

ON A NEWLY DISCOVERED HOARD IN INDIA

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1. INTRODUCTION

Prior to the formation of the Magadhan, later Mauryan, empire in the fifth century B.C. a number of states in northern India were issuing coins. These were of the punchmarked variety described in many publications such as Gupta and Hardaker (1985) and Mitchiner (1978).

Aside from pre-empire Magadha the other states known to have minted their own early coinage were: Kasi, Vatsa, Kosala, Malla, Kuru and Panchala in the Ganges basin; Kalinga on the Eastern Deccan; Avanti and Saurashtra in the Narbada Valley; and Taxila/Gandhara in the Indus basin. Each of these had its own identifying punchmarks, often several. Some were on the Satamana standard of 100 rattis (c. 11 gm), one ratti being the weight of the *Abrus precatorius* seed. Some were on the Karshapana standard of 32 rattis (c. 3.5 gm).

About five years ago a previously unknown series of coins appeared, an exciting numismatic event since new series are rare, and give promise of new understanding of the early states of India, their cultures, trading practices, and their inter-relationships. I have been fortunate in obtaining seventeen of these coins, the only ones of whose existence I am aware. These form a sufficient sample to catalogue some of the features of the series, starting with solid data and proceeding to some rather tenuous deductions.

2. FABRIC

These coins have been cut from thick silver planchets, similar to those of several other states of this era. They are roughly rectangular in shape, some being elongated and resembling the satamana bent bars of Taxila. They are heavily punched with a single large punchmark. The force of the punch is strong enough to give the coins a decided scyphate form.

3. WEIGHT

The weights are fairly uniform and range from 6.96 gm to 7.22 gm which would make them double karshapanas. One sample weighed only 4.18 gm but showed obvious signs of breakage. Otherwise the coin was undamaged.

4. COIN TYPES

The symbols on these coins fall into two, quite separate, groups. There are interesting variations within these groups. There follows a description of the coin types identified in the seventeen samples studied. Photographs of the symbols on the coins are also included.

5. GROUP A: CRESCENT DESIGN

This design is composed of crescents and dots which may occur in various formations.

Type A1



- A semi-circular arc at the right enclosing a 'dot'.
 - A slightly pointed arc at the left enclosing a 'dot'.
 - An appendage to the right hand arc extends from its centre downwards towards the left. There is a faint 'dot' at the southern end.
 - A solid arc-plateau at the top.
- fig. 1.

Type A1a



- Very similar to type A1 with the right and left sides reversed. There appears to be a slightly raised portion to the south.

Type A2



- A regular geometric figure
 - A central round, flat mound.
 - Four evenly spaced semi-circular crescents surrounding the mound.
- Fig. 2.

Type A3



- A regular geometric figure somewhat similar to A2.
- A central square, flat mound.
- Four evenly spaced semi-circular crescents surrounding the mound, each enclosing a 'dot'.

6. GROUP B: PENTAGON DESIGN

Based on various pentagonal figures containing four elements: (a) a central mound, (b) a ring approximately pentagonal in shape, (c) five points on the ring and more or less part of it, (d) the outer field, i.e., the field outside the ring.

Type B1



- Mound: Large and well-formed; flat top; well-formed sloping sides.
Ring: About the same elevation as the mound and fairly wide and flat; sides straight inside and outside forming a pentagon.
Points: Definite; raised a little higher than the ring; tops are sometimes flat, sometimes rounded.
Outer Field: Probably no bars or dots; very small field and little space for bars and dots although some specimens show faint signs.
Fig. 3.

Type B2



- Mound: High and well-formed; flat top; sloped sides.
Ring: Much lower than mound; very thin; inside circular; outside straight.
Points: Triangular in shape and point outwards; higher than ring but lower than mound.
Outer Field: Straight bars between points (only 2 evident on our single sample, but could be more).
Fig. 4.

Note that this coin is elongated and resembles a bent bar of Taxila in shape.

Type B3



- Mound: High and large; flatish top bending to sloping sides.
Ring: Moderately wide; rounded top; circular inside and concave outwards outside; lower than mound.
Points: Not too definite; only very slightly higher than ring; lower than mound.
Outer Field: This is a very distinctive feature; four bars, concave outwards, and one 'dot'; all well-formed.
Fig. 5.

