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Kshaharata Questions

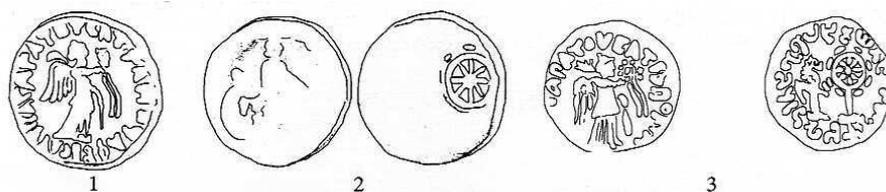
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We know little about the beginnings of currency systems in Gujerat¹ but, by the first century AD, a system of silver drachms, later dated, became the norm. To the north, in the Punjab, the silver (later billon) and copper system of the Indo-Scythians and Indo-Parthians was replaced by the gold/copper system of the Kushan and to the south, in the Deccan, lead had predominated under the Satavahanas. These silver drachms have a parallel in the similar silver drachms issued in Sind by the Indo-Parthians and the drachms of the Paratarajas of Sind/Baluchistan. They probably grew out of, and were an extension of, the monetary system of the Parthians and were possibly influenced too by the appearance in the region of Roman silver denarii brought in trade.

The silver drachm coinage of Gujerat was mainly issued by the successors of Chastana, of the Kardamaka dynasty, the rulers of which dynasty are generally referred to as the Western Satraps. The silver coinage was introduced however by Chastana's predecessor and contemporary, the Mahakshatrap Nahapana of the **Kshaharata** dynasty. It would seem that Nahapana was probably the last of his dynasty to rule in India. He carved an empire stretching from Gujerat to Ujjain and Nasik before suffering reverses at the hands of the Satavahanas. It is Nahapana's forebears that interest us in this note.

His immediate predecessor was the Kshaharata Kshatrap Bhumaka of whom we know nothing apart from his coins, which are of copper only and generally found in Gujerat, though one was found in Sharjah, one of the Gulf Emirates. He in turn was preceded by Abhiraka (Aubhirakes). At present, he is the earliest named Kshaharata of whom we have coins and they have been found not only in Gujerat but as far afield as the Arab Emirates and Afghanistan, suggesting that it was he who may have founded the wealth of the dynasty by trading with the Romans. The coins of Abhiraka are of copper only and were struck in several sizes. The earliest coins are rather large and show his name in good Greek. In ONS Newsletter 158, p.21 I illustrated an example from my collection and now Shailendra Bhandare has shown me a further example of this coin which is seemingly from the same obverse die. His unbroken example measures 26 mm in diameter and, though worn, weighs 11.27 gm. A drawing (1) shows the full type. The second letter in the king's name resembles ã rather than Y on this example. It was found in Kutch together with a different coin of similar size that bears two countermarks. This latter coin was a bronze of Apollodotos II, the obverse of which is 'countermarked' with an eight-spoked wheel.² Shailendra has a second example from the same region and a further specimen was reported by Dilip Rajgor as having come from Rapar.³



This second specimen of Shailendra's, from Kutch, is on a very worn flan (but heavier at 13.52

gm) and is illustrated as No. 2 above. It shows for the first time that there is a reverse punch which shows part of an 'elephant/lion capital on a pillar'. This would seem to confirm Rajgor's guess that the wheel countermark was placed on the coins by Abhiraka since on ill. 2 the two punches represent the reverse device to be found on all Abhirakas coins (see ill. 3). One other distinguishing feature to notice about the wheel is the occurrence of ovoid shapes at the extension of each spoke. Similar ovoid shapes appear round Nike's wreath on most of Abhiraka's coins and this feature is found elsewhere only on the coins of Gondophares I, whom I regard as a contemporary of Abhiraka and whose coins the latter imitated for his obverse. The use of Nike would suggest an Indo-Parthian connection of some kind. Through these countermarked coins I would now like to try to trace the Kshaharata Satraps a little further back before Abhiraka.



This wheel countermark has so far been found on only one other coin type and that is the coin illustrated No. 4 above, which is in the collection of Lance Dane in Bombay, reportedly found in Junagarh in Gujerat. This has the 'elephant/lion capital on a pillar' on the reverse too. The issuer of the undertype is as yet a mystery but may be the predecessor of Abhiraka. Two uncountermarked examples of the issue (one illustrated as No. 5) are in the collection of W. F. Spengler (who cannot remember where he purchased them) and a third, which has the portrait facing left (No. 6), is in my collection (now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford) and is ex-Mir Zakah II hoard. The legend on the obverse of these remarkable coins is in Greek on four sides, and in Kharosthi on the reverse in three lines, part of which one can read as '*...maharayasa yapirajayasa...*'. The 'Yapirajaya' would seem to be a title rather than a name. The reverse shows Nike, as on all obverses of Abhiraka and it is very close to the Nike appearing on some coppers of Gondophares I. This suggests that this new ruler was also an Indo-Parthian or Scythian. The obverse portrait is similar to certain coins of Orthagnes/Gadana, a contemporary king in Arachosia. I do not have the weight of Bill's coins but my (very worn) specimen weighs 10.68 gm. This is in line with the early Abhiraka and countermarked Apollodotos II coins. Bill Spengler and I had already observed the similarity in fabric and style of these coins to those of Apollodotos II and that the field letter Di occurs on some of his coins even before the countermarked coins had surfaced. I even suggested to him some years ago that Nahapana might have issued them, based on what I thought might be read from the visible Greek legend. We are left with an enigma therefore. Who could have issued them and when? I date Apollodotos II c.65-55 BC and, as his countermarked coins all seem to be worn, I would date them to some decades after their issue. Shailendra informs me that small round and square imitation Apollodotos H coins are often found in Kutch too. Gondophares I seems to have been regnant until the last decade BC and I feel Abhiraka was a contemporary of his towards the end of his reign. I would therefore place the 'Yapirajaya' c. 30/20 BC and suggest that Abhiraka countermarked these and the still circulating Apollodotos II coins shortly thereafter. I would hope that an example with clear legends will surface in the future which might answer the question of the ruler's name and that of the dynasty to which he belonged. All the Apollodotos coins with the countermarks are so far of just the one type and monogram, BN⁴ series 6 C,D. These are associated with a mint in Hazara, east of Taxila. Silver drachms of Apollodotos are also known to have circulated in Barugaza until the time of Nahapana. This strongly suggests that there were strong connections between the Punjab and Gujerat, possibly for trade but also possibly for ethnic reasons as may become apparent next.

