

# The Mint Indigenously Currency in Western Rajputana

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**Abstract--** Money as an important instrument of trade. Mercantile class had to use various types of currencies and coins for its trade transactions and commercial pursuits. After, Jodhpur and Bikaner in western Rajputana accepted Mughals sovereignty, the currency minted by the Mughal Emperors at their central mints remained in circulation for internal and external trade. The death of Aurangzeb in 1707 A.D., Mughal imperial power in India began to decline. During this period, a number of autonomous states emerged while the Rajput principalities which acknowledged the supremacy of the Mughal rapidly slipped away from their control. As a result, the rulers of Bikaner and Jodhpur established mints and started minting currency to develop and enrich the economy of their states and invited traders. The merchants had to pay taxes, transit duties and custom duties in the currency of the state through which they passed. Therefore, they possessed intimate knowledge of the currencies and coins in circulation in various states and their exchange value.

**Keywords--** mint, currencies and coins, merchants

## I. INTRODUCTION

Rajputana, is located in western India, was for centuries a region controlled, ruled and predominantly inhabited by Rajput princes.<sup>1</sup> Rajputana region has been known as Rajwara which later came to be designated as Raethana. Subsequently, during British period, the Rajput principalities came to be known as Rajputana.<sup>2</sup> Rajputana's geographical location and factors shaped its History and Economy. It was surrounded by prosperous trading commercial provinces like Sindh, Multan, Punjab, Gujarat and Malwa, and connected to royal highways of Agra and Delhi,<sup>3</sup> which were developed numerous trade routes, leading to status of economic prosperity and increased revenue potential for the states of Rajputana.

A number of coins were in circulation during the medieval period; and all of these were treated as regular currency.<sup>4</sup> The Mughals established offices for the exchange of coins, mainly to earn heavy fees in transactions made by big bankers, sarrabs and other capitalists. The petty sarrabs in the towns and cities often dealt with the individual customers at their own level. The prevalence of different coins also got support from bankers who demanded payments from their borrowers in specific coins.<sup>5</sup>

This was also due to the fact that different regimes and regions maintained specific coins as their currencies. In the 18th century, the period under study, when all the Rajput chiefs of Rajasthan acknowledged the Mughal sovereignty, coins of Mughal emperors were in flow. Rajput rulers were prohibited to strike their own coins. The Mughal emperors minted and circulated imperial rupaya and dam in the empire including Rajput states.<sup>6</sup> For coinage in Suba Ajmer, the imperial mints functioned in Ajmer, Nagor, Ranthambor and Sambhar.<sup>7</sup> After the death of Emperor Aurangzeb, the rulers of princely Rajputana states began to strike their own coins with formal permission of the Mughal emperors. In this process, the mints were established at Bikaner in 1753 A.D. and Jodhpur in 1761 A.D. The coins struck in these mints had specific areas of 189 their circulation, mostly in the bordering states besides the state of their origin. Their exchange value, of course, varied in proportion to the contents of the metal as well as their demand in a particular area.

The Jodhpur Maharaja Abhay Singh (1724-1750) himself issued letters to the traders of Sindh and Multan to pass through his territory with goods. Similarly, Maharaja Surat Singh (1787-1828) of Bikaner invited famous traders Mirjamal and his family from Ramgarh to settle in the state and arranged land for their settlement in Churu. These 227 merchants were granted many privileges in their business activities in the state. Many more such examples exist in the literature. Apparently, it showed a positive and significant growth both in trade and commerce and virtually the merchant's class, bankers and intermediaries gained a lot of profit.<sup>8</sup>

## II. BIKANER

In Bikaner, the first mint was established during the time of Maharaja Gaj Singh (1746-87 A.D.). In 1754 A.D., perhaps Bikaner was the first state in western Rajasthan which had obtained permission of the Mughal Emperor Alamgir II (1754-59 A.D.) to strike her own coins. The silver coins were known by the names of rulers, the silver coins of Gaj Singh were good in shape, known as Gajshahi; and the coins of Maharaja Surat Singh (1787-1828 A.D.) were known as Surat shahi, continued to be minted in the Bikaner's mint.<sup>9</sup>

The copper coins were also struck in the Bikaner state. They were also known by the names of rulers. The copper coins of Maharaja Gaj Singh were known as Gaj shahi.. Likewise, during Surat Singh regime copper coins were known as Suratshahi.<sup>10</sup> It is found that the royal mint of Bikaner has frequently been called in the Bahis as Rupe Ri Taksal (rupe means silver coin) in the records.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, it seems possible that the copper coins might have been struck elsewhere in the state.

The gold coin (mohur) of the state was uncommon. the gold mohurs were minted at Bikaner mint.<sup>12</sup> These gold coins were generally used to be given in juhari.<sup>13</sup>

Maharaja Ratan singh (1828-1851A.D.) ,the wealthy bankers were allowed to cast their own coins in the government mints on the payment of a tax known as taka ghadairolazmio. When a banker or sahukar brought to mint 1025 mashas of silver bullion, then one hundred silver coins were minted, each silver coin weighing ten mashas. Out of the 1025 mashas, twenty-five mashas of silver bullion were taken extra for every hundred silver coins which was equivalent to two and a half silver coins. Noalloying was done for the copper coins. The cost of one maund copper was 32 rupees and 13 annas. The cost of copper coins struck of one maund copper was 43 rupees, 4 annas and 9 paise, whereas its value was taken as 50 rupees. The margin was the net profit of the state.<sup>14</sup>

