



ONS News

Members' News

Shams Eshragh receives prize

On 28 May, which coincided with World Museum and Cultural Heritage Day, at a ceremony performed in Chehelsotoun Palace and Museum, Isfahan, Shams Eshragh received a prize from Dr Zāker Isfahani, Governor-General of Isfahan province, for his recently published book *Silver Coinage of the Caliphs* (reviewed in JONS 202). Our congratulations to Shams on this award.



Shams Eshragh receiving his prize

Michael Robinson has copies for sale of his two publications with Lewis Shaw. The price of *The Coins and Banknotes of Burma* will shortly rise to £32 but he is offering it to ONS members at the reduced price of £20 including surface postage. He also has copies of their booklet *The Die Varieties of Nineteenth Century Burmese Copper Coins* for £5 including postage. In addition there are some books on Burmese history and numismatic books on various oriental and non-oriental topics. For further information please contact him at michael-robinson@tinyonline.co.uk

Annual ONS Meeting Utrecht 16 October 2010

The annual meeting of the Oriental Numismatic Society in the Netherlands will be held on Saturday, 16 October 2010, at the premises of the Geldmuseum (Money Museum) Leidseweg 90, Utrecht. Members from continental Europe will receive information separately with this Journal. All others and those who have not received the programme for the meeting can find it at the ONS website (www.onsumis.org).

The program of lectures has not yet been finalised, but presentations on Sasanian, Islamic and Indian subjects are foreseen.

In addition, the Geldmuseum has, as always, some very interesting exhibitions. These exhibitions can be viewed during the lunch-break, when the museum library, too, can be visited. As is the tradition, at the end of the meeting a small auction of oriental coins and related books will be held. The proceeds of this auction is a welcome addition to ONS funds. All the lots of this auction will, be uploaded to the ZENO.RU Oriental Coins Database, by the middle of September.

Members who wish to attend the meeting are invited to contact Jan Lingen, the Regional Secretary for continental Europe, lingen@wxs.nl no later than 12 October 2010.

ONS Meeting Cologne

The regular meeting in Cologne is planned for Saturday, 13 November 2010. For more information, please contact Mr N. Ganske (e-mail: nikolaus.ganske@ra-ganske.de).

New Members

No new members are reported for this issue.

Lists Received and Auction News

1. Stephen Album (PO Box 7386, Santa Rosa, Calif. 95407, USA; tel ++1 707 539 2120; fax ++1 707 539 3348; album@sonic.net) lists 254, 255.
2. Tim Wilkes (PO Box 150, Battle, Sussex, TN33 0FA, UK; ++44 (0)1424 773352; tim@wilkescoins.com) list 9 of mainly oriental coins (summer 2010).

New and Recent Publications

A catalogue of the Islamic gold coinage of the first three centuries of the Hijra era has just been published, entitled *Arabic Gold Coins. Corpus I*. The author is Giulio Bernardi. Cloth-bound, A4, 410 pp, well-illustrated. The book is published by EUT (Edizioni Università Trieste). ISBN: 978-88-8303-284-4 Price: 80 € plus shipping.

CONTENTS OF JOURNAL 204

	Page
ONS News	1
New members and revised addresses	1
Other news	2
Reviews	2
The standing caliph coins of Damascus: new die links – new questions, by Ingrid Schulze	3
A new Abbasid mint, by Yahya Jafar	6
A hoard of silver-washed dirhams of Ibrahīm, b. Ḥusain Qarakhanid (second half of 12 th century), by Anton Grachev	7
Coinage of Toghril bin Sunqur, Salghurid Atābeg of Fārs, by A. Akopyan & F Mosanef	14
The minting of gold shauris in eighteenth century Georgia: monetary evidence, by Irakli Paghava	15
A coin with Gandharan and Mauryan symbols, by Hans Loeschner	17
A spate of new tooled forgeries of Kushan and Pāratārāja coins, by Pankaj Tandon	17
New discoveries and varieties in Gupta coinage, by Sanjeev Kumar	21
Some unusual coins of Ranbir Singh, Dogra ruler of Kashmir, by Nicholas Rhodes	23
A new mint for Indian princely states, Kotah & Jhalawar: “Qila‘ Shahabad”, by Parveen Jain	24
On one method of extracting copper for casting coins during the Yuan dynasty, by S.V. Sidorovich	25
A new variety of Sikandar bin Ilyās tanka, by SLG	27
Tiny pitis inscribed “Shi-dan” (sultan) from Palembang, by T.D. Jih	27
More members’ news	31

