

The Chittagonian Coinage of Arakan's Royal Sons

Philip Hauret

Independent Scholar/Researcher, Honolulu, Hawaii USA

ABSTRACT

A researcher approaching the multi-lingual coins of the former Kingdom of Arakan (circa 1430-1784) must overcome many challenges. Difficult to read specimens, incorrect translations, poor scholarship and at times deficient photography within the existing treatments, when one can find them, are some of the obstacles encountered. Despite all the recent attention the Rohingya controversy has brought to these coins, studying them can still be productive of new information about Arakan. The objectives of this article are relatively modest, nonetheless. It will focus on a particular series of multi-lingual coins issued by a number of Arakanese-appointed governors of the Chittagong region, located in present-day Bangladesh, beginning in the 1570's and ending circa 1612, with the aim of correcting some mistranslations and errors in descriptions as well as uncovering additional information about these governors, particularly those who were sons of Arakanese kings. It will also assess the effectiveness of the numismatic evidence in approximating the succession of these governors during the subject period. We will be assisted in this endeavor by the sale at auction of a major collection of Chittagonian coins in 2011 by Stephen Album Rare Coins (SARC) of Santa Rosa, California, a numismatic dealer specializing in Asian coinage. This unmatched assemblage of over 75 specimens offers students of Arakanese numismatics an unprecedented opportunity to study these coins, as today's on-line auctions provide quality digital photography unavailable in the past.

Keywords: Arakan, coins, numismatics, Burma, Myanmar, Chittagong

INTRODUCTION

With the coming to the throne by King Min Palaung¹ in 1571 (r. 1571-93), the kingdom of Arakan entered a phase of its history that Jacques Leider has called the "L'époque de Rois Guerriers," or the Age of the Warrior Kings, which continued in his periodization scheme for approximately fifty years [1]. Arakan's most important territorial acquisition during this time was the region of Chittagong, which at its greatest extent could be roughly defined as the territory north of the town of Ramu in present-day southeastern Bangladesh to a frontier demarcated by the Feni River and the southern-most boundary of the state of Tripura in northeast India, and from the Bay to Bengal to a line west of the current international boundary between India and Bangladesh and Myanmar and Bangladesh [1]. Included in this region would be the important port of Chittagong located on the northern bank of the Karnaphuli River, which during the second half of the sixteenth century was the focus of power struggles between the Sultanate of Bengal, the kingdoms of Tripura and Arakan and local lords and governors who

¹ There is no universally accepted transcription system for the Burmese or Arakanese languages. Therefore, we will employ the most commonly used transcriptions for Arakanese words and names.

oftentimes exercised surprising independence from these three powers and could be considered minor monarchs in their own right [2]. See Figure 1 for a map of the Kingdom of Arakan.

