

Beginning of the Indian Coinage from the Sixth Century B.C. to the Indo-Greeks

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Abstract

Coin collection and its study-numismatics, existed even in ancient time. The Roman emperor Caesar Augustus (Born: 63 B.C.- Died: 14 A.D.) used to gift ancient coins to his near ones. The minting of coins derived its origin in Lydia, presently in the western part of Turkey in and around 600 B.C. Lydian coins were electrum coins. Our India did not lag far behind, around 500 B.C, Indian states-16 Janapadas were able to develop complete minting as the expression of sovereignty. Indian Coins-Karshapanas-were in Silver and copper respectively. Abstract India got united under the Magadhan initiative and the All India concept became concrete under the Mauryas, who excelled on karshapan coin legacy. The Indo-Greeks, the Indo-Scythian and the Indo-Parthian model and artistry of coin edged India past in the world of coins. The image of the male or female sovereign, city goddess, occidental dress code, horse riding, the inscriptions in both Greek and Khorostri scripts added glamour to this oriental coinage. None fails to watch that the Indo-Scythian king Azes-I founded in 58 B.C. “Azes Era”, which coincides with Vikram Era in India.

Numismatics, the collection and the study of coins, may have possibly existed in ancient times. Even Caesar Augustus gave others “coins of every device” as gifts. Petrarch, the first Renaissance coin collector, gifted a Roman coin to Emperor Charles IV in 1355. The first book on coin was “De Asse et Partibus”, written by Guillaume Bude in 1514. Famous coin collectors include Pope Boniface VIII, Emperor Maximilian of the Holy Roman Empire, Louise XIV of France, Ferdinand— I and Henry IV of France to name only a few. This hobby of coin collection is therefore called the “hobby of king”.

The coin was first devised in ancient Lydia, presently located in the western part of Turkey in and around 600 B.C. These coins bore the Greek legend “fanes emi sema” meaning “I am the portrait of fanes”. Fanes was a responsible person, associated with minting. Moreover, some coins bore the inscription of the Lydian king Allyatteser (610 B.C-561 B.C) during the regime of Gyges (687 B.C to 652 B.C), Lydia graduated herself to an empire and during this period, minting coins was widespread. The metal of coinage was electrum.

From this Lydian invention, the minting of coinage made inroads to Greece and Persia. The Achaemenid emperor, Darius-I (522 B.C-486 B.C), following the imitation of the coins of

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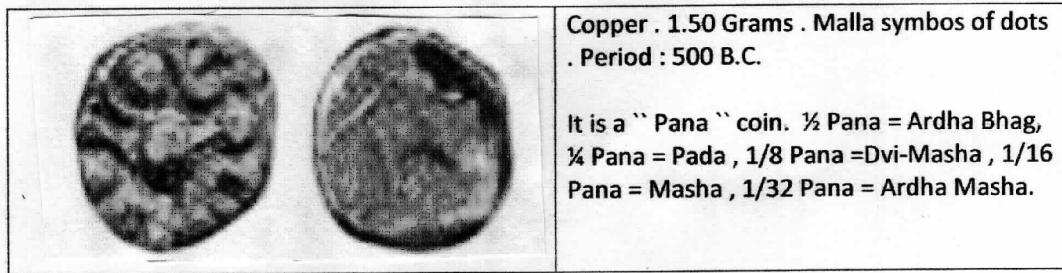
Lydian king Crekus, issued gold coins for the first time in Persia, which was known, after his own name “Doric”

Around 500 B.C., in the lower Ganges Valley of eastern India and in the north-western India, a coin called a punch marked “Karshapana” was devised and put into circulation. In course of time, all janapadas as well as in sixteen Mahajanapadas, minted money became the standard expression of sovereignty.¹