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Annual Subscription: UK: £25; rest of Europe €30; American continent \$35; for other areas please consult the appropriate Regional Secretary

Website: www.onsnumis.org

Printed by Pardy & Son (Printers), Ringwood, UK.

Supplement to Journal of Oriental Numismatic Society, #197, Autumn 2008. P. 33-37.

4. Paghava-Turkia-Janjgava 2010 - Paghava I., Turkia S., Janjgava G. "Some New Denomination Coins of Nadir Shah Minted in Georgia". *Journal of Oriental Numismatic Society*, 202, Winter 2010. P. 13-15.
5. Paghava 2010 – [Paghava I. "The Tbilisi Coinage: Weight Standard, Denominations' System and Minting Technique (Afsharid Dynasty Period). *Studies in Modern and Contemporary History*, 1(7). Tbilisi: Universali, 2010. P. 515-532.] (Original text in Georgian: ფაღავა ი. "თბილისური მონეტების წონის სტანდარტი, ნომინალთა სისტემა და მოჭრის ტექნიკა (აფშარიანთა დინასტიის პერიოდი)". *ახალი და უახლესი ისტორიის საკითხები*, №1(7). თბილისი: უნივერსალი, 2010. გვ. 515-532.)
6. Pakhomov 1910 – [Pakhomov Ye. *Coins of Georgia. Part I (Pre-Mongol Period)*. St.-Petersburg, 1910.] (Original text in Russian: Пахомов Е. *Монеты Грузии. Часть I (домонгольский период)*. С.-Петербург, 1910.)
7. Pakhomov 1970 - [Pakhomov Ye. *Coins of Georgia*. Tbilisi, 1970.] (Original text in Russian: Пахомов Е. *Монеты Грузии*. Тбилиси, 1970.)
8. Turkia-Paghava 2008 - Turkia S., Paghava I. "The Start of Sirma Coinage: The Sirma Abazi of AH "1166" and its Dating". *Caucasian Numismatics, Papers on the Coinage of Kartl-Kakheti (Eastern Georgia), 1744-1801. Supplement to Journal of Oriental Numismatic Society*, 197, Autumn 2008. P. 28-32.

Æ COIN WITH GANDHARAN AND MAURYAN SYMBOLS

By Hans Loeschner

The flat c. 17 mm diameter Æ coin enlarged in Figure 1 is so far unpublished.^{62, 63, 64} The coin shows on one side a 6-armed "Gandharan symbol"⁶⁵ (Figure 2a) and on the other side, above an elephant walking to right, there is a "Mauryan symbol", consisting of a three-arched hill surmounted by a crescent (Figure 2b).

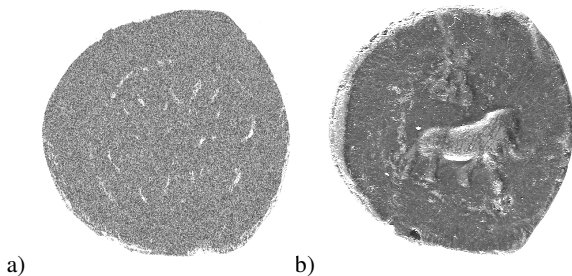


Figure 1: Æ coin, c. 17 mm Ø, 3.32 g

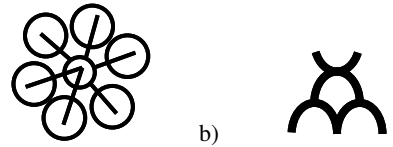


Figure 2: a) Gandharan symbol, b) Mauryan symbol

Whereas uniface silver scyphate coins with the Gandhara symbol are quite common⁶⁵ and some uniface Æ scyphate coins (imitating the silver units) have been found and published,⁶⁶ flat Æ coins with a Gandharan symbol as shown in Figure 1 are so far unknown.

