

CC-7: HISTORY OF INDIA (c.1206-1526)

III. SOCIETY AND ECONOMY

(D). MONETIZATION; MARKET REGULATIONS; GROWTH OF URBAN CENTRES; TRADE AND COMMERCE; INDIAN OCEAN TRADE.

With the consolidation of the Delhi Sultanate and the improvement of communications, and the establishment of a sound currency system based on the silver tanka and the copper dirham, there was a definite growth of trade in the country. This was marked by the growth of towns and towns life. Ibn Battutah calls Delhi the largest city in the eastern part of the Islamic world. He says that Daulatabad (Deogir) equalled Delhi on size-an index of the growth of trade between the north and the south. The other important towns of the times were Lahore and Multan in the northwest, Kara and Lakhnauti in the east, and Anhilwara(Patan) and Cambay(Khambayat) in the west.

During the period of the Delhi Sultanate, there developed a new system of coinage. The gold coins which Muhammad of Ghur struck in imitation of the issues of the Hindu kings of Kanauj, with the goddess Lakshmi on the obverse, are without a parallel in Islamic history. For the first forty years the currency consisted almost entirely of copper and bullion: hardly have any gold coins been struck, and silver coins of the earlier Sultans are scarce.

Iltutmish, however, issued several types of the silver tankas, the earliest of which has a portrait of the king on horseback on the obverse. The latest type bears witness to the diploma in investiture from the Khalifa of Baghdad, Al-Mustansir.

Gold though minted by Masud, Nasir-ud-din Mahmud, Balban and Jalal-ud-din Khalji was not common until Ala-ud-din Khalji had enriched his treasury by conquests in south India. These gold coins are the replicas of the silver in

weight and design. Ala-du-din Khalji, whose silver issues are plentiful, changed the design by dropping the name of the Caliph from the obverse and substituting the selflaudatory titles. His successor Mubarak Shah whose issues are in some respect finest of the series, employed the old India square shape for some of his golds, silver and bullion. Ghiyas-uddin Tughlaq was the first Sultan of Delhi to use the title of Ghazi.

Most of the coins struck in bullion by these early Sultans including Mohammad Ghur, are practically uniform in size and weight. Numerous varieties were struck.

The Indian type known as the dehlwala, with the humped bull and the sovereign's name in Nagari on the reverse and the Delhi Chauhan type of horseman on the obverse lasted till the reign of Alauddin Masud Shah. Another type with the Horseman obverse and the Sultan's name and title in Arabic on the reverse, survived till Nasir-uddin Mahmud's reign. The bullion coins of Alauddin Khalji were the first to bear dates. The earliest copper of this period is small and insignificant. Some coins as well as a few bullion pieces bear the inscription *adl*, which may simply mean currency.

Muhammad bin Tughluq has been called 'the Prince of moneyers'. Not only do his coins surpass those of his predecessors in execution, especially in calligraphy, but his large output of gold, the number of his issues of all denominations, the interest of the inscriptions, reflecting his character and activities, his experiments with the coinage, entitle him to a place among the greatest moneyers of history. Muhammad bin Tughluq's gold and silver issues, like those of his predecessors, are identical in type.

The gold coins of Firoz Shah Tughlaq is fairly common, and six types are known. Following his predecessor's example, he inscribed the name of the caliph on the obverse, and his own name on the reverse. Firoz associated the

name of his son, Fath Khan, with his own on the coinage. Gold coins of subsequent kings are exceedingly scarce; the shortage of silver is even more apparent. Only three silver pieces of Firoz have ever come to light, but the copper coins are abundant.

The coinage of the later rulers, though abounding in varieties, is almost confined to copper and billon pieces. During the whole period, with but two exceptions, one mint name appears, Delhi. The long reign of Firoz Shah Tughlaq seems to have established his coinage as a popular medium of exchange; and this probably accounts for the prolonged series of his posthumous billon coins extending over a period of forty years. Some of these and of the posthumous issues of his son, Muhammad, and of his grandson, Mahmud were struck by Daulat Khan Lodhi and Khizr Khan. The coinage of the Lodhi family, despite the difference in standard, bears a close resemblance to that of the Sharqi kings of Jaunpur.

Ala-ud-din Khalji's measures to control the markets and price regulations were one of the most important policy initiatives of his reign and he is noted in history for the same. Since Ala-ud-din Khalji wanted to maintain a large army, he therefore lowered and fixed the price of the commodities of daily use. Ala-ud-din Khalji established four separate markets in Delhi. Those were- Grain market (Mandi) for grain; Cloth and groceries market (Sarai Adl) for cloth, sugar, dried fruits, butter, and oil; Market for horses, slaves, cattle, etc; Market for miscellaneous commodities.

