

The Post Kushans 'Kota' Coins Found From North West India

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A large number of post Kushana copper coins found in various parts of northwest India bearing the monogram-Kota, present one of the most controversial coins series of Ancient India. This series have composite Brahmi letters Kota, Ghuta or Shuta, Kpa, Bala, Rudra etc. on its obverse and are called Kota coins after the symbol  which can be deemed to represent composite Brahmi letter. These coins have commonly on the obverse the symbol while on the reverse there is Siva and nandi. Another main variety have the symbol  which can be read as Brahmi legend thakapa or Chakra with Kpa. Cunningham¹ has described such coins and identified the monogram as "rude fire altar". He described the coins with the symbol  as another variety of such coins with rude fire altar with attendant and wheel to the right² How he was able to see fire altar with attendant out of this device is beyond our imagination but scholars have followed his words without questioning their validity. On yet another coin he could identify rude fire altar with an attendant on each side.³ But in fact the monogram Kota is flanked by a flower with stalk on the right side and suchi or Varja on the left side. Some of the coins have flower with stalk on both the sides.⁴ According to Cunningham many of these coins bear single letters or names in early medieval letters. One has the name of Rudra and a second had syllable tri, which may be the first syllable of a well known name if Siva.⁵ Regarding the date of these coins, scholars have divergent views. Cunningham has placed these coins in the period A.D. 500-800.⁶ Smith also echoed the same sentiments by literally reproducing his view.⁷ Handa places these coins in the period A.D.530-580.⁸ While P.C. Roy assigns them to 11th-14th Century A.D.⁹

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But all these theories are merely guess-work without any basis. In order to date these coins we shall have to study the devices found on them and shall have to correctly identify these devices unlike Cunningham.

We shall also have to take into account their stratigraphic positions as obtained during various excavations. The common devices found on these coins are Siva and bull on the reverse which clearly show the derivation from the late Kushana Coins. Hence these coins can be assigned to the period immediately succeeding them. From Sanghol these coins were found in the layer overlying the layers which yielded Vasudeva II type coins. Similarly from Sunet also same stratigraphy is available.¹⁰ More recently, at Mandoli (Delhi) similar coins were found after the Vasudeva II (Vasudeva III of our scheme) type coins. On the basis of these evidences we can safely place the beginning of these coins to 3rd-4th century A.D.¹¹ Ashvini Aggarwal on the Basis of palaeography assigned similar date of these coins.¹² Those coins remained in circulation long after their issuer and some such coins are found re-struck on the Huna coins.¹³

The issuers of these coins struck their devices on earlier coins and some coins still have the remnants of earlier devices.¹⁴ Sometimes an extra metal patch was also cold shouldered to the smaller coins in order to confirm it to the desired weight.¹⁵ Similar technique was also employed by the Yaudheyas during their initial, minting of Yaudheya Ganasya Jaya type coins.¹⁶ The Kota type of coins were re-struck on either Late Kushana Coins or Huna coins. They even used smaller coins like those of Indo-Parthians which are smaller and lighter.¹⁷ Sometimes the Kota type of coins were re-struck by the devices of Kpa type or vice-versa.¹⁸ A coin was found to be even a triple-struck one.¹⁹

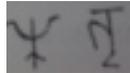
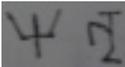
Cunningham has identified the monogram Kota with rude fire altar with or without attendant. Smith also saw some of the reverse devices of these coins to be an echo of the Sassanian type.²⁰ Lallanji Gopal also attributes these coins to Indo-Sassanian series with slight modifications.²¹ Scholars have even tried to attribute these coins to the Kota-Kula mentioned in the Allahabad inscription.²² P.L. Gupta denied the identify of Kota-Kula of the inscription with Kota of the coins.²³ K.K. Maheshwari pleads that scholars should reconsider the identity of the two and not unlikely, they might be one and the same.²⁴

Manmohan Kumar have collected quite a few such coins from Ambala, Panchkulaa, Yamuna-Nagar, Kaithal and Kurukshetra districts of Haryana, and discussed them under the heading 'Kota coins' without attributing them to any dynasty with the possibility that these coins formed the standard currency after the all of the Yaudheyas. He has postulated that mahasenapati or Mahakshtrapa, etc. are the titles adopted by the Yaudheyas as is evident from the discovery of their seals and sealings. His views sound quite convincing though some more information is required. Secondly there is another objection to his attribution that the issuers either give their names such Mahakshtrapa Balavarma etc. or Shorter forms of the name such as Mahakshtrapa Balavarm i.e. Bala, Shorter forms of the

name is Rudra, Shuta, Isvara etc. found on the coins can be the initials of Yaudheys Chieftains. But we have no epigraphically or other evidence to support his theory that Yadudheyas were allowed to rule their dominion even after the defeat. Though he had general policy of rehabilitating the defeated kings.

So Called Kota Coins



- Type 1  :: Siva with Nandi
Walking to left
- Shape : Irregular Size:
- Weight : 3.0 gms Provenance: Jind region
- Obverse : Inside the border of dots ornamental trident with damru or parsu on the shaft and Brahmi bhri on the right half in between the two on the upper half crescent with dot.
- Reverse : Inside the dotted border Siva standing in the foreground a bull which is is Walking to left. Some parts of the devices run out of flan but the right hand of Siva is visible and is bent and upraised.
- Type 2  :: Swastika
- Shape : Irregular Size: N.A.
- Weight : 2.7gms Provenance: N.A.
- Obverse : Trident of the left and world bhri to right
- Reverse : Inside the dotted border a bold Swastika.

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