

# ORIENTAL NUMISMATIC SOCIETY

## NEWSLETTER

## No. 166

Winter 2001

### ONS News

#### Annual General Meeting on 23rd June 2001.

The annual general meeting of the Society will be held at 2 p.m. on 23rd June 2001 at the Cumberland Coin Fair in the Cumberland Hotel, Marble Arch in London. The business of the meeting will be:

1. To receive the Council's report on the activities of the Society during the previous year;
2. To receive and consider the Society's accounts for the previous year;
3. To decide on any resolution submitted in accordance with these rules.

If you are unable to attend the meeting but wish to vote you may appoint the chairman of the meeting or some other member as your proxy to vote on a poll in your place. A form of proxy for use at the meeting is enclosed. To be valid this must be signed and returned in accordance with the instructions on it.

After the meeting there will be lectures in memory of two of the Society's founders:

The Michael Broome lecture on an Islamic subject

The Ken Wiggins lecture on an Indian subject.

Details of these will be available later and distributed to members in the UK and advertised on the Society's website.

#### Membership List

An updated membership is being produced and will be distributed with newsletter 167.

#### ONS Website

A reminder that the ONS Website can be found at <http://www.onsnumis.org>

The site contains a full index of newsletter contents which members may find useful.

#### Auction News

Baldwin's Auctions, London, will be auctioning the Ken Wiggins collection of Indian princely states and East India Company coin on 8 May 2001. On the next day a large collection of Indian Sultanate and Mughal coins will be auctioned. For more information phone: ++44 20 7930 9808; [auctions@baldwin.sh](mailto:auctions@baldwin.sh)  
See also page 18 for news of the Jean Elsen auction 65.

#### Obituary

*Mr Yasushi Funakoshi, Chairman of the Japan Numismatic Association*

Yasushi Funakoshi was born in Yokohama, Japan, in September 1928. He died of heart failure on 10 November 2000. His childhood love of books, especially history books, led him into the world of numismatics. He joined the JNA in 1968, and wrote many articles about Japanese coins for JNA publications. His personal collecting interests were Kokaiei-tsuuho (pre-1668), Kosen-mon (pre-600) and Daikichi-koban.

Mr Funakoshi became the fifth chairman of the JNA, and devoted great energy to promoting Japanese numismatics. His success in inspiring enthusiasm in others is indicated in the membership of the JNA, which soared from 200 to 500 during his time as chairman. He was also keen to develop links overseas, and during the last five years had been building up good relations with colleagues in China and the UK. In October 2000 he visited London and Cambridge to see the famous Kuchiki ("Tamba") collection.

His philosophy was that coins were part of the economy, and were closely related with society and government. As money reflected the life of people, societies and different countries, studying coins was also the study of the history of mankind. HW

#### Members News

Vincent West's website <http://www.vincentwest.org.uk> now has a section devoted to Aksumite numismatics. His idea is that this can serve as an online first stop for Aksumite numismatists with links to other relevant sites. He would welcome any comments especially more items for inclusion.

#### Jena

Regional meeting of the Oriental Numismatic Society in Jena 6-7 May 2001.

The annual regional meeting of the Oriental Numismatic Society will be held in 2001 in the University City Jena on the weekend of 6-7 May. During these days lectures by participants will be held on various topics of oriental numismatics. Anyone interested in further details should contact the organisers, Stefan Heidemann und Tobias Mayer, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität, Orientalisches Münzkabinett Jena, Loebdergraben 24a, D - 07743 Jena, Germany. Telefon: +49 (3641) 9 44853; Telefon/Fax: +49 (3641) 9 44850 (Secretary); E-mail: [x7hest@nds.rz.uni-jena.de](mailto:x7hest@nds.rz.uni-jena.de).

## London

The London meeting of 2 December duly took place. The full programme of papers was:

- Shailendra Bhandare, "Representation of a river goddess on ancient Indian coins".  
Michael Mitchiner, "Lakshmi bathed by elephants on Indian coins".  
Marzbeen Toddywalla, "Zoroastrianism and representation of gods on Kushan coins".  
Michael Willis, "Who built the stupas of Sanchi?".  
Elizabeth Errington, "Numismatic evidence for dating the 'Kanishka' reliquary from Shah-jī-ki-Dheri".  
Joe Cribb, "Unorthodox Muslim coins from mediaeval Sind".

The next meeting will be on Saturday 24th March 2001 at the Department of Coins and Medals at the British Museum in London starting at 11 a.m. We are pleased to have the following speakers:

### Morning

- Helen Wang, "Images of Mao on Chinese paper money".  
Alex Fang, "Chinese Charms".

### Afternoon

- Joe Cribb, "Silver coins of Sri Jagapala - a new medieval silver coinage".  
Nasim Khan, "New discoveries from Pakistan, unpublished Hephthalite coins from Kashmir Smast".

For more information please contact Joe Cribb at the British Museum on 020 7323 8585.

## Other News

### Internet Groups

Fawzan Barrage, moderator of the Islamic Coin Group on the Internet has sent us the following message:

This is the third year that the Islamic Coins Group has served the community of Islamic numismatic scholars, students and enthusiasts. Over the years the group have grown to include more than 300 members from around the globe and we are proud to count among our members many of the paramount scholars on Islamic coins today.

Our eJournal *as-Sikka* (ISSN 1496-4414) which was started back in 1999, is now a peer reviewed Journal. *as-Sikka* is a semi-annual Journal published in June and December. We are seeking article submissions for the next issue. Please visit the Journal's site at the following address

<http://www.islamiccoinsgroup.50g.com/assikka.htm>  
to review the articles and see the submission requirements.

We would also like to announce that the internet home page of the group has moved to:

<http://www.islamiccoinsgroup.50g.com/>

We welcome your visits and urge you to join our group.

Editor's note: we do not, of course, wish to discourage articles on Islamic coins from appearing in this newsletter. There is nothing to stop them appearing both here and on the Islamic Coin Group site, as well as the ONS website.

Work has also been continuing to develop the website of the South Asia Coins Group, the address of which is: [www.southasiacoins.org](http://www.southasiacoins.org)

### New Curator of Islamic Coins at the British Museum

The British Museum has appointed Cécile Bresc, a French scholar, to succeed Venetia Porter as Curator of Islamic Coins in its Department of Coins and Medals. Venetia has moved to the Museum's Department of Oriental Antiquities, where she is now a Curator of the Islamic Collections.

Cécile Bresc is a History graduate based in Paris where she is currently working on her Doctoral thesis on 'The Numismatic History of Iran, 9-13th centuries, from the Tahirids to the Mongol Invasion'. After graduating from the Sorbonne, her Master's dissertation was a study of the mint of Aleppo in the 9-13th centuries, she then completed a DEA (higher masters) on the monetary history of Syria during the same centuries. She has published three studies on Islamic coin issue and circulation in Armenia in the three volume series *History and Coin Finds in Armenia*, published jointly with G. Depeyrot, F. Gurnet and A. Mousheghian (Wettern 2000).

Cécile has also studied Arabic and Arabic Studies at the National Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilisations in Paris and the French Institute for Arabic Studies in Damascus, and Arabic epigraphy at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes under Ludvik Kalus and at the École du Louvre under Thérèse Bittar. During last year Cécile worked in the Cabinet des Médailles, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris cataloguing their collection of Iranian coins. She has been doing research in the Cabinet since 1995.

Cécile will begin working at the British Museum in May.

### The Gujarat earthquake

Everyone will be aware of the terrible earthquake that hit Gujarat in late January. Our sympathies go out to the people of the region and especially to any ONS members affected. One of the casualties of the quake was the Kutch Museum in Bhuj. Dilip Rajgor has sent the following report.

"I am afraid to inform you that the recent devastating earthquake of Kutch-Gujarat has totally demolished the famous Kutch Museum of Bhuj. It was founded by the then ruler of Kutch, Khengarji III in 1877 as an Art School. It was the oldest museum among 34 museums in Gujarat. It housed the best collection of Kutch State coins, coin dies, art-work for Kutch State Bank notes, and a few beautiful gold and silver coins of the Mughals, Sasanians and medieval dynasties. Right now the museum with its huge collection of coins, antiquities, miniature paintings, etc. is buried under the debris. The authorities are trying to safeguard the collection. However, it is going to take some time as the priority is to save 75,000 souls under the debris!"

And subsequently

"A ray of hope has emerged from the Gujarat Government. The State Government has posted military to safeguard the Museum collection. Twenty-four hours a day, the rubble of the Museum will be looked after until better arrangements are made. Moreover, a three-member team led by Gujarat's Director of Museums has gone to Bhuj to assess the losses. I hope the rich collection will now be available for posterity.

However, two other museums were fortunate enough to survive the disaster. A century old museum, the Madansinhji Museum at Bhuj and the Museum at Prabhas Patan, Somnath (District Junagadh) have developed a few cracks.

Another sad piece of news is also concerned with Kutch: Maharajkumar Bhupatsinhji Jadeja of Kutch died on 18th of January. He was an authority on the currency of Kutch State. He published very rare and unknown types of Kutch coins in the *Numismatic Digest*."

### New and Recent Publications

- Volume 160 of *The Numismatic Chronicle*, published by The Royal Numismatic Society, London, includes the following articles of oriental interest:
  - o O. Bopearachchi, H. Falk & R. Wickremesinhe "Earliest inscribed coins, moulds, seals and sealings from Tissamaharama (Sri Lanka)"
  - o S. Tyler-Smith, "Coinage in the name of Yazdgerd III (AD 632-651) and the Arab conquest of Iran"

- o M. Fedorov, "The Qysmychi hoard of Qarakhanid dirhams (1002-1021)"

There are also notes on two Islamic coins hoards and book reviews.

- Dilip Rajgor has published two books:  
*Punch-marked Coins of Early Historic India*  
*Palaeolinguistic Profile of Brahmi Script*  
The following information is presumed to have emanated from either the author or the publisher.

*Punch-marked Coins of Early Historic India*

Size: 240 x 170 mm Pages: xx + 221 Plates: 16 (289 coins illustrated) Paperback with section binding Price: US \$70  
Pre Publication Price: US \$55 (if order sent by 15 February 2001)

"Punch-marked Coins of Early Historic India chronicles 200 years of numismatic history of the Indian Subcontinent. The period covered in the monograph ranges from the rise of Janapadas (States) in c. 600 BC to the rise of the Shishunagas in c. 400 BC. Numerous monarchical and republican Janapadas issued punch-marked coins. These metallic pieces had various symbols punched on their face. These undeciphered pictographs had political, social and economic significance. However, behind these little nuggets of history, lies a hidden story of issuing authorities, manufacturing techniques and numismatic expertise.

In writing the monograph, the author has studied 10,000 punch-marked coins and 66 coin-hoards. Based on this study, he has forwarded a Catalogue of Coins of 1288 coin varieties in electrum, silver and copper. All these coins are classified into 83 coin series assignable to 17 Janapadas. This attribution is a synthesis of two important factors, provenance of coins and location of ancient Janapadas during the early historic period. Consequently, the volume is classified into 12 parts, comprising 21 chapters giving information about the location of Janapadas, their historical outline and coin hoards known from that region. Moreover, Catalogue of Coins lists every variety of punch-marked coins assignable to respective Janapadas. Furthermore, two appendices enlist modern forgeries and an Index of Main Symbols. Three maps locate ancient Janapadas and their respective coin hoards. Furthermore, Identification Guide forwards an easy reference guide for coin collectors and Bibliography for numismatists. At the back, 16 plates illustrate 289 coins.

Punch-marked coins listed in the book belong to the following Janapadas: Andhra, Vanga, Magadha, Surashtra, Avanti, Ashmaka, Kuntala, Shakya, Gandhara, Kalinga, Kashi, Kosala, Kuru, Malla, Panchala, Shurasena and Vatsa.

Arrangement:

Punch-marked coins catalogued in the monograph are arranged according to the present-day states of India. Those from Pakistan and Afghanistan are listed under the heading "Coins from North-West India".

All these geographical regions of the Indian subcontinent are arranged alphabetically in eleven parts. Within each part, Janapadas are also alphabetically arranged. Within a Janapada, coins are catalogued from higher to lower denomination. Among a group of one denomination, an attempt has been made to classify coins chronologically. Important features of classified coins in the Catalogue are: Unique Type No., Eye Copy of Symbols, Weight, Size, Provenance, Location, Reference, Remark and Coin Rarity. This is a first comprehensive monograph on lesser-known punch-marked coins of Early Historic India."

It is understood that the many drawings for this book were made by Shailendra Bhandare.

*Palaeolinguistic Profile of Brahmi Script*

Size: 186 x 246 mm Pages: xxx + 89 Plates: 64 (Color 25; Black 38) Hardbound Price: US \$ 90

"The monograph "Palaeolinguistic Profile of Brahmi Script" revolves around the palaeolinguistic analysis of Mauryan and Ksatrapa Brahmi scripts. The former is the earliest known form of the script dating back to at least 250 BC whereas the latter is a derivative of the former in western India in the first four centuries of the Christian era. The book deals with the linguistic and topographic organization of Brahmi Script. Furthermore; Dependency Phonology is an important component of this work. This modern linguistic phenomenon is corroborated by the ancient Brahmi Script.

Furthermore, evolution of Brahmi has also been traced into four stages preceded by Harappan script, viz.,

1. Harappan Script (c 2500 - 1700 BC),
2. Proto-Brahmi Script (c 1700 - 600 BC),
3. Pre-Mauryan Brahmi Script (c 600 - 350 BC),
4. Mauryan Brahmi Script (c 350 - 150 BC), and
5. Post-Mauryan Brahmi Scripts (c 150 BC - AD 600).

The book is also an important tool to learn the script. Moreover, it also illustrates 16 color plates of 49 coins of the Western Ksatrapas, Traikutakas and of the Guptas."

- R.Krishnamurthy: *Non-Roman Ancient Foreign Coins from Karur in India*

The book deals with ancient foreign coins found in the Amaravathi river bed (Karur)Tamil Nadu,India.

Contents

1. Greece and Greek coinage
  - 1.1 Thracian coin from Karur
  - 1.2 Thessalian coin from Karur
  - 1.3 Cretan coin from Karur
  - 1.4 Rhodian coins from Karur
  - 1.5 Seleucid coins from Karur
2. Phoenecian coins from Karur
3. Askalon coins from Karur
4. A coin of the priest kings of Judaea from Karur
5. Coins of the Roman Governors of Judaea from Karur
6. Parthian coins from Karur
7. Edessan coin from Karur
8. Aksumite coins from Karur
9. Observations

With 10 multi-colour plates and maps.

Price Rs600 or 30\$, shipping extra.

It can be obtained from:

Garnet Publishers, 34,2nd Main Road, R.A.Puram, Chennai-28, Tamil Nadu, India

- After several decades study and collecting Bob Senior has now finished his long awaited *Catalogue of Indo-Scythian Coins* which will become the standard work on the subject for the foreseeable future. It lists every known coin and illustrates almost all of them. There are three volumes, the first being an analysis of the coinage and discussion of the history and chronology of the period. The second volume is the main catalogue of coins and the third is a handy summary of it in tables and line drawings of each main type to enable the collector to identify the coins quickly. The first two volumes have 234 and 263 pages respectively and the third has 80, all in A4 format and hard cloth-bound. The work is published by CNG and expected to sell at \$175. It is due for release in March and signed copies can be ordered from the author at no extra cost! These volumes will be indispensable for anyone studying or collecting ancient Indian coins.
- Spink Numismatic Circular, vol. CIX/1 (February 2001) includes two short articles of oriental interest:  
F. Rebello: "Unrecorded date and dies in rupia of Goa". This concerns the issue of 1739.  
B. Juel-Jensen: "A gold coin of King Kaleb of Aksum with a reverse from an unpublished die".

Lansen, A.J. & Wells, L.T. Jr. *PLANTAGE-, HANDELS-, EN MIJNGELD VAN NEDERLANDS INDIË* (Plantation-, Merchant-, and Mining-money of the Netherlands East Indies). 2nd ed. 2001, cloth, 26.5 x 21.5 cm., 230 pages. Profusely illustrated. Listing all known plantation tokens with their varieties, historical information, maps, valuations charts, concordance with Scholten, Saran Singh, v.d.Chijs, Pridmore. Dutch text. Most important terms translated in English, German and Bahasa Indonesia. Expected march 2001. See the Mevius website at [www.mevius.nl](http://www.mevius.nl)  
This is a revised version of a book first issued in 1992.

- The Numismatic Society of Calcutta has just released its annual issue (2000) 'COIN' with some very interesting articles on coins and tokens. The paperback costs \$6 (including postage). Interested members/dealers may write to: The Chairman, Numismatic Society of Calcutta, 14, Srinath Das Lane, Calcutta-700012 India or e-mail at: [bosecoins@rediffmail.com](mailto:bosecoins@rediffmail.com)
- Malek Iradj Mochiri has published an article in *Iran*, no. XXXVIII, 2000, entitled "Kirman terre de turbulence" (pp. 33-48, plates XIII-XIX). The article concerns Arab-Sasanian coins from Kirman and more particularly those of 'Abd Allāh b. Zubayr, and has three tables. The main concern of the author is to prove that these coins are neither his nor those of his governors.  
The same issue also contains an article by Prof. Dr M. Fedorov entitled "The Khwarazmshahs of the Banū 'Irāq".  
*Iran* is the Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies, c/o The British Academy, 10 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AH, UK.

#### Work in Progress

Lutz Ilisch has provided the following progress report on the Tübingen series.

The Damascus volume of the Tübingen sylloge series is proceeding slowly. It will contain some 1600 coins:

Umayyads 250, Abbasids 95, Tulunids 6, Ikshidids and successors 20, Fatimids 8, Saljuqs 8, Burids 12, Zangids 30, Ayyubids 285, Mongols 5, Bahri-Mamluks 505, Burji Mamluks 274, Timurids 3, Abbasid interval in Mamluks (al-Musta'in) 7, Ottomans 84.

So far all the coins have been arranged in their proper order and photographed, but only the Umayyad section is written. So it may well take another year before the text is ready.

The next volume to appear is the one by Florian Schwarz on coins from the upper course of the Oxus with the important mints of Balkh, Andaraba, Tirmidh and various mints of Badakhshan. It contains all of the large Samanid and sub-Samanid dirhams, which help to make it a fat volume. Proof-reading is largely completed; some coins that were acquired or donated while Florian was already writing have to be photographed a second time. So it is basically a few days or a week before that goes back to the publisher and I am still very optimistic that the book will appear before April this year. Fortunately, the financing of it is already covered, mainly shared between a large banking organisation and the university itself.

The next volume then to appear will be the one with the mints of Bukhara and Samarqand, authored by Michael Fedorov, Boris Kochnev, Golib Kurbanov and Madeleine Voegeli. This will comprise another 1100 coins. It was written in 1997-1998.

Yet another forthcoming publication should be noted. That is a catalogue of the countermarked silver coins of the Timurid period in the Tübingen collection. Written by Barbara Jockers, it also contains Jalairid, Aq Quyunlu and Qara Quyunlu countermarks. It will not appear within the sylloge series, so only a selection will be illustrated. But all the countermarks, some 600 different, I believe, will be represented by drawings and a lot of care has been taken by Mrs. Jockers to identify the undertypes and

the relative sequence of countermarks. My idea is to publish this catalogue in a comparatively cheap fashion, so that it may be distributed widely.

#### Lists Received

1. Stephen Album (PO Box 7386, Santa Rosa, Calif. 95407, USA; tel ++1 707-539-2120; fax ++1 707-539-3348; e-mail [album@sonic.net](mailto:album@sonic.net)) lists numbers 165 ("October" 2000), 166 (January 2001) and 167 (February 2001).
2. Scott Semans (PO Box 2347, Issaquah, WA 98027, USA; tel ++1 425 369 1725; fax ++1 425 369 1726; E-mail [SSemans@aol.com](mailto:SSemans@aol.com)) list 62

#### Articles

##### Ge'ez Punctuation Marks on Aksumite Coins

By Vincent West

The legends on the coins of the ancient Ethiopian kingdom of Aksum appear first in Greek in the late third century AD and later in Ge'ez (Ethiopic), a Semitic language which survives to this day as the liturgical language of the Ethiopian Christian Church.

In Ge'ez script punctuation marks are used, words being separated by two vertical dots (a colon) and sentences by two sets of these (two colons). On coins, however, punctuation marks are rare, having been noted only on the issues of the mid-fifth century king MHDYS (written thus, as the vocalised form of his name is not known). On his so far unique gold<sup>1</sup>, two dot word separators are used on both obverse and reverse. On his extremely rare silver<sup>2</sup>, two and three dot word separators are used on the obverse (with three dot ones also at the beginning and end of the legend) and two dot word separators on the reverse. On his more abundant copper<sup>3</sup>, punctuation marks are usually absent but two dot word separators have occasionally been found on the obverse and reverse<sup>4</sup>. The Ge'ez word for these marks is *naq<sup>w</sup>t* 'drop(let), spot<sup>5</sup>.



The copper MHDYS coin from my collection, West 289, illustrated enlarged (actual diameter 15 mm.) has a new variety of reverse. Whereas there are no punctuation marks in the obverse legend, which, in transliteration is MHDYS N+GŠ 'KSM ("MHDYS King of Aksum"), in the reverse legend +BZ +MW' BMSQL ("By this + victorious by the cross") the three words are separated by two punctuation marks each of three vertical dots, after the Z and the ' <sup>6</sup>. The second is carelessly inserted, the innermost dot being very close to the preceding letter. A dot also appears each side of the initial cross, a variety not previously recorded. The punctuation marks are faint and are particularly evident because of the excellent preservation of this specimen. Another MHDYS copper in my collection, West 310<sup>7</sup>, also has three dot punctuation marks on the reverse, but without the dots beside the initial cross. It is likely that punctuation marks are not so rare on this issue as has hitherto been suggested, at least on the reverse, but are simply not visible on less well preserved specimens. Indeed two of the British Museum specimens have punctuation marks on the reverse which are not noted in the catalogue<sup>8</sup>. BMC 298 has a two dot separator after the Z and BMC 302 a three dot separator after the ', the other expected separator being unclear on both coins due to wear<sup>9</sup>.

It is surprising that punctuation marks have not been found on coins of other Aksumite kings. A copper coin of the late sixth century king Hataz from my collection, West 118<sup>10</sup>, may however have such a mark in its obverse legend. The two Ge'ez words NGŠ HTZ ("King Hataz") are separated by two carelessly placed dots between the Š and the bust, one to the right of the letter and the other below its right half<sup>11</sup>. There are no marks in the reverse legend ŠHL L'HZB ("Mercy to the people"). The obverse dots may be one of the symbols (control marks?) that appear on late Aksumite coins. Alternatively they may be a punctuation mark, being between words and in their careless positioning echoing the MHDYS coin illustrated. Whether a symbol or a punctuation mark, the variety is unrecorded.

I am grateful to Bent Juel-Jensen for taking the photograph.

#### Notes

1. Munro-Hay S.C. and Juel-Jensen B., *Aksumite Coinage*, Spink, 1995, (henceforth *AC*) type 67
2. *AC* type 69
3. *AC* type 70
4. *AC* records JJ 74 with separators on both obverse and reverse and MH 89 with separators on reverse only. For MH 89 see Munro-Hay S.C., *The Munro-Hay Collection of Aksumite Coins, Supplemento no. 48 of the Annali, Istituto Universitario Orientale, Naples, 1986* (henceforth *MH*), p.38 and pl.VIII
5. Leslau W., *Concise Dictionary of Ge'ez (Classical Ethiopic)*, Wiesbaden, 1989, p.122 restricts this word to the four dots (two colons) between sentences but the Ge'ez-Amharic dictionary of Kedana Wald Kefle, Addis Ababa, 1955/6 defines it as referring to any punctuation mark. I owe the latter reference to Dr David Appleyard
6. In *MH* the separators on the reverse of MH 89 are transcribed as three dots each without comment (and MH 89a has a similar reverse where "the *naqwet* are difficult to see" though the second is clear on pl.VIII). Munro-Hay S.C., *The Ge'ez and Greek Paleography of the Coinage of Aksum, Azania XIX, 1984*, p.135 referring to the separators on the reverse of MHDYS coppers says "there appear to be three dots". On Ge'ez legends see West V., *Ge'ez Legends on Aksumite Coins, Oriental Numismatic Society Newsletter 159, Spring 1999*, pp.5-6
7. ex Spink auction 13.7.00 (Dreesmann Part II) lot 927 (illustrated) ex Sternberg auction VIII 16-17.11.78 lot 358 and pl.XVIII = Hahn W.R.O., *Die Münzprägung des Axumitischen Reiches, Litterae Numismaticae Vindobonenses 2*, pp.113-80, pl.12-15, no.30 (this coin) = Vaccaro F., *Le Monete di Aksum*, Mantua, 1967, no.35 (this coin)
8. Munro-Hay S.C., *Catalogue of the Aksumite Coins in the British Museum*, British Museum Press, 1999 (henceforth *BMC*)
9. JJ 74, MH 89 and 89a, West 289 and 310, BMC 298 and 302 all appear to come from different reverse dies, though some are very similar
10. *AC* type 141, ex Sternberg auction XVIII 20-21.11.86 lot 267 and pl. XI
11. Only the dot to the right is visible on the Sternberg illustration (see note 10)

#### Anomalous Arab-Byzantine coins

##### Some Problems and Suggestions

By Clive Foss

The complex series of bronze coins struck in Syria in the seventh century AD bear Byzantine types but are products of a region conquered and ruled by Moslem Arabs. Although some of this coinage is datable, the mass of it is not, but is left floating in time between the Arab conquest completed in 640 and the reign of 'Abd al-Malik (685-705). Beside chronology, the coinage poses many problems of organization and interpretation. There are many basic questions still unanswered. This paper aims to address a few of these problems by examining a small group of coins, most of them acquired in Jerusalem. Some of them have long been known,

others are new, but all raise questions that may have broader implications. Although clear and definitive answers may not be forthcoming, the problems associated with these coins will at least illustrate the complexity of the series and, I hope, suggest lines of further investigation<sup>1</sup>.

#### Terminology

Any discussion of this coinage requires a set of consistent terms to describe it. So far, 'Arab-Byzantine' has been generally accepted as describing all the coins with Byzantine (or Late Roman) types struck under the authority of states ruled by Arabs, or better, Moslems. This embraces the seventh-century coinage of Syria, Palestine, Egypt and North Africa. As used in the classic catalogue of John Walker, it includes everything from imitations of Byzantine types to the coins that bear the name and image of 'Abd al-Malik<sup>2</sup>. Objections have recently been raised to this term on the grounds that it is too general and ambiguous, and a new designation 'pre-reform coppers' has been suggested to replace it<sup>3</sup>. This does not seem to me to be an improvement, since, without further qualification, it is even more ambiguous and imprecise: its employment would require defining the 'reform' in question. 'Arab-Byzantine' has the advantage of a clear meaning, however broad the area it embraces, and forms a neat pair with 'Arab-Sasanian' which likewise describes coins of Sasanian type struck under the authority of Moslem Arabs. I shall therefore retain it here, as denoting the entire series of coins struck in Syria between the Arab conquest and the reform of 'Abd al-Malik that introduced types without images.

Likewise, the major series within the broader coinage need definition. The following proposals have been made<sup>4</sup>: *Pseudo-Byzantine* (copies of Byzantine coins); *Umayyad Imperial Image* (Byzantine types; meaningful Greek or Arabic legends; mint names or Arabic religious formulae); *Standing Caliph* (Islamic figure with sword; Arabic legends).

*Standing Caliph* is in common use and will surely meet no objections (though it may need qualification; see on no. 12 below). The others, though, are worth discussing.

*Pseudo-Byzantine*, it seems to me, is far too vague to apply to a specific series of coins without further qualification. It could, after all, indicate coins struck by the Avars, Franks or Lombards or even the Latin crusaders of the thirteenth century. I would suggest using in its place two terms for the coins that follow Byzantine types and bear no clear indication of place of issue: *Imitative*, for coins that attempt, however successfully, to copy Byzantine types, usually with remnants of a Greek legend (as nos. 1-4 below), and *Derivative* for coins that use Byzantine types as their base but modify them by changing details, introducing new variations and legends, without attempting to copy the original Greek (nos. 6-9 below). These terms are not totally exclusive, but further refinement of the definitions could account for coins like no. 5 below which uses Byzantine types and Greek legends but transforms one of the crosses of the obverse and introduces a new legend (?) in the exergue. I shall employ these terms here.

*Umayyad Imperial Image* also suffers from ambiguity, for the imitative and derivative series certainly bear imperial images and were struck under the Umayyads. It also seems to imply that the image on these coins is of an Umayyad emperor, surely not the case since he usually bears crosses in his hands. *Official Imperial Image* proposed by Luke Treadwell<sup>5</sup>, has a similar problem by indicating that this series (by implied contrast with others) was 'official'. For these coins, I would suggest something like *Bilingual series with mint names*, not to indicate that each coin is bilingual (they are not), but that they form part of a series that uses both Greek and Arabic, and is characterized by the indication of a mint name. In any case, this coinage, now becoming the subject of increasing attention, deserves a consistent and unambiguous nomenclature.

### Unusual prototypes

- 1) Obv.: Two standing figures: l. has long beard and prominent moustache and holds staff; r. holds globe with cross.  
Rev.: M, + above, B below, NN on l.  
Struck on a very thin, irregular flan: 20x15mm, 1.46 g.

This coin imitates a class 8 follis of Constans II (641-668), struck in regnal years 15, 16 and 17 (655-8). The vast majority of the Arab-Byzantine imitative coinage is modeled on issues of the first seven years of Constans' reign (classes 1-4), showing the emperor standing. Imitations of class 5 (emperor with long beard, struck 651-656) are less common, but copies of later types are rare. I have noted only the following published examples:

W. Hahn, *Moneta imperii byzantini* 3 (Vienna 1981) pl. 29 X34: obv. from Constans follis type 8 (as this example); reverse from types struck 641-655

Marcus Phillips and Tony Goodwin 1997: "A seventh-century Syrian hoard of Byzantine and imitative copper coins", *NC* 157: 61-87. no. C66: same types as present specimen, but weight 2.78g<sup>6</sup>.

