REVIEWS


This modest book is the first in English to be devoted to its subject since Barnard’s ponderous and pretentious work. It is strictly confined to those of English make, which Barnard did not recognize for what they are, and which, as I can testify from twenty-five years’ coverage of the archaeological scene, in fact account for most of the English finds from most of the period of their production—to be precise, from the 1280s until the middle of the fourteenth century, after which they are rapidly overtaken by imports. Unlike ‘Barnard’, Berry’s catalogue is systematic, expandable, and eminently usable: it is possible to see at a glance what types have been found in combination and how they may be linked, through shared punches, with the ‘Fox-classes’ of pennies. The ‘break-through’ in this connection was L. A. Lawrence’s brilliant little article, which far out-weighs Barnard’s contribution. Berry has exploited Lawrence’s discovery as fully as the specimens themselves allow, but without benefit of the archaeological associations that almost entirely confirm him. His description of reckoning with counters, as apparently revived with the ‘Romanesque Renaissance’ in Lotharingia, and of its particular application in the English Exchequer and Wardrobe, is as clear as any I have seen.

On the other hand, the division into ‘Edward I’ and ‘Edward II’ is unnecessary and can be confusing. The sterling coinage is one, from 1279 to at least the 1330s, and so is the issue of ‘sterling’ jettons. Some of those on Plates 5 and 6 have archaeological associations well into Edward III, while Plate 6, 1, is not a jetton at all but a mid-fifteenth-century Blanc aux Couronnelles of Charles VII. Rouyer and Hucher, Histoire du jeton au moyen âge (1858, but still useful and not excessively rare), includes English ones and should be in the bibliography. Boethius, one of the authors most studied in the eighth and ninth centuries, was much more than a mathematician, but it is hard to think that any of his points could have been ignored. Finally, the last six plates, though interesting, are largely padding, and a view of the excavation of Baynard’s Castle, where the Wardrobe was actually situated, would have served better than St. Andrew-by-the-Wardrobe.

S. E. R.


This is an idiosyncratic book, befitting so original a scholar. Would it were more so, for, having announced radical and perspicacious revisions, Dr. Grierson too often scuttles back into the ‘largely false’ orthodoxy deemed proper to an elementary handbook, leaving only a strange imbalance. The two opening, historical, chapters, ‘The Western Tradition’ and ‘The Eastern Traditions’ are nearly equal in length. It is admitted that only the Far-eastern stands truly apart; that Muslim coinage, little more aniconic than much of Christendom, is Western but for its language. But it is ‘barbarian’ in the Greek sense, so back it goes into the unreadable Orient. And back come ‘Greek’, ‘Roman’ (just another Hellenistic coinage, to begin with), ‘Medieval and Modern’, and all that, leaving so full a treatment of the Far East that the intermittent coinage of Japan gets five pages—as much as that of all medieval Christendom, on which Dr. Grierson could speak with such authority. This is more than ‘being fair to the Third World’; it is a quixotic form of self-denial that denies the readers too. Again, and rightly, Dr. Grierson stresses the formal and ritual role of money at certain times and places, to balance the preoccupations of over-mercantile historians. Yet in doing so he almost ignores the small change that has saturated most markets, Eastern and Western, since the Hellenistic age and is what the beginner in fact encounters. Here only China, which until lately knew no other coinage, has its due. He is also unjust to jettons, which are seldom ‘very roughly struck’ but as well or better than contemporary coins.

However, the strength of the book lies in its middle sections—on the theory and practice of types and legends; on the legal and technical aspects of mintage; on the use and abuse of hoards and site-finds; on gradations of imitation and ‘immobility’; and with notable clarity, on physical and statistical methods. The section on numismatic scholarship is unexpectedly weak—mainly about collecting, with no mention of...
Eckhel or Mommsen. All these discourses are enlivened with examples from the boundless reading of Dr. Grierson, who is known not least as a bibliographer. A short bibliography is the only part of this book that is weighted in the British and American interest. Some tables whose intention is to familiarize readers with the metric weights of 'typical' coins seem to present an erratic selection: the final guinea-weight dates from 1670, not 1662.


This volume, which covers one of the least studied of any British series of coins, has been awaited with keen anticipation by students of both Commonwealth and Indian coins. From the previous volumes in this series we have learned to expect a high standard of scholarship from Major Pridmore, and this latest work is no exception.

The book has been divided into three sections dealing respectively with the Presidencies of Madras, Bombay, and Bengal. Each section contains a short historical summary, a detailed chronological survey of the coinage, and finally a catalogue of all the coins known to the author. In addition, there are a number of useful sections giving details of such subjects as balemarks, regnal years of Moghul Emperors, the Urdu inscriptions which appear on so many of the coins, maps showing the extent of the British possessions at various dates, and other essential background information.

The detailed survey of the coinage has numerous quotations from contemporary records. Major Pridmore has searched through the records of the India Office Library with commendable thoroughness and has unearthed much material which had not previously been published. The necessity to compress such a massive amount of information into a volume of manageable proportions has meant that the prose style has suffered, but this is essentially a reference book, and is not intended to be read from cover to cover.

