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Members news

Mr. Howard Daniel III (520) of Alexandria, VA, is looking for information on Vietnamese numismatics in connection with a book he is preparing. He would welcome material from any ONS members with coins, tokens or paper money from that area.

There will be an ONS meeting in London on Saturday October ²⁰10th. from 2 pm. at the usual venue: St. James' Hall, Gloucester Terrace, London W 2. Any members who are able to come will be welcome. Please contact Mr. Ken. Wiggins.

Copper coins from Ladakh

by Dr. P. L. Gupta

Mr. N. G. Rhodes has published copper coins struck by Ranbir Singh for Ladakh in the ONS Newsletter no. 56. Therein, he has translated the Urdu legend **Sri Gadadharji Sahai** into English as 'Hail, Lord Gadadhara'. This translation is quite incorrect. The word **Sahai** is a Hindi word and it means 'help' or 'helper'. Here, the legend would mean 'Be Lord Gadadhara be helpful (or merciful)'.

The reverse legend in Nagari characters, though meant to represent the transliteration of the obverse Urdu legend; is very much defective and is written variously on different types. Mr. Rhodes has not taken this into consideration when he classified the coins into five types mainly on the consideration of how the lines begin. But that would not be true classification. The types, as classified by Rhodes, may be placed in two distinct classes on a very basic difference. On his types III - V the first word **Sri Gadadharaji** is correctly transliterated while on types I and II it is changed into **ja. Gadadhara** and **Gajadhara**, ie. the second letter **da** is changed into **ja**. Although **Gadadhara** and **Gajadhara** mean the same God, Vishnu, they differ in their connotations. Again, in types I, IV and V the third letter of the name of the God is missing. The coins do not suggest that it was off the flan. On type I it is **Gajara** without the long medial **a** in **ja**. This distinguishes the coins from the other two types.

The second word, **Sahai**, is uniformly written on all the coins as **Saha**. While there was ample space on type I to accommodate the letter **ya**, the other two varieties leave no such space. This shows that the omission is deliberate, but without any reason. The third word, **Zarb**, is written in Hindi as **jarava**, ie. the letter **ba** is replaced by the letter **va**. This is no serious mistake as the two letters are inter-changeable in both Hindi and Sanskrit and such interchange is often noticed in medieval inscriptions. But on type IV only the first and third letters, **ja** and **va**, and on type V only the single letter **ja** is seen. Perhaps the other letters were missing from the dies. On type I a single letter **vi** is seen in line 3 for the entire word **zarb**; it is inexplicable. The fourth word, **Ladakh**, is written on the coins of all the types uniformly as **Ladakha** (kha with a long medial a). Whether this is meant to express 'Ladakah' ('kaf' and 'he' are read as 'kha', as well as 'kah' and 'he' is often pronounced as a long 'a' when it is written at the end) or the country was known as 'Ladakha', I am unable to say. The fifth word, **Qalam**, is written in Hindi as **Kalam** on types I, II and III. On type V only the first and third letters, **Ka** and **ma** are seen. On type IV the last line is truncated but the letters **la** and **ma** may well be visualised. Whether the other missing letter on these varieties are omissions or are off the flan can only be ascertained from other coins. The sixth word, **ru**, is uniformly written in Hindi as **rava**, the exact transliteration of the Urdu letters 're' and 'wav'. This is peculiar. The last word in Urdu is written as **Jamun**; in Hindi only **jama** is seen. Perhaps the medial **u** is off the flan.

In classification of the coins all these should be taken into consideration.

White Elephants

by Lewis Shaw

As pointed out by Michael Mitchiner in newsletter no. 59, the conventional type of silver coin of Arakan bears the ruler's accession date. But it is interesting to note that on the first Arakan coin to bear an inscription in Arakanese, as distinct from its predecessors using Persian characters, the date is eight years after the king's accession. This king was named Razagyi (AD 1593 - 1612: BE 955 - 974). In 1599 he inflicted a great defeat on the Burmese, taking their capital, Pegu, and bearing off many trophies back to Mrouk-U, the Arakanese capital. The most important of these trophies was a White Elephant, one of four which the Burmese, in their turn, had plundered from the Siamese capital Ayuthia in 1564. White Elephants are comparatively rare and they are revered by the Buddhists who believe that the Buddha had been a White Elephant in his last incarnation before being born as a man. Possession of one was a symbol of universal sovereignty.

