



RELEVANCE OF ISLAMIC COIN INSCRIPTION IN UNDERSTANDING MEDIEVAL INDIAN HISTORY

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ABSTRACT

These days different sources are accessible which empower the antiquarian to contemplate and dissect the contemporary political and social conditions, among these, coin engravings structure a significant part. In contrast to messages in stone, mosaic, wood and different materials. The coin flan was bounded by limitations of space so the inscriptions on them must be brief.

Although no complete and exhaustive study of the coins inscriptions has yet been carried out. Until, now analysis of these inscriptions has been confined to the explicit text as cited on the coin and no attention has been paid to understand the relevance and importance to the coins inscription. In this article I will try to explain how important is coin inscription in understanding medieval Indian History.

KEYWORDS : Coin Inscriptions, Dynasty, Calligraphy, Caliph. Islamic, Kalima

Importance of Inscription:

Indian history composing whether it is antiquated or archaic experiences the imperfections of absence of coordinated history composing opposing ordered recreation for the antiquarians. Despite the fact that medieval period had numerous sources which reflects archaic Indian history period, at times misses the mark concerning illuminating sequential effectiveness.

In such a literary shortfall coinage and inscription play a major role in reconstruction of Indian history. Coins and its inscription is one of the biggest sources of understanding the contemporary socio-political and economic condition prevalent during the times when such coins were issued. They confirm the information derived from literature. They are of various metals: gold silver copper alloy and contain simple but informative legends. We can consider coins and its inscription as our sole evidence.

Coins are the build-up of the period when they were current and subsequently fill in as the most contemporary proof. Coins buoy, travel and circulate even external the political limits of a domain, mirroring its monetary strength; the engravings address the actual furthest reaches of a realm. Together, they give a practically unmatched series of historical documents.

The absence of name of any rulers in chronicles is an unusual phenomenon in history which can be completed and corrected by numismatics and Epigraphical evidence. Like many rulers of Bengal sultan had not been mentioned in chronicles but we get coins of them and we chronolize them with the information present on coins, Jalaluddin Mahmud is one such good example of my this point, as his name was absent and unknown in chronicles and monumental inscriptions, but we have his coins, so that we considered him as one of the ruler of Bengal sultanate.

The immaculateness of the metal mirrors the monetary state of the time. They illuminate concerned culture, they likewise give financial data of the contemporary time frame, as they, when all is said and done, were the foundation of the general public, and without cash anybody can't consider endurance.

Henceforth coin Inscriptions is undoubtedly among the most dependable sources of the history of any region. They have been proved a source of the highest value for the reconstruction of the history. They furnish extremely fascinating information of the contemporary life. Comparatively, they are more authentic and informative than any other source, as they are the contemporary records of the rulers and others. Their value as contemporary documents

thus remains unparalleled. Their study reveals that these were inscribed by the court poets or other royal officials of the rulers on various occasions such as festivals, conquests, and victory, (Gaud Vijaya legend found in the coins of Muhammad Bin Saam) etc.

Therefore they help us in knowing the chronology, extent of empires, military achievements and other political, social or religious events of the contemporary time. On the one hand, these inscriptions settle down many controversies, and on the other, they also raise many controversies due to exaggerations on many subjects (this view is supported only in monumental inscriptions as they were large and somehow in detailed). But, if the information, which are hidden and invisible, are studied and understood by critically, they become very important for our history. A coin stamped with a ruler's name and titles as well as the name of the mint and the date of issue provides the student of a coin with a good deal of information, on the other hand, this information can be of great importance, ensuring the coin's legitimating, attesting to its authenticity, its quality, and so on. It is just such sets of authenticating, legitimating pieces of information.

Inscriptions are very helpful for studying the development of Indian scripts and languages. Inscriptions represent the earliest written forms of Indian languages and are evidence that these written forms were already well-developed by the time the inscriptions were made. By studying the vocabulary, and forms of the inscriptions linguists have been able to advance their understanding of how languages developed and where they were used. In the country as a whole the earliest inscriptions were recorded on stone. But in the early centuries of Christian era copper plates began to be used for the purpose.

