

ESSAY ON THE SYMBOLS AND MARKS OF OLD SIAMESE COINS

By

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In his book "The Coinage of Siam", published by the Siam Society in 1932, le May has given some explanations on the meaning and significance of the symbols and marks on old Siamese coins. He states, however: "I do not by any means claim infallibility in determining the meaning of all the marks given," and it appears that no serious attempt was made by him to investigate the significance of these symbols. I therefore believe that a more thorough investigation might be opportune and might be considered as a welcome supplement to the existing descriptions of Siamese coins, all the more as I hope to prove that such research will lead us to the very sources of South east Asia's coinage in general and of Siam's old coinage in particular. In addition, I have endeavoured in these notes to throw some light on the meaning, age and history of some symbols, because I believe that the ability to understand the marks on Siamese coins should be preceded by the knowledge of symbols and their significance in general and in addition by some knowledge of the history of Indian and Burmese coins.

Although the bullet coins of Siam are of relatively recent date most of their marks can be traced very far back, and these marks can be plausibly explained and partly interpreted by their comparison with marks on old Indian coins, with which they have much in common.

It is a good rule for the student of numismatics to go very slow in his investigations, to take nothing for granted and not to "jump to conclusions". This refers particularly to the studies of symbols and their significance. Former writers about this subject

have been inclined to explain symbols as either of Hindu or Buddhist origin, mainly on account of their own religious faith and creed. Others again have been apt to consider the symbols as solar or lunar signs, as personal marks of local kings and rulers, or as locality marks. It is of importance to remember that firstly: all symbols have *a very long life*, secondly: *almost all symbols admit of different interpretations*, thirdly: *the execution of symbols* on very small coins and their frequently very primitive design (circles, dots, squares etc.) *does in many cases not permit of any reliable explanation at all*. A few remarks about the long life of some well-known symbols: Anybody will now-a-days still recognise the "hour — glass" as a symbol of Time. This symbol had the same significance already in Athens, about 2500 years back. The sword as a symbol of War, the dove or the palm-branch as symbols of Peace are age old symbols. The heart is the symbol of Love, the anchor of Hope, to name only a few more. Most Hindu and Buddhist religious symbols are naturally older than Christian symbols. The fact that similar marks on different coins may be interpreted in different ways, makes the task of interpretation so much more difficult. Anyone who undertakes this task is therefore bound to consider not only the country and locality of origin and the probable age of each coin, but, in addition, also the religious creed of the issuing authorities, political conditions at the time of minting, and any other special circumstances under which that particular coin may have been struck. In the case of old Siamese coins (pre-Bangkok period) this task is all the more difficult, since we possess scarcely any reliable data about our old coins. No age is known for certain, nor (with one exception) the name of the kings or princes who ordered the issue; they bear no inscriptions, and we can so far merely attempt to define their age by their shape and weight. The number of marks on old Siamese coins is small as compared with marks on Indian coins. Many marks seem to be the repetition or variation of another mark. Still, the riddle of their significance is hard to solve, and I do not claim to have solved it by the following explanations and suggestions. But before I can deal with

Siamese coins proper, I propose to make some short remarks about the sources on which this essay is based, i.e. *the old Indian punch-marked coins and the so-called "Mohenjo - Daro - Seals"*

I. *The Silver Punch-marked Coins of Ancient India.*

A great number of so-called Silver Punch-Marked-Coins have been found during the course of centuries at different localities throughout India and Pakistan. They are small thin pieces of silver of irregular shape, bearing several symbols on the obverse and mostly additional marks on the reverse. These very interesting relics of a very early period of Indian history have been the subject of numerous essays, articles, and notes in the scientific Journals of India and Pakistan. Numismatists of great standing such as Sir A. Cunningham, W. Theobald, E. H. C. Walsh, C. L. Fabri, Durgā Prasād, and others, have contributed to the knowledge of these coins and to the explanation of their marks. The Curator of Coins in the British Museum, J. Allen, issued a Catalogue in 1936. Durgā Prasād has collected, illustrated and described not less than 407 symbols in the "Journal & Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal" Vol. XXX, Numismatic Supplement No. XLV:(1) This article has been invaluable for the present notes. There are at present more than 4000 pieces of old Indian silver punch-marked coins known, the greater part of which is in the British Museum and in public Museums in India and Pakistan. Durgā Prasād seems to own the largest private collection. It appears that most experts agree that these punch-marked coins have been in use throughout the greater part of India during B.C. 600 - 200, but there are other Numismatists who are inclined to date their age back as far as B.C. 1000-800. It would be tempting to deal with these coins more extensively, but, since space is lacking, it must suffice to state that it is on these old Indian coins that we find symbols identical or similar to the marks on our old Siamese coins.

II. *The Mohenjo - Daro-Seals.*

The discovery of a very ancient Indian culture in the valley of the Indus near Mohenjo - Daro and Harappa by Sir John Marshall and the great number of "seals" or "matrices" found there, have opened a new field for numismatic research.⁽²⁾ The age of the culture of the Indus valley is estimated as B.C. 3500-3000. The most important discovery - from a numismatic point of view - was the fact, that a great many of the Mohenjo-Daro seals bear symbols which are in striking resemblance to the symbols on the Indian silver punch-marked coins. It seems certain that the marks on the latter are closely linked to the former. Thereby we seem to have for a number of symbols an uninterrupted chain for several thousands of years; new connections are revealed and a new field for the interpretation of the symbols on our old Siamese coins has been opened.

