



AN INTRODUCTION TO ANCIENT INDIAN COINS

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Abstract

Coins are as important as the inscription in history. They confirm the information derived from literature. They are of various metals –gold, silver, copper, or alloy and contain legends or simple marks. The coins are very important to the reconstruct of the ancient Indian history. It is a part of archaeological sources .Those with dates is probably very valuable for the framework of Indian chronology. Coins are almost our sole evidence with regarded to the Indo Scythian and Indo Bactrian King. The Bilingual coins had served as Rosetta Stones in deciphering the Ancient Indian writings. The purity of the metal reflects the financial conditions of the Gupta Empire. The inscription on the coin indicates territory over which the rulers ruled. Some coin throws significant light on the personal events of certain rulers. The discovery of the same kind of coins at different places helps up in fixing the coverage of various kingdoms in ancient India.

Keywords: types, punch marked coins, dynasty coins, samudra gupt, chandragupta vikramaditya ii, media news.

Introduction: The history of coins extends from ancient times to the present, and is related to economic history, the history of minting technologies, the history shown by the images on coins, and the history of coin collecting. Coins are still widely used for monetary and other purposes. All western histories of coins begin with their invention at some time slightly before or after 700 BC. In Aegina Island, or according to others in Ephesus, Lydia, 650 BC. Ancient India in circa 6th century BC was one of the earliest issuers of coins in the world. Ancient India: In ancient India, people used money trees to store their coins. A money tree was a flat piece of metal, shaped like a tree, with metal branches. At the end of each branch was a round disk with a hole in the center. Each of these disks was an ancient Indian coin. When you needed money, you simply broke off a coin from your money tree. The ancient Indians often used pictures of dragons and other make-believe animals on their coins.

Types Of Coins In Ancient India: Numismatic or coin collecting is the science of coins under an economic, legislative, metrological and artistic point of view. It has a great importance in the whole Historical and Archaeological science; as a matter of fact into the peculiarity of a people or age the Coin holds a fundamental role: Numismatic has always reflected the political, economical, artistic and social trends of the time in which it developed.

The most ancient coins of India are commonly acknowledged as 'punch-marked coins'. The Ashtadhyayi cites that the metallic pieces were stamped (ahata) with symbols (rupa). As the name indicates, these coins carry the symbols of assorted types, punched on pieces of silver of defined weight. Fascinatingly, the earliest Indian coins have no determined shapes and were mostly unified. Secondly, these coins are deficient in any inscriptions scripted in contemporary languages and almost always struck in silver. These unique characters makes ancient Indian coins stand very much apart from their contemporaries in Greece. Punch-marked coins are marked with 1-5 (and at times more) marks, representing a choice of symbols. Two well acknowledged numismatists, D. B. Spooner and D.R. Bhandarkar, after careful study, independently had concluded that the punching of these umpteen symbols exemplifying animals, hills, and tree and human figures followed a definitive pattern and these coins were always issued under royal authority.

Punch Marked Coins : There is no particular date that has been stated for the discovery of advent of "punch marked coins". Historians say that the first trace for this coin were available in Harappa and Mohenjo Daro in the Indus Valley Civilization. There is no proper evidence to establish that these coins were actually from that era. However, it is widely believed that the "punch marked coins" were issued somewhere between the 7th and 8th century BC and 1st century AD. These coins got its name from the manufacturing technique, mostly made of silver, with symbols embossed on the coins on either side. The coins were first issued by the merchant guilds and then by the States, and were extensively used for the purpose of urban development and trade activity.

Dynastic Coins : The exact date of the dynastic coin usage is contentious. The earliest use of these coins relate to the dynastic rules of Kushans, Saka-Pahlavas and Indo-Greeks. The main use of these coins was between 2nd century BC and 2nd century AD. The Indo-Greek coins are signified by the Hellenistic traditions, where the Greek gods and goddesses figure prominently in the coin surface, along with the issuer's portrait. These coins, with Greek gods and legends, are

extremely significant as it has helped in the reconstruction of Indo-Greek history. The Saka coinage is perhaps the earliest dated coins, which goes back to the Saka era, 78 AD. The official calendar of the Indian Republic is represented by the Saka era. Much of the Kushan coinage attributes to Vima Kadphises. The coins from the Kushan Dynasty generally depict iconographic forms taken from Mesopotamian, Zoroastrians, Greek and Indian mythology. Mostly Indian gods were portrayed in those coins and were influenced by subsequent issues, namely the Guptas.

