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INDIA - THE QUEEN VICTORIA COINAGE OF BHARTPUR

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INTRODUCTION

The former native state of Bhartpur lay in the north-east corner of Rajputana, adjoining the states of Alwar and Jaipur on the west and the territory of the North-west Provinces on the east. Its total area was 1,993 square miles and the population amounted to about half a million. In the days of British rule the state came under the jurisdiction of the Eastern Rajputana States Agency.

The ruler of Bhartpur from 1853 to 1893 was Maharaja Jaswant Singh whose full title was His Highness Maharaja Sri Brajindra Sawai Brijandra Singh Bahadur Jang.

There were two mints in the state. One was at the capital Bhartpur, also known as Braj Indrapur and the other at Dig, also known as Mah Indrapur, a town about 20 miles north of Bhartpur. These mints are said to have been established by Maharaja Siraj Mal in 1763 some years after the state had been founded. Both mints issued coins in the name of the reigning Mughal emperor until 1857. The output must have been fairly substantial as early 19th century specimens are not difficult to come by. The purpose of this paper, however, is to deal in detail with the post 1857 coinage of Bhartpur. The gold mohurs and silver rupees, struck first in 1858, were the only hand minted coins of any Indian State to bear a portrait of Queen Victoria. Although they are well known pieces, they have never been correctly described or properly published.

DESCRIPTION OF THE COINS

The coins which have so far been recorded can be divided into 2 types by the presence or absence of the name Queen Victoria on the obverse.

Type 1 Silver rupee. Weight 170 grains

Obv. Head of Queen Victoria to left.
Inscription (clockwise from 5 o'clock).

جناب ملکہ معظمہ ملکہ
کمرین وکتوریا فرمان راولی
ہند و انگلتر سنہ



Janab Malikah Muazzamah Malikah
Queen Victoria Farman Rawli
Hind wa Inghland Sanah (1858)

N.B. On some specimens Queen
is spelt قوین

Type 1 (Continued)

Rev.



مہارا جہ شر
برج انڈیپور
جنگ جسونت سکھ بہادر مہارو
ضر بہارتپور ۱۹۱۰

Maharaja Sri

Braj Indrapur

Jaswant Singh Jung Bahadur
Maharao

Zarb Bhartpur 1910

Type 1. Var. A Silver rupee. Weight 170 grains

Obv. As Type 1.

Rev.



مہارا جہ شر
انڈیپور
جنگ جسونت سکھ بہادر مہارو
ضر دیگ ۱۹۱۰

Maharaja Sri ?

Mah Indrapur ?

Jaswant Singh Jung Bahadur
Maharao

Zarb Dig 1910

N.B. The reading of the
two top lines is not
certain as insufficient
specimens have been
examined to verify
it.

Type 2. Silver rupee. Weight 172 grains

Obv. Head of Queen Victoria to left.
Inscription (clockwise from 5 o'clock)



ملکہ معظمہ
فرمان روای انگلستان سنہ

Malikah Muazzamah

Farman Rawli Inglstan
sanah (date).

Rev.



سکہ کار
زولہ قترارنگ پور
برج انڈیپور
ضر

Sirkar Sikka

Zawallah Qatadar Angrezi

Zarb Braj Indrapur

(date).

NOTES

Type 1 is known only for rupees. It was illustrated and described by Webb (I), although his reading of the legends was inaccurate. Valentine (II) also illustrates and describes this type and gives what are probably the correct legends. Craig (III), illustrates the same coin as Valentine, as does the Krause/Mishler (IV) catalogue. In the latter the dates given are confused with those found on Type 2.

Type 1 was struck initially in some quantity in 1858 and is the type most commonly found. It was probably produced for a year or two with the same date. No fractions of this rupee are known, although they are listed in the Krause/Mishler catalogue. This confusion has arisen from the existence of some copies of the Bhartpur rupee, together with fractions, which are mentioned later.

Pieces in copper and identical to the Type 1 rupees were first published by Valentine and later listed in Craig and Krause/Mishler, as a paisa and half paisa. These are more probably trial strikings or test pieces for a rupee and a half as no copper coinage of this type was ever produced.

It will be noted that coins of the Bhartpur mint have the marks of a star and a dagger to the left of the Samvat date.

