



# An Unlisted Indo-Portuguese Bazaruco Coin from Sri Lanka

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## Abstract

The Portuguese were the first European power to make an incursion into the island of Sri Lanka in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. The arrival of the Portuguese was the turning point in changes to the social, political, economic, and cultural sectors of the country. The Portuguese administration introduced several types of coins for circulation in their Asian colonies, including India, later extending their use to Sri Lanka. Numismatists refer to these coins as Indo-Portuguese coins, as they were specifically issued by the Portuguese for use within “Indian” territories. For instance, the Portuguese minted gold, silver, copper and tutenag (an alloy of copper, zinc, iron, and nickel) coins. This article is focused on an unlisted Indo-Portuguese half Bazaruco coin found in a Sri Lankan context, that has, so far, remained unstudied. Its significance lies in the engraved figure of St. Lawrence, observed for the first time in an Indo-Portuguese series. This study examines the socio-political and cultural symbolism reflected in this coin, further analyzing how the coins may have reshaped the existing monetary system in the island. Here we argue that the new find is a unique Sri Lankan product, which may be a commemorative coin to venerate St. Lawrence. Finally, we explore the religious and cultural value of the coin that shaped Portuguese colonial ambitions in the East.

Key Words: colonial, monetary, numismatics, tutenag, Indian Ocean



*Ancient Lanka: Volume 2 (2025)*

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## Introduction

Sri Lanka played a vital role in the Indian Ocean maritime trade from the beginning of the first millennium B.C. (Jayasinghe, 1997, p. 311), while many external powers were interested in the island for commercial, political, and religious reasons. Visits from people of other lands have resulted in the discovery of numerous foreign coins belonging to different periods throughout the island. The Portuguese arrived on the coast of Ceylon in 1506 CE. (Ferguson, 1908, p. 299). They maintained a 152-year relationship with Sri Lanka, naming the island “Ceilão”. From 1506 till 1658 CE, except for the Kingdom of Kandy, the whole island was under Portuguese dominion, where they transformed the Kingdom of Kotte into a protectorate.

The reason for the introduction of Portuguese coins was the frequent fluctuation of the coin’s value and obstacles existing within the local trade. The Portuguese introduced silver Tanga, copper, and tutenag Bazarucos (Vaz & Sousa, 1980; Gomes, 2007) for use in Ceilao. The existence of a Portuguese mint in Ceylon is first mentioned in a letter of the King to the Viceroy dated February 25, 1585 in which it is stated that Larins and Fanams were struck by the captain of Colombo, presumably in the name of the King of Kotte (Codrington, 1914, p. 20). As stated by Couto “... and because there was no money in the fortress, he called the captain of the *Inhames*, who was a friend of all the soldiers, and gave him a silver sword of his, and a dagger and sword – belts, that he might melt it into Larins” (Ferguson, 1908, p. 233). According to a letter written by Viceroy Conde de Linhares to King Fillipe III, on 9<sup>th</sup> December 1634, information was provided regarding the striking of coins by D. Jeronymo da Azevedo (1594-1612 A.D.) and D. Constantino de Sa (1618-30 A.D.). However the minting was stopped on the orders from the King. In this letter the viceroy states “...Dom Jeronymo de Azevedo and Constantino de Sa in Ceilao have always been knocking coins, which is not done today, because in accordance with the order of Your Majesty I have prohibited it. So that it may only be made in Goa.” (Aragao, 1880, pp. 536-37).

Bazaruco was an early monetary value system that was used in India. The first indication of Bazarucos was revealed by Gaspar Correa in his commentary of *Lendas Da India*, which informs us about the first Portuguese coins minted in India, in areas that were colonized: “*There were in the land (Goa) gold coins, worth three hundred and sixty reis, and a good silver coin, which they called barganym, worth two vintens, and a copper coin, which they called bazarucos, worth two reis...*”(Correa, 1860, pp. 75-77).

