
Seals and Sealings of Pataliputra (From the Maurya Period up to the Gupta Period)

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Abstract: *In the pocket of Patna plenty of types of archaeological remnants are found, wherein seals and sealings keep important place. They are ranging from the Maurya period up to the later Guptas. Though, several of these artifacts are so valuable in the historical gallery; notwithstanding, very few were highlighted and used in Indian history. Apart from these plenty of other seals and sealings also keep good historical importance, nevertheless hardly any attempt has been made to analyse them thoroughly, and the importance of these artifacts was left aside. The theme of the article is to analyse those seals and sealings thoroughly with all aspects, which have been found from various sites of Patna; so that as much as possible information regarding history could be extracted. The main objective of the paper is to study inscriptions and devices found on them; and methodology to strike seals and sealings has been left silent.*

Keywords: Pataliputra, Symbols, Seals and Sealings, Terracotta Matrix, Buddhism, Dharmachakra, Inscription

Introduction

In the hoard of archaeological findings, seals and sealings secure distinct status. It generally relates to the commercial and administrative activities of any society, culture, and territory; however, religious seals are also found. Many seals and sealings have been found at some archaeological sites in Patna, which are generally made of terracotta and circular and oval-shaped. These belong to various periods ranging from the third century BC up to the sixth century AD. Several of them bear inscriptions and symbols; some have symbols but do not have legends, while some have legends but do not have symbols (Altekar & Mishra 1959: 103). These can be divided into two types, inscribed and uninscribed. Inscribed seals can also be classified into two types based on their physical condition, readable, blurred and indistinct. These were made off terracotta commonly; therefore, the majority of them became blurred entirely or partially over time; and symbols and legend were transformed indistinct. The area of inscribed seal and sealing is divided into two parts generally, where one or some time a pair of horizontal lines bifurcate them. The upper part consists of symbols of various kinds of animal figures, while the lower part bears legend (Altekar & Mishra 1959: 103). At Kumrahar, Spooner has found 20 seals, wherein 9 are matrices. Finding 9

matrices out of 20 is unique and a thing to surprise; therefore, he says it is a most unusual percentage (ASIAR 1912-13: 79, 82-84). Altekar has recovered 1 seal and 50 sealings from this site (Altekar & Mishra 1959: 103). Sinha excavated four places at Patna, which were densely populated, and highly prosperous right from the fifth-sixth century BC to fifth century AD, but hardly any seal and sealing were recovered. It is pretty interesting that such material prosperous sites from the pre-Mauryan era to the Gupta era did not yield any seal and sealing. Alexander Cunningham has commented that numerous coins, gems, and seals are found annually in the bed of Ganga in front of Patna (Cunningham 1871: VII), and have also drawn figures of three such seals found in the Ganges, which is the quite bigger size (Cunningham 1882: Plate II).

Seals and sealings have been found in various sizes (from 0.3 X 0.38 inches to 3 X 3.5 inches). The shape is also different types, such as square, rectangular, oval, square/rectangular with round vertical axes, etc. A lot of seals and sealings are found blurred, therefore hard to identify symbols and legends; but many are found in good condition also, which consists with several kinds of signs such as Plan of a building, *dharmacakra* or Sun, tree, three-crescented hill, *nandīpada/triratna*, wheel, conch, flower coming out of a vase, spouted vessel, peacock, animal, *nandī* (bull), standing human figure, human-feet, *triśūla*, *swāstika*, other religious symbols, etc. Most of these symbols are also commonly found on punch-marked and copper cast coins, like – sun, *swāstika*, bull, peacock, three-crescented hill, etc. Some of the symbols are pretty uncommon and hard to find elsewhere, such as the sealing of the Kuṣāna period has a symbol of a square-shaped building with the legend *Saghasa* (Figure 1.1). Altekar's opinion on this sealing is that the plan of the monastery was approved by the council of monks before implementation, or Buddhist-*Samgha* used to circulate such kind of sealing as their monogram (Altekar & Mishra 1959: 38). Two sealing seems to have a symbol like human feet (Figure 2A.2 & 2B.4), which is left unidentified by excavators. Many such sealings have been reported at Basarh and Vaisali excavations. Bloch believes that such sealings have no connection with *Buddha-pada* but might be related to either *Viṣṇu-pada* or *padukas* of any Jain *tīrthankara* (ASIAR 1903-04: 105).

Spooner found an inscribed oval-shaped seal (1.12" X .75") of the first century BC, which contains a legend *Gopālasa* (Figure 3.D); and has symbols, viz., a *saṅkha* in the centre and different smaller symbols on four corners; the viz upper right has *triśūla* and wheel, and *swāstika* is on the lower right. Signs of the lower left and upper left are unidentified (ASIAR 1912-13: 82). This seal is unique because it resembles the size and shapes of the seals of later periods, and the popularity of it could be imagined by the fact that the seal of the government of India under the British period had a close resemblance with this seal (ASIAR 1912-13: 79). Another inscribed oval-shaped seal (3/4 by 5/8 inches) of the Gupta period has a legend *Chatrasya* has been found by him, which has been divided lengthwise into two halves comprised of four symbols *triśūla* (in the centre), wheel, *saṅkha* and *swāstika* (ASIAR 1912-13: 82). An oval piece, probably a seal of dark green glass with an indistinct letter in the oldest form of Brahmi in high relief, has been found at Kumrahar (Kuraishi 1931: 109). The period is not precise but