The combination of an elephant and the Maurya symbol is well known from Taxila Æ coins⁶⁷ which are allocated to ca. 200 BC⁶⁸.

Scholars disagree about the time period of Gandharan "bent-bar" and scyphate coins; some opine that they were in use over a very long time period, stretching from as early as the 6th/5th century BC⁶⁹ to possibly into the early 2nd century BC. In contrast to this, through the study of ancient coin hoards, Joe Cribb^{70, 71} came to the conclusion that the minting of the Gandharan silver bent-bar and scyphate coins should be allocated to c. 350 - 250 BC.

Thus, without additional information, this Æ coin with Gandharan and Mauryan symbols can, for the time being, only be attributed to a broad time span from the 3rd century BC to the first half of the 2nd century BC. The possible issuers are authorities from the Mauryan empire, from the post-Mauryan Gandharan city state of Taxila, or early Indo-Greek rulers.

Acknowledgements

The author thanks Robert Bracey and Bob Senior for valuable discussions on this coin.

A SPATE OF NEW, TOOLED FORGERIES OF KUSHAN AND PĀRATARĀJA COINS

By Pankaj Tandon⁷²

One of the banes of the coin collector is the presence of forgeries in the coin market. Forgeries can come in many forms. Some are complete fantasies, purporting to be unique, exotic new types such as the coin pictured in Figure 1.⁷³ Others are very well-made copies of known coins, perhaps high-pressure cast copies of actual examples, where the best, maybe even the only, way to recognise the fakes is to spot mould replicates – exact copies of one another.

⁶² The coin shown was obtained in April 2009 from a well respected vendor at low price. There is no indication that the coin is false.

⁶³ Bob Senior, private communication April 17th, 2009: "The coin is as far as I know unpublished and probably extremely important with the reverse symbol coming from the bent-bar silver coins."

⁶⁴ Robert Bracey, private communication April 22nd, 2010: "The danger with this as with all unique or previously unpublished items is that they are not what they seem to be. A colleague suggested to me that someone could take a genuine coin and add other marks to make it appear rarer. That certainly does happen. This possibility should be acknowledged."

⁶⁵ Alexander Fishman, "Previously unknown Gandharan punchmarks from a recent hoard", JONS No. 222, pp. 26-28 (Oriental Numismatic Society, London, Winter 2010).

⁶⁶ Dilip Rajgor, "Punchmarked Coins of Early Historic India" (Reesha Books International, California, 2001), p. 105, Type 566 and 567.

⁶⁷ John Allan, "Catalogue of the Coins of Ancient India", (reprint of London 1936 edition by Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, New-Delhi, 1975), pp. 223-224 and Plate XXXII.

⁶⁸ Zeno.ru website, #29384

⁶⁹ Osmund Bopearachchi and Wilfried Pieper, "Ancient Indian Coins", Indicoeleustoi Archaeologies of the Indian Ocean Vol. 2 (Brepols, Turnhout, 1998), pp. 7-10.

⁷⁰ Joe Cribb, "Dating India's Earliest Coins", pp. 535-554 in South Asian Archaeology, edited by J. Schotsmans and M. Taddei (Naples, 1983).

⁷¹ Joe Cribb, "Money as a Marker of Cultural Continuity and Change in Central Asia", pp. 333-375 in "After Alexander – Central Asia before Islam", edited by Joe Cribb and Georgina Herrmann, Proceedings of the British Academy Vol. 133 (Oxford University Press Inc., New York, 2007), p. 336 and p. 342, Fig. 4.

⁷² I wish to thank Peter Linenthal for many helpful discussions centering around Buddha coins and for sharing some photographs with me.

⁷³ According to Joe Lang, coins such as this one are being manufactured in western China.



