

PUNCH MARKED COINS

Dr. Dilip Kumar

Assistant Professor (Guest)
Dept. of Ancient Indian History &
Archaeology,
Patna University, Patna
Paper – VI, B.A. 3rd Year

History of Coinage

- The development of coinage is an important stage of economic development of society.
- This is believed that the *Barter system* was started at the very early stage of the society (as early as the *Early- Mesolithic*) to utilize the various resources and products of the community.
- The excavations of *Singrauli* leads the fact that the micro-Lithic factory found there was used for supplying the tools to neighbouring communities, in exchange of other goods.
- Some ancient literary references support the existence of Barter System i.e.-. Rig.4.24.10./8.1.5./8.32.2/8.32.8

कः इमं दशभिर्ममेन्द्रं क्रिणाति धेनुभिः

- In Homer; we find the use of oxen as standards of value.
- In the ancient Rome the fine were assessed in terms of oxen. The cow was standard of value and thus, the word *Pecunia* (cattle in Latin) to mean money came in practice.
- Barter system proved its utility over a long period; but with certain lacking.
- The relative value of the goods varied in respect of weight; quality and quantity; class and types etc. especially with the knowledge of metals which compelled to use a certain amount of metal piece in exchange of other kind of goods.

- Gradually; as the knowledge of weight and measurement developed, the relative value of metal pieces determined against different articles which ultimately paved the way of development of coin system.
- In Harappan civilization scientific weight system was well developed, hence this is assumed that they would have used the metal pieces of certain weight in trade activities, especially in foreign trade.
- In contemporary Mesopotamia the silver pieces of certain weight (Shekel, Telent, mina, etc.) had been used for trade exchanges and the Harappan traders had relations with Mesopotamian cities-Ur, Lagash, and Kish etc.

- This is naturally derived that Harappan traders may also have adopted the same system of exchange.
- Rig Veda also refers some gold ornaments like *Nishka* and *Hiranya* as articles of donations or offering but the weight of these articles are not clear.
- Later Vedic period witness the weight system based on some common vegetable seeds. For example-*Krishnala* or *Raktika* (*Abrus Precatorius*); *Yava* (Barley); rice; and Mashak.

Punch-Marked Coins

- Punch-Marked coins get their name because of the making technique in which coins are marked with stamps of various symbols.
- These are the ancient most coins found in India.
- Prof. V. S. Agrawal named these coins as *Aahat-mudra*; because of the depiction of many symbols on the coins.
- He adds reference from *Astadhyaayi* of *Paanini* wherein *Rupadaahat Prasanshyoryap* – term has been used as a *Sutra* (formula). Here *Rup* term added with *Yap pratyay* has been used in two meanings- 1) *Aahat* and (2) *Prashansa* (Appreciation).

- *Kaashika* refers three examples of *Aahat*-
 - (1) *Aahatam rupmasya rupyō deenaarāh*
 - (2) *Rupyō kedaarah*
 - (3) *Rupyam Kaarshapanam*
- According to *Kaashika* the symbols occurred on *Deenar* by hitting this on anvil is called *Aahat*.
- other similar words have also been used for marking symbols on the coins. *Rupa* means sign and *Aahat* means strike.
- This *Rupa* word turned in to *Rupya* as an adjective for *Aahat mudra* which is the source of present word *Rupaya*.

- Prof. V. S. Pathak has contradicted the above views of Prof. Agrawal.
- Prof. Pathak invited attention on a term *Lakkhana-Aahatam* from *Vinay Pitak*; which is; according to Prof. Agrawal; generally considered for marking symbols on the body of criminals.
- But there are many other references from *Paali* texts – *Lakkhanakrit, Kasaahat, Tilkaahat*; etc. Have been used for making injuries on the body beating by cane, whip or other things.
- Thus Prof. Pathak proves that *Aahat* word means making injuries or cut on the body or beating.