may belong to the Maurya-Sunga era. Another seal impression on glass, which is comprised of a legend *Devalakhitaśa* (Figure 3.A) (Sanskrit – *Devarakṣhitasya*) of the third century BC, is recovered from Bulandibagh (ASIAR 1926-27: 139). Altekar found an excellent sealing of Gupta period, which has on its upper part a tree or probably *boddhīvṛkṣa*, lower half contained the legend *Śrīārogyavihāre bhikṣusamghasya* (Figure 1.5) indicates that a monastery-cum-hospital functioned here. It probably would be the one among those monasteries where medical treatments used to provide, which Fa Hien described. Another important sealing that belongs to the Kuṣāna period has the plan of a building (probably a monastery), and a legend *Saghsa* (Figure 1.1) on the lower half is discovered by him (Altekar & Mishra 1959: 103). An important sealing of the Gupta era is inscribed with the legend *Tambolīkarmasya* (Figure 2A.10), which indicates the organisation of betel sellers of the period (Altekar & Mishra 1959: 104).

Seals and sealings found at Kumrahar indicate that it would be either a commercial zone or administrative area, but ample inscribed potsherds suggest it as a commercial zone. Seeing the high percentage of the matrix of seals (ASIAR 1912-13: 79) and sealing with the legend *tambolīkarmasya* (guild of betel sellers) support the above narration. Besides it, some seals and potsherds allude to the fact that the area was also a monastic settlement. The well-known seal of *Śrīārogyavihāre bhikṣhusamghasya* (Figure 1.5) altogether with other seals like *Śrī suapī brīhad vihāra bhikṣhu samghasya*, *brīhad vihāra bhikṣhu samghasya*, inscriptions on potsherds like, *ārogyavihāre*, *[Dha]nvantareh*, *[Śra]manyāh*, *Budhadeva[ā]layānī [mittam]* (Altekar & Mishra 1959: 104) justified the above statement. The structural findings of the site stamps that the nature of the settlement of Kumrahar was monastic. So, together with the matrix of seals, sealings, building architecture, etc. makes it clear that it was monastic-cum-commercial centre right from Ashoka's regime to the Gupta period. On the contrary, sites like Shah Kamal Road, Mahabirghat, Begum ki Haweli and Gulzaarbagh Government Press Playground neither produced any matrix of seals and sealings nor any inscribed objects; however, a lot of potsherd from all cultural strata have been recovered. So, the absence of the above materials alludes to these areas being residential in all periods.

For a thorough discussion, these seals and sealings have been classified into three periods:

Seals and sealings of Mauryan and pre-Mauryan Period

Seals and sealings of Post-Maurya Period

Seals and sealings of Gupta Period

Sealings of Maurya and Before Period

Though several seals and sealing are found from various city sites nevertheless, Mauryan and pre-Mauryan seal and sealing are found limited. Most excavated areas at Patna are rich in Mauryan materials, but the well-excavated site Kumrahar has limited Mauryan remains. Archaeological findings by Altekar and Mishra indicate that the site was inhabited during the third century BC; however, several brick structures were

