

Monetary history is reflected in the money in circulation during any given period in history. The medieval period in India is no exception. Money that was in circulation in the past is often found accumulated in a coin hoard or a treasure trove, which, in effect, portray a distinct profile of money belonging a particular period that was withdrawn from circulation, either based on a specific plan or intention or because of an accidental loss. A hoard is, by definition, a group of coins or other valuables concealed as a unit. The essential feature of a coin hoard is that the coins comprising it should have been brought together at the time when it was concealed/lost. But at the same time, it may be noted that hoards are not the only form in which coins are lost. They were casually dropped or lost all the time, and since metal is in varying degrees resistant to corrosion, a proportion are eventually found. In the present discourse, the focus is solely on coin hoards, keeping casual finds beyond its purview. Now, one may raise the point: 'what is the size of an ideal hoard?' In fact, there is no minimum or maximum limit for the size of a hoard, but it is difficult to suppose that anyone would deliberately conceal only one or two coins; however, technically speaking even such a small number of coins can be regarded as a hoard. The majority of hoards probably contain between 50 and 100 coins, but a fair number exceed 1,000 and a few are much larger (Grierson 1975, 138). Less than 50 coins accumulated together, lost and buried, may be termed as a minor hoard.

These hoards can also be categorized into different classes and sub-classes depending upon the purpose or situation behind the formation of a particular hoard. Though hoards and accumulations of single finds are, for the most part, less interesting than coins in any collection (coins in collections are chosen precisely for a specific purpose), yet they are the numismatist's most valuable single guide to classification and dating, and are virtually the sole guide to coinage in circulation. Each and every hoard can be expected to supply the numismatist and historian with different kinds of information because the coins in it represent samples of coin population of any particular period in the past. If one carefully looks into the group of coin hoards representing a sole period of history, it sheds interesting light on monetary history as well as the socio-economic scenario of the period represented.

In the present discourse, an endeavour has been made to use a new approach towards an analytical study of the coin hoards (both published and unpublished) belonging to the Bengal Sultanate (1204–1576 CE), in order to restructure the monetary history of the period. Systematic study and critical analysis of the coin hoards belonging to a particular series has always been neglected by the numismatists of India, except for a few works,¹ even though data derived from a group of hoards can provide wealth of authentic information towards the monetary history of any period. In case of the Bengal Sultanate period, lack of contemporary written sources also ignited the necessity to delve into the evidence of coins and inscriptions to reconstruct the socio-economic and socio-political history of the period. As a result, an investigation into information on the published coin hoards (published since the nineteenth century in different journals and periodicals) began, and

as a result forty-five published coin hoards (including twelve minor finds) came to my notice till 2003. In the following years, a good number of coins were also unearthed from various parts of West Bengal and Bangladesh, among which a few have been studied and published by me. I had the opportunity to study five unpublished coin hoards of the period under question, either singly or jointly, unearthed from different districts of North Bengal, like Jalpaiguri, Malda and Dinajpur (Sinha2017). Thus, fifty coin hoards, including twelve minor finds, have been thoroughly analyzed, with several interesting facts emerged from the study. In the following pages, I will try to illustrate through a few paradigms how statistical analysis of these coin hoards can generate data which ultimately allows us to reconstruct the monetary history of any particular period.

The earliest hoard of the Bengal Sultanate period was found in 1841 from the district of Howrah, which was reported by H.T. Prinsep (1841, 168–69) in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*. Edward Thomas's pioneering essay on the early Muslim rulers of Bengal, based on the Cooch Behar trove (Thomas 1867) found in 1863, was supplemented by a discourse on the same subject written on a small find of thirty-seven silver coins from the Fort of Bihar in 1873 (Thomas 1873). The hoard of Cooch Behar, with its unusually large number of 13,500 silver coins, created a sensation as it is the largest hoard ever found from Eastern India. The coins recovered from this hoard immensely helped scholars of the nineteenth century reconstruct the chronology of the period of Bengal governors. The last decade of nineteenth century and the first three decades of the twentieth century witnessed the recovery of a large number of coin hoards of the Bengal sultans found from different parts of then Bengal, Assam and Bihar. As far as the published reports of the coin hoards of the Bengal sultans are concerned, the number decreased considerably from the 1930s, and in next few decades of the twentieth century, the average went down to just one in each decade. From 1980, the scenario changed and coin hoards began to be reported at regular intervals, especially in West Bengal.

Methodology

Given below is a list of the fifty coin hoards, including twelve minor finds (containing less than ten coins), arranged chronologically (according to the year of their discovery), which provides us with an idea about the content of the hoards under study. The number of coins found in each hoard has also been specified:

Sl. No	Name of coin hoards/minor finds	Year of Find	No. of coins	Dynasty/Dynasties represented
1	Howrah	1841	31	Ilyas Shahi and later Ilyas Shahi
2	Cooch Behar	1863	13500	Pre-Ilyas Shahi and Ilyas Shahi
3	Fort of Bihar	1873	37	Pre-Ilyas Shahi
4	Madhubani	1874	36	Ilyas Shahi and later Ilyas Shahi
5	Sundarban	1875	2	Husain Shahi
6	Gauhati	1880	38	Pre-Ilyas Shahi
7	Dewan Sarai	1883	85	Ilyas Shahi and later Ilyas Shahi
8	Sibsagar	1891	44	Delhi Sultan to Cooch King
9	Kamrup	1892	30	Pre-Ilyas Shahi and Ilyas Shahi
10	Gaur	1892	14	Husain Shahi

