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Members news

We regret to announce the death of Sri ..., South India. He had been a member since 1972 and was one of the first Indian members of the Society. His son, Mr. ..., now wishes to dispose of ... extensive collection of Indian coins.

Mr. ... (5) of California would like to correspond with collectors of Chinese Bronze Mirrors. He also offers to make xeroxes of two of his books dealing with Japanese coins. 'One book, a large work, is entitled something like "Japanese Money", dated 1793, with extensive material on coins (illustrated throughout), from the Wa-do through to Kanei-tsuho; including local issues and amulets. The book is in kana and Kanji. The other book is small, dated 1811, and seems to deal with Luck or perhaps fortune telling; it has many coins/amulets illustrated. The illustrations are clear, but I think the text is running hand. Xeroxes can be made for anyone interested, at cost'.

The ONS accounts for the year 1983-84 are available from the Treasurer (Vic Brown): please send sae.

ONS Meetings

The next London meeting will be at the usual venue, 28 Little Russell Street, London, on Saturday 23rd February 1985. The next meeting of the Northeastern USA Chapter will be on Friday 30th November 1984 at 6 pm in the Monarch Suite, Sheraton Centre Hotel, Seventh Avenue & Fifty-third Street, New York and Dr. N. D. Nicol will talk on 'Fatimid coin types'.

ONS is a "Do - it - yourself" society*A letter from the Secretary General*

Most numismatic societies that I know of make the arranging of meetings between members their most important activity although the larger national and international societies also publish journals of a high scholastic standard. Almost all societies keep the addresses and interests of their members a secret. In contrast ONS makes its prime objective the preparation and distribution of an accurate list of members' names, addresses and detailed areas of interest. The reason for this is also the reason that ONS was founded fourteen years ago. People interested in one or other of the many aspects of Middle Eastern, Indian, Far Eastern or South East Asian currency found it almost impossible to get in touch with others having similar interests. Even now, in sixteen countries we have only a single member. They are Abu Dhabi, Austria, China, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Finland, Indonesia, Japan, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Nigeria, Norway, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Syria and Tunisia.

It is obviously not possible for the Society to organise regular meetings for these members, but where small groups of members do live closer together and would like to arrange their own meeting the ONS organisation will help, if possible. Dates and places can be publicised in the Newsletter, given enough notice, and your Regional Secretary may know of suitable meeting places, or other organisations who would be interested in joining in. Without calling for great endeavours from anyone we try to make it possible for members to widen their understanding and acquaintances, But, it does not just happen, it has to be done by each member. The aim of the Society is low profile, loose fit and long life.

Michael Broome

The Gold and Silver Coinage of the Sikhs:

Part I : Amritsar – addendum

S. Goron and K. Wiggins

On page 10 of our paper dealing with the Amritsar mint (Information Sheet no. 22, May 1981) we pointed out that coins of type IV bore not only the date in the Samvat era but also an additional set of figures, viz. 315 or 316. These latter figures, we suggested, referred back to the birth of Guru Nanak. As they had only been noted on coins of Type IV it was assumed they were peculiar to that type. Recent information on coins in the Norma Puddester collection, however, reveals that this date series was continued until at least Samvat 1850 and therefore appeared on coins of Amritsar Types V and VI, as well as IV. On the later coins the additional figures are located on the obverse in the loop **ل** of the word **فصل** on the extreme left-hand side of the inscription. This part of the inscription is usually off the flan of coins of this period and is only to be found on specimens struck off-centre to the left.

The Puddester coins are as follows:

Type IV:	Samvat 1844	317
Type V:	Samvat 1845	318
	Samvat 1846	(3)20
Type VI:	Samvat 1849	(32)3
	Samvat 1850	(3)23

This, therefore, enables us to postulate the following series:

Samvat 1841	<i>315</i>	Samvat 1846	319 & 320
Samvat 1842	<i>315 & 316</i>	Samvat 1847	320 & 321
Samvat 1843	<i>316 & 317</i>	Samvat 1848	321 & 322
Samvat 1844	<i>317 & 318</i>	Samvat 1849	322 & 323
Samvat 1845	<i>318 & 319</i>	Samvat 1850	323 (? and 324)

Those combinations that have so far been found are indicated in italics. Members are invited to confirm any of the other postulated combinations from coins in their collections.

Finally, our thanks are due to Mr. and Mrs. Puddester for permission to use the information they kindly provided.