Figure 1: Fantasy “Indo-Parthian” gold coin
Weight = 1.25 g, Diameter: 10-11 mm.

The two coins in Figure 2 present an example of this that was discussed recently on the South Asia Coins Discussion Group.⁷⁴ No two ancient coins are exactly alike. With die-struck coins, there were always at least small differences in the centering and depth of the strikes, and even with cast coins there would always be some differences in the casting. Moreover, on all ancient coins there would be differences in wear over the years. Thus when we see two coins as identical as the two in Figure 2, we can be quite sure they are modern forgeries. A third type of forgery is the tooled forgery, and that is the subject of this brief note. I have noticed a number of tooled forgeries recently of Kushan and Pāratarāja coins, and I thought it worthwhile to bring these to the attention of collectors.

A tooled forgery is a coin where a forger has taken a genuine coin and has then used tools to either “enhance” the detail on the coin or to alter the coin in some significant way. Tools are also sometimes used to clean coins. Some coins may emerge from the ground so heavily encrusted that it is impossible to tell what the coin is.



Figure 2: Mould Replicate Forgeries of a Satavahana coin

Cleaning such coins may sometimes involve picking away at the encrustations with fine tools such as dental picks, and this process can leave scratches on the coin, particularly if the cleaning is being performed by a relatively unskilled worker. Thus it can sometimes be difficult to spot a tooled forgery, as the presence of scratch marks around the details of the coin may not be conclusive evidence of chicanery. But when one gets to know a coinage well, it becomes easier to distinguish tooled forgeries from simply badly cleaned coins. The first example I will offer is a silver drachm of the Pāratarāja king, Miratakma.⁷⁵ The first panel in Figure 3 shows the coin photo as I first saw it, while panel (b) repositions the obverse by turning it slightly. We see that the forger mistook the coin to feature a right-facing bust⁷⁶ and tooled it to enhance the

portrait. But he had misunderstood the coin, which in fact features a left-facing bust. We can see it quite clearly in panel (b), particularly when we compare it with the coin in panel (c), a genuine coin struck with the same obverse die. In retrospect, the portrait in panel (a) now looks obviously tooled. Note the tell-tale “edge” created in front of the face in the right field, marking the point on the surface of the coin where the forger commenced “digging” into the coin to create the face. The details of the portrait also look obviously incorrect. This coin tipped me off that there was at least one workshop where Pāratarāja coins were being tooled, and led me to examine other coins with a greater sense of scepticism.



(a) Tooled coin with right-facing bust



(b) Same coin with obverse turned to emphasize actual left-facing bust



(c) Genuine coin struck with the same obverse die

Figure 3: Tooled and genuine drachms of Miratakma

The second example is a similar one: a Pāratarāja coin where the portrait has been tooled in an attempt to enhance its detail, seen in panel (a) of Fig. 4. This time the coin is a billon drachm of the Pāratarāja king, Bhimarjuna.⁷⁷ Once again, the reverse has been left untouched, only the obverse portrait has been tampered with to “improve” its appearance. Although there is not enough original detail on the coin to identify a die match, panel (b) of the figure shows a genuine version of the same type. We can see the outline of the hair on the tooled coin, but little else. Compared to the genuine coin, we see immediately that the details of the portrait are wrong. We also see the tell-tale “edge” where the forger started to modify the surface in front of the face on the tooled coin. Some might say that this coin is not a forgery at all, but just one that has been heavily tooled to enhance its appeal. I would say, however, if the tooling has been so heavy as to significantly change the coin to the point where it might be regarded as a new type, that we should regard it as a forgery.

⁷⁴ The first coin was presented by Wilfried Pieper and the second coin by Shailendra Bhandare, who noticed they were mould replicates. My thanks to Wilfried and Shailendra for permission to publish the coins here.

⁷⁵ I thank Jan Lingen for showing me this coin and permitting me to publish it.

⁷⁶ In a way, the forger’s mistake is understandable and shows a decent knowledge of Pāratarāja coinage. All silver Pāratarāja coins other than this

Miratakma type feature a right-facing bust. Thus, it would be natural to assume or look for a right-facing bust on this coin, too.