The earliest inscriptions in coins were written in Greek language in the 3rd century BC. With the help of coin inscription only it becomes possible to decipher India's oldest script Kharoshthi and Brahmi. Later, Brahmi and Kharoshthi and other scripts, like Sanskrit, were commonly used. In ancient Period, inscriptions were not promoted and they focussed mainly on pictorial motifs, for enhancement of the coins. The point to be noted that in ancient period depiction of picture provides very confusing information which always remained the subject of debate. But with the coming of inscriptions totally changed the meaning and purpose of Coins.

Islamic Inscription:

In 8th century with the advent of Muslim another new inscription noticed which was named as Islamic type coins. From there not in common but noticed some coins of new language and pattern. Indians had a flexible culture they can easily adopt

and influenced by new things. That's the reason we get to see varieties of new categories of coins in early medieval India.

The advent of Muslim brings their own culture, tradition and language, 'Arabic and Persian'. The first coin of Muslim with Arabic inscription was noticed on the coins of Amir's of Sindh (8-9thcent).

Later with the firm establishment of Muslim rule, Following Ghaznavid Goid, and Delhi Sultanate, strengthened the scripts (Arabic and Persian) on coins. it was further strengthened during the Mughal period.

The inscription inscribed on the coins operate, information at different levels and it can be understandable and sorted in two ways first secular and second religious. The kalima, caliphs name and any other signs of religion was in the religious category. The temporal types of information conveyed by the coin's text, the names and titles of a ruler, the epithet of the mint and dates was included in secular information. The religious expressions on coins could reflect the distinction, and the hostility, between Shiite and Sunni, Fatimid and Abbasid or Umayyad or Muslim and non-Muslims. Like in Adil shahi coins, contain inscription relating to their shiite faith, particularly the coins of Ali Adil Shah I, who bore the name Of Fourth Caliph Hazrat Ali. The inscription is: *Assadullah Ghalib (Lion of God), in one side and in other Side Ali Ibn Abi Talib (Ali Son of Abu Talib). Ali Adil Shah is a Shia Muslim reflected by his coins.*

The purely linguistic Islamic coins had one important common feature, it can not only be read by those who knows how to read, but it also serves as a message sent deliberately and consciously by the ruler who uses it. Of course, it is clear that everything stamped on a coin carries with it some meaning, has some significance. But in this aspect no critical study has been done.

How and when this revolution in coinage came:

A revolution in the history of the Islamic coinage took place in 696 AH, when the Umayyad caliph Abd Al Malik issued a new pattern coins consisting only of inscription in Arabic. The amazing impact of this all epigraphic coinage can be seen in India also as Muslim rulers in India continued the tradition of issuing only inscriptional coinage. They issued only inscriptional coins because pictorial devices were prohibited in Islam. After decline of Abbasid Caliph, the domain of the Caliphate was administered by provincial governors who acted as representatives of Caliph. They used Caliph Name for the recognition of their sovereignty which provided them with a support to win over the confidence of their masses.

In India also Muslim rulers continued to use caliph's name as a Degree of investiture from Caliph on their coins as a shield and protecting device from rivalries and enemies and opponents and also to win the confidence of the masses. Coins issued in the name of Abbasid caliph Al Mustansir, bears the legend, Fi Ahd, Al Imam Al Mustansir Amirul Mumineen, (in the reign of Imam) on one side, and the name and honorific title of the ruler on the other side. Indian Muslim rulers (Iltutmish, Muhammad Bin Saam) issued bilingual coins as to convey to their subjects, in their own script and language, the title and designation of the supreme of their conquers faith. Like they used to write in devanagiri legend *Suritana* in one side and or Caliph name in devanagiri, and in other side *Sri Shalifa*, the word *Shalifa* means *Khalifa*.

