

***Jalla Jalaluhu* on the Coins of Panchbibi in the Mahasthan Museum**

A Numismatic Appraisal

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Introduction

OF all the Mughal emperors of Hindustan i.e. Indian sub-continent the *Jalla Jalaluhu* coins of emperor Jalal al-Din Muhammad Akbar considered a novel innovation created a sort of numismatic complexity and historical controversy regarding his attitude towards religio-political settings of the time. Perhaps his *sulhi kul* theory thrust him to issue the coins with the legend of *Allahu Akbar Jalla Jalaluhu* (الله أكبر جل جلاله) in A.H. 992/1584 C.E. to let the people know about the change that took place in the statecraft. It needs to be discussed vertically later in the proper place. However, fortunately we have traced the *Jalla Jalaluhu* coin-hoard of Panchbibi which are now preserved in the archaeological Museum of Mahasthan, Bogra. Possibly in the month of February 2011 from the precincts of a dilapidated architectural edifice of a nearby village of Panchbibi Police Station in Jaipurhat district with the spade of a farmer came out a smallest earthen pot containing twenty eight dumpy, but tiny silver coins with Perso-Arabic scripts. These are not understandable to the commoners. However, the police of Panchbibi took the hoard to their custody first and later on at the joint venture of journalist Hasibur Rahman Bilu, the senior reporter of Daily Star and Nahid Sultana, a former student of mine and the Custodian of Mahasthan Museum the hoard was brought and enlisted to the Museum's collections. Nahid Sultana sent me the photographs of the coins with request to their identification and, on decipherment, I reported that the coins belong to the *Jalla Jalaluhu* series of Akbar's Ilahi coins. However, for in-depth study at the later part of March 2011 I personally visited the Museum and deciphered each and every coin with all their paraphernalia and probable implications. It came to my mind instantly that I should write a paper on his hoard

preparing a catalogue of the coins in a methodical way with all necessary comments and annotations. Now I have got the opportunity of presenting this paper to the International Seminar organized by the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, Dhaka. I thank Nahid Sultana, the Custodian of Mahasthan Museum for her cooperation and the Asiatic Society for honouring me to present the paper on the occasion of Diamond Jubilee Celebration of the Society.

Backdrop

The coins as tiny archaeological units contain in their legends and symbols such untraced materials that may either bridge the gap in or to facilitate to probe into some undecided facts of history.¹ The oriental and occidental coin-legends of the Muslim dynastic rules were inscribed in Arabic or Persian as the case might be since the origination of true Muslim coins at the hands of Abdul Malik b. Marwan (685-705), the Umayyad Caliph.² The issuance of the coins is considered to be the vital insignia included into the prerogatives of the dynastic rulers of the Muslim world till its discontinuity with the circulation of currency notes in modern times.³ Though primarily the coins of the Muslim rulers were being struck as metallic units of monetary transaction, but they had great inherent value of message communication. An in-depth search into the coin-legends will bear witness to this point.

The Persianized Turks of Central Asia with rich cultural heritage entered this sub-continent as conquerors and established permanently the Muslim rule at Delhi in the beginning of the 13th century. Thenceforth, the Muslim rule consisting of the Sultanate period and Mughal period continued over this land till the year 1858 (though theoretically after the Plassey disaster of 1757) when the British crown took over the power with the banishment of Bahadur Shah II, the last scion of the Mughal dynasty to Rangoon. Pertinently it is to be mentioned here that the rulers of Delhi Sultanate struck their coins (of gold, silver and copper) in the Transxoian style of their predecessor in legends and fabrics though at the early phase some indigenous elements were found to be inscribed along with their main formula.⁴ With the overthrow of the Lodi dynasty in 1526 Zahir al-Din Muhammad Babar captured the power and founded the Mughal dynasty in this sub-continent.

Changes were gradually brought in the hierarchical and other aspects of administrative set-up. But as a descendant of Turk-Mongal blood he did not shun all Transoxian traditions from his state-policies instantly, rather some of his predecessors' policies were retained with their original shape. The issuance of coins followed this track.