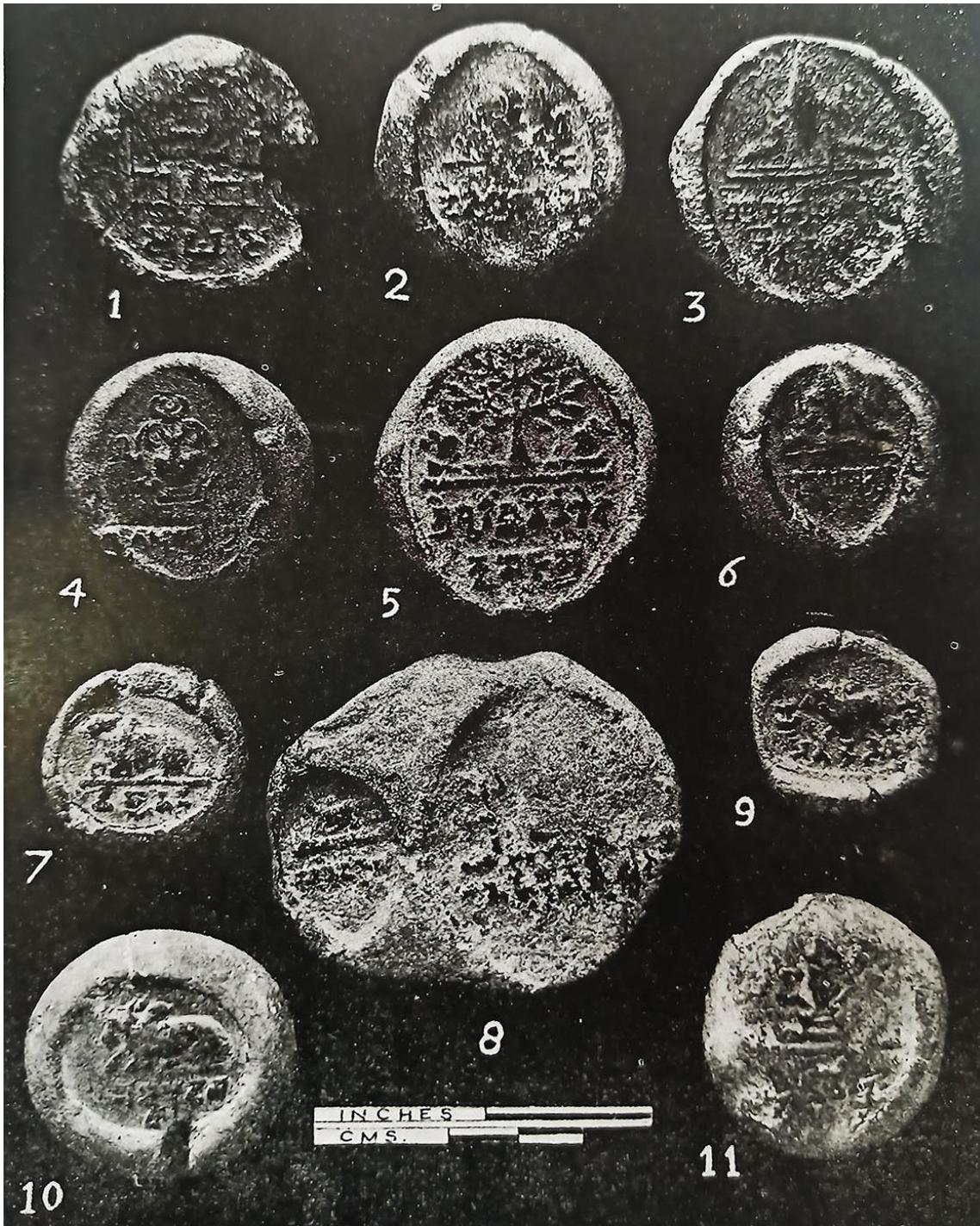


Figure 1: Inscribed Terracotta Sealings from Kumrahar (Courtesy: Altekar and Mishra 1951-1955)

found around the area claimed to Mauryan period by Mukharji, but lack of scientific excavations and dating method difficult to establish it. Sites like Shah Kamal Road, Mahabirghat, Begum ki Haweli, and Gulzaarbagh Government Press Playground are prosperous in Mauryan cultural deposits; notwithstanding, significantly fewer inscribed objects are reported, while seals and sealing are absent. The reason might be

the absence of horizontal excavation¹; however, there might be other reasons also. Magnificence in material remains such as abundant pottery remains, terracotta figures and figurines, etc. from all cultural strata of these sites indicate that these would be the prominent cultural zones of Pataliputra in all periods; and antiquities reported from here continued from the pre-Mauryan era up to Guptas, nevertheless, no any seal or sealing is found.² Such conditions lead to hypothesise that these areas would be actual residential zones; however, this hypothesis is based on slender evidence; therefore, the discussion will remain in the light of fresh evidence.



Figure 2a and b: Terracotta Sealings from Kumrahar (Courtesy: Altekar and Mishra 1951-55)

Seals and sealings of this period are found in different shapes, such as round, oval, square (rounded end on the vertical axes), rectangular (rounded end on the vertical axes), and are made of terracotta and glass. Their sizes are also varied. Cunningham has drawn the picture of three seals found in the bed of Ganga near Patna; but he has not given any detail, except drawing of those seals with captions 'seals found in the Ganges' (Figure 4) in his book "Report of a Tour in Bihar and Bengal in 1879-80 from Patna to Sunargaon" (Cunningham 1882: Pl. II). All three seals are inscribed, but two have a device only. Paleographically, the dates of these seals could be assigned to Maurya or pre-Maurya era. The first seal, approximately square-shaped (2.8") with rounded-ends on the vertical axes, has a legend *Naṇdaya* (Figure. 3.E) up, and a symbol (perhaps Buddhist) down under the letter 'Naṇ'. The second seal is oval-shaped (3.2" X 2.5") has a legend as well as symbols also (Figure. 3.F). The upper part of this seal has a symbol *naṇḍīpada* or *trīratna* whereas the lower part has a legend *Agapalaśa* and between *naṇḍī/trīrantna* and legend is another symbol which is perhaps a plough. Seal third (Figure 3.G) is rectangular-shaped with vertical, rounded ends (3" X 3.5") and has a legend *Sēlaya* (Sanskrit - *Śailaka*) (Chandra 1987: 872).

Some inscribed sealing of this period is reported from Kumrahar. A round and flat terracotta matrix (diameter 1/2") of the third century BC with legend *Silakasa* 'seal of *Silaka*' (read by R. D. Banerjee) has been reported (ASIAR 1912-13: 82-83).³ Another notable Matrix of clay has a legend of early Brahmi Characters in three lines: *Dīghavata*,

Palama Sa[m]ghasa, which Spooner reads as “of the *Palama* – congregation of *Dīghavata* or *Dīrghavata*.”⁴ But this reading seems doubtful. Here, *Dīghavata* (Sanskrit – *Dīrghavata*) means oblong or it might be the name of a person or organisation of Buddhist monks, *palama* might be a Māgadhī-Prākṛit form of *Parama* (Woolner 1917: 181) means – the ultimate or absolute or supreme, and *samghasa* – of the congregation. Thus, the translation would be “Seal of *Dīrghavata* or oblong - the supreme congregation.” So, there would be perhaps a prominent organisation of Buddhist monks whose name would be *Dīghavata* used to issue its seals; or there would be a big event where Buddhist monks were congregated on a considerable number in an elongated rectangle or oval shape; therefore, it received its name *Dīghavata Palama Saghasa* (Sanskrit - *Dīrghavata Parama Saṃgha*). This translation seems logical, as it is well-known that during Ashoka’s time, this city was transformed into the nucleus of Buddhist activities; therefore, gathering a lot of Buddhist monks would be a common phenomenon, and thus one among them would be entitled as such name.

