

With the exception of two (nos. 26 and 27), all the punch-marked coins weigh from 17.19 grains to 42 grains. The coins by their appearance are much worn, and have lost a good deal of weight in course of circulation. Since the coins belong to the type of which the standard weight is considered to be 54 to 58 grains, the loss of 16 to 34 grains would have taken quite a long time. This is also supported by the associated Roman coins. The last known date of the Roman coin in the hoard is 117 A. D. So, it may be presumed that the hoard was deposited some time late in the second century A. D. But if we take the deposit in the nature of the bank, even then the date of the deposit of the coins in the hoard cannot be placed earlier than the beginning of the Christian era. The earliest Roman coins in the hoard do not date earlier than 69 B. C.

Furthermore, although it was believed that Kerala had established her foreign relations in the remote past,¹ no direct evidence was so far available. The present find shows that Kerala had an extensive foreign and inland trade at a fairly early date.

An analysis of the composition of the hoard indicates that only 17% of the punch-marked coins belong to the pre-Mauryan period; the rest are of the Mauryan period. This shows that the coins of the Mauryan period were in extensive use. Whether these coins show any political influence of the Mauryas in Kerala or suggest mere brisk trade from the Northern India, is not easy to suggest. Probably both the factors are responsible for the preponderance of the Mauryan coins.

Amongst the Mauryan coins, 21% belong to Group III. A(c) and 17% to Group IIIA(h). In one of his papers, Dr. P. L. Gupta has suggested the origin of these two groups of coins to Taxila and Madhyadeśa respectively, on the basis of the proportionate finds of different groups of coins. But to me, the composition of hoards, noticed by him from other parts of the country, does not appear to be very different from that of the present hoard. So, the principle of identifying the origin of these coins on the basis of composition of the hoard does not appear to be sound. It requires examination of a large number of hoards before a final opinion could be pronounced.

1. K. Menon, *Kerala Culture*, p. 87.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE SO-CALLED KHADGA-TRĀTĀ COIN-TYPE OF KUMĀRAGUPTA I

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[Plate I]

The rhinoceros-slayer coin-type of Kumāragupta I is one of his rare types in gold. Four specimens of it were first described by the late Dr. A. S. Altekar.¹ Since the discovery of the Bayana Hoard three more specimens have been recovered and published in the earlier issues of this *Journal*.² The main purpose of the present note is to examine, at some length, certain observations made by Mr. S. V. Sohoni³ towards the determination of the real nature of this coin-type.

Mr. Sohoni thinks that this coin-type has some religious belief as its background. He admits that the flesh and blood of the rhinoceros were highly valued during a *Srāddha*,⁴ yet he prefers to think "Kumāragupta I took only its horn,"⁵ and styles this type as "the rhinoceros-protector type." In his opinion Kumāragupta I is shown on the obverse as "about to cut off the horn of a rhinoceros, but deliberately sparing that animal's life. He was a *Sringahartā* as well as a *Khāngatrātā*"⁶ i.e., the protector of the rhinoceros. His observations are based on the following statement of S. H. Prater:

"In Nepal the flesh and the blood of the rhinoceros is considered highly acceptable to the *Manes*. High caste Hindus and most Gurkhas offer libation of the animal's blood after entering its disembowelled body. On ordinary *Sradh* days the libation of water and milk is poured from a cup carved from its horn. The urine is considered antiseptic and is hung in a vessel at the principal door as a charm against ghosts, evil spirits and diseases. These beliefs connected with the rhinoceros are prevalent in varying form in Burma, Siam and China. They set a

1. *BHU*, pp. 296ff.
2. *JNSI*, XI, pp. 9-10, pl. III, 7; *ibid.*, XVII, pt. II, pp. 104-6, pl. IX, 5; *ibid.*, XXII, pp. 180ff, pl. IX, 3.
3. *JNSI*, XVIII, pt. II, pp. 178-186.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 182.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 184.
6. *Ibid.*, XVIII, pt. II, p. 186.

great value upon the animal and provide the main reason for its persecution."¹

Sohoni has selected only the third sentence of the above paragraph and possibly the following statement that the horns of the rhinoceros "grow throughout life and if lost are reproduced,"² in formulating his theory.