- In support Prof. Pathak has quoted a reference from *Atharvaveda* (6/141/2) which states making symbols on the body by heated copper knife. Similar reference has been quoted from *Maitryani Samhita* (4/2/9).
- Prof. V. S. Pathak views that *Aahat* word is derived from the Vedic Sanskrit word *Aahan* which was initially used for “pouring a creative fluid in a Pot”.
- Gradually this word was used for pouring melted metal in moulds.
- Hence *Aahat* means moulded. According to him, *Aahat-mudra* term should be used for Moulded coins; not for Punch-Marked coins.

- He further suggests, Punch-marked coins should be termed *Tankit-mudra* instead of *Aahat-mudra*. His view is based on word *Tanka* derived from *Taki-dhatu* of Sanskrit, meaning “**to strike**”.
- *Arthashastra* of *Kautilya* refers an instrument *Bimbatanka* used for making the symbols on the coins .

Making technique

- Various methods have been used for making the Punch-marked coins.
- In the earliest method, the symbols were marked on a plate of metal on both sides and roughly cut in a rectangular or square shape. This roughly cut piece was further cut to obtain the desired weight which many times took pentagonal, hexagonal or semi-circular shapes. In this process, many of the marks either got disappeared or remained partially.
- In the second method a metal piece of certain weight was melted in crucible and put on a plane surface to allow it to take round shape, and symbols were marked in the leather-hard condition.

- Third method required cutting a metal piece to a standard weight. Later it was hammered on to desired shape and then marked with symbols.

Issuers of Punch-marked coins

- This is believed that earlier coins had been issued by guilds, because the coins were mainly used for trade and commerce.
- Later, State also got involved in the issuing of coins. Vincent Smith views that obverse of the coins were marked by guilds whereas the reverse by the State as a token of authenticity.
- As the state became powerful and importance of coins gradually increased, the issuing of coins fully came under the government.
- *Vishudhimagga* refers that after examination of the coins *Hiranyaka* (an state official) can find out where (village, hill, river etc.) and by which *Acharya* the coin was minted. This proves that state had control over coinage system.

Date of PMC

- Punch-Marked coin is referred as **Karshapan** in literature of Sutras period and its Prakrit form Kahawan frequently occurs in the Buddhist texts. period of Sutras is generally determined Circa 7th- 6th cent. BC.
- On the basis of literary evidences; Prof. Altekar dates back the PMC to 7th cent. BC.

- Archaeological evidences little differ with above dates. Some scholars have analyzed the stratigraphy of different sites from where the PMC have been found—

Ropar	600 – 200 BC
Hastinapur	600 – 200 BC
Purana Quila (Delhi)	600 – 100BC
Ujjain	600 – 100BC
Tripuri	400 – 300BC
Maheshwar	400 – 300BC

- Hence; the date of PMC can be accepted around 6th cent. BC.

Symbols on PMC

- More than 550 symbols have so far been identified from obverse of the Punch-Marked coins. These comprise symbols from vegetable kingdom; animals & birds, geometrical designs, Arms; human figures, natural signs and some unidentified symbols etc. explained in different ways.
- Some of the symbols represent the place and mint; dynasty; while others related with religion etc.

INDEX IV

SYMBOLS ON PUNCH-MARKED SILVER COINS



xvi, 1.



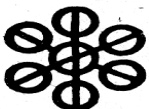
xvi, 1.



xvi, 1.



xvi, 2.



xvi, 3.



xvi, 3.



xvi, 2.



xvii, 4.



xvii, 5.



xvii, 8.



xviii, 9.



xix, 10.



10.



10.



xvii, 6-7.



xvii, 6-7.



xxii, lix-lxiii, 1-51, 64-5,
79-82, 84.



xxii, xxxvii, lxiv-lxvii,
52-63, 68-76, 83.



xxii, 58-9.



xxii, xxxvii, 44.




xvii, 7.



xxiii, lix-lxi, lxix, 11-20,
25-34, 38, 40-1, 43-
50, 55, 56, 82.



or  xxiii, lxvii, 59,
72, 79-81, 82.