*ibid.*, C73: obv. from Constans class 9 (659-664); rev. from class 7 or 8 (655-658)

These examples show that some of the imitative coinage was being struck in the mid-650's or later. Their rarity reflects the ending of the abundant supply of Byzantine bronze coins that had been reaching Syria in the first decade of the reign of Constans<sup>7</sup>. The great majority of Byzantine coins (not imitations) found in Syria were struck in 641-648; there are considerably fewer from the 650's and virtually none after 660. Their imitations, of course, reflected the coinage in circulation: two of these examples reveal the common phenomenon of their makers combining an obverse of one type with the reverse of another. In all cases, the prototypes provide only a *terminus post quem*. The imitations could have been struck as early as the 640's, and thus represent a continuous series from shortly after the Arab conquest, or have been made at some much later time. The present examples, however, cannot be earlier than 655/660, perhaps representing late issues of the vast imitative series.

- 2) Obv.: Facing bust, cross on globe in r. hand; fragmentary blundered legend  
Rev.: K, + above, T below; on l., ANN, on r. UI  
Irregular flan, 24 x 19mm. 4.9g

This piece copies the half-follis of Heraclius struck in regnal years 1-4 (610-614). Since early coins of Heraclius were not normally imitated in the Arab-Byzantine series, it invites comparison with the anomalous folles studied by Henri Pottier. In his forthcoming work, he will show that they represent an organized coinage of Syria under the Persian occupation of 611-628<sup>8</sup>.

- 3) Obv.: Two standing figures, l. in military dress; + between heads  
Rev.: K; above, +; on l. ANN; on r. I I  
Oval flan, 28x19 mm. 6.85g

The prototype for this coin is the half-follis of Heraclius issued 629-640; its heavy weight corresponds to the early issues of 629-631. Its peculiar flan and impossible dating, however, identify it as an imitation, in this case, very close to the original. It seems to have no exact parallel in this series.

Imitations of half folles (distinguished by the letter K on the reverse) are extremely unusual (I note only Hahn *MIB* 3. Pl.12. X25: imitated from K of Heraclius struck 614-628), but the

denomination did exist in at least one area. Rare coins of Scythopolis bear the letter K and are of an appropriate size relative to the larger local bronzes that have the typical denomination letter M<sup>9</sup>. Their rarity, too, reflects a reality of the coin supply. Half folles of the seventh century are hardly found in Syria: the hoard analyzed by Phillips and Goodwin contained only 2 out of 298, while the Antioch excavations produced only 3 of 55 of Heraclius and 1 of 81 of Constans II. The denomination, though, did circulate in the sixth century when it constituted 10-20% of the bronzes discovered at Antioch. It no doubt fell out of use as the size of the follis was drastically reduced during the reign of Heraclius.

### An unexplained inscription

The common coins of Damascus of the imperial type most often have an enigmatic inscription, AEO, on the obverse. It defies all attempts at explanation: it is not a proper name (that should be AEWN, with an *omega*), nor a date, nor even a debased form of the *kalon* 'good' that appears on the coins of Emesa. The following coin may offer a clue:

- 4) Obv.: Standing imperial figure of very crude execution, garbled EN TOYTO NIKA around.  
Rev.: Cursive **m**, fragmentary letters l. and above; on r., AEO; exergue blank  
Irregular flan, 22 x 22mm. 3.4g

The AEO on the reverse evidently represents the remains of the original inscription ANANEO, with one bar of the N missing (it has not been lost from wear; the coin is in excellent condition). A similar inscription appears on an unpublished piece from Kathleen Kenyon's excavations in Jerusalem. It is of the usual type, with large letters AE r. of the **m** (the rest of the inscription is illegible). These coins raise the possibility that a debased reverse inscription got transferred to the obverse of a similar type and somehow stuck there, at least in Damascus. Careless execution of the imitative types and the general practice of mixing obverse and reverse types would allow such a change to happen. The following illustrates the process:

- 5) Obv.: Usual stg. imperial figure, except that the cross on his staff has been transformed into something like a trident,  
, NA l., EN r.  
Rev: **m**, pellets within, ANA l., ΔHE r., O ~ O below.  
18mm. 2.96g

Very similar examples have been published by Tony Goodwin and Rachel Milstein<sup>10</sup>. Both of these show the emperor holding a cross in his r. hand. No obverse legend can be read on the Goodwin example, but the Milstein coins shows a clear NEO. It and the present specimen indicate that the Byzantine reverse inscription ANANEO has been transposed to the obverse, to appear on both sides in a highly debased form. These coins can be associated with a definable class of bronzes from Syria characterised by a horizontal S in the reverse exergue<sup>11</sup>. The pellets within the **m** may relate them to a larger group of imitations with blundered Greek legends that Milstein attributes to Damascus. In these coins, the reverse legend has migrated to the obverse, where part of it could have been immobilised to produce the enigmatic AEO.

### Star and Crescent

- 6) Obv.: Bust of Constans II type, holding large cross in right hand. Flanked by star (left) and crescent (right); in r. field below crescent: S

Rev.: M with cross above, A below; ANA on l., AX on r.  
CON in exergue

Overstruck; undertype illegible

Thin, oval flan: 25 x 18mm. 2.47 g.

Published: C. Morrisson, *Catalogue des monnaies byzantines de la bibliothèque nationale* (Paris 1970) 371, no. 13/X/AE/01, ill. on plate LVII. This is of the same size and shape but struck on a thicker flan (4.07g); Hahn, *MIB* pl. 29 X21, possibly same obv. die: similar flan, no weight given

The prominent star and crescent in the obverse field constitute the most striking feature of this coin. These symbols, among several others, occur on the bilingual coinage of Emesa/Homs on both obverse and reverse. An imperial bust on the obverse is the main distinguishing feature of that series. It is conceivable, therefore, that this specimen is to be associated with that mint, perhaps representing some sort of prototype. Yet the star and crescent are also the prominent feature of another coinage with an obverse bust, the bronze dodekanummia struck at Alexandria during the Persian occupation, 618-628. Those, however, have the crescent facing right, and no cross on the obverse. The present type for the moment can only invite speculation.

#### Mint practice, square coins and enigmatic names

- 7) Obv.: Stg. figure with detached crown; elaborate sceptre (or palm branch? or conceivably a bird on a stand) on l.; orb on staff and cross on longer staff on r.; no legend  
Rev.: Cursive **m**,  above; H on l., AV on r.  
a) 20mm. 4.05 g  
Published: Kirkbride, A. S., 1948: "Coins of the Byzantine-Arab Transition Period", *QDAP* 13: 59-63, no. 16 (round, 20 mm.)  
b) rectangular 15 x 15mm. 3.6g

One method often advocated to help introduce order into the seemingly chaotic mass of Syrian bronzes with derivative types is mint practice. Logically, each mint should have its own way of making coins, distinguishable by the size, shape or manufacturing technique of the flan, or by the choice and arrangement of types. In particular, rectangular flans might serve to differentiate types from those with new or overstruck round flans. The present examples undermine such a hope, at least in this case, for both – round and square – are struck from the same dies. Nevertheless, their distinctive style and almost complete lack of Christian symbolism relate them to another group which unusually has a specific provenance.

- 8) Obv.: Stg. figure between staff ending in [symbol] and object that resembles a shepherd's crook; reversed E in left field<sup>12</sup>.  
Rev.: **m**,  above; legends as follow:  
a) TEP in ex.  
16x15mm. 2.66 gm.  
Published: Walker 139 (19x14mm, 3.52g), same reverse die  
b) reversed E I.  EI in ex.  
15mm square. 3.49 gm.

Both these coins were excavated in Jerusalem by the Israel Antiquities Authority. The provenance, together with their rarity that suggests these coins did not enjoy wide circulation, indicates that they were local issues of Palestine. This origin may have implications for related types like the following, which may be associated on stylistic grounds. Like these, it has a very simple obverse and is rectangular, cut from a piece of metal. It differs, though in having a cross and Arabic inscriptions.

- 9) Obv.: Stg. figure holding cross; on l., *Muhammad*

Rev.: Reversed cursive **m**,  in exergue

Rectangular, 17x15mm. 3.4g

Published: Kirkbride 1948. 62= Walker p.52, ASK 6 (rev. leg illegible); Qedar 1989, p. 33 with pl.5.12

The Qedar coin shows that the obv. figure bore a cross on his crown and that another cross appeared above the m of the rev. It and the present example both reveal the rev. legend clearly. Mr. Qedar plausibly reads this as a mintmark, *bi-'Amman*. Use of the preposition 'in' before the mint name is common on the Standing Caliph series. Yet there is another possibility, which at first sight seems unlikely. The legend could as well read *Nu'man*. Although there is a town in northern Syria near Qinnasrin called Ma'arrat an-Nu'man, it seems never to be called simply 'Nu'man'. That leaves the alternative of a proper name, which seems unparalleled in this coinage (see also the discussion of 'Qatari' below). A recently published coin, however, seems to provide another example.

Obv.: Stg figure holding two crosses, no legend

Rev.: **m**. cross above, *sa'id* r.

Rectangular, 12 x 15mm; weight not given<sup>13</sup>

(unknown provenance)

In style, module and Arabic inscription, this coin resembles the previous, though the crosses on it are displayed more prominently. Stefan Heidemann, who published it, naturally interpreted the inscription as the common name Sa'id, and supposed that it denoted an official, a mintmaster or perhaps a merchant offering copper coins. The Arab-Byzantine coinage is of no help here, but the Arab-Sasanian offers a seemingly obvious solution: it routinely names governors. Why not look for one here?

The Standing caliph coinage may offer a parallel. A very rare and enigmatic coin struck in Sarmin has the usual types and inscriptions, but bears the additional legend *'Abd al-Rahman* in the obverse field<sup>14</sup>. Unless this is an unattested additional name of the caliph 'Abd al-Malik, it seems reasonable to suppose that it is the name of a governor. In that case, the most likely candidate would be 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Umm al-Hakam al Thaqafi, the nephew of Mu'awiya. Governor of Damascus under 'Abd al-Malik and previously in charge of the Jazira, Mosul and Egypt; he was evidently a major figure of the day<sup>15</sup>. Yet there is no explanation why his name, alone among the many Umayyad potentates, should be the only one to appear on the coinage.

In fact, governors named Nu'man and Sa'id are attested in Umayyad Syria. Nu'man ibn Bashir (for whom Ma'arrat an-Nu'man was named) governed the region of Homs under Mu'awiya and again for 'Abd al-Malik's rival as caliph, Ibn al-Zubayr (693-694); and Sa'id b. Malik b. Bahtal was governor of Qinnasrin for Yazid I (680-683)<sup>16</sup>. Historically, these figures are suitable, but they pose a numismatic problem, both of them held office in the north: Sa'id in Qinnasrin and Nu'man in Homs whose well-known coinage has nothing in common with these pieces<sup>17</sup>. One of them, no. 9, was purchased in Jerusalem; the Kirkbride specimen came from Transjordan. If association with no. 8 is correct, they should be part of the coinage of Palestine, not northern Syria. In other words, these governors probably did not issue these coins.

Another personal name may appear on a coinage that has rightly been dubbed 'enigmatic'. Curious and inconsistent issues that appear to be of Tiberias contain an unparalleled reverse legend:

Obv.: Stg. imperial figure with cross on crown holding globus cruciger in each hand; long cross in l. field, TIBEPICOC

Rev.: m, cross above; r.: ΧΑΛΕΔ; in ex.: BON; l.: ΑΛΑΚ  
 Walker P.15: 20mm. 4.34g; Qedar 1989, Pl.5.14 (19 mm., no weight given);  
 Karukstis<sup>18</sup> 1: 20mm. 4.45g

This type has many varieties (no two of the nine known examples are alike) which have given rise to many explanations, some reasonable, some fantastic<sup>19</sup>. There is as yet no clear solution, but the examples with the most complete legends seem to be trying to use Greek letters to convey an Arab name like Khalid ibn ('Abd?) Allah. The name is not uncommon; one of its bearers was governor of Basra under 'Abd al-Malik<sup>20</sup>. On the other hand, as so often in this series, the inscriptions may be mere gibberish.

The discussion of coin 9 has led a long way without offering a solution: it may bear a mintmark or a personal name. An example of a similar type from the British Museum, though, points in an entirely different direction:

Obv.: Figure standing between two staffs (upper parts missing), fragmentary Arabic inscription ending in 'ayn sad  
 Rev.: m,  above, Arabic inscription, apparently Muh[ammad] in ex.  
 Walker 140: 16mm square. 3.33g

This coin resembles no.9, and seems connected to no.8 by the decoration of the reverse. It appears to have reversed the legends of 9, with the Prophet's name on the reverse, and an enigmatic word on the obverse. The last two letters, very clear in Walker's photograph, cannot be the ending of Nu'man or bi-'Amman. Most likely, they are the end of the word ba'd, meaning 'a part'; that is, the coin was called something like 'a fraction'<sup>21</sup>. This may seem a dull name for a coin, but it actually has a parallel in a coin of Scythopolis which bears a word read as miqsam, 'a part', i.e. a fraction<sup>22</sup>. Ba'd could be the reading of no.9, but it does not seem to suit the coin illustrated by Qedar. When further examples are published, the question may be resolved<sup>23</sup>.

If no. 9 does not contain a personal name, what about the type published by Heidemann? The reading sa'id is not in doubt, but it need not be a personal name. As an adjective, sa'id means 'lucky, fortunate'. Although this sentiment is alien to the Arab-Byzantine coinage, it has parallels in the Arab-Sasanian, where many coins bear the term afzut, 'increase'. One example of a Standing Caliph bronze with Pahlavi legends excavated at Susa (Walker p.82) bears an inscription read as farrokh, 'good fortune', close in sentiment and meaning to sa'id.

All this is inconclusive, as so many studies of this complex coinage. Coin no.9 may bear a mintmark, a personal name or a denomination; Heidemann's coin may have a name or an exclamation; only the BM specimen seems unambiguous, with a word that probably denotes the name or denomination of the coin. The possible personal name on the coins of Tiberias remains an enigma.

As for mint practice, the square coins do seem to be related, but shape of flan by itself is not a certain indication of a mint<sup>24</sup>. The coins discussed here as no.8 show that one mint could strike round and square coins at the same time. In other words, evidence of style and inscriptions should necessarily be considered together with evidence of minting technique.

#### Mules, new types or imitations?

10) Obv.: Usual stg. figure; pellet and palm branch on l., K [or E] O in r. field  
 Rev.: M, cross above, ^ below; l.: ΗΑΙ ⚡; r.: ΠΟΛ; (Arabic) b'lbk below  
 19 mm. 3.1g  
 Published: Walker 6

Although the reverse of this coin names Heliopolis/Baalbek, its obverse is typical of Damascus: the inscription ΛΕΟ regularly occurs there, as do various symbols, including a palm branch, in the left field<sup>25</sup>. A similar phenomenon recurs on bronzes that have an obverse characteristic of Damascus coupled with a reverse that names Tiberias<sup>26</sup>. Likewise, coins are known that combine an obverse of Heliopolis with reverse of Damascus<sup>27</sup>.

As Michael Bates has clearly demonstrated, these coins are mules, not types<sup>28</sup>. Their existence has important implications for mint practice in Umayyad Syria, suggesting that dies for Damascus, Heliopolis and Tiberias were all produced in the capital. Alternatively, the coins could have been struck locally by moneymen sent out from the capital. In either case, dies could have been mixed to produce such coins. All this indicates a centrally organized coinage, as would be expected from the distinctive types that each mint in this series employs.

Most of the identifiable mules derive from the well-known series of coins with mintmarks, exchanging recognizable types from other mints. A recently published example, however, falls outside that category:

Obv.: Usual stg. figure with crosses, remnants of EN Τ ⚡ TO NIKΑ  
 Rev: M, Δ below; EMH to l., CIC r., tayyib below  
 13mm. 3.6g

Tony Goodwin, "7th Century Arab Imitations of Byzantine Folles," *NumCirc* 103, 9 (November 1995), 336-37, no. 14

This coin combines a reverse that names a mint with the EN TOYTO NIKΑ obverse that normally does not appear on issues of the organized mints. It is instead characteristic of the vast range of imitations of Constans II struck in unknown times and places, but products of seventh-century Syria. It is unlikely, therefore that this is a mule, for that would imply that the stock of dies at a mint had examples of the imitative type. Nor does it appear to be a new type of Emesa, for the mints in this series distinguished themselves by their obverse types and such distinction would have been lost if they employed the imitative type. Rather, it is to be seen as an imitation, made by a die engraver who took as his model obverse and reverses that had nothing in common with each other. The imitative series offers many examples of mismatched types. The reverse used here appears on the less common standing emperor type of Emesa, which is evidently an early issue.

Other published coins, which appear to be mules, turn out to be imitations derived from more than one prototype. These combine anomalous obverses of Homs with reverses of Damascus. Here, the manufacturer has combined types that themselves are derived from imitations<sup>29</sup>. In all cases, the coins need to be examined carefully to see whether they are mules or imitations. In many cases, certainty will be impossible, for, as so often, study this coinage is complicated by the existence of numerous and often unpredictable imitations.

#### An anomalous inscription at Tiberias

11) Obv.: Three stg. figures  
 Rev.: M;  above, A below; on l., THC; r. Tabariya; in exergue   
 12mm. 3.4g.  
 Published: Ilisch Filistin 286-7 'Azraqite'

The inscription in the exergue was read by Ilisch as Qatari, and taken to name the leader of the extremist Kharijites, or Azraqites, who revolted against Abd al-Malik in central Iran and posed a serious threat to Iraq. After their first advances were pushed back, Qatari ibn al-Fuja'a was proclaimed their caliph in 689 and successfully led them until 697 or 698, when he was

killed<sup>30</sup>. His base was in Iran (he never succeeded in occupying Iraq), where coins were struck in his name<sup>31</sup>. They are typical Arab-Sasanian dirhams, struck at Bishapur in AH 69 and 75, and at Ardashir-Khurrah, Darabjird and Zaranj in 75. Their Pahlavi inscriptions name Qatari, Commander of the Faithful; the issues of Bishapur add his otherwise unattested name 'Abd-Allah. Some have the Kharijite slogan, *lā hukma illā lillāh* in the margin. Qatari never came anywhere near Syria; the coins reflect his activity in the East. It is hard to imagine how a coin that names Tiberias and is so close in style and fabric to the issues of that mint could have anything to do with him.

Of course, there are Arab-Sasanian bronzes (mostly discovered since Walker's day) that are closely related to Syrian types, just as dirhams of Sasanian style were struck in Damascus. Cross-fertilisation was natural in a huge empire that stretched from the Atlantic to India. One of them, a bronze of 18mm excavated at Susa, resembles this coin with its three standing figures on the obverse, a large M on the reverse, but its inscriptions are in Pahlavi and may include the name of Khuzistan<sup>32</sup>. Again, this is plainly an eastern issue, quite different from the present coin.

History and numismatics both would suggest that the association with Qatari be abandoned and another solution sought. There are plausible possibilities. The word could be read *qutri* meaning 'regional', to indicate that the coin was struck for a definable district<sup>33</sup>. Alternatively, the root QTR has an old meaning 'copper or brass' so that *qatari* could be the name of the coin derived from its metal. The actual solution may be left to Arabic epigraphists or philologists, but in any case, Qatari ibn al-Fuja'a should be removed from the discussion.

#### A new mint and an image of Mohammed?

- 12) Obv.: Standing figure wearing sword, *bism illāh*  
 Rev.: **m**, line below, uncertain inscription on both sides  
 Thin irregular flan, 23 x 15mm. 2.7g

This coin plainly belongs to the class of 'standing caliph' coins struck in Filistin. Its irregular flan is reminiscent of the coins of Yubna, but unlike those, or the issues of Jerusalem, it bears an unparalleled inscription on the obverse. Likewise, its mintmark does not correspond to any known and offers no obvious reading. Prof. Moshe Sharon, who was kind enough to examine it, suggested that it might read *filastin*; in that case, the inscription on the left would be retrograde. I know of no more plausible reading.

If the coin names Filastin alone, it should be an issue of the capital of the province. Later issues of the aniconic type offer parallels: undated pieces name Filastin (Walker 911-913) or Urdunn alone (Walker 743-745); they were presumably struck at the *jund* capitals, Ramla and Tiberias, which are also named on coins of the same series.

If this coin bears the name of the provincial capital, it was presumably not struck at Ramla, which was only founded around AH90 (708/9), but at Ludd which had been the capital previously.

The obverse of this coin portrays a standing figure wearing a long robe, perhaps the mantle of the Prophet, tied at the waist with a cord, and a bedouin headdress or *kufiya*. He wears a sword which he holds with his left hand while his right rests on the pommel<sup>34</sup>. This figure appears on the coins of Jerusalem, Ludd and Yubna in the south and al-Ruha and Harran in Mesopotamia. With a few stylistic differences, it is the same as the figure on the large issue of 'standing caliph' coins of *junds* Urdunn, Damascus and Homs, many of which bear the name of 'Abd al-Malik.

Because of the coinage that names the caliph, as well as the very similar image in a statue at Khirbat al-Mafjar which is normally taken to represent a caliph, no-one has doubted the identity of the figure. Yet the coins of Jerusalem, Harran and al-Ruha raise a real question. On them, the image is accompanied by

the inscription *muhammad rasūl Allāh* (Jerusalem and al-Ruha) or simply *muhammad* (Harran). Ever since the time of Augustus, Roman and Byzantine coins (which were struck and circulated in Syria) bore the image and superscription of the emperor, as did those of the other great ancient empire, the Sasanian. In virtually every case, the name on the obverse identified the figure portrayed. The rare exceptions include the common gold issue of Heraclius and his sons, and several bronze issue of Heraclius and his family, which have no legend on the obverse, and do not in fact name the emperors at all. Likewise, most of the common bronzes of Constans II (widely imitated by the Arabs) have no legend or the religious slogan EN TOYTO NIKA instead of the emperor's name and titles. Yet, as far as I can tell, there is no coin where the name of someone else accompanies the imperial image.

This raises the curious possibility that these coins portray not the caliph but the prophet Mohammed. At first sight, this seems highly implausible, for Islam is well known for its prohibition of images, and the Prophet himself is never portrayed until the late middle ages, and then veiled. Yet so little is known of early Islamic iconography, that the possibility may remain open. As Prof. Oleg Grabar informs me, there was apparently no formal prohibition against representing the Prophet in early Islam, but a general avoidance of images begins under 'Abd al-Malik<sup>35</sup>. Certainly, the 'standing caliph' coins already show that portrayal of a living ruler was officially permitted, at least until the reform of the coinage. Perhaps, then some mints chose to portray Mohammed himself. This question might never find a clear solution, but, like so much else in this complex coinage, it is at least worth considering.

#### Anomalous mints

- 13) Obv.: Standing Caliph, *li-'Abd Allāh 'Abd al-Malik amīr al-mu'minīn*  
 Rev.: **Φ** on steps, *lā ilāha illā Allāh wahdahu Muḥammad rasūl Allāh*. In field r., *wafa, l. li-Tanūkh*  
 Walker p.41 P10 (not identified)  
 (unknown provenance)

The name of this mint, which also appears on the undated reformed types, Walker 884ff, was formerly interpreted as Saruj, but well-preserved specimens like the present example show that that reading is impossible. Among the many conceivable alternatives, Tanukh seems the most probable<sup>36</sup>. But what and where is the mint? Its tall and narrow reverse **Φ** would associate it with the *jund* of Qinnasrin, whose mints are in the general vicinity of Aleppo, but no place named Tanukh seems to appear in the sources or geographical literature. On the other hand, the name Tanukh is well known in the region of Aleppo and Qinnasrin, as that of a famous Christian tribe long settled there<sup>37</sup>. Formerly allies of the Byzantines, some converted to Islam after the Arab conquest but most remained Christian. They fought as allies of the Umayyads, on the side of Mu'awiya in the first civil war and of Marwan in the second. It would seem natural to associate them with this coinage. Yet, all the other mints, whether of the Arab-Byzantine or reformed coinage, are places (whether towns or districts), not people. One possible solution is that some place, no longer attested, took the name of the tribe settled there, and was the site of the mint<sup>38</sup>. In any case, the coin raises questions about the nature and function of this coinage which need to be considered, even if they cannot yet be answered.

One obvious question, of course, is why were coins struck here at all? 'Tanukh' is one of a group of eight mints of the *jund*, or military district of Qinnasrin, which produced coins in only two major series. The first consists of 'standing caliph' coppers, issued at Qinnasrin (W132-135), Sarmin (W94-95, 123-124), Ma'arrat Misrin (W99-101), Halab (W106-117), Jibrin (W105, 1.2), Qurus

(W J2) and Manbij (W102-103, P9, 136, J3) as well as Tanukh. Most of these are standard types, with the name of the caliph Abd al-Malik, but the issues of Ma'arrat Misrin and some of those of Manbij and Sarmin, have the title *khalīfat Allāh* instead of the royal name.

The second series is of the post-reform type, with the *shahada* on both sides, and usually a double circle around the legend. These were struck at Qinnasrin (W914-921), Sarmin (W883), Ma'arrat Misrin (W926-927), Halab (W789-794), Jibrin (W782), Tanukh (W884, P134, I.7), Qurus (Bone 252)<sup>39</sup>, and Manbij (Bone 249). These undated coins have been assigned to the 80's or 90's AH (708-718)<sup>40</sup>. These two series represent the only times when this entire group of mints struck coins<sup>41</sup>.

These mints are all in the north of Syria, remote from the centres of an empire that stretched from the Atlantic to the Indus, and even eccentric in terms of location within Syria. Although none of them but Aleppo was a major centre of population, they are all of great strategic importance for guarding the northern frontier against the caliphate's greatest enemy, Byzantium, as well as for communications between Syria and Mesopotamia. Antioch and Qurus, in particular, control the routes that lead north into Byzantine territory, while Manbij dominates the route across the Euphrates into Mesopotamia. Aleppo and Qinnasrin, the most prolific mints of this group (the other coins are relatively scarce or rare), are the major centres of the north Syrian plain that saw extensive tribal settlement after the Arab conquest<sup>42</sup>. Since this area was the base for the annual expeditions against the Byzantines, it is natural to suppose that these mints existed to serve the military, but that does not explain why they only struck on two occasions. To understand this, historical circumstances need to be considered.

Although virtually nothing is known of the history or development of the individual mint towns during the Umayyad period, one place that did not strike coins may provide a clue<sup>43</sup>. The grassy plain of Dabiq north of Aleppo, between Qurus and Manbij, was the main mustering ground for Umayyad and Abbasid expeditions against Byzantium<sup>44</sup>. All these mints lay in convenient proximity to it, so that tribal and other contingents could have been organised in them before joining the expeditions that set forth from Dabiq. In particular, Dabiq was the base for one of the most ambitious attacks of the Umayyad period, the grand expedition of the caliph Sulaiman (715-717) against Constantinople. The troops were mustered by the caliph himself, who made Dabiq his military headquarters. He took a personal interest in the project, whose success would have brought untold glory to Islam. Instead, the Arab forces met unexpectedly powerful resistance, and the project had to be abandoned. Sulaiman met an untimely death at Dabiq, where he was buried.

This expedition, which involved a large army based precisely in the area of these mints, could well have provided the occasion for striking the series of post-reform coins in this region. Although undated, their proposed chronology of the 90's would suit the expedition and the caliphate of Sulaiman (AH 96-99). If this association of coins and history is correct, it could provide a firmer date for the series<sup>45</sup>.

The standing caliph coins of the same mints pose a different problem. They were presumably struck between 685, when 'Abd al-Malik became caliph and 696/7 when images were removed from the coinage. During these years, however, there was little active conflict between the Umayyads and Byzantines, and in fact the empires were officially at peace for several years after 685. This reflected the internal situation of the caliphate, where 'Abd al-Malik had to wage a long struggle against his rival 'Abd Allah ibn al-Zubayr who commanded the allegiance of most of the East. Only in 694 was ibn al-Zubayr finally crushed and Umayyad supremacy definitively established.

Control of Iraq was crucial to this civil war. Mus'ab ibn al-Zubayr held it for his brother for most of the period 66-71 (685-691), successfully defeating Shiite and Kharijite opposition forces. The region was so important that 'Abd al-Malik himself led the operations. For that, he established his base at Butnan Habib, east of Aleppo in the district of Qinnasrin. He is recorded camping there every winter from AH 68 to 71 (687-691), when he sent forth the forces that finally defeated Mus'ab and took control of Iraq<sup>46</sup>. Here, then, is another occasion when a large army was assembled and kept operational over a period of several years in precisely the area where these coins were struck. With the lack of more detailed narrative sources, the association between coins and history remains probable rather than certain, but the circumstances at least establish a plausible occasion for striking coins in this area. Again, if the association is valid, the coins could be dated relatively early in the reign of 'Abd al-Malik.

Finally, it may be possible to associate two other anomalous issues with these wars. The mints of al-Ruha (Edessa) and Harran in the Jazira struck a different variety of the standing caliph coinage, with the legend *muhammad (rasūl Allāh)* around the figure on the obverse, a type otherwise issued only in *jund* Filastin. This district also played a role in the campaigns against ibn al-Zubayr, apparently in the year 70 (689/90). At that time, 'Abd al-Malik appointed his brother Muhammad Ibn Marwan to take control of Mesopotamia, Mosul and Armenia. He crossed the Euphrates to Edessa, which he took without any resistance, then used it as his base for the successful conquest of northern Mesopotamia<sup>47</sup>. This campaign might have provided the occasion for issuing the 'standing caliph' coins of the two Mesopotamian mints. If so, their curious types would be without chronological significance, for they would be contemporary with the other 'standing caliph' coins.

If any of this speculation is correct, it would suggest that the anomalous mints of Qinnasrin struck coins primarily for military purposes, whether as part of salaries or for the convenience of troops dealing with a market. The evidence of the Antioch excavations has already suggested that coins of the common Emesa/Homs bilingual type as well as of the northern mints of the 'standing caliph' series had been brought there for military purposes<sup>48</sup>. It even seems possible that the civil population made more extensive use of Byzantine coins and their imitations, while the new 'official' types were favoured by the military. But of course, the common issues of Homs, Damascus and Jerusalem were produced in major population centres, where they presumably circulated. Once again, the coinage raises more questions than can yet be answered, but at this stage even posing the questions may be of some value.

