

ORIENTAL NUMISMATIC SOCIETY

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Members news

Dr. Hans Wilski writes *—How to clean nickel coins?* During the time of the Ottoman Empire nickel coins were minted under the reigns of the last four sultans, namely Abdul Aziz, Abdul Hamid II, Mohammed V and Mohammed VI. Hence it follows that the collector of Ottoman coins is sometimes confronted with the problem of how to clean these coins. Different experiments with chlorinated hydrocarbons and inorganic acids have not lead to satisfactory results. Does anybody know a good method to clean nickel coins? Mr. W. Warden jr. has a number of coins for disposal, mainly Sassanian and other classical specimens. Many ONS members who have frequented the premises of Messrs. B. A. Seaby in London will have met Herbert Seaby who founded the firm over half a century ago and continued working until shortly before his death in December 1979.

Information sheet no. 21 on Hafsid coins of Tunisia is now being circulated to members.

ONS meetings

London: a meeting is to be held on Saturday 8th. March at 2 pm in St. James' Hall, 6 Gloucester Terrace, London W. 2. Arrangements will be along the same lines as previous meetings held there and further details are available from Mr. Ken Wiggins.

Rotterdam: a special meeting will be held on Saturday 10th. May at the Museum voor Volkenkunde (Ethnological Museum), Willemskade 25, Rotterdam. The museum is open from 10.00 am., the meeting starts at 11.00 am. Special subjects: Tibetan and Nepalese coins, Dutch coinage in Ceylon. It is hoped that a good number of ONS members from Belgium, Germany, Great Britain and the Netherlands will be present. For further details please contact Dr. van der Wiel or Mr. Jan Lingen (back from India in March). By prior arrangement they may be able to arrange viewing of sections of the Museum's coin collection. Members may also contact their regional secretary in case group travel can be arranged. This is the 10th. anniversary of the founding of the ONS.

Forgeries of rare early Islamic Dinars

Pressure cast gold forgeries derived from two Omayyad dinars have recently been seen. They appear to emanate from the Middle East and have appeared in both London and California: apparently from a vendor who, having acquired two rare coins, wished to multiply his assets. These dinars belong to the rare issues that include a mint name in their marginal legend. One type bears the mint name Al Andalus and is dated AH 110, the other purports to have been minted in Ifriqiyah during AH 122.

When the 'California' and the 'London' specimens were examined side by side it was apparent that the 'California' coins were pressure casts made from the 'London' originals. A few minor scratches on the flan of each original coin and a minor striking flaw on one coin were all faithfully reproduced on the forgeries. The latter were good quality copies but some details, particularly of the Al Andalus specimen, deserve comment. The flan of this copy is flat on one side but slightly buckled (elevation and adjacent depression) on the other side and whereas the original coin has parts of a pellet border at the edge, the edge of the copy has lost this feature and is not so sharp. The coins are all now being examined at the forgeries bureau in London and have also visited the British Museum. Anyone being offered similar coins may be advised to contact one of these bodies

(Editor)

A coin of the Sultanate of Sambak?

by Ken Wiggins

I was interested to read the item by Raf van Laere in Newsletter 63 concerning some coins supposedly from the Sultanate of Sambak in Borneo, as I possess some similar pieces. The coins illustrated by Mr. van Laere appear to be retrograde strikings¹, whereas mine are conventional pieces, one of which is illustrated.

My past enquiries failed to discover the origin of these coins so I hesitate to suggest an attribution, but can only add a little further information concerning them.

The metal of my coins appears to be a mixture of brass and copper, or some similar alloy. The flans have obviously been cast and the edges afterwards smoothed with a file. On the obverse the letters in the square are plainly: HC+ / VOC / CHO. There are traces of an Arabic inscription outside the square. The square design resembles the obverse of the gold ducats of Holland, Zeeland, Utrecht and Westfrisia; which were struck for use in the Indies. My coins are all dated AH 1247. The Arabic inscription above this date on the reverse is puzzling: any denomination, if the coins are from Borneo, is likely to be a Kapang, a Stiver or a Doit, but none of these can be read in Arabic on the coins. Possibly it is the name of the place where the coins were issued. One of my pieces was found in Ceylon in 1946.

1 Erratum: the illustrations of Mr. van Laere's coins were unfortunately rendered the wrong way round; so they should appear the same as Mr. Wiggins' coin illustrated here.



