

INDIAN COINS

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Indian Coins by E. J. Rapson

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E. J. RAPSON

INDIAN COINS

GRUNDRISS DER INDO-ARISCHEN PHILOGIE UND ALTERTUMSKUNDE
(ENCYCLOPEDIA OF INDO-ARYAN RESEARCH)
HERAUSGEGEBEN VON G. BÖHLER
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INDIAN COINS

BY

E. J. RAPSON.

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SOURCES OF INDIAN HISTORY: COINS.

BY

E. J. RAPSON.

I. INTRODUCTION.

§ 1. Limits of the Contribution. — The object of this contribution is to give an account from the historical point of view of all the known coinages of ancient and mediaeval India, beginning with the earliest times and extending in each particular instance to a period determined by the following considerations. In the case of the states of Northern India generally, and those also of Southern India which were situated to the north of the river Kistna, our subject is naturally bounded by those well-defined limits which are, as a rule, afforded by the introduction of the Muhammadan form of coinage as a result of the progress of Muhammadan conquest between c. 1000 and 1310 A.D. In the extreme south, where Muhammadan supremacy was never absolute, and where, consequently, no similar break of continuity occurs in the coinage, our survey will not extend beyond the rise of the kingdom of Vijayanagar in 1326 A.D.

Beyond these limits reference will, however, be made to any note-worthy instance in which, from some special cause, such as the isolation or inaccessibility of a state, the use of an early form of coinage has survived until a later date.

§ 2. Classification. — Ancient and mediaeval Indian coins, as thus defined, fall naturally into three main classes — (1) a primitive native coinage, which, so far as the present state of our knowledge will allow us to judge, seems to have been very widely used throughout India and in Ceylon; and, following this, the classes which numismatists have usually distinguished geographically as (2) Northern, and (3) Southern. These terms are not strictly accurate, as any rigid geographical classification is, in this case, impossible. The real distinction between the two classes so called is due to the disturbing influence of foreign invasions; and, while it is true that all the successive waves of foreign influence came in at the N. W. corner of India, it is equally true that most of them had spent their force not only before reaching the south, but even before reaching the centre or the north-east. On the other hand, intercourse with the north gave to the coinage of certain southern states, e. g. that of the Andhras, some of the usual northern characteristics. In the numismatic sense, therefore, the term 'Northern' should be understood as denoting that class of Indian coins in which the primitive native system of coinage is very greatly modified by foreign influence, and the term 'Southern' as denoting that class in which, for the most part, an independent and distinctively Indian development is to be traced.

§ 3. Literature. — The following are standard works on the different branches of Indian numismatics. Further references are given in or at the end of each section.

(1) *Græco-Bactrian and Indian generally* — H. H. WILSON, *Ariana Antiqua*, 1841; J. PRINSEP, *Essays on Indian Antiquities* (originally published in *JBA*, 1832—38), edited and supplemented by E. THOMAS, 1858.

(2) *Græco-Bactrian, Græco-Indian, and early Indo-Scythic* — A. CUNNINGHAM, *Coins of Alexander's Successors in the East*, 1873 (= *NChr.* 1868, pp. 93-181, 257; 1869, pp. 28, 121, 217, 293; 1870, pp. 65, 205; 1872, p. 157; 1873, p. 187); A. VON SALLET, *Nachfolger Alexander d. Gr. in Baktrien und Indien*, 1883 (= *ZfN.* 1879, pp. 165, 271; 1880, p. 296; 1881, pp. 109, 279; 1882, p. 158; 1883, p. 156), For a list of previous works on the subject v. p. 79 (= *ZfN.* 1879, p. 283), and also *PE.* II, p. 172, note; P. GARDNER, *Catalogue of Indian Coins in the British Museum: Greek and Scythic Kings of Bactria and India*, 1886; G. BÖHLER, *Kharoṣṭhī Inscriptions on Indo-Grecian Coins*, *WZKM.* VIII, p. 193.

