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Like all previous years we are happy to announce to present the Annual Journal of our society on the occasion of Coin Fest - 2024. Throughout the years Numismatists are in the process of research work pertaining to various facets of numismatic artifacts. Numerous findings within the country generate interest in all coin lovers. But the information obtained from the finding of relics needs to be published in the form of an article, which should be compiled in the form of the journal. We have put our best efforts and compiled the Journal.

This particular volume contains 11 papers presented by both senior and junior numismatists. As usual some of them were read out in our preceding Mudra Utsav-23, during the technical session. Rest we have received from other authors in the field. The articles / papers cover the different era of india. Papers of Ancient India, Mughals, Bengal Sultans, Ahoms, Bengal Presidency, Tea Garden Token, Foreign Coins are part of this journal. Discovery of a new ruler's coin and new observations are the highlights of this journal which the numismatists would be finding very useful for their knowledge and it makes this journal interesting.

Lot of effort has been put by numerous individuals to bring out this journal. Firstly the Paper contributors who had made immense effort in writing the paper and contributing to the journal for publishing and many other individuals who had worked hard behind the scenes for getting the journal published. Hope the readers will appreciate the hard work of all of them by liking the journal.





A Newly Discovered Copper coin of Chandra Mitra of Pancala <i>Ravi Shankar Sharma</i>	5
Coinage of Ancient Bengal with light to finds from different sites <i>Dr. Ujjwal Kumar Saha</i>	8
A new variety in the coinage of Maues <i>Biswaroop Ghosh</i>	23
Sharifabad: A Mint Town of the Sultans of Bengal <i>Smaran Kumar Das</i>	26
Note on a Unique Coin of Shams ud din Muzaffar Shah of Bengal <i>Smaran Kumar Das</i>	29
An Interesting Ahom specimen with both side Regnal Year <i>Priyak Chakraborty</i>	33
Unique fraction from Munger Mint: A short note <i>Vikram Chatterjee</i>	36
Coins under Administration of Nawab Siraj-ud-daula from Murshidabad <i>Souvik Majumdar</i>	38
Ek Pai Sikka – A Rare Find <i>Vinod Jaiswal</i>	40
A newly discovered Tea Token : A Goldmine of unexploited information <i>S. K. Bose</i>	46
District Coins of Sri Lanka <i>Riddhi Bhattacharya</i>	49

A Newly Discovered Copper coin of Chandra Mitra of Pancala



Ravi Shankar Sharma

Pancala was one of the sixteen Mahajanapadas of ancient India before the rise of the Magadhan/ Mauryan Empire. From the evidence of coin, it appears that in post-Mauryan period the kingdom regained the independence under local kings. During those days, it was divided in two parts- Northern Pancala and Southern Pancala with their capitals respectively at Ahichchtra (identified with modern Ramnagar in Bareilly district of U.P) and Kampila (identified with modern Kampil in Farrukhabad district of U.P). More than 40 kings are known through their coins; of them only three are mentioned in ancient inscriptions. In an inscription of coins Pabhosa, dated to the late first century BCE, names one Ashadhasena as the grandfather of Vangapala. From the numismatic evidences it reveals that Northern Pancala came under Kushana during Kaniska reign.

The numismatists have attributed a particular series of coins, which are known as Pancala coins of local dynasty of this janapada. The coins of this series are uniform in majority of cases, depicting on the obverse three symbols with the name of the king below, written in Brahmi genitive in square incuse, impressed in round flan.

The most interesting feature of the Pancala coinage is its reverse device which is the representation of a deity either in an iconic or anthropomorphic form. Scholars like Allan and many other numismatists made vivid research on the subject but without any firm conclusion about this enigmatic reverse symbol. However, after the Kusana retreat from northern India, the 'three Pancala symbols' were omitted from the obverse coins and later types were issued by such kings as Sivanandasri and Sri-Nandi.

The dynasty of the Mitras of Pancala (as most of the rulers have Mitra-ending names) was probably one of the earliest to establish its independence sometime after Ashoke. Of course, many discoveries of coins in recent times reveal that the dynasty had their titles like Gupta, Pala, Sena etc. Accordingly, to Allan this dynasty was in existence before Sungas, if we date the accession of Pushyamitra c. 184 BCE. Whatever may be the origin of this dynasty, no doubt, they deserve special attention in light of long list of rulers, as well as their coinage. From the above observation Michael Mitchiner gave a tentative year of ruling of this dynasty from c. 150 BCE to 84 CE, whereas Wilfried Pieper inclined to believe it



should be c. 150 BCE to 130 CE.

The period of origin and circulation of local coins is although generally fixed between 300 BCE to 300 CE, yet it remains to be fixed with certainty and Pancala is no exception to this. So far, these coins have not been dated with proper chronology. Scholars have different opinions in this regard. The date- the earliest and latest- of the coins of this series, we feel, can be fixed on the basis of the occurrence in stratified layers in different excavations. This archeological method of dating is likely to provide an approximately correct chronological picture. Unfortunately, from the number of rulers within the estimated period of this dynasty indicate that exact chronology of this kingdom may be difficult to ascertain. Recently many new rulers of this series have been discovered where the name of the rulers is prefixed by rano or rana etc. These rulers are considered to be later than those that contain simply the name of the issuers.

Recently a new addition in the list is Chandra Mitra through some currently discovered coins. From the type and execution, and also from the legend, it is undoubtedly issued by a Pancala king. Legend of the coin is as follow:



Obverse



Reverse





Obverse:

Within incuse area three symbols in the top line and bottom “*Chandra Mitrasa*”

Reverse:

Behind the railing one flag stands in the center & a trident on left and right

Metal : Copper Weight: 1.91 gm

It is difficult to surmise that how many such rulers of this dynasty will surface in future. But, undoubtedly, coinage of Pancala deserve special attention.

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Coinage of Ancient Bengal with light to finds from different sites



Dr. Ujjwal Kumar Saha

In the light of the numismatic evidence of the history with regards to coinage in ancient Bengal (up to 16th century AD), the area in discussion actually consists of four principal sub-regions, viz **pundravardhana** (mainly north Bengal, though from the middle of eighth century onwards embracing wide areas to the east of the Bhagirathi upto present day Burdwan district), **Rarha** (present districts of Purulia, Bankura, Birbhum, Burdwan and parts of Howrah and Hughli), **Vanga** (Dhaka-Vikramapura-Faridpur regions of Bangladesh) and **Samatata, Harikela** (Noakhali, Comilla, Chittagong areas in Bangladesh). The history of coinage in this zone will be treated in terms of the regional features and will also be linked up with the currency system in north India.

Ancient coins although some terms like **niska**, **shatamana** began to figure in the Vedic literature in the sense of metallic pieces or lumps of metal, it is difficult to prove the minting of coins in South Asia prior to c 6th/5th century BC. The discovery of silver coins struck on the weight standard of 2.5 gms and also some varied weights made of silver and debased silver of various shapes (square, oblong, roundish etc.) do not carry any inscription/legend recording the name of the issuing authority or the name of an area. These instead bear a number of symbols, which were punched on the silver piece with separate punches; this is why these are called punch marked coins. The punches were probably marks authenticating the weight standard and metallic purity of the coin.



Punch-marked coins, Wari-Bateshwar



As these coins are uninscribed and do not carry any names of rulers, it is likely that the earliest specimens could have been issued by professional 'guild'-like bodies of merchants for whom the availability of minted metallic pieces as medium of exchange must have brought enormous advantages. Significantly enough, the introduction of the earliest coins of India coincided with the burgeoning of trade, emergence of urban centres and growth of monarchical polity in north India (especially the Ganga valley).

Early coinage though many areas in north India experienced regular metallic currency from c. 5th century BC onwards, the definite evidence of the introduction of metal money in Bengal cannot be pushed beyond c. third century BC, when Pundravardhana probably came under the Maurya rule. The Mahasthan Brahmi Inscription, palaeographically assignable to the third century BC, records the filling up of a royal treasury (kosa) at Pundranagara with ganda and kakini. The two terms, according to many scholars, stand for two types of coins in circulation. An alternative interpretation, however, suggests the prevalence of cowrie shells counted in the unit of four (ganda). The latter view implies that cowry-shells could have been used as a medium of exchange at least since the third century BC.

That Bengal began to experience the circulation of metallic pieces from this period onwards is clearly evident from the availability of silver punch marked coins from excavated sites like Mahasthangarh, Bangarh (South Dinajpur district, West Bengal), Chandraketugarh (North 24 Parganas district, West Bengal), Mangalkot (Burdwan district, West Bengal) and also from various places in Medinipur, Bankura, Murshidabad districts in West Bengal. No less significant is the discovery of fairly large number of punch marked coins from Wari-Bateshwar near Dhaka, Bangladesh.



PMC of Chandraketugarh



At many places punch marked coins occurred simultaneously with the Northern Black Polished Ware, itself a deluxe pottery and possibly an item of trade. There is little doubt that punch marked coinage reached Bengal from the Ganga valley as a result of the expansion of Mauryan control over North Bengal which has also yielded perhaps the earliest evidence of punch marked coins from an excavated site in Bengal. These coins weigh from 1.7 grams to 3.48 grams, though the weight of the maximum number of these coins range between 3 and 3.45 grams. In other words these were struck on the 57.6 grain (karsapana) standard. Some coins weighing nearly half this weight are considered to have been half karsapanas.

