

Conclusion

The present research contains an introduction, six chapters and a conclusion of the overall study. In the introduction we have introduced the problems under study and presented a brief overview of the system of coinage in India from its beginning to the end of the 12th century to give an idea of the system of coinage in India. Then the next part briefly summarizes the technical aspect of a coin. The next section concentrates our attention towards the coinage of the princely states in the Indian subcontinent, prior and after the Muslim rule to justify the need of coinage system by the independent states. The remaining section finally gives a bird's eye view of the organization of the entire thesis. In the following we have attempted to summarise the main contents of our study and point out the important findings of the present study and also present a set of concluding observations.

Chapter I bears a title '*Koch Dynasty: A Political Outline*' which is an introductory chapter of the present research. The chapter intends to show the history of the Koch kingdom from the early thirteenth century up to the merger of the state with Union of India. In the first part of the chapter, location, nomenclature and topography are discussed to understand the favorable condition of the emergence of the Koch state. Though the Koch emerged in the territory in the first half of the sixteenth century but the politico-social condition of the area before the establishment of the Koch state is also discussed here. In this respect the emergence of the Khen dynasty is consulted and how gradually the Khen rule came to an end is also highlighted here. The emergence of the Koch is the most historically significant event of the sixteenth century. How the Koch grew here after dispelling the other minor communities is analyzed here. After the initial years of its existence Koch kingdom witnessed of its most able ruler Nara Narayan. How Nara Narayan consolidated the kingdom and expanded the territories of the state in the far-flung parts of North East India and retained as a

sovereign state until the second half of the eighteenth century is vividly examined. Events which paved the way to the involvement of the English East India Company in Koch affairs are carefully re-examined and how the state from an independent principality turned into a tributary state of the British Empire is vividly analyzed. The political history of the state during the Company and also under the Crown rule is also discussed. Lastly the history of the merger of the kingdom with union of India is shown in the later phase.

The chapter II entitled as '*Economic Scenario in the Koch Kingdom*', this chapter also acts as a background chapter. This chapter is incorporated because as the present study attached with coinage which is an integral part of the economic affairs so without understanding the economic viability of the kingdom we cannot justify the system of coinage properly. In this chapter the economic viability of the Koch state and correlation among the surplus generation, its extraction and concentration are the basic themes which have been discussed here. The structure of land revenue system and administration, technological acculturation of the people of the kingdom, process of peasantization, commercial relations with neighboring countries and the role of *Narayani Tankas* in the commercial transaction of the kingdom are discussed here.

The chapter III is given the title '*Origin and Development of Koch Coinage (1496-1773)*'. The origin and development of the Koch coinage is the main attention of the third chapter. Here the economic condition and the mode of transaction before the establishment of the Koch kingdom are discussed. The transaction system in Bengal and its neighboring territories are clarified here, as because it will help us to understand the general patterns of development of the coinage system. The events which compelled Nara Narayan to introduce a state sponsored currency in the Koch kingdom is discussed here. How with the expansion of the territory by Nara Narayan, the Narayani currency became popular in a wider range of area of North East India and how far the Narayani currency acted as the instigating factor for the introduction of various other regional currencies is vividly discussed here. Besides this some technical aspects of Nara Narayan's currency is attached here to understand

the gradual development of this currency. After the demise of its originator how the remaining kings of the Koch kingdom maintained the acceptability of the currency to a wider range of area upto 1773, is discussed in the later part of this chapter.

Chapter IV entitled '*Koch Coinage: From Anglo-Koch Treaty to Merger (1773-1949)*'. The chapter explores the condition of the Koch coinage from Anglo-Koch treaty to Jagaddipendra Narayan the last king. Careful re-examination has been made here about the ups and downs of Koch coins due to the British monopolistic attitude. How the Koch kingdom came into contact with the British and which resulted the loss of political sovereignty and which subsequently paved the way for the de-monetization of its age long currency is also narrated here. The chapter also explores the Company's intention of establishing a uniform unit of money to eradicate the complexities of multiple unit of value. In this respect on the basis of the diplomatic letters exchanged between the commissioners stationed at Cooch Behar with the high official of the British government is consulted here to reveal the gradual debasement of the Narayani currency.

