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THE
NUMISMATIC CHRONICLE,
AND
JOURNAL OF THE NUMISMATIC SOCIETY.

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NUMISMATIC SOCIETY.

EDITED BY
W. S. W. VAUX, M.A., F.R.S.,
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AND
BARCLAY V. HEAD.

NEW SERIES.—VOL. XII.



Factum abiit—monumenta manent.—Ov. Fast.

LONDON:
JOHN RUSSELL SMITH, 36, SOHO SQUARE.
PARIS: MM. ROLLIN ET FEUARDENT, RUE VIVIENNE, No. 12.
1872,

CONTENTS.

ANCIENT NUMISMATICS.

	Page
Jewish Coins. By F. W. Madden, Esq.	1
On an Unpublished Coin of Artavasdes II., King of Armenia. By Percy Gardner, Esq., M.A.	9
Renseignements Numismatiques sur l'Expression קָרָן, "cornu," employée dans l'Écriture Sainte pour désigner métaphoriquement la Puissance. Par M. F. de Saulcy, Membre de l'Institut, &c.	65
Coins of Alexander's Successors in the East. By Major-General A. Cunningham, R.E.	157
Note on the Legend קָרָן. By the Rev. Henry C. Reichardt.	221

MEDIEVAL AND MODERN NUMISMATICS.

Notes on the Annals of the Scottish Coinage. By R. W. Cochran Patrick, Esq., F.S.A. Scot.	16, 83, 242
Farther Notes on the Gold Coins discovered in 1828 at Crondal, Hants. By the Vicomte de Ponton d'Amécourt	72

	Page
An Account of a Hoard of Coins found at Ephesus. By H. A. Grueber, Esq.	120
On a Hoard of English Coins found at St. Alban's, with some Remarks on the Early Coins of Edward VI. By John Evans, Esq., F.R.S., F.S.A.	186
Unpublished Varieties of English Silver Coins issued in the reign of Richard II. 22nd June, 1377—29th September, 1399. By J. Fred. Neck, Esq.	223
Unpublished Varieties of Scottish Coins. By R. W. Cochran Patrick, Esq., F.S.A. Scot.	235
On the French Medals struck on the intended Invasion of England by Napoleon I. By T. J. Arnold, Esq., F.S.A.	266

ORIENTAL NUMISMATICS.

Sassanian Coins. By Edward Thomas, Esq., F.R.S.	33, 105, 271
Arabic Glass Coins. By Stanley E. Lane Poole, Esq.	199

NOTICES OF RECENT NUMISMATIC PUBLICATIONS.

Revue Numismatique, N.S., Tome xiv., 1869, No. 5	60
Revue de la Numismatique Belge	61, 212
British Museum. "A Guide to the Select Greek Coins Exhibited in Electrotpe in the Gold Ornament Room"	62
The Story, Partly Sad and Partly Gay, of the Thorngraston Fiud	63
Berliner Blätter	213
Numismatische Zeitschrift, 1871	214

CONTENTS.

vii

MISCELLANEA.

	Page
The St. Bartholomew Medal with VGONOTTORVVM STRAGES	216
British Museum. Case for the exhibition of a portion of the National Collection of Coins	217
Sale of Coins and Medals. The "Chetwynd" Collection . .	219

XII.

ARABIC GLASS COINS.

ARABIC GLASS COINS have been greatly neglected by Numismatists of all ages.

Among recent writers, Soret, in his "Numismatique Musulmane," dismisses the subject with a single paragraph; whilst, among the earlier writers of this century, Marsden does not give to them, in the "Numismata Orientalia," the place they deserve from their exceedingly curious and interesting character; in this respect he would have done well if he had followed Pietraszewski, who gives a very fair account of them, by examples, in his "Nami Mohammedani," with many illustrations.

The reason of this neglect is partly the great rarity of glass coins, and partly the opinion expressed by many that they are not coins but weights (of which more presently), which has doubtless dissuaded many Numismatists from entering upon what they thus conceived not to belong to their science.

I have lately had the opportunity of examining the fine collection of these coins at the British Museum, and also a very interesting and valuable one belonging to the Rev. Greville Chester; and I conceived I should be doing a service to Oriental Numismatics if I made known a por-

tion, at least, of the results obtained from the study of these collections.

