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THE BUNDI-KOTAH COMPLICACY

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INTRODUCTION

The coins issued by the Rajput chiefs of Bundi and Kotah during the hundred years prior to 1858 have, since they were first published, been subject to much confusion and frequent misattribution. In the trays of dealers, in museum cabinets and at exhibitions Kotah coins are seen labelled as Bundi, whilst Bundi pieces are ticketed as Kotah. Similar confusion occurs in numismatic works and catalogues. This widespread disorder has arisen because of the similarity between the coins of both states and the incorrect reading of the mint names that appear on the coins. Another contributory factor is the defect common to most Indian hand struck coins, namely that the flan or planchet is much smaller than the dies from which the coins are struck, thereby leaving much of the inscription off the coin.

EARLIER ATTRIBUTIONS

Before proceeding to explain how the coins of Bundi and Kotah may be correctly assigned, it may perhaps be pertinent to indicate the errors that exist in published works that deal with these coins and which are usually available to collectors. The first major publication dealing with the coins of Rajputana was Webb's "Coinage and Currency of Rajputana" (London 1894). It is as well to refer to the illustrations only, for mere inscriptions may be inaccurate and cannot be checked. Under BUNDI, Webb illustrates four coins (Plate VIII) of the pre-1858 period: Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 6. In spite of the crudity of the drawing, No. 1 may be recognised as a rupee of Bundi, with the name of the Mughal Emperor Muhammad Bahadur. In the text Webb queries the mint name. No. 2 merely shows the obverse side of a coin of Muhammad Akbar II. No. 3 is a rupee of Muhammad Akbar II, regnal year 10 but is from the mint of Mahdupur in Jaipur. Webb gives this mint name as "Sawai Bundish" although but a fraction of it can be seen. No. 6 is a copper coin of Kotah, struck in the name of Muhammad Akbar II.

Under KOTAH, Webb illustrates five coins: Nos. 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12. Nos. 8 and 10 are correctly illustrated as Kotah coins of Shah Alam II and Muhammad Bahadur. No. 11 appears to be a copper coin of Jhalaway State, and Nos. 9 and 12 are post-1858 coins of Kotah. In his notes referring to these coins Webb refrains from giving a mint name for Nos. 8 and 10 and erroneously attributes the latter to Muhammad Bidar Bakht. For No. 9 he cites the mint name as Kotah.

In the Catalogue of the Coins in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, Volume IV (Oxford, 1928), in the section on BUNDI, only one coin is illustrated (Plate XVIII, No. 1). This is a mohur of Muhammad Akbar II of Kotah. In the text Valentine gives the mint name as "Bundka". He does not attempt a mint name for the remaining Bundi coins listed but unillustrated and remarks in his notes that the coins of Bundi and Kotah seem to be identical. This Catalogue does not list any coins of Kotah prior to 1858. Valentine appears to have been perplexed by the mint names on the later coins and read them as "Bundka" with a query.

Moving to more up-to-date publications, Mitchiner in "The World of Islam" (London 1977), illustrates three early coins under Bundi - Nos. 3618, 3619 and 3620. All happen to be coins of Kotah, although the photograph of the copper coin is not sufficiently clear to be quite certain. The reading of the mint name is given erroneously as "Sawai Bundish." In the same volume the sole illustration of a Mughal type coin of Kotah (No. 3631) is correctly attributed although the reading of the mint name is incorrect. The post-1858 Kotah coins that are illustrated have also been allotted incorrect mint names. The Standard Catalog of World Coins by Krause and Mishler (5th Edition, 1978) illustrates a number of early Bundi coins, which, with the exception of one copper coin, are all coins of Kotah. The section on Kotah has illustrations of coins that appear to be incorrectly assigned. Further errors occur in Craig's "Coins of the World - 1750-1850" 3rd edition where several illustrations of Kotah coins appear in the section on Bundi whilst under Kotah one coin depicted appears to be an issue of Bundi.