Samudragupta: Samudra Gupta, (died 380 CE), regional emperor of India from about 330 to 380CE. He generally is considered the epitome of an “ideal king” of the “golden age of Hindu history,” as the period of the imperial Guptas (320–510 CE) has often been called. The son of King Chandra Gupta I and the Licchavi princess Kumaradevi, he is pictured as a muscular warrior, a poet, and a musician who displayed “marks of hundreds of wounds received in battle.” In many ways he personified the Indian conception of the hero. From inscriptions on gold coins and on the Ashoka pillar in the fort at Allahabad, Samudra Gupta is shown to have been especially devoted to the Hindu god Vishnu. He revived the ancient Vedic horse sacrifice, probably at the conclusion of his fighting days, and distributed large sums for charitable purposes during these ceremonies. A special gold coin that he issued commemorated this ceremony, while another showed him playing the harp; all were of high gold content and excellent workmanship. Among the Gupta kings, the coins of Samudra Gupta are especially significant.

Six Types Of His Coins Have Been Found Which Can Be Mentioned As Follows:

Standard type of Garud-dhvaja type: On the one side of coin a king is represented having a garud-dhvaja in his left hand and making offerings to the fire with his right hand. He is wearing a cap, coat and ornaments. Round the king there are inscribed the word 'samarshatavitatavijayojitari-purajit Divam jayati' in a circular form. Under his left hand Samudra or samudra Gupta is written. On the reverse of the coins goddess Lakshami seated on the lion has been represented. This portion of the coin also inscribes the title 'parakrama' and some meaningless letters as well.

Archer type: The obverses of such coins represent the king with a bow and garud-dhvaja. The name of Samudra Gupta is written under the left hand. On the four sides of the king there is a word written in a circular form. And the word can be mentioned as 'Apratiratho vijtya kshitia sucharitai divam jayati'. On the reverse of the coin goddess Lakshami has been represented

seated on the throne and having in her hand the flower of lotus. The right side of this figure the word 'Kratantaparashu' is written.

Lyrist type: On the obverse of the coin, there is the figure of the king playing on the lute and words 'Maharaja dhiraja shri samudra gupta' are written. On the reverse of the coin there is the figure of Lakshami in sitting position. The word 'Samudra Gupta' is also written in this side of the coin.

Lion slayer type: In this type of coins Samudra Gupta armed with bow and arrow and thus has been represented as killing the lion and under this figure the words, 'Vyaghra parakram' are written. On the reverse of the coin there is a figure of goddesses standing on a makara i.e. a fish with an elephant head and on its right side 'Raja Samudra Gupta' is written.

Asvamedha type: On one side of a coin, a horse stands near a yupa or sacrificial post. The words, 'Rajadhiraj prithvi vijitya divam jayatyahutvasimedha' are inscribed in a circular form. On the reverse there is the representation of the chief queen of Samudra Gupta. The words 'Asvamedh parakrama' are also written on one side of the coin.

It may be noted that the early coins of Samudra Gupta were modeled on foreign influence but his later coins are purely Indian. His lion slayer type and lyrist type coins are purely Indian.

Chandragupta Vikramaditya II : Towards the beginning of the 4th Century A.D. the Gupta dynasty rose out of a small principality in North India and established a powerful and prosperous empire that lasted for more than two hundred years. The Gupta era hence came to be known as the Golden Age of Indian History. The Guptas issued coins of gold, silver, copper and lead. The gold coinage of the Gupta rulers is remarkable for its superb execution and artistic merit. The coins are thematic and depict various facets of the Gupta rulers' personal and social life. The ornate script on the coin is Brahmi. This coin was issued by Chandragupta II, the third Gupta King. Proud of their multi-faceted personalities, the Gupta kings conciously depicted themselves engaged in various martial as well as artistic activities. In this coin, we see Chandragupta II in the act of felling a lion with his bow and arrow. The Brahmi legend below his left arm reads 'Chandra' and that around the coin reads –'Devashri Maharajadhiraja Shree Chandragupta' On the reverse of the coin is the Goddess Laxmi, seated on a lotus. The legend on the reverse reads 'Shrivikramah' This coin belongs to the famous Bayana hoard found in Rajasthan. Provenance:

Regard Ancient Indian Coins News In Media:

Gold Coins Of Gupta Era Found In West Bengal.

