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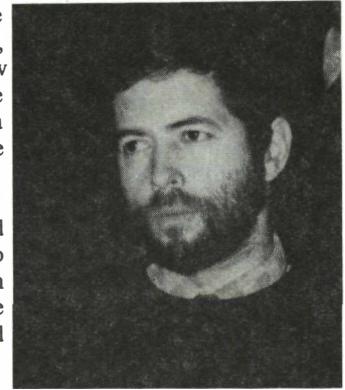
January - February 1990

In this issue we feature our contributor and former membership secretary Joe Cribb. Joe was born in 1947 in the town of Brighton, a popular resort on the south coast of England, but grew up in West London, under the main flight path of planes taking off from Heathrow Airport. He studied Latin with Greek and Ancient History at London University before joining the British Museum Coins and Medals Department in 1970. His first job was as a general assistant, answering enquiries and helping visitors to the department. He is now the department's specialist in South Asian and Far Eastern currencies, and lives in ...

He was introduced to oriental coins by his brother, a collector of Chinese coins and another ONS member. Joe's early interest was also in Chinese coins, but soon widened to cover the whole of Asian coinage, with particular interest in the early phases of coinage in China, India and South East Asia, the coins of the Kushan rulers of Central Asia, Chinese silver ingots and paper money and the numismatic evidence of religious history in India and the Far East.

Joe is very interested in promoting general interest in coins and numismatics and in 1986 organised a major British Museum exhibition called *Money*. He also edited the illustrated companion to the exhibition *Money - from Cowrie Shells to Credit Cards* and a children's book *The Money Fun Book*. 1987 saw the publication of his *Money in the Bank*, an illustrated introduction to the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank coin and bank note collection. He has two more general books due out next month: *The World Coin Atlas*, a country by country encyclopedia of coinage history, co-authored with Ian Carradice and Barrie Cook, and another children's book, *Money* in the new Dorling Kindersley *Eyewitness Guide* series. He has recently become secretary of a new Indian coin group, the Numismatic Section of the Society for South Asian Studies (London) and since 1983 has been a secretary of the Royal Numismatic Society.

Joe is currently working on the editing of a catalogue of Chinese silver money ingots (sycee) which should appear next year and after that will return to his obsession with the coins of the Kushan Kings of Central Asia.



New and Recent Publications

- 1 Numismatic Literature No. 122, September 1989, published by the American Numismatic Society, New York, contains information on 43 items relating to the Near and Middle East, 19 items relating to India, and no fewer than 106 items relating to the Far East, mainly China. Many of the latter are in Chinese and reflect the continuing upsurge of activity in China regarding archaeology and numismatics.
- 2 Some reprints and new books available from Indian Books Centre, 40/5 Shakti Nagar, Delhi 110007, India:
 - i. J. R. Henderson: *The Coins of Haidar Ali & Tipu Sultan*, reprinted New Delhi 1989. Rs 145.
 - ii. Geo. P. Taylor: *The Coins of Tipu Sultan*, originally published as *Occasional Memoir of the NSI - no 1* and reprinted New Delhi 1989. 32pp and illustrations. Rs 80.
 - iii. Ethel M. Pope (?): *India in Portuguese Literature*. Reprinted New Delhi 1989. 300pp. Rs 195.
 - iv. R. S. Whiteway: *The rise of Portuguese Power in India 1497-1550*. Originally published 1899, reprinted New Delhi 1989. 357pp. Rs 195.
 - v. Muni Lal: *Mini Mughals*, New Delhi 1989. Biography of later Mughal emperors. 333pp. Rs 195.
 - vi. C. A. Padmanabha Sastry: *Administration in Andhra, from the earliest times to the 13th century A.D.* New Delhi 1990. 334pp. Rs 280.
 - vii. Mark Wilks: *Historical Sketches of the South of India in an attempt to trace the History of Mysore*. 2 volumes. Reprinted New Delhi 1989. Rs 895.
 - viii. Horace Hayman Wilson: *Travels in India - Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan & the Punjab in Ladakh & Kashmir*. Reprinted New Delhi 1989. Two volumes. Rs 495.
- 3 Stephen Album (P O Box 7386, Santa Rosa, CA 95407, USA) has published his list no 62; C. J. Holcombe (240 Castellain Mansions, Castellain Road, London W9 1HD) has published a list of Islamic coins for sale.
- 4 The Spink-Taisei auction of 22 February held in Singapore contained some 750 lots of oriental (mainly far-eastern) coins, medals and bank-notes.