(3) *Indo-Scythic* — E. DROUIN, *Chronologie et Numismatique des Rois Indo-Scythes*, 1888 (= *Rev. Num.* pp. 8, 185); A. CUNNINGHAM, *Coins of the Indo-Scythians* (i. e. Sakas and Kuṣanas), 1892 (= *NChr.* 1888, p. 199; 1889, p. 268; 1890, p. 103; 1892, pp. 40, 98); id., *Coins of the Later Indo-Scythians*, (i. e. Later Great Kuṣanas, Scytho-Sassanians, Little Kuṣanas, and Ephthalites or White Huns), 1894 (= *NChr.* 1893, pp. 93, 166, 184; 1894, p. 243), *Résumé* by V. A. SMITH, *JBA.* 1894, p. 179; E. DROUIN, *Monnaies des Grands Kouchans* (i. e. the Scytho-Sassanians of C.) *Rev. Num.* 1896, p. 154.

(4) *Native States* — E. THOMAS, *Ancient Indian Weights*, 1874 (= *International Numismata Orientalia* I, Part 1); A. CUNNINGHAM, *Coins of Ancient India*, 1891; id., *Coins of Mediaeval India*, 1894; BHAGVĀNLĀL INDRĀJĪ, *Coins of the Western Kṣatrapas* (ed. RAPSON), *JRAS.* 1890, p. 639; V. A. SMITH, *Coinage of the Early or Imperial Gupta Dynasty of Northern India*, *JRAS.* 1889, p. 1; id., *Observations on the Gupta Coinage*, *JRAS.* 1893, p. 77; id., *History and Coinage of the Gupta Period*, *JBA.* 1894, p. 164.

(5) *Southern India* — W. ELLIOT, *Coins of Southern India*, 1886 (= *International Numismata Orientalia* III, Part 2).

(6) *Ceylon* — T. W. RHYS DAVIDS, *Ancient Coins and Measures of Ceylon*, 1877 (= *International Numismata Orientalia* I, Part 6).

II. EARLIEST NATIVE COINAGE.

§ 4. Standard and date of use. — The most ancient coinage of India, which seems to have been developed independently of any foreign influence, follows the native system of weights as given in *Manu* VIII, 132 ff. The basis of this system is the *rati* (*raktikā*), or *guñja*-berry, the weight of which is estimated at 1.83 grains = .118 grammes. Of the gold standard coin, the *suvarṇa* of 80 *ratis* = 146.4 grs. or 9.48 grms., no specimens are known; but of the silver *purāṇa* or *dharāṇa* of 32 *ratis* = 58.56 grs. or 3.79 grms., and of the copper *kārṣāṇa* of 80 *ratis* (same weight as the *suvarṇa*), and of various multiples and sub-divisions of these, numerous examples have been discovered in almost every part of India.

The estimate of the weight of the *rati* here given is that of CUNNINGHAM, *CAL.* p. 44. For other estimates v. *Th. AIW.* p. 65; SMITH, *Proc. BA.* 1887, p. 222, and *JRAS.* 1889, p. 42. For the complete system of native weights, v. *CASR.* X, 78; *XIV.* 17; and *Th. AIW.* p. 13. Cp. also *AR.V* (1798), p. 91; *JBA.* 1838, p. 892; 1864, p. 251; 1865, pp. 14, 46, 51.

The earliest specimens of this coinage are probably at least as early as the beginning of the 4th cent. B.C.

CASR. I, p. 70; II, pp. 229, 264, 288; *XIV.* p. 17; *CNChr.* 1873, p. 209; *C.CAL.* p. 52; *Th. AIW.* p. 33; *RH.D.ACC.* p. 1, summary of results p. 13, § 22; *RAPSON*, *JRAS.* 1895, p. 869.

In the N.W. the influence of the Greek settlers in the early part of the 2nd cent. B.C. greatly modified this coinage; but, in other parts of India, this primitive coinage continued for some centuries longer (Th. AIW. p. 57).