III. *Flat Silver-coins found in Siam, probably of Indian origin.*

The coins, illustrated on Plate I are almost with certainty the oldest coins found in Siam. Their shape and symbols seem to prove that they have not been struck in Siam. As I have made special efforts to trace the origin of their marks and explain their significance, their treatment will occupy a relatively large space within these notes. I estimate that not more than about 100 pieces still exist in Siam, of which 15 pieces are in the National Museum in Bangkok. Most of these specimens have been found at Nakorn Pathom or at Prachin Buri. Nakorn Pathom is undoubtedly one of the oldest places in Siam, and many Buddha-statues have been found there, dating back to the Dvaravati-period. (300-500 A.D.). Some similar coins of this type have been published in Siam before. (3, 4, 8.) They are of good silver and reproduced on Plate I. in natural size. Let us first consider the coins on Plate I/1 and Plate I/2. Though I am not certain, I consider I/1, 2, 0 as the obverse and I/1r, 2r as the reverse sides of the two coins.* It may be seen at first sight, that both coins bear very similar symbols, though the

* see page 142 a

representation of the large centre-symbol is somewhat different. I have searched all works of reference at my disposal for pictures or descriptions of similar coins and the following is the result.

a) *Sir Walter Elliot*⁽⁵⁾ illustrated a copper coin which has a bull and sunrays on the obverse and on the reverse a symbol, which seems to me similar to Plate I/1-2 or rather like a combination of the obverse and reverse of the two coins. Sir Walter does not give an explanation of the symbol, but calls it a "curious device" (See Plate II/1).

b). Plate II/2 and II/3 show two coins, both of which bear symbols which seem closely related to our coin. They are taken from *Sir Arthur P. Phayre's* book⁽⁶⁾ and an interesting explanation accompanying the illustrations is given there at some length. Since Sir Arthur's book is rather rare, even in public libraries, I herewith give the full text.

This Coin (Plate II/2) is not now available. The figure on the Plate has been taken from one shown on plate iii. vol. xv. of the "Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal." The coin was originally described by Captain Thomas Latter. It appears to have been found in Upper Burma, and was sent by the Mekkhara Prince, one of the royal family of that country, to General W. C. Macleod, who forwarded it to the Asiatic Society in 1844. It is curious that the Mekkhara Prince, though a man of considerable learning, does not appear to have recognized the symbols on the coin as Buddhist, and that is more remarkable when the ascertained facts regarding coin Plate II 3, which will be stated presently, are considered.

Captain Latter regarded coin Plate II 2 as Buddhist. He observes that the obverse has in the centre a chaitya formed of detached upright glyphs, and surmounted by a ht'r or umbrella. Right and left are representations of the cobra capella, and above the sun and moon. To the left are Buddhist and Hindu symbols, being a trident, three horizontal lines or scores, and the swastika; to the right is some unrecognized figure, and below all are four horizontal or slightly curved lines, one probably representing a serpent.

Of the reverse Captain Latter remarks, "it may be intended to convey a symbolical representation of the cosmology of Buddhism, the twenty-eight circular figures in the outer ring representing the twenty-eight Buddhas, characteristic of a Mahāgābbha, or grand period of nature. The five drop-shaped figures representing a Buddha-gābbha or lesser period of nature, the present period being characterized by the presence of five Buddhas."

The emblem in the centre is "composed of certain triangles, representing this world in particular. The triangles with their points downwards

represent water, and those with their apices upwards typify fire;" and they meet in a central circle having a point within it, the whole denoting both the supposed elements of which the world is composed, and the reiterated destruction of the world by fire and by water. The above observations convey a probable explanation of the symbols. It might have been added that the volumes of cloud-like substance, which appear to be issuing from the centre, where the points of the triangles meet, symbolize "air," another of the "elements" which go to form a world, and by which it is destroyed once in sixty-four times. The triangular figures and floating substance, taken as a whole, also typify "earth" as an "element," and as the "world," the particles of which are rearranged, and form a body fit for land animals to dwell on, after each periodical destruction. Below the triangles there is a wavy horizontal line which appears to represent "a serpent." This form introduced on coins below a Chaitya is described by Mr. E. Thomas in his essay on coins of the Andhra dynasty in the "Indian Antiquary."

Coin Plate II 3 Silver.

The device on this medal has evidently been copied, except as regards a few minor differences, from Plate II 2. The origin of the medal is well known, and the facts regarding it serve to illustrate the remarks which have been made as to the intended use of other coins or medals of older date found in different parts of Burma. This coin is figured in plate liii. of Marsden's work, and he relates that the pattern of it was given to Colonel Symes, who was Envoy to Ava in 1794, by some of the Burmese Ministers, with a request that dies corresponding thereto should be engraved in Calcutta. This was done, and apparently a number of pieces were struck therefrom and sent to the Court of Ava. It is probable that these medals were originally intended to be deposited in the relic chamber of the grand pagoda, which the then King of Burma, Bhodau Phra, commenced building at Mengun, on the west side of Erawati, a few miles above Ava. The medals were conveyed by Captain Cox, who arrived at Amarapura in 1797, at which time the work was in progress.