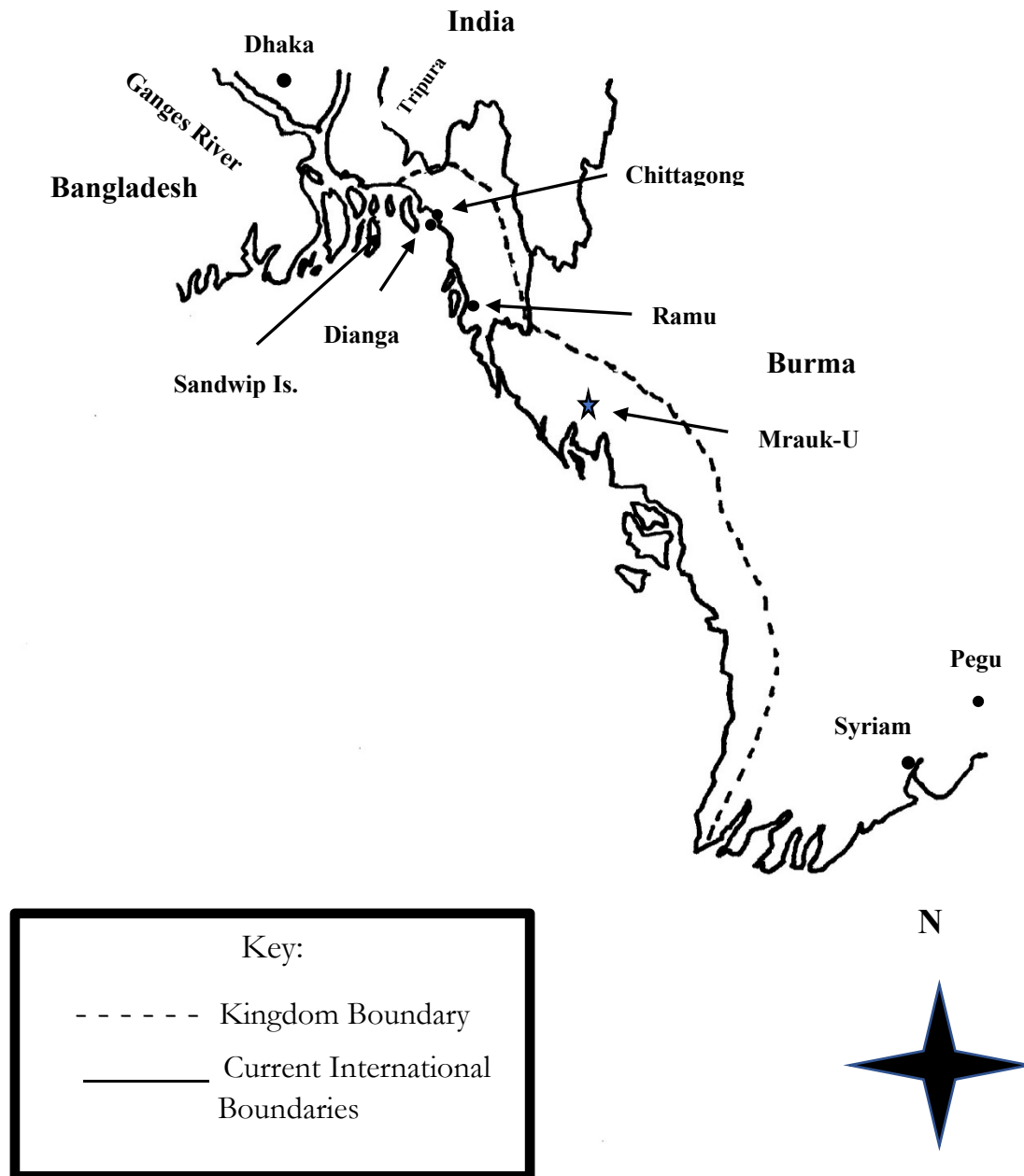


Figure 1. The Kingdom of Arakan, Early 17th Century

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries prior to the ascent of Min Palaung, Arakan achieved a relatively steady control of the Ramu area, but only occasional and temporary control of the port, and certainly did not have the predominant control of Chittagong beginning in the mid-fifteenth century as alleged in one of the early histories of Burma [3]. Yet it was a prize worth fighting for as the appanage of Chittagong was one of the most lucrative fiefdoms that could be granted by an Arakanese king. Despite its importance, Leider notes that the historical sources do not set forth a clear succession of the governors who were privileged to receive this appanage, and a study of the coinage is required if one wishes to identify them and approximate their terms in office [1]. One of the objectives of this article will be to test the effectiveness of the numismatic evidence in this task.

In his historical treatment of the Chittagong region, Suniti Qanungo calls the years between 1538 and 1576 the Afghan period of Bengal's history, during which the Karrani family ruled the sultanate from 1564 to 1576. In contrast, Richard Eaton dates the Afghan period differently, marking its commencement in 1537 and its demise in 1612, when the Mughals suppressed the last of the Afghan resistance in eastern Bengal. Qanungo dates the Mughals' defeat of Daud Karrani and their seizure of Gaur, Bengal's capital, in 1576, while Eaton notes the fall of the Karrani capital in September 1574 and correctly contends it had been moved from Gaur to Tanda prior to the arrival of the conquering Mughals. Notwithstanding these minor differences, this provides us a basic outline of the relevant history of Bengal, but events in Chittagong are much more difficult to establish, as the same period witnessed much fighting over Chittagong between the Sultanate, Tripura and Arakan, exacerbated by the presence of a Portuguese community that was frequently divided into separate factions that pursued their respective interests in a complex political and economic environment. Simply put, the source materials do not allow a clear picture [2, 4, 5]. After the Mughal conquest of Tanda, Arakan was able to exploit the resulting political weaknesses in Bengal to advance northward [6], but when Arakan achieved any actual control over Chittagong is subject to disagreement among the authorities, some of whom concede that firm control of the port most probably did not occur until the late 1580's or 1590 [7]. One way to determine when Arakanese control was obtained, even if only partially, is to examine the dates of a number of Arakanese coins minted in the port and for which royal party, as it is generally believed that during this period Arakan had no mint in Mrauk-U, its capital, and the minting of *Arakanese* coins in Ramu, as distinct from the so-called Chittagonian "trade coinage", had by the 1530's come to an end [8].

ARAKAN'S TERRITORIAL EXPANSION INTO CHITTAGONG

Leider believes Arakanese domination of Chittagong was not achieved until 1589, and notes that no single event or military campaign marks the establishment of its effective political control: "The extension of Arakanese hegemony did not necessarily take place by sheer force as no Arakanese (nor any other) sources report a *single* momentary military conquest of the port-city. Numismatic evidence would suggest that at first local Muslim governors came under Arakanese authority before direct rule was exerted by Arakanese princes." (emphasis in original) [9] (p. 349). He uses the expression "gradual conquest" to describe the take-over of Chittagong and cites 1578 as the earliest time Arakan could have had any control of the city [9]. On the other hand, Michael Mitchiner contends Arakan obtained control of the port as early as 1575, based on the all-Persian coins of Min Palaung dated After Hijra (AH) 983, or Christian Era (CE) 1575 (Mitchiner coin nos. 300-01 [M-300-01]), which should not be confused with his later trilingual coins [8]. In contrast, both Qanungo and Vasant Chowdhury believe Arakan could not

have had any control over Chittagong until 1580. Qanungo argues the necessity of fending off a threat to Arakan by the Burmese and expelling the Tripurese from Chittagong made occupancy earlier than 1580 unlikely, while Chowdhury contends 1580 was the date Arakan expelled a local governor named Jalal Khan to establish its own control [2, 10].

But Leider is not entirely ignoring the 1575 coin of Min Palaung, and interprets its date as the moment an existing Chittagonian governor named Cicala, also called on his all-Persian coin Jalal Khan (M-302-03), submitted to Arakanese rule. The Arakanese chronicles date his submission circa 1575, and from other events it can be dated between 1574 and 1577 [1, 8]. Mitchiner has a different view, saying: “Jalal Khan was appointed when Min Palaung conquered Chittagong (983) [AH 983/CE 1575]” [8] (p.130), but Mitchiner cites no source and Jalal Khan’s coins (M-302-03) are undated. We conclude, therefore, that the characterization of this act as a confirmation in office, not an appointment, receives the most support. Unfortunately, we are left to wonder exactly what sort of possession of Chittagong would compel Jalal Khan to submit to Arakanese rule. But whatever form it took, it was sufficient to obligate or authorize Jalal Khan to issue all Persian coins in the name of Min Palaung, a power that Chittagonian governors possessed during Arakanese control [1]. See Table 1 for a list of the subject kings and governors and their reigns or terms in office.

Table 1. List of Arakanese Kings and Chittagonian Governors

Name of Ruler	Status	Reign or Term in Office	Also Known As	Dates of Coinage	Coin Identifiers
Min Palaung	King of Arakan	1571-1593	Sikandar Shah, Thikauntara Shah	1575, 1584, 1581 or 1590	Mitchiner (M)-300-01; M-307-10
Jalal Khan	Governor of northern Chittagong	1575 (?) -1580	Cicala	Undated	M-302-03
Adam Shah	Governor of southern Chittagong	1575-1586	Adam Humayun	Undated	M-295-99
Wamar	Governor of northern Chittagong	1580-1586	N/A	1580	M-304-06
Min Saw Hla	Governor of Chittagong	1581-1595 or 1581-1597	Minnala	1591	M-311-13; SARC Lots 1277 and 1128
Min Raza Kyi	King of Arakan	1593-1612	Selim Shah	1593, 1601	M-314-17; M-328-31
Islam Shah	Governor of Chittagong	1595-1597 or only 1597	Min Man Kyi, Alamanja, Anoporan	1597	M-318-20; SARC Lot 1130
Halal Shah	Governor of Chittagong	1597-1602 or 1597-1607	Sinabadi, Senapati	1597, 1598	M-321-24; SARC Lots 1131 and 1132
Min Nyo	Governor of Chittagong	1608-1609	Min Nui, Anoporan, Min Man Kyi	N/A	N/A
Cakrawate	Governor of Chittagong	1610-1612	Suleman Shah, Min Man Kyi	1611	SARC Lot 1135
Min Khamaung	King of Arakan	1612-1622	Hussein/Hussain Shah	1612, 1619	M-332-37
Unnamed Royal Uncle	Governor of Chittagong	1612	N/A	N/A	N/A

