

New Evidence on Parataraja Chronology

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The purpose of this paper is to report the discovery of two coins that help solidify the chronology of the Paratarajas. While the chronology of the first six Parata kings was firmly founded on die studies, the subsequent chronology, although also quite well founded, was based on somewhat more speculative features of design and style. The new coins provide solid new evidence to support key parts of this subsequent chronology. I will first introduce the new coins and then will explain their importance by reviewing the chronology in what follows.

The New Coins



Figure 1: Silver drachm of Kozana (Aman ur Rahman collection)

The first coin, illustrated in Figure 1, is a silver drachm of the king Kozana that uses an obverse die previously used by Miratakhma. I discovered the coin in the collection of Aman ur Rahman, with whose kind permission I am publishing it. Its discovery provides a final proof of an important aspect of the Parataraja chronology which I have outlined in a previous paper.¹ The coin can be identified as a silver drachm of Kozana on the basis of the reverse legend, which reads in Kharoshthi letters (starting at 12 o'clock, counter-clockwise): *kozanasā bagapharnaputrasa paratarajasa*. The most significant feature of the coin is that it uses an obverse die known to have previously been used by Miratakhma (see the image in Figure 2). The legend on that coin reads, in Brahmi letters (starting at 11:30, clockwise): *miratakhmasa*

¹ See Pankaj Tandon: "The Coins of the Pāratarājas: A Synthesis," *Supplement to the Journal of the Oriental Numismatic Society* 205 (Autumn 2010): A Seminar on the Occasion of the 100th Anniversary of the Numismatic Society of India," pp. 15-31 [hereafter Tandon 2010].

hvaramiraputrasa paratarajasa. Although I have not been able to examine the coins side by side, the images make it quite clear that the Kozana coin uses the same, albeit more worn, obverse die used on the Miratakhma coin. This proves conclusively that Kozana followed Miratakhma chronologically, thereby providing a crucial missing link in the construction of the chronology of the Paratarajas. Exactly how will be explained in the following section.



Figure 2: Silver drachm of Miratakhma (Coin 34 in Tandon 2010)



Figure 3: Silver drachm of Bhimarjuna (Tandon collection #682.73)

The second coin is a silver drachm of Bhimarjuna which I acquired a few years ago (see Figure 3). The legend reads, in Kharoshthi letters (starting at 1 o'clock), *bhimarjunasa yolatakmaputrasa paratarajasa*. This coin is significant for two reasons. First, it is clearly of fairly good silver; previously published coins of Bhimarjuna were all of quite base billon or of copper. Second, although it does not use the same die, the obverse portrait is very similar to that on a previously known coin of Kozana (see Figure 4). The coin dies were, in all probability, made by the same hand and therefore must have been made at roughly the same time. For both these reasons, this coin buttresses the argument I have made in my previous paper that Bhimarjuna succeeded Kozana, despite the fact that coins of Kozana's son Koziya are known.



Figure 4: Silver drachm of Kozana (Coin 41 in Tandon 2010)

Implications for the Chronology of the Paratarajas

The coins of the Paratarajas form two rather distinct series. One series, which I will call the Brahmi series, contains coins of six kings. These coins are all in silver, the legends on the coins all use Brahmi letters, and the coins can be arranged in a clear chronology that includes all six kings. The other series, which I will call the Kharoshthi series, contains coins of another five kings. Of these, the coins of one king (Kozana) are made of silver, while the coins of the other four are almost all in copper. The legends on the coins of all five kings use Kharoshthi script except for one known coin of Kozana which uses Brahmi letters. The five kings in this series cannot easily be ordered chronologically because they do not form an obvious single family group. In the paper in which he published the first correct readings of these coins,² Harry Falk

² Harry Falk: "The Names of the Pāratārājas Issuing Coins with Kharoshthi Legends," *The Numismatic Chronicle* 167, 2007, pp. 171-178.

divided the five kings into three family sub-groups (or “strands”) and suggested an ordering of these three strands on paleographic grounds. He also suggested, as had Senior before him,³ that the Kharoshthi series preceded the Brahmi series, as was to be expected, given the pattern seen in other parts of India.

The basic problem of chronology is that we would like to be able to place the kings in chronological order. A more fundamental problem of chronology, however, is to determine whether the Brahmi and Kharoshthi series are parallel or sequential and, if the latter, which of the two series precedes the other. The presumption was that the Kharoshthi series must have come first, because historically Kharoshthi had been widely used in north-west India but had then gradually given way to Brahmi. Senior and Falk had adopted this position. In my paper, however, I argued that the Brahmi series came first and that the Kharoshthi series followed sequentially. To explain why, and to understand the importance of the two coins being introduced in this paper, let us start with the Brahmi series.

The six kings in the Brahmi series are:

1. Yolamira, son of Bagareva
2. Bagamira, son of Yolamira
3. Arjuna, son of Yolamira
4. Hvaramira, son of Yolamira
5. Mirahvara, son of Hvaramira
6. Miratakhma, son of Hvaramira

Yolamira is clearly the earliest of the kings, since the other five are his sons and grandsons. The following three kings were all his sons, and we can order them based on an interesting feature of their coins: each one used on his coins an obverse die that had previously been used by his predecessor. Bagamira was the first of the three to succeed his father, as his only known coins all use an obverse die that had previously been used by Yolamira, as illustrated by coins 1 and 2 in Figure 5. No coin of Bagamira using a different die is known. Arjuna must have been next, as he used the same Yolamira die as had been used by Bagamira (coin 3), but then introduced new dies, including the one seen on coin 4. Hvaramira must have been last, as he did not use the die in coins 1-3, but did use the die introduced late in his reign by Arjuna (compare coins 4 and 5). The final two kings in the Brahmi series were sons of Hvaramira and they can be ordered in the same way. Mirahvara came first, as he used a die introduced by his father (compare coins 6 and 7), while Miratakhma came second, as he did not use a die of his father but did use a die introduced by his brother (compare coins 8 and 9). Thus the six kings in the Brahmi series can be ordered chronologically on a very firm basis.

