DOI: 10.15613/hijrh/2024/v11i2/48145
ISSN (Print): 2349-4778
***HuSS*: International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Sciences,** *Vol 11(2), 63-67, 2024* *ISSN (Online): 2349-8900*

The Coin Exhibits of Victoria Jubilee (Bapu) Museum, Vijayawada - A Historical Perspective

Musugu Srinivasa Rao

School History, Culture and Archaeology, P. S. Telugu University, Srisailam – 518101, Andra Pradesh, India; srao.musugu@gmail.com

Abstract

Numismatics is the study of coins. It is one of the chief sources for the study of the ancient, medieval and modern history of India. During the last two hundred years quite a large number of coins have been discovered in various parts of the country including Andhra Pradesh. A good number of early Indian coins have also been found in Amaravathi, Nagarjunakonda, Yeleswaram, Chebrolu, Dhulikatta, Kotilingala, Maski, Kondapur, Machilipatnam, Ghantasala, Nagarjunakonda (Vijayapuri) and Vidhyadharapuram in Vijayawada. All these coins are exhibited in museums in various places like site museums, district museums, regional museums, state museums and national museums. The coins shall give information about the dynasty, the significance of the family members and chronology. Titles of the Kings, their hobbies, historical importance, king-wise information, socio-economic, religious and financial status. Sometimes the Numismatics evidence forms the only source for the reconstruction of Indian History.

Keywords: Bezawada, Coins, History, Punch Marked, Roman, *Satavahana*, V. J. Museum, Vijayawada

1. Introduction

Vijayawada is one of the largest towns in Andhra Pradesh. It is situated on the left bank of river Krishna in the Krishna (NTR) district of Andhra Pradesh[1]. Due to its geographical position, at the meeting place of grand routes from Kalinga, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh and from the South, Vijayawada became the largest commercial centre in Andhra Pradesh right from the early period.

Inscriptions from this town refer to its name as Pechchavada, Vecchavada, Beszzavada and Vijyavatika. Later, due to Sanskritisation, it came to be known as Vijayawada or Bezawada[2]. Eight decades back Vijayawada Municipal Corporation declared its name as Vijayawada.

The historic city was selected for the establishment of a museum by the British rulers in 1887 on the eve of the Golden Jubilee Coronation of Queen Victoria, along with other towns Jaipur, Udaipur and Rajkot[3]. Robert Sewell, a renowned historian and the then Krishna District Collector had laid a foundation stone on June 20th, 1887 A.D. for the construction of a Museum in Vijayawada. A museum building was constructed on Bandar Road (Mahatma Gandhi)[4]. In the beginning, the antiquities which came to light from its region and the samples of the industrial products and handicrafts of this district were exhibited in this museum. It belongs to the first generation of the few museums in India which were set up during the last quarter of the 19th century. Now, this museum which is in the heart of Vijayawada, has celebrated its centenary in 1987.

The Victoria Jubilee Museum (V. J. Museum) is organised as a district museum by the Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Andhra Pradesh and enhanced its collection improved its exhibition galleries and also maintained good relations with the public and student community. At present, the V.J. Museum name has changed to Bapu Museum. The Directorate of Archaeology and Museum Head Office was constructed in the same premises.

2. Objectives of the Study

- The main objective of the study is to focus on the Victoria Jubilee (Bapu) Museum on its collection of coins.
- To study the importance of Numismatics.
- To study the various dynasties coins and their significance.

3. Methodology

The present study purely depends upon the observation and descriptive method.

4. Numismatics Gallery

A separate building was arranged to display the coins. In this gallery, there are ten show-cases. These ten show-cases exhibit the various types of coins.

5. History of Coins

The history of coins is closely intertwined with the story of humanity. Man's requirements, in the remote past, were limited to food, shelter and covering. As these items were available equally to everybody in nature there was no need for him to exchange them with others. But as man settled to live in communities and changed from food-gatherer to food producer. He had a problem with surplus production. He developed the necessity to exchange his surplus production of food grains and things of utility in daily life with others. The mutual exchange of goods developed into trade, leading to the evolution of the barter system.

As a result, certain commodities became more preferred than others and were assigned higher values. They began to function as a medium of exchange and served as a standard for assessing the value of other goods. This led to the emergence of the concept of unit value, marking the first step in the evolution of coinage.

During the Vedic period, cows were used as a medium of exchange in transactions.

