



Coins of the Eastern Gangas ruler Anantavarman Chodaganga

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Attributing the coins of the Eastern Gangas is a difficult task because the coins do not name the ruler, but only are dated in what are thought to be regnal years. Many authors in the past have tended to attribute the coins to the most prominent king of the dynasty, Anantavarman Chodaganga (1078-1147) (hereafter AC), but without any real justification.² In a recent paper, I proposed a method of attribution, based on the regnal lengths of the different kings, which would assign a sizable group of the known coins to the last four kings of the dynasty.³ Coins attributable on a sound basis to AC remained unknown.

In this brief note, I present some coins that I believe can be attributed quite firmly to AC. The coins consist of a group of ten coins I acquired at a Spink auction in 2014.⁴ As I will show, four of these coins can be attributed to this king because of the dates they contain and, by extension, the rest of the lot can therefore be attributed to him as well. In what follows, I will present the ten coins first and then follow up with my argument for why the coins can be attributed to AC.

Table 1: The group of 10 Coins

Coin #	Photo	Details
1 (677.83) ⁵		Date: 8 Weight: 0.35 gm Diameter: 7.5 mm Die axis: 8 o'clock
2 (677.84)		Date: 8 Weight: 0.40 gm Diameter: 8 mm Die axis: 8 o'clock

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² See, for example, Vincent A. Smith: *Catalogue of the coins in the Indian Museum, Calcutta*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906, p. 311 and plate XXX, 7.

³ Pankaj Tandon: "Tentative Attributions of some gold fanams of the Eastern Gangas," *Numismatic Digest*, Vol. 34-35, 2010-11 (published 2012), pp. 78-100.

⁴ Spink London Sale 225 (September 23, 2014), lot 852.

⁵ Numbers in parentheses are the Tandon collection inventory numbers.

<p>3 (677.85)</p>		<p>Date: 10 Weight: 0.41 gm Diameter: 7 mm Die axis: 9 o'clock</p>
<p>4 (677.86)</p>		<p>Date: 10 Weight: 0.41 gm Diameter: 8 mm Die axis: 3 o'clock</p>
<p>5 (677.87)</p>		<p>Date: 23 Weight: 0.42 gm Diameter: 8 mm Die axis: 5 o'clock</p>
<p>6 (677.88)</p>		<p>Date: 28 Weight: 0.41 gm Diameter: 8 mm Die axis: 12 o'clock</p>
<p>7 (677.89)</p>		<p>Date: 58 Weight: 0.40 gm Diameter: 8 mm Die axis: 8 o'clock</p>
<p>8 (677.90)</p>		<p>Date: 62 or 63 Weight: 0.42 gm Diameter: 7 mm Die axis: 11 o'clock</p>
<p>9 (677.91)</p>		<p>Date: 63 Weight: 0.38 gm Diameter: 7 mm Die axis: 9 o'clock</p>

10 (677.92)		Date: 71 Weight: 0.39 gm Diameter: 7 mm Die axis: 1 o'clock
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Before moving on to the attribution of these coins, four observations are worth making. The first is that coins 8 and 9 provide the first known examples of Eastern Gangas coins that contain the numeral 6. Because the dates used on the coins follow the *Anka* system, which skips all years that would end in the numeral 6,⁶ this number has not yet been seen on any Eastern Gangas coin. Here, however, we have two coins with dates that *start* with the number 6, the first known coins to have this property. At first, I was quite puzzled by this numeral, as it did not conform to any previously known number on an Eastern Gangas coin, but then determined that it must be the number 6. This form of the number was in use during the 11th to the 14th centuries in Andhra and indeed the number forms for all the numerals on Eastern Gangas coinage conform to the same system.⁷ We may therefore update Table 1 from my earlier paper; Table 2 provides a completed listing of the number forms used on coins of the Eastern Gangas.

