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RESEARCH ARTICLE

HISTORICAL VIEW OF MUGHAL COINAGES IN INDIA – A STUDY

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Abstract

The coinage began anywhere between the early 1st millennium BCE to the 6th century BCE and consisted mainly of copper and silver coins in its initial stage it reflects various aspects of the kings and their reigns, as it contains ancient designs, symbols, and stamps. India was one of the world's first countries to issue coins and has been noted for its extreme variations in minting methods, themes, sizes, shapes, metals, etc. Since its beginnings, the Coinage of India has been a significant factor in the history of the nation's economic growth.

Keywords: Coins Babar, Humayun, Akbar, Jahangir, Shahjahan and Aurangzeb)

Introduction

The Mughal Empire ruled much of South Asia for over three centuries. Mughal emperors accumulated vast wealth, with an economy based on a stable and abundant coinage in gold, silver, and copper. the coinage of the Mughals can be sorted into four phases: the wandering or regional phase lasted from 1526 to 1556 with emperors Babur and Humayun; the classical phase (1556-1707) saw leaders like Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb; the decadent phase (1707-1720) began with Shah Alam I, ended with the start of Muhammad Shah's reign and had as many as seven occupants of the throne who got there by massacring or blinding rivals; and finally, the quasi-Mughal phase (1720-1835) saw the issuing of 'Mughal' coins by regional powers in Awadh,

Hyderabad and Rohilkhand, as well as enemies of the empire, like the Marathas, Sikhs, Rajputs, the French, and the English. These coins carried the nominal consent of the ruling Mughal emperor and were issued in his name. While the sun may have finally set on the empire only with the end of the Uprising of 1857, the decline had begun in 1720. During Muhammad Shah's three-decade rule the influence of the Emperor shrunk rapidly and local powers, both Mughal and non-Mughal, rushed in to claim imperial authority.

The Mughal Empire was founded by the Timurid adventurer, Zahir-ud-din Muhammad Babur with the defeat of Ibrahim Lodhi on the dusty battlegrounds of Panipat on 21 April 1526, which gave the victor control over Agra and Delhi. Twenty-two years before that, driven by the humiliating loss of his

ancestral kingdom of Ferghana in Central Asia to his Uzbeki rivals, Babur had conquered Kabul. Like a consummate politician, Babur chose to move to greener pastures south of the Hindu Kush and claim Hindustan as a legacy of his great ancestor, Timur Lang, the great Turco-Mongol conquistador of the fourteenth century. The trials and tribulations of his career gave our first Mughal emperor very little time for administrative matters and thus despite the drastic relocation of his kingdom, he continued to issue the staple Timurid currency coins known as the 'Shahrukhi' the silver coins of about 4.6 grams. Named after Shahrukh Mirza, Timur's eldest son, the Shahrukhis were essentially thin broad-flanned coins imprinted with the Sunni Kalima or credo on its obverse at the centre with the names of the first four caliphs around it. The reverse had the king's Islamic name and titles along with the date in the Hijri era and the name of the minting town. The mint names on the reverse help us understand the actual extent of each ruler's domain. Babur continued to issue Shahrukhis throughout his political career from Kabul to Agra, where he died on 26 December 1530.

The Shahrukhi standard was continued by Babur's immediate successor, Humayun and even by his grandson, Akbar, for the first three years of his five-decade reign. The Mughal Empire was unsteady in this initial period, especially under the talented but fickle-minded Humayun. Humayun's eccentricities led to his downfall; he was deposed by a rival Afghan leader, Sher Shah Suri in 1540 and exiled to the court of the Persian ruler, Shah Tahmasp, whose help he sought in regaining his lost kingdom. In Persia, Humayun was often encouraged to turn to the Shia faith. Thus we find some later coins issued by the Mughal from Kandahar proclaiming Shah Tahmasp as his overlord and featuring the Shia Kalima—a compromise Humayun accepted to survive at the Safavid court.

During Humayun's exile, his rival, Sher Shah innovated a new silver coin christened the 'rupaiya'—which survived the Afghan ruler by over four-and-half centuries to become the modern rupee. One of the major reforms attributed to Sher Shah is a move from base metal alloys to bimetallic currency; like the silver rupaiya and a copper coin called the paisa (the Mughals would call it daam).

