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Members news

The Indian Institute of Research in Numismatic Studies, noted in previous newsletters, is now in the process of being built at Nasik. Please contact Mr. K. K. Maheshwari or Dr. P. L. Gupta at 507 Raheja Centre, 214 Nariman Point, Bombay 400 021 for details. Donations of coins, literature or coin photographs will be much appreciated. They can either be sent to the address above or to Mr. J. Cribb at the British Museum in London. Please also contact Mr. Cribb for details on publication of Proceedings of the Colloquium on Kushan Numismatics held earlier this year.

Mr. M. ... (621) of London has changed his interests to Islamic coins until AH 800, with special interest in Minor Dynasties and in the coinage of the Arabian Peninsula (Saudi Arabia, Yemen etc.). We are sorry to hear about the death of Dr. ... on the 2nd. April. He was a good friend to our Society for many years. His most recent publication was noted in the last newsletter.

ONS Meetings

A successful meeting in the Netherlands was held at the house of Mr. Kamphorst on 3rd. April. The meeting included lunch and talks on Arsacid and on Urtuqid numismatics, the former by Drs. Arkesteijn and van der Wiel and the latter by Mr. Denys. The meeting held a few days earlier in London was attended by over twenty members, including Mr. G. Hennequin from France and Mr. Jan Lingen from the Netherlands. A small auction realised £13 for the Society and a welcome tea was provided by Mr. and Mrs. Oddy.

Another meeting will be held in London at the same venue, 28 Little Russell Street (close to the British Museum: map in Feb. 1982 N/L), from 2.30 pm. on Sat. 24th. July. As a projector and screen are available it is now possible to have talks at the meeting. Please will any member who wishes to give a short talk contact either Mr. Wiggins or Mr. Cribb. Mr. N. G. Rhodes will speak on Tibetan tangkas.

Some new Pyu coins and modern fantasies

by M. Robinson and R. Domrow

In Newsletter no. 68 for October 1980 Dr. Mitchiner¹ illustrated the main types of Pyu coinage. Recently new coins have appeared on the scene; a new denomination of the type with dots in the temple, and a new variety of the silver unit with sankh shell in the temple.

1 - 2 AR ½ unit, group of dots in temple



Both these coins are fairly flat and not scyphate. They belong to the series with dots in the temple (Series B of ref. 1), rather than a Lingam and dots. Close examination of the photographs will show that they come from different dies. On the obverse the top angle of the lower triangle is greater on coin 1, than on 2, and the top line of the top triangle on coin 2 intersects a dot. On the reverse of coin 1 the curved base of the temple passes through the dot of the sankh shell and the wavy line curves up to the right. On the reverse of coin 2 the base curves up from the dot and the wavy line passes horizontally under the dot. Other differences could be listed.

We believe that ... has had at least four of these pieces, and apparently they come from different dies. Notice also that since the design is reduced in size from that on the One unit, the coin is not a cut-down One unit. An X-ray fluorescence analysis of coin 1 showed it to be 99% silver.

3 AR Unit (Domrow, 11.2 gm)

Obv. Damaru symbol with straight lines top & bottom:
5 dots above

Rev. Temple containing Sankh shell pointing left:
Three dots below, two of which lie on continuation of the base curve.



This coin differs in several respects from Mitchiner nos. 4 and 5, and has some similarities with the Half Unit (no. 6 of ref. 1). Like these three, it is only slightly scyphate.

For those using '2' as a reference, the following additional numbers will be allocated: 3.1A for the ½ unit with dots in temple, 3.4 for the silver unit with sankh shell in temple, leaving 3.4(a) and 3.4(b) as before. 3.4(b) is the silver ½ unit, no. 6 of ref. 1. The copper unit with sankh shell (3.4(a)) has now been examined by X-ray fluorescence and found to contain 3.3% iron, 74.6% copper, 14.2% zinc, 3.9% lead and 4% tin. It was also proved to be cast. Another such coin belonging to Dr. Mitchiner has been examined and the proportions of these metals were 1.1, 81.1, 5.8, 5.5 and 6.5 respectively, a very similar mix. It is hard to know whether these coins are genuine; the composition is very unusual for ancient coins. The specimen illustrated in ref. 2 was bought in Rangoon. The owner had several examples from different dies, which he said had been found in Upper Burma. The surface is only slightly scyphate and the design differs a little from that of the silver unit.