5 The Turkish Numismatic Society, Istanbul, has recently published a work by Celil Ender on Abaka Khan's silver coinage that bears both the year and month in which it was struck. In Turkish but with an English summary. 39 pages plus English summary, 4 plates and illustrations throughout catalogue. A few copies are available for £6 plus postage from A H Baldwin & Sons Ltd, 11 Adelphi Terrace, London WC2N 6BJ.

Other News

The inaugural meeting of the Society for South Asian Studies - Numismatic Section took place on 3 February in London. Opened by Dr D W MacDowall, the programme included the following items on the subject of New Approaches to Indo-Greek coinage:

O. Bopearachchi: New approaches to Indo-Greek Coinage.

D. Bivar: Posthumous Menanders.

D. W. MacDowall: The currency patterns of different localities in the Indo-Greek period.

The meeting was held in association with the ONS.

Membership of the Society for South Asian Studies is open to anyone interested in the archaeology, history and culture of South Asia (Afghanistan, Pakistan, India & Sri Lanka) and costs £20 per year. Members of the society receive a copy of the society's journal *South Asian Studies* each year free of charge. Membership of the Numismatic Section of the society is open to anyone interested in the coinages of South Asia and costs £12 per year. Members of the Numismatic Section receive a copy of the *Numismatic Digest* published by the Indian Institute for Research in Numismatic Studies, Nasik, India, each year free of charge.

Book Review

Les Collections Monétaires, Part V 1. Monnaies de l'Islam et du Proche-Orient. by G. Hennequin "with the participation of G. Krebs". Published by the Administration des Monnaies et Médailles, Paris 1988, 392pp incl. xxxvi plates. Paperback, FF 390 from the publishers.

The fifth part to be published of a catalogue of the coins in the collection of the Paris Mint, this volume describes 2322 coins from Islamic countries, 791 of them being illustrated on clear enough plates at actual size with 13 also shown at an enlarged scale. A bibliography is included of the works referred to together with three maps showing the areas of influence of some of the main dynasties in the eighth, twelfth, and sixteenth centuries respectively. At the end of the volume there are lists of people and places mentioned in the text and, in the French fashion, the List of Contents.

The sequence adopted is broadly geographical running from Spain eastwards to Afghanistan with separate sections for North Africa, the Nile Valley, East Africa, Arabia, The Mediterranean Countries, Asia Minor, Eurasia, (8 coins only), South West and Central Africa. There is also an initial section called *The Caliphal Dynasties* dealing almost exclusively with the Ottoman Empire.

The largest sections are those covering countries with which the Paris Mint has had some connection such as North Africa, Lebanon, Syria and French East Africa. Countries further to the east are but poorly represented. Although the dates recorded range from AH 163 to AD 1986 there are only about a hundred pieces earlier than AH 1000, perhaps reflecting the haphazard way in which early coins find their way into mint collections. Two thirds of the total are late eighteenth or nineteenth century pieces, the remainder being mostly Ottoman.

The information provided is normally restricted to the ruler, mint, and date, where these are shown on the coins, together with the weight in grams to 0.01 gram, the (maximum?) diameter, and the die axis to the nearest 15 degrees. For the few early coins the Arabic legends are set out clearly but, in general the reader is referred to a standard publication for a complete description of the coin type. This is a sensible procedure for a listing of predominantly modern coins but it is unfortunate that the decision was made to use the page and column numbers of the 1985 edition of Messrs Krause and Mishler's *Standard Catalog of World Coins* for the majority of the references. Many people retain only the latest edition of this annual publication and both page and column numbers change as each year's crop of new coins is added. Where a Yeoman or Craig number is also provided this may not matter but this practice is intermittent. One minor consequence of the use of this particular reference is that many of the pieces noted as 'unpublished' are just more recent issues of standard coins and can be found in the later lists of the countries concerned.

An unusual feature is the use of different type faces for the catalogue entries and for the descriptive matter. This is explained in a Preface by the Director of the Mint as a means of distinguishing the contributions of the two authors; the catalogue proper being by Hennequin while Krebs wrote the introductory and historical sections.

The choice of material included in these sections seems to bear little relationship to the coins catalogued. The extensive list of the 'Abbasid Caliphs' introduces a mere 6 rather dull coins. The details given of twelve Safavid and nine Ilkhanid rulers dwarf the total of six specimens from the two dynasties together that are represented in the collection. On the other hand, the c. 800 coins from Tunisia and Morocco have only a few lines of historical background each and that, mostly uninformative in relation to the actual coins listed. No account is given of the role of the Paris Mint in connection with these coins and yet this is material of relevance and interest to the student of modern coins that is difficult to find elsewhere.