But Jalal Khan was not the only governor appointed or confirmed in office once some Arakanese hegemony was established. Per Mitchiner, Min Palaung actually appointed (or confirmed) two governors in 1575 to administer the Chittagong region: Jalal Khan in the north of Chittagong and Adam Shah in the south at Ramu and Chakaria, the latter being a district between Ramu and Chittagong [8]. Jalal Khan's coins were similar to the aforementioned trade coinage struck earlier in Chittagong, as were coins dated 1580 struck by his successor, Wamar, appointed in 1580 (M-304-05) [8]. Mitchiner believes Adam Shah is identical to Adam Humayun, who struck undated coins in the south at Ramu (M-295-99) [8]. It is interesting to note that all the coins of Jalal Khan and Adam Shah are undated, and the conclusion that their terms in office began in 1575 finds numismatic support only from the coins of their Arakanese master, Min Palaung, who accepted their submission.

Yet Min Palaung was apparently not done with the nomination of governors for the Chittagong region, for in 1581, after appointing several royal family members with unsatisfactory results, he appointed his middle son Min Saw Hla, also known as Minnala, as governor with the title *anauk hpuran* or "king of the west," supported by a large army of men, cavalry and elephants [1, 7, 9]. Leider alleges the title *anauk hpuran* expressed an Arakanese expansionist tendency that went well beyond Chittagong, since from Arakan's geographic perspective Chittagong was to the north, but greater Bengal, to the west of Chittagong, represented additional lands to which Arakan claimed an historic right [6]. We can only speculate on the administrative reasons for Min Palaung's appointment of his son, when from numismatic evidence there were already two governors, Wamar in the north and Adam Shah in the south. Nor do we know the political relationships between the three, but since Min Saw Hla was the son of the king, it is reasonable to assume he was senior to the other two. But that problem disappears if we accept Mitchiner's assertion that Min Saw Hla was appointed only later in 1586, an assertion supported by Goron and Goenka, but one we will reject for reasons to be examined below [8, 11].

This appears to be the first appointment of a king's son to this prestigious post, and an examination of his coinage starts us on a voyage into the at times confusing world of the coins of Arakan's royal sons. It is reported in Chowdhury as coin no. 2 and features the *kalima* in Persian and the following Bengali inscription: *Sri Sri Anaka pha ra*. The Arakanese inscription is *Min tara kyi tha daw anauk hpuran shin 953*, which he translates as "Son of the Great King of the Law, Lord of the West, Burmese Era (BE) 953," or CE 1591 [10]. However, Mitchiner provides a slightly different transliteration of both the Bengali and the Arakanese: Bengali, *Sri Sri Min Thauh'ra*; Arakanese, *Min taya gyi tha daw anauk bawa shin 953*, which is translated as "Great Prince of Righteousness, Royal Son, Western Lord of Life 953", a translation he attributes to Michael Robinson and N. G. Rhodes, while acknowledging that Chowdhury proposes a slightly different one (M-311-13) [8]. A careful examination of photos of all four coins indicates that Chowdhury's translation is preferred, as all four clearly feature *anauk hpuran* or *anauk hpuran shin*, or "Lord/King of the West." So where did Robinson-Rhodes get "Western Lord of Life"? Mitchiner appears to think this is only a matter of wording, but the sale of two coins attributed to Min Saw Hla in Stephen Album Rare Coin (SARC) auctions (Auction 10, April 2011, Lot 1277 and Auction 11, September 2011, Lot 1128 found at <http://db.stevealbum.com/php/auctions.php?site=0&lang=1&cust=0>) resolves this matter nicely. Both clearly feature the following Arakanese inscription: *anauk bawa shin*, "lord of the Western lives or existences," while both M-311-13 and Chowdhury coin no. 2 feature *anauk hpuran* or *anauk hpuran shin*. See Figures 2 and 3 for photos of Lot 1128 and Figures 4 and 5

for the Arakanese inscription on the Mitchiner and SARC coins. This means that Robinson-Rhodes' translation ("Western Lord of Life") represents a correct translation of a coin or coins similar to Lots 1277 and 1128, which Mitchiner assumed were the same as M-311-13. How this mix-up occurred we cannot say, but it evidently took place. In fairness to Robinson-Rhodes, therefore, we now know their translation pertains to another coin or coins they must have examined, which as a result of SARC's Auctions 10 and 11 have now been identified.



Figure 2. Obverse of Lot 1128, SARC Auction 11

Figure 3. Reverse of Lot 1128

(All photos in this article courtesy of SARC)

Min Saw Hla, Mitchiner 311-13	Min Saw Hla, SARC Lots 1277 and 1128
မင် တရား	မင် တရား
ကြိ သာ	ကြိ သာ
တော အနောက်	တော အနောက်
ဖုရည် or ဖုရန် *	ဘဝ ရှင်
ဇွဲ	ဇွဲ (or ခ)
Tha daw: သာ တော	Tha daw: သာ တော
Modern Burmese သား တော်	Modern Burmese သား တော်
* Note: hpuran seen with two spellings.	

Figure 4. Arakanese Inscription on Mitchiner Coins 311-13

Figure 5. Arakanese Inscription on SARC Coins 1277 and 1128

Of further interest is that both Chowdhury and Robinson-Rhodes translate *tha daw* as "royal son", despite the fact that the tones represented in the Arakanese inscription are opposite those of modern Arakanese and Burmese [12, 13]. The coin's inscription has *tha* as level tone and *daw* as falling tone, while in modern Arakanese and Burmese the opposite is true. In some

transcription systems, the difference would be represented as follows: Arakanese on coin, *tha daw*; modern Arakanese/Burmese *tha: daw*. Curious as it may be, this apparently older spelling will work as a “genetic marker” to confirm the identities and familial relationships of various governors appointed during the study period.

