

Coins, Commemorative Coins And Banknotes of Thailand

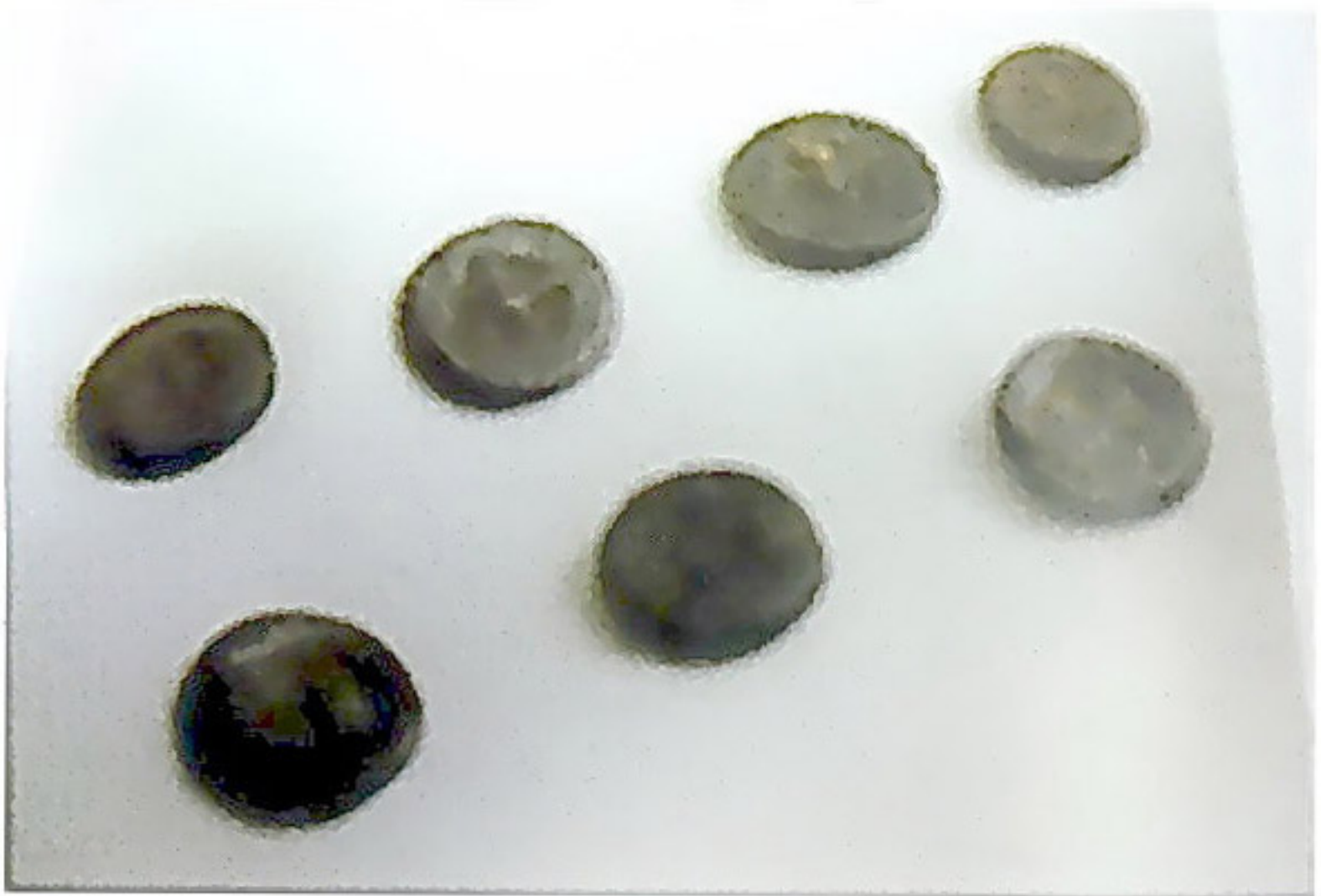
Coins are an important means of exchange in some economic systems due to the fact that they were created to be a standard value by which exchange may be conducted.