In the first place, are these impressed discs of glass coins, or weights, or what?

My opinion is that they are coins, used to represent gold or silver coins, as our English bank-notes represent a certain number of sovereigns.

The considerations which support my view are the following:—

(1.) Their form and general appearance is precisely similar to that of coins: they are circular, thin, and flat, so as to be convenient for currency; whereas weights might be, and are, rings, or blocks, of metal, of any shape.

Again (2), glass is an extremely inconvenient material for the purpose of weights; for the bulk of a weight in glass would be nearly four times that of the corresponding weight in copper. And it would be impossible to cast glass weights of exactly the right weight (except by accident) without subsequent adjustment by filing (as is done with copper) or grinding; but this abrasion would be very difficult for Easterns to perform in the case of glass, and absolutely impracticable in the case of discs with inscriptions on both sides, which several have, as it would efface the characters. In short, why should a very inconvenient material be used, when a convenient, cheap, and heavy, metal, copper, was at hand?

But (3) it is clear that the point that would almost settle this question is the weight of each glass disc. This has been ascertained,¹ and seems to me to show decisively that they are not weights.

¹ For this I must express my obligations to Mr. P. Gardner, B.A., Fellow of Christ's, Cambridge, and of the Numismatic Department, British Museum.

The small weights most commonly in use at the time of the issue of these glass coins, were probably the following:—

Weight of a <i>dirhem</i>	.	.	.	45·5	grs.
„ $\frac{1}{2}$ „	.	.	.	22·7	„
„ $\frac{1}{4}$ „	.	.	.	11·3	„
„ double „	.	.	.	91	„
„ a <i>deenâr</i>	.	.	.	65·5	„
„ $\frac{1}{2}$ „	.	.	.	32·7	„
„ $\frac{1}{4}$ „	.	.	.	16·3	„
„ double „	.	.	.	131	„

Now, at first sight, the glass discs would seem to agree almost exactly with these weights. We find the weight 46 grs. eight times (among those described in this paper), and 45 five times, being only half-a-grain wrong. So, too, 22, 23, 11, 12, 90, 91, 92, 65 (which are all found among these glass discs) are sufficiently exact—91 being perfectly so. But 21, 19, 44, 42, 13, 14, 61, 126, 47, 43, are all far too wide of the mark to be admissible as weights.

It would be absurd to weigh with a weight of 19 grs. instead of 16·3 grs., the seller thus losing about 16½ per cent. On the other hand, if the merchant used a weight of 42, instead of 45·5, the buyer thus losing about 8 per cent., the inaccuracy would soon be discovered, and the weight would be rectified; and, as I have said before, in the case of discs with characters on both sides, this would be impossible, unless the edges could be ground, which could only be done when the inscriptions did not extend to the extreme edge.

My view is also supported (4) by the fact that by far the largest number of glass discs issued by any one ruler were issued by the Fâtîmee Khaleefeh El-Mustanşir bi-llâh, in whose reign there occurred a fearful famine of seven years' duration, which, of course, impoverished the

country of the precious metals, and rendered it necessary to substitute for them a cheap material, such as glass. El-Mustansir even felt himself obliged to distribute from his private property, to dispel the popular alarm, to an incalculable amount.²

Another (5) strong argument for these being coins, is the occurrence on one of them (Fig. 1) of the name of a place, *El-Manşoreeyeh*, which is usual on coins, but would be objectless on a weight.

The reason of the rough approximation of the weights of these glass coins to those of metal coins, is exceedingly obvious.

There was no distinguishing mark by which glass deenars could be identified as such, and shown not to be dirhems; for the material is the same, and (with the exception of a couple which have ميزان دينار, the *equal of a deenár*, upon them) they have not their denomination stated in their inscriptions; so the only way of distinguishing them was by weighing them, and the approximation in weight would at once determine whether the coin in question was a deenár, or a dirhem, or a fraction of either.

I do not consider the hypothesis, entertained by some, that these are charms, as worthy of argument; for very few have any religious sentence upon them, and none has a hole for suspending it—both of which are essential qualifications for a charm.