In chapter V we have discussed the '*Koch Coins in Cultural Perspective*'. How far the Koch cultural heritage is being preserved on the coins is discussed here. If we look back deep into the Koch coinage it can be seen how the same is influenced by religion to a great extent. In numerous types of coins one can find legends symbolizing the religious path followed by the rulers of the Koch kingdom. Judging from this angle, the religious incitement of the rulers is can be asessed. The speciality of Koch coinage is that both side, of the coin contain legends. The obverse shows the dedicative inscriptions and the rulers name, epithet, year of issue. The legends are found to be in details in full unit coins while fractional unit coins show shorter forms. A careful study of the obverse legends show that these coins have invocation to Gods and Goddesses of two separate cults of Hinduism prevailing at that time in Eastern India the *Shivism* and *Vaishnavism*. While examining the volume of availability of the coins in the Koch kingdom it is seen that generally the coins with invocation to Siva are plenty

in number while those invoked to Vishnu are rare. Besides this both Hindu and Muslim elements on Koch Coins, secular symbols have been analyzed here.

Lastly, chapter VI deals with the '*Koch Coinage in relation to that of the Neighboring States*'. This chapter is basically a descriptive as well as analytical chapter which has explored the other dynastic coinages of medieval North East India. In this chapter the beginning of the system of coinage in North East India is discussed. We have found that the Koch coinage greatly inspired the other North Eastern states to introduce coins in their respective territories. Here we have discussed about the other coinages like as Ahom, Tripura, Kachar, Manipur, Bhutan to understand the impact of the Koch coinage over the economy and politics of North East India and adjoining areas. In the remaining section a comparative analysis in terms of Political, economic and socio-cultural perspective is discussed to understand the inter relationship between Koch and other North East Indian coins.

II

So from the above mentioned survey we can come to this point that the Koch kingdom was one of the most prolific coin issuing kingdoms of the medieval North East India and struck coins for circulation almost continuously from the mid-sixteenth century until the late eighteenth century when the British forced its closure. It is suggested that Visvasimha may have struck coins however, in course of our research we have find several literary references regarding Visvasimha's coins so it is presumable that Visvasimha might have his own coins. But until the discovery of Visvasimha's coin we can not say it definitely. But surely it was the credit of his son and successor Nara Narayan who struck coins in quite high numbers. With the increase of his territory *Narayani* currency extended over a vast area of North East India. This continuation of striking coins was hampered due to the invasion of Bhutan in the late 18th century. The King of Koch Behar took help from the English East India Company to resist the Bhutanese attack and made an agreement with the British (1773). By this

agreement Koch kingdom became a tributary state and it lost the authority of minting coins. Finally the Koch mint was permanently closed by a British order of 27th December, 1845. In spite of the closure, the Narayani rupee of Koch kingdom continued to be very popular among the local people until the mid-nineteenth century because of its relatively reliable silver content and weight and the rulers retained the right to strike one hundred one gold and one thousand one silver coins on the occasion of their coronation. The coins were mass produced using rupee sized dies to strike half rupee sized coins with no attempts at artistic excellence. The coins were used not only in the Koch state itself but also beyond its borders in Bhutan, western Assam and other adjoining areas. From our study we have reached certain conclusions on the importance, viability of the Koch currency. In the following we will highlight on that.

The coins are of immense importance as contemporary historical documents in providing firm dates for the reign of the each king and independent confirmation of certain other important events. While literary sources may illuminate brilliantly short periods or episodes, coins offer a much more continuous chronological and geographical coverage. In this respect coins of Koch kingdom are of immense historical importance particularly as these coins are among the earliest historical documents that survive from the region and almost invariably dated as they are; for they duly bear the names and epithets of the issuing kings. The evidence of coins not only corroborate genuine facts as given by the literary sources but also supplement information not which are supplied by the literary sources. Coins have therefore a reliable chronological framework to be constructed for the history of the state, a framework that could not have been produced without them.