Table 1: Inscribed Seals of the Maurya Period

SL. No.	Material	Symbol	Legend	Shape	Size
1.	Terracotta	No	<i>Silakasa</i>	Round & Flat	0.5”
2.	Glass	No	<i>Devalakhitasa</i> (Figure 3a)	Circular	0.5”
3.	Terracotta	No	<i>Dīghavata Palama Sa[m]ghasa</i>	Roughly circular	0.75”
4.	-	Buddhist Symbol	<i>Naṇḍaya/Yadanaṇ</i> (Figure 3e)	Square (rounded end on the vertical axes)	2.8”
5.	-	<i>Nandipada/Triratna and Plow with</i>	<i>Agapalaṣa</i> (Figure 3f)	Oval	3.2” x 2.5”
6.	-	No	<i>Sēlaya</i> (Sanskrit <i>Śailaka</i>) (Figure 3g)	Rectangular (rounded end on the vertical axes)	3” x 3.5”

Sources: Cunningham 1882, Spooner 1912-13, Ghosh 1926-27

Bulandibagh, which lies around half-km west from Kumrahar (Presently situated in Jai Mahavir Colony), also yielded Mauryan remains, and wherefrom the remains of well-known wooden defence wall, chariot wheel and stone capital of Maurya period are found. But only one sealing has been reported here (Figure 3A). This sealing is made up of glass (diameter ½”) bearing a legend *Devalakhitasa*, (seal of *Devarakṣhita*) in Brahmi characters of the third century BC (ASIAR 1926-27: 139) (Table 1). Other sealings or tokens made of glass (oval-shaped) have been recovered from Kumrahar. The legend on it is in high relief but indistinct and said to be the oldest form of Brahmi (Qureshi 1931: 109).

Seals and Sealings of Post-Maurya Period

Two seals and three sealings are found of this period, and all are from the site of Kumrahar. Spooner found a terracotta sealing having six impressions wherein five are the impression of the same seal (three are fairly complete form and two are in fragment condition). Impressions of these seals are oval (9/8” X 3/4”) have a legend in letters

reading *Gopālasa* (Figure 3.D) of first century BC. Four traceable devices are found, which are a *saṃkha* in the centre, *triśūla* and wheel in the upper right corner, and *swāstika* in the lower right corner. Other impressions on the same clay are round and smaller in size (5/8”) and have no legend, but a triangular symbol or letter is traceable in indistinct conditions. Spooner believes that it is not a true seal but an irregular fragment of terracotta, perhaps a potsherd (ASIAR 1912-13: 82). But it is hard to find seal impressions on pottery. Seeing the same seal impression on a single-sealing more than one place is unique, but it is probably due to some problems in the first impression and therefore was repeated again and again, or might be some other typical reason for it which is too hard to find out. It may also be possible that it would be a kind of raw material, which would have been used for testing the quality and clarity of the impression of the seal. The seal impression of two different authorities on a single-sealing of the Gupta period is found at Basarh on a large scale, representing the name of individuals. Most of them represent those persons who belong to the corporate world or commercial activities.

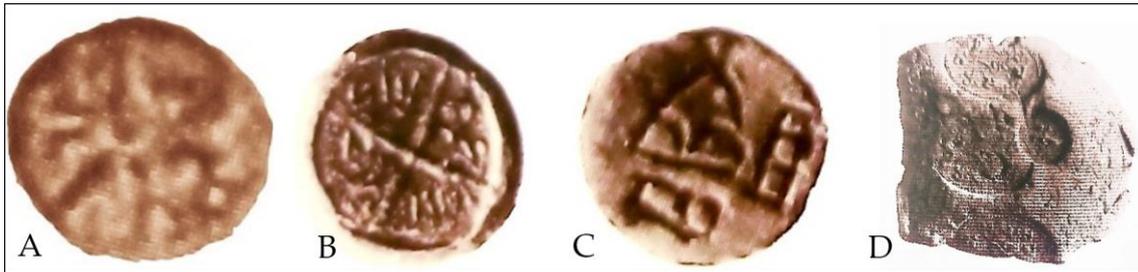


Figure 3: Terracotta Seals and Sealings from Kumrahar and Bulandibagh (Courtesy: (A) Ghosh 1926-27; (B, C & D) Spooner 1912-13)

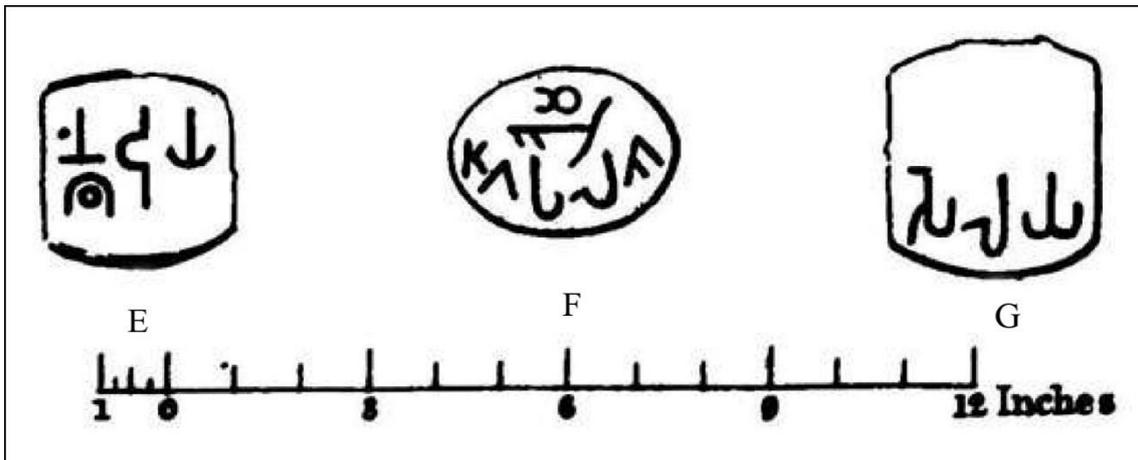


Figure 4: Seals found on the Bed of Ganges near Patna (Courtesy: Cunningham 1882)