Though karsapana coins were mostly in silver, Bengal was also acquainted with punch marked copper and billon coins, which however number far less than the silver punch marked coins. Copper punch marked coins occur in large numbers in the North and South 24 Parganas (eg Chandraketugarh and Deulpota), Burdwan (e.g Mangalkot) and Bankura (e.g Dihar) districts. Their weight varies between 1.4 grams and 3.62 grams (i.e ranging from 22 to 56 grains). Evidently these copper punch marked coins were struck on the silver karsapana weight standard of 32 ratis or 57.6 grains and not based on the usual copper karsapana standard of 80 ratis or 144 grains. Punch marked coins were also struck on billon and such coins have been found from *Chandraketugarh and Harinarianpur* (South 24 Parganas) and *Bangarh* (South Dinajpur). Square or round in shape, such billon coins range in weight from 11 to 51.75 grains. The billon pieces appear to have been struck, like the silver and copper specimens circulating in Bengal, on the 57.6 grain (karsapana) weight standard; the coins weighing 11 to 13 grains may therefore be taken as quarter unit pieces.

Punch marked coins, as we have already pointed out, emerged in Bengal probably around 4th - 3rd century BC. Stratigraphic evidence does not suggest the continuation of this coinage beyond first century BC in Bengal. A detailed study shows that as many as 172 symbols were stamped on the obverse of these punch marked silver pieces from Bengal. The above survey shows that silver was the most common medium for striking punch marked coins in Bengal.

There is little doubt that the silver punch marked coinage considerably influenced the striking of copper and billon pieces of the same weight standard. The use of copper and billon punch marked coins perhaps indicates that minted currency in baser metals was meant for petty transactions.



Copper cast coins

Copper was also used for striking cast coins, which have been found from a number of archaeological sites: *Harinaraynpur, Deulpota, Chandraketugarh, Atghara and Pakurtala* (North and South 24 Parganas), *Tamluk and Icchapur* (Medinipur.), *Dihar and Pokharna* (Bankura), *Manglakot* (Burdwan), *Harinaryanpur* (Howrah), *Bangarh* (South Dinajpur) and *Mahasthangarh* (Bogra, Bangladesh).

Stratified evidence of the cast copper coins from these archaeological sites in West Bengal and Bangladesh suggests the introduction and circulation of cast copper coins during the 2nd and 1st century BC, though in certain areas these might have continued to be in use up to c. 2nd-3rd century AD and even in the Gupta age. Cast copper coins are of various shapes: round or nearly round, oval, square and rectangular. Their weight ranges from 72 grains to 9 grains, though the majority of these coins weigh between 45 and 56.75 grains. That it closely corresponded to the well-known silver karsapana standard is clearly evident. Thus like the punch marked copper pieces the cast copper coins of Bengal too were based on the silver karsapana standard of 57.6 grains and not on the usual 80 ratis (=144 grains) standard prescribed for copper coins. Based on the karsapana standard, these cast copper pieces were probably struck as one and a half karsapana, three-quarter karsapana, half karsapana and one-fourth karsapana denominations.

Imitation of Kushan Coinage



Kusana Coinage: While the use of silver and copper for the manufacturing of coins has a fairly long and well-established tradition in South Asia, the credit of



introducing gold for the minting of coins in the subcontinent goes to the Kusanas. Wima Kadphises issued the earliest gold currency of the Kusanas, following the metrology of the Greek and Roman gold coins. The most frequently seen device on the obverse of the Kusana gold coins (king at the altar) was however probably derived from a similar device figuring in the coins of the Imperial Parthian ruler Gotarzes II of Iran. Kaniska I and Huviska subsequently issued large number of die-struck gold pieces of many varieties. Though the region of Bengal did not form a part of the Kusana empire, Bengal yielded a large number of Kusana coins which seem to have reached Bengal by way of trade. Three gold coins of Kaniska I are reported from *Mahasthanagarh*, *Pandurajardhibi* (Burdwan) and *Tamluk* (Medinipur). Huviska's gold coins are found from *Dewanati* (North 24 Parganas) and *Farakka* (Murshidabad). Another place yielding a Kusana gold piece is *Mahanad* in the Hughli district. Three gold coins, attributed to Vasudeva I, were found respectively from Malda and Murshidabad districts in West Bengal and Bogra in Bangladesh. *Mahasthanagarh* has also yielded another gold piece attributable to Vasudeva II, possibly the last of the Kusana rulers.

It is significant to note that the Kusana copper coins in Bengal far outnumber their gold counterparts. Beginning with the earliest piece attributed to Soter Megas, copper coins of Vima Kadphises, Kaniska I, Huviska and Vasudeva I have been found from the North and South 24 Parganas, Burdwan, Medinipur and Hughli districts. This indicates the regular circulation of the Kusana copper pieces in the Radha region to the west of the Bhagirathi from c. 1st to about 3rd century AD.

There is little doubt that the Kusana copper coins, albeit being imported into Bengal, formed a regular currency in this area. Its outcome can be seen in the emergence of a large number of imitations of the Kusana copper coin-types. Such coins have been found in North and South 24 Parganas, Burdwan and Bankura districts. Their weights range from 16.1 grams to 1.48 grams. On the variations of their metrology a seven fold classification has been proposed: I) c. 12-16.1 grams; ii) c. 8-11 grams; iii) c 6.05-7.25 grams; iv) 5.08-5.67 grams; v) 3.65 grams; vi) 2-2.28 grams; vii) 1.48-1.8 grams. Numismatists have noted a 'concentration' on the weight standard of 3.65 grams. This weight standard closely corresponds to about 57 grains, i.e. the well known karsapana weight standard. Thus majority of the imitated Kusana die-struck copper pieces in Bengal followed the karsapana standard, while Kusana copper pieces were



struck on the theoretical Attic tetradrachm (= 268.8 grains or 17.417 grams). As the imitated Kusana copper pieces in Bengal were struck on the karsapana standard, the weight standard of the coins of groups i, ii, iii, iv, vi and vii may suggest respectively tetra-karsapana, tri-karsapana, double karsapana, one and a half karsapana, three-fourths karsapana and half karsapana denominations. Thus these copper pieces imitated Kusana devices but followed the karsapana weight standard, instead of the Attic tetradrachm metrology. Considering the combinations of these two features, these imitations have been designated as Kusana-Vanga or Kusana-Radha coins, which had a distinct local character, associated with two important sub-regions of early Bengal.

Besides the die-struck Kusana-Vanga/Radha coinage, a large number of cast copper coins showing a Kusana device (standing king: standing deity Mao) have been found from the South 24 Parganas, Burdwan, Medinipur, Purulia and especially in Bankura districts.

'King Nana' Gold Coins of Kaniska I

A remarkable discovery in this connection was that of 281 copper pieces from Masuabazar, 32 miles south of Purulia (now in the collection of the Indian Museum, Kolkata). There is a distinct correspondence of the metrology of these cast copper coins to those of the groups iii to vii of the die-struck Kusana-Vanga/Kusana-Radha coinage. This fact and the actual weight of at least one piece of cast copper coin (now in the Asutosh Museum of Indian Art, Kolkata) being 3.63 grams strongly suggest that the cast copper coins of Bengal too conformed to the karsapana metrology of 57.6 grains or 3.65 grams.

These cast copper coins share some common features with the Puri-Kusana copper pieces in terms of their round shape and metrology. The Puri-Kusana coins were in circulation in Orissa and northern Andhra. The close correspondence between the Puri-Kusana and Kusana-Radha/Kusana-Vanga copper coins (though the two being not identical) strongly suggests that 'all these could have formed parts of a complex system of currency', used in upper Andhra, Orissa, West Bengal (including the coastal zones) and the adjoining regions of south Bihar during the period from the 1st century BC/AD to about 4th century AD.



Gupta coinage



Tiger Slayer Type

The numismatic scenario in Bengal becomes much more illuminated during the period from c. 4th to the 7th centuries AD. The most remarkable point is the availability of a large number of Imperial Gupta (c. 320-570 AD) gold coins, generally of excellent quality and execution. On the other hand the silver and copper currencies issued by the Gupta emperors are rather rare in Bengal. Besides the actual specimens of Gupta gold coins found in Bengal, a number of Gupta inscriptions-mainly from the northern part of Bengal-occasionally refer to coin terms which provide further information regarding the monetary system. The facts that Pundravardhana or North Bengal became a bhukti or a province of the Gupta empire (at least from c. 414 to 550 AD) and that the imperial Gupta authority could have extended up to the Comilla region in Bangladesh in the early 6th century AD, may explain the regular circulation of the Gupta gold currency in Bengal. In fact the Kalighat hoard in Kolkata provides the earliest discovery of a hoard of Gupta coins.