But we must ask why, if Min Saw Hla was appointed in 1581 (or 1586 if we believe Mitchiner and Goron-Goenka), is his coinage dated 1591, a full ten years after his appointment when most Arakanese coins are dated the year of accession? The answer to this question is found in the events following his appointment, where we again discover conflicting accounts and dating in the sources. Nevertheless, a certain consensus can be distilled that demonstrates that Arakan's control of Chittagong was still tenuous for a number of years.

Qanungo believes the Arakanese expelled the Tripurese from Chittagong circa 1582, yet continued to fight off the Tripurese as late as 1586, when the British traveler Ralph Fitch visited Chittagong and observed additional conflict [2]. However, Leider argues persuasively that Qanungo has confused Fitch's trip to Chittagong, which actually took place in 1583, with a later trip to lower Burma in 1586 [1]. Either way, Arakan's occupation of the town as late as 1583 continued to be tenuous as the fighting in 1583 would not end the hostilities between the two kingdoms. Several years later Tripura allowed the Arakanese governor of Ramu and Chakaria Adam Shah, who in some way betrayed the Arakanese, to seek exile in Tripura. What followed was a violent two-year struggle that began in 1586, when a coalition consisting of the Tripurese, the “twelve Bangalas,” a reference to Afghan and Hindu lords of Bengal who still exercised some independence from the Mughal Empire, and Portuguese fighters who wished to reassert their presence in Chittagong, tried to seize Chittagong from the Arakanese. This combined force chased the Arakanese garrison out of Chittagong and proceeded south to subdue the “six kingdoms” of southern Chittagong, including Ramu. It then pivoted back north to take Dianga, the Portuguese settlement southwest of Chittagong, but before it could an Arakanese force appeared suddenly and was able to turn the allegiance of the Portuguese against Tripura, after which this combined force routed the Tripurese. The latter retreated across the Karnaphuli River and then abandoned Chittagong altogether, but in northern Chittagong district they rallied and counter-attacked the Arakanese force, inflicted approximately 1,000 deaths and captured one of its forts. Subsequent negotiations between the two kingdoms resulted in a cease fire until the following year, and both sides retreated to more secure locations. But Min Palaung did not honor the agreement and personally took command of Arakanese forces in southern Chittagong. The Tripura king, learning of this betrayal, marched on Chittagong and managed to occupy territory outside the Arakanese fort. Various tricks to entice the Arakanese to come out and fight on open ground were tried and failed. Thereupon, the Tripurese repeatedly assaulted the fort, but the Arakanese, well equipped with a considerable number of firearms and artillery, held off the attacks, and when two Tripurese princes were either injured or killed the Tripurese fell back in retreat. Min Palaung then demanded Amaramanikya, the king of Tripura, to turn over the rebellious governor Adam Shah, who appeared to be the cause of much of the animosity. But Amaramanikya refused and had Adam Shah hidden away. The Tripura king then unwisely continued the struggle against Arakan and as a result lost his kingdom to an Arakanese army that sacked his capital in March and April 1588. This was the last major conflict between the two kingdoms and Tripura never again seriously threatened Chittagong [2].

According to Mitchiner, Min Palaung responded to the recent defections of the Chittagonian governors by no longer appointing a separate governor for the Ramu area. The other governor Wamar, who had replaced Jalal Khan, was removed from office and replaced with Min Palaung's second son Min Saw Hla in 1586. From this point onwards, Arakanese kings made it a habit to appoint only family members as governors, a conclusion with which Leider agrees [6]. Mitchiner describes these policy changes as "the reorganization of 1586," which sounds more like the consequences a modern-day corporate merger and not a major military campaign that raged up and down the Chittagongian region until April 1588 [8]. Moreover, Mitchiner's timeline has a number of problems. It conflicts with Leider's contention, based on the Arakanese chronicles, that Min Saw Hla was appointed in 1581, and dates the so-called reorganization to 1586, when Arakan was struggling to control the town or had even lost it, instead of 1588 when Arakan had restored control. For these reasons, Leider's dating of the appointment of Min Saw Hla to 1581 seems more credible.

Even more fighting over Chittagong, however, was to take place in 1589 before truly firm Arakanese control was realized. The best evidence of this is the diary of an Austrian traveler named Georg Christoph Fernberger, who visited Chittagong in October 1589 and upon the day of his arrival witnessed a major battle between an unnamed port governor and Nandia Sundar, the name Fernberger gives to Min Saw Hla, the governor of the broader region. The port governor had seized the fort and was defending it with 800 guns, 5,000 men and fifty elephants. Against him was arrayed an Arakanese force that consisted of 40,000 men, 10,000 of which had guns, 370 war elephants, and 4,000 cannons of various sizes. The town's governor had initially received the support of the local Portuguese, but upon the arrival of the main Arakanese force led by Min Saw Hla, transported in 4,000 boats, the Portuguese were offered an attractive package that included a nearby island and considerable war material. The port governor's counter-offer to the Portuguese was rejected, and within days he surrendered to the Arakanese who magnanimously allowed him to live and maintain control of the port. Local observers considered it a wise decision, as the port governor now knew he could not trust the Portuguese and his life depended on pleasing the Arakanese. Fernberger's account is quite detailed and clearly indicates that Arakanese control of Chittagong was still challenged as late as 1589. Stephan Van Galen believes this struggle was the final battle in the contest for Chittagong in the late sixteenth century, and Fernberger's account provides valuable data that corrects other accounts that describe a similar clash occurring in either 1588 or 1590 [2, 6, 7, 14].

It is for these reasons that Min Saw Hla's coinage is dated 1591, ten years after his appointment when his control over Chittagong could no longer be challenged. But his coinage comes at the end of a lengthy period of struggle for Chittagong during which Arakanese jurisdiction was nonetheless sufficient to issue several coins in the name of King Min Palaung. In the coming section, what will challenge our understanding will not be the extent of Arakan's political or administrative control of Chittagong, but rather the identities of its governors and the length of their terms in office.

