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The Paratarajas

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PĀRATARĀJAS (ca. 125-300 CE)

The Pāratas were a tribe who ruled parts of modern day Baluchistan (and perhaps some neighbouring areas) during the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE. They appear to have originated in what is now northern Iraq or Iran, from where they began a slow eastward migration sometime between the 7th and the 4th centuries BCE, arriving in Baluchistan by the 1st century CE. They issued coins for a period of about 175 years from c 125 to 300 CE. Why they migrated is not known.

The tribe is mentioned in a number of Greek sources and also appears in many of the tribal lists in various Indian texts, where it is sometimes called the Pāratas and sometimes the Pāradas. This ambiguity in the spelling of the tribal name is also seen on the coins. On most, the tribe is called the Pāratas but on some coins very late in the series it is called the Pāradas.

Only one king of the Pāratarājas is known from non-numismatic sources. His name is Yolamira and he is known from inscriptions on some potsherds found in the area of Lorlai in Baluchistan (Konow). This is also the area where most coins of the Pāratarājas are found.

Yolamira is the first king for whom we have coins. Ten other kings issued coins and, when we include the fathers mentioned on the coins, we can identify a total of fifteen individuals. Of these, thirteen have Iranian names and two have Indian names. Several of the names contain the root word *Mira*, which is clearly a variant of Mithra, the old Persian (or Zoroastrian) deity of Light. Thus it appears that the dynastic family followed the Zoroastrian religion.

Coinage

E.J. Rapson (1905) was the first scholar to study their coins. B.N. Mukherjee (1972) provided the first historical information on the tribe, and R.C. Senior published many new types in a series of articles in the ONS Journal, consolidated later in his 2001 catalogue of Indo-Scythian coins. The coinage was finally correctly identified and organized by Pankaj Tandon (2006, 2009 and 2010) and Harry Falk (2007).

The coins of the Pāratarājas form two quite distinct series. One series consists of coins exclusively of silver, on which the legends are all in Brāhmī script. The other series consists of coins

mostly in copper (with a few in silver), on which the legends are almost all in Kharoṣṭhī script. There is one known coin in this series in which the legend is in Brāhmī. Scholars initially assumed, quite understandably given the history of Brāhmī replacing Kharoṣṭhī in northern India, that the Kharoṣṭhī series came first and the Brāhmī series followed. However, it is now quite clear, thanks to the evidence of the coins themselves, that this is not the case here and that the Brāhmī series pre-dated the Kharoṣṭhī coins.

The coins were issued by a total of 11 kings, six of whom issued coins with Brāhmī legends and five who issued coins with Kharoṣṭhī legends. Most of the coins feature the bust of the king (or, late in the series, a standing king) on the obverse and a central swastika (sometimes turning right and sometimes left) on the reverse, surrounded by a circular legend. The use of the swastika as a reverse symbol on the coins may be further evidence of the dynasty's allegiance to Mithra, as the swastika was thought to be a symbol in ancient Persia of the revolving sun (*Garduneh-e Khorshid*) and Mithra's Wheel (*Garduneh-e Mebr*). The legend, whether in Brāhmī or Kharoṣṭhī, identified the king by name, his father via a patronymic, and then his title *pāratarāja*. The legends are almost always in the genitive case and the language is almost always Prākṛit.

One interesting feature of the coin legends is that they are quite often truncated. Almost all the legends follow the same pattern: they start with the name of the king, follow that with the patronymic, and end with the title "king of the Pāratas." Thus, for example, the full legend on the coins of Yolamira, son of Bagareva, reads: *Yolamirasa Bagarevaṣṭrasa Pāratarājasa*. However, if the die-cutter ran out of room as he carved the circular legend, he would simply truncate the legend at whatever point he finished using up the space. Coins are known with various kinds of truncations, from leaving off the last *sa* to leaving off as much as the terminal *tarājasa*

Creating a chronological sequence of the coins is of course helped by the use of patronymics, but it is further helped by an unusual feature of the coins of the first seven kings: each successor used an obverse die previously used by his predecessor. Considerations of stylistic evolution help in ordering the remaining kings.

For those wanting to relate these coins to the catalogue published by Senior in his 4-volume series



Obv: As previous (new die, with ear flap)
Rev: As previous

53. Koziya, AE drachm, 1.61g, 14mm



Obv: As previous (new die)
Rev: As previous

54. Koziya, AE drachm, 1.89g, 14mm



Obv: As previous (new die)
Rev: As previous
(*Courtesy Jan Lingen*)

55. Koziya, AE drachm, 1.76g, 13mm



Obv: As previous (new die, hair in rows)
Rev: As previous

56. Koziya, AE didrachm, 3.87g, 21mm



Obv: Standing king turning right, clean-shaven, wearing peaked tiara, holding sceptre, Brāhmī legend at left: *Koziya*

