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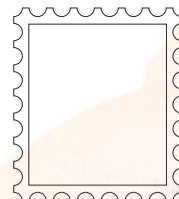


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Evaluating Chola Coins vis-a-vis Chola Art

By R. Vaidyanadhan



Bronze icon of Rajaraja Chola

Any avid collector of South Indian coins will be wondering why coins of the Chola period fail to reflect the rich artistic skills exhibited in their bronze icons, temple architecture or sculptures.

The earliest South India coins of the Pandya, Chera and Chola dynasties of Sangam Age, in fact, were produced with a great degree of fineness. The coins mostly were between one or two cm in diameter and were produced with beautiful miniature figures of horse, elephant, bull, lion, etc., even between 300 to 200 BC.

The crowning glory of the fine art of coin making was the portrait coins of the Sangam Age Chera King, Mak Kotai and Kuttuvan Kotai, of third quarter of 100 BC to the end of AD 100.

Also see the Kushana coins struck between 200 BC to AD 400. They were all examples of fine craftsmanship. Similarly the Byzantine coins minted between 5th to 10th centuries in the reign of Justinian I to Alexius I, exhibited marvelous craftsmanship.

But the die-making skills of coins with the bronze iconography of later Cholas, particularly of Rajaraja Chola make a poor comparison. The image looks neither a human nor a beast. However, their bronze works show intricate jewellery and embroidery work in their attire. See the examples of the bronze statue of King Rajaraja Chola, stone sculpture of Lakshmi at Gangaikonda Cholapuram and the coins. They leave the impression that the art of coin die-makers were more amateurish than professionals.

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*Stone sculpture of Lakshmi
at Gangaikondacholapuram*

Even the sculptures crafted during the Great Empire of Rajaraja Chola, too capture every mood of gods, goddesses and courtesans.

The Chola reign saw many temples being constructed. The deities of various sizes were created in granite, sandstone and bronze.

The Cholas who came to power in the late 9th century and ruled till the 13th century, ruled most of South India, Sri Lanka, the Maldives Islands, and even parts of the Indonesian island of Java.

It was founded by Vijalaya, who captured Tanjore in AD 850. The greatest among the Chola rulers were the imperialists Rajaraja Chola (AD 985-1014) and his son Rajendra I Chola (AD 1012-1044). But none of the coins issued by them carried any portraits. Most of the copper issues carry prototype figure. The coins of Chola era which were in circulation in Sri Lanka and other countries also carried similar figures.

With regard to Chola art, the Brihadiswara temple at Tanjore, built by Rajendra I, has been acclaimed as the finest achievement of synthesis of the famous Chola art. Its artistic excellence lies in the perfect balance of the parts and the whole: the architecture, sculpture, painting (frescos), stone and bronze images, the idols within, and the relief without. Its design has been compared to that of a bio-organism in which each part is related to the whole.

Regarding coinage, the Cholas issued a varied coinage in gold, silver and copper for general currency. It is principally the copper coins, known as Rajaraja Kasu, that are found abundantly.

Uttama Chola seems to have introduced coinage during the Chola era (AD 973-985). The coin depicts seated tiger, two fishes, bow, umbrella and a lamp, and on the reverse was inscribed *Uttama Chola* (in Sanskrit). These specimens were first minted at Madurai and then at Thanjavur. Rajaraja I (AD 985-1014) on his gold and silver coins carried the title *Yuddha Malla* (the Conqueror of Wars) with the same type of obverse. His victory of Talakad (Gangavadi, upper Cauvery basin) was marked with *Gangai Konda / Cholah* (again in Sanskrit) in gold and silver.

The design of famous gold coins issued in Sri Lanka was introduced in his reign. This shows a seated king and inscription *Sri / Raja / Raja* (in Sanskrit). These commemorative issues were attributed to have been issued in AD 1007, according to Michael Mitchner (*the Coinage and History of Southern India*, part II).

The die variety was extensively used in copper Kasu by Rajaraja and followed by Kolottunga (AD 1070-1120); and the Perunjinga Pallavas of Sendamangalam (AD 1221-1278) and Pandyas of Madurai (AD 1278-1325).



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Venetian Ducat Coins in India

By Devyani Jere

Apart from the coins minted by Indian rulers, many foreign coins, too were used in certain parts of India during different periods of history. Merchants and Traders imported these foreign coins into India.

Venice, in Italy was an independent state, an island city, whose main economic resource was its dominance in the trade of Mediterranean.