Bloch says that “two or even more of the seals of private individuals are found in combinations with each other or with the seal of the guild of bankers, etc., of which evidently most of them were members. It looks as if during those days something like a modern chamber of commerce existed in upper India at some big trading centre, perhaps at Pataliputra” (ASIAR 1903-04: 104). If the multiple-seal impression

mentioned above is accepted as a sealing, and if Bloch's statement is also accepted; so, it can be said that the chamber of commerce existed during the first century BC in Pataliputra; and it was a sealing of members of this commercial council. B. P. Sinha believes that "the two impressions probably represented two sections of the institution. The letter with which the sealing had to be sent possibly concerned both of the sections" (Sinha & Roy 1969: 126). Such kind of sealing of the Gupta also has been found at Kumrahar (Figure 1.8), which indicates that the chamber of commerce, as Bloch believes, continued during the Gupta period.

Table 2: Inscribed Sealings of Post-Maurya Period

Sl. No.	Period	Symbol	Legend	Shape	Size
1.	150 BCE to 100 CE	broken	<i>Subhava(vā)sa (sā)</i> (Figure 2.A.8)	Oval	.6" X .3"
2.	150 BCE to 100 CE		<i>Buddharakhitasa</i>		
3.	100 CE to 300 CE	plan of building	<i>Saghasa</i> (Figure 1.1)	Oval (broken)	1.45" X 1.3"
4.	100 CE to 300 CE	no Legend	<i>Roha (i) ni (ni)</i> (Figure 2A.5)	Oval	.6" X .4"

Sources: Altekar and Mistra 1959, Kuraishi 1931

A clay sealing (Figure 2A.8) probably belongs to Sunga or Kanva period has four letters in a single line in fragment condition, which has been read as *Subhāva(vā)sa(śa)* (auspicious dwelling) (Altekar & Mishra 1959: 103). Another sealing belongs to AD 100 to 300 (Kuṣāna period), which is considered unique of its type because the upper half of the sealing has a 'plan of a building' and the lower half has a legend *Saghasa* (Figure 1.1). By this, it can conclude either the plan of the monastery was approved by the council of monks before implementation or Buddhist-*Samgha* used to circulate such kind of sealing as their monogram. Buddhist sacred books produce information that a monastery (vihara) was constructed under the direction of an overseer selected by the *Samgha* (Altekar & Mishra 1959: 103). Other clay sealings of the period have three letters in a single line with legend *Roha(i)ni(ni)* (Figure 2A.5) (Altekar & Mishra 1959: 103). It would be the name of a *Nakṣatra* or the name of a woman. Suppose this would be the name of a woman, then it indicates that during the commercial zenith of the period, women would also be participated in some kind of commercial activities and issued sealing.

A heavy globular token of baked clay was found with a faint impress of a signet. Legend on it consists of four letters, but too obscure to read, and has a device, which has been identified as akin to a Persian fire-alter motif. Such impressions are also found on some specific seals of Basarh (Kuraishi 1931: 109). The date of this baked clay has not been fixed. An oval-shaped seal of dark green glass bears an indistinct legend in relief is said to be the oldest form of Brahmi discovered from Kumrahar (Kuraishi 1931: 109). A matrix of baked clay with the legend *Buddharakṣitasa* (Sanskrit

Buddharakṣhitasya) (Table 2). The letters are said to be the most primitive form of the Brahmi (Kuraishi 1931: 109). However, it seems that this would be a post-Maurya period because the mixing of Sanskrit- Prakrit words is a characteristic feature of post-Maurya eras.

Seals and Sealings of Gupta Period

Many inscribed seals and sealings are found of the Gupta period, which could be classified into two kinds by their contents – religious and individual names. Most of them have an individual's name, while a few are related to Buddhism and Brahmanism. It is the point to notice that all the inscribed seals and sealings of the Gupta period have been found at Kumrahar only. Several inscribed seals sealings are found by Spooner here, wherein four inscribed sealing which has insignia of the monasteries at Saranath are also unearthed. One of these sealing has an uncompleted legend, reading – *Bṛihad-vihāra-bhikṣhu-saṁghasya* (seal of the community of monks on the great monastery of ...); another sealing has also engraved with the same legend, but this is better in reading - *Śrī-suapī-brīhad-vihāra-bhikṣhu-Saṁghasya*; however, in both cases, the name of the monastery is lost. These seals belong to the Gupta period and recovered from less than three feet under the ground (Kuraishi 1931: 109). Another sealing of its kind is also found at Kumrahar, which is a large oval-shaped (1.6" X 1.2") (Figure 1.3) has a *dharmacakra* in the centre and deer on each, and legends also in two-line, but have been blurred, and reverse of the sealing has thumb impressions which hint that it was moulded. One more sealing has the same symbols, but the legend is - *Sarvya Sambhūti* or (*Sukṛitī*) (Figure 1.6) (Altekar and Misra 1959: 104, 06). All these sealings, perhaps a religious sealing, represents the Buddhist faith. It also seems that there was a close resemblance between the monastery of Sarnath and the monastery of Pataliputra.