China was the first state in Asia to produce metal coins, 2,000 years before Christ. The first metal used was bronze, shaped to look like shells, which were the medium of exchange at that time. Later, in the Chou Dynasty (1122-246 B.C.), spade-shaped metal coins were produced. The form developed until it became knife-shaped and then, finally, a round, flat coin. Likewise, Asia Minor was another region, which introduced coinage; gold and silver alloy coins were used with some success by the Lydian about 700 years before Christ.

In Thailand, evidence of the use of coins has been found which covers many consecutive periods. These coins were the products of both local civilized communities and of neighboring countries, arising from a wide range of economic contacts.

The distinguishing features of these coins exemplify the progressive thinking of the ancient groups of people who invented them, and amply illustrates their technological stage of development. A study of the coins found in Thailand reveals 4 distinct groups, which help us to understand their development.

1.Round, flat coins; this was a very popular form as they were easily carried, and of a manageable size. Both casting and striking techniques were used in the production of these types of coins: sometimes both methods were used in conjunction. One method also used was to mold the basic shape and then stamp the design on afterwards. They were then fired in the same as one might fire pottery, at low temperatures: Other objects used as low were produced at the end of the Ayutthaya period. Coinage made from gold, silver, copper, earthenware, tin and nickel.



Dokchan Coins and coins with Sanskrit Inscription "Vara"

Srivijaya Period 8-13th century A.D.

Silver

They are round, flat coins, stamped with a square mark with serrated leaves called Dok Chan. The obverse has the Sanskrit word "vara", meaning "excellent"

2. Rounded, bulbous coins; these were made from various materials, such as, silver, gold and pewter (an alloy of lead and tin). A rough lump of metal, like a coffee bean, was struck first, and then hot-stamped with a mark. These types of coins were known by many names, like Khub or Khuk, Phot Duang (bullet coins), Khot Duang or Mak Do.



Namo Coins

Srivijaya period, 8-13th century A.D.

Silver

A round, lumpy shape, moulded by being struck. The edge has the ancient Sanskrit word “u”, while on the other side is a gouged mark similar to a coffee seed.

3.Coins which were modified from rare shells were called “cowries shell money”. These were used as small change and had the lowest value. They started to be used in the 18th.century B.E. (13th.century A.D.) and continued until B.E.2408 (1865 A.D.).When round, flat coins began to be minted, cowrie shells were phased out.



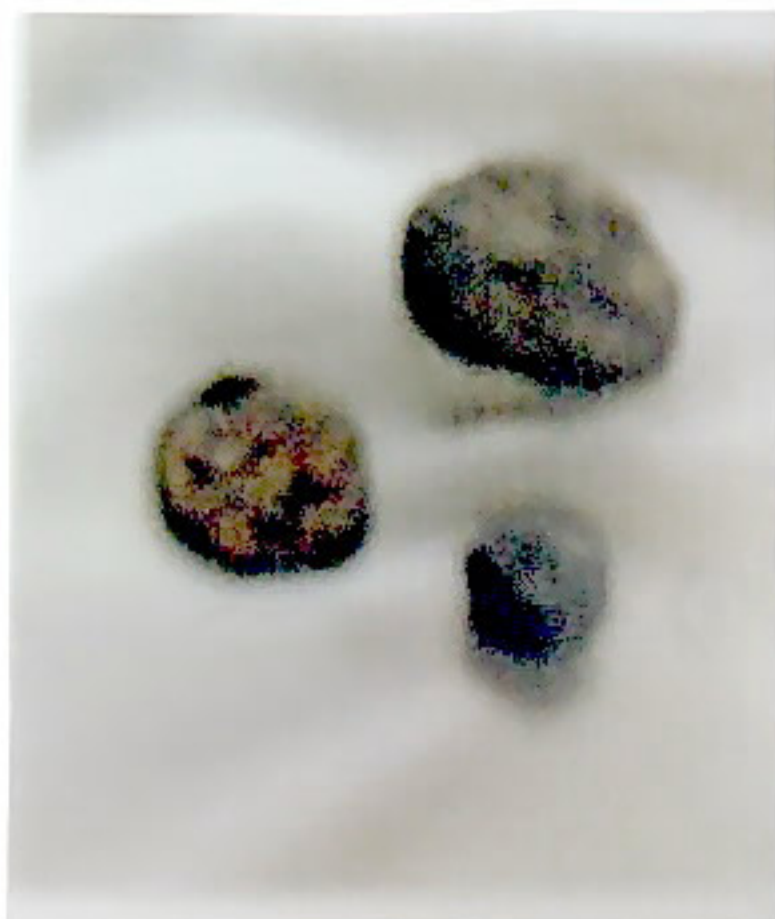
Cowrie Shell Coins

Ayutthaya period, circa 14th century-1767 A.D.