Although the purpose of the catalogue is clear enough, the interests of prospective buyers is not so obvious. The historical intermissions would be moderately useful to someone needing an introduction to some of the early Islamic coinages but these are poorly represented in the collection. The data provided on weight distribution in modern coins is interesting but only to the specialist in metrology or mint practice. More people might well buy the book as an index to the many 'Essais' in the collection from Tunisia, Morocco, The Lebanon, Syria, and Iran, but probably the section of widest interest is that devoted to the Ottomans with its long run of 543 coins including many noted as unpublished.

With the wide range of material covered by this volume it is encouraging that so few errors are apparent. A superficial check has revealed only two. Coin number 7, a square Ottoman *aqche* from North Africa listed as undated has a clear 19 visible on the plate. This can represent either 1019 or 1119 depending on your view, although this controversy is not mentioned. Finally, number 2204, the solitary entry for the Seljuks of Rum, is labelled as AR (in which case it would be unique) whereas it is almost certainly AE and relatively common. But this is probably just a typing error.

MRB



The coin illustrated above, taken from Steve Album's sales list no 57, is an interesting example of early Safavid copper fulus. It is anonymous but differs from the normal Persian anonymous coppers in that it is wholly inscriptional and is named as a 'Royal' fals. It seems to be dated 980 on one side and 978 on the other and hence falls into the reign of Shah Tahmasp I, AH 930-984/ AD 1524-1576. On one side, the legend is simply 'zarb Ja'farabad' in a cartouche surrounded by sprays of leaves. On the other, there is an unusual warning which has been translated as 'may God's eternal punishment be upon him who counterfeits the royal fulus'.

بیو ستہ بلعنت الہی تعیردہ فلوس شاہی

Ja'farabad is known as a mint for silver under Tahmasp I in 973 and 979 and under Muhammad Khudabanda, his son, in 985 (who also struck gold coins there). Anonymous coppers were also produced there, according to Rabino di Borgomale, but the present dated piece is earlier and may even be the earliest Safavid copper coin recorded.

Evidence of the location of this town is difficult to find. There is no entry for it in the major historical or geographical references but Zambaur follows Codrington in placing it at, or near, Varamin, some 45 kilometres south east of the site of Teheran, although neither author cites his source.

The name is presumably an allusion to the Imam Ja'far al-Sadik who was considered to be one of the greatest Shi'a Imams of the Twelver sect. Tahmasp was a devoted follower of his Ja'fari teachings and is credited with the conversion of Persia to this particular version of Shi'ism. It would be quite acceptable for him to rename a town in honour of the holy man, at this time.

Why Varamin should have been chosen (if indeed this attribution is correct) is uncertain. Contemporary accounts describe it as a pleasant small town, on the edge of the Great Desert, that had flourished following the Mongol destruction of the great city of al-Rayy, some two centuries earlier. Its only claim to fame otherwise is the presence of a Mongol Great Mosque of unusual design. Possibly, this was sufficient for it to have been honoured with the name of the great Imam Ja'far.

I am indebted to Steve Album for the reading and a translation of the above legend.

Mughal Miscellany

1. Akbar — a rupee of Baldat Patna by Dr. B. Becker

Patna was captured from Daud Shah Kararani, Sultan of Bengal, in AH 982. The earliest known Mughal coins of Akbar denoting this conquest are dated AH 983 and on these coins Patna is called Dar-ul-Zarb (seat of the mint). See Lahore Museum Catalogue page LXI and Lucknow Museum Catalogue page 56. Published here is a rupee of Patna of year 984 where the mint is called Baldat Patna (city of Patna). The epithet is believed to be otherwise unpublished for this mint.



The obverse bears the Kalima and, presumably, in the margins, the four Caliphs, whilst the reverse bears Akbar's name and titles. The mint is in the bottom reverse margin and is written بلدہ. The coin weighs 11.4 grams.

