
THE COLLECTION OF NEPAL COINS AND MEDALS
PROPERTY OF THE LATE NICHOLAS RHODES



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Nicholas Rhodes (1946-2011) has been described as a “numismatic giant ... a scholar and collector of immense importance” (JONS No.208). His specialist numismatic interests embraced the currency of the whole Himalayan region - from Kashmir and Ladakh in the west, through Nepal, Tibet, Bhutan, to Assam and the Hindu states of north-east India. He was elected Honorary Fellow of the Royal Numismatic Society in 2002 and served as Secretary General of the Oriental Numismatic Society from 1997.

Having started collecting coins from an early age, his lifelong passion for oriental coins started in 1962 with the coins of Nepal, which at the time presented the opportunity to build a meaningful collection and provided a fertile field for original research. ‘The Coinage of Nepal’, written in collaboration with close friends Carlo Valdetaro and Dr. Karl Gabrisch and published by the Royal Numismatic Society in 1989 (henceforth referred to in this brochure as ‘RGV’), is the standard reference work for this eye-catching series and “may be considered as Nicholas Rhodes’ magnum opus” (JONS No.208).

The Nicholas Rhodes collection is considered to be the finest collection of Nepal coins currently in existence. Totalling approximately 3500 pieces, the collection is well documented and comprehensive; indeed, Nicholas was renowned for his painstaking ability to track down every known variety of a series. On the one hand it includes some magnificent highlights of the greatest rarity. On the other hand, as a whole, it is a valuable document that tracks the history of Nepal through its coinage from the 6th century AD. In this context, the tiny silver Dams (believed to be the smallest coins in the world) or the early coins made of local metals and bearing images of intriguing local deities are equally important.

Spink is delighted to be offering the Nicholas Rhodes collection of Nepal coins and medals as a single sale through private treaty. The buyer will receive a full listing of the coins in catalogue format compiled by the renowned expert Wolfgang Bertsch, together with copies of ‘The Coinage of Nepal’. Please enjoy looking through the highlights in this brochure and, if you feel you are the right buyer to take the collection into the future, please contact me to arrange a viewing.

Barbara Mears

Email: bmears@spink.com

Tel: +44 (0)20 7563 4000 / 4091

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THE EARLIEST COINAGE OF NEPAL

THE LICCHAVI PERIOD (C.576-750)

The Licchavis were an influential tribe originating in Vaishali in northern Bihar. In the early 4th century the founder of the Gupta dynasty, Chandragupta I, married a Licchavi princess Kumaradevi. The alliance was considered so important that their son, Samudragupta, struck coins commemorating the union, and described himself as Licchavidauhitra (the grandson of the Licchavis from his mother's side) on the Allahabad Pillar inscription. After this, their fortunes waned and they came to Kathmandu, attacking and defeating the last Kirat king, Gasti, and seizing his land.

The coinage is intriguing as it is not dated, but names kings (often by their title only) and deities, in a script derived from that used by the Guptas. Contemporary records refer to them as Pana or Tamrapana (copper Pana). There must have been much trade in the area to justify a coinage, but the only materials available locally were base metals such as copper, iron and lead, and the coins are composed of these metals in varying proportions.

Amshuvarman and Jishnu Gupta were both Licchavi rulers of Nepal in the early 7th century, and the use of their names on some coins helped to provide a framework for their dating. They were also accurately described by Chinese travellers to Nepal in the 8th century. Working with this information and the coins themselves, Nicholas Rhodes established a progressive order for the series, dividing them into eight main groups (A-H), plus two later groups. The Rhodes collection contains over 400 Licchavi coins, the largest collection of these fascinating early coins outside of Nepal.



THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD (C.750-1540)

It is curious that from the early 8th century to the mid 16th century very few coins are known from Nepal. There are many references in contemporary documents to amounts of money and even the striking of coins. However, the coins themselves are elusive. The pioneering article by N.G.Rhodes and C.Valdettaro "Coins in Medieval Nepal" (Numismatic Chronicle, vol. XVI, 1976, pp. 158-166 and plate 35) represents the first attempt to identify specific coin types struck in Nepal during the long period lasting from the end of Licchavi rule to the early years of Malla control. The coin types described in this article are all represented in the Rhodes collection and are extremely rare and never before offered as a group.