On the obverse of Coin Plate II 3 the sankh shell replaces the Chaitya which is on No. 1; while on the reverse, below the triangular figures, segments of circles replace the wavy line representing water on the reverse of No. 1; and three Z-shaped figures appear in place of five drops. These refer to the three extinct Buddhas of the present world period, while the three lines composing the Z figure have the same signification. The fourth Buddha of the present period, whose religion is still existing, is implied in the triangular figures, which represent not only the world, but also the throne on which Gaudama sat under the Bo tree.

Nearly all the symbols on both medals may be traced on ancient Indian coins. Thus the Chaitya, trident, sankh shell, sun and moon, have already been mentioned. The snake figures may be seen on coins of the Saurashtra series, and also the triangular figures representing there a Sassanian fire-altar. The snake figures appear on coins of the Indo-Bactrian series, over the heads of a deer and of a bull. The three horizontal

bars on the obverse of No. 1 are included in plate xxii. of Wilson's *Ariana Antiqua*. The snakes are probably introduced as emblematical of destruction and renovation; the horns of a deer have the same significance, while the animal represents the famous deer-birth of Gautama; and the figure of a crab, which is shown on one of the coins of Southern India, also supplies the symbol of destruction and renovation.

The triangular figures on coin Plate II 3 would represent to a loyal Burmese the king's throne, and suggest an analogy between the king of his country, as a Chakravartti, or universal monarch, and Buddha, the object of worship of the present period. This object is not unlikely to have been kept in view by a king like Bhodau Phra when he had these medals struck."

c) The third reference I have been able to find is in *George Groslier's* book⁽⁷⁾ where the author illustrates a coin under Figs. 8 p and 9, which is undoubtedly similar to our coin under discussion. The text accompanying this coin is quoted as follows:

"En revanche, j'ai pu acquérir deux pièces énigmatiques en argent, maladroitement coulées et d'un dessin très archaïque, Diamètre: 30 et 31 millimètres; épaisseur 1 mm. 5 et 1 mm, 70; poids 7 gr, 7 et 9 gr, 70. On voit, d'un côté, un lotus stylisé (?) et de l'autre le sthéma d'un Garuda vu de face, bras levé, paraissant tenir deux Naga retombant de chaque côte, sujet classique khmèr par excellence mais exécuté ici très grossièrement (136).

Et je me demande si l'on ne peut pas apparenter ce lotus avec le soleil à rayons conservé dans la mémoire des Cambodgiens. Dans ce cas, nous pourrions admettre que deux types de monnaie disparus portaient tous les deux en pile, un lotus épanoui et en face l'un un sema, l'autre un Garuda. Notons en faveur de cette hypothèse que le type Garuda est du même diamètre que le Prak bat modèle B et qu'on nous a dit que le Prak sema avait une grandeur sensiblement égale au Prak bat, grand modèle."

If we disregard Elliot's coin with its "curious device", there remain Phayre's and Groslier's coins to be considered of which the latter is apparently identical to our coins on Plate I 1-2. If we now compare Phayres Coin and our coin we find that the obverse sides of both show a remarkable similarity in design, especially the centre design and the general arrangement of symbols. I believe

that it can be said with certainty that Phayre's coin (which I henceforth shall call the "Burmese" coin) is the oldest of the three and that Siamese and Cambodian specimens seem to represent the same but largely simplified symbols in the centre of the obverse. Captain Latter explains the ten detached glyphs in the centre as a "Chaitya, surmounted by an umbrella." Although this seems unlikely to me, I am unable to give a more convincing explanation. I would however agree to the identification of the cobras right and left. Presuming that the designs on the Siamese and Cambodian coins has been derived from that on the Burmese coin, it seems unlikely that the symbol on the former should represent a Garuda, though I admit that it looks similar to an archaic representation of it. On the Siamese coin the moon is represented by a simple cross and the sun by a round circle. This speaks in favour of the theory that the Siamese coin is younger than the Burmese coin. The svastika and the "hour-glass"-like symbol will be dealt with later.

If we now compare the reverse of the Burmese and the Siamese coin, we find that they differ considerably. Only the circles of dots are common to both types. Whereas the Burmese coin has 28 dots in the outer circle, representing according to Captain Latter "the twenty-eight Buddhas, characteristic of a Mahāgābha, or grand period of nature" our coin on Plate I 1 has 28 and 14 and the coin on Plate I 2 has 32 and 16 dots. In both cases the number of dots in the inner circle is half of the number of dots on the outer circle. In spite of my endeavours to find a reasonable explanation for the symbol on the reverse of our coin, I have been unable to do so. The appearance is sunlike and it might be meant to represent a symbolical representation of the cosmology of Buddhism similar to the reverse of the Burmese coin.

