

ORIENTAL NUMISMATIC SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER No. 126
September - October 1990

ONS News

1. Because of pressure of work, Michael Legg has had to relinquish the job of Membership Secretary which he has fulfilled since the middle of 1987. On behalf of all members, I should like to thank Michael for his efforts on behalf of the society. The post has been taken over by Paul Withers (Galata Print, Park House, Albert Road, Wolverhampton WV6 0AG, England). Paul and his wife, Bente, are already closely associated with the society as they have been typesetting and printing the Newsletter in recent years. Would all Regional Secretaries please send all future membership information to Paul at the above address.
2. Would South Asian members please note that from 1991 the subscription in Indian rupees will be increased from Rs 75 to Rs 100.
3. At the time of writing, final arrangements are being made for the Oriental Numismatic Congress in Nagpur. Your Editor, unfortunately, is unable to attend the Congress but it is hoped nonetheless to provide good coverage of the events in the next Newsletter. Dr Michael Mitchiner has been appointed General President of the Congress and we wish both him and all other participants a very successful time. A number of copper medals have been struck to commemorate the congress.
4. A reminder that the next ONS meeting in London will be on Saturday 10 November, 14.00 at 9 Montague Street, London WC1. Ken Wiggins will give a talk on the coins of the Sudan.
5. I am now running short of articles for publication. Suitable contributions would be welcome.

New & Recent Publications

1. Some books available from the Indian Books Centre, 40/5, Shakti Nagar, Delhi-110 007, India:
V K Jain - Trade & Traders in Western India, New Delhi 1990, xvi, 303p. Rs 275. Covers period 1000-1300 AD.
H K Naqvi - History of Mughal Government & Administration, Delhi, 1990, viii, 340p. Rs 300.
R. Pande - Succession in the Delhi Sultanate, New Delhi 1990, xii, 203p. Rs 200.
S. Subrahmanyam - Improvising Empire: Portuguese Trade & Settlement in the Bay of Bengal 1500-1700, Delhi 1990, 306p. Rs 215.
2. Numismatic Digest vol. 14 for 1990 will be published shortly and will be available for Rs 100 (or \$20) from the Indian Institute of Research in Numismatic Studies, P.O. Anjaneri, Dist. Nasik, Maharashtra 422213, India.
3. Prashant Kulkarni's book on the Coins of the Bhonsla Rajas of Nagpur will be available soon at a price of Rs 200 (Rs 150 pre-publication price).
4. Newsletter no. 4 (October 1990) of the Indian Coin Society contains the following items of interest:
 B. Chumble - Chariot on an Ancient Indian Coin. A silver plated copper coin weighing 2.85g, attributed to the Madhya Pradesh area of 2nd century BC.
 A. M. Shastri - Unique Coin of Vakataka Prithivishena (II?). A copper coin weighing 0.63g, found at Paunar in the Wardha district of the Vidarbha region which formed the core of the Vakata kingdom. The coin bears the partial legend '... hārāja-Prithivi'. This is apparently the first published coin of the Vakatakas.
 J. S. Deyell - Two extraordinary coins of AH 965 - Part 1. A silver *tanka* of Akbar from Bengal, weighing 10.43g. The reverse legend reads 'Sultan Jalal-ud-din Akbar ibn Muhammad Humayun Ghazi khald Allah mulkahu wa Sultanahu 965'. As Deyell mentions, this coin is unusual because 1) it mentions Humayun as his father, 2) the title Sultan totally supplants the usual Badshah, 3) it is struck on the silver tanka standard and 4) it quotes a date of 965 when according to historians no part of Bengal was under Akbar's control ! Although no mint appears on the coin, the style is definitely that of Bengal.
 P. Bakhari - The Din-Panah Mohur of Jahangir. A mohur of Burhanpur mint, weighing 10.95g with the legend 'Sikka zad dar shahar Burhanpur Shah din panah; Shah Nuruddin Jahangir ibn Akbar Badshah'.
 P K Kulkarni - Counterfeit 1939 rupees from Bombay.
5. Stephen Album has published his list no. 69; Bill Warden & N. Economopoulos recently published a joint list of ancient & Islamic coins.

Book Press Release — Important Annam Coin Books again available.

