

## **Bahmani Coins of Deccan: A Study**

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### **Introduction:**

Islamic coins were first issued in India by the Amirs of Sindh in the eight century A.D. out of this Regular Coinage Commenced in the eleventh and twelfth century A.D. by the Sultans of Delhi. Bahmani kingdom was the first major Islamic dynasty to rule in the Deccan after their revolt against the Tughlaq rule from the Delhi. Islamic coins are unique not only for their Calligraphy but also for the wealth of information that they provide and Bahmani coins were no exception Islamic coins usually have mints name, year of issue in Hijri era, Regular year and a legend which could be very elaborate and truly reveal the characters of the issuer. Another characteristic of Islamic coins is the mention of the name of the father of the issuer which makes it easy to identify the Sultan especially when his name is common like Ahmad and Muhammad of Bahmani Sultan for example there were four Ahmad and three Muhammads out of eighteen Bahmani rulers and each Sultan can be identified because they mentioned the name of their father and sometimes even their grandfather. Hence, this research work provides a brief genealogy of Bahmani Sultans followed by a detailed description of silver and copper coins issued by them.

The policies of Muhammad Bin Tughlaq Sultan of Delhi resulted in dissatisfaction and unrest among the nobles and provincial governors (Amiran-e-Sadah) and turmoil become order of the day. Consequently, there were several revolts in various parts of India, including the Deccan, which formed part of the Tughlaq empire, with its second capital at Devagiri Daulatabad in 1327 A.D. Muhammad Bin Tughlaq mad Daulatabad the second seat of his empire. The sultan was constantly on the march from Daulatabad and Delhi and vise-versa.

There were insurrections all over the Tughlaq Empire and the turn of the Deccan proper came in 1336-37 A.D. when Shihab-i-Sultani Nusrat Khan, Governor of Bidar, proclaimed himself sultan. It was an abortive attempt as he was defeated by the governor of Daulatabad, Qutlugh Khan. The next insurrection in the Deccan was the rebellion of Ali Shah, who proclaimed himself sultan at Dharur with the title of Alauddin Ali Shah. He even issued copper coins in his name as "Ali Shah Sultan". This attempt also was suppressed by Qutlugh Khan.

In 1345-46 A.D. a group of leading nobles, Amiran-i-Sadah, who were practically autonomous in their own jurisdiction carried out a successful revolution and created an independent kingdom in the Deccan in 1345-46 A.D. They elected one of their own member, Ismail Mukh as the first independent Sultan of the Deccan.

On September, 1346 A.D. Ismail Mukh became Sultan under the title "Abul Fateh Nasiruddin Ismail Mukh". Under this title coins were also issued. According to Futuh-us-Salatin of Moulana Isami, when the crown was offered to Ismail, he first refused, declaring that Hasan should be raised to the throne as "apart from his widespread jagirs, he was of the progeny of Bahman himself". But as Hasan was busy elsewhere and as the enemy had to be faced immediately, that Ismail was made the sultan. He gave Nasiruddin the title of Khwajah Jahan and bestowed on Hasan the title of Zafar Khan and Amir-ul-Umara.

There were eighteen rulers constituting the Bahmani dynasty, the first eight of whom ruled from Gulbarga (Ahsanabad) and other from Bidar (Muhammadabad) as their capital. It was probable that all these eighteen rulers issued copper coins as the reading of Khutba and issue of coins were regarded as royal prerogatives. However, it is noteworthy that the coins of two rulers, viz., Dawood Shah-I and Alauddin Shah-IV have not yet been discovered.

Bahmani coins were issued in various denominations and of varying weights. It may be worth noting that the copper currency of Bahmani rulers had not followed any fixed standard, since varied greatly. In fact, as a rule when a ruler issued coins of various denominations, they usually bore different legends although there were some notable exceptions for instance Muhammad Shah-III had issued coins of four denominations all of which carried the same legend.

It is significant that the coins of earlier rulers tended to be lower weights and those of the later rulers of higher weights. This points to a discernable trend indicative of gradual rising of weights of coins despite the fact that coins of lower weight of low denomination were also issued by these rulers.

One notable feature of the Bahmani Copper Coins is the absence of any ornamental design, though adorned by calligraphy of a high standard. Moreover, the script on the coins of earlier kings shows the Tughlaq influence while the local variation on the Tuluth and Tughra styles of writing marks the coins issued from Tajuddin Firoz Shah onwards. All the Copper Coins of the Bahmani rulers are round in shape the lone exception being a rare type of coin of Firoz Shah which was rectangular in shape, odd shape in Muhammad Shah's coin and in Mujahid Shah is not circular. The Badshah and regnal year which are found on Mughal coins do not figure on the coins of the Bahmani Kings.