2. Aurangzeb — two significant varieties of the usual mohurs and rupees

The usual couplet on Aurangzeb's mohurs contains the expression جو مہر صبر ('like the shining sun') while that of the rupees contains the expression جو بدر صبر ('like the shining moon'). In a number of cases however we find mohurs with the rupee couplet and rupees with the mohur couplet. For most of the mints involved the occurrence is sporadic, but in one or two cases, notably, Akbarnagar, the abnormal was the norm over a lengthy period. Dr. A. Shakaar Malik of Jhelum, Pakistan has provided a list of examples taken from the Punjab Museum Catalogue (Lahore), the Lucknow Museum Catalogue and from a number of private collections. To these I have added examples from the British Museum collection, the Nagpur Museum Catalogue, the Indian Museum Catalogue and coins that were in my own collection.

References: P = Punjab Museum Catalogue; N = Nagpur Museum Catalogue; I = India Museum Catalogue; L = Lucknow Museum Catalogue; Ls = Supplement to Lucknow Museum Catalogue; B = British Museum; Pr = private collection. Only one reference is given for each date.

MOHURS

Etawa 1111/43(B); Kabul 1110/- (P); Shahjehanabad -/12 (I); Surat, Bandar-i-Mubarak -/1 (P), -/2 (B); Tatta 1073/5 (B).

RUPEES

Ahmednagar 1118/51 (B)

Akbarnagar -/1 (Pr), 1070/2 (B), 1070/3 (P), 1071/3 (P), 1071/4 (L), 1072/4 (P), 1072/5 (B), 1073/5 (P), 1076/6 (L), 1074/7 (B), 1075/7 (N), 1075/8 (L), 1076/8 (B), 1076/9 (Ls), 1078/10 (L), 1078/11 (L), 1079/11 (L), 1079/12 (N), 1081/13 (P), 1082/14 (L), 1082/15 (N), 1083/15 (P), 1083/16 (L), -/17 (N), -/20 (P), -/21 (P), 1090/22 (L), 1090/23 (I), 1091/23 (N), 1091/24 (L), 1092/24 (N), 1092/25 (N), 1093/25 (L), 1093/26 (L), 1094/26 (L), 1094/27 (N), 1095/27 (L), 1095/28 (N), 1096/28 (L), 1096/29 (N), 1097/29 (L), 1097/30 (L), 1098/30 (N), 1098/31 (N), 1099/31 (L), 1099/32 (P), 1100/32 (N), 1100/33 (L), 1101/33 (N), 1101/34 (L), 1102/34 (L), 1102/35 (Pr), 1103/36 (N), 1104/36 (N), 1104/37 (L), 1105/37 (N), 1105/38 (I), 1106/38 (N), 1106/39 (N), 1108/40 (N), 1109/41 (L), 1111/44 (Ls), 1112/45 (N), 1113/46 (N).

Alamgirpur 1071/3 (N)
 Allahabad (Baldat) 1070/1 (B), 1071/3 (B), 1071/4 (P), 1072/4 (B)
 Allahabad 1073/6 (N)
 Bhilsa -/3 (L)
 Burhanpur -/34 (B)
 Jehangirnagar 1070/3 (Pr), 1071/3 (B), 1073/5 (Pr), 1073/6 (Ls), 1112/44 (Ls), 1112/45 (Ls), 1113/45 (Ls), 1113/46 (Ls), 1114/47 (Ls) (None of the later Jehangirnagar coins are illustrated; other catalogues with these dates do not specify the 'abnormal' couplet. The Lucknow coins therefore need to be checked.)
 Kabul 1082/15 (Ls), 1083/16 (L), 1085/18 (Pr), 1091/24 (B), 1092/24 (B), 1117/49 (N)
 Kambayat 1070/1 (P), 1109/41 (B)
 Kashmir -/45 (B)
 Katak 1071/3 (L) The Nagpur Museum Catalogue lists a number of coins of this mint issued between 1085/18 and 1108/40 plus 1114/48 which are allegedly of this type. None are illustrated and, as no other source specifies the 'abnormal' couplet for this period, the coins need checking before inclusion in this list.
 Lahore 1069/1 (B), 1070/1 (L), 1070/2 (L), 1071/3 (L), 1072/4 (L), -/5 (B), -/6 (B), 1085/18 (P), 1109/42 (B), 1118/50 (B)
 Multan 1070/1 (B), 1070/2 (L), 1071/3 (P), 1071/4 (B), 1072/4 (L)
 Shahjehanabad 1069/1 (L)
 Tatta -/8? (B), -/11 (B)
 Zafarabad 1074/6 (I), -/8 (P), 1079/12 (I), 1080/12 (B), -/17 (Ls), -/22 (B)

One needs to exercise caution when listing examples from the museum catalogues, unless the coins are illustrated or the 'abnormality' specified. Where ditto signs are used it is not always clear precisely what is being repeated. The Nagpur catalogue also suffers from a back-referencing system that is mind-boggling in its ineptitude. Members are invited to send details of additional mints and dates from coins in their own collections or other collections that they have personally checked (either regards the coins themselves or clear photographs). Details of any sources should be given.