Anonymous gold Sivakas, and silver Dams, believed to have been part of a new currency system introduced by King Sivadeva (c.1098-1126). Both are very small, the Sivakas weighing under 1g. and the Dams between 0.32 and 0.46g (RGV 160-171).



Copper coins believed to date from the same period (RGV 172 & 173). Identified by Nicholas Rhodes.



THE MALLA DYNASTY (1540-1768)

During this period, the Kathmandu Valley was divided into three separate kingdoms: Kathmandu, Patan and Bhatgaon. The earliest coins were called Tankas, made of fine silver with a weight standard of around 10g. They were modelled on coins of the Muslim Sultans of Delhi or Bengal with a design derived from Arabic script (contained within a circle of beads).

The earliest Tankas were struck at Dolakha shortly before 1550. The coinage was short-lived and all coins are rare.

In 1640 the currency was reformed and from then on all coins bore the name of issuing king and the date. The standard unit was the Mohur, struck on a lower weight standard of 5.4g.

All coins illustrated x1.5 unless otherwise stated.



Kingdom of Dolakha

Indra Simha and Queen Vijaya Lakshmi (c.1540-48)

One of the earliest and rarest Tankas of Nepal, the first Malla coin to mention the name of a queen.

Legend translates as 'of Jaya Indra Simha Deva Lord of Dolakha and of Queen Vijaya Lakshmi Mahadevi, who is like Śrī' (RGV 176)



Anonymous early Tanka (issued c.1605-39)

The legend in crude Arabic, taken from part of a legend found on a coin of 'Ala ud-Din Khilji of Delhi. This is arranged in a circle around the legend 'Śrī Śrī' in a central circle on the obverse, and a lion above an elephant within two intersecting squares on the reverse (RGV 190).



Siva Simha of Kathmandu (c.1578-1619), Tanka.

The fields of this coin are decorated with a version of the legends found on the Tankas of Ghiyas ud-Din Mahmud Shah III of Bengal (1526-32). The Arabic is actually upside down, but above this on the reverse is a Newari legend 'Śrī Śrī Śivasim' (RGV 206)

All these coins were withdrawn from circulation in 1640 and are exceptionally rare today.

COINS OF THE MALLA DYNASTY STRUCK ON THE MOHAR STANDARD

Jaya Pratap Malla (1641-74), square 2-Mohur (RGV 258)



A beautiful and rare coin, the only Double Mohur struck by any king of the Malla Dynasty. The design was copied from a Rupee of the Mughal emperor Jahangir. However, it was made uniquely Nepali by the inclusion of the trident (an attribute of Siva) on the obverse and the sword (emblem of sovereignty) on the reverse. These symbols are found on Nepali coins to this day. (RGV 258, illustrated x2)



Jaya Pratap Malla (1641-74), (RGV 262), a Suki (Quarter-Mohur) of same ruler. The reverse inscription names the 'Princess of Behar,' referring to the fact that the queen of Pratap Malla was the sister of Prana Narayan, king of Cooch Behar.

Jaya Chakravartendra Malla (1669), Mohar, an attractive and original design.

Obv. Conch and discus (attributes of Vishnu) in central circle, arrows to left, and bow right.

Rev. Elephant goad and noose (attribute of Siva) within inverted triangle, between lotus and mace.

Issued at a time when his father, Pratap Malla, was on pilgrimage to India. The Vamsavali records that during his absence each of his four sons were to rule for one year, but Jaya Chakravartendra died soon after his father had left, apparently because of the inclusion of the bow and arrow on his coins.



Jaya Parthivendra Malla (1680-87), Mohar, modelled on contemporary coins of the Mughals, Newari legends between pseudo-Arabic script (RGV 273)



Jaya Parthivendra Malla (1680-87), Mohar, Yantra design of two intersecting squares (RGV 274).

During this period trade was becoming more important. These two coins show different ways of making coins acceptable to users of all religions, particularly the Muslims of India. Neither has images of humans, deities or animals. The first copies closely the design of Mughal coins, the second features a Yantra. Hindu or Buddhist Yantras were substitutes for anthropomorphic images, in code form, that could be decoded by initiates. Hence, the Nepalese could honour their deities while not offending potential users of their coinage.