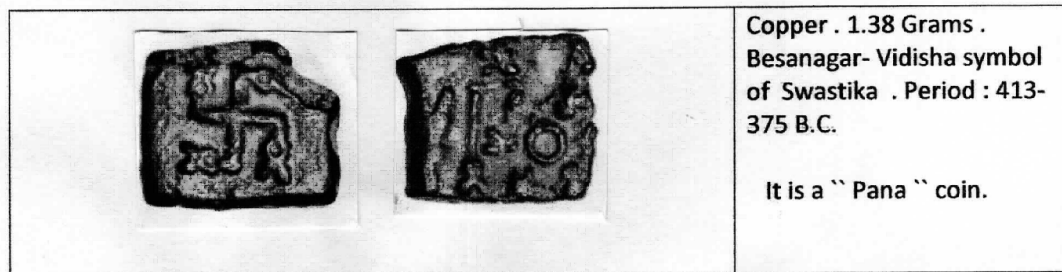


Coins in Janapadas and Mahajanadas

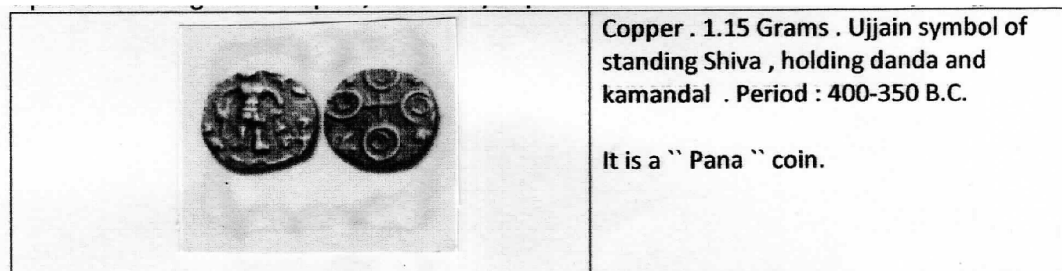
Malla was a Mahajanapada in the sixteen mahajaapada era (500-350 B.c.). This Mahajanapada-Malla, was a republic with two capitals—Padrauna and Kasia, both in Kushinagar, where Gautam Buddha attained parinirvana. Also Pava was located in this Mahajanapada, where Mahavir died. The annexation of Malla with the Magadhan empire began with the rule of Haryanka dynasty, first with Bimbisara (543-492 B.C.) and then with Ajatasatru (429-460 B.C.), who was the contemporary of both Mahavir and Gautam Buddha.



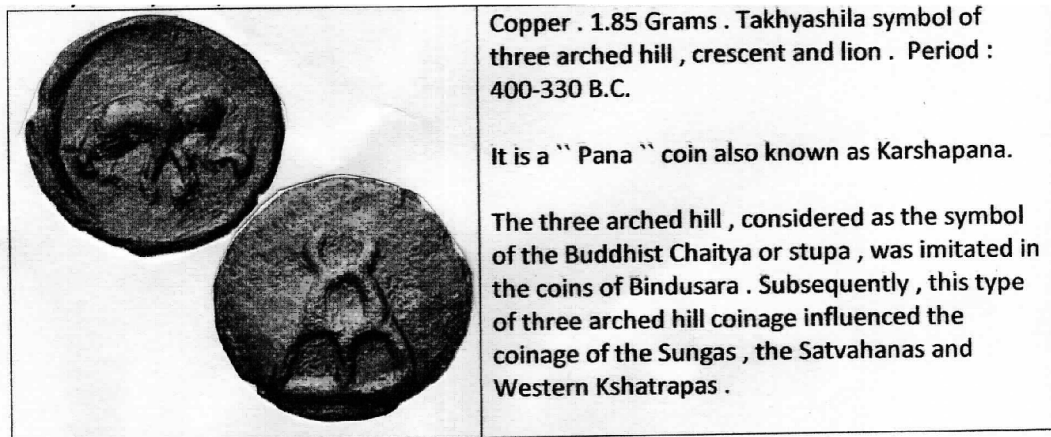
Vidisha was Janapada in Avantika Mahajanapada in the sixth century B.C., which in later days, became a part of the Magadhan Empire during the reign of Shishunaga dynasty (423-345 B.C.). Vidisha was famous in the ancient Indian history as Heliodorous, an ambassador of the Indo-Greek King Antialkidas (115-95 B.C) was sent to the court of Bhagbhadra, aking of Vidisha. Heliodorous erected a pillar at Vidisha in 113 B.C. in the praise of Garuda.