But we feel that this animal was not hunted exclusively for its horn. As it can be seen, there is nothing in Prater's statement to indicate that the life of the animal was spared. As for the religious significance of rhino-hunt connected with *Srāddha* ceremony, we do not know the authority of Prater's statement. It may have been based on some local beliefs. There is no doubt sufficient evidence from very ancient texts to show the religious significance of rhinoceros in a *Srāddha* ceremony. According to many texts,³ while the flesh of certain animals served to the Brāhmaṇas results in the temporary satisfaction of the manes, the eating of the rhino flesh and some other things results in their permanent satisfaction. This literary tradition undoubtedly appears to be a strong one, and it may be suspected that rhino's flesh was sometimes actually served in a *Srāddha* ceremony. It could not of course have been a common practice, for obvious reasons. But, for want of more definite evidence, we can not be quite sure that it was a common practice even amongst the higher and more influential sections of the society, especially when we consider that from the time of the *Upaniṣads*, Buddha and Mahavira itself, non-killing of animals and not taking of meat had been growing more and more popular. Asoka gave further impulse to the idea. That it strongly affected the Brahmanical tradition is quite clear not only from the fact that Vedic sacrifices fell into comparative disuse and half-hearted attempts were made to justify animal killing in a Vedic sacrifice, but also from this that suitable adjustments were made in sacrificial prescriptions to avoid actual animal-killing. Brahmanical as well as

1. *The Book of Indian Animals*, p. 192.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 191.

3. *Āp. Dh. Sū.*, II, 7.17. 1-3; *Baudh. Gr. Sū.*, II, 11. 53-4; *Mbt.*, *Anaśā*, 88. 6-10; *Manusmṛiti*, III, 268-72; V. 27; 42; *Padma Purāṇa*, *Sṛiṣṭi*, 9. 152-159; *Vishnu-dharmottara Purāṇa*, I, 141, 42-52; *Vishnu Purāṇa*, III, 16. 1-3; *Matsya Purāṇa*, 17, 31-36; *Kūrma Purāṇa*, II, 20. 40-42. Cf. also, *Skanda Purāṇa*, *Kaśī*, 4, 14-20; *Agni Purāṇa*, 163. 1-32, 168. 20-21; *Padma Purāṇa*, *Adi*, 56. 40-4 which also prescribes the meat of clean animals at *srāddha*; *Bīj. Saṇi*, XLVIII, 30.

other literature from very ancient date⁴ extol the virtues of *ahimsā* and prohibit meat-eating. A certain apathy towards meat eating had grown quite strong by the Gupta period, and although vegetarianism may not have been the rule, meat-eating was probably not very common, especially amongst higher classes. But even if it is admitted for the sake of argument that rhino's meat was sometimes served in a *Srāddha* ceremony, being a special occasion, there could of course be no question of sparing the animal's life and hunting it only for its horn as Sohoni thinks. While he quotes⁵ some of the texts to show the association of rhino with *Srāddha*, it is strange that he ignores this point.

But, whatever may have been the religious significance of rhino's flesh in a *Srāddha* ceremony, it appears to me that Kumāragupta issued this type purely as a *mrīgaya* type or, what is more accurate, as following a numismatic tradition of his dynasty.⁶ *Mrīgaya* coin-types, introduced by Samudragupta, were continued by Chandragupta II and Kumāragupta I, and became an important feature of the Gupta gold coinage.

In the following pages, we intend to consider some other points raised by Mr. Sohoni in his note on the coin-type under discussion.

Kālidāsa in *Raghuvamśa*⁷ refers to Daśaratha as removing the horns of the rhinoceroses by means of a *kshurapra*. Sohoni takes this statement of Kālidāsa to prove his hypothesis. But this description has no bearing, whatsoever, on the coin-type under discussion, primarily because it is only a poet's way of describing a scene full of action and at the same time eulogising his royal hero. To Sohoni, Kālidāsa's *kshurapra* is the weapon used to cut off the rhino's horn, and "even on our

1. *Āp. Dh. Sū.*, I. 5. 16, 16, I. 5. 17. 29-37; *Vas. Dh. Sū.*, XIV. 30-37; *Baudh. Dh. Sū.*, I. 5. 12. 5; *Gaut. Dh. Sū.*, XVII. 16-31; *Manusmṛiti*, V. 11-18, V. 48, 53, in verse 95 flesh is called the diet of Rākshasas, Yākshas and Piśāchas, XI. 158; Asoka prohibited the slaughter of all quadrupeds which are neither used nor eaten" including rhinoceros, Bhandarkar, *Asoka*, 5th PE, p. 309; *Mbt.*, *Sānti*, 36. 21-24, Karna, 44. 11; *Rāmāyaṇa*, Ayodhyā Kānda, 76. 38; Uttara Kānda (Ch. 59) refers that King Brahmadatta was cursed for serving flesh to a Brāhmaṇa; *Mbt.*, *Sānti*, 337. 5 prohibits slaughter of animals even for sacrifices and states that only food grains should be offered; Fa-hien quoted in *PHAI*, p. 558 (6th edition) Beal, *Si-Yu-Ki*, p. 89; Al-Biruni, ch. 68.

