

Abstract

Ancient coins are living testimonials to the past and an important source of information about a region's political development, monetization, trading patterns, external contacts, religious beliefs, cultural diversity and so on. From very ancient times likewise the other sovereign principalities of the world, the South Asian kingdoms had a unique tradition of issuing coins to proclaim their independent character. The various phases of Indian History have witnessed the rise of numerous political identities and these princely identities had their own series of glorious coinage. This is not only an inimitable tradition in South Asian context but also a revolutionary event in global politico-economic perspective.

In late-medieval period Koch kingdom a small princely state situated in the northern part of sub-Himalayan Bengal, was a prolific coin issuing kingdom. The coins issued by the Koch rulers, were the proof of the majestic mark of the Koch kingdom's politico-economic and cultural achievements. These coins are among the earliest historical documents that survive from the region. The long practice of issuing coins was initiated by Nara Narayan, the second historical sovereign of the kingdom in mid-sixteenth century and the practice maintained by the successive rulers until 1773 un-interruptedly. In the said year due to some politico-administrative crisis Koch kingdom compelled to surrender its sovereignty to the English East India Company and by virtue of Anglo-Koch (1773) treaty they lost the authority of minting coins. But the successive rulers until the merger of the kingdom with Union of India were permitted to mint some commemorative issues to retain the four century long tradition. Koch Kings struck coins mainly on gold, silver and brass metal. The gold and brass coin is very rare, silver being the main metal of coining money.

Keeping in mind the above background of Koch currency the present study has explored the age-long Koch currency popularly known as *Narayanai Mudra* in different frontiers, like political, economic and socio-cultural perspectives and thus trying to establish a co-relation between the Koch coinage and coinage tradition of India. Not only that the present study has explored British economic imperialism by analyzing the currencies' gradual de-monetization in the late-eighteenth century and thoroughly presented an analytical explanation of the politico-economic impact of the

Koch coinage over the economy and politics of North East India and adjoining areas. The scheme of chapters adopted for the present research work is detailed below:

The main theme of the first chapter is the origin and development of the Koch dynasty. In this Chapter the political history of the Koch kingdom is discussed. Careful examinations are made here about the ups and downs of Koch Empire.

Economic perspective of the Koch Kingdom is the basic theme of the second chapter. This chapter includes the economic viability of the Koch kingdom. To ventilate the core issues of the Koch economics, careful study is made here about the kingdom's geographical settings, administrative machinery, production system, land revenue settlement and collection, trade and market networks and so on. The use of currency in trade and transaction in Koch Kingdom and also in several parts of North East India are also discussed here to understand the role of currency in day do day transactions.

The beginning of the Koch coinage is the main theme of the third chapter. Here the economic condition and the mode of transaction before the establishment of the Koch kingdom are discussed. The economic condition of the kingdom during the reign of Nara Narayan and the main causes which compelled him to establish a regularized currency system is the main emphasis of the chapter. Koch coinage from its inception up to the Anglo-Koch treaty (1773) is discussed here.

The fourth chapter thoroughly deals with the Koch coinage from Anglo-Koch treaty to Jagaddipendra Narayan. Careful re-examination has been made here about the ups and downs of Koch currency due to the British monopolistic attitude towards the Koch kingdom. The colonial masters always intended to carve the power and position of the Koch kingdom. So how the British policy towards the Koch currency hampered the circulation of this currency and ultimately paved the way of its debasement have been analyzed in this chapter.

Art and iconographic designs on the Koch coins are the primary subject matters of fifth chapter. This chapter highlights different symbols, various designs, engraved words on the Koch coins and their practical and spiritual causes.

In chapter six, the coinage of various other North Eastern kingdoms have been discussed to gather a comprehensive idea about the transaction system in North East India and to establish the co-relation of these coinages with the coinage of Koch kingdom. Lastly there is an observation of the overall in the form of conclusion derived from the discussion of the above mentioned chapters.