

ORIENTAL**NUMISMATIC****SOCIETY***Secretary General*

Mr. M. R. Broome

Regional Secretaries

General Section:

Mr. C. M. Webdale

Newsletter Editor

Dr. M. B. Mitchiner

Europe:

Dr. H. J. van der Wiel

UK. and Eire:

Mr. K. W. Wiggins

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North America:

Mr. P. D. Hogan

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Members News

Mr. F. Gurnet of Waterloo (Belgium) died in November after an illness of several months. He was an active member of the ONS, having graduated to Oriental Numismatics after several years interest in Parthian coinage. More recently he had been preparing a study of coinage struck by the Seljuqs of Rum. We are also sorry to note the death of Mr. Pratley, a long-standing member from Bushey Heath. Mr. K. Wiggins has a copy of Volume IV 'Catalogue of Coins in the Indian Museum Calcutta, ed. John Allan' dealing with Indian Native States (etc.). Any member interested in acquiring it please contact Mr. Wiggins.

ONS meetings: recent and forthcoming

Eighteen members attended an enjoyable meeting at St. James' Hall (London) on November 12th. They came from as far afield as Leeds, Brighton, Oxford and Holland. Thanks are due to Messrs. Spink and Sons for kindly donating a number of coins. These enabled a raffle to be held and the proceeds covered the cost of hiring the hall. It is proposed to hold another meeting at this hall on Saturday 11th. March 1978. Please note this date and confirm with Mr. Wiggins beforehand (St. James' Hall, Gloucester Terrace, London W2). Mr. Joseph Cribb will be giving a talk at the Royal Numismatic Society (in the rooms of the Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W.1) on Tuesday May 16th. 1978 commencing at 5.30 pm. Its title is 'Precious metal currencies in China'. Members of the ONS will be welcome as guests and it is proposed to gather for supper afterwards. Please contact Mr. Cribb if you would like to come.

More forgeries

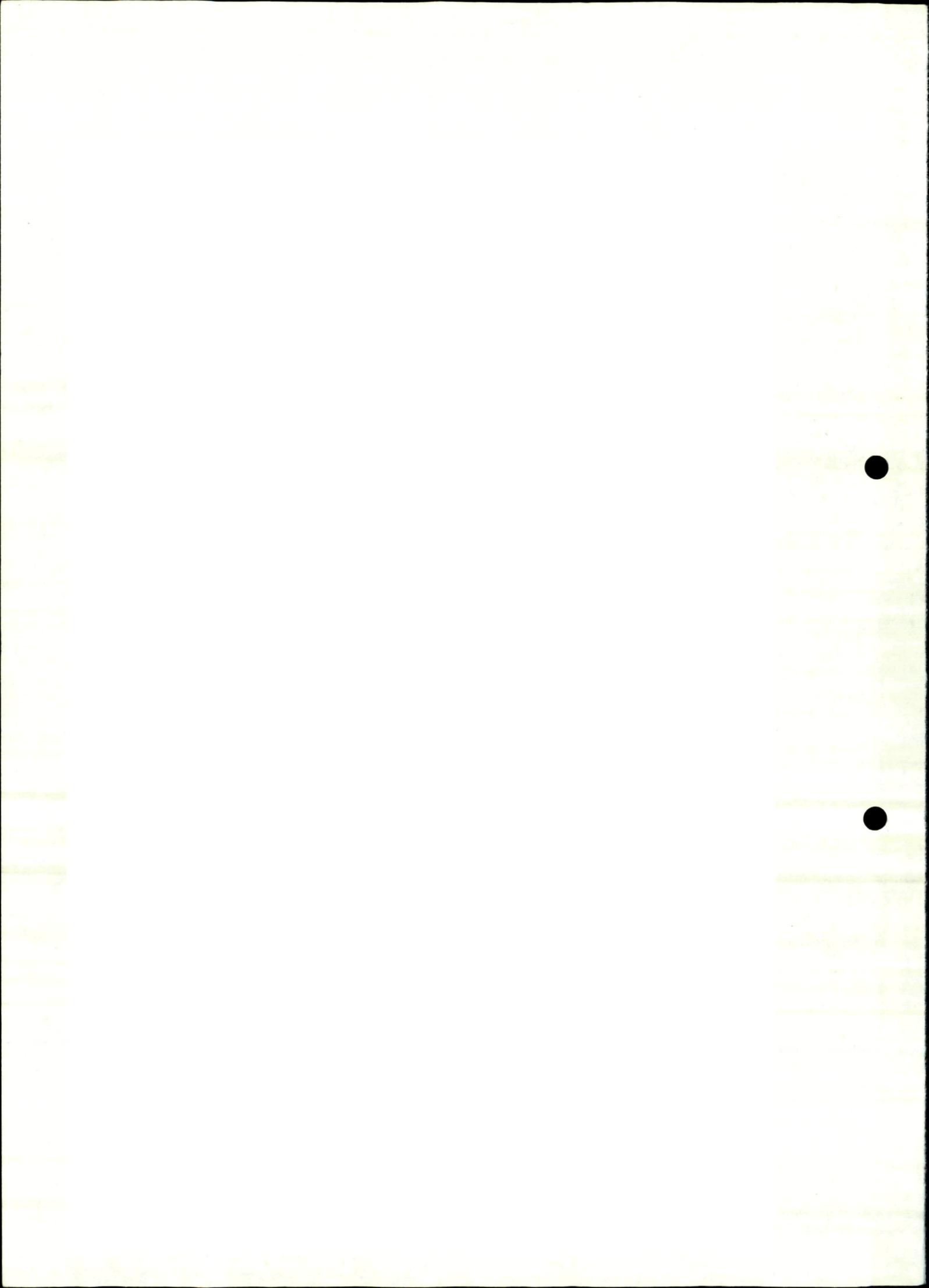
A number of forged imitations of Dutch coins struck in Ceylon have recently been circulating in London. These include the Colombo copper Doit of 1780 ! (its issue was only authorised in 1789) and related issues from Colombo and Galle, plus the 4¾ stiver bars of Colombo (lacking C above the VOC). These appear to have been cast but normally have a blackened surface, having apparently been heated in order to age them and hide casting flaws.