Some of the sealing of this period is unique of its kind, therefore are so valuable; like an inscription bearing the legend - *Śrī-ārōgyavihāre bhikṣhuSaṁghasya* (Seal of the monastic community in the sanatorium- monastery) (Figure 1.5); which establish that Buddhist monastery used to work as a hospital also, where diseased persons were cured by monks and nuns. Two inscribed potsherds of the period which is engraved with the legends *Ārogyavihare* and (*Dha*)*nvantareḥ* (Altekar and Misra 1959: 107) have been found from the same trench wherefrom the sealing *Śrī-ārōgyavihāre bhikṣhusaṁghasya* has been found. The inscription on sealing together with the two inscribed potsherds conclude that a well-flourished hospital-cum-monastery was running here; and also allude that the legend *Dhanvaṅtarī* was either the leading physician of the *Ārōgyaviahāra*, or it was a post of the head of the physician of the Sanatorium.

A distinct sealing of this period which has oval-shaped double impressions (1" X .7" & 1.75" X 1.35"), is found at Kumrahar. One impression has a humped-bull or *nāndi* on the upper half, and the other has three devices wherein the left seems to be a *triśūla*.⁵ Legends of both impressions are blurred. One such sealing has also been found from the pre-Gupta period from the same site and Vaisali (Sinha & Roy 1969: 113). Bloch

Table 3: Inscribed Sealings of the Gupta Period

Sl. No.	Period	Symbol	Legend	Shape	Size
1.	300 CE to 600 CE	Two recumbent deer flanking the wheel of law (the insignia of the monastery of Sarnath)	<i>Sri-suapi-brihad-vihara-bhikshu-Samghasya</i>	-	-
2.	300 CE to 600 CE	Two recumbent deer flanking the wheel of law (the insignia of the monastery of Sarnath)	<i>brihad-vihara-bhikshu-Samghasya</i>	-	-
3.	300 CE to 600 CE	<i>Boddhivriksha</i> , conch (either side)	line 1 – <i>Sri-arogyavihare bhikshuSamghasya</i> (Figure 1.5)	Oval	1.65" X 1.3"
4.	300 CE to 600 CE	An indistinct symbol	<i>Swaminaga</i> (Figure 2.A.3)	Oval	7" X 4"
5.	300 CE to 600 CE	Top- <i>Wheel</i> , Below- two conches (either side)	<i>Sarma</i> (Figure 1.11)	Oval	.55" X 4"
6.	300 CE to 600 CE	An indistinct symbol	<i>Bhagasi(m)hasya</i> (Figure 1.4)	Oval	1.25" X .9"
7.	300 CE to 600 CE	<i>a spouted vessel with a lid (centre)</i> , A conch on the left and a serpent on the right	<i>Tambolikarmsya</i> (Figure 2.A.10)	Oval	9" X 7"
8.	300 CE to 600 CE	<i>Dharmachakra</i> (centre), conch either side	<i>Amsumana</i> (Probably) (Figure 2.A.12)	Rough circular	.5" X .45"
9.	300 CE to 600 CE	<i>Peacock</i>	Indistinct (Figure 2.A.1)	Oval	.7" X .5"
10.	300 CE to 600 CE	<i>Dharmachakra</i>	<i>Devam...</i> (Figure 2.A.14)	Oval, broken	.7
11.	300 CE to 600 CE	<i>Dharmachakra</i>	<i>Ramaswami</i> (Figure 2.B.7)	Oval	1.05" X .8"
12.	300 CE to 600 CE	<i>Nandi</i>	<i>Vishunandi</i> (Figure 1.7)	Oval	.9" X .8"
13.	300 CE to 600 CE	<i>Nandi</i>	<i>Ishwarada(a)sa</i> (Figure 1.10)	Oval	1' X .85"
14.	300 CE to 600 CE	two impressions side by side – <i>Nandi (one side)</i> , three symbols (another side)	Indistinct legend on both sides (Figure 1.8)	Oval	1' X .7"; 1.75" X 1.35"
15.	300 CE to	<i>Dharmachakra</i> (centre),	<i>Sarvasya Sambhuti</i>	Oval	1.1" X

	600 CE	two indistinct animals (either side)	(Figure 1.6)		.8"	
16.	300 CE to 600 CE	<i>Dharmachakra</i>	<i>Disa.kari(i)ndra</i> (Figure 1.2)	Oval	1.3" X 1"	X
17.	300 CE to 600 CE	Indistinct symbol (probably Human-feet)	<i>Ba.dhara(?)</i> (Figure 2.A.2)	Oval	.65" X .5"	X
18.	300 CE to 600 CE	<i>Dharmachakra</i> (centre), deer (either side)	<i>Visvamisra</i> (Figure 2.A.13)	Oval	1.05" X .7"	X
19.	300 CE to 600 CE	Alter (?)/ perhaps human feet	<i>Tu.....</i> (Figure 2.B.4)	Oval	1.4" X .6"	X
20.	300 CE to 600 CE	Indistinct (probably a conch)	<i>Sidhathasa</i> (Figure 2.A.6)	Oval	.5" X .5"	X
21.	300 CE to 600 CE	<i>Dharmachakra</i> (centre), two indistinct symbols (either side)	<i>(Na)gadina</i> (Figure 2.A.4)	Circular	.7" X .6"	X
22.	300 CE to 600 CE	<i>Dharmachakra</i>	<i>Dharma</i> (Figure 2.B.1)	Oval, broken	1.3" X 1.25"	X
23.	300 CE to 600 CE	<i>Nandi</i> in front of a tree	<i>Bhadrasena</i> (Figure 1.9)	Circular	1.05" X .7"	X
24.	300 CE to 600 CE	-	<i>Bhamasyandi....</i> (Figure 2.B.3)	Oval	1.2" X .5"	X
25.	300 CE to 600 CE	<i>Dharmachakra</i>	<i>Su(sa)ttato</i>	Circular and broken	1"	X
Sources: Altekar and Mistra 1959, Kuraishi 1931						

