



Research Paper

MAGHA-SIRI/SIRIYĀ-MAGHA/MAGHA

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ABSTRACT

The present paper seeks to prove that the coins found from Malhār bearing the legends “Raño Magha sirisa” and “siriya Magha” were issued by the founder of the Magha dynasty having the proper name Magha.

KEYWORDS: Malhār, Raño Magha sirisa, siriya Magha, Magha dynasty, Magha

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It took a scholar of the calibre of Ajay Mitra Shastri to publish the largest hoard of the Magha coins ever discovered.^[1] This hoard brought to light a coin which allowed the ascertainment of the genesis of the dynastic appellation Magha. This coin, typologically resembling the standardised Magha coins, bore on the obverse the name and regal title of the issuer.^[2] The only plausible restoration of the incomplete legend, as done by Shastri, is “[Ma]haraja Ma[gha]”.^[3] The presence of this progenitor of the Magha family, apart from Kauśāmbī, is made conspicuous in Malhār by a few coins. Lead coins carrying the legend “Raño Magha sirisa” and a copper coin reading “siriya Magha” have been discussed by S.B. Majumdar in a monograph on the coins of Malhār.^[4] These aforementioned coins seem to belong to Mahārāja Magha of Kauśāmbī.^[5] *Siri* and *siriya* are both Prakrit forms of the honorific title “śrī”. Coins of Śivamagha are known from Malhār itself bearing the legend “Śivamagha sirisa”.^[6] Here *siri* cannot be taken as part of the name of the king, for the stand alone name Śivamagha from numismatic and epigraphic sources found from Bandhogarh,^[7] Fatehpur^[8] and Kauśāmbī^[9] is already known to us. So *siri*, in the case of *Magha sirisa* and *Śivamagha sirisa*, should be taken as just an honorific term. Same is the case with *siriya*. *Siriya* can be converted to Sanskrit *śrīya*, which itself is the collateral form of *śrī*.^[10] Thus, from Malhār we have coins bearing the name Magha with the honorific title *śrī* being used both before and after the name of the regal figure. We have the earliest King and Queen type coins of the Imperial Guptas in which the name Kumāradevī is both prefixed and suffixed by the honorific term *śrī*.^[11] The same practice seems to have been followed in the construction of the legend on the Malhār coins of King Magha. Thus, it is safe to conclude that we have the progenitor of the Magha dynasty, known to us through his numismatic issues from both Malhār and Kauśāmbī, issuing coins displaying his name being adorned with the regal epithets, viz., *Rājā* and *Mahārāja* and prakrit variants of the honorific title *śrī*.^[12]

NOTES AND REFERENCES:

- [1]. A.M. Shastri, *Kauśāmbī Hoard of Magha Coins*, Nagpur Vidyapeeth Mudranalaya, Nagpur, 1979, p. xi.
- [2]. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
- [3]. *Ibid.*
- [4]. S.B. Majumdar, *Coins of Malhār*, IIRNS Publications, Mumbai, 2000, pp. 6-7 and Plate IV, nos. 18-24.
- [5]. A.M. Shastri (*Early History of the Deccan: Problems and Perspectives*, Sundeep Prakashan, Delhi, 1987, p. 152) reading the legend as *siri-Yāmagha*, ascribed the coin to a king having ‘quite a new and rather strange name among the Magha’, Yāmagha. P.L. Gupta (“Three Malhār Coins Revisited”, in *Numismatic Digest*, Vol. XIV, IIRNS Publications, Mumbai, 1990, pp. 10-11), however, took *Siriya* to be part of the name of the issuer. S.B. Majumdar (*op.cit.*, p. 7), too, seems to take *Siriya* Magha as the name of the king.
- [6]. S.B. Majumdar, *op.cit.*, p. 8.
- [7]. *Vide* Fragmentary inscription of Mahārāja Śivamagha from Bandhogarh (*Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXXI, p. 184).
- [8]. in *The Journal of the Numismatic Society of India*, Vol. II, 1940, pp. 105-106.
- [9]. Coins of Śivamagha I (A.M. Shastri, *Kauśāmbī Hoard of Magha Coins*, Nagpur Vidyapeeth Mudranalaya, Nagpur, 1979, pp.45-51) and Śivamagha II (*Ibid.*, pp. 58-62) have been reported from Kauśāmbī. A.M. Shastri (*Early History of the Deccan: Problems and Perspectives*, Sundeep Prakashan, Delhi, 1987, p. 152) pointed out that a couple of coins resembling closely those of Śivamagha from Malhār, one of them clearly attributable to Śivamagha on the basis of legend, have been reported from the Tripurī region also. Furthermore, two terracotta sealings from Bhīṭā carry the legend *Mahārāja-Gautamīputrasya śrī-Śivamaghasya* (J. Marshall (ed.), *Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report, 1911-12*, Superintendent Government Printing, Calcutta, 1915, p. 51) and one

- sealing from Vārānasi bears the legend *Rājña(h) Kautsīputrasya śrī-Śivamaghasya* (in *The Journal of the Numismatic Society of India*, Vol. XXIII, 1961, p. 412).
- [10]. M. Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1986, p. 1100.
- [11]. A.S. Altekar, *The Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, Numismatic Society of India, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, 1957, p. 27. A parallel can be drawn, too, with the coins of Bhavanāga where *śrī* appears both before (H.V. Trivedi, *Catalogue of the Coins of the Nāga Kings of Padmāvātī*, The Department of Archaeology & Museums, Gwalior, 1957, pp. 31-37) and after (W. Pieper, *Ancient Indian Coins Revisited*, Classical Numismatic Group, Lancaster, 2013, p. 360) the name of the king.
- [12]. P.L. Gupta (in *The Journal of the Numismatic Society of India*, Vol. XXXVIII, 1976, pp. 46-55) had noted 1137 Magha coins from the two lots of 552 and 596 copper coins obtained by B.M. Vyas from a villager who resided in the vicinity of the ancient site of Kauśāmbī. Reading the three letters *ra*, *ja* and *ma* on a coin and considering *Rājā Magha* or *Rājamagha* as two possible restorations, he expressed that there is every possibility of Rājamagha being a proper name. In the editorial note to P.L. Gupta's paper, A.M. Shastri (*Ibid.*, p. 57) correctly pointed out that this coin too belonged to King Magha. Shastri even noted the possibility of the full legend on Gupta's coin being the same as the legend on the solitary coin of King Magha found from the hoard published by him. On another coin P.L. Gupta deciphered the last three letters as *śrī*, *ma* and *gha* and suggested the possibility of a letter having existed before *śrī*. In case the complete legend was just *śrī Magha*, then a direct parallel can be drawn with the Malhār coin displaying the prakrit equivalent of this legend, *siriyā* Magha. It is probable that, instead of one, there were two letters before *śrī*. In that case those two *aksharas* would surely have been *ra* and *ja*, making the complete legend as *Rājā śrī Magha*, and thus, having the same components as the legend appearing on the lead coins from Malhār, albeit arranged in a different way. It must be pointed out that in the context of the copper coin discussed by S.B. Majumdar (*op.cit.*, p. 7), she had stated that the possibility of the word *Raño* appearing before *siriyā* Magha cannot be discounted. Either way, the uncanny resemblance of the legends of all these coins, coming both from Malhār and Kauśāmbī, seem to point to the conclusion that they were all issued by the same ruler.