A study of the coin-catalogues shows that the Mughal emperors of this sub-continent struck their coins in broad and thin fabric of gold, silver and copper in imitation of their Transoxian Timurid predecessors (1370-1499). From the time of Babar upto the promulgation of *Din-i-Ilahi* by Akbar in A.H. 992/1584 C.E. (in another version A.H. 991/1583 C.E.) the Mughal coins followed the Transoxian model in fabric and other characteristics.⁵ This may be termed as the first stage in the numismatic history of the Mughals. In this stage Arabic was the language of coin-legends like the central Asian heritage. During this period the emperors inscribed the *kalimah* on the obverse in the middle along with the name of four pious caliphs in the margin and on the reverse the emperor's title of *al-Sultan al-A'zam al-Khaqan al-Mukarram* (رمکن الم خاقامظ الاعالسلطان) - the exalted Sultan and the honoured Khaqan- in the Transoxian style along with their name and the benedictory formula of *Khalla dallahu mulkahu wa sultanahu* (خلد الله) - (ملكه وسلطانه) - may Allah perpetuate his kingdom and power.⁶ But the promulgation of *Din-i-Ilahi* on the basis of *sulhi kul* emboldened Akbar (1556-1605) to eliminate all previous legends including the *kalimah* and the name of four pious caliphs from the coins, and the Ilahi-legend of *Allahu Akbar Jalla Jalalahu* (الله اكبر جل جلاله) and the Persian months occupied the obverse and reverse of the coins.⁷ This Ilahi type of coins continued till the death of Akbar in 1605 for twenty-one years and was not followed by any of his successors.

Pertinently it is to be mentioned here that Akbar at the advice of his counselors like Abul Fazl Allami, Birbal and TodarMal returned to the solar system of ancient Persian calendar in the reconing of the year forsaking the lunar system and the hijrah-reconing.⁸ This is why one of the following ancient Persian months in succession was inscribed in his Ilahi coin at the time of minting. The twelve solar

months are Farwardin, Ardibihist, Khurdad, Tir, Mardad, Shahriwar, Mihr, Aban, Azur, Dai, Bahman and Isfandarmiz.⁹ Concurrently it is to be pointed out for clear understanding of *Din-i-Ilahi* and *Ilahi* coin that though *Din-i-Ilahi* was promulgated in A.H. 992/1584 C.E.,¹⁰ but its effect was given in retrospect from the year of Akbar's accession to the throne in A.H. 963/1556 C.E. while the *Ilahi* coin was issued with 28 *Ilahi* year in A.H. 991/1583 C.E. Thus starting with 28 *Ilahi* year this *Ilahi* coin ended in 50 *Ilahi* year with the death of Akbar in A.H. 1013/1605 C.E. To be more specific and clear of Akbar's *Ilahi* years from the 28th to the 50th with the corresponding Hijrah and Christian years are given in the following chart.¹¹

Ilahi		A.H.	C.E.
28	began	991 (28 Safar)	1583 (11 March)
29	„	992 (8 Rabi I)	1584
30	„	993 (19 „)	1585
31	„	994 (29 „)	1586
32	„	995 (11 Rabi II)	1587
33	„	996 (22 „)	1588
34	„	997 (4 Jamadi I)	1589
35	„	998 (14 „ „)	1590
36	„	999 (24 „ „)	1591
37	„	1000 (5 Jamadi II)	1592
38	„	1001 (17 „ „)	1593
39	„	1002 (28 „ „)	1594
40	„	1003 (9 Rajab)	1595
41	„	1004 (20 „)	1596
42	„	1005 (2 Shaban)	1597
43	„	1006 (13 „)	1598
44	„	1007 (23 „)	1599
45	„	1008 (4 Ramazan)	1600
46	„	1009 (15 „)	1601
47	„	1010 (26 „)	1602
48	„	1011 (6 Shawwal)	1603
49	„	1012 (17 „ „)	1604
50	„	1013 (28 „ „)	1605

Description and Decipherment

In the light of this short observation the coins of Panchbibbi hoard in the Mahasthan Museum the number being twenty-eight of the metal 'silver' with dumpy fabric are deciphered and catalogued in the following.