ARAKAN'S GOVERNORS OF CHITTAGONG, 1590 TO 1612

In 1593 Min Palaung died and Min Raza Kyi, the crown prince also known by an Islamic name Selim Shah (r. 1593-1612), became the king of Arakan [1]. In Mitchiner, we find four trilingual coins of Min Raza Kyi/Selim Shah all minted in Chittagong and dated 1593, his accession date, with the following inscriptions: Arakanese, *Naradipati Sawleim Shah 955*; Bengali, *Sri Sri Chalim*

(or Chalam) Shah; and Persian, *l-malik l-'adil Salim Shah Sultan*, or *Sa(hib) Al-ra(hman) Salim Shah Sultan*, or just *Sultan Salim Shah*. Again, he provides a translation of the Arakanese by Robinson-Rhodes, "Ruler of Men, Selim Shah, Year 955" indicating that Naradipati is not a proper name, but a title (M-314-17) [8]. In analyzing these coins, Mitchiner says this about one specimen, M-317: "The Bengali resembles that on a coin attributed by Chowdhury (no. 7) to a governor who took the Persian name Suleman Shah (BE 973) [CE 1611], but Persian and Arakanese legends are different. The present coin could be a governor's issue, or the legends could be corrupted from those of Selim Shah." [8] (p. 133) We get the impression that he questions whether M-317 is even a coin of Min Raza Kyi, suspecting instead that it might be a poorly made governor's coin, and as for Chowdhury's coin no. 7, a supposed coin of a governor named Suleman Shah, we find no further mention of it or Suleman Shah in Mitchiner. Unfortunately, the photos of Chowdhury's coin no. 7 are so poor it defies reading [10], and we are left with unanswered questions. The sale of a coin in SARC Auction 11 in September 2011, which we will address below, will resolve this matter.

We must assume that Min Saw Hla, the younger brother of the new king, still held his post as governor upon the accession of his brother in 1593, for no additional governor coins are issued until 1597, when we encounter the coins of a new governor named Islam Shah. However, it is possible Min Saw Hla could have been removed by his older brother as early as 1595, since at that time various hill tribes threatened Chittagong and Min Saw Hla appeared unable to deal with them [1]. Mitchiner presents three specimens of Islam Shah's coins (M-318-20), all dated BE 959, CE 1597, and alleges he was also known as Min Man Gyi and initially governed for two years from 1595 to 1597, replacing Min Saw Hla. But he provides no evidence or reasoning to support the belief he took office two years prior to the dating of his coins: "The present governor of Chittagong, who took the name Islam Shah, replaced Min Sawhla in 1595 (957) and was himself replaced by Halal Shah in 1597 (959). Islam Shah, son of Selim Shah (coin legend) was probably Min Man Gyi (Alamanja), second son of Min Razagyi (Selim Shah). He was born in 1579 and was, at a later time, recorded as being appointed Governor of Chittagong in 1602 (he subsequently revolted and was defeated by his elder brother, Min Khamaung). He may earlier have been granted the governorship of Chittagong during 1595-97." [8] (p. 134).

It appears Mitchiner is not sure of his own narrative, as the last sentence questions what he just set forth. The Arakanese inscription of these coins is as follows: 959 *khu Naradibbati tha daw anauk bawa shin*, which Robinson-Rhodes translates as "Year 959, Ruler of Men, Royal Son, Western Lord of Life." This translation is correct, but we should point out that Mitchiner's transliteration misrepresents the last Arakanese word *shin* as *shah*. The *shin* is quite clear in M-318 and in SARC Auction 11, Lot 1130; see Figures 6 and 8 below. But of greater importance is the spelling of *tha daw*, "royal son", on these coins, which duplicates, as best as we can tell, that of the coins of governor Min Saw Hla, with *tha* in level tone and *daw* in falling tone, the opposite of modern Burmese and Arakanese.



Figure 6. Obverse of Lot 1130, SARC Auction 11

Figure 7. Reverse of Lot 1130

Islam Shah/Min Man Gyi, Mitchiner-318 & Lot
1130, SARC Auction 11

ဇ္ဈိဇ္ဈိ

နရမိ ပျတိ

သာ တော

အနောက်

ဘဝ သျှင်

Tha daw: သာ တော

Modern Burmese သား တော်

Figure 8. Arakanese Inscription of M-318 and Lot 1130

The Persian inscription, per Mitchiner, is the *kalima*, while the Bengali is *Sri Sri Ichalam Saha*, although Mitchiner notes Robinson-Rhodes has it as *Hachana Saha* [8].

It should be stressed that this coin features no Arakanese name for Islam Shah, as Naradipati is a title, not a proper name, so we are not sure where Mitchiner obtained the Arakanese name of Min Man Kyi. He cites San Tha Aung's *Arakanese Coins* as a reference [8], which mentions him as a governor of Chittagong and brother of Min Khamaung, the crown prince under Min Raza Kyi. According to San Tha Aung, Min Man Kyi revolted at an unspecified time against their father Min Raza Kyi, during which his children were spirited away by the Portuguese [15]. Goron-Goenka refer to him as Islam Shah, also known as Anoporan, a Portuguese corruption of *anauk hpuran* that was applied to several governors, while Chowdhury calls him only Islam Shah [10, 11]. Leider attributes the origin of the name Min Man Kyi to a British colonial official and popular historian named Maurice Collis, who in one of his early twentieth century articles substituted Min Man Kyi for Min Nui, also known as Min Nyo, a son of Min Raza Kyi whom

Chowdhury believed replaced governor Sinabadi in 1608 (a governor we will discuss below) [10]. Per Leider, the Arakanese chronicles record that Min Nui/Min Nyo revolted against Min Raza Kyi circa 1609-10 and had to flee to Sandwip Island, near Chittagong. Leider contends the name Min Man Kyi has no evidentiary foundation and notes that Chowdhury does not use it because there was no coinage attributable to him. Choosing to rely upon the chronicles and not Collis, whom he has criticized elsewhere for popular and uncritical histories [16], Leider uses only Min Nui to describe the governor who replaced Sinabadi in 1608 and subsequently revolted [1]. San Tha Aung does cite Collis as a source [15], but these explanations fail to address Mitchiner's equation of Islam Shah with Min Man Kyi during an earlier term in office, starting in either 1595 or 1597. In fact, of all the sources, Mitchiner is the only one to associate Min Man Kyi with Islam Shah. In his scheme, therefore, Min Man Kyi/Min Nui/Min Nyo's term in the early seventeenth century was his second appointment, the dating of which we will examine below [8]. Refer to Table 1.