According to Albert R. Fery, “Bazaruco was a coin struck by the Portuguese in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries and currently in their possessions at Chaul, Goa, Bassein, Diu and in the vicinity of Bombay, of which specimens exist in copper, lead and bullion” (Fery, 1917, p. 21). The colonial government intended to replace the use of more common coins, giving materiality to the Bazaruco (Puntoni, 2024, p. 17). It is clear that the Portuguese introduced Bazaruco coins to build upon and replace the existing monetary value system in India, by making it a prominent copper and tutenag coin during their colonial rule.

With regards to the etymology of the word “Bazarucos”, the word ‘Bazaar’ is used for a permanent market or street of shops. The word has spread westward into Arabic, Turkish, and, in special senses, into European languages, and eastward into India, where it has generally been adopted into the vernaculars. The popular pronunciation is bazar. In South India and Ceylon the word is used for a single shop or stall kept by a native (Jobson, 1903, pp. 75-76). The Bazaruco, hence, was used for Bazar transactions. The Bazaruco was varied and its value fluctuated under the rule of different Kings. As a result of trade and administration connections of the Portuguese with Sri Lanka, the Bazaruco flowed into the island and at some point in time it was also manufactured in Sri Lanka (Meslinka & Kapukotuwa, n.d., p. 3).

Before the introduction of silver coins for use in Ceylon, the Portuguese practiced the use of copper and tutenag Bazaruco and its variations. The earliest Bazaruco copper and tutenag coins identified by researchers lack a stated mint year and letters. In Sri Lanka, Bazaruco coins belonging to the reigns of King Joao III to King Joao IV have been found in abundance. Yet little attention has been paid in Sri Lankan numismatics to study the importance of these coins. In this paper, we analyze Indo-Portuguese tutenag Bazaruco coins recovered from Sri Lankan contexts, hitherto not discussed.

For this study, five Bazaruco coins curated by two private coin collectors were used. These coins were probably recovered from the Ratnapura district. The importance of this finding is that this coin type bears the figure of St. Lawrence for the first time on the Portuguese coins in the Asian context. For the manufacturing process, tutenag metal and a casting system were used. Although the coin type has been listed in major catalogues (Vaz & Sousa, 1980, p. 149; Gomes, 2007, p. 550 ), they were unable to find specimens. The main focus of this study is to examine the origin of this specific coin and how it can be used to interpret the contemporary socio-political and religious history of the island.

## **Literature Review**

The survey has focused on unlisted St. Lawrence type tutenag Bazaruco coins. The significance of this study lies in the fact that this coin type has not been recorded in previous studies on Indo-Portuguese coins in the Asian context. Gaspar Correa (1860, pp. 75-76) and Puntoni (2024, p. 09) provide detailed and insightful discussion on the origin and evolution of Bazaruco coins in India, focusing on the derivation of the word “Bazaruco”. Both surveys contribute to the development of a historical background relevant to the present study area. However, none of these studies examine Bazarucos and their subdivisions in depth, which are essential for reconstructing the early Portuguese monetary system. Although Campos (1901, pp. 15-16 ), Vaz & Sousa (1980, pp. 85, 115, 129-130, 149, 168), and Gomes (2007, pp. 539, 546, 548, 550, 553) catalogued various types of Indo-Portuguese Bazarucos, they did not include the Bazaruco discussed in the present examinations. In the Sri Lankan context, H. W. Codrington’s contributions introduced the gridiron type Bazaruco, which is assumed to have been minted on the

island (Codrington, 1914, p. 21) and another variation of St. Lawrence type Bazaruco bearing the legend of S. LORENCO. Nevertheless, these previous studies can largely be regarded as surface surveys, and none provide substantial support for the present research.

