

INDIA: THE COINAGE OF SRINAGAR IN GARHWAL 1760-1815 A.D.

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Historical Summary

In common with many hill states of northern India, the little state of Garhwal has had a fairly stormy past, and indeed very little is known of its history apart from a list of rulers and a few records of conquests. A summary of the known facts is given by Capt. J. Evatt in his "Handbook on Garhwalis" published in 1924, and I have not been able to supplement this to any great extent. Since it was not until about 1760 that coins were first struck in Garhwal, I shall confine my outline of the history to the 18th and early 19th centuries.

The first ruler of interest in this period was Fateh Shah who ascended the throne of Garhwal in 1684. He was a very warlike character who led raids into Tibet and onto the plains as well as into the neighbouring state of Kumaon. Until 1709 he was comparatively successful, but in that year the capital, Srinagar was captured by the Raja of Kumaon, and Fateh was forced to flee to Dehra Dun the next most important town in Garhwal. Fateh was unable to recapture his territory, but early in the reign of his successor Pradip Shah, who ascended the throne in 1717, the Garhwalis recaptured their capital. The next forty years were relatively prosperous and uneventful, until in 1757 Dehra Dun was captured from the Garhwalis by the Rohillas, a tribe living in the plains to the North East of Delhi. Pradip Shah ruled until 1772, when he was succeeded by Lallat Shah, followed in 1781 by Jayakrit Shah. In 1785 Jayakrit attacked Kumaon, where his brother Parduman was ruling but the Garhwali forces were defeated and fled, and during the flight Jayakrit Shah died. The troops of Kumaon pressing home their advantage took possession of Srinagar, and Parduman Shah became ruler of both Kumaon and Garhwal. After a few years Parduman forsook Kumaon altogether and set up residence in Srinagar.

In 1791 the Gorkhas of Nepal invaded Garhwal having first subdued Kumaon. However, news of the Chinese invasion of Nepal forced the Nepalese troops back home and they were unable to capture Srinagar, but they did conclude a treaty with Parduman whereby the Garhwalis agreed to pay a yearly tribute to Nepal of 25,000 rupees. In 1803 the Gorkhas again invaded, and occupied Srinagar in October 1803 after very little resistance. Parduman fled to the plains, but in January of the following year he made a final and unsuccessful attempt to recapture his kingdom.

For the next 12 years the Gorkhas ruled Garhwal with a tyranny that became proverbial. Villages were burned, the inhabitants sold as slaves, extortionate taxes were imposed and all persons of rank were either murdered or banished. Fortunately for the Garhwalis in 1815 the British annexed Garhwal, no resistance being offered by the Gorkhas. Control of the state was then handed over to one Sudarsan Shah, who ruled in peace and with distinction for over forty years, but as no coins were struck after the Gorkha occupation this period of Garhwali history is beyond the scope of this paper.

Coinage and Metrology

The coinage of Garhwal has never, so far as I know, been adequately published and the following listing is the first to appear in this short lived and poorly produced series.

Coinage and Metrology (Continued)

Coins were first struck in Garhwal around 1760 and all bear the mint name of Srinagar, the capital. The copper coins carry the name of the Raja of Garhwal Pradip Shah, while the silver are of standard Moghul design with the name of the Moghul Emperor Shah Alam II. Although Garhwal was not really part of the Moghul Empire it seems possible that the Shah Alam titles were included to ensure that the coins could be used in trade with the plains.

The silver coins seem to have been called "Timasha", which presumably referred to the weight standard of 3 Mashas. Taking a Masha to be 1/12th of a Tola, the weight should be about 3 grammes although the weights of actual specimens vary between 2.3 and 1.7 gms. The reason for this weight standard, unusual for a Moghul type coin, may be found by looking to the north from where much of the trade through Garhwal originated. In Tibet weight standards tended to be derived from China instead of India, and the Chinese ingots, weighing multiples of the Chinese ounce, or "Srang" in Tibetan, circulated widely in multiples of about 38 gms. of fine silver. It may be that these pieces were intended to circulate as 1/20 Srang or 1/2 Sho and to be used in Trade with Tibet. A coinage of similar weight and fabric can be found in another of the Tibetan border areas, Ladakh.

