

INDIA: INDIAN NATIVE STATESTHE COINAGE OF KISHANGARH.K.W. WIGGINSHistorical Summary

The former princely state of Kishangarh was situated in Rajputana, India and lay to the northeast of Ajmir and between the states of Jaipur and Jodhpur. The capital was the town of Kishangarh and the area of the state was about 874 square miles. The population in 1891 amounted to 125,516, of whom 90% were Hindus, the remainder being Muslims and Jains.

The state was divided into five districts: Arain, Bandar Sindri, Kishangarh, Rupnagar and Sarwar and contained about 221 towns and villages.

The chiefs belonged to the Rathor clan of Rajputs and were descended from Raja Udai Singh of Jodhpur, whose second son Kishan Singh (born 1575 A.D.) was exiled to Ajmir for reasons which are now unknown but which were probably not to his credit. Kishan Singh came under the notice of Akbar, the Mughal emperor (1556-1605 A.D.), who employed him for various unsavoury political activities, which even included the assassination of politically unreliable chiefs in Rajputana. As a reward for these services the emperor granted Kishan Singh the village of Setholao with some adjoining territory. By 1611 he was powerful enough to found the town and fort of Kishangarh, where Kishan Singh styled himself as Raja. The emperor Jahangir (1605-1627 A.D.) bestowed on him the title of Maharajah, doubtless for further services to the court of Delhi. Kishan Singh died in 1615 but his line continued to rule Kishangarh until recent times. The state enjoyed a somewhat precarious semi-independent existence whilst the Mughal Empire crumbled and fell. During the latter half of the 18th century and the early 19th century the Maharajahs of Kishangarh were forced to pay tribute to the Marathas, who had become the masters of the greater part of Rajputana. It was not until 1818, when the Marathas were finally defeated by the British that the state's independence was guaranteed by treaty in which Maharajah Kalyan Singh acknowledged Great Britain as the paramount power.

The Coinage

The coins issued by the state of Kishangarh were limited to four, or possibly five, types. They are described by Webb in "The Currencies of the Hindu States of Rajputana." (Archibald Constable & Co., London, 1893), and catalogued by Valentine in "The Catalogue of the Coins in the Indian Museum, Calcutta. Vol. IV. (Oxford University Press, 1928).

The issue appears to have been confined principally to two denominations, the gold mohur and the silver rupee. No fractions of these coins are known. The copper paisa described here has not been published previously but there is no doubt as to its authenticity.

Gold Coins

The Mohur. According to Webb, the gold mohur of Kishangarh weighed 11 mashas $2\frac{1}{4}$ rattis (approximately 170 grains). He remarks that they were not coined in any great number and are very rarely met with. As Webb does not describe the coin it may be presumed that he had not seen one. Neither does the coin appear in the Indian Museum Catalogue. There is no specimen of a Kishangarh mohur in the British Museum and I have never seen one elsewhere.

It is possible that they were coined with the same dies as the 'Sanah 24' rupee and the 1858 rupee at very infrequent intervals. (Craig 17)

Silver Coins

The 'Sanah 24' Rupee. The first issue of coins for Kishangarh appears to have been made in A.H. 1197 or during the 24th year of the reign of the Mughal emperor Shah Alam II, corresponding to 1783 A.D. The name 'Kishangarh' is quite obvious on the reverse side. The only ornament of note on the obverse side is a small string of triangular shapes between the words "sikka" and "mabarak". On the reverse side above the name of the state is a flower spray or jhar of rather unusual form. The average weight of these rupees is 165 grains and the average diameter 19mm. (See FIG.I) (Craig 10)

The 'Sanah 25' Rupee. The next issue of the rupee bore the regnal year 25 of Shah Alam II and it differs in several respects: no Hegira date is apparent on the obverse and the necklet-like mark is absent. A differently formed Jhar appears on the reverse of these coins, which in other details are identical. The average weight is 165 grains and the diameter 19mm. (See FIG II).

No further issues of rupees were made until an entirely new type appeared in 1858. It is therefore probable that the 'Sanah 24' rupee was struck in its original form when needed from 1783 until 1858. The piece with this regnal year seems to predominate and is more commonly found than the 'Sanah 25' rupee. It was, it would appear, more acceptable for some reason than the latter coin, for the figures 24 were perpetuated in the 1858 rupee for no valid reason and even on some private issues that are thought to have been struck some 60 years later. It is probable that no further strikings were made of the 'Sanah 25' rupee, after the initial issue.