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Rev: As previous

Phase 2

57. Koziya, AE didrachm, 2.62g, 15mm



Obv: As coin 55 (new die, king with moustache)
Rev: As previous

58. Koziya, AE drachm, 1.54g, 12-13mm



Obv: As previous (new die)
Rev: As previous

59. Koziya, AE didrachm, 3.94g, 19mm



Obv: As coin 56 (new die, king with moustache)
Rev: As previous
(*Courtesy Wilfried Pieper*)

Phase 3

60. Koziya, AE drachm, 1.47g, 13-14mm



Obv: Diademed bust of king to right, wearing turban and prominent ear-ring, dotted border around (new die)

Rev: As previous

61. Koziya, AE hemidrachm, 0.78g, 11mm



Obv: As previous

Rev: As previous

62. Koziya, AE drachm, 1.28g, 12-13mm



Obv: As previous (new die, turban with ear flap)
Rev: As previous

63. Koziya, AE drachm, 1.83g, 12-14mm



Obv: As previous, but with sceptre in right field
Rev: As previous

64. Koziya, AE drachm, 1.55g, 12-14mm



Obv: As previous (new die)
Rev: As previous, but with swastika turning left

65. Koziya, AE didrachm, 4.66g, 17-18mm



Obv: Standing king turning left, with moustache, wearing turban, holding sceptre in right hand, Kharoṣṭhī legend at right: *Koziya*
Rev: As on coin 63 (swastika turning right)

66. Koziya, AE didrachm, 3.29g, 18mm



Obv: As previous (same die)
Rev: As on coin 64 (swastika turning left)

Datarvharna

Koziya was succeeded by Datarvharna, whose coins closely match the style of Koziya's late

coins. As far as we know, he issued only didrachms of the standing king type, although there is a single drachm that may be his also. Since Koziya was issuing drachms and didrachms at the end of his reign, it is plausible to expect that Datarvharna would start out doing the same. The rarity of the drachms, however, suggests that the coinage was reduced to didrachms only very quickly. In all probability, this may have been the result of a high inflation rate, which would perhaps have eliminated the need for lower denomination coins.

We do not know the family relationship of Datarvharna with his predecessors, as his father, Datayola, had not issued coins. It is reasonable to speculate that he may have been Bhimarjuna's grandson, as the root word Yola had been used by Bhimarjuna's father, Yolatakma. If this was the case, Datarvharna would have been Koziya's nephew, making him a prime candidate to succeed him.

The name Datarvharna consists of the two root words *datar* and *vharna*. We have already seen that the word *vharna*, likely a variant of the root word *hvara*, refers to divine glory. Although we are not sure what *datar* meant, Falk argued that it probably referred to the Creator, making the meaning of Datarvharna to be "the glory of the Creator." Given his meagre coin output using very few dies, Datarvharna probably had a very short reign, perhaps c. 275-285.

67. Datarvharna (?), AE drachm, 2.10g, 15mm



Obv: Diademed head of king left, wearing turban
Rev: Swastika turning right, indistinct Kharoṣṭhī legend around

68. Datarvharna, AE didrachm, 4.13g, 19mm



Obv: Standing king turning left, with moustache, wearing turban, holding sceptre in right hand, Kharoṣṭhī legend at right: *Datarvharna*
Rev: Swastika turning right, Kharoṣṭhī legend around: *Datarvharnasa Datayolaputrasa Pāratarāja*

75. Datayola, AE tetradrachm, 7.72g, 21mm



Obv: Diademed bust of king left, holding flower before face

Rev: Swastika turning right, Kharoṣṭhī legend around: *Datayo(lasa Datarv̄harnaputrasa Pārata)rāja*

Vijayapota, formerly called 'the unknown king'

There are certain coins that carry the swastika on the reverse with a circular Brāhmī legend that apparently come from the same area as other Pāratarāja coins. The legend on these coins has been tentatively read, and it provides no certainty that these are indeed Pāratarāja coins, since the dynasty is not mentioned in the legend. The lunar crescent on the crown suggests a much later date than the coins of Datayola. This feature was first introduced by the Sasanian king Yazdegard I (399-420), and was then copied widely on the coins of the Kushano-Sasanians and the Hephthalites. Thus these coins probably date from the c. 5th century. The use of the swastika makes it likely that they were issued by a dynasty that continued the traditions of the Pāratarājas, whether a continuation or a successor of the dynasty is not clear.

The coins come in two varieties. In the first, the legend is read from the inside; in the second, it is read from the outside.

CATALOGUE

76. AE, didrachm, 3.18g, 18mm



Obv: Diademed bust of bearded king right, wearing crescented crown, dotted border around

Rev: Swastika turning right, Brāhmī legend around: *śrī rājño ṣāhi vijayapotasya*

श्री राज्ञो षाहि विजयपोतस्य

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