Razagyi, on his return to Mrouk-U, had a coin struck to commemorate his capture of the White Elephant. This is the coin dated BE 963 (AD 1601) with the obverse inscription in Arakanese "Lord of the White Elephant, Ruler of men" (Phayre Pl. I, nos. 1 and 2). The reverse carries inscriptions in Persian and Nagari.

Subsequent rulers retained the title "Lord of the White Elephant" and then, in BE 984 (AD 1622), Thirithudhamma (AD 1622 - 1638) added the title "Lord of the Red Elephant", presumably because he had acquired one of these much esteemed beasts. Manrique (Manrique's Travels, Hakluyt series 2 vol. 59) recorded having seen the White Elephant in Mrouk-U in AD 1630 and described the luxury in which the animal was kept. He made no mention, however, of a Red Elephant. Thirithudhamma was troubled by a prophecy which forecast that he would die shortly after his coronation, with the result that he delayed this ceremony for twelve years. Manrique described the coronation which took place in BE 996 (actually 23rd. January AD 1635) at which the King and Queen threw specially minted coins from a balcony to the people gathered below. We might therefore expect to find Thirithudhamma's coins bearing the date 996, as well as those with his accession year 984, but I have so far not heard of any.

Thirithudhamma lived four years after his coronation and on his death (BE 1000) his Queen, Nat Shin me, married the Chief Minister, Kuthala, and made him king with the title Narabadigyi (AD 1638 - 1645: BE 1000 - 1007). The son who should have been king, Min Sani, died a month later, officially of smallpox, but widely rumoured to have been assisted out of this world by a little state magic applied by the Queen. Michael Mitchiner records the finding of a coin inscribed with the Lordships of both White and Red Elephants. The next king, Thado (AD 1645 - 1652: BE 1007 - 1014), also takes both titles, yet strangely gives preference to the Red Elephant.

Thado's son Sanda Thudhamma (AD 1652 - 1684: BE 1014 - 1046) omitted the Elephant titles and we can, perhaps, assume that the animals had died during his father's reign. Elephants are long lived beasts and it is quite possible that the young White one taken from Ayuthia in 1564 could have lived into the 1640's. No subsequent rulers used Elephant titles on their coins until Bodawpaya, the Burmese king (AD 1782 - 1819) who annexed Arakan in AD 1784 (BE 1146). Perhaps to show his supreme authority and to impress his victory on the demoralised Arakanese, Bodawpaya used the title "Lord of many White Elephants".

Some recent publications

Bosco, P., The Coinage of Cheribon. This is the listing of a hoard, with drawings, in his current sales list. He will send a copy to any interested ONS member (540 East 5th. St. New York 10009).

Campbell, I. C. G., Gold issues of the Turkish Republic, Numismatics International Bull., March 1979, 86-88

Gutman, Pamela, The Ancient coinage of Southeast Asia, J. Siam Soc., 1978, 8 - 25

MacKenzie, K. M., Abd Al-Hamid I: the first silver coins struck in regnal year one, Spink's NC., June 1979, 290 - 291

Shaw, S. J., Mintage records for the 1911 Ottoman City Visit coins, Spink's NC., June 1979, 293.

Snartt, P., The rarity of East India Company coins (contd.), Seaby's C & M Bull., May 1979, 154 - 155.

Snartt, P., The rarity of East India Company coins (contd.), Seaby's C & M Bull., June 1979, 185 - 187

Wright, R. N. J., The Birmingham mint and Imperial Chinese coinage, Spink's NC., May 1979, 236 - 239

Islamic silver coins with re-adjusted weights

by Henri Arroyo and Alain Pierson

We have recorded two Islamic silver coins to which have been added a little silver strip cut from another coin and set through a slit, then bent on each side of the coin to prevent it slipping out. One is a late Marinid square silver coin (Fig. 1) weighing 0.80 grammes and the other is a dirham of Al Andalus mint dated AH 260 (Fig. 2) and weighing 2.70 grammes. What could have been the purpose of such coins? Their scarcity appears to rule out possible utilisation as normal currency: these being the sole examples we have seen among tens of thousands of Islamic coins. The only reference we know of to another published piece was noted by G. C. Miles¹ who described an Al Andalus dirham of the year AH 231 weighing 2.50 grammes with a silver strip fixed through it (no. 123a). Miles was unable to give a satisfactory explanation for this occurrence.

For our part we are inclined to think that these "rectified" coins were utilised as weights. In this context it may be noted that the geographical distribution of the few known specimens is confined to the Hispano - Maghrebin area; a region of the Islamic world from which no glass weights are known. If we consider the Spanish Umayyad coin cited above which weighs 2.70 gm. we see that this weight is close to the mean weight of dirhams struck by Al Hakam II, given by Miles as 2.77 gm. The modification of the coin for use as a coin weight might therefore have been carried out a century after its initial striking.