3. Fractional silver coins of Aurangzeb in the British Museum collection

For the record the following coins have been noted:

Ahmedabad ½ rupees 1075/7, -/18
 Akbarabad ¼ rupee -/45
 Bijapur ½ rupee 1089/22
 Junagarh (square area type) ½ rupees 1074, 1077
 Kambayat ½ rupees 1087/19, 1091/24, 1098/30, 1100/3x, 1102/34
 Patna ½ rupee 1089/22
 Sholapur 1/8 rupee 1071; ½ rupee 1093/25
 Ujjain ½ rupee 1100 (?)

The above coins are of the normal types for the mints and dates in question.

4. More on the mint of Islamabad

Mughal coins (mainly mohurs and rupees) are known with mint-name Islamabad from the reign of Aurangzeb through to Shah Alam II, though some of the ephemeral intermediate reigns are not represented. A series of coins struck during the reign of Shah Alam II. occurs with the mint-name Islamabad Mathura. Apart from this latter series, there has always been uncertainty as to where the earlier coins were struck. Several towns were named Islamabad during the Mughal period:

Mathura was named Islamabad by Aurangzeb in AH 1080.

Chittagong was named Islamabad by Aurangzeb in AH 1076.

Chakna (near Pune) was named Islamabad by Aurangzeb in AH 1070 and later Muminabad.

Incha (in Kashmir) was named Islamabad by Shah Jehan I.

Chhatra (in Bundelkhand) was named Islamabad by Shah Jehan I.

Another place, Rairi, said to have been called Islamabad was in fact called Islamgadh. The mint of Islamabad was discussed by S. H. Hodivala in an article in Numismatic Supplement XXXIV to the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. In this article, Hodivala was of the opinion that because the Islamabad series was largely homogenous in style and covered a period of some 140 years it must have originated from a centre of some importance to the Mughal realm. The earliest known coins with mint-name Islamabad were dated AH 1074 and 1079. Chakna remained in Mughal hands until AD 1667 (AH 1078/79) when it was restored to the Marathas. Both of these early coins could have been struck at Chakna or the latter one at Chittagong. Hodivala attributed most of the Islamabad coins to Chittagong whilst not ruling out the possibility of the earliest coins being struck at Chakna. Thus it has remained.

The two rupees illustrated below, however, are worthy of note.



Both were issued during the reign of Farrukh Siyar (AH 1125-1131) and bear the mint-name Islamabad. Coin A was struck in year 5 (AH 1128/19) and conforms stylistically reasonably well with other coins in the series. The mint-name is at the bottom of the reverse. Coin B was struck in year 1128, is stylistically crude and has the mint-name at the top. While the position of the mint-name did change on the coins of certain mints during the lengthy reign of Aurangzeb, I am not aware of this being the case for any mint during the reign of Farrukh Siyar. This and the difference in style lead me to believe that these two coins were struck at two different mints both called Islamabad. I would suggest that coin A belongs to the 'Chittagong' series whilst coin B could well have been struck at Chakna. The Pune area was under tenuous Mughal government during the period AD 1708-20 (AH 1120-33) and coin B could have been struck at Chakna during this period. This particular specimen came out of Bombay, which could support the Chakna attribution. Do any members have other specimens of coin-type B?

Two Nepalese Portrait Patterns of King Prithvi Vir Vikram Shah by Wolfgang Bertsch



The above illustrated portrait patterns came to my notice when the new RNS publication 'The Coinage of Nepal' by N. G. Rhodes, K. Gabrisch and C. Valdetarro was already in print. In this exhaustive survey of Nepal's coinage various Prithvi copper patterns are listed and illustrated (see p. 166, No. 1271 a to 1274 a and Plate 41). They were all struck in 1888 AD when Nepal introduced a new copper paisa coinage, using modern coin presses.

The two patterns which I reproduce are technologically not quite up to the standard of the patterns illustrated by Rhodes on plate 41, but we have nevertheless reason to believe that they are both genuine, since the reverse designs are related to the patterns on plate 41 and it would be unlikely for a forger to use clipped blanks and thus make his products less attractive to collectors.