Table 2: Numerals on Coins of the Eastern Gangas

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
·	∩	3	3	8	κ	γ	?	Γ	∩

The second observation to be made about the coins is that coins 5 and 6, both of which feature dates in the 20's, have a curious vertical stroke in between the two digits of the date. I have not seen such a stroke on any other of the several hundred Eastern Gangas coins I have examined, including many that feature dates in the 20's. I have been unable to determine the significance of this stroke. It is clearly not a number, but what it is exactly I have not been able to figure out.

The third observation about the coins is that coins 1 and 2 appear to share an obverse (though not a reverse) die. The same appears to be true for coins 3 and 4.

Finally, it is worth commenting on the designs on the coins. The basic design on these coins is the same as on all Eastern Gangas coins I have seen. The obverse features a couchant bull right and the reverse the letter *sa* (for *samvat*) with the regnal date below. However, the

⁶ For a detailed description of the *Anka* system, please see my paper.

⁷ See Pandit Gaurishankar Hirachand Ojha: *The Palaeography of India*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, Third edition, 1971, Plate LXXVI.

coins differ quite markedly from most other coins I have seen, and from all the coins featured in my earlier paper, in several respects. On the obverse, the bull, especially on coins 1 and 2, seems to my eye to be more realistic than the stylized bull seen on previously analyzed coins. Further, whereas previous coins have featured an array of symbols and pellets in front of and above the bull, these coins are quite parsimonious in adding other symbols to the obverse. Coins 1 and 2 seem to feature a simple trident (or fire altar?) in front of the bull and nothing else. Several of the later coins add a crescent type shape above the bull. There are also hints of an object in front of the bull on a few coins although, judging by coin 5, this so-called “object” may be nothing more than the bull’s left foreleg.⁸ Finally, all the coins I analyzed in my previous paper featured two objects (either both elephant goads or a battle axe and an elephant goad) flanking the letter *sa* on the reverse. Here, there are no objects flanking the letter. Overall, therefore, these coins exhibit a simpler, less complicated design than the coins I examined earlier, suggesting that they were issued earlier.

Table 3: Dynastic list of Eastern Gangas kings

King	Regnal dates	Regnal Length	Highest <i>Anka</i> date
Anantavarman Vajrahasta III	1038-1070	32	41
Rajaraja I Devendravarman	1070-1078	8	11
Anantavarman Chodaganga	1078-1147	69	87
Kamarnava II	1147-1157	10	13
Raghava	1157-1170	13	17
Rajaraja II	1170-1190	20	25
Anivankabhima II	1190-1197	7	10
Rajaraja III	1197-1207	10	13
Anangabhima II	1216-1235	19	24
Narasimha I	1238-1263	26	33
Bhanudeva I	1264-1279	15	19
Narasimha II	1279-1306	27	34
Bhanudeva II	1306-1328	22	28
Narasimha III	1328-1352	24	31
Bhanudeva III	1352-1378	26	33
Narasimha IV	1378-1414	36	45
Bhanudeva IV	1414-1434	20	25

Source: Tandon, *op. cit.*, Table 5.

Let us now turn to the attribution of these coins. Table 3, reproduced from my earlier paper, provides a dynastic list of the Eastern Gangas rulers, along with their regnal dates, the length of their reigns and the consequent highest *Anka* date we could conceivably see on their coins. The highest *Anka* date is higher than the length of reign because of the practice in the *Anka* system of skipping all years ending in 6 and some years ending in 0.⁹ From the table we see

⁸ This was pointed out to me by Govindraya Prabhu Sanoor.

⁹ For details, please see my earlier paper.

that, because of his long reign of 69 years, AC's coins could feature *Anka* dates as high as 87. But the highest *Anka* date we could possibly see for any other king is 45 for Narasimha IV.

Assuming that the dates on the coins are indeed the regnal dates expressed in the *Anka* system, as is universally believed, it becomes obvious that coins 7-10 of Table 1 must be issues of AC. The dates on these coins are too high (58, 62 or 63, 63 and 71) to have been issued by any other ruler. These then become the first confirmed coins of AC, the builder of the famed Jagannath Temple in Puri and the one who began the construction of the world-renowned Sun Temple at Konarak.