Sher Shah's system was adopted by Akbar who ditched the Shahrukhi for the rupaiya and also introduced gold coins called asharafi (mohurs). This trimetallic currency had the following market exchange rate: 35 to 40 dams were equal to one silver rupee and 9 silver rupees were equal to 1 asharafi or mohur. Akbar also issued heavier mohars worth 10 and 12 rupees and experimented with the shape of coins, issuing square and even polygonal ones called mehrabi.

Mughal coinage took a distinct shape in the time of Akbar, the son and successor of Humayun. The currency system of Akbar was primarily based on the Suri coinage, but some modification and changes were made from time to time, which made it distinct. Akbar issued coins in gold in gold, silver and copper; these were called as Muhar, rupiya, dam or falus or tanka respectively. The gold and silver coins were issued in the weight standard of about 11-11.5 gm with their denominations. Dams or falus weighed about 20 gm. In his 40th RY Akbar issued copper coins of the weight of double dams (40 gm) and called them tanka. Like gold and silver his copper coins are also known in various denominations. Some of his copper coins particularly the tanka series are found with denomination inscribed on them in words such as tanka, nim tanka, etc.

Apart from the actual coins, the Ain-i-Akbari of Abul Fazl also helps us to understand coin types of Akbar. It includes a separate chapter entitled the Imperial Household, discusses various aspects of coins such as minting technique, mint administration and the coins of glorious Empire. Gold, silver and copper coins separately with their names and weight. The Gold were Sahanshah, Rahas, Atmah, Binsat, Chaugal, lal-i-jalali, Aftabi, Ilahi, Lal jalali (square), Adl- gutka, Muhar (round), Mihrabi, Muini. The Silver were Rupiya, Jalalah (square), Darb (half jalalah). Charn (1/4 part), pandu (1/5 part), Asht (1/8 part), Dasa (1/10 part), Kala (1/16 part), Suki (1/20 jalalah) and the Copper coins were Dam, Adhela, Pawlah and Damri.

The coinage of Akbar may broadly be divided into two groups. The division of coins is based on the two different dating systems used on his coins named Hijri and Ilahi. His coins in all three metals (gold, silver

and copper) adopted same dating system. The gold and silver coins are issued on similar typology while copper coins adopted different typology.

Hijri type coins, inscribing date has been one of the features of the medieval Indian coins and it is generally inscribed in Hijri era i.e. Islamic calendar (begins from 622 CE with the migration of Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Madina). Akbar too adopted hijri dates for his coins. But his coins with hijri date continued till 30th regnal year. Apart from the hijri date the gold and silver coins of Akbar also bear Kalima and names of four great Caliphs (Abu Bakr, Umar, Usman and Ali with or without their epithets) on the one side and Jalaluddin Mohammad Akbar Badshah Ghazi on the other, besides, the date and mint. The copper coins with hijri pattern are primarily anonymous, these, however, bear date in words and numerals on the one side and mint name on the other. It is inscribed as falus zarb (mint name) on the one side and nahsad hashtaad wa chahaar 984 on the other.

Ilahi type of coin, Akbar in his 30th anniversary of a sovereign's accession, he introduced Ilahi calendar, begins from the date of his accession i.e Hijri 963/ 1556 CE). It adopted month names from Zoroastrian/ Persian calendar (Farwardi, Ardibahisht, Khرداد, Tir, Amardad, Shahrewar, Mehar, Abaan, Azr Di, Bahman, Asfandermuz). Ilahi coins in gold and silver were issued without the name of Akbar. These bear a uniform legend i.e. Allah-u-Akbar Jalle Jalalah on one side and RY Ilahi month and mint name on the other, inscribed as for exp.42 Mehr (Ilahi month) Ilahi zarb Agra.

The copper coins of Akbar on Ilahi pattern neither bear Allah -u-Akbar Jallejalalahau nor the name of Akbar but mentions the mint name and Ilahi month with RY, inscribed as Falus(mint name) on the one side and RY Ilahi month name(37 Ilahi Di) on the other. Akbar in his 40 RY introduced heavy copper coins of 40 gms and termed as Tanka. The coins of this series bear his name inscribed as Tanka-i-Akbar Shahi on the one side and Ilahi month date on the other.