A Sikh Quarter Rupee

by D. C. Corbel

Kashmir – Shaikh Gholam Muhyid Din (Governor)

Since the issue of ONS Information Sheet no. 25 in March 1983 – “The Gold and Silver Coinage of the Sikhs, part III. The Sikh Coinage of Kashmir” – a Sikh quarter rupee has come to notice in a small parcel of assorted Indian coins which it is understood were brought back from India many years ago.

This coin is clearly Type 32 of the Information Sheet, dated S. 1898, with the Mark **ش** and a spray. It has a maximum diameter of nearly 17mm, weighs 2.75 grams and shows little evidence of circulation wear. Sub-fractions of rupees of this series must be extremely rare and it seems that this coin is unpublished. I am grateful to Mr. K. W. Wiggins for confirming the identification.



An unpublished Arab-Sasanian dirham of the hitherto unidentified governor Muhammad by F. Timmermann

Obverse: Usual bust of Khusro II
 (Gobl: obverse type II [prototype])
 Left of bust in Pehlevi: GDH apzw
 Right of bust in Pehlevi: MHMT

Handwritten Pehlevi script: *GDH apzw*
MHMT

Margin: 3^h to 6^h in Arabic: MHMD

Handwritten Arabic: *محمد*

Reverse: Usual fire-altar with attendants
 (Gobl: reverse type 2 [prototype])
 Left: the date in Pehlevi
 Right: mint signature in Pehlevi

Handwritten Pehlevi script: *𐭠𐭣𐭥𐭥*
𐭠𐭣𐭥𐭥

I would be grateful for any comments regarding the reading of the mint signature and the date. This signature does not occur on Sasanian coins; perhaps it is a corrupt rendering. Note the use of the old Khusro II reverse (Gobl: rev. type 2)¹; this is very unusual, as nearly all of the known Arab-Sasanian coins have Gobl: reverse type 3 ! Also, the date seems to be a very corrupt rendering. In any case, I am unable to make an attempt to read it.

The obverse is also remarkable. You may note the omission of the Pehlevi 't' at the end of the usual 'GDH apzwt' inscription. This is the first known dirham which combines both the name of the governor Muhammad and a marginal legend "Muhammad". Does anybody have a dirham of this governor? If so, please let me know.

1 Gobl: reverse type 2 was in use only in regnal years 2 - 10 of Khusro II. Vide R. Gobl, Sasanian Numismatics, Braunschweig 1971, table XII

Bibliography:

Gaube, Heinz, Arabosasanidische Numismatik, Braunschweig 1973

[This appears to belong to the series of dirhams struck by the Arab governors of Zabulistan (Seistan). examples that bears the names of other governors, or are anonymous see Steve Album list 37, no. 257, and previous lists; also Mitchiner, Oriental Coins: Ancient and Classical World, 1978, nos. 1390 - 1394: - editor]



Early copper coins of Dhar State

by K. W. Wiggins

In an article endeavouring to identify some early copper coins of Dhar State (ONS Newsletter 81 - 82, 1983) it was suggested that nearly all the devices that were said to have been put on these coins could, in fact, be found on pieces of similar fabric. The one exception was a coin which depicted a sparrow. Since then just such a coin has come to light and it was found in the trays of the American Numismatic Society in New York. This chance find completes the devices that are said to have been put of the coins of Dhar and rather tends to confirm that such inelegant pieces originated there.

Two Burmese coins from the American Numismatic Society Collection

by M. Robinson

The ANS collection in New York contains about 150 Burmese coins, some of which are unique. Several were listed in my book with Lewis Shaw¹, or in parts 1 and 3 of my recent series of articles in the ONS Newsletter on the Mrohaung dynasty of Arakan². The two coins to be described here are not known from any other source and are therefore of interest. The numbers refer to the ANS catalogue system.

1 Obv. and Rev.

1146 Era (= AD 1784)

Amarapura, Kingdom of the Lord
of many white elephants

Legend inscribed in circle surrounded by dots.

ANS 1928 . 999 . 33: silver, 9.794 gm.



The above piece was no. 6038 of the Schulman White King sale of 1905 and is yet another variety of Bodawpaya's Arakan conquest issue of 1784 (numbers 7.38 to 7.42 of ref. 1). See ONS Newsletter 77 for another type. The distinguishing feature here is the border of dots, and the coin will be given the RS number 7.43.

2 Milled edge, borders of looped lines outside circle of dots.

Obv. Shwepyisoe bird left, surrounded by branches

Rev. legend in wreath: tha tha na daw / 2396

'Era of the Noble Religion 2396 = 2396 Buddhist

Era: ie. AD 1852 - 3'.