Scientific Research Committee of the Royal Numismatic Society

The Council of the Royal Numismatic Society (c/o Dept. of Coins and Medals, British Museum, London WC1) has recently formed a Scientific Research Committee whose main objectives are to promote research in all branches of numismatics and to liaise with other numismatists, scientists and institutions engaged in the study of alloys and metrology of coinage. In order to collect information about numismatic projects of a scientific nature which have recently been completed, are in progress, or are being actively planned, a questionnaire has recently been sent to those people who are known to be active in this kind of research. The answers to this questionnaire will enable the Scientific Research Committee to prepare an index of those working in the field which will be available for consultation by scholars who are seeking technical information about coins. In order to make the information in this index as complete as possible those readers of this newsletter who are applying scientific techniques to the study of coinage, but who have not received a copy of the questionnaire, are urged to write to the above address. The questionnaire is quite brief but the information provided by the replies is likely to be of mutual benefit.

Note from the Secretary General

Members were advised in the June Newsletter of the Society's shortage of funds. We have now reached the position where we are unable to finance both the Newsletters and the Information Sheets until further funds come in. We shall therefore be concentrating on the Newsletters for the time being. Many subscriptions fall due on January 1st. If this is so in your case please do not wait to be reminded but send your subscription to your regional secretary now. Donations are always welcome too.



Two interesting overstruck coins of Taxila

by Robert Tye

The first of the two coins I wish to describe is a copper piece showing the arched caitya with crescent, of the same type as BMC Pl. XXXIV no. 12: Mitchiner 573. The reverse of the piece, however, bears three punchmarks, apparently added later than the original design. Although the punches are beautifully engraved and very much in the style of Mauryan silver Karshapana punches, exactly similar motifs do not appear in that series.