1. My sincere thanks to Michael Bates and Shraga Qedar who took the trouble to read and criticise this paper. They will understand that the ambiguities of the subject have kept me from adopting all their suggestions. I am grateful also to Irfan Shahid, Oleg Grabar, Harry Bone and Stefan Heidemann who gave helpful advice on specific points.
2. John Walker, *A Catalogue of the Arab-Byzantine and Post-Reform Umayyad Coins*. London 1956.
3. W. L. Treadwell "The Chronology of the pre-reform Copper Coinage of early Islamic Syria" (*Supplement to ONS Newsletter 162*, Winter 2000), p.1.
4. They were presented at the Arab-Byzantine Forum held in Washington DC in November 2000.
5. Treadwell (above, n. 3) 2.
6. Their C65, described as an imitation of Constans is actually taken from Heraclius class 5, as shown by the monogram above the M on the reverse.
7. Circulation of Byzantine bronzes in Syria is the focus of an important study, Marcus Phillips and Tony Goodwin, "A seventh-

- century Syrian hoard of Byzantine and imitative copper coins", *NC* 157 (1997) 61-87. Note that, strictly speaking, we know only the dates when the coins were issued, not when they arrived in Syria. Further study would be necessary to show that only new coins were being exported from Byzantium.
8. The volume will be called *Le monnayage de folles lourds en Syrie pendant la guerre byzantino-persé*. Cécile Morrisson presented a summary of it at the Arab-Byzantine Forum in New York, November 1999.
  9. The three known varieties are listed in N. Amitai-Preiss, A. Berman, S. Qedar, "The Coinage of Scythopolis-Baysan and Gerasa-Jerash", *INJ* 13 (1999) 144f.
  10. Tony Goodwin, "Imitations of the Folles of Constans II", *ONS Occasional Paper No.28* (April 1993), no. 16; Rachel Milstein, "A Hoard of Early Arab Figurative Coins," *INJ* 10 (1988-89), 3-26, no. 2
  11. See Andrew Oddy, "Imitations of Constans II Folles of Class 1 or 4 Struck in Syria", *NumCirc* 103 (May 1995) 142f.
  12. Photos are courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority who excavated the coins; my thanks to Donald Ariel, Head of the IAA Coin Department, for permission to publish them. Coin 8a (IAA 44642) is reproduced courtesy of the Temple Mount Excavations Publication Project, Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University, and the IAA. Coin 8b (IAA 31489) was excavated on behalf of the IAA by E. Shuqron. It will be published by G. Bijovsky in the full numismatic report of the excavation.
  13. Published in Stefan Heidemann, "The Merger of Two Currency Zones in early Islam...", *Iran* 36 (1998) 95-112 at 98 (PI XVI.4)
  14. Published by Tony Goodwin, "A Remarkable Standing Caliph Fals", *ONS Newsletter* 151 (Winter 1997), 5.
  15. Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses* (Cambridge 1980) 124.
  16. Crone (previous note) 124f. lists the governors of Syria under Abd al-Malik; most were relatives of the caliph, none was called Nu'man or Sa'id. For Nu'man b. Bashir see Crone 155 and *EI*; Sa'id b. Malik: Crone 94.
  17. Lutz Ilisch, in "Die umayyadischen und 'abbasidischen Kupfermünzen von Hims: Versuch einer Chronologie", *Münstersche Numismatische Zeitung* 10, 3 (August 1980), 23f. actually attributed type 9 and the related Walker 139 to Homs, supposing that the Arabic inscription had two letters reversed. Better preserved specimens, however, render that reading impossible.
  18. Charlie Karukstis, "Meshorer's 'Enigmatic Coin' Revisited", unpublished paper delivered at ANS Arab-Byzantine Forum V (1999), p.6.
  19. See Walker pp.46-49, Y. Meshorer, "An Enigmatic Arab-Byzantine Coin", *INJ* 3 (1965-66), 32-36, and Karukstis (previous note). Walker recounts the fantastic explanations.
  20. Crone (above, n. 15) 232 n.289.
  21. This reading has also been proposed by Shraga Qedar, as reported in W. L. Treadwell (above, n.3) 11. Mr. Qedar (personal communication), however, recently suggests that the word be read as *na'd* meaning 'obtainable'. Unfortunately, I have been unable to locate this word in any dictionary of classical Arabic.
  22. See Amitai-Preiss *et al.* (above, n. 9) 137.
  23. Treadwell (above, n. 3) 11 refers to a forthcoming article by Qedar that may resolve this question.
  24. At least two other square coins have been published, but without sufficient information to determine how, if at all they relate to the present group: 1) N. Amitai-Preiss and A. Berman., "Muslim Coins", in Y. Hirschfeld, ed., *The Roman Bath of Hammat Gader--Final Report* (Jerusalem 1997), 306 no.41: brief description, no illustration. 2) M. Sharabani, "Coins" in V. Tzaferis, "The Excavations of Kursi-Gergesa", *Atiqot* 16 (1983), 40 no. 9 with pl. XVII: this coin bears some resemblance to the coins excavated at Jerusalem (above), but the ANA on its reverse suggests that it belongs to the large class of Constans II imitations. Charlie Karukstis, in an unpublished paper "Die Studies of the Arab-Byzantine Series" presented at the ANS Arab-Byzantine Forum in 1995 tentatively associates it with a group of imitative types that includes one square and four round coins.
  25. For the palm branch, Walker 9, Rachel Milstein, "A Hoard of Early Arab Figurative Coins", *INJ* 10 (1988-89), 3-26, no.106 and Andrew Oddy, "Arab Imagery on Early Umayyad Coins in Syria and Palestine: Evidence for Falconry", *NC* 1991, 59-66, pl. 19 no.15. For what it is worth, coin no. 10 portrays the palm branch under the emperor's arm, rather than in the field.
  26. Walker P4 (pl. III) = Oddy (previous note) pl.19.9 (same dies); cf. Oddy pl. 19.10, with same obverse die but blundered reverse.
  27. Walker 42, 43
  28. Michael Bates, "Byzantine Coinage and Its Imitations, Arab Coinage and Its Imitations: Arab-Byzantine Coinage", *Aram* 6 (1994), 381-403 at 386. Note, however, that Treadwell (above, n. 3) 4 n.25 questions the identification of these types as mules
  29. Andrew Oddy and Paul Pavlou. "A Barbarous Bronze from Seventh Century Syria", *ONS Newsletter* 145 (Summer 1995), 3.
  30. For a sketch of his career, see Walker, *Arab-Sasanian Ixi* and *EI*, s.v. Katari.
  31. Walker. *Arab-Sasanian* 112-113
  32. Walker Teh.1, p.81.
  33. This solution is favoured by Shraga Qedar, who apparently published it in a work I have not seen, *The Book of Tiberias* (1973, in Hebrew).
  34. For the iconography, see Walker pp. xxviiiiff, and for variations in detail, George Miles. "The Earliest Arab Gold Coinage", *ANSMN* 13 (1967) at pp. 216-224
  35. Personal communication.
  36. Stephen Album, "Umayyad and Abbasid relationship is rethought", *The Celator* 3.6 (June 1989) . xxii may have been the first to establish the correct reading.
  37. For their history, see the article in *EI* by Irfan Shahid.
  38. I owe this suggestion to Prof. Irfan Shahid, who points out the parallel cases of other federate tribes, the Ghassanids and Salihids, who gave their names to places (Ghassan and Salih) in the areas where they were settled.
  39. Reference is to the detailed and extremely valuable but yet unpublished thesis of Harry Bone, "The Administration of Umayyad Syria: the Evidence of the Copper Coins" (Princeton 2000)
  40. 80's (tentatively because the issues of this *jund* are difficult to relate to others) by Bone 226-253; 90's suggested by Album (above, n. 35) xxii.
  41. There is also a series struck in Antakiya, Ma'arrat Misrin, Sarmin and possibly Halab and Qinnasrin: see the table in Bone 291f. Bone assigns these coins to the 90's AH.
  42. For tribal settlement in this area, see the comprehensive discussion of Claus-Peter Haase, *Untersuchungen zur Landschaftsgeschichte Nordsyriens in der Umayyadenzeit* (Hamburg 1972) 146-169. The tribes were usually settled in camps outside existing cities; one of them, Hadir Qinnasrin, is now being excavated: see Donald Whitcomb, "Discovering a New City in Syria", *Oriental Institute News and Notes* 163 (Fall 1999) 1-5.
  43. I could find nothing of relevance in the articles in *EI*, the passages collected by G. Le Strange in *Palestine Under the Moslems* (London 1890), the references in the valuable geographical section of Haase (previous note), pp. +1-56, nor in the monographs of E. Frézouls on Cyrrhus (*AAS* 4/5 [1954/5] 89-128) or J. Sauvaget, *Alep* (Paris 1950).
  44. See the articles of D. Sourdel, "Dabik" and E. Honigmann, "Mardj Dabik" in *EI*, with full references, as well as Haase (above, n. 42) 52-59 who puts Dabiq in the context of the (very limited) evidence for the organization of Umayyad campaigns against Byzantium.
  45. If Bone's proposed dating to the 80's AH is correct, of course, the present argument could not stand; yet I leave it to suggest an approach that might prove fruitful.
  46. Tabari II.765, 797 = *the History of al-Tabari* vol. XXI, *The Victory of the Marwanids*, tr. M. Fishbein (Albany NY 1990)134, 171.

47. This information comes from a Syriac source, the chronicle of Dionysius of Tell-Mahre, as reconstituted: see A. Palmer, *The*

*Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles* (Liverpool 1993) 200  
 48. See C. Foss, "The Coinage of Syria in the Seventh Century: The Evidence of Excavations", *INJ* 13 (1999) 119-132.



**The phases of coin circulation in the State of the Great Seljūqs**  
 By Michael Fedorov

The founder of the Seljūq dynasty, Seljūq b. Tuqāq, came from the tribal aristocracy of the Ōghūz nomads. This Turkic tribe populated the steppes in the region of Syghnaq, a town which was situated to the north of the Syr Darya in the territory of modern Kazakhstan. Seljūq served the Yaghbū (which was the title of the ruler of the Ōghūz), and despite being young, was made Sūbāshī (Commander-in-Chief). A rival group of tribal aristocrats decided to destroy him and won over to their side one of the Yaghbū's wives. She told the Yaghbū that Seljūq intended to overthrow him and that he should therefore be killed. Seljūq got wind of this and fled along with his Kynyq clansmen, having taken all their flocks and herds. They arrived at the steppe near the town of Jend, about 250 km west of Syghnaq. Being a minority there, Seljūq and his clan accepted Islam to win the support and good will of the Muslims living along the northern frontiers of Khwārizm (al-

Husainī 1980, 23-4). According to al-Bīrūnī (1963, 193), when a Ghūz accepted Islam, he was called a Turkmān. So that is what Seljūq and his tribe were called henceforward. Seljūq guarded the frontier and banished from that region the tax-collectors sent by the infidel Yaghbū (al-Husainī 1980, 24).

Later, some of the Turkmen, headed by sons of Seljūq set off in quest of new pasturelands to the south and settled in the state of the Sāmānids, in the steppe near the town of Nūr (about 130 km north-east of Bukhārā). When the Qarākhānids began their conquest of the Sāmānid state, the Seljūqs sided with the Sāmānids. But when the last Sāmānid amir was killed in 1005 AD, they acknowledged the Qarākhānids as their overlords. They paid them a so-called "tribute by blood", sending armed troops as auxiliaries for the Qarākhānid army. In return, the Qarākhānids gave them good pastureland.

The attitude of the Qarākhānids towards the Turkmen was somewhat ambivalent, however. On the one hand the auxiliary troops strengthened the Qarākhānid army considerably. On the

other hand, the Qarākhānids were wary of the Turkman chieftains as potential rivals and as a possible threat to their own rule over Mawarānnahr.

Meanwhile the advance of Turkmen to the south for new pasturelands did not stop in Mawarānnahr. Around 1026 AD some tribes crossed the Amu Darya and came to Khurasan, where they asked Sulṭān Maḥmūd of Ghazna to give them pasturelands and, in return, promised to guard his frontier and pay him taxes. Soon enough, however, the greed and extortions of the Ghaznavid tax-collectors caused the Turkmen to rebel, but unsuccessfully (Agajanov 1969, 193).

In 1029-30 AD a conflict broke out in Mawarānnahr between Turkmen and Qarākhānids, which cost the life of one of Seljūq's grandsons, Yūsuf b. Mūsā. His cousins, Chagrī Bek Dā'ūd and Toḡhrul Bek Muḥammad, sons of Mīkā'il b. Seljūq, took their revenge on the Qarākhānid general who had killed Yūsuf, but were later defeated by 'Alī Tegīn, the Qarākhānid ruler of Mawarānnahr. Oddly enough, most of the Turkmen remained loyal to 'Alī Tegīn and helped him greatly in 1032 AD near Dabūsiya in his battle against the Khwārizmshāh, Āltūntash, who, being a vassal of the Ghaznavids, was sent by Sulṭān Mas'ūd of Ghazna to attack 'Alī Tegīn. The latter was an astute diplomat and married to a granddaughter of Seljūq. He was therefore able to achieve a reconciliation with the Turkmen (Agajanov 1969, 188, 198-9).

After the death of 'Alī Tegīn, a new conflict broke out between the Qarākhānids and the Turkmen, and the latter went to Khwārizm, where they were gladly accepted by the Khwārizmshāh, Hārūn b. Āltūntash, who was raising an army for a war against the Ghaznavids. He gave them good pasturelands and they undertook to join his army. But a disaster soon struck. Ghaznavid agents prevailed upon the ruler of Jend, Shāh Malik, to attack the Turkmen (there was an old hereditary feud between the rulers of Jend and the Turkmen). In the winter of 1034 AD, Shāh Malik crossed the desert, caught the Turkmen unaware and defeated them. About 8000 warriors were killed and their wives, children, flocks and herds were captured by the Jend army. Hārūn, the Khwārizmshāh, saved the discomfited Turkmen from starvation, sending them bread and sheep. He then gave them weapons and horses so that they would be able to participate in his war against Ghazna. In the spring of 1035 AD, however, when his army started its advance towards Ghazna, Hārūn was killed by his own bodyguards, who had been bribed by Ghaznavid agents. Afraid of a new attack by Shāh Malik, and unable to return to the Qarākhānids, the Turkmen turned southwards, crossed the Amu Darya and joined the Turkmen tribes who had been settled in Khurasan since the time of Sulṭān Maḥmūd of Ghazna.

The arrival of kindred tribes strengthened the Turkmen and they started the struggle to win Khurasan from the Ghaznavids. Sulṭān Mas'ūd b. Maḥmūd sent his generals and armies several times but they were defeated by the Turkmen. Eventually, Mas'ūd led an army himself, but he, too, was defeated on 8 Ramadan 431 / 23 May 1040 in a fierce battle near Dandānakan (about 65 km south-west of Merv). Toḡhrul Bek Muḥammad b. Mīkā'il b. Seljūq, being the elder descendent of Seljūq, was enthroned right on the battlefield and proclaimed ruler of Khurasan (al-Ḥusainī 1980, 25-32). In this way was created the state of the Great Seljūqs, which, in its heyday, spread from the western part of Afghanistan and Central Asia to Syria. It reached its apogee under Alp Arslān (1063-72 AD) and Melikshāh (1072-92). It was Alp Arslān who, in the battle of Malāzḡird (16 August 1071) defeated and took prisoner the Byzantine emperor, Roman Diogen (al-Ḥusainī 1980, 59-60). The Qarākhānids acknowledged the Great Seljūqs as their suzerain from the time of Melikshāh.

After the death of Melikshāh, civil war broke out between his four sons and three brothers as they fought for the position of supreme ruler. This time of unrest lasted for thirteen years. In the end just two pretenders were left alive. In 1005 AD Muḥammad b.

Melikshāh was acknowledged as supreme ruler and his younger brother, Sanjar, who had been vicegerent of Khurasan since 1097, was acknowledged heir to the throne. On his coins, Sanjar mentions Muḥammad as suzerain. After the death of Muḥammad, Sanjar duly became supreme ruler (1118-57 AD). He was the last of the Great Seljūqs. After his death, the Seljūqs lost Khurasan and the state of the Great Seljūqs disintegrated into several principalities independent of each other, which were later conquered by the Khwārizmshāhs (al-Ḥusainī 1980, 77-83)

There were four periods of money circulation in the Great Seljūq state.

*First period: the reign of Toḡhrul Bek Muḥammad (1038-63 AD)*

Having become supreme ruler, Toḡhrul Bek captured Rayy, made it his capital and started the conquest of Iraq. He gave some provinces in appanage to his relations. His brother, Chagrī Bek Dā'ūd received Merv, Nisa and Sarakhs. His uncle, Yabghū Mūsā b. Seljūq, received Sīstān (al-Ḥusainī 1980, 35) and so on. Fraehn (1848, 45) published a coin of Rayy on which he read the date 432/1040-41. Dorn (Fraehn 1855, 265), however, read the date on this same coin as 433/1041-2. Miles (1938, 196) thought the reading of the date as 432 to be mistaken. He considered that the Seljūq minting at Rayy started in 434. Since this question is still undecided, the earliest coin of the Great Seljūqs is otherwise considered to be a dinar struck by Toḡhrul Bek at Nīshāpūr in AH 433 (Lane-Pool 1877, 27 Nr. 53). Then come Rayy (434), Herāt (435), Iṣfahān (440), Qumm (445), Hamadān (447), Ahvāz (448), Madinat al-Salām (448) and Baṣra (449) (Khojaniyazov 1972, 157).

It would seem that the minting of high standard silver and particularly gold coins was the privilege of the supreme ruler. The appanage rulers sometimes struck base gold dinars, as did, for example, Ḥasan b. Mūsā b. Seljūq (Herāt 435, 443, 446) or dirhams in billon (Chagrī Bek in 453) or silver (Alp Arslān) (Khojaniyazov 1977, 24, 27). The appanage rulers usually quote Toḡhrul Bek on their coins as suzerain.

Thus, during the first period of money production in the Great Seljūq state, there were mainly high grade gold dinars minted in the domains of the supreme ruler while the appanage rulers struck mainly low grade gold and silver coins in small quantities. Most of the coins were minted at Nīshāpūr, Rayy and Iṣfahān, with other mints being less productive. Silver dirhams are scarce. They were struck in small quantities at Nīshāpūr, Rayy and Iṣfahān at intervals of 2-5 years. The silver is of comparatively high standard as it was previously with the Ghaznavid dirhams. It is noteworthy that, in the Qarākhānid khaqanate, where the silver crisis had a more acute form, the dirhams of the second quarter of the eleventh century AD had 20-30% silver while Ghaznavid dirhams (even those of Mas'ūd) had up to 73% silver. So the first Seljūq dirhams were about the same standard (Khojaniyazov 1977, 26).

Of 107 coins of Toḡhrul Bek (Khojaniyazov 1979, 151), 96 (89.7%) were high standard gold dinars, 1 base gold dinar, 9 (8.4%) silver dirhams, 1 billon dirham. Copper coins must also have been struck but have not yet been found to my knowledge. During this first period, coins struck by the Ghaznavids and other dynasties circulated in the territories that were conquered by the Seljūqs. Hence, in the Talkhatan Baba hoard (Merv oasis), there were both Seljūq and Ghaznavid dinars (Khojaniyazov 1977, 27).

*Second period: the reign of Alp Arslān Muḥammad b. Chagrī Bek Dā'ūd (1063-72 AD) and Melikshāh b. Alp Arslān Muḥammad (1072-92)*

The silver crisis was getting worse. The shortage of silver and silver coins resulted in the mass coinage of base gold dinars, which

were cheaper and handier in trade than high grade gold dinars, which could buy 1-2 sheep. To some extent, the base gold dinars were a substitute for high grade silver dirhams, which became scarcer and scarcer. Of 130 coins of Alp Arslān, 107 (82.3%) were base gold and 19 (14.6%) high grade gold dinars, 3 (2.8%), silver dirhams and 1 copper coin (Khojaniyazov 1979, 151). Of 133 coins of Melikshāh, 94 (70.7%) were base gold and 22 (16.5%) high grade gold dinars, 12 (9%) silver and 1 billon dirham, and 4 copper coins (Khojaniyazov 1979, 151).

The base gold dinars of the Great Seljūqs contain 38.8% gold and 57% silver (Davidovich 1960, 101). They were called *dinār-i-rukni*. High grade gold dinars were called *dinār-i-zar-i-surkh*. Of ten mints of Alp Arslān (Herāt, Merv, Nīshāpūr, Nihāvand, Hamadān, Madinat al-Salām, Ahvāz, Rayy, Qumm, Ūrmia) only two (Harāt and Merv) struck base gold dinars systematically and in large quantities. Base gold dinars of Nīshāpūr and Qumm are scarce. Of 12 mints of Melikshāh (Herāt, Balkh, Merv, Merverrūd, Nīshāpūr, Iṣfahān, Hamadān, Madinat al-Salām, Ahvāz, Rayy, Dara, Sarakhs) base gold dinars were minted in Herāt, Balkh, Merverrūd, Merv and Sarakhs.

So, with the exception of Qumm, base gold dinars were struck (systematically and in large numbers) and circulated only in the eastern part of the Great Seljūq realms. The high grade gold dinars were, with rare exceptions, minted in the western part of the state (Khojaniyazov 1977, 350).

At the end of this second period (around the end of the 1180s AD), another novelty appeared. Melikshāh started to coin fiduciary dinars made of gilt silver. In 1968, near Turkmen Kala in the Merv oasis (25-30 km south-west of ancient Merv) a hoard was found containing 6 high grade gold dinars and 33 silver gilt coins which were called "dinar" in their circular legend. Ten of these had been struck by Melikshāh. The date 483/1090-91 could be read on one of them. Twenty-three of the silver gilt dinars were struck by Sanjar b. Melikshāh and on at least some of these the date 503/1112-13 could be read. Khojaniyazov (1977, 36) wrote that the coins were gilt. But the analysis of the Munchak Tepe hoard of silver dinars, minted by Sanjar (Fedorov 1967, 58-70; Fedorov 1971, 244, 249) established that they were made of an alloy containing 13.1-14.2% gold. After minting, the coins were dipped in some kind of acid which destroyed the surface silver and left gold there, so that they had the appearance of gold dinars. In the process of circulation, the gold was rubbed away but the operation could be repeated to restore the thin layer of gold on the surface. The coins of the Munchak Tepe hoard looked like silver and only a wet, destructive analysis could establish that they had gold in them.

Without any doubt, such coins were fiduciary dinars with an exchange rate fixed by the state. This exchange rate would have been higher than the combined value of the gold and silver contained in the coins. Because of this, they could have been used only in domestic trade (and that, mainly in the eastern part of the state) as, elsewhere, they would not have been accepted at the artificially high rate determined by the Seljūq government. These fiduciary coins had their counterpart in the Qarākhānid khaqanate, where fiduciary copper, silver-washed dirhams were struck. These latter dirhams contained about 5% silver which was applied to them using a mercury-silver amalgam.

During this second period, silver and billon dirhams were little struck in the Seljūq state.

#### *Third period: the period of civil wars (1092-1118 AD)*

After the death of Melikshāh, his 4 sons and 3 brothers fought against each other for the position of supreme ruler. Between 1092-1118 AD there were four sultans. The minting of coins was decentralised, with the striking of high grade gold dinars increasing considerably. This, however, was not a sign of

prosperity as the money was needed to pay the various armies fighting on behalf of the warring parties. In this way, the treasure amassed by their predecessors was squandered by the pretenders.

Khojaniyazov (1979, 65-6) mentions three coins of Maḥmūd b. Melikshāh (1092-4 AD), all high grade gold dinars. For Barkiārūq b. Melikshāh (1094-1105) he mentions (1979, 151) 30 coins, of which 26 are high grade gold dinars, 1 base gold dinar, 1 silver coins and 1 copper coin. For Muḥammad b. Melikshāh (1105-18) he mentions 23 coins, all of which are high grade gold dinars. And for Sanjar b. Melikshāh (1097-1118) there are 11 whole and fragments of 6 high grade gold dinars, 24 whole and fragments of 7 silver gilt dinars (all 7 from the Munchak Tepe hoard), 1 silver dirham and 982 copper coins (Fedorov 1967, 59-62; Khojaniyazov 1979, 85-7, 151).

#### *Fourth period: Sanjar b. Melikshāh as supreme ruler (1118-57)*

The situation changed when Sanjar became supreme ruler. Base gold dinars were again struck in large quantities. Khojaniyazov (1979, 151) mentions 15 high grade and 51 base gold coins. Silver gilt dinars continued to be minted. Thirty silver gilt dinars (whole and large fragments) and 60 small fragments (of about 12 coins, judging by the weight) have been published (Fedorov 1967, 63, 66; Khojaniyazov 1979, 102-3; Petrov 1985, 52-6). According to Petrov, the hoard found around 1980-1 "probably in Turkmeniya" comprised several hundred coins but he was shown only 12 coins. He added that on some coins traces of gilding survived. One of the coins shown to him was struck by Melikshāh (in 483/1090-1), 10 by Sanjar (in 1118-35) and on one coin neither name nor date had survived.

It is strange that, while the hoard of Turkmen Kala and that published by Petrov comprised whole coins, the hoard of Munchak Tepe found in Uzbekistan to the north of Termez (Fedorov 1967, 59) contained only 10 more or less whole and 88 fragments of silver gilt dinars. Some of them were analysed by destructive wet analysis. The results were as follows:

1. gold 13.22%, silver 73.53%, copper 9.29%, lead 1.13%
2. gold 14.17%, silver 66.54%, copper 14.79%, lead 1.27%
3. gold 13.08%, silver 68.01%, copper 14.39%, lead 0.95%
4. gold 13.4%, silver 77.97%, copper 5.4%, lead 0.69%
5. gold 13.06%, silver 63.48%, copper 19.86%, lead 1.15%

The coins also contained mercury (up to 1%). Could this mean that, when the gold was rubbed away from the surface of these fiduciary coins, someone tried to make them look like gold coins again using a mercury-gold amalgam? And what was the point of cutting the fiduciary dinars into pieces, thus exposing their silver interior? It seems to me that, after the death of Sanjar (and when the Seljūqs had lost Khurasan), the silver gilt dinars ceased to be fiduciary and circulated in the market place as silver metal by weight. Cutting them into pieces made this process easier. Most fragments weigh between 0.63 and 0.784 g (average: 0.71 g), which is close to a *danīq* (one-sixth either of a *mithqāl*:  $4.464 \div 6 = 0.744$  g; or of a canonical muslim dinar:  $4.235 \div 6 = 0.706$  g). Other fragments weigh between 1.4 and 1.57 g (average: 1.483 g), which is close to 2 *danīq* (1.488 or 1.412 g). And there are larger fragments weighing between 2.18 and 2.46 g (average: 2.36 g), which is close to 3 *danīq* (2.23 or 2.12 g).

It should be noted that the Seljūq dinars, both the high grade gold and base gold ones, varied in weight considerably, usually by 1 or 2 g but sometimes more. This excludes the possibility of their having been reckoned by tale. They must have been reckoned by weight. The fact that some hoards of Seljūq fine gold or base gold dinars also contain fragments of such coins attests to this. The high grade gold dinar was a coin of considerable value (it could buy one or two sheep) and therefore not suitable for everyday small trade. As silver coins were scarce or unavailable, their place was taken by pieces of gold dinars, which were more convenient for everyday

trade. In the ninth to tenth centuries AD a high grade canonical Muslim gold dinar was equal to 15 high grade silver dirhams. So a fragment equal to one-sixth (or *danīq*) of a high grade gold dinar would be equivalent to 2.5 silver dirhams. A similar fragment of a base gold dinar would be equivalent to one silver dirham.

Apart from dinars, small quantities of billon dirhams were also struck. Khojaniyazov (1979, 104-5) published 7 such coins of Sanjar. Several hundred copper coins of Sanjar are known too (Khojaniyazov 1979, 105-20). The situation with those, however, is a little complex. According to Khojaniyazov, some of the coins are "dirhams", i.e. fiduciary copper, silvered coins. It is not clear, though, whether such coins were minted and circulated within the territory of his own state. Surviving mint-names on copper coins are those of Bukhārā and Samarqand. Some of the coins bearing the name and/or title of Sanjar were certainly struck by him when he occupied Mawarānnahr in 522-4/1128-30. Other coins bearing his name and/or title as well as the name and/or title of some Qarākhānid ruler wereminted in Mawarānnahr by his Qarākhānid vassals. The only fiduciary dirham on which Khojaniyazov read the mint-name "Merv" was not minted there because the three surviving letters of what he thought was the mint-name (1977, plate X, Nr. 96 and p. 108) occupy the place where the last letters of the date should be, i.e. immediately before the place where the mint and date formula should start (right above the first line of the Kalima in the field). Naturally, the possibility of Sanjar having issued fiduciary copper, silvered dirhams in his own dominions should not be dismissed but so far there is no substantiated evidence for it.

As far as copper falūs are concerned, most of them were minted within Sanjar's state, though in the Takhta Bazar hoard (Merv oasis), comprising more than 7000 copper coins, there were falūs of Sanjar from Mawarānnahr as well as falūs of the Qarākhānids. There were also 187 fiduciary copper, silvered dirhams minted by the Qarākhānids either as independent rulers or as vassals of Sanjar (Khojaniyazov 1971, 172-6; 1979, 107-20). It looks as though the Takhta Bazar hoard was deposited by a soldier who went with Sanjar's army to Mawarānnahr and, while staying there, was paid with Qarākhānid coins circulating there and with coins minted there by Sanjar in imitation of the local coinage. I think this hoard is probably atypical of coin circulation as one would not normally expect to find Qarākhānid fiduciary copper, silvered dirhams well within the domains of the Great Seljūq state.

The Seljūq vassals of Sanjar, whose appanages were mainly in the western part of the Great Seljūq states (western Iran, Iraq) minted high grade gold dinars, as well as copper coins (Khojaniyazov 1979, 130-47).

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Fiduciary silver gilt dinars of Sanjar from the Munchak Tepe hoard

1. Balkh, issued between 1115 and 1135 AD
2. Mint name not legible, AH 515 or 525 (1121-2 or 1131-1)
3. Herāt, issued between 1118 and 1135 AD
4. Balkh, issued between 1136 and 1157 AD

## A Bukharan Coin Story

By Dr. Golib Kurbanov, Bukhara State Museum, Bukhara, Uzbekistan.

The numismatic collection of the Bukhara State Museum includes a Chinese silver ingot known as a yamb. According to documents in the Bukhara Museum archives this silver ingot came to the collection from the treasury of the Bukhara Khans (Amirs) of the Mangit dynasty (1753–1920) in 1922.