§ 5. Form of the coins. — The shape of these coins is approximately square or oblong, the silver coins having been, as a rule, cut from a flat sheet of metal, and the copper coins from a bar. These primitive coins are little more than weights of metal, on which was stamped from time to time the symbol of the authority responsible for their correctness and purity. From this method of marking, they have usually been called *punch-marked* coins (Plate I, 1).

C.CAL. p. 42, Pl. I, 1—23; C.ASR. VI, 213; Th. AIW. p. 57; Collection of symbols, THEOBALD, JBA. 1890, p. 181 (rev. Rev. Num. 1892, p. 91); 1894, p. 73. Cp. also Ar. Ant. p. 403; JBRA. X, p. XXI.

§ 6. Guild-tokens. — To the same period belong the pieces (Plate I, 2) which BÜHLER has recognised as *guild tokens* (Indian Studies III, p. 49; cp. C.CAL. p. 63, Pl. III, 8—12); and, perhaps of a slightly later date, the pieces of *cast copper*, which, like these, bear inscriptions in Indian characters of an ancient form or designs of purely native art unmodified by any foreign influence (e. g. C.CAL. Pl. II, 21, 22).

Cp. also C.CAL. p. 59, Pl. I, 24—29; PE. I, p. 214; Th. AIW. p. 55.

III. EARLY FOREIGN COINS IN INDIA.

§ 7. Early Persian Coins. — During the period of Achaemenid rule (c. 500—331, B.C.) *Persian* coins circulated in the Panjab. Gold double *staters* (Plate I, 5) were actually struck in India, probably in the latter half of the 4th cent. B.C. (E. BABELON, Les Perses Achéménides, pp. XI XX, 16, Pl. II, 16—19, and 27). Many of the silver *sigloi*, moreover, bear countermarks so similar to the native punch-marks as to make it seem probable that the two classes of coins were in circulation together (Plate I, 3), and this probability is increased by the occurrence on sigloi of characters which have been read as Brāhmī and Kharoṣṭhī letters (Plate I, 4).

BÜHLER, Indian Studies III, p. 113; RAPSON, JRAS. 1895, p. 865. BABELON, op. cit. p. XI, attributes these countermarks to other provinces of Asia.

§ 8. Early Persian standard. — As a result of the Persian occupation is probably to be regarded the establishment in the Panjab of a weight-system apparently derived from the Persian (siglos = 86.45 grs., or 5,601 grms.), which was subsequently used in the coinages of nearly all the Greek princes.

GARD. p. LXVIII; C.NChr. 1888, p. 216, explains this change of standard as due to an alteration in the relative value of gold and silver; VON SALLETT also, ZfN. 1879, p. 193, regards the new standard as reduced from the Attic.

§ 9. Athenian coins. — At an early period, the *owls* of Athens were carried in the course of commerce to the East; and, when the supply from the Athenian mint grew less (i. e. for about a century before B.C. 322, when the mint was closed) imitations were made in N. India. Some of these are merely attempts to faithfully reproduce the originals (Plate I, 6); others, probably somewhat later in date, substitute for the owl on the reverse an eagle (Plate I, 7). From the latter class, the coins of Sophytes (v. inf. § 11), who, at the time of Alexander's invasion (326 B.C.) ruled over a district on the banks of the Acesines, seem to have copied (Plate I, 8).

HEAD, Catalogue of Greek Coins in the Brit. Mus., Attica, pp. XXXI XXXII, Athens, nos. 267—276, Pl. VII, 3—10; GARDNER, NChr. 1880, p. 191, Pl. X, 5, 6. Cp. also C.NChr. 1866, p. 220; GARD. p. XIX.

§ 10. Alexander's coins. — It is probable that certain copper coins of square Indian form, bearing the name ΑΑΞΑΝΑΡΟΥ, were struck in India by Alexander the Great.

GARD, p. XVIII. DANNENBERG who first noticed these coins attributed them to Bactria, VON SALLET, ZfN. 1879, p. 285, Pl. IV, 1.

