The Currency of Tibet

Wolfgang Bertsch
THE CURRENCY OF TIBET

A Sourcebook for the Study of Tibetan Coins, Paper Money and other Forms of Currency

by

Wolfgang Bertsch
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Publisher’s Note

We are happy to publish yet another book on numismatic study of Tibetan currency, entitled *The Currency of Tibet*, a sourcebook for the study of Tibetan coins, paper money and other forms of currency by Mr. Wolfgang Bertsch.

The author has taken great pain in compiling this book. He has provided a comprehensive introduction with illustrations of paper currency and coins and their explanations. He has, also, consulted numerous western non numismatic publications on Tibet and has listed all those which mention some aspects of Tibet’s currency, often quoting extensively, particularly from those works which may not be of easy access.

We hope that this sourcebook will be of immense use to all those scholars and students who would like to be thoroughly informed on an aspect of Tibetan history and culture.

Publications Department
Library of Tibetan Works & Archives, Dharamsala.

June, 2002.
Preface

Compiling bibliographies is hardly anybody's favourite occupation and if the work with bibliographies was more exciting and less time consuming we certainly would have many more specialized bibliographic compilations which are a necessary tool for students and scholars whenever they want to embark on studies in a certain field which hitherto has not been their speciality. A serious bibliographer will always strive for completeness, but the result which he presents will unfortunately be nothing more than a selective bibliography, as nobody can claim to have access to every publication worldwide in the field which forms the subject of his specialized bibliography. Hence I am quite aware that also the present sourcebook cannot present more than a selection of existing publications on the history of Tibetan currency (including bordering areas to the west and south of Tibet).

The nucleus of the present bibliographical compilation is the following publication: Hellrigl, Wolfgang and Gabrisch, Karl: *Tibet. A Philatelic and Numismatic Bibliography*. Santa Monica 1983. Naturally, I have included all entries of the numismatic part of this bibliography in the present compilation, mostly along with Gabrisch’s summaries, and have marked these entries with an asterisk. In collaboration with Nicholas Rhodes and myself Karl Gabrisch compiled an unpublished supplement to the numismatic part of his bibliography comprising titles published between 1983 and May 1993 as well as earlier works which had been omitted in the published bibliography. After Karl Gabrisch’s death in 1995 I continued to collect bibliographical material and also included Chinese publications, part of which had been collected by me during extensive journeys to China and many of which had been translated into German at the expense of Karl Gabrisch who had made a preliminary listing of this Chinese material; this list was subsequently improved and expanded by Nicholas Rhodes and myself and has been included in the present compilation as Section IX.

I have tried to include not only numismatic books and articles on Tibet, but have consulted numerous western non numismatic publications on Tibet and list all those which mention some aspects of Tibet’s currency, often quoting extensively, particularly from those works which may not be of easy access. In this respect I follow the method applied already by Karl Gabrisch in his above mentioned bibliographic compilations.

I must admit that the present compilation (no more than Gabrisch’s original numismatic bibliography) hardly has considered publications in Tibetan language. Although the majority of Tibetan authors were normally more concerned with their country’s religious than with its political, economical, social and cultural history, Tibetan currency is occasionally mentioned in ancient and modern Tibetan literature which should be systematically examined in order to glean all references of numismatic relevance. I hope that one day I will be able to convince a Tibetan scholar to do this job which could bring the present compilation somewhat closer to being “complete” and would undoubtedly uncover some hitherto unknown details of Tibet’s currency history.
I do hope that despite all shortcomings this sourcebook will be of some use to all those who would like to be thoroughly informed on an aspect of Tibetan history and culture which has hitherto been neglected not only by Tibetan scholars but also by most Western tibetologists.

Wolfgang Bertsch,
Gundernhausen (near Darmstadt),
Germany,

Introduction

1. A Brief Historical Survey of Tibet’s Currency

Till the mid 17th century some coins of countries bordering with Tibet were used in Tibet, but their importance was limited, since barter trade was the main form used for commercial transactions.

The era during which currency in the form of coins or banknotes was used in central Tibet can be divided into four parts.

1. Ca. 1650 to 1792. This period is characterized by the use of the mohar silver coinage struck by the three Newari kingdoms Kathmandu, Patan (Lalitpur) and Bhaktapur (Bhadgaon), all located in the Kathmandu valley. After 1767 coins struck for Tibet by the Nepalese rulers of the early Saha dynasty were used in Tibet together with the earlier mohars of the Malla dynasty. In the second half of the 18th century the Tibetan government made some attempts to strike coins in Lhasa, following the weight standard and design of the Newari coins.

2. 1792 - 1835. This is the period during which Chinese influence on the coinage of Tibet was predominant through the introduction of the so called Sino-tibetan coins in 1792. These coins had Tibetan inscription on one side and Chinese inscription on the other and were struck in the eras Qian Long, Dao Guang and Jia Jin. From 1791 to 1793 dated silver coins, known as “Kong-par” tangkas and bearing only Tibetan legends were also struck.

3. 1836 - 1911. Tibet resumed the production of own coins, the design of which is still inspired by the Newari coins. The main type is the so-called “Gaden tangka”, a silver coin weighing about 5.3 grammes, which was struck in considerable numbers. From about 1850 the Indian Rupee gained importance and competed with the native coinage, replacing it almost completely in Eastern Tibet. Between 1903 and 1911 the Chinese tried to counteract the predominance of the Indian rupee by issuing the Sichuan rupee which gained some popularity, particularly in Eastern Tibet. For a brief period during 1910 and 1911 Chinese influence was again predominant also in Central Tibet, when the Lhasa mint was placed under Chinese authority and a new type of Sino-tibetan coinage in the name of Xuan Tung was introduced.

4. 1912 - 1959 This is the period during which Tibet tried to rid itself of both Chinese and British Indian influence regarding currency. The large majority of coins and banknotes used in Tibet during this period were struck and printed in Lhasa, using Buddhist and Tibetan designs and did not mention any foreign authority. Influence of Nepal can still be seen in the design of the coins and influence of British India made itself felt in the minting and printing technique. The Indian rupee retained its importance to a certain degree, while the use of the Sichuan rupees and of other
Chinese silver coins was less widespread and became insignificant towards 1950. Between 1951 and 1959 the Yuan Shikai dollar which was restrauck in Chengdu for exclusive use in Tibet, gained a certain popularity among Tibetans owing to its high silver content. Between 1953 and 1954 the last coins were struck under Tibetan authority and in 1959 the Tibetan government issued the last banknotes of 100 Srang. After this last time the Chinese Renmimbi Yuan replaced the Tibetan currency.

2. Chinese Numismatic Literature on Tibet

Since the publication of the numismatic part of the late Karl Gabrisch’s Tibet bibliography (see VIII.11) an amazing number of new publications on Tibet’s currency have appeared.

Particularly noteworthy are the books and articles which have been published in China and Tibet, being dedicated wholly or partly to the coinage and paper money of Tibet. The Cultural Revolution had brought serious research in numismatics to an almost complete standstill in China. Beginning in the 1980’s research could finally resume and numerous numismatic journals were launched, catalogues and research papaers were published and older numismatic works could be reprinted. In Lhasa a numismatic research unit, attached to the Lhasa Branch of the People’s Bank of China, was founded. Members of this research group have published articles (mostly in “Zhongguo Qianbi”), the only Chinese numismatic journal with nationwide distribution) and an illustrated booklet, following Xiao Huaiyuan’s earlier book on the currency of Tibet, entitled “Xizang Difeng Huobishi”, published in Peking in 1987.

Although the desperate effort made by some Chinese authors to persuade their readers that the currency of Tibet’s “Local Government” proves that Tibet has always been a part of China, can at times be quite disturbing, many papers provide fresh information and interpretations, often based on documentary evidence which hitherto had not been available to readers from the West, as Tibetan and Chinese archives are not accessible to western scholars.

However, most Chinese authors do not make use sufficiently of the evidence presented by the coins and banknotes themselves (perhaps with the exception of a few authors like Wang Haiyan), and they often ignore the close commercial and monetary relationship which existed between Nepal and Tibet from the 17th to the 19th century resulting in a strong Nepalese influence on both currency units and designs used for most coins minted in Tibet - and naturally they often prefer to ignore the influence which British India exerted on Tibet’s 20th century money and particularly on the minting and paper note printing techniques.

Possibly more for political reasons than for reasons of unavailability Chinese authors almost totally ignore what has been published on Tibetan numismatics by western specialists.

Despite these shortcomings most contributions made by Chinese authors are very valuable and often ideally complement what has been written on Tibetan currency by western specialists.

It is left to specialist from western countries to focus on those aspects of Tibetan numismatics which are neglected by Chinese authors. In this context the contributions made in recent years by Nicholas G. Rhodes, Karl Gabrisch and myself may be mentioned.
It is to be hoped that in the near future Chinese authors will be able to study and use western numismatic publications on Tibet and that in this way a fruitful dialogue between Tibetan, Chinese and western numismatists may be inaugurated, a dialogue which due to political reasons could so far not yet be considered.

3. Tibetan Currency Units

Two different currency units were used in Tibet during the period when coinage and paper money were produced:
1. The older system, based on the srang and most probably introduced from China.
2. The later system based on the tam or tangka, introduced from Nepal in the 16th century.

The srang, as most currency units used worldwide, originally was a unit to weigh gold and silver, based on the Chinese Liang (or Tael) which was equal to slightly more than 37 grammes, varying in different periods and different areas, but officially fixed as "Kuping Tael" for payment of government taxes in the beginning of this century with the weight of 37.312 grammes. Supposedly the srang as weight unit had existed in Tibet already two generations before the rule of king Srong Tsang Gampo (srong-btsan sgam-po), i.e. in the late 6th century A.D. At that time the following subdivisions of the Srang are said to have existed:

1 srang = 10 qian (or "chien"; Chinese word for what in Tibet was called "zho")
1 qian = 20 sawa
1 sawa = 6 qung kier (barley grains)

The srang is frequently mentioned as gold and silver weight in the Blue Annals. From about the thirteenth century it was primarily used as silver weight.