⁷⁷ My thanks to Alex Fishman for permission to publish this coin.



(a) Tooled billon drachm



(b) Genuine coin of same type

Figure 4: Tooled and genuine drachms of Bhimarjuna

A third example is another Pāratārāja coin that had me fooled enough that I published the coin as genuine.⁷⁸ But after seeing the previous two coins, I decided to re-examine it, and I have now concluded that it is false. I believe the coin was originally a normal quarter drachm of the Pāratārāja, Yolamira. Figure 5 shows the coin in panel (a) along with a genuine coin struck with the same obverse die (and possibly the same reverse die) in panel (b). Here, both sides of the coin have been heavily tooled. We see the now-familiar “edges” on both the front and the back. Details around the neck and the back of the head show that the obverse die matches the one on coin (b), but the facial features have been entirely created.⁷⁹ More egregious is the reverse. When it emerged from the ground, the reverse must have been very heavily encrusted: we see the remnants of that encrustation around the edges of the coin even now. So the coin presented a blank slate and the forger had to decide what to create on it. Since almost all Pāratārāja coins have a swastika on the reverse, it must have seemed logical to the forger to insert a swastika here as well. But the Yolamira quarter drachms actually do not have a swastika reverse, as we see from the coin in panel (b). Unfortunately the actual reverse design has been obliterated in the process of tooling the coin.



(a) Tooled coin



(b) Genuine coin

Figure 5: Quarter drachms of Yolamira

The little information I have about the origin of these coins is that they are found in the area of Loralai in Pakistani Balochistan, but they then make their way to the bazaars of Peshawar. It could well be that the forgery workshop is active in the Peshawar area, not far from the village where the famous 19th century “Utmanzai” forgeries were made. These examples suggest that collectors buying coins that may have been sourced in that area of the world should watch carefully for signs of tooling, particularly for the “edges” created when the forger starts to dig into the coin surface in order to create a sculptural element.

It was this awareness that has also led me to identify, within the past year, a number of Kushan bronzes with “Buddha” reverses that appear to have been manufactured by tooling other coin types. Given the big price disparity between the Buddha coins and other bronzes, this would certainly be a lucrative activity if successful. Exposure of these forgeries is therefore desirable as a way to warn collectors.

All these coins were circulating in the trade market. Coin 6(a), offered as a Buddha coin, is quite clearly not one at all, but a more common reverse such as Miiro or Mao. Here, rather than re-carving the coin to “enhance” detail, the forger has attempted to smooth down elements of the coin, such as the normal raised right arm, in order to make it appear as a front-facing Buddha. Coin (b) may have been a Buddha to start with, but the area around the tamgha is clearly tooled and the tamgha itself is not the original. This casts doubt on the entire coin. Close examination reveals a change in the patina of the coin around the figure, marking a sort of “edge” where the tooling took place. Coins (c) and (d) are clearly tooled, with noticeable changes in the surface patina and identifiable “edges” around the figures showing where the genuine parts of the coins end. Coin (e) has had the entire reverse re-engineered, even to the extent of a created legend BOΔΔO, which appears on the gold coins but never on the bronzes. Finally, coin (f) is a smaller denomination drachm or quarter unit, on which the original deity has been carved away to be replaced by a seated Buddha and the BOΔΔO legend. Incidentally, none of these reverses matched any of the dies shown in the detailed study of Buddha bronzes by Cribb.⁸⁰

Since these coins are normally found quite worn, it is not unsurprising to see examples in poor condition such as the ones shown here. Readers are advised to exercise care in buying these coins!



(a)



(b)

⁷⁸ See Pankaj Tandon: “New Light on the Pāratārājas,” *Numismatic Chronicle* 166, 2006, coin T9 (p. 177).

⁷⁹ I suspect some very slight tooling around the nose of the coin in panel (b) as well.

⁸⁰ See Joe Cribb: “Kanishka’s Buddha image coins revisited,” in *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 6, 1999/2000, pp. 151-189.