§ 11. Indian relations with the Seleucids. — From the date of the eastern expedition of Seleucus and his alliance with Candragupta in B.C. 306 (Appian, Syr. 55), a constant intercourse was maintained between the Seleucid kingdom of Syria and the Maurya kingdom of N.India, as is shown by the Seleucid embassies established under Megasthenes and Daimachus at the court of Pāṭaliputra, and by the mention of Greek kings in Aśoka's inscriptions (L.IA. II, p. 241). The adoption of the elephant as a type on Seleucid coins, and the similarity between certain coins of Seleucus (e. g. BABELON, Rois de Syrie, Pl. I, 15) and those of Sophytes, are no doubt due to this intercourse.

It has been generally assumed (e. g. GARD, p. XX) that the coins of Sophytes were copied from those of Seleucus; but the opposite may have been the case, or, perhaps, both of these classes may have been derived from the same originals — the imitations of Athenian coins made in India (v. s. § 9). For Sophytes, v. C.JBA. 1865, p. 46; NChr. 1866, p. 220; Geog. Ind. p. 157; VON SALLET, ZfN. 1879, p. 285, Pl. IV, 2; GARD, pp. XIX, 2, Pl. I, 3; SYLVAIN LÉVI, JA. 1890 (XV), p. 237; Cp. also NChr. 1893, p. 101; Proc. BA. 1867, p. 106; Rev. Num. 1890, p. 496; ZfN. 1883, p. 2, Pl. I, 1.

§ 12. Graeco-Bactrian influence. — But, until the beginning of the 2nd cent. B.C., no extensive modification of the native Indian coinage had been caused by foreign influence. It was from the kingdom of Bactria, established by Diodotus (Plate I, 9), who revolted from the Seleucid sovereign Antiochus II, c. B.C. 248, that there came eventually the influence which completely changed the form and character of the coinage of N.W.India (v. inf. § 18).

§ 13. Parthian influence. — Parthian characteristics, due no doubt to the contact between Parthians and Sakas in Bactria, are found in the Śaka coinages of India, the earliest of which — those of Maues — belong to the latter half of the 2nd cent. B.C. (v. inf. § 29). The dynasty of Vonones, which seems to have exercised a sort of suzerainty over the successors of Maues in the 1st cent. B.C., is very probably Parthian in origin (v. inf. § 30). The later dynasty of Gondophares in the 1st cent. A.D. is certainly Parthian (v. inf. § 61).

§ 14. Roman coins, dating from the beginning of the empire onwards are found in great numbers in many parts of India both north and south (v. inf. §§ 69, 123).

AR. II (1790), p. 331; C.ASR. II, p. 162; XIII, p. 72; JBA. I (1832), pp. 392, 476; 1834, pp. 562, 635; 1851, p. 371; Proc. BA. 1879, pp. 77, 122, 205, 210; 1880, p. 118; 1886, p. 86; NChr. 1843 (V), p. 202; 1843 (VI), pp. 111, 160; 1891, p. 199; PE. I, p. 148.

§ 15. Roman influence. — With regard to their influence on Indian coinages, two points at least seem clear — (1) the head on the Kušana copper coins bearing the name Kozola Kadaphes is directly imitated from the head of Augustus (v. inf. § 66); (2) the gold coinage of the Kušanas follows a weight-standard identical with the Roman (v. inf. § 70).

§ 16. Sassanian influence. — The result of intercourse between the Sassanian monarchy of Persia and the Kušana kingdom of Kabul, during the period from c. A.D. 300 to 450, is shown by a class of coins struck in the Oxus territory and known as Scytho-Sassanian — a class which is of great chronological importance from the fact that most of the issues can be attributed

to the different Sassanian monarchs who reigned within these limits (v. inf. § 75). There is also further evidence of relations between Persia and India during the reign of Varahrān V, A.D. 420—438 (DROUIN, HE. p. 24, from the Muséon 1895). But the most extensive importation of Sassanian coins into India was due to the invasion of the Hūnas (last quarter of the 5th cent. A.D.), who brought with them the proceeds of the plunder of Sassanian treasures. Some of the coins thus introduced were restruck in *repoussé* by the Hūnas (v. inf. § 104); others no doubt were used as currency with little or no modification and formed the patterns from which subsequent Hūna and also other Indian coinages were copied (v. inf. § 105). In this manner the Sassanian type of coin — *Obv.* King's Head: *Rev.* Fire-Altar — became firmly established in certain parts of India, and continued to be used during several centuries (v. inf. § 122). During the 7th cent. also, as is proved by the coins, Sassanian kingdoms existed in Multan and Sind (v. inf. § 109).