The Cambodian coin is similar to the specimens from Siam. It is interesting to note that Groslier "naturally" attempts an explanation based on Khmer motives. He believed that the symbol in the centre of the obverse represents a Garuda. Apparently he had not seen the picture of the Burmese coin. As I said before, I believe that all researches about the significance of symbols on old

coins should be based on the knowledge of all old Indian coins and cannot be limited to more or less local traditions.

If we now look at the coin illustrated on Plate II 3, we find in Phayre's explanation, that this coin or medal was engraved in Calcutta and a number of pieces were struck and sent to the court of Ava in 1797 A.D. Now, Phayre says that "the chaitya was replaced by the sankh shell." I have my doubts, whether the symbol between the two cobras is meant to represent a sankh shell. I am rather inclined to believe that this symbol — on account of the two marks below the so-called "sankh-shell" — is intended to represent Sun and Moon and Holy Flame, i.e. the Chandra-Monthon (9) or the magical sign "Om". The fact that on this coin, reproduced at a fairly recent period, sun and moon are not more represented on top of the obverse seems to confirm my presumption.

To sum up this rather complicated investigation:

1) I do not believe that the symbol of our coins on Plate I. 1-2 represents a Garuda, but the true identification of the main symbols on these coins must be left to further research.

2) I believe that these coins are of very old age, probably dating back to the first centuries A.D.*

3) I believe that the Siamese specimens as well as that of Cambodia have been struck in India or Burma and have been carried at an early time to the other countries.

The investigation on the next three coins illustrated on Plate I 3-5 has revealed that coins with similar symbols have been published before by Phayre. Their illustrations are reproduced here on Plate II 5-8. The full description as given by Phayre follows herewith:

"The next three coins on this Plate, marked 9, 10, and 11, belong to a type which is found in Arakan though rarely. I am not aware that such coins have been found elsewhere.

The object intended to be represented upon the obverse of them may admit of doubt, but is most probably the sankh shell of Vishnu. It may

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appear strange that this emblem should be placed on one side, and the trident of Siva on the other. But these emblems appear on coins lately found in Pegu, specimens of which are figured in Plate IV, figures 6 and 7. The tradition in Arakan is that coins Nos. 9, 10, and 11 were issued by ancient kings of Arakan, but no particular dynasty is named. It may be conjectured as probable that they were struck at a time when the kings and influential persons of the country had been won over to Brahmanical doctrines. They have no legends.

It may be that the engraver of the dies of coins Nos. 9, 10, and 11 had no distinct notion as to the object which he was required to portray on the obverse. He has made it more like a leaf (inverted, as shown on the Plate) than a sankh shell. At the same time this dissimilarity to the object intended to be shown is not uncommon in representations of objects in Indian pictures. In some of the illustrations to Moor's Hindu Pantheon (ed. 1861) some of the figures of Vishnu show him bearing a sankh shell, the shell being so drawn as to appear a globular vessel, or a gourd, with a long neck to it. The emblems or symbols shown on the coins of Arakan, Pegu, and Burma were most probably copies from Indian coins. The sankh shell appears upon many coins of Southern India, as depicted and described by Sir Walter Elliot. On coin No. 105, of Plate xi., found at Dipaldini in the Guntoor district, the sankh shell appears as an adjunct to a Buddhist dagoba, and in form is not unlike the figure on the obverse of coin No. 9 above described. It may then be concluded that objects usually pertaining to Vishnu have been associated with Buddhist objects or symbols on the coins of kings in Southern India; and these have in some instances been the models followed in portraying such objects in Arakan and in Pegu.

PLATE IV

<p>Coin No. 6. Silver.</p> <p>Obverse.</p> <p>The sankh shell of Vishnu.</p>	<p>Reverse.</p> <p>Trident of Siva.</p>
<p>Coin No. 7. Silver.</p> <p>Obverse.</p> <p>The sankh shell of Vishnu, with what is apparently meant to represent a hermit crab at the open part; an appropriate Buddhist emblem.</p>	<p>Reverse.</p> <p>Similar to that of No. 6. Within the trident on both these coins is an object which may be intended to represent a linga with a serpent.</p>

Seventeen coins, generally similar to these, were lately found under ground, about twenty-five miles from the town of Sittaung in Pegu. It is probable that these were cast in Pegu at a time when Hindu doctrines had undermined Buddhism, a state of affairs which may be traced from the history of the country from the sixth century of the Christian era, at intervals until the eighth. These coins probably were not intended for currency, but might be used as amulets by votaries of the doctrines represented by the symbols."

It may be observed at first sight that the coins Plate II /4-6 and II/7-8 are closely related to one another, though the first series is probably of much older date. Furthermore, the coins on Plate II/7-8 are certainly very similar to our Siamese coin on Plate I/5. The question remains: What significance can be attributed to the symbols? I think we can accept the conch-shell of Vishnu and the deer as explanation for the symbol on the obverses. With regard to the reverse the problem is more complicated. Playre considers it as the trident of Siva, but on the coins found in Siam the identification of the symbol as a trident appears less convincing, especially so on the reverse of the "deer"-mark coin (Plate I/4). Here again, I cannot offer a better explanation and I have been unable to trace any similar designs on other old Indian or Burmese coins. It is quite possible that these coins have been minted in Burma and later brought to Siam. Though they are now-a-days frequently used as amulets, I do not think — as Phayre does — that they were *intended to be used as such*, since they have no holes, or, if they have, the holes have been made afterwards. It is remarkable that these coins have a circle of round dots on the periphery of the obverse and that they seem in this respect similar to those described before Plate I/1 and I/2.