Two long out-of-print standard references on Annamese coins are again available to collectors and dealers: Albert Schroeder's *Annam Etudes Numismatiques, Plates & Descriptions*, and John Novak's *A Working Aid For Collectors of Annamese Coins*.

Annam Etudes Numismatiques by Albert Schroeder has long been recognized as the premier work on Annamese coins. Its coverage of gold and silver coinage in this 1895 work is unequaled. Though Schroeder numbers are widely used by dealers and collectors, few will ever possess a copy of the book due to its extreme scarcity and high cost. Originals of the work have sold for over \$1000.

To provide collectors and dealers with the key elements of this standard reference, yet keep the cost down to a reasonable level, only those plates dealing directly with the coins, and their accompanying text, have been reprinted. The result is a convenient 225 page softcover book. Though the text is in the original French, it is easily understood with even a limited knowledge of the language. Albert Schroeder's *Etudes Numismatiques, Plates & Descriptions* retails for \$39.50.

A Working Aid for Collectors of Annamese Coins, Revised edition by John Novak, is designed to aid collectors in attributing their Annamese coins. Coins are arranged in stroke count order, making it easy to quickly "look up" a coin. The book references a number of other important works on Annamese coins, including Schroeder, Toda, Schjöth and others. This revised edition includes indexes and corrections not found in the original. The card cover work contains 118 pages and sells for \$10.

Both books are available from the publisher, Joel Anderson, P.O. Box 3016, Merced, CA 95344. One dollar per volume should be added to include cover shipping costs to either domestic or foreign addresses. Dealer and distributor inquiries are invited.

Book Reviews

MONEY OF THE PEOPLE - A Survey of some 18th & 19th century tokens of India. By Roma Niyogi. Pp. 92, 20 plates. Indian Museum, Calcutta, 1989. Rs 100.

In this book Dr. Niyogi deals with two types of Indian coin-like objects; Ramatankas, more commonly termed "temple tokens" and base silver pieces imitating the Bengal rupees of the East India Company, circa 1793-1835. The place and time of the origin of the Ramatankas is obscure, as is also the precise use for which they were manufactured. The writer discusses these points and is in general agreement with earlier writers that they were religious pieces, looked upon as objects of worship and at one time were offered in the holy places and temples to gods and priests or presented as blessings by the gods and priests as presents to their devotees and disciples. Her main theme, however, is that these Ramatankas were used as currency in 18th and 19th century Bengal. There is virtually no evidence to support this thesis but she details certain circumstances prevailing at the time, mainly the shortage of silver in Bengal, which tend to indicate that Ramatankas could have been used in commercial transactions. It is a fact that there was an acute shortage of silver during the period stated. There was also a dearth of copper coinage. Prinsep lists but a few copper coins that were current in Bengal. Much use was made of cowries for small change. Some support for Dr. Niyogi's claim may be found in the Bombay Gazetteer, Vol. XXII (Dharwar) where it would appear that the earlier South Indian gold pieces had at least an intrinsic, if not a commercial value. It states that a Ram tenki was worth 80 rupees, a Padma tenki 18 rupees and a Hanmant tenki 18 rupees. Presumably they were used as currency. Dr. Niyogi has not mentioned the Islamic pieces struck in imitation of the rupees of Akbar and later Mughal emperors on the grounds that these would hardly have been used as currency by the devout Muslims. As most Islamic coins bear a religious inscription this objection is hardly valid.

The pieces resembling the East India Company's Bengal silver coinage have been classified under two headings — Indo-British Tokens and Indo-British Coin Tokens. Dr Niyogi considers the former to be jewellery or ornament pieces. They were certainly not manufactured for use as currency as they bear the names of various jewellers or silversmiths and could be considered as a form of advertisement ticket. It might be remarked here that many bear signs of having been mounted on necklaces or bracelets. In her concluding sentence the writer suggests that these ornament pieces were used as coin by ignorant persons, but whether they would be acceptable by an acute Indian tradesman as genuine coin is hardly conceivable. These pieces are probably not as old as is thought; this reviewer has one which is dated VS 1966 (AD 1909).

