

A SYSTEM TO ASSIST IN THE UNDERSTANDING OF COIN INSCRIPTIONS.

by

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OVERVIEW

The illustration of coins for display and research has been standard for centuries. The idea has always been to show the inscription on the coin, and if in a language foreign to the researcher, offer a translation to the common language.

In early research the coins were hand drawn and published as black and white facsimiles of the actual coin. As photography became more adept and cheaper to use and print photographs were used and the inscriptions were duly recorded in the texts.

As printing methods became cheaper again colour photographs appeared in literature but essentially the same methodology used for centuries had not changed.

There had been sporadic ideas to show inscriptions as a separate hand drawing in various colours but no consistent arrangements or translations had been offered.

THE PROBLEMS

In the formation of the numismatic research and writing team Tariq Ansari offered a fundamental solution in that the image of the coin itself could be overlaid with various colours using modern technology to show the inscription. This idea had great merit but a number of obstacles needed to be overcome for the idea to be put to practical use.

1. The organisation of colours so that different sections of the coin inscriptions being shown could be adequately differentiated and printed by modern printing methods.
2. That many hand struck coins because of the nature of production may not carry the full inscription and for researchers and collectors the full inscription was required.
3. Some inscriptions in various languages especially those with Persian/Arabic inscriptions were neglected in research and quite difficult to read and place into a context for successful translation.
4. The dating system used on the coins needed to be fully understood.

5. The use of, for example, poetic couplets on coins allowed the die makers some variance in how it was presented on the coin and these variances needed to be recorded both for collectors to accurately complete collections and researchers to understand fully certain coin series.
6. The problem with translating needed to be addressed in a more modern context where Christian coloniser's view of meanings needed to be fully reviewed and possibly corrected.

THE SOLUTION

Discussions between Tariq Ansari and Needham quickly resolved the major issues.

1. A series of colours were chosen for the major attribution details on the coins. These could be shaded in the same colour range if multiple details on the same inscription.
2. That coin illustrations be shown side by side. One with the overlay colours and the same coin as the untouched image. The problem here was described above in that many coins did not have the full details on each struck coin. This required that a number of coins were viewed to obtain the necessary data. It is noted that with some rare coins variances in inscriptions such as those with couplets have not yet been fully identified.
3. Given the language there was some largesse given to the die engraver and that real variations in presentation of the inscription should be recorded.
4. That the inscription shown in colour on the coin should be recorded on the coin illustration in the colours as inscribed on the coin.
5. That a separate section showing the inscription must also include the old version and the new translation of the inscription. Should there be a variance between authors then both ideas will be recorded.
6. That within the research work on the coins of the Indian subcontinent a simple coin series should be selected to present the first work. This would be followed by a more complex series and then another work in a different language from an earlier time period. This would cement the idea and work could return to the original series.

PROGRESS

Work was completed on the fundamental idea and a number of technical printing were completed. The coins of Shah Alam I Bahadur, the seventh Mughal emperor were chosen for the first major work.

We were fortunate to have the large nonfiction publishing house in Delhi, Manohar Publishers and Distributors offer a major publishing contract for our work.

The coins of Jahandar Shah have also been published. There has been a necessity to carry on some far-reaching research into the use and manufacture of coins in ancient and medieval times. Much of this research has been published or presented in various international lectures. Each will be the subject of later presentations.

THE SYSTEM

The fundamental presentation of the simple process when it is cohesively understood and presented shows how simple the idea is and how versatile the system is.

Shah Alam Bahadur,
Dar-ul-Sultanat Lahore Mint, AH 1121/RY 4
NT 175.3500.1.a.a.100 (M7.55)



Badshah Ghazi Shah Alam Sikkah 1121



Zarb Dar-ul-Sultanat Lahore Sanah 4 Jalus Manus Maimanat

Above is shown the standard illustration technique of colour overlay.

1. The obverse of the coin is shown as the top illustration.
2. The reverse is shown as the second illustration.

Each side has a simple colour system for the inscriptions. The major ones are:

OBVERSE.

Rulers name in **RED**.

Date of issue (hijri) in **ORANGE**.

REVERSE

Mint name in **GREEN**.

Mint epithet in **BLUE**.

Regnal year (reign year) in **PINK**.

For this simple series we have the key elements for attribution clearly shown and described. Essentially the three key elements and their colours are:

Rulers name in **RED**.

Mint name in **GREEN**.

There are of course coins that do not have the rulers name on them or the mint name etc. However, the fundamental application of the idea can be clearly seen.