Further complicating matters, Chowdhury alleges Islam Shah did not hold the office for very long, because the following year another governor's coin dated BE 960/CE 1598 was issued, which Chowdhury does not describe or list but tentatively attributes to the aforementioned Min Nyo, who governed only briefly after having a disagreement with his father. Unfortunately for Chowdhury's contention, we have a coin dated 1597, discussed below, belonging to governor Halal Shah who replaced Islam Shah in 1597, which would mean Min Nyo's term in 1598 would have interrupted Halal Shah's term. Chowdhury says the following about Min Nyo: "But this new governor [Islam Shah, coin no. 4] did not rule for long. The very next year, a coin with the date 960 B.E. was issued by another governor which indicated a very brief rule by the 'son of Naradhipati'- Islam Shah. It is rather difficult to pinpoint who this prince was because of the conflicting reports in different historical accounts. However, it is stated that during the early reign of Naradhipati [Min Raza Kyi], the governor who was his son Meng [Min] Nyo, was expelled after a brief reign due to his disagreements with the king, and I attribute this coin to him." [10] (p. 149-50). Chowdhury's source for this is a compilation of the Arakanese chronicles by Candamala Lankara known as the *Rakhine Razawinthit Kyan*, or *New History of Arakan*, published as two volumes in Mandalay in 1931-32 and frequently cited in Leider [1]. Since Chowdhury has no picture or description of this coin and no specimens have appeared over the years in either Mitchiner [8] or the SARC Auctions, we must dismiss this brief term of Min Nyo in 1598, although we will encounter him again.

The coins of Halal Shah, which Mitchiner believes was the governor of Chittagong from 1597-99, following directly the term of Islam Shah/Min Man Gyi (1595-97), provide a partial confirmation of the meaning and spelling of *tha daw*. Mitchiner lists seven specimens of his coins (M-321-27), and two sales in SARC Auction 11, Lots 1131 and 1132 (see Figures 9 and 10) provide us with electronic copies of M-321 (in fact, it is the identical coin) and M-324. Besides identifying another governor and his term, the relevance of these coins is found in the Arakanese inscription where Halal Shah is identified, per the Robinson-Rhodes translation, as *uri daw*, "royal uncle". Although the spelling of *daw* is slightly different in M-321-22 (*daw* with a "d" as opposed to M-323-24's *daw* with a "t", equivalent to the modern spelling in Burmese), in all cases we find *daw* with a falling tone, not the level tone of modern Burmese. This would seemingly confirm the translation of *daw* in the *tha daw*/royal son coins as "royal". See Figure 11. The Persian inscription is *Sultan Halal Shah*, the Bengali is *Sri Sri Hinan Saha*, and the

Arakanese is 959 or 960 *Naradipati Uri daw Maha Thiha Thura*, or “Year 959 or 960 Ruler of Men, Royal Uncle, Great Lion Hero” [8]. Two versions exist, dated CE 1597 and 1598.



Figure 9. Lot 1131 SARC Auction 11

Figure 10. Lot 1132 SARC Auction 11

Halal Shah/Sinabadi, Mitchiner 321/Lot 1131 SARC Auction 11 & Mitchiner 323-24

Mitchiner 321/Lot 1131:

နာရာဇိပျ

တိ ဥရိ ဒေါ မဟာ

သိဟ သုရ

၉၅၉

Mitchiner 323-24: ဥရိ တော

Daw: ဒေါ or တော



Figure 11. Arakanese Inscription of Lot 1131

Figure 12. Persian/Bengali side of Lot 1131

Mitchiner also contends that Halal Shah was the Islamic name for Maha Pyinnya Kyaw, an elderly royal adviser and minister who had served a number of Arakanese kings since the reign of Min Bin (1531-53) and per Leider had been given the appanage of Chittagong in the 1540's when Arakan briefly held the port [1]. Mitchiner: “The elderly Maha Pyinnya Kyaw took part in the Arakanese military expedition to Pegu (1598-99) and died on the journey home. At the time of his death he was holding the office of Governor of Chittagong. The Arakanese inscription (royal uncle and military hero) suggests that Halal Shah was Maha Pyinnya Kyaw. Chowdhury is inclined to dismiss this view.” [8] (p. 134). Qanungo concurs that in the early years of Min Raza Kyi's reign, Maha Pyinnya Kyaw was a governor of Chittagong, who, as mentioned above,

died in 1599 on the return voyage to Arakan after the sacking of Pegu. He was replaced by the king's uncle, Sinabadi, which may be a Portuguese corruption of *Senapati* or *Simhapati* [2]. He adds that during a Portuguese counter-attack against the Arakanese in November 1602, Sinabadi was killed and "was probably succeeded by Anaporan, the younger brother of the Arakanese monarch" [2] (p. 241). Leider, citing a Portuguese source, also reports this death of Sinabadi and agrees Sinabadi is a title, not a name, a corruption of the Pali word *senapati*, meaning head of the army, but believes the identity of this individual is problematic [1]. Goron-Goenka also believe Halal Shah was probably Sinabadi, who died during a fight with the Portuguese in 1602, or "possibly later" [11]. Chowdhury, although agreeing that Halal Shah the royal uncle was most probably Sinabadi, contends he died in 1607, not 1602, while fighting the Portuguese in a later campaign, even though he cites only unspecified "historical accounts" for this [10, 1]. Thus, if Sinabadi was the royal uncle Halal Shah as seen in the above coinage, his term would have begun in 1597 and ended either in 1602 or 1607.

Leider believes the governorship of Chittagong was probably given for a while to Maha Pyinnya Kyaw only during the reign of Min Palaung (1571-93), not Min Raza Kyi, but does not provide a precise dating. For this reason, he questions the assertion of Chowdhury, Mitchiner and Goron-Goenka that Maha Pyinnya Kyaw succeeded Min Saw Hla as governor circa 1597, even if his appointment was only a "stop-gap" measure prior to the attack on Pegu [10, 11]. He further notes that no coinage supports the alleged appointment [1].

Upon assessing this conflicting data and opinions, we conclude that Islam Shah, also called by Mitchiner Min Man Kyi/Alamanja, names disputed by the other authorities, served as governor briefly in 1597, although he could have served since 1595, as alleged by Mitchiner, since 1595 was the year Min Saw Hla might have been removed from office as result of attacks from various hill tribes. If Min Saw Hla was not removed in 1595, he was replaced in 1597 by Islam Shah, who was soon replaced by Halal Shah based on his coinage dated 1597 and 1598. Halal Shah, being unmistakably identified as a royal uncle, was most probably the Sinabadi who was killed in either 1602 or 1607. Putting the greatest weight on Leider, we do not believe Maha Pyinnya Kyaw served as governor of Chittagong in the 1590's, as he was not an uncle to either Min Palaung or Min Raza Kyi, meaning he could not have been Halal Shah as alleged by Mitchiner, and no other coinage supports his governorship during this period. Refer to Table 1.