Coins of Pala period

The imperial Gupta rulers starting from Chandragupta I (c. AD 320-35) to Visnugupta (around the middle of the sixth century) issued gold coins of different types with the maximum varieties of gold coins being struck by Kumaragupta I (c. 414-54). A brief overview of the different types of the Gupta gold coins found in Bengal may be presented here:

Chandragupta I: king and queen type (total known type 1); Samudragupta: i) standard, ii) archer and iii) ashwamedha types (total known type 6); Chandragupta II: i) archer, ii) chhattra (umbrella) types. (total known type 9);



Kumaragupta I: i) archer, ii) horseman, iii) elephant, iv) lion-slayer, v) Karttikeya types (total known type 14); Skandagupta: i) archer type (two weight standards) and ii) king and queen type (total known type 3 or 4); Kumaragupta II: I) archer type (total known type 1); Vainyagupta: i) archer type (total known type 1); Narasinghagupta: i) archer type (total known type 1); Visnugupta: I) archer type (total known type 1).

It is well known that the Gupta emperors initiated the striking of the gold pieces by following the metrology of the gold coinages of the Kusana rulers and their successors, i.e. 122.9 grains. This weight standard in its turn was based on the Roman aureus of 122.9 grains. The earliest of the Gupta gold coins, probably issued by Chandragupta I, had the metrology of 120-21 grains. This corresponds to what is known as the dinara weight standard. The name dinara as denoting a gold coin regularly figures in the Gupta inscriptions. It appears that possibly during the reign of Kumaragupta I and certainly during that of Skandagupta, the Gupta gold coins were struck on a heavier metrology. This is evident from the metrology of some gold species of Kumaragupta I being 127 grains; some of Skandagupta's gold pieces weigh 130-132 grains. Later, during the reign of Skandagupta the metrology of the Gupta gold coinage was increased to 144 grains, which corresponded to the suvarna standard, equivalent to 80 ratis. It is likely that for some time both the dinara and suvarna metrologies were followed for minting of the Gupta gold coinage. This will be evident from the simultaneous references to the dinara and suvarna types of gold coins in the Gadhwa inscription (from UP) of Kumaragupta I.

Interestingly enough, some of the Archer type gold coins of Skandagupta weigh 121-22 grains, the typical dinara standard; some other gold pieces of the same ruler with the famous King and Queen device weigh 132 grains. The latter variety appears to have been minted by following a heavier dinara metrology. Finally Skandagupta issued another variety of Archer type weighing 144 grains, i.e. the suvarna standard. The pieces struck on the heavier dinara standard appear to have then belonged to a phase of transition of the metrology of the Gupta gold coinage from the dinara to the suvarna standard. Gold coins of the successors of Skandagupta were minted following the suvarna standard. The discovery of these gold pieces from various districts of both West Bengal and Bangladesh clearly points to their regular ancient Bengal's familiarity with the Gupta gold coins is also evident from the references to dinaras in the sense of gold pieces in about nine copper plates of the Gupta rulers, recording the sale of land in north Bengal from c. AD 433 to 544. Though there must have been Gupta gold coins of



the suvarna standard, especially of the post-Skandagupta period, the Gupta copper plates, however, use the generic term dinara to denote gold coins both of the dinara and suvarna metrologies. The significant point is though Skandagupta started the heavier gold coinage, these coins - especially during the reign of his successors - contained much less gold. This suggests that later gold coins of the Guptas contained a higher percentage of alloys. Narasinghagupta's gold coins from Bengal, struck on the suvarna standard, contained about 70% gold; but coins of his successors contained 50% or lesser percentage of gold in their issues which were certainly debased gold coins implying some economic problems in the Gupta empire during the first half of the 6th C. AD.

Though the Gupta inscriptions of Bengal refer to rupakas or silver coins, these are very rarely found from Bengal. Only a handful of silver coins of Chandragupta II, Kumaragupta I and Skandagupta have been reported. The Gupta silver coinage was begun by Chandragupta II, modelled on the silver pieces of the Western Ksatrapa rulers whom he conquered in c. 411/12 AD. The Gupta silver coins were minted on the Ksatrapa weight standard of 30-32 grains and not on the well established karsapana standard of 57.6 grains. On the basis of the Baigram copper plate of the Gupta era 128 (=AD 448) it has been suggested that the ratio between the gold (dinara) and the silver (rupaka) coins was 1:16. On the other hand, it has been inferred on the basis of the Damodarpur copper plate of the Gupta era 128 (= AD 448) that the ratio could have been 1:15. In spite of our definite knowledge that the Guptas did strike copper pieces too, no Gupta copper coins have been found in Bengal. Excavations at Mangalkot (Burdwan dist.) have yielded cast copper coins of pre-Gupta times from the Gupta layers. It is therefore likely that cast copper coins of the pre-Gupta times were in circulation in different parts of Bengal during the period from 4th to the 6th century.

Post-Gupta coinage





Gold and silver coins continued to be issued by rulers who succeeded the Imperial Guptas in Gauda and Vanga regions roughly from the second half of the sixth century to the mid-eighth century AD. These rulers are largely known from their inscriptions but they were also issuers of coins. Of the three rulers, Dharmaditya, Samacharadeva and Gopachandra ruling in Vanga during the second half of the 6th century, Samacharadeva issued gold pieces of two classes, both being struck on the suvarna standard of 144 grains. But his coinage is of debased gold and appears to have been in circulation in the Vanga and Vanga-Samatata regions.

Coins of Shashanka (c. AD 600-637)



The powerful Gauda ruler, offers significant information regarding coinage and currency system in Bengal in the first half of the 7th century. Like the rulers of Vanga, Shashanka also minted gold coins on suvarna standard, but these were debased gold coins. Groups I, II and III of the debased coins contained respectively 49-52%, 33%, 32-36% and 16-34% of gold.

From Samatata area, on the other hand, a different kind of Shashanka's gold coins have been discovered. Chemical analysis show that these coins had a much higher gold content of good metal. These coins were struck not on the suvarna standard, but these weighed about 90 grains. Their weight suggests that these were minted by following the satamana standard of 180 grains and these coins were actually half satamana pieces. It is likely that these half satamana pieces of a much better metallic standard and purity were meant for circulation in the Samatata area only. Thus Shashanka's gold coins of two varieties and weight standards were minted for two different zones, Gauda-Vanga and Samatata.

It is significant that Jayanaga, who probably ruled in the Gauda region after



Shashanka, issued debased gold coins of suvarna standard which appear to have been used in Gauda.

On the other hand several local rulers of Samatata like Devavarman, Vasuvarman, an anonymous ruler of Samatata, Shrikumara, Jivadharanarata, Shridharanarata, Devakhadga, and Rajabhata continued the tradition of minting good quality gold coins based on satamana weight standard, started by Shashanka. These coins, generally weighing about 90 grains, were obviously half satamana pieces. Not only were these made of good quality gold, the percentage of gold is also quite high in these pieces. Balabhata of Samatata issued two types of gold coins, both weighing 90 grains; but one variety contained very high percentage gold of the total metallic content, the other variety represented a very debased gold coinage of half satamana weight. The end of the tradition of minting gold coins in Samatata and adjoining regions came with the gold coins of suvarna standard (144 grains) issued by Vangalmriganka Anandadeva of the early Deva dynasty of devaparvata (modern Mainamati) who modelled his gold coinage on that of the Chandra rulers of Arakan. In Harikela, the area around present Chittagong, were issued in 8th century debased gold coinage struck on the 8 gram weight standard.

A New Ruler SriDhruva in Samatata Coinage



In the annals of Indian history, it was mostly the rulers of north India who cherished imperialistic designs and to achieve it undertook military expeditions against the kingdoms of south India. For instance, Samudra Gupta and Harshavardhana during ancient period and Allauddin Khilji, Muhammad bin Tughlaq, Akbar and Aurangzeb during the medieval period. An exception to this trend was Dhruva, who was the first south Indian monarch to undertake an expedition to north India.



Dhruva was the second son of the Rashtrakuta ruler Krishna I and was ruling as governor over Nasik- Khandesh region during the rule of his elder brother Govinda II. From 780 A.D. onwards we find Dhruva as emperor, probably Govinda II himself entrusted responsibility to him and retired. Towards the same time Dhruva launched a campaign towards Bengal and defeated Dharmapala who had his rule over the samatata areas also. In context to this victory Dhruva might have issued coins in that area keeping the circulation coinage in design. A hitherto coin of an archer type has now come to surface. The obverse motif is that of the Archer types of the earlier rulers of the region but reads in brahmi " Dhruva" in between the legs and Sri in the right field as was previously observed on the coins of Sri Dharanaratta. This was not observed on any other specimens earlier and is worth recording of his issue in the region of Bengal.



Coins Of Harikela

The gradual fading away of the tradition of the minting of gold pieces in Bengal coincided with the issuance of a large number of silver coins in Harikela and Pattikera. The Harikela silver series is marked by its very high content of pure silver, the device of a recumbent bull and the legend Harikela on the obverse and a tripartite symbol on the reverse. The full unit weighed 8 grams, while the three-quarter, half and quarter units respectively weighed 6 grams, 4 grams and 2 grams. The palaeography of the legend Harikela and its variant forms indicates that the coins were struck in the 7th and 8th centuries. The Harikela silver coinage seems to have been derived from the silver coinage in contiguous Arakan under the Chandras of Arakan. More or less at about the same time similar silver coins were issued bearing the name of the locality Pattikera, identifiable with the area around Comilla; the Pattikera silver coinage must have been based on the Harikela silver coinage. It must be pointed out that the silver coins of Harikela and Pattikera do not bear the name of their issuing authorities.