In the next section I propose to deal with some of the more important symbols, one by one, as they appear on Siamese coins or coins found in Siam. The various flat coins described before are presumably the oldest coins found in Siam, preceding the so-called bullet coins by many centuries. In order to have our list of symbols and marks as complete as possible, I propose to start with the symbols on these old coins.

a) Plate I1 and Plate III a *The Svastika*. There are only a few coins in the National Museum and one in my possession bearing this mark. These are obviously of Indian origin and have been described before in detail. The svastika is an age-old symbol. It appears already — 5000 years back — on the Mohenjo-Daro-seals (Plate CXIV, 514 and 502), is found on Indian Gold coins from the South - Maharatth country, which date back to the time before

1000 A.D. and on old Indian silver coins (Durgā Prasād Tables 23/105 and 27/110.) It is identical with the Greek "Triglyph" which appears on Etruscan antiquities and is well known as an old Chinese design. Much has been written about this symbol, but space forbids to mention all its possible meanings. (See Plate IIIa)

b) Plate I/2 and Plate III b. This symbol, already found on the Mohenjo-Daro seals, again appears only on our old coins (Plate I 2). Its significance has been differently interpreted by various scholars. It is sometimes explained as a reliquary or as an Indian stool, used as stand for offerings, but the most plausible explanation seems to me the representation of the "damaru", the hand-drum, which is used during religious service. As such the symbol may be regarded as having a propitious or protective significance. (Cf. Durgā Prasād Plate 25/88).

c) Plate III c The *trident* or *Trisula* as weapon of Shiva is well known. It does not appear on Pre-Bangkok Siamese bullet coins, but was adopted by King Phra Buddha Yot Fa (1782-1809), the first ruler of the Chakri-Dynasty, as his first personal mark. It seems strange that the Trident-symbol does apparently not appear on old Indian coins.

d) The *Conch-Shell*, which is an attribute of Visnu, appears on a great number of Siamese coins, of the Pre-Bangkok period, though this symbol has been sometimes confused with the "Chandra-Monthon" symbol. As may be seen from the drawings in le May (3) and Guehler (4) the conch-shell is represented on Siamese coins in a considerable number of different designs. In some cases it seems difficult, owing to the similarity of the design, to decide whether the respective symbol is to be interpreted as a shell or as the sun, moon and holy flame (Chandra-Monthon symbol) especially if there are dots added at the base of the shell. The conch-shell was extensively used by ancient Indians during the war, as its sound penetrates far and wide. I have not been able to solve the question, why on Siamese coins the shell is at sometimes represented

closed and at other times cut open to show the interior. The meaning of this different representation — because there must be a meaning to it—escapes me. I could not find the, “open-conch-shell” — symbol on any old Indian coins, and it seems strange that the Buddhist Kings of the Ayuthia-Dynasty should have chosen a Brahmanic symbol on so many coins. There is, as Boeles⁽¹⁰⁾ mentions, a close connection between the symbol of the Chandra-Monthon and the symbol of the conch-shell: “Moreover as to the place (sthāna) of this syllable (om) it is mentioned that in the centre of the conch-shell (sankha) the A shines as the Sun; and again in its middle (as we are to understand) is the U-sound like the Lustre of the moon. There is also the place of the M-sound, like the fire...” We can therefore presume that the representation of so many various designs of conch-shells on Siamese coins was not intended to represent the conch-shell of Vishnu, but rather the Chandra-monthon symbol, especially so when the mark shows an open shell.

e) Plate III d. This symbol, like a wheel with spokes, is a very old symbol. It is represented on the Mohenjo-Daro seals CXLVII 367 341) and appears on many old Indian punch-marked coins. (Cf. Durgā Prasād Plates 23/88, 23/99, 25/37). Theobald considers it as a solar symbol, or as representation of the Chakra-wheel or discus. A picture of Siva is shown on the Mohenjo-Daro seals, but this fact does not conclusively prove that this symbol has always had a Tantric or religious significance. It appears however that later the symbol was intended to represent a Buddhist symbol, i.e. the wheel of the Law, (dharmacakra), which, in remembrance of the first sermon of the Lord Buddha in the deerpark at Benares, was extensively used as a symbol to represent the Lord Buddha at the earliest times when no images of His person were yet made.

f) Plate III e. A circle of dots surrounding a centre dot. This symbol is frequently found on old Siamese coins. The number of dots varies. In some cases the dots are surrounded by frames of different designs. Some of these marks are explained by le May (3) as Jantras (cabalistic signs). For the circle of dots le May gives no explanation. No similar symbol is found on the Mohenjo-Daro

seals, whereas the old Indian punch-marked coins bear similar marks (see Durgā Prasād Plates 22/77, 22/79-80). The latter believes that the significance of the symbol is a Chakra-wheel, which was considered as auspicious in early Hindu India. I am inclined to share this suggestion.