The name of the mint is found only on some of the Copper Coins of the Bahmani rulers and that too as a marginal inscription. In Firoz Shah's Copper Coin Hazrat Ahsanabad mint very clearly inscribed and in Ahmed Shah-I and Ahmed Shah-III's mint name was Muhammadabad (Bidar) mentioned. The year of issue of the coin is commonly found on the coins of the rulers of the later period and is inscribed at the bottom of the obverse legend with the exception of those of Muhammad on which year of issue given in Arabic numbers figures of the margin of the coin. Yet other notable feature of the Bahmani Coins is the mention of the name of the future and even of the grandfather of the ruler who had issued the coin a feature helpful to the fixing of generally of Bahmani sultans.

One other feature of Bahmani Coins is the mention of the sultan's name and his regnal titles on one side of the coin without continuation of legend on the other side of it's the lone exception being these types of 15 coins were of Muhammad Shah.

One another characteristics features of the Bahmani coins is the use of legends and epithets which are also found on the coins of Muslim rulers of the medieval period and some only on Bahmani coin. The most common of these with their connotations are discussed in following table;

| <b>Name of Sultan</b>      | <b>Gold Coins</b> | <b>Silver Coins</b> |
|----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Alauddin Hasan Bahman Shah | 20gm              | 11gm                |
|                            | 11gm              |                     |
|                            | 5gm               |                     |
| Muhammad Shah-I            | 12.8gm            | 10.8gm              |
|                            | 10.8gm            | 7.3gm               |
|                            |                   | 1.7gm               |
|                            |                   | 1.6gm               |
|                            |                   | 1.4gm               |
| Alauddin Mujahid Shah      | 12.8gm            | 1.1gm               |
|                            | 10.8gm            | 0.8gm               |
|                            |                   |                     |
| Muhammad Shah-II           | 10.8gm            | 10.8gm              |
| Tahmathan Shah             |                   | 10.8gm              |
| Dawood Shah-II             |                   | 10.8gm              |
| Tajuddin Firoz Shah        | 12.6gm            | 10.8gm              |
|                            | 11gm              | 10.8gm              |
| Ahmed Shah-I               | 11gm              |                     |

|                   |        |        |
|-------------------|--------|--------|
| Ahmed Shah-II     | 11 gm  | 10.8gm |
| Humayun Shah      | 10.4gm | 10.8gm |
| Ahmed Shah-III    | 11 gm  |        |
| Muhammad Shah-III | 11 gm  | 10.8gm |
| Mahmud Shah       | 11 gm  | 11 gm  |
|                   |        | 1.8gm  |

The history of Bahmani dynasty and their coins were well defined by the three medieval historians, they are as follows;

1. Muhammad Qasim Hindu Shah Ferishtah in "Tarikh-i-Ferishtah"
2. Ali Bin Azizullah Tabataba in "Burhan-i-Maasir"
3. Moulana Abdul Malik Isami in "Futuh-us-Salatin"

Bahmani Coins which are available in plenty corrected many of the defects which crept into the histories of these authors and helped Abdul Wali Khan in compilation of Bahmani genealogy.

Ferishtah wrongly declared that no coins were struck by the first ruler best coins were issued not only by him but even by his predecessor Nasiruddin Ismail Shah Mukh. Ferishtah's information about the coins of Muhammad Shah-I are wrong again. Ferishtah states that his coins had Kalimah and names of the Khalifa which is not true. Ferishtah was wrong in stating that coins of the Bahmani dynasty were of a square form. All the coins of the Bahmani rulers are round in shape, the coins exception long area type of coin of Firoz Shah which was rectangular in shape in Mujahid Shah and Muhammad Shah.

#### **Mints and Legends of Bahmani Sultans:**

1. Fatahbad (Daulatabad)
2. Ahsanabad (Gulbarga)
3. Muhammabad (Bidar)
4. Goa (Dabul Goa Mint)

The coins have been given the correct year of accession of some of these rulers for instance third ruler came to throne in 1375 A.D. and not in 1373 A.D. Similarly Ahmed Shah-II came to power in 1436 A.D. and not in 1435 A.D. and Humayun Shah came to power in 1458 A.D. and not in 1457 A.D.

The legends on Bahmani Coins reveal the honorary title assumed by the sultan Shah as Tajuddin, Summi Khalilul Rehman etc. Again, some coins reveal the regnal titles of the rulers such as Al-Hasan, Al Kavi etc. The majority of coins do mention names such as Al-

Mansur, Al -Mutasim etc. which are the name of the Khalifas of that era and Quranic words from Allahtala.

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