

ORIENTAL NUMISMATIC SOCIETY

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Members News

Mr. van Helvert (583) has amended his interests to Arabic coins. Mr. West (524) wishes to exchange information and coins of the "Bull and Horseman" sereis. Mr. Robert Tye will be travelling to India during the course of this year and hopes to meet ONS members while there. While away he can be contacted through an address in England: Mr. N. Rhodes has spare copies of JASB numismatic supplement XLV and JNSI XIV (1952); anyone interested please contact him.

March meeting in London

Members are reminded that a meeting has been arranged for 2.30 pm on Saturday 11th. March at St. James' Hall, 6 Gloucester Terrace, London W.2 (adjacent to Lancaster Gate Tube station). It has been suggested that to aid ONS funds an auction of members' duplicates could be held. If any members have an item for the auction they are asked to enclose it in a paper envelope clearly marked with a) their name, b) brief description of the coin and c) reserve price. It is proposed to keep 10% of the price realised for Society funds. Any offers of coins which may be auctioned entirely for the benefit of the Society would be welcome.

Treasurer

Mr. Vic Brown, ONS treasurer, advises that he is changing his place of business and that all future correspondence should, for the time being, be addressed to him at . The UK account of the ONS will remain at Barclay's Bank, Market Place, Swaffham. Please note also that the Society's GIRO account in the Netherlands is now Post Giro, ONS, GOUDA, Netherlands, account number 2903327. For members who pay their ONS subscriptions in dollars the rate is henceforth SIX dollars per annum with the first year's subscription and joining fee set at eight dollars.

United States

Mr. Pat Hogan, the ONS secretary for North America has now left the Florida sunshine and returned to his old address in Iowa:

Other communications

Dr. M. L. Tarrizzo writes in reply to the item on "Ottoman Zinc coins" in ONS N/L no. 51. - I do not have any information on zinc coins of this type but wonder whether these "coins" are not in the category of similar tin reproductions of coins which are frequently used as ornaments, for collars, bracelets etc. in North African and Arab countries. Such copies are often silver- or gold-plated and very often show traces of having been mounted. The copies I am referring to are usually much lighter and thinner than the original coins, but this consideration would tend to differentiate them from those in zinc reported by Mr. Wilski.

Dr. Westphal writes concerning East Berlin that the collection of 30, 000 coins has now been returned intact from Russia to the Munzcabine in the Stadtmuseen. Virtually nothing has been added to the Islamic section since Nutzels time. A handwritten draft for Nutzels Vol. III is present dealing with coins of lesser Islamic dynasties. There is also a hoard of over 10, 000 coins found in Babylon about 1900. This has been partially published by Mrs. Stepkove of Prague and by Dr. Simon of Berlin (the Sassanian section) in Acta Iranica, Textes et Memoires, Varia V, 1976 published by E. J. Brill of Leiden in 1977. Dr. Simon's doctoral thesis includes descriptions of 441 Sassanian coins from Peroz to Yezdegard III.

An 18 th. century coin of Chamba State?

by K. W. Wiggins

I am indebted to Mr. N. G. Rhodes for drawing my attention to the following passage in the Himachal Pradesh District Gazetteers - Chamba (1963) : - *There is no available evidence to show any distinct coinage system prevailing in the erstwhile Chamba State prior to the British conquest, except that an old coin, namely the chakli, was a copper coin and five chaklis were equivalent to one anna. Specimens of this coin are still preserved in the Bhuri Singh Museum at Chamba and sometimes a chakli may be found with a local resident also although as a unit of currency it has now lost its entity. On the chakli, Raja Sihal Varma caused to be struck a pierced ear, the symbol of a yogi, in honour of his guru Charpat Nath. Some later Rajas added the Vishnupad or the feet of Vishnu.*"

On reading the above passage I retrieved from my box of miscellaneous and unattributed Indian copper coins the piece illustrated here which seems to fit the rather vague description given. Valentine¹ first published some coins of Chamba State and these were all struck by Raja Charhat Singh and his successors in the 19 th. century. I am not aware of the publication of any earlier coins.