In 1868, the Bukharan Khanate was driven into Russian vassalage and the monetary system of the Khanate became dependent on that of the Russians. The Russian rouble currency began to circulate in the markets of Bukhara together with the local Bukharan currency, the tanga (silver coin). Tsarist Russia tried to establish control over the mintage of the tanga and the rate of exchange of the tanga to the rouble. In 1894, a Department of the State Bank of Russia was opened in New Bukhara (now the city of Kagan, 10 km from Bukhara). Its capital amounted to 90 million roubles. According to the agreement between the Amir of Bukhara and the State Bank, the bank was to deliver Chinese silver ingots to the Bukhara mint for the minting of tanga.

During my research in the Central State Archives in Tashkent, I found two documents which shed light on this moment in the monetary history of the Bukhara Khanate of the 19th to early 20th centuries and also in the history of the yamb ingots.

The documents represent the correspondence between a Kushbegi, Astanakul Zakotchi, and a Russian political agent, Pavel Lessar (served in Bukhara 1891–1895 and was transferred to London as Russian political agent for Asian affairs). The documents date from the time of 'Abd al-Akhad Khan (1885–1910) and are preserved in the Kushbegi archives in the Central State Archives of Uzbekistan (u-126, op.1, e.h. 1365, l.3). Lessar, in his letter, informed Astanakul Kushbegi that 10,000 silver yamb ingots had been bought by the State Bank for minting Bukharan tanga. He asks Kushbegi to open a mint in the bank itself, as had been previously discussed. Astanakul replied that the minting of coins was a prerogative of the Amirs and the transferring of the mint to the bank could discredit him (i.e. the Amir) before his citizens. So, the minting of tanga in the Russian State Bank was impossible, despite repeated petitions by the Bank and the previous agreement. Astanakul Kushbegi noted that the bank planned to use only 12,000 yamb for the minting of tanga. This would not be enough to establish a stable rate for the native tanga currency and would not allow the tanga to circulate in the markets of the Turkestan military district. Astanakul wrote that the government of the Bukhara Khanate would protect the interests of its own state and contribute to the strengthening of the tanga and its circulation in the markets of Turkestan contrary to the prohibition by the Tsarist Russian government.

This comparative analysis of coins and documents has made it possible to determine the Khanate's struggle for a strong native tanga currency during this period.

### Palaeographic Peculiarities of the Kota Coinage

By Les Riches

My continuing research into the Kota coinage of the Punjab region of India often turns up interesting information which itself leads to further research. In my article in the spring 1999 issue of this newsletter I put forward a date for the commencement of the Kota

coinage of around 260 AD. The dating of ancient Indian coins is often very difficult, giving rise to various views. In this context, palaeography can be important as it may be the only dating evidence one can get from a coin.

The Brahmi script used on the Kota coinage has been a subject of some debate. Some scholars call the script post-Kushan, others call it early Gupta. In my view it is a transitory script between the two of these<sup>1,2</sup>, with some of the symbols being used for only a short period of time, probably less than 100 years.

We know from literary evidence that the Kushans were driven out of Mathura between 238 and 269 AD by a confederation of tribes, probably led by a certain Pravarasena of the Vakatakas<sup>3-6</sup>, who pushed the Kushans northwards into the Punjab and further, into what is now Pakistan/Afghanistan. Most Indian historians agree that the Yaudheyas were still in control of most of the region around what is now Delhi, probably ruling from Rohtak. This would have brought the vanquished Kushan tribes into conflict with them and probably the Vrisni as well.

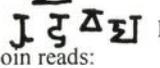
It has been proven from archaeological excavations on many sites in the Punjab that towns and cities were destroyed around this time: could this have been the reason for the destruction?

I have recorded from some of these excavations Kota coins found in or on the destruction levels, and also in rebuilt houses, made from Kushan clay bricks. I have also recorded Kushan strongholds and fortifications being rebuilt on the eastern side of the Sutlej river. There is also excavation and hoard evidence that the Sasanians were in control of that part of the Punjab which is now in Pakistan. In hoards of newly minted coins attributed to Shapur II small numbers of mostly worn Kota coins have been found, which places them before 320 AD.

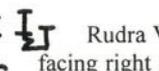
Back, however, to the Kota coins. The coins which have the transitory Brahmi script on them are all very rare. I have recorded only 5 specimens so far, one in my own collection, one in the Netherlands and three in India. All of these coins probably came from the same hoard, found in the 1970s in or around Ambala and not far from the many well recorded ancient sites on or near the Jumna river (including Sunnet, source of the only recorded terracotta sealing with the Kota symbol found so far<sup>7</sup>). KK Maheshwari noted the Dutch specimen of the five coins mentioned above in Numismatic Digest vol. IV part 1 (June 1980). This coin reads:

Obverse:  Bala Kota Rama, or more likely:

 Bala Kota Va Rama.

Reverse:  Rudra Vama or more likely, Va Rama.  
My own coin reads:

 Bala Kota Vama (probably Va Rama) on

the obverse and  Rudra Va Rama on the reverse, with the word *Bala*  facing right rather than left. On my specimen, the word *Rama* is more prominent but both coins probably read the same.

It is the word *Rama*  that gives me the idea that these coins were in fact issued during the transitory period, the usual Kushan form of *ma* being , the Gupta form , and the transitory form . It is also interesting to note the different stylistic forms of the *ko* (*k*) used on the Kota series. These start with a straight armed type , continue with a type with slightly bent arms  and end with the type with fully bent arms .

There are also different versions of the compound *koha*  reflecting the different versions of *ko* (*k*). On the other hand, the word *bala* never seems to change its form.

The photographs are as follows:

1. coin with straight arm version of *ko*, trident left, thunderbolt right.
2. intermediate type reading *kota* with the arms slightly bent.

3. the most common type, with the arms of *kota* fully bent, while 3a shows the reverse of most Kota coins.
4. the *Bala Kota VaRama Rudra Varama* type (5 known).

The meaning of the actual words *kota* and *koha* is not yet known.

Notes

1. *Epigraphica Indica* XIX, 1927, pp. 96/7
2. *Epigraphica Indica* XXVI pp. 292-7, XIX 1927, XXIV pp. 146
3. *Ariana antiqua* pp. 296-303
4. *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 56, 1936, pp. 429
5. *Journal of the U.P. Historical Society*, XVI, pp 52-7
6. *Journa of the U.P. Historical Society*, XII, pp. 119-22
7. *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1884, p. 256

I am indebted to Mr H. Sutton of the British Library, India Office section, Professor C. Wright (SOAS) and Joe Cribb of the British Museum for their assistance with my research.



**A Garhwal Takka Struck in the Name of the East India Company**

By Nicholas Rhodes

I should like to thank Shailendra Bhandare for drawing my attention to a copper *taca* in the collection of the American Numismatic Society, which appears to be struck in the name of the East India Company. The coin can be described as follows:



(x 2)

Obverse: **ملک کمپنی بہادر** – *mulk (angrez) kampanī bahādur*

Reverse: **ضرب سرینگر سمبت ۱۸۷۲ (?)** – *zarb srīnagar samvat 1872 (?)*

Weight: 4.29 g    ANS 86.449/ 1921.54.835

The coin is similar in fabric and basic type to the copper takkas struck in the names of the 18<sup>th</sup> century kings of Garhwal. Lallat Shah and Parduman Shah (Val. 228-36) and in the name of the Nepalese king, Girvan Yuddha (RGV 1405-8), but the obverse legend differs and, on the reverse, the name of the mint is not preceded by the epithet *shahr*, meaning “city”<sup>1</sup>.

At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the copper mines in Garhwal became well-known to the British and, in 1796, Capt. Hardwicke mentioned two mines: at Nagpore and Dhunpore. I have not seen any documents referring to the exact basis on which the copper coins were issued, but the assumption can be made that the striking of coins was most probably farmed out to the mine operators in some way<sup>2</sup>. The mines were apparently only worked for eight months a year, and the ore yielded 50% of pure metal. one half of which went to the raja, with the rest used to defray the expense of working, smelting and supervision<sup>3</sup>. Whether the coins were made from the half share of the metal that went to the raja is not recorded. In 1804, Garhwal was conquered by the Gurkhas and, initially, they made little change in the way the state was administered. As time passed, however, their rule became increasingly harsher and, by 1812, the country was becoming severely depopulated with a large number of people sold or brought into slavery. Silver *timashas* were struck in large numbers until 1813<sup>4</sup>, and a few copper *tacas* were struck, but unfortunately the dates are not legible, so it is not possible to say exactly when, during the period of the Gurkha occupation from 1804 to 1815, they were struck. Also, although the *tacas* have the mint name of Srinagar, it is possible that they may have been struck near one or more of the mines, rather than actually at the capital, where the silver *timashas* were struck. What is certain is that the copper coins were limited to local use within Garhwal itself, and they played no part in the external trade of the state, in contrast to the silver coins, which were used to buy goods from Tibet, and, as they were made of silver, could presumably be used to pay taxes. Moreover, their issue must have been rather sporadic, as they are only known bearing a limited number of dates. Judging from surviving specimens, their issue was on a much smaller scale than that of the silver coins.

In 1814, the British decided that the expansion of Nepal, under the Gurkhas, had to be stopped, and war was declared. The motives behind this war were multiple but they were primarily commercial. Potential trade with Tibet was perhaps the most important factor but the copper mines in Garhwal were also deemed of possible interest. On 27 May 1815, as the war was reaching its conclusion, J. Adam wrote to Edward Gardner requesting that specimens from the iron and copper mines be forwarded, stating that “although little advantage has hitherto been derived from them, chiefly as His Lordship understands, from the erroneous management of the Gorkah Government. His Lordship is not without hope that they may prove a valuable resource”<sup>5</sup>.

In March 1815, the Company Government had granted to Raja Sudarshan Shah that part of Garhwal situated to the west of the Alaknanda River and, in July 1815, the principal inhabitants of the territory to the east of the river were informed that they were subject to the authority of the Commissioner of Kumaon. In this way, Garhwal was divided between Tehri Garhwal, subject to the raja, and British Garhwal, subject to direct British rule. In 1816, the border was clarified to ensure that the mines near Dhanoli and certain other more valuable lands were clearly defined as being in British territory<sup>6</sup>.

The Initial interest in the copper mines continued for some time and there is a detailed account of them in *JASB* 1843, pp. 454-72, but it seems that it was never a commercial proposition to exploit them to any great extent.

Until the discovery of the coin described there, it had always been assumed that the mint in Garhwal had closed permanently, most probably in 1813, but certainly as soon as the Gurkha rule over Garhwal ceased in 1815. The present coin, however, appears to have been struck in the name, if not by the authority, of the East India Company. I can find no reference to any mint having been authorised by the British in Garhwal, and it seems unlikely that a mint would have been contemplated. It is possible, however, that the farmer of the mint under the Gurkhas may have taken note of the change in authority in the first half of 1815, and may have issued coins in the name of the Company in the expectation that he would be allowed to continue with the traditional minting procedure. But as soon as the British representatives noticed the issue of new coins, they would have put a stop to it, and any continuing mining would have been under different agreements and procedures. I have also not noticed any report ordering the demonetisation of the old coins in Garhwal, so I can only assume that the old coins disappeared from circulation without any problems and were replaced by Company coins relatively soon after the commencement of British rule.

In conclusion, this copper *taca* is probably the last coin struck for circulation in Garhwal. Most probably it was struck by one of the mine "owners", without specific authority, and striking was probably stopped after a relatively short time. Finally, I should like to thank the American Numismatic Society for allowing me to publish this interesting coin, and Shailendra Bhandare for bringing it to my attention and reading the legend.

## Two Mughal Copper Coin

By B. Millancourt

### *A dam of Burhanpur with double mint-name*

After the capture of the fortress of Asirgarh by Akbar in his 45<sup>th</sup> regnal year, the state of Khandesh was annexed to the Mughal Empire and Burhanpur, the main city, became an important mint for silver coinage. Very few copper coins, however, are known for this mint from Akbar's reign: a single *dam* is listed by R.B. Whitehead in the Lahore museum catalogue<sup>1</sup> and none by C.J. Brown in the Lucknow Museum catalogue. [coins do exist, however, in private collections, Ed.]

The *dam* illustrated below is unusual in having the mint-name on both obverse and reverse. Its description is as follows:



برهانپور  
فلوس  
ضرب



شهر برهانپور  
برهانپور

Obverse: *zarb falūs burhānpūr*

Reverse: *shahrewar ilahī 47 burhānpūr*

Weight: 20.6 g Diameter: 20.5 mm Thickness: 7 mm

Such coins, dated Ilahī 47 with the Persian month Shahrewar, are known<sup>2</sup> and this means that this type was limited to the issue of a single month.

1. Whitehead, W.B., *Catalogue of Coins in the Lahore Museum*, vol. II: *Coins of the Mughal Emperors*, coin 631, which reads *zarb falūs burhānpūr / ardībihisht ilahī 4x*

2. Information kindly provided by Shailendra Bhandare and Jan Lingen.

### *A quarter dam of Aurangzeb from the mint of Narnol*

This small copper coin from Narnol appears to be unpublished. It is similar in design to the one-eighth dam listed by Whitehead in the Lahore Museum Catalogue (coin 1991) and can be described as follows



Obverse: *shāh 'ālamgīr* Reverse: *zarb nārnol*

As only around 30% of the legend is on the flan, I have added the missing letters to complete the legend as it is probably arranged.

Weight: 4.1 g Diameter: 13.5 mm Thickness: 3 mm

A *dam* of this mint is listed by Whitehead in the same catalogue (coin 1992) and it is to be noted that the weight of that coin is 13.8 g. Different weight standards appear to have been used for copper coins during Aurangzeb's reign at different times and/or in different parts of his empire. A proper study of this has yet to be undertaken.

## More Auction News

Jean Elsen S.A. will be having their auction no. 65 on 17/18 March 2001. This will included a number of Islamic and oriental lots of potential interest to ONS members. The lots are listed on the Elsen website at <http://www.elsen.be> or the company can be contacted by telephone: ++32 2 734 6356; fax ++32 2 735 7778 or by E-mail on [numismatique@elsen.be](mailto:numismatique@elsen.be) although messages sent by your editor to that E-mail address have of late been returned. That may be a temporary glitch. The physical address is Avenue de Tervueren 65, B-1040 Brussels, Belgium.

## Newsletter Supplement

Issued with this newsletter is a fine supplement by Barbara Mears entitled "From Venad to Travancore – copper coins of Kerala between 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries", which we hope you will all find of interest.

And lastly may we take the opportunity to wish all members a very happy 2001. Please continue to send articles for publication. If you need any advice on how to do that do not hesitate to contact the Editor by e-mail or by post.

## Anantasayanam and Thirai Cash of Venad and Travancore

Barbara Mears

I opened the envelope and out spilled coins. Tiny copper coins bearing no script, just water-worn images of gods, animals and unfamiliar symbols. I knew that they came from South Kerala as they had been sent by my friend (and fellow ONS member) Mr. Dennison, who lived in Trivandrum. But what were they? Who had issued them – and when? Ever since that day in 1995 I have been trying to answer these questions, and this paper is the result.

Examples of them were published by Michael Mitchiner in 1979<sup>1</sup>. Articles about them also appear in "Studies of South Indian coins" issued annually by the South Indian Numismatic Society<sup>2</sup>, and more recently they have featured in Michael Mitchiner's 1998 publication "The Coinage and History of Southern India" Part Two (# 1193-1223).

In 1996 I made my first visit to Kerala clutching a new copy of Mr. Mitchiner's "Coin Circulation in Southernmost India"<sup>3</sup> which was a revelation to me at that time, and unbelievably useful for identifying the 1001 small copper coins that I encountered during that and subsequent trips. By then, in a classic case of "Fools rushing in..." I had decided that this was a series that was ripe for research, and that I was the person to do it.

As the number of varieties I encountered expanded exponentially, I soon discovered that many traditional forms of research were not available to me. The coins have no legend, which means that attributing them to any issuing authority or dating them accurately is a problem. Many of them are exceptionally small, which makes the designs difficult to see unless they are in optimum condition. This is not often the case, as they are usually found in the local rivers, where, as you can imagine, they have lost a lot of their detail. I never found evidence of any hoard that I could analyse in the normal way, as these river-finds were "accumulations" rather than hoards, so any coins of known date found in the same location could not be used to date them.

As far as historical records went, there was no mention of them prior to 1816, when the coinage of Rani Parvathi Bhai was issued, and the only light "Coin Circulation in Southernmost India"<sup>3</sup> could throw on the subject was that they were issued in Travancore after 1512.

It was obvious that I was going to have to work within the limits of the available information. This amounts to:

1. What is known of the location of coin finds.
2. Coinage in the area before and after the issue of these coins
3. The coins themselves, their fabric, weight and size.
4. The symbols on the coins and what they imply.
5. The known history of the area.
6. The coinage of surrounding states.

This is the form that the following paper takes, followed by conclusions that I reached, and some ideas I have had, in the light of the information amassed.

### 1. Location

The area covered by my study is literally the southernmost tip of India. It is divided by a high mountain range, a part of the Western Ghats, and extends approx 120 miles up the west coast and 50 miles up the east coast from Cape Comorin. The western part was occupied by the Ay Kingdom until their destruction by the expanding Chola Empire in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Then it became the southernmost province of the second Chera Empire under the Kulusekharas, known as Venad. Most of the coins I studied were found in the rivers named in the map below. Some of the older Venad Chera coins linked to those Loventhal<sup>4</sup> described as the "Battle-axe" series were found east of the Ghats, but most of the later varieties were found to the west. This has implications for dating the coins that I will go into later.

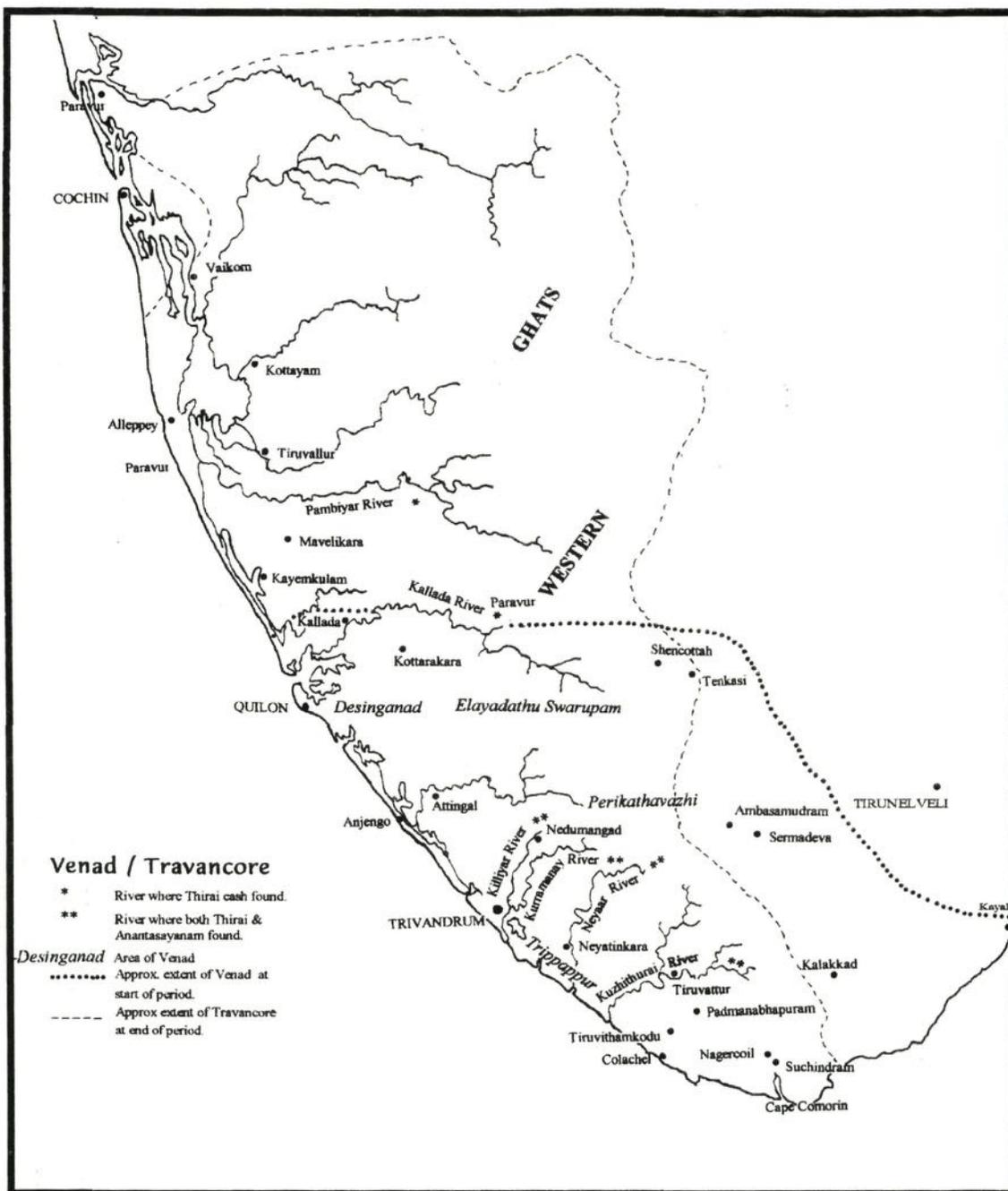
This area, now the southern part of Kerala and S.W. Tamil Nadu, was later to become the most fertile part of Travancore. With irrigation it was capable of producing 2 cycles of crops in one year, which meant it could support a large population who might be expected to use such small denomination coins. The rivers, although subject to monsoon floods, run low in the dry season, allowing the exposed riverbeds to be searched for coins and other valuables. This is not the case further north. Here, the rainfall is higher, and, as many of the rivers are joined to the backwater system and used for transport, they are always full of water. Obviously this makes the locating of coins more difficult, so although they were possibly used here they are rarely found.

<sup>1</sup> *Oriental Coins and their values*. Vol. 3. Non- Islamic States and Western Colonies, London 1979. (Nos. 1069 to 1083)

<sup>2</sup> Published by South Indian Numismatic Society, New Era Publications, Chennai, India. Issues 2, 7, 8, 9 and 10 have articles on this series.

<sup>3</sup> Published in 1995 by the Indian Institute of Research In Numismatic Studies, Nashik, India.

<sup>4</sup> *The Coins of Tinnevely*, Reprint of 1978. Numismatic International, Dallas, Texas, USA.



My information was obtained from local collectors, many of them jewellers, who for many years have cultivated the acquaintance of the people who find these items.<sup>5</sup> Because the coins had been brought to them via a third party they often did not know the exact location of the coin finds, but knew which river they came from. By all accounts they have been found in large numbers, but many are discarded as being in too poor a condition for anything except scrap. Local sources say that many were found in the Kuzhithurai River about 10 -15 years ago, but that this has not been as productive lately.

<sup>5</sup> My thanks go out to Mr V. Subramonium Chettiyar, Mr K. Lekshmanan, Mr P.K. Vidyasagar, Mr Jee Francis Therattil, Mr. Sekhar, Mrs Beena Sarasan and of course Mr L. Dennison without which this work would not have been possible.

All the rivers have towns on their banks that were regional centres when these coins were in circulation. Kottarakara was the capital of Elayadathu Swarupam, a semi-independent division of Venad until 1741. Kallada was the capital of another branch of the Venad royal family, Desinganad, when their previous capital at Quilon had become dominated by European powers. Attingal housed the Queen and Princesses of the royal line. Trivandrum became the capital of Travancore in 1790, but had been an important place from time immemorial due to the presence of the Sri Padmanabhaswami temple, with its venerated effigy of Padmanabha lying on Ananta. "Anantasayanam" was an early name for the town, and it is also the name local collectors use to describe the coins bearing the image of Padmanabha.

Neyyatinkara and Nedumangad were also one-time seats of branches of the royal family. When signing a treaty with the English in 1723, the great ruler Marthanda Varma described himself as a prince of Neyyatinkara, and it is still a busy place on the main road south. Nedumangad deserves a mention, not only because it was capital of the Perika Thavazhi and temporary seat of the Rani of Travancore when the country was invaded in 1680, but also because the old palace there now houses the Numismatic Study Centre. Padmanabhapuram was capital of Travancore from the early 17<sup>th</sup> Century (at the latest) until 1790. This palace is also open to the public, but is now situated in Tamil Nadu, and is no longer a very busy place. Nagercoil and its satellite towns have always been populous, even though they were in a much contested area on the border of first Venad and then Travancore. The nearby temple in Suchindram is enormous, and houses a variety of deities important to both Vaishnavites and Saivites. The main town on the Kuzhithurai River is now Marthandam, but Tiruvattur, further up river was once more important. This is an intriguing place as there is very little there now except a smallish village, a large temple and, in between this and the river, a rural brickfield. The temple was once second only to Trivandrum in importance (with the possible exception of Suchindram). It also houses a prone image of Vishnu on the snake Ananta, but he is called Adi Keshava, and, where in Trivandrum the image lies to the left, here he lies to the right.

One may ask how the coins ended up in the rivers in such numbers. Of course, being low value coins they may just have been lost, especially during the bathing process when many ladies keep their clothes on. There is also the possibility that they were thrown into the river, perhaps as offerings, as most of them bear religious symbols.

Another option to be considered is that they were lost in a busy market, the site of which has been recently eroded by the river. This could account for the sudden find of a lot of coins such as happened in the Kuzhithurai River, especially if the site had been disturbed by an activity such as brick making.<sup>6</sup>

### 2.(a) Coinage in use prior to these issues

Surprisingly, the coinage of this area between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries is quite well catalogued. The Ay Kingdom and Venad heartland to the west of the Ghats did not appear to issue copper coins, although silver coins have been attributed to Vira Kerala and Kodai Varma of the early 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup> Loventhal described coins found south of Tirunelveli on the eastern side of the mountains<sup>8</sup>, and Biddulph, in his "Coins

of the Pandyas" described the issues of the Pandyas when they occupied this area.<sup>9</sup> From these studies it is apparent that the coins used here in this period were derived from the copper cash introduced by the Cholas in the late 10<sup>th</sup> century. They took the form of those used slightly earlier in Sri Lanka, with a standing man on one side and a seated king on the other. The Pandyas adapted this coinage, introducing their emblem of 2 fish to one side. Likewise, when the Venad Cheras made incursions into this area they also issued coins with their own distinguishing marks; by the side of the seated king appeared an axe and the Tamil letter "Cha", said to stand for "Chera", and a lozenge appeared to the right of the standing man. These, and other less common types, are well catalogued by Mitchiner<sup>10</sup> as coins of the Venad Cheras issued in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, so they form a firm base from which to start my study.

Mitchiner also illustrates some later Venad Chera issues, examples of which I illustrate below.<sup>11</sup>



Type V1. 1.37gm - 14 x 12mm



Type V2. 2.83gm - 15 x 14.5mm



Type V3. 1.73gm -13mm

As you can see, these still have a seated king with an axe on one side, but he has now also acquired the vestiges of a lozenge and some beads, as the whole of the other side is taken up by what can only be described as symbols of

<sup>6</sup> My thanks to Dr. Martin Allen of the Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge for this idea.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Mitchiner, *The Coinage and History of Southern India*. Vol. 2. Hawkins Publications 1998.

<sup>8</sup> *The Coins of Tinnevely*, Reprint of 1978. Numismatic International. Dallas. Texas. USA

<sup>9</sup> Published by the Numismatic Society of India, Varanasi, 1966.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Mitchiner, *The Coinage and History of Southern India*. Vol. 2. Nos.450-465.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* 466,467,469 - 71.



Stone pillars of the late 16<sup>th</sup> century showing similar symbols to those found on the coins.  
To the right is that of Rama Varma, dated 1478.

kingship - but of which king? The provenance for most of Mitchiner's examples is Nagercoil, which is in the very south of the country, and it is also my experience that they are found to the south and east of the Ghats rather than the West. In the search for an issuing king we are obviously looking for a Venad ruler who was operating in this hotly contested area from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

Mitchiner ascribes one type (V1 above) to Ravi Varma Kulusekhara, who is a feasible candidate as between 1312 and 1316 he conquered, and briefly held, huge swathes of the Tamil country to the east of the Ghats, and was an outstanding leader for the Venad Cheras.

Equally possible are the ideas put forward by Mrs Beena Sarasan<sup>12</sup>, that the coins were issued in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century by the rulers Rama Varma and Jayasimha Deva. Her theory is backed up by the appearance of 3 stone tablets found in the same area as the coins are.<sup>13</sup> Two of them are dated using local Malabar Era dates that equate to 1478 and 1486AD. The first mentions that it was issued by a king Rama Varma of Venad who was established in this area but, as the inscription makes clear, also had Quilon in his domain. Quilon was the capital of the Venad rulers at this time. However what is most remarkable about these tablets are the symbols depicted above the text, which correspond very closely to those found on the coins. The umbrella appears on V1 and the ankus between a double lozenge symbol appears on both V2 and V3 (as it does on many later coins of Travancore).

Even if this is not proof positive that these rulers issued these particular coins it establishes beyond doubt that they were Venad coins, likely to have been issued in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries when the Venad Chera rulers were dominant in this area, and as such form a stepping stone towards the series that I am investigating.

Issue V1 appears in 3 clear denominations differentiated by the middle denomination having the bow and umbrella symbols reversed. The other two types appear cruder issues with thicker flans but still have at least 2 denominations. Below is a table of the 3 types with their average dimensions.

	Large	Medium	Small
V1	15 - 17mm, 2.5 - 3.5gm	13 - 14mm 1.3 - 1.9gm	8 - 10mm 0.5 - 0.9gm
V2	13 - 15mm 2.5 - 3.3gm	13mm, 1.8gm possibly	10mm 0.8gm
V3	13-14 2.2 - 3gm	12.5 - 14mm 1.4 - 1.8gm	9mm 0.8gm

## 2.(b) Coinage in use after these issues.

My first port of call was Krause & Mishler<sup>14</sup> who list coins of Travancore from 1798 in their section on Indian Princely States. The gold fanam coins and the silver 1 chuckram coin carry a Viraraya design, a bastardised version of similar designs that have appeared since the 14<sup>th</sup> century on the small taras and fanams of the South West seaboard of India.

<sup>12</sup> "Coins of Desinganad Branch of Venad". *Studies in South Indian coins*. Volume X.