A 1933 Sun Yat-sen Dollar die variety

by R. N. J. Wright

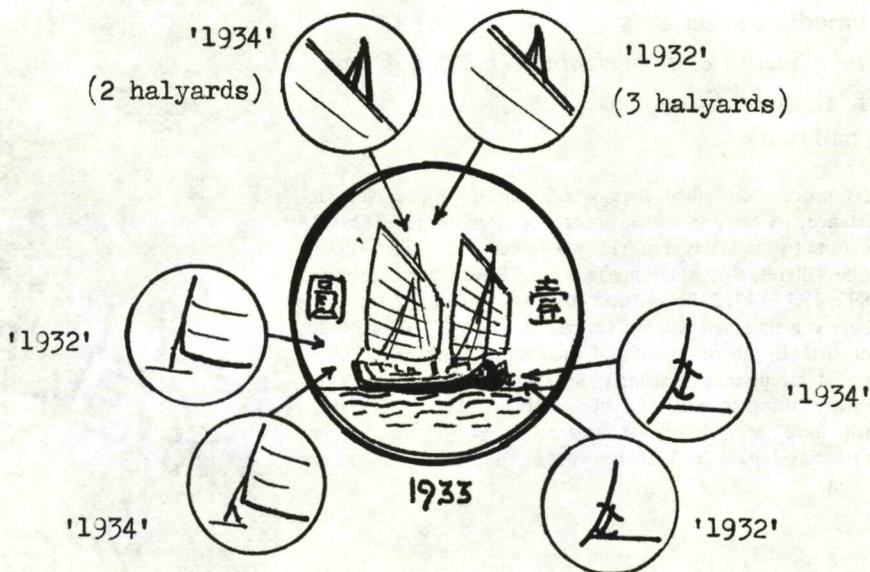
The Central Mint at Shanghai, first projected in 1921, was resurrected by the Nationalists to coin the new standard dollar for the country. The production of this, the Sun Yat-sen 'Junk' silver dollar dated 21st. Year (1932: Y. 344), was delayed and the coins were actually struck between March and June 1933. The design on the reverse of the coins was of a junk, with three birds flying overhead, symbolising Sun Yat-sen's three principles, and the Kuomintang 'sun' lurking in one corner. The first and only batch to enter circulation met with immediate criticism, as China was by then reeling both from the loss of Manchuria (the Three Eastern Provinces) and from the Japanese aggression at Shanghai, and the symbols were misinterpreted as being either the Three Eastern Provinces flying away while the sun set over China, or three bombers emanating from the 'rising sun' of Japan; or a combination of either. The issue was withdrawn and the design amended by removing the offending symbols, thus simplifying the design enormously. The next issue (Y. 345) dated 22nd. Year (1933) was struck in quantity between June 1933 and May 1934, and a further batch, up-dated 23rd. Year (1934), was minted from May 1934 to December 1935, when production of silver dollars ceased. In 1949, when hyperinflation caused by the civil war forced a return to silver, these Sun Yat-sen dollars were re-struck in the United States at Denver, San Francisco and Philadelphia mints, and in China at the Taipeh (Taiwan), Chengtu (Szechuan) and Canton (Kwangtung) mints. All these re-strikes were apparently from 1934 dated dies.

The standard of production maintained by the Central Mint was extremely high, and although some 147 million dollars of the three dates were struck over the period 1933 - 1935, there are few varieties to be found amongst the currency issues. Kann lists only trial pieces, or patterns in base metal, in addition to the currency issues for the 1932 and 1933 dated coins, and some minor varieties for the 1934 dated issue which may be the result of the 1949 re-striking. However, the point that appears to have been overlooked is that there were, in fact, two distinct reverse dies employed for the 1933 dated coins: one of these was the 'cleaned up' reverse die from the ill fated 1932 dated issue, which was then superseded by a new reverse die, subsequently to be used throughout the 1934 dated issue. The most obvious differences between these two dies, referred to in this article as the '1932' and '1934' dies, are centred on the halyards (2 or 3 ropes), sheets (1 or 2 ropes) and the base of the anchor of the junk (on or above the horizon), and are shown in the blown up portions of the accompanying sketch. (For the nautically uninitiated, halyards are the ropes holding the sail up to the top of the mast, while sheets are the ropes controlling the lower back end of the sail).

