

SANGAM:

NUMISMATICS AND CULTURAL HISTORY

Essays in Honour of Dr. R.Krishnamurthy

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First Published 2006

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NEWERA PUBLICATIONS

Post Box No.8780, Adyar

Chennai - 600 020.

E-Mail: newerapublication@rediffmail.com

Published by :

New Era Publications, Post Box No.8780, Adyar, Chennai - 600 020.

E-Mail: newerapublications@rediffmail.com / newera@indiainfo.com

Printed at : Arunaa Offset Printers, Chennai - 600 005.

Reinhold Walburg

Some punch-marked coins and an early Roman *aureus* from India in the Monetary Historical Collection of the Deutsche Bundesbank

To honour a man who devoted his scholarly life to the detection and publicising of unexpected things in unexpected places, it would seem to be apt to do something comparable, albeit in a much more modest way, of course. Ramasubbu Krishnamurthy enriched our knowledge of the numismatic history of ancient southern India by making known to the public many different coins which had been found by native inhabitants in the beds of river Kāveri and river Vaigai. Some of these specimens, such as the “Non-Roman ancient foreign coins from Karur ...” (Chennai 2000) and several types of “Late Roman copper coins ...” (Madras 1994) had been unreported from this region of the subcontinent prior to the publication of those two monographs. It is therefore an enticing prospect for the present writer on this occasion to report in turn on some of the ancient Indian coins and a Roman specimen discovered in India which belong to the Monetary Historical Collection of the Money Museum of the Deutsche Bundesbank in Frankfurt, Germany, and which, at first sight, might not to be expected to be found there. However, given that the museum has a universal collection consisting of about 90,000 coins, its Asian section is not too bad and possesses a quite large Indian component comprising specimens ranging from antiquity to modern times. Here, I want to focus exclusively on the ancient local and imperial punch-marked coins. Most of these specimens are of the ordinary and well-known types, but some show interesting details or are of some rarity. This small contribution is intended to broaden the basis for further in-depth studies on coins discovered in Indian soil. The punch-marked coins are arranged in a typological and thus only rough chronological order. Given the current state of the discussion – as outlined, for example, by Cribb and Bopearachchi/Pieper (pp 7-10) – it would be unwise to adopt the absolute dating given by Gupta/Hardaker and Mitchiner and thus tread on thin ice.

The Roman *aureus* to be dealt with in the second part of this paper is of a well-known type struck by Augustus (Caius and Lucius Caesares on the reverse), which is found so abundantly in southern India. On its obverse this coin has a chisel-cut on the emperor’s head and a round punch-mark below his chin. While the cut is quite normal for Roman *aurei* found in India, punches are comparatively scarce. These are found frequently on the Roman silver coins in the Akenpalle and Nasthullapur hoards (both Andhra Pradesh). On two *denarii* of the Akenpalle hoard (Turner pl VII.314 and 1018) this special plain round punch-mark is located at exactly the same place below the emperor’s chin as on our gold coin, the latter having been found about 500 miles, as the crow flies, south-west of Akenpalle in Tamil Nādu. Of 15 gold coins illustrated by Berghaus, only one other specimen, a Tiberian *aureus* from the Nagavarapupadu hoard, also has a single punch (no 8; in this case, a star) on its obverse. Turner knows of no Roman gold coins with punches found in India. The present coin was discovered in the bed of river Vaigai close to Madurai, the capital city of the ancient Dravidian Pāndya kingdom. Occasional finds of early Roman gold coins are attested for this area (Gupta nos 30 and 31; Turner p 64 f) as are stray finds of late Roman copper coins, some of which were published by Ramasubbu Krishnamurthy in his “Late Roman copper coins ...”,

which has already been cited. The smallest but most important detail of our coin, the inconspicuous punch, seems to be a promising starting point for further investigation. The results of such research may perhaps elucidate the underlying pattern of the punch-marks found on the early Roman gold and silver coins discovered in Indian soil.

Catalogue of coins

All specimens are depicted in their actual size as well as enlarged x 2 (only no 3 is enlarged x 4).

(Photographs by M Lotz, Monetary Historical Collection)

Local punch-marked coins

1



Kingdom of Kashi

AR 5.49 g

Obv: Two large and two small punches.

Rev: Three (or four?) small punches (banker's marks?) of which only a windmill sail pattern is recognisable.

Mitchiner 3848 f (Half Satamana).