g) *Le May Marks 35, 36.* These marks are explained by le May as open lotus-flowers, and, as no similar marks are found on old Indian coins, I have no better explanation to offer. The mark certainly looks like an open flower.

h) Plate III f. This mark appears only twice on old Siamese coins, le May Block 54, "Notes" Plate III/12. The symbol is an old one, appearing on Mohenjo-Daro seal XLIX/349 and on various old Indian coins (Durgā Prasād Plate 23/112, 113). It reminds me of the "vesica piscis" design of the Romans but might also represent an eye or a Yoni of the very old Phallic cult.

i) Plate III g. The so-called "Anchor" and "Inverted-Anchor" mark:

Although on the few coins known to me which have an anchor as symbol, a kind of rope can be observed around the stock (see "Studies" Block 2), I am in doubt whether this symbol was intended to represent an anchor at all. There is no explanation for this symbol nor for the "Inverted Anchor" mark. There is, however, among the Mohenjo-Daro seals CCCXXIX, seal 340, a symbol which, though it looks more like an umbrella, might have some relationship with our "Inverted Anchor" mark.

j) Plate III h. This mark appears only twice on Siamese coins ("Studies" Block 34 and "Notes" Block 12). Here again we find a similar mark on Mohenjo-Daro-seal CCCI/444 and among the old Indian coins (Durgā Prasād Plate XXII/70 and XXV/21). The same symbol was found also on terra-cotta whorls at Troy, but its former or present significance is not known.

k) Plate III q and r. We now come to a group of symbols which are about 5000 years old, the symbols of the *elephant* and the *ox*. Both of them are represented on the Mohenjo-Daro seals and

they appear on a great number of old Indian punch-marked coins. Their design on the Indian coins varies considerably, but the elephant is in almost each case represented with tusks, whereas the elephants on our old Siamese coins have no tusks. The significance of these symbols has been and may be explained in different ways. From an Hindu point of view the elephant would appear to be the Airāvata of the vedic god Indra. Indra is represented riding on a elephant as his Vāhana. For a Buddhist, the elephant is a sacred animal as a symbol of the supernatural conception of the Lord Buddha, since it is believed that the Bodhisattva entered the body of Queen Maya in the shape of an elephant. A Buddhist will, furthermore, remember the story of the elephant Nalagiri which, while attacking the Lord, was subdued by the words of the Master. In Siam the elephant enjoys special reverence, as a royal charge, and the white elephant is a sacred animal enjoying special privileges. It is therefore not surprising that we find the symbol of an elephant frequently represented on old Siamese coins, especially on those of lesser denomination, as well as on many flat coins of the Chakri dynasty.

The humped ox, appears on the Mohenjo-Daro seals and is a very common symbol on the old Indian silver and copper coins. It is explained by Hindus as Nandi, the vehicle or Vahāna of Siva, and according to Hindu conception the Bull is regarded as the symbol of Dharma or Truth. There is no specific significance attached to the Bull in Buddhist faith except that Buddha was born in the month of the Bull (Vaisakha). We might therefore presume that the Ox or Bull depicted as mark on old Siamese coins is meant to represent the Nandi of Siva. It may, however, signify the zodiacal sign of the year in which the respective king was born.

k) The *hare* Plate III i is represented on a few Siamese coins only, probably of Ayuthia period. It is of strikingly similar appearance to those on old Indian coins. (See Plate III/i S and III/i I). As far as I am aware, there is no explanation given for the hare-mark by Hindu scholars, but from a Buddhist point of view one is inclined to connect the hare with the story of the "Hare and the Moon" in

the Yataka tales. Also in this case the hare exists as a zodiacal sign, and the mark may refer to the year of the birth of the king.

l) *The deer-or gazelle-Mark*, which appears only on one coin, found in Siam (Plate I 4) is without doubt a symbol of the Lord Buddha. It belongs to those symbols which were intended to represent the Lord before pictures or statues were made of His person, i.e. the Chakra-wheel, the empty throne, the fig-tree, the stupa and others all indicating important stages during His life. The deer-symbol derives its existence from the deer-park at Benares, where Buddha preached his first sermon.

m) Plate III v *The Rajasi*, (see also "Notes", Block 2, "Studies" Plate V4 etc.) a mythological animal from India, is considered in Siam as an emblem of Royalty. Hindu-scholars are inclined to consider the lion as Simha the vahāna of the mothergoddess Durga. In Buddhism the Lord Buddha is called the "Lion from the Sakya-family". In Buddhist sculpture the lion is frequently represented. The famous monument of Sarnath shows four lions, a wheel, a bull, an elephant and a horse. Buddhas throne is frequently supported by lions.

n) There is only one old Siamese coin bearing the clear mark of a *horse*. This was discovered recently and is published here for the first time (Plate II 9). Though we find a horse represented on several Mohenjo-Daro seals, there is no representation of a horse on the old Indian punch-marked coins. A Buddhist would be reminded by this symbol of the horse Kanthaka on which the Prince Sidhartha left his home at night. The horse is also a zodiacal sign. In connection with the animal-symbols it seems noteworthy that two animals very popular in Siam, the tiger and the water-buffalo, do not appear on any coin. This seems to prove that the coin-marks have been derived only from very ancient symbols and that there existed a certain tradition.

