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RESEARCH ARTICLE

HISTORY OF COINS IN KERALA

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Abstract

Coins are as important as the inscription in history. Numismatics, the study of coins, is a multi-disciplinary science in the sense it requires information in palaeography, prehistoric studies, engravings and history, however it is itself one of the fundamental hotspots for the reproduction of history. Kerala was conceivably occupied with exchanging exercises from 3000 BCE with Sumerians and Babylonians. Phoenicians, Greeks, Egyptians, Romans, Jews, Arabs, Chinese and Europeans were pulled in by an assortment of wares, particularly flavors, cotton textures and other resources. Trade, invasion and civilizations were influenced the coin history. The evolution of coinage in Kerala throws light to history too. The present paper is an attempt to review the studies on numismatics of Kerala and thus to history too.

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Introduction:-

The concept of money had been around awhile. Shells were used as currency in ancient China and, about 5000 years ago Mesopotamians had even developed a banking system where people could "deposit" grains, livestock and other valuables for safekeeping or trade. The development of trade and commerce is impossible without money while the happiness and prosperity of human society depend largely on the ease with which one's necessities can be procured. The introduction of coins in the economic life of man solved such problems to a great extent. Coin has been used as long as goods and services have been traded, and its form depends on the culture in which it operates. It acts as the simplest, most broadly accepted and reliable form of transaction. A coin is a bit of valuable metal (gold, silver, copper, lead, and other base metals and alloys) stamped in a way indicating that it has been issued by some authority (Augustine, 2014).

The world's first coins appeared around 600 B.C., jingling around in the pockets of the Lydians, a kingdom tied to ancient Greece and located in modern-day Turkey. They featured the stylized head of a lion and were made of electrum, an alloy of gold and silver (Chakraborty, 1931). Vanaja (1983) postulated that, coinage began in India, in the 6th or 5th century B.C with the punch marked series and continued to be issued in an unbroken chronological sequence. However, various views have been expressed about the date and origin of the Indian coins. Greek origin of Indian coins proposed by H.H Wilson and James Prinsep (Bhandarkar, 1921); indigenous Indian coinage system coined by Alexander Cunningham and Edward Thomas (Cunningham, 1891); Achaemenid Persian Coinage system proposed by J. Allan (Allan, 1936) and Babylonian originals proposed by James Kennedy (Bhandarkar, 1921) are some important views in this array.

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Coins are as important as the inscription in history. They confirm the information derived from literature. They are of various metals: gold, silver, copper, or alloy and contain legends or simple marks. Those with dates are probably very valuable for the framework of chronology. The purity of the metal reflects the financial conditions of the time. The inscription on the coin indicates territory over which the rulers ruled. Some coins throw significant light on the personal events of certain rulers. Vehicle of Vishnu inscribed on some coin indicating the religious belief of the rulers. Musical instruments bears out their love for music. The discovery of the same kind of coins at different places helps up in fixing the coverage of various kingdoms in ancient India.

Gupta (1969) denoted that, south Indian coins are the revival of the punch-marked coins. Most of the punch-marked coins are different from the coins of northern India. He also pointed that, inscriptions on the south Indian coins are rare and when they occur are short giving simply the ruler's name or title and dates are rarer still. Coins of Satavahana rulers followed by Ikshvakus; Salankayanas; Pallavas; Traikutakas; Kalachuris; Chalukyas; Vijayanagara; Pandyas; Cholas; Cheras (Sircar, 1968; Chattopadhyaya, 1977; Sarasan, 2000) etc. brought light to the evolution of coinage of south India.

An in-depth study on epigraphical and literary sources contains valuable information regarding various aspects of coins used in Kerala is conducted. The present review paper is an attempt in the direction of documentation and discussion on the evolution of coinage in Kerala.

Coins of Kerala

A detailed review on coins of south India, especially Kerala is done based on collections, epigraphic and pertinent literatures. Coin collections in government museums and those owned by numismatists; epigraphical sources include temple inscriptions and copper plates were examined in detail. Publications of Elliot (1866); Schoff (1912); Barbosa (1921); Dodwen (1922); Gupta (1965); Muthatu (1967); Satyaprakash and Singh (1968); Narayanan (1972); Bhandarkar (1972); Chakraborty (1973); Warmington (1974); Grierson (1975); Crindle (1979); Mathew (1983); Kurup (1984); Pillai (1986); Turner (1989); Henderson (1989); Murthy (1991); Sathyamurthy (1992); Thurston (1992); Joseph (1994); Devaraj (1994); Gupta and Hardakar (1995); Narayanan (1996); Varrier (1997); Murthy (1997); Krishnamurthy (1997); Michener (1998); Gurukkal and Varier (1999); Mears (2000); Sarasan (2000); Mears (2000); Gopakumar (2003); Mathew and Pius (2003); Gopakumar (2003); Koshy (2007); Subairath (2012) etc. were examined for the purpose. Records in The Journal of Numismatics Society of India; The Journal of South Indian Numismatic Society; Catalogues in Travancore Archaeological Series; Coins in the Indian Museum; Epigraphica Indica, Annual report of Epigraphy and Annual Reports of the Archaeological Department- Cochin State were also examined. Systematic analysis on the above said data has resulted the evolution of coinage in Kerala as given below.

