

# More about Gold Coins from Khlong Thom, with a Revised Reading of the Inscription

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**ABSTRACT**—In addition to the gold coins from Khlong Thom described in previous articles in *JSS*, more coins have come to light, along with some scrap gold. One of the coins makes possible a full reading of the inscription found on four of these coins.

This is a follow-up on my two previous contributions on the gold coins from Khlong Thom, published in *JSS* in 2017 and 2019 respectively (Borell 2017, 2019). Around the time the 2019 update was printed, I received two communications about other gold coins from Khlong Thom.

First, Joe Cribb, the retired Keeper of the Coins and Medals Department of the British Museum, London, informed me that five gold coins of the type with conch motif are kept in the British Museum. One of them is identical to the coin, which was published by him in 1986 and has already been mentioned in my update of 2019 and included in the count of gold coins from Khlong Thom given there.<sup>1</sup> The five coins were donated to the museum by William L.S. Barrett in 1983. Photographs of the individual coins can be found on the British Museum website under their respective registration number (see Table 1). The weights of the five coins in the table are given according to their respective museum label.<sup>2</sup> From their weights, which are just below half a gramme, it is evident that they belong to the four-*rattī* denomination. All five coins are uniface with conch motif on the obverse and a plain reverse with the characteristic irregular striations well known from many of the other gold coins from Khlong Thom. The coins, numbered 1-3 in Table 1, may be assigned to the subgroup Cc, whereas numbers 4-5 show affinities to the subgroups Cg and Cd respectively.<sup>3</sup> These additional coins bring the count of the four-*rattī* coins from Khlong Thom known at present to a total of sixty-two (see Table 2).

In addition to the donation of the five coins in 1983, the British Museum received a donation of small gold fragments from the same collector in 1996. He had bought these

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<sup>1</sup> My sincere thanks are due to Joe Cribb for his interest and constant help in this matter.

<sup>2</sup> On the British Museum website, the weight of coin no.4 is given as 0.49 g instead of 0.45 g, see [https://research.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/collection\\_object\\_details.aspx?objectId=906004&partId=1&searchText=1983%2c0530.5&page=1](https://research.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=906004&partId=1&searchText=1983%2c0530.5&page=1)

<sup>3</sup> For subgroup Cc, see Borell 2017, 173, and for subgroups Cd and Cg, see *ibid.* 173-174.

fragments of scrap gold together with the five coins from a dealer in Bangkok.<sup>4</sup> He was told by the dealer that they were the remnants of a larger hoard. The 100 fragments are kept now in a small box in the Coins and Medals Department under British Museum reg. no. 1996, 0111.1-100. The museum photograph (Figure 1) shows them together with the five gold coins.<sup>5</sup> In general, the fragments are broken and distorted or otherwise damaged pieces of worked gold. They include pieces of gold sheet as well as gold wires either twisted or in spiral form. Some of the fragments clearly had been items of jewellery, for example some plain gold beads of various sizes and shapes, as well as granulated gold beads and other ornaments with granulation. A few pieces appear to be cut-off from small gold ingots. The bent rods of circular or square cross section, with clear cut marks on at least one end, may also represent some sort of gold ingots.

*Table 1. Five gold coins with conch motif of four-rattī weight in the British Museum.*

	British Museum reg.no.	Reference	Weight in grammes (according to museum label)
1	1983,0530.2	British Museum website	0.48 g
2	1983,0530.3	Cribb 1986: 123 no. 19 pl. 3 (erroneously image for B10). British Museum website	0.45 g
3	1983,0530.4	British Museum website	0.49 g
4	1983,0530.5	British Museum website	0.45 g
5	1983,0530.6	British Museum website	0.37 g

From reports in the 1980s, it appears that in 1981, or slightly earlier, a large hoard of gold coins was discovered at Khlong Thom. I discussed the available information in my earlier articles (Borell 2017: 155; 2019: 155). Subsequently, the contents of this hoard were dispersed. Parts of it were sold by dealers in Bangkok. According to the information recorded in the 1980s, the hoard had included – apart from the gold coins – a large number of gold artefacts, in particular gold beads. There seems little reason to doubt that the five coins and the fragments of scrap gold stem from this hoard. For the first time, we have an idea of the other items of gold in this hoard. Future studies of gold finds from Khlong Thom certainly will have to discuss these fragments of scrap gold.

Second, I received information that a coin of the eight-rattī denomination, with head in profile on the obverse and Brāhmī inscription on the reverse (Figure 2), was found at Khlong Thom in 2018 and is now in a private collection in Krabi Province.<sup>6</sup> Its weight is 0.87 gramme and the diameter is 9-11 mm. This recently discovered coin

<sup>4</sup> Joe Cribb, personal communications, September 2019 and April 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Great thanks for help with the photograph go to Lucia Rinolfi, British Museum Images. Although the photograph lacks a scale, the size of the coins may serve as a reference. On the basis of the other four-rattī coins we may assume for them an average diameter of 8 mm.

