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**Newsletter number 79****August 1982****Members news**

The new List of Members has now been circulated. The next publication will be a paper by Mr. N. G. Rhodes on Ga-den Tankas. A publication devoted to collecting, correlating and publishing short notes recording new numismatic information (such as unpublished coin types) is being initiated. The address to write to is Howard and Frances Simmons, PO Box 104, Leytonstone, London E11 1ND (Tel. 01-989-8097). ~~Interests~~ Interests have been amended to Peace Medals relating to the 1914-18 war including those from India, South-east Asia, Africa and the Pacific regions of the British Commonwealth and Empire.

**Meetings**

Some fifteen members attended the July meeting in London and listened to a talk by Nick Rhodes on early Tibetan coinage. The tea prepared by Mrs. Oddy was most welcome. The next ONS meeting in London has been provisionally arranged for Saturday November 6th. and a short talk on some new evidence relating to South-east Asian coinage will be given by Dr. Mitchiner. The meeting will be held at 28 Little Russell Street, as before. Please contact Mr. Wiggins or Mr. Cribb for further details.

The next continental meeting for Collectors of Indian Coins will be held at the Hotel Mondial in Koln (near Central Station) on Saturday November 6th., commencing at 10-30 am. Short papers will be presented by Dr. Gabrisch, Mr. Jacknath and Dr. von Kleist concerning various aspects of the coins of Tibet, Nepal and India. Please contact Dr. von Kleist for details.

The 70th. Annual Conference of the Numismatic Society of India will take place on the 7th to 9th. November at Vikram University, Ujjain (Madhya Pradesh). Please contact Dr. K. C. Jain, Professor and Head, Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archeology, Vikram University for further details.

**Some Forgeries**

Mr. Michael Broome notes that a Maria Theresia taler minted in Brussels in 1936 or 1937 has been found with the large "Nejd" countermark, normally dated rather earlier. He also notes a number of Abbasid dinars of common dates from Misr that are counterfeit. Dr. M. L. Smith writes on "Quantity production of counterfeits of bronze Chinese antique coins in Hong Kong" that - While I was in Hong Kong last November I was taken to visit a display centre-cum-casting factory in the New Territories. The main activity was turning out copies of antiques of all kinds: of bronze statues, bowls and more exotic objects, but there was also a sizeable production of Chinese cash - mainly of the Sung dynasty. These were for free distribution to visitors to the 'Sung dynasty' village - a very popular attraction. These must have been produced by the many thousand. There were also 'antiqued' copies of various types of Spade money: two of them resembled Carson's coins (1962) illus. 996 and 1000. The other was a much older design of a large cash with squatting figure attached. Familiar, but I have no reference. The proprietor was an artist who spent much time in the Hong Kong museum copying items there and designing the moulds. They were first-class reproductions and if they got into the wrong hands after sale, and were suitably treated could easily deceive most non-specialists. The factory has a large output of these coins so they could surface almost anywhere. I brought home a sample of each for interest.

### Chinese engraved silver Presentation Pieces: circa 1853 /1912

by Michael Mitchiner

During the second half of the 19th. century and the last decade of the Empire a series of silver presentation pieces was produced in China by use of a very characteristic engraving technique. Their manufacture appears to have commenced at about the time of the T'ai P'ing rebellion (1850 - 1864) and the early specimens tended to bear numismatic designs referring them to the T'ai P'ing rebels. The later emissions show some refinement of engraving technique and they evolve a more frankly amuletic form. Pictorial designs combined with a suitably auspicious inscription tend to take the place of an Imperial legend. Although some evolution in the engraving technique can be discerned this whole series of engraved silver presentation pieces is remarkably coherent and one may reasonably surmise that the whole series was produced during a short span of years. This conclusion would also fit in with the rarity of surviving specimens.

#### 1/ The T'ai P'ing period: 1850 - 1864

Among the earliest of these engraved presentation pieces are those bearing the numismatic inscription "T'ien Kuo / Sheng Pao" (Celestial State - Sacred Currency). These are illustrated as coins (silver and gold) of the T'ai P'ing (Great Peace) rebellion in the current edition of the Krause-Mishler coin catalogue<sup>1</sup> and in the Numismatic Chronicle<sup>2</sup>. The inscription on these silver (and gold) presentation pieces is the same as on bronze cash cast by the T'ai P'ing rebels<sup>3</sup>. Another presentation piece that has evolved slightly further away from a numismatic prototype has recently been published<sup>4</sup> and it is also catalogued below (no. 1). It bears the inscription "T'ai P'ing T'ien Tzu / T'ien P'ing" (The T'ai P'ing Emperor - Heavenly Peace) and was probably also engraved during the period of the T'ai P'ing rebellion. Slightly further removed from currency, but still bearing some numismatic affinity, is a cash size silver presentation piece<sup>5</sup> on which the auspicious obverse legend "Yen Cheng Wen Bao" (Speech is righteous, Literature is a treasure - or alternatively The Speech of righteous cash currency) is combined with a standard numismatic reverse type - the Manchu mint signature "Bao Chuan" (Board of Revenue mint, Peking).