The second class of token, termed Indo-British Coin Tokens, by the author, comprises pieces which are similar to the Indo-British Tokens. They are usually palpable copies of the 19 san Murshidabad mohurs and rupees, rather roughly engraved and struck. Quite a few are known in gold, silver and baser metals and some have letters in English on the obverse. Dr Niyogi suggests that these tokens probably had a limited circulation, presumably amongst trades people and within different companies, in order to overcome the shortage of legal currency. There is no evidence to support this contention and one would have thought that if such was the use of these pieces it would have been mentioned by contemporary writers such as James Prinsep.

Chapter 5 gives the reader a detailed account of the designs and legends that occur on the religious tokens, all of which is useful to persons who collect these items and wish to classify them. Mention is made of the Sikh religious tokens but those from Assam appear to have escaped the notice of the author.

One hundred and forty nine tokens have been meticulously catalogued under various headings. Unfortunately, these include a copper paisa struck at the instance of W. J. Hessing, Governor of Agra, c.1800-1803, a Madras 1/2 dub of the East India Company, a New Zealand token and a Glasgow Transport token. Presumably these were included as examples of tokens used in other parts of the world.

There are two appendices; one dealing with the enigmatic dates that appear on the Ramatankas. Some speculative comments have been made by the author on the meaning of these dates. The second appendix attempts to ascribe certain tokens to various regions and to give examples that influence their design. The reader will not be too impressed with the fanciful suggestion that the design of one Ramatanka, which she attributes to the Madras region, is based upon the 1797 English copper coinage of Boulton and Watt of Birmingham.

The photographs which are set out on twenty plates at the end of the book are of excellent quality and may easily be referred to from the catalogue.

This book will be particularly useful to those who collect or are interested in these types of numismatic material of India. Of particular value is the catalogue and the photographs. Not a great deal has previously been published about these tokens. Brotman's work is rather sketchy and Pridmore did not consider them in any great detail. It is a pity that Dr Niyogi did not extend her enquiries to a larger number of museums and collectors in order to enhance the catalogue. Several fine collections of Ramatankas exist outside India. This book should certainly be in the possession of any collector of temple tokens or, for that matter, anybody with an interest in Indian numismatics.

K Wiggins

SULTAN MAHMUT II ZAMANINDA DARP EDILEN OSMANLI MADENI PARALARI 3 No.'lu Kitaba Ek, By Cüneyt Ölcer. İstanbul, 1990. 6 x 9 1/2 in. Stiff paper covers, 64pp (including 8 tables and 3 plates). Available from Numismata Orientalia, P.O. Box 212, Tenafly, NJ 07670, \$12.50 post paid.

This supplement to Mr Ölcer's third book on Ottoman coinage entitled Ottoman Coins minted during the reign of Sultan Mahmud II published in 1970 includes a foreword written by him on January 28th 1990 (a few days prior to his untimely death). It has been seen through the press by a colleague member of the Turkish Numismatic Society, Mr. Celil Ender who adds a short foreword.

The eight tables from the original work have been revised to include the additional coins, 38 gold, 94 silver and 21 copper which are listed and described with some line drawings and 20 coins illustrated on 3 plates. Coins from two new mints, Medea and Van which were not in the previous work are of interest.

The coins of Mahmud published in his Books No. 4 (Moscow and Leningrad Museums) and No. 9 (European Museums) are included. Most of the coins showing various regnal years are to be found listed in the SCWC 17th edition.

K. MacKenzie.

Press Notice - XIth International Numismatic Congress — Brussels, 8th - 12th September 1991

General setting of the Congress

The XIth International Numismatic Congress, to be held in Brussels in September 1991, is organized under the auspices of the International Numismatic Commission, a world organization related to Unesco via the International Commission for History, and which unites important scientific bodies: monetary institutions, mints, banks, scientific societies, all greater numismatic collections belonging to national libraries or museums, the main senior scholars related to the field.

Such congresses are held every six or seven years, the most recent was organised in London, September 1986. It was then decided that the next city for the congress should be Brussels for the following reasons:

- 100 years ago, the first such Congress was held in Brussels at the initiative of our Royal Numismatic Society.
- our Royal Numismatic Society, one of the oldest and the most active in the world after the British and the French, will celebrate its 150th anniversary the same year;

- this will also be the anniversary of our regular scientific publication, the *Revue belge de numismatique*, a journal with a worldwide audience.