o) *Lotos-flower — and tree-symbols*. Plate III k and III t. These symbols are largely represented on old Siamese coins. In many cases it seems difficult to distinguish whether the respective

mark is designed to represent a lotos-flower, a circle of dots or a chakra-wheel. I am inclined to consider those marks on which the leaves or flowers branch off at certain intervals from other leaves or flowers as representation of trees, not as lotos flowers. As an example I refer to Plate III kS. ("Studies" Block I) Similar trees are found on the old Indian coins (Plate III k I) This is explained by Durgā-Prasād as the Vāta-tree. From a Buddhist point of view symbols of trees might signify the holy Fig-tree, under which Buddha received illumination whereas the Lotos, which is frequently represented on old Siamese coins, appear to the Buddhist as symbol of Buddha's birth and at the same time as symbol of purity.

p) Plate III l The "*pyramid of dots*" or *Rachavat* is explained by le May as a Sanskrit word and "used in Siamese to denote a fence which marks a Royal route or enclosure". Another translation is "Fence with multi-tiered umbrella at intervals". The word seems to express both symbols, the pyramid of dots and the pyramid-like shape of a Royal umbrella. This pyramid of dots appears on various old Siamese coins in different executions and designs. The number of dots varies from three to ten, and it must be noted that the pyramid is not always complete, but sometimes without a top with two dots in the highest row. Le May draws attention to the fact that a similar mark is found on old Indian punch-marked coins. And indeed, we find similar symbols on a great number of those Indian coins. The significance of these symbols has again been explained by various authors in different ways, by some as a hill or meru, by others as a stupa. Sir Walter Elliot believes that the old Indian symbol, which does not always consist of separate dots but of arches, or of crescents, signifies a chaitya. As a chaitya, or in Siamese a chedi, it would signify the Phra Meru, or the holy hill, a mythical mountain, whence the Bodhicitta loses itself in Sūnya. I think it probable that our mark of the Rachavat derives its existence from the old symbol of a chaitya and that—at a later time — the original significance was lost and the name of Rachavat was given to it in Siam with another meaning. Since a long time the pyramid of dots is painted on walls and doors of houses in Siam to ward off evil spirits.

q) The *Garuda*, as the *vahāna* of Vishnu, appears already on coins of Southern India. There are no doubts about the significance of this symbol. The fact that it was used as mark on coins of the Ayuthia period and again as late as in the reign of the Bangkok dynasty is an example how Hindu and Buddhist influences in Siam have been active side by side throughout the ages, although Siam is considered as an emporium for the Buddhist creed.

There are several more symbols illustrated on Plate III, the meaning and significance of which is partly not clear.

r) Plate III/n S seems to represent the Sun. It has been copied from a Northern bullet-coin. Many similar symbols are found on old Indian punch-marked coins, though Durgā Prasād is justified in remarking that the symbol of the Sun should show a round circle with rays protruding from the circumference, but without a dot in the centre. I must leave the question open, but I am convinced that many symbols shown by Durgā Prasād are meant to represent the Sun, as f.i. the symbol shown on Plate III/n I No. 24.

s) The meaning of the symbols illustrated on Plate III/h, o and p are unknown and any attempt at explanation would be merely speculation. They are included in the plate in order to show their similarity in each group.

t) Plate III/m No. 17 is found on Bar money from the North. There is a similar mark on the Mohenjo-Daro seals and again on Indian punch-marked coins. The symbol seems to represent a snake. It may signify the Naga, the pet of Siva or the Naga-King Mucilinda, which sheltered the Lord Buddha.

u) Plate III/u. The symbol No. 28 is taken from a Chieng-mai coin, on which it is distinctly visible, though never described before. I have two coins like Kneedler Plate VI/1-5 and like Le May Plate IV/4 which show the mark of a fish. The fish mark is found on the Mohenjo-Daro seals as well as on old Indian coins. The Fish has its place in Hindu mythology and is considered as sacred.

A great many symbols and marks remain for which at present no explanations can be given. I have drawn a number of the more important marks, and they are shown on Plate III. A number of them are similar to marks on old Indian coins, but their significance is doubtful. To some of these marks Durgā Prasād has attributed a Tantric significance. Actually, the resemblance of some marks with descriptions in Tantric texts is striking. But, as I said before, we should refrain from attributing a purely religious significance to symbols, either Hindu or Buddhist, unless there are compelling reasons for it. If a symbol which appears on old Indian coins corresponds to a Tantric formula, it is not proven that the same symbol appearing on the Mohenjo-Daro seals had the same significance at that time, i.e. about 2500 years earlier. On the other hand, I am unable to share Allen's view, who states that the symbols on old Indian punch-marked coins have *no* religious significance. Some may have and some may have not. The appearance of a reproduction of Shiva on the Mohenjo-Daro seals is rather in favour of the hypothesis that some of the oldest symbols *have* a religious significance.

Conclusion:

Utmost care and restraint are recommended in the attempt to explain symbols and marks on old Siamese coins. We have no written evidence as proofs of their significance. The names by which some marks are called now are not reliable. They have probably been relatively lately created by the "man in the street", who did not know anything about their origin.