The coins are certainly circulated as currency. During the sixteenth century they were struck in reasonably large numbers and probably had a significant monetary function for payment of mercenary soldiers as well as being used as a store of wealth and for use in religious ceremonies and for payments to Brahmins. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries they had a modest role for the payment of taxes and for use in day today transaction in the kingdom. These coins were the first path

maker of revolutionising of transaction system. As we have no specimen of state sponsored coinage before Narayani currency in North East India, so it is easy to believe that transaction was depended on barter system. But at the moment coins came to replace the barter mode of transaction it changed the whole volume of trade as it eradicated the complexities of barter transactions. As a result trade and commerce flourished in this region and the self-sufficient rural economy started to transform into a surplus economy and which ultimately increased the standard of living of common people and also helped a lot to develop the communication network. By taking inspiration from the Koch rulers the other princely kingdoms of North East India also started minting their own currencies and which popularized the acceptability of coins as a good mode of transaction, which ultimately paved the way for economic development of the entire region. Though we cannot get this short of information directly from coins but it compels us to think about the economic development and thus can be treated as valuable source for North East Indian economic history. They have been found in hoards beyond the borders of the Koch state primarily in the other kingdoms of North East India but their monetary use was largely confined to within the borders of the kingdom. In practice their commercial use was probably limited to the main commercial centers of the sub-Himalayan region of northern Bengal as well as some neighboring areas such as in Bhutan and in lower Assam.

Another area of economic activity to which coins provide an insight is in trading patterns. As there are no silver mines in North East, so the silver must have reached the states in the course of trade, probably from Bhutan or China, either directly or via Bengal. Koch coins provide an interesting case study as the silver coinage were very plentiful at several periods. After 1562, it is recorded in the local chronicles that Koch kingdom acquired a lot of silver as tribute from various states conquered by Nara Narayan during his military expedition. Much of this booty was struck into coins by Nara Narayan. Later kings however did not acquire silver through conquest and it is likely that those coins were struck from the profits earned from transit trade between Tibet and Bengal that passed through Bhutan and Koch kingdom. The sizes of the coinage provide a crude measure of volumes of this

trade. In particular no coins were struck in Koch kingdom between 1683 and 1695 which probably indicates that trade was disrupted during this decade. Find spots of coins indicate trade flows.

Numismatics illuminates the exercise of the political power and Koch coins are no exception of that process. There is a close relation in between imperialism or more specifically speaking empire building and coinage. The spread of an imperial coinage or of symbols relating to imperial control on local coinage may mirror the expansion of political sovereignty. The Koch established their political sovereignty over a considerable portion of North East India from about 1550 to about 1600. The ruling power imposed its own coinage, own weight standard and system of denominations over the regional kingdoms of North East India to claim imperial control. There is however another aspect of the coinage which has received less attention from historians. The introduction of coinage in Koch kingdom coincides with the time when the entire North Eastern region, came under the influence of Brahmanical Hinduism. This process of conversion to what is now commonly known as Hinduism at different times in different places and throughout the North East the introduction of coins became a part of this Hindu state formation process. The Muslim rulers of Bengal had been striking silver coins since the thirteenth century, so the issue of coins could perhaps be seen as part of a process of 'Civilization', instigated by the kings of each kingdoms of the region at the behest of the new immigrants from Bengal and in particular new Hindu immigrants.

Culturally also these coins are very significant as by the close study of various legends engraved on Koch coins we can get a picture of cultural atmosphere of the Koch kingdom and as well as North East India. The coins of Koch kingdom provide valuable information regarding beliefs and practices of the kings and the people in general. The religious inscriptions on the coins together with the name of the king reinforced the religious identity of the monarch and of the state. A careful study of the legends engraved on Koch coins show that these coins have invocation to Gods and Goddesses of two separate cults of Hinduism prevailing at that time in Eastern India the *Shivism* and *Vaishnavism*. While examining the volume of availability of the Koch coins it is seen that generally