It looks as though a mint official had collected some clipped copper blanks from the floor of one of the Mint's workshops to try out his new pattern dies. When I visited the Kathmandu Mint in 1975 and again in the 1980s, clipped blanks and clipped coins were lying around plentifully on the floor of the main workshops. All the more reason to assume that this was also the case around 1888 AD.

These two patterns are Nepal's first coins to show a king's portrait. We have to wait until 1953 AD to find an officially released coin issue showing King Tribhuvan's portrait (KM Nr. 740 and 742).

Description of the patterns:

Fig. 1. Weight: 5.25 g; Diameter: 24.2 mm.

Obv.: Portrait of king with the typical Nepalese crown, the most impressive feature of which is the plume of Bird of Paradise feathers imported from Papua New Guinea (New Guinea in the 19th century, shared by Great Britain, Germany and Holland). Above moon to left and sun to right. Legend (starting on the right): Sri Sri Sri Prithvi Vira/ Vikrama Saha Deva.

Rev.: Ornamental flower border. Legend in four lines: Sri/ Bhavani/ Nepal Sarkar/ 1810 (=1888 AD). The rev. is similar in style to Rhodes' type 1 (No. 1271 a).

Fig. 2. Weight: 5.45 g; Diameter: 24.4 mm.

Obv.: Different portrait of king with crown, but same legend as on the obv. of the coin fig. 1: Sri Sri Sri Prithvi Vira/ Vikrama Saha Deva.

Rev.: Ornamental border, similar in style to the one on the rev. of Rhodes' type 2 (No. 1272). Legend in central circle in three lines: Sri/ Nepal/ Sarkar. No date.

This month we present the first in a series of articles by Tom Zell that will provide some etymological and cultural background to some of the more common characters found on Chinese cash coins.

House of Ancient Treasure seen through a little square hole by Tom Zell

The most common written character seen on uncountable billions of Chinese style 'cash' is 'BAO' – which means, conveniently, 'money'. (Fig. 1)

There are many collectors who recognize 'BAO' but not many familiar with the derivation of its parts. The character 'BAO' for 'money' may have originated earlier than 2,000 BC but most assuredly it was fully evolved by the time of the Shang Dynasty (c.1700-1100 BC) as we see it on oracle bone and oracle shell inscriptions. During the succeeding Chou Dynasty it was commonly seen in bronze vessel inscriptions mentioning royal awards of cowry money to recipients who had bronze vessels cast in commemoration.

Among its earliest appearances on a coin we see 'BAO' on a spade coin of the Chou Dynasty somewhere around 2,500 years ago or much earlier according to the late numismatic scholar Arthur B. Coole. This is the hollow-handled spade coin, the earliest type, arising out of barter with metal implements such as miniature spades, knives, or other metal objects, all prized in trade. (Fig. 2)

Not until the founding of the great Golden Age of China by the prince-general Li Shih Min in 621 AD did the character 'BAO' become a permanent part of all East Asia's 'cash'. It then found a permanent home to the left of the square hole – seen on untold billions of cash until the collapse of the empire in 1912 AD.

The K'AI YUAN T'ONG BAO is the founding coin of the fabulous T'ang Dynasty. It set several precedents in Chinese coinage lasting some 1,300+ years. (Fig. 3)



FIGURE 1 "BAO" FOR "MONEY"
ANCIENT STYLE & GRASS-WRITING

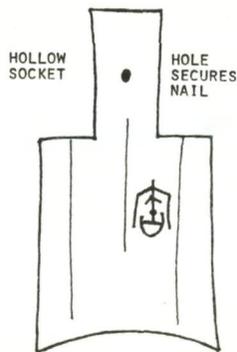


FIGURE 2 spade coin
(after Coole)



FIGURE 3 T'ang Dynasty Founding Coin
"k'ai" "t'ong" "yuan"
"INAUGURAL CIRCULATING MONEY"

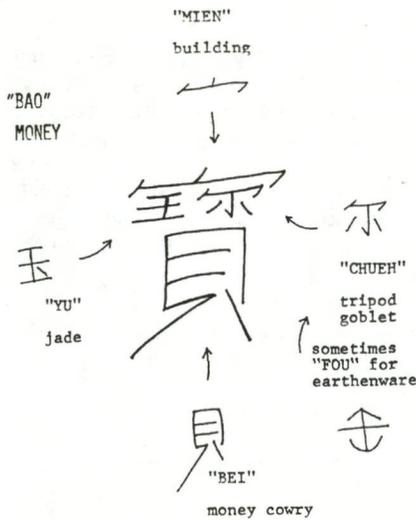


FIGURE 4 MODERN STANDARD SCRIPT



FIGURE 5 "MIEN" : "BUILDING"