For long-term savings, they found the gold ornament "*Nishka*"[5] as an alternative medium. Metal pieces like "*Satamana*"[6] and "*Pada*" were some other denominations in bullion during the Vedic period between 1500 B.C. and 800 B.C[7]. However, the people faced difficulty with the quality and weight of the metal pieces. This issue was resolved by stamping metal pieces with the mark or symbol of an authoritative body, serving as a guarantee of accurate weight and quality. In this way, punch-marked coins were created[8].

By the fifth and sixth century B.C.,[9] the manufacturing of coins or metallic pieces was very much common in India. The ornament '*Nishka*' of the Vedic period, now represents a definite value. Besides "*Nishka*", "*Satamana*" and '*Pada*' of the Vedic period. Several other coin-terms (denominations) like *Vimsatika*, *Trimatika*, *Sana* and Karshapana are also mentioned in Panini's *Ashtadhyayi*[10]. This indicates that by the seventh century B.C., coins had become quite popular in India.

The coins found in the Andhra region are displayed in this numismatic gallery. The cabinets contain punch-marked coins, the coins of Roman emperors and coins of *Satavahanas*. The *Ikshvaku*, the *Vijayanagara* Kings, the *Bahmani Sulthans*, the *Qutbsahis*, the Moghal Emperors and the *Asaf Jahis*. Some of the coins of Queen Victoria (British Indian period) and the coins of the Republic of India are also displayed.

This gallery has ten showcases with various types of coins on display.

5. Punch Marked Coins

Puranas, or punch-marked coins, are the earliest forms of currency in India. They were in circulation centuries before the start of the Christian Era. Unlike modern coins, the symbols or marks on these coins were not die-struck[11]. But they were struck with a series of different punches one after another. The symbols on these coins are primarily religious, mythological, or astronomical. Commonly seen marks include the Sun, Elephant, Cow, Chariot, Horse, Bull, Jackal, Tree, Tiger or Lion, *Dharmachakra* and *Swastika*.

An intriguing aspect of these coins is that they carry neither a date nor the name of the issuer. To date, only silver and copper punch-marked coins have been discovered, although ancient literature also mentions the existence of gold punch-marked coins.

6. Roman Coins

Roman interactions with India began only during the reign of Augustus (31 B.C. to 14 A.D). It continued and expanded in the regions of Tiberius (14-37 A.D.), Chadins (41-54 A.D.) and Nero (54-68 A.D.)[12].

Roman trade activities with Andhra Desa are well attested from the time of Tiberius. In the time of Antonimus Pius (158-161 A.D.), the Andhra country had brisk trade relations with Rome and its coins were flowing in. However, no Roman coins were found after Caracalla (198-217 A.D). The Roman coins found in Andhra Desa were of Gold or Silver. These coins were found at Amaravathi, Nagarjunakonda, Yeleswaram, Chebrolu, Dhulikotta, Kotilingala, Maski, Kondapur, Machilipatnam, Ghantasala and Vidyadharapuram in Vijayawada.

Showcases No. 2 and 3: These showcases have *Satavahana* copper coins and lead coins on display.

7. *Satavahana* Coins

The *Satavahanas* gained independence shortly after Ashoka died in 232 B.C. and their reign lasted until around 227 A.D. Their empire stretched south of the Vindhya Mountains.

The *Satavahana* Kings mostly used lead and potion (an alloy of zinc, lead, tin and copper) as material as to make coins. Silver was also used, but rarely. Numerous copper coins have also been found. While *Satavahana* coins may lack artistic beauty or merit, they served as an important historical resource for understanding the dynastic history of the *Satavahanas*, much like Roman coins. *Satavahanas* issued portrait coins. eg: *Goutamiputra Satakarni, Yajnasri Satakarni, Pulumavi* etc[13].

Most *Satavahana* coins feature the images of an elephant, horse, lion or *chaitya* on one side. The reverse side often displays the *Ujjain* symbol, along with designs such as a tree on the railing, a swastika, a crescent, and Srivatsa. Some coins also bear the name of the king who issued them[14].

Showcase No. 4:

In this showcase, *Ikshvaku* Lead coins and *Vishnukundins* copper coins are on display.

8. *Ikshvaku* Coins

Ikshvakus were the successors of *Satavahanas* who rose to power in Coastal Andhra with their capital at *Sriparvata Vijayapuri* (present *Nagarjunakonda* in Guntur district). They ruled from 227 A.D. until approximately 306 A.D. The coins of the *Ikshvakus* are made of lead, featuring a horse or elephant on the obverse along with a fragmentary legend (the king's name) and the Ujjain symbol on the reverse[15].