THE HINDU

KOLKATA, June 2, 2013

Gold coins belonging to the Gupta period have been found at Ahiran in West Bengal Murshidabad district. The coins found during a road construction on National Highway 34, date around fourth century A.D. The region's chronological history may have to be rewritten following this find, archaeologists said. It is the second such discovery in the State since the early colonial era and is considered significant, as according to historians, it can present new evidences of the reach of the Gupta empire. It also opens up new scope of research in Gupta coinage system in India. Amal Roy, the deputy director of the State's Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Government visited the spot on Saturday. Gautam Sengupta, director, Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Government of West Bengal, said it is second discovery of a coin horde of the Gupta era in West Bengal, the first one being at Kalighat here during the early colonial era. The gold coins were found where the soil was brought from nearby Gonkar and Hatpara areas under Sagardighi police station. The coins were believed to have been carried along with the soil. Archaeologists visited those sites as well. Mr. Roy told The Hindu that 11 coins had so far been found and kept at the local police station. More coins could possibly be unearthed. He said the finding could help historians fill up the gaps in Murshidabad's history where there were evidences of settlements from the first and second century A.D. during the Kushana period and then during the Sashanka period dating to the sixth and seventh century A.D. The coins were of the imperial series of coins during the regime of Gupta kings Chandragupta and Samudragupta, Mr. Roy said. "The coins depict a king along with a Garuda Stambha on his right and with a fire altar. On the other side of the coin there is an image of goddess Lakshmi," he said. Historians hold varying opinions about the original homeland of the Guptas and the discovery of the coin horde can throw some light on the issue, Dr. Sengupta said. "The discovery of the coins will help us revisit the original homeland of the Guptas as well as the extent of presence of early Guptas in the area," he added.

Gupta Period Gold Coin, Locket Found.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Jhimli Mukherjee Pandey & Sujoy Khanra, TNN | Dec 19, 2013, 03.44AM IST

KOLKATA/DANTAN: A wave of excitement swept the Moghalmari excavation site near Dantan on Wednesday following the chance discovery of a gold coin and a locket. Though yet to be confirmed, archaeologists feel the exhibits belong to the sixth century AD, which is generally known as the Gupta period in ancient history. It is also known as King Shashanka's reign in the history of Bengal. In 2003, when Indologist BN Mukherjee had visited Dantan to document Bengal's navigational history; he came across a huge mound at Moghalmari, which the locals call Sakhi Sena or Sashi Sena. They told him that underneath the mound lay the state's oldest Buddhist monastery, which might even beat the Raktamrittika Vihara of Murshidabad (erstwhile Karnasuvarna) in age. Chinese scholar Hiuen Tsang had mentioned the existence of an old Buddhist monastery in Bengal that was older than Raktamrittika. However, this was never found and historians felt the excavation might finally bring the age-old mystery to an end. At the behest of Mukherjee, the Calcutta University took up the excavation project at Moghalmari. Gradually, a tri-ratha structure, typical of Buddhist monastic architecture complete with innumerable cells for the monks was unearthed.

Conclusion:

Currency is a term which refers to medium of exchange. Every country has its own currency. There are a huge number of currencies in the world. The currency of India is Rupee. If we have a look at Indian currency; gold, silver, copper and bronze coins without any denominations were used as currency in past i.e. till 7th century B.C. After that, in 6th century B.C. India issued coins with denominations printed on them. There are historic evidences that show that coins may have introduced somewhere between 2500 and 1750 BC. The coins printed in that time were known as punch-marked coins. As the time passed, many empires and dynasties rose and fell, which changed the country's coinage designs. The coins reflect emblem of dynasties, social events, deities and nature. The article referred secondary data of the various authors and focus to the ancient Indian coins. A coin shows our country how much rich in culture, architecture, language for upcoming generation.

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