Sl. No	Name of coin hoards/minor finds	Year of Find	No. of coins	Dynasty/Dynasties represented
11	Kotia	1892	28	Ilyas Shahi and later Ilyas Shahi
12	Jessore	1893	60	Ilyas Shahi and later Ilyas Shahi
13	Barchpura	1893	25	Ilyas Shahi (Balban intrusion)
14	Darbhangra	1896	3	Husain Shahi
15	Chandsar	1897	20	Ilyas Shahi and later Ilyas Shahi
16	Jashodal	1897	317	Ilyas Shahi, later Ilyas Shahi, Husain Shahi and post-Husain Shahi
17	Belbari	1904	110	Suri with three coins of Nusrat Shah
18	Moorshidabad	1907	85	Pre-Ilyas Shahi
19	Enayetpur	1909	6	Pre-Ilyas Shahi
20	Purinda	1910	24	Pre-Ilyas Shahi
21	Rupaibari	1911	5	Pre-Ilyas Shahi
22	Pandua	1911	5	Pre-Ilyas Shahi
23	Basudebpur	1911	2	Later Ilyas Shahi
24	Kastabir Mahalla	1913	97	Pre Ilyas Shahi and Ilyas Shahi
25	Khulna	1915	100	Pre Ilyas Shahi and Ilyas Shahi
26	Kankaribag	1916	31	Later Ilyas Shahi and Husain Shahi
27	Bashail	1917	10	Later Ilyas Shahi
28	Mohispur	1918	6	Later Ilyas Shahi
29	Ketun	1918	346	Pre-Ilyas, Ilyas and later Ilyas Shahi
30	Rautkhai	1919	7	Husain Shahi
31	Sonakhira	1919	3	Later Ilyas Shahi and Husain Shahi
32	Kalighat	1919	6	Later Ilyas Shahi
33	Raipara	1928	182	Husain Shahi and Suri
34	Nawdiha	1933	16	Husain Shahi
35	Santhal Pargana	1934	8	Husain Shahi
36	Bajjnathpur	1935	7	Husain Shahi
37	Kalna I	1937	20	Pre-Ilyas Shahi and Ilyas Shahi
38	Kalna II	1939	72	Pre-Ilyas Shahi and Ilyas Shahi
39	Malhepur	1943	18	Delhi Sultan to Mysore King
40	Malda	1957	69	Husain Shahi
41	Barimo	1958	6	Ilyas Shahi and later Ilyas Shahi
42	Kurseon	1966	15	Ilyas Shahi
43	Islampur	1981	135	Ilyas Shahi and later Ilyas Shahi
44	Chandir Jhar	1987	767	Ilyas, later Ilyas Shahi, Husain Shahi and post-Husain Shahi
45	Biyani Bazar	1988	800	Ilyas Shahi and later Ilyas Shahi
46	Harishinga	1990	40	Cooch coins with three coins of Nusrat Shah
47	Haleswar	1993	168	Ilyas Shahi and later Ilyas Shahi
48	English Bazar	1996	50	Later Ilyas Shahi
49	Chancho	1996	40	Later Ilyas Shahi
50	Bhorel	1997	83	Pre-Ilyas Shahi, Ilyas Shahi, later Ilyas Shahi and Husain Shahi

On the basis of documentation and analysis of the coins present in the above hoards, I have labelled each hoard with the respective dynasties of the Bengal Sultanate period which is/are represented by the coins found within it. For example, if a hoard contains coins of the Ilyas Shahi dynasty exclusively, then it would be termed an Ilyas Shahi hoard, but if more than one house is represented by a single hoard, then the names of the concerned houses would be ascribed to it. The above chart shows that among these fifty coin hoards, four hoards entirely belong to the pre-Ilyas Shahi house, one belongs to the Ilyas Shahi house exclusively while the later Ilyas Shahi and Husain Shahi houses yielded six and eight coin hoards respectively. But if we look at the hoards containing coins of two or three successive houses, the number of hoards increases; for example, hoards containing coins of the Ilyas Shahi and later Ilyas Shahi houses rises up to ten.

After this initial categorization of these hoards, apart from chrono-typological classification, a critical analysis of the hoards has been done to retrieve statistical data. These data have been sieved through several filters (mainly using simple statistical software like MS Excel), which helped immensely in determining different features of the coinage and currency pattern of the period under discussion (Strnad 2001).² One may also use other statistical software (like SPSS) which might produce a similar answer. It should be mentioned here that data derived from the source used for such analysis are always relative and not absolute, because the amount of data one gathers (howsoever sincerely done) always have some limitation and thus cannot represent the actual scenario of the past; yet, they certainly represent the plausible trend of the period.

Trends of Discovery and Minor Finds

To begin with, I tried to understand the trend of discovery of the coin hoards of the Bengal Sultans since 1841, i.e. during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The entire 160-year period of finding hoards (from 1841 to 1996) has been divided into nine twenty-years spans. The number of coin hoards found during each of these twenty-years periods have been plotted and a definite pattern has emerged during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, first half of the twentieth century, and also during the post-Independence period.