The present investigation clearly identifies a significant research gap that remains unaddressed. None of the previous studies examined the contextual and artistic values of Bazaruco issues and as such, this survey reviews the historical and archaeological evidence to identify the newly discovered St Lawrence half Bazaruco coin within the Sri Lankan context. Furthermore, this study reviews previous studies, incorporating the latest knowledge and methodological approaches and aims to interpret contemporary social, political, religious and cultural history through an analysis of the St. Lawrence half Bazaruco coin.

## **Research Methodology**

Among the various research methodologies employed in contemporary academic scholarship, this study adopts a historical research methodology, relying primarily on Portuguese history in Sri Lanka and specifically, examines the coinage system within the broader context of Portuguese history in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, at both local and global levels.

The study is based on field surveys conducted in June 2024 where research was carried out through a detailed examination of coins. Data was collected from two private collections belonging to Mr. Praboth Denuka and Dr. Gehan Rajeew, which had not been previously documented and was identified and recorded for the first time through the present study.

Although preliminary observations on St. Lawrence Bazaruco coins were made by H. W. Codrington in his publications of 1914 and 1924, this specific type has not been formally recorded. This absence is presumably due to the unavailability of such coins at the time. According to collectors, the specimens examined in this study were uncovered in the vicinity of Ratnapura, together with the other varieties of Portuguese coins, during the mining of sand in the Kalu Ganga (river). Individuals involved in these findings dealt directly with the collectors, who purchased this alien coin for their private collections. Based on expertise and experience in Portuguese coins, present researchers have identified this type as “new and previously un-recorded”. This recognition formed the basis for selecting this particular coin type for detailed examination. Several coins in the collection were heavily worn. Five well-preserved coin specimens were selected for the study (two coins from the collection of Mr. Praboth Denuka and three coins from the collection of Dr. Gehan Rajeew).

All coins were measured using a digital caliper and balance. The photographs were captured using a camera and scanner for proper documentation and the collected data was recorded in a manually designed data sheet. Published catalogues of "Modaes

Portugueses" and "Indo-Portuguese Coins," were followed to identify the coins. Both catalogues were further used for comparative analysis.

The coins were analyzed in comparison with other contemporary Portuguese Tutenag half Bazaruco coins found in Sri Lanka through visual inspection and precision measuring. All specimens were physically assessed, including assessments of weight, diameter, and thickness (Table. 1).

Type of Coins	Weight	Diameter	Approximate Thickness
The Gridiron Type Bazaruco	3. 0 g. <sup>1,2</sup> 1. 4 - 0. 2 g. <sup>3</sup>	15 mm <sup>2</sup> 14-15 mm <sup>3</sup>	1- 2 mm <sup>3</sup>
S Lovrenco Type Bazaruco (with legend)	1.4 g. <sup>2</sup> 1.2 - 2. 0 g. <sup>3</sup>	12 mm <sup>3</sup>	1. 8 mm <sup>3</sup>
St Lawrence Bazaruco(new)	1.6 – 1.8 g. <sup>3</sup>	13.5 -14.5 mm. <sup>3</sup>	1.7-2.9mm <sup>3</sup>

**Table 1.** Comparative measuring chart (Vaz & Sousa, 1980, p. 149<sup>1</sup>; Gomes, 2007, p. 550<sup>2</sup>; Meslinka, 2025, pp. 95-105<sup>3</sup>).

## Results

This study identifies a hitherto unlisted and unpublished Indo-Portuguese St. Lawrence type tutenag Bazaruco coin, recorded for the first time in Sri Lankan numismatic history. This coin type has not been documented in India or in any other Portuguese colonies. The specimens identified in this study represent a new variation of the Indo-Portuguese St. Lawrence type half Bazarucos.

The coin bears a coat of arms on the obverse and the figure of St. Lawrence on the reverse. The analyzed specimen shows an average weight ranging between 1.6 and 1.8 grams, while the standard weight for comparable issues is approximately 1.4 grams. The diameter of the coin ranged from 13.5 to 14.5 mm. The coins are circular in form and encircled by thick line margin and were minted in tutenag metal.