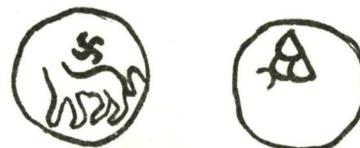
I should be most interested to receive the opinions of any other members as to the origin of the piece. My only explanation is that it was an old copper used as a trial piece for the punches, which had been produced by either an official mint or for counterfeiting, but were never used. The fact that the punches are in pristine condition supports this idea to a limited extent.

AE Circular Quarter Karshapana (?): weight 2.4 gm
Obv.: Caitya
Rev.: Symbols



The second coin is less mysterious, but perhaps adds a new fragment of chronological evidence. On the obverse side it bears a Lion and Swastika, being catalogued as Mitchiner 558. The reverse shows a three arched hill with crescent, but the design, to my eye, appears to have been overstruck at a later date, and to be one with the overstrikes on Mitchiner 572. If I am correct in this observation, then Mitchiner type 572 must precede type 558 and not vice versa as is given in "Indo-Greek and Indo-Scythian Coinage".

AE Circular Quarter Karshapana (?): weight 3.0 gm
Obv.: Lion with swastika above (taurine symbol in front not visible)
Rev.: Caitya of 3 arches: overstramped later



(Mr. Tye has shown me the coin and I would agree that the Caitya type was struck after the Lion type: M. B. Mitchiner)

The last Native Coinage of the Maldive Islands

by Raf van Laere

In Moslem Numismatics one sometimes has the opportunity of doing some numismatic 'field-work' which has become virtually impossible in other branches of Numismatics. During a short stay on the Maldive Islands during September 1977 we had the opportunity of being introduced to one of the direct descendants of the last Mint-master of the Maldives. During our talk some interesting remarks about the last minting on the Maldives were made.

The last mint-master, Sikka Husain Takha, died about 50 years ago at the age of 96 years. Together with his brother Sikka Ali Manikufaan and their respective families, he lived in the house called Sikka, or, as we should say, The Mint. Originally the family were smiths coming from Hulu Meedu in the Asdhoo-atoll.

The first minting by their hand was that for Mohammad Imad al-din Iskandar (AH 1250 - 1300). During his reign the bodu or big (2) Lari coins were made in the traditional way. The flan of these coins was made by pouring the mint-metal into sepia moulds. Afterwards they were sometimes adjusted. These coins were made only during the years 1294 and 1298 AH. Both years copper and bronze were used in minting. The smaller 1 Lari and ½ (koda) Lari were made differently, since they were manufactured out of sheet metal.

Since coinage was not well planned in advance and since copper had to be imported from Ceylon or Calcutta, the minters were sometimes forced to use other metals than copper and bronze, metals such as nickel alloys (called "white copper" by the Maldivians and attested, for instance, for the year 1298, a year with an extremely high output of coins). Coining was a matter of complete confidence and the mint-master was in no way submitted to any Government control. The Treasurer gave the metal: copper, tin, nickel, or, in times of scarcity, even silver. Whenever the Treasury needed some coins the Treasurer sent some men to the mint to fetch as much coin as was needed. These coins were neither counted nor weighed but taken by measure. So the minters could, in times of need, make smaller and lighter coins without causing any change in their value.

During the last native minting in AH 1318 some more sophisticated procedures were introduced. Coin flans were all punched off a well prepared sheet of metal. In the mint, a large room decorated with white cloth, the five minters, all members of the family, worked under the supervision of Husain Takha who also designed and engraved the dies. The novelty introduced was that all five minters sat around the fly-wheel of an old engine. In the five holes of the fly-wheel five steel dies were fixed while the top dies were made out of phosphor-bronze. Later, this fly-wheel was divided between the inheritors of Husain Takha, and parts of it still serve as anvils. This system permitted the production of very well finished coins which more than once gave the impression of having been machine struck.

Mohammad Shams al-Din Iskandar (AH 1322 - 1353) had his coins designed by Husain Takha, but the coins themselves were struck in Birmingham.

Nowadays the grandchildren of Sikka Husain Takha have taken up their ancestral profession: they are nearly all smiths in the capital, Malé.