Only in 1908 A.D. the silver srang was issued as a coin for the first time; till then the srang had only been used as unit of account. However, its standard was reduced to 50% of its original weight, i.e. to about 18.65 grammes.

The value of the dngul srang in A.D. 1919 is given as 1 rupee and 11 annas approximately which in weight is equal to 19.683 grammes.

The next coins issued in srang were silver coins of 3 srang which were first minted in 1933 A.D. and weighed the same as the Indian rupee, i.e. about 11.66 grammes. Hence the srang's standard was further reduced to one third of an Indian rupee; in fact its value was even slightly less than that. This must have been the approximate standard of the silver srang when the first 100 tam srang notes were issued in 1937 A.D.

2. Roerich, George: The Blue Annals. Reprint New Delhi. 1976 (first published in Calcutta, 1949). For references to the gold srang see e.g pp. 112, 927, 1026 and 1027. For a reference to the silver srang, see p. 1064. The Blue Annals were written between A.D. 1476 and A.D. 1481.
4. For the calculations of the weight standard of the Srang, I treat the silver coins issued in Tibet in the srang denomination as having a "theoretical" fineness of 100% silver although the actual fineness was only just above 80% for the coins which were minted in srang denomination.
5. The Indian Rupee found wide circulation in Tibet after its introduction within the uniform coin system established in British India in 1835. Its weight had been fixed in that year at 180 grains (1 grain = 0.0648 gramme) which is equal to 11.664 grammes. Cf. Chakravarty, D.: Nineteenth & Twentieth Century Coins of India. Calcutta, 1979, p. 19.
Between 1953 and 1954 A.D. a coin in the style of the earlier “Gaden Tangkas” was minted in good silver, had a weight of about 5 grammes and was reportedly given the value of 5 srang, which shows that the standard of the silver srang was again considerably reduced, reaching less than 1/37th part of its original weight standard.

The expressions “dngul srang” and “tam srang” were used concurrently. I am not aware that there existed any difference in value between the two. Thus one reads “tam srang” on the first 100 Srang notes, whereas the 25 srang notes mention “shog dngul srang” (“paper silver srang”) in the last line of the obverse legend.

The silver srang (dngul srang) had the following subdivisions:

1 ngul srang (srang-gang) = 10 zho (sho) = 6 tangka + 1 zho  
1 zho (zho-gang) = 10 skar = 4 kha  
1 kha (kha-gang) = 2 1/2 skar

As unit of account there existed the rdo-tshad which equals 50 dngul srang.

When referring to one unit the syllable “gang” (e.g. “zho-gang”) is added to the name of the currency unit while the syllable “do” (e.g. “zho-do”) is added when referring to two units.

The tam, tangka, tamka or tamga was first introduced into Tibet from Nepal and originally was equivalent to about 10.5 grammes of silver. In about 1640 A.D. the Nepalese Malla kingdoms replaced this heavy standard by a lighter of roughly 5.6 grammes. The coins struck to this standard in Nepal were called mohurs (mohars) and were exported to Tibet in large numbers where they were called “bal tam”, since Nepal was known as “bal yul” (wool country). After the Tibet-Nepal war of 1792, Nepal was deprived of it’s privilege to mint coins for Tibet and from then onwards the “zho” and the “tangka” were the main currency units which were struck in Tibet. Even in the beginning of the twentieth century, when the first banknotes were introduced, the “srang” had not yet been firmly established as currency unit among the Tibetan population, since the coins struck in this denomination in 1908 were few and, being of good silver, were mostly hoarded. This explains why the first Tibetan paper notes were issued in tam rather than in srang. According to Wesley E. Needham in 1914, when the early Tam notes circulated, the value of 1 Tam was equivalent to 0.12 US$.1

The forms “tang-ka” and “trang-ka” in which the letter “ma” has changed to “nga” probably owe their existence to the assimilation of the sound “ma” to the following sound “ka”. 

2. Unpublished letter of Wesley E. Needham to Joseph J. Woodburn Jr., dated April 4, 1951. My thanks go to N.G. Rhodes for having made a copy of this letter available to me.
The following subdivisions of the srang and tam existed:

1 tangka = 1.5 zho = 15 skar = 6 kha
1 srang = 10 zho = 100 skar
1 srang = 6 2/3 tangka
1 tangka = 0.15 srang
1 zhogang = 10 skar = 4 kha
1/2 tangka = 1 phyad brgyad = 7 1/2 skar
1/3 tangka = 1 skarma ngna = 5 skar
1/6 tangka = 1 khakang = 2 1/2 skar
1 kha-chag = 6 kha = 12 1/2 skar

In Chinese literature occasionally the following expressions are used for the units based on the srang (liang). The expressions given in brackets are those used in older western literature on China:

1 liang (tael) = 10 qian [or “chien”] (mace)
1 qian (mace) = 10 fen (candareens)
1 fen (candareen) = 10 li (cash)

The value of the early tam banknotes expressed in the srang system are as follows:

5 tam = 7 zho + 5 skar (= 7 1/2 zho = 3/4 srang)
10 tam = 1 srang + 5 zho (= 1 1/2 srang)
15 tam = 2 srang + 2 zho + 5 skar (= 2 1/4 srang)
25 tam = 3 srang + 7 zho + 5 skar (= 3 3/4 srang)
50 tam = 7 srang + 5 zho (= 7 1/2 srang).

For the banknotes issued from 1939 AD onwards the unit “srang” was used.

4. Some Numismatic Terms

Here I try to define some numismatic terms which are mentioned in the bibliographic section or are otherwise used in the context of Tibetan currency history. For a more comprehensive survey of numismatic expressions one should consult the Numismatic encyclopedias which exist, such as the following:


I have based the definitions which I give here mainly on this work.

*Billon*

A metal alloy which contains a maximum of 50 % silver, the rest being base metal, mostly copper. In Tibet billon containing only about 14% silver was used for the minting of 10 Srang coins which were struck between 1948 and 1951.

*Brockage*

Coins are struck from a lower die which produces what is called the obverse of the coin and an upper die which produces what is known as the reverse of the coin. When, after striking, the coin remains stuck to the lower die instead of being removed, the new planchet...
gets the impression of the reverse of the coin which was struck previously instead of the impression of the reverse die. Thus this coin will have two reverses, one normal in relief, struck with the upper die, and one unusual in incuse and inverted, from the reverse of the coin which got stuck on the lower die. This is called a reverse brockage.

When a coin gets stuck to the upper die, the following planchet will get two obverse impressions, one normal in relief from the lower die and one unusual in incuse from the obverse of the previous coin which got stuck to the upper die. The resulting coin is called an obverse brockage.

Brockages of Tibetan coins are mainly known from copper coins, such as 5 Skar (large size issue), zhogang (the earlier issues) and 7 1/2 skar (scalloped planchet). An example of the 1/4 zho struck in the name of Xuan Tong is also known. The only known brockage of a silver coin is that of a Gaden Tangka.

**Forgery**

Imitation of a coin meant for circulation with the intention to deceive the public. Forgeries are made in a metal which is cheaper than the one used for the genuine counterpart. Forgeries are also produced as imitations of rare coins in order to deceive collectors and are also called counterfeits. These try to be as close to the original as possible, but are often cast instead of being struck, thus having a slightly smaller diameter than the original counterpart; this is due to the shrinking of the metal after casting.

The silver coins which were frequently forged in Tibet are the Kong par and Gaden tangkas. Among the copper coins, the earlier zho gangs are the most widely forged pieces. Modern counterfeits are known of most rare Tibetan coins, such as the silver 1 Srang, dated 15-43, the gold coin, dated 15-54, the silver one and two zho issues in the name of Xuan Tong, the copper issues of 2 1/2, 5 and 7 1/2 Skar, dated 15-43.

**Off metal strike**

This is a coin struck in another metal than the one normally used for its type. As examples of Tibetan off metal strikes one may mention a zho in the 58th year of Qian Long, struck in gold (instead of silver), a 20 Srang coin, dated 15-53, struck in copper (instead of gold), a 1/8th zho in the name of Xuan Tong struck in silver (instead of copper) and a zho-gang, dated 16-6, struck in silver (instead of copper). Off metal strikes can be produced as a fancy of mint employees (called mintsport), in the process of testing newly carved dies (trial strike) or in a limited number as presentation pieces.

**Pattern**

An officially struck coin which was not issued. Numerous Tibetan pattern coins of the 20th century are known, the most attractive piece being a 50 srang silver coin which shows the Potala on the obverse (see Fig. 1, p. 9). The silver coins, dated to the 57th year of Qian Long are most probably patterns, being the only ones of the 18th century. As 19th century patterns may be considered some silver coins struck in the name of Xien Feng.

**Phantasy**

Phantasies are privately stuck coins in the style of official pieces, but never identical. They are specially produced for collectors and not meant for circulation. Phantasies of Tibetan coins were probably all produced in China and exist in the three major metals, i.e. gold, silver and copper.
Planchet

This is a disk of metal, mostly round, stamped out of a metal sheet and used to produce a coin. In the case of modern machine striking, before a planchet is used it is treated around the edge by passing through a special machine, resulting in a planchet with a design on the edge (called milling; the result is a milled coin) and with a border which is higher than the rest of the coin. This method was used for all Tibetan coins from the early 1930s onwards.

In two cases, planchets of a somewhat fancy shape were used in Tibet. The first copper 2 1/2 skar issue was struck on a small flower shaped planchet (with four petals; see plate VI, nr. 41) while the second copper issue of 7 1/2 Skar was struck on scalloped planchets (with eight lobes; see plate VI, nr. 44).

5. The Dates on Tibetan Coins and Banknotes

a) Dates on coins

The dating system found on most Tibetan coins is the one of the Sexagenary Cycle which started in AD 1027, which is believed to be the year when the Kala Cakra (Tib.: dus kyi khor-lo) was introduced into Tibet from India via Kashmir.\(^1\) The year AD 1027 is the first year of the first Tibetan cycle.