2. *JNSI*, XVIII, pt. II, pp. 182-3.

3. *JNSI*, XXIV, pt. II, pp. 152-163.

4. IX. 62; cf. also XI. 29.

coin there is a small curvature at the other extremity".¹ But we think that there is neither any such curvature in the weapon held by the king (see the enlarged photograph and drawing, Pl. I. 4) nor this weapon is identical with *kshurapra*.² Mallinātha, commenting on *Raghuvamīa* (IX. 62), defines *kshurapra* as *kshurapraih śaravīśhaih chandrārdhabānairīyarthāh*. Thus *kshurapra* was in fact a crescent-topped arrow, whereas what Kumāragupta holds is, as we shall see, a variety of the straight sword.³ The two are entirely different from each other.

Similarly the depiction of Gaṅgā on the reverse of this type cannot be taken to have been intended to serve as a road to heaven.⁴ For, if it were so, what would be the significance of depicting the same deity on the tiger-slayer coin-type of Samudragupta and Kumāragupta I?

Further, Mr. Sohoni thinks that this type of King Kumāragupta I was issued early in his reign, because "his hair are fuller on head here than on other coins. His figure is also more youthful."⁵ But this point, we feel, can be best explained if the rhinoceros-slayer type is taken to be a *mrigayā* type, as pointed out by me earlier.⁶ We know from Kālidāsa, who is generally placed in the Gupta period, that kings along with their attendants used to put on a special dress⁷ (*mrigayāvesha*) while going on hunting. The practice of putting on a hunting dress matching with the colour of the forests was also known to the royal author of *Mānasollāsa*.⁸ Therefore, the dress of the

1. *JNSI*, XVIII, pt. II, p. 186.
2. Altekar, *BHC*, p. cvii, and 296 ff; ibid., *The Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, pp. 198 ff; Vidya Prakash, *JNSI*, XXIII, p. 290, also takes it to be a sword.

3. *JNSI*, XVIII, pt. II, p. 186.

4. *JNSI*, XVIII, pt. II, p. 186.

5. *JNSI*, XXIV, pt. II, p. 152-163.

6. In *Sākuntalam*, King Dushyanta orders his attendants thus: *Āpanayantu bhavatyo mrigayāvesam* (Act. II). In *Raghuvamīa* (IX. 50) Daśaratha is styled as *mrigavanopagamakshamaveshā*, and as *Grathitamaulīraeu vanamāloyā tarupalīśā savarnatānuchhadā*, (IX. 51).

7. हरितांशुकूपणे (से) हरितां शुकूपणे रैः ।
कद्गुपतारा (द्वृपत्र) प्रद्विभिर्हेतुभा (हेतिभि) वापषारिमः ॥
तोषणासाहस (पक) हस्तैष कैरिच्छीपशुगान्तैः ।
सप्तागत्य पटस्थाने नीलाम्बरपरिज्ञदद्य ॥
तु (त्रु) लगभाँ तथा मृदीं गद्धिकाँ गतंमात्रिकाम् ।
किञ्चिन्मध्यात्पुरोभागे शयां मध्यां (मध्ये) निवेशेत् ॥
श्यामलान्तुपधानानि हरिता द्विपदीस्तथा ।
गतस्य परिचमां भिर्ति छादयेन्नीलवाससा ॥

Mānasollāsa, IV. 15. 1468-1471.

Gupta kings on their *mrigayā* type of coins can well be taken to be the same as the hunting suit known from literature. And what Sohoni takes to be the 'plentiful hair' of Kumāragupta I, may probably be the *Grathitamaulīraeu Vanamāloyā* type of headdress. Hence, the rhinoceros-slayer type need not have been issued early in the reign of its issuer. On the contrary, it was probably issued comparatively later in his reign. And it is due mainly to this fact that so far we have recovered only a few specimens of this type. Had it been issued earlier it would have been found in larger numbers in the Bayana Hoard.

In order to clarify the *mrigayā* nature of the rhinoceros-slayer type, we intend to point out a few more details from certain texts. Someśvara prohibits the hunting of rhino⁹ and some other animals. Had it been considered so valuable for the performance of the *Srāddha*, the author of *Mānasollāsa* would certainly have prescribed its hunting. But as he makes no such reference, it seems that at least in south, the flesh of the rhino was usually not served. And his prohibition of its hunting indicates that it was listed along with such wild animals as tigers¹⁰ and bears and its hunting was prohibited primarily as a precautionary measure to save the person of the king.