<sup>13</sup> Now in Padmanabhapuram Museum in Tamil Nadu.

<sup>14</sup> *Catalog of World Coins*, Krause Publications, Wisconsin, USA.

A silver 2 chuckram coin is also depicted, along with a half chuckram denomination (8 cash) in both silver and copper. These have a conch on one side and on the other, what looks like a Star of David, but is actually a Sudarsana chuckram. Krause & Mishler do not give weights and measurements for these, but from Elliott<sup>15</sup> I found that the 2 chuckram should weigh 0.75gm, the 1 chuckram 0.37gm, and the silver half chuckram 0.18gm. These tally with measurements of coins I have been able to weigh myself:

2 chuckram 0.75gm/ 9mm  
 1chuckram 0.36gm/ 6-7mm  
 Half chuckram 0.19gm/ 5mm  
 Copper half chuckram 2.5gm approx/ 13-14mm

The History of Kerala<sup>16</sup> states that the 2 and half chuckrams were a short-lived issue of 1809 (985ME), struck on the authority of a new Dewan, Ummini Thamby, who was ousted the following year. They are certainly uncommon coins, unlike the 1 chuckram that continued to be struck all through the century at about this weight.

In 1816 a new series of copper coins was struck for the new monarch, Rani Parvathi Bai. They have a 5-hooded snake above the denomination in Tamil on the reverse, and the obverse bears the 3-pronged symbol of Vishnu surmounted by a garland with the date beneath. They come in denominations of 1,2,4 and 8 cash and my average weights and dimensions for these follow:

1 cash 0.62gm/ 8.5-9.5mm  
 2 cash 1.25gm/11-12mm  
 4 cash 2.51gm/13-14mm  
 8 cash 4.87gm/18-19mm

One thing that is apparent from the above is that the half chuckram (or 8 cash) of 1809 weighs approximately half of an 8 cash of 1816. This could mean one of three things; that the 1809 coin is actually worth 4 cash, that a half chuckram did not equate to 8 cash at that time, or that the weight standards for copper coins (but not silver) changed at the mint during this period.

### Mints and weights

When Elliot was making his investigations into the coins of South India in the 1880s he was disappointed to find that the early mint and its records had been destroyed by fire<sup>17</sup>. However in 1995 records and materials used in the 19th century mint at Trivandrum were discovered in the Secretariat treasury. These are now displayed at the new Numismatic Study Centre housed in the old palace at Nedumangad. The curator there, Mrs G.Sarojini Amma, has published several articles on the contents of these old

records, some of which throw light on preceding coin issues.<sup>18</sup>

The actual weights used in the mint are on show in the museum. The ones of most interest to me were the Kalanju weights. Before the use of standard weights in this area, rice grains, seeds and beans were used as measures. The Kalanju was one of them, and Elliot, by weighing a selection of these beans in his possession established that it weighed between 45-50 grains (2.91-3.24gm)<sup>19</sup>. However, the weight of a "Kalanju" as used in the Travancore mint averages out at around 5.09gm. Obviously it was this weight that was used for the new issue of cash in 1816, as the 8 cash coin equates to the weight of 1 kalaju, the 4 cash to half a kalanju, and so on. It is equally obvious that the 19<sup>th</sup> century Travancore "Kalanju" bore no relationship to the weight of the original bean, although earlier issues may have done.

Travancore rupees were struck to 4 different weight standards in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, so it is unlikely that the weight standards of copper cash were constant either. Rev. Samuel Mateer, a missionary in Travancore in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, mentions that weight standards varied from one part of the country to the next, and even within Travancore itself, different weights of the same denomination were used for metals, pepper and salt.<sup>20</sup>

The dies and punches on display in the museum date from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. From these it can be seen that even at that time coins were still of the hammered variety, and, that if they had script, each letter was applied using a separate punch.

The Rev. Mateer also gives an interesting account of how these coins were minted. He writes in 1870 that there had been a mint department for some 80 years operating from within Trivandrum Fort. He says that the silver for coins was provided by foreign silver coins that were melted down in clay crucibles. The molten silver was then poured into cold water to make it form grains, which could be weighed out at the exact amount for each chuckram. Each of these measures was put into a cavity of the correct size in a large earthen plate that was heated until the silver formed into globules. Once cool, the globules were removed and the design punched on by hand. In this way up to 20,000 chuckrams could be produced in one day by a 2-man team. The only way that the production of copper coins differed from this is that the copper was bought in sheets, it took double the time to fuse into globules, and that these had to be hammered flat before they could be struck.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Sir Walter Elliot, *Coins of Southern India*. . Originally issued 1884. Reprint from Indological Book House, Varanasi, 1970.

<sup>16</sup> K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala*. Volume 2. Asian Educational Services. Reprint. 1989.

<sup>17</sup> Sir Walter Elliot, *Coins of Southern India*.

<sup>18</sup> "Copper Thirai Cashes of Old Travancore State" *SSI Coins*, Vol IX. No.22

"Weigh Standards of Travancore Coinage" *SSI Coins*, Vol VIII.

"Techniques Adopted in Travancore Mint" *SSI Coins*, Vol VII

<sup>19</sup> Sir Walter Elliot, *Coins of Southern India*.

<sup>20</sup> *The Land of Charity*. Originally published 1870. Reprint available through Asian Educational Services. New Delhi.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*.

One of the mint records mentions copper sheets being transported to Padmanabhapuram mint from the Armoury at Mavelikara in 1803 for just this purpose.<sup>22</sup>

From the writings of Visscher<sup>23</sup>, on the workings of the Cochin mint 150 years earlier it appears that little had changed in the manner of coin minting over the centuries, so it can be presumed that my coins were made in a similar way.

Some coins were probably special issues, not intended for circulation. Examples of these exist in Nedumangad and Padmanabhapuram museums where I found silver half, quarter, eighth and sixteenth rupees of Rani Lakshmi Bai (1810-15), bearing the image of the deity Lakshmi on the obverse, along with similar strikings of half and quarter rupees of Rani Parvathi Bai. These were probably intended as special gifts to be given out by the ruler. Gold coins called Kalanju that corresponded to the weight of this name were also issued, but these were made for the Thulapurusha Danam ceremony when the king is put in a balance and donates his own weight of gold to the temple and officiating Brahmins, and they also did not circulate.

To return to the written records of the Travancore mint; some of these take the form of proclamations issued when a new series of coins were minted. The earliest is dated 1786 and marks the introduction of an issue bearing a lotus and a club

One of the most useful is the proclamation of 1816 that announces the introduction of the new series of 1,2,4 & 8 cash coins, and the withdrawal of the previous issue, that bearing the image of Garuda and a lotus. This coin was well known to me, being relatively common, and often found in good condition, which one would expect from a later issue. The records also mention that these coins, referred to as Thirai cash, were subject to a change in design every 3 years, to prevent forgery and the circulation of worn coins. These records also tell us that the fire-damaged mint at Padmanabhapuram was re-established there in 1790. After the capital moved to Trivandrum the mint moved too, but did not find a permanent home there until 1824. In the meantime there were other mints at Mavelikara, Quilon, Paravur and possibly Anjengo.

When I had read this it immediately became apparent why there are so many varieties of these coins. This information enabled me to make reasonable headway in tracing back the sequence of issues from the Garuda/lotus coin. It also helped me to establish that the coins I had encountered bearing similar designs but struck on rough, square flans were, in fact, issues of another mint (or mints).

Finally, to put things in context, one cash was worth a 456<sup>th</sup> of a rupee. Nevertheless, Rev. Mateer records that in the

latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century 8 cash could keep a family in provisions for a day, and that even 1 cash would purchase a reasonable quantity of produce in a native market.

### 3. Research into Fabric, Weight and Size of Coins

#### Description of coins and methods

As mentioned previously, the coins are found with both thick square flans and thinner round ones. Their sizes range from 5 to 17mm in diameter. Some come in just one denomination, but almost as many have two or 3 sizes. The visible metal content varies considerably too; while most types are of a standard copper alloy, some appear very brassy. What they all have in common is an image of religious or dynastic significance surrounded by a circular border and beads - and a total lack of script.

Faced with a plethora of uncatalogued coins I decided to make pencil sketches of each coin I encountered, as their size and condition made them impractical to photograph. I visited the British Museum, Fitzwilliam Museum, Numismatic Study Centre in Kerala, and the homes of numerous collectors in the Trivandrum area, who, along with the late Ken Wiggins, Peter Smith and Scott Semans, were kind enough to let me study their coins. I measured and weighed each coin and made notes on its general appearance. When I had a few of a particular variety I would make an ink drawing of it, and these ink drawings and measurements began to form an embryonic catalogue of the series.

When this "catalogue" expanded exponentially to over 200 varieties, I consulted Joe Cribb<sup>24</sup> on how best to make sense of the information. He suggested that I made a scatter graph (or graphs) and plot the weight against the size of each variety. When I hit upon the idea of putting a graph for each variety on a separate acetate sheet, I found I could compare any one type with any other type for weight and size, which was immensely useful.

From studying these graphs it was evident that the coins with thick square flans had a different weight standard to those with thinner round flans. By inspecting the fabric of the coins and taking into account the number of denominations they came in, they could be further divided into 2 classes of coins with round flans, several classes of coins with square flans and some that seemed to form a separate intermediate class.

#### The Catalogue

I have divided the catalogue below according to these classes that I have defined as:

<sup>22</sup> G.Sarojini Amma, "Copper Thirai Cashes of Old Travancore State". *SSI/Coins*, Vol. IX. No.22.

(Record 182/dt7/978ME)

<sup>23</sup> K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala*. Vol.II Asian Educational Services. Reprint. 1989.

<sup>24</sup> Curator of South Asian Coins. British Museum.

A : Anantasayanam issues.  
 As: Anantasayanam special issues.  
 B : Thirai cash with thin round flans found in 3 denominations.  
 C : Thirai cash of intermediate style (one denomination usually).  
 D : Thirai cash with thick square flans (one denomination usually).  
 E : Thirai cash with thin round flans usually found in 2 denominations.  
 These classes are further explained on the relevant page of the catalogue.

Of course, such a system has its limitations. For a start, I relied heavily on the weights and dimensions of coins to form classifications. As I mentioned in the section on mints, these were unlikely to have been very accurate or to an unvarying standard in the first place, and they were probably further reduced and distorted by the action of water over years of immersion.

Many of my records come from coins belonging to collectors in Trivandrum who were kind enough to let me record their collections. These coins were in good condition and likely to be near their issue weight, but each collector had obviously retained a few of the best coins of each variety, so they were probably not a representative sample.

Apart from the coins in Museums, most of the other coins I measured are what I encountered over 3 – 4 years of visits to the area. What was being found during this period would

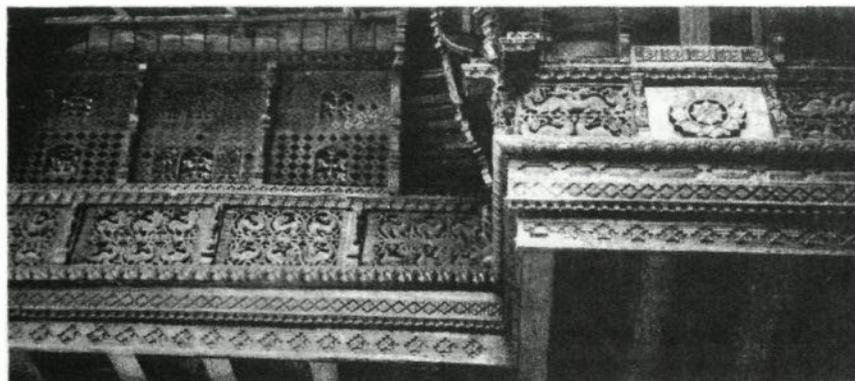
probably not be replicated over a different 3 – 4 year period, so some varieties that I consider to be rare might, in fact, be quite common.

In this catalogue I use all varieties of which I have encountered 5 or more specimens. Sometimes it is difficult to categorise coins from such a small sample, especially when they could have been struck at several different mints, some of which operated in the same, or overlapping time frames, and issued more than one denomination. It is difficult to put an accurate dividing line between the classes in these cases, but I have pointed out varieties that I am uncertain about.

At the head of each class I have put a scan of a representative coin of that series. The illustrations are there to show the designs, but it is rare to get a coin that is perfectly struck as depicted. I have added notes as to where actual examples can be seen (see key below). I also mention how many coins of each type I encountered, which might provide a guide to their rarity, although with the common varieties, once I had recorded 20 or so of a similar weight and size I tended to stop measuring them, so these may be more common than the figures suggest!

One thing that I can state categorically is that this is not a definitive catalogue – there are at least 100 varieties that did not break the 5-example barrier – but it is a start, and one that can possibly be worked on by more methodical minds in the future.

BM	British Museum, London.
Fi	Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.
Me	In my collection.
Mi.0000	The Coinage and History of Southern India. Vol. 2      Michael Mitchiner.
T (—) C F S Se V	Collections in Trivandrum, Kerala. Mr V. Subramonium Chettiyar Mr Jee Francis Therattil Mrs Beena Sarasan Mr. Sekhar Mr P.K. Vidyasagar
ONS	Collector associated with the Oriental Numismatic Society, England.



*Padmanabhapuram palace: detail of woodcarving*



### Characteristics

- \* Always have image of Padmanabha on obverse.
- \* Circular coins with relatively thin flans.
- \* Issued in one or more of 3 denominations.
- \* The copper content varies a lot from issue to issue.
- \* Generally good quality engraving and well struck.

Probably the first issues of the mint at Padmanabhapuram.

REF	DESIGN	SIZE (mm)	WEIGHT (gm)	SYMBOLS	REMARKS
A1		Large: 16 - 18 Med: 14	3.5 - 3.8 0.9	Rev: Conch with sun & moon above, ankus to left and fish symbol to right. Obv: Padmanabha lying to left. Ananta represented by 3 lines. Arm up. Leaves in exergue.	Uncommon variety, heavy for series. 3 lines beneath deity suggest design derived from those of As series. BM, T (C), P. Smith (ONS). 4 recorded.
A2		Large: 14 - 16 Med: 12 - 14 Small: 7 - 9	2.4 - 3 0.8 - 1.6 0.2 - 0.6	Rev: Elephant walking right or left, sun & moon above. 3 beads in exergue on larger issues. Obv: Deity lays to right or left. 2 lines beneath, arm up. A variety of symbols in exergue.	Most common variety. Possibly 4 denominations. BM, Me, Mi.1194, T (All). 38 recorded.
A3		Large: 14 - 16 Small: 7 - 8.5	1.5 - 2.1 0.3 - 0.4	Rev: Garuda running left. Obv: Padmanabha left, 2 lines beneath, arm up. Conch and discus in exergue.	Garuda similar in appearance to that on coins issued by Banas of Madurai and Vijayanagar. Me, Mi.1195, T (All). 16 recorded.
A4 (a)		Large: 13 - 15 Med: 10 - 11.5 Small: 7 - 8	1.5 - 2.4 0.7 - 1.2 0.25 - 0.5	Rev: Figure as in "Battle-axe" issues. 5 beads, lozenge and axe in various positions. Small types have only axe, beads and lozenge - no figure. Obv: Padmanabha lying right or left with arm up.	Many different die varieties. Possibly issued by different authority, or at different time, to those with 3 beads. BM, Me, T (All). 26 recorded.
A4 (b)		Med: 10.5 - 12 Small: 8	0.9 - 1.1 0.3 - 0.5	Rev: Figure as in "Battle-axe" series. 3 beads to right or left. Axe to right. Obv: Padmanabha lying to left, arm up, with lozenge above and bead below.	Different die varieties. Sometimes beads to right of figure, sometimes to left. Me, T (C,S,V). 9 recorded.
A5		Large: 13 - 15 Small: 7.5 - 8	1.6 - 2.3 0.2 - 0.4	Rev: Conch and discus, sun & moon above, Vaishnavite symbol below. Obv: Padmanabha lying right or left, arm up, sun above.	Me, Mi.1199, T (C,S,V,Se). 15 recorded.
A6		Large: 14 - 15 Med: ? 12.5 Small: 7.5 - 8.5	1.7 - 2.2 1.34 (one only) 0.25 - 0.5	Rev: Lotus flower facing. Large size has 9 or 10 petals, 3 beads in centre. Smaller size has 8 to 10 solid petals and 1 bead. Obv: Padmanabha lying right or left, arm up, 2 leaves in exergue.	Different die varieties in both sizes. Me, T (C,S,V). 10 recorded.
A7		Large: 13 - 14.5 Med: ? 12 Small: 7 - 7.5	1.6 - 2.1 1.3 (one only) 0.2 - 0.3	Rev: Deer standing left, sun & moon above. Obv: Padmanabha lying right or left, arm up. Lozenge above, sometimes with sun & moon. Branches in exergue.	One example has deer with head returned. Me, T (C,S,V,Se). 8 recorded.
A8		Large: 13 - 14 Small: 6 - 7	1.5 - 2 0.2 - 0.4	Rev: Large size has lozenge between sun & moon, small size has lozenge only. Obv: Padmanabha lying left, arm down. Moon above on large issues.	Uncommon variety. Me, T (C,S). 5 recorded.



## Anantasayanam (continued)



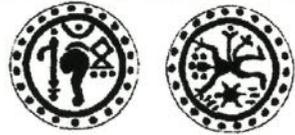
REF	DESIGN	SIZE (mm)	WEIGHT (gm)	SYMBOLS	REMARKS
A9		Large: 12.5 - 14 Small: ? 7	1.5 - 2.2 0.22 (one only)	Rev: Ankus between conch and discus and 2 lozenges. Small type has ankus and 2 lozenges only. Obv: Padmanabha lying left, arm up.	Usually crudely engraved dies. Me, T (C,V). 5 recorded.
A10		Med: 10.5 - 12.5 Small: 5.5 - 6.5	0.7 - 1.55 0.15 - 0.2	Rev: Vishnu symbol (Urdhva Pundra). A varying number of beads below. Obv: Padmanabha lying left, arm down, sun & moon above. Beads between the 2 lines beneath. 2 leaves in exergue.	Many different die types. Very common in medium size. Possible larger denomination approx. 13mm and 1.5 gms but not clear from those examined. Me, Mi.1208, T (All). 32 recorded.
A11		Large: 13 - 14.5 Med: 10.5 - 11 Small: 7.5 - 8.5	1.5 - 2.1 0.7 - 1 0.3 - 0.4	Rev: Large conch with garland. Obv: Padmanabha lying right or left, arm down. Moon and/or sun above, placed separately.	Me, Mi.1200, T (C,S,V,Se). 21 recorded.
A12		Large: 14 - 15 Med: 11 - 12 Small: 7.5 - 8	1.4 - 1.9 0.8 - 0.9 0.2 - 0.3	Rev: Yali standing left, head back. Obv: Padmanabha lying left, arm down. Conch and discus above. 3 beads in exergue.	Mi.1196, 1197, T (C,S,V). 7 recorded.
A13		Large: 12.5 - 14 Med: 10 - 12 Small: 7 - 8	1.2 - 2 0.7 - 1 0.2 - 0.45	Rev: Chamaran (or possibly discus) with 1 or 2 bars across the centre. Obv: Padmanabha lying left or right, arm down. Star above.	Possibly 4 denominations (2 large sizes). Common variety with many different dies. BM, Me, T (All). 25 recorded.
A14		Large: 14 - 14.5 Med: 11 - 13 Small: 7 - 8	1.6 - 2 0.7 - 1.4 0.25 - 0.4	Rev: Holy bird (Hamsa or peacock) walking right or left, sun & moon above. Obv: Padmanabha lying right or left, arm down. Conch and discus above. 3 beads in exergue.	Me, T (C,S,V). 20 recorded.
A15		Large: 13 - 14 Med: ? 9 Small: 7 - 8	1.4 - 1.9 0.8 (one only) 0.2 - 0.4	Rev: Larger types have bull seated right, smaller types have bull seated left. Obv: Padmanabha lying left, arm up. Lozenge above, one bead below.	May only have 2 denominations, not enough examples to tell. BM, Me, T (S). 8 recorded.
A16		Med: 10 - 13	0.6 - 1.2	Rev: Lion (Sardula type) walking left. One bead in exergue. Obv: Padmanabha lying left, arm up. Lozenge above, one bead below.	Crude issue of one denomination. Usually found in brassy metal with little of the border visible. Me, Mi.1198, T (C,S,V). 15 recorded.



**Characteristics**

- \* All designs have a turtle and 3 lines beneath Padmanabha.
- \* Thick, chunky flans in good copper.
- \* Weights closer to standards of later Venad "Battleaxe" coins than to most coins of main Anantasayanam series.
- \* Probably 2 denominations.

May have circulated in north of Venad/Travancore before main Anantasayanam series.

REF	DESIGN	SIZE (mm)	WEIGHT (gm)	SYMBOLS	REMARKS
As 1		14.5 - 17.5	2.7 - 3.2	Rev: Elephant standing right. Above and around are an ankus, "fish" symbol, sun & moon, and conch. Obv: Padmanabha lying right. Turtle swimming between 3 lines beneath.	The reverse of this coin has similarities with a coin of the Ummattur Cheras. BM, Mi.1193, T (C,F).  7 recorded.
As 2		14.5 - 16	2.8 - 2.9	Rev: Abhisheka of Lakshmi. Obv: : Padmanabha lying right. Turtle swimming between 3 lines beneath. Conch above.	Lakshmi in similar pose also appears on a coin of the Ummattur Cheras. There is a smaller denomination of half weight with a similar Lakshmi but reverse as As3. BM, T (F). 2 recorded (plus one half sized).
As 3		14 - 15.5	3.1 - 3.8	Rev: Ankus between 2 lozenges and 2 conch. Obv: : Padmanabha lying right. Turtle swimming between 3 lines beneath.	BM, Me, T (C).  5 recorded.
As 4		10 - 12	1.4 - 1.7	Rev: Conch with ankus to right, sun & moon above, "fish design with 3 beads beneath to right. Obv: Padmanabha spread-eagled above turtle, evidence of 3 lines around.	This is a smaller denomination of other 3 types as it weighs only around half. Reverse design exactly the same as on coin A1 of Anantasayanam series. BM, Me. 3 recorded.
				There is also one coin in the British Museum with Padmanabha above turtle on obverse and Garuda standing on reverse. Diameter: 15mm. Weight: 3.08gm	



## Thirai Cash - "B" Series



### Characteristics

- \* 3 denominations - the sizes of which usually correspond to denomination sizes of Anantasayanam coins, but are slightly smaller.
- \* Similar designs to those found on Anantasayanam issues.
- \* Relatively thin, circular flans in good copper.
- \* Mostly old in appearance.
- \* Good quality engraving and well struck.

Probably issued at Padmanabhapuram mint after Anantasayanam issues.

REF	DESIGN	SIZE (mm)	WEIGHT (gm)	SYMBOLS	REMARKS
B1	 	Large: 13.5 - 16 Med: 11.5 - 13.5 Small: 7.5 - 9	1.7 - 2.5 1 - 1.6 0.3 - 0.4	Obv: Yali walking right, bead back.  Rev: Conch with garland. This is placed on a stand on larger issues.	Yali as on Anantasayanam coins. Unusual issue, often found in good condition. Possibly 4 denominations. BM, Me, Mi.1211, T(All). 22 recorded.
B2	 	Large: 14 - 14.5 Med: 13 Med: 10.5 - 12 Small: 7 - 8.5	2.3 - 2.4 1.5 - 1.9 0.6 - 0.9 0.3	Obv: Elephant running right  Rev: Chamaran (or possibly a type of discus).	Could have 3 or 4 denominations. Elephant as on Anantasayanam coins. Usually found in worn condition. BM, Me, Mi.1210, T (C,S,V,Se). 16 recorded.
B3	 	Large: 14 Med: 10 Small: 7.5 - 8	2.1 (one only) 0.5 - 0.8 0.2 - 0.4	Obv: Fish right, with trident beneath and sun & moon above.  Rev: Chuckram (style varies with Denomination).	May have only recorded 3 denominations out of a total of 4, as great difference between large size and medium. Usually found in worn condition. Me, T (C,F). 7 recorded.
B4	 	Large: 13 - 14 Med: 10 - 12.5 Small: 7 - 8	2 - 2.2 0.7 - 1.1 0.35 - 0.5	Obv: Bird (Hamsa or peacock) standing right, sun & moon above.  Rev: Spear between conch and discus Die varieties.	Both obverse and reverse designs found on Anantasayanam coins. Me, T (C,S,F). 11 recorded.
B5	 	Large: 11 - 13 Med: 10 - 11.5 Small: 6.5 - 7.5	1 - 1.6 0.6 - 0.9 0.2	Obv: Lion (Sardula) walking right.  Rev: Spear or standard between conch and discus.	Both obverse and reverse designs found on Anantasayanam coins. Denominations uncertain Me, T (C,F,S,Se). 13 recorded.
B6	 	Large: 11 - 13	0.9 - 1.5	Obv: Bird walking right with wings open.  Rev: Wheel or chuckram.	Conforms to this class in size and shape of flan, and state of wear, but only one denomination, so possibly wrong. Me, T (C,V). 10 recorded.
B7	 	Large: 14 Med: 11.5 - 12.5 Small: 7 - 8	1.6 (one only) 1 - 1.2 0.2 - 0.3	Obv: Ganesh seated facing. Various dies, some very crude.  Rev: Chuckram, in several varieties. Large size has 4 pellets in centre.	Usually found in worn state. Bears no relation to D(i) 10 in size or form. BM,Fi, Me, T (C,F,S). 17 recorded.
B8	 	Large: 13.5 - 14 Med: 10.5 - 12	1.4 - 1.7 0.8 - 0.9	Obv: Lotus bud  Rev: Lamp-stand between bow and tree (or double umbrella)	Usually found in water worn condition. Symbols appear on other coins, but not of this size and style. Me, Mi.1212, T (C,F,S,V). 7 recorded.
B9	 	Large: 13.5 - 14 Med: 10.5 - 11.5 Small: 8 - 9.5	1.4 - 1.6 0.65 - 0.8 0.4 - 0.5	Obv: Bird flying left on largest size, other 2 sizes have bird flying right. Rev: Sword between 2 lamp stands, sun & moon above.	Usually water worn. Me, T (C,S). 10 recorded.



Thirai Cash - "B" Series (continued)



REF	DESIGN	SIZE (mm)	WEIGHT (gm)	SYMBOLS	REMARKS
B10	 	Large: 15 - 14.5 Med: 10 - 12 Small: 7.5 - 8.5	1.5 - 1.6 0.7 - 1.05 0.2 - 0.4	Obv: Narasimha's face.  Rev: Srivatsa symbol with 4 beads either side. Small size only has 1 bead either side.	Usually worn. Me, T (C,F,S).  13 recorded.
B11	 	Large: 15 Med: 11 - 12.5 Small: 7.5 - 9	1.6 (one only) 0.7 - 1.1 0.2 - 0.4	Obv: Lanky bull standing right, usually has sun & moon above. Rev: Spear (or possibly ankus) between 2 lozenges.	Usually worn. Me, T (C).  10 recorded.



## Thirai "C(i)" Series



### Characteristics

- \* Intermediate group between B and D series.
- \* Rarely 100% round flans, but not remarkably square either, in good copper.
- \* Generally quite worn.
- \* Engraving good, and reasonably well struck.
- \* One denomination; standard size, but with relatively large weight variations.

Could be Padmanabhapuram mint in a period of decline, or a different mint using similar standard of workmanship in die cutting, but weight standards not so closely adhered to.

REF	DESIGN	SIZE (mm)	WEIGHT (gm)	SYMBOLS	REMARKS
C(i) 1	 	9 - 11	0.7 - 1.1	Obv: Elephant walking right, sun & moon above. Rev: Ankus between sun & moon symbol and conch. (die varieties)	My examples very worn. Me, T (F).  5 recorded.
C(i) 2	 	9.5 - 10.5	0.8 - 1.2	Obv: Hamsa bird walking right, sun above (or rider). Rev: Yali right, with sun & moon above.	Usually a good strong strike. Me, T (C,F).  8 recorded.
C(i) 3	 	9 - 11	0.6 - 1.5	Obv: Dancing deity with spear, bow, and trophies hanging from waist. (Die varieties) Rev: Srivatsa with lotus bud.	There is similar coin with Krishna dancing on a snake, with an umbrella on reverse. Of this series, but only 4 found. BM, Me, T (C,S,V). 7 recorded.
C(i) 4	 	10 - 11	1 - 1.3	Obv: Parrot walking right, 4 beads above. Rev: Srivatsa with spear, similar to reverse of C(i)3, possibly an umbrella.	Usually worn. Me, T (C,F,V).  6 recorded.
C(i) 5	 	9.5 - 11	0.8 - 1.3	Obv: Deer walking right, 4 beads above. Rev: Open lotus with 6 petals.	Usually found in worn state but originally a very delicate design. Me, T (C,F).  10 recorded.
C(i) 6	 	9.5 - 11.5	0.8 - 1.3	Obv: Yali walking right, head back. Rev: Flower or chuckram.	Yali similar to that on B1, but little similarities in weight or size. BM, Me, T (C)  13 recorded.



## Thirai Cash "C(ii)" Series



### Characteristics

- \* Flans neither entirely round or particularly square, generally thicker than previous issues.
- \* Weights spread over a large range, not easily split into denominations.
- \* Most issues have at least 2 dies, one of very good workmanship, one (or more) far more crude.
- \* Fabric appears newer and less worn than previous issues, some almost uncirculated. Reasonably common.
- \* Copper content generally good, but on the issues struck with crude dies can appear brassy.

Probably issued at a different mint, or at 2 mints using same designs and different dies. Could be a continuation of C(i) series issued into late 18th or even early 19th century.