The number of cycles (each comprising sixty years) and the number of years which have elapsed since 1026 are indicated on the coins. Here I give an example: rab byung (cycle) 15 lo (year) 43.

This means that 14 complete cycles plus 43 years of the 15th cycle have elapsed since 1026 AD. Hence the Western year can be calculated as follows: \(14 \times 60 + 43 + 1026 = AD 1909.\)

On some pattern coins the year is given as “rab-lo”: Example: rab-lo 927. This figure represents the total amount of years which have elapsed since 1026, i.e. it corresponds to the year 1953 of the Christian Era in this example (see plate VIII, nr. 61).

Two Tibetan pattern coins can serve as evidence that the above mentioned formula to convert the cycle date into Western date is correct and is the one which Tibetan mint officials must have applied on the coinage. The coins are of the denominations of 25 and 50 Srang and mention the Western year as “spyi lo 1951”; on both coins the Tibetan date is given as “rab-lo 925”.

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The error committed by Csoma de Körös in the calculation of the 1st year of the Tibetan cycle was finally corrected by: Pelliot, P.: “Le cycle sexagénaire dans la chronologie tibétaine.” In: Journal Asiatique, Mai-Juin 1913, pp. 633-667.


Shakabpa, Tsepon W.D., Tibet. A Political History, New York 1984, p. 17, suggests that the Kalacakra Tantra was translated into Tibetan in AD 1027 which became the first year of the first sixty year cycle. For numismatic literature discussing the dating of Tibetan currency see the section “I” of the bibliography.
One should bear in mind that the Tibetan lunar year usually begins in February according to the Western calendar. Therefore a coin which can be dated to AD 1951, can still have been struck in January 1952, while it cannot have been struck as early as January 1951, supposing that a given Tibetan coin was actually struck at the date with which it is inscribed.

There are some silver coins which have Tibetan legends on one side and Chinese characters on the other and are usually referred to as Sino-Tibetan coins, as they were issued in Lhasa under joint Chinese and Tibetan authority. These coins make mention of the Chinese Imperial Eras of Qian Long (AD 1736-1796), Jia Qing (AD 1797-1820), Dao Guang (AD 1821-1851) and Xuan Tong (AD 1908-1911) and indicate the year within these Eras in which they are struck. Example: Qian Long 58th year = AD 1793 (see plate II, nrs. 9 - 15).

b) Dates on banknotes

Two different dating systems were used on the banknotes. The Tibetan Era date can be found on all notes in Tam denomination and on the 10 Srang issues. The first year of the Tibetan Era corresponds to 254 A.D. which year, according to the inscription on the banknotes was the year of the founding of the Tibetan Government. According to another tradition it was the year when Tho-tho-ri, the first historical Tibetan king of the Yarlung Dynasty was born. Yet another tradition considers it as the year when the first Buddhist scriptures fell from heaven at a place where the Yumbu Lakar (Tibetan: yum bu brla mkhar) was built earlier on (in the second century B.C.) by the legendary first Tibetan king Nyatri Tsenpo. (Tibetan: ngya khri btsan po).

The early banknotes and the 10 Srang notes also mention the cycle during which they were issued. However, they do not indicate the exact year of the cycle during which they were printed or released for circulation. If we did not know how to convert the T.E. date into Western date and had to rely on the indicated cycle alone, the dating of banknotes would be very vague. We could only conclude that the early notes were issued some time between AD 1867 (first year of the 15th cycle) and AD 1926 (last year of the 15th cycle). The 10 Srang notes could be dated between the first year of the 16th cycle (AD 1927) and AD 1959 which was the last year when banknotes were issued. However, there are some notes from which the exact manner of conversion of the T.E. year to the year of the Western calendar can be deducted:

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Shakabpa believes that the buddhist text, which was called Nyenpo Sangwa (the secret) by Tho-tho-ri, was given to this king in 233 A.D. and that the king was born 60 years earlier, i.e. in AD 173. Therefore he assumes that currency notes were first introduced in 1890 AD, taking 232 AD as the first T.E. year. However, this is not consistent with the evidence provided by the banknotes.

Shakabpa’s erroneous dating of Tibetan banknotes has been repeated uncritically in numerous western tibetological publications.

Following the early Tam notes, new, multicoloured 50 Tam notes were issued. Like the early notes they are inscribed with the T.E. year and indicate the Tibetan cycle. The first multicoloured 50 Tam notes to be issued mention the year 1672 of the Tibetan Era and the 15th Tibetan cycle (Fig. 2). The notes issued in the following year bear the T.E. date 1673 and indicate the 16th cycle (Fig. 3). From these two note issues we can deduce that the first notes of T.E. 1672 must have been issued during the last year of the 15th cycle (i.e. in AD 1926) while the next notes must have been issued during the first year of the 16th cycle. Thus one can assert beyond any doubt that the figure 254 (AD 1926 minus T.E. 1672) must be added to the Tibetan Era year indicated on Tibetan banknotes in order to arrive at the equivalent Western year.

However, this rule only applies to T.E. dates found on Tibetan banknotes. There may well exist Tibetan documents on which a T.E. year is indicated which has to be converted into the equivalent Western year by using a different formula. These different T.E. dates may refer to historical events which may not be the founding of the Tibetan Government, but one of the other early incidents in Tibetan history some of which are mentioned above.
Fig 2
Tibetan 50 Tam banknote dated to the Tibetan Era year 1672 in the second line of the legend and to the fifteenth cycle in the last line of the next.

\[ \text{year 1672} = \text{lo chig stong drug barya bdun cu don gnyis} \]
\[ \text{fifteenth cycle} = \text{rab byung bco nga} \]

Fig 3
Tibetan 50 Tam banknote dated to the Tibetan Era year 1673 in the second line of the legend and to the sixteenth cycle in the last line of the text.

\[ \text{sixteenth cycle} = \text{rab byung bcu drug} \]
Abbreviations used in the bibliographical part:

IBNS = Journal of the International Banknote Society
JASB = Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta
JEAN = Journal of East Asian Numismatics, Taipei and Niskayuna NY, Taiwan and USA
NC = Numismatic Chronicle, U.K.
NIB = Numismatics International Bulletin, Dallas, USA
ONS NL = Oriental Numismatic Society Newsletter, U.K.
TJ = The Tibet Journal, Dharamsala, India
WCN = World Coin News, Iola, Wisconsin, USA

In order to make the bibliographical part of this compilation more accessible to non-specialists I often did not use the above listed abbreviations. However, I omit the place of publication of the above listed journals in the references given below.

When referring to specific coins, the abbreviations for the following better known coin catalogues are used:


Most of the Western sources included in this compilation can be located in at least one of the following libraries:

Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Foreign Language Department, Dharamsala, India.

Library of the Tibetan Monastic Institute, Rikon, Switzerland.


Library of the American Numismatic Society, New York, U.S.A.

Library of the Coin Department of the British Museum (London).
PLATE I

1. Anonymous "Shri Shri" Tangka of Nepal

2. Mohar of king Ranjit Malla of Bhaktapur dated Nepal Samvat 842 (AD 1722)

3. Mohar of Pratap Simha and fractional pieces dated Saka era 1697 (AD 1777)

4. Undated Sucakara Vijaya Tangka

5. Undated Shri Mangalam Tangka

6. Tangka with figure "45"

7. Undated tangka with Vartula script
PLATE II

8. Kong-par tangka, dated 13-45

9. 1/2 zho dated 57th year of Qian Long

10. 1/2 zho dated 58th year of Qian Long

11. 1/2 tangka dated 58th year of Qian Long

12. Zhogang dated 60th year of Qian Long

13. Zhogang dated 3rd year of Jia Qin

14. Zhogang dated 6th year of Jia Qin

15. Zhogang dated 15th year of Dao Guang
20. Sichuan rupee struck in Chengdu  21. Sichuan rupee struck in Kangding
22. Half Sichuan rupee struck in Chengdu  23. 1/4 Sichuan rupee struck in Chengdu
24. Lukuan rupee struck in Kangding (1899-1901)

25. British Indian rupee (Queen Victoria)

26. Undated tangka struck ca. 1910

27. 1 tam srang, dated first year of Xuan Tong

28. 5 zho dated first year of Xuan Tong

29. 1/4 zho dated first year Xuan Tong

30. 1/8 zho dated first year Xuan Tong

31. 1 tam srang dated 15-43
32. 21/2 skar dated 15-43
33. 5 skar dated 15-43
34. 71/2 skar dated 15-43
35. Half skar dated to the Xuan Tong Era
36. 1 skar dated to the Xuan Tong Era
37. Zhogang dated to the Xuan Tong Era
38. 2 zho dated to the Xuan Tong Era
39. 1 tam srang dated 15-48
PLATE VI

40. 21/2 skar dated 15-48

41. 21/2 skar dated 15-52

42. 5 skar dated 15-48

43. 5 skar dated 15-55

44. 71/2 skar dated 15-56

45. Undated late Ganden tangka (1929-30)

46. 5 zho dated 15-50

47. 5 zho dated 15-52
PLATE VII

48. 20 tam srang gold coin dated 15-52

49. Zhogang dated 16-2

50. Zhogang dated 15-54

51. Zhogang dated 16-9

52. 3 srang dated 16-8

53. 3 srang dated 16-10

54. 3 zho dated 16-20

55. 5 zho dated 16-23
PLATE VIII

56. 10 srang dated 16-22

57. 10 srang dated 16-24

58. Undated tangka (1953-54)

59. Undated 5 zho pattern (ca. 1928)

60. Zhogang pattern dated 16-1

61. 5 Srang pattern, dated rab lo 927

Red imprint of an unepigraphic (without script; Tibetan yig man) Dalai lama seal on the left. Normally these notes also show the imprint of a black seal on the right. This imprint has been omitted on this note.

