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**Newsletter number 84****June 1983****Members news**

Michael Robinson is at present preparing a booklet on the Burmese lead and tin coins of Pegu and Tenasserim. He would be grateful if any members having a coin from these series could contact him. The Pegu types were described in ONS newsletters 82 - 83; the Tenasserim coins are usually around 60 mm diameter.

The Indian Institute of Research in Numismatic Studies at Nasik will be officially opened on 16th October 1983. A seminar will follow on the 17th to 19th October about 'Numismatics and history'. There are facilities for offering hospitality to visitors. The Director is Dr. P. L. Gupta, 507 Raheja Centre, 214 Nariman Point, Bombay 400021. It is suggested that a party from England attend the inauguration. For details please contact ...

**ONS meeting**

The next London meeting will be on Saturday 25th June, 2-30 pm, at 28 Little Russell Street, London W 1. Bob Senior will give a talk on Indo-Scythic coins (illustrated with slides).

**Addenda**

N/L 80: Chinese amulet no. 10: The first (top) character should read "Shui" (not Yung); hence, Shui-lu (waterways) P'ing An. This is effectively a prayer for 'Peace and serenity on the waterways'; the amulet presumably having been engraved on behalf of a travelling merchant. I am grateful to Mr. Arber Cooke for this suggestion (M. B. Mitchiner)

N/L 81: Weights for coins of type 7 are 8.87 gm (Ash), 9.56 gm (ANS 1920.999.10), 9.95 gm (ANS 1920.999.11), 9.62 gm (BM). (M. Robinson)

## Part 2: Chittagong

The coins used in Arakan proper throughout the period of the Mrohaung dynasty were silver tankahs of around 10 gm weight. Those with legends in archaic Persian script have already been discussed; the series with trilingual inscriptions will be dealt with later. In addition to these there are a small number of much lighter coins of 2½ gm weight which are supposed to have been used in the city of Chittagong. The present article will be devoted mainly to this group, as well as one or two other coins which were issued in the city.

Chittagong, now in Bangladesh, lies on the bank of the river Karnaphuli near the Bay of Bengal. During the sixth and seventh centuries it was known as a centre of Buddhist culture. The name is written in Bengali script as 'cattagram', derived from the Sanskrit 'Saptagrama' meaning 'seven villages'. From 1199 the city came under the sway of the independant Sultanate of Bengal.

However, the city was for many years fought over between Bengal and Arakan. King Basawpyu of Arakan conquered it in 1459 and the Arakanese had the upper hand for most of the next two hundred years. It was briefly recovered for Bengal from about 1512 until 1538, although the ruler of Tripura occupied Chittagong briefly in Saka 1435 (AD 1513) and issued a commemorative coin (ref. 1, no. 48). Min Bin reconquered it around 1538, or later, when the power of the Bengal Sultanate began to wane. We know that Min Palaung (1571 - 93) was firmly in control of Chittagong and the surrounding district, and the English traveller Ralph Fitch confirmed this in 1586, although he admitted that the Arakanese only kept the city with much fighting. From around the middle of the sixteenth century they were aided in this by Portuguese mercenaries who were very influential in Lower Bengal. In 1666 the Mughal governor of Bengal, Nawab Shaista Khan, captured the city for the Mughals, renaming it Islamabad. But in 1776 it was taken by the British.

*The coins*

The earliest coins of Chittagong were issued with inscriptions in Bengali script around 1416 AD. Quoting from Gupta (ref. 2, p. 100) "They were issued in the names of Danujamardana Deva and Mahendra Deva; and on them are to be found the dates Saka 1339 and 1340; they were issued from Pandunaga (Pandua), Sunargaon and Chatgaon (Chittagong). It is believed that they belonged to the family of Raja Ganesh, who was a zamindar of Bhaturia in the district of Dinajpur. He acquired considerable power and, taking advantage of the weakness of the Sultan, rebelled and overcame him in 1409 AD. Later circumstances forced him to consent to the conversion to Islam of his own son Jadu who was placed on the throne of Bengal with the title of Jalal ud-din Muhammad in 1414 AD. Jalal ud-din Muhammad was, however, deposed and imprisoned by his father in 1416 AD after an ineffectual attempt to reconvert him to Hinduism. Raja Ganesh then ascended the throne taking the title Danujamardana but he died the next year. During the period he issued his own coins bearing the Saka years 1339 and 1340 (1416 - 17 AD). He was followed by Mahendra Deva who continued to rule for some time. In the meanwhile Jalal ud-din escaped from prison and succeeded in establishing himself again on the throne".