The central figure in the Plate shows an ordinary copper weight of Cairo; the *Uķeeyeh*, or ounce, weighing nearly 1¼ oz. avoird. It was brought from Egypt by my great-uncle, Mr. Lane. The drawing is full size: the five-rayed star

² Price's "Retrospect of Mahomedan History," vol. ii. p. 322.

of Turkey is seen upon it, and also the stamp of Mohamad 'Alee, with the date 45 (*i.e.* 1245 A.H., 1829-30 A.D.) The hole in the middle is for convenience in holding and stowing away.

It has already been stated that these glass coins are in shape similar to metal coins. They are found of all sizes, between one-third of an inch, and one and one-fourth of an inch, speaking roughly. I have been informed that some exist still larger.

They are sometimes cast in high relief; sometimes in relief so slight as to be scarcely legible.

The field containing the inscriptions is often deeply sunk in the glass.

The glass is of all qualities and colours; though in colour green predominates, and in quality they are generally translucent; but sometimes they are, on the one hand, transparent, or, on the other, opaque.

There is no rule observed in colour, such as reserving one colour for deenars, another for dirhems, &c.

In most cases there are no legends on these coins, but in some there is one; and we meet occasionally with even two.

The inscriptions are generally restricted to one side, but there are several instances of characters on both sides.

The dynasty that struck by far the greater number of existing glass coins is that of the Fátimée Khaleefehs.

I shall now give examples of the glass coins of this dynasty, taking the Khaleefehs in the order of their succession, beginning with the conqueror of Egypt, *El-Mo'izz* (who is the earliest of this line of whom I have seen coins in the collection of the British Museum), and offering such supplementary and explanatory remarks as may seem necessary.

EL-MO'IZZ LI-DEENI-LLÁH ABOO-TEMEEM MA'ADD.

4th Fátímee Khaleefeh. 341—365 A. H.

I.—(Pl. IX.³ fig. 1).

Exterior legend—بِسْمِ اللَّهِ أَمْرَهُ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ مَعْدَّ أَبُو تَمِيمِ الْإِمَامِ

Interior legend—المعز لدين الله بالمنصورية

Area—Five dots in form of quincunx. Wt. 61 grs.

i.e.—"In the name of God: 'Abd-Alláh commanded it; The Imám Ma'add Aboo-Temeen El-Mo'izz li-deeni-lláh; at El-Manşooreeyeh."

'*Abd-Alláh* was a son of El-Mo'izz.⁴ *Manşooreeyeh* is mentioned in the *Ḳámoos* as being near *Ḳayrawán*; and, according to M. Quatremère ("Vie de Moëzz," p. 86) was the capital of the Fátímees before the building of El-*Ḳáhíreh*. It existed as a fortress in the time of the celebrated geographer El-Idreese (Jaubert's ed., vol. i. p. 245.)

M. Soret has undoubtedly erred in ignoring El-Manşooreeyeh in *Afreekeeyeh* (Tunis), and attributing all coins with that name to *Manşoorah* in Lower Egypt, which is never pronounced *Manşooreeyeh*, and which was founded by El-Melik El-Kámil the nephew of *Şaláḥ-ed-deen* (full a century and a half after the time of El-Mo'izz), to commemorate his success over the invading army of Jean de Brienne.

³ All figures referred to in this paper will be found in Pl. IX.

⁴ M. Quatremère, in his "Vie du Khalife Fatimite Moëzz-li-din-allah," says (p. 95), on the authority of El-Makreezee, after giving an account of the Khaleefeh's entry into the newly-built city of El-*Ḳáhíreh* (Cairo), "Par son ordre [*sc. par l'ordre de Moëzz*] on afficha ces mots dans toutes les rues de Fostat: Le plus excellent des hommes, après l'apôtre de Dieu, est Ali, fils d'Abou-Taleb, le prince des croyants (sur qui repose le salut!). On inscrivit partout le nom de Moëzz-li-din-allah, et celui de son fils, l'émir Abd-allah."

(See the "Encyclopædia Britannica;" art. *Egypt*, the modern part of which was written by E. Stanley Poole, and the ancient by R. Stuart Poole.)

This coin has been illustrated by Adler ("Museum Cuficum Borgianum Velitris," lx.), but he failed in reading it.

EL-HĀKIM BI-AMRI-LLĀH ABOO-'ALEE MAṢṢŪR.