ANS 1973 . 56 . 115: silver, 17.620 gm

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In ref. 3 it is stated "The shwepyiso bird is believed to have been a Crown Prince who was transformed into a bird when the executioner's sword fell on him. 'Shwe pyi so' = 'Oh ruler of the Golden Kingdom' ". This bird is also known as the Common Iora.

There are obvious similarities with 10.1 of ref. 1, which is shown beside. However, the bird faces the other way and the workmanship of the ANS coin is vastly superior. The weight is heavier, well above 1 kyat of 16.5 gm. It will be given the RS number 10.1A. (BM, 16.45 gm: no. 10.1 of ref. 1)



The date 2396 corresponds to the accession year of king Mindon, but the coins could have been produced later (compare the well known peacock rupees with date 1214 Burmese era = AD 1852 - 3, which were not struck until 1865). Other early pieces produced in Mindon's reign were a kyat dated 1214 BE referred to in a Calcutta mint letter of January 1854 as 'Ava mint' (our 10.2) and a kyat dated 1222 BE = AD 1860-1 (our 10.3). Another example of 10.3 has recently been seen in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (weight 15.15 gm)

The purpose of these early coins is not known, but they were probably religious presentation pieces of some kind, struck to commemorate Mindon's accession. Prior to 1865 there was no regular coinage but monks and others were sometimes given 'coins for use as kyats'¹. Here 'coin' is the translation of 'dinga' (= round circular stamped object). The kyat dated 1222 would most likely have been minted that year and may have been a trial piece for a proper coinage. Curiously, the date on the first regular issue of 1865 reverts back to 1214, as mentioned above.

We have no evidence as to where 10.1 to 10.3 were produced. The East India Company provided minting equipment to King Bodawpaya in 1797, but the ANS coin seems to be too well made for such old equipment, with good die engraving and a milled edge. Thomas Spears, British envoy at Amarapura, reported in 1854 that one of the Burmese ministers wanted to visit the Calcutta Mint, and another visit had been made earlier in the century. So, if any of these coins was not made in Burma, Calcutta seems the most likely source, but unfortunately the available Calcutta Mint records contain no reference to Burmese coins. However, since the contract would have been on a small scale financially, it is unlikely that records of it have survived.

I am grateful to Mr. Michael Bates of the ANS for permission to reproduce the photos of their coins.

References:

- 1 'The Coins and Banknotes of Burma', by M. Robinson and L. A. Shaw, published by the authors, 1980.
- 2 'The Coinage of the Mrohaung Dynasty of Arakan: 1430 - 1635 AD: part I. Coins with Persian legends only', by Michael Robinson, ONS Newsletter 81, Dec. 1982 and 'Part III. The Trilingual coins', by M. Robinson and N. G. Rhodes, ONS Newsletters 85 - 86, Aug. - Oct. 1983.
- 3 'Burmese Folk Tales', by Maung Htin Aung, Calcutta, Oxford University Press, 1948

A short note on a very rare Arab-Sasanian Kharijite propaganda silver drahm

by William B. Warden, Jr.

The writer recently acquired a Kharijite silver drahm¹, which, on the basis of its date (AH 75 = AD 694), mint signature (ART = Ardeshir-Khurra, in Fars Province), marginal Pahlevi ("Bisi'llah" in second quarter) and Kufic ("La Hukma illa lillāh = No judgement save that of God" in third quarter), can be identified according to Dr. Dale L. Bishop² as a propaganda issue struck by Kharijite counter Caliph Quatari ibn al-Fuja'a (see Figure 1). According to Dr. Bishop, "Another coin with the same mint, date and marginal legend has been attributed to Quatari by Walker³ on the basis of the name legend". See figure 2 for a similar drahm in the writer's collection. The name legend on both the ANS specimen (ex E. G. Weber collection) published by Dr. Bishop and the writer's, which is similar in every detail, have in place of Quatari's name and title the following Kharijite slogan: "L'(Y)T'd"twbl BR'yazd" = nest dādwar be Yazd = 'There is no Judge except God'⁴ in Pahlevi. Both coins are identical to Walker T 18 and the inscription also the same as M 53. A similar drahm in the Haddad Collection has been published by Dr. Heinz Gaube⁵, arriving at the same conclusions as Dr. Bishop's. The great Pahlevi scholar, Salemann, seems to have been disregarded by Walker⁶ who placed these coins in his uncertain governor's category. Perhaps this was because they were never illustrated by Mordtman⁷ and by Thomas when they published their respective coins and because their present disposition is unknown. If the coin published by Thomas (ex Bland collection) is the coin acquired by either the ANS or the writer, we have no way of knowing, but at the maximum, it would mean that there are four known Kharijite propaganda pieces of this date and mint in existence today, and also the one of AH 69, making it one of the rarest issues in the Arab-Sasanian series.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Footnotes:

- 1 Sotheby's of London, Islamic Coins Auction Sale of 17th April 1984, lot no. 12
- 2 Bishop, Dale L., 'Problems in Arab-Sasanian Numismatics', pp. 178 - 193, pl. XLV, in *IRANICA ANTIQUA*, vol. XI, Leiden 1975.
- 3 Walker, John A., *Catalogue of Arab-Sasanian Coins*, Oxford 1941, p. 112, N2.
- 4 op. cit., Bishop, p. 188
- 5 Gaube, Heinz, *Arabo-Sasanidische Numismatik*, Braunschweig 1973, pp. 78 - 79, pl. 10, no. 116.
- 6 But mentions it on p. 201, section p. 112, M 53
- 7 Z.D.M.G., 1854, p. 170, no. 864. The coin was in his own collection, and, according to his own description, the date reads NVSHST = AH 69. This was also republished by him in Z.D.M.G., 1880, p. 155.

(Photographs by courtesy of Dr. N. D. Nicol and Steve Album)

A rare Gupta gold stater of Prakasaditya

by K. C. Jaria

The obverse shows the king riding on horseback, with a sword in his right hand, attacking a lion which leaps up at him. It is exceptional in showing the character 'Ru' repeated twice, beneath the horse.

On the reverse the Goddess sits facing on a lotus, holding a fillet in r. hand and lotus in l. (which rests on her knee).

Legend: Prakasadityah.



A rare rupee of the Mughal Emperor Mohammed Shah

by S. Goron

In his paper entitled 'some notable coins of the Mughal emperors, part II', published in the Numismatic Chronicle, (series V, vol. VI) R. B. Whitehead described a rupee of Mohammed Shah from the mint of Dar-us-Sarur Burhanpur which bears both the ruler's laqab (Nasir-ud-din) and kunyat (Abu-l Fath). He also referred to a similar specimen in the Nagpur Museum which was discussed by H. Nelson Wright¹ and by S. H. Hodivala². Whitehead illustrated the coin he described and stated that the laqab is clearly Nāṣir-ud-din (ناصر) rather than Nāṣir (ناصر), adding that the change to Nāṣir must have taken place after the first year of the reign. Whitehead's reading is not as clear from the illustration as he would have us believe; indeed, a coin in my collection would suggest he was mistaken.

This is a coin of Jehangirnagar of the first year of Mohammed Shah's reign. Mohammed's rupees of this mint are very scarce. This coin, like the Burhanpur specimens mentioned above, bears the ruler's laqab (definitely Nāṣir-ud-din) and his kunyat (Abu-l Fath) though most of this latter is off the coin.

Obverse

محمد شاه بادشاه
ناصر الدین غازی
ابو الفتح

Reverse

مانوس
میمنت
سنه جلوس
ض
جها نیر نگر



Mohammed Shah bad shah
Nasir - ud - din ghazi
Abu - l Fath

Duriba Jehangirnagar
Sanah Ahd
Jalus maimanat manus

Weight 10.91 grams

(the reverse of the coin is somewhat corroded)

1 JASB., Numismatic Supplement XII (1909)

2 Historical Studies in Mughal Numismatics, p. 308

A half rupee of Shah Jehan I – a response

In newsletter 90 - 91 I published a half rupee of the Moghal emperor Shah Jehan I, struck at Akbarabad (Agra), for which there did not seem to be a corresponding full rupee. I invited ONS members to let me know of any in their collections. I am pleased to report that Dr. Becker of Ulmen, West Germany, sent me a quick reply with details of a rupee in his collection. This coin is dated AH 1042 and is of the same basic type as my half rupee. There are, however, some differences both in the obverses and the reverses of the coins. The most significant is that on my coin the mint name is in the lower margin of the reverse, whereas on Dr. Becker's coin the mint name is in the left hand margin, with the rest of the reverse marginal legend arranged to fit. Identification of the date prompted me to delve into the various museum catalogues in my possession to see whether I had overlooked an entry. As it happened I had, for coin number 580 in part I of the Nagpur Museum Catalogue¹ would appear to be another specimen of the coin in Dr. Becker's possession. Unfortunately, the coin is not illustrated and the catalogue uses an irritatingly convoluted back-referencing system that makes identification unnecessarily difficult.