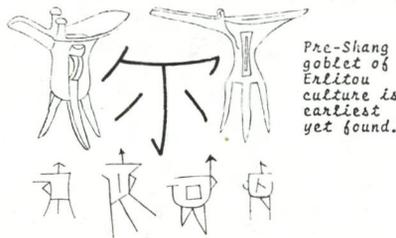


FIGURE 6 "CHUEH" BRONZE WINE VESSEL
SHANG DYNASTY C. 1700-1100 B.C.



FIGURE 7 CHUEH/JUE
ANCIENT TO MODERN



FIGURE 8 CHUEH
MODERN AND ANCIENT

Now to the inscription itself. 'BAO' is composed of four elements. At times a fifth element is seen replacing one of the others, but not often. (Fig. 4)

Ornate building houses treasure

Let's take them from the top. First the roof symbol. Early symbols for a building showed walls as well as a roof but eventually became abbreviated into the modern radical which resembles a flat roof. The little centre dash represents the highly decorated ridge of a special building, such as a temple or palace. Roof ridges were adorned with dragons, birds, fish, and other propitious symbols. (Fig. 5)

Unlike western buildings with roofs supported by walls, in the traditional Chinese building the roof came first, supported by pillars. Walls were independent of this construction and could be removed or moved around as weather conditions demanded. Hence the roof is the most important part of a traditional Chinese building.

The radical 'MIEN' today does not appear by itself but always in combination with other radicals forming a compound character. Of course, it appears on top of the compound character – where a roof properly belongs.

How to guzzle away an empire

Now let's look below the roof at the radical on the right. It is 'CHUEH', a three-legged bronze drinking vessel from the Shang Dynasty of about 1700 to 1100 BC. Actually it existed prior to the Shang Dynasty as museums display yet earlier versions. Its tripod legs allow it to be placed over a fire for heating rice wine. Lugs on top enable it to be picked up by two rods or sticks squeezing the lugs between them. The handle, of course, held with a cloth to prevent burns, tips the flagon's content into smaller receptacles for drinking. Some of these 'CHUEH' are among the world's most gracefully conceived vessels. Apparently intended for balance, its tail extending opposite its pouring spout gives the 'CHUEH' the appearance of a bird. It is from this resemblance that it gets its name of 'CHUEH' or 'short-tailed bird'.

Ancient pictographs of the tripod goblet were reduced to the version we see in 'BAO' on cash. But we do not see this character in modern dictionaries related to a tripod vessel. (Fig. 6).

In some dictionaries we see the short-tailed bird in reference to a tripod wine vessel. (Fig. 7).

In other dictionaries we see the character now preferred by archaeologists when referring to the tripod vessel. It consists of a lid on a vessel held by a person, while below we see two hands holding a cauldron of fermenting grain. It bears no resemblance to the tripod vessel nor the bird. (Fig. 8).

The 'CHUEH' was used principally in religious rites honouring ancestral spirits. Ritual feasts were held during which the aroma of freshly cooked meat was offered to the spirits, along with a wine libation poured in their honour. As spirits are insubstantial entities it was felt that vapours were adequate to satisfy their cravings. The more substantial food and drink was consumed in their honour by the yet living. In fact, so many spirits were drunk in honour of the spirits that Shang rulers became alcoholics – leading to their defeat by Chou warriors.

Chou rulers, avoiding Shang error, shied away from using the 'CHUEH', hence making it a tankard known only to the Shang.

Bronze vessels take on a significance as treasure, being highly treasured by early rulers as symbols of their authority – heirlooms handed down through generations. So the written character 'CHUEH' took on as one of its meanings 'treasure', important here within context of the character 'BAO' for 'money'.

Back to the stone age

Now for the next radical, 'FOU' for 'earthenware', the one which at times replaces 'CHUEH'.

It is not surprising this radical substitutes for 'CHUEH' for it was from ceramics that many later bronze vessels took their shapes. We should know the Chinese led the world in ceramics, creating the most desired porcelains – in fact, creating porcelain.