The first appearance of the asta mangala (the eight auspicious symbols of Buddhism) is found on this Mohur. The symbols are found around the edge in the spaces formed by the squares. Clockwise from top right: The lotus flower, the banner of victory, the vase of holy water, two fly whisks, two golden fish, the umbrella of sovereignty, the conch shell, the endless knot.



Jaya Bhupalendra Malla (1687-1700), Mohar. NS 809
The earliest coin type to use eight petals arranged as a lotus to house elements of the design. Known as Chyasing Mohurs, the form became very popular in Tibet. The reverse has one of the asta mangala in each petal (RGV 281).

Jaya Bhupalendra Malla (1687-1700), Suki, NS 808
(Quarter Mohur), naming Riddhi Lakshmi, the mother of Bhupalendra, who was regent for her son during his minority.

The reverse features a mirror (RGV 286).



Jaya Bhaskara Malla (1701-15), Mohar, NS 821,
with title Nepāreśvara Girindra (Lord of Nepal and King of the Hills).

A coin in particularly good condition (RGV 292)

Jaya Bhaskara Malla (1701-15), Suki, NS 818,
This coin is unusual as it is dated three years before Bhaskara Malla's accession. Rhodes believed it may have been struck to mark his installation as heir apparent (RGV 300)



Jaya Prakash Malla (1735-46)
Half Mohar, NS 856 (RGV 330)

Most coinage issued during the first reign of Jaya Prakash was debased, so much so that the Dalai Lama wrote to the Nepalese king complaining about the coins sent to Lhasa. However, the Half-Mohur, left, is almost 100% silver, and extremely rare, suggesting it was struck for presentation.

Jyoti Prakash Malla (1746-50)
Debased Mohur (approx. 50% silver), NS 866 (RGV 345)





Jaya Prakash Malla (c.1750-68)

Gold and Silver Mohars of his second reign, dated NS 873

The first gold Mohur of the Mallas, and its silver counterpart.



Rhodes notes that the gold Mohurs have only been found in Europe, and concludes that they may have been struck specially to be sent to the East India Company in 1766 as part of a ceremonial gift.

(RGV 352 & 362)



THE KINGDOM OF PATAN

SOME INTERESTING DESIGN VARIANTS



Siddhinarasimha (1619-61), Suki,
NS 774 (RGV 375).

Lion above date on reverse representing the last part of the king's name: simha

Jaya Yoga Narendra Malla (1684-1705)

Two Mohurs with identical obverses; a swastika formed of squares with legend interspersed.

On left dated NS 805, featuring a central kalasa (vase of holy water) (RGV 395)

On right dated NS 808, with a vermillion casket as centrepiece (RGV 396)



A Half-Mohar of same ruler, NS 805, obverse legend dividend by pseudo-Persian characters, a vermillion casket in centre of reverse, rare (RGV 402)



Riddhi Narasimha Malla (1715-17), Mohur, NS 835 mandala type with six petals around central circle bearing image of a lion or Narasimha (RGV 445 var).



Jaya Vishnu Malla (1729-1745), Mohar, 5.47g, NS 849, four petal type (RGV 460).

Jaya Vishnu Malla (1729-1745), Mohar, 5.27g, NS 851, rare type with obvers legend between pseudo-Persian characters and unusual textured background (RGV 468)



Dala Mardana Shah (1764-65), Mohar, NS 884 Dala Mardana was the brother of the Shah ruler Prithvi Narayan who at the time was blockading the valley in an effort to take control. He was sent as his brother's representative in Patan and appointed king. His coins are very rare (RGV 507)

Jaya Tej Narasimha Malla (1765-80)
Mohur, NS 866, history does not recall how Jaya Tej Narasimha became king, but his mother had some influence. His coins are also very rare and interesting (RGV 510)



THE KINGDOM OF BHATGAON



Most coins of Bhatgaon were modelled on the 'Ghiyas-ud-Din' type, as the coin of **Jaya Bhupatindra Malla** below (RGV 532). His Half-Mohur of NS 816 (right) is a special issue giving the date of his coronation (RGV 543)



Above:
Jagatprakash Malla
(1644-73), a rare Suki,
NS 775 (RGV 518)



Below: **Jaya Ranajit Malla** (1722-69), a rare Mohar, copying an earlier issue of Chakravartendra Malla of Kathmandu, possibly the design was useful as a talisman (RGV 562)



Left: **Jaya Ranajit Malla**, a special coronation issue Half-Mohur, NS 842 (RGV 567)



THE SHAH DYNASTY (1749-1911)

Prithvi Narayan Shah (in Kathmandu 1768-1775)

When Prithvi Narayan conquered the Kathmandu Valley he retained the existing currency system, but devalued the debased coins issued by the Malla kings and they were gradually withdrawn.