The silver coinage appears to stop temporarily in about 1880 as no coins are known for the reign of Jayakrit and only copper coins for the reign of Parduman Shah. There is a curious anomaly in the dates of these copper coins as many of the pieces are marked 1835 or 1838. The era used should be the Samvat, making these 1778 and 1781 A.D., well before Parduman conquered Srinagar in 1785. It may be that Parduman exercised some nominal control over Lallat Shah and his brother Jayakrit while he was still ruling in Kumaon, but no such authority is mentioned in the history.

After the Gorkha conquest of Srinagar in 1803, silver coins immediately make their appearance again, and the copper coins virtually disappear. Indeed only a single specimen of a copper coin which has the name of the Nepalese king is known to me. The silver coins have the name of Girvan Yuddha, the King of Nepal, and the Moghul Emperor, but after about 1813 the Moghul Emperor is dropped and Girvan Yuddha's name alone appears on the coins. Although Arabic script is used on all the Garhwali coins struck by the Nepalese, some Hindu influence is occasionally visible. On a few coins the sword, the emblem of sovereignty, appears, and the date numerals sometimes appear in Nagari script.

In 1815, after the annexation of Garhwal by the British, the coinage came to an abrupt end and no coins are known to have been struck by Sudarsan Shah. The whole history of the Mint lasted only about 55 years.

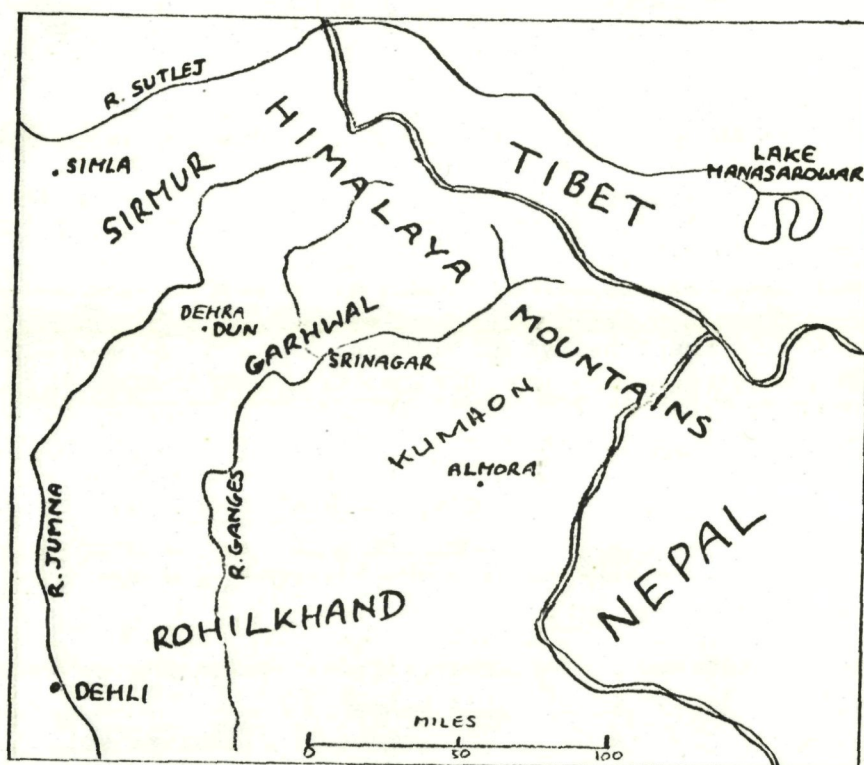
Selected References

- W.H. Valentine. "The Copper coins of India, Part I". Spink 1914.
A good listing of the copper coins based on the British Museum Collection. (reprinted 1971).
- J. Princep. "Useful Tables". Calcutta 1834
Mentions the "Timasha" and describes it as "coined in Nepal? current in Srinagar". He also gives the weight of 34.3 grains (= 2.22 gms) and fineness of 92.9%.