IV. GRAECO-INDIAN COINS.

§ 17. The Greek invasion. — The incursions of the Bactrian princes into the Kabul Valley and Northern India must have begun about the beginning of the 2nd cent. B.C. The war between the Seleucid Antiochus III and the Bactrian Euthydemus ended in an alliance between them (B.C. 206). Probably in the same year, Antiochus crossed the Paropanisus and renewed friendly relations with the king then reigning in the Kabul Valley, Sophagasenus or Subhagasena, who has been identified (LIA II, p. 273) with Jaloka.

POLYBIUS, Exc. Hist. XI, 34, 11.

§ 18. Euthydemus and Demetrius. — It was during the reign of *Euthydemus* (Plate I, 18), and, perhaps, under the leadership of his son *Demetrius*, that the first Indian conquests were made (GARD. p. XXII). As evidence of this early settlement in India, there exists a coin of *Demetrius* which is, perhaps, the first to show the result of a compromise between the Greek and Indian methods of coinage (Plate I, 10). The regular types of the Greek system are retained, but the coin is of the square Indian form, and, on the reverse, is added an Indian translation in Kharoṣṭhī characters of the Greek legend on the obverse.

C.NChr. 1869, p. 136, Pl. IV, 11; GARD. Pl. XXX, 3. For the extent of the Indian conquests of Demetrius, v. VON GUTSCHMID, Gesch. Irans, p. 44, and GARD. p. XXII.

§ 19. Eucratides. — Next, in point of date, come the Indian conquests of *Eucratides*, c. B.C. 190—160, the rival and conqueror of Demetrius (JUSTIN XLI, 6). His coins are found at Balkh, in Seistan, in the Kabul Valley, and, more rarely, in the Panjab.

C.NChr. 1869, p. 217, Pl. VI, VII. For the date of Eucratides: VON SALLET, ZfN. 1879, p. 170; GARD. p. XXVI. Parthian coins attributed to Mithradates I (B.C. 171—138) imitated from those of Eucratides: GARD., Parthian Coinage, p. 32, Pl. II, 4 (= Internat. Num. Orient. I, Part 5). — Gold piece of 20 staters struck by Eucr.: CHAROUILLET, Rev. Num. 1867, p. 382, Pl. XII, *Les textes relatifs à Eucratides, id. p. 407. Gold coin of Eucr.: MONTAGU, NChr. 1892, p. 37, Pl. III, 11. Cp. also ZfN. 1879, p. 295. Silver medal (decadrachm) attributed to Eucratides or Heliocles, GARD., NChr. 1887, p. 177, Pl. VII, 1. Coins of Eucratides bearing also the name of Heliocles and Laodice: VON SALLET, ZfN. 1879, p. 188; VON GUTSCHMID, Gesch. Irans, p. 48; GARD. p. XXIV.

§ 20. Dates on G.I. coins. — Important for the chronology of this period is the unique tetradrachm of *Plato*, copied from the tetradrachm of Eucratides, and bearing the date 147 of the Seleucid era = B.C. 165. The occurrence of other dates on Bactrian coins is less certain.

GARD. p. 20, Pl. VI, 11; VAUX, NChr. 1875, p. 1; VON SALLET, ZfN. 1879, pp. 173, 190. Cp. also Proc. BA. 1872, pp. 34, 174; C.NChr. 1869, p. 226; 1892, p. 45; HOERNLE, Ind. Ant. 1879, p. 196; TH.JRAS. 1877, p. 3; VON SALLET, ZfN. 1879, p. 184.