Consequently, H. M. King Baudouin granted his High Patronage and we are honoured equally by the Patronage of Dr. Jaques Delors, President of the Commission of the European Community and Dr. Philippe Maystadt, Minister of Finance of Belgium as well as of the National Bank of Belgium.

The London Congress attracted some 600 participants from all over the world: this figure could well be exceeded because Brussels is better situated, reachable by rail and road from a number of places in Europe at cheap rate. Also, because we started our advertising last year, we have so far received 1000 enquiries with about 300 offers for the presentation of scientific papers.

We have already hired the main congress hall of the Palais des Congrès (1400 places, with six adjacent halls for lectures, and facilities such as telephones, fax, bank, travel agency and a restaurant for 400 people), thanks to the sponsorship by the Banque Nationale de Belgique.

We have also received some important sponsorship to help finance the participation of Eastern scholars or scholars from countries with exchange difficulties. We have also reserved accommodation for younger people, with standard comfort at low prices. These measures will make sure that the international character of this meeting is as world-wide as one could wish.

The various sections of the Congress are partly the traditional ones, such as Greek, Roman, Medieval, Oriental, Modern numismatics, but in addition our Committee has decided to provide for new stimulating topics: the development of monetary techniques, jetons and medals, primitive money and, especially, the evolution from mechanized coin-striking to banknotes and nowadays electronic money. For these topics, we are sure that such world specialists as Dr. Richard Doty, from the Smithsonian Institution and Dr. Virginia Hewitt, from the British Museum, are going to chair and organize the sessions. We also very much want to bring these sections to the attention of all the specialists who work in bank collections and who very often are not directly known to their other numismatic colleagues.

A workshop session on current research on Islamic Numismatics will be organised by the ONS. It will be chaired by Dr Michael Bates and will provide an informal opportunity for people to learn of new research and to describe their own studies.

The organising Committee comprises Prof. P. Naster, ambassador Luc Smolderen, Dr Jean Jadot, Dr M. Colaert, Miss Christiane Logie, Mr Raf Van Laere, Eng. J. Schoonheydt, Captain Dengis, Dr Raymond Weiller (Luxembourg, Secretary General of the International Commission), Mr A. G. Van der Dussen (Maastricht, Delegate of the International Association of Professional Numismatists) and Miss Ghislaine Moucharte, M.A., secretary general.

Several special issues of a commemorative medal, special tokens of ECU value for the days of the Congress, a special coin struck for the occasion and a postal stamp are being prepared.

In order to welcome our guests not only to Belgium, but also to the heart of Europe, we are actively preparing a European exhibition, sponsored by the European Community and illustrating the various coinages that had international or interregional importance through history. This exhibition will be organised in the Royal Library. Another exhibit will illustrate Greek coinage and Greek Art parallelly. At the Royal Museum in Mariemont, medals illustrating industrial archaeology will be on show and in Antwerp, family medals and tokens of the Ancien Régime will be shown in a bank exhibit. Mariemont and Antwerp represent a choice of destination for the Excursion day.

Applications to participate should be sent to Dottorella Ghislaine Moucharte, Collège Erasme, Place Blaise Pascal, B 1348 Louvain-la-Neuve. Fax: 32-10-472999. Tel: 32-2-474880.

The following article is published as a posthumous tribute to its late author.

The Turks of Bust by Raymond J. Hebert

Among the coins on the trays of the National Numismatic Collections of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. are several rare or unpublished pieces believed to have come from the vicinity of Bust (Qal'a-i Bist) and Lashkari Bazar in the southeast of Afghanistan, on the now deserted banks of the Helmand, near its confluence with the Arghandab, on the stretch of route through Girishk between Herat and Kandahar.¹ The pieces were said to have been surface finds.

Included were two specimens of the published and hitherto unique bronze piece of Bust,² 420 AH = January 20, 1029 - January 9, 1030, in the name of the rebel, Baituz.³ These pieces are described below, nos. 1-2.

Obverse:

Reverse:

o

Decoration

الله مولى

الله مولى

الله وحده

الله وحده

لا شريك له

لا شريك له

o o

Margin:

Margin:

ضرب هنا الفتن بيت سے
تھے وغیرہ ونکت ما

Illegible

In addition, may I add here four other pieces from the same area which as far as I know are unique and unpublished.