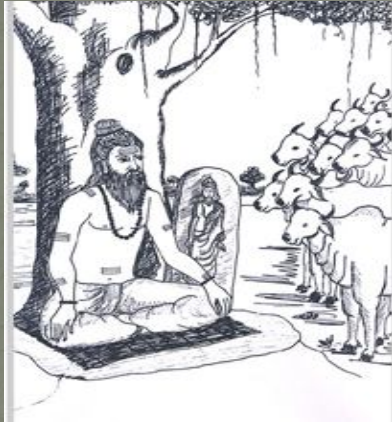


xxiii, xxviii, lxii, 35, 36.



xxiii, 37, 38.

Pictures of some earlier objects used as coins



PMC



Classification of PMC

- Various kinds of classifications of PMC have been made by scholars , out of which the classification made by Dr. P.L.Gupta is found more acceptance among the Numismatians.
- Dr. Gupta divides the PMC into two major classes:- (I) Local PM coins , and (II) Imperial series of PMC.
- Local PMC are the coins starting from 7th-6th Cent. B.C. and prior to commencement of Magadha empire i.e. 5th Cent. B.C.
- Imperial series of PMC are the coins considered to be issued by the Magadha empire .

Local series of PMC

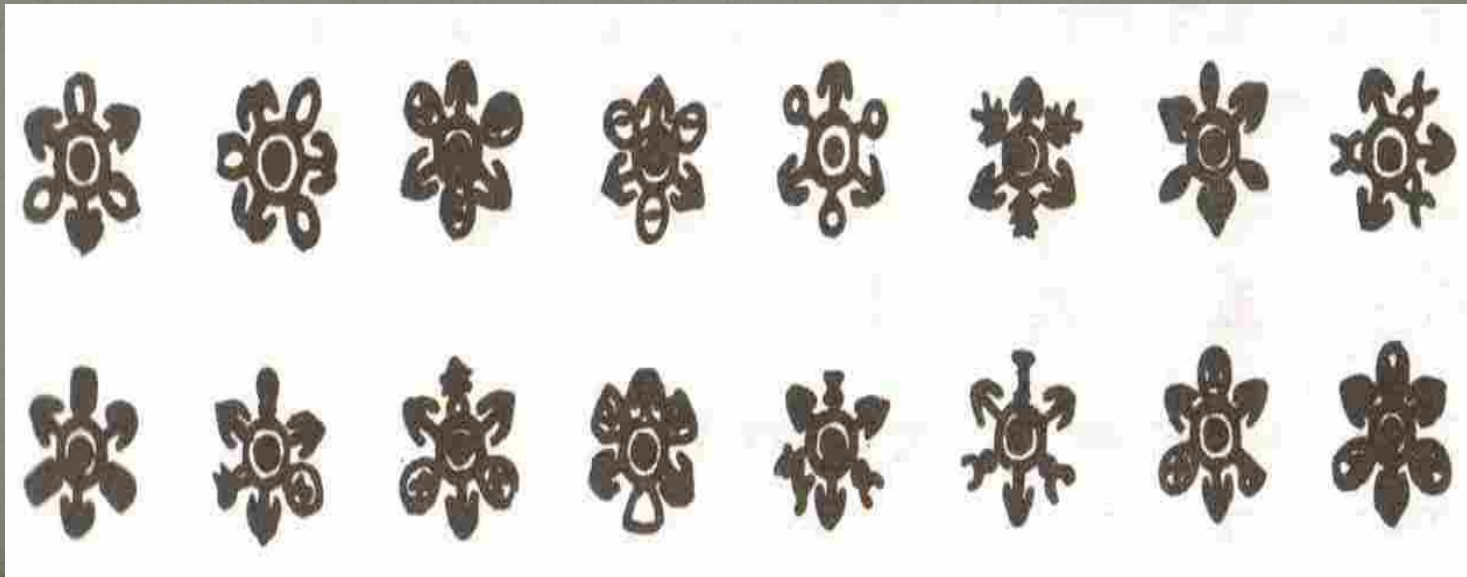
- Local PMC of Panchala, Shoorsen, Saurashtra, and Kuntal *Janpadas* bear only one symbol.
- The coins of Gandhara *Janpada* bear two symbols.
- The Janpadas of Kashi, Koshal, Magadha, Vatsa, Chedi, Avanti, South-Koshal, Andhra and Ashmaka bear four symbols .