N.B. This coin is also elongated and resembles a bent bar of Taxila in shape.

Type B4



- Mound: Large with flat top and sloping sides.
Ring: Only moderate width; rounded top; slightly lower than mound; sides straight inside and out.
Points: Not pronounced; little, if any, higher than ring; lower than mound.
Outer Field: Four bars (probably), slightly concave outwards, and a 'dot'.

Type B5



- Mound: Very pronounced; high; almost hemispherical; fills the inside space.
Ring: Pentagonal and slightly concave outwards; very low in elevation; moderate width.
Points: Not pronounced; same elevation as ring; broad.
Outer Field: Definite 'dot'; weak bars (probably).

Type B6



- Mound: Very large; high and hemispherical in shape; fills the entire area inside the ring.
Ring: Thin; circular with flatish top; very much lower than mound, but definite.
Points: Extremely prominent; leave little space on ring; about 3/4 of height of the mound; shape is that of a ball or hemisphere squashed somewhat into triangular form; they appear to be separate entities rather than part of the ring.
Special Feature: A unique feature of this design is the joining of each point to the mound by a narrow ridge.
Outer Field: In our single sample there are two bars and probably a third (somewhat obliterated), and two areas free of bars or 'dots'.



1



2



3



4



5



6

Figures

7. OTHER MARKS

There are no marks on the reverse of any of these coins in either series. There are bankers marks on most, but not all, of the coins. Two of these are of special interest and could be clues to inter-relationships between series.

Case 1: 6-arm symbol

Fig. 6 shows a well-formed six-arm symbol similar to Gupta Hardaker Mark 389, i.e., consisting of six arrows. The style of the arrows, however, is much closer to that of GH mark 379. Both of these marks appear on early Series I coins of Magadha. Similar arrows appear also on the pre-empire half satamana coins of Magadha.

Case 2: Type A1 symbol

One coin shows a rather crude version of symbol A1, apparently being used as a banker's mark.

8. OTHER FEATURES

Another feature, here called a "raised flan", occurs on several coins of both series. It consists of raised metal, roughly rectangular in shape, superimposed on the basic planchet. The purpose of this metal is not known unless it is to adjust the weight. Examples occur in both groups A and B.

Examples:

- Type A1. Raised flan to north and west. (Fig. 1)
- Type A1. Raised flan to north northeast.
- Type A3. Raised flan to south.
- Type B1. Raised flan to northwest.
- Type B1. Raised flan to east and right across mark.
- Type B2. Raised flan to both east and west. (Fig. 5)
- Type B5. Raised flan to west.
- Type B6. Raised flan to east and right across mark.

9. PROVENANCE

Facts are few relating to the provenance of these coins and the deductions presented here must be considered highly speculative. The actual location of the hoard is unknown. The only solid fact comes from Robert Senior who obtained the first coins from a source in Pathankot (32 18 N, 75 45 E). Pathankot is within the area once covered by the ancient state of Kuru, one of the sixteen great powers of the first millenium B.C. Kuru is generally associated with another state of the era, Panchala, and since there are two distinct, but related, groups of coins, viz. A and B, it is tempting to assign these two groups to Kuru and Panchala. Also there are no other obvious contenders for the source of these coins.

Unfortunately, existing catalogues, such as Mitchiner (1978), attribute the silver plated satamana bent bars of the Taxila-Gandhara type to Kuru and Panchala. All of the latter coins came from a hoard recovered at Kosam, near Allahabad (25 25 N, 81 58 E). Further evidence and study may be required to decide whether the coins described here have the better credentials or not.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Gupta, P.L. and T. R. Hardaker, 1985: Indian Silver Punchmarked Coins of the Magadha-Maurya Karshapana Series. Indian Institute of Research in Numismatic Studies. 112pp.
- Mitchiner, Michael, 1978: Oriental Coins and Their Values, The Ancient & Classical World 600 BC - AD 650. Hawkins Publications. 760pp. (See also Durgan Prasad's paper in JASB XXX Num Suppl and plate VII)