Now let us turn to the Kharoshthi series. One point that has not been made before is that, had the Brahmi and Kharoshthi series been parallel issues, it would be reasonable to expect them to come from different areas. However, coins of both series all come primarily from the same

³ R.C. Senior: *Indo-Scythian Coins and History*, Lancaster and London: Classical Numismatic Group, 2001.

place (Loralai district in modern Baluchistan); therefore, they must have been sequential rather than parallel. In terms of ordering the five kings, Falk identified three strands and ordered them as follows based on the paleography of the legends (kings listed in bold type are known to have issued coins):

Strand 1: Yolatakhma – **Bhimarjuna**

Strand 2: Bagapharna – **Kozana** – **Koziya**

Strand 3: Datayola I – **Datarvharna** – **Datayola II**.⁴

In contrast, I suggested in my paper that the five kings could be ordered as following (continuing the list from the previous six kings):

7. Kozana, son of Bagapharna
8. Bhimarjuna, son of Yolatakhma
9. Koziya, son of Kozana
10. Datarvharna, son of Datayola I
11. Datayola II, son of Datarvharna.

The argument proceeded as follows. I placed Kozana first for several reasons:

- (a) His coins were in silver, like all of the coins in the Brahmi series,
- (b) One of his coins carried a legend in Brahmi, the only coin among all of these five kings to have this feature. This connected Kozana closely to the Brahmi series,
- (c) Most of Kozana's coins feature a bust left, wearing a peaked tiara (see coin 12 in Figure 5), although some of his coins have the bust facing right. Almost all the coins in the Brahmi series featured a bare-headed bust facing right, except that Miratakhma introduced a type in which the bust faces left and the king wears a peaked tiara (see coin 36 in Tandon 2010).

This argument is now strongly supported by the coin introduced in Figure 1 (coin 11 in Figure 5). The use by Kozana of an obverse die used earlier by Miratakhma provides solid proof that he closely followed the latter king.

We know that Kozana's son, Koziya, issued coins and it would be natural to assume that the son immediately followed the father. However, I argued in my paper that it was Bhimarjuna who followed Kozana and that Koziya then followed in turn. My argument was again based on circumstantial evidence:

- (a) There were a few coins of Bhimarjuna that were of silvery billon, while all of Koziya's coins were of copper only. This suggested that Bhimarjuna followed Kozana, all of whose coins were of silver.
- (b) The style of bust on Bhimarjuna's coins was closer to the style of Kozana's. Koziya's coins, by contrast, had larger busts of a somewhat different style.

⁴ Falk's strand 3 actually consisted of Patakatakhma (?) – Datayola - Datarvharna and ?-yola, but subsequent work has reduced that strand to the three kings listed here.

Again, this speculative argument is now buttressed by the coin introduced in Figure 3 (coin 13 in Figure 5). Although this coin of Bhimarjuna does not use the same die as the coin of Kozana seen in Figure 4 (and also as coin 12 in Figure 5), the two dies are so similar as to make it quite clear that they were created very close to one another in time, probably by the same die cutter. Thus we can be quite sure that indeed Bhimarjuna followed Kozana and that Koziya subsequently followed him.

The rest of the chronology remains unchanged. Koziya followed Bhimarjuna, as he was the last king to issue large numbers of coins carrying the king's bust. Koziya later in his reign introduced the standing king type (coin 16 in Figure 5) and Datarvharna and Datayola II imitated this type. The ordering of these last two kings is based on a gradual deterioration of style from Koziya to Datarvharna and then finally to Datayola II. The last king was also the only one to issue coins with a new spelling for the tribal name: *Pārada* instead of *Pārata*. This spelling became quite common in the later literary sources that mention this tribe.

Figure 5: Table of coins illustrating Parataraja Chronology

	
1. Yolamira (Late)	2. Bagamira (same obverse die as coin 1)
	
3. Arjuna (Early) (same obverse die as coins 1-2)	4. Arjuna (Late)
	
5. Hvaramira (Early) (same obverse die as coin 4)	6. Hvaramira (Late)

	
<p>7. Mirahvara (Early) (same obverse die as coin 6)</p>	<p>8. Mirahvara (Late)</p>
	
<p>9. Miratakhma (Early) (same obverse die as coin 8)</p>	<p>10. Miratakhma (Late)</p>
	
<p>11. Kozana (Early) (same obverse die as coin 10)</p>	<p>12. Kozana (Late)</p>
	
<p>13. Bhimarjuna (Early) (similar obverse die as coin 12)</p>	<p>14. Bhimarjuna (Late)</p>
	
<p>15. Koziya (Early) (similar obverse die as coin 14)</p>	<p>16. Koziya (Late)</p>



The two new coins introduced here therefore provide solid new evidence that the chronology I proposed in my 2010 paper is indeed correct.