<sup>6</sup> I am most grateful to Mr. Somboon Patimaarak, a collector with an interest in numismatics, for bringing this coin to my attention in December 2019. He also brought me into contact with the owner, Mr. Luechar Saelee, to whom I am greatly indebted for generously providing photographs and measuring the weight, as well as for giving his permission to publish the coin.

Table 2. Gold coins from Khlong Thom in various museums and collections.

Museum / Collection	Publication	No.
<b>Coins head in profile / Brāhmī inscription (eight rattī)</b>		
Wat Khlong Thom Museum (Krabi province)	<i>Sārānukrom/Encyclopedia</i> vol. 2, 1986: 441, 691. Borell 2017, figs. 1 and 5.	1
Suthiratana Foundation (Bangkok)	Borell 2017: 158 figs. 2-3.	2
Private collection (LS) (Krabi province)	Borell, present publication	1
	Subtotal	4
<b>Coins with conch motif (four rattī)</b>		
Wat Khlong Thom Museum (Krabi province)	Borell 2017: 162 fig. 9.	1
The Thaksin Folklore Museum (Songkhla province)	Borell 2017: 162 fig.10.	2
British Museum (London, United Kingdom), donated in 1983.	Cribb 1986: 123 no. 19 pl. 3 (erroneously image for B10). Borell 2019: 156. British Museum website.	1
British Museum (London, United Kingdom), donated in 1983.	British Museum website.	4
Suthiratana Foundation (Bangkok)	Borell 2017: 161-165 figs. 7-8, 10e-m, 11-13.	18
Private collection (RK) (Bangkok)	Krisadaolarn 2016: 39 A609.	11
Private collection (SP) (Bangkok)	Unpublished, mentioned in Borell 2017: 171.	2
Private collection (AP) (Krabi province)	Unpublished, mentioned in Borell 2017: 171.	10
Private collection (MM) (United Kingdom)	Mitchiner 1985: 322-7.	9
Present location unknown	Mitchiner 1998: 168 nos. 576-577 (with illustrations)	2
Auction Bangkok 2015	EUR-SEREE Collecting Co., Ltd., Bangkok Sale #39, 28th-29th November 2015, Lot 1967. Borell 2019: 156.	2
	Subtotal	62
<b>Coins with śrīvatsa motif (one rattī)</b>		
Suthiratana Foundation (Bangkok)	Borell 2019: 157 fig. 1.	1
Private collection (AP) (Krabi province)	Borell 2019: 157 fig. 2-3.	2
	Subtotal	3
	Total	69

is very important, as it has an impact on the reading of the inscription of the other eight-*rattī* coins. It is very similar to the coin kept in the Wat Khlong Thom Museum (Figure 3), which has been known since the 1980s, in terms of its style and details of the head, as well as the layout of the inscription and the shapes of the individual characters. Apparently, the two coins were struck with the same pair of dies.



Figure 1. British Museum, reg.no. 1996, 0111.1-100. Gold scrap fragments. British Museum photograph.

The important fact about this recent find is the reverse side, with an inscription in which all six characters are clearly visible, particularly the last character which is for the first time completely preserved. On the coin in the Wat Khlong Thom Museum, only a small part of this character is visible near the edge of the coin. Similarly, on neither of the two coins in the Suthiratana Foundation, which come from a different pair of dies but have the same inscription, is the last character preserved in full. On the coin cut in half, it would have been on the missing half, and on the complete coin only a small part of it may be discerned, in fact the same part as on the Wat Khlong Thom coin (Borell 2017: 158-159, Figures 2-4). The inscription on the reverse of the recently found coin makes it clear that the short curved line, visible on the previously known coins, is in fact only a very small part of this last character, which can now be read as the genitive ending *-sa*.

On the basis of these new findings, Harry Falk was able to revise his previous reading of the inscription to *śr(ī) viṣuvamasa*, “Of Śr(ī) Viṣṇuvarma”.<sup>7</sup> All four known coins of the eight-*rattī* denomination have the same inscription, although they were

<sup>7</sup> Again, very special thanks are due to Harry Falk, retired professor of indology, Freie Universität in Berlin, who took a tireless interest in these coin inscriptions.





Figure 2. Private collection, Krabi province. Gold coin of eight-*rattī* weight, found at Khlong Thom. D 9-11 mm. Photos: Courtesy of Luechar Saelee.



Figure 3. Wat Khlong Thom Museum. Gold coin of eight-*rattī* weight, found at Khlong Thom. D 10 mm. 3a (above left), obverse; 3b (above right), reverse; 3c (right), reverse; the hatched characters are those from the first strike. After Borell 2017.

Revised reading by Harry Falk: *śr(ī)* *viṣuvamasa* “Of Śr(ī) Viṣnuvarma”

struck with two different pairs of dies: the one pair of dies was used for the coin in the Wat Khlong Thom Museum and the recently found coin presented here (Figure 2 and 3), and another pair of dies for the two coins kept in the Suthiratana Foundation.

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