In Medieval period Muslim name in coins is a structure of many important elements. Like name *Ism*, *ism* is followed by *Nasab*, which refers to ones ancestors, such as *Mahmud Bin Muhammad Tughlaq* issued coins under the name of

Ghyasuddin Mahmud Tughlaq. The coins bear the inscription *Yaminul Amirul Mumineen Ghyasudduniya Waddin Abul Muzaffar* on one side and *Mahmud Shah Bin Muhammad Shah as- Sultan* on the other.

Therefore according to Bates, the appearance of the kunya, of the designated successor to the reigning caliph is a major Characteristic of Islamic Coinage.

Along with all these information, rulers used to write Quranic text, on coins. This tradition also come from Islamic world but its impact was less, as few rulers had only issued coins with Quranic Text like *Muhammad Bin Tughlaq*, issued coins with *Kalima Taibba* and *Kalima Shahadat*. *Aurangzeb* had banned to use Quranic text on coins as he feels that it was an insult of Qurani ayats as it can be carried and taken anywhere and everywhere, like toilets or bad palces where *Shaitan* or *Napak Things* are available.

When there is discussion of inscription there will be the discussion of Calligraphy, because the concept could not be separated from each other. Calligraphy is the most dignified art in Islam. Arabic being its language was very enthusiastically studied by the votaries of Islam and its writing in a beautiful hand was thought to be an act of great virtue. The holy Quran says, "Oh Prophet, read in the name of the Lord who taught thee with pen". It is also narrated in the tradition, "The first thing that the Lord created was the pen". The development in Calligraphy was directly connected with Quran because they employed their artistic design in engraving Quranic Ayats in Masjids and in papers for fulfilling the necessity of enormous copies of Quran. Therefore various styles of Calligraphy writing were invented by the artists to suit the occasion and to grace the beauty of decorations.

During the more than fifty years following the introduction of the epigraphic coins, the style of script gradually changed, from an ordinary writing script to the style of monumental inscriptions. Like the calligraphers of early Quran editions, engravers exploited the inherent tendencies of the Arabic script. And with the experiments and exploitation of Arabic letters they developed many other new beautiful scripts like *Nastaliq Thulth*, *Tughra*, etc.

The first main step taken to transform the writing style in coin was during the reign of *Al Mamun*. During his reign Arabic script changes from the angular kufic script to a more refined curvilinear and methodical Kufic style. This change in the calligraphy appears a definitive break with the past and occurs in both the sides of the coins. The Fatimid ruler *Al-Mu izz li-D n All h* (341-365/953-975) changed the layout of the inscriptions and created a visually distinct coinage. *Al-Mu izz's* coinage was composed of three concentric circles of inscriptions in Kufic script carrying Shia messages. After that they shifted their concern towards calligraphy and slowly and steadily they introduce *Naskh* on coins.

Ayyubids followed and Expanded and sustained use of *Naskh* script. Later another beautiful calligraphy had been noticed that is *Tughra* style. In Arabic calligraphy the *Tughra* style is considered as most beautiful but intricate. The *Tughra* has been a peculiar visual art. It represented a symbol of spirituality and power. In Arabic calligraphy in general and in the *tughra* style in particular, certain letters have their individual personality and significance. The first coin in *tughra* style was struck by the Ottoman ruler *Amir Sulaiman* (1403-10)65. In India, the *Tughra* pattern of coins of the *Bengal* and *Jaunpur sultans* are prominent.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion to the coinage and inscription described above, the coins with inscriptions, primary functions indicates something outside the normal monetary system, these are struck for purposes of presentation or honouring someone or something. As the examples cited here show, the forms and contents of the coinages of Islam carried messages on more than one level. The language used on a coin perhaps most obviously says something about the attitudes and policies of the issuing authority. Messages written in a particular script are clearly intended for a particular audience. Therefore the study of these inscriptional coins is particularly important because they include traditional or non-traditional data.

Coins spoke to the people in two ways, through the language of inscription and language of art, we have to just understand and differentiate the meaning come out from the small piece of informative coin. In this aspect of coins a careful study is needed.

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