6th Fāṭimee Khaleefeh. 386—411.

This was the first Khaleefeh of this line who was born in Egypt; for he was a native of Cairo: whereas his father, El-'Azeez, was born at Mahdeeyehs (in Afreekeeyeh) before the conquest of Egypt by El-Mo'izz.

I. Legend—لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ عَلِيٌّ وَلِيُّ اللَّهِ

Area — الإمام الحاكم بأمر الله أمير المؤمنين ووليّ عهده
Wt. 65 grs.

The reverse has characters, but illegible.

The words *وَوَلِيّ عَهْدِهِ* (*wa weleeyu'ahdihī*) may be translated "and his successor designate," more exactly, "the successor by virtue of his covenant,"⁶ for it was the custom with these Khaleefehs, as with others, to appoint by covenant a successor, who shared, in a certain

⁵ *Abu-l-Fidā's History*, ed. Reiske, vol. ii., p. 591.

⁶ *عَهْدٌ*, the infinitive noun of *عَهَدَ* used as a simple substantive, signifies "an injunction, a charge, a bidding, an order, a command," also "a compact, covenant," This is quoted from my uncle's (Mr. Lane's) *Lexicon*, *voce* *عهد* (a portion as yet unpublished, but, by the kindness of the author, opened to my reference). I have the same eminent authority for the renderings of *عَهْدُهُ* ووليّ عهده.

degree the state and privileges of him who thus designated him.

In the legend is seen the well-known symbol of the Shee'ees, *على وليّ الله*, 'Alee is the favourite of God. It will be noticed that a rendering of *وليّ* is given in this case different from that in *وليّ عهده*: the reason is that *وليّ* is one of those wide-ranging Arabic words which can by no means be translated alike in every case, but the meaning of which is regulated by authority.

On the name *El-Hákim bi-amri-lláh*, "the ruler by the command of God," it may be observed that this Kha-leefeh ventured to change it into *El-Hákim bi-amrihi*, thus signifying that he governed not by the command of God but by his own command.

II. *الحاكم بأمر الله أبو على منصور* Wt. 21 grs.

On the reverse the word *الله* is distinguishable. The surname *Aboo-'Alee* was derived from *Eḡh-Dháhir*. I may here notice what I believe to be an error in Adler's "Museum Cuficum Borgianum Velitris." He reads and illustrates a glass coin (lviii.) as—

الملك أبو على الحاكم بأمر الله أمير المؤمنين

whereas it should undoubtedly be *المنصور*, &c.

III.*(fig. 2) *الإمام الحاكم بأمر الله ووليّ عهده* Wt. 92 grs.

IV. *الحاكم بأمر الله* Wt. 46 grs.

There is another example of this inscription, but in less clear and flowing characters, and with a star beneath.

V. *الإمام الحاكم بأمر الله أمير المؤمنين* Wt. 56 grs.

(The rest is illegible.)

VI. الحاكم أبو علي Wt. 46 grs.

(The words أبو علي are doubtful.)

EḂH-DĦÁHIR LI-IAZAZI-DEENI-LLÁH ABU-L-ĦASAN 'ALEE.

7th Fátímee Khaleefeh. 411—427.

I. الظاهر لإعزاز دين الله Wt. 83 grs.

(Another with similar inscription.)

II. الظاهر Wt. 20 grs.

(With a cross between two dots above and below the name.)

III. (fig 3), الظاهر Wt. 22 grs.

(With two dots above and two below the name.)

IV. الإمام الظاهر Wt. 91 grs.

(There is another with similar inscription, but in the latter case it might perhaps be read الإمام الحاكم; and on the reverse of the latter there are several dots between two concentric arcs of circles larger than the circumference of the coin.)

V. الإمام الظاهر لإعزاز دين الله أمير المؤمنين Wt. 46 grs.

(With a dot above and below the inscription; the other side not legible. This mode of ornamenting by dots seems characteristic of EḂh-DĦáhir.)

EL-MUSTAḂSIR BI-LLÁH ABOO-TEMEEM MA'ADD.

8th Fátímee Khaleefeh. 427—487.

As has been said before, this Khaleefeh is remarkable for the great number of glass coins pressed into currency during his reign, owing chiefly to the great famine, but

also, in some degree, to the unusually long reign which he enjoyed.