The only other mention we have of the Kshaharatas is from inscriptions, not coins. On the Taxila

copper plate inscription of year 78 one Kshaharata Kshatrap of Chukhsa, Liaka Kusuluka is mentioned with his son Patika (though this may have been misinterpreted in view of the next inscription). The inscription mentions the Great King Moga (Maues) and the era has been thought to be one of c. 155 BC when Maues was still alive but I would suggest that it could be an era of Maues and refer to a date in the last decade BC when the Kshaharatas were already wealthy. On the Mathura Lion Capital reference is made to the Mahakshatrap Kusuluka Patika and this may be the same person as above or his son. The inscription chiefly concerns the daughter of Kharahostes and queen of the Mahakshatrap Rajula (Rajuvula), and mentions the solemnities paid to the illustrious King Muki (thought to be Maues). It is dedicated in honour of the whole of Sakastana. It too would fall in the last decade BC. The one inscription being in Taxila and the other in Mathura shows that at this time there was a strong link between the Punjab and sites as far south as Mathura with all being encompassed by the term 'Sakastan'. Important people from these areas were interconnected and made religious or political donations at important places. The Kshaharatas were considered to be important enough to be mentioned. If one accepted that the Taxila copper plate was as early as c. 80 BC (which I do not) then their influence would stretch even further back. It has been considered that Kshaharata may refer to a place but if so then this is not certainly identified.

The other place mentioned in connection with the Kshaharatas is Chukhsa and this was identified by Sir Aurel Stein as being Chach, a district near Taxila, and no-one seems to have questioned this since. I do not know the origin of the name Kutch but it strikes me that this would be a more likely meaning of the word Chukhsa since we know that the Kshaharatas occupied this district. However, there is a further possibility of tracing their origin. One other inscription, the Taxila silver vase inscription, refers to 'Jihonika, the Skhatrap of Chukhsa'. Jihonika is considered to be the same ruler as the Strap, later Mahasatrap Jihuniasa. In fact the name of the father of Jihonika was reconstructed in the inscription from that of Jihuniasa on the coins - it being assumed that they are the same king. His Greek name is Zeionises. His name also occurs on one of the recently translated Buddhist scrolls now in the British Library but in the form Jihonige⁵. Such variations in name-spelling do not seem to be unusual. In my decades of coin collecting, I have seen that practically all the coins of Zeionises turn up, both silver and copper, in the Indian part of present Kashmir. It would seem that Scythians had been settled in this area for centuries (see ONS Newsletter 158, p.17-20) and since Zeionises is called the Satrap of Chukhsa I would suggest that it is to be found somewhere close to Kashmir. Zeionises is the successor to Azilises in this region and falls in the range c.40/35 - c.15 BC. He is son of Manigula who was brother of 'the Maharaja' or Great King. This may have been Azilises. There is no mention of Manigula or Zeionises being Kshaharatas and we must assume that they were not, unless evidence to the contrary surfaces. Was Liaka Kusuluka Patika the successor of Zeionises/Jihonika? and how was he/they related to Abhiraka? Were they contemporaries? Did the Kshaharatas move south at the same time that Sodasa, son of Rajuvula made Mathura his capital? And Finally, who issued the enigmatic coppers that were countermarked by Abhiraka and is he the missing Kshaharata link?

Notes

1. Kutch is the part of Gujerat north of the Gulf of Kutch. Kathiawar is the part to the south (the ancient Saurashtra/Surastrene) and Barygaza (Bharukucha) was the port of Nahapana's kingdom, sited where Broach now is near the mouth of the Narbada River.
2. Whereas the other two examples of this countermarked coin of Apollodotos II have original undertypes, this coin of Shailendra's seems to be cast, with the countermark being part of the mould design. The coin is light at 8.53 gm. Though there is a part of the flan missing (blister?) I think that the appearance is due to the coin being cast rather than having been partly melted in a fire. We have something similar with countermarked coins of Phraates IV of Parthia where some coins use original coins for the undertype and others are locally made dies with the countermark added to the die.

3. K. K. Maheshwari and B. Rath, Ed., Numismatic Panorama, New Delhi, 1996 - Abheraka, the earliest Western Kshatrpa by Dilip Rajgor, page 142, No.13.
4. O. Bopearachchi, Monnaies GrÉco-Bactriennes et Indo-Grecques, BibliothÉque Nationale, Paris 1991.
5. R. Salomon, Ancient Buddhist Scrolls from Gandhara, British Library, London 1999

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