
Currency on Pern

by Whitney Ware

The main method of commerce on Pern is through barter, or the exchange of one type of goods or service for another. A family might barter a chicken or basket of eggs in exchange for a healer's services in reducing a child's fever, or a holder might purchase a new plow in exchange for several bushels of seed grain. However, there are times when this system is cumbersome and inconvenient: say, for example, you want to sell a riding horse, and your prospective buyer, a tailor, wants to trade you six gather-day gowns for your fine steed. You, however, have six sons and no daughters, and no doubt your wife would kill you if you came home with six ladies' dresses that are several sizes too small to fit her. If you trade your horse for the gowns, you'll likely have to spend several more hours trying to barter the gowns off for the items on your wife's shopping list, but no one else at the market today is interested in buying your horse, and it may be days or weeks before you find another interested purchaser. What are you going to do? King Solomon might suggest carving the horse in two, but this would be a definite inconvenience for the poor beast (as well as decrease its worth to the purchaser). So, obviously, in an economy dependent entirely on barter, a person having something to trade often has a real struggle ahead of them in finding another person who both wants what they have to trade, and has something acceptable to offer in exchange.

Luckily, Pern has its own currency, a welcome economic improvement over the barter system. The currency of Pern comes in two shapes -- the mark, and more rarely, promissory notes.



THE MARK

The mark, in all of its differentia, functions as a medium of exchange. The owner of a commodity may sell it for its worth in marks, which is likewise acceptable in payment for goods, thus avoiding the waste of much time and effort on behalf of both sides of a market stall. Every major Hold and Crafthall mints their own marks from molds provided them by the Smithcraft, and operated by the local smith. The coins are minted out of alloys of precious and base metals, primarily lead, copper, silver, and, for the 5 and 10 mark coins, gold. While each major Hold and Crafthall mint their own marks, there is a set standardization of sizes, weights, and values for each determination of coin. The actual value of a mark is fluid, depending on the current state of the local market and harvest (as a rule, a mark will buy more in the autumn, when fields are being harvested and prices are low, than it will in the winter and spring, when fresh foodstuffs are more rare). Inflation of the mark's immediate value is

held in check by the agreement of the mark's worth among the holds and crafts. The mark comes in several different denominations:

- 1/32 mark (a bit or bitmark)
- 1/16 mark (a two-bit mark)
- 1/8 mark (an eighth-mark)
- 1/4 mark (a quartermark)
- 1/2 mark (a half-mark)
- 1, 2, 5, & 10 marks

Each mark carries the badge of the hold or crafthall of its origin on one side, and the number denoting its specific denomination on the other. The worth of a coin can be told by either a horizontal line above or below the number, meaning that it is worth less or more than one mark, respectively. As most marks are the same size, color, and weight, both a buyer and seller should carefully inspect their marks to ensure that they are not mistaking a half-mark for a two-mark piece. Note: Yes, we know that the [Dragonlover's Guide to Pern](#) says that marks are made from wood; however, with the development of mineral resources on the Southern Continent, Kadanzer's Pern has moved to the more forgery-resistant metal coins.



PROMISSORY NOTES

Promissory notes are rarely used, and only by Mastercraftsmen, Craftsmasters, Lord Holders, or minor holders of great rank and reputation. Promissory notes are basically IOU's, written on the individual's personal stationery, and signed with both their individual signature and often a signet ring as well. They are more convenient to transport over long distances than, say, a wagonful of 10-mark coins, but more risky for the receiver to accept, in case the payer's credit turns out to be no good, or the paper turns out to be a forgery!. Rank alone is not a guarantee of value; a lord known (or rumored!) to be in a poor financial situation might find that traders will not accept his paper. Anyone caught forging a note will be handed over to the nearest Lord Holder for severe punishment; any Lord with sense knows that such forgery threatens the entire economic base of all the Holds and will deal with perpetrators as such.