The glass coins of El-Mustanşir are very peculiar, being chiefly of strongly marked types, which differ but little in the various examples.

I. (fig. 4). المستنصر بالله أمير المؤمنين Wt. 37 grs.

This is the most remarkable type of all. There are five other examples of it, differing very little *inter se*.

The peculiarity of this type consists in the distinctive ornaments (or Damghahs) at the end of the top line and the beginning of the second. The separation of بالله into two parts, by putting با or لا at the end of the second line and لله or له at the beginning of the third, is also very remarkable, and is carried out in all the examples I have seen.

Another noteworthy thing in this type is the tall *redaw*, with its loop high above the two *meems* on each side of it: this is, of course, for the sake of gaining room by getting the loop out of the way. This may also be observed in the next type.

Coins with this type are so striking in appearance that they may be ascribed to El-Mustanşir at a glance.

II. (fig. 5). Legend—الإمام معدّ أبو تميم المستنصر بالله

Area—

أمير المؤمنين

Wt. 46 grs.

This, again, is a characteristic type: not on account of any marks, but by reason of the invariable position of the various words composing the inscription.

There are two other examples of this: in these the letters are rather closer together, because the surfaces of the coins are smaller.

III. This type, of which there are three examples, is like the last; except that in the legend بالله is omitted, and in the field المؤمنین is contracted into المؤمن.

IV. معدّ الإمام أبو تميم المستنصر بالله أمير المؤمنين Wt. 90 grs.

V. (fig. 6). المستنصر بالله أمير المؤمنين Wt. 92-grs.

There are some glass coins of the 'Abbāsee Khaleefeh El-Mustaḍee not unlike the one illustrated by fig. 6. This resemblance has induced an error in Pietraszewski, who reads on a glass coin *El-Mustanṣir bi-amri-lláh*, which, though euphonious enough to the ears of a European Numismatist, would be absolutely unintelligible to an Arab. This coin should have been read *El-Mustaḍee bi-amri-lláh*.

Fig. 7 will show the resemblance and the difference, when compared with fig. 6.

VI. المستنصر بالله Wt. 11 grs.
(Three dots beneath.)

VII. الإمام المستنصر Wt. 46 grs.

VIII. المستنصر بالله أمير المؤمنين Wt. 90 grs.

IX. (fig. 8). الإمام معدّ Wt. 11 grs.
(There are two others like this.)

This *Ma'add* may have been either El-Mo'izz Ma'add or El-Mustanṣir Ma'add. The latter is the more probable, I think, as his coins are very numerous; whereas of El-Mo'izz I have seen only one.

EL-MUSTA'ALEE BI-LLÁH ABU-L-KÁSİM AḤMAD.

9th Fátímee Khaleefeh. 487—495.

I have not seen any coins of El-Mustaalee with anything but *The Imám Aḥmad* upon them.

I. (fig. 9). الإمام أحمد
(Two others like this.)

II. أحمد الإمام Wt. 22 grs.

EL-ÁMIR BI-AḤKÁMI-LLÁH ABOO-'ALEE MANṢOOR.

10th Fátímee Khaleefeh. 495—524.

I. (fig. 10). الإمام الأمر Wt. 22 grs.

EL-HÁFIḐH LI-DEENI-LLÁH 'ABD-EL-MEJED.

11th Fátímee Khaleefeh. 524—544.

I. الإمام الحافظ لدين الله أمير المؤمنين Wt. 126 grs.

II. (fig. 11). الحافظ لدين الله أمير Wt. 61 grs.

There is an indication of characters at the top, which might be الإمام or المؤمنين

I hope that I have now shown that Arabic glass coins are as interesting as any other coins in that language. Though they have not so high an historical value as gold and silver coins, on account of their inscriptions being shorter, yet their curious character and great scarcity give them a peculiar interest; and, if my view of their use be correct, they are very remarkable witnesses to the his-

torical fact of the famine in El-Mustanşir's reign, and also to its great extent and severity.

I may be able on some future occasion to communicate some more information on this subject derived from the collection of the British Museum, by that time augmented, I hope, by that of the Rev. Greville Chester.

STANLEY E. LANE POOLE.

Worthing, July 12th, 1872.