No. 3. Bronze, 7.7mm, 0.782 grams

Nos. 4-6. 21.8mm, 1.404 grams, broken;

22.1mm, 2.046 grams, holed; 24mm, 4.284 grams, broken.

Obverse

Reverse

Obscure

Obverse

Reverse

الله

بِاللَّهِ

محمد

سَلَّمَ

رسول الله

سَلَّمَ

جعفر

سَلَّمَ

جعفر

سَلَّمَ

Margin: Qur'an xxx 3-4

الله امر من قبل ومن بعد ويومئذ

يفرح المؤمنون بنصر الله

اکھدی واربعین وثمانی

Because of the condition of the pieces, reading them has been tricky. The margin of the obverse of number 3 should be bil-wafa'bi'llah, "with equity in God", while bil-aswad may mean "with the more (or most) illustrious (or powerful)". The field legends are simply the Muslim statement of faith, "There is no God but God, He is alone. (There is) no partner to Him" and "Muhammad is the Messenger of God".

If my reading of the date of nos. 4-6 is correct, 341 AH = May 29, 952 - May 18, 953, we should be in the time of the Saffarid Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Khalaf b. Layth (310-352 = AD 922-963). According to the *Tarikh-e Sistan*,⁴

In the year 341 AH/952AD,[†] factionalism broke out among the people of Uq, as between the followers of Shangol (?) and the followers of Zaturaq(?). Abu'l-Fath went there and restrained them. But then Abu'l-Fath himself defected because of Tazi Mondarek (?), and after coming out in rebellion, he left the city and went to Karkuy and from there to Quqa. Amir Abu Ja'far dispatched Razdani and the army to track him down. Abu'l-Fath retreated and went to Jarvadkan, where the city mob rallied to him. The people there swore allegiance to Abu 'Abbas, the son of Taher ibn Mohammad ibn 'Amr ibn al-Lays, saying: "He is more worthy than Abu Ja'far of being the king of Numruz, because Abu 'Abbas is descended from the king on his father's side, whereas Abu Ja'far is descended from the king [only] on his mother's side." The people of Bashkar also joined in allegiance to Abu 'Abbas, who appointed Abu'l-Fath his army commander. Abu'l-Fath assembled the army, and proceeded to attack Sistan. He reached the gates of the city, where he was confronted by the army of Amir Abu Ja'far, and the battle ensued. But the Turks of Bost* arrived to the aid of Abu Ja'far, and Abu'l-Fath could not stand his ground against the combined forces, so he fled and his army plundered Jarvadkan and most of Pish-e Zarab on their way. Amir Abu Ja'far dispatched Razdani to Uq to track him down. But Razdani could not locate him, and set up headquarters in Uq. However, the people of Uq became refractory and gathered in Runj*, where a battle took place; they were defeated, and sixteen of their leaders killed. Afterwards Amir Abu Ja'far sent Ahmad ibn Ibrahim to Uq, and the people of the city became tranquil under his rule. Later Solayman ibn 'Awf arrived from Khorasan with three thousand men in response to Amir Abu Ja'far's letter, who had offered him quarter, and Amir Abu Ja'far gave him the district of Uq [to rule].

[†] Given in the text as 41 AH.

*These Turks were the followers of Qaratakin, who had plotted against the Samanid Nasr ibn Ahmad in 318 AH and had come from Balkh to Bost where he died (Bahar referring to Al-Kamel).

• Probably Barunj, a region near Zarang (Bahar).

The readings of pieces nos. 4-6 are problematical. It is possible to see bi'llah waliy'e or "By God, the helper or guardian of", in the first line of the reverse.

As for the obverse, the first three lines read "To God. Muhammad is the Messenger of God," and the margin reads "Of God is the Command from before (man existed) and from after (man shall cease to exist), and on that day the believers shall rejoice in the victory of God."

The third line of the reverse *may* read "and Nusayr (or Nāṣir)". The second word of the reverse, also occurring as the fourth line of the obverse, is puzzling. It may be a compound ending in -tegin (Steve Album remarked when he examined these pieces recently that it might be Jitegin or some such name). Could it be Chintegin? If so, who were Chintegin and Nāṣir? These names have no phonetic resemblance to Shangol or Zaturaq referred to in the *Tarikh-e Sistan*, or for that matter, to any of the other individuals mentioned in the reference.