In preparing the catalogue of coins, Major Pridmore has obviously encountered numerous problems. Many of the coins were struck with native designs or were of poor workmanship and did not attract the British collectors. As a result many of the issues are poorly represented in British collections, and throughout the catalogue Major Pridmore lists coins recorded as having been struck, but of which no specimens have been traced. The fact that at one time a mint might be striking coins of totally different designs for different purposes, makes a logical sequence for the various pieces described virtually impossible. The system chosen does have a few illogicalities; for instance, surely the Madras Alamgir Pagoda would be easier to find listed with the other coins of Moghul design, instead of with the Hindu style pagodas. However, the photographs which illustrate practically every type through the catalogue make it easy to find any particular coin. Numerous line drawings clarify points of detail or reconstruct the original design when, as is frequently the case, only a small portion appears on any one specimen. In the catalogue, only dates which have been examined by the author, or have been recorded by reliable sources, have been listed. This is a wise policy in this series, which has been plagued by misreadings or misprints in previous works. It is a pity, however, that Major Pridmore does not always give the location of a specimen examined in the case of confirmed dates, or the source of his information in the case of unconfirmed dates, so that future sceptical students may convince themselves that no mistakes have crept into this work. The proof reading has been done to a very high standard, but the amount of material makes it inevitable that some errors should appear, and I have noticed two of a trivial nature: on p. 231, coin No. 8 is described in Num. Supp. V (1905) not 1904, and on p. 121 the 1770 gold 15-rupee coin is dated A.H. 1184, not 1183.

It is not difficult to find published references to dates not listed in the catalogue, especially among the Moghul style rupees, which are included in numerous catalogues of Moghul coins in museums in India. Most of these reveal nothing new about the coinage itself, and may have been intentionally omitted because the readings had not been confirmed. A few, however, seem to call for some comment. In particular the two earliest coins of Moghul style from the Bombay mint have not been mentioned, a rupee of Jahandar struck in A.D. 1712, and a rupee of Furrukhsiyar dated mint signature is probably Mumbai. The date, which is written backwards, should be A.H. 1124, and not 1123 as stated.

1 Num. Supp. xlv, Art. 324, "Some Rare Moghul Coins in the State Museum, Haidarabad (Deccan)", by K. M. Ahmad. The description of this coin leaves much to be desired, but the illustration shows that the
These two pieces indicate that Bombay may have been striking Moghul style coins before being given formal approval by the Moghul Emperor in A.D. 1717.

One of the problems which Major Pridmore has not solved is the identity of the first coins struck by the British in India, namely the Pagodas and Fanams struck in Madras in the years following A.D. 1642. The documentary evidence for these is admirably presented, but the coins illustrated as possible examples are less convincing. In the British Museum there is at least one pagoda which has a crude version of the standing figure of Vishnu which is very similar to Tavienier’s illustration. The reverse of this piece is slightly mottled, very different from the granulated effect of the later issues, and could easily be said to be plain, and to conform to the contemporary description. I feel that this piece is much more likely to be a specimen of the first Madras pagoda than the Hanuman piece illustrated by Major Pridmore, which has the appearance of being less than the 84 per cent fine specified in the records. But appearances can be misleading.

As regards the Madras fanam, Sonnerat’s illustration bears a close resemblance to some coins in the British Museum described as Dutch Tanjore Fanams. The crude reverse design is often identical, and the obverse is very similar, except that the figure is more stylized and does not have raised arms. Their weight of 0·34 gm. probably proves that they are not Madras fanams misattributed, but close copies of them. Although the Hultzsch coin tentatively presented by Major Pridmore as a possible Madras fanam still awaits positive identification, all experts on South Indian coins agree that it must be a medieval coin from South India or Ceylon, and it only deserves mention in this book as being the prototype for the later fanams. Clearly there is much work to be done before these early pagodas and fanams can be satisfactorily classified, but an analysis of their metal content would provide useful information, now that we know the specified fineness of the East India Company issues.

Whereas the previous volumes in Major Pridmore’s study of the Coinage of the British Commonwealth may, without much exaggeration, be said to be the definitive work on the subject, this volume is not, and is not intended to be. It is, however, the unrivalled standard work on the subject, and it lays a firm foundation on which further studies on the coinage of the East India Company may be based. N. G. R.

British Countermarks on Copper & Bronze Coins.
By J. GAVIN SCOTT. 179 pp., 4 + 10 pls., London, Spink & Son, £8·50.

None, least of all the author, claims this book is complete. Indeed it were probably better titled ‘Some British Countermarks . . .’. Mr. Scott has, however, made a good, if tentative, beginning in mapping one of those nebulous regions of our subject which are now rightly engaging more attention than hitherto. His book is therefore to be welcomed in a field where books are still few. Yet the study of modern countermarks may soon enjoy a modest vogue: one thinks of a not dissimilar book on the Countermarks of the Ottoman Empire 1880–1922 recently published by K. M. Mackenzie and S. Lachman (Hawkins Publications).

After preliminary matter on the historical background, the legal position (including ‘loopholes’) of unofficially countermarked coppers, and the truck system, the author divides his material into two main groups (to say nothing of ‘encircled’ pieces), attributed—struck on both British and foreign coins—and unattributed. The very full notes on the identified issuers in the first group are undoubtedly the most useful part of the work, though perhaps he is more certain of his attributions in some instances than the evidence warrants. He reproduces some contemporary advertisements for Pears’ Soap, Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper, and the like. This is all valuable social history.

The painstaking recording of large numbers of unidentifiable names and marks is of more doubtful value. Many, perhaps most, of these are, I feel sure, only single occurrences—‘one-off jobs’ of the sort we all have met with in our collecting. They are the kind of thing which was, and no doubt still occasionally is, produced at whim. A few have a story to tell, perhaps, but it is not told and we do not know which they are. Their inclusion adds considerably to the bulk of the book, and thus to its cost, but does not seem to add much to its value.

In conclusion a number of the attributed pieces are illustrated, mainly from the author’s own collection, though it is a pity some of the pictures are not more clear. Some very quaint items are included.

D. L. F. S.