says that sealings with two or more impressions represent the house of commerce whose main centre would be Pataliputra. There may be another angle for this sealing, as devices (*nañdi* and *triśūla*) on it is associated with Śiva so might be a religious token or represent the individual's belief in the Saiva sect; and if it was a sacred token, then there may be the possibility that in the Gupta period religious institutions used to work jointly also, and on any event released such types of tokens.

Another oval-shaped sealing bears legend *Ba..dhara(?)* (Figure 2.A.2) are found whose upper half has a device that seems to be the human feet, and this device is found commonly in sealings of Basarh (ASIAR 1903-04: 104) and Vaisali (Sinha & Roy 1969: 113).

Sealings bearing legends like *Chatrasya* (seal of *Chatra*), *Sawarasya* (seal of *Sawara*), *Dharmmapr(i)yasya* (seal of *Dharmmapr[i]ya*), *Śaśthīdāsa* "(seal of *Śaśthīdāsa*), *ma-pu-trasya-vi(va)*, *ghu-ra-te-ra*, (ASIAR 1912-13: 82-84) *Swāmīnāga*, *Sarmā*, *Bhāgasi(m)hasya*, *Rāmaswāmī*, *Vishnunandī*, *Aṃsumāna*, *Ishwarada(ā)sa*, (Altekar & Mishra 1959: 103-05), etc. are individual's sealings (Table 3). A sealing, which is probably belonged to a group of betel sellers, has been found. The sealing is divided into two parts; the upper

half having three devices, a spouted vessel with lid in the centre, a conch on the left, and a serpent on the right; and the lower part has a legend *Tambolīkarmasya*. Altekar says this belongs to a guild or trade union of betel sellers.⁶

Uninscribed Seals and Sealings

Like inscribed seals and sealing, these are also found in circular, oval, rectangular, parallelogram shapes, wherein circular and oval are common-most. Generally, uninscribed sealings were moulded, and the fingerprints of moulders are often found on the backside of sealings (Altekar & Mishra 1959:104). They were also generally engraved with the same symbols found on inscribed seals and sealings. Owing to the absence of any legend, the date such seals cannot be determined. Therefore, no date of these seals has been discussed and described together without any periodisation.

An uninscribed matrix (Figure 3.C) has been found at a depth of 18 feet by Spooner at Kumrahar, which is in the shape of a high cylinder of small diameter, with a flaring face whose area of the face is circular and 0.62-3 inch in diameter. It is comprised of "a three-arched chaitya with surmounting crescent, a taurine lying on its side underneath the chaitya, and very long narrow upright rectangle in the right field divided into three equal parts by two short cross line." He believes that the seal belongs to an extremely primitive age and fixes the date with credence to the third century BC at the latest (ASIAR, 1912-13: 83-84). Two matrices of a high pointed cone have been found here, whose area of faces are circular (1" & .75") have neither device nor legend; therefore, the nature of these objects is in question. The bigger has been found six feet two inches deep, and the smaller is eight feet six inches deep from the ground level. But at Kumrahar, the date of any material remains could not be determined based on the depth of antiquities because the soil of the site is often found disturbed; therefore, the Gupta antiquities were sometimes found eight to ten feet below the surface and sometimes just three feet below. A unique uninscribed seal is reported at Kumrahar, which comprises a complete stupa and a figure of Buddha, flanked by two Bodhisattva in the upper half of the seal, and a Buddhist creed is depicted in the lower half (Kuraishi 1931: 109). A circular sealing (Figure 2.B.6) 1.1" diameter has a standing bull on a pedestal on the upper half, and reverse of the sealing has been found the fingerprints, which indicates that the sealing was struck by mould technique. Some other unique uninscribed sealings are also needed to mention here; such as a sealing (engraved with a standing human figure in cross-legged posture (Figure 2.A.7), a sealing with wheel motif (Figure 2.A.9), a seal with the sun with radiating rays (Figure 2.B.5), a sealing of elephant figure in the whole surface (Figure 2.B.2), and a sealing with nine animals and a bird with a wheel in the centre. (Altekar and Misra 1959: 105).

Discussion

Altekar found 26 inscribed sealings from Kumrahar and 5 of them ends with 'sya' or 'sa' (like *Tambolīkarmasya*, *Bhāgasimhasya*, *saghasa*, *sidhāthasa*, etc.) and 16 are mainly the names of individuals or benedictory formulas⁷ which do not have any suffix. Three oval-shaped sealings have a *Dharmachakra* in the centre, and both sides obscure traces

of two animals (probably deer) (Altekar & Mishra 1959: 103-06). Two of them are approximately same in size (1.1" X .8" & 1.05 X .7") while third sealings is bigger (1.2" X 1.6"). Spooner also found four sealings at Kumrahar, where the *Sarnath insignia* was stamped (Kuraishi 1931: 109). These devices have symbols in the same style, size, and but legends on them varied, such as *Visvāmitra*⁸ (friend of the universe) and *Sarvaya sambhūti* or (*sukṛitī*), *Śrī suapī brīhadvihāra bhikṣhusaṁghasya*. Different legends on the same kind of sealings indicate that a single authority or organisation would have released these sealings on any auspicious occasion or grand festivals or events; these different legends would have been represented as keywords of the theme of events. It seems that sealings that have symbols of *Dharmachakra* would be religious and would be associated with any institutions or monasteries; because most of them have benedictory formulas rather than an individual's name. Sealings that have symbols of bull/*naṇḍi* represent the Saivite faith.