Note that the Qur'anic legend xxx 3-4 translated above appears on the reverse of the piece weighing 4.284 grams, while the decade date of that same piece is tis' or "nine", the date probably being 339 AH = AD June 20, 950 - June 9, 951.

Notes

1. p.1334, J. Sourdel-Thomine, "Bust", *EI*.
2. For Bust as a mint name, Zambaur knew the Tahirid piece date 209 AH, and the Saffarid piece dated 298 AH p.72, E. v. Zambaur, *Die Münzprägungen des Islams*, Wiesbaden, Franz Steiner Verlag 1968.
3. no. 1, pp.1702-2, Jean-Claude Gardin, *Lashkari Bazar II. Les Trouvailles. Céramiques et monnaies de Lashkari Bazar et Bust*. Mémoires de la Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan Tome XVIII, Paris 1963. Gardin cites most of the references concerning the person whose name appears on these pieces.
4. pp.266-7, *Tarikh-e Sistan*, translated by Milton Gold, Royal Institute of Translation and Publication of Iran. Roma, Instituto Italiano per il medio ed estremo oriente 1976.

A New North-Afghan Dynasty? by R C Senior

The province of Sogdiana in ancient times lay south of the River Oxus and north of Bactria. Until the time of Euthydemos of Bactria it was part of the Bactrian Empire but then seems to have regained its independence. To the north-east lay the territory of the Scythians.

The coinage of Euthydemos depicts his portrait on the obverse and on the reverse Hercules sits on rocks holding a club, left. At some time in the middle of the second century BC Sogdiana threw off the Bactrian yoke and coins were issued imitating the coinage of Euthydemos — tetradrachms and a few drachms are known. The Scythians then erupted into Sogdiana and Bactria towards the end of the century and they also issued imitation Euthydemos tetradrachms. The Yueh-Chi, another branch of the Scythians followed suit at the beginning of the first century BC. Apart from these imitation Euthydemos tetradrachms a small group of obols and drachms exists which probably come from some areas bordering Sogdiana. The drachms of Pseigacharis have a standing Hercules on the reverse as do the obols of Pabes (see MIG 123, 513) and both share the same square letter Greek script. A new group has surfaced of obols which more closely resemble the Euthydemos prototype.

The obverse has a bearded bust with long plaited hair to the right. The reverse has seated Hercules left on rocks with club resting on the ground (not on rock or knee as on original Euthydemos coins). On the three specimens in my collection there appear portions of legend. The three coins may be of different rulers but if not then a possible reconstruction of the legend may be made. On coin (1) the legend reads PHACCOROY with square letters. The sixth letter *could* be a G and therefore read PHACCOGOY and one might even conjecture that the word could be split PHAC being the ending of the king's name and COGOY referring to SOGdiana as on the imitative coins above (see MIG 480, 493) but I prefer the first reading. On coin (2) we seem to have the same word right of Hercules but in addition Kharosthi Sa and A at 8-9 o'clock and Greek A at 9-10 o'clock. Coin (3) is uncertain left of the club but has Greek DA at 10-11 o'clock. There is room for one more letter before the PH behind Hercules and if we put all this together we arrive at ADA_PHACCOROY Sa-A. Only the appearance of more specimens can enable us to determine the true reading.

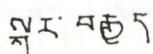


4 x actual size.

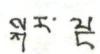
Forgeries of Tibetan Copper Coins from Northern India by Wolfgang Bertsch

In 1977 N. G. Rhodes¹ published a note on a forged Tibetan 7 1/2 Skar copper coin (Y 11), dated 15-43 (=AD 1909). Meanwhile I have been able to acquire the dies which were used to produce these forgeries (figs. 1 and 2). I also managed to get three dies used to make forgeries of the 5 Skar (Y A10) and the 2 1/2 Skar (Y 10) copper issues, both also dated 15-43 (figs. 3, 4 and 5). While the 7 1/2 Skar forgery is of quite good quality and could deceive unwary collectors, the forged 2 1/2 Skar and 5 Skar coins can easily be detected.