Following the coins of Halal Shah, Mitchiner contends there are no further governor coins until 1629, when an anonymous coin only in the name of *Sittakaun Min*, or "King of Chittagong", is reported (M-343) [8]. This conclusion has not survived the test of time, for in SARC's Auction 11 of September 2011, Lot 1135, a coin of Suleman Shah dated BE 973, CE 1611, sold for an impressive US \$1,888 and provides us with electronic photos of Chowdhury's coin no. 7 that Mitchiner briefly mentions, but dismisses, as it is not listed elsewhere in his study [8]. Chowdhury's coin no. 7 is listed in Goron-Goenka, who attribute it to a "royal middle brother" of Min Raza Kyi named Cakrawate, but note that Chowdhury's photos of coin no. 7 are so poor they could not be reproduced in their treatment [11]. As there is only one governor's coin between 1598 and 1629, we must turn to the historical sources to develop a picture of the succession of governors in Chittagong between the death of Halal Shah/Sinabadi and the last royal son.

Similar to what we have already seen, there is little in the way of consensus about the identity of the next governor of Chittagong. Mitchiner believes that Islam Shah/Min Man Kyi, a son of Min Raza Kyi, was appointed again for a term from 1602 to 1607. He then revolted against his father and older brother, the crown prince, and fled to the Portuguese-controlled Sandwip Island. As support he cites San Tha Aung's *Arakanese Coins* [8, 15]. This scenario, however, assumes the Portuguese had control of Sandwip in 1607, which our sources agree did not occur until 1609, when a band of Portuguese fighters led by their grandee Sebastian Tibao ousted Fateh Khan, the Bengal lord of the island who was a vassal of Arakan [2, 7, 14]. This scenario is partially echoed in Goron-Goenka, who contend an Anoporan, a son of Min Raza Kyi who may be the same as Mitchiner's Islam Shah/Min Man Kyi, became governor in 1602 after the death of Halal Shah/Sinabadi, but unlike Mitchiner they believe he governed until 1609, or as late as 1611, when he was replaced by another royal son, Cakrawate [11]. Chowdhury, in contrast, asserts Anoporan was a *brother* of Min Raza Kyi and replaced Sinabadi circa 1608, after the latter's death in 1607, and then entered into a plot with the Portuguese to revolt against the king. This revolt was suppressed by Min Khamaung, which in Chowdhury's scheme of things would have been Anoporan's nephew. Consequently, Anoporan fled to Portuguese-controlled Sandwip Island where he died [10]. Qanungo also believes Anoporan was a brother, not a son, of Min Raza Kyi [2]. As we say, there is little consensus among the authorities.

Leider, on his part, appears to accept Chowdhury's narration that Anoporan became governor circa 1608 after the death of Sinabadi the year before [1]. Citing the chronicles, Leider contends Anoporan, whose Arakanese name was Min Nui, also known as Min Nyo (which we will use hereinafter), entered into a plot with an unnamed Indian or Bengali lord and the Portuguese to seize the throne from his father and his older brother, the crown prince Min Khamaung. A less likely explanation for the disaffection of Min Nyo is the allegation that either Min Khamaung or Min Raza Kyi demanded he surrender a Sri Lankan elephant of great value, a story found in Portuguese sources that Leider terms "curious" [1, 14]. Regardless, when Min Raza Kyi learned of the plot, he sent Min Khamaung to Chittagong to put down Min Nyo's revolt. Portuguese sources of the time indicate that Felipe de Brito, another Portuguese grandee who had established a small kingdom at Syriam in lower Burma, promised Min Nyo considerable military assistance to take the throne, but whether de Brito intervened is not known and ultimately Min Nyo lost to Min Khamaung in a naval battle and had to flee to Sandwip Island, which was then under the control of the other Portuguese grandee Sebastian Tibao. Shortly thereafter, Min Nyo dies on Sandwip, with Tibao being implicated in his death by Portuguese sources. This would date the death of Min Nyo circa 1609-1610. To cement their alliance, Tibao married Min Nyo's daughter, but Min Nyo's widow refused to marry Tibao's brother because it would mean converting to Christianity, and in 1612 she returned to Chittagong to marry a royal uncle who was at that time the governor of Chittagong. This governor, apparently unnamed in the chronicles, died shortly thereafter of natural causes. Min Raza Kyi also appointed another son, Cakrawate, a younger half-brother of Min Khamaung, as governor in 1610 after the flight and death of Min Nyo [1, 2]. Van Galen largely supports this narrative, but does not mention the unnamed royal uncle who became governor in this time period [7]. We believe the above account has the greatest support, but some of its dating does not entirely reconcile, as Cakrawate's coin dated 1611 confirms his appointment in 1610, after the death of Min Nyo, but apparently conflicts with the term of the unnamed royal uncle in 1612. How could the uncle become governor when Cakrawate already held the post? We believe we can ultimately resolve this matter, but first let us look at Cakrawate's coin.

SARC's Lot 1135 of Auction 11 is in above average condition and upon comparing it to the poor photographs of coin no. 7 in Chowdhury, we have concluded they are not the same coin, meaning there are at least two specimens in existence. SARC translates the governor's name as Suleman Shah in Arakanese and Cheleman Saha in Bengali—the Persian inscription is the *kalima* and does not feature a name. Their cataloguer alleges his term in office spanned from 1611 to 1614, partially supported by the date of the coin, BE 973, CE 1611, a term he most probably got from Goron-Goenka [11]. Chowdhury alleges Min Khamaung removed him from office in 1612 when he became king [10]. The Arakanese inscription is: 973 *hku hsin pyu thakin thadaw Thulei Man Shah*, translated as “Year 973, Lord of the White Elephant, Royal Son, Suleman Shah.” The “th” of Thulei is pronounced in Burmese as in “thistle”, but in Arakanese is pronounced with an “s”, thus Suleman.



