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ORIENTAL NUMISMATIC SOCIETY

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Members news.

Dr. Donald Gear (146) is seeking information on the metrology of medieval North Thai coinage (eg. Kakim) & other forms of metal currency (eg. Toks, lats). Most previous publications (Le May, Guehler, Cresswell etc) have provided little information on weights or on silver purity as reflected in such measurements as specific gravity. Please will members with collections or individual specimens contact Dr. Gear or me. Mr. Simmons (26) of London has expanded his interests to include Islamic coins of the Middle East and associated Crusader issues. Mr. Jacobsen (205) of Denmark now includes coins of Tranquebar. Mr. Kuhn (273) of West Germany is seeking to compile a complete list of Chinese mints and asks members to write to him with details of anything new or rare. Mr. K. Wiggins has a copy of 'The currencies of China', E. Kann, Shanghai 1926, for sale or exchange and I have a selection of Islamic and Moslem Indian coins available; also two brass bound coin cabinets. Mr. Weller has provided offprints of his article on Turkic countermarks in the Numismatic Circular (Dec. 1975): available from Michael Broome (2 IRCs for postage).

Subscriptions

General section members are asked to note that the renewal rate for one year's subscription is 5-00 US dollars plus 40 cents to cover bank charges on cheques or money orders. The 40 cents need not be paid when remitting ordinary currency notes. Payment can be made in any currency to the equivalent of 5-00 dollars.

Information sheets.

Mr. Rhodes' information sheet on the coinage of Bhutan has been delayed but should be distributed in September. The following draft copies of papers have been submitted :-

- Dr. Arroyo Ottoman coinage of Tilimsan
- Mr. Barron Coins of the Jalayirids
- Mr. Pawlik Coinage of the Ispahbads of Tabaristan
- Mr. Shaw Modern Burmese coins
- Dr. Tarizzo Early Arab coins of Tunisia: 2 - The Aghlabids
- Mr. Walker Bibliography of the figured bronze coinage of the Turkomans
- Mr. Wiggins Queen Victoria rupees of Bhartpur

Other papers in preparation have been cited in previous newsletters, especially Jan. 1975 (no. 35). Members with new information relating to any of these publications please contact the authors concerned.

Editor for Medieval India.

Dr. P. L. Gupta (507) of, India has offered to act as editor for Information Sheets on Medieval Indian series. Any member wishing to offer such a paper should write first to Dr. Gupta.

Numismatic Society founded in Pakistan.

(a letter from David Briggs)

The first-ever Numismatic Society in Pakistan was founded on 23rd. June at a meeting in Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan, under the chairmanship of Mr. Yusuf Buch, Special Assistant to Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. The idea for the Society was first proposed last January in a lecture at Islamabad by Mr. William Spengler, U.S. Consul General in Lahore and a prominent American Numismatist. Mr. Spengler, who was declared a 'founder member' of the Society, completed his assignment in Lahore on 25th. June and returned

home. Other 'founder members' of the new Society are Mr. Buch, Begum Mumtaz Rashidi (Secretary), Dr. Ahmad Hasan Dani (Dean of Social Sciences Islamabad University), Mr. Shariful Hasan (Director General Pakistan National Centre), Dr. Mohammed Ishtiaq Khan (Director of Pakistan's Dept. of Archeology & Museums, Karachi), Dr. S. Dar (Director of the Lahore Museum) and Mr. Fidaullah Sahrai (Director of the Peshawar Museum).

At this first meeting the Society agreed to invite Prime Minister Bhutto to be its patron. It also named Mr. Buch as its President and Dr. Dani as Chairman of its executive committee. Plans discussed included the publication of an annual journal, establishment of a coin cabinet and formation of a numismatic library.

In his inaugural speech Mr. Buch noted that Pakistan has a rich history as indicated by the coins of the region. He regretted that proper attention had not been paid to numismatics since the country was founded but pledged the Society determined to fill the gap. Mr. Buch paid tribute to Mr. Spengler for suggesting the formation of the Society and said that it should welcome participation in its membership by numismatists from other countries.

Enquiries about membership should be addressed to Begum Mumtaz Rashidi, Secretary, The Numismatic Society of Pakistan, Pakistan National Centre, Islamabad.

Annual Membership : 20-00 rupees (in Pakistan), £ 2-00 (Europe), 5-00 US dollars (America, Australasia) and the equivalent of 30-00 Pakistan rupees elsewhere. Life and Institutional memberships are available. The Journal will be sent free to all members.

Indian Native States : Tonk State.

As the coins of Tonk State appear to be rather uncommon it is doubtful if many further additions will be made to the very complete and comprehensive corpus compiled by Mr. Jan Lingen in IS. no. 12 (Nov. 1975). I should, however, like to add one coin which has recently come to light : -

AE. weight 80 grains (5.184 grammes)

The obverse appears to be the same as Mr. Lingen's Class III, F type a, while the reverse is a completely new arrangement of the Mohammad Ibrahim Ali Khan legend with the date split on either side of the fly whisk mark. The general style of the coin and what can be seen of the mint name leaves no doubt that it is from Sironj mint. The weight suggests that the denomination is 1 pie. The date confirms Mr. Lingen's assertion that this mint was in operation as late as 1896.

K. W. Wiggins



Coins struck by Shaykh Sa'id of Ras Bab al Mandab, circa 1890.