1 Miles, G. C., *The coinage of the Umayyads of Spain*, American Numismatic Society, New York, 1950.



Fig. 2

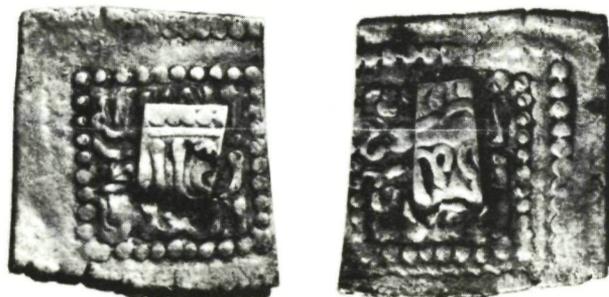


Fig. 1

A Moghul rupee struck for Aurungzeb at Sholapur in AH 1096 (AD 1685): a military issue

by Michael Mitchiner

From time to time coins have not uncommonly been issued for various purposes over and above the requirements of local commerce. Such functions as rendering of tribute and payment of local troops have often been reasons for striking coinage, while more restricted issues of coin have been struck to commemorate and advertise such events as coronation of a sovereign or a military victory. The concept of appointing a specific mint organised to strike money destined for payment of a standing army was well established in both India and Iran; one or more army mints that moved from place to place. In other instances the machinery of a local mint was used to produce the increased output of coin necessary to pay an army currently engaged in the locality. Less information is available about this aspect of mint activity and thus it is interesting to consider the political environment in which this Sholapur rupee was struck.

The two major Deccan Sultanates ruled by the Qutb Shah of Golconda and the 'Adil Shah of Bijapur came face to face with the expanding Moghul realm when Shah Jahan marched south in 1636. Following skirmishes launched from Shah Jahan's seat at Daulatabad both the Qutb Shah and the 'Adil Shah recognised Moghul suzerainty and agreed to pay annual tribute. Shah Jahan returned north leaving his 18 year old son Aurungzeb as viceroy of the Deccan (July 1636). But when Aurungzeb had returned to Delhi (1637) and then been dismissed from his appointment (1644) the Moghul administration in the Deccan collapsed and tribute ceased to flow. After Aurungzeb's re-appointment as governor of the Deccan in 1653 some Moghul influence was restored and inconclusive campaigns were mounted against Golconda (1656) and Bijapur (1657). But, then the Emperor Shah Jahan died and Aurungzeb (1658 - 1707) was occupied in the north for several years consolidating his own position as Emperor. Moghul activity in the Deccan remained ineffectual until Aurungzeb, himself, intervened. Early in 1685 Aurungzeb set up his headquarters at Sholapur and from this base he laid seige to Bijapur fort (April 1685) and finally took this in September 1686; annexing Bijapur Sultanate to the Moghul Empire. Although the Qutb Shah of Golconda had renewed his fealty to Aurungzeb when the Moghul established himself at Sholapur, Aurungzeb now went on to annexe Golconda. He took Hyderabad in January 1687 and then occupied Golconda after a seige lasting from February until September 1687.

The town of Sholapur, which had been Aurungzeb's base for the annexation of the Bijapur and Golconda Sultanates during the years 1685 - 1687, was at other times a town of no great importance. Coins were struck there on a few occasions during the ensuing half century. In his survey of Moghul mint towns (NSI memoir no. 4, 1953) Singhal lists Sholapur as having struck later coins for Shah 'Alam Bahadur (1707-12: AR & AE), Farrukhsiyar (1713-19: AE only) and Mohammed Shah (1719-48: AR only).

The rupee described here is dated between five and seven months after Aurungzeb had established his headquarters at Sholapur and one may be reasonably sure that Aurungzeb established this "headquarters mint" for the purpose of striking coin required to meet the expenses of his military campaign against the Deccan Sultanates.

AR rupee weighing 11.4 grammes (Author)

Dated: AH 1096 (Dec. 1684 - Nov. 1685)

Regnal year 29 (Sept. 1685 - Sept. 1686)

thus: Sept - Nov. 1685

Mint: Sholapur -

Standard inscriptions:

شولاپور



اورنگ زیب عالمگیر شاہ
سکہ زد جہان چو مہر منبر ۱۰۹۶

ضرب شولاپور سنہ ۲۹
جلوس میمنت مانوس