The Chandori Rupee. Webb states, presumably with some authority, that the second issue of the Mewar Chandori rupee was struck in Kishangarh as a mark of respect of Chand Kunwar Bai, sister to Bhim Singh, the Maharajah of Mewar in the early part of the 19th century. Why the Maharajah of Kishangarh should hold this lady in such esteem is not stated but the first issue of Chandori rupees were struck by Bhim Singh on the advice of Chand Kunwar Bai and were principally used for charitable purposes. The copies struck in Kishangarh are of the same type as the Mewar Chandoris, but the die cutting is inferior work and the silver is very base. The average weight of these coins is 166 grains and the diameter 19mm. (See FIG III).

The 1858 Rupee. To conform with the directions of the Government, in 1858 the majority of the native states made a drastic change in their coinage by dropping the name and titles of the Mughal emperors and issuing coins in the name of Queen Victoria. The Kishangarh rupee that appeared in 1858 is described in the Indian Museum Catalogue and by Webb, although the latter illustrates it among the coins of Jaipur and does not appear to recognise it as a Kishangarh coin. Both works give an incorrect reading for the obverse and reverse legends. The Kishangarh mint closed about 1900 although the precise date is not known and the 1858 rupee was issued spasmodically between 1858 and 1900. According to the Imperial Gazetteer of 1907 the rupee was still current at the beginning of the 20th century, when it equalled 13 British annas. They were known locally as "Chaubisana" (of the 24th year), the fixed regnal year having been carried on since the time of Shah Alam II. The average weight of these rupees is 166.3 grains and the diameter 20mm. (See FIG. IV) (Craig 35).

The Double Rupee. This large piece which has the same obverse and reverse legends as the 1858 rupee was obviously struck as a nazr or presentation piece. Very few specimens probably exist. The coin in the British Museum weighs 346 grains and gives the full die, whereas on the ordinary rupees much of the legend falls off the coin. The Persian script on the coin is rather debased and some of the words are displaced. The reason for striking these large coins is not on record but it is thought that the mint produced such pieces occasionally for presentation to the State Darbar. (See FIG VI).

Copper Coins

The 'Sanah 25' Paisa. Webb makes no mention of a copper coinage for Kishangarh and indeed the information that he provides for the gold and silver is rather sparse. There is no information as to what copper coins were current in Kishangarh but use must have been made of copper of some description, probably that of some neighbouring state. It is therefore quite probable that copper was struck by the Kishangarh authorities and as is the case with a number of other states, the copper coinage has never been recognised and attributed or is of some rarity. The hitherto unpublished paisa described here is of the same pattern as the 'Sanah 25' rupee, although certainly not from the same dies. The weight of 55 grains is unusually light for a copper coin of the period but would seem to indicate that it could not be intended to pass for a rupee is silvered over. (See FIG V).

Bibliography

"The Currencies of the Hindu States of Rajputana". Capt. W.W.Webb. Archibald Constable and Co., London, 1893.

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I am indebted to our member, Mr. C.K. Panish, U.S.A., for the reading of the double rupee illustrated as Fig. VI. The illustrations portray a typical specimen of the coin and are actual size.

FIG. I



شاه عالم ۱۱۹۷
بادشاه غازی
سکه مبارک

Shah Alam 1197
Badshah Ghazi
Sikka mabarak

Auspicious coin of the
Victorious Emperor
Shah Alam 1197



میمنت مانوس
کسنگره جلوس
ضرب سنه ۲۴

Maimanat manus
Kishangarh jalus
Zarb sanah 24

Struck in year 24
of his fortunate reign
of Kishangarh

FIG. II



As Fig I but year
25 instead of 24 and
1197 omitted.

FIG. III



No inscriptions but symbols
of various sorts on both sides.

FIG. IV



As Fig. VI.

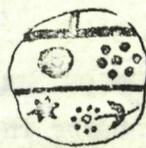
FIG. V



Inscription
probably as
Fig. I.



FIG. VI



دکتوریان
انگلستان ۱۸۵۸
ملکه مظمه
سلطان
سکه مبارک بیام

Victoria
Inglstan 1858
Malikah Muzzamah
Sultanat
Sikka mabarak
bi'ahd

Auspicious coin by
permission of the
Great Queen of the
EmGLISH Empire
Victoria 1858



مهمان مانوس
کسنگره جلوس
ضرب سنه ۲۴
مهمان مانوس
ضرب سنه ۲۴ جلوس

Maharao
Prithvi Singh
Maharajah Ram
Kishangarh Bahadur
Maimanat manus
Zarb sanah 24 jalus Maharao

Struck in the 24th year
of the prosperous
reign of the Kishangarh
Maharajah, Bahadur
Ram Prithvi Singh