According to collectors, these coins were unearthed during the sand mining activities in the vicinity of Ratnapura. None of the examined specimens bears the mint letters or the mint years. These coins can be probably attributed to a Colombo mint, based on contextual and stylistic features. At present these remain unlisted. Images and descriptions of the coins are noted in Figure 1.

The five Indo-Portuguese half Bazarucos	Description
<p>a</p> 	<p>Weight: 1.6 g; Diameter: 13.9 mm; Thickness: 2.9 mm                      Obv: Crowned Coat of Arms of Portugal within line circle.                      Rev: Figure of St. Lawrence to forward, holding a Grid iron in right hand and a palm leaf in the left within a line circle. ↑                      Curated in: Gehan Rajeew's Private Collection.                      Provenance: Ratnapura, Sri Lanka.                      Photo: Field Survey, 2024, No. 09.</p>
<p>b</p> 	<p>Weight: 1.8 g, Diameter: 13.9 mm, Thickness: 1.9 mm.                      Obv: Crowned Coat of Arms of Portugal within line circle.                      Rev: Figure of St. Lawrence to forward, holding a Grid iron in right hand and a palm leaf in the left within a line circle. ↑                      Curated in: Gehan Rajeew's Private Collection.                      Provenance: Ratnapura. Sri Lanka.                      Photo: Field Survey, 2024, No. 10.</p>
<p>c</p> 	<p>Weight: 1.6 g, Diameter: 14.3 mm, Thickness: 1.7 mm.                      Obv: Crowned Coat of Arms of Portugal within line circle.                      Rev: Figure of St. Lawrence to forward, holding a Grid iron in right hand and a palm leaf in the left within a line circle. ↑                      Curated in: Gehan Rajeew's Private Collection.                      Provenance: Ratnapura. Sri Lanka.                      Photo: Field Survey, 2024, No. 11.</p>
<p>d</p> 	<p>Weight: 1.7 g, Diameter: 14.4 mm. Thickness: 1.7 mm.                      Obv: Crowned Coat of Arms of Portugal within line circle.                      Rev: Figure of St. Lawrence to forward, holding a Grid iron in right hand and a palm leaf in the left within a line circle. ↑                      Curated in: Praboth Denuka's Private Collection.                      Provenance: Ratnapura.                      Photo: Field Survey, 2024, No. 01.</p>
<p>e</p> 	<p>Weight: 1.7 g, Diameter: 13.6 mm, Thickness: 2.2 mm.                      Obv: Crowned Coat of Arms of Portugal within line circle.                      Rev: Figure of St. Lawrence to forward, holding a Grid iron in right hand and a palm leaf in the left within a line circle. ↑                      Curated in: Praboth Denuka's Private Collection.                      Provenance: Ratnapura.                      Photo: Field Survey, 2024, No. 02.</p>

**Figure 1 (a - e).** The unlisted Indo-Portuguese St. Lawrence type half Bazarucos analyzed in this research. The ↑ arrow represents the die direction (axis) when minted.

## Discussion

The rare specimens of St. Lawrence half Bazaruco provide valuable insights into the social, political and religious symbolisms reflected in Portuguese coinage. The absence of comparable specimens raises several questions regarding their origin, authenticity and circulation. The present specimen exhibits a close relationship with the S. LOVRENCO Tutenag half Bazaruco recorded by Codrington (1924, p. 101). However, Codrington did not include an illustration of this coin. The specimen recorded by the present study from Dr. Gehan Rajew's private collection confirms the availability of the S. LOVRENCO tutenag half Bazaruco coins within the Sri Lankan context (Figure 2/L). Additionally, the Gridiron type tutenag half Bazaruco of Ceilao type (Figure 2/R) described by Codrington (1914, p. 26; 1924, p. 101) further supports this evidence. Together, these two types of Bazarucos coins confirm the circulation and usage of St. Lawrence type coins in the island during the period of Portuguese administration. A particularly notable feature of these coins is that they have not been earlier recorded from any other Portuguese Asian possessions or elsewhere in the world.