The notes in tam denomination were printed from wood blocks until the 1920s. In 1936 they were withdrawn from circulation.
2. TEN TAM note dated T.E. 1659 (= A.D. 1913). Serial nr. 17674

This note and those illustrated in plates XI to XIV show the imprint of an unepigraphic red Dalai Lama seal on the left and the imprint of a black treasury seal on the right. The text of the black seal is written in 'phags pa (also called hor yig in Tibetan) characters and reads gzung dngul khang (government treasury)
PLATE XI

3. FIFTEEN TAM note dated T.E. 1659 (= AD 1913) Serial nr. 3006

These notes are known with dates ranging from T.E. 1672 to T.E. 1697 (= A.D. 1926 to A.D. 1941). All these notes were machine printed from metal blocks and hand numbered.
7. FIVE SRANG note, dated to the 16th cycle. Serial nr. ka 029775.

Five srang notes were issued between 1942 and 1945. The black seal has the same text as the ones on the tam notes: “gzhung dngul khang”. However, the black seals were redesigned for the 5 and 10 srang notes.


Ten srang notes with dates ranging from T.E. 1687 (A.D. 1941) to T.E. 1694 (A.D. 1948) were issued.

These notes were issued between 1950 and 1955. The black seal in 'phags pa script reads srid zhi dpal pa which can be translated as “Every form of being augments the good.” The seal is attributed to the Tibetan government mint and was also used for the 100 (tam) srang notes illustrated on plates XVII and XVIII.
10. 100 TAM SRANG note, undated. Serial nr. kha 06245.

The red seal is identical to the one found on the early tam notes and on the multicoloured fifty tam note (see plates IX to XIV). The 100 tam srang notes were most probably issued in 1937 and 1938.
11. 100 SRANG note, undated. Serial nr. a 14899.

The red seal on the left side is smaller than the one on the 100 tam srang note (see nr. 10, plate XVII) and shows several undecipherable characters except for one which can be read as cha.

100 srang notes were issued between 1939 and 1949 and again between 1951 and 1959.

All notes in srang denomination and the 100 tam srang note (plates XV to XVIII) were machine printed from metal blocks at the Tibetan government mint Trabshi Lekhung (Tibetan: grva bzhi glog ‘khrul las khungs) which was located north of Lhasa on the way to Sera monastery.
Explanations to the Plate I - VIII

The coins illustrated on plates I - VIII are from the author's collection except nrs. 5 and 39 which are from the collection of the late Karl Gabrisch. Since the coins are not reproduced in their actual size, I give their exact diameter below.

Abbreviations: W = Weight; D = Diameter; g = gramm(e)s; mm = millimeters. Ag = Argentum (silver); Au = Aurum (gold); Cu = Cuprum (copper). The Tibetan dates found on the coins are given in an abbreviated form. E.g. 15-52 has to be understood as rab-byung 15 lo 52 (cycle 15, year 52).

Plate I

Nr. 1. Ag. W: 10.35 g; D: 31 mm.
This undated and anonymous tangka shows on its obverse as only legible legend “shri shri” in Newari script which is a variant of the Devanagari script from northern India. On the reverse some Bengali characters are recognizable which indicate that this Nepalese tangka of heavy standard was designed in imitation of prototypes from Bengal. Coins of this and similar types were struck from the mid 16th century until about 1640 when Nepal introduced a lighter standard for its silver coins. This new standard was called mohar (or mohur) and corresponds to about 5.4 grammes. At that time nearly all of the earlier tangkas of the illustrated or similar type must have been melted down in Nepal. However, many of them had reached Tibet by trade and most probably continued to circulate in Tibet even after they had been withdrawn from circulation in Nepal. Most if not all of these early Nepalese silver coins were discovered in Tibet during the last fifty years. (see XI.C.52)

Nr. 2. Ag. W: 4.47 g; D: 27.5 mm.
The obverse legend of this coin is written in Newari characters and reads: “Shri shri Jaya/Rana jita/Malla Deva/842.” It was struck in Bhadgaon (Bhaktapur) specially for export to Tibet and together with the Pratap Simha mohar illustrated as nr. 3 is the Nepalese coin which found the widest circulation in Tibet. Owing to its low silver content it often turned black and therefore became popularly known as “nag tam” or “nag tangka” in Tibet. (see XI.C.52)

Nr. 3. Ag. The complete coin’s W: 5.18 g; D: 28 mm.
The obverse legend of this coin reads: “Shri shri shri Pra-/tapa/Simha/Saha Deva/1697.” This coin was specially minted in low grade silver for export to Tibet under the Nepalese ruler Pratap Simha, its circulation being forbidden in Nepal itself. It is known with the following four dates: SE (Saka Era) 1695, 1697, 1698 and 1699 (A.D. 1773, 1775, 1776 and 1777). The coin was often cut into fractions for small change. The major fractions which were used had the value of 1/2 tangka (of which four pieces are illustrated, showing the different methods which were used for cutting the coin), 1/3 tangka or 1/2 zho and 2/3 tangka or 1 zho. The cutting of the coins was mostly done by silversmiths who
used to clip off small parts of silver which they kept as their fee for the work of cutting the coins. The result of this further clipping are crescent shaped pieces. However, the petals were never cut away since they indicated the value of the piece. Thus a fragment showing three petals represented 1/3; one with four petals was half and one with five petals was 2/3 of a tangka. (see IX.75 and XI.C.52)

Nr. 4. Ag. W: 5.20 g; D: 27 mm.
This is the only Tibetan coin with an inscription in 'phags pa script, called “hor yig” (Mongolian script) in Tibetan. The legend is divided into two columns and reads Su rtsa kra/bi rja ya. This is the Tibetan transcription for Sanscrit “Su cakra vijaya”, “The noble, victorious wheel”. The Tibetan equivalent is bde ’khor lo rgyal ba. The coin is undated and various dates have been suggested for its minting. A Chinese document reports that silver coins were struck in Tibet in A.D. 1753/54 and again in 1785. The four undated early Tibetan tangkas which are illustrated as nrs. 4 - 7 have been associated with these dates but there are no means to decide which of the four coins has to be attributed to the earlier and which to the later date and whether all four coins were actually struck as early as the second half of the 18th century. (see I.43, I.107, I.157, I.193, I.195. IX.29 and IX.76)

Nr. 5. Ag. The measurements of this coin are not available.
The obverse inscription reads dga’ ldan phyod las rnam par rgyal ba which can be translated as “Ganden completely victorious in all directions”. Undoubtedly dga’ ldan is short for dga’ ldan pho brang and refers to the Ganden Podang government which was initiated by the 5th Dalai Lama in 1641 A.D and received its name from the residence of the Dalai Lamas in Drepung monastery. The main design features of this coin like the eight petals on obverse and the four oblong hexagons surrounding a square on reverse are imitating Nepalese mohars of the Malla dynasty which were circulating in Tibet. It is even possible that the engraver who produced the dies for the minting of this coin was a Newari artist residing in Lhasa. The coin is undated and was most probably struck in 1753/4 or in 1785. Several design variants are known for this coin. Recently also a specimen struck in gold was discovered.

Nr. 6. Ag. W: 4.25 g; D: 27 mm.
This coin was also designed in imitation of a Nepalese prototype of the Malla period. On the obverse the Tibetan figure “45” can be seen. There is no conclusive way to interpret this figure. It could refer to the 45th year of the 13th cycle (= A.D 1791). The rather crude design and striking seems to indicate that this coin was privately struck, but possibly with permission given by the Tibetan government. (see IX.107)

Nr. 7. Ag. W: 5.41 g; D: 27 mm.
This coin shows eight times the character “dza” on both sides written in the ornamental north Indian Vartula script. The eight petals surrounding a circle are like in the case of coin nr. 5 imitating designs of Nepalese prototypes. The eight spokes represented in the centre of the coin certainly refer to the eight spoked wheel of the doctrine (Tibetan: chos ’khor; Sanscrit: dharma cakra) (see I.35). It has been suggested that the syllable “dza” could represent the sanscrit syllable “ja” which may be short for “jaya”, “victory”.

Plate II
Nr. 8. Ag. W: 5.25 g; D: 27.8 mm.
This type of coin is called “Kong-par tangka” (see I.261) as it was struck in the Kong-bo province in 1791. It is reported that the coins of this type were specially struck to pay
Chinese soldiers which had been sent to Tibet at this time and which were going to expel a Nepalese army which had entered Tibet as far as Shigatse. The following two reasons are given why this coin was struck in Kong-bo rather than in Lhasa: 1. In Kong-bo wood as fuel was available to melt the silver and prepare the alloy. 2. The Chinese soldiers should exchange the silver ingots which they brought from China into these coins before reaching Lhasa in order to avoid inflationary pressure in this city.

Since most of the Kong-par tangkas are struck from heavily alloyed silver the Tibetan government made a handsome profit by having this coin struck. The coin is dated [rab byung] 15; [lo] 45, equivalent to 1791 A.D. Coins of similar design with the dates 15-46 and 15-47 were also struck. (see IA.6)

Nr. 9. Ag. W: 1.88 g; D: 18.8 mm.
After the Nepalese army had been evicted from Tibet in 1792 the Chinese decided that Tibet should not any more depend on imported coins from Nepal, but that sufficient coins struck from good silver should be produced in Lhasa under joint Tibetan and Chinese authority. The illustrated coin has the obverse legend Chen lung pa’u In Ra’u In Ina brgyad meaning “current coin of the 57th year of the Qian Long era”. The reverse legend reads pod kyi rin po che meaning “Tibetan Rinpoché” which could be a reference to the Dalai Lama. Similar types of coins were also struck at the value of one zho and one tangka. They were all rejected by the imperial authorities in Beijing on the ground that the new Tibetan coins should not be inscribed exclusively with Tibetan characters. The coins were to have a Chinese legend on the obverse and a Tibetan legend on the reverse. This order was executed for the coins which were struck subsequently and examples of which are illustrated as nrs. 10 to 15. (see I.199)

Nr. 10. Ag. W: 1.88 g; 20 mm.
In the 58th year of Qian Long (A.D 1792) silver coins of four different denominations were struck: 1/2 zho (nr. 10), 1/2 tangka (nr. 11), 1 zho and 1 tangka. The denomination of the coins is not indicated on any of them; only the 1/2 tangka issue has a small crescent placed in the central square on both obverse and reverse as a distinguishing mark. This somewhat complicated system must have caused confusion in the market, and probably the coins had often to be weighed if one wanted to be absolutely sure of having received the right payment or the right change. Therefore, in the following years (59th, 60th and 61st year of Qian Long) only one kind of silver coin was struck: the 1 zho. This had an average weight of 3.7 grammes.