Selected References (Continued)

Capt. J. Evatt. "Handbook on Garhwalis". Calcutta 1924.
The best historical survey on Garhwal that I have seen.

F. Toker. "Gorkha". Constable 1957.
A good history of Nepal which gives the Nepalese background
to the invasion and occupation of Garhwal.



List of Coin Types

A - Silver Coins

The coins listed in the first five sections are all silver "Timashas" of diameter about 13mm and weight between 1.7 gms. and 2.3 gms.

Section I

SHAH ALAM II (1759-1806)

Coins with the name of the Moghul Emperor without the name of the local ruler. First series dated in regnal years.

Obv. شاه عالم باد شاه غازی سکه مبارک

Shah Alam badshah ghazi sikka mubarak.
Auspicious coin of the victorious emperor Shah Alam.

Rev. ضرب سر نگر سنه ۱۳ جلوسر میمنت مانوس

Zarb Srinagar, sanah ... julus maimanatmanus.
Struck in Srinagar in the ...th year his fortunate reign.

1. 1st year (۱)
2. 2nd year (۲)
3. 3rd year
4. 4th year
5. 5th year
6. 8th year
7. 11th year
8. 12th year
9. 15th year

Section II

Second series with date in "A.H." and with Samvat date below
Inscriptions the same as previous issue.

10. 1189 A.H., 1832 Samvat (1755 A.D.)
11. 1190 A.H., 1833 Samvat.
12. 1191 A.H., 1834 Samvat (Illustrated)
13. 1192 A.H., 1835 Samvat.
14. "۴" in place of A.H. date, 1837 below.

Section III

SHAH ALAM II and GIRVAN YUDDHA (period 1803-1806)

Coins struck during the first three years of the Gorkha occupation of Garhwal. Inscriptions as follows.

Obv. As last type.

Rev. مهاراجه گربان حوده بکرم شاه ضرب سر نگر

Maharaja Girvan Yuddha Vikram Shah, Zarb Srinagar.

15. Problematic date "66" on obverse (Illustrated)
16. Problematic date "1181" on reverse (Illustrated)
17. Tiger knife on reverse " ۴ " (Illustrated).
18. Tiger knife on obverse " ۴ " , " ۴ " on reverse.
Form of "k" in "Mubarak" varied (Illustrated).

AKBAR II and GIRVAN YUDDHA (Period 1806-1813)

Section IV.

Silver timashas were struck throughout this period and exist in many varieties. I have tried to illustrate most of those that I have seen, but others may well exist. Inscriptions as follows.

Obv.

اکبر شاہ بادشاہ غازی سکہ مبارک

Akbar Shah Badshah Ghazi, sikka mubarak.
Auspicious coin of the victorious emperor Akbar.

Rev. As last coin.

- 19. Date "66" on obverse. This may be short for 1866 Samvat. (= 1809 A.D.) but see coin No. 15.
- 20. As last but different form of "k" in "Akbar".
- 21. Symbols " * " on obverse and " | " on reverse. No date.
- 22. Different placing of obv. legend. First year (۱۸۰۱) Rev. " † " "
- 23. As last but symbol on rev. " √ ".
- 24. Reads "Shah Akbar". "First" reads " P ".
- 25. Symbol on rev. " * ".
- 26. Date "67" in Nagari symbols for 1867 Samvat (=1810A.D.) in obv. field.
- 27. As last, but different arrangement of obv. inscription.
- 28. As last, but yet another arrangement of inscription.
- 29. Date "68" (=1811 A.D.). Rev. sword in dotted circle.
- 30. As last, but reads "Shah Akbar".
- 31. Date "69" (=1812A.D.) in dotted semicircle. No symbol on rev.
- 32. As last, but date in semicircle undotted.
- 33. Date "70" (=1813 A.D.).

GIRVAN YUDDHA alone. (Period 1813-1815)

Section V

Both obverse and reverse have the same inscriptions as the reverse of the last type. I have looked for, but not found any die links between this and any other type.