A simple circle with an internal cross symbolizes a bowl seen from above. A more complex version includes a lid. Either of these might be seen replacing 'CHUEH' in 'BAO' on our cash. (Fig. 9). On the spade coin (seen earlier) a side view of a bowl is seen.



FIGURE 9 "FOU" : "EARTHENWARE" (LEFT MODERN, OTHERS ANCIENT)

Reverence for jade yet lives

Jade. We could write a book about jade. Many people have already done so. Diamonds, rubies, and emeralds may captivate the western eye with their glitter, but among the Chinese jade has been the most revered of any gemstone. Thought to possess powers of preservation, it was used in burials for thousands of years. During the Han Dynasty whole suits of jade adorned rulers and aristocrats in their tombs. Made of several thousand small jade plaques they were sewn together with threads of gold and silver. Other jade items were used, too.

The character 'YU' for 'jade' consists of three horizontal lines representing three pieces of jade. A vertical line connecting them is a thread. In the early versions a knot with silken tassels spread outward from the string. This later became a mere slash or dot on the right side between the lower two pieces of jade. We see the remnant of the tassel is entirely deleted in the compound character of 'BAO'. (Fig. 10)

The most popular meaning for the character 'YU' is 'pure' or 'purity'.



FIGURE 10 "YU" : "JADE, PURE"
ANCIENT TO MODERN

Cowry – the world's first 'cash'

And now we come to the most delightful of 'BAO's radicals – 'BEI' for 'cowry seashell' – the world's first 'cash'.

Explorer Thor Heyerdahl has shown the money cowry created a flourishing industry for the early peoples of the Maldive Islands in the middle of the Indian Ocean. They traded money cowries with Africa, the mid-east, India and south-east Asia. It's obvious these pretty little shells also made their way into China.

The creature creating this shell is the cowry seasnail, a nocturnal and omnivorous protector of its young. Although any cowry was valued in ancient China, two species were most used – the *Cypraea moneta* or irregularly shaped 'money cowry' – and the *Cypraea annuli* or 'gold-ring cowry', somewhat smaller but prettier due to its golden yellow ring.

The Chinese character for money cowry is apparently among the earliest of Chinese written words. We see it on oracle bones and oracle shells of the Shang and on bronze vessel inscriptions of the succeeding Chou Dynasty. Today there are nearly 90 compound characters including this symbol, all involving values, either monetary or ethical or both.

The radical for money cowry, 'BEI', shows the underside of a cowry shell. Its opening has teeth-like edges, helping the snail's body grip the shell. In the symbol for cowry, these serrations are seen as two short horizontal lines. Two lines extending below represent the snail's feelers. (Fig. 11).

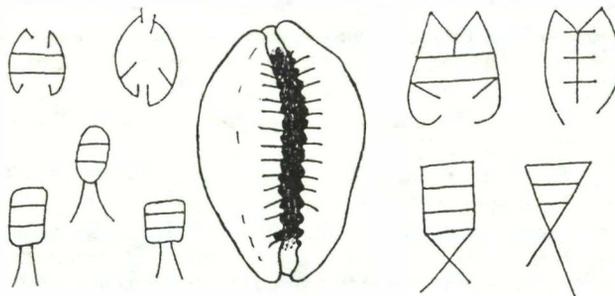


FIGURE 11 "BEI" : "MONEY COWRY"

So from this composite of four picture-words, how do we obtain the meaning of 'money'?

A special building, here an imperial treasury, holds bronze treasure, jade jewels, and cowry money.

In a treasury we keep money.

Peeping through the little square hole in Chinese cash, via this one character we can envisage Chinese architecture, a reverence for ancient bronze vessels, the beauty of ceramics, a timeless endearment to jade, and the world's first 'cash', the humble cowry shell.

To enter into the mentality of any people we must understand at least a modicum of their written and spoken language – and so it is with full enjoyment of our Chinese cash. It is hoped this article will enhance your enjoyment.

Late News

1. As we go to press we regret to announce the death of the eminent Turkish numismatist Cüneyt Ölçer, author of numerous books and articles on the coinage of the Ottomans and other dynasties of Turkey. An obituary will appear in a future Newsletter.
2. Bob Senior (...) has issued an extensive list of Indian coins for sale, from the ancient period to the princely states.
3. N. J. Hill (...) has issued his January 1990 list comprising mainly far eastern coins.
4. Spink Numismatic Circular for February 1990 contains an article by Samuel Lachmann entitled 'The Coins of the Zaidi Imams of the period 1224-1265 H/ 1809-1849'.