The inscription on these coins differs somewhat from the one on the earlier issues like the one illustrated as nr. 9. The Tibetan side reads Chen lung gtsang pa’u lnga bcu lnga brgyad “Tibetan coin of the 58th [year] of the Qian Long Era” Hence the Chinese syllable “thung” (current) was replaced by the syllable “tsang” (spelt “gtsang”) which is short for “Xi-tsang” (Tibet).

Nr. 11. W: 2.72 g; D: 21.8 mm.
According to Chinese records only three denominations of silver coins were to be struck in Tibet in the 58th year of Qian Long: 1/2 sho, 1 zho and 1 tangka. But the additional denomination of 1/2 tangka was also struck probably at the initiative of the joint Tibetan and Chinese mint authorities in Lhasa. The illustration shows an example of this "semi official" issue.

Nr. 12. W: 3.76 g; D: 27 mm.
This coin, dated 60th year of Qian Long should normally be the last issue of the Qian Long Era since the emperor abdicated in this year of his reign. However, there also exist
zho issues dated to the 61st year of Qian Long which were struck in Lhasa before the news of the emperor’s abdication had reached Tibet. (see I.180)

Nr. 13. W: 3.75 g; D: 28.2 mm.
In the Jia Qing (the spelling is gca 'chin on the Tibetan coins) era coins dated to year 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 24 and 25 were struck in Lhasa. However, substantial numbers of coins were only struck in the first, 8th, 9th, 24th and 25th year (A.D. 1803, 1804, 1819 and 1820) of this era. Very few examples of the other years have survived of which the illustrated coin of the third year is one of three known specimens.

Nr. 14. W: 3.7 g; D: 28.6 mm.
This coin is remarkable in several respects: it is the only known trilingual Tibetan coin: Chinese on the obverse and Manchurian and Tibetan on the reverse. The Tibetan legend on the reverse reads ca’ chin ‘khri rzhugs [for bzhugs] and on the rim: gung pa lo drug. This can be translated as: “[struck] in the sixth throne year of Jia Qing”. The Manchurian legend has been read as Nigen Mennugu meaning “one zho” or “one miscal”. Should the reading of the Manchurian inscription be correct this would be the only known Tibetan coin struck before 1908 on which the denomination is mentioned. (see I. 199)

Nr. 15. W: 3.66 g; D: 29 mm.
Coins struck in the Dao Guang era are known for the following years: 1, 2, 3, 4, 15 and 16 (A.D. 1821, 1822, 1823, 1824, 1835 and 1836). The Tibetan legend on the illustrated coin reads rda'o kvortg gtsang pa'u bco lrga pa, “Tibetan coin of the fifteenth [year] of Dao Guang”.

Plate III

Nr. 16. W: 5.12 g; D: 28 mm.
Chinese influence in Tibet weakened under the successors of Qian Long. This gave the Tibetan government the opportunity to fully resume its authority and strike coins of purely Tibetan design, inspired by the Malla and Shaha coins from Nepal which still circulated in Tibet. The illustrated undated coin is the earliest example of what was going to be the most widely circulating Tibetan silver coin for more than 100 years. Called “Gaden Tangka” by western numismatists because of the first word of the legend and tangka dkarpo “white tangka” by the Tibetans. The obverse design consists of the bkra shis rtags brgyad, “eight auspicious emblems” which are placed into eight petal shaped compartments. The reverse shows the eight spoked chos 'khor (wheel of doctrine) surrounded by eight petals into which the following legend is placed dga' ldan pho brang phyod las rnam rgyal “the Gaden Palace, victorious in all directions”. This was going to be the standard reference to the Tibetan government which was used for all Tibetan coins which were struck under Tibetan authority between about 1840 and 1954. (see I.187 and I.218)

Nr. 17. Ag. W: 5.32 g; D: 27 mm.
Considerable numbers of this type of Kong-par tangkas in the style of the coin illustrated as nr. 8 were struck in about 1850 although they are dated 13-46 (= A.D. 1792).

Nr. 18. Ag. W: 4.37 g; D: 26.5 mm.
Coins of this style are known with the dates 15-24 and 15-25 (A.D. 1890 and 1891). The illustrated specimen is dated 15-25.

Nr. 19. Ag. W: 4.54 g; D: 27 mm.
This coin exists inscribed with many different dates, some of which seem to have no
specific meaning. It is the only Tibetan coin showing Lañtsa script on both sides and it is believed to have been struck by Newari merchants in Lhasa, possibly with the permission of the Tibetan government. All these coins have moon and sun above the legend on the obverse except for one specimen which has moon and swastika and is dated 15-46 (A.D. 1912). This coin is illustrated.

Nr. 20. Ag. W: 11.28 g; D: 30.5 mm.
Nr. 21. Ag. W: 11.18 g; D: 30.5 mm.
Nr. 22. Ag. W: 5.23 g; D: 23.7 mm.
Nr. 23. Ag. W: 2.87 g; D: 9.2 mm.
The so called “Sichuan rupees” were struck in Chengdu between 1902 and 1911 (nr. 20) and in Kangding between 1930 and 1942 (nr. 21). The half rupee (nr. 22) and the quarter rupee (nr. 23) were only struck in Chengdu. The fractional pieces were struck in small numbers only: 130,000 half rupees and 120,000 quarter rupees. The latter were not very popular and often converted into buttons. The rupees struck in Chengdu are occasionally encountered cut in half. Very seldom they were also quartered. The German scientist Ernst Schäfer (see I.216) reports that further silver was cut away from the half pieces whenever they changed hands in Eastern Tibet until they eventually took the shape of a sickle. Sichuan rupees are modelled on the British Indian rupee (see nr. 25) which was very popular in Tibet owing to its reliable weight and silver content. Chinese authorities hoped that the Sichuan rupee would eventually replace the British Indian rupee in Eastern Tibet. The Chinese legend on these coins reads Si chuan sheng tsao (made in Sichuan).

Plate IV

Nr. 24 Ag. W.: 11.54 g; D.: 30.4 mm.
This undated rupee represents the first attempt by Chinese authorities to replace the British Indian rupee in Eastern Tibet. The Tibetan legend on the reverse of this coin has been read as dngos dngul (genuine silver) and nged gsum zho dar (possible meaning: three zho of dar [rise mdo]. Dar tse mdo is the Tibetan name for Tachienlu (also spelt “Tatsienlu”) which is known as Kangding nowadays. Chinese sources indicate that coins of this type were struck in Kangding between 1899 and 1901 (see I.181).

Nr. 25. Ag. W: 11.54 g; D: 30.4 mm.
British Indian rupee with the portrait of Queen Victoria.

Nr. 26. Ag. W: 3.81 g; D: 25.8 mm.
This special silver tangka was issued during the short stay of the 13th Dalai Lama between his exiles in China and British India in late 1909 and early 1910. It is said to have been distributed to monks, most probably during the Monlam Festival in early 1910. (see I.45 and I.46)

Nr. 27. Ag. W: 18.8 g; D: 35 mm.
Obverse legend: “shon thong khri lo 1 srang gang” (1 Srang of the first throne year of Xuan Tong [=A.D. 1909]).

In the 18th and 19th century Tibetan coins were handstruck. From 1909 onwards all coins were struck by machine. Originally the coin presses were hand operated, later they
were powered by water wheels and finally (from the mid 1920s) by electricity. The coins illustrated as nrs. 26 to 31 can be considered as the earliest machine struck coins of Tibet.

Nr. 28. Ag. W: 9.42 g; D: 26 mm.
Same obverse legend as coin nr. 27, but zho lnga (five zho).

Nr. 29. Cu. W: 7.78 g; D: 25.8 mm.
Same legend as coins nr. 27 and 28, but zho'i 1/4 (quarter zho).

Nr. 30. Cu. W: 4.04 g; D: 21.5 mm.
Same legend as coins nrs. 27 - 29, but zho'i 1/8 (one eighth zho)

Nr. 31. Ag. W: 18.87 g; D: 35 mm.
During or shortly after the 13th Dalai Lama’s short stay in Lhasa in late 1909 and early 1910 the Tibetan government started to strike coins which omit all reference to Chinese authority. On all coins struck under Tibetan authority from 1909 onwards figure the snow lion (excepting the silver tangka issues), the eight auspicious emblems (bkra shis rtags brgyad) and the legend dga’ ldan phyogs las rnam rgyal (see IX.80). The illustrated silver coin has the denomination “one tam srang” and is dated 15-43 (A.D. 1909). Coins of similar design and of the same denomination and size exist with the dates 15-48 (see nr. 39), 15-52 and 15-53. They are the largest silver coins ever to be struck for circulation in Tibet.

Plate V

Nr. 32. Cu. W: 4.22 g; D: 23 mm.
This unit was popularly called khagang and is equal to one quarter zho.

Nr. 33. Cu. W: 7.01 g; D: 25.9 mm.
5 skar are equal to 1/2 zho.

Nr. 34. Cu. W: 9.63 g; D: 29.7 mm.
7 1/2 skar (Tibetan: skar phyed brgyad) is equal to 3/4 zho (or three kha).

Nr. 35. W: 3.73 g; D: 21.8 mm.

Nr. 36. W: 6.67 g; D: 27 mm.

Nr. 37. W: 3.53 g; D: 21.6 mm.