Besides, the above-mentioned two major types, Akbar also issued some interesting coin types, which can be mentioned here. These are mehrabi type, Ram Sita type

(a very rare type issued only from Agra), bird type (issued only from Asirgadh), couplet types (from Allahabad). Akbar after capturing Malwa, Gujarat and Kashmir adopted coin type of these regions at least for early period. Akbar is known to have issued coins from various mints. Agra, Fatahpur, Delhi, Ajmer, Lahore, Burhanpur, Ahmadabad, Patna, Kabul and Thatta etc. are the some important mints. Sometimes these mints are inscribed with their epithets such as dar-al-sultanates, dar-alkhilafah etc.

The Emperor Jahangir (r. 1605–27) showed exceptional engagement with his coinage, which represents the height of Mughal Indian numismatic art in calligraphy and design. The front of this example features a portrait of Jahangir sitting cross-legged, reclining against a bolster on a hexagonal throne and holding a goblet-like ornament in his hand. It has been described as a wine goblet, showing the Emperor's attachment to his favourite pastime. The Farsi inscription around the portrait reads, 'Destiny has made the picture of a likeness of venerable king Jahangir on this gold coin'. Jahangir issued coins bearing his portrait, by his own admission, to be given to his followers as a special gift which they could 'wear on their turbans or sashes' to show that they had been graced by imperial favour.

On the reverse is a central sunburst with compartments on either side. The one on the left mentions Ajmer as the place where the coin was made (Jahangir had moved his court there in 1615–19) and 1023, the Islamic (Hijri) year of its issue. On the right is the words 'O Assister', followed by 'Year 9', the year of the reign. The Farsi inscription reads 'The words "Jahangir" and "Allahu Akbar" are equal in value till the Day of Judgement'. Based on the so-called Abjad system, which applied numerical value to each letter of the alphabet, the words 'Jahangir' and 'Allahu Akbar' ('Allah is greater') were considered to add up to the same total.

Shah Jahan include the gold and silver coins that had the 'Kalima' and the mint's name on one side and his name and title 'Sahib-qiran Sani Shihabuddin Muhammad Shah Jahan Badshah Ghazi' on the other. Primarily the superscriptions on the coins were plain and simple. But later till the end of his reigning period,

except for the Tattah mint, where the earlier style was retained, Shah Jahan employed a type endless in its varieties. During this time, the names of the four Khalifas were reintroduced and they appear with epithets in the margin on the obverse side of the coin. The reverse margin bore the titles of the emperor. He used a couplet only on the coins of Shahjahanabad during the last ten years of his reign. The couplet that was introduced during his period connotes, may the coins of Shahjahanabad be current in the world forever in the name of the second Lord of the conjunctions.

The predecessors of Shah Jahan did not use any pretentious titles. But Shah Jahan, imitating Timur, called himself 'Sahib-i-qiran Sani. After this, the later emperors started using this title. Following the tradition of Jahangir, Shah Jahan also used the Ilahi months on the coins along with his regnal year and ordered that his regnal year be reckoned according to the lunar system, on which the Hijri era was based. This was followed by all his successors. During the first few years, copper coins along with the gold and silver coins also bore the 'Kalima' on the obverse and the name of the king with his titles and the mint name on the reverse. Later, the 'Kalima' etc was relinquished from the copper coins and the name and title of the king were placed on the obverse. Some coins had only his title 'Sahib-qiran sani' with or without the word 'fulus'; the reverse had the mint name. Afterward, the obverse was changed with a simple inscription, 'Fulus Shahjahani'.

Coins of Shah Jahan in gold, silver, and copper metals were issued from Ahmedabad, Akbarabad, Allahabad, Kashmir, Cuttack, Lucknow, Patna, Shahjahanabad, Surat and Ujjain. Gold, copper, and silver coins were also issued from different places in India like Ajmer, Aurangbad, Junagarh, Udaipur etc. After the severe illness of Shah Jahan, the conflict for succession to the throne followed. During this time, Shah Shuja and Murad Bakhsh asserted their claims by issuing coins in their names. Shah Shuja issued coins from Akbarnagar in Bengal and Murad Bakhsh issued his coins from Ahadabad, Surata, and Khambayat in Gujarat. They used the square type of their father with the 'Kalima' and the names of the Khalifas on one side and their name and title on the other. Both of them styled themselves on the coins as 'Sikandar-Sani'.

