

# THE JOY OF COLLECTING COPPER COINS

By Mohammed Tariq Ansari and Arthur Needham

Coin collecting especially on the subcontinent is often difficult for new collectors. There are so many options available on where to start from the early punchmarked coins up until the modern coins of the 21 st century. Each area has their own special place in the collecting hobby.

For early coinage the new collector experiences a number of problems and a major one is cost. The subcontinent has, from the earliest days of coin production in the world, some wonderful gold and silver coins to collect. Many collectors revel in showing off on social media wonderful and often highly expensive coins. Unfortunately for many new and especially young collectors the cost of these coins is out of reach so coin collecting is not an option.

However, coins made from copper and that includes billon (copper mixed with silver) types are still very accessible and remarkably cheap to purchase. Not only that because of the neglect by researchers over many years new finds are still possible. For example two years ago in a unattributed group lot of copper coins in a major auction Mohammed Tariq Ansari discovered a new coin type (based on weight) for a major Sultanat issue.

Starting a coin collection correctly can also be a major cost.

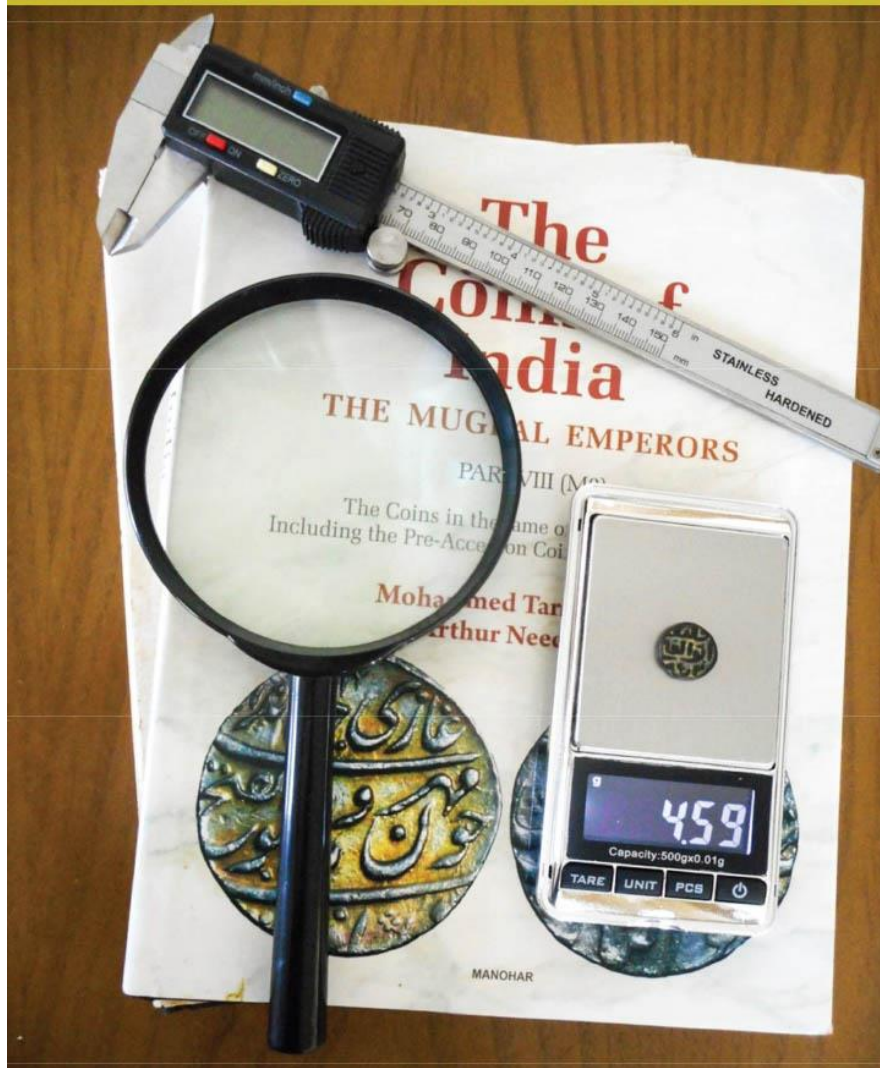
1. Research books to understand what we found or purchased to check attribution.
2. Scales to weigh the coin. To be a coin it must fit into a system and this is called metrology. Fundamentaly it is metal type, weight and size.
3. Ruler or similar to measure size.
4. Magnifying glass.
5. Correct storage system for the coins.