- 34. Symbol " √ " on one side. Reverse symbol not clear.
- 35. Symbol " * " on one side, " A " on other. Slight variation in positioning of the inscription on one side.

B - Copper Coins

Section VI

The copper coins are all about 16mm. in diameter and weigh between 3.5 gms. and 5.4 gms. References are given to Valentine.

PRADIP SHAH (1717-1772)

36. Obv. سر پر دیپ شاہ
Sri Pradip Shah

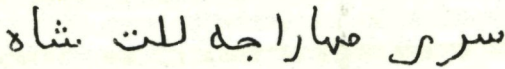
Rev. ضرب سر نگر

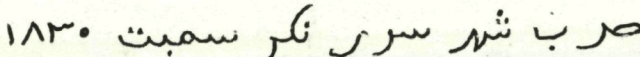
Zarb Srinagar. No date visible.

V225, 226.

Section VI (Continued)

LALLAT SHAH (1772-1781)

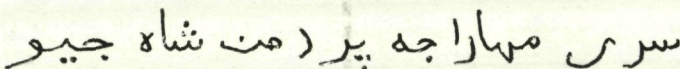
37. Obv. 
Sri Maharajah Lallat Shah.

Rev. 

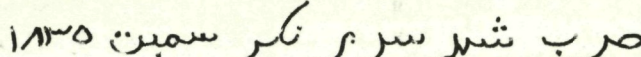
Zarb Shahr Srinagar, samvat 1830 (=1773 A.D.) V228

38. Similar, but date 1831 (=1774 A.D.) V229

PARDUMAN SHAH (1785-1803)

39. Obv. 
Sri Maharajah Parduman Shah Jyo

(The meaning of the word Jyo is not clear).

Rev. 

Zarb Shahr Srinagar, samvat 1835 (=1778 A.D.) V230-234

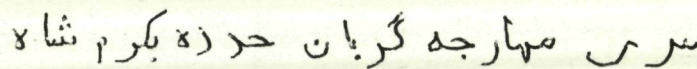
N.B. this date is inconsistent with Parduman Shah's date of accession.

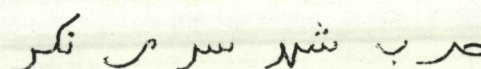
40. As last, but date 1838 (=1781 A.D.) V235

41. As last, but date 1845 (=1788 A.D.) V237

42. As last, but date 1853 (=1796 A.D.) V238

GIRVAN YUDDHA (1803-1815)

43. Obv. 
Sri Maharajah Girvan Yuddha Vikram Shah.

Rev. 

Zarb Shahr Srinagar. No date visible.

In the following plate I have reconstructed the designs of the various types from a great many specimens. In most cases the designs were too large for the flans, and in any case very few specimens are found struck up all over. I have not indicated the edge of the design but I hope that readers will find the illustrations useful. In a few cases I have left a blank when I have been unable to find a specimen exhibiting the missing details. Finally I must apologise for any inaccuracies in the drawings which are entirely due to my poor draughtsmanship.