Following is a chart showing the number of coin-hoards discovered in twenty-year periods from 1840 to 2000, followed by a representative graph:

Year of Find	1840	1860	1880	1900	1920	1940	1960	1980	2000
No of Hoards	0	1	5	9	12	6	3	1	8

In the first twenty-year period (1840–60), only one hoard was reported to be discovered from Bengal and in following twenty-years (1860–80) the number of coin hoards unearthed and reported gradually increased, which might be correlated with the active participation of the scholars and Indologist associated with Asiatic Society of Bengal in the last part of the nineteenth century. In the following twenty years (1880–1900), another nine hoards were discovered; these were unearthed quite

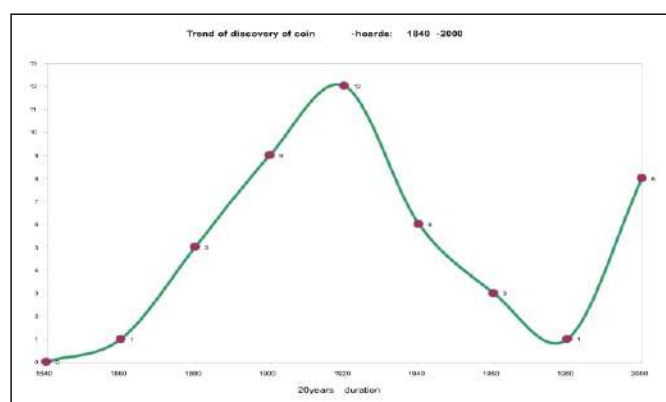


Fig. 1: Trend of discovery of coin hoards, 1841–2000

frequently from different parts of then Bengal, Assam and Bihar. During the pre-independence era, frequency of the discovery of the coin hoards of the Bengal sultans increased sharply, and the reports of those were published in a regular manner. As a matter of fact, in the first forty years of the twentieth century (1900–40), eighteen hoards were reported to be unearthed; it may be noted that a large number of these have been recovered from different parts of present-day Bangladesh. On the contrary, from the 1940s, the number of coin hoards unearthed and reported suddenly goes down to four. Though a few more might have recovered, they remained unreported. However, after 1980, an upward trend of publication of some information regarding the discovery of coin hoards of the period under study was noticed, perhaps due to the comparatively stable political scenario, both in West Bengal and Bangladesh, the major hoard-yielding area under study. Again, since 1998, due to some reasons or other, not a single coin hoard containing the coins of the Bengal sultans has been brought into notice.

The coin hoards and minor finds under discussion have been found mainly from areas which were directly under the control of the sultans of Bengal and their neighbouring states, i.e. undivided Bengal (present-day West Bengal and Bangladesh), Bihar, and Assam (then Kamrupa and Kamta). Thus, we have four geographical divisions from where the coin hoards have been unearthed—West Bengal, Bangladesh, Bihar and Assam. The attached map will show the distribution of find-spots of important coin hoards and minor finds discussed above within the area under study.

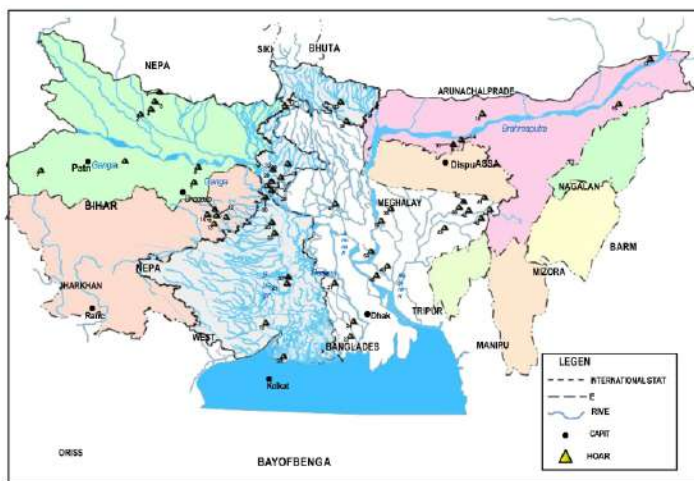


Fig.2: Map of study region showing the find spots of the coin hoards of the Bengal sultans.

Thus, it appears that a majority of the coin hoards of the Bengal sultans were unearthed from West Bengal, Bangladesh and Bihar. Sixteen coin hoards, including two minor finds, have been unearthed and reported so far from present-day West Bengal since 1841, while Bangladesh yielded another sixteen coin hoards, including six minor finds, unearthed from various parts of the country since 1893. Bihar also yielded not less than thirteen coin hoards of the period.

A far as Assam is concerned, information of only five hoards have come to our notice which contain coins of the Bengal sultans in large proportion; we presume that there must have been some other hoards of our interest which were either lying in a corner of a museum or treasuries unnoticed for a long time or escaped the notice of scholars before someone could report their discovery to the proper authorities. Among these five hoards, the earlier three were published in journals while the later two were published as news item in local dailies from where I gathered information for my study. The later group of two hoards obviously yielded very limited data as they were published in a newspaper and, as a result, the scope of information and study is limited.