To ensure implementation, each market was under the control of a superintendent called Shahna-i- Mandi who was assisted by an intelligence officer. Apart from Shahna-i-Mandi, Ala-ud-din Khalji received daily reports of the market from two other independent sources, barids (intelligence officer) and munhiyans (secret spies). The Sultan also sent slave boys to buy various commodities to check prices. Any violation of the Sultan's orders (such as if any

shop keeper charged a higher price, or tried to cheat by using false weights and measures) resulted in harsh punishment, including expulsion from the capital, imposition of fine imprisonment, and mutilation. No hoarding was allowed and even during the famine the same price was maintained.

The supply of grain was ensured by holding stocks in government store houses. Regulations were issued to fix the price of all commodities. A separate department called Diwani Riyasat was created under an officer called Naib-i-Riyasat. Every merchant was registered under the Market Department. The sale of liquor and intoxicants was prohibited and gambling too was banned.

The 13th and 14th centuries saw the rise and growth of several towns and cities in India. For example, Lahore and Multan (modern Pakistan), Broach, Cambay and Anhilwara (western India), Lakhnauti, Gaur, Sonargaon (eastern India), Delhi and Jaunpur (northern India) etc.

At the heart of each new dynastic domain, capitals needed serious fortification. Big stone forts arose in serious succession on major arteries of mobility, running east-west in northern India and north-south in the peninsular: Bijapur (1325), Vijaynagar (1336), Jaunpur (1359) Agra (1506) etc. In this context Delhi began its long career as an imperial capital, strategically astride routes down the Ganga and into Malwa and the Deccan.

Tughlaqabad was carved out by Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq to combat the increasing population of Delhi built between 1321 to 1323. Firuz Shah Tughlaq had founded a large number of cities such as Hissar-Firoza, Jaunpur, Fatehpur, Firozabad etc. Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq constructed another fortress Adilabad and built a town named Jahapanah. Ibn Battuta tells that Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq planned to bring old Delhi, Siri Tughlaqabad and Jahanpanah within one fortification. Firuz Shah Tughlaq built Kotla Firoz Shah on the bank of

Yamuna in 1350-70 in Delhi. In 1504, Lodhi ruler Sikandar Lodhi established Agra city which later on became the capital of Sultanate in 1506.

Bengal and the towns in Gujarat were famous for their fine quality fabrics. Cloth of fine quality was produced in other towns as well. Cambay in Gujarat was famous for textiles and for gold and silver work. Sonargaon in Bengal was famous for raw silk and fine cotton cloth (called muslin later on). There were many other handicrafts as well, such as leather work, metal work, carpet weaving, etc. Some of the new crafts introduced by the Turks included the manufacturing of paper. The art of manufacturing paper had been discovered by the Chinese in the 2nd century. It was known in the Arab world in the 5th century, and travelled to Europe only during the 14th century. The production of textiles was also improved by the introduction of the spinning-wheel. Cotton could be cleaned faster and better by the use of the cotton carder's bow (dhunia). But there is little doubt that most important was the skill of the Indian craftsmen. Indian textiles had already established their position in the trade to countries on the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. During this period, fine Indian textiles were introduced to China as well where it was valued more than silk. India imported high grade textiles (satin etc.) from West Asia, glassware and, of course horses. From China it imported raw silk and porcelain.

Though early medieval inscriptions do indicate substantial commercial activity, including long-distance trade by major merchant communities, medieval documents indicate that commerce expanded dramatically after 1200.

A web of long and short trade routes in the Indian Ocean were attached to the coast from ancient Ocean times. Long routes between China and Europe always touched South Asia, where they met coastal routes among localities from Gujarat to Bengal. Early medieval records in Cairo describe voyages to Gujarat and Malabar; and for many merchants from the Mediterranean, Cochin was India's port of entry. Many Christian, Muslim and Jewish traders from the west,

settled in early medieval Kerala, where Hindu rulers depended on them to increase dynastic wealth. In 1357, John of Marignola, Pope Benedict XII's emissary to China, called Quilon "the most famous city in the whole of India, where all the pepper in the world grows." Europeans began building fortified settlements for permanent residence on the west coast after Vasco da Gama arrived in Malabar, in 1498.

REFERENCE

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