

PUNCH-MARKED COINS AND THEIR CONTEMPORARY COUNTERFEITS

K.W.C. Tharangani, A.M.P. Senanayake

Department of Archaeology, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

k.w.c.tharangani@gmail.com

The Punch-marked Coins impressed with various symbols on both flans are recognized as the earliest coins found in Sri Lankan coinage. The circulation period of Punch-marked Coins is ascribed to period between 3rd century B.C. and 5th century A.C. In India, it is also identified as the earliest coins found in Indian coinage, and circulated from 6th century B.C. to 150 B.C. Several Punch-marked Coins collections and hoards were used for the research. The coin collections and hoards named Meerigama coin hoard, Jetavana collection, Jaffna Museum collection, University of Jaffna Museum collection, Professor Pushparatnam Collection and published catalogues were used for the study. There are two major objectives in this research. The first is to identify the origin of the coins and the second is to identify the chronology of the coins. The study was carried out using the methodology introduced by Gupta and Hardaker. The methodology was mainly applied to the coins which bear four or five obverse symbols. The majority of the coins could not be ascribed to any variety because of the lack of five major symbols on the obverse other than bankers' marks with two or three official marks. Hence it is difficult to identify their variety and their series. Although a collection of coins was studied for the research, only a few of them were useful to identify their variety and series. It appears that the Punch-marked Coins found in Sri Lanka belong to imperial series, and they were found to be minted in Gangatic plain in Northern India. It seems that the coins have travelled a long journey from North India to Sri Lanka. Although they originally belong to an earlier date in India the coins found in Sri Lanka belong to significantly later date attested by contextual data. The coins that were studied have been minted using silver metal and silver plated copper. There are three types of coins in the collections. They are Punch-marked Coins of Northern Indian origin, the contemporary counterfeit coins and the silver ingots. The authors surmise that the silver ingots may be the first attempt to cast local coin types in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Punch-marked coins, Contemporary counterfeit coins, Silver ingots, Chronology