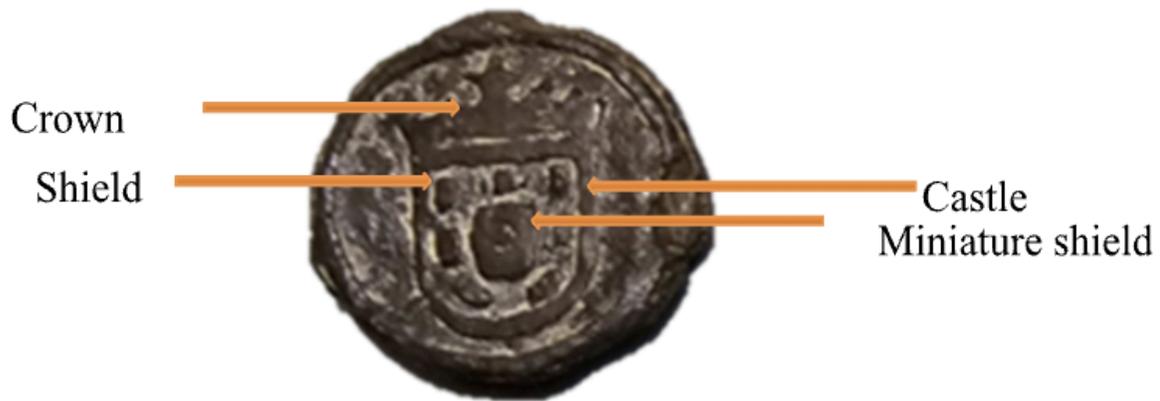
Weight: 1.8 g., Diameter: 11 mm.

Weight: 1.9 g., Diameter: 15.4 mm.

**Figure 2.** Half Bazaruco with the legend S. LOVRENCO (L) and Gridiron type half Bazaruco (R)

By comparing these three types of coins, it appears that they were issued under the same authority, namely the Portuguese imperial authority. Portuguese coins uniformly bear the royal coat of arms on their obverse symbolizing the power and legitimacy of the governing ruler. The Portuguese royal coat of arms consists of two principal elements: the crown and the shield. Since the Middle Ages, the crown has functioned as a symbol of sovereignty (Gomes, 2007, p. 11). The crown represents the third dynastic King with a scroll pattern, and the curved shape of the shield relates to the Portuguese classical period (Gomes, 2007, p. 08). The shield contains the field or ground whereon are represented the charge or figures that form a coat of arms. The Portuguese shield is filled with five miniature shields (escutcheons), and each shield consists of five dots (quinas) (Grant, 1924, p. 16) surrounded by seven figures of castles. The half Bazaruco coin examined in this study incorporates both the crowned arms and the shield, thereby adhering to established royal iconographic conventions.

The third dynasty of Portuguese kingship is represented by King Filipe I (1580-1598 AD), Filipe II (1598-1621 AD) and Filipe III (1621-1640 AD). During the reigns of these monarchs the coat of arms remained consistent in both form and symbolic meaning. Coins of three Filipe's represent a closed crown centering a cross, supported by four arches (Meslinka, 2025, p. 386). These stylistic features are clearly observable on the newly recovered St. Lawrence Bazaruco coins (Figure 1a-e). However, neither Filipe I or II employed the iconography of saints for their coins struck in Asian territories. King Filipe III was the first monarch who introduced the figures of saints for overseas issues. (Before that, King Joao III utilized the figure of St Thomas for Gold Pardao coins minted in Lisbon for circulation in India)(Vaz & Sousa, 1980, p. 88).

