

British Museum Research Publication No 174. Catalogue of the Japanese Coin Collection (pre-Meiji) at the British Museum. Shin'ichi Sakuraki, Helen Wang and Peter Kornicki with Nobuhisa Furuta, Timon Screech and Joe Cribb.

An outline of this publication appeared in ONS 207. The work is valuable in a number of ways. The first three articles deal with the acquisition of the collection of Kutsuki Masatsuna by the British Museum, and offer an entertaining insight into Victorian museum practices.

Professor Shin'ichi Sakuraki provides a modestly entitled "Brief" History of Pre-modern Japanese Coinage, which contains far more information than any other western account I am aware of. He presents the full background of the "Fuhon" pieces, claimed by some to be Japan's earliest coins, although the author, among others, is not wholly persuaded. The economic background of later gold, silver, and copper issues is then presented.

The next article deals with the history of Japanese numismatics. The Life of Kutsuki Masatsuna is then described. Both articles are interesting background information.

The Catalogue proper then follows. As this is just the listing of the BM collection, not all known coins are shown. For example, only three types of oban are shown, and the Nagasaki Trade Coins are not represented at all, although they are pretty common coins (did a tray get missed or were these not considered as Japanese issues at the time the collection was made?). Any omissions are amply compensated for by what is present. There is a comprehensive collection of the "Twelve Antique Coins" which is free from any of the modern forgeries which bedevil the present-day collector. There is an extensive collection of Japanese coins made in imitation of Northern Song Chinese coins, and of the often crudely written and bizarrely inscribed unofficial *Shimasen* which are not often seen elsewhere. There are good examples of the silver square-holed coins issued in the 16th century. The *Kan'ei tsūhō* coin which was issued for nearly 230 years will form the majority of any collection of Japanese coins, and there are over 500 specimens, all attributed in line with the latest thinking. However, there is no description of the differences which particularise the types.

If there are only three oban in the collection, there are plenty of other lower denomination gold coins. Of particular interest are the twenty-six gold coins from *Kōshū*, again very rare items. Silver coins are well represented. The catalogue ends with a selection of some of the decorative and unorthodox coins issued locally in the 19th century.

Overall, the book is well-presented, and would make a welcome addition to the library of those interested in Far Eastern coinages.

David Hartill