The Mahendra issue is referred to by Majumdar et al. (ref. 3, p. 338): "In 1418 coins with Bengali letters were issued from Pandua and Chittagong by a king named 'Mahendra Deva, devoted to the feet of the goddess Chandi' ". Having re-established himself, Jalal ud-din Muhammad Shah issued coins with the conventional Persian script of the Bengal Sultans, and a Chittagong coin is known dated 834 AH (= 1430 AD). It is listed by Hull (ref. 4, no. 787, p. 323) as having the mint name Chatganu چٹگانو, but this is not very clear from the illustration. No other coin of this ruler is known to me from Chittagong, but evidence to confirm the reading is given by Roy (ref. 5, p. 223): "In 1430 AD the Islamised son of Raja Ganesh, Jalal ud-din, extended his kingdom up to Chittagong and to commemorate this achievement he issued coins from Chittagong". Jalal ud-din died in 1431.

The small silver coins are also extremely rare as regards known museum specimens. They are about 18 mm diameter, 2.5 gm weight, and have an inscription in Arakanese on one side and either Bengali or Persian on the other. Five specimens are known of the Persian variety: four are in the British Museum and one in the Manchester Museum. The book by San Tha Aung (ref. 6) shows two from the British Museum and one other (Plate 25; weight given as 2.5 gm).

Phayre, writing in 1882 (ref. 7) illustrated the four British Museum specimens, which were donated by him to the British Museum in that year, and added "these are small silver coins, such as were issued by the Arakanese chiefs in Chittagong while governing there for their sovereigns in the sixteenth and early part of the seventeenth centuries. Sometimes they issued coins in their own names as Viceroys". In my book with Lewis Shaw (ref. 8) two specimens were shown (7.5a, 7.5b), but in order to see more of the legend three examples are illustrated here, enlarged to twice natural size. All the known inscription can be observed from these three coins. Those British Museum specimens not shown here weigh 2.41 and 2.45 gm.



2.40 gm (BM)

2.47 gm (BM)

2.45 gm (Man)

Obv.	မင်္ဂ (Min)	မင်္ဂ (Min)	Rev.	၇၆၂ (762 or 792)	?
	ထင်္ခ (Thin kha)	ထင်္ခ (Thin kha)		—	?
	ယ (ya)	ယ (ya)		سلطان (Sultan)	?
	(note: on no coin is the 'in' visible, so Min Bin (1531-53), though probable, is unproven)			چاتکانو (Chatkan(u))	?
				مبارز (mubariz)	?
				شاه (Shah)	?

The dates 762 AH (= 1361 AD), or 792 AH (= 1390 AD), are both far too early, but the digits are not sufficiently definite on any coin, and are mostly not visible at all. If the date is in the Burmese era, then 792 (= 1430 AD), was the founding year of Mrohaung. There are enough letters of Chittagong to be fairly certain of the name but the bottom two lines are more conjectural. It would be very useful to see other specimens to gradually piece together the legend. X-ray fluorescence analysis of the Manchester specimen showed it to be 99% silver.

The remaining two coins have inscriptions in Arakanese on the obverse and Bengali on the reverse. They were also shown in ref. 8, but the readings given here are more accurate. The first (RS 7.6) is known only from the British Museum specimen, but RS 7.7 is shown also in ref. 6 (Plate 26, weight unknown). Phayre does not mention them as they were donated to the British Museum by Grindlay in 1884, two years after his article. Photographs are twice natural size.



RS 7.6  
2.54 gm (BM)

Obv.	မင်္ဂ (Min)	Rev.	শ্রী শ্রী (Shri Shri)
	မာထိ (Ba Thi)		নিজাম (Nijama)
	গা (gha)		শাহ (Shah)

(only 'Min' and 'Thi' are certain, and the name is unknown: conceivably Min Tikha (1553 - 5)).



RS 7.7  
2.52 gm (BM)

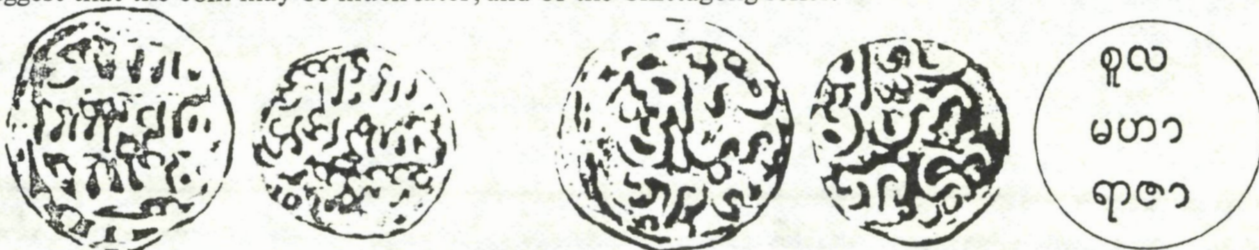
Obv.	সি (Sit)	Rev.	শ্রী শ্রী (Shri Shri)
	(ruler of)		পিরোজ (Piroj)
	তাগাউ (ta gau)		শাহ (Saha)
	চিটগাং (Chittagong)		
	মিন (ng Min)		

Both the Bengali inscriptions probably refer to the local chieftain, as the names bear no similarity to any of the Arakanese kings. Coins of this type must be far more common than they seem, and I would like to know of any further examples. Unfortunately there does not appear to be any comprehensive list of the local rulers under the Arakan regime. Possibly there may be something in the Chittagong archives, or the accounts of the Portuguese traders.