REF	DESIGN	SIZE (mm)	WEIGHT (gm)	SYMBOLS	REMARKS
C(ii) 1	 	Large: 10 - 11 Med: 8.5 - 10	0.9 - 1.5 0.5 - 0.7	Obv: Prancing horse with headdress. Rev: Lamp-stand between bow and tree (or double umbrella). Some of smaller, cruder issues have no bow.	Horse in same stance as brass lamp in Padmanabhapuram palace dating from mid 18th century. BM, Me, T (All). 20 recorded.
C(ii) 2	 	Large: 10 - 12	0.8 - 1.4	Obv: Yali prancing right. 2 types. Rev: Conch facing left on good issues, right on poorer types.	Clearly 2 forms: one on rounder, thinner flan, one of squarer, cruder form. Me, T (C,S). 8 recorded.
C(ii) 3	 	Large: 10 - 12 Small: 6	0.8 - 1.5 0.15 - 0.2	Obv: Bird (Hamsa or peacock) walking right. Rev: Discus. Small denomination has 5 beads round a central pellet.	Small denomination may not belong to this type—but is likely to. BM, Me, T (C,T,V). 25 recorded.
C(ii) 4	 	Large: 10 - 12 Small: 7.5	0.9 - 1.6 0.3 (one only)	Obv: Deer right, head returned. Die Varieties. Rev: Axe between 2 sun & moon Symbols.	BM, Me, Mi 1218, T (C,Se). 20 recorded.
✓ C(ii) 5	 	Large: 10 - 12 Small: 8	0.8 - 1.7 0.5 (one only)	Obv: Lion walking right, sun & moon above. 2 types. Rev: Srivatsa symbol around crossed spears.	"Lion" may be intended to be a dragon or mythical beast. BM, Me, T (C,F,Se). 16 recorded.



## Thirai Cash "C?" Series



### Characteristics

Coins appear in this series more as an accident of weight and size than the fact they conform to any distinct type.  
Nos. 1 & 2 can probably be placed into one of the other series when more examples come to light.  
Nos. 3 & 4 are less easy to classify, possibly being one-off issues of a smaller mint or mints.

REF	DESIGN	SIZE (mm)	WEIGHT (gm)	SYMBOLS	REMARKS
C? 1	 	9 - 10.5	0.8 - 1.25	Obv: Garuda running left. Rev: Srivatsa design.	Has designs in common with E14 and E18 but appears too light and has flans of too irregular shape to fit in this class. BM, Me, T (C,F). 6 recorded.
C? 2	 	9 - 11	0.8 - 1.2	Obv: Yali (or possibly lion) walking right with head back. Rev: Umbrella with branches beneath.	Has symbols in common with C(i) and C(ii) series, but could also fit into D(i). Me, Mi.1215, 1217, T (C,V). 7 recorded.
C? 3	 	9 - 10.5	0.8 - 1	Obv: Unidentified symbol or possibly a letter. Rev: Crude conch facing left.	Crude designs, but clear. Me, T (C,S). 7 recorded.
C? 4	 	Large: 11.5 Med: 9 - 10	1 - 1.2 0.6 - 0.9	Obv: Torso and head of Garuda, palms together. Rev: Snake, possibly superimposed on a bow.	This Garuda features on a coin in the Fitzwilliam with Persian script on reverse, so could come from N. Kerala. BM, Fi, T (C). 6 recorded.



## Thirai Cash - "D(i)" Series



### Characteristics

- \* One denomination, the weight of which does not correspond to coins of similar size in C or E classes.
- \* Smaller flans cut into roughly square shape.
- \* Crude thick flans in a variety of copper alloys, some very brassy.
- \* Vary in state of preservation, some issues quite unworn, some very poor.
- \* Designs not as refined as on previous issues.

Probably issued at a secondary mint (or mints) where workers were less skilled.

REF	DESIGN	SIZE (mm)	WEIGHT (gm)	SYMBOLS	REMARKS
D(i) 1	 	8.5 - 10.5	0.65 - 1.2	Obv: Bird walking right, wings open. Rev: Appears to be 3 beads in a vertical line between 2 storks, but may just be a variant of a common pattern.	Usually poor condition. Me, T (C,F).  17 recorded.
D(i) 2	 	9 - 10.5	0.8 - 1.4	Obv: Yali walking right, head back. Rev: Temple lamp on bracket.	Usually poor condition. Yali similar to that on B1 and C(i)6, but does not correspond in weight, shape or size. Me, T (C,F,V). 13 recorded.
D(i) 3	 	8.5 - 9.5	0.7 - 1.2	Obv: Narasimha's face. Rev: Double umbrella.	Does not correspond in weight or size to other coins with Narasimha face (except D(i)6) or double umbrella. Me, T (C,F,V). 7 recorded.
D(i) 4	 	9 - 10	1 - 1.2	Obv: 2 or 3 snakes. Rev: Double lozenge with 4 beads either side.	Bears no relation to coin E15 that has same reverse. Coin with snakes and Narasimha face (D(iv)) is much smaller. Me, T (F), Peter Smith. (ONS). 5 recorded.
D(i) 5	 	9 - 10.5	0.7 - 1.3	Obv: Bird walking left. Rev: Chuckram (lozenge shaped).	Sometimes brassy. Me, T (C).  9 recorded.
D(i) 6	 	9.5 - 11	0.8 - 1.3	Obv: Bird right with head returned, sun & moon above. Rev: Narasimha's face.	Sometimes brassy. Usually very clearly struck. BM, Me, T (C).  6 recorded.
D(i) 7	 	9 - 11	0.8 - 1.2	Obv: Fish to right or left, sometimes with a ball in it's jaw. Sun & moon above. Rev: Standard between conch and discus and 2 "fish" symbols.	Usually brassy. The "ball in jaw" may be copied from a statue in temple at Trivandrum. BM, Me, T (C,S,F). 8 recorded.
D(i) 8	 	9.5 - 10.5	0.9 - 1.3	Obv: Fish to right. Rev: Ankus between 2 lozenges.	Usually brassy. Me, T (V,Se).  9 recorded.
D(i) 9	 	9.5 - 10.5	1 - 1.2	Obv: Hanuman running right, tail above head. Rev: Pot with spout.	Sometimes brassy. Me, T (C).  5 recorded.



Thirai Cash "D(i)" Series (continued)



REF	DESIGN	SIZE (mm)	WEIGHT (gm)	SYMBOLS	REMARKS
D(i) 10	 	10 - 11	0.8 - 1.2	Obv: Ganesh seated facing. Rev: Conch, of same type as D(i) 11,12 & 13.	Not related to type B7 in size or weight. BM, Me, T (C). 6 recorded.
D(i) 11	 	10 - 11	1.1 - 1.4	Obv: Lakshmi seated facing Rev: Conch, of same type as D(i) 10,12 & 13.	Not related to type E14 in size or weight. Possibly issued in reign of Rani Lakshmi Bai (1810 -1815) BM, Me, T (C,S,V). 14 recorded.
D(i) 12	 	9 - 10.5	0.9 - 1.3	Obv: Garuda running right (usually very crude). Rev: Conch, of same type as D(i) 10,11 & 13.	D(ii)2 superficially the same, but conch differs and Garuda faces other way and is much poorer here. Me, T (C,F,V). 7 recorded.
D(i) 13	 	9 - 10	0.9 - 1.2	Obv: Discus Rev: Conch, of similar type to D(i) 10,11 & 12. Faces left.	Same symbols as E8 and D(ii)1, but weight and size different to E8, and D(ii)1 is smaller with conch right. BM,Me. 9 recorded.

The coins on this page form a little sub-section. They are all of similar type, and all have a conch on the reverse. This conch exhibits die varieties, but to all intents and purposes is the same on all 4 types. It is highly possible they were issued from the same mint, probably in series. The Garuda / Conch and Discus / Conch types also appear with completely different dies, to a slightly different weight and size standard in the D(ii) series. This makes me think that D(i) and D(ii) types were issued from different mints that had overlapping periods of operation.



## Thirai Cash - "D(ii)" Series



### Characteristics

- \* One denomination.
- \* Very small, with irregular or square cut flans which are very thick for size.
- \* Usually very brassy in appearance.
- \* Mostly in good state of preservation.
- \* Designs simple, usually clearly struck, but not always well placed on flan.

Probably issued at a secondary mint. Either a continuation of D(i) series, or, as is more likely, a different mint.

REF	DESIGN	SIZE (mm)	WEIGHT (gm)	SYMBOLS	REMARKS
D(ii) 1		8 - 9.5	0.7 - 1.2	Obv: Discus. Rev: Conch of D(ii) type facing right.	Conch of style common to this series. Differs from that of D(i) 13. Size and weight different to E8. Me, T (All). 23 recorded.
D(ii) 2		7.5 - 9	0.7 - 1	Obv: Garuda running left. Rev: Conch of D(ii) type facing right.	Garuda far better style than that on D(i) 12, fabric more brassy, and conch typical of this series. BM, Me, T (C,F,V). 11 recorded.
D(ii) 3		8 - 9.5	0.6 - 1	Obv: Club (Gada). Rev: Conch of D(ii) type, facing right.	Most of mine have a dark patina with some brassiness visible. Me, T (C,S,F,Se). 13 recorded.
D(ii) 4		7.5 - 9.5	0.8 - 1.1	Obv: Club (Gada). Rev: Lotus bud.	This design mentioned in mint records as being issued in 1786 by a proclamation of Rama Varma (State record 1). BM, Me, T (C,S,V). 9 recorded.
D(ii) 5		8 - 9.5	0.6 - 1	Obv: Lotus bud. Rev: Conch of D(ii) type, facing right.	Brassy fabric. Lotus had die varieties, not always similar to D(ii)4. BM, Me, T (C,S). 12 recorded.
D(ii) 6		7 - 9	0.6 - 1.2	Obv: Bow and arrow. Rev: Conch of D(ii) type, facing right or left.	Almost pure brass. Issues with right and left facing conches could be of different date. BM, Me, Mi.1221,2 & 3, T (F,S). 18 recorded.
D(ii) 7		7.5 - 8.5	0.6 - 0.9	Obv: Lion running right "Mysore" style face, but very crude. Rev: Sudarsana chuckram, with 1 bead in centre.	Brassy fabric. Possibly issued at same mint as D (iii) series, but weight and size do not make it fit as a denomination Me, T (C,F). 10 recorded.
D(ii) 8		7 - 9	0.5 - 0.9	Obv: Male deity (Krishna with snake? Hanuman with stick?). Rev: Water pot or vase.	Not so brassy, but all other factors of it's size and appearance fit in with this series. Me, T (C,S,Se) 8 recorded.
D(ii) 9		7 - 8	0.6 - 1.1	Obv: Ornate discus. Rev: Conch facing right, with more beads in garland than others in series.	Almost pure brass. Me, Peter Smith (ONS). 6 recorded.
D(ii) 10		7 - 8	0.6 - 1	Obv: Garuda with wings open. Rev: Lotus bud of different form to those on D(ii)4 & 5.	Proclamation of 1816 withdraws issues of lotus and conch. It could apply to this issue as well as E18, which means it was minted in 1813 from a different mint. BM, Me, T (C). 9 recorded.

## Thirai Cash - "D(iii)" Series

### Characteristics

These are very similar to D(ii)7, with square thick flans but the fabric is less brassy and the lion faces sideways. The appearance of the Sudarsana chuckram would ally it to issues of known date that featured this symbol in 1798 and 1809.

I have given it a class to itself as it is the only issue to give a hint of its denominations. In the centre of the chuckram there may be 1,2 or 3 beads. Those with 1 bead are under 0.6gm, those with beads are under 1.2gm, and the 3 examples with 3 beads are under 1.6gm, so these are likely to be 1,2 and 3 cash coins.

Some of the 1 bead types have a 5 pointed star very reminiscent of the "Shahani" issues of the Nawabs from Trichy mint, which also featured a lion (see section 6). This would add further weight to a tentative date for this issue of the late 18th century.

REF	DESIGN	SIZE (mm)	WEIGHT (gm)	SYMBOLS	REMARKS
1 bead		7 - 8	0.3 - 0.5	Obv: Lion walking right.	6 recorded.
2 bead		9 - 10.5	0.8 - 1.2	Rev: Sudarsana chuckram with beads in centre.	7 recorded.
3 bead		10 - 11.5	1.3 - 1.6		3 recorded.
					BM, Me, T (C,F,S,V).

## Thirai Cash - "D(iv)" Series

### Characteristics

- \* One denomination.
- \* Small, with irregular or square flans.
- \* Usually poorly struck using basic dies.
- \* Little evidence of a weight standard.
- \* Many have similar designs to those on the more "official" varieties listed above.

Probably issued by unofficial or minor mints. Have about 50 varieties of these on record. 2 listed below.

	6 - 8	0.3 - 0.7	Obv: Narasimha's face. Rev: 3 snakes.	T (C,F,V). 5 recorded.
	7 - 9	0.3 - 0.9	Obv: Hamsa bird walking right. Rev: Lotus bud.	Me, T (C,F). 8 recorded.



## Thirai Cash - "E" Series



### Characteristics

- \* Usually 2 denominations.
- \* Relatively thin, circular flans in good copper.
- \* Fabric appears newer and less worn than previous issues, some almost uncirculated. Reasonably common.
- \* Good quality engraving and well struck.

Probably later issues of Padmanabhapuram mint and of Trivandrum mint prior to 1816.

REF	DESIGN	SIZE (mm)	WEIGHT (gm)	SYMBOLS	REMARKS
E1	 	Large: 11 - 13	0.9 - 1.5	Obv: Bull seated to right or left, sun & moon above. Die varieties. Rev: Srivatsa symbol in shape of lozenge (die varieties).	One die variety with the bull left looks very similar to that on E2. Metal with dark patina. BM, Me, T (C). 13 recorded.
E2	 	Large: 11 - 12.5 Small: 7	0.9 - 1.3 0.2	Obv: Bull seated to left, sun & moon above. Rev: Lotus bud above 4 beads and between a sun & moon and an ankus. Small type has lotus and beads only.	Also has die varieties, especially Reverse. Dark patina. Bead circle often runs into circular frame as illustrated. BM, Me, T (C). 11 recorded.
E3	 	Large: 10 - 12	1.1 - 1.4	Obv: Makara standing right, sun & moon above. Rev: Sceptre (or possibly ankus) between 2 lozenges.	Dark patina. Me, Mi. 1201, T (C,V). 6 recorded.
E4	 	Large: 10.5 - 12 Small: 7 - 8	0.8 - 1.3 0.2 - 0.3	Obv: Peacock or holy bird, walking right with rider (or riders) on back. Rev: Conch, right or left facing, with garland. Die varieties.	Most have dark patina. BM, Me, T (F,S,V). 15 recorded.
E5	 	Large: 10 - 12 Small: 7	0.8 - 1.5 0.2 - 0.25	Obv: Hanuman running right or left. Rev: Bow and arrow and ankus. Designs can be reversed.	May be 2 issues, those with Hanuman left always appear with a thick ankus (or possibly a whip) to left of bow. BM, Me, T (All). 23 recorded.
E6	 	Large: 11 - 12.5 Small: 6.5 - 7.5	0.9 - 1.4 0.2 - 0.3	Obv: Old style "standing man" image, flanked by 6 beads and conch. Small type just has 6 beads. Rev: Ankus flanked by 2 "fish".	Interesting throw-back to an old traditional design on an obviously newer issue. Usually has dark patina. Me, T ( F,S,Se). 15 recorded.
E7	 	Large: 10.5 - 12 Small: 6 - 7	0.9 - 1.5 0.15 - 0.2	Obv: Vyagrapada to right. Rev: Ankus between 2 "fish" symbols. "Ladder" or beads beneath.	BM, Me, Mi. 1209, T (All). 29 recorded.
E8	 	Large: 10 - 11.5	0.9 - 1.2	Obv: Conch turned to left. Rev: Discus.	By far the most common type. Many die varieties. Very standard in its size and weight. Possibly being struck after 1816 BM, Me, Mi. 1220, T (All). 26 recorded.
E9	 	Large: 10.5 - 12	0.9 - 1.3	Obv: Conch turned to left. Rev: Lozenge shaped discus.	Conch die far finer than that used for E8. Weight more variable. Dark patina. BM, Me, Mi. 1214, T (C,S). 7 recorded.



## Thirai Cash "E" Series (continued)



REF	DESIGN	SIZE (mm)	WEIGHT (gm)	SYMBOLS	REMARKS
E10	 	Large: 10 - 12	0.8 - 1.4	Obv: Horse with headdress sitting right. Lotus bud above. Rev: Umbrella. At least 2 die varieties.	BM, Me, Mi.1216, T (C,S,V). 15 recorded.
E11	 	Large: 10 - 12 Small: 7	1.1 - 1.4 0.17 (one only)	Obv: Lion walking right. Rev: Double umbrella.	Does not bear any relation to D(i) 3 in weight or size, but has same reverse. BM, Me, T (C,F,Se). 8 recorded.
E12	 	Large: 11 - 12.5	0.9 - 1.5	Obv: Standing god (Venkateshwara?) Rev: Viraraya design as on chuckrams.	Slightly different reverse to E13. BM, Me, T (C,F,S,V). 10 recorded.
E13	 	Large: 10.5 - 12 Small: 7	0.8 - 1.4 0.2	Obv: Jug (Kamandalam) used in temples. Many die varieties. Rev: Viraraya design.. Die varieties.	BM, Me, Mi.1213, T (All). 25 recorded.
E14	 	Large: 10.5 - 12 Small: 7	0.8 - 1.6 0.2	Obv: Lakshmi seated, holding lotus buds, or Lakshmi seated on lotus (small denominations in this style). Rev: Srivatsa (several die varieties).	Possibly 2 varieties. Lakshmi seated on lotus is in same form as on silver issues of 1818. Other Lakshmi has some rather heavy examples and may be C(ii) series. Me, T (C,S,V). 20 recorded.
E15	 	Large: 10.5 - 12 Small: 6.5	0.8 - 1.5 0.2	Obv: Lion (Sardula) walking right. Rev: 2 lozenges (thunderbolt) with 4 beads each side in large size, 1 bead in small size.	Has similarities with A16. Less copper in fabric than other coins in E series. BM, Me, T (C,F,V). 20 recorded.
E16	 	Large: 10 - 12 Small: 6 - 7	0.9 - 1.4 0.2	Obv: Elephant walking right or left. Sun & moon above. Rev: Ankus and double lozenge (thunderbolt).	My examples appear quite old, so perhaps should appear earlier in this series. BM, Fi, Me, T (All). 20 recorded.
E17	 	Large: 10 - 12 Small: 6	0.9 - 1.5 0.2	Obv: Elephant with rider(s) walking left. Rev: Open lotus viewed from side.	Lotus varies in detail with that of E18. BM, Me, T (C,F,Se). 19 recorded.
E18	 	Large: 10 - 12 Small: 6 - 7.5	0.8 - 1.5 0.2	Obv: Garuda running left. Rev: Open lotus viewed from side.	Probably last issue of this series. Proclamation of 1816 orders their withdrawal. BM, Me, T (All). 22 recorded.

#### 4. Symbols

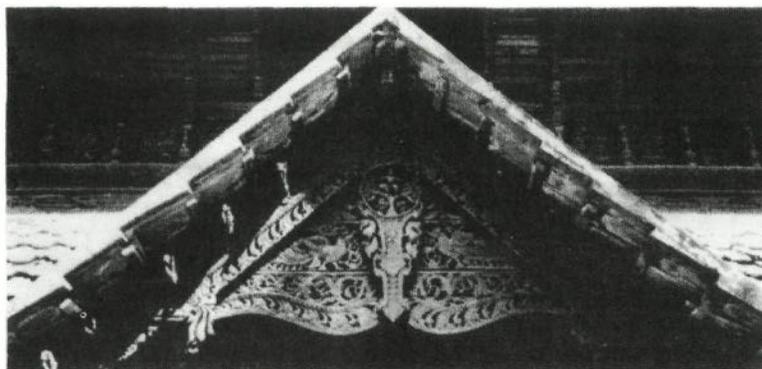
I made a study of the symbols on the coins and found that most of them were associated with the god Vishnu, his various forms, incarnations, attributes and vehicles. Vishnu, in the form of Padmanabha, is the presiding deity in the temple at Trivandrum, where he is portrayed sleeping on the endless snake, Ananta, in between the ages of man. He was the tutelary god of the Venad royal family, although they also had associations with Sankanarayana (half Vishnu, half Siva) who is a deity associated with the important temple at Suchindram, and at least one of them was crowned in the temple of Mahadeva (Siva) at Tiruvithamkode.<sup>25</sup> The symbols with religious significance are usually found in the style in which they appear in temple sculptures. Many of the other designs are found featured in the wood and stone carvings in the palace at Padmanabhapuram that was the capital from the mid 16th century until around 1790. The rest appear to be symbols adopted by the Venad and Travancore royal families and represent the fact that they authorised the issue of the coins.

The coins obviously display symbols that the people using them would understand and were familiar with. If a royal proclamation were issued withdrawing one type with, for example, Lakshmi on and replacing it with one depicting Hanuman every one would understand and be able to comply with the order.

As many of the coins bear the same, or similar, symbols I have often tried to link coins in a series by this means. Unfortunately, with the exception of the coins bearing a conch in the D(i) and D(ii) series, I found that this rarely worked. For example, the coin B3 bears a fish of very

similar type to those found on coins D(i)7 and 8, but when you look at the coins side by side and reflect on their comparative size, shape and weight it is obvious that they have no connection apart from the similarity in design. This was also apparent when I tried to match coins with images of lotus buds, srivatsas, birds etc. It could be that coins bearing the same designs were being issued from different mints at the same time. In fact this would be a likely explanation, bearing in mind that the proclamations for each issue specified a design to be used. However I rarely found coins with similar designs on both the obverse and the reverse, which rather spoils this theory. It could have been the case that the issuer wanted a new issue of coins to look completely different from the previous one, so that there was no confusion as to which coins were current and which were out of date. In this case any similarities in design would be coincidental, and would indicate that such coins were issued at a completely different time, rather than the converse.

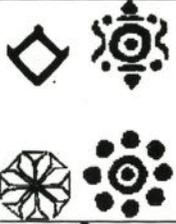
The lack of script could imply that the people using the coins were unable to read, or that the time and effort involved in punching each letter required on to every coin individually was not worth it for low value copper coins. Another factor to be considered is that people around Trivandrum and further north spoke Malayalam, and those further south spoke Tamil. Although these languages are related, they use different scripts. I have encountered some coins with a single letter in Tamil or Malayalam on each side. Apart from C?3 they were not common enough to include in the catalogue, and, although I know what the letters are, I have not worked out their significance yet.

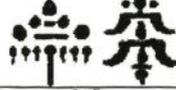


*Padmanabhapuram palace – detail of carving*

<sup>25</sup> Aditya Varma was made Chiravai Muppan here in 1544. Aswathi Thirunal Gouri Lakshmi Bayi *Sree Padmanabha Swamy Temple*. p83.

	<b>Padmanabha</b>	Padmanabha is a form of Vishnu and is the presiding deity in the temple at Trivandrum, where he is portrayed sleeping on the endless snake, Ananta, in between the ages of man. At the start of a new age a lotus sprouts from his navel bearing Brahma, the creator. He was the tutelary god of the Venad royal family.
	<b>Lakshmi</b>	Wife of Vishnu, and goddess of wealth and prosperity.
	<b>Krishna</b>	Incarnation of Vishnu, associated with cows and milkmaids, and also for killing snakes to protect the herd when a young child. It looks like this is what he is doing here.
	<b>Venkateshwara</b>	A form of Vishnu associated with wealth. Has famous shrine at Tirupati. Appears on many coins of Vijayanagar & Madurai.
	<b>Garuda</b>	Half eagle, half man, he is the mount of Vishnu. He feeds on and destroys snakes, which is why he is often depicted carrying them. Associated with war and military strength.
	<b>Hanuman</b>	Now a popular god in his own right, associated with great feats of strength. Originally appeared in the Ramayana as the monkey warrior who helped Rama (an incarnation of Vishnu) rescue his wife Sita.
	<b>Ganesh</b>	Although a son of Siva, he has a place in most temples as the god of new enterprises and remover of obstacles. Has head of elephant and body of a stout man.
	<b>Vyagrapada</b>	Not a god, but a holy man. In his old age he found he could not climb trees to pick the finest flowers to offer to his god. After much prayer he found that he was endowed with tiger feet (vyagra pada) and could climb trees with ease. He is depicted on many temple sculptures in South India.
	<b>Narasimha</b>	Another incarnation of Vishnu, half man, half lion. There is a large shrine to him in Padmanabhaswami temple where he is worshipped in his fierce and warlike form. This is probably why he is depicted on these coins as a large ferocious face.
	<b>Lion</b>	Symbol of kingship and power. Sometimes has associations with Narasimha.
	<b>Sardula</b>	A type of lion, with same associations. Often depicted on temple sculpture standing sideways with growling face turned to front, as typified by 19 <sup>th</sup> century coins of Mysore.
	<b>Elephant</b>	Symbol of kingship and power used throughout India.
	<b>Bull</b>	Seated bull associated with Nandi, the mount of Siva. Also has associations with Krishna in his role of Gopala, or Lord of Cows, and with Gomata, the ever-productive cow and with the "Bull of Dharma" or fate.
	<b>Deer</b>	Deer, especially those with backward turned heads, are associated with Siva, and he is often depicted with one in his hand.
	<b>Horse</b>	Symbol of kingship and wealth, horses being very difficult to keep in South India. Famous oil lamp with rearing horse in exactly this pose in entrance hall of Padmanabhapuram palace since 18 <sup>th</sup> Century. Also the Kuthiramalika, or "Horse Palace" at Trivandrum has a façade bearing rearing horses under eaves.
	<b>Yali</b>	A mythical beast, very common in temple sculpture in this area. Said to be part elephant, part lion, part goat and part man. Sometimes depicted with trunk up, sometimes with trunk down. Like many politicians, its appearance is impressive, but its role is uncertain!

	<b>Makara</b>	A mythical beast, part fish, part crocodile, part elephant. Also a star sign representing "Capricorn". The Padmanabhaswami temple and many other temples feature this image in their sculpture. Vishnu also wears earrings in the shape of a Makara. Symbol of growth, enrichment and fertility.
	<b>Fish</b>	The first incarnation of Vishnu was a fish called Matsya. It rescued Manu, the lawgiver, from the flood. It has also been said that this fish is a particular type, found off the coast of Kerala.
	<b>Turtle</b>	The second incarnation of Vishnu, called Kurma. Associated with churning the ocean to retrieve various valuable things.
	<b>Snake</b>	"Naga". Worshipped in primitive form since pre-Hindu times in this area. Has good and bad connotations. Its appearance on coins of Rani Parvathi Bai shows its continuing importance in the area. Two names of Trivandrum, Tiruvananthapuram and Anantasayanam, derive from that of the "endless snake" Ananta.
	<b>Swan</b>	"Hamsa". Holy bird, mount of Saraswati. Appears as a feature in many temple sculptures in South India, where it is called Annam.
	<b>Peacock</b>	Mount of Krishna, but in the South it is usually Murugan (Kartikeya), the other son of Siva, who is depicted in temples mounted on a peacock.
	<b>Parrot</b>	Mount of Madana, son of Vishnu. Also associated with Mohini (Vishnu in female form) who is the goddess of beauty and love.
	<b>Conch</b>	"Sankh". An attribute of Vishnu. Always depicted carrying a conch in one of his four hands. Long-standing symbol of Travancore. Early 16 <sup>th</sup> century rulers given the title "Sankaranarayana", which is also the name of a god worshipped in Suchindram temple. Often appears garlanded on coins.
	<b>Discus or Chuckram</b>	Another attribute of Vishnu. It is a weapon, often described as being like a thunderbolt, that Vishnu throws at his enemies. In the time of the Venad Cheras it was depicted as a lozenge, then as a circle or lozenge with decorations around it, or any of the designs depicted left. It gave it's name to the small silver chuckram coins of Kerala, which never depict this image! Perhaps it was because they were round.
	<b>Sudarsana Chuckram</b>	A different type of chuckram in the form of a star. Murals found on the walls of temples in Kerala often show Vishnu carrying a chuckram of this form.
	<b>Club</b>	"Gada". The third attribute of Vishnu.
	<b>Lotus</b>	The fourth attribute of Vishnu. Associated with the sun and with purity and holiness, as it is always found growing in mud from which it emerges in pristine splendour. "Padmanabha" means "lotus in navel" (see above).
	<b>Axe</b>	Symbol of Parasu Rama (Rama with the axe) an incarnation of Vishnu who is said to have rescued Kerala from flooding in early times, by throwing his axe over the land. Appears on coins all through this series, and on earlier "Battle-axe" coins of Venad Cheras.
	<b>Bow &amp; Arrow</b>	Symbol of the Cheras from earliest times. Appears on coins from 1 <sup>st</sup> century AD to 19 <sup>th</sup> century. Rama (incarnation of Vishnu) is famous for having a bow, but may just be a symbol of power.
	<b>Ankus</b>	Elephant goad. Symbol of power used by many Hindu rulers including those of Venad, for which it appears especially significant. Appears on coins up to early 19 <sup>th</sup> century.

	<b>Naman</b>	“Urdhva-Pundra” Symbol of Vishnu that his followers paint on their foreheads. Depicts two “pada” (feet) of Vishnu with a red mark in the centre depicting his “Shakti” (active female energy).
	<b>Srivatsa</b>	Represents the curl of hair found on Vishnu’s chest, which also stands for the presence of Lakshmi, his “Shakti”. Can take many formson these coins.
	<b>Viraraya</b>	Symbol found on fanams and chuckrams of Kerala. Originates from “lion with pellety legs and moon above” designs on the coins of Vijayanagar and the Hoysalas (see Mitchiner).
	<b>Ankus between 2 “fish”</b>	Represent the ankus symbol of the Venad Cheras supreme over the 2 fish of the Pandyas. Appears first in an inscriptions at Poonamallee in Madras made by Ravi Varma Kulusekhara following his conquest of the Pandya country <sup>26</sup> , on stone tablets of the 15 <sup>th</sup> century, and later on coins of Venad and Travancore up until 18 <sup>th</sup> century at least. Seems to have become a royal insignia.
	<b>Chamaran</b>	A type of fan used in temples.
	<b>Umbrella</b>	Symbol of kingship. Only kings and important people were allowed to have umbrellas carried over them in processions.
	<b>Lamp stand</b>	Light, as signified by lamp stands, is a very important factor in worship in the area. Often gifts were given to a temple in order to fund the burning of a perpetual light. Signifies continuity.
	<b>Suns and Moons</b>	Hindu kings are said to descend either from the lunar race or the solar race. Siva has the moon for his symbol, and Vishnu is represented more by the sun. The months of the year are governed by the light and dark phases of the moon. Often the sun, or the moon, or the moon and sun in conjunction, will appear on these coins. I wish I knew what it meant.
	<b>Kamandalam</b>	Water jug, as used in temples for oblations, or by holy men. Silver and gold pots are often mentioned in the temple records as being donated by the ruler in penance for sinful behaviour.



