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INTRODUCTION

From the 8th century onwards, merchants from China introduced copper cash in bulk into the Malay States and these formed the chief, and at times the sole, currency of the majority of the States of the Eastern Archipelago.

The first native coinage of the Malay States developed from this copper cash. Owing to the monsoons and the shortage of ships to carry on the trade, the shortage of copper cash led local chiefs and merchants to cast imitations of the cash for their own needs. This copper cash in due course developed into a truly native coinage.

TIN COINAGE

In the Central Malay States of the Malay Peninsula, the early currency took the form of solid ingots of tin of standard weight and purity. These ingots were particularly popular at the height of the Melaka Empire.

The value of the ingots in relation to the Spanish dollar fluctuated with the current price of tin. In Selangor, the ingot currency denomination best known to foreign merchants was that with a weight of one *kati*. The smaller 'sugar-loaf and 'pagoda' shaped blocks were used as ordinary trade and common usage currency, while the heavier ingots were used either for exports or to pay custom duties.

GOLD COINS OF THE MALAY STATES

In the Malay States, most of the gold coins were made by first cutting metal discs, or octagonal planchets, from sheets of beaten gold and then striking them individually between pairs of inscribed dies. The resultant coins were later trimmed around the edges until roughly the correct weight was achieved.

The weight of the coins would be counter checked using the scarlet pea with a black spot or '*biji saga*' (seed of *Abrus Maculatus*). Twenty four pieces of these seeds are considered to be equivalent to 1 mace (1 mace is equivalent to 1 *Mas*). As the Sultan had the authority to issue the currency, it is believed that the mint was located in the palace.

COINS OF THE MELAKA SULTANATE (1400-1511)

Parameswara, a Srivijayan Hindu Prince of Palembang in Sumatra, founded Melaka around 1395 and developed it into a prosperous trading centre. In 1414, he concluded an alliance with the Kingdom of Pasai by marrying a daughter of its ruler and converted to Islam. This alliance encouraged the movement across the Straits of Melaka of many Muslim merchants, who introduced to Melaka, Pasai coinage which consisted of locally minted gold *dinars* and fractional tin cash or *pitis*.

The earliest known tin cash were issued by Sultan Muzaffar Shah (1445-1459). By the middle of the 15th century, the tin coins of Pasai were replaced by coins minted in Melaka.

COINS OF KELANTAN (1400 - 1914)

Between 1400 and 1780, a number of gold coins or *kupang* were known to be minted for use in Patani and Kelantan. Unfortunately, as these coins were not dated, the period when they were issued is not known. The Kelantan-Patani gold coins were only minted in one denomination, namely a *kupang* which contained approximately 9 grains of gold. There were three main types of Kelantan gold coins, namely the *Kijang*, the *Dinar Matahari* or Sun Coins, and coins with Arabic inscriptions on both sides.

KIJANG COINS

The *kijang* coins derived their name from the motif of the Malayan barking deer or *kijang* embossed as the obverse design. This motif is used as the logo of Bank Negara Malaysia. This coin is believed to have originated from India and first issued in Kelantan and Patani when the religion in these states was Hinduism. Originally, the figure was ascertained by many to be that of a hump-backed bull which later evolved to a barking deer. These coins were undated and the known varieties of this type of coin show that they were used over a long period of time.

TIN COIN-TREES

The *pohon pitis* or tin coin-trees of Kelantan were produced by the use of moulds adapted from those used by the Chinese to cast copper coins which were first introduced into Malaya from China during the Tang dynasty (A.D. 618 - 906). At first, this *pitis* were merely crude copies of Chinese cash, cast in Malayan tin (instead of copper). Eventually, an independent indigenous coinage evolved, bearing inscriptions in Arabic or *Jawi*. The earliest known pewter coins of this type were undated.

COINS OF JOHOR (1528 -1885). GOLD COINS

After the capture of Melaka by the Portuguese in 1511, the Melaka royalty settled on the banks of the Johor river. Sultan Alauddin Riayat Shah II (1528-1564), set up his capital at Johor Lama in 1528 and developed it into a powerful empire. A trade coinage in gold first appeared in the reign of the second Sultan Muzaffar Shah, (1564 -1570). There were two denominations, the *Mas* and the *Kupang*, which were used as far north as Patani and Kedah, and even in parts of Sumatra. These gold coins were octagonal in shape and they are usually referred as the '*Johor type*'.

TIN COINS OF JOHOR

The tin coins known as *Katun* were used side by side with the Johor gold coins. The tin coins were minted in various shapes: round, hexagonal and octagonal. Unlike the gold coins, the tin coins generally did not have any inscription of the name of the rulers. As the coins were made of tin, they were naturally fragile and were of poor condition.

COINS OF TERENGGANU (1700-1921) - GOLD COINS

The Terengganu Sultanate was founded in 1700, when Zainal Abidin Shah, the Sultan of Johor's younger half-brother, was installed as its ruler.

Only three varieties of gold coins are attributed to Terengganu. These were issued during one or two reigns. Both the *Mas* and *Kupang*, minted in octagonal shape, closely resembled the Johor trading currency. They were first issued in 1708 by Sultan Zainal Abidin Shah I, the first Sultan of Terengganu.

TIN COINS OF TERENGGANU

In the beginning of the 19th century, pewter or tin *pitis* were introduced. The earlier varieties of *pitis* were not dated.

Around 1870, with the permission of the Sultan, the Chinese headmen were also permitted to issue monetary tokens known as *Jokoh*, for use in their areas of jurisdiction and gambling houses. The ability of these headmen to issue pewter *Jokoh* depended on the confidence of the public in the issuers' ability to exchange the tokens for silver dollars on demand.

TERENGGANU COINS FOUND AT TANJUNG PINANG, RIAU ISLANDS. INDONESIA

These coins found in the vicinity of the tomb of Sultan Sulaiman Badrul Alam Shah, a descendant of the royal family of Johor/Riau, who was buried in Tanjung Pinang, Riau islands in Indonesia.

This collection now fills a very significant gap in Malaysian numismatic history. Most of the coins were cast by the 'lost wax' process which was common during those days.

COINS OF KEDAH (1600 - 1905)

From the beginning of the 17th century, Kedah had already begun to produce its own tin cash for domestic use.

Gold and silver coins minted in Kedah can be traced only to two reigns: (I) Sultan Dziya'uddin al Mukarram Shah (1661-1687); and (II) Sultan Muhammad Jiwa Zainal Shah II (1710-1760).

Tin money in the shape of a cockerel perched on rings was introduced during the reign of Sultan Muhammad Jiwa Zainal Abidin Muazzam Shah. It is said that the cockerel was worth 5 cents and each ring was worth 1 cent of the Spanish silver dollar.