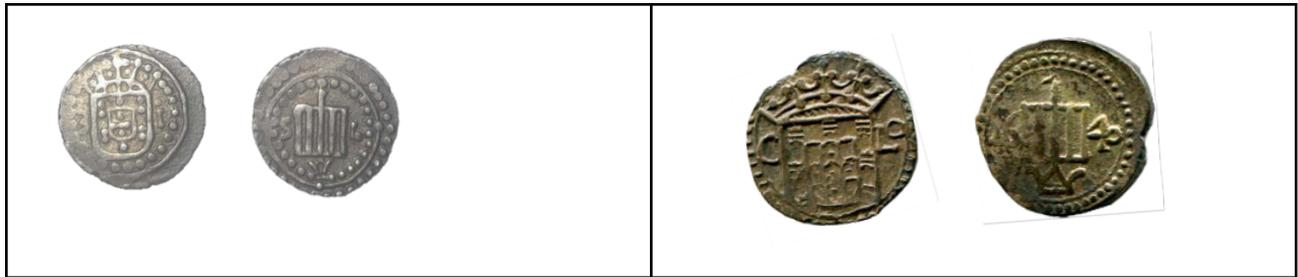


**Figure 3.** Features of the Portuguese Coat of Arms

The reverse feature of the coin is particularly significant and interesting. For the first time in Portuguese numismatic history the figure of St. Lawrence can be identified on this coin. At the same time, the Portuguese introduced a coin featuring the gridiron surrounded by the legend S. LOVRENCO (Figure 2/L). The present examination reveals that the figure of the Saint is depicted instead of his traditional instrument of martyrdom, “the crest of Gridiron”. On the newly identified coins, the figure of Saint is depicted facing forward-holding a grid-iron (Gridiron) in his right hand and a palm leaf in his left. This is the figure assigned to St. Lawrence by the Holy Catholic Church. The Portuguese often utilized the crest of the gridiron above flame to symbolize the Saint’s martyrdom. Later it became the emblem of the Saint.

The present study identifies four types of Gridiron or St. Lawrence type coins within the Indo-Portuguese series. Among these, the earliest example is a tutenag gridiron Bazaruco which impressed the crest of the Armillary Sphere on the obverse and the gridiron on the reverse (Figure 2/R). This rare specimen is generally considered as a coin minted in the island by the Portuguese during the reign of King Filipe III (Codrington, 1914, p. 26; Grogan, 1914, p. 93; Codrington, 1924, p. 101; Vaz & Sousa, 1980, p. 149; Gomes, 2007, p. 550).

The second example, also attributed to King Filipe III, the Silver Tanga, which reflects the coat of arms between letters  $\mathfrak{J} - \mathfrak{I}$  on the obverse and the crest of Gridiron between S-L for St. Lawrence (Figure 4/L) on the reverse (Codrington, 1914, p. 25; Codrington, 1924, p. 100; Vaz & Sousa, 1980, p. 149; Gomes, 2007, p. 551) to symbolize St. Lawrence, the protector of the country.



**Figure 4.** The gridiron type silver Tanga coin of Filipe III (L) and the gridiron type silver Tanga minted in Colombo Mint (R)

In 1640, King D. Filipe III issued silver tangas (Figure 4/R) from Colombo Mint. These coins bear the coat of arms between the letter C – L<sup>o</sup> on the obverse, and the Crest of the gridiron between 16-40 on the reverse. These examples confirm that the crest of the gridiron was a prominent symbol on the island, which was used for the veneration of St. Lawrence. This explanation clarifies the relationship of the crest of the gridiron with the island. It is interesting to note that the *tutenag* Bazaruco coins with the figure of St. Lawrence have been issued exclusively for Sri Lanka, indicating that it is a localized improvement of the gridiron type coin. The Portuguese use the figure or crest of St. Lawrence for their coins in Sri Lankan contexts appears to be unique.