Nr. 38. W: 7.23 g; D: 25 mm.
The attempt of the Tibetan government to create a national coinage was briefly interrupted in 1910. After the 13th Dalai Lama had left Lhasa in early 1910 the Chinese resumed control of Lhasa for a short period and the then Chinese Amban Lian Yu ordered the striking of undated coins with Chinese and Tibetan legends referring to the Xuan Tong Era (A.D. 1909-1911). The denomination of these coins is given in Tibetan as skar che (half skar) (nr. 35), skar gang (one skar) (nr. 36), klu phon zho’gang (one zho) (nr. 37) and klu phon zho do (two zho) (nr. 38). The remaining Tibetan legend is


1. Khu-phon must be the Tibetan transcription for the Chinese word which is normally rendered as Kuping.

The standard silver weight unit during the late Qing Dynasty was called kuping tael and was equivalent to 575.8 grains (=37.312078 grammes). The klu-phon zho’gang which is referred to on the coin should weigh 1/10th of a tael, hence around 3.731 grammes. The weight of six actual 1 zho coins which I verified ranges between 3.34 and 3.73 grammes. The weight of four 2 zho coins which I checked ranges between 7.56 and 7.43 grammes.

identical on the four coins and reads: *shon thong bod kyi rin khor* (Tibetan coin of Xuan Tong). *Bod kyi rin khor* is meant to render the Chinese *pao tsang* ("Tibetan coin") inscribed on the obverse of these coins.

This coin issue under Chinese authority was shortlived. After the fall of the Qing dynasty all the Chinese (excepting those who had Tibetan wives) were made to leave Lhasa and most other Tibetan districts in 1912 after which Tibet gained its de facto independence. The snow lion evolves into Tibet's national emblem and as such figures not only on Tibetan coins, but also on Tibet's national flag, and, from 1912 onwards, also on the post stamps and banknotes issued by the Tibetan government.

**Nr. 39. Ag.** Measurements not available.
This coin is similar in style to nr. 3i, but the snow lion is looking upwards and the coin's date is 15-48 (A.D. 1914). Judging by the rarity of this coin only few specimens can have been minted.

**Plate VI**

**Nr. 40. Cu.** W: 3.56 g; D: 23.5 mm.

**Nr. 41. Cu.** W: 2.07 g; D: 17.0 X 17.2 mm.
This type of small 2 1/2 skar copper coins is refered to as *khagang zur bzhi* (khagang with four corners) in Tibetan. It was struck with the dates 15-52, 15-53 and 15-55 (A.D. 1918, 1919 and 1921).

**Nr. 42. Cu.** W: 4.93 g; D: 26 mm.
Five skar coins of this type were struck between 15-47 and 15-52 (A.D. 1913 - 1918). In order to distinguish them from the smaller 5 skar issue (see nr. 43) they were called *skar chen* (big skar) in Tibetan. They must have circulated for a long time, since on most specimens found nowadays the design is worn away.

**Nr. 43. Cu.** W: 2.76 g; D: 20.3 mm.
Popularly called *skar chung* (small skar) this coin was struck with dates ranging from 15-52 to 15-56 (A.D. 1918 - 1922) and was meant to replace the heavier earlier issue of the same denomination (see nr. 42).

**Nr. 44. Cu.** W: 3.86 g; D: 22.4 - 22.7 mm.
This copper issue of 7 1/2 skar exists with dates ranging from 15-52 to 15-56 (A.D. 1918 to 1922). Very few specimens are also known inscribed with the date 15-60 (1926). It is the only Tibetan coin which was struck on a flower shaped planchet.

**Nr. 45. Ag.** W: 4.22 g; D: 26 mm.
This silver coin of the "Gaden tangka" type was struck with machines in the late 1920s and is the last regular issue of the undated silver tangkas which were first struck in about 1840 (see nr. 16).

**Nr. 46. Ag.** W: 8.92 g; D: 28.5 mm.
Two types of five *zho* silver coins featuring the snow lion design were struck in the 1920s: One type has a snow lion looking upwards and was struck from 15-47 to 15-50 (A.D. 1913 to 1916) and again from 15-58 to 15-60 (A.D. 1924 to 1926). On the other type the snow lion is looking backwards (see illustrated specimen). This type was struck from 15-49 to 15-53 (A.D. 1915 to 1919), in 15-56 (1922) and from 15-59 to 16-1 (A.D. 1925-1927).
Nr. 47. Ag. W: 9.72 g. D: 28.7 mm.
This 5 zho silver coin seems to be a special issue with five dots arranged in the form of a flower, above the snow lion on the obverse. All other coins of this type display a sun above the snow lion (see nr. 46).

Plate VII

Nr. 48. Au. W: 11.07 g. D: 26.5 mm.
The only Tibetan gold coin is known with the dates 15-52 to 15-55 (A.D. 1918 to 1921). It was struck in a special mint called gser khang, located west of the Norbu Lingka, under the supervision of Tsarong Shabpe. When the first coins were issued in 1918 the gold they contained was worth about 13 srang. However, due to inflation, by 1921 the intrinsic gold value of these coins had risen to more than 20 srang (which is the face value) and it was profitable to export Tibetan gold coins to India; therefore the production of these beautiful coins was discontinued. Only very few specimens are known with the last date 15-55 (A.D.1921). (see I.104 and IX.86)

Nr. 49. Cu. W: 4.21 g. D: 24 mm.
Nr. 50. Cu. W: 4.23 g. D: 24.2 mm.
Copper coins of one zho were produced in very large numbers. Two types of the early issue exist. One has the denomination zhogang written vertically (nr. 49), the other has this word written horizontally on the reverse (nr. 50). Different types of snow lions can also be observed among these zho coins. They were struck between 15-52 (1918) and 16-2 (1928).

Nr. 51. Cu. W: 5.6 g. D: 24 mm.
Since many forgeries among the zhogang coins illustrated as nrs. 49 and 50 were discovered (see I.196), the Tibetan government decided to produce a new type copper zho with the help of modern coin presses which had been imported from England and were established in the new government mint grva bzhi glog 'khrul las klturzg (Trabshi Electrical Machine Plant) north of Lhasa. About six million zho coins of this type are known to have been struck. The coins are dated between 16-6 and 16-12 (A.D. 1932 to 1938). Two specimens are known with the date 16-16 (1942). (see IX.77)

Nr. 52. Ag. W: 11.94 g. D: 31 mm.
These coins were called srang gsum sgor mo (round coin of three srang) and struck with the date 16-7 and 16-8 (A.D. 1933 and 1934). After the sudden death of the 13th Dalai Lama in December 1933 many people thought that the design of these coins was inauspicious. This may be the reason why the design of the three srang coins was changed for subsequent years (see nr. 53).

Nr. 53. Ag. W: 10.96 g. D: 31 mm.
Three srang coins of the new design were struck from 16-9 to 16-12 (A.D. 1935 to 1938) and again in 16-20 (A.D. 1946). The three srang coins were of about the same weight as the Indian silver rupees but were traded at a small discount. They were struck from silver supplied by British India. (see I.43)

Silver coins of the same design with the denomination 1 1/2 srang (srang gang zho lnga) were struck between 16-10 and 16-12 (A.D. 1936 to 1938) and again in 16-20 (A.D. 1946). These coins are half the size of the 3 srang issues and their average weight is just over 5 grammes.
Nr. 54. Cu. W: 8.79 g. D: 28.5 mm.
The three zho coin exists only with the date 16-20 (A.D. 1946). The production of this coin was discontinued as it had the same size as the 5 zho coin which was introduced one year later (see nr. 55) which must have caused some confusion in the markets. (see I.41 and IX.111)

Nr. 55. Cu. W: 8.71 g. D: 29.3 mm.
Considerable quantities of copper 5 zho coins were struck between 16-21 and 16-27 (A.D. 1947 and 1953). Two major varieties exist, one shows two suns on the obverse, while the other has moon and sun in the same position. The 5 zho coins dated 16-27 were the last copper coins which were struck in Tibet.

Plate VIII

Nr. 56. Billon. W: 16.61 g. D: 32.5 mm.
Ten srang coins with the design of two jewel spitting mongooses on the reverse were struck between 16-22 and 16-26 (A.D. 1948 and 1952). Two major reverse varieties exist: one has the denomination in figures srar lg 10 (see illustration), the other in words srang bceu. The obverses can have two suns or sun and moon. These coins contain only about 14% of silver.

Nr. 57. Billon. W: 16.77 g. D: 32.4 mm.
This type of 10 srang coins was struck with the dates 16-24 and 16-25 (A.D. 1950 and 1951). The denomination is given as dngul srang bceu (ten silver srang), although the silver content of these coins is only about 14%. The outer legend on the reverse of the coin reads as follows: 'du 'god bde skyid 'dod rgu 'khill ba. It is believed that these coins were struck to pay Tibetan army members and that a mint was set up within the army compound in Trabshi, north of Lhasa. The expression bde skyid 'dod rgu in the coin's reverse legend may represent the name of this mint.

Nr. 58. Ag. W: 4.51 g. D: 26.5 mm.
Undated special issue in the style of the “Gaden tangkas”. Coin dies for the minting of this issue which were illustrated in a Chinese article (see IX.31) are inscribed with the dates rablo 927 and 928 (A.D. 1953 and 1954) which allows us to date these coins to this particular period, making them the last silver coins to be struck in Tibet. Many of them were distributed to monks. These tangkas entered circulation at the value of 5 srang and were referred to as tangka dkarpo sarpa (new white tangka). A Chinese source reports that 331,292 pieces were struck.