I hope I have shown in this essay that a number of marks on our coins are of very great age. The fact that some have existed already about 5000 years ago gives an idea of the longevity of symbols. At the same time it gives us an impressive connection of our present days with the dark past and leads us to the common sources of all culture in Asia, which time and tide cannot destroy.

P.S.

During the time when this essay was already in print I have received—through the kind intermediary of Mr. J. J. Boeles—a communication from Professor George Coedès which is of great importance. The letter reads as follows: “Je m’intéresse à ces pièces (Note: this refers to all the coins illustrated on Plate I) depuis longtemps. On en a trouvé quelques-unes au Cambodge (G. Groslier, *Recherches sur les Cambodgiens*, pp. 37-38, fig. 8, p, q) et au cours de fouilles récentes dans l’Ouest de la Cochinchine sur un site qui remonte à l’époque du Fou-nan, on a découvert un grand nombre de pièces dont plusieurs étaient découpées en secteurs de cercle correspondant apparemment à des subdivisions de l’unité monétaire. Etant donnée la repartition de ces monnaies dans l’espace, de la Birmanie en Cochinchine, et de la date probable du site cochinchinois (où l’on a trouvé une médaille d’Antonin le Pieux, un cabochon sassanide, des intailles indiennes avec inscriptions du II au V siècle et un fragment de miroir chinois d’époque Han), mon impression est qu’elles doivent être mises en relation avec le Fou-nan.

L’explication des symboles pose un problème délicat. Les Nos. 1 et 2 (Note: of plate I) “reverse” devraient figurer sur la photo “Obverse” et vice-versa. La présence d’un cercle des perles encadrant le motif central comme sur les Nos. 3 à 5 est significative. Une fois la transposition faite, il devient clair que toutes les pièces “reverse” montre le même motif: sur les Nos. 3 à 5 qui paraissent plus anciens, ce motif ressemble à une édifice. Quant aux motifs “Obverse” si celui des Nos. 3 et 5 est clairement une conque, celui des Nos. 1 et 2 doit être un soleil levant. Je signale a toutes fins utiles que le motif du “sablier” (Hour-Glass) visible sur les Nos. 1 et 2 est identique à celui qui figure sur les sapeques chinoises des Han (type Wou-Chou) où il représente le chiffre 5.”

These remarks seem to be doubly interesting as in view of the excavations in West Cochinchina the great age of our Siamese coins shown on Plate 1 has been proved beyond doubt. With regard to the explanation, which the learned Professor gives in connection with the “Sun”-design it is noteworthy that according to information from Mr. J.J. Boeles, the Museum in Calcutta possesses one piece (apparently similar to our Plate I 1 and I 2) which is described there as “Rising Sun of Burma”.

Plate I

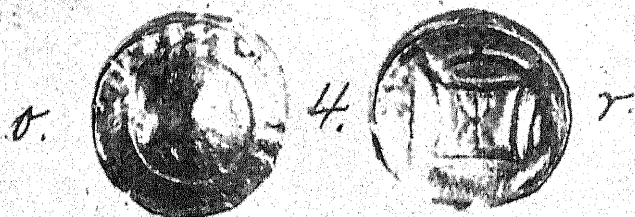
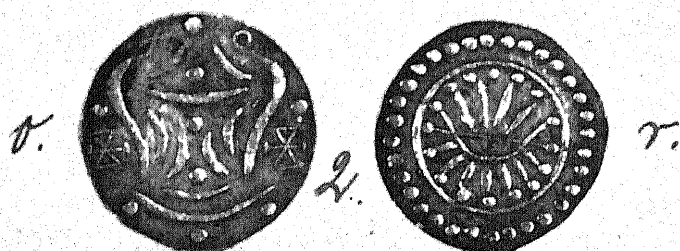
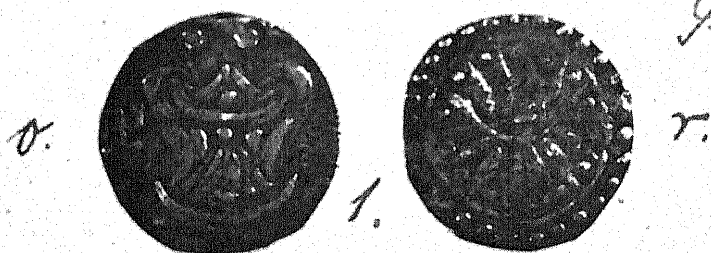
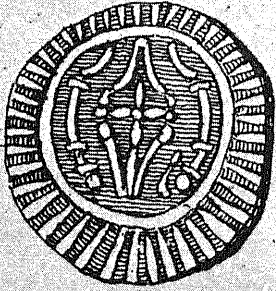
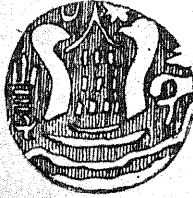


Plate II

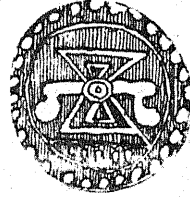


1.



o.

2.



r.

4.



o.



r.



o.



r.

3.

5.



o.



r.

6.



o.



r.

7.



o.



r.



9.

ca. 1:10.

14.7 gm.

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