However, on the basis of *Syainikāśāstram* of king Rudradeva of Kūrmāñchala (Kumaon), a very late work (13th to 16th century A.D.), it seems that hunting from horse-back gives much pleasure (III. 17). Concerning the rhino hunt, king Rudradeva states that five or six men are enough for hunting rhinoceroses. The horses of the hunters should be quiet and well-trained in the swiftness of motion. The animal should be struck with small darts (*kaludraśakti*) in quick succession on its back. And if it turns back, the horsemen should run to front

1. निमज्जनाजजलस्यान्तं (१) प्रवेशाच्च बिलान्तरे ।

गवयस्यान्द्रभग्नस्य व्याप्रस्य महिषस्य च ॥

खञ्जस्य मुग्यात्त्वर्णं प्रसा (मा) दयहु (ला) यतः ।

तस्मादेषा विवर्ज्या स्यात् धीमतां पृष्ठवीभुजाम् ॥

Mānasollāsa, IV. 15. 1451-52.

and others should strike it from behind.¹ It is noteworthy that Kumāragupta is clearly shown about to strike the animal from behind (Pl. I. 4). The pictorial suggestion of Sohoni is highly conjectural. The *kshudraśakti* weapon mentioned in *Syainikāśāstram* is probably the same as the *śakti* weapon mentioned in the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta² and *Raghuvamīśa*³ of Kālidāsa. Mallinātha explains *śakti* as *śaktya kāśūnāmañkenāyudhena* and refers the authority of *Amarakosha* as *kāśūnāmarthyayoh* *śaktiḥ*. *Śakti* is generally taken to be a spear or javelin.⁴ But the weapon in Kumāragupta's hand which he seems to be in a mood to thrust in the back of the rhino in quick succession seems to be a straight and pointed sword-like object. And if this straight sword of Kumāragupta has anything to do with the (*kshudra*)*śakti* of Rudradeva, its identification with spear becomes improbable. The object with which Kumāragupta I has been depicted hunting the rhino in all probability is a sword (*khadga*) as it is specifically styled as such on the obverse and reverse inscriptions.

Sohoni's view that [*Bhar*]*ītā* is meaningless and should be replaced by [*Har*]*ītā*⁵ does not seem to be correct. As we have shown, Kumāragupta was not hunting the rhinoceros only for its horn. Further, the word *khadgatrātā* in the coin legend does not appear to mean the protector of the rhinoceros, and the type in question should not be named as such. The rhino, being a harmless creature, cannot be taken as a justification for the king to spare its life. Kumāragupta was hunting the rhinoceros and not sparing its life, and thus the whole of the coin legend, as pointed out by Altekar, makes