It will be seen from the foregoing that generally the coins of Bundi and Kotah, struck in the names of the last three Mughal emperors, have never been correctly attributed or catalogued and remain in a state of disorder. It now remains, in this paper, to correct this situation and to point out the proper attribution of the coins of these two states.

COINS OF BUNDI

It would be more convenient to deal with the coins of Bundi first, as the method of attributing them is fairly straight-forward. The coins issued by this state were struck at only one mint, Bundi city. The precise date when this mint commenced operations is as yet uncertain but it was certainly producing coins in 1762. What has been established however is that the mint name inscribed on all Mughal type coins of this state was  (Urdu = Bunde or Bundi) and no variations or accompanying epithets have been noted. The Reverse of all Mughal type Bundi coins, whether in gold, silver or copper is as follows:-



A noticeable feature, which enables the Bundi coins to be distinguished from those of Kotah, is the position of the mint name. On the Bundi issues this always falls below the word  (= struck) and the tail of the 'r' is close beneath and horizontal to the elongated 'b'. This feature is always present on the Bundi issues and enables them to be attributed, even if the whole of the mint name is missing.



COINS OF KOTAH

Consideration can now be given to the coins of Kotah, the name of which derives from the Koteah Bhils, from whom the country was wrested by the Hara Rajputs. The name was applied to the whole territory but when the present day city of Kotah was founded it was apparently called Nandgaon, but in time became known by the same name as the state.

Again, no certain date has been yet ascertained for the first issue of coins from Kotah but rupees are known bearing the name and titles of the Mughal emperor Alamgir II (1754-1759). Mints are said to have been established at two other centres in Kotah State - Jhalra Patan and Gargaon.

The town of Jhalra Patan was founded in 1796 by Zalim Singh and the mint there set up in 1801. Gargaon was but a short distance from Jhalra Patan and, if indeed it was a separate mint, probably struck the same type of coin.

The earliest coins of Kotah must, therefore, have been struck at Kotah city, also known or hitherto known, as Nandgaon. This is confirmed by the mint name that appears on the coins as "Nandgaon urf Kotah".

نندگاؤن عرف کوتہ

This inscription did not remain constant for on subsequent specimens struck in the name of Shah Alam II and dated a few years later the mint name reads "Kotah urf Nandgaon"

کوتہ عرف نندگاؤن

Some years later the word urf (= alias or "the same as") appears to have been dropped from the mint name and all that may be read is "Kotah Nandgaon" . By this time the calligraphy has become increasingly slipshod and inaccurate.

کوتہ نندگاؤن

On coins struck at the beginning of the reign of Muhammad Akbar II, Mughal Emperor from 1806 to 1837, the name Kotah has been relegated to an insignificant position under the ضرب of ضرب and usually falls off the flan of the coin. The more prominent part of the mint name that is observed is Nandgaon 7. نندگاؤن but the end of this is invariably off the flan. By about 1828 the mint name has been reduced to نندگاؤن and some years later all traces of the word Kotah have disappeared with نندگاؤن (purporting to read Nandgaon) being visible only. The archaic and inaccurate name of Nandgaon, indifferently engraved, persisted as the mint name on the coins of Kotah until they ceased being issued at the end of the 19th century.

Where much of the mint name is off the coin, the Kotah pieces may be recognized by the beginning of the name Nandgaon which interposes itself between the 'zar' and the 'b' of the zarb and usually appears thus on most coins:-

ضرب نندگاؤن

Attempts have been made to differentiate between the coins of Bundi and Kotah by reference to the marks and symbols that appear on them. The following marks appear on coins of both states and also on those of the neighbouring state of Jhalawar and no special significance may be assigned to them: * * * * * Some of the earlier coins of Kotah bear on the obverse a different form of flower: ↓ ↓ *

The authors of this paper would deem it a favour if members who have in their collections any coins of Bundi or Kotah in any metal would forward details or rubbings to either author.