The obverse of Variety A is the same as Type 1 but the reverse legend contains a different mint name. These rupees were produced at the mint at Dig (or Deeg) and specimens have been seen with the dates 1858 and Samvat 1910. It is possible that the mint at Dig ceased striking silver coin shortly after 1858 and coins from this mint are uncommon. The marks on the reverse are a star and a vertical stroke between two dots.

An inexplicable feature of these two varieties of rupee is the Samvat date of 1910 which is equivalent to 1853 A.D. whereas the date appearing on the obverse is 1858 which is the same as 1915 Samvat. The Samvat year 1910 happens to be the year that Jaswant Singh succeeded to the gaddi, but this event seems to be irrelevant. The incompatible Samvat and Christian dates may be the result of a die-cutter's error. The correct Samvat year (1915) written in Persian is ۱۹۱۵. This may have been read by the die-cutter as 1910 in English figures. Accordingly he engraved this in Persian numerals thus perpetuating an error which was never corrected.

Coins of Type 2 exist as gold mohurs and silver rupees; no fractional pieces have come to light. Both obverse and reverse legends differ from those on the Type 1 coins. Dr. Gupta illustrates and describes a coin of Type 2 but there are doubts over his version of the obverse legend. He also appears uncertain of the reverse legend, the meaning of which is not clear.

The earliest date of this type, both in gold and silver, is 1858 with an uncertain Samvat date. Thereafter the coins bear the Christian date and the corresponding Samvat year. The latest date observed is 1866/S.1923, although there is reason to believe that the rupees were struck later in quantities of about 3,000 annually. The numbers of gold mohurs struck were presumably less than this figure and it is possible that coins of Type 2 were used only as largesse or presentation money.

Copies of Bhartpur Coins

Mention should be made here of a series that resemble the Bhartpur coins but are of inferior metal and workmanship and struck on dump flans. They appear to have emanated from Brindaban, or Bindraban (both spellings are on record), a town which is on the River Jumna and near the city of Muttra. Brindaban is only about 25 miles from the border with Bhartpur State and in the then British territory of the North-West Provinces.

Description: Silver rupee. Weight 162 grains.

Obv. As Type 2 but a katar to the left and a small dagger to the right of the Queen's head.

Rev.



سکہ کار
 زوالہ قاتدارنگین
 ضربہ رابن

Sirkar Sikka

Zawallah Qatadar Angrezi

Zarb Bindraban

...date ?...

Mark of chhata (umbrella) above.

From the few specimens examined it has not proved possible to establish the reverse legend with certainty. There is possibly another word or maybe a mark above the angrezi.

This series includes fractions of a rupee, both halves and quarters being known. There are various dates of the Christian era under the Queen's head but a suitable specimen showing a Samvat date on the reverse has yet to be discovered.

The reason for the existence of these copies is not known nor has any information come to light on who in Brindaban was responsible for striking them. The copying of certain types of coins by other mints was a common practice in 19th century India and a number of instances may be cited. It has been suggested that the Brindaban copies were struck locally on order by private individuals for distribution at weddings, religious ceremonies and other such functions.

Synopsis of the types and the known dates:

TYPE 1		TYPE 1A		TYPE 2		COPIES		
Mohur	Rupee	Mohur	Rupee	Mohur	Rupee	Rupee	Half Rupee	Quarter Rupee
Not known	1858/ 1910	Not known	1858/1910	1858/ 1859/1916 1860/1917 1862/1918	1858/ 1851/1916 sic 1851/1917 sic 1865/1922 1866/1923 1859/1916 1861/1917	1858 1859		1858
							1867/ 1923	

It is not certain when the Bhartpur State ceased minting its coins. Webb, who wrote about 1893, states that for many years the Bhartpur mint has alone been worked. He also states that the Dig mint was re-opened and that the coins were issued from it up to S.1935 (1878 A.D.). This statement could refer to copper coins, which according to a later passage were still being struck in S.1944 (1887 A.D.). This paper is not concerned with the copper coins of Bhartpur and it is sufficient to say that none in the name of Queen Victoria are known.

The Government rupee had a wide circulation in Bhartpur and the expense and trouble of maintaining a local mint was probably found to be uneconomic and was also discouraged by the British Authorities. Such coin that was minted must have been on a negligible scale, which would account for the scarcity of the later dates of the Type 2 coins.

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