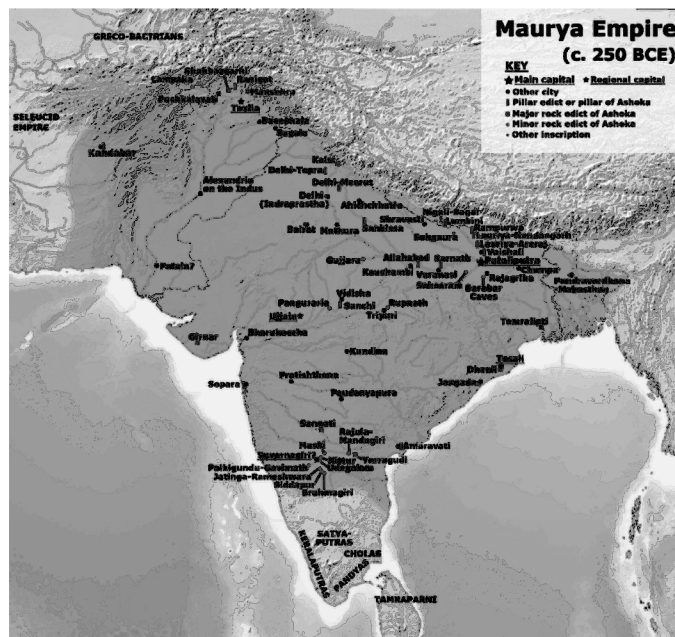
Ujjain was a janapada in Avantika Mahajanapada in the sixth century B.C. which became later a part of the Magadhan Empire, the Mauryan prince Ashoke was onec the viceroy of Ujjain.

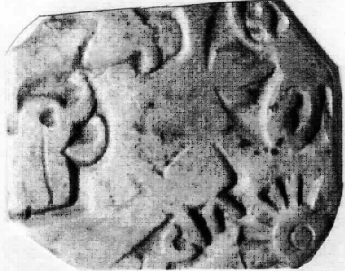
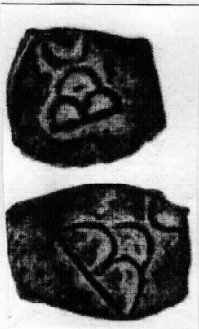



Takhyashila was a janapada in Gandhara Mahajanapada in the sixteen Mahajanapada eras. Its king Ambhi submitted to Alexander in 327 B.C. Chandragupta Maurya made it a part of the Mauryan Empire by defeating Seleucus Nicator in 305-303 B.C.



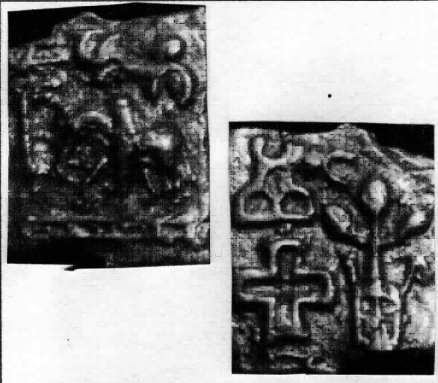
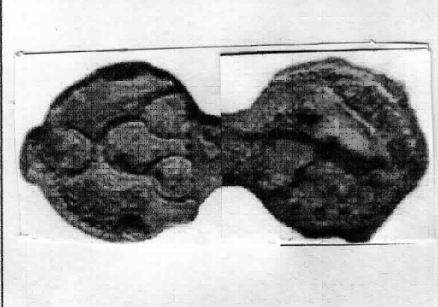
The Mauryan coinage was modelled on the native janapada and majanapada coins with some variants in symbols. Kautilya advocated the theory of bimetallism for the Mauryan coinage, which involved the use of two metals—copper and silver, under the same administration.² The centralized Government of the Mauryan India opened workshops and made arrangements for providing jobs to ladies of respectable families, which needed small denomination of coins, which were in copper.³



	<p>CHANDRAGUPTA MAURYA (322 – 297 B.C)</p> <p>Silver . 2.96 - 3.79 Grams .</p> <p>It is a `` Pana `` coin also known as Karshapana.</p> <p>The crown Prince had the salary of 4,000 Panas per month.</p>
	<p>BINDUSARA (297- 272 B.C)</p> <p>Copper .3.5 Grams.</p> <p>It is a Copper Mashika coin. 15 Mashikas = 1 Silver Karshapana. ¼ Mashika = 1 Kakani.</p> <p>The daily wage of a labourer was 1½ Mashika , if not supplemented by food , and with food , it was 2/3 Mashika. Again the monthly wages of a labourer was 1¼ Karshapana. (4)</p>
	<p>ASHOKE (272 – 232 B.C)</p> <p>Silver . 2.96 – 3.78 Grams .</p> <p>It is a `` Pana `` coin also known as Karshapana.</p> <p>The Chief Senapati had the salary of 4,000 Panas per month.</p>

