

Preface

Ancient coins surviving into the present age are living commentaries on the dead past. So coins of a given period and area constitute an important source of information about its history and culture. In the field of antiquarian studies in particular, where the quantity of sources is very restricted, coins constitute a major body of historical, economic and artistic material and evidence. The importance of coins as a source of history can hardly be undermined in a country like India where genuine historical chronicles comparable to those of the west is not only rare but almost unavailable. In this backdrop coins, a very important component of archeological object can help us to reconstruct the past based on the true parameters set by both western and Indian scholars. It is common to belief that coins don't adequately compete with literary sources in revealing the complexities of past and merely confirm history but seldom to modifies or amplifies it. However they can shed ample light upon political, economic, social, religious, administrative and also on the historical geography of a certain region. From a close study of the symbolic significance of the varied emblems found on coins, we can know about various important events of royal history, as well as history of the general people and thus can draw a general picture of the contemporary life.

In late-medieval period, the Koch kingdom an important politico-cultural identity of sub-Himalayan northern Bengal had its own glorious series of coinage. As a royal issue, the coins of the Koch kingdom were the emblems of royalty and symbolic majesty of the Koch kings. The metals, the motifs, the legends as well as other accompanying details on the coins depict the details of faiths and customs adopted by the Koch kingdom. As the coinage can shed light on many aspects of the history and culture of a region, in this respect Koch kingdom is no exception, particularly as coins are the earliest historical documents that survive from the region. The dates on them give a firm

chronological framework for the early kings, the extent of the coinage at different periods demonstrate the changing economic wealth of the country and trace the trading links with the neighboring areas. These coins mark the beginning of a new stage of economic development not only for the Koch kingdom but also for the entire North East India as prior to the Koch coinage money in its organized form was almost non-existent in North East India. The currency is not only important on the above mentioned grounds but also it had the capacity to tell the British imperial intentions and their gradual penetration in the economy and politics of Koch kingdom in particular, as due to their politico-economic interest the Koch currency gradually de-monetized in the latter half of the eighteenth century.

Although in recent years few papers have been published about particular aspects of the coins of the Koch kingdom, but no comprehensive survey of current knowledge on the subject has been written. The writers of the history of this region have not shown their interests in using the numismatic data, through which a better perspective into Koch history can be gained. Keeping in mind of the above background of research on Koch coinage the present study have presented a thorough study of Koch coinage by exploring the different frontiers of numismatic elements like political, economic and cultural perspectives and thus tried to establish a correlation between the Koch coinage and coinage tradition of India. The present research also presented an analytical explanation of the impact of the Koch coinage over the economy and politics of North East India and adjoining areas.