

32. The Coins of Tranquebar - Poompuhar Coast, Tamilnadu

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The Coins under study were collected during Marine Archaeological Explorations off Tranquebar (15 Km north of Karaikal) Thanjavur District of Tamil Nadu coast in the year 1989-90. These Coins were collected near Masalamani temple on Tranquebar coast in the intertidal zone at low tide. These were heavily patinated because of salt action. The first attempt was made to clean the coins. The chemical treatment of coins was undertaken in National Institute of Oceanography, Goa.

Copper Coins : The alkaline tartrate solution ($C_2H_2O_6$) (50 grams Sodium hydroxide and 150 grams sodium potassium tartrate in one liter of distilled water) was prepared and the coins were immersed in this solution separately in the beakers for a few hours or overnight until all the greenish blue encrustations of cupric salts are removed, then they were slowly cleaned with soft brush.

Subsequently the coins were immersed in 5% solution of sulphuric acid for two hours until the pinkish cuprous oxide is removed completely. The coin is thoroughly cleaned with distilled water about four to five times. The silver coins were immersed in the beaker separately in 10% solution of ammonia to remove silver chlorides (greenish colour) and cleaned with distilled water. Again the coins were immersed in 10% of hot solution of thiourea to remove dark silver oxide or silver sulfide. After applying 1% of PMM the coin was cleaned with distilled water thoroughly and dried.

The lead coins were first immersed in separate beakers with 10% solution of UCL, Hydrochloric acid and kept for a few hours until the bubbles were completely stopped. Then the coin was washed two to three times in hot distilled water to remove lead chloride. Next it was immersed in 10% solution of ammonium for two hours until the yellowish coating of lead oxide was completely removed, then the coin was washed three times in freshly boiled and cooled water for removing all the dissolved carbon dioxide (CO_2). Finally the cleaned coin was dried properly.

After cleaning all the coins they were photographed individually on both sides, obverse and reverse, and were measured and weighed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Ten percent of the coins have been collected from the intertidal zone of Tranquebar coast of Tamil Nadu. They include 3 gold, 2 silver / lead and 95 copper coins. Presently 25 coins have been identified. Remaining ones are yet to be identified.

With the revival of South Asian trade by the beginning of the 10th Century AD, the Cholas issued a regular coinage in gold, silver and copper. Copper became the chief metal for currency in the late Chola period. Those coins invariably have the tiger symbol with legend either in the *nagari* or *grantha* and Tamil script giving the name or title of the ruler.

Some square coins of Cholas were discovered along with other datable associated finds like the black and red ware and rouletted ware in the wharf site in Kaveripattinam, the Early Chola port, (Vanaja, 1983, 27).

The Dutch started trading with peninsular India about the 1st decade of 17th Century AD. The trading cities were Masulipattinam and Surat. The Dutch factories were located on the Coromandel coast in the Krishna and Godavari river basins, which they later extended to cover the Tamil Nadu coast and the Karnataka region. These regions were well known for fine weaving and painting of *chintz* of superior quality. The Dutch East India Company minted a series of coins in silver and copper and a limited number in gold. These coins were minted in Holland for a long period from 1602 to 1806. They are known as *challies* in local parlance bearing on obverse the monogram of the company VOC (the Oost Indische Compagnie) (the East India of Netherlands), superscribed over the arms and devices such as a flower, a cock, a plain shield, a castle or galloping horse, which may have served as mint marks. Each has a different coat of arms on the reverse, according to the state represented, for example the Tamil legend Nahapattinam on the reverse. Also they issued the gold currency based on the English East India Company or Vijayanagar type.

The Danish East India Company was formed in 1616 AD at Copenhagen for trading in East India under a charter issued by king Christian IV. From the Nayak of Tanjore the

Danes obtained in 1620 AD the sea port of Tranquebar near Nagapattinam and adjoining villages were fortified by them. Tranquebar remained their chief factory settlement from where they issued coins. They minted the coinage in gold, silver and copper and also introduced lead from Tranquebar. They were issued with the initial alphabet and monogram of the reigning monarchs on the reverse and the term *Kas* is used on the reverse to denote its value. It is the same as the English cash and Tamil *Kasu*. Some of the copper coins series bear monograms of the Danish East India Company until 1729 AD., when it was dissolved and the monogram DOC (for DAC that of the new company Dansk Asiatic Company) was substituted Asian trade in 1732 AD. The minting operations of the Tranquebar mint went on till 1845 AD when Tranquebar and other Danish settlements were transferred by sale to the British Government.

The coins were identified on the basis of the emblems, inscriptions and royal *insignia*. Out of twentyfive, Coins twenty three are of copper and two of lead coins. The gold and silver coins will be taken up for the further study. Dynastywise these coins belong to three periods (A) late Chola period (B) Danish period and (C) Dutch period.

Late Chola coins : Three copper coins belong to this period. On the obverse of the coins is a crude man in standing posture and on the reverse is a crude man in standing posture with a legend Rajaraja in devanagari script, (Pl.I 3-4B, Pl 11A-11B). These coins were issued by Rajaraja I between and 1014 A.D. (Vanaja 1983, P. 130).