9. *Vishnukundina* Coins

Vishnukundians were one of the important dynasties that ruled over part of coastal Andhra from 500 A.D. to 570 A.D. All *Vishnukundin* coins are made of copper and are round in shape. The obverse features a lion inside a circle, while the reverse displays a vase or *kalesa*, flanked by lamp stands on either side, within a rayed circle.

Showcase No. 5: Eastern *Chalukyan* copper coins are exhibited in this showcase.

10. Eastern *Chalukyan* Copper Coins

The dynasty of eastern *Chalukyas* was established by *Vishnukundina* in the second quarter of the seventh century A.D. The capital of the Eastern *Chalukyan* Kingdom was Vengi. The rule of this dynasty lasted till the 11th century when it was overthrown by *Cholas*.

The Eastern *Chalukyan* coins have their insignia, the boar in the centre and each letter of the king's name is punched by a separate punch. The other side is blank. The coins were issued in gold, silver and copper.

Showcase No. 6: This showcase has *Kakatiya* silver coins and *Vijayanagara* gold coins are also exhibited.

11. *Kakatiya* Silver Coins

The *Kakatiyas*, one of the major dynastic that ruled over the Telugu country for about two centuries from 1150 A.D. to 1323 A.D. with Orugallu (Warangal) as their capital. Kakatiyas issued coins in gold and brass - gold and the denominations were *Godyana* or *Mada*, *Ruka*,

Adduga, Padika, Visa, Chinnamu etc. The coins bear the legend of *Rayagajakesari* or *Dayagaja-Kesari* and symbols like *Varaha*, sun, sword and moon on the obverse while the reverse was left blank.

12. Vijayanagara Gold Coins

The Kingdom of *Vijayanagara* was founded in 1336 A.D., by Harihara Raya and Bukka Raya. It flourished under four dynasties: the Sangama (1336-1485 A.D.), Saluva (1486-1505 A.D.), Tuluva (1505-1565 A.D.) and Aravid (1556-1636 A.D.).

Vijayanagara coins are primarily gold *Varahas* or *Pagodas* weighing 56 grains, with half and quarter denominations. A variety of symbols appear on both gold and copper coins from the *Vijayanagara* Empire. The most common symbols include the bull, the elephant and various Hindu deities like *Lakshmi Narasimha*, *Balakrishna*, *Venkateswara*, *Lakshminarayana*, *Umamaheswara*, *Saraswathi* and *Brahma*, *Sri Rama*, *Hanuman*, *Garuda* and a double-headed Eagle "*Gandabherunda*" carrying four elephants on obverse and an inscription either in Canerese or *Sanskrit* bearing the name of the kind (Issuer) on the reverse.

Showcase No. 7: In the seventh showcase *Bahmani* copper coins and *Qutubshahi* copper coins are exhibited.

13. *Bahmani* Coins

Like other provinces of the Delhi Sultanate, the Deccan region also rebelled and declared its Independence in 1346-47 A.D. Zafar Khan alias Hasangangoo assumed the title of Allauddin Bahman Shah and founded the *Bahmani* dynasty. This dynasty ruled the five provinces of the Deccan namely Bedar, Berar Bijapur, Ahmad Nagar and Golkonda till 1518 A.D.

The *Bahmani* Sultans issued coins in gold, silver, and copper. While gold was rare, copper was abundant. Of the 17 rulers in the dynasty, gold coins are known to have been issued by only nine kings. The early *Bahmani* rulers followed the coinage patterns of the Delhi Sultanate. The silver and copper coins of the first ruler, Bhuman Shah, closely resembled the coins of the Khilji and Tughlaq dynasties in both form and design. The coins bear the epithets denoting the titles of the issuing rulers, the year of the issue and the mint. By 1526 A.D. The Bahmani Kingdom was split into five small independent kingdoms.

14. Qutub Shahi Coins

The first king of Golkonda, Sultan, Quli Qutub Shah was the founder of the Qutb Shahi dynasty. He declared independence from the Bahmani Yoke in 1518 A.D. assuming the title of 'Qutub Shah'. Qutub Shah ruled over Deccan from 1518 to 1687 when its last ruler Abdul Hassan Qutub Shah (Tana Shah) was taken as a prisoner by Aurangazeb the Mughal emperor. The Qutub Shahis issued coins in silver and copper. The coins are both circular as well as square. The coins feature Persian couplets on the obverse, while the reverse displays the king's name, the mint and the year of issue.

