

# THE GRADING OF HAND STRUCK AND ANCIENT COINS

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Within coin collecting the collecting of coins is, of course, the first objective. What individuals, museums, institutions etc. decide to collect is of their personal choosing. From here we can take many highways and byways of collecting from collecting dates, empires and the many other coins that have been issued since coinage was invented. Perhaps the only singular common resolve should be that coins, once collected, should be stored correctly so that the form they reach the collector in does not deteriorate in any way.

There are a number of distinctly different methods of coin production. For the sake of brevity three types are mentioned.

1. **Cast.** Generally an old method where molds are made and the molten metal is poured into the molds. The molds might be singular or consist of many poured in a single operation. The metal sprue (the place where the molten metal has entered the mold) is then removed and the coin is ready for circulation. Some mints operating in this manner were comparatively large industrial operations for their time.
2. **Hand Struck.** The coin blanks were prepared (often on the site of the striking) and they were then struck using a die and a hammer. Uniface coins were produced where only one die was used. The most common type produced used two dies. One was generally fixed and the other was hammered onto the coin blank so that an impression was produced on both sides of the coin blank. In many instances the dies were larger than the coin blanks produced and many coins produced from dies of similar design did not include the complete die impression. A number of mints were large industrial operations for their time. In large empires many mints operated and frequently had differentiating marks on the coins to show where they were produced and in later times various dating systems were used. Various metals were struck. Gold, silver, copper and its alloys including billon (potin), tin, lead and iron were some of the metals used. The purity of precious metals within the coins was subjected to stringent control and testing. This testing, although apparently rudimentary by modern methods, was comparatively highly accurate in experienced hands and available in almost all levels of society.
3. **Machine Made.** Various forms of machinery have been used to produce coins over hundreds of years. Generally, the key difference between hand struck coins and machine-made coins is that the coin flans (blanks) of machine-made coins are consistent in size and weight and when the coins are produced the impression of the die is shown in full on the coin blank. With improved metals and hardening dies are able to make hundreds of thousands of coins per set and dies can be made practically identical from set to set. Given the consistency of the process there is a collector's market for coins that have been mis-struck in the mint. This may be due to problems with the strike (off centre for example), struck on the wrong coin blank, problems with the integrity of the metal blank, die cracks etc.

## Fundamental Differences Between Hand Struck and Machine Made Coins.

The single fundamental difference is that it is expected that machine struck coins will show the impression of the dies in their entirety while this may not be the case for hand struck coins. With hand struck coins a large number of coins produced in a series may not in fact show the full die impressions on either the obverse or reverse or both.

**Therefore, fundamentally a hand struck coin from a series that shows FULL die impressions on the obverse and reverse should be valued higher than a coin (in any condition) where die impressions are incomplete on one or both sides.**

### **Major Point**

If grading a coin does not include authentication of that coin then it is fundamentally a waste of time and money. It is essentially meaningless in the scope of collecting.

### **Other Key Points**

Within the current grading of hand struck coins there is a process that indicates the level of “perfection” of the strike. These are graded from 1-5 with 5 being the best.

There is currently (apparently) no attempt in the grading to note whether there is a full or partial strike of the die shown on the coin being graded.

### **Notes for Grading of Hand Struck Coins to Be Effective**

1. The coins must have a guarantee of authenticity.
2. If coins are incomplete in their strike on either side or both it must be duly noted as “Incomplete Strike” for each side that is incomplete.
3. Should a coin have a shroff or test mark applied then this should also be noted (as to number) but this should not be a detriment to the coin being graded.
4. An hand struck coin that is complete in strike on obverse and reverse should be valued higher than a coin in any condition that has an incomplete strike on one or both sides.

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

Coin showing clearly both dates applicable, enough of the mint and the mint epithet for certain attribution. Parts of the inscriptions missing although for the type the full attribution is clear.



Shah Alam Bahadur,

Itawa Mint, AH112X/Ry 3

NT 175.2900.1.a.a.100 (M7.42)



Badshah Ghazi Shah Alam Sikkah 112X



Zarb Itawa Sanah 3 Jalus Manus Maimanat

Coin showing part of one date missing so full attribution is not possible.



**Coin showing shroff marks (test marks) in the form of round punch marks, two on obverse and two on reverse.**

**Note:** The coin illustrations with the colour overlays showing the inscriptions are from the published works by Mohammed Tariq Ansari and Arthur Needham. They show the colour coding system developed by them from an original overlay idea by Mohammed Tariq Ansari. The alpha numeric coding system was developed in conjunction with this new initiative.

Although hand-struck coins from the sub-continent are used in this discussion, the idea is suitable for any hand struck coin series in the world.

**Note:** All our illustrations are available as artwork on archival canvas and inks.