Like most of Europe, Venetian coinage was based entirely on silver until the latter part of the 13th century. During the late medieval period, Venice traded with the ports of western and southern India. Venetian Gold Ducat was a leading coin for the trade between Europe and Asia from the 14th through the 18th century. These coins were issued by Venetian rulers such as Francis Lorendano, Paul Rainier and Peter Grimani. The Venetian Gold Coins were known as Ducats and Sequins. They weight around 3.5 g. The Ducat was introduced in AD 1284 and experienced only minor changes in more than 700 years of minting. Its issue continued even a few years after the fall of Venetian Republic in 1797. The Ducat was intended to be absolutely pure, 24 carat gold and it appears to have been maintained as close to this ideal as contemporary technology allowed.

The Ducat coins became so popular among Indian public that people started copying and imitating them locally. Those who could afford the original gold coins could buy them locally but those who could not lay their hands on such coins were contented with their local copies. Many contemporary counterfeits are very well executed and can be distinguished from issues of the Venetian mint only by careful comparison with genuine specimens. The mint of Venice used individual letter punches and some image punches for engraving the dies for Ducats. Identification of these punches holds the key for distinguishing true Venetians Ducats from imitations.

The Venetian coins were in great demand during the Medieval Period in Kerala. Indian rulers purchased these coins for gifting them to priests and scholars. Many Syrian Christian women wore

necklaces made of Venetian coins. Venetian coins were also called as *Sanar Kasu* by some people of Kerala because of the figure of Doge standing in front of St. Marks cross on these coins. The Indians even produced imitations of these coins. One such imitation bear the figure of Hindu deities Rama and Sita on obverse and Lakshmana on reverse. These came to be known by various names like in Maharashtra they were called *Putali*. The term *Putali* refers to the human figures seen on both the sides of coins.

Venetian coins, imitated in india, 1675-1850



Gold, Ducat. Venetian type copied in India, Jesus Christ type



Gold, 2.8 g, ducat

Obv: Doge kneeling before the standing figure of St. Mark
Rev: Christ standing within stars.

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New Commemorative Coins of C. Subramaniam released at Coimbatore



To mark the birth centenary (AD 1910-2010) of the former Union Minister and former Governor of Maharashtra, Bharat Ratna C. Subramaniam a set of Commemorative coins was released by the Finance Minister Hon. Pranab Mukherjee on 28th August 2010 at Coimbatore.

C. Subramaniam was born in Varadhanur village near Coimbatore on January 30th 1910. He completed his school education and then joined Law College and become a leading lawyer in Tamilnadu.

When Congress announced the agitation, Salt Satyagraha, he immediately joined the Congress and threw foreign clothes and wore only Khadi dresses till his death. In 1952, he was elected as a member of Madras State (now Tamil Nadu) and became Education Minister. In 1962, he first entered the Parliament as a Member and became the Cabinet Minister under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru. The famous plan of Food Corporation of India (FCI) was his brain child.

It was one of the critical moments in India's economy and finance when Subramaniam undertook the responsibility of Finance on 10th October 1974. Just two weeks before that, the rate of inflation was almost 24%. The country had drought for three consecutive years and was compelled to import food grains. When he demitted office in 1977, the picture was totally different. The rate of inflation was negative then. Due to this contribution, he has been referred to as the **Father of Green Revolution**.

By T. M. Ravichandran

Subramaniam rendered his valuable services in building Indian agriculture and reinforcing core strengths of country's economy and democracy. He was a great patriot. He was truly a scientist among Scientists, an administrator among administrators and a statesman among statesman. He encouraged people to develop a scientific temper. He was a builder of institutions and believed that democracy could be strengthened by strengthening the institutions.

He made so many important contributions and even after retirement, encouraged new efforts in the fields of science, agriculture and water resources. On November 7, 2000, at the age of 90, he passed away.

C. Subramaniam had a numismatic connection, too. In 1991, as the Governor of Maharashtra, he released the famous book of Dr. Dilip Rajgor, *Standard Catalogue of Sultanate Coins of India* at the Raj Bhawan in Mumbai.



Hon. C. Subramaniam delivering his speech after releasing the Sultanate book on 7th December 1991.

On his right is Mr. Dinesh Mody, and on the left are MM. Jayant Krishna Dave and Dilip Rajgor

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Leprosarium Coinage

By Vishal M. Parikh

Leprosy is a disease we seldom hear about, and yet millions of people, perhaps 15 to 30 million, are afflicted with it. Throughout history, lepers have nearly always been shunned and forced to leave their families and possessions and live apart. Because of this isolation, lepers had to develop their own money, to be used only by lepers.