### III. JODHPUR

In Jodhpur, a mint was established for the first time in 1780 A.D. during the time of Raja Bijay Singh (1752-92 A.D.) with the permission of Emperor Shah Alam-II (1759-1806 A.D.). This mint was controlled by government establishments superintended by the hakims and worked by silversmiths hired for the purpose. The materials were, with rare exceptions, furnished by individuals wishing to convert their silver into Bijaishahi rupee, the local currency. The seigniorage levied on the minting of the coin varied from one to one and half per cent upon bullion and from 8 to 10 annas upon 100 silver coins delivered for conversion into Bijaishahi rupees. Copper alloy equivalent to 4 rupees in weight was allowed for coining 100 rupees.<sup>15</sup>

Mints were also located at Pali, Kuchaman, Sojat, Jharol, Merta and Nagor where gold, silver and copper coins were regularly minted. In fact, there were total fourteen mints in Jodhpur state during the Maharaja Man Singh(1803-1843). In Pali, there were four separate mints where both silver and copper coins were regularly struck separately.

In 1784 A.D., the silver and copper mints of Pali were given on ijara for 9301 rupees and 5001 rupees per annum respectively to Bahadur Mal Kothari.<sup>16</sup> A mint was also established at Nagor where silver, copper and gold coins were usually minted. This mint was controlled by the government. In 1778 A.D., Moji Ram Vyas was the daroga of this mint.<sup>17</sup> A mint at Merta where only silver and copper coins were minted. In 1784 A.D., this mint was given on ijara to Ram Singh Kothari for 1001 rupees for a year.<sup>18</sup> There are numerous marks on the Jodhpur coins, placed by darogas in charge of mints, but the special marks of the state are jhar of seven branches and khanda. The local name of jhar was turra; it was signified as an ornament worn on the turban. Similarly, the local name of sword was khanda.

The gold coins of the state were mohurs, half mohurs and quarter mohurs. They were known as Jodhpuri mohur, Bijaishahi mohur etc. These mohurs were minted only at Jodhpur town mint; and it was said that gold was never issued from the provincial mints. The gold coin of the state was uncommon, and rarely met with beyond the Jodhpur borders. The weight of a full Jodhpur gold coin (mohur) was 169.9 grains (1 gram=15.4 grains); and it was made of pure gold. The value of these gold coins was equivalent to the metal. These mohurs were, generally, used to be given in gift to the recipients and for the ceremonial purposes. W.W. Webb opined that the gold was probably first coined in 1781 A.D., and from the same die as that from which the silver pieces were struck. During the British age, one mohur was usually equivalent in value to 15 silver rupees.<sup>19</sup>

The silver coins of the Jodhpur state were rupee, half rupee and quarter rupee pieces. These silver coins were called Bijaishahi. The weight of the Bijaishahi silver coin was 176.4 grains. It contained 169.9 grains of pure silver and 6.5 grains of alloy.<sup>20</sup>

The copper coin of the state was also called Bijaishahi. It was also called Dhabbushahi on account of its great weight. The weight of a Bijaishahi or Dhabbushahi copper coin was 310 grains. During the time of Maharaja Bhim Singh (1792-1803 A.D.) the name was changed to Bhim shahi; and weight of the coin was increased by two mashas. From one maund of copper about 14000 Dhabbushahis were cast. Fifty-six Dhabbushahis were equal to one Bijai shahi silver coin.<sup>21</sup>

Besides the Dhabbushahi copper coin, phadiya copper coin, was also commonly prevalent in Jodhpur for petty transactions, since the beginning of sixteenth century. During the late 18th century, 5 phadiyas and 6 pies were equivalent to one rupee; 18 and one phadiya was equivalent to 12 pies.<sup>22</sup>

A small copper coin, known as Jihanabadi, was also prevalent in Jalor (Jodhpur). Forty-two Jihanabidis were equal to 1 silver coin; and 8 Jihanabidis were equivalent to 1 phadiya. 62 Jihanabidis which had been mentioned as equivalent to 1 rupee, 7 annas and 2 paisas, were paid to carpenters for making doors for the two government shops in Jalor.<sup>20</sup> In the same Bahi, 42 Jihanabidis have been mentioned equivalent to 5 phadiyas and 3 pies.<sup>23</sup>

The mint at Kuchaman belonged to the feudal chief of that place. In Jodhpur state, the Thakur of Kuchawan was the only one who had been allowed to coin in his mint. No gold and copper coins have ever been struck by the Kuchawan thakurs. The silver coin struck there was called Ektisundas. The silver coin was probably first coined in 1788 A.D. there. It was worth 12 to 13 annas, compared to Bijaishahi silver coin. These light weight rupees had an economical effect in the distribution of largess at the marriages and other festivals. Its weight was about 168 grains.<sup>24</sup>

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The rulers of western Rajputana states were allowed to have their own coins minted and hence, many mints at Bikaner and Jodhpur were established. Silver and copper coins were minted indigenously and circulated. This suggests that this period noticed rise of money economy and gradually was replacing the barter system prevalent in the villages. This 232 resulted in the increased demand of coins. But a significant change which is noticed that during the Mughal period, the Mughal silver coin had equal face and intrinsic value due to the nominal minting charges and the fixed alloying ratio. But the western Rajputana states' indigenous coins lacked in either respect. Furthermore, there used to be a number of coins of different states in the circulation, putting a problem of exchange. The expertise of a sarraf was the sole agency who could determine the exchange value. Therefore sarrabs gained considerably. The silver coins of Bikaner state were considered to be the best in whole of Rajputana.

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