From Bangladesh, a group of twelve coin hoards of the period under discussion was reported in regular intervals from 1893 to 1928. Notable among them are Kastabir Mahalla, Khulna, Purinda,

Kankaribag and most importantly Ketun in Rupganj Police Station, Dhaka. The group of coins present in the Ketun hoard were in a continuous series which helped numismatists and the historians see the Ketun hoard as authentic evidence in reconstructing the chronology of the early independent sultans of Bengal, i.e. from Ghiyath al-din Bahadur Shah of the fourteenth century to Jalal al-din Muhammad Shah of the fifteenth century. The hoard is numerically strong in the coins of Sikandar Shah, Azam Shah of the Ilyas Shahi dynasty and Jalal al-din Muhammad Shah of the early fifteenth century. After a gap of sixty years, an interesting hoard was partially published in 1988 (Karim 1999, 543–57) containing some 800 coins, of which almost 70 per cent belong to Jalal al-din Muhammad Shah. The coins of this Biyani Bazar hoard are now preserved in a private collection barring a few pieces which are fortunately preserved in the collection of the National Museum of Bangladesh, Dhaka. Had it been published in its entirety, a very interesting study could be done on this as the hoard has yielded a good number of rare coins, which revealed the existence of two usurpers in the fifteenth century who were unknown before the discovery of this hoard. Unfortunately, this hoard could not be preserved and from the few coins reported from the belongings of a few private collectors and dealers in Bangladesh, a holistic reconstruction of the hoard is impossible.

The earliest coin hoard reported from Bangladesh is dated 1893, and is found in Jessore. It contained some sixty coins. Four years later, towards the end of 1897, a large hoard of 317 silver coins was unearthed from Jashodal, a village in district Mymensingh (presently in the Kishoreganj district of Bangladesh). H.E. Stapleton reported this hoard in a systematic way, which provided us with details of almost all coins recovered from the hoard. Given below is a bar graph showing the number of coins found from each of the treasure troves unearthed and reported from Bangladesh:

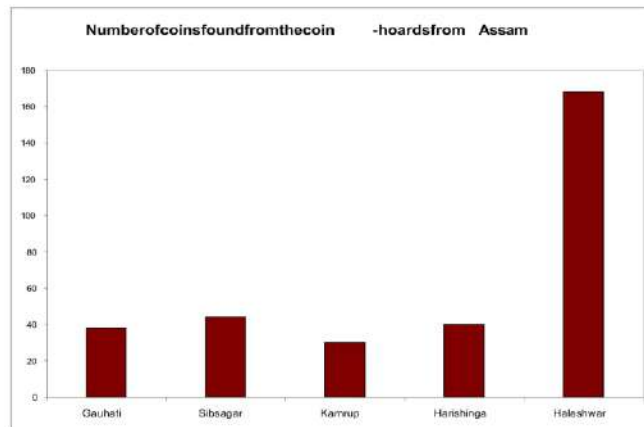


Fig.3: Number of coins found in the coin hoards of Assam

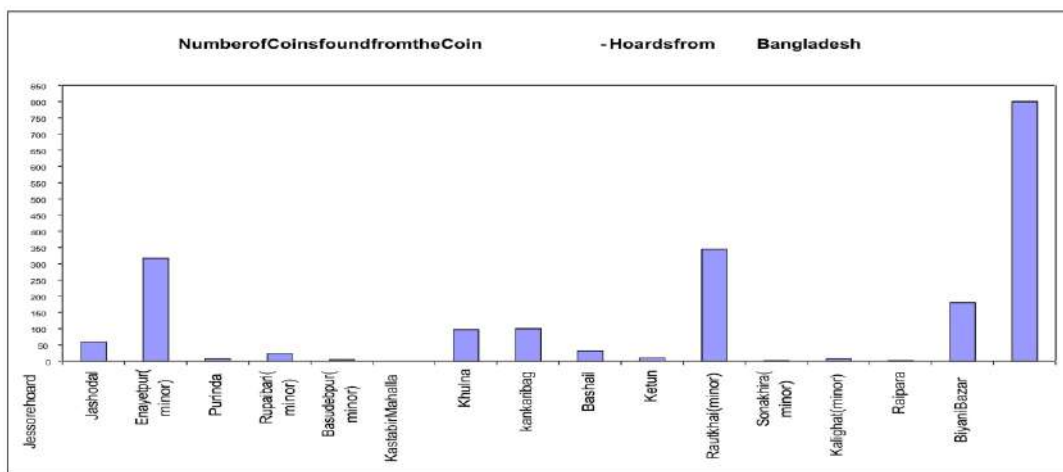


Fig.4: Number of coins found from the coin hoards in Bangladesh

As far as West Bengal is concerned, the earliest hoard of thirty-one silver coins was discovered from Howrah and was reported in the *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*. In contrast, after a gap of twenty-two years, i.e. in 1863, the largest-ever hoard of the Bengal sultans was discovered from the district of Cooch Behar in North Bengal. Given below is a graph showing the number of coins contained in each hoard found from West Bengal.