The numismatic scenario of Bengal from c. 750 to 1200 AD perhaps offers maximum complexities and has generated immense scholarly controversies. The political situation is certainly dominated by the Palas (c. 750-1175) and the Senas (c. 1096-1205) who, however, did not control all the four major sub-regions of early Bengal. While these two were the premier regional powers of Bengal during the early middle ages, in the Samatata and Vanga areas ruled the Chandras (c. 900-1055), the Varmans (c. 1055-1145) and the Later Devas (last quarter of the 12th century to c. 1290). What strikes us is the total absence of gold currency of any ruler of Bengal from c. 750-1200. No less important is the fact that despite being the outstanding powers of eastern India, the Pala and the Sena kings are not known to have minted any metallic pieces as medium of exchange. On the other hand, inscriptions of the Palas and the Senas often refer to coin-terms like *purana*, *dharana* and *dramma* all of which stood for silver coins of the *karsapana* weight standard (32 *ratis* or 57.6 grains). The inscriptions of the Senas and those of more or less contemporary powers occasionally speak of the use of *kaparddaka-puranas* as a currency. The term *kaparddaka* stands for cowry shell. The hyphenated expression *kaparddaka-purana* denoted in all likelihood 'a theoretical unit of account representing the value of a *purana*, counted in *kaparddakas* or cowry shells'. The traditional arithmetic tables of Bengal suggest that the ratio between 1 silver coin (*purana/dramma* etc) and cowrie shells was 1:1280. The image of the circulation of cowries as a currency in early medieval Bengal gains ground from the availability of cowries from the excavations at *Paharpur* (Bangladesh) and *Colgong* (near Bhagalpur).

The absence of coins of precious metals in the Pala-Sena domains and the regular use of cowry shells have led some scholars to infer that Bengal suffered from 'monetary anaemia'. The monetary anaemia is thought to have been a consequence of languishing trade in Bengal and the onset of the self-sufficient, enclosed, rural, feudal economy. Cowries are perceived as a poor substitute for metallic money as a medium of exchange and these at the most were used in small-scale and local-level exchanges. The perception that cowries were restrictive of long distance trade does not stand scrutiny, as cowries were not native of Bengal and were themselves brought to Bengal from far away Maldives by sea trade (see trade and commerce).

Though the Pala-Sena realms did not yield any coins of Bengal, most part of the south-eastern Bengal presents a significant contrast to this. *Harikela* is noted for its uninterrupted silver coins of excellent metallic purity and content from the 7th to the 13th centuries. Like the silver coins of the 7th and 8th centuries, the silver



pieces of the post-8th century also do not inform us about their issuing authority or authorities. But the Harikela coins of the post-8th century show some significant changes. The flan of the silver coin was made broader and thinner and the devices of recumbent bull and tripartite symbol with the legend Harikela were stamped only on one side; the reverse was left blank. The palaeography of the legend Harikela and its variant forms suggests the striking of these coins from 8th/9th to 12/13th centuries.

The most significant change in the later coins is in their metrology: the later coins weigh in their higher denominations from 2.3800 - 3.3600 grams and in the lower denomination from 0.8392 to 1.9912 grams. These were struck on the metrology of 3.7314 grams that closely corresponds to the old karsapana standard of 57.6 grains or 32 ratis. From this point of view, the second and later series of Harikela coinage were probably the same as the puranas frequently figuring in the inscriptions of the Palas and the Senas. These silver pieces have a remarkable correspondence to the reformed Arab silver currency (dirham) in terms of shape and metrology. Harikela area plays a major role in Bengal's seaborne trade with the Arab world in the early medieval times. The Harikela coinage thus explodes the myth of the non-availability of coins of precious metals in early medieval Bengal. As these coins were easily convertible into cowries (ratio being 1:1280), the near absence of metal money in the Pala-Sena domains may not necessarily portray a decline of trade and coinage in Bengal.

In some inscriptions of the Sena period a new term *churnni* appears. The term suggests something powdered or in dust form. In many cases the term *churnni* figures in conjunction with puranas or silver coins, implying thereby that *churnni* should have denoted a medium of exchange. The Mehar copper plate of Damodaradeva of 1234 AD gives an impression that *churnni* and *purana* were used as nearly synonymous and interchangeable terms. Judged from this angle the term *churnni*, synonymous with *purana* or a silver coin, should denote powdered dust of pure silver having the same weight standard as that of a *purana*, i.e. 32 rati or 57.6 grains. An early medieval Tibetan text and the account of al Marvazi (1142 AD) leave impressions of the use of this 'dust currency' in pure silver and/or gold in Bengal. The *churnni* could be therefore easily exchanged with and converted into a *purana* or silver coin.

The early medieval period in Bengal, therefore, did not show the symptoms of



'monetary anaemia' and did not experience languishing trade. On the contrary, Bengal in the early medieval times witnessed the emergence of a complex three-tier currency system. At its base were cowry-shells, the perennial currency in Bengal at least from the third century BC; at the apex position were the excellent and very high quality silver coins-minted and circulated in Harikela-Samatata zone to the east of Meghna for over seven centuries and in the intermediate position was the churnni or dust currency, easily exchangeable and compatible with both metallic pieces and cowry-shells. With the advent of the thirteenth century Bengal once again saw the minting of gold coinage, this time under the Sultans of Bengal to whom the striking of coins was, among other things, a symbol of sovereignty of the ruling authority.

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India was frequently attacked by successive waves of outsiders in the past. India was, to put it mildly, one of the invaders' favourite destinations. Invaders desired to colonise India primarily because of its enormous wealth, agricultural potential, the spice trade, fertile river valleys, etc. Each foreign conqueror in India ruthlessly exploited the populace since India had an abundance of human resources.

The following information is about the foreign invaders who came to India in chronological sequence.

- Aryan Invasion (1800-1500 BCE)
- Persian invasions(535 BC)
- Alexander's Invasion(336 BC -323 BC)
- Indo-Greek Invasion (180 BC)
- Invasion of Scythians (125 -85 BC)
- Kushans from the Yeuchi Prinipate(8 AD)
- Arab Invasion by Mohammed Bin Kasim (712 AD)
- Turkish Invasion by Mahmud of Ghazni (1001 AD)
- Turkish Invasion by Muhammed of Ghur (1175 AD)
- Mongol Invasion (1206-1368 AD)
- The Invasion of Mughals (1526-1761 AD)
- The Invasion of Nadir Shah (1736 -1747 AD)
- The European Invasions

Amongst them were The Indo-Scythians , a group of nomadic Iranian people of Scythian origin who migrated from Central Asia southward into the north western Indian subcontinent. They started expansion in South Asia from 200 to 100 BCE and established rule between 100 and 80 BCE, their rule in Indian Subcontinent **lasted until 415s CE.**



Maues was a king of this tribe who appears to have conquered territory in Kashmir and then acquired control of the area around Taxila in the Punjab. At this point, the Scythians were perhaps not as distinct from the Greeks as might be imagined, as considerable inter-marriage was probably taking place. There is a coin telling us that the so-called "Indo-Greek" king Artemidoros was the son of Maues. We also see this inter-mingling in the fact that most of Maues's coin types follow Greek prototypes. This paper cites one unpublished coin of Maues . The normally published and known variety of this type is described as follows: imagined, as considerable inter-marriage was probably taking place. There is a coin telling us that the so-called "Indo-Greek" king Artemidoros was the son of Maues. We also see this inter-mingling in the fact that most of Maues's coin types follow Greek prototypes. This paper cites one unpublished coin of Maues . The normally published and known variety of this type is described as follows:



Maues, circa 125-85 BC. AE (Bronze, 24x23 mm, 13.34 g, 12 h). ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΜΑΥΟΥ Poseidon standing front, holding trident in his right hand and resting his right foot on river god swimming left. Rev. 'Rajadirajasa mahatasa Moasa' (of the Great King of Kings Maues' in Kharoshthi) Yakshi standing front, surrounded by vines and holding vine stems in both hands; to left, monograms. HGC 12, 553. Senior 28.3.

Obverse: Poseidon standing facing, making benediction gesture and holding trident, foot on river god; Greek legend around

Reverse: Yakshi standing facing, holding lotus and flanked by vines; Kharoshthi legend around Rajadirajasa mahatasa Moasa (of Great King of Kings Maues)

Ref: HGC 12, 552; Senior 26.1



A hitherto new variety of this type has been observed from my personal collection and I am thankful to Dr. Wilfred Pieper for noting out the difference. The obverse retains the same depiction of Poseidon standing front, holding trident in his right hand and resting his right foot on river god swimming left with legend in greek around ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΜΑΥΟΥ but on the reverse instead of the Goddess depicted the tripod on a railing symbol and monogram in left field which occurs in the coins of Azes only . But Kharoshthi legend around remains as *Rajadirajasa mahatasa Moasa* . This is indeed a remarkable observation for a symbol occurring on the coin of a preceding ruler and the observation is worth recording.



