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Using Money in Peninsular India, 14th-17th Centuries

Monday, September 21, 2015
7:30pm
Carlos Museum, Reception Hall
Emory University

This talk addresses a number of fundamental questions about the use of money in peninsular India during the time of the Bahmani and Vijayanagara states. Who had access to money? Had the use of coinage become common in rural society, or was it strictly an urban phenomenon? What were the relationships between gold, silver, and copper coins minted by a single state? Were coins issued by a given state restricted to circulation within the territory of that state, or did they circulate more broadly? Very few textual sources shed light on these matters, but the physical and spatial evidence provided by money itself speaks eloquently to these questions.

Using GIS software, I have constructed a spatial database of 307 coin hoards – comprising a total of over 100,000 Bahmani and Vijayanagara coins – plotting the findspot for each hoard together with reported data about its composition—including the numbers of coins it contains, broken down by issuing authority and by metal. This spatial database has permitted quantitative statistical analysis not only of the compositions of the hoards, but also of their spatial distributions, shedding much-needed light on circulation patterns and different communities of use.