There is a further issue possibly belonging to this series, shown in plate 19 of ref. 6: two specimens (weights unknown). The illustrations are probably enlarged. These coins have Arakanese obverse and Persian reverse; although this is upside down on the original plate. His interpretation of the Arakanese, also shown,

“Sula Maha Raza”. He believed it was of Sula Chandra who reigned in 975 AD. This king, alarmed at the rise of Muslim power, is supposed to have attacked and defeated the Muslim ruler of Chittagong in 953 AD. However, the word Sultan is fairly clear on the reverse (not much else, except perhaps the letter ‘h’) and I would suggest that the coin may be much later; and of the Chittagong series.

Ref. 6  
plate 19



Indirect evidence about the dating of coins 7.5 to 7.7 comes from an examination of the weight and script. In ref. 9 Scott Semans lists some silver ¼ and ½ tankahs minted by the Sultans of Bengal. Number 6 is a ¼ tankah dated 925 AH (1519 AD), weight 2.54 gm, and number 8 is of slightly heavier weight (2.55 - 2.73 gm) and dated 933 AH (1527 AD). The inscriptions are in Persian only, as were all the coins of the Bengal Sultans prior to this time (with the exceptions already discussed).

With the advent of the Afghan line under Sher Shah (945 - 952 AH: 1538 - 45 AD), initially in both Delhi and Bengal, coins with both Persian and Bengali inscriptions were introduced, and fractional tankahs were continued, although Hull does not say what fractions they were. He mentions no fractions in Bengal after 1545, and in Delhi after 1556 (when it was absorbed by the Moghul Empire). Bengali inscriptions continued to appear on the Bengal rupees until 1576, when it in turn was absorbed into the Moghul Empire. Thereafter Bengali did not appear on coins in the Moghul territory. All this tenuously suggests that Bengal ¼ tankahs were the prototypes for the Chittagong coins, which may have first appeared between 1538 and 1576 AD; that is, in the period of Min Bin and his immediate successors.

During the period of Moghul rule (1666 - 1776) coins were issued from Chittagong, now renamed Islamabad. Silver and gold coins were struck there for Aurangzeb, the three earliest silver coins being dated year 3, 1074 AH and 1076 AH / year 8 (cfr. ref. 1). These first two coins pre-date the Mughal capture of Chittagong in February 1666, and need to be confirmed. The mint name Islamabad was used also for Mathura, but I suggest not until after the capture of Chittagong by the British in 1776. For further details see refs. 1 and 4; though in the former it is assumed that Islamabad refers only to Mathura.

I am grateful to Mr. Graham Shaw, assistant keeper of North Indian languages in the Dept. of Oriental Manuscripts and Printed Books, the British Library, for help in reading the Bengali legends.

**References**

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- 7 A. P. Phayre, The coins of Arakan, of Pegu and of Burma, Numismata Orientalia, 1882
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**Early medieval silver coins from Swat**

by Michael Mitchiner

The four coins published here were part of a small group acquired some four years ago in the bazaar at Milgora, the largest town in Swat and situated at the foot of the Swat valley. They are small uniface silver coins weighing slightly less than half a gram. The design on the obverse is more or less completely expressed on one of the coins, but less well executed on the others.

Obv. Sri Ro vi na                      ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ  
 Gu - trident - ta

Rev. blank                              ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ

Weights. 0.40, 0.40, 0.37 and 0.30 gm



(photographs are enlarged to twice natural size)

Most small silver coinage of the post-Gupta period circulated in regions well to the south of Swat. One can cite the uniface ‘Gupta’ issues found at Bavanni and Jeera (M. 4905-09: M. 269-76), the Rana Hastin and related issues from Bundelkhand (M. 299 ff), various issues attributed to the Kalachuris and their feudatories (M. 287 - 298) and the ‘Sri Vighraha’ coins attributed to the Gurjuras (M. 247 - 251), one specimen of which was recovered in the north from the Manikyala tope (Prinsep, vol. 1, pl. V, 7). The present coins should probably be attributed to the same general period, the sixth to seventh century AD, and represent the most northerly occurrence for this kind of coin.

**References**

- M (247 ff) M. Mitchiner, Oriental coins and their values. III. Non-Islamic States and Western Colonies 1979  
 M (4905 ff) M. Mitchiner, *ibid.* II. The Ancient and Classical World 1978  
 Prinsep J. Prinsep, Essays on Indian Antiquities, ed. E. Thomas, 2 vols., London 1858