Even in these modern times the expense for most copper coins is not large.

1. Research books: Thankfully for new collections we have a cheap and very good work available. W.H. Valentine The Copper Coins of India Parts I and II published in 1914. This wonderful work is available in very cheap reprint hard copy and free download because it is out of copyright. This is the starting publication.
2. Scales: Electronic scales that are very accurate are available to .01 gram are available from popular online sales sites.
3. Ruler: A standard ruler is fine to start with but a set of electronic calipers is the next step. The source is the same as the scales.
4. Magnifying Glass: For beginners no higher than 4X is required.
5. Storage System: This can come later but needs to be specialised for coins.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF NUMISMATICS THE FUNDAMENTALS

Arthur Needham  
Mohammed Tariq Ansari



*The equipment for the specialist collector of coins of Jahandar Shah including the specialised book and the textbook/handbook for the postgraduate course in numismatics at Shri Ram College. The coin being weighed is from the Jaunpur Sultanat.*

So with this equipment a new collector may start on the wonderful journey of real discovery. To increase knowledge there are now great resources available on the internet. The joining of professionally run social media sites can help expand knowledge.

Joining a local coin club and visiting exhibitions is a fine start to collecting. But simply learning about the collecting coins of your choice is the first step.

## THE BEST COINS TO COLLECT

In collecting copper coins that are hand struck (before the introduction of machine made perfectly struck coins) the size of the coin flan (the blank piece of metal that the coin is made from) is often smaller than the coin dies. A decision must be made if “pretty” coins that, perhaps, cannot be fully attributed or coins that can be fully attributed with all attribution details fully shown will be collected.

Our perfect coin can be fully attributed from what is seen on the coin. Sometimes these may not be as “pretty” as some coins with important parts of attribution missing but we are looking at full attribution rather than prettiness because we are real collectors.

In fact many hand struck coins of all metals are termed “common” because there are many of them but in reality very few from some rulers and mints can be clearly fully attributed without some guess work. A classic example of this is the Akbar dam from the mint of Narnol. A very common coin but not common if all the attribution details are looked for on any single example.

## COLLECTING THEMES

Collecting themes are many and varied

1. Different sizes.
2. Different dynasties.
3. Different rulers.
4. Different mints

to name just a few. There are even times where the same mint has different types available for the same coin size and the same ruler. So collecting becomes an astonishing journey on a budget.

In a short space of time a collector can be an expert in a chosen field and move from a collector to being a genuine numismatist. From there they can add to the knowledge base currently available. Copper coins from the subcontinent have been under researched and in a number of areas almost totally ignored.

This problem is a sad indictment on the coinage of the common person (together with humble money such as cowrie shells) and requires new blood in research. For collectors as shown above the fields for collecting can be as broad as wished or narrowed down to be highly selective that makes searching for the required coins and adventure in itself where studied knowledge gives the collector a great advantage.

So, for new collectors wishing to start collecting the coins of the greater subcontinent the adventure can start with the humble copper coin. Astute collectors often never leave this field and their collections are a marvel to view.

**JAHANDAR SHAH**

**SURAT**

**AH 1124/RY 1**

**NT 185.5060.11.a.a.750 One and a Half Paisa (M8.139)**



**Falus Badshah Jahandar Shah 1124**



**Zarb Surat Sanah Ahad Jalus**

Above is the illustration of a copper coin illustrated in the style developed from a suggestion by Mohammed Tariq Ansari and jointly worked on with Arthur Needham to complete the full colour coding now available for all coins (copyright). The illustration is from one of our books published by Manohar of Delhi.

Here all the sections of attribution can be easily seen. A prime coin for collection.

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