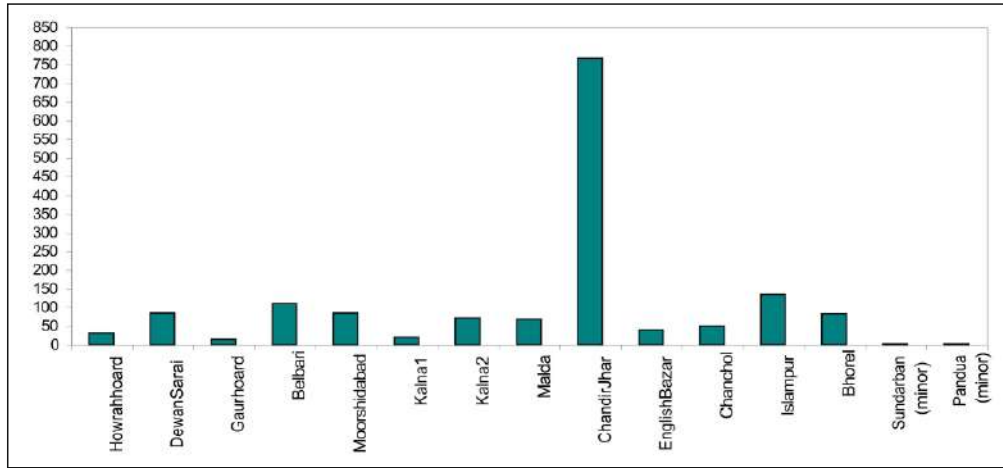


Fig.5: Number of coins found in the coin hoards of West Bengal

The above graph shows that apart from the Chandir Jhar hoard, other hoards found from this region have yielded more or less the same number of coins, i.e. ranging from 31 coins to 136 coins. Only the Chandir Jhar hoard is said to have yielded 767 silver coins, but it may be noted here that number of coins found in the Cooch Behar hoard in 1863 was unusually higher than any of these coin hoards unearthed from different parts of West Bengal. Here is a linear graph to show the comparison between the number of coins in the Cooch Behar hoard with the other hoards unearthed between 1841 and 1997 (Sinha 2001):

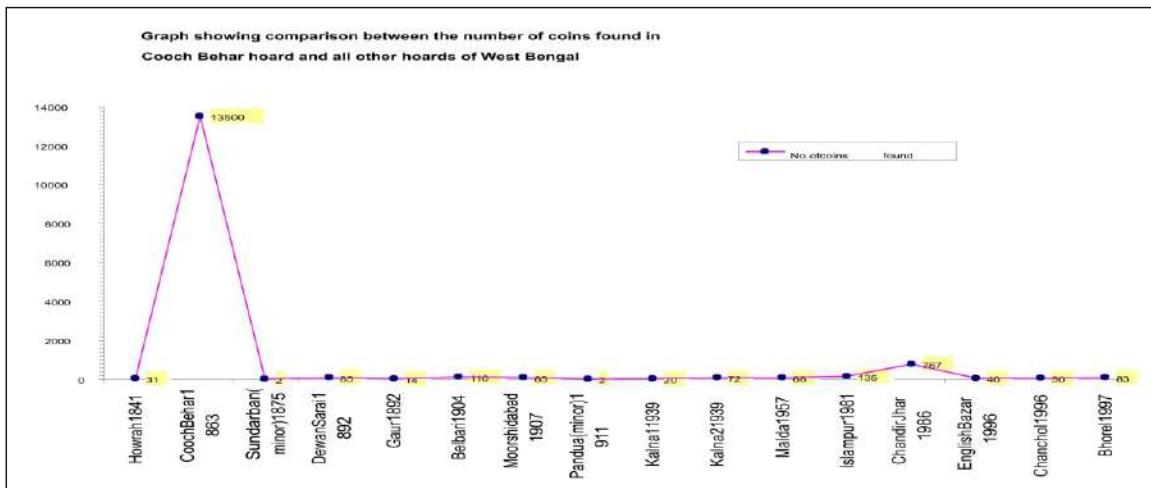


Fig.6: Comparison between the number of hoards found in Cooch Behar and all other hoards of West Bengal

I published the last five coin hoards in the list found from different districts of North Bengal from 1981 to 1997; the largest among them is the Chandir Jhar hoard of silver coins, found at a place called Chandir Jhar in Jalpaiguri district in 1987, though it came to the possession of State Archaeological

Museum, West Bengal in 1992. This hoard was published in a catalogue form in 1995 (Mitra and Sinha 1995), where I was the second author and every possible detail of the hoard has been provided for further study except die-analysis. We may discuss here other four hoards very briefly before going on to discuss the situation in Bihar.

The earliest among these five hoards was unearthed in 1981 from Islampur in Uttar Dinajpur district (Coin Hoard 222–27) (erstwhile West Dinajpur) and lay unnoticed till it was documented and partially acquired by the State Archaeological Museum, West Bengal in 1996.³ It contains some 135 silver coins of the Bengal sultans belonging to the Ilyas Shahi and later Ilyas Shahi houses. The hoard is numerically strong in coins of Jalal al-din Muhammad Shah - represented by sixty-six coins. The other coins of the hoard are of the sultans of Ilyas Shah, Sikandar Shah, Azam Shah, Hamzah Shah and Bayazid Shah - all five rulers of the Ilyas Shahi house. King Danujamarddana Deva is represented by only two coins, which are quite rare. Several interesting coins of Muhammad Shah are also present in the hoard.