Figure 13. Arakanese Side of Lot 1131

Figure 14. Persian/Bengali side of Lot 1135

In this coin we encounter a new and completely different spelling of *tha daw* or royal son, which at first raised doubts as to whether it is even the same word. Here it is spelled *thadaw* as one word—there is no “a” following the initial “th”, producing a short syllable with a “weakened” pronunciation [17] between the initial “th” and the final “taw”, which, as in the other coins, is spelled with the falling tone (see Figures 13 and 15). We have considered whether this one-word spelling could be the Arakanese version of the Burmese word *thado* or “title of high honor” as defined in the Myanmar Language Commission dictionary [13] (see Figure 13), which would fit in the coin’s context (“His Excellency Suleman Shah”). To resolve this matter, we consulted Jacques Leider and in an email dated May 28, 2022, he advised that this one-word form is just another spelling of *tha daw*, royal son, and that the elimination of the tone mark designating a falling tone, which we see in *tha*, is frequently found in Arakanese manuscripts. Considering his advice and the date of the coin, we conclude that Suleman Shah was no doubt the Islamic name for Cakrawate, another royal son, appointed as governor circa 1610.

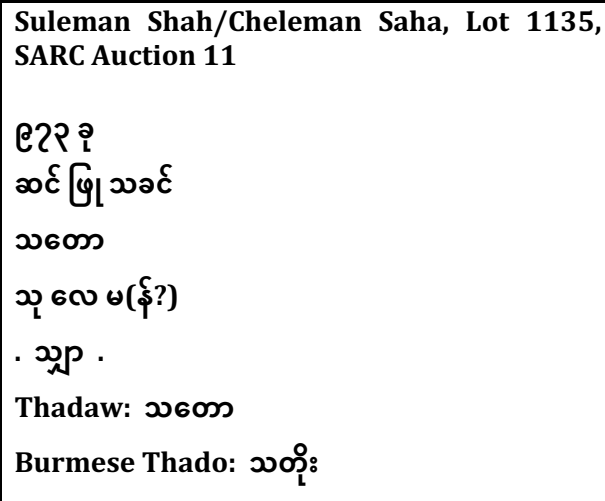


Figure 15. Arakanese Inscription of Lot 1135

In 1612, Min Raza Kyi died and the crown prince, Min Khamaung, became king (r. 1612-22). He was immediately faced with a crisis in Chittagong as his younger brother Cakrawate, like Min Nyo before him, appeared to have entered into a pact with local Portuguese to defy the king. It was well known that bad blood existed between the two from the days their father was still alive. In fact, Portuguese reports allege Min Raza Kyi gave Cakrawate the appanage of Chittagong to get him out of the palace in Mrauk-U because of friction between the two. To protect himself from his older brother and the king, Cakrawate began to strengthen Chittagong's defenses and cemented an alliance with some 400 Portuguese fighters who resided in the Chittagong area. Adding fuel to the fire was his close ties to the Portuguese, to which Min Khamaung still bore great resentment resulting from his imprisonment by Felipe de Brito years before. One of Min Khamaung's first acts as king, therefore, was to launch an attack against Cakrawate by besieging the town and its fort. Despite the severity of this move, Leider informs us the Arakanese chronicles make no mention of it, and our knowledge of the affair comes entirely from Portuguese sources. In spite of alleged close ties between Tibao and Cakrawate, Tibao did not take sides and sent support to neither combatant, meaning Cakrawate was largely reliant on the support of the Chittagonian Portuguese. When Min Khamaung petitioned Tibao to back his cause, Tibao responded that his authority covered only the Portuguese of Sandwip Island and the rest were free to commit themselves as they saw fit. After four months of siege, Min Khamaung prevailed over his brother, and just prior to the king's arrival in Chittagong Augustin friars secretly whisked away Cakrawate's two children, both baptised, to Hughli in western Bengal [1, 2]. The story of the children matches San Tha Aung's account regarding the struggle between Min Khamaung and Min Man Kyi, thus implying Min Man Kyi was another name for Cakrawate as well as Islam Shah. Refer to Table 1.

Charney seems to confirm this equation of Cakrawate with Min Man Kyi, but in a slightly different version, by reporting that the crowning of Min Khamaung as king in 1612 came only after the death of the rebellious Min Man Kyi/Cakrawate during the siege [14]. In either account, however, Cakrawate dies in 1612, meaning he could not have served as governor until 1614, as alleged by Goron-Goenka and the SARC cataloger. Once this dating is established, the apparent conflict with the term of the unnamed royal uncle, who had married Min Nyo's widow in 1612 and then died shortly thereafter of natural causes, can be resolved. He was appointed

by either Min Raza Kyi or Min Khamaung after the death of Cakrawate, eliminating the apparent overlapping of terms.

Leider ends his discussion of the violent revolt of 1612 by noting, “Ce fut la fin de l’institution des ‘rois de l’ouest’.” [1] (p. 213). This also marks the end of any coinage of royal sons, indicating perhaps a certain connection between the two. Charney contends that in the wake of the back to back revolts of royal sons Min Nyo and Cakrawate, Min Khamaung reformed the governance of Chittagong by appointing a “viceroy” to replace the traditional governor, but fails, in our opinion, to make clear the precise difference between the two except to say the viceroy would be under the direct control of the Arakanese king while the governors enjoyed considerable autonomy [14]. Since the governors’ autonomy was characterized in part by the authority to mint coins in their names, this may explain the lack of coinage after 1611, although the grandiose title “King of Chittagong” on the next coin of 1629 hardly speaks of lesser powers.

CONCLUSION

This article summarizes the at times confusing and conflicting data of the appointments and terms of Arakan's Chittagonian governors from 1575 to 1612, with an emphasis on the coinage of the royal sons. Upon testing Leider's suggestion that a study of the coins of this period provides the necessary data to approximate these appointments, we have discovered that after the coinage of Min Saw Hla, Islam Shah and Halal Shah of the 1590's, there is a dearth of coinage in the early decades of the seventeenth century. In fact, only one coin, that of Cakrawate dated 1611, comes before the coinage of the unnamed King of Chittagong dated 1629, and we did not have a verifiable specimen of Cakrawate's coin until 2011. Thus, the coins provide only occasional sign posts along the way. To fill in the gaps of our knowledge, therefore, we must rely upon historical sources that present conflicting narrations and do not even agree on the names of the governors or their relationships to the respective monarch. The researcher must sort through this data and draw conclusions that receive the most support, as summarized in Table 1, but in doing so should refrain from overreaching and keep in mind the need to advise the reader that certain matters have not been resolved and may never be.

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