§ 21. Pantaleon, Agathocles. — Contemporary with the reign of Eucratides in India are those of *Pantaleon* and *Agathocles*, whose coins are found both in the Kabul Valley and W.Panjab — those of Agathocles also as far south as Kandahar (C.NChr. 1869, p. 41). The Indian coins of these two rulers are the only coins of Greek princes which bear inscriptions in Brāhmī characters (Plate I, 12, Pantaleon). Certain copper coins of Agathocles have legends on both *obv.* and *rev.* in Kharoṣṭhī letters (Plate I, 16).

C.NChr. 1868, p. 279, Pl. VIII, 8—10, Pl. X; VON SALLET, ZfN. 1879, 175, Pl. V; GARD. p. XXVI, Pl. III, 8, 9, IV, and XXX, 4. For the reading of the Kharoṣṭhī legends on coins of Agathocles: BÜHLER, WZKM. VIII, p. 206.

§ 22. Agathocles. — Certain *medals* (tetradrachms) of Bactrian fabric struck by Agathocles bear the portraits, types, and inscriptions of Alexander the Great, Antiochus 'Nicator' (*sic*, v. VON GUTSCH., Gesch. II., p. 38; GARD. p. XXVIII, note), Diodotus, and Euthydemus; similar medals of the Bactrian prince Antimachus also bear those of Diodotus and Euthydemus.

GARD. Pl. IV, 1—3, and XXX, 5, 6. (The medal of Antimachus and Euthydemus is in the possession of an Indian coin-dealer, and is as yet unpublished). For the historical significance of these: VON SALLET, ZfN. 1879, p. 176; 1881, p. 279; GARD. p. XXVIII. Cp. also NChr. 1868, p. 278; 1869, p. 31; 1880, p. 181; PE. I, p. 28.

§ 23. Antimachus. — The types on the coins of *Antimachus* point to some naval victory won by him, perhaps on the Indus or some other large river.

GARD. pp. XXIX, 12, Pl. V, 1—3; C.NChr. 1869, p. 39.

§ 24. Heliocles. — After the reign of *Heliocles* (c. B.C. 160—120) the transference of the Greek power from Bactria to territory south of the Paropanisus was complete. Until his time, many of the Greek princes had ruled both in Bactria and in India, and had struck coins both of Bactrian fabric bearing purely Greek legends, and of Indian fabric with bilingual inscriptions. Up to this date all the silver coins were struck according to the Attic standard (drachm = 67.5 grains or 4.37 grammes). This Attic standard gradually gives place to the Persian standard (v. sup. § 8). Heliocles himself, Apollodotus I, and Antialcidas use both standards; all the later Greek princes use the Persian standard only.

VON SALLET, ZfN. 1879, p. 193; GARD. p. LXVII.

§ 25. Heliocles' successors. — The reigns of all the Greek princes who ruled after the date of Heliocles — they are about 20 in number according to the coins — must be confined within about a century, i. e. from c. 120 B.C. to 20 B.C., when the Kuṣanas completed the conquest of India. There were undoubtedly, for a considerable portion of this period, two or more distinct dynasties of Greek princes ruling at the same time, and varying greatly from time to time in power and extent of territory. No perfectly satisfactory arrangement of these different families or of the chronology of this period has yet been proposed.

For one suggested arrangement: C.NChr. 1868, p. 274. Available data and general chronological table: GARD. p. XXXII ff. »Die sicheren Daten«: VON SALLET, ZfN. 1879, p. 191. Historical notices of Menander and Apollodotus: GARD. p. XXXVI; L.IA. II, p. 322; PE. I, p. 47; R.H.D., SBE. XXXV, p. XIX; VON GUTSCHMID, Gesch. II., p. 104. Coin bearing the names of Archebius and Philoxenus (the genuineness of this specimen and of others struck from the same dies has been disputed): VON SALLET, ZfN. 1888, p. 9, Pl. I, 3; id. 1896, p. 327. Coin of Polyxenus: RONGERS, NChr. 1896, p. 269; of Theophilus, SMITH, JBA. 1897, p. 1. Interpretation of mono-