Another notable point is that, at the site of Kumrahar, Spooner recovered a total of 20 seals wherein 9 was matrix; while from the same location, Altekar found only one matrix and 50 sealings. It is a distinct phenomenon to find such differences in two different excavations from the same site. The reason might be digging two different areas of the same site. The area where Spooner dug was just above the remains of well-famed 80 pillared-hall have been found, while Altekar excavated nearby surroundings to this area. It may indicate that the site above to the pillared hall or where more matrices have been found might be a house of commerce or was a wholesale market area wherefrom commercial goods was stamped by various commercial organisations or individual traders.

Two sealings on glass belonging to the Mauryan era are unearthed from Kumrahar and Bulandibagh. Those days glass would undoubtedly be a costly and exported item, and if these glass sealing had been struck here, it could be concluded that glass was used to export in Pataliputra to strike sealings. It might be slender evidence that glasswork would flourish here in Mauryan time. Some other objects made of glass have also been reported, but including sealings, all these objects have a travelling nature; therefore, reaching certain conclusions will be a kind of hurry in the absence of solid evidence.

Conclusion

Inscribed seals and sealings of Patna are quite worthwhile, which provide valuable information to recreate the history of Pataliputra, but these have their limitation also. The nature of these objects, consisting of either one or a few words, decreases their historical value, particularly if they inscribe with an individual's name, as in the case of seals and sealings found at Patna. Therefore, most of the inscribed seals found here remain inactive. Even so, much information on historical values might be extracted from them. Some inscribed sealings representing community names are so worthwhile not only for Patna but also in the Indian perspective. A rare sealing engraved with the legend *Śrī-ārogyavihāre bhikṣhusaṁghasya* (Seal of the monastic community in the sanatorium- monastery) informs us that a hospital-cum-monastery regulated in the

Gupta period is one of the earliest epigraphic evidence of the hospital in India. Some other sealings, which have legends like *Dīghavata palama saghasa*, *Saghasa*, *Śrī suapi brīhadvihāra bhikṣhusaṅghasya*; other uninscribed or indistinct sealings have device-related to Buddhist faith; and inscribed potsherds of the same site like, *ārōgyavihāre and [Dha]nvantarēh*, *[Śra]manyāḥ*, *Budhadeva[ā]llayāni [mittam]* render Kumrahar as a monastic area. Monastic structures, which have been found during excavations justifies the above statement. These sealings and inscribed potsherds authenticate literary sources that Pataliputra, from the Maurya period to the Gupta period, was a busy harbour of Buddhist religion; while devices such as *triśūla*, *naṇḍi* and *swāstika*, *saṅkha* and Human feet on other seals and sealings might represent that Brahmanic cult equally popular in this legendary city. Finding a large number of the Guptan terracotta matrix and sealings at Kumrahar indicate that it was a commercial zone also; and the sealing with the legend *Tambolīkarmasya* tells that commercial guilds were also active; whereas sites like Mahavirghat, Begum-ki-Haweli, Gulzarbagh Press Playground, and Shah Kamal road do not yield any seal or sealing and would be residential areas.

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Notes

- ¹ *Shah Kamal Road, Mahabirghat, Begum ki Haweli and Gulzarbagh Government Press PlayGround are excavated by Sinha and Mishra in 1955-56. Due to the dense population of the Patna, they were unable to carry excavation on a larger area. So, for that, they selected four different sites of Patna, wherein two-place they took two-two trenches and the remaining two-place single trench. The lengths and breadths of these trenches were ranging from 18 feet to 51 feet, and from 8 feet to 15 feet respectively (Sinha & Narain 1970: 15).*
- ² *Excavation reports of these areas display the great material prosperity, where several superstructures are continued to overlap on each other. Like, the small area of Mahabirghat where two trenches (48' X 15' each one) yield brick structures along with 15 ring wells and 10 pits of 10 different sub-period. Antiquities of these sites also demonstrate the material affluence (Sinha & Narain 1970: 15).*
- ³ *Spooner provides a list of 20 seals and sealing which he recovered during his excavation between 1912-13. The number was however more than the list, some of them have been discussed by later authors in their works, but the photos all these seals are not available. A total 10 seals and sealings photos have been published in the report, but photos of these seals have not been correlated with the list of these seals. Other side, these photos published in ASIAR very much obscure. So, in the article only those photos have been taken which are well documented.*

- ⁴ Altekhar declares three indistinct symbols on a bigger impression, however, the left device seems to a trisula in the photo provided by him (Altekhar & Mishra 1959: 104).
- ⁵ By referring *Mitākṣharā* (*Vyavahārādhyāya* line 30) Altekhar explains a 'śrenī' consisted of persons of different castes following one profession; 'tambulikas' are mentioned as one type of 'śrenī' (Altekhar & Mishra 1959: 104).
- ⁶ Bloch defines such sealings have legend other than individual's name or official posts or titles as benedictory formula (ASIAR 1903-04: 105).
- ⁷ Here, 'Visvāmitra' might be a benedictory formula rather than an individual's name.

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