Fig. 6: Tooled “Buddha” bronzes of Kanishka

Lastly, I recently saw the photo of a rather unusual coin that had been sent to the British Museum for identification.⁸¹ The coin, seen in Figure 7, is a normal Kanishka tetradrachm or full unit, with a deity, most probably Athsho, on the reverse, but with an additional seated figure (a “Buddha” according to the person who sent it to the Museum) at right.



Fig. 7: A tooled Kanishka bronze with created additional figure

If genuine, this coin would be unique, and would cry out for an explanation and interpretation of its reverse. However, it is probably not genuine, but rather a new type of tooled forgery where an entirely new design element has been carved onto a genuine coin. In the colour photograph I had at my disposal, the patina around the seated figure and the head of the deity is a fresh

⁸¹ I thank Robert Bracey for bringing this and the next discussed coin to my attention.

copper colour, entirely different from the rest of the coin, which is a normal dark green. Since I have not held the coin in hand, I cannot be absolutely certain about my conclusion. In hand, one could check to see whether the seated figure is in relief or whether the high points are lower than a proper relief would indicate. But the change in patina around the seated figure serves to provide the tell-tale “edge” that the tooled forgeries all seem to have. Further, I am fairly certain that the reverse is actually struck from the same die as Göbl 772.5,⁸² a Kanishka bronze with Athsho reverse. The seated figure on the coin in Figure 7 has been carved onto the area of the flan where the legend ΑΘΨΟ would have been. I believe I detect the bottom of the letter O below the seated figure, just where it would have been on the die of Göbl 772.5. If I am correct, this would be conclusive evidence that the coin is a tooled forgery.

This coin calls to mind another unusual Kushan coin that was recently published as genuine: an elephant-rider Huvishka bronze showing “Siva cursing Apasmarapurusa,”⁸³ and one begins to wonder if this also is a tooled forgery. The coin’s reverse showed a normal four-armed Siva, with the legend ΟηβΟ at right, but a seated figure at left where the tamgha normally would be. The presence of this figure is what was interesting and unique about this coin and made its publication worthwhile. But, after seeing the coin in Figure 7, it behoves us to question the genuineness of the Huvishka coin also — it could be the product of the same workshop, working with the same idea of adding figures to otherwise normal coins. The figure on the Huvishka coin interrupts the circular dotted border of the reverse design, rendering it clear that the figure was not an element of the original design. Was it added as an afterthought by the original die-cutter? Or was it added by a modern forger, attempting to create an interesting, unique, coin out of a common bronze? If the latter, it was obviously done well enough to fool experts such as Boppearachchi and Pieper.



Figure 8: A genuine Huvishka bronze with a die flaw

In Figure 8, I illustrate a coin from my collection, a bronze Huvishka elephant-rider with ΟηβΟ reverse. I was looking to see if I had a die-match to the Boppearachchi-Pieper coin and I do not think this is one, although it is very close. What caught my eye on my coin was the die flaw that has developed around the tamgha area on the reverse. Quite possibly a pit developed in the die as the tamgha details broke down, giving rise to a protuberance on the coins once struck. On my coin, the result is a shapeless blob of metal on the surface of the coin. But I could imagine that, in the hands of a forger bent upon creating new and interesting coin types, such a blob of metal could be turned into a seated figure similar to the one on the Boppearachchi-Pieper coin or the one in Figure 7.

Knowing that there is a workshop, perhaps somewhere in the Peshawar area, hard at work at altering ancient coins is a sobering thought, and one that makes it incumbent upon all collectors of coins from the area, especially Kushan coins, to be very cautious in evaluating new or unusual coin types that appear in the market.

⁸² Robert Göbl: *Münzprägung des Kusānreiches*, Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1984.

⁸³ Osmund Boppearachchi & Wilfried Pieper: “Siva cursing Apasmarapurusa on a Huvishka coin,” *Journal of the Oriental Numismatic Society*, No. 200 (Summer 2009), pp. 35-6.