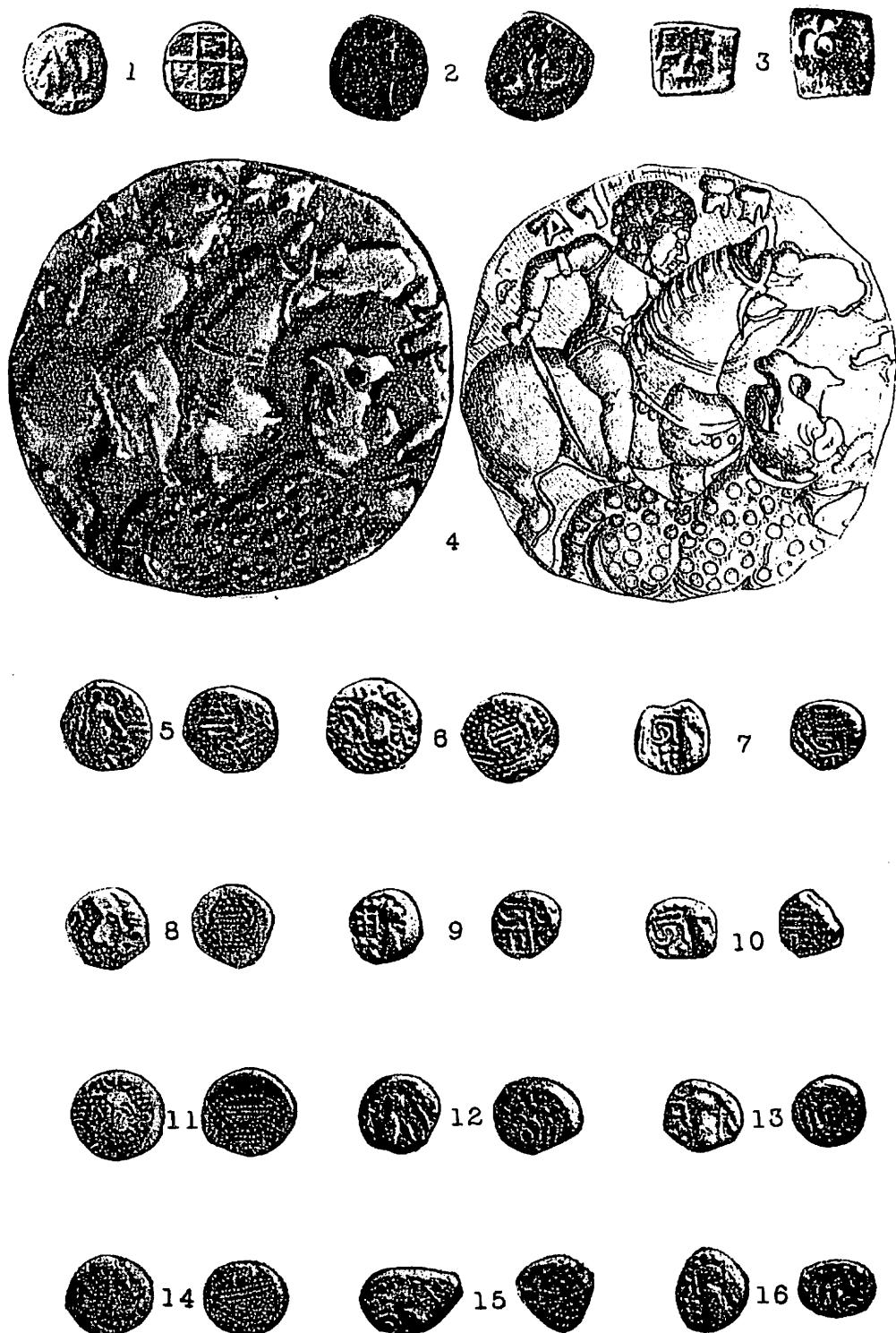
1. सम्मुण्य सावकाशेन प्रसार्यानिलसम्मुखम् ।
बले वृगभिसारेण सानायासेन सिद्धितः ॥
2. खज्जाभिसरणे शत्तः पद्मया एव सादिनः ॥
3. वरयास्तुरज्जाः शस्यन्ते यिक्षिता ये गतापते ।
वरया गुरुतो वेद्यः शुद्धशक्त्या तु सादिना ॥
4. परावृत्तो यदि भवेत्तदात्य पुरयित्वा ।
विषम्भास्तु निजाश्वस्य सादिना भाव्यमञ्चसा ॥
5. तस्याभिसारे चान्येन वेद्यो भवति गृह्णतः ।
अथवा पार्श्वतो वाणैरेद्यः श्रेष्ठवनुद्दैः ॥

Syainikāśāstram, III. 36-40.

2. D.C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, p. 256.
3. XII, 77.
4. Vidyā Prakash, *JNSI*, I, XXIII, p. 287.
5. *JNSI*, XVIII, pt. II, p. 184.

a pun (*BHC*, p. cix) on the word *khadga*. The reverse legend also, I feel, should be understood in the same context. *Śrī-mahendrakhadgaḥ* should probably be translated as 'the illustrious sword (or rhinoceros) Mahendra', and not as 'Rhinoceros (killed by) Mahendra' as done by Altekar (*BHC*, p. cviii).

But even if, for the sake of argument, Sohoni's view is accepted for a moment, some difficulties arise. First of all, if we believe that this type was issued during the *Śrāddha* of Kumāragupta's father, can we say that Kumāragupta was the only Gupta king who loved his father, or were not Samudragupta and Chandragupta II interested in obtaining permanent peace for their immediate ancestors, or were not they strong and skilful enough to hunt a rhino to fulfil the *Śrāddha* requirements; and if they performed the *Śrāddha* of their *pitrīs* and fed the Brāhmaṇas with rhino's flesh, why did they fail to issue coins of a similar content? These are some of the questions which will have to be answered before finally accepting the view of Mr. Sohoni and rejecting the *mrigayā* character of the rhinoceros-slayer type of Kumāragupta I.



Coins issued by Trader's Guilds (1-3); Rhinoceros-slayer Type of Kumāragupta (4); and Gadhia Coins (5-16)