The Portuguese first landed in Colombo under the leadership of captain-major Dom Lorenzo de Almeida (Ferguson, 1935, p. 146). The patron saint of Lorenzo de Almeida was St. Lawrence. The first factory of the Portuguese was established in Colombo soon after their arrival. By its side they built a small chapel dedicated to St. Lawrence, the patron saint of the captain-major (Perera, 1955, p. 14). Grogan assumed that it would be in the fort itself that the coins would have been struck (Grogan, 1914, p. 93). Thereafter, the gridiron and the figure of a saint were probably employed for coins struck in Ceylon. Further Grogan states that coins without the mint year, which have been found on the island and identified, were likely issued by the Captain General Jeronymo de Azevedo or Constantino de Sa during the reigns of Filipe II and III (Grogan, 1914, p. 93), presumably the first coins issued as souvenirs to glorify Almeida's patron saint. According to the Portuguese' religious convictions, honouring St. Lawrence as the protector of the island of Ceylon was important. The introduction of *tutenag* half Bazaruco coins with the figure of St. Lawrence was also a result of Portuguese religious propaganda over the Sinhalese society. It is possible that the Portuguese coins first issued in Sri Lanka depicting the

figure of a saint or his emblem were intended to promote the veneration of saints among the local population. St. Lawrence type Bazaruco have not been previously recorded by researchers in the field of Portuguese coins. Vaz & Sousa, and Gomes have left blank entries without illustrations in their catalogues when referring to the half Bazaruco of Ceilao. But they recorded the standard weight of this Bazaruco as approximately 1.4 grams. (Vaz & Sousa, 1980, p. 149; Gomes, 2007, p. 550).

As was the tradition, when the Portuguese erected a fort on newly discovered lands, they also established a mint house in the fort. It can be assumed that the Portuguese mint was erected in the newly constructed Colombo fort in 1518 by Lopo Soares de Albergaria (Ferguson, 1908b, pp. 39-40), which was in the vicinity of Kayman Gate (Kaiman Dorakada): the entrance to the Fort (Meslinka, 2025, p. 402). In the Sri Lankan context, the special interest in St. Lawrence is clearly demonstrated by the Portuguese coat of arms carved on a stone slab found at Manikkadawara. The arms design features seven gridirons instead of castles (Meslinka, 2024, p. 06), which was commonly associated with the Portuguese heraldry. It can be suggested that the Menikkadawara Royal Coat of arms represent a unique, locally originated design and reflection of local identity (Meslinka, 2024, p. 09). This example further contributes to clarify the significant position held by St. Lawrence within the Portuguese community in Sri Lanka, while this discovery helps us understand the origin of St. Lawrence-type coins on the island.

As discussed earlier, three distinct types of tutenag half Bazarucos were associated with St. Lawrence and according to the evolution of coin patterns, it can be demonstrated that the newly discovered tutenag half Bazaruco coin represents the last improvement stage of the St. Lawrence coin series. When we carefully examine the obverse features of types 2 (L) we notice that both coins bear the same crowned arms. Therefore, these two series of coins can be regarded as contemporaneous issues. It is similar to the crown pattern used by the kings of Filipe's. It can be assumed that these coins were the issues under King Filipe III (1621-1640 A.D.). This interpretation is further supported by evidence that the mass manufacturing of the Portuguese coins in Ceylon began by King Filipe III.

Regarding the manufacturing process of these coins, tutenag (an alloy of copper, nickel, iron and zinc), a low-value metal, was used. The Portuguese commonly struck low-value coins for small transactions. In Ceylon, introducing tutenag coins for everyday transactions was an obvious outcome (Meslinka, 2025, p. 412).

The island came under the patronage of King Joao III after sending envoys to Lisbon to crown the figure of Prince Dharmapala in 1543 After which Ceylon became a protectorate of the Kingdom of Portugal. It is therefore reasonable to presume that Portuguese coins were issued for circulation in Ceylon from this period onward. The availability of copper Bazarucos coins related to the reign of King Joao III supports this assumption. In this base, we can argue that Saint Lawrence half Bazaruco coins were locally minted during the reign of D. Filipe III (1621-1640 A.D.). These coins should not be

forgeries because without knowing the morphological features attributed to the saint by the Holy Catholic Church, no one can strike such a coin (Meslinka, 2025, p. 413 ).

