

A Sketch of the Second Silver Plate found at Badakshân. By ALEXANDER CUNNINGHAM, Esq.

In the seventh volume of the *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, at page 1047, was published a sketch of an ancient silver plate, obtained by the late Dr. Lord in Badakshân. In a letter to me, enclosing a drawing of a second silver plate, which he had fortunately obtained, he mentioned a fact regarding the first plate which is worth preserving; namely, that it "had been an heir-loom in the family of the Meers of Badakshân, who claim to be the descendants of Alexander the Great; and it had been sold by them in their distress, when they were conquered and imprisoned by Meer Morad Beg of Kunduz, to Atma Ram, his Dêwân Beghi."

Regarding the second plate, I cannot do better than quote Dr. Lord's own words: "I was aware there was a second *patera*, but I failed in all my attempts to get it when I was before in the country. I have now however succeeded; but find, to my astonishment, that its subject is not Grecian, but pure Persian; probably Shápûr killing a lion, as seen in the Persepolitan figures. The *patera* is pure silver; weight 104 kaldâr rupees, (312 drs.) the workmanship of unequal merit; the heads of both man and horse, particularly the latter, appear to me far superior to the other parts; you will notice the peculiar way in which the horse's tail is tied up."

I can add nothing to Dr. Lord's description, except that the original silver plate is 11·2 inches in diameter; and that there is a short inscription of dotted letters on the back of the plates; which appear to me to resemble very closely the Pehlvi characters of the Sassanian coins.

Dotted inscription on the back of Dr. Lord's plate. For the *facsimile* copy of this inscription, I am indebted to the kindness of Lady Sale.



In the four corners of the sketch, I have represented four coins, illustrative of the subject on the silver plate.

No. 2 is the obverse of a silver Sassanian coin, published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, vol. vi. 14, fig. 1, by Mr. Prinsep,



570a



Original 112 inches in diameter.

from his own cabinet. The king's crescent head-dress is the same as that on the silver plate; and the position of the right arm seems to indicate, that it must have pointed a spear towards the indistinct object which is seen between the horse's fore legs, and which is probably the lion of the plate.

No. 3 is the reverse of an early Mahomedan copper coin, published by Mr. James Prinsep, as fig. 2, pl. 14, vol. vi, of his Journal. The obverse has a head and some illegible letters. I have lately procured a similar copper coin, on which the horseman faces to the right; on the obverse is an inscription in ornamental Cufic characters, "*Us sultan ul azem Ala-ud-dunya wa ud dîn*;" and above the horseman on the reverse are the remains of the letters of the name; and between the horse's legs is the word *بامیان* *Bâmiân*, the place of coinage. I suppose this coin to belong to Ala-ud-din Husên, Ghorî, who was called the Incendiary, after having mercilessly destroyed Ghazni, and put an end to the Ghaznvide dynasty.* The horseman I believe to have been copied from the coins of the Hindu kings of Lahore, of which No. 5 in the lower corner to the right is a silver specimen of Syâlapati Deva.

No. 4, in the left lower corner, is a gold coin of one of the later Guptas, on which the subject is the same as that represented on the plate; the only difference being that on the coin the horseman is using a sword instead of a lance. This coin may date about A. D. 500. The earlier coins of the Gupta family also display the same subject; but on them the lion is attacked by a bowman on foot; and on the reverse, the goddess Lakshmi is seen sitting upon the vanquished animal.

The subject represented on the plate, and on the coins of the Guptas, is then substantially the same; namely, a hero-king overcoming a

* A large hoard of the Indian gold coins of his nephew, the celebrated Mahomed Ghori, the first Mahomedan king of India, has lately been found in the Huzâra country. About one-fourth of the gold coins are of "*Sri-man Kumdra Pala Deva*"—the remaining three-fourths being of Mahomed Ghori. They are highly curious, as proving that the Musulman conqueror was content to have his name only represented on the coinage of the country, without changing the Brahmanical character of the coin. On the obverse is the seated figure of Durga, and on the reverse, in Deva Nagari characters, is the legend, "*Sri Mahajâina Mahamada Sâmâ*," for Sri Moaz-ad-din Mahummud Sâm.

lion. The Guptas besides, were contemporary with the most flourishing period of the Sassanian monarchy, from A. D. 350 to 500, and even an interchange of presents took place between them and the Sassanian kings; but which however both parties mention as tribute.

But the coincidence of subject on the coins of the Guptas and Sassanians becomes more striking, when we see that the sculptures, gems, and coins of the latter represent the lion being attacked by a hero on foot. A gem published by Ouseley in the *Oriental Collections*, represents the Sassanian king Balash, or Balasces, on horseback, exactly in the same way in which the kings Chandra Gupta and Kumara Gupta Mahendra are represented upon the Indian coins. But the most curious circumstance is, that we can trace this same horseman from his first appearance on the coins of the Bactrian king Mayas,* (whom I confidently hope to be able to identify with Demetrius, the son of Euthydemus,) through the coins of Azas and Azilisas, Undopherras, and Abalgasus, down to the Indo-Parthian king Arsaces; and then through the Sassanian sculptures, gems, and coins, and through the coins of the Hindoo Guptas of Kanoj, and the Pâla family of Lahôr, down through the Mahomedan coinage of the Ghaznivides, and through the Pathan coinage of India, to the time of Mahmud, the cotemporary of Timur; or from B. C. 200 to A. D. 1400, for a period of 1600 years. All this I undertake to make good, when I shall publish my account of the native coinages of India.

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Lucknow, 25th June, 1841.

* I beg to refer my readers to a paper in No. 96 of the *Asiatic Society's Journal*, in which the identification of Mayas with Demetrius was first maintained in opposition to the theory of Mons. Raoul-Rochette, and others. My friend Lieut. Cunningham has, I am gratified to find, adopted my views, as stated in the paper above noted; views however which he is infinitely better qualified than myself to maintain by sound historical argument.