Among three other coin hoards, two were found in 1996 from the district of Malda, and one was found in 1997 from the district of Dakshin Dinajpur. The two hoards found from Malda, namely English Bazar (Sinha 1999a, 211–13; Sinha 1999b) and Chanchol (Sinha 1999a, 214–15; Sinha 1999b), were found at the same time in January 1996 and, curiously enough, the pattern of content of these two hoards are identical - both have coins of the later Ilyas Shahi sultans. Both these hoards are preserved at the Malda Museum, Malda. All these hoards have been published in detail and every coin has been analysed.

The coin hoard found from the village of Bhorel (Sinha 2000) in Dakshin Dinajpur district in 1997 was seized by the local police and subsequently preserved in the district treasury of Balurghat. Eighty-three coins were recovered from the hoard, of which seventy coins are of Sultan Husain Shah. It is presumed from the verbal discussion with eyewitnesses (the villagers who were involved in finding and unearthing the pot) that the actual number of coins contained in the hoard was at least five times the coins recovered. The earliest coin found in this hoard is of Ghiyath al-din Bahadur Shah and, thus, it covers a period of nearly 200 years, i.e. from 1320–28 to 1516. Apart from Bahadur Shah, coins of Ilyas Shah, Sikandar Shah, Muhammad Shah, Yusuf Shah, Fath Shah and Firuz Shah are also present in this hoard though in very small numbers. But none of the coins in this hoard carry any significant data with regard to numismatic history; on the contrary, the nature of the hoard and its inhumation process are more interesting to note.

Altogether thirteen coin hoards have been reported so far from Bihar containing coins of the period in question, none of them have over forty coins. Among them, three are minor in category. In 1873, the earliest hoard from Bihar was reported from the fort area in the then Bihar Sharif region of Nalanda district. The most recent coin hoard of the Bengal sultans was reported in 1966 from Kurseon, district Darbhanga (presently in Madhubani district). The only hoard containing gold coins of the Bengal sultans was recovered from Malhepur of district Sahabad in 1943. Eighteen gold coins were found by a poor old woman in the foothills near Shergarh fort; this includes coins of Muhammad bin Tughlaq and two other Delhi sultans, coins of Nasir al-din Mahmud Shah and three

rulers of Husayn Shahi house, a coin of the Bahamani sultan Humayun Shah, two coins of the Jaunpur sultans and a single specimen of the King of Mysore, Krishna Raja Wodeyar, who reigned in the early nineteenth century. As it is a hoard of heterogeneous specimens covering a period of 536 years, we thus intend to label it a collector's treasure. The remaining coin hoards do not deserve any special mention and a bar diagram will provide us an idea of their size.

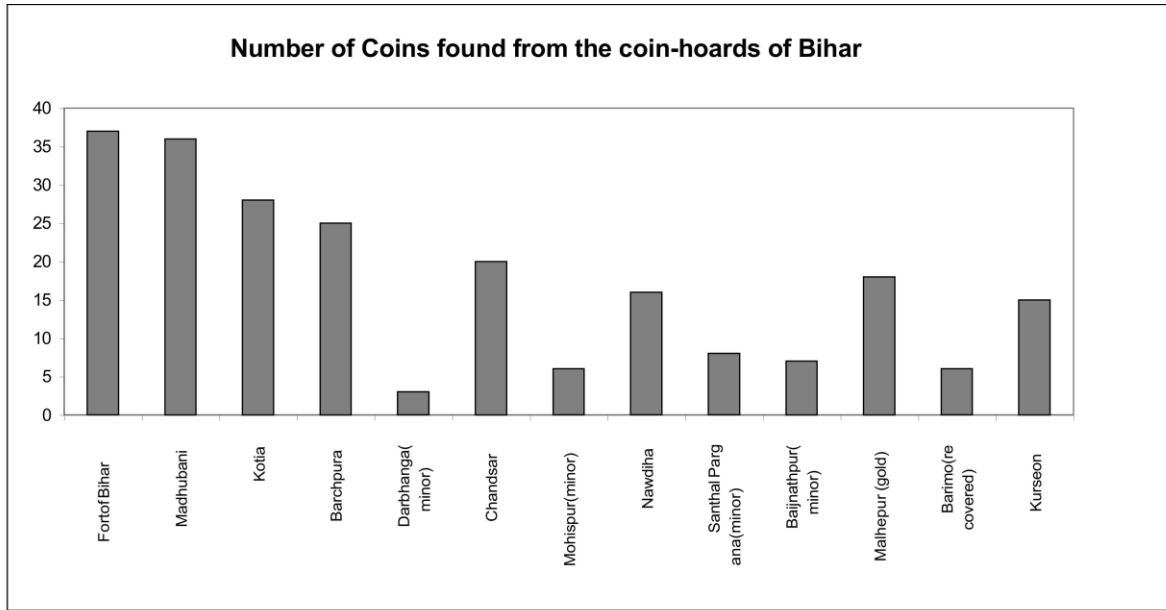


Fig.7: Number of coins found from the coin hoards of Bihar

Analysis of the Coin Hoard Classification and Their Reflection on Monetary History

An intensive study on the structure of all these coin hoards and minor finds, found from the regions mentioned above and their composition, their period of accumulation and some other features have also been carried out (Jensen et al. 1992, 113–15, 119–27, 128–34; Macdonald 1903, 282–300), which allows us to draw some hypotheses about the monetary history of the past. The period of accumulation of a hoard can be calculated by counting the difference between the earliest dated coin and latest dated coin present in a hoard (Strnad 2001, 31–36). As a result, we have found that these fifty hoards and finds can be grouped under seven different categories of hoards. Given below is a chart showing the period of accumulation of each hoard (the time span that has been taken by each hoard to be accumulated before it was buried, intentionally or accidentally by its last owner with an intention to retrieve it in future in the first case), the number of coins recovered from each hoard and the nature of the hoard (determined by the relation between number of coins and their period of accumulation) under study. A chart has been prepared from earliest discovered hoard to the latest discovered one.