The motifs used for the coins reveal the desires of diverse ethnic and religious groups. The cross, figures of saints, and instruments of saints were prominent designs used for the coins. These motifs also reflect the multicultural amalgamation fostered by the Portuguese expansion in Asian Territories. It is suggested that Portuguese coinage contributed to the social and cultural transformation in Sri Lanka.

The social symbolism reflected in Portuguese coins offer valuable insights into Sri Lankan society under the Portuguese colonial administration. The establishment of the mint and metal usage highlights significant changes in colonial monetary practices. The coinage system of the Portuguese was neither entirely foreign or wholly indigenous, rather it represents a hybrid output and one that is reflective of the border social values to examine.

The new tutenag half Bazaruco coins are said to be recorded from Ratnapura district, where the Sabaragamuwa fort functioned as a main stronghold of the Portuguese. The diversity of coins found in this area reflects the multiple political authorities operating in the area under the Portuguese administration. At present, a considerable number of Portuguese coins have been unearthed during sand mining along the Kalu Ganga river flow near Ratnapura (personal conversation with Mr. Gehan Rajeew, June 4, 2024). The facts suggest lucrative economic activities and political expansion in the area during the Portuguese period.

The production technology of the Portuguese coins in Indian possessions followed the hammer struck method. However in Sri Lanka casting technology appears to have been employed for coins attributed to Azevedo and Sa. Evidence such as irregular shapes, less sharp details and seam lines (visible where the two mold halves met) confirms this interpretation. The variations in metals and denominations further represent and reinforce social stratification within the colonial monetary system. Further uniqueness and rough workmanship of the St. Lawrence half Bazaruco strongly suggests that these coins were locally produced.

## Conclusion

The study on an unlisted Indo–Portuguese tutenag half Bazaruco coin from Sri Lanka opens multiple avenues of further study. Without a doubt the coin appears to be a solely indigenous product. The absence of the mint mark and the mint year on the coins furthermore proved this conclusion. These coins were probably minted in Colombo without the King’s Permission by D. Azevedo and Constantino de Sa. It is presumably not entered in the Portuguese official documents, and findings are rare.

The coin has totally amalgamated with the Portuguese religious objectives. On the obverse of the coin depicts the crowned arms of Portugal symbolizing royal power, while the reverse features a Saint to reflect their religious purpose and cult of veneration of saints. The Portuguese’ main ambitions in the East were political unity, spiritual assimilation (the spread of religion) and economic solidarity (Caetano, 1951, p. 31). It is clear that the Portuguese accomplished these objectives through minting coins and using associated symbolism.

Although these coins have been attributed to the reign of King Filipe III of Portugal, it should more accurately be assigned to the period between King Filipe II (1598-1621 A.D.) and Filipe III (1621- 1640 A.D.). In the Sri Lankan context, these coins were introduced by the captains Dom Jeronymo de Azevedo (1594-1612 A.D.) and Constantino de Sa (1618- 1630 A.D.) during their captaincy in the island. Codrington has correctly dated this coinage to the period between 1612 and 1617 (Codrington, 1914, p. 21).

The Portuguese coins functioned as a medium through which the colonial power was visually and materially impressed into the day-to-day life of the local population in their colonies. The introduction of Christian symbols bear witness to multi-religious and multi-cultural dominance. Within the Indo–Portuguese series, the absence of monarchical portraits is an outstanding feature. Instead, the Portuguese appear to have embedded religious symbols as a medium of religious propaganda in the community by popularizing religion among non-Christians (e.g., Buddhist, Hindu adherents). In conclusion, the newly identified tutenag St. Lawrence half Bazaruco coins add valuable insights to further examine the Indo-Portuguese coinage system in Sri Lanka.

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