The latter two silver pieces were made by exactly the same technique as one another. Both have been mounted and they were acquired together in a London market. Their close affinities suggest a similar origin for the two specimens - an origin as presentation pieces made during the period of the T'ai P'ing rebellion.

The various forms of T'ai P'ing presentation pieces appear to be the earliest representatives for this class of engraved artefact. This would provide a date of AD 1853 as the earliest possible time for the inception of manufacture. The T'ai P'ing rebellion lasted from 1850 until 1864, but rebel coinage only commenced in 1853. The fifteen, or so, engraved silver (and gold) presentation pieces of this class in the British Museum were acquired by that body at various dates from the 1860's onwards - further confirmation that manufacture commenced during the period of the T'ai P'ing rebellion.

#### 1 "The T'ai P'ing Emperor"

Silver: 1.4 grams, diam. 16 mm. (Mitchiner)

Obv. T'ai P'ing T'ien Tzu

Rev. T'ien P'ing

Manufacture: from a flat disc the margins and the characters have been outlined by engraving and the field has been recessed by hammering that has left a finely stippled effect.



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The normal inscription on the most closely related T'ai P'ing rebel bronze cash coins is T'ai P'ing T'ien Kuo (T'ai P'ing Celestial State). The legend T'ai P'ing T'ien Tzu means T'ai P'ing Emperor, the phrase T'ien Tzu (Son of Heaven) being a standard formula denoting the Emperor. The reverse inscription, T'ien P'ing, means Heavenly Peace. It is modified from such legends as T'ien Kuo (Heavenly State) which appear on the reverse of T'ai P'ing rebel cash coins.

“Speech is Righteous, Literature is a Treasure”  
 Silver: 2.14 grams, diam. 21 mm. (Mitchiner)  
 Obv. Yen Cheng Wen Bao  
 Rev. Bao Chuan  
 Manufacture: as previous



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The reading of the obverse inscription given here is a fairly characteristic amuletic form, but it is not the only possible reading for this inscription. The character Wen can also be translated Cash and the character Bao also means Currency; so one could read 'The Speech of Righteous Cash Currency': 'Speak forth, the Cash of Just Currency'; or various other permutations on this theme. The mint name on the reverse appears to be intentionally fictitious, as on other specimens catalogued below. Although the closest reading is Chuan, indicating the Peking Board of Revenue mint, the character Chuan seems to have been engraved incorrectly on purpose (lower part malformed).

II/ The T'ung Chih period: 1862 - 1875

Presentation pieces of the T'ung Chih period are similar to those of the T'ai P'ing period, but they tend to be better made and are closer to standard cash size. It is still normal practise for the whole design to be created using a single tool – a feature that was to change on the more amuletic later specimens.

3. “T'ung Chih currency”: dated to AD 1871

Silver: 7.5 gm., diam. 26 mm. (Mitchiner)  
 Obv. T'ung Chih T'ung Pao  
 Rev. Pao Su (Suchow in Kiangsu)  
 Cyclical date for AD 1871

The mint signature would appear to be fictitious. This piece is particularly carefully manufactured.



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4. “T'ung Chih currency”

Silver: not weighed, diam. 19 mm. (F. Billioud)  
 Obv. T'ung Chih Yuan Pao  
 Rev. Pao Yuan (Peking Board of Works mint)

The Manchu character Yuan is incorrectly rendered (as on the next two pieces: vide also no. 2 supra).