If, as the above passage states, coins were struck in Chamba at the time of Raja Sihala Varma they must be among the earliest issued by any Native State for Sihala Varma ruled from 920 to 940 AD, although these dates must be arbitrary. It also seems probable that succeeding Rajas issued copper coins with the pierced ear mark, which probably originally looked like : -  . The passage quoted gives the additional information that some Rajas added the Vishnupad (feet of Vishnu) to the design. This mark also occurs on coins attributed to Almora, a town in the Himalaya foothills, in the Kumaon district about 300 miles from Chamba. I do not know of any other place using such a mark on its coins.

The coin illustrated here shows on the obverse two distinct symbols :

- 1 at the top two foot marks
- 2 two curved marks with a dot.

These may well represent the pierced ears quoted. The reverse of the coin is badly double struck and probably stamped over an earlier coin. The only part that gives an intelligent reading is श्री राज *Sri Raj* at the bottom. This may refer to Raja Raj Singh who reigned from 1764 to 1794.



Weight 127 grains
Diam. 23 mm.

The weight of the coin compares favourably with the weight of 129 grains for an early copper of Charhat Singh (Valentine, page 225 no. 1). It would appear that the  marks, instead of standing for "Charhart - Chamba", as suggested by Valentine, are derived from the pierced ear symbols of earlier coins. It would be interesting to know if other members have similar coins in their collections.

1 W. H. Valentine, Copper coins of India, part II. The Panjab and contiguous Native States. Spink 1914.

A Javanese coin

The coin illustrated here belongs to a Dutch member of the ONS who obtained it many years ago while on military service in Indonesia. It is a copper specimen illustrated natural size, of unspecified weight. The series of pictorial Javanese coins has, as a whole, been fairly well known since Millies¹ published a selection in 1871. The earlier specimens are made of copper and can justifiably be attributed as currency pieces to the Javanese kingdom of Mataram (AD 1582 - 1755); as, for instance, the specimen recently published by Mitchiner² (no. 3964). But, in the course of time, the style and mode of manufacture declined and it may well be that the later, crudely cast brass pieces had more of a religious than a commercial significance. Some of these late pieces were listed in one of Scott Semans recent catalogues. The specimen shown here resembles one auctioned some decades ago by Schulman³ and bears a reverse inscription that could be in Javanese characters, though it might merely be un-intelligible pseudo-script. It would be appreciated if any members could make further suggestions as to the date, purpose and classification of these pieces and could, perhaps, present an interpretation of the 'inscription'.

- 1 H. C. Millies, *Les monnaies des Indigènes de l'Archipel Indien et de la Péninsule Malaie*, Le Haye 1871
- 2 M. B. Mitchiner, *The World of Islam*, London 1977
- 3 Schulman, Amsterdam. Coll. J. M. H. van Oosterlee, Dec. 1900



Some recent publications

Papers

- I. C. G. Campbell*, *Frontiers of numismatics: no. 4 part 1: The Indian Native States*. NI. Bull. Nov. 1977, 348
- A. Gunstone*, *Records of the Birmingham mint limited*. Spink's NC. Feb 1978, 71-3 (cfr. Cambodian issues)
- Rev. E. Loventhal*, *Coins of Tinnevely*, edited reprint of the Madras 1888 edn. NI. Bull. Jan. 1978
- K. M. MacKenzie*, *A Levante Taler used in the Ottoman Empire*, NI. Bull. Dec. 1977, 375
- M. B. Mitchiner*, *A group of broad repoussée silver coins struck by the Candra kings of East Bengal circa AD 1000*. Spink's NC. Jan. 1978, 8-9.
- F. Pridmore*, *East India Company: Nuzzer rupees*. Spink's NC. Feb. 1978, 67-8
- P. Snartt*, *The rarity of East India Company coins*. Seaby's C & M Bull. Feb 1978, 43-6.
- R. N. J. Wright*, *The silver dragon coinage of the Chinese provinces 1888 - 1949*. Numismatic Chronicle 1976
- R. N. J. Wright*, *China - The Yuan Shih-kai 20 and 10 cents dated 5 th. year*. Spink's NC. Jan 1978, 6-7

Books

- B. Chattopadhyaya*, *Coins and currency systems in South India circa AD 225 - 1300*, pp 368, E.J. Brill 1977 (E. J. Brill, Oude Rijn 33a, Leiden, Neths.: 41 Museum Street, London), price £ 16-50
- R. B. Whitehead*, *Catalogue of the Coins in the Lahore Museum. Vol II (Mughal Emperors) and Vol III (Nadir Shah & Durrani)* have been reprinted, case bound, by the Lahore Museum. Vol. II costs 90 Rs (9-10 doll) and Vol. III costs 60 Rs (6-07 dollars). Both are obtainable from the Museum only.