Cowry Shell

These 3 coins are real cowry shells, a group of salt-water shellfish with a single shell of the *Cypraea* species and *Cypraeidae* family. The main features are the hardness of the shell. The shiny surface. Protruding back, flat stomach, long mouth and tapering towards the end. Both sides of the shell lips are Zig- Zagged or tooth-like. There is no opposig cover shell. Popular cowry shell coins in ancient times were *Cypraea moneta*, which were called “Beiachan or Bieachakchan” and the *Cypraea annulus* called “Beiakaew or Beianang”. Most of these cowrie shell were brought in by Indian traders.

4.Special coins were produced for ancient Thai dependencies, though were meant to be for small change or for use in local community customs; for example, for the payment of dowry. In the case of the Chiang Mai Tok, these were they minted using silver and alloys.



Ngoen Dokmai or Ngoen Phakchee
Lanna style : Bangkok period, 19th century A.D.
Silver alloy

Similar to a shell, on one side are rough lines and pits. On the other side is a whorl or parsley style design similar to the flower used on some money.

COMMEMORATIVE COINS

This expression refers to coins minted as mementos or to commemorate events within the city or country during a particular period. They were made of various metals, such as copper, gold, silver and nickel and were decorated with pictures or designs

BANKNOTES

Evidence points to first use of banknotes, or paper money, as occurring in China during the Tang Dynasty (B.E.1161-1449 [619-906 A.D.]), in the reign of the Emperor Tank Hien Chong (B.E.1350-1364[807-821 A.D.]). He ordered the issue of paper with the amount written on it to traders who sold goods to the treasury. These were called “deposit note”, or Ngoen Bin “easy money”. Traders were able to use these deposit notes/easy money at many places with great convenience. In common parlance this was called carrying “light objects”.