Nr. 59 Ag. W: 6.57 g. D: 26.7 mm.
This undated 5 zho coin was probably not meant for circulation but represents a pattern. There exist pattern coins of similar design but of larger size which have the denomination “10 Tam”. The illustrated coin represents an accomplished example of the art of Tibetan die engravers. (see I.48 and I.192)

Nr. 60. Brass. W: 5.26 g. D: 24.2 mm.
Pattern for a zhogang coin with a snow lion of somewhat British aspect. The dies to produce this coin were probably sent to Tibet from England in the late 1920s along with modern coin presses. The date on this coin is 16-1 (A.D. 1927). (see I.194)

This coin is most probably a pattern for an unissued five srang coin. It is also known in billon which is probably the metal in which specimens were going to be issued for circulation, had the plans for their production not been abandoned. The coin is dated *rab lo* 927 (A.D. 1953).
I. Literature in Western Languages on Coins

**Note:** In the case where a source refers to coins as well as to other forms of money, it will normally be listed only in this section. However, in some exceptional cases a publication may be listed in more than one section.


pp. 69-70: Items nrs 97 to 111 are banknotes (97-101) and coins (102-111) on loan from the Namgyal Monastery (Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh). Most of the items are dated erroneously to the 17th, 18th and 19th century. The rarest piece listed is a 20 Srang gold coin, dated 15-53.


Restrikes of the Tibetan 10 Srang of 1948-49, struck by the Valcambi Mint, Balerna, Switzerland, in gold, silver and cupronickel and authorized by the 14th Dalai Lama are discussed. Illustrated is the obv. and rev. of the artist’s plaster model.


A specimen of the very rare silver shokang, Qian Long, year 57 is illustrated.


The modern restrike of the 10 Srang coin Y 29b is illustrated.


p. 132: No. 205 Despatch from Sir J. Jordan to Sir Edward Grey, dated Peking, 24th July, 1907. Received 9th September, 1907. Enclosure to No 205. Extract from the “Peking Gazette” of 18th July 1907.

Summary of a Memorial by the Board of Finances respecting Tibet, approved by Imperial Rescript of 20th June, 1907.

“Silver coin of 1 m. 5 c., Tibet standard, equivalent to 1 mace, Kuping standard, are to be minted in Tibet. Money supplies sent to Tibet from Szechuan are henceforth to be sent in Sycee, to be coined in Tibet. The rupees of 3 m., 2 c. struck by the Szechuan mint having depreciated in market value to less than 3 mace, the viceroy of Szechuan is to report as to the advisability of continuing them.”


An article on the history of minting of the Sichuan rupee.

The official coin in Tibet is the tang-ka, but coins of neighbouring countries are also current along the borders. In Northern and Eastern Tibet Chinese money as well as sycee silver and copper cash are most frequently used. The Tibetans refuse paper notes. Barter is the rule, the trade on a monetary basis being scarce. Tea bricks are widely used as a medium of exchange.


Includes a section on commerce (Tibet’s trade with China and India) and finance (taxes and public revenue, currency).


p. 47: It is reported that in the beginning of the 20th century Chao Erh Feng “cast the bronze and copper offering vessels of worship into bullets and small coins” during the Chinese invasion of Eastern Tibet.


Japanese text. Tibet: Hsuan T’ung 2nd year, 7th month, 1st day (5 August 1910), the Office for Tibetan affairs established a mint. A trial issue of two types of copper coins was made, equivalent to 5 silver Li.


Includes a brief introduction to the currency of Tibet. Some Tibetan coins are listed and illustrated. Also six different banknotes are described and two are illustrated. Some comments on Tibetan tea bricks (p.2).


The following varieties of the “3 Srang”, Y. 25 (different numbers of flames in the lion’s extended fore paw and his tail) are listed: 16-7: 4/7, 4/8, 5/8; 16-8: 4/16, 4/17, 4/18 and 5/18.


Dates are invariably found on the reverse of Tibetan coins. On copper coins, the dates are usually stated in numerals, inscribed clockwise in the outer rim legend. On silver pieces, the dates are written in words: a) the word “year” and the year-figures are usually placed in the centre; b) the word “cycle” and the cycle-number may be written in the centre or on the outside rim legend. Once the cycle and the year are deciphered, the method of converting the Tibetan date to A.D. or C.E. (Common Era) is simplified by the following formula: (60 X cycle) + Year + 966 = A.D. or C.E.


pp. 5-6: “Monetary Currency. Even after the Chinese occupation, gold, silver and copper coins and notes issued by the mint department of the Government of Tibet remained in circulation. The Chinese on a number of occasions tried to have the Tibetan Government stop the circulation of
Tibetan currency, but this was resolutely rejected by the people and the National Assembly of Tibet. The Tibetan currency remained in use till 1959. All transactions by Chinese personnel were made in Chinese silver dollars (called Dayen [sic]) at the rate of 15 Tibetan sangs per dayen. The [6] Chinese had specific instructions not to use Tibetan currency. Later, they stopped the use of dayens and issued coupons instead. These coupons could be used at Chinese stores but they had no value at Tibetan shops."


Proof restrikes of the 10 Srang (Y 29a) in gold and silver, to be struck by the Valcambi Mint in Switzerland were authorized by the 14th Dalai Lama. The Australian distributor of these issues, Nelson Eustis, is quoted as saying “A gap of 28 years between the release of regular issue coinage - both approved by the same authority - probably never occurred in numismatic history”.


Reports that proofs of the Tibetan 10 Srang issue of 1950 (Y 29a), struck in cupronickel, silver and gold by the Valcambi mint in Switzerland and authorized by the 14th Dalai Lama, will be distributed by an Australian agent.


It is reported that restrikes in gold, silver and cupro-nickel of the Tibetan 10 Srang issue of 1950 Y-29a will be struck by the Royal Australian Mint (with illustration).


Gives a brief description of the proof restrikes in gold and silver of the Tibetan 10 Srang coin of 1950, struck by the private Valcambi Mint in Switzerland (with illustration).


Reported and illustrated are a 7 1/2 skar copper coin imitating the Y-11 type and a 2 1/2 skar of the Y-A19 type. The former has a lion of wrong style on the obverse while the latter can easily be identified owing to the wrong date 5-15 given on the obverse. The coins were identified as fakes by Brian Hannon and Charles Panish.


Restrikes of the Tibetan 5 Sho copper coin 16-21 (1947) struck by the Swiss Valcambi Mint in copper, silver and gold are listed with illustration of the obverse.


On the Tibet Y-22, gold 20 srang fake coin the lion's face lacks personality, appearing round and lacking expression. The lion's face on a genuine coin has more detail, although the workmanship is crude. One believes that South Asia is the source of the Tibetan gold counterfeits. These forgeries are all dated 15-54.


The legend of a token struck over a Tibetan 5 Sho copper coin is read as: “La Hsiu Han”, literally meaning “La Hsiu cliff’. A monastery of this name existed in Qinghai province. Author is most probably Bruce W. Smith.


Pp. 290-293. A Tibetan 5 Tam note without serial number and seal imprints and several coins from Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan and a few unidentified copper coins are illustrated.


(The author is probably Bruce W. Smith)

The new type is without the dotted circle in the centre of the reverse and appears to have a different Tibetan inscription. It is suggested that the Chinese “Lu” does not refer to “Tachienlu” as thought by Kalgan Shih but stands for Luting (30 miles southeast of Tachienlu) or Lubuo, a county near Tachienlu.


Japanese text. P. 177-179: A table of Tibetan coins, illustrating a silver 1 Srang, 5 Sho and tamka coin as well as fractions of Nepalese tangkas representing 1 Sho, 1 Chegye, one Karma and one Kakang.


Most of the tea imported by Tibet via Ta-chien-lu is paid for with Indian rupees of which great quantities are melted down by the Chinese in Ta-chien-lu:

“It is probable that most of the tea is paid for in rupees, as the export of Tibetan woolens cannot do much more than balance the supply of cotton clothes and silk. The rapid influx of these coins during the last fifteen years (that is from 1866) is remarkable; before that period they were rare, but have now become the currency of Tibet and are counted instead of being valued by weight (p. 197). Great quantities are melted down by the Chinese in Ta-chien-lu, the Tibetans being unable to reduce them. On my asking a Tibetan why it was necessary to melt them down at all he replied that if they did not do so, they would have no use for such an immense quantity. It is clear that there must be a trade of no small proportions between Tibet and India. For exchange with Chinese silver in Ta-chien-lu, the rupees were weighed against silver, and two rupees are added for every 10 Chinese ounces.”
"Rupees are called Peiling-tchranka, i.e. English coins; (...). Another name is Peiling ngo-mu, i.e. English woman-face.

Georgian and Victorian rupees are distinguished as p’o-tu and mo-tu, meaning male-head and female-head. Those which bear a crowned presentment are named Lama tob-du or "vagabond Lama", the crown having been mistaken for the head-gear of a religious mendicant.” (p. 198)


An extensive discussion of the value of the Sichuan rupee which is traded at a large discount in central Tibet. Mentioned are different names of Indian rupees given by Tibetans in eastern Tibet and the practise of cutting rupees in half in order to give change.


The amount of silver used for the mohars struck for Tibet in the name of Pratap Singh is given as 113,206 tolas for V.S. 1697, 671,590 for V.S. 1698 and 265,010 tolas for V.S. 1699.

Remarks on Nepal’s right to mint coins for Tibet on pp. 301, 335-336 and 342.

I.27. Baker, Henry D.: British India. With Notes on Ceylon, Afghanistan, and Tibet. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. Government Printing Office. Washington, 1915, p. 568: As trade in Tibet is chiefly by exchange or barter, and comparatively few articles are paid for in cash, bricks of tea are often used as a convenient currency instead of money, being in such universal demand, while at the same time they are limited in production, fairly portable, and of nearly uniform size.

Money is, however, also current and coined by the Tibetans at their mint in Lhasa. It is in the form of crudely fashioned silver pieces about the size of a halfpenny, but thick as a sixpence, and modeled after the Nepalese “tangka”, which Indian name it also bears. Tibet used to import coins from Nepal, but has for several years been minting its own and retaining on them the eight lucky symbols. Its value is that of its silver, equivalent to 5 pence, and like its Nepalese prototype is clipped into half, a third, or a quarter to form coins of smaller denomination. The almighty rupee is, however, in great demand.