*Horse in shape of oil lamp; Padmanabhapuram palace (see C(ii)1)*

<sup>26</sup> “The Genealogy of the Sovereigns of Travancore”, *Journal of Kerala Studies*. p94. University of Kerala, 1983.

## 5. History

### Historical sources

Historical information on this period is mostly garnered from temple records and inscriptions. Most written records were inscribed on sections of palm leaves (olas) and have fallen prey to the fires that plagued the mainly wooden buildings, or have disintegrated. Those remaining, notably the Mathilakam records of the Trivandrum temple, and the inscriptions found in many temples, usually relate to gifts made to the temple and services instigated by the Koyiladhikarikal (the member of the royal family responsible for that temple) who was not necessarily the ruler of Venad, or to similar gifts made by other wealthy people.

Inscriptions are somewhat complicated by the fact that there were only a few names used in the royal family; Marthanda (or Udaya Marthanda), Rama, Ravi and Aditya feature heavily, followed by "Varma" which is a name denoting the Kshatria caste.<sup>27</sup> Individuals were usually identified more by the star sign they were born under, and, unfortunately for us, some of the inscriptions are also dated only by the positions of the stars and planets at that time. However, they are sometimes dated in the Quilon or Malabar era, which started in 825AD, and can be most useful for establishing who held sway over a certain area at a given time.

There are also some poems and songs written to commemorate various battles and deeds, but these are heavily biased in favour of the commissioning ruler as you can imagine.

With the arrival of the Portuguese in 1498 we start getting records of the country as seen from an outsider's perspective. These give a good idea of the general conditions and who had jurisdiction over which part on the seaboard, but sadly, the early traders were not numismatists, except in their habit of collecting as much gold as possible, and therefore omitted to mention when every king in the interior brought out a new issue of copper coins.

### The Royal family

The royal family of Venad was formed when three ruling families intermarried in 12th century: the Kizhperur or Kupaka family, from Attingal district, the Chiravai family from Alleppey district, and a branch of the old Ay dynasty who lived at Trippappur, just north of Trivandrum. The titles used by these families persisted into our period, although they were no longer used by rulers of geographical areas, being more commonly used to mark the bearer's status in the family hierarchy.

As mentioned before, Ravi Varma Kulusekhara gained great status by conquering most of Tamil Nadu for a brief period at the start of the 14th century. He named his dynasty after

his father, Jayasimha, so the ruling family in the Quilon area became known as the Jayasimhanad or Desinganad branch.<sup>28</sup>

This is the last mention we have of a son inheriting from his father. Sometime after this the royal family changed to the Maramakkathayam system of inheritance, whereby the male progeny of the king's sister (or sisters) would inherit the kingdom, in order of their age. Obviously, this system had it's problems, and we often hear of members of related families being adopted to cover a shortage of legitimate heirs. It also led to the Ranis (Queens) becoming very important, being given their own estate around Attingal, in which they were semi autonomous.

By the end of the 14th century the royal family had started splitting up. While they still had an overall king; the Tiruvati, various branches held sway over different areas. Hence we have the main branch, the Desinganad, with it's capital at Quilon; a branch called the Elayadathu Swarupam with a seat at Kottarakara; the Perakathavazhi based in Nedumangad; and the Trippappur branch who established their capital at Tiruvithamkode in the first half of the 15th century, while still keeping a strong presence in the Trivandrum area as they were responsible for the temple there.<sup>29</sup> They had their headquarters in various wooden palaces scattered over the country that they visited from time to time, as their territory did not always consist of one neat parcel of land. The eldest, or most able, male of these families was the overall king in theory, although in practice this role seemed to devolve on the head of the Desinganad branch from the mid 15<sup>th</sup> to mid 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The heir had the honorary title Trippappur Muppan, and was usually responsible for the Padmanabhaswami temple. Most of the other princes also attempted to get authority over a temple, not always one situated within their domains, as this could be most useful in times of war, when the temples provided sanctuary. Many of these rulers would call themselves the head of the Chiravai or Desinganad family in temple inscriptions, either because they were acting on the authority of the true holder of the title, or because they sought to elevate their status.

This could account for the king list becoming so diverse in this period. I have appended 3 different versions: that issued by the Journal of Kerala Studies<sup>30</sup>, that works on the assumption that the title "Chiravai" denoted the main ruler, that established by reference to the records of the Padmanabhaswami temple at Trivandrum which tends more to equate the king with the head of the temple<sup>31</sup>, and a general opinion of who was the overall ruler from the Kerala District Gazetteer.<sup>32</sup>

The situation with regard to the many royal houses in Venad stayed the same until resolved forcibly by Marthanda Varma

<sup>28</sup> A. Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala District Gazetteer*. Trivandrum 1962.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> "The Genealogy of the Sovereigns of Travancore", *Journal of Kerala Studies*. p94. University of Kerala, 1983.

<sup>31</sup> Aswathi Thirunal Gouri Lakshmi Bayi, *Sree Padmanabha Swami Temple*. Bombay 1995.

<sup>32</sup> A. Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala District Gazetteer*. Trivandrum 1962.

<sup>27</sup> K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala*. Vol.3. p.138.

## Travancore/Venad King List

Kerala District Gazeteer A. Sreedhara Menon Probably gives the main ruler (Tiruvati) of Venad or Desinganad	Sovereigns of Travancore Journal of Kerala Studies Probably gives the Chiravai Muppan, or ruler in power in South Venad	Sri Padmanabha Swami Temple Uses Mathilakam records. Probably gives royal head of temple (Trippappur Muppan)
1384-1444 Chera Udaya Marthanda Varma 1444-1458 Ravi Varma	1399-1435 Kerala Marthanda Varma	1425 Ravi Ravi Varma
1458-1469 Rama Marthanda Varma	1434-1469 Rama Marthanda Varma (Chera Udaya Marthanda Varma)	1459 & 1461 Udaya Marthanda Varma ( Rama Marthanda Varma) - Ruler in 1469.
1469-1484 Kodai Adithya Varma (Chempaka)	1461- 1485 Kodai Adithya Varma (Chempaka)	1472 & 1481 Kodai Marthanda Varma 1486 Jayasimha Deva II (Vira Kerala Varma)
1484-1512 Ravi Ravi Varma 1512-1514 Ravi Kerala Varma 1514-1516 Jayasimha Kerala Varma 1516-1535 Bhutala Sri Vira Udaya Marthanda Varma 1535-1538 Bhutala Vira Ravi Varma 1538-1544 Adithya Varma 1544-1545 Vira Kerala Varma	1485-1500 Vira Kerala Varma (Jayasimha)	1486 Ravi Ravi Varma (Junior Prince was Ravi Adithya Varma at this time) 1490,91,99 Ravi Ravi Varma, senior Tiruvadi of Trippappur 1501,02,05,07,09 Kizhperur. (May be same Ravi Ravi as above) 1504 Adithya Varma - Trippappur Muppan at this date. 1526 & 1532 Ravi Varma
1545-1556 Bhutala Sri Vira Rama Varma	1500-1548 Rama Marthanda Varma (Bhotalavira Udaya Marthanda Varma) 1548-1554 Marthanda Varma 1554-1575 Vanchi Adithya Varma	1545 Kothalavira Marthanda Varma (Rama Udaya Marthanda Varma) - but Adithya Marthanda Varma senior Tiruvati at this date.
1556- ? Unni Kerala Varma	1575-1577 Ravi Varma 1577-1578 Makayiram Tirunal - Senior Rancee of Attingal 1578-1592 Marthanda Varma	1559,64,66 Kerala Varma (Unni Kerala Varma) 1568 & 1587 Marthanda Varma ( Udaya Marthanda Varma) 1587 Unni Kerala Varma 1591 Bhutala Rama Varma
? -1595 Udaya Marthanda Varma	1592-1609 Ravi Varma Kulusekhara	1595-1608 Ravi Varma (Ravi Ravi Varma Tirunal)
1595-1609 Ravi Varma (Trippappur Kizhperur Kulusekahara)	1609-1610 Rama Varma	1608-1609 Rama Varma
1609-1610 Adithya & Rama Varma	1610 Adithya & Rama Varma	1609-1611 Adithya & Rama Varma
1610-1611 Rama Varma	1610-1662 Ravi Varma Kulusekhara	1611-1663 Ravi Ravi Varma
1611-1663 Ravi Varma	1662-1671 Rama Varma	1663-1672 Ravi Varma
1663-1672 Rama Varma	1671-1677 Adithya Varma	1672- 1677 Adithya Varma
1672-1677 Adithya Varma	1677-1684 Umayamma Rancee (Regent)	1677 -1684 Umayamma Rancee (Regent)
1677-1684 Umayamma Rancee (Regent)		
1684-1718 Ravi Varma 1718-1722 Adithya Varma 1722-1729 Rama Varma 1729-1758 Marthanda Varma 1758-1798 Rama Varma (Dharma Raja) 1798-1810 Bala Rama Varma 1810-1815 Rancee Lakshmi Bhai	AS LIST TO LEFT	AS LIST TO LEFT

\*These lists are from 3 different sources

\* The auspicious prefix "Sri Vira" is often added to the above names

\*The name "Ravi" is often written as "Iraivi"

in the 1740s and 50s, when he conquered most of the petty principalities south of Cochin. In the light of this you will realise why it is virtually impossible to ascribe a coin type to a particular ruler, unless it is established that one particular king used a particular symbol or emblem.

### Temples and the Brahmins

The Brahmin caste have been held in high esteem in Kerala since time immemorial, when myth suggests they were introduced by an incarnation of Vishnu called Parasu Rama (Rama with the axe). In our period they were almost above the law, but they were not the rulers. Traditionally in Hinduism this role was performed by the warrior caste, the Kshatriyas, or in the case of Venad, possibly the local warrior caste, the Nairs. Nevertheless, both castes were dependent on each other, the Brahmins validated the king's rule, the king supported the Brahmins and the temple financially, usually by means of lavish offerings and endowments of land. Hinduism pervaded the life of the area, offerings to the temple being necessary to facilitate most things in life. Naturally the temples accumulated great wealth and lands by these means, not to mention power.

The temples were first administered by a Sabha of Brahmins. Later, in the case of the Trivandrum temple this became known as the Ettara Yogom as it had 8½ (ettara) members, the half member being the Trippappur Muppan. He had to attend meetings and officiate at services or they could not proceed. The temple lands (or Devaswam) were extensive and, as most of them had been gifts by different donors, they were very scattered. The Trivandrum temple coped with this by appointing the heads of 8 local families to administer them. They were known as the Ettu Veetil Pillamars (Lords of the 8 houses) and eventually became very powerful in their own right, sometimes uniting to hold the balance of power.<sup>33</sup> There were many conflicts between the royal family and the temple administration down the years that came to a head in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, resulting in temple services being suspended between 1673 and 1677. This is another problem that was only resolved by Martanda Varma in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

### The People

To a certain extent the people were self-governing and self supporting. They were held in thrall by their caste practices, and any deviation from these could result in ostracism from the community, as decided by the village assembly. As mentioned before, the land was very fertile and supported a large rural population for many centuries without recourse to coinage; rental payments and temple offerings presumably being made in kind. Those not farming temple lands were governed by local lords called Madempimar, who were mostly Nair chiefs, who (in theory) would throw their weight behind the ruler in times of conflict. Of course they were just as likely to look after their own interests first. It is a particular characteristic of the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century,

that, although there were titular heads of the various branches of the royal family, they did not appear to hold much power, and their standing army was not very effective, so they had to rely on such support. The result is evident from the ease with which the Nayakas of Madurai plundered the Nanjenad area in the south, and the way in which a Mughal sirdar who happened to pass through the area with a small band of mounted men in 1680 could seize most of Travancore, forcing the Queen Regent to flee to the palace of her relative in Nedumangad.<sup>34</sup>

Due to the complex inheritance laws polyandry was an accepted practice and not considered immoral. However morality suffered a decline from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards, whether due to the corrupting influence of Europeans, or due to the evils of a monetary economy we do not know. The Portuguese writer Barbosa records that in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century the Nairs would not touch alcohol, but Buchanan records in 1800 that they were "addicted to intoxication".

By the time of Dutch rule in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, it is certain that the average person needed to use money. From the Dutch accounts of their time at Quilon we read that the local populace had to pay to fish off Travancore waters, to get married in the Christian church in Travancore, to get permission to build a new boat, not to mention customs duties, and tolls for passage of goods along the backwaters.<sup>35</sup> The chuckram is the usual unit mentioned. However, for lesser transactions, it is likely they also needed smaller denominations such as copper cash that were too insignificant to be mentioned in the records.

### The Portuguese

The Portuguese arrived in the area in the last years of the 15th century and it is not surprising that their writings relate a somewhat confused picture. From these accounts we can nevertheless gain an idea of the extent of the kingdom and the pre-occupations of the rulers. Albuquerque, Varthema and Barbosa, who wrote between 1505 and 1514, all say that the same king ruled in Quilon as in Kayal, which proves Venad was making inroads into what was traditionally Pandyan territory. Quilon had been one of the most important ports in Malabar for at least 700 years by this time due to its safe harbour and its links to the hinterland via the backwater system.

Most of the accounts mention dealings with a Queen or a governor of Quilon, which proves the king was often absent, possibly defending his conquests, and we are told that during 1517 the Portuguese factor in Quilon was unable to discuss his plans for a fort with the Queen as she was called away to do battle with her relative in Tiruvithamkode.<sup>36</sup>

The Portuguese accounts also mention battles with a king of Vijayanagar called Narasimha, (Vijayanagar had 3 rulers of

<sup>33</sup> P. Shangoony Menon, *A History of Travancore*. p.71. Government of Kerala 1983. Reprint of 1878 edition.

<sup>34</sup> A. Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History*. Madras 1998. p.247-251

<sup>35</sup> Captain Nieuhoff's account of 1662, quoted by K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala*. Vol. 1. p.289.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* Vol.2.p.42. Quoting from Portuguese Government records.

this name between 1485 and 1509), in which Venad had been victorious or at least made a success of defending itself. The Portuguese had most of their dealing with what was then the main branch of Venad at Quilon. However, from the accounts it is evident that the southernmost branch, based at Tiruvithamkode, was becoming more independent. It is mostly in the area of this kingdom that my coins were found, and this branch subsequently became the most powerful, the name "Tiruvithamkode" eventually becoming "Travancore".<sup>37</sup>

### Conflict with Vijayanagar

Until the mid 16th century the Venad rulers held large areas of land on the eastern side of the Ghats, as well as their own land to the west. They built palaces at Chera Maha Deva and Kalakkad and spent a lot of time in them.<sup>38</sup> Although the Vijayanagar Empire made great conquests in the south in the 14th century, Venad appears to have remained untouched. It was not to be so lucky in the early 16th century during the southern campaigns of Krishnadevaraya. He installed a Nayaka (Governor) at Madurai, and the Pandyas were made his subjects. The Venad ruler at that time was still actively acquiring land in what was considered Pandyan territory, encouraging missionaries to convert the local fishermen to Christianity, and harbouring rebels, so a conflict was inevitable. The armies met in 1532 and 1544, with the result that Venad was obliged to pay tribute to Vijayanagar, although they appear to have retained most of their land to the west of the Ghats, and did not have a nayaka installed over them.

It is possible that the tribute often went unpaid as the exacting of tribute was used as an excuse for raids on Travancore, right through to the end of the Nayak period. The most notable took place during the rule of Tirumala Nayak, after 1634, and between the years 1677-1706, during which time the erstwhile productive district of Nanjenad (S.E. Travancore) was reduced to a state of turmoil, unable to sow crops or to pay tax.<sup>39</sup>

Unfortunately, as well as suffering raids, Travancore experienced a period of weak rule and conflict from the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century until the reign of Marthanda Varma, and very few historical records or inscriptions are available. The lack of temple inscriptions itself is a mark of the impotence of the rulers. Ravi Varma Kulasekhara initiated many building projects in the Tiruvattur temple during his reign (1595 – 1609). He also held the Thulapurusha Danum ceremony at the Trivandrum temple and initiated building works there that were not finished until 1620.<sup>40</sup> However, after this we hear little in relation to temples except for stories of conflicts until the 1730s.

<sup>37</sup> A.Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala District Gazetteer*.

<sup>38</sup> "The Genealogy of the Sovereigns of Travancore", *Journal of Kerala Studies*. p106

<sup>39</sup> A.Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala District Gazetteer*.

<sup>40</sup> "The Genealogy of the Sovereigns of Travancore", *Journal of Kerala Studies*. p116

We know that, due to the Nayak raids of the mid 16th century, the capital of Travancore was moved, from Tiruvithamkode, situated in a rather exposed position on the plain, to Kalkulam, sheltered by mountains. This town was eventually called Padmanabhapuram (Padmanabha's town). Nieuhoff gives a description of its palace and fortifications in his 1662 account of Travancore. It is apparent from this account, and from Dutch maps of the time, that Travancore had shrunk to an area not much larger than an English county, and that the Desinganad family was now subject to their southern relatives in Kalkulam.<sup>41</sup>

### The Dutch

The Portuguese had established a fort and trading post at Quilon, which was seized by the Dutch in 1662. They intervened far more in local politics and trading practices than the Portuguese had. Their policy was to establish trading monopolies with some of the lesser principalities, such as Kayemkulam to the north of Quilon, where they undertook to buy their entire supply of pepper at a fixed price, in return for goods such as copper, tin, lead, sugar, silk and opium.<sup>42</sup>

At Quilon they established direct rule over a large part of the town, and the Desinganad royal family retreated up-river to a palace at Kallada, but for economic reasons the Dutch dramatically reduced their trading activities here. So much so, that when Captain Hamilton visited at the end of the 17th century he described what had once been the proud capital of Venad in the 15th century as "a small principality with inconsiderable trade".

In south Travancore the Dutch had small trading stations at Colachel and Tengepatanam. Luckily they did not seem to intervene in the administration of this area until they tried to stem the rise of Marthanda Varma in the 1740s and were well and truly routed.

### Marthanda Varma (1729-58)

Marthanda Varma came to the throne in 1729 and is regarded as the father of modern Travancore. He provided the firm leadership necessary to rescue the country from its parlous state and expanded its borders dramatically against all the odds.

He did this initially by buying-in troops from local powers, such as the Nayakas of Madurai, to suppress his own unruly people. He also made great use of the British fort at Anjengo to keep him supplied with modern weaponry, (in exchange for pepper, of course). He energetically suppressed the rule of his relatives in neighbouring states: the ruler of Quilon, who initially had decided to adopt an heir from the Kayemkulam royal family, was forced to adopt Marthanda Varma instead, likewise the ruler of Elayadathu Swarupam, whose legitimate heir was female.

<sup>41</sup> K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala*. Vol. II p20 & p55.

<sup>42</sup> A. Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History*. p256.

This led to conflict with the Dutch, supported by aggrieved neighbouring kingdoms, such as Kayemkulam, who feared his meteoric rise. In this conflict he was eventually victorious, humiliating the Dutch and initiating their demise as a force in the area. Opportunistic as ever, he recognised the military ability of one of the Dutch prisoners, D'Lanoy, eventually installing him as head of his army.<sup>43</sup>

His masterstroke however was his method of controlling the temple authorities. At first he had to expose their plots against him and use force to suppress them. As he had no authority over Brahmins, the worst punishment he could inflict on them was the confiscation of their property and banishment. However, he hit on a typically brilliant long-term solution: after undertaking a lot of restoration work at Padmanabhaswami temple he dedicated the country to the god Padmanabha in 1750. He, and his heirs, subsequently bore the title "Padmanabha Dasa" (servant of Padmanabha), which meant that any orders they pronounced henceforth were deemed to have come straight from the god himself, which made it virtually impossible for the Brahmins to object to them.<sup>44</sup>

He also rebuilt his capital at Kalkulam and renamed it Padmanabhapuram, endowing his new palace there with lavish woodcarving and beautiful wall paintings. The country was wealthy enough to afford this as he had established a government monopoly in spices that produced enormous profits.

By the end of his reign Travancore stretched from Cape Comorin to beyond Cochin (see map), although some of the land to the East of the Ghats had been threatened by the Nawabs. Attacks on this area came in from the Nawab of Arcot in 1740 when Marthanda Varma was busy fighting the Dutch. While he was away on campaigns in the north in the 1750's the various generals of Maphuz Khan descended on the area and it suffered many changes of hands until it was finally agreed in 1765 that Travancore would retain Shencottah and Cape Comorin, but lose Kalakkad.<sup>45</sup>

### Rama Varma (1758 – 1798)

Rama Varma was Marthanda Varma's nephew and he had been preparing him for leadership from an early age. One of his first acts was the setting up of a new system of government in keeping with the size of the country. Travancore was split into 3 areas each with its own governor and administrative staff.<sup>46</sup>

He helped the Cochin Rajah defend his land from the Zamorin of Calicut, and was given some land in return, but on the whole his reign was a period of consolidation, marred by incursions from Mysore.

### Threat from Mysore

Between 1774 and 1792 the country was attacked from the north several times by Haider Ali and his son Tipu Sultan. Travancore refused to pay tribute to Mysore, and eventually, with the help of the British, their forces were ejected from the country. The price of British intervention in the war was a hefty annual tribute, and the installation of a British Resident, and supporting military force.

During this time Trivandrum became a refuge for exiled princes from the northern states who had lost their kingdoms in the conflict. This, and the expenses incurred in the war drained the country's finances.<sup>47</sup> After 1765 Padmanabhapuram was right on the southern borders of Travancore, so in 1790 the capital was moved to Trivandrum.

### The British

In 1644 the British obtained permission for a small trading post at Vizhinjam, a bay about 12 miles south of Trivandrum. Further north, the Ranee of Attingal gave them permission to establish a trading station at Anjengo in 1684. This later became a fort that is still standing. The first 40 years of its existence were marked by misunderstandings and resentments, but by the mid 18th century it was of great importance to both Travancore and the East India Company.

Marthanda Varma was a truly independent ruler, and, while he cultivated connections with the British, he only agreed treaties with them for his own purposes, and was just as likely to seek help from other sources. His treaty of 1723 was the first one between the East India Company and an Indian state, but it was drawn up not just to expiate the damage caused to Anjengo Fort by a long siege, but also to ensure British aid in suppressing the Ettu Veetil Pillamar. This treaty mentions the setting up of a British fort at Colachel where there was to be a mint coining fanams, and also gives permission for them to be coined at Anjengo if this had not taken place by a certain date. Unfortunately we never hear any more about this mint.<sup>48</sup>

However from the reign of Rama Varma it is evident that some constraints were being applied from the Governor of Madras, especially during and after the war with Mysore and the subsequent treaty of 1795. This guaranteed Travancore's external security for the princely sum of 240,000 rupees a year and required the stationing of 3 battalions of British troops on Travancore soil. We know that Travancore had trouble paying for this as there were riots in the next reign when the then Dalawah,\* Valu Thamby, tried to cut back on the native Nair troops to economise. These riots led to the drawing up of a further treaty in 1805 that supposedly guaranteed Travancore's internal security as well. This treaty

<sup>43</sup> A. Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History*. p.284 – 288.

<sup>44</sup> P. Shangoony Menon, *A History of Travancore*. p.127.

<sup>45</sup> A. Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History*. p.295.

<sup>46</sup> P. Shangoony Menon, *A History of Travancore*. p.139.

<sup>47</sup> A. Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History*. p.315.

<sup>48</sup> A. Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala District Gazetteer*.

\* "Dalawah" and "Dewan" both describe the chief minister. "Dalawah" was the old term, "Dewan" was considered more modern.

was much opposed, as it effectively gave the British the final say in internal affairs, cost the country 800,000 rupees a year, and had the rider that non-payment of tribute would result in the British taking over parts of the country and extracting revenue directly.<sup>49</sup>

When the young Rani Lakshmi Bai came to the throne in 1810 she very wisely gave the position of Dewan\* to the then Resident Colonel Munro, thereby forestalling any possible complains about how the country was being run and how much revenue was being raised. It was nevertheless a huge transferral of power, and the Rajahs of Travancore never again held total sway over their country.

Rani Parvathi Bai was Rani Lakshmi Bai's younger sister who became Regent to Lakshmi Bai's young son after her early death in 1815. As she was only 13 at the time she probably had to rely on the administration of the Dewan and the British Resident, and it is unlikely that she was the instigator of the coinage reform of 1816.

## 6. Coinage of Neighbouring States and Countries.

I looked closely at coins of neighbouring states knowing that Travancore came relatively late to the use of coins in comparison with its neighbours. I had an idea that a coinless country, wishing to introduce a coinage, and surrounded by examples of coins used by other countries in the area, would be likely to incorporate some of the more successful features of these coins into its own issues. This could give me further clues to the dates of some of my coin types.

### Malabar

This forms the north part of Kerala today. The coinage of the area from the 14<sup>th</sup> century has consisted of small silver coins called variously taras, chuckrams or puttams, and similar sized gold coins called fanams. Apart from foreign coins used in trade, these are the ones mentioned in historical records and they do not seem to have issued a copper coinage. During the period of the Dutch (1663 – 1776) they used Dutch copper duits, and around this time a series of copper Rasi coins were issued bearing the same symbols as the chuckrams and weighing 11.23, 5.75 and 2.8gms.<sup>50</sup>

By all accounts these were not a success and are now quite rare. I have noticed a few small Travancore-style coins bearing these Viraraya/lazy J symbols and this may have been an issue that circulated as part of the later system of small coppers in north Travancore, but they are unlikely to have been a major influence.

<sup>49</sup> Many accounts of these treaties. Described at length in *A History of Travancore and A Survey of Kerala History*.

<sup>50</sup> Michael Mitchiner, *The Coinage and History of Southern India*. Vol. 2. #1249-51



Chuckram



Reverse of Thirai cash E13

### Vijayanagar

Devaraya I and II had a mint at Madurai from 1416. This issued a series of coins with an elephant walking right on the obverse and Kannada script on reverse. They appeared to be of one denomination, measuring from 15 to 17mm in diameter and between 2.75 and 3.6gm in weight. The elephant is walking in a particular way, with one back leg extended behind, and the nearside front leg bent.<sup>51</sup> This is exactly the stance of elephants on Anantasayanam coins of Travancore (A2). They are also similar in that they sometimes have a raised circle between the design and the beaded border that always runs round the outside of the flan.



Left: Reverse of Anantasayanam coin.



Right: Reverse of coin of Devaraya.

After 1446 the Vijayanagar Empire experienced a period of weak rule and Madurai was held by some local chiefs called the Banas (see below).

In the 1520s Krishnadevaraya reconquered the south and installed a Nayaka (governor) in Madurai. For his main copper coinage he issued a series of coins depicting Garuda. They come in a variety of denominations. Mitchiner says that a one-unit coin (jital) should weigh around 3.5 grams, but in real life this denomination weighs between 2.4-3.4gm and measures 11-12mm across.

The next two Vijayanagar rulers kept to a similar weight standard, also issuing a half-jital size (ideal weight 1.7gm, actual weight 1.4-1.7gm). Coins of Achyutaraya (1529-42) bear images of the Gandabherunda (2 headed eagle), elephant and a few of Garuda. The puppet king Sadasiva (1543 – approx 1570) had issues bearing Garuda standing or running. Although the elephant issues look similar in style to those of Devaraya I, the animal is a much cruder representation. Garuda appears in standard pose - running with wings outstretched, which is similar to the Garuda on

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. #522-538

the Anantasayanam coins, but not remarkably so. Gandabherunda does not appear on either Anantasayanam coins or Thirai cash.

These issues were mainly for use in the Vijayanagar heartland to the north. On their reverse they had the name of the ruler in Devanagari script. However some types were minted in the south, possibly at Madurai or Tanjore, and circulated in the area from Bangalore south. In Tamil Nadu, by far the most common of these is the issue bearing a standing bull with a sun and moon above on the obverse, and a stylised dagger between a conch and discus surrounded by Kannada script on the reverse.

They were struck for Krishnadevaraya (1509-29) and come in one-unit and half-unit denominations, with smaller local derivatives. They are to the same weight standard as the main issues and measure 12-15mm for the larger denomination and 10-11mm for the smaller. Nothing about their design bears any resemblance to the Venad/Travancore series.<sup>52</sup>

### Banas of Madurai

Between 1450 and 1520 they issued a series of coins from Madurai that almost always depict Garuda running on the obverse and Tamil script on the reverse. The style of this Garuda is very similar to that found on coins in the Anantasayanam series (A3) These were struck on relatively thin flans and weighed between 2.4 and 3.5gm, with a flan diameter of 14-18 mm. They had a beaded border, and in some cases a raised circle between this and the design.<sup>53</sup>



Left: Coin of Banas showing Garuda.



Right: similar Garuda on Anantasayanam coin.

### Pandyas

The remnants of the Pandyan Empire held out against attacks from the Venad and Vijayanagar rulers in their capital at Tirunelveli until about 1545. They probably used a debased form of their 2 fish/ standing man issues. The "2 fish" symbol appears in stylised form in many Venad and Travancore issues, however this is not because they admired the design, but was used either to show they had conquered some part of the Pandya country, or that their ruler had some dynastic claim over it.

<sup>52</sup> Michael Mitchiner, *The Coinage and History of Southern India*. Vol 1, p186-196

<sup>53</sup> Michael Mitchiner, *The Coinage and History of Southern India*. Vol.2. #564-576.

### Ayra Chakravatis of Jaffna

Ayra Chakravati was a Pandyan general who established a dynasty in the north of Sri Lanka in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century. The last series of coins issued by this dynasty between 1462 and 1597 has a bull seated right with a sun and moon above and "Sethu" in Tamil below. Sethu was not only the name of the bull, but also of the bridge of land that stretches virtually all the way between Rameshwaram in Tamil Nadu and the Jaffna Peninsular. It is approx. 150 miles from Kayal, which was part of Venad/Travancore at that time, so it is likely that the coins were encountered at Tiruvithamkode, and also at Quilon, by means of the flourishing coastal sea trade mentioned by the Portuguese. They have large flans around 20mm in diameter and weigh 3.5 to 4.3gms. The reverse bears a traditional depiction of a "standing man", but on both sides the design is surrounded by a raised circle and a beaded border, as is the coinage of Travancore. A seated bull with a sun and moon above appears on an Anantasayanam coin (A15) and on Thirai cash E1 and E2, but this is a common image on coins of India.<sup>54</sup>

### Ummattur Chiefs of Kongu

The Kongu plain is reached through the Palghat pass which starts some 50 miles north west of Cochin and is one of the few places where the Ghats can be easily crossed. The first Chera Empire had their capital here in the early years A.D. Up until the mid 14<sup>th</sup> century the Kongu Cheras were allied to the Venad rulers of Perumpadappu Swarupam (Cochin area), then they were conquered by Vijayanagar. Much like the Banas in Madurai, the Ummattur chiefs seized their chance to overrun the area when the Vijayanagar Empire was weak in the 1450s. It was gradually reconquered by Krishnadevaraya between 1512 and 1520.