Imperial series of PMC

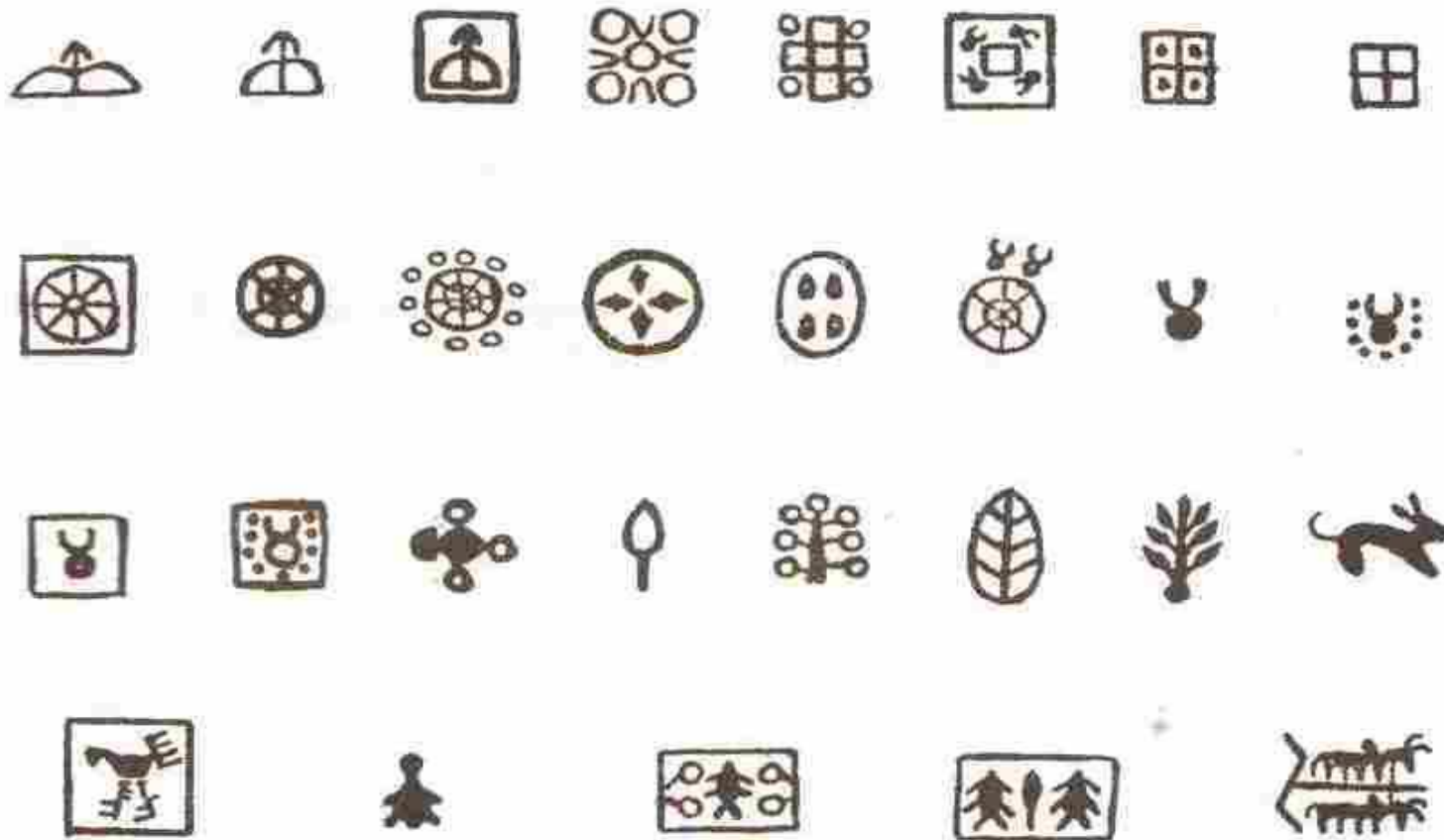
- Imperial series of PMC were issued by Magadha empire .
- The main attribute of this series is five different symbols marked with five different punches.
- The weight of these PMC is found 50 to 55 grains.
- On the basis of symbols three layers classification have been made- ***Class, Group*** and ***Variety***.
- Almost every coin of this series bears **Sun** symbol in common.