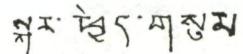
According to my information the forger was active in Gangtok (Sikkim) from about 1970 till his death in ca.1985.² Obviously he only had a genuine 7 1/2 Skar coin as sample to produce his forgeries. The dies for the 5 Skar and 2 1/2 Skar forgeries must have been copied so closely from the genuine 7 1/2 Skar coin that the forger forgot to engrave the proper Tibetan words for the respective denominations: On the 5 Skar rev. die we find the words "sKar phyed brgyad", meaning 7 1/2 Skar (literally "Skar half eight"), instead of "sKar lha" (fig. 5, below left). On the 2 1/2 Skar rev. die we find again the words "sKar phyed brgyad" instead of "sKar phyed gsum", meaning 2 1/2 Skar (literally "Skar half three"), as one would expect (fig. 4). This allows us to recognize the latter two forgeries at a glance.



"sKar phyed brgyad" = 7 ½ Skar



"sKar lha" = 5 Skar



"sKar phyed gsum" = 2 ½ Skar

The small chisel which I illustrate in fig. 5 was used to produce the reeding of the edges.

It is likely that the same forger also produced the forgeries of the 2 1/2 Skar coins dated 15-55 (=AD 1920) (Y A19)³ and of the 1 Srang silver coin dated 15-43 (AD 1909) which I have published elsewhere.⁴

References:

1. "Further forgeries", ONS Newsletter, no. 51.
2. The name of the forger is known to the author.
3. S. Semans, "Some more forgeries", ONS newsletter no. 50, Aug. 1977.
4. W. Bertsch, "Varieties of Tibet's Srang Issues", Numismatics International Bulletin, Vol. 20, Nr. 1, Jan. 1986, p.11, F 1.



Fig. 1.

left: obv. die of forged 7 1/2 Skar coin (diameter 29.1mm).
middle: obv. of forged 7 1/2 Skar coin (weight 11.85g, diameter 29.3mm).
right: obv. of genuine 7 1/2 Skar coin (weight 9.85g, diameter 29.5mm).



Fig. 2.

left: rev. die of forged 7 1/2 Skar coin (diameter 29.2mm, 39mm around the foot).
middle: rev. of forged 7 1/2 Skar coin.
right: rev. of genuine 7 1/2 Skar coin.



Fig. 3.

left: obv. die of forged 2 1/2 Skar coin (diameter 22.3mm).
right: obv. of genuine 2 1/2 Skar coin (weight 4g, diameter 23.2mm).



Fig. 4.
left: rev. die of forged 2 1/2 Skar coin (diameter 22.2mm).
middle: rev. of forged 2 1/2 Skar coin (weight 4.9g, diameter 23.3mm).
right: rev. of genuine 2 1/2 Skar coin.



Fig. 5.
below left: rev. die of forged 5 Skar coin (diameter 25mm).
upper left and below right: obv. and rev. dies of the 2 1/2 Skar forgery (see also figs. 3 and 4).
upper right: chisel used for the reeding of the edges (length 63mm).
Note: the obv. die for the forged 5 Skar coin has been lost.

Contributions to a Die Study of Assamese Coins, by N. G. Rhodes

When no mint records exist, one way of estimating the size of a coinage is to determine the number of dies used in its production. With many coinages it has been determined that a die may be expected to strike roughly 10,000 coins as an order of magnitude, so if the number of dies can be estimated, so can the size of the coinage. Naturally such an analysis is highly approximate, but it is better than nothing, and may produce an answer to within a factor of about 10. If external evidence is available that would help determine the average life-time of a die in a particular series, then more accurate estimates can be made, but no such evidence is available in the case of Assam.

In writing this short piece, I make no apologies for the fact that I am relying almost entirely on coins in my own collection, and I shall only make a few observations, and point towards directions for future research.

A. Gadadhara Simha 1681-96

Seven varieties of the Ahom rupee of this ruler were published by Krause & Mishler, "Standard Catalog of World Coins", 1986 edition, Vol. I, p.1202. I have been fortunate in being able to complete a die study of 161 specimens of these rupees, and have noted 7 obverse dies (A-G) and 21 reverse dies (a-u), two of which were significantly altered during their periods of use. The dies were combined in 26 different ways as follows:

Type	Obv dies	Rev dies	Notes
KM.28	A	a, b	
KM.29	A	c-f	
KM.30	A	g-i	
KM.31	A	i	but an extra bird skilfully added at 9 o'clock
KM.32	B	j-l	
	C	l	
KM.33	D	m	
	E	m, n	
	F	m, o, p	
	G	q, r	
KM.34	F	s	two varieties, one with additional dots
	G	t, u	

It is interesting to note here that obverse die A was used with no fewer than 9 reverse dies, none of which were used with any other obverse die, while the other 6 obverse dies were only used with 2-4 reverse dies, and then not always exclusively. Clearly die A was exceptionally long lived.