Showcase No. 8: In this showcase, Mughal copper and silver coins are exhibited.

15. Mughal Coins

Mughal emperors placed great importance on the privilege of issuing coins. Akbar, for instance, used coins to promote his new "Divine Faith" (*Din-e-Ilahi*). The artistic tastes of the Mughal emperors were reflected in their coinage. The standard gold coin of the Mughals was the "*Mohar*," weighing about 170 to 175 grains, and was equivalent to nine rupees. Half and quarter *Mohars* are also known to have been minted. The silver rupee, adopted from Sher Shah's currency, became the most renowned of all Mughal coins. It maintained a standard weight of 178 grains, with only slight variations. Additionally, half, quarter, one-eighth and one-sixteenth rupees were also minted. The Mughal copper coin, known as the "Dam," was modelled after Sher Shah's coin, weighing between 320 and 330 grains. Jahangir introduced the practice of inscribing legends in Persian couplets. All Mughal emperors used the *Hijri* calendar, with their regnal years also inscribed on their coins.

Showcase No. 9: This showcase has *Asafjahi* silver coins and Victoria silver coins.

[*Asafjahi* Silver Coins: Mir Mahboob Alikhan Bahadur Asafjahi VI ruled in A.H. 1285-1329 A.D. 1869-1911]

16. Obverse

Nizam-Ul-Mulk Asafjahi Bahadur is in the centre of the emblem of Charminar and in the centre of arch, the letter (*Meem*) in there. This *Meem* is the initial letter of Mir Mahboob Alikhan Asafjahi VI.

17. Reverse

Juloos -1-Maimanat Manoos Zuriba (Mint) *Farkhunda Bunyad* Hyderabad. In the centre one rupee.

18. Victoria Silver Coins

(1839-1901 A.D.) Queen Victoria's silver coins are displayed in this showcase.

19. Obverse

Portrait of Queen Victoria with legend.

20. Reverse

East India Company 1840 - 1 Rupee in English and Urdu Legend.

Showcase No. 10: In this showcase, Mahatma Gandhi's centenary coins and currency notes are exhibited.

21. Conclusion

All these coins have given a lot of information about the Andhra Region. These coins shall give information about the political, social, religious, cultural and mainly economic history of ancient and medieval India coins are useful for the knowledge of society, fine arts and language also.

Very recently the main museum building shifted into a new building, so there are so many changes in the placement of all exhibits in the Museum.

22. References

1. Suryanarayana RJ. History of Vijayawada. Archaeology of Andhra Pradesh, Victoria Jubilee Museum Vijayawada-Centenary 1887-1987 (Souvenir), Edi. Director of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad. 1987; p. 89.
2. Prarabrahma Sastry PV. Bezawada in Inscriptions. Archaeology of Andhra Pradesh, Victoria Jubilee Museum Vijayawada-Centenary 1887-1987 (Souvenir), Edi. Director of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad, 1987; p.85.
3. Sarkar H. Museums, Archaeological remains, monuments and museums, Part-II, New Delhi. 1964; p. 333.
4. Sarma PV. Victoria Jubilee Museum. Archaeology of Andhra Pradesh, Victoria Jubilee Museum Vijayawada-Centenary 1887-1987 (Souvenir), Edi. Director of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad, 1987; pp..69-71.
5. Rigveda. II, 33, 10, VIII, 47.15.
6. Agarwala VS. India as known to Panini. Lucknow. 1953; p. 264, Swati Chakraborty - Socio-Religious and Cultural Study of the Ancient Indian Coins, Delhi, 1986; p.9.
7. Chakraborty SK. A study of ancient Indian numismatics. Calcutta.1931; p. 33.
8. Ancient India, Bulletin of the ASI. 10-11. p.5.
9. Cunningham A. Coins of ancient India. London. 891; p.43.
10. Panini, "Astadhyayi".Vol; 1:.27
11. Chakraborthy S, Op.cit. pp. 322-325
12. Ibid; p. 330
13. Sarma IL. Coinage of the Satavahana empire. Delhi, 1980; pp. 100-103.
14. Bulletin of the Madras Government Museum. 1959; VII(2):1-26. https://doi.org/10.2307/4058264
15. Subrahmanyam R. A catalogue of the Ikshvaku coins in Andhra Pradesh. Hyderabad. 1962; p. 3.