Left: coin of Ummattur chiefs.



To right: Anantasayanam coin of type As 1

During this interval they issued a distinctive series of coins having very dumpy flans. They weigh between 3.5 and 5gms but are only about 11-12mm in diameter. The obverse always bears a standard design of 2 swords crossed in front of an altar, with lamp-stands either side and pellets above. The reverse usually has somewhat geometric representations of palm trees, lamp-stands and bows, with the occasional appearance of a fish, a cross, or Narasimha's face in the centre. One of the lightest, commonest, and presumably latest, in the series bears an elephant surrounded by a selection of the above symbols (see illustration above).<sup>55</sup> In both weight (around 3.2gm) and in the juxtaposition of

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. #672-678.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. #587 & 588.

symbols around an elephant, this issue bears a striking resemblance to coin As 1. of the Anantasayanam special issues.

### Nayakas of Madurai

The Nayakas were originally the governors installed by Vijayanagar to keep control of this distant part of their empire. As is usual in these cases, they gradually became independent, finally achieving this in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Long before this they had started issuing their own coins from a mint in Madurai. As is apparent from the history (section 4) there was much interaction between the Nayakas and Travancore, usually of a hostile nature. Travancore Thirai cash are found in the River Vaigai at Madurai, and some Madurai coins must have appeared in Travancore. They are of a similar size to Thirai cash but much thicker and dumber. The issues Mitchiner places in the time slot between 1630 and 1700 weigh between 1.4 and 1.8g, but earlier and later issues seem to be intended to follow the Vijayanagar unit weight of 3.5gm (or less, allowing for wear and tear).<sup>56</sup>

One side of the coins usually has "Sri Vira" expressed in Kannada script, unless it has anything original to say, in which case it appears in Tamil, the local language. The deities and animals that appear on the reverse feature associates of Siva and the local goddess Minakshi, but apart from this, could be common to any Hindu kingdom. Ganesh, Garuda, Hanuman, Krishna, elephants, seated bulls and water pots are all symbols common to both series, but I could not say that one had a particular influence on the other.

### Polygars

In the early 16<sup>th</sup> century there were 72 of these local chiefs, supposedly gaining their authority from the Nayakas of Madurai. In effect, many of them ran small independent states in the land between Travancore and that of the Madurai Nayakas. Their issues were usually crude affairs, often over-struck on coins of neighbouring states. They are unlikely to have influenced my coins.

### Mysore

In the 1650s Kanthirava Narasa Wodeyar conquered much of West Kongu, thus putting him within reach of north Travancore. Due to his name (Narasa) being associated with Narasimha, the half-lion, half-man incarnation of Vishnu, most of his coins bore images of lions. On the copper series these were quite distinctive, walking to right with a pointy face and a raised paw.<sup>57</sup> They weighed between 2.5 and 3.3gm and measured 13-14mm in diameter, so there was little correlation of dimensions, however this lion with his distinctive features replaced the old "Sardula" style lion on some issues of Thirai cash, notably C(ii)5, D(iii) and

possibly E11. It was a continuing feature on Mysore coinage until the end of the century at least, with a reverse of more or less readable Devanagari script, which then degenerated into the distinctive criss-cross pattern of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Other 18<sup>th</sup> century coins had images of Hanuman, seated Ganesh, elephants, birds etc. in common with the Travancore series, but, as mentioned before, these were common to many Hindu coins. More unusual are the prancing horses and deer that appear on both series, but it would be difficult to demonstrate which way the influence (if any) ran.

### Nawabs of Arcot

The Nawabs had a seat at Trichy from the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century. They had a mint there, and also for a time at Karur in the Kongu plain. This, or a similar mint in the area, was responsible for an issue of coins bearing a single fish on the obverse and Tamil letters on the reverse in the 1730s and 40s. Between 1744 and 1760 the Trichy mint issued a series known by the script on the reverse as the "Shahani" series.<sup>58</sup> The reverses bore images of 5 or 6 pointed stars, lions with one paw raised, and trees. The stars and the lions are very similar to those found on series D(iii) of the Thirai cash, and several Thirai cash varieties feature a similar fish, most notably D(i)7 and D(i)8.

It was during the 1750s and 60s that Travancore had many dealings with the Nawab's representative at Trichy over their land to the East of the Ghats and the Nawab's rebel generals who tried to annex it. It is likely these coins were seen then and their designs possibly copied, although they have no similarities in weight or size.

From the above it can be concluded that the following issues had an influence on the Anantasayanam series:

Vijayanagar: Devaraya I and II of (up to 1446 – but circulated until time of Krishnadevaraya)

Banas of Madurai: 1450's to 1520s.

Ummattur chiefs of Kongu: 1450s to 1512.

Ayra Chakravatis of Jaffna (possibly): 1462 to 1597.

Some issues of Thirai cash were also influenced by the following :

Mysore: Kanthirava Narasa, Dodda Devaraya and Chikka Devaraya, 1640's – 1704.

Nawabs: Karur & Trichy mints between 1730-60.

The size of the coinage of Malabar, and this area in general, must have had a bearing on the small size of the coins.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. p.211-221

<sup>57</sup> Michael Mitchiner, *The Coinage and History of Southern India*. Vol. 1. #913-25.

<sup>58</sup> Michael Mitchiner, *The Coinage and History of Southern India*. Vol. 2. #1003-15.

## So what were they, and when were they issued?

So far I have been careful to limit myself to established facts, or, at least, "the facts" as stated by other sources. I am hoping that by reading through the material presented so far you may have come to some conclusions of your own. Due to the limitations of the research material there can be no right answers, just some that are more likely than others. Here are my thoughts on the matter.

### Anantasayanam coins

Mr K. Lekshmanan places these as issues of the 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards.<sup>59</sup> Beena Sarasan, postulates that they may be issues of Martanda Varma struck after he dedicated the country to Padmanabha in 1750.<sup>60</sup> These are both equally valid ideas given the lack of records and information on these coins. I have been working with the information laid out above which has led me to a different conclusion.

We know from inscriptions on the tablets at Padmanabhapuram museum and the appearance of the Venad issues (VI, 2 & 3) that the Venad rulers were producing coins featuring their own emblems in the 15<sup>th</sup> century to supply their newly conquered lands to the east of the Ghats. These must originally have been issued to comply with the weight standard current in the area of; one unit: 3.5g, half unit: 1.7g, quarter unit: 0.85g. The first two issues of Anantasayanam coins (A1 & A2) were made to a similar standard, then the series suffered a decline in weight. Issue A4 had a seated king and battle-axe on the reverse as did all previous Venad coins, showing continuity of design. Coins have also been issued in the Tirunelveli area with this reverse, and an elephant or Garuda on the obverse.<sup>61</sup> These weigh about 2.6 – 2.7g, which is near to the ideal weight of the large denomination of the Anantasayanam series from A3 onwards, and may point to a different local weight standard being adopted for later Anantasayanam coins.

From our look at Anantasayanam coin designs and how they compare with issues of neighbouring states we have established that similarities occur with coins issued in the mid 15<sup>th</sup> century. Taking into account the varied state of the metals used, they also must have been issued at time when a regular supply of copper was not available. Copper was a known item of trade for the Dutch, who established a trading post at Colachel in the mid to late 17th century, so this would imply that the coins were issued before then.

At the same time, there must have been a need for such coins, other than the satisfaction of civic pride, which would imply the adoption of a monetary economy at the level of the petty traders. From this we can assume that goods, such as

<sup>59</sup> "Anantha Sayanam Coins of the Venad Rulers. *SSI Coins*. Vol. VIII. Also in ONS Newsletter. #160.

<sup>60</sup> Articles published in the Trivandrum press. Paper, yet to be presented, entitled "Coins of Sree Padmanabhaswamy, the Perumal of Travancore".

<sup>61</sup> Examples in the British Museum, Fitzwilliam Museum, also illustrated in *Coins of Tinnelvely*. #45-57

pepper and spices, were exchanged for cash more often, as happened when the Portuguese started trading in the Quilon area in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The link with Padmanabha of Trivandrum temple (and also possibly Adi Keshava of Tiruvattur) could not be more plain. Obviously the ruler or other issuing authority was closely associated with this deity. Once I had thought that the Brahmins, with their great power and links with the temple may have been responsible, and have used the coins for offerings, but in India this idea was laughed at; the Brahmins would never have bothered with anything of such a low value as copper!

This leaves the royal family (or one of its branches or governors) as a possible issuing authority. In the late C15th and early C16th the Venad ruler was so sure of himself he could afford to leave his capital in the hands of governors and his queen for long periods of time while he and his associated princes were making further conquests in the south. Even Francis Xavier regarded the Venad ruler as a "great king" during this period, and many Portuguese accounts marvel at the extent of his territory. The Vijayanagar governors saw him as a threat that they were unable to suppress in the late 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> century. It must have been a time of expansion and prosperity in the area, up to, and possibly after, the defeats by Vijayanagar in the 1530's and 40's.

All things considered, I think that it is likely that this is the period in which the Anantasayanam issues were first minted. The 16 or so types of this series are so similar in design that it would be likely that they were issued by one dynasty or authority operating over a uninterrupted period of between 30 and 70 years approximately, and that is what we have here. Between about 1485 and 1545 the Venad rulers had the power and the authority to strike coins, the need for coinage, and the other coin types that influenced the designs of their own coins were in circulation.

That they are found mostly to the south and west of the Ghats could be due to the fact that, in the mid C16th when most of them would be circulating, the Venad rulers were forced back into this area by the governors of the Vijayanagar Empire. It would certainly give one the impression that this was not a series that was used earlier, when Venad held sway on the eastern side of the mountains.

### Anantasayanam Special Issues

This is good as far as it goes. However we then turn to the Anantasayanam Special Issue series (As). At first, having only seen examples of these in reasonable condition kept in collections in the UK or USA, I had assumed they were a more recent issue than the main Anantasayanam series. I thought that they could, quite conceivably, have been issued by Martanda Varma to celebrate him giving the country to the god Padmanabha in 1750. Or alternatively, they could have been issued in association with a silver pattern coin of

the early 19<sup>th</sup> century in the Ashmolean Museum that also bears the image of Padmanabha.<sup>62</sup>

They are certainly not common coins, but when I visited India I realised just how rare they were. A collector who has spent a lifetime of collecting coins found in the rivers south of Trivandrum has just one example. Another collector who seems to have sources further north has amassed four, and these were the only coins of this type I saw in Kerala. These were far more worn than the coins I had seen in Europe, and indeed, more worn than coins of the normal Anantasayanam series found in similar circumstances. This made me change my views on their date of issue. Apart from the reason given above I have 3 further explanations for this opinion:

- i) They are heavier and chunkier than the normal Anantasayanam coins, conforming quite closely to the Vijayanagar weight standard of 3.5g for one unit, 1.75g for half, etc., which was used in the Venad series of coins and earlier Anantasayanam issues only.
- ii) The heaviest of the Anantasayanam series (A1) has 3 lines beneath the image of Padmanabha, which is common to all the As issues (in conjunction with the turtle), but not to the other Anantasayanam coins, which have 2 lines. This not only establishes a link between the two series, but leads one to believe that type A1 was a continuation of the As series.
- iii) Some have similarities in designs with coins of the Ummattur Cheras. This is the case not only for the one example given in section 5, but also for the Lakshmi issue (As2).<sup>63</sup>

This evidence made me believe they were issued first, probably not in the southern part of Travancore around Tiruvithamkode or Trivandrum, but further north, in an area that was more likely to be influenced by Ummattur Cheras in Kongu, but still be under the sway of Padmanabha, such as Quilon, capital of Venad during the period of the Ummattur chiefs.

If the head of the Desinganad branch, or his administration, struck them here they were not much used, as the people were accustomed to smaller silver coins such as chuckrams and taras. They probably suffered the same fate as the copper Rasis issued during the Dutch period in Cochin. The Quilon area is not suited to the easy finding of stray coins, even if they had circulated in large numbers, but it is evident that the few that are found appear in rivers to the north of Trivandrum, and far less to the south. The handful that appear in The West could owe their good condition to traders taking a few home as a curiosity, where they lay in a drawer or cabinet for many years, forgotten, but protected.

I mentioned above that the Anantasayanam type A4 with the seated figure and battle-axe is not the heaviest in this series, which might be expected if it had been the first Anantasayanam type, adapted straight from the Venad issues

with the same design. The "link coin" A1, and the type with an elephant on (A2) are far heavier and more in line with the weights of both the Venad issues and the As series. When you take into account my suspicions about the origins of the As series, an explanation for this becomes apparent. The southern branch of the Venad royal family was becoming more independent at this time, and disputes with the Desinganad branch in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century have been recorded. They were the branch responsible for the Padmanabhaswami temple and would have welcomed a currency depicting that deity, who, when rotated 90°, could almost be taken for a "standing man". They, or at least their contemporaries a few miles to the south and east, were used to using large copper coins of this type. As mentioned above, coins bearing Garuda or an elephant in conjunction with the ubiquitous seated king were circulating here already, albeit at a slightly lesser weight. The simple answer could be that the Trippappur branch of the family with their embryonic "Travancore" state operating out of Tiruvithamkode and Trippappur near Trivandrum (the very area where Anantasayanam coins are found) could have adopted the As issues as their own. After their first 2 issues they had made a couple of minor adaptations to their design and weight, either to fit with the size and weight of coins used in the area, or so as not to be too lavish in the use of that scarce import, copper.

The use of the conch on Anantasayanam issues must be mentioned in this context. It is still the symbol of Travancore, and appears on almost every coin issued by this state in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Being a symbol of Vishnu, it had appeared on many previous Hindu coins in conjunction with the discus. However, on the coins of the Anantasayanam series it appears in isolation for the first time<sup>64</sup>, as a symbol in its own right (A1 & A11). It was one of the emblems of the Venad rulers in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and its new use could signify one branch of this family showing their authority and independence – literally making their own mark. In the early 16<sup>th</sup> century many rulers adopted the prefix "Sankaranarayana", which may have denoted their devotion to this deity, but the word "Sanku" also means "conch".

Other symbols have been dealt with in section 4, but it is the more minor symbols on the Anantasayanam coins that would appear to give further pointers to their issuer and date of issue. A whole paper could be written about the significance of clusters of 3, 5 or 6 beads appearing on issues of Venad coins,<sup>65</sup> and 3 or 5 beads also appear on the A4 types of this series. Some issues have a sun above Padmanabha, some have a moon, some have a "sun within a moon" symbol that also appears with great regularity on Thirai cash. There is an issue featuring what appears to be a star, as well as types with chuckrams and conches in this position. When you think of how often inscriptions in this area were dated by the position of the stars and planets, it is difficult not to imagine that these symbols have something to do with dating these

<sup>62</sup> My thanks to Shailendra Bhandare for alerting me to the existence of this coin.

<sup>63</sup> Coin in British Museum. Biddulph collection. #940. Found Salem/Coimbatore area.

<sup>64</sup> Since the time of the Pallavas.

<sup>65</sup> I believe that Mr Jee Francis Therattil of Trivandrum is working on one at this moment.

coins. Alternatively they could serve to indicate which "house" of the royal family issued the coins, or even which ruler.

The deity himself can lie to either the right or the left. This could just be the result of a different die being used, as the coins look very similar otherwise, and were obviously struck at the same mint. However, it has also been pointed out to me that Padmanabha at Trivandrum lies with his head to the left, and Adi Keshava at Tiruvattur lies with his head to the right, and that these two types might have been intended for circulation in different areas.<sup>66</sup> Likewise, there is no known reason for the fact that the deity sometimes has his arm above his head, and sometimes held parallel to his body. Padmanabha lies with his arm up, holding a lotus blossom above his head. Unfortunately I was unable to ascertain the position of Adi Keshava's arm, but this may have some bearing on which area the coins were intended for also. In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century the ruler Ravi Varma Kulusekhara was as much noted for his works in the Tiruvattur temple than the Padmanabhaswami temple and may have wished to feature this deity on his coins also.

I have called these coins Anantasayanam issues, in line with local practice, but I have no idea what they were called in their time. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were 16 copper cash to one silver chuckram. It is difficult to tell with any degree of accuracy, but it appears that the smallest denomination of Anantasayanam coins weighed about one eighth of their largest counterparts and a quarter of medium sized coins. It is possible that the large denomination was worth half of the tara, which was the silver coin current at the time, but this is just a guess. Between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries the Travancore silver tara weighing approximately 0.25gm was replaced by the chuckram which was a heavier coin weighing around 0.34gm.<sup>67</sup> I do not know if this rethink of the coinage had anything to do with the cessation of the Anantasayanam series, but it seems likely that they did not continue long into the 17<sup>th</sup> century, as this was not a very prosperous time for Travancore.

### Thirai Cash

It is generally accepted that these were introduced after the Anantasayanam series, but there is no reason why there could not have been an overlap. On the whole, they are much smaller in size, only the larger denominations of the B series coming near the weights and sizes of previous issues.

I love these coins, they seem to carry within them the whole spirit of Travancore life, made manifest in tiny designs, engraved with infinite care. So many of these designs are reflections of the carvings and fittings of the palace at Padmanabhapuram (see section 4) it seems impossible to imagine that they could have been made anywhere else, even if we did not already know there had been a mint there. The palace in its present form was built in the time of Martanda

Varma in the second quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century it is therefore likely that many of these coins date from around this time, as it is more likely that the palace inspired the coin design than the converse. It is perhaps not too fanciful to suppose that the same fine craftsmen who worked on the woodcarvings might have had a hand in engraving the coin dies.

Of course some issues may have been struck during the period of the earlier palace on this site, which, judging from the remaining parts, also shows evidence of fine carving. Likewise, the similarly decorated palace at Trivandrum, the public parts of which date from the reign of Rama Varma (1758 -98) must have given rise to some later issues. It is specially famous for the row of 21 prancing horses carved under the eaves of its façade, which gave the palace its name (Kuthiramalika) and may have inspired designs such as that found on coin E10.

Thirai cash are found in the same rivers as the Anantasayanam issues, and also in rivers further north such as the Pambai and Arumalla, the Palghat pass and even Madurai. Mitchiner records one being found at Hampi,<sup>68</sup> but generally speaking they are found with diminishing regularity the further north you go. Unlike Anantasayanam issues they are quite a common series within their locality. When I was measuring collections in Trivandrum collectors would point to a coin and tell me that they had discarded 50 or 100 similar coins before they found an example in such good condition, so you can imagine how many have been found. My main argument against the possibility that Anantasayanam coins were issued by Marthanda Varma after 1750 is that this leaves only 65 years for the issue of 16 Anantasayanam varieties and at least 200 Thirai cash types, which I think is pushing it a bit.

### Classification

In my catalogue something had to follow on from the Anantasayanam coins, and I have put the coins of the B series, because they were issued in 3 denominations to a similar weight standard to that of the Anantasayanam coins, some have similar designs, their flans are of similar proportions, and they generally look old. However, there is nothing to say that when these coins were being struck there were not issues with only 1 or 2 denominations being minted as well, as happened in the Anantasayanam series with issues A10 and A16. Likewise it is unlikely that the striking of 3 denominational issues suddenly stopped at the end of the B series, and it was decided to only strike one denomination henceforth. Some of the types in the E series such as E1, E2, E3 and even E16 that often appear in a worn state and have the curious "sun in moon" symbol, common on early issues, could fit into B series just as well if this is taken into account. Likewise, B series issues such as B1 that I have seen in quite unworn condition could have been issued later, at a time when 3 denominations were needed again. As is seen from the scanty mid 19<sup>th</sup> century issues of 4 and 8 cash, the larger sizes were never needed as much as

<sup>66</sup> My thanks to Mrs Beena Sarasan of Trivandrum for this idea.

<sup>67</sup> Michael Mitchiner, *The Coinage and History of Southern India*. Vol. 2. p.256.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* #1201.

the small change. It is quite conceivable that B and E types (and possibly some of the others) were all part of a continuing series of coins struck between the late 16<sup>th</sup> century and the early 19<sup>th</sup> century by the main mint, first at Padmanabhapuram, then at Trivandrum.

The C(i) issues that I have encountered seem of darkened and worn fabric, but reasonable workmanship, and may have been struck at this mint when it was under duress, such as during the raids of Tirumala Nayak in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century. The mint was also operating under adverse conditions and suffering a lack of official control in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, which may also account for the irregular appearance of some of the issues.

Conversely, while being of similar weight and size, some of the C(ii) issues seem in remarkably good condition. The standard of engraving on some of them matches that of the B and E series, but they are much thicker coins for their size, more irregular in shape, and their weight (but not diameter) varies considerably. For these reasons I think it is unlikely that they were issued at the main mint. Then there is the fact that all of them (with the possible exception of C(ii) 3) come in 2 distinct die varieties, one very well cut, and one comparatively crude. This makes me think that one set of dies was cut by less skilled hands, and either used at another mint, or used after the first set of dies had worn out.

In order to effectively administer Travancore in its enlarged form, Rama Varma (1758-98) established 3 administrative districts early in his reign. It is unlikely that this new improved administration felt the need to distribute tons of small copper coins around the country from one mint deep in the south. This could be the time that mints were set up for the two new districts to the north, and some of the C(ii) and D(i) issues, and all of the D(ii) and (iii) issues (not to mention the D(iv)s) could have been the products. This could account for the fact that these series differ so markedly in their weight standards, shape and size from those of the B and E series, and for the fact that they are generally found in only one denomination. Of course, until a study is done establishing exactly which rivers each variety is most commonly found in, it will be difficult to prove this theory, and I would be unable to say which series was struck at Mavelikara mint, which at Quilon and so on.

C? series coins are issues that fitted in with other C series coins as regards weight and size, but I could not honestly say with which series they should be placed.

The D(i) series is again mainly categorised by weight, size and shape, and the fact they are only found in one denomination. Because they are so different to coins of B and E series in their weight:size ratio I am pretty confident they were struck at one of the other mints. Within this class I see evidence of other sub-classes, such as issues D(i)5 – 8 being linked by their brassy fabric and clarity of strike, and issues D(i)10 – 13 having a conch of a similar style on their reverse. This may mean that these sub-classes were issued in sequence under similar mint conditions, or even that they

were issued at different mints to the rest. My feeling is that the brassy issues may have been symptomatic of a disturbance in the copper supply caused by the war with the Dutch in 1741. It may have taken a while for them to set up a regular supply from a new source. The last 2 issues of this series certainly seem to overlap that of the D(ii), almost as if one mint was operating in tandem with another for a few years, preparatory to taking over from it.

The D(ii) series obviously form a class of their own; they are of such a small size, so thick in comparison, and are usually struck in such brassy metal, they could only belong together. Bearing in mind that they are one of the last series of Thirai cash to be struck it is likely that some of them were produced during the war with Mysore, and disturbances in the supply lines, and other shortages occasioned by this invasion, may have led to many of them being struck in brass. This would especially be the case if they were struck at a northern mint such as Mavelikara that was also an armoury at this time. It could also explain their clear but basic designs; no one had the energy to waste on engraving elaborate coin dies.

Type D(ii)4 is actually mentioned in the mint records as being issued in 1786. Taking the issues to be at 3 yearly intervals (1786, 1789, 1792 etc) there should have been 8 different types struck between this issue and that of the Garuda/lotus, which we know was the last issue, struck in 1813. I have listed 5, which may not be far off the mark when you bear in mind that in 1810 there was a contested change of ruler and a new issue may not have been authorised that year, that the issue D(ii)6 with the bow facing right may have been a different issue to that with the bow facing left, and that production could have been disrupted by the totally new series of coins struck in 1809 (see section 2(b)). The copper half chuckram of 1809 bears an image of a Sudarsana chuckram on its obverse, as does D(ii)7, and the D(iii) series. It is thus possible that they were issued around the same time, if not earlier, bearing in mind their likeness to the Shahani series issued from the Trichy mint between 1744-60.

Of course, it is very much an assumption of mine that the D(ii) issues and the E issues were being struck at the same time, but from different mints. That a coin that could be described as a Garuda/Conch issue was struck at both mints is certain, as is the fact that coins answering this description were withdrawn in 1816. From this I would infer that both mints operated in to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The C(ii) mint may also have been operating during this period, and even the D(i) mint (if it was not the same mint that struck D(ii) coins later), but this is not a surprising assumption to make, as we know that at least 4 mints were operating in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

I do not intend to go into every type and try to guess when they were minted, but I would like to comment on types D(i)11 and E14 which bear the image of Lakshmi. I mention in the catalogue that type E14 may be split into 2 different sub types, one of which may have been issued from the mint

striking the C(ii) series as it is typified by thick flans and a heavy weight. The other E14 type, depicts Lakshmi seated on a lotus in exactly the same pose and style as on the silver pattern rupees in the Padmanabhapuram museum, struck for Rani Lakshmi Bai (1810-15). Figures of the major gods are rare on Thirai cash coins but it would appear likely that 2 or possibly 3 mints simultaneously struck coins bearing the image of Lakshmi to mark the reign of her namesake.

The issues of irregular, light weight, badly struck and uncommon coins that I have put under the heading D(iv) could have been struck anywhere. I have considered the possibility of people buying licences to strike low denomination coins as happened in Stuart times in England, that some of these may have been tokens knocked out to look like a coin, but intended as a temple offering, or the fact they may have been struck illegally. The proclamation of 1816 states that one of reasons coins were issued every 3 years was to prevent forgery. This law must have been brought in at an earlier date to address a problem, which would imply that at one point at least there were a lot of forgeries. This could account for some of these odd issues, of which only 1 or 2 examples are available. The fact there were "proclamations" issued about the coinage at all demonstrates that many were official issues, sanctioned by the treasury.

Unfortunately I was unable to establish why these coins are called Thirai cash. "Thiru" is the South Indian form of "Sri" and indicates something holy or held in high esteem. Most of the coins bear images that could come under the heading "holy". Another possibility is raised by a Dutch record of a landing of copper and a substance called thiraviryam at the port of Colachel, from whence it was taken to Padmanabhapuram nearby.<sup>69</sup> This may mean the term originates from the metallic composition of the coins. Vishnu's sword is supposed to be made of an alloy of 5 metals; gold, silver, copper, iron and tin. This alloy obviously has religious significance, and it is known that an alloy of 3 metals was used for Cochin fanams.<sup>70</sup> I feel that a study of the metallic content of these coins could answer many questions.

### Denominations

The name of the coins also offers no clue to their denomination. As mentioned in the catalogue, the D(iii) coins are the only ones that give any inkling of what they might be worth in relation to each other. If, in fact, the number of beads on these relates to their value in cash, it appears that this was linked to their weight rather than their size. Copper has always been sold by weight, and even now, when not required by coin collectors, these coins would be sold by weight to metal dealers. Perhaps this is how quantities of these coins were measured and valued, rather than each one having a constant value. Of course the peasant with his few coppers would know exactly how much each coin was worth in terms of goods he could buy, although,

knowing Indian markets, the real "value" was probably subject to a lot of haggling!

In the other series the diameter of the coins usually increases in line with their weight. Some types such as B10, E14 and E15, have 4 beads in their design on larger sizes and one bead on the small sizes, but this may just be fortuitous and not intended to indicate a denomination. On the other hand, in the case of the E series it does appear that the smaller denomination was intended to represent a quarter of the value of the larger denomination as the weights seem to follow a 1:4 ratio approximately. Large Thirai cash of the E series have an average weight of 1- 1.25gm, which is marginally under the weight of a 2 cash coin of Rani Parvathi Bai, and the small cash of this series weigh 3gm at the most. If we apply the "Kalanju" weight system adopted for the coinage of Rani Parvathi Bai they would be 2 cash and half cash coins. However, if you remember that the copper half chuckram of 1809, supposedly worth 8 cash, weighed approximately the same as a 4 cash coin of Rani Parvathi, and twice as much as a large Thirai cash coin, it would seem that they were intended to be tariffed at 4 and 1 cash. This would appear to be a more logical choice of denominations and would point to the adoption of a new weight standard for copper coins between 1809 and 1816. The D(ii) issues have an average weight of 0.8 - 0.9g, and many of the D(iv) types weigh between 0.6 - 0.7g, so it is possible that they served as an intermediate denomination - but I would not stake my life on it!

The "conch and discus" issues D(i)13, D(ii)1 and E8 appear so common that I can't help but think that they circulated after 1816. They are certainly more frequently encountered than the cash of Rani Parvathi Bai and Rama Varma III (1829 - 47). In the case of E8 they were struck to a very accurate weight and size, which shows up on my graphs as being in marked contrast to other Thirai cash. In the light of this it is worth considering the question of whether they were used as a stock coinage in the early half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, possibly even being re-struck occasionally after 1816 using the old dies, as many of them have a very fuzzy design as if worn dies had been used.

### Envoi

I hope this has given you an idea of what these intriguing coins are and when they were minted. By doing this research I certainly found out a lot about them and the area that they circulated in. Of course, as soon as I thought I had found an answer to one conundrum another, more fiendish, question would present itself to me in its place. Eventually I gave up thinking that my quest would ever be "finished" by myself alone and decided that instead of trying to achieve the impossible, I would present the information that I had to the best of my ability, and hope for some feedback. Obviously, I would be delighted to hear from any one who has any of these coins, especially types that do not appear in the catalogue, so I could include them in my records. Best of all would be someone in Kerala using my catalogue to establish exactly which varieties are found in which areas, or possibly

<sup>69</sup> My thanks to Mrs Beena Sarasan of Trivandrum for this information.

<sup>70</sup> K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala*. Vol.2, p.26.

doing some research into their metal content. More useful insights could be obtained by a full publication of the mint records, or someone with access to old records and familiar with Malayalam (or Tamil, which was often the language used by the administration) going through them with an eye open for references to these coins.

I can be contacted by E-mail on  
barbaramears@supanet.com  
or by writing to the Oriental Numismatic Society in England

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