Sl. No	Name of the coin-hoards	Period of accumulation	No. of coins present	Nature of Hoard
1	Howrah	121	31	Long term saving
2	Cooch Behar	168	13500	Royal treasure
3	Fort Bihar	13	37	Short term saving
4	Madhubani	12	36	Short term saving
5	Gauhati	40	38	Short term saving
6	Dewan Sarai	114	85	Long term saving
7	Sibsagar	419	44	Collector's hoard
8	Kamrup	91	30	Common hoard
9	Gaur	45	14	Common hoard
10	Kotia	60	28	Common hoard
11	Jessore	70	60	Common hoard
12	Barchpura	4	25	Emergency saving
13	Chandsar	38	20	Short term saving
14	Jashodal	196	317	Long term saving
15	Belbari	36	110	Short term saving
16	Moorshidabad	130	85	Long term saving
17	Purinda	22	24	Short term saving
18	Kastabir Mahalla	74	97	Common hoard
19	Khulna	122	100	Long term saving
20	Kankaribag	47	31	Common hoard
21	Bashail	19	10	Short term saving
22	Ketun	125	346	Long term saving
23	Raipara	54	182	Common hoard
24	Nawdiha	30	16	Short term saving
25	Kalna I	47	20	Common hoard
26	Kalna II	60	72	Common hoard
27	Malhepur	536	18	Collector's hoard
28	Malda	45	69	Common hoard
29	Barimo	113	6	Long term saving
30	Kurseon	35	15	Short term saving
31	Chandir Jhar	239	767	Composite hoard
32	Biyani Bazar	120	800	Long term saving
33	Harishinga	62	40	Common hoard
34	Haleswar	178	168	Long term saving
35	English Bazar	23	50	Short term saving
36	Chanchol	31	40	Short term saving
37	Islampur	81	135	Common hoard
38	Bhorel	200	83	Composite hoard
39	Sundarban	1	2	Emergency saving
40	Darbhangha	6	3	Emergency saving
41	Enayetpur	12	6	Short term saving
42	Rupaibari	16	5	Short term saving
43	Pandua	2	2	Emergency saving
44	Basudebpur	1	1	Emergency saving
45	Mohispur	8	6	Emergency saving
46	Santhalpargana I	1	8	Emergency saving
47	Bajjnathpur	30	7	Short term saving
48	Rautkhai	6	3	Emergency saving
49	Sonakhira	24	6	Short term saving
50	Kalighat	8	2	Emergency saving

As a result, we have found seven different categories of hoards, which can be categorized as Long-term, Short-term, Common and Composite, and may also be broadly grouped under a single class - Savings Hoard, where coins have been withdrawn from circulation for the purpose of savings, either by one person or across generations within a particular family. Even the condition of the coins deposited in a hoard may indicate the income group of the owner/owners of a single hoard. In contradistinction to these hoards, Emergency Hoards are reflection of sudden outbreak of a war or an epidemic or any such exigencies which resulted in a hasty concealment of available coins which were withdrawn from circulation. This type of hoard implies a dramatic circumstance of hoard formation which results in small number of coins accumulated in a very short period of time (mostly one to three years) and issued from a single mint or two.

The bar graph below shows the ratio of different categories of coin hoards of the Bengal Sultanate period, prepared on the basis of the data provided in the above chart.

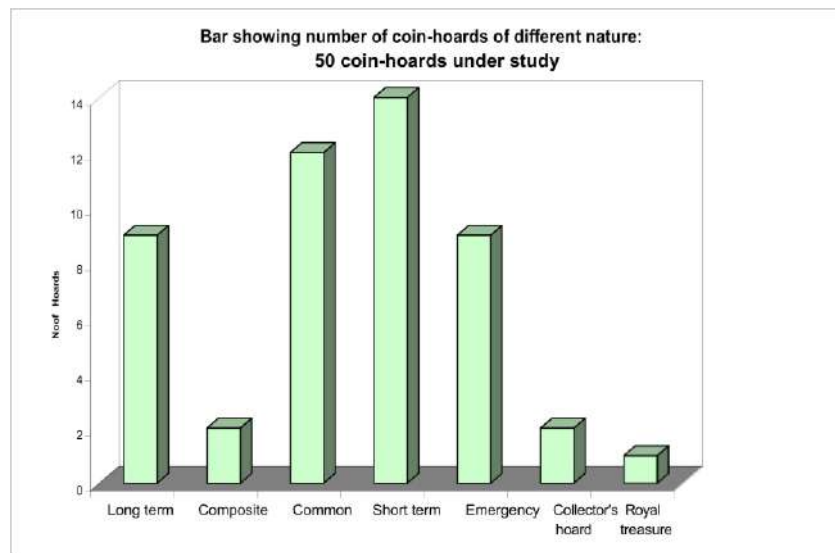


Fig.8: Fifty coin hoards of different natures

Nevertheless, on the basis of the structure of the hoards, it may be stated that during the Bengal Sultanate period, Savings Hoards outnumbered Emergency Hoards, which again lead us to a controversy prevalent among economic historians and numismatist: did turmoil or difficult socio-political situations lead to saving as well as hoarding tendencies among the common people or were undisturbed political situations or period of relative peace responsible for the above activity? The question that has been raised still needs further study and is not within the purview of the present discourse.