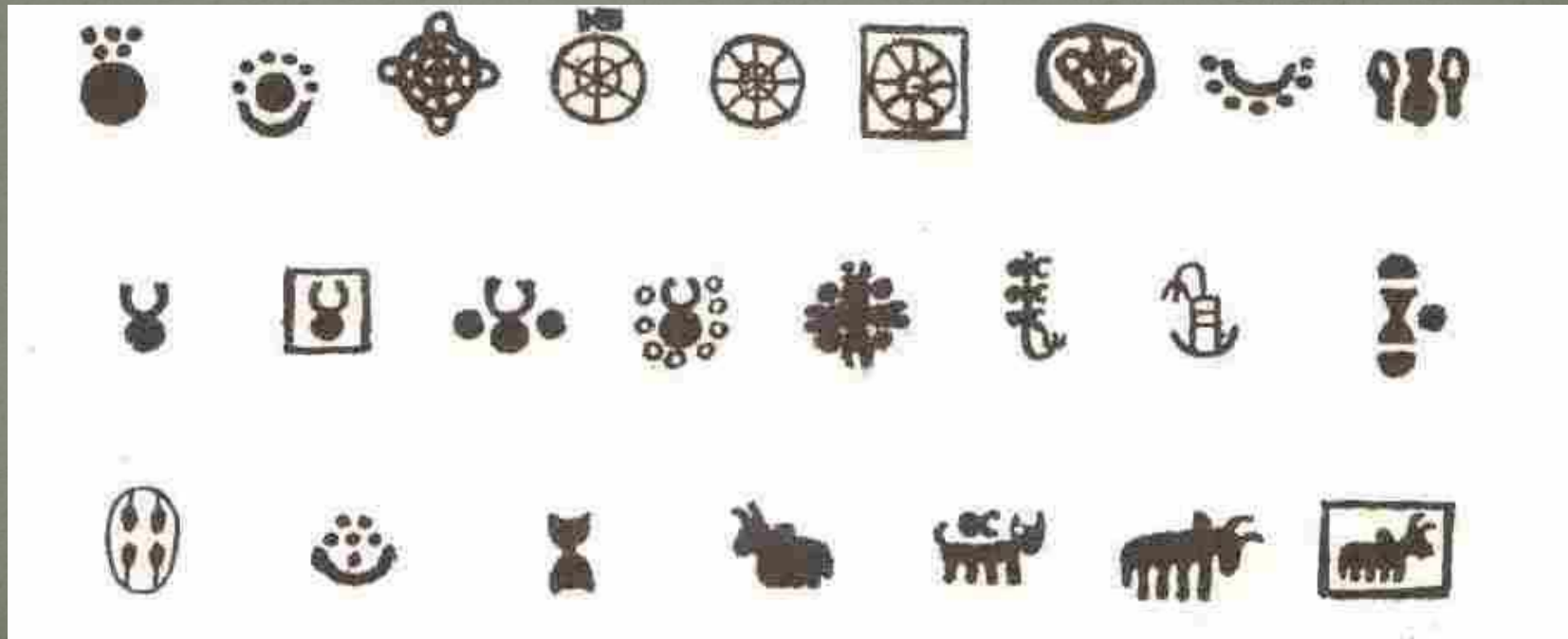
- For the study purpose the **Sun symbol** has been considered first symbol on the coins.
- The second common symbol is **Six-armed wheel symbol**.
- Six-Armed wheel symbols has many varieties.



- The third symbol determine the class of the coins. These “**class symbols**” are more than **50** in number.



- Each “**Class**” has a fourth common symbol which determine the “**Group**” within the Class. Thus every class is divided in many “**Groups**”.
- These **group symbols** are normally not found beyond their class.



- The fifth symbol causes the "**Variety**" of the coin.
- The **variety symbols** are maximum in the number and so far their number is counted more than **175**.