The Shah kings of Nepal considered themselves as incarnations of the Hindu god Vishnu. His four emblems: *cakra* (disk), *gada* (mace or club), *shankha* (conch) and *padma* (lotus) appear on the obverse of nearly all gold and silver coins of this dynasty.



This Duitole Asarphi dated SE 1693 (23.02g) is struck using the same reverse die as the Duitole Asarphis of Surendra, dated SE 1769 (1847). This, and the style of the lettering, indicates that it was not struck by Prithvi Narayan, but was made posthumously and exclusively for Jang Bahadur Rana to present to VIP's during his journey to Europe in AD 1850. It is nevertheless extremely rare, only three examples being known to date (RGV 596).



This Half-Mohur, also dated SE 1693, 2.74g, is more typical of the coins struck by Prithvi Narayan Shah himself (RGV 603). It features a legend written between pseudo-Persian letters and is also very rare.

Pratap Simha Shah (1735-46), gold 2-Mohar, dated SE 1699, 11.48g, naming the goddess Guhyeshvari (RGV 628)



Rana Bahadur Shah (1777-99), 2-Mohur, SE 1711, 10.84g, a small but rare gold Ani (1/8- Mohar), 0.68g, and a silver Suki, SE 1707 (RGV 657, 673, 710)



Girvan Yuddha Vikram Shah (1799-1816), gold 2-Mohar, SE 1733, type 2, 11.08g (RGV 726- this coin). In 1799 Rana Bahadur abdicated in favour of his young son and left on a pilgrimage to Benares.



Girvan Yuddha Vikram Shah (1799-1816), Left: Half-Mohar naming the young king dated SE 1732, 2.75g. Right: Suki, dated SE 1738, 1.38g, naming Goraksha, who he married in 1813. She was the mother of the next king, Rajendra. Rhodes wrote “unique” on the ticket with this coin (RGV 741, 755 - this coin)



In 1804 Rana Bahadur returned from pilgrimage and introduced a new series of coinage in fine silver to a different weight standard. These issues were only struck for a few years and are rare. Left: 3-Mohar, SE 1725, 16.39g. Centre: 1½-Mohar, SE 1726, 8.24g. both struck in the name of Girvan Yuddha. Right: 3/8-Mohar, SE 1726, 2.10g, naming new wife of Rana Bahadur, ‘Lalitesvari’. Of highest rarity, possibly unique (RGV 767 – this coin, 771 – this coin, 800 – this coin)



Rajendra Vikram Shah (1816-47), came to the throne aged only three. Left: Suki, in the name of his wife Queen Samrajya Lakshmi Devi, SE 1757, 1.38g. Centre: Half-Mohar, type 1, SE 1741, 2.73g, in his own name. Right: Ani, undated, 0.71g (RGV 839, 850, 855)



NOTABLE COINS OF SURENDRA VIKRAM SHAH (1847-81)

Surendra Vikram Shah issued many innovative and extremely decorative coins during his long reign.



A Duitole Asarphi (2-Tola), dated SE 1796, 23.05g. The obverse names his son and heir Trailokya Vir Vikram Shah, who died in 1878, and so never became king (RGV -). A paper written by Nicholas Rhodes in the JONS (issue 194, Winter 2008), describes this previously unknown issue, purchased by him at an auction of Baldwin, Ma, Gillio & Monetarium, in August 2007, lot 703. It remains the only coin of this type recorded. Illustrated x2.



An Ek Tola Asarphi (1-Tola), dated SE 1771, 11.54g. This coin names Trailokya Raja Lakshmi Devi, the mother of Trailokya Vir Vikram and the senior queen of Surendra (RGV 953). Particularly attractive with its reverse design of an offering vase within a 6-pointed star and the zig-zag pattern in the obverse margin, linking it to the presentation pieces of Surendra Vikram. Extremely rare. The Rhodes collection also includes type 1 of this coin (RGV 952). Illustrated x2.