During the first half of the 20th century, it was a common practice in many countries, including the US, to forcibly confine people with leprosy to special institutions. This was because the disease was believed to be highly contagious. In some countries, special coins, tokens or paper money were made for use within these institutions, which came to be called "leper colonies."

In fact, the United States used special coins at its colonies in the Panama Canal Zone and in the Philippines, when they were under U.S. jurisdiction.


As medical knowledge of the disease advanced, medical experts eventually realized that leprosy could not be spread by handling the so-called "contaminated" money that lepers had touched. In most cases, the special money was discontinued in the 1940s and 1950s. The remaining examples of it were usually withdrawn and destroyed. Because of this and because coin collectors were reluctant to handle the coins, most leper colony money today is difficult to find.

Leprosarium coins and tokens serve as stark reminders of a time when people with leprosy were denied their freedom and common human dignity. Japan, Philippines, Panama, Colombia, Venezuela and Brazil are the countries known to have issued the Leper Coins.

Following are some of the examples of the Leper Coins issued by Venezuela under the head of Leprosarium Coinage:



Isla de Providencia, Leproserias Nacionales, 1939, BS. 0.05
 Isla de Providencia, Leproserias Nacionales, 1939, BS. 0.12 1/2
 Maracaibo Lazareto Nacional, 1913, BS. 1/8



Zubayr Khan

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Massa Coin of Sahasa Malla

By Abhay Vedpathak

Sri Lanka, our southern neighbour, has a fairly ancient numismatic history. Excavations at Anuradhapura, the ancient capital of Sri Lanka, have unearthed punch-marked rectangular pieces of silver termed as *Purana*. These coins are tentatively dated from 5th century BC onwards. These coins were subsequently replaced by 'Lakshmi' and 'Elephant' type die-struck coins. Some gold coins, of later Anuradhapura period, have also come to light recently.

The issue of coinage was monopoly of kings and was exclusively issued through the Royal Treasury. However, coins depicting King's name were first issued by King Vijay Bahu I (AD 1055-1111) from Polonnaruwa (the subsequent capital of the Sinhalese kings). During further course of time, i.e. Parakram Bahu I onwards, the use of precious metal for minting coins declined considerably. Subsequent kings issued copper coins known as *Massa* from Dambudeniya (present day, Dambulla). There are six known varieties of this type of coins, also known as *Dambedi Kasu*. These coins were found in various hoards across Sri Lanka and are fairly common. One of the rulers of Kalinga dynasty, Sahas Malla (AD 1200-1202), ascended the throne in AD 1200. Though he ruled for a fairly short period of about 2 years, his coins were in widespread use and are found in plenty.

During his recent visit to Polonnaruwa, the author had acquired a Massa coin of Sahas Malla from local petty coin dealer. According to him, the find-spot was around the Palace region of Polonnaruwa. The same is published here and details are as under:

Copper with greenish Patina,
3.8 g, 19.4 mm,
die axis - 180°, die-struck



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Inscription

On the obverse side, traditional Lankan Massa design of standing king is depicted with irregular oblong as head. On the right side is a vertical line from which three horizontal lines protrude symbolising nose, mouth and chin. The crown is shown to be bulging from the back of the head. The forearm is bent down with the hand holding a hanging lamp and the other hand is raised upwards from elbow and is holding a flower. The upwardly turned curved lines on either leg indicate a person wearing a *Dhoti*. The king is shown standing on a lotus stalk with flower to the right. On the reverse is a seated king with similar head design. His one hand is curved upward at elbow and arm is holding a conch shell; the other arm is holding a hanging lamp, as in obverse. To the right, just below the elbow, are 5 dots. On right side, Devnagari legend *Sri ma t Sa ha sa Ma lla* is seen. On either side of the coin, there are 40 to 43 beads in circular pattern around the periphery.