Smaran Kumar Das

The most interesting contribution to the geography of Bengal during medieval period, in spite of inadequate data, is Todar Mall's rent-roll. Though of AD 1582, it may be assumed that Todar Mall merely gave in it what he found to exist with regard to both divisions and revenue; for Bengal was only subjugated during Jahangir's reign. In Ain-e-Akbari, we find that Bengal proper was divided into 19 Sirkars, and 682 Mahalls. Eight of the 19 Sirkars, and 204 of the 682 Mahalls, have Muhammadan names. The rent roll included both the 'Khalisah' or crown lands, and the 'aqta' or 'Jagir' lands, i.e. land assigned to the officers in lieu of pay or maintenance of troops.

Sirkar Sharifabad, comprised of a portion of present Birbhum and a large area of Burdwan district together with the town of Burdwan itself. Mahall Barbak Singh and Fath Singh, were so called after the names of Bengal Sultans Barbak Shah and Fath Shah, and Sherpur 'Atai' where Man Singh defeated the Afghans also belonged to this Sirkar. It had 26 Mahalls under the jurisdiction and paid revenue of Rs 5,62,218 annually during those days. From this it may be contemplated that this area was an important settlement during the early Mughal rule.

However, it is generally believed that Sher Shah Suri, after conquering Bengal issued coins from Sharifabad. Not only Sher Shah, his successor Islam Shah also issued coins from this mint. Sher Shah captured Gaur (Lakhnauty), the capital of the then Bengal, in AH 945/AD 1538. And from the very next year he struck coins from Sharifabad in silver. His successor Islam Shah also followed the earlier tradition. But in spite of plenty copper coins (paisa) circulated in the market, no copper coins are found from this mint. From this it may be surmised that 'Chowrie' or 'Kapardaka' was prevalent in the market in Bengal. However, the next Afghan rulers of Bengal stopped issuing coins from Sharifabad.



Sher Shah Suri, Silver Rupee, Sharifabad Mint, Date 947



But recent discoveries belie that Suris were the first to issue coins from Sharifabad. Alauddin Husain Shah (AH 899-925/AD 1493-1519), one of the greatest Sultans of Bengal, struck coin from this mint in the beginning of his rule. During his time the kingdom was extended in different directions. So far eight mosque inscriptions have been identified from Sharifabad area. After Husain Shah none of his successors struck coin from this mint. A coin presumably issued by the last ruler of this dynasty (Ghiyathud din Mahmud Shah) from here (cf. G & G no. B912) have doubt in reading the mint name in its legend. From the above observation it may be accepted that Husain Shah is the only ruler to issue coin from Sharifabad prior to Sher Shah.



Husain Shah, Silver Rupee, Sharifabad Mint, Date 899

Very recently the author had the opportunity to examine his own collection where a unique silver rupee of Sharifabad has been found issued by Shamsuddin Yusuf Shah (AH 879-885/AD 1474-1481) i.e. 20 years prior to Husain's reign. The legend of the coin is as follow:



Yusuf Shah, Silver Rupee, Sharifabad Mint



Obverse:

Shams al dnyawa'l din abu'l Muzaffar Yusuf Shah (Sultan) bin Barbak Shah Sultan bin Mahmud Shah Sultan

Reverse:

Sahada, Sharifabad

Metal: AR Wt: 10.5 gm (approx.)

From the above numismatic evidences, it can be said with confidence that even before the conquer of Bengal by Suris, Sharifabad was a strong Centre. The town has been identified with Burdwan/ Bardhaman (i.e. the name of 24th Tirthankara of Jain- Mahavir). Indeed, Burdwan is an ancient town and several archaeological relics have been unearthed from here. But After the rule of Sultans of Bengal, when Mughals captured the region, it seems that coins ceased to appear from this mint.

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Note on a Unique Coin of Shams ud din Muzaffar Shah of Bengal



Smaran Kumar Das

The rule of the slaves of Abyssinia (modern Ethiopia) was a remarkable incident in the political history of medieval Bengal. Sultan Ruknuddin Barbak Shah (AH 864-879/AD 1459-1474) of later Ilyas Shahi dynasty brought the slaves from distant Africa and posted them as palace-guard.¹ Gradually they enjoyed the confidence of the Sultans, and were raised to dignified position in the society. But this pro-Abyssinian policy of the then rulers appeared as dangerous for both the masters and the country. The enormous favor showed to the Abyssinian slaves antagonized the members of both Hindu and Muslim nobilities, and this policy finally brought the ruin of the later Ilyas Shahi dynasty.

Jalaluddin Fath Shah (AH 886-893/ AD 1481-1486)², One of the son of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah ascended the throne after replacing Sikandar Shah, on the ground that he was afflicted with lunacy. About this time the body of Abyssinian slaves, grew very powerful and insolent. Fath Shah took the steps to curb their power and as a result, was assassinated by the commander of the palace-guard, called Shazada, who ascended the throne under the title of Ghiyathuddin Barbak Shah (AH 893/AD 1487/88).³ Thus a new regime, often called Habshi dynasty, started ruling Bengal. Most of the historians belief that this is the darkest age of the history of medieval Sultanate of Bengal. In the dark annals of Abyssinian predominance in Bengal only reign of Saifuddin Firuz alone provides a welcome relief. Now we will concentrate about the last ruler of the dynasty who styled himself Shamsuddin Muzaffar Shah (AH 896-899/ AD 1490-1493) and proclaimed his accession by the issue of coin.

Shamsuddin Muzaffar Shah, originally known as Sidi Badr Diwana, was a premier Abyssinian noble. He killed his rival Habsh Khan and earlier Sultan Qutbuddin Mahmud and seized the throne in AH 896/AD1490. He issued the coin from the beginning wherein he called himself Shams al dunyawa'l din abu'lhasir (rarely al muzaffar) Muzaffar Shah al Sultan (the sun of the world and religion, the father of the helper Muzaffar Shah, the king).⁴

Few years back another type of silver coin of this ruler had come to light. The coin carries a phrase 'KamtaMardan' along with the name of the ruler i.e. Shams al dunyawa'l din Muzaffar Shah in the margin on reverse while the obverse inscription begins with 'Fath al Mulk'. The complete legend of obverse and reverse are as following:⁵



Obverse

“Fath al mulk al-adil al-badhil al- mujahid sa'd al-din nasir amir al-mu'minin al-mukhaatib Shams al dunyawa'l din abu'l nasir”

(The victory of the just and generous king, the warrior, fortunate in the faith, the helper of the commander of the faithful, who is called Shams)

Reverse

Shahada in the center, divided by two parallel lines, around ***“Muzaffar Shah al-sultan khallada allah mulkahu wa sultanahu Kamta Mardan, Khazana, fi 898”*** (some coins the word mulkahu is missing and no mint name is present).



حکومت

Weight: 10.5 gms(approx.)

It establishes that a military expedition was made on Kamta by the army of the king in AH 898 (AD1493). It can be mentioned that Jalaluddin Fath Shah gained



some military success against Kuch overlords and called his kingdom Kuchmard Shahi on his coins struck in AH 890 (AD1485).⁶ Muzaffar Shah further penetrated in the northern frontier and entered in Kamta region as is clear from his coins with the phrase Kamta Mardan meaning Kamta Vanquished.⁷ The term 'Fath-al-mulk' or 'victory of the country' on the obverse side of the same coin also emphasizes the whole Kamta which is also challenged by few historians. Most likely his army pillaged and captured some fringe area of Kamta. Most of the coins of this ruler were struck at Dar-al-darb, and Khazana; but they were also issued from Barbakabad, Fathabad, Muhammadabad and a new unknown mint Khairabad. But this Kamta Mardan type have no mint name. Maybe they were issued from war camp mint. But this theory has been belied from a **newly discovered coin where 'Khazana' is introduced** in the margin, along with date, i.e. AH 898. This indicates that his military expedition was short lived and these coins were issued to glorify the Sultan's name.

Muzaffar Shah's reign lasted for about three years i.e. (AH 896-899/AD 1490-1499) and five inscriptions of his time have so far been discovered. They are from:⁸

- a) Dargah of Maulana Ata, Deokot, W. Dinajpur, West Bengal,
- b) Jami Mosque, Champanagar, Bhagalpur, Bihar, India,
- c) Dargah of Shah Majlis, Kalna, Burdwan, West Bengal,
- d) Chhoti Dargah, Hadrat Pandua, Malda, West Bengal &
- e) Chapai Nawabganj, S-E of Gaud, W.B.

But none from the then Kamta or nearby area. From the evidences of mints and epigraphical records it transpires that kingdom of Muzaffar was not big enough in comparison to the other dynasties, ruled in medieval Bengal.

The tyranny, violence and cruelty of Muzaffar Shah alienated the noble as well as the common people. Fortunately, they found an able leader and astute statesman. The man was the wazir of the Sultan, Husain Shah, and the joint efforts of the nobles, common people and soldiers, the dark period of Abyssinian rule in Bengal came to a sudden end.



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An interesting Ahom specimen with both side regnal year



Priyak Chakraborty

When it comes to Ahom Coinage and minting process it is considered as a pristine and highly skilled art of metallurgy among the medieval Indian coinage. The specimens were minted with high accuracy and was scrutinized by officers or mint masters. The *Sonari Bardoloi* or the mint masters were the experts of the mints (*Rajshals*), and skilled supervisors too. The mints or the *Rajshals* had an efficient level of hierarchy and various sections were engaged in respective duties which included production of plain sheets, hammering and supervision of mint masters and sorting of the damaged and error coins.