From the above chart it is also quite clear that except for emergency savings, the number of coins present in a hoard is not always directly proportional with the period of accumulation. For example, the largest hoard of the series, i.e. the Cooch Behar hoard that contained 13,500 coins, covers 168 years as the period of accumulation while a small hoard of eighteen gold coins (the Malhepur hoard) or forty-four silver coins (Sibsagar hoard) covers a period of 536 and 419, years respectively (see above chart). This is not a usual case and we have explained such depositions as accumulations of a contemporary collector who collected selected specimens of coins of different rulers from various periods. In such a case the coins found in a hoard do not reflect the pattern of

currency in circulation in a given period of time as they were acquired as items of curio. Here we will try to explain this feature of the hoards under study through a graph where period of accumulation has been put in the Y axis in relation to number of hoards in the X axis. An equal gap of twenty years has been kept between 0 to 540 years (span of time between the earliest dated coin and the latest dated coin) in order to place all fifty coin hoards.

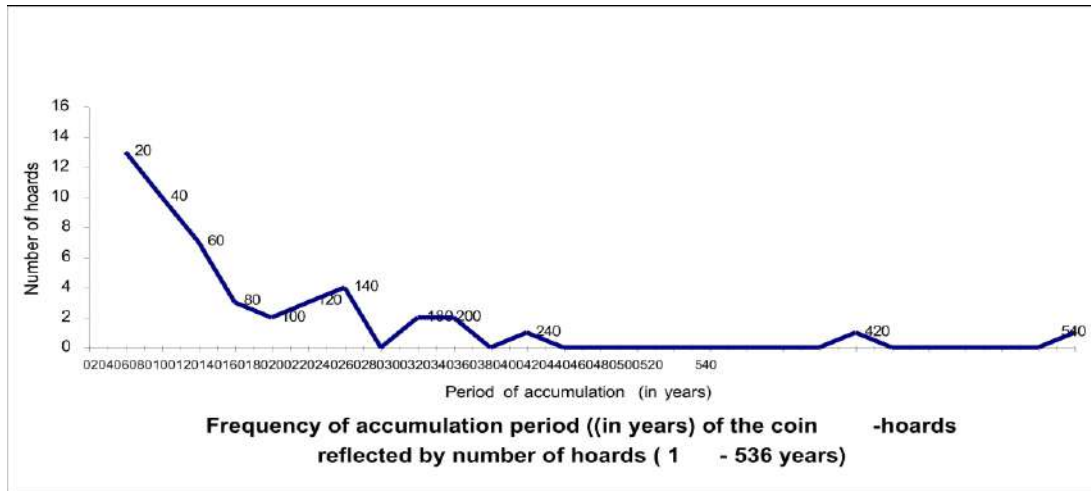


Fig.9: Frequency of accumulation periods (in years) of coin hoards, reflected by the number of hoards (1-536 years)

One may easily observe from the above illustration that the lesser the accumulation period, the higher the number of hoards. Thirteen coin hoards fall within the category of a twenty-year accumulation period, and the number of coin hoards decreased gradually as the accumulation period grew. Ten coin hoards fall into a forty-year accumulation period while in a sixty-year span, the number decreases to seven. The number sharply comes down to three and two for eighty-year and hundred-year accumulation period, respectively, though it goes up to four between a 120-year and 140-year accumulation period. Only two hoards cover a period ranging between 160 to 180 years. Two other hoards fall within the accumulation period of 180 to 200 years. One hoard each falls within the period of 220–40 years, 400–20 years and 520–40 years, respectively. Thus, it can be said that the number of coin hoards of the Bengal Sultans is inversely proportional to the period of their accumulation.

However, there are several other sets of data derived from these hoards and subsequently used in analysis of different issues of the economic scenarios of the Bengal Sultanate period - estimation of coin production from different mints and the relation between the mints and types of coins issued by each ruler of the different dynasties, percentual share of the coins in a group of hoards and their significance or impact on the respective coinage etc. This certainly adds some more authentic information to our existing knowledge about the coinage and currency system of the period concerned.

Notes

1 Important analytical and statistical works have been done by John S. Deyell, Shireen Moosvi, J.F. Richards, Aziza Hasan and Jaroslav Strnad while broad overviews have been given by P.L. Gupta, B.C. Jain, H.K. Prasad and A.K. Srivastava in their respective works.

2 Strnad has applied several statistical methods to the data collected from the Mughal coin hoards

found from Uttar Pradesh and deposited in the Lucknow Museum.

3 The entire hoard was initially documented by Pratip Kumar Mitra, the then Keeper of the State Archaeological Museum, West Bengal along with the present author and the coins were photographed by Shiharan Nandy, the Photographer of the Museum.

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