the coins with invocation to Siva are plentiful while those invoked to Vishnu are rare. For example in Koch coins the term '*Sri Sri Siva Charana Kamala Madhukarasya*' is engraved in most of the coins Koch dynasty. The phrase inscribed on the reverse side of the coins to show the deep relationship of the Koch kings with Siva and also to establish the fact that the association of Siva with the people of the kingdom was very deep-rooted. Besides as the term *Narayan* was taken by the Koch rulers as their official dynastic name. As we all know that the Vaishnavism had a strong command over the Koch kingdom so it can be stated that the Koch took the name *Narayan* (Vishnu is also known as Narayan) as their dynastic name. We find both the term Siva and Narayan on the Koch coins so on the other way Koch coins signify that the Koch were not rigid in their religious attitude. Koch coins are not only the platform of assimilating the two cults of Hinduism itself but it has some greater significances as we find some unique signs on the coins which is regarded as sacred symbol in Islamic faith. In this way Koch coins tried to catch the sentiment of both the Hindu and Islamic population of the Koch kingdom. Apart from this direct information, coins provide us information relating patronization of religion. In those days monetary donations to temples and to the Brahmins were made by the state or private individuals. This economic assistance had increased the economic power of the religious institution and thus arts could flourish.

After 1773 the coins were struck exclusively for ceremonial purpose but the privilege of striking coins were carefully preserved and exercised even though the coins themselves could hardly be used as currency. With the consolidation of the British power in Northern part of Bengal, the East India Company had attempted to establish a uniform monetary system in this part of the country. Since the British neither sanctioned nor proscribed their issue the officials seemed to have kept a diplomatic silence over their continued production in the official administration and reports. The coinage was presumably regarded as a private issue of medallions not requiring sanction whereas the official policy was only to allow states to issue coins under strict control.

The coins of the Koch kingdom were beautifully struck mainly on carefully produced circular flans with dies of the same size as the flan. Their weight standard was carefully controlled and silver content appears to have been of the highest quality. The fact that relatively few pairs of dies were used at most periods indicate that production had not been high although the coins were retained as religious amulets or buried as treasure. The small denominations produced would seem to indicate that the coins were intended to be used in circulation but such use seems to have been limited and the small denominations are often in very fine condition. Gold coins were very rare and probably only struck for presentation purposes as the fineness was not as high or consistent as that of the silver pieces.

The introduction of a regularized currency system in Koch state by Nara Narayan was not a mere event of history but it ushered a new era in political, economic and also in cultural spheres. These coins were the sign of Nara Narayan's personal glory as well as his political supremacy over the territory he ruled. He was a contemporary ruler to Akbar, but in the way he conquered different parts of North East India and made the indigenous rulers as his subordinates it reflects his political wisdom and ability. These coins were the sign of sovereignty of Nara Narayan's military victory. As we have no specimen of state sponsored coinage before Nara Narayan in North East India, so it is easy to presume that transaction depended on barter system. But with the minting of coins, monetary transactions appear to have replaced the barter system and enhanced volume of trade. By taking inspiration from the Koch rulers, the other princely states of North East India also started minting their own coins and popularized the acceptability of coins as a better mode of transaction, ultimately paving the way for economic development of the entire region. Culturally also these coins are very significant as the close study of various legends engraved on Nara Narayan's coins we can get a picture of cultural and intellectual environment of the Koch kingdom and as well as North East India. By a minute analysis of the letters engraved in the coins we can know about the evolution of Bengali script and language. Besides the above mentioned importance these coins may be treated as primary

source materials in reconstruction of the Koch and North East Indian history. The information supplied by the literary sources can be corroborated with the numismatic sources and thus it helps us to draw a clear picture of the past. So finally, it can be stated that the coinage of the Koch kingdom have added a new chapter in the numismatic heritage of North East India and also in the Indian subcontinent. When corroborate with the legends, symbols and language of the era, the coins of the kingdom suggest the continuity of the cultural legacy of the mainland India. The information offered by these medieval coins certainly goes a long way to provide an antithesis of the 'colonial theory' that the region was 'completely isolated' from the rest of India. We have to work harder at producing proper corpuses of the coinage that exist and must use the raw data gleaned from the numismatic source.