How about the rest of the coins? I would argue that these are most likely also coins of AC. Coins 3-6 are stylistically very similar to coins 7-10. For example, the crescent shapes above the bull on coins 3 and 7 are virtually identical. The overall style is very consistent. It therefore seems virtually certain that these coins are also issues of AC. Coins 1 and 2 are slightly different. The style of the bull is more refined and there is no symbol above, only the trident in front of the bull. These two coins therefore seem quite clearly earlier than coins 3-10. A case could therefore be made that these coins may have been issued by one of the two kings who preceded AC, Anantavarman Vajrahasta III or Rajaraja I Devendravarman. However, even if they were issued by AC, they would indeed be earlier than the other coins by virtue of their date. So a case could be made that they may well have been issued by AC anyway. If we think of the style of these coins as being distinct enough to have been issued by an earlier ruler, might we not have seen coins with even later dates in this style and then seen coins with early dates in the style of AC's coins?¹⁰

In summary, therefore, I believe that all ten coins presented here are issues of Anantavarman Chodaganga. The degree of confidence in this belief is lowest, although still high, for coins 1 and 2, higher for coins 3-6, and highest for coins 7-10. Coins of "later" style which have often been attributed to this king, must be attributable to later rulers.

Now that we know of some coins to be incontrovertibly those of AC, I can add one more coin to the known corpus of this king. In her survey of Eastern Gangas coinage, Snigdha Tripathy had reported fractional fanams with dates 55, 58, and 59 but indicated that we couldn't be sure of these readings because "the numerals are very crudely struck ... and not easily recognizable due to their smallness in size"¹¹ and she had therefore not linked these coins to AC. If the readings are correct, these coins (and perhaps two other fractional fanams listed by Tripathy, dated 41 and 43) must also be issues of AC. To these, I may add a quarter fanam from my own collection, illustrated in Figure 1. The figure

¹⁰ I am aware that, in making this argument, I am implicitly treating the group of coins as a hoard, although I don't know that it is. Even if the group is not a hoard, however, it seems to be unlikely that a haphazard group of coins would feature only early dates of an early king and late dates of a later king.

¹¹ See Snigdha Tripathy: *Early and Medieval Coins and Currency System of Orissa*, Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1986, p. 192.

presents the coin with a millimeter scale to emphasize just how tiny it is, with a diameter of around 4 mm. Previously, I had been unable to read the date on the coin, tentatively reading it as 5. However, now that we know how the numeral 6 was inscribed on these coins, I believe a better reading might be 63. The numerals are not inscribed very clearly, but that may be mainly because the coin is so small. If the date is indeed 63, this would be a coin of AC, and can be added to the coins mentioned by Tripathy. It appears therefore that AC may have minted a reasonably large number of quarter fanams.



**Figure 1: Quarter fanam of Anantavarman Chodaganga
(Tandon collection #545.14, details: 0.07 gm, 4-5 mm, 11 o'clock)**

Before concluding, I wish to make one more observation about the fanams illustrated in Table 1. The 82 coins I studied in my earlier paper, which I argued were attributable to the last five kings of the Eastern Gangas dynasty (covering the period 1306-1434), averaged 0.4702 gm in weight (range 0.42 – 0.51 gm) and approximately 10 mm in diameter (range 9 – 12 mm).¹² In contrast, these 10 coins, which I am attributing to AC (1078-1147), average 0.3990 gm in weight (range 0.35 – 0.42 gm) and are all 7-8 mm in diameter. Thus these early coins are significantly smaller and lighter than the coins made in the last 100 plus years of the dynasty. It will be interesting to see if, as I expect, as yet unattributed types, which would presumably be attributable to the kings who ruled in the interim period 1147-1306, have weights and diameters in between the coins that appear to be the early and late coins of the dynasty respectively. This would be something to keep in mind as we continue the work of attributing the coins of the Eastern Gangas to individual kings.

¹² These averages were computed using the coin details provided in the Appendix of my earlier paper; see Tandon, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-100.