Coins of the Sungas

The last Mauryan king was Brihadrath (187-180 B.C.), who was assassinated by Pushyamitra Sunga during the army review. Pushyamitra Sunga founded the Sunga dynasty and reigned from 185 B.C to 149 B.C. He was succeeded by his son Agnimitra, who is immortalized in Kalidas's drama — alabika Agnimitram. The last Sunga king was Devahuti, who was assassinated by his Minister Basudev Kanva in 73 B.C., who founded in Kanva denasty or rule for a short period.

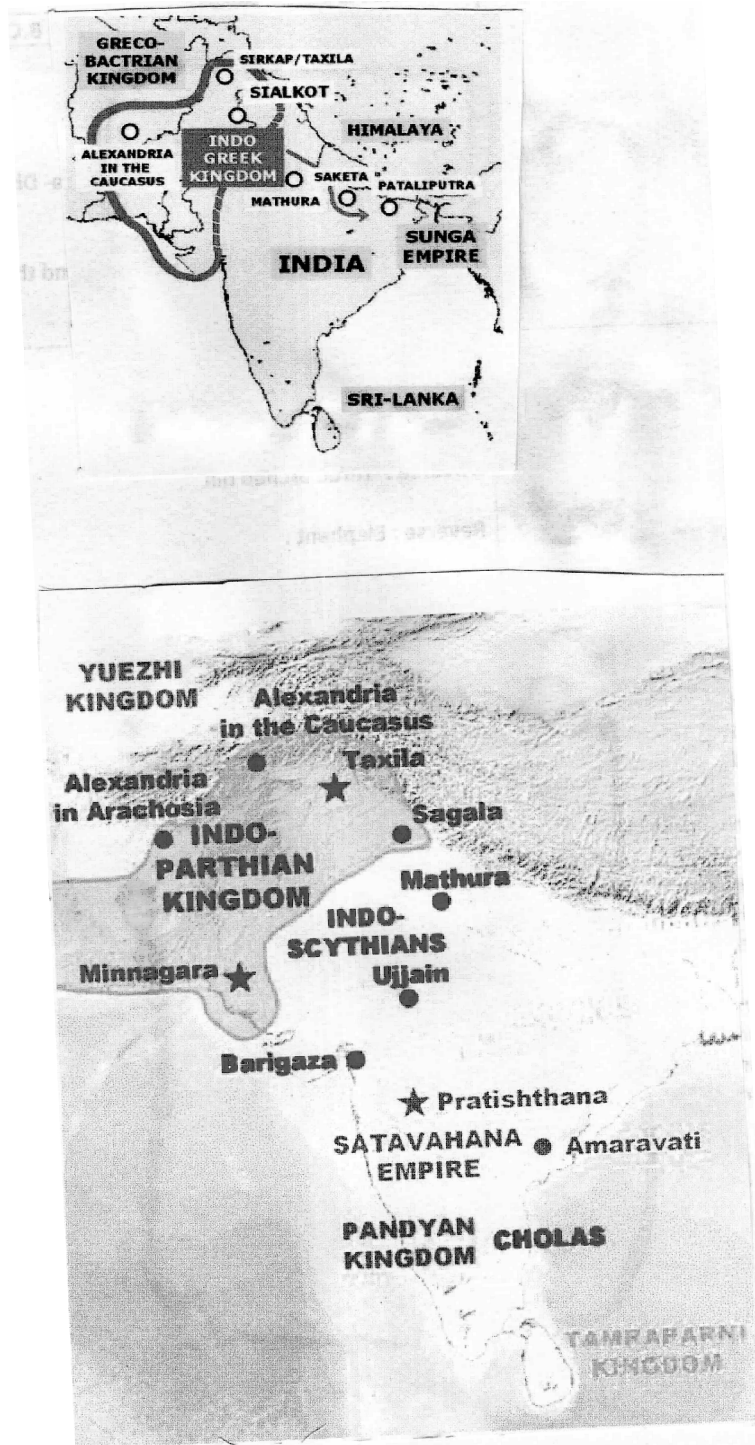
	<p align="center">PUSHYAMITRA SUNGA (185 – 149 B.C)</p> <p>Bronze . 2 – 3 Grams .</p> <p>It is a half- Karshapana coin.</p> <p>Obverse : Elephant to left facing an Indra- Dhvaja , (a triangle headed standard).</p> <p>Reverse : Tree-in-railing , Hollow Cross and three arched hill .</p>
	<p>Bronze . 2 – 3 Grams .</p> <p>It is a quarter - Karshapana coin.</p> <p>Obverse : Three arched hill</p> <p>Reverse : Elephant .</p>