Recent Publications

Papers

- Amjad Ali*, Copper coins of Bahiri rulers, *Numismatic Digest (Bombay)*, li, June 1977, 73
- Ibrahim and Cevriye Artuk*, Birinci Mahmud'un Sikkelerine Kisave toplu bir bakis, *Koleksiyon*, II 3, pp. 4-7
(ed. Erdogan Atak, Babiali Cad., Tasvire Han, 14-15, Cagaloglu, Istanbul)
- M. R. Broome*, "Tell Laurus" identified, *Spink's Numismatic Circular* LXXXV, 12, Dec. 1977, 543
- Nadir A. R. Dafter*, The medallion of Caliph Al-Mutawakkil, *Numismatic Chronicle* 1977, 170-1
- K. Gabrisch*, Six unrecorded dates of the Tibetan 50 Tam notes, *SNC LXXXV* 12, 544
- J. Gandhi*, Unusual Western Kshatrpa and Traikutaka coins, *Numismatic Digest (Bombay)* li, June 1977, 19
- P. L. Gupta*, Coins of the Arjunayanas, *Numismatic Digest (Bombay)* li, June 1977, 14
- P. L. Gupta*, Notes on some new or rare South-western mints of the later Mughals, *ibid.*, 43
- G. Hennequin*, Archéologie, Numismatique et imitations monétaires, *Bull. de la Soc. Franc. de Numismatique* 32, 8, Oct. 1977
- W. Husch and H. Wilski*, Ottoman copper coins of the Caucasus, *SNC LXXXV*, 11, Nov. 1977, 492
- A. Kazmarczyk, R. E. M. Hedges and Helen Brown*, On the occurrence of mercury coated dirhems, *Numismatic Chronicle* 1977, 162-70
- Samuel Lachman*, A hoard of Medins, *SNC LXXXV*, 10, Oct. 1977, 423
- Samuel Lachman*, A hoard of Medins (contd.), *ibid.*, Nov. 1977, 482
- Samuel Lachman*, The changes of Ottoman silver coinage in the reign of Sultan Mustafa II (1106-1115 H), *NI Bull*, Oct. '77, 309
- K. M. MacKenzie*, An Ottoman countermark on a Maria Theresa Thaler, *SNC LXXXV*, 10, Oct 1977, 429
- K. K. Maheshwari*, Some interesting coins from Andhra Pradesh, *Numismatic Digest (Bombay)* li, June 1977, 1
- K. K. Maheshwari*, Some interesting and rare Mughal coins, *ibid.*, 39
- M. B. Mitchiner*, A lead coin of the Sassanian Emperor Narses, *Numismatic Chronicle* 1977, 161 - 2
- K. Munzel*, Dirhems des Rum-Seldschuken Kai-Ka'us II aus dem Jahre 658 AH, *Jahrbuch fur Numismatik und Geldgeschichte*, XXVI, 1976, 107 - 113
- F. Pridmore*, British Indian Coinage, *SNC LXXXV*, 10, Oct 1977, 418
- P. Snartt*, The rarity of East India Company coins (contd.), *Seaby's C & M Bull.*, Nov. 1977, 391 - 394
- R. K. Sethi*, A seal of Rao Gopal Singh Chandrawat of Rampura, *Numismatic Digest (Bombay)*, li, 51
- S. L. Sisodia*, Mughal Pagodas and Fanams, *ibid.*, 58
- H. Wilski*, An unknown coin with an unknown countermark, *Geldgeschichte Nachrichten* XII, Sept. 1977
- Numismatic Digest* (Ed. Dr. P. L. Gupta), Numismatic Society of Bombay, 317 Neelam, 108 Worli Sea Face Road
Bombay 400 018

Books

- Michael Mitchiner*, Oriental coins and their values: The World of Islam (cfr. Oct. N/L). This book is now available.
- Jem Sultan*, Coins of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic: 2 vols - 487 pp (vol. I) + 373 pl (vol. 2): 95 dollars
obtainable from Numismata Orientalia, PO Box 212, Tenafly NJ. 07670
- J. M. Sanchez-Gison*, Monedas de Maruecus, Tome I, Dinastia Alautia: ptas 450. Obtainable from the author.