Also illustrated in ref. 1 is a ¼ unit with Lingam in temple. This will be given the number 3.5B (no. 3.5 being the full unit, leaving 3.5A in case a ½ unit turns up). We should like to thank Lewis Shaw for photographing the 4.94 gm. half unit.

Finally we show some "coins" which would appear to be modern imitations of Pyu designs, in some cases with individualistic embellishments (eg. a small elephant) quite distinct from the originals. Five of the six are pierced to one side with two holes, in the manner of the jewellery worn by the hill tribes of Burma. The weights are not known, but the pieces seem to be thin and possibly underweight.

References:

- 1 M. B. Mitchiner, "Early Burmese coinage and King Bodawpaya's re-strikes", ONS Newsletter no. 68, October 1980
- 2 M. Robinson and L. A. Shaw, "The Coins and Banknotes of Burma", published by the authors, 1980.



Archeological exploration of Sardis: mgr. 7: Greek, Roman and Islamic coins from Sardis

by T. V. Buttrey, Ann Johnston, K. M. MacKenzie and M. L. Bates

Harvard University Press 1981, pp. 274, pl. 10, case bound, 30 dollars

The archeological exploration of Sardis, initiated as a joint project of Harvard and Cornell Universities in 1958, has so far resulted in the publication of two reports (major monuments: sculpture) and a series of seven monographs, mainly on selected series of the artefacts recovered in the excavations. The present monograph is concerned with coins and these range from the Ancient Greek period to the 19th. century. Over 1100 Roman coins, principally fourth century bronzes, form the largest group; but the 400 Greek coins demonstrate an interesting spectrum that adds to our understanding of the local circulation of bronze coinage in the Ancient World. The section on Byzantine coins is essentially a series of additions to the previous monograph on Byzantine coins found in the Sardis excavations, but there follows a small and interesting group of forty one ancient lead pieces. In the last section of the book some 500 Islamic coins found on this site are catalogued. Fifty three coins were issued by a range of local dynasts during the pre-Ottoman period (Anatolian Beyliks); the remainder are Ottoman coins among which a broad spectrum is represented. The material published in the book is laid out clearly and the significance of the various finds is discussed. The authors are not dealing here with hoards of precious metal, but essentially with the small value coin of everyday usage – coins that were handled frequently and occasionally lost. This publication provides an important description of the spectrum of coin used in the everyday local commerce of a west Turkish town through a period of some two millenia.

M. B. Mitchiner

Some recent publications

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1. Seminar Papers on the Chronology of the Punchmarked coins, ed. A. K. Narain, 6 dollars
2. Seminar Papers on the local coins of Northern India, edd. A. K. Narain et al., 5 dollars
3. Seminar Papers on the problems of Megaliths in India, edd. Narain and Singh, 5 dollars
4. Seminar Papers on the Tribal Coina of Ancient India, edd. Gopal, Singh and Ahmad, 8 dollars

Some new Pyu coins

The Half unit coins with dots in temple illustrated as nos. 1 - 2 in the accompanying article by M. Robinson and R. Domrow may well have been from a small hoard that was disseminated during 1981. There are three major varieties of half unit coins according to the form of symbols above the temple: varieties comparable with those of Unit and quarter unit issues. Five coins in the editor's collection illustrate observed varieties and weigh as follows: a) ● ✱ 4.83 gm. b) ⊙ ✱ 4.85, 4.34 gm. c) ✱ ⊙ 4.95, 4.20 gm. X-ray fluorescence analysis of one coin from each group shows them to contain 99.85% (4.83 gm), 99.68% (4.34 gm) and 99.87% (4.95 gm) silver. All coins seen are from different dies. (M. B. Mitchiner)