The coins of Aurangzeb bore his name and title 'Abu-al-zafar Muiuddin Muhammad Bahadur Shah Alamgir Aurangzeb Badshah Ghazi' on the obverse side of the coin during the early years of his ruling period. Later he introduced a couplet which was composed by Mir Abdul Baqi Shahbai. The couplet came into use at different dates at different mints. Except from Akbarabad, the couplet was used by all mints and continued till the end of reign. The couplet was adopted by Akbarabad very late. The square area like Shah Jahan's coins was used during the early years at Akbarabad and Junagarh. Aurangzeb introduced a separate formula, which carried 'Sanh julus Manus zarb' with the name of the mint. The connotation of this phrase was "struck at (mint's name) in the year (regnal year) of the accession associated with prosperity."

In comparison to the copper coins issued during the time of Shah Jahan and Jahangir, copper coins of Aurangzeb stood with a distinct characteristic. His coins were issued in the 'dam' (a small Indian coin) weight till the fifth year of his reign. As per the historical evidences, the weight of the coins was reduced perhaps due to the rise of the metal price during that time. Aurangzeb's coins in copper bore on the obverse, variously, 'Fulus Badshah (or Shah) Alamgir, Fulus Alamgiri, Fulus Aurangzebshahi, Aurangzeb Alamgir, Sikka Mubarak julus. The reverse side of the coin had the mint name. The largest number of places was known to have issued the coins of Aurangzeb. The places like Ahmedabad, Akbarabad, Akbarnagar, Azimabad, Bijapur, Burhanpur, Gulbarga, Hyderabad, Cuttack, Lucknow, Shahjanabad, Sholapur, Surat, Ujjain etc issued coins of gold, silver and copper metals. Moreover, copper coins were exclusively known from Aurangnagar, Bairat and Udaipur. It had also been considered that the coins that were issued in some of these places were not the imperial issues but they had been issued by the local authorities without any imperial sanction.

The coins of Aurangzeb were noted for the distinct features he employed during his reigning period. Aurangzeb was followed by his successors for the inscriptions of their coinage. They adopted uniformly on the reverse the formula 'Sanh julus maimanat Manus' with the mint name and the regnal year. There was a common pattern for the obverse,

which began with the words 'Sikka mubarak' (auspicious coin) followed by the name of the king and ended in 'Badshah Ghazi'. At times, the successors of Aurangzeb preferred to add some couplet on the obverse side of the coin in place of the set pattern of the coins.

After the death of Aurangzeb the Mughal Empire witnessed its gradual disintegration, but coinage tradition of Mughals continued for a long period in India. Shah Alam Bahadur, the son and successor of Aurangzeb followed the coin type of his father bearing his name in the form of a couplet on the one side and Manus maimanat sanah julus zarb.. on the other. Some of the coins are issued without couplet inscribed as Shah alam bahdur badshah ghazi sikkah mubarak on the one side and Manus maimanat sanah julus zarb.. on the other. His successors Jahandar, Farukhsiyar, Rafi ud-darjaat, Rafi-ud-daula, Muhammad Shah, Ahmad Shah and Shah Alam II etc. also issued their coins on the pattern of the coins of Aurangzeb. The Mughal currency was accepted throughout the country and interestingly, the coins of Princely states of India, even English, East India Company and French East India Company were issued in the name of feeble later Mughal emperors such as Ahmad Shah Shah Alam II etc. Issuing coins in their names were just to continue the type which was accepted to the masses and it continued till 1857. The changes in the inscription introduced by Aurangzeb were followed by his successors. Even the coinages of princely states and East India Company were issued on this pattern. The words Manus Maimanat Sanah Julus Zarb more or less continued on Indian coins till 1857 and in the case of coinage of Nizam of Hyderabad, it remained till 1947.

Conclusion

Mughal coins came to be made in all three metals at the imperial mints established in Agra, Delhi, Ahmedabad, Lahore and other important towns. Akbar's period also saw huge gold coins or mohurs being minted in multiple units of 5, 50 and 100 tolas, and a policy that was continued by his successors also. Mughal power was finally shattered when Emperor Shah Alam II lost the Battle of Buxar in 1764 A.D. to the East India Company's army and became a puppet in the hands of the British who entered Delhi in 1803 A.D. The

British continued to issue coins in Shah Alam's name till his death and his successor Muhammad Akbar II forfeited all minting rights in 1835 when the East India Company substituted the Mughal emperor's name with that of the English monarch and introduced English legend coins as the official Indian currency.

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