Of the 26 die combinations recorded:-

- 7 are noted from 1 example
- 5 are noted from 2 examples
- 4 are noted from 3 examples
- 1 is noted from 4 examples
- 1 is noted from 5 examples
- 1 is noted from 7 examples
- 2 are noted from 8 examples
- 1 is noted from 9 examples
- 1 is noted from 11 examples
- 1 is noted from 15 examples
- 1 is noted from 17 examples
- 1 is noted from 48 examples

This clearly shows that the sample analysed is unlikely to be randomly representative of the whole coinage, as one die combination, Bj, seems overrepresented.

When the 7 obverse dies are considered:-

- A is noted from 51 specimens
- B is noted from 67 specimens
- C is noted from 11 specimens
- D is noted from 1 specimen
- E is noted from 3 specimens
- F is noted from 13 specimens
- G is noted from 15 specimens

Without undertaking any further analysis, it seems likely that other die-combinations and reverse dies almost certainly exist, but I may have recorded all the obverse dies. If this is the case, it seems likely that Gadadhara Simha struck perhaps something between 30,000 and 300,000 coins during his 15 year reign.

B. Rudra Simha 1696-1714

In contrast to the rupees of Gadadhara Simha, which are all dated to the coronation year, those of Rudra Simha are dated to the year of issue. I have not done any systematic die analysis of the rupees of Rudra Simha, but have noted from the coins in my collection that relatively few dies were used. The date appears on the side I term the obverse, because it contains the king's name, and even these dies were not always changed each year, the date being very skilfully altered on the die. Year 1619 is of a special type, struck with a single pair of dies, but the other years are all the same basic type. The dies of those in my collection can be analysed as follows:-

Date	Obv die	Rev die	No of pieces in Sibsagar
1618	A	a	6
1620	B	a	7
1621	C	a	3
1622	D, E	b, c	15
1623	F	d	2
1624	G	d	—
1625	G	d	5
1626	H	e	—
1627	H	e	2
1628	I	e	—
1629	I	e	—
1630	J	e	3
1631	K	f	—
1632	L	f	1
1633	L	f	2
1634	M	f	4
1635	N	f	4
1636			1

No example dated 1636 happens to be in my collection, but over the range of 18 years, only 6 different reverse dies were used for the pieces in my collection, compared with 13 obverse dies. With only one date represented by more than one example, this sample is hardly representative, but it does indicate that the output of rupees may have been similar in total to that in the reign of Gadadhara Simha. However, with reverse dies lasting from three to five years throughout the reign, apart from the year 1622S, when at least 2 reverse dies were used, mint output was probably higher in that year. In the final column of the above table I have noted the number of specimens of each year in the Sibsagar hoard 1892,¹ which confirms that rupees of 1622S are more common than those of other years.

One feature of die life is that the upper die, which bears the full force of the hammer blow, usually has a shorter life than the lower die. It seems likely, therefore, that the king's name was on the lower dies on the Ahom issues of Gadadhara Simha, and on the upper dies of Rudra Simha.

I have not yet attempted any die analysis of later reigns, but note that production of rupees must have been low during the early years of Shiva Simha; a brief examination of my own collection indicates that after at least 2 reverse dies were used in 1637S, one of those dies was used for all rupees until at least 1645S — i.e. for nine successive years! Thereafter several pairs of dies were normally used each year, so that a larger sample of coins has to be studied to provide meaningful results. In itself, however, this indicates that coin production probably increased significantly in Assam during, and after, the reign of Shiva Simha (1714-44).

I have written this short note to indicate a possible future research project, and I hope that it will encourage someone with access to more Assamese coins than I have to extend the study, and perhaps estimate the relative production of silver coins in later years.

Note

1. cf. the hoard report in PASB, Mar. 1894, pp.59-61.