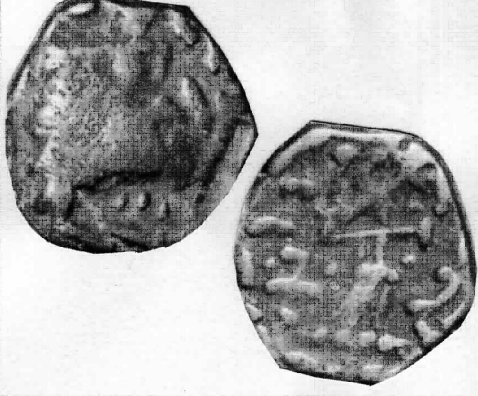
Coins of the Indo-Greeks

The Indo-Greek kingdom was founded when Graeco-Bactrian king Demetrious invaded the sub-continent from Bactria early in 200 B.C. Menander was succeeded by his wife AGATHOKLEIN, who ruled on behalf of her son, Strato-I. About these Indo-Greeks, coin is the only source for information.

The Indo-Scythian dynasty, also known as the Sakas, coming from Central Asia and Iran, at the outset of the Christian era, ended the rule of the Indo-Greeks. This Indo-Scythian's ruler Azes-I founded in 58 B.C. "Azes Era", which coincides with the Vikram Era in India. Azilises, the son of Azes-I, ruled in the parts of India in 57-35 B.C. This Indo-Scythian dynasty, also known as the Sakas, was destroyed by the Kushans.

The Indo-Parthian Gondopharid dynasty came to India from Central Asia and Iran before 1st century A.D. Gondophares-I ruled from 19-46 A.D. Saint Thomas, apostle to India, took voyage to India in 30 A.D, following the crucification of Jesus Christ and met Gondophares-I in Takhyashila in circa 40 A.D.



	<p>INDO-GREEK : MENANDER (155 – 130 B.C)</p> <p>Silver . 1.65 Grams . Drachma.</p> <p>Obverse : (in Greek) BASILEOS DIKAIΟΥ MENANDRIOU – Of king Menander , the just. Bare headed king , diademed bust of the king.</p> <p>Reverse : (In Khorostri) Maharajasa Dhramikasa – Menandrasa , Winged Nike right , holding palm and conferring diadem with her right hand.</p>
	<p>INDO-SCYTHIAN : AZILISES (57 - 35 B.C)</p> <p>Copper . 9.64 Grams. Copper Drachma.</p> <p>Obverse : (in Greek) BASILEOS BASILIEON MAGALOY AZOY – the king king , the king of kings , the great Azilises . Azilises is mounted on the horse right , wearing a tunic holding spear.</p> <p>Reverse : (In Khorostri) Maharajasa Mahatasa Ayilishasa , the city goddess is standing left , holding lamp and palm.</p>
	<p>INDO- PARTHIAN : GONDOPHARES-I (20 – 50 A.D)</p> <p>Silver . 1.65 Grams . Copper Drachma.</p> <p>Obverse : Gondophares –I wears a headband , errings , a neckless and an across jacket with round decorations.</p> <p>Reverse : Pallas , the other name of Athena (the epithet is Pallas Athena) standing right with thunderbolt and shield , Khorashtri letters around.</p>

Lessons from these coins

From the punch marked coins, revelations are, the metallurgy was a well-developed study by then, the purity of the coin metal was superb, smelting technology and skill of the metal workers reached a height, the artistry on the coin was a breakthrough. The Maurya coins were the full

descriptions of subtle artistries of Indian nature. The Sunga coins were the parade of furtherance of Indian coin technology. The Indo-Greek, Indo-Scythian and Indo-Parthian coins show Indian dice makers were competent to prepare dice for both Greek and Khorostri Scripts. European dress codes, winged Nike, City goddess, rushing horse with king mounted with a lance and subtle palm leaves.⁵

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