SL.No	Mint	Year : month	Obverse	Reverse
1	Ahmadabad	30 (993) Aban	الله أكبر لله جل Tr. Allah is Great. His greatness be exalted.	آبان الہی 30 احمد اباد Tr. Aban Ilahi-30 Ahmadabad.
2	Ahmadabad	46 (1009)	The legend is same with that of No.1	Same as No. 1 except Din in place of Aban and 46 in place of 30.
3	Ahmadabad	31 (994) Khurdad	Same as No.1	Same as No.1 except Khurdad in place of Aban and 31 in place of 30.
4	Ahmadabad	40 (1003) Azur	Same as No.1	Same as No.1 except Azur in Place of Aban and 40 in place of 30.
5	Agra	Mihr	الکبر شن شاه جهان والدين Tr. Akbar Lord of the lords of world and religion.	الہی ماہ مہر ضرب اکرہ Tr. The Alahi month Mihr, struck in Agra.
6	Ahmadabad	41 (1005) Bahman	Same as No.1	Same as No.1 except Bahman in place of Aban and 41 in place of 30.
7	„	41 (1005) Tir	Same as No.1 Foiled <i>Mihrabi</i>	Same as No.1 except Tir in place of Aban and 41 in place of 30.
8	„	Farwardin	Same as No.1 <i>Mihrabi</i>	Same as No.1 except Farwardin.
9	„	41 (1005) Azur	Same as No.1	آذر الہی ضرب 41 احمد اباد Tr. Ilahi month Azur 41 struck in Ahmadabad.
10	„	41 (1005) Isfandarmiz	Same as No.9	Same as No.9 except Isfandarmiz in place of Azur.
11	„	46 (1009) Azur	Same as No. 10	Same as No.9 except the date 46 in place of 41.
12	„	41 (1005) Isfandarmiz	Same as No.2	Same as No.10

13	„	Dai	Same as No.12	Same as No.12 except Dai in place of Isfandarmiz.
14	„	41 (1005) Azur	„	Same as No.12 except Azur in place of Dai.
15	„		„	Partially deciphered Ahmadabad
16	Agra		„	Partially deciphered Ilahi-Agra.
17	Not readable	Azur	„	Partially deciphered Ilahi month Azur.
18	Ahmadabad	41 (1005) Mihir	„	Same as No.14 excepty Mihir in place of Azur.
19	Lahore	47 (1010) Mihir	„	Same as above except Lahore in place of Ahmadabad.
20	„	47 (1010) Dai	„	Same as above except Dai in place of Mihir.
21	„	„	„	„
22	-	Bahman	Same as coin No.5	ماه بھمن الہی not readable Tr. Struck in the month Bahman.
23	-	Tir	Same as coin No.22	ماه تير الہی not readable Tr. Struck in the month Tir.
24	-	Tir	Same as coin No.23	Same as coin No.23.
25	Nakar ?	Mardad	„	Same as coin No.24 except Mardad in place of Tir.
26	Jahangir Nagar ?	Aban	Same as coin No.24	ماه ابان الہی رکضرب جہانگیر Tr. month Aban Ilahi year. Struck at Jahangir Nagar?
27	„	Ardibihist	Same as coin No.24	„ except Ardibihist in place of Aban.
28	On both the obverse and reverse sides of this coin are inscribed the Persian distichs which could not be deciphered due to the hazy inscribed scripts and the fabric.			

Historical Derivates

First, the issuance of *Ilahi* coin created a sort of numismatic complexity as well historical controversy regarding emperor Akbar's stand towards new religious

conviction and political reformations. As soon as the *Din-i-Ilahi* was promulgated in 1583/1584 it was ventilated to the public - notice with the issuance of coins having the *Ilahi* legend.¹² This step led him to melt down all the previous Mughal coins with the traditional religious legends of the Sunnite Islam and convert them into new coin - form with *Ilahi* legend. This change created commotion among the subject people especially the Muslims and hit on their sublime sentiments. Though apparent abhorrence could not be shown during his reign but its instant discontinuance by his son and successor Jahangir testifies to the fact that the subject people particularly the Muslims resented to Akbar's *Din-i-Ilahi* and the *Ilahi* coins.¹³ Moreover, on the basis of *sulhi kul* the abolition of poll tax and land tax (*kharaj*) from the non-Muslims at large happened to cause the fall of revenue in the exchequer of the state. Secondly, the coin-catalogue shows that Zahir al-Din Muhammad Babar (1526-1530), the founder of the Mughal dynasty struck coins inscribing the *kalimah* and the name of the four pious caliphs with their attributory titles on the obverse, and on the reverse his full name and title as *as-Sultan al-Azam al-Khaqan al-Mukarram* Zahir al-Din Muhammad Babar with the addition of *Padshah Ghazi* in some issues of the coins.¹⁴ These coin-legends on both obverse and reverse ventilates his viewpoints of Sunnite Islam as the coins of his Transoxian predecessors focused on this point.