Stan Goron

1 'Catalogue of Coins in the Central Museum Nagpur: Coins of the Moghul Emperors, part I', 1969

A Moghul rupee of Shah Alam II

Mr. P. P. Kulkarni of Nagpur, India, has sent in the photograph shown below of a rupee and would be grateful for any suggestions as to the mint name. The coin is one of the emperor Shah Alam II and it is dated AH 1215 (although the date is not clear in the photograph). The jalus year is off the coin flan. The only prominent symbol is a small sun face in the س of jalus.

The beginning of the mint name is probably off the coin, but it seems to be an unknown one for this emperor. There are simple shroff marks on both faces of the coin.

Ken Wiggins

شاه عالم
بادشاه غازی
سار ۱۲۱۵



مانوس
میمنت
سنه جلوس
ض
نکر



Punchmarked silver coins of Saurashtra

by R. Tye

The area of Western Coastal India now known as Gujarat has a long history of using silver currency. Throughout the rest of the world, only Persia can boast a comparable stability of its silver based currency. The silver basis for the coinage of Gujarat has persisted, as local and imperial dynasties have come and gone; and despite wholesale debasements throughout the rest of the sub-continent (One of my fancies is that someone will one day dig up an old pot in Gujarat, dating from one of the darker periods of Indian history, inscribed with the ancient Hindu equivalent of 'Business as usual'). The earliest known local silver coins of Gujarat are 'punchmarked' pieces which were mis-attributed by Allan to Konkan (BMC class 5), but correctly attributed by Mitchiner to Saurashtra (MA 4122 - 4142). These small uniface irregular coins are known showing at least ten different obverse devices. They are sometimes overstruck on cut down Magadhan karshapanas, and they are often overstruck amongst themselves.

Although the geographical problems of attribution have been solved, some doubt still remains over the chronology of the series. Both Hardaker and Mitchiner have reasonably postulated that Imperial Mauryan punchmarked coins formed the currency of Saurashtra at the time of Ashoka, and that the Saurashtran pieces, being obviously of very early manufacture, were produced either just before, or just after, the Mauryan occupation (c. 260 - 190 BC). Mitchiner prefers the earlier choice, provisionally dating the series to 312 - 260 BC. Hardaker leaves the question open, seeing problems with either possibility. Considering the symbols on the coins, he feels that they cannot be pushed back much before 250 BC: the coins also appear to form too long a series to fit into a short period just before the Mauryan occupation. On the other hand, Hardaker notes the complete absence of new silver coins in India from the fall of the Mauryas until the rise of the Western Satraps in the early second century AD (outside the silver-using North Western Indo-Greek sphere of influence); and on the basis of this situation he is disinclined to unreservedly put the coins into the later period either. I agree with Hardaker's objection to the earlier possibility, and would like to suggest a post Mauryan, late 2nd - early 1st century BC, date for the Saurashtran coins. It is not clear to me that no silver coins were issued during this period in the rest of India. There are many strange scraps of silver, lying unremarked in museums and private collections, which might eventually turn out to fit into this period. Most especially, there are the coins showing an elephant surrounded by minor symbols, which were produced using worn late Mauryan karshapanas as flans (BMC page 30 no. 24). These are definitely post-Mauryan and they are not dissimilar in inspiration to the Saurashtran coins. Secondly, in later periods Gujarat has consistently followed its own path coinage-wise. On the basis of subsequent history the concept of Gujarat going its own way and issuing a silver coinage regardless of the tide of copper coinages sweeping the rest of India, is not at all surprising.

If the hypothesis presented here is correct, it produces a very satisfying picture of the silver coinage of Gujarat. The Saurashtran punchmarked series fits neatly into the gap between the demise of the Mauryan punchmarked coinage in the early second century BC and the adoption of imported Indo-Greek drachms of Apollodotos II as the staple coinage of Gujarat sometime in the later first century BC. This gives Gujarat a continuous chain of silver coins running from the Mauryan issues of Ashoka down to the much later British issues of India that ended in 1945. The hypothesis could be confirmed if a Saurashtran issue could be found overstruck on a cut down Mauryan flan. I would be most interested to hear if anyone spots one.

Some obverse symbols found on
Saurashtran punchmarked silver coins



References:

J. Allan, British Museum Catalogue: 'Ancient India'

M. Mitchiner, 'Oriental Coins: the Ancient and Classical World', also 'The Origins of Indian Coinage'

T. Hardaker, unpublished paper kindly shown to the author