A Sino - Tibetan Countermark

by N. G. Rhodes

The accompanying drawing shows a rectangular countermark which has been stamped on a late Szechuan rupee. The coin was probably struck after the formation of the Republic of China in 1912 and before 1938, but continued to circulate until 1950. So the countermark could have been applied at any time between 1912 and 1950. The coin is now in a private collection in Nepal.

The individual characters of the countermark are clear : -

- 里 "Lam" in Tibetan (meaning uncertain)
 用 Yung = to use
 里 Li = A village, or the Chinese mile



Although the characters in the countermark are clear their meaning is far from clear. The first word looks like "Lam", using a circle over the "L" to indicate the "M" sound; a practice that is usually confined to words borrowed from Sanskrit; though this does not seem to be such a word. It is possible that it might be a phonetic rendering of *ལམ* (= a road), or even *ལམ་ལམ་* (= a Lama). Another possibility is that the "L" is not really an "L" at all but the Tibetan numeral "7"; but in that case the circle above would become even more mysterious.

A number of possible translations for this countermark would be: "For use in the village of Lam" although I have not found any village of that name on a map; "Use for 1 Li by road", "Use for 7 Li" or even "The Lama, Yung Li". Further suggestions as to the true meaning of the countermark are requested.

An unusual Tanka of Jalal-ud-din Fath Shah of Bengal

by S. L. Goron

Jalal-ud-din Fath Shah was a son of Nasir-ud-din Mahmud Shah I. He came to the throne in AH 881 and reigned until his assassination in AH 891 or 892. Several different types of Tanka of this ruler have been described in the past but not, to my knowledge, the present issue. This coin weighs 10.62 grams (163.9 grains), a typical weight for Bengal tankas of this period. The legends are unfortunately incomplete, being partly off the coin flan, and they are partly defaced by shroff marks. This tanka is unusual for several reasons: it has a central "cog-wheel" design on both obverse and reverse - a design I have not encountered before on a Bengal tanka -; the legends are inscribed in circular fashion around the central design; the Sultan, if my reading is correct, calls himself "Abu Al-Mujahid" rather than using the more normal title "Abu Al-Muzaffar", although the former title does appear on some coins of his father. A date is present but only the first two digits are legible, namely $\wedge \wedge$: the third digit bears a vertical stroke and could thus be \surd or \circ : hence the date 886 or 889. Perhaps it is 886 and the coin was issued in memory of his father (Abu Al-Mujahid) soon after Fath Shah's accession. No mint name is visible on the coin.

Legends:

Obverse

1 Inner circle

فتحشاه السلطان

(ابن محمود شاه السلطان)

2 Outer circle

.. ابو المجاهد الحسين ..



Reverse

Kalima and date



The reading of the inner circular legend appears satisfactory. Although part of it has been flattened by the shroff marks on the other side of the coin traces of the word Mahmud can be made out. The reading of the outer circular legend is much more difficult. Abu Al-Mujahid seems clear, albeit crudely written like the rest of the inscription on this side of the coin. The next word could be Al Hussain which occurs on other coins of Fath Shah. Nothing else is decipherable although one would expect to find the phrase Jalal al dunya wa al din if the legend were complete. The script on the reverse of the coin is much less crude. There is a word between the end of the Kalima and the date but it is defaced by shroff marks. It may have been a mint name.

It would be interesting to know whether the "cog-wheel" design had any religious or mystical significance. Members views on this would be welcome, as would any other information concerning legend, date and mint.

- 1 The Cambridge History of India (Vol. III) gives his death as occurring in AH 891. H. Nelson Wright (Cat. coins in the Indian Museum Calcutta vol. II) cites the year of his death as AH 892.