The coins of the sultans of Dehli in the British Museum

Lane-Poole Stanley
CATALOGUE

OF

INDIAN COINS

IN THE

BRITISH MUSEUM.

THE SULTÁNS OF DEHLÍ.

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THE COINS
OF THE
SULTÁNS OF DEHLÍ
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BRITISH MUSEUM.

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EDITOR'S PREFACE.

The Catalogue of Indian Coins, of which the present volume is the first instalment, will consist primarily of five volumes, of which two, those dealing (1) with the coins of the so-called Patán Sultáns of Dehlí, and (2) with the contemporary issues of the Kings of Bengal, Jannpúr, Gujarát, and other Arabic coinages, will be the work of the author of the Catalogue of Oriental Coins, Mr. Stanley Lane-Poole, while the earlier series, Greek-Indian and Hindú, will be comprised in two volumes by Prof. Percy Gardner; and I shall myself undertake the description of the currency of the Emperors of Dehlí of the House of Bábár.

The general principles upon which the Catalogue of Indian Coins will be arranged will be similar to those which have been observed in the Greek and Oriental series, but the tabular or column-arrangement which was used in the eighth volume of the Oriental Catalogue will be retained in preference to the open pages of the earlier volumes of that series, save when the length of the inscriptions render the open page necessary.

The coins included in the present volume correspond to Fraen’s Class XVII.

The metal of each specimen is stated, and its size in inches and tenths of inches. The weight of the gold and
silver examples is given in English grains. Tables for converting grains into grammes, and inches into milli-
mètres as well as into the measures of Mionnet's scale, are
given at the end of the volume.

A comparative table of the years of the Hijrah and of
the Christian Era has been added with a view to facilitating,
reference to the standard works on Indian history where
the European computation is adopted.

Typical specimens are figured in the nine plates, which
are executed by the autotype mechanical process from casts
in plaster.

The work has been written by Mr. Stanley Lane-Poole,
and I have carefully revised it throughout, except in the
case of the Nágari inscriptions, which have been collated by
Mr. Gardner.

REGINALD STUART POOLE.
INTRODUCTION.

The present volume comprises the coinage of the Sultáns commonly known as the “Patán” or “Pathán” Kings of Dehlí. With some reluctance I have abandoned this time-honoured designation, for the reason that the word Patán is synonymous with Afgán, and most of the Sultáns of Dehlí were not Afgáns. The founder of the line of Dehlí, Muhammad ibn Sám, was a Ghóri Turk; and his successors, the rest of the first dynasty, were his Turkish slaves and their offspring. The second dynasty, sprung from Jalál-ad-dín Firóz Sháh, was composed of Khaljí Turks. The third dynasty, that of the Taghlak-Sháhís, was of the race of the Jáls. The fourth claimed descent from the Arab Hussain, grandson of the prophet Muhammad, and called itself by the sacred title of Sayyids. Indeed, only the fifth and the sixth of the dynasties into which the kings of Dehlí are divided could properly term themselves Patán or Afgán, inasmuch as Buhlói belonged to the Lódí tribe of Afgáns, and Shér Sháh to the Súr division of the Lódí tribe. Thus, out of forty Sultáns of Dehlí, eight alone have any right to be called Patáns or Afgáns. If, therefore, the name is to be retained at all in this misleading connection, it can only be in deference to long-established usage. The gain in convenience, however, in thus preserving the appellation, is surely more than counterbalanced by the historical and ethnological accuracy which is restored by its abolition.

The series of coins struck by the Sultáns of Dehlí offer fewer points of interest and importance than do most of the currencies of Muhammadan States. As a rule we may
look upon Muhammadan coins as the surest foundations for an exact history of the dynasties by which they were issued. The coins of a Muslim ruler generally go far to establish those outward data in regard to his reign which Oriental historians too often neglect or misstate. The year of accession, the extent of his dominion, his relations with the neighbouring powers and with the spiritual chief of his religion, are all facts for which we may look with confidence to his coins. In many of the smaller and less known dynasties it is hardly too much to say that the coins are our chief informers. Unfortunately we cannot claim this importance for the issues of the Sultans of Delhi. The history of this dynasty has been recorded in detail by native writers, to whose statements the coins can add but little that is new or valuable. Now and again the coinage may suffice to establish the truth about a disputed date, but such examples of usefulness are rare in the series. Moreover, owing to the habit with weak rulers, whose tenure of power was unusually precarious, of protecting themselves behind theegis of a renowned predecessor, and issuing their coins in the name of a deceased but revered Sultán, it is not always easy to feel assured that the dates on the coins represent precisely what they profess; and to arrange the order and years of the succession by these dates, without reference to the histories, would create no little confusion. Almost the only piece of historical information which has been thought to be derived from the coins alone is the presumed issue of the piece No. 85 in this volume, by Nasir-ad-dín Mahmúd, the eldest son of Altamsh, during his father’s lifetime. This would doubtless be interesting if it were established, but the result of a careful examination of the facts has led me to reject, with all diffidence, Mr. Thomas’s attribution. Two sons of Sultán Altamsh bore the title of Nasir-ad-dín; the elder was governor of Bengal from 624 to 626, when he died; the younger, born in the year of his
brother's death, became Sultán of Dehlí after Mas'úd Sháh, and reigned from 644 to 664. Mr. Thomas ascribes the coin No. 85 to the short government of Bengal by the elder Násir-ad-dín, on the ground of the occurrence upon it of the name of the 'Abbásí Khalífah Al-Mustansir, who reigned from 623 to 640. The improbability of the governor's striking coins in his own name, without any acknowledgment of his father, the reigning Sultán Al-tamah, together with the close resemblance between this coin and those which undoubtedly belong to the younger Násir-ad-dín, led me to class No. 85 among the latter's coinage, and to regard the anachronism of the Khalífah's name as merely an instance of the not unfrequent posthumous use of names on Dehlí coins. Since coming to this decision, I notice that Dr. A. F. R. Hoernle* has arrived at the same conclusion, and has supported his view by some cogent arguments, the substance of which I here reproduce. In the first place, no Governor of Bengal, unless he had thrown off the yoke of Dehlí, ever substituted his own name for that of his master the Sultán. The utmost a governor might do was to add his name after his master's, as Yıldız did after Muhammad ibn Sám's. Secondly, coins probably struck in Bengal, and clearly dated 624, do not bear Násir-ad-dín's name. It is evident that when the latter styles himself Sultán, and puts his own name exclusively on the coin, he does not do so as a mere governor. Moreover, the publication by Dr. Hoernle in the same article of a coin of 'Alá-ad-dín Mas'úd, with precisely the same obverse, including the peculiar أ and the omission of the article before Sultán, seems to put it beyond a doubt that Násir-ad-dín copied his obverse from his immediate predecessor, at first, and that the coin No. 85 was his earliest issue. Neither the coin of Mas'úd nor No. 85 have any trace of marginal inscriptions or dates.