DANISH COINS : Three lead and eighteen copper coins belong to this period. Within a circle is a crown and below the crown the value of the coin and the company name DOC (for Dansk Ostindisk Companie) are inscribed. Some coins give the date of issue. Christian V, Christian VI, Christian VII, Frederick III, Frederick IV and Frederick V were the issuers of these coins, in the eighteenth to nineteenth century A.D. (Pl. II 1A-2B, 5A-22B, 2AA-25B).

DUTCH COINS : One Dutch copper coin is of seventeenth to eighteenth century AD. The company name VOC (the Vercenigde Oost Indische Compagnie) is on the obverse and on the reverse is the minting place of the coin Nahapattinam (Pl. III 23A-B).

The large number of coins transported to the beach from the sea near Masalamani temple (Tranquebar coast) collected by the local people daily at very low tide. This is the only place where the coins are available on beach.

CONCLUSION

From the above study we may conclude that such a large number of coins have been transported to the sea either from shipwrecks which carried coins or a coin minting place might have been submerged here.

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Sl. No.	Metal	Size in Cms Thickn.	dia	Weight	Period	Dynasty	Obverse	Reverse	Remarks
1.	Copper	0.25	1.4	2.23		Danish	Within ring circle 4 is visible portion is eroded.	Crown below C7	
2.	Copper	0.27	1.55	2.14	1761	Danish	Crown below	Crown below DAC	This coin called as 2 Kas or Kobber issued by Frederick V.
3.	Copper	0.17	1.70	2.29	10 th Century	Late chola	Seated posture of a man with legend Rajaraja indevanagari script	Standing posture of a man	Issued by Rajaraja Chola in(985-1016)
4.	Copper	0.25	1.70	3.60	"	"	"	"	"
5.	Copper	0.25	1.45	2.53	1788	Danish	X below Kas below that 1788	Crown below C7	Issued by Christian VII
6.	Copper	0.25	1.40	1.62	16 th	C. Danish	Crown below F4 in double faceted	DOC	Issued by Fredrick Ck IV in 1699-1730 Thins was called as 4 Kas.
7.	Copper	0.25	1.40	2.06	1768	Danish	Crown below 17 DAC 4	upper portion eroded below C7 is visible 4 Kas.	Issued by Christian VII, it was called as
8.	Copper	0.25	1.45	2.13	1768	Danish	Crown below 17 DAC 4	Crown below C7	Issued by Christian VII it was called as 4 5Kas.
9.	Copper	0.25	1.45	0.36	17 th C.	Danish	Crown below F4 double form	DOC	Issued by Frederi Ck IV (1699-1730) called as 3 Kas.
10.	Copper	0.20	1.35	2.13	1768	Danish	Crown below 17 DAC 4	Crown below C7	Issued by Christian VII
11.	Copper	0.15	2.10	2.28	10 th C	Late Chola	Same as Sl. No.3	Same as Sl. No.3	Same as Sl. No. 3
12.	Lead	0.35	1.30	3.04	17 th C	Danish	Within the circle of dots DC inscribed	Within the circle of dots C5 inscribed	Issued by Christ as V (1670-1699)

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Sl. No.	Metal	Size in Cms Thickn.	dia	Weight	Period	Dynasty	Obverse	Reverse	Remarks
13.	Lead	0.30	1.30	2.18	17 th C	Danish	"	"	"
14.	Copper	0.21	1.10	0.85	17 th C	Danish	Within in a ring circle crowcircle below C6	Within in a ring DAC	Issued by Christian VI (1730-1746)
15.	Copper	0.39	1.30	2.33	18 th C	Danish	Within the circle of dots IV below A5	Within the circle of dots crown below C7	Issued by Christian VII (1766-1808)
16.	Copper	0.22	1.00	0.89	17 th C	Danish	Within a circle of dots crown below F4	Within a circle of dots DOC	Issued by Frederi CK IV (1699-1730)
17.	Lead	0.30	1.31	2.19	17 th C	Danish	Within a circle DC	Within a circle C5	Issued by Christian V (1690-1699)
18.	Copper	0.19	0.95	0.69	17 th C	Danish	Within dots of a circle crow below F4 DOC	Within dots of a circle crown below	Issued by Frederick IV (1699-1730) and called as 1 Kas
19.	Copper	0.20	1.45	1.86	17 th C	Danish	Within the dots of circle crown below F3	Within the dots of circle galloping horse.	Issued by Frederick III (1648-1670)
20.	Copper	0.20	0.91	0.65	17 th C	Danish	"	"	Issued by Frederick III (1648-1670) and called 1 Kas
21.	Copper	0.20	1.02	0.61	17 th C	Danish	Within a circle crown below F4	Within a circle crow below DOC	Issued by Frederick IV (1699-1730)
22.	Copper	0.20	0.95	0.72	17 th C	Danish	"	"	
23.	Copper	0.24	1.15	1.14	18 th C	Dutch	DVC	Nahapattinam written in 3 lines in Tamil script	
24.	Copper	0.32	1.30	2.67	17 th C	Danish	Crown below C7	Upper portion eroded, lower portion is (1)? 790 visible	Issued by Christian VII (1766-1808)
25.	Copper	0.20	1015	1.13	17 th C	Danish	Within a circle crown below C7	Within a circle crown below 17 DAC 6 broken further and 2 is visible	Issued by Christ an VII (1766-1808) this was called as 2 kas