Above: A spectacular Duitole Asarphi dated for the first year of Surendra Vikram's reign, SE 1771, 23.12g. The reverse die is the same as that used for the presentation set given to Queen Victoria on the visit of Jang Bahadur to England in 1850. It is probable that this coin was also used as a presentation piece during the same visit. The condition is exceptional and it is extremely rare (RGV 937)

Below: A Duitole Asarphi of normal type, dated SE 1794, 23.05g, equally rare and ex Valdetaro collection, Sept. 2003 (RGV 940)



During this period, copper coins became more acceptable in Kathmandu. In 1865 a series of these was introduced to replace the tiny silver coins that had been used for small change previously. Some early issues are rare. On left: a copper coin dated SE 1787, 5.08g, struck from gold dies of a Half-Bakla Asarphi, Rhodes numbered this RGV 1084a in his personal copy of 'The Coinage of Nepal, it is very rare, perhaps unique. Centre: a rare 2-Paisa, SE 1788 (RGV 1074) and 1-Paisa, SE 1787 (RGV 1087 – this coin). Right: a Half-Paisa, SE 1802, only struck for inclusion in presentation sets, very rare (RGV 1107).



SOME RARE COINS OF PRITHVI VIR VIKRAM SHAH(1881-1911)

By the end of the 19th century a full range of beautiful coins in gold, silver and copper were being issued in Nepal. Surely some of the most beautiful coins in the world.



Above left, a Duitole Asarphi of SE 1829, 23.20g. (RGV 1124 – this coin). Above right, a Bakla Asarphi (Tola) of SE 1820, 12.39g. (RGV 1135). Below left a Half-Mohur of SE 1805, 2.78g. (RGV 1159);. Below centre, a 4-Mohur of SE 1817 (RGV 1186 - this coin). Near right and far right, a Half-Mohur and Suki of SE 1833 (RGV 1247 & 1256 – this coin). These last two struck from polished dies for inclusion in presentation sets.



Early Trial Paisa, struck in 1888, dated SE1810, 5.23g, type 1, full titles of king (RGV 1271a). About uncirculated with lustre, rare.

Early Trial Paisa, struck in 1888, dated VS 1945, 5.09g, type 4, with title Bhavānī Gorkha Sarkār around trident, and paduka (two footprints) above crossed kukris on reverse (RGV 1274). Wonderful dark tone, also rare.



MODERN ISSUES AND MEDALS

The Rhodes collection contains a full range of 20th century coin and later currency issues that did not feature in 'The Coinage of Nepal,' as this covered coins dated from the earliest times until 1911. The many interesting coins that were struck after this time, are found in exceptional condition in the collection. The rarest formed the subject of papers written by Nicholas Rhodes. Likewise, the collection contains 17 exceptional medallions and 27 campaign medals that are now virtually impossible to find.



Tribhuvan Vir Vikrama, second reign (1951-1955), gold Ashrafi, 11.66g, VS 2010 (1953), rare portrait type for this ruler (KM 744)

Mahendra Vir Vikram Shah (1955-71), 25-Paisa, VS 2017 (1960). Subject of a paper by Nicholas Rhodes, in Numismatics International Bulletin, Vol. 26, No. 8, August 1991. A special strike in silver for the Royal Palace, no cupro-nickel 25-Paisa coins were struck with this date.



Birendra Vir Vikrama (1971-2001), gold proof portrait Asarphi, 11.66g, dated VS 2031 (1974), but struck for the year of the Child 1981 (KM 852)



Birendra Vir Vikrama (1971-2001), gold Quarter-Ounce Asarphi, dated VS 2052 (1995), and tiny Asarphi of 0.3g, dated VS2057 /2000, both with image of Buddha (KM 1081 & 1129)



Uniface proof Medal in the name of Prime Minister **Chandra Shamsher Jang Bahadur Rana** (1901-29), silver, 15.08g, VS 1971 (1914) Described by Nicholas Rhodes in Spink's Numismatic Circular, April 1984. Probably struck in Birmingham, it was designed as a trial for a medal to be inserted into the marble floor of a temple in Kathmandu as penance. Extremely rare with an interesting provenance.





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For more information please contact

Barbara Mears | bmears@spink.com | +44 (0)20 7563 4091

Spink London | 67-69 Southampton Row | Bloomsbury | WC1B 4ET