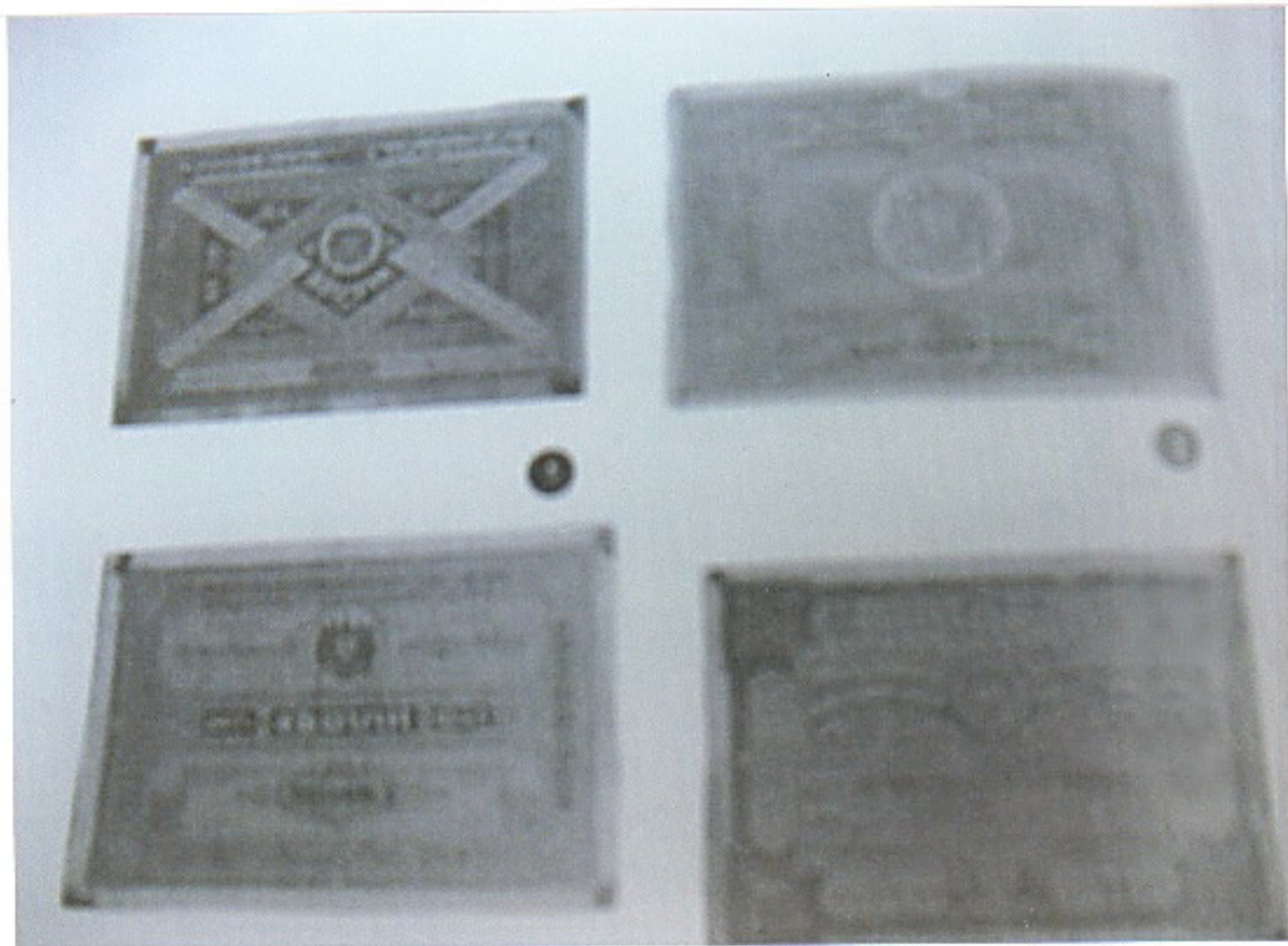
In Thailand, the origin of banknotes or paper money started in B.E.2396 (1853 A.D.),in the reign of King Rama IV because the Fuang, Saleung and Baht (or Tical),which people had been using were being faked by opium dealers by mixing copper and lead. A royal command was therefore issued to make Mai Kradat, or the first paper money to be issued for use in the currency system, to replace the coins. When anyone had Mai Kradat, it could be exchanged at the army barracks in the Grand Palace.



Att Kradat

King RamaV commanded the production of one more type of paper money to be used in the currency system in B.E. 2417 (1874 A.D.),called Att Kradat. It was introduced to make up for the

shortage of small denominations caused by gambling den owners talking business while the Government finally canceled the use of Att Kradat.



The Promissory Notes

Besides paper money specially produced for economic use, banknotes were also used. They were promissory notes, which foreign commercial banks, like the Hong Kong Bank and Shanghai Bank Ltd., the Chartered banks of India Australia and China and Banque Indochine, received permission to use to repay debts between the bank and its costumers, though this was not strictly allowed by law. This semi-legal situation meant that people were not keen to use banknotes for the repayment of debts. The circulation of banknotes thus became rather tight.

“Banknotes” have had a role in the money system of Thailand in accordance with the Siam Bank Act, Rattanakosin Era 121(B.E.2445 [1902 A.D.], which established banknotes as a medium of economic exchange. The production of banknotes in the reign of Kings Rama V and did not include the printing of the monarch’s picture on the notes. This stemmed from the fact that the country was under an absolute monarchy system and the king was the owner of the life of all the people. Thus the printing of the king’s image on a banknote was not deemed appropriate, until democratic political ideas from the West began to infiltrate into Thailand. This caused a change in the nation’s administration on B.E. 2475(1932 A.D.), which affected the previous value held about the monarchial institution, which was no longer considered the owner of life as in the past. Even so, the Constitution provided for the king to hold a place superior to the law of the land, and that no one would be allowed to infringe upon his status. However, the new values mentioned affected the design of banknotes issued after the change in the administration. The third series of banknotes orders for printing from Thomas de la rue Co.,Ltd., of England were issued on 22nd June , B.E.2477 (1934 A.D.). The face of the banknotes had a picture of King Rama VII. The reverse contained a naturalistic picture and important places in Thailand. These notes were of various denominations, the style of which were the origin of the ones we have today.