2





City of Taxila

AR 1.23 g

Obv: Three “double paddles” crossing a central circle. Two countermarks: Three dots within a circle, overlapping a sun, of which only a half is still visible.

Rev: Blank.

BMC pp 2/3, nos 12-16, esp 12 (countermark, but of different shape) and 16 (dot); Mitchiner 4079 f (Eighth Satamana); Bopearachchi/Pieper p 67, no 4.

3



Kingdom of Avanti

AR 0.09 g

Obv: Four symbols.

Rev: Blank.

Bopearachchi/Pieper p 68, no 13 (Unpublished). Cp Mitchiner 4258 ff and BMC p 286/287, for other types of this size. Our coin shows on its obverse the same design like the unique specimen published by Bopearachchi/Pieper, who describe the symbols as *Damaru* shaped and *taurine*, each of these depicted twice.

Universal series

4





Kingdom of Magadha

AR 3.02 g. Overstruck.

G/H 305; BMC 6.V.12; Mitchiner 4003.

5



Kingdom of Magadha

AR 3.39 g

G/H 398 type (marks 1, 2, 3, and 5); BMC 6.III.2 ff.

6



Kingdom of Magadha

AR 3.48 g. Rev. three small punches.

G/H 416; BMC 6.III.5 ff; Mitchiner 4044.

7



Kingdom of Magadha

AR 3.11 g. Rev. at least six small punches.

G/H 422 var; BMC 6.III.1 var; Mitchiner 4045.

8



Kingdom of Magadha

AR 3.16 g. Rev. at least five small punches.

G/H 427; BMC 6.IV.1; Mitchiner 4048.

9





Mauryan Empire

AR 3.23 g. Rev. one small punch in the form of a three-arched hill surmounted by a crescent.

G/H 477; BMC 2.VII.48; Mitchiner 4153.

10



Mauryan Empire / Kingdom of Sunga

AR 3.41 g. Rev. two punches, one in the form of a three-armed “whirl”.

G/H 543; BMC 2.VII.13; Mitchiner 4208 var.

11



Mauryan Empire / Kingdom of Sunga

AR 3.10 g. Rev. punch four-armed symbol.

G/H 574; BMC 2.I.1; Mitchiner 4196.

12



A second specimen (AR 3.41 g).

13



A third specimen (AR 3.25 g).

14



Mauryan Empire / Kingdom of Sunga
AR 3.25 g. Rev. bale-shaped punch.
G/H 566; BMC 2.III.17; Mitchiner 4178.

15



Mauryan Empire / Kingdom of Sunga
AR 3.19 g. Rev. punch four-armed symbol of the same shape like those on coins nos 11-13 above.
G/H 575; BMC 2.I.37; Mitchiner 4197.

16



Mauryan Empire / Kingdom of Sunga
AR 3.47 g
G/H 582; BMC 2.I.37?; Mitchiner 4160 ff var.

17





Mauryan Empire / Kingdom of Sunga

AR 3.44 g. Rev. part of one small punch (rest off flan).

G/H series VIa – VIb (528 ff). Only marks 1 and 3 are recognisable); Mitchiner 4160 ff.

18



Kingdom of Sunga

AE 2.70 g

Obv: Four large symbols of which only a sun and a six-armed symbol are recognisable. In the centre there is an additional small symbol.

Rev: A single, leaf-shaped symbol.

Bopearachchi/Pieper pp 78/79, nos 28-33; Mitchiner 4328 ff and 4611 f (Quarter Karshapana).

19



A second specimen (AE 2.40 g), but obverse symbols indistinct.

20



Kingdom of Kalinga

AE 14.38 g

Obv: Indistinct number of symbols of which only a sun is clearly visible.

Rev: Encrusted.

BMC p 101 ff, no 1 ff; Bopearachchi/Pieper p 79, nos 1-3; Mitchiner 4609 f (Double Karshapana).

Modern forgery

21



AR 7.21g. This fantasy coin combines the shape of the very early Taxila specimens like Mitchiner 4071 ff with the punches of the later Magadha-Maurya series. According to its weight and by redoubling its obverse punches it pretends to be a double *kārshāpana*.

Roman coin

22



Augustus, 27 BC – AD 14

Aureus, struck c 2 BC – AD 4 at Lugdunum

AV 7.73 g

RIC² 206. Identical with Berghaus no 3. Chisel-cut and round punch on obverse.

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