As numbers of each type of the 1933 dated coins seem to be evenly divided, no rarity value can be ascribed to the one or the other.

Bibliography:

- E. Kann, Illustrated Catalog of Chinese Coins, USA, 1966
- A. B. Coole, Coins in China's History, USA, 1965



Two early Chinese soft metal 'Seed' ('Mother') cash

by Michael Mitchiner

Although the method by which cash coins have been cast in the Far East for many hundreds of years has been subject to some local variation¹, the basic technique appears to have evolved very little. The first step in coin production was to engrave a model of the proposed new coin issue in bronze: the 'Seed' or 'Mother' cash. The next step was to reproduce the new design of the bronze seed cash as a group of soft metal secondary seed cash. After re-touching the designs these soft metal seed cash were then used to impress the clay moulds in which the standard currency cash were later to be cast. When pouring channels had been pressed in the clay moulds the final stage was to cast therein a 'tree' of the cash coins destined for circulation as currency.

The process has been described in more detail by de Villaret² in his monograph on Japanese coinage: *Les monnaies de cuivre étaient fondues dans des moules de sable; cette matière maintenue, pendant les opérations diverses du moulage, dans des caisses en bois renforcées par des armatures de métal, bronze ou fer.*

Le modèle de la monnaie future était gravé sur bronze en relief, par l'artiste monétaire. Après approbation du souverain, ce type était utilisé pour exécuter, en étain, un certain nombre d'exemplaires de la pièce nouvelle. Ces premiers spécimens, soigneusement et facilement retouchés au burin, servaient enfin à faire les empreintes en vue des moulages définitifs.

Voici comment on opérait généralement pour cette préparation des moules. Les modèles de zinc étaient placés par lignes parallèles, distantes de quelques centimètres, sur la surface bien dressée, formée par le sable de l'une des coquilles. La seconde coquille était ensuite placée sur la première, une légère pression suffisait pour faire pénétrer les pièces de zinc dans le sable, en y dessinant leur forme. La position relative des deux parties du moule repérée exactement, celles-ci étaient séparées, et les modèles de zinc retirés de leurs alvéoles.

Pour permettre la coulée, les différentes empreintes étaient alors réunies, par un canal oblique, à un autre plus large, creusé à égale distance de deux rangées d'alvéoles. Ces canaux médians aboutissaient à l'extérieur. Les deux parties du moule étaient de nouveau réunies et soigneusement repérées, les canaux médians débouchant dans une même rigole destinée à recevoir le métal en fusion qui garnissait ainsi toutes les cavités ménagées dans le sable.

Après complet refroidissement, les moules étaient brisés, et le métal, dégagé soigneusement du sable qui l'enveloppait, présentait alors l'apparence d'une branche munie de ses feuilles, ces dernières figurées par les monnaies elles-mêmes. Cette première opération terminée, les pièces étaient détachées une à une, ébarbées et régularisées à la lime, parfois au burin.

La première coulée de chaque émission était conservée, après avoir été soigneusement retouchée, pour rester comme le type de la nouvelle monnaie courante. Un usage à peu près constant voulait aussi qu'à chaque coulée, on fondit des médailles portant des prières bouddhiques ou autres symboles religieux.

The two coins presented here are cash of the T'ang dynasty (AD 618 - 907): well made and in good style. But for their metal they would pass as early *K'ai - yuan* specimens made during the period of Kao Tsu (618 - 626) and his immediate successors. These cash are, however, made of Tin (or possibly zinc)³ and this would seem to place them in the category of secondary seed cash.

T'ang dynasty (618 - 907)

period of Kao Tsu (618 - 626) and his immediate successors

Tin 'Seed' cash weighing 5.67 & 6.45 gm.

Obv. *K'ai yuan t'ung pao*

Rev. nail mark

- 1 The process described here would not be applicable, for instance, to cases in which bronze (eg. sometimes in China) or stone (eg. in Malaya) moulds were used for casting.
- 2 E. de Villaret, *Numismatique Japonaise, Revue Numismatique* 1892, 125 - 147, 217 - 240 and 369 - 412: vide 217f.
- 3 There is a recorded issue of tin cash during the T'ang period, but virtually no other cash of such metal were placed into general circulation in China: apart from some mid 19th. century issues. By way of contrast soft metal (lead, zinc, tin) cash have been used for normal currency purposes in Provincial Japan, in Vietnam and in the Malay-Indonesian region.