The coins of Ahom kingdom were struck mentioning the exact year of issue, the exceptions being the coins of early Ahom period belonging to *Jayadhvaja Simha* and *Chakradhvaja Simha*, which mentioned the year of issue as *saka era 1570* and *saka era 1585* respectively as frozen date. The early coins had the frozen year type issues probably influenced by the Cooch Behar coinage, which were known to the Ahoms before they started minting their own coins. Also, coins were struck by Jaintia Kingdom, Kachar Kingdom, and Khyrim Kingdom before the Ahoms introduced coins. It is interesting to note the fact that the early specimens bearing Ahom scripts, mentioned the date as 15th year of the 60-year cycle (*Chakradhvaja Simha*), 21st year (*Udayaditya*), 27th year (*Dihingia Roja*) and 33rd year in the coins of *Gadadhara Simha*.



Fig 1: The Regnal Year was minted in the reverse side of the coin. In this specimen dated (RY 14) is present on the reverse side of the coin.
(Gaurinatha Simha Half Rupee)



These were all frozen dates; it was from the time of Rudra Simha that the exact dates were mentioned in the coins. It is interesting to note the fact that the concept of exact Regnal year was introduced by Shiva Simha. The concept of RY was introduced by Shiva Simha probably by observing the Mughal coins which minted the RY and the date of issue. It is also noted that the Persian script was introduced during his tenure. The use of Persian script probably indicated the trade relations and openness of the Ahom kingdom under the tenure of Shiva Simha to trade and interact with the neighbors. It is interesting to note the fact that the RY concept was missing during the reign of Pramatta Simha and Rajeshwara Simha and Lakshmi Simha, except for few half rupees and coronation specimen (Ahom Script). The declaration of RY was widespread during the reign of Gaurinatha Simha. We can find specimens in Rupee denominations, half rupee, quarter rupee where the RY was mentioned along with the dates. As the norm suggests, the Regnal year was mentioned on one side of the coin (The reverse side of the coin) example specimen (Fig 1). A Specimen (Fig 2) with RY on both the sides of the coin weighing 5.56 gram was discovered by the author which belonged to the era of Gaurinatha Simha. The denomination is of Half Rupee which bears the name of the king and a Sivaite invocation to Gauri. The specimen was supposed to have the RY inscribed on one side but due to some minor error it has the RY imprint “১”, RY 1 on both the sides. These type of minor errors and also major errors, in Ahom coinage are seldom seen as they were perfectly scrutinized before being released from the mint.



Fig 2. Half Rupee (Gaurinatha Simha)

Obv: Assamese legend "*Sri Sri Ha/ra Gauri Pa/da Parasya RY 1 at bottom*"

শ্রী শ্রী হ/ৰ গৌৰীপ/দ পৰস্য '১'

Rev: Assamese legend "*Sri Sri Gau/rinatha simha/nrpasya*" RY 1 at bottom"

শ্রী শ্রী গৌ/ৰী নাথ সিং/হ নৃপস্য '১'

Abbreviations: RY (REGNAL YEAR meaning a year in the reign of a monarch, beginning on the day of accession)



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Vikram Chatterjee

Towards the end of June 1762, the Nawab of Bengal, Mir Qasim Ali Khan reached Munger from Murshidabad and made it his permanent capital, so many reasons were there for changing the capital, one of the reason was to secure Bihar from the interference of Shuja-Ud-Doulah, the wazir of Oudh also to save himself from the conspiracy of Mir Jafar Ali Khan. At Munger the Nawab immediately set himself to work of repairing the fortifications, and the existing building and commenced the construction of new edifices to beautify the town. Most of the artillery remaining at Murshidabad had to be brought gradually to Munger and new pieces of cannon were also purchased. In short, the Nawab took great pain to adorn and strengthen his capital. But within a few months there was a clash between Nawab and Company due to private trade of the Englishmen, nonpayment of Taxes, and the repeated violations of Nawab's farman. Finally, Company sent their army to Munger and captured the fort in October 1763 AD and Mir Qasim was removed from the post of Nawab.

During this period two types of Siccas had been minted from Munger Mint in the name of Shah Alam II with RY 4/1176 AH and RY 4/1177 AH. The design of the dice are completely different.



Type 1: Nazrana



Type 2: Conventional

One of the possible reason is that Nazrana type was issued by Mir Qasim to control the trade from Munger but the Englishmen minted the conventional type similar to the Murshidabad Sun Siccas for their trade and to save themselves from the Battas in the other mints of Bengal. Another reason could be the Nazrana type was issued by Mir Qasim but forced to withdraw due to the pressure of Company as it was completely different from the Murshidabad style Sun Sicca. As we get the Munger Sicca with 1177 AH date which had been issued after the reign of Mir Qasim so it is clear that Nazrana type was not issued by the company.



Recently a unique fraction of Munger Mint ($1/8^{\text{th}}$ rupee or two anna) has surfaced which had been prepared from Nazrana type die and probably a Muhgal issue as it was issued by the Nawab.



The weight of the fraction is 1.41 gm. This is a beautiful unique fraction from Munger Mint which is also historically important.

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Coins under Administration of Nawab Siraj-ud-daula from Murshidabad



Souvik Majumdar

The Mughals established the Nawab, a rank of administration, to exert control over the country by dividing it into smaller regions known as subah. Bengal Subah was likely formed during the period of Akbar, but it was Aurangzeb who employed Murshid Kuli Khan as Nawab or Governor of Bengal, Bihar, and Odisha. After Nawab Alivardi Khan's death, Nawab Siraj-ud-daula ascended to the throne in April 1756. Continuous conflicts with Maratha and the East India Company made his life and reign very short. Just after the battle of Plassey in June 1757, he was captured and executed by his own general, Mir Jafar, who also became the next nawab.

Siraj-ud-daula's importance is that he was the last independent ruler of Bengal. Numismatists try to collect coins in his name, but because of his short reign, coins are rare. Like his predecessors, coins under his administration bore the name and title of the Mughal Emperor, along with the mint name, hijri date, and regnal year of the emperor.

Siraj-ud-daula had minting control over **Murshidabad**, **Azimabad** (Patna), **Jahangirnagar** (Dacca), and **Alinagar** (Calcutta). As Murshidabad was the capital of Bengal, it was the main operating mint.

Coins minted from Murshidabad under the short period of Siraj-ud-daula are of silver and very few gold coins are known. The silver coins bore the legend of emperor Alamgir second as follows: "sikka zad bar haft kishwar ham chu taban mihr-o-mah; shah Azizud-din Alamgir badshah ghazi," which means struck coins in the seven climes like the shining sun and moon, and king Azizuddin Alamgir, the defender of faith.

The only difference between the coins of Siraj-ud-daula and the other two Nawabs is the date incorporated on the obverse of the coin and the regnal year of the emperor on the reverse side. As Siraj-ud-daula ascended to the Masnad in April 1756 and was executed in June 1757, coins issued during that time were considered coins under the name of Siraj-ud-daula. Julus (Regnal Year) 3 with date AH 1169 or AH 1170 are such coins.

The complete four numericals of the hijri date are very rarely visible. Fractions in Siraj's reign are exceedingly rare. Only a part of the legend on the obverse and Julus 3 appear on coins. Easy identification is to follow the distinctive nokhta of



Alamgir's name (two dots on the left of the upper line) and the sun symbol on the obverse. In reverse julus 3 an easily visible added jasmine flower or part of it confirms the coins. Mint names in smaller fractions like 1/4th, 1/8th or 1/16th are generally out of flans.

Following are the rupee, a half rupee, and a two annas of Nawab Siraj-ud-daula's reign. The rupee has a clear date of AH 1170 with RY 3 but the fractions only bore RY 3 in reverse along with other important mint marks.

Pic 1



Rupee of Siraj ud-Daula in name of Emperor Alamgir II, dated A.H. 1170, Regnal year 3

Pic 2



Half Rupee of Siraj ud-Daula in name of Emperor Alamgir II, dated Regnal year 3

Pic 3



1/8th. Rupee of Siraj ud-Daula in name of Emperor Alamgir II, dated Regnal year 3

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COIN COURTESY- AUTHOR



Vinod Jaiswal

The Bengal Presidency, one of the largest and most significant administrative divisions under British rule in India, played a crucial role in the economic and cultural history of the region.

Among its many contributions to colonial India's monetary system, the coinage of the "**Ek Pai Sikka**" (One Pice Coin) stands out as a symbol of the intricate blend of local traditions and colonial administration.

The term "**Ek Pai Sikka**" refers to the One Pice Coin, a low-denomination currency unit that was pivotal in daily transactions during the Bengal Presidency era. These coins, primarily minted from copper, served as the backbone of small-scale commerce and were essential for everyday purchases. Their circulation not only facilitated trade but also provided insights into the economic practices, cultural influences and administrative policies of the time.

Coinage in the Bengal Presidency evolved through various phases, reflecting changes in governance, economic policies and technological advancements in minting. From the early issues bearing Persian inscriptions to the more standardized post-1835 coins featuring English, Persian and sometimes Bengali or Devanagari scripts, the Ek Pai Sikka coins encapsulate a rich tapestry of historical narratives.