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Calendar of Events 2010-11

Month	Date	Place	Event	Venue
October	1-3	Bangalore	Nanyadarshini 2010	Karnataka Numismatic Society, Shikshak Sadan, K.G. Road, Opp. Cauvery Bhavan (Mahesh Jambulingam 094480 80502)
October	1-3	Jabalpur	Dharohar 2010	Jabalpur Coin & Philately Society on "Mahatma Gandhi" at Sardar Patel Bhawan, Gujarati Mandal, Civic Center
October	19-21	Bhubaneswar	94th Annual Conference of NSI	Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology
October	22-24	New Delhi	Annual Coin Exhibition	Delhi Coin Society, Bhaiveer Singh Sahitya Sadan, Near Speed Post, Gol Market (contact Goga Jain)
October	29-31	Mumbai	Mumbai Fair	Tejpal Auditorium, Mumbai (contact Shashikant Gangar)
November	11-12	Chandigarh	International Seminar	Coinage of the Imperial Guptas and their Contemporaries: New Perspectives, Dept. of Ancient Indian History Culture and Archaeology, Punjab University (ashi_593@yahoo.co.in)
December	3-5	Pune	CoinEx 2010 Pune	International Collectors' Society of Rare Items
December	3-5	Mumbai	Mumbai Fair	Tejpal Auditorium, Mumbai (contact Shashikant Gangar)
December	10-12	New Delhi	Stamps of India 2010	National Exhibition, NSIC Exhibition Ground, New Delhi (sine@stampsindia.com)
December	24-26	Kolkata	14th Coin Exhibition & Conference	Numismatic Society of Calcutta, Haldiram's Banquet
January	24-26	Nagpur	NagMoney 2010	Numismatic Research Institute, Nagpur
February	12-18	New Delhi	INDIPEX- 2011	World Philatelic Exhibition, India Post-PCI-FIP-FIAP

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New Coins to Commemorate the Birth Centenary of Mother Teresa

By Rishi Chandio



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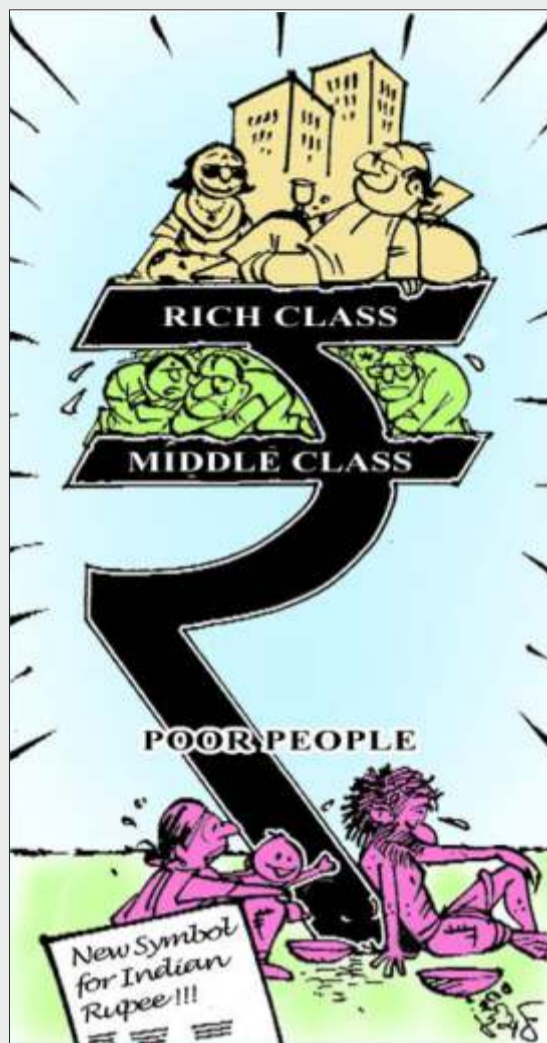
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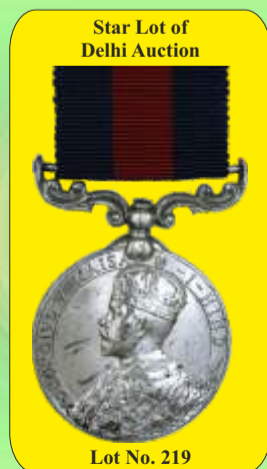
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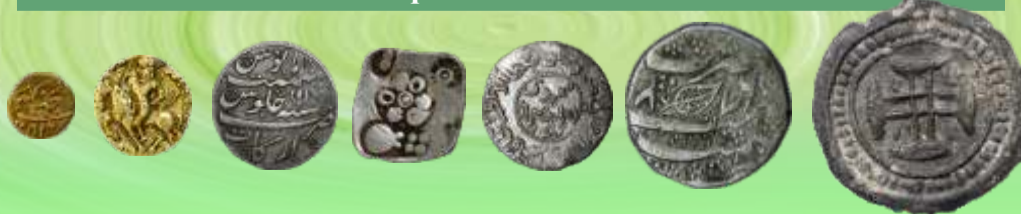
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