ISVARADEVA: A NEW WESTERN KSHATRAPA KING

By Pankaj Tandon

The purpose of this brief note is to report a coin of a previously unknown Western Kshatrapa king: Isvaradeva, a son of Rudrasimha I. The coin is illustrated in Figure 1.

![Figure 1: Silver drachm of Isvaradeva](image)

The date behind the king’s head is (Saka era) 13x. Unfortunately, the units digit of the date (if there is one) is mainly off the flan. The little bit of a possible units digit that is visible curves to the right, a characteristic unknown for any units digit among the Brahmi numerals, leading me to suspect that the date may well be 130. Although the tops of some of the letters on the legend, including notably the father’s name, are off the flan, it is possible to reconstruct the legend, starting at 6 o’clock, as:

\[
\text{Rajno mahakshatrapasa Rudrasihaputrasa Rajno kshatrapasa Isvardevasa.}
\]

Figure 2 shows the reconstructed legend as it would have appeared on the coin. The only other candidate for the father’s name, given that the bottoms of the letters rudra are clearly visible, would have been Rudrasena. However, as we see on Figure 2, there is a curved line at 1 o’clock of the figure that is compatible only with the letter ha and not with na. Thus the name on the coin must have been Rudrasih (Rudrasimha).

![Figure 2: Reconstructed legend](image)

The individual who first showed me the coin suggested that it was a coin of the Abhira king, Isvaradeva, who is mentioned by Jha and Rajgor in their study of Western Kshatrapa coinage. An inscription of this king, dated S. 254, is known. If the date on my coin were read as 23x, it might be compatible with the Abhira ruler’s reign, and this was the date read by my source. There is a slight die imperfection at the spot where a horizontal line on the 100’s numeral would render it to read 200, however, a close examination of the coin reveals that there is no actual line there, only the die flaw, so that the 100’s digit indeed reads 100. To
carry a different legend than the ones naming him as mahakshatrapa during the same years, and have proposed a hypothesis that the coins were issued at different mints. This would explain the conundrum by saying that Rudrasimha retained his full authority in part of his kingdom, but had a reduced status in another part. Further, there exists a unique coin of Rudrasimha, naming him as mahakshatrapa, dated 121, and having the same legend features as the dated Rudrasimha kshatrapa coins, indicating it was struck at the same mint. Thus it might appear that it was Rudrasena who took the title of mahakshatrapa during the period and in the place of Rudrasimha’s “demotion.” Why or how he did so (or even whether he did so) is still uncertain.

The Isvara deva coin, dated S. 13x, comes too late to shed any light on this question. Indeed, the period S. 121-144 seemed relatively unproblematic in Western Kshatrapa history. Rudrasena I seemingly had a rather peaceful reign, with only a brief period of possible unrest in S. 124, when Satyadaman issued an brief coinage. As he names himself only as kshatrapa on his coinage, Satyadaman does not automatically appear as a rebel. He could well have been operating under the suzerainty of Rudrasena I. But perhaps the Isvara deva coin suggests that Satyadaman’s “reign” was not as benign as might have appeared. Since both Satyadaman and Isvara deva appear to have had very short reigns, as evidenced by the facts that their coinage is very rare and each king has coins of only one known date, perhaps they were both rebels who were quickly subdued by Rudrasena I.

Thus the Isvara deva coin presented here, while attesting to a previously unknown Western Kshatrapa ruler, creates additional uncertainty regarding the political history of that dynasty and the reign of Rudrasena I in particular. The basic outline of events can perhaps be best presented in the form of a short chronology:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S. 100-119</td>
<td>Reign of Rudrasimha I s/o Rudradaman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. 119-121</td>
<td>Reign of Jivadaman s/o Damażada, Rudrasimha’s (older) brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. 121-144</td>
<td>Reign of Rudrasena I s/o Damażada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. 124</td>
<td>“Rebellion” of Satyadaman s/o Damażada and brother of Jivadaman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. 13x</td>
<td>“Rebellion” of Isvara deva s/o Rudrasimha I and brother of Rudrasena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. 144</td>
<td>Reign of Prithivisesa s/o Rudrasena I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. 144-158</td>
<td>Reign of Damażesa s/o Rudrasimha I and brother of Rudrasena</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Damażesa’s reign was also punctuated by probably at least two rebellions, those of Samhagadham and Damażadasi II.

Western Kshatrapa political history therefore seems to involve considerable jockeying for power among family members, and the Isvara deva coin presented here adds to the list of possible rebellions against the main central power.

**Notes**

1 I wish to thank Shailendra Bhandare for many useful discussions on Western Kshatrapa coinage.
3 I have argued in a recent paper that the kings commonly known as Damažadasi I and Damažadasa II were in reality one and the same person, whose name was Damażada. See Pankaj Tandon: “The Western Kshatrapa Damažada,” *Numismatic Chronicle* 169, 2009.
4 I should point out that the obverse portrait has a feature that would rule out a dating much earlier than S. 120. The lips are shown as two dots, something not seen until the later coins of Rudrasena I, whose early coins always show the lips as lines rather than dots.
6 See R. C. Senior: *Indo-Scythian Coins and History* (3 volumes), London and Lancaster, PA: Classical Numismatic Group, 2001, type 339.60AD.

Fig. 3: Silver drachm of Rudrasena I, dated S. 132.

Fig. 4: Silver drachm of Rudrasimha II, dated S. 230.

The history of the Western Kshatrapas around the time of this coin is still not fully understood and it would have been nice if this coin had helped resolve some of the unsettled issues. Unfortunately it does not; rather, it raises new questions of its own. The most vexing question still unanswered relates to the so-called “demotion” of Rudrasimha I. This king issued undated coins naming himself kshatrapa and then dated coins naming himself as mahakshatrapa. The mahakshatrapa coins carry dates for all years from S. 100 to S. 119. In addition, there are coins that name Rudrasimha as kshatrapa again carrying the dates S. 110, 111 and 112! We therefore have the conundrum of a ruler simultaneously claiming the title of mahakshatrapa and also a reduced title of kshatrapa.

I have discussed this problem in detail in a recent paper and have shown that the coins showing Rudrasimha’s “demotion” all