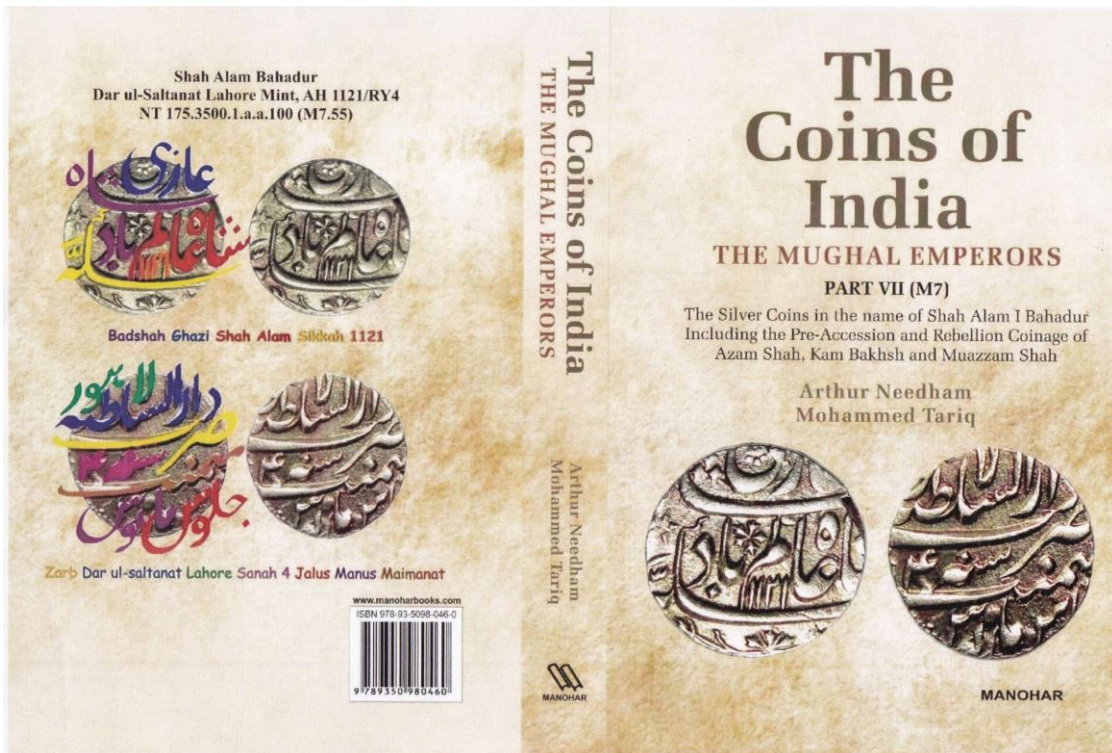
SIMPLE VARIATIONS ON A THEME

For many a series of coins by the one ruler would appear to be rather simple and the simple guide for the ruler's name is easily followed. The complexity of the calligraphy presents the researcher and collector with a number of issues. Here in this series, we have the ruler's name written as both Shah Alam and Shah Alam Bahadur. We also have a later ruler Shah Alam (II) so close attention to detail is necessary.

VII. SHAH ALAM I BAHADUR (NT 175)

قُطْب الدِّينِ مُحَمَّدٌ بَهَادُرُ شَاهِ أَوْل

Full Name	Sahib-i-Qiran-i-Mu'azzam Shah 'Alamgir Sani Abu'n Nasir Sayyid Qutb ud-din 'Abdu'l-Muzaffar Muhammad Mu'azzam Shah 'Alam Bahadur Shah I Badshah Ghazi
Birth Name	Sultan Muhammad Mu'azzam Mirza
Royal Lineage	Son of Emperor Aurangzeb
Date of Birth	30 Rajab 1053 (4 October, 1643)
Place of Birth	Burhanpur
Reign Years	1119-1124 (1707-1712)
Date of Death	21 Muharram 1124 (18 February, 1712)
Place of Death	Lahore, Pakistan
Resting Place	Moti Masjid, Delhi



As SHAH ALAM BAHADUR



Badshah Ghazi Shah Alam Bahadur Sikkah Mubarak 1120



Badshah Ghazi Shah Alam Bahadur Sikkah Mubarak 1120



Badshah Ghazi Shah Alam Bahadur Sikkah Mubarak 1121



Badshah Ghazi Shah Alam Bahadur Sikkah Mubarak 11XX



Badshah Ghazi Shah Alam Bahadur Sikkah Mubarak 1122



Badshah Ghazi Shah Alam Bahadur Sikkah Mubarak 1122



Badshah Ghazi Shah Alam Bahadur Sikkah Mubarak 1123



Badshah Ghazi Shah Alam Bahadur Sikkah Mubarak 1120



Badshah Shah Alam Bahadur Sikkah 1120



Badshah Ghazi Shah Alam Bahadur Sikkah Mubarak 1119



Badshah Ghazi Shah Alam Bahadur Sikkah Mubarak



Badshah Ghazi Shah Alam Bahadur Sikkah Mubarak 1123

As SHAH ALAM



Badshah Ghazi Shah Alam Sikkah 1119



Badshah Ghazi Shah Alam Sikkah 1120



Badshah Ghazi Shah Alam Sikkah Sanah 1119



Badshah Ghazi Shah Alam 1119



Badshah Ghazi Shah Alam Sikkah Mubarak 1123



Badshah Ghazi Shah Alam Sikkah 1120

The above demonstrates clearly by the use of the overlay system how what appears to be in English two or three simple words can be written in Persian.

It is also seen how with the careful viewing of a number of coins of the same type how illustrations show what is outside of the strike on the coin demonstrated. This assists full attribution by showing what the die actually did show on a full strike.

In later magazine editions the subject will be expanded on to show how more complex inscriptions can be easily rendered.