Nasir al-Din Muhammad Humayun (1530-1556), son and successor of Babar followed the track of his father in the issuance of the coins both in legends and fabric, thereby expressing to hold the dictate of Sunnite Islam.¹⁵ On the numismatic evidence it can be presumed that till the year A.H. 991/1583 or A.H. 992/1584 Jalal al-Din Muhammad Akbar (1556-1605) held the Sunnite Islam like his predecessors Babar and Humayun. Because in his coins were inscribed the *kalimah* and the name of four pious caliphs that sheds light on the pristine tenet of Islam. Moreover, the *hijrah* reckoning and the assumption of *Sultan al-A'zam Khaqan al-Mukarram* inscribed on the coins bear witness to his upholding of Transoxian tradition.¹⁶ In some of his pre-Ilahi coins the mention of *Dar al-Khilafat* and *Dar al-Sultanat* before the mint name could be put to substantiate his adherence to the Sunnite Islam.¹⁷ But Akbar's start of the foundation of Fathpur Sikri in A.H. 976/1568 C.E. as capital city,¹⁸ the establishment of *Ibadat Khana* within its area in A.H. 983/1575 C.E., his frequent visit to it from A.H. 986/1578 C.E. and last of all the declaration of his infallibility in 987/1579 C.E.¹⁹

made his power absolute and dared him to appropriate the trait of Godhead in his person. These steps resulted in the issuance of the coins with *Allahu Akbar Jalla Jalaluhu* formula in A.H. 991/1583 or A.H. 992/1584 giving retrospective effect from A.H. 963/1556, the date of Akbar's accession to the throne.²⁰ Finally, under the influence of heretical associates Akbar receded, as it seems, from pure monotheistic belief into a new creed coming out from various religious beliefs like the Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity and Islam with the name of *sulhi kul* or a rapprochement of all (religions).²¹ On this point he expressed his will to inscribe *Allahu Akbar Jalla Jalauhu* on his imperial seals and coins. Several people particularly his flatterers supported him while men like Haji Ibrahim (one of his courtiers) objected. He said that the phrase had an ambiguous meaning (of "God is great" or "Godhead is in Akbar") and that it would be better to substitute the verse of the Quran, *Lazikrullahi Akbaru* (to remember Allah is greatest thing).²² But emperor Akbar was not pleased with this, and he did not pay heed to what Haji Ibrahim proposed. From this statement it can be assumed that Akbar gave little importance to the difference in the ambiguity of that phrase which he imprinted in his imperial seals and coins. Whatever explanation may be put about the phraseology there remains a room of doubt as to his departing from the pure monotheistic creed of Islam. And that with his death the discontinuance of the legend by his successors substantiates the argument of those who interpret Akbar's such innovation as heretical.²³ In spite of the criticism, both positive and negative, the *Allahu Akbar Jalla Jalaluhu* coin-legend has entertained open discourse on emperor Akbar's religio-political innovation along with his conciliatory outlook towards all among the Mughal emperors of the sub-continent.

Concluding Remarks

A question arises about the importance of the find-spot and also the nature of fetching this small hoard in such a place, which has no historical bearing whatsoever. It is difficult to answer the question due to the absence of suitable data. Yet we may take into consideration presumptive proposition in this regard. Mahasthan situated in the west bank of the river Karatoya three times