Table 1:- The Coins of Kerala.

Sl.No.	Coins	Origin	Area /Source	Period of circulation	Source of information
1	Cowrie/Kavati (Ancient form of coins-Shells/Sippikanai/Palunkukasu)	Indigenous and Exotic	Throughout Indian beds	Ancient to recent centuries	Literature, Hoards
2	Silver Punch marked Coins	Indigenous and Exotic	Throughout Kerala beds	Circa 300 BC -300 AD	Literature, Hoards
3	Square Copper Coins Double Die Copper Coins	Indigenous	Northern Kerala	Ca. 1090 A.D.	Literature, Hoards
4	Chera Copper Coins with Symbols	Indigenous	Northern Kerala; Pattanam	Ca. 1090 A.D.	Literature, Hoards
5	Roman Gold and Silver Coins/Punch marked Silver Coins Imperial Roman Copper Coins	Exotic (Trade)	Throughout Kerala	Ca. BC 31 – AD 1500	Inscriptions and Indigenous literature
6	Dinara Kerala Dinara	Exotic Indigenous	Kochi Vazhapalli / Nanrulai nadu (Tiruvalla, Chengannur)	AD 400-900	Inscriptions and Indigenous

					literature
7	Kasu (Chembukasu, Vellikasu, Thankkasu, Alkasu, Channar kasu, Talam kasu or Pazham kasu, Karumkasu , Thulabhara kasu , Anaikasu , Sulthankasu , Ilakasu etc.)	Indigenous (minted in Travancore)	Kollam/Venad	AD 900 - 1500	Inscriptions and indigenous literature
8	Rashi	Indigenous	Throughout Kerala	AD 900	Literature
9	Palamkasu	Indigenous	Trikkakara	AD 1000	Inscriptions and indigenous literature
10	Kalanju/Kanam	Indigenous	Northern Kerala	AD1000- 1100	Indigenous literature
11	Accu /Anaiaccu/Alakaccu	Indigenous	Venad and Wayanad	AD 1200- AD 1400	Inscriptions and indigenous literature
12	Pakam	Indigenous	Valluvanad	AD 1300- AD 1400	Indigenous literature
13	Calaka	Indigenous	Venad and Wayanad	AD 1200- AD 1400	Inscriptions and indigenous literature
14	Panam (Rasi panam, Kaliyugarayan panam, Gold panam, Virarayam panam, Puthiya panam, Erattavalan panam)	Indigenous	Venad, Kochi, Valluvanad and Kozhikode	AD 1300- AD 1700	Inscriptions and indigenous literature
15	Pon	Indigenous	Venad	AD 1200- AD 1400	Inscriptions and indigenous literature
16	Gulika	Indigenous	Vempolinad	AD 1400- AD 1500	Indigenous literature
17	Tiramam (Aratiramam (half-a Tiramam) and Mukkal tiramam (three fourth of a Tiramam)	Indigenous	Meenachil area	AD 1400	Indigenous literature
18	Taram/ Mummuri/ Muntiyavattu/ Makani	Indigenous	Kozhikode and Kochi	AD 1500- AD 1700	Literature
19	Virarayan panam	Indigenous	Kozhikode	AD 1500- AD 1700	Literature
20	Cannannore puthiya panam	Indigenous	Kannur	AD 1500- AD 1700	Literature
21	Varahan, Aanaikasu, Puthen	Indigenous	Kochi	AD 1600- AD 1800	Literature
22	Kasu, Panam, Fanam, and Varaham (Thulabhara kasu, Thirai kasu, Anantarayan panam, Ananthavaraham)	Indigenous	Travancore	AD 1600- AD 1900	Indigenous literature
23	Chukram, Fanam, Kashu, Cash, Kalyan Panam, Chitra Rupee,	Indigenous	Valid throughout Kerala	AD 1800- AD 1900	Indigenous literature

	Pagoda, Rupee (Uniform coinage introduced in 1835 by the British)				
24	Republic India Coins	Indigenous	Republic India money	AD 1950 -	Indigenous literature

Conclusion:-

Coins can act as a source of history. It throws light to the flow of information around the known world and tells us a lot about metallurgy and technology. Additionally, finding coins from one nation across land and sea in another far away nation can tell us something about communication and trade. In-depth analysis on coin evolution will give us the idea about wealth of the state, kingdoms, rulers, deities, rituals, practices, biodiversity, trade, interconnections of kingdoms and also the civilizations. The enriched history of coinage in Kerala and its checklist is drawn here. It is concluded that, in Kerala, coins were circulated or used as a medium of transaction from 300 B.C. onwards, though we didn't get continuity from 300 B.C. An urgent documentation and conservation of this precious wealth is the need of the hour.

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