COPPER MINTS OF BENGAL PRESIDENCY

The Bengal Presidency, under British rule, had several mints that produced copper coins to meet the demands of the local economy. These mints played a crucial role in standardizing currency and facilitating trade within the region. The major copper mints were **Calcutta, Benaras, Putla and Sagour**.

The copper mints of the Bengal Presidency played a crucial role in the economic life of the region. They ensured a consistent supply of small denomination coins, which were vital for everyday transactions and trade. These mints not only supported the economic policies of the British East India Company and later the British Crown but also left a lasting legacy in the form of coins that are now valuable historical artifacts.



While the "EkPaiSikka" or One Pice Coin, one of the key denominations of copper coin from the Bengal Presidency had various sizes, weights and design variations over the years. The design and varieties from the Sagour mint were notably elegant. Here is a more detailed overview of these aspects from the Sagour mint with a background of the then town and its mint.



THE TOWN OF SAGOUR/SAGAR

The word “**SAGAR**” means “Security and Growth for All in the Region”. Sagar city is located in the north-central region of Madhya Pradesh. It is situated around a lake that is surrounded on three sides by low spurs of the Vindhya range. The city is known as the heart of Madhya Pradesh.

The Saugor Territories were captured by the British East India Company from the Marathas at the conclusion of the Third Anglo-Maratha War, in 1818.

During British era the city was called “SAUGOR” and got changed to “SAGAR” again only after Independence.



SAGOUR MINT OVERVIEW

The Sagar/Sagour mint was set up in 1779 AD and started producing silver coins known as “Balashahi rupee” which was said to contain “80 ruttees of silver and 10 ruttees of alloy”.

The copper pice was proposed to be made in 1826 AD but the minting began only in the early 1827 AD. As the sources revealed the mint was operational only up to 1833 AD and it was closed thereafter.

COINAGE AND DESIGN

The COPPER PICE of Sagar/Sagour mint bears no private mint mark but are known and easily recognized by their general appearance. All pice bears the sanah/ regnal year 45.

The **FIRST COPPER COINAGE** of Sagar/Sagour mint is said to be from 1826 AD to 1833 AD bearing the “Sanah/Regnal year 45” and the “Trisul/Trident” on both sides obverse and reverse of the coin.



OBVERSE

“Sanah julus 45 Shah Alam Badshah”
(In the 45th year of the emperor Shah Alam)



REVERSE

Value in two (2) languages:
Persian and Hindi (Translated as “Ek Pai Sikka”)

The **SECOND COPPER COINAGE** is said to be of 7 months in 1833 AD bearing Trisul/Trident on only one side i.e. the reverse of the coin and the obverse comes with 3 different varieties as stated.

Obverse A: Trisul/Trident in the sin of julus

Obverse B: 6 petalled flower in the sin of julus.

Obverse C: 6 petalled spiky rosette/star flower in the sin of julus.



OBVERSE A



OBVERSE B



OBVERSE C



REVERSE

Value in two (2) languages:
Persian and Hindi (Translated as "Ek Pai Sikka")
Note: Trisul/Trident in the Persian inscription

NEW FINDING

Ek Pai Sikka has always intrigued the curiosity of exploring for a coin collector. I was no different in being mesmerized by the same. Each piece offers a design element for deeper study. By examining these details, one can appreciate the historical and numismatic importance of the Ek Pai Sikka coins from the Bengal Presidency era. While doing so, I came across a highly interesting differentiating element of style which I am hereby presenting.

This has been the first time being noted that there is a difference in not just the styling of the word Ek Pai but also the Spelling.

The observation about the difference in the styling and spelling of "Ek Pai" (एकपाई) on this coin is indeed fascinating and can offer valuable insights into its historical and cultural context. Variations in coin inscriptions can occur due to several reasons, including differences in regional dialects, changes in administrative policies or even specific mint practices. Here's a deeper look at what these variations might signify:



KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS:

- Ek Pai written in Hindi as पेकापई
- Ek Pai spelled as Peka Pie
- Spiky rosette in sīn of julūs suggest its mint “Sagour”

The word Ek Pai written in Hindi as Peka Pie “The stroke (Ṛ) should come after (प) instead of (क) in actual.

ASSUMPTIONS OF VARIATION IN SPELLING & STYLING

1. REGIONAL INFLUENCES:

The Bengal Presidency encompassed a vast and diverse region with multiple languages and dialects. The differences in spelling and styling could reflect local linguistic preferences or practices.

For example, the script used in Murshidabad might have slight variations compared to that used in Calcutta due to regional linguistic nuances.

2. MINT-SPECIFIC PRACTICES:

Different mints within the Bengal Presidency might have had their own standard practices for coin inscriptions. This could lead to variations in the way words are styled or spelled.

Specific engravers or mint officials might also influence the design and inscriptions on the coins.



CONCLUSION

The **Ek Pai Sikka** from the Bengal Presidency era is a fascinating subject for those interested in numismatics, colonial history and economic history. These coins not only served as a medium of exchange but also as artifacts that offer a glimpse into the complex history of British colonial rule in India. Preservation and study of these coins continue to provide valuable insights into the economic and administrative systems of the time.

My sincere thanks to Mr. Ravi Shankar Sharma & Mr. Rishav Raj Maroti for helping me and guiding me to write this paper.

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A newly discovered Tea Token : A Goldmine of unexploited information



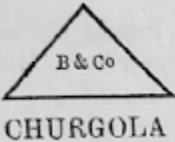
S. K. Bose

While writing on our book *Cha Baganer Paisa*¹ in 2011, we have commented that in future many more tea garden tokens are likely to surface and certainly a vast treasure house of tea tokens still remains to be discovered and could yield a goldmine of information². Naturally, door to research in this field remains open, which will highlight more history of the tea labours and their socio-economic status during the pre-independence period. Our books and several articles in recent past have certainly raised interest among readers, students, researchers and scholars alike and information of more tokens have started surfacing from different areas, especially in India and Bangladesh, both having a number of tea and coffee plantations in their geographical region.

Recently, a previously unknown token has surfaced. This has been first noticed by Ravi Shankar Sharma, numismatist.



Tea token, used for paying salary to the employees



CHURGOLA TEA CO, LD., Karimgunge, Sylhet.—Post Office, Ratabari. Gardens, Churgola, Anipur, and Kalacherra. Total acreage, 572. *Proprs.*, Churgola Tea Co., Ld. *Supdt.*, R. Cooke. *Managers*, H. Bryans and W. Pigot. *Asst.*, H. Cholmeley. *Medical officer*, A. Dobbs, M.B. *Mang. agents*, Buch nan & Co., London.

Tea Chest Symbol

¹Shanker Kumar Bose, *Cha Bâgâner Paisâ* (Bengali), Library of Numismatic Studies, Kolkata, 2011, p.61.

²S. K. Bose et. al, *A Tale of Tea Tokens*, The Asiatic Society, Kolkata, 2021, p.66.



The diameter of the token is 39 mm and the weight is 9 gram; Metal – Brass, Shape –Round, Legend - **CHARGOLA TEA ASSOCIATION LIMITED** on both the sides (obverse and reverse) between two circles around the rim and on the upper portion of the centre a perforation has been made in such a way that it stand as H. Below H there is a legend **DIVISION**. Considering the location of the garden, we presume that this H represents Hailakandi Tea Division of the then Karimgunge or Karimganj Sub-Division of Sylhet.

When we searched all the available old records on Indian tea gardens, from 1879 onwards, we noticed that a tea company namely **CHURGOLA TEA CO LTD** was in existence at “Karimgunge”, Sylhet in 1879 and the company had three gardens namely Chargola, Anipur and Kalacherra. The total acreage was 572, nearest Post Office was at Ratabari; the garden was owned by Chargola Tea Co. Ltd.. Managing agents of the company was Buchanan & Co, London³. Interestingly, a further search shows that ownership of all the above mentioned gardens subsequently changed to Chargola Tea Association. Not only that, the later company has also acquired some more tea estates such as Tarbin chhara (Police Station Ratabari), Magura Chhara Shingla Chhara and Balichara (P.S. Ratabari), all under the then Karimgunge Sub Division. In addition, the new owner also expanded his plantation to Hingajia (P.S. Hingajia) in South Sylhet⁴. The question therefore arises as to when this Chargola Tea Company converted or sold their assets to Chargola Tea association. After a further search to the archive records⁵ preserved at the Glasgow University, in the name of Chargola Tea Association and Records of P R Buchanan Co. Ltd. a set of information has helped us to understand the situation or reason thereof.

We have seen above that Buchanan & Co, London was the Managing Agent of Chargola Tea Company Ltd. P R Buchanan went to India in 1867 and was working as manager of Monacherra Tea Estate, Hailakandy Valley. In 1871 He became the owner of an estate called Chargola in Sylhet, near the western

³*A Complete List of Indian Tea Companies; their capital, Directors, Managers. And Agents And of Tea Gardens; with Jute, Indigo, Sugar, Coffee Manufactories, And Their Marks, Proprietors, Managers, Assistants and Agents, Thackers, Spink And Co., Calcutta, 1879, pp. 1-65.*

⁴Achyutcharan Choudhury, *Sreehatterlibritta, Bongabda* 1317 (1910-1911), Sylhet, Addenda of Geographical description, Part I Chapter I, pp. 32-34 and appendix E (ৗ), pp. 21 to 27.