than the Ganges is an ancient historical city and the emporium of North Bengal from the time of yore.²⁴ The find-spot of the hoard situated in Panchbibi Police Station of Jaipurhat district had been within the radius of the emporium of Mahasthan for all kinds of transactions and communications in the time in question. Bengal was annexed to the Mughal Empire of Delhi in 1576 during Akbar's reign while the *Ilahi* coins introduced in 1584. It is, therefore, reasonable to hold that after 1584 the *Jalla Jaluhu* coin had its entry in Bengal either in the life time of Akbar or after his death (in 1605) during the reign of Jahangir when he had to send a good number of expeditions against Bara Bhuiyas of Bengal. It is reported that the war-flotilla of the Mughals used to run over the Karatoya in suppressing the rebellions of the Bara Bhuiyas till the year 1613.²⁵ It is, therefore, possible and feasible that in any such expeditions *Jalla Jalalahu* coins, altogether discarded in and around Delhi, the capital of the Mughal dynasty, were carried by the naval soldiers to the distant land of Bengal and dropped for the purchase of daily necessities in Mahasthan, the great emporium of North Bengal. It is possible that an appreciable number of the *Ilahi* coins along with other types of the Mughal coins came at the hand of the amateurs who preserved them for their own satisfaction. But with the passage of time due to the negligence in preservation these coins were handed down to the purchasers and brokers. It may happen that one such lot in smallest earthen pot was kept concealed under earth of a particular place (Panchbibi) which later on the person concerned could not locate, and as such it remained therein. In course of time it was unearthed with the spade of a farmer, and this is the coin-hoard presented in this paper. The *Ilahi* coins based on the *sulhi kul* portray emperor Akbar's reconciliatory policy towards his subject people of the sub-continent particularly the dominant class and the nobility in politics and religion.

Photographs of the coins are as below:

SL. No.	Obverse	Reverse
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- 1.



- 2.



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- 4.



- 5.



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- 10.



- 11.



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19.



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22.





References

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- ² John Walker, *A Catalogue of the Arab-Byzantine and Post-Reform Umayyad Coins* (London: The Trustees of The British Museum, 1956), p. Introduction Liv. (Henceforth *Arab-Byzantine Coins*).
- ³ Stanley Lanepoole (ed.), *Coins and Medals in History and Art* (Chicago: Argonaut Inc. Publishers, 1968), p. 6 (Henceforth *CMHA*); AKM Yaqub Ali, *Muslim Numismatics and Calligraphy in Bengal* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1989; Book Choice edition Dhaka 2008), p. 25 (Henceforth *Muslim Numismatics*); AKM Yaqub Ali, "Four Undeciphered Arab Coins: Historical Derivatives and Calligraphic Niceties", *Journal of Bengal Art* Vol. 15, 2010, p. 115, The International Centre for Study of Bengal Art, Dhaka.
- ⁴ H. Nelson Wright, *Catalogue of the Coins in the Indian Museum, Calcutta*, Vol. II, Reprint (Delhi: Indological Book House, 1972), pp. 20ff.
- ⁵ Stanley Lanepoole, *The Coins of the Mughal Emperors of Hindustan in the British Museum* (London: The Trustees of the Museum, 1892), pp. 1xv & 5ff. (Henceforth *The Coins of the Mughal Emperors*).
- ⁶ *Ibid*, p. 7.
- ⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 1xvii-1xviii & 32 ff.
- ⁸ *Ibid*, p. 1xi; Henry Elliot & John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by its own Historians, abridged Tarikh-i-Badauni* (Calcutta: Susil Gupta private Ltd third Reprint 1961), pp. 50 ff.
- ⁹ *The Coins of the Mughal Emperors*, p. 1xi.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid*.
- ¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 1xii.
- ¹² *Ibid*, pp. 32ff.
- ¹³ *JASB*, June 2009, p. 49; cf. Coin legends in *The Coins of the Mughal Emperors*, pp. 56 ff.
- ¹⁴ *The Coins of the Mughal Emperors*, p. 7.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 4 ff.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 11 ff.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid*, Coin Nos. 40 & 66, pp. 14 & 19.
- ¹⁸ ABM Husain, *Fathpur Sikri and its Architecture* (Dacca: Bureau of National Reconstruction, 1970), p. 5.
- ¹⁹ Abridged *Tarikh-i-Badauni* in *History of India as told by its own Historians, op.cit.*, pp. 54-56.
- ²⁰ *The Coins of the Mughal Emperors*, p. 1xi.
- ²¹ Abridged *Tarikh-i-Badauni*, pp. 47 ff.
- ²² *Ibid*, p. 46-47.
- ²³ *Ibid*, p. 47-48; Quranic Verse 29: 45.
- ²⁴ Minhaj Siraj, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. I. Text ed. Abdul Hai Habibi (Kabul: Historical Society of Afghanistan, 1963), p. 427; AKM Yaqub Ali, "Pundranagara: An Emporium of North bengal", *JASB*, Vol. 53 June 2008, pp. 78 ff.
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