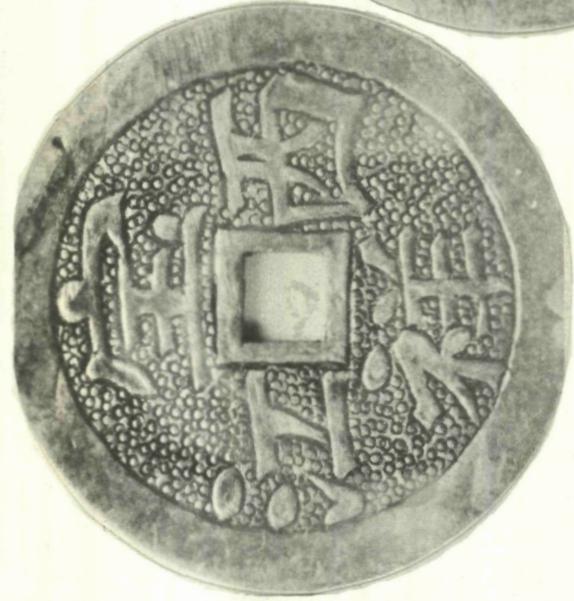
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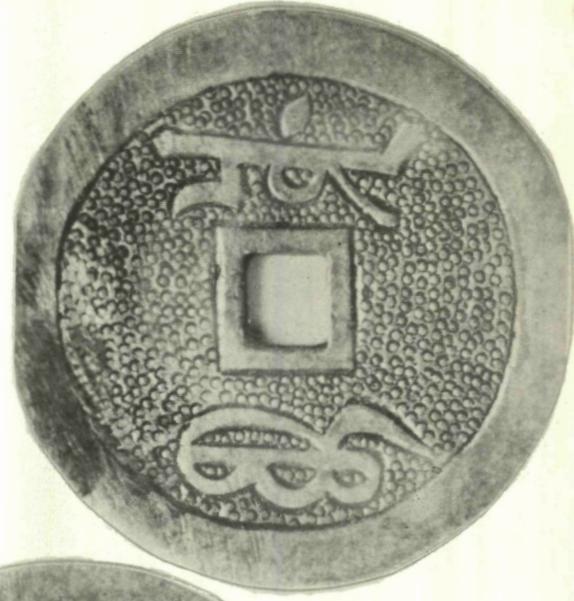
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All photographs are enlarged with a view to demonstrating the engraving technique as clearly as possible. Numbers 1, 2 and 7 are enlarged three times, numbers 4, 5 and 6 slightly more. Numbers 3, 8 and 9 being slightly larger specimens are enlarged twice.

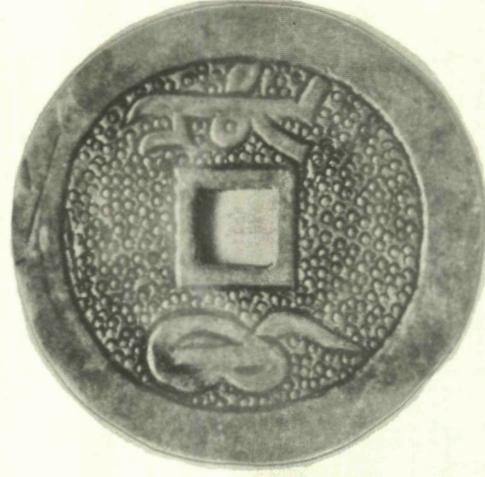
I am grateful to Monsieur F. Billioud for the photographs of his three pieces published here.



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6. "Eight portions of one whole"  
Silver: not weighed, diam. 17 mm. (F. Billioud)  
Obv. Pa Fen Chih Yuan  
Rev. Pao Yuan

This specimen also has the same incorrect form of the character Yuan. Considering also the virtually identical engraving style/technique; tool shape, tool size and angle of applied force; one can again suggest that these three pieces (nos. 4 - 6) were all made by the same engraver.

III/ The Kuang Hsu period: 1875 - 1908

This cash-style specimen differs little in general form, fabric and engraving technique from the previous issues.



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7. "Kuang Hsu currency"  
Silver: 3.85 gm., diam. 23 mm. (Mitchiner)  
Obv. Kuang Hsu T'ung Pao  
Rev. Pao Chuan/Yuan

The mint character most closely resembles Chuan (Peking Board of Revenue), but it has the posterior stroke of the not dissimilar character Yuan (Peking Board of Works). The fictitious form of the mint character was probably intentional – as with the mint character Yuan on nos. 4 to 6.

5. "Precious Good Omen, Western River"  
Silver: not weighed, diam. 21 mm. (F. Billioud)  
Obv. Pao Hsiang Hsi Chiang  
Rev. Pao Yuan

The incorrectly engraved character Yuan has the same form as on the previous specimen (no. 4) and may well be a contemporary product of the same engraver.