Coin Inscriptions

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| <p>عالمہ
بارشاہ عاز
سنگ مبارک</p> <p>۱۲</p> | <p>سر کی سنگ
جلوس سال ۱۱۶۱
۱۸۴۴</p> | <p>عالمہ
بارشاہ عاز
سنگ مبارک</p> <p>۱۵</p> | <p>مہاراجا
بان حورہ نگم
سر کی سنگ</p> <p>۱۵</p> | <p>عالمہ
بارشاہ عاز
سنگ مبارک</p> <p>۱۶</p> | <p>مہاراجا
بان حورہ نگم
سر کی سنگ</p> <p>۱۶</p> |
| <p>عالمہ
بارشاہ عاز
سنگ مبارک</p> <p>۱۷</p> | <p>مہاراجا
بان حورہ نگم
سر کی سنگ</p> <p>۱۷</p> | <p>عالمہ
بارشاہ عاز
سنگ مبارک</p> <p>۱۸</p> | <p>مہاراجا
بان حورہ نگم
سر کی سنگ</p> <p>۱۸</p> | <p>عاری
الکشاہ بان
سنگ مبارک</p> <p>۱۹</p> | <p>مہاراجا
بان حورہ نگم
سر کی سنگ</p> <p>۱۹</p> |
| <p>عاری
الکشاہ بان
سنگ مبارک</p> <p>۲۰</p> | <p>مہاراجا
بان حورہ نگم
سر کی سنگ</p> <p>۲۰</p> | <p>عاری
نشاہ بان
سنگ مبارک</p> <p>۲۱</p> | <p>مہاراجا
بان حورہ نگم
سر کی سنگ</p> <p>۲۱</p> | <p>الکشاہ بان
عاری سنگ مبارک</p> <p>۲۲</p> | <p>مہاراجا
بان حورہ نگم
سر کی سنگ</p> <p>۲۲</p> |
| <p>نشاہ بان
عاری سنگ مبارک</p> <p>۲۴</p> | <p>مہاراجا
بان حورہ نگم
سر کی سنگ</p> <p>۲۴</p> | <p>نشاہ بان
عاری سنگ مبارک</p> <p>۲۵</p> | <p>مہاراجا
بان حورہ نگم
سر کی سنگ</p> <p>۲۵</p> | <p>الکشاہ
بارشاہ عاز
سنگ مبارک</p> <p>۲۶</p> | <p>مہاراجا
بان حورہ نگم
سر کی سنگ</p> <p>۲۶</p> |
| <p>الکشاہ
بارشاہ عاز
سنگ مبارک</p> <p>۲۸</p> | <p>مہاراجا
بان حورہ نگم
سر کی سنگ</p> <p>۲۸</p> | <p>الکشاہ
بارشاہ عاز
سنگ مبارک</p> <p>۲۹</p> | <p>مہاراجا
بان حورہ نگم
سر کی سنگ</p> <p>۲۹</p> | <p>نشاہ بان
عاری سنگ مبارک</p> <p>۳۰</p> | <p>مہاراجا
بان حورہ نگم
سر کی سنگ</p> <p>۳۰</p> |
| <p>بارشاہ
عاز شاہ سنگ مبارک</p> <p>۲۷</p> | <p>مہاراجا
بان حورہ نگم
سر کی سنگ</p> <p>۲۷</p> | <p>الکشاہ
بارشاہ عاز
سنگ مبارک</p> <p>۳۱</p> | <p>مہاراجا
بان حورہ نگم
سر کی سنگ</p> <p>۳۱</p> | <p>عاری
سنگ مبارک</p> <p>۳۲</p> | <p>مہاراجا
بان حورہ نگم
سر کی سنگ</p> <p>۳۲</p> |
| <p>الکشاہ
بارشاہ عاز
سنگ مبارک</p> <p>۳۳</p> | <p>مہاراجا
بان حورہ نگم
سر کی سنگ</p> <p>۳۳</p> | <p>مہاراجا
بان حورہ نگم
سر کی سنگ</p> <p>۳۴</p> | <p>مہاراجا
بان حورہ نگم
سر کی سنگ</p> <p>۳۴</p> | <p>مہاراجا
بان حورہ نگم
سر کی سنگ</p> <p>۳۵</p> | <p>مہاراجا
بان حورہ نگم
سر کی سنگ</p> <p>۳۵</p> |

B. Copper Coins

- | | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| <p>نشاہ
سر کی سنگ مبارک</p> <p>۳۶</p> | <p>سر کی سنگ مبارک</p> <p>۳۷</p> | <p>الکشاہ
سر کی سنگ مبارک</p> <p>۳۸</p> | <p>سر کی سنگ مبارک</p> <p>۳۹</p> |
| <p>نشاہ
سر کی سنگ مبارک</p> <p>۳۹</p> | <p>سر کی سنگ مبارک</p> <p>۴۰</p> | <p>نشاہ
سر کی سنگ مبارک</p> <p>۴۱</p> | <p>سر کی سنگ مبارک</p> <p>۴۲</p> |