At the end of the 19th. century the basic silver currency of regions around the mouth of the Red Sea was provided by Maria Theresa thalers and British India rupees, supplemented by Turkish silver and a motley collection of whatever came to hand (cfr. eg. Major F. Pridmore's survey of Yemeni coinage serialised in Seaby's Bulletin 1963). The opening of the Suez canal in 1869 improved local prosperity, provoking the production of local silver coinage: the first phase of countermarking available silver currency during the late 1880's and the 1890's. The issues of Qaiti on the Asian and Djibouti on the African side of the Red Sea mouth belong to this period. The headland of Ras Bab al Mandab juts into the mouth of the Red Sea from its African coast, creating Straits of the same name. Shaykh Sa'id, who controlled this strategic location during the period around 1890, struck his own coins which have not, so far as I know, been published previously : -

- 1) Maria Theresa thaler (1780) counterstamped by Shaykh Sa'id
- 2) British India rupee 1840 bearing the same counterstamp

Counterstamp : Al Shaykh Sa'id fi Ras Bab Al Mandab

الشيخ سعيد في راس باب المنذب

Weights 27.0 and 11.5 gm.

(the under coin type has not been drawn in detail)

M. B. Mitchiner

Recent Publications

This section will be continued in the October Newsletter

Iranian Hammered Coinage, 1500 - 1879 AD : 900 - 1296 AH
West Berlin 1975: 124 pp, illustrated in text, card covers. £ 7-50

by. H. Farahbakhsh

This is not a catalogue of coins nor a historical survey of the events documented by the four centuries of coinage described. The author's main purpose, as stated in his preface, is to determine the denomination of each coin by relating its weight in misghals (1 misghal = 4.608 grammes) to various standards. Standards, expressed in terms of the number of misghals to a toman, arrived at from a study of contemporary documents, such as the Tadhkiratu al Muluk, supplemented by a knowledge of the weights of many thousand coins. The result is a most useful book which supplements, though it does not replace, both Lane Poole's *Catalogue of the coins of the Shahs of Persia in the British Museum* and Rabino di Borgomale's two volumes, *Coins, medals and seals of the Shahs of Iran 1500 - 1941* and *Album of coins, medals and seals of the Shahs of Iran (1500 - 1948)*. Each page is written in English and Persian set opposite each other, with legends in the centre. The main events of each ruler's career are noted, together with his recorded coin legends and mint towns. Each metrological standard that the author has identified is defined and coins struck to it are given denominations and unique reference numbers. Their weights are noted in Misghals and Nokhods (24 nokhods = 1 misghal); grains and grammes. Full sized photographs of coins are provided against almost every reference number, the few omissions being mainly the rarer gold coins. Although sometimes lacking in definition, it is these illustrations which provide the main reason for buying this book. As in Rabino di Borgomale's Album, the weight and mint of each coin are noted. The large number of mints represented and the ability to see coins of the same weight set against each other enhance the utility of the present book. For example, Rabino shows 4 coins of Tahmasp II from 3 mints where Farahbakhsh has 31 coins from 8 mints. For Fath 'Ali Shah the comparisons are 60 coins from 22 mints versus 116 from 26 mints. On the other hand many of the illustrations, particularly of rare coins, are the same in both books; with those in Rabino's book sometimes clearer. Farahbakhsh does not deal at all with seals and medals, or with autonomous copper coinage. Another omission concerns coins struck between 900 and 910 which are either anonymous or without a date and struck to a standard of 28 and 56 grains. The reviewer is not in a position to judge the validity of the changes in standards quoted, nor the authority behind the assigned denominations. Certain coins exist (eg. Meshad 1279 weighing 83 grains) with weights inappropriate to their date if the revised standards are applied to all mints. There are a number of unimportant typographical errors in the English text and a few mis-attributions, such as the 2 Ghaz piece of Tahmasp I dated 930 which is really a Shirwan Shah issue; but, in general, the book is a welcome and valuable addition to the published literature on the subject. Should a second edition be produced it would be helpful if the list of Tahmasp I mints could be added and a more robust binding used.

M. R. Broome

Indo-Greek and Indo-Scythian Coinage

by Michael Mitchiner

in 9 volumes; the first four already available and the next four expected before the year's end. Price £15 per volume with an initial subscription offer at £9.

Dr. Mitchiner has not only written this work and taken all the photographs (several thousand) but is personally responsible for its publication, the rather high cost being due to the limited number of copies being printed and the cost of reproducing photographed material.

The series covers the period from circa 330 BC until circa AD 400 and the coinage of the Bactrians and their antecedents, the Sakas, Pahlavas, Western Satraps and contemporary coinages of the Kushans, Sogdians, City and Tribal states, etc.

Since the time of General Cunningham a great deal of new material has come to light and many eminent numismatists have contributed to furthering our understanding of these coinages. W. Tarn, a historian, tried with some success to put the history of the Indo-Greeks into some sort of order, but what Dr. Mitchiner has done is to assemble all the pieces and theories, and with a great deal of study of metrology, contemporary sources and the coins themselves, create a complete picture from the jig-saw puzzle. This work is destined to become a standard reference work not only for the history of this period and area but as a catalogue of its coinage. Dr. Mitchiner has shown in his previous works this very rare talent for seeing the 'Gestalt' or whole form of a large area with its complex monetary systems. Some experts might disagree with some of his theories but the body cannot I think be denied and the amount of single-handed work that has gone into producing this milestone in Indian Numismatics can be measured from the innumerable tables and references. The style is clear and very easy to read and understand, even for a non-specialist in this series of coinages. The only criticisms I would make are rather petty and concern presentation: of the maps, a few coins omitted and the volumes format; but they in no way detract from the importance of the overall work and I look forward with eager anticipation to the forthcoming volumes.

R. C. Senior