⁵<http://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk;Chargola Tea Association – Records of P.R. Buchanan Co. Ltd – Archive Hub> searches on 13.47 pm, 24.02.2024.



boundary of Cachar. This was actually in fairly close proximity to the Hailakandy Valley. In 1877, P R Buchanan and friends set up an agency in London called P R Buchanan & Co in which Arthur Bryan was also involved in some way. The four partners were: P R Buchanan, Gow Smith, based in India; C T Richardson based in India; and Col. P Robertson, a sleeping partner, based in Great Britain. By 1878 supervising tea estates was their main business and the backbone of that business was Chargola. This Tea Company developed into the above mentioned Chargola Tea Association in 1895, comprising of, by 1910, Chargola, Anipur, Kal Chhara, Tarbin Chhara, Magura Chhara, Shinga Chhara, Bali Chhara Hingajia and Lall Chhara⁶. The Company was also supervising many more tea gardens, such as Mukham chhara, Nora Chhara, Doorga Chhara, Sauchhara, Doolab Chhara, Teela Chhara, Phania Chhara, Coombir Chhara, Olivia Chhara, Duklingole, Kajudhara, Sagurnal, Bagchhra.

P. R. Buchanan retired from the business in November 1905 and died in 1929.

The history of Chargola tea division will be incomplete, unless we mention about Chargola exodus of 1921. Due to persistent economic hardship, the tea garden labourers became restive from the beginning of 1921. On 2nd May, the garden labourers in Chargola Valley stopped work, demanding a pay increase. Finding no solution, when their demand was totally ignored, historic labour exodus from Chargola had started. Seven hundred fifty men, women and children from only Anipur garden left the garden and started proceeding towards Uttar Pradesh where from they were hailing. Subsequently this was followed by thousand of tea labourers from Chargola and Longai Valley. They were following Gandhiji's peaceful non-cooperation and decided to go back to their roots in U.P. villages to live a simple life. When police adopted brutal outrageous behaviors against these workers at different railway stations, the matter drew attention of common people, and railway workers, steamer workers also started strikes in support of the tea labourers. As a result "Chargola exodus" became a historical phenomenon.

⁶*Op. cit.* Sreehatterltibritta.



Riddhi Bhattacharya

A state is a primary political division within a country. It typically has its own government, constitution, and sovereignty, and it exercises significant control over its internal affairs. In federations like the United States, Australia, or Germany, states have broad powers and share sovereignty with the central government. States are usually represented in the National Government and they have the authority to pass laws and make policies within their jurisdiction.

A territory is a subordinate political division within a country. It is usually established when a region has not yet achieved full statehood or does not have the same level of self-governance as a state. Territories are typically subject to greater control from the central government compared to states. They may have limitations on their decision-making powers and can be governed by officials appointed by the central government. Territories may have limited representation at the national level and might not have the same degree of political autonomy as states. In India there are total 28 states and 8 union territories. Union territories are still trying to be part of state representation.

A district is a smaller administrative division within a state or territory. Districts are created for the purpose of local governance, administrative convenience or to ensure effective provision of public services. They are often delineated based on geographic, demographic, or historical considerations. Districts can have elected representatives or appointed officials who manage local affairs, such as education, healthcare, infrastructure, and law enforcement. The specific powers and responsibilities of districts can vary depending on the country and its political system.

It's important to note that the definitions and roles of states, territories, and districts can vary widely depending on the country or region in question. The specific features and powers assigned to these divisions are determined by national constitutions, laws, and historical contexts.

A province is a type of administrative division or territorial unit within a country or region. It is typically larger than a city or municipality but smaller than a country or state. Provinces are often delineated based on geographic, historical, cultural, or political considerations. In many countries, provinces serve as a subdivision of a



larger administrative unit, such as a state or country. They are usually responsible for managing certain local affairs, including governance, public services, infrastructure, and sometimes taxation. The specific powers and responsibilities of provinces can vary widely depending on the country or region. Some provinces have significant autonomy and legislative powers, while others have limited authority and mainly act as administrative divisions.

District coins, also known as provincial coins or regional coins, are issued by governments to commemorate and celebrate specific districts or provinces within a country. While I don't have access to specific information about district coins issued by the Sri Lankan government, I can certainly provide you with a brief history of such coins in general.

The concept of district coins or regional coins is relatively modern, and there isn't a definitive "first" district coin of the world that can be identified. However, there are several notable examples of regional currencies or tokens that have been used throughout history. One prominent example is the Canadian Tire money, which was introduced by the Canadian retail company Canadian Tire in 1958. It is a loyalty program where customers receive paper money-like coupons that can be used as currency at Canadian Tire stores and partner businesses. Although not issued by a government, it is often considered a form of regional or district currency. Another example is the Bristol Pound, a local currency created in the city of Bristol, England, in 2012. It was designed to encourage local spending and support the city's independent businesses. Bristol Pounds can be used alongside the national currency, the British Pound Sterling, within the city and help boost the local economy. While these examples may not fit the traditional definition of district coins, they showcase the idea of promoting regional commerce and supporting local economies through the use of alternative currencies. It's important to note that the history of regional currencies is diverse, and there may be other instances of district coins or regional currencies throughout the world. Conducting specific research on the history of regional currencies in various countries can provide more insights into this topic.

In the same way the country Sri Lanka has been divided into 25 districts and 9 provinces out of which the Sri Lankan government has produced the 25 district coins of the country in the year 2013. These coins are not typically intended for circulation, but rather as collectible items available for purchase by collectors, enthusiasts, or tourists. District coins can offer a variety of designs, shapes, and materials, and they can become valuable over time due to their limited mintage.



and unique themes. If you're interested in learning more about district coins issued by the Sri Lankan government, I recommend reaching out to relevant numismatic organizations or conducting further research online.

It is a pity that these 25 district coins were not issued individually, say one per month with maybe a function in each district. It would have been an opportunity to engage with the rural public. Many countries like Britain, Canada, Australia and the United States have issued similar coin sets. Almost all issued over a period of one or more years, gaining momentum in collector interest over that long period. The most popular 50 US state series of 25 cent coins was issued over 10 years from 1999 to 2008 with just 5 issued each year in 10 week intervals.

In 1833, a legislative council was created, making the island a politically and administratively single unit. Five provinces were created, later expanded into nine, and these were subdivided into twenty-one districts. These districts were administered by officials known as Government Agents or Assistant Government Agents.

In 1955, the district replaced the province as the country's main administrative unit. The Ampara District was created in 1961, followed by the creation of the Mullaitivu and Gampaha districts in 1978 through a new constitution, which also reintroduced the province as the main administrative unit. The last district to be created was Kilinochchi in 1984, and the current constitution (that of 1978) states that the territory of Sri Lanka consists of 25 administrative districts. These districts may be subdivided or amalgamated by a resolution of the Parliament of Sri Lanka.

Almost all countries which have issued a series of coins are a federation of once independent states which merged to form the present large country. This is clearly not the case for small Lanka which has 25 purely administrative districts under the nine Provincial Councils created in 1987 by the 13th Amendment to the Sri Lanka Constitution.

The economic condition of Sri Lanka has been quite in an obtuse way with respect to the present scenario if we analyse it for the same. In the year 2011 the Indian Rupee is to Sri Lanka rupee was only 49 paisa to 47 paisa during 2011-2013 tenure with respect to 0.25 paisa at the current scenario which clearly specifies that a stiff fall of 46.41% in the present situation. Thus to check the declining situation of the Economic condition they started to focus the main



backbone of their country. The main backbone of the economy is Tourism and thus to make the same popular they started to focus on the district coins of Sri Lanka which appears as the main nucleus to the world. With this initiative the Sri Lanka's economic growth is expected to recover gradually to 6.8% in 2013 and to 7.2% in 2014.

This set of 25 coins was issued, it is claimed, to create coin collector interest. However, CBSL does not see the need to communicate with the collectors while letters sent seeking information and with offers to help go unanswered. It is therefore not surprising that it leads to very poor public relations.

At the beginning of the project the Sri Lanka Numismatic Society wrote and requested that this set be associated with the heritage sites, rather than districts. UNESCO Heritage site Dambulla gets no mention, overshadowed by Sigiriya in the same district.

It is a pity that the representation of the image was not identified on each coin. As district names are hardly known, a tourist might wonder why Sigiriya Rock is called Matale. The fact that the two bathing elephants on the Kegalle coin represent the Pinnawala Elephant orphanage is not obvious. The space at bottom could have been used, removing the 2013 which appears on both sides of the coin, when it is not even the year of release. It was just the year the coins were ordered from the Mincovna Kremnica of the Slovak Republic.

Thus after the issue of this type of coins mainly in Canada (provincial coins), USA (state and territory coins), Germany, Slovenia, Australia (territory coins) it would be very good now if India can come up with the issue of its own state and territory coins through the bimetallic coins of 10 and 20 Rupees.



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