 […] Chinese tea bricks now chiefly sold in Tibet consist of hard blocks of tea leaf and crushed twigs mixed with a strong extract of the boiled leaves and compressed. The cakes weigh about 5 1/2 pounds each, and being in universal demand and fairly portable and uniform in size, they are, as above stated, often used as currency or substitute for money at their market value. About 12 of the bricks, weighing about 70 pounds, are usually sewn into bales of skin to form loads for yaks or mule carriage.


Two drawings and a description of the Sino-Tibetan coins Ch’ien-lung Year 59 and Tao-kuang Year 1.


German text. A translation of the Chinese “Wei-tsa’ang shih-lüeh” (Record of Tibet) from the 18th century (author: Sheng-Sheng-Tsu). P. 127: gold and silver are current in Tibet.

An introduction to Tibet’s monetary system. The silver coins are: trang-ka, sho-nga, ngü-sang. The copper coins are: kha-kang, kar-ma-nga, chhe-gye. There are no gold coins - in 1918! (P. 136, American edition; p. 118, Nepalese edition)


The chief monetary unit is the trang-ka, a silver coin with a large measure of alloy. It is divided into lesser units, known as ka. Owing to over-coinage of copper coins, large quantities of which were counterfeited in India and smuggled across the border of Tibet, the trang-ka depreciated greatly. Lumps of silver, called “horseshoes” and varying greatly in size, are used for higher values (p. 162). The book contains a photograph of 12 Tibetan coins and of a silver lump (p. 161).

Treasury notes of five, ten, fifteen, twenty-five and fifty trangkas, respectively, are in use, the issue of these notes commenced in 1914 (p. 162).


Five varieties of the 1 Srang silver issue Y # 9 and four varieties of the issue Y # 12 are described and pictured. Besides these the author publishes with pictures three forgeries of the Y # 12 issue. He has not encountered any forgeries of the Y # 9 issue.


A pattern struck in brass dated “Cycle 15, Year 57” (1923 AD) with the denomination “Tam Srang 20” is described and illustrated. It may have been minted by Taylor & Challen Co. (U.K.) and was never adopted by the Tibetan Government.


Three hitherto unknown patterns were illustrated in a booklet issued in Chinese by the Institute of Finance of the People’s Bank of China (Lhasa Branch). Described and pictured are a) silver 50 srang, b) silver 25 srang and c) silver 50 srang with design of Potala. All three are dated “925” (= A.D. 1951).


The author attributes the so-called Vartula-tamga (C # 5) to the 2nd Demo Regent who ruled from 1811 to 1819 because the same Vartula character “dza” which one encounters on the coin is also engraved on the upper border of the seal of the 2nd Demo Regent.


The author obtained and describes the dies which were used to produce the forgeries of 7 1/2 Skar copper (15-43), 5 Skar (15-43) and 2 1/2 Skar (15-43). The forger worked in Gangtok (Sikkim) and died in 1985. With 15 photos.


Interpretation and origin of the so-called “Gadan Phodang” (dga’-ldan pho-drang) inscription on Tibetan coins.


The development of the Tibetan snow lion from a guardian of one of the quarters to a buddhist animal and finally to the symbol of Tibet as used on coins, paper money and post stamps, is discussed.

It is suggested the a countermark on a 8 reales of Mexico could be the Tibetan syllable "rgya". see also under Smith, Bruce W. (see I. 227).


A total of 16 patterns are illustrated and described; 2 are published for the first time.


Four major obverse varieties and five reverse varieties of this coin are explained and illustrated. also a grain token struck on a 3 Sho coin is shown along with another specimen struck on a 5 Sho copper coin.


The grain tokens were produced in the 1960s and are attributed to a "Motor Repair Workshop" in Lhasa. A specimen struck over the Tibetan 3 Sho copper coin is reported.


Contains remarks on the background and significance of the second 3 Srang issue, suggests a classification of the obverse varieties and explains three scarce reverse varieties.


Forged Sino Tibetan coins of the Qian Long and Xuan Tong eras, silver strikings of the 20 srang gold coin, dated 15-53 and a copper forgery of a 3 Srang coin, dated 16-10, are illustrated and described.


An explanation for the term "Kalsang Tangka" is suggested, the tangka's issue is placed into its historic context and the major varieties of this coin, including a gold striking, are listed.


After giving a brief introduction to the coinage of Tibet until the beginning of the 20th century the author discusses the so called "monk tangka" in the context of the normal tangka issues of Tibet. Variants of this special tangka are pointed out and a gold striking is recorded.


Four paper notes issued by Tashi Dargyas monastery are illustrated and the background to their issue is given. These notes could be exchanged for high quality tea bricks at this monastery's store rooms. Sichuan rupees with the countermark "Li Yong Lam", probably issued by the monastery of Litang and copper tokens issued by Labrang Tashi Kyil monastery are also discussed.


A machine struck copper zhogang, dated 16-16, is described and illustrated.

Based on a Russian paper which refers to the Chinese report written by Ao-Hiu, who refers to his visit to Tibet in 1789, the authors state that the first coins in Tibet were struck in 1763-6 and 1785. They describe and picture three types of the first issue and two types of the second issue. Most of the coins are extremely rare or unique.


For the first time the authors describe three types of the extremely rare 10 Tam coins from Tibet all from their collections. Though undated it is supposed that the coins were issued in 1909, 1928 and 1929/30. The reason for the issue probably may be the attempt of the Tibetan government to issue coins in size and weight similar to the very popular Indian rupee. The paper is illustrated with 12 photographs of the coins and related issues.


Following a brief historical introduction, all the known dates and major variants of this series are described and illustrated with line drawings.


A description of the Sichuan rupee, without illustration.

1.52. Bonvalot, Gabriel: Across Tibet (original French title: De Paris à Tonking, A travers le Tibet inconnu) New York, 1892, p. 290 and 313.

“Revolvers, matches, mirrors, as well as knives and scissors, were in great request, while gold coin and silver rubles were highly appreciated. Small change too, was accepted with pleasure, for they will serve as buttons in the Chinese fashion. As it is, two or three lamas of high rank have buttons formed of quarter rupees.”

“The only Tibetan coin we have seen is one about as thick as a sixpence and as large as a halfpenny, weighing the sixth of an ounce. It ought always to be of silver, but sometimes, to the disgrace of the authorities of the “mint”, it is of a bad alloy, so that the savages do not readily accept it. One one side it is stamped with inscriptions on eight medallions, forming a circle round a rose in the centre; and on the other, with curious ornamentations, among which we fancy we can recognize the crescent touching the sun, and the trident.”

(The author refers to South-east Tibet in ca. 1890.)


French text. This contribution to the history of precious metals in Asia relies on documents in Western languages, as well as in Russian and Chinese. It includes two parts: the first one, on Tibetan gold; the second one on the silver coinage minted by Nepal for Tibet before 1792. In both parts the 18th century period is given special attention. In the first part testimonies and legends are reported dealing with the gold mines of Tibet (including the famous text by Herodot on gold-digging “ants” and the discussion it has raised) and actual facts, from ancient times till nowadays.
Based on various sources, the identifications of old and recent gold mines and gold fields, the extraction and circulation of gold, prices, gold/silver exchange rate, comparisons with world prices, and political consequences, are studied - as well as the ways gold was made use of, beliefs as to precious metals and mines, treasures accumulated in monasteries and their fate. Photographs of 18th century maps help to interpret reports.

The second part deals with the monopolistic treaties by which the Nepal kings, until 1792, were entitled to mint silver coins for Tibet out of bullion provided by the Tibetans; with the evolution of this agreement during the 18th century, its commercial and political context, its numismatic aspects, the consequences of minting debased coins, the Gorkha conquest, the war with Tibet and China “the abrogation of the monopolistic treaty”, Chinese attitude towards Tibetan coinage after 1793, and the source of silver bullion used to mint Tibetan coins.


The author considers the so-called Lama dollar not as a forgery nor fantasy coin as classified by E. Kann in his “Illustrated Catalog of Chinese Coins” (B-74), but as an authentic coin struck in the early 1900’s in the Szechuan Provincial Mint at Chengdu.


A brief account of the different types of Indian rupees and the rupees with the portrait Kwang Su which circulated in Tatsienlu (modern day Kangding) in the 1930s (no illustrations).


German text. Gives an introduction to the coins and banknotes used in the 1940’s (pp. 165-167), with beautiful plates 102-105.


German text. Listing of daily wages of Tibetan artisans, prices for commodities, food and services at Lhasa between 1947-1950 (p. 197). Conversion table for the different Tibetan monetary units (p. 198).


An attempt to classify the “white tangka”.


A mint for the coinage of silver money was established in Lhasa by the Emperor Ch’ien-lung in the 57th year (A.D. 1792) of his reign. The rules of the new mint are detailed in the Regulations of the Board of Revenue, Ch. 34, fol. 35-36. Two “1 sho” specimens of this coinage are illustrated: Ch’ien-lung pao tsang Year 59 (A.D. 1794) and Tao-kuang pao tsang Year 1 (A.D. 1821).


A drawing of the “1/2 sho” of Ch’ien-lung pao tsang Year 58 (A.D. 1793).

The mint in Lhasa is under the superintendence of four officers jointly appointed by the Chinese resident and the Dalai Lama. The coins were directed to be cast from standard sycee silver, unmixed with other materials. The later emperors ordered that one fifth of the issues of the silver coinage of Tibet as well as of the coinage of Illi should still be inscribed with the reign of Ch‘ien-lung in memory of the great Emperor’s conquest.


Russian text. On p. 32 there is a short note on the Kong-par tangka and the first Sino-Tibetan issue of 1793. On plate XVI the following coins are illustrated: the Kong-par tangka 13-46 (no. 126), the 1 sho of Ch‘ien-lung Year 59 (no. 127) and of Tao Kuang Year 3 (no. 128).


Gives a very brief introduction to the coinage of Tibet (pp. 544-545) with illustration of a 5 Sho silver coin, dated 15-50 (plate 61, no. 1007).


Notes on daily wages of artisans in Tibet, in 1947, and on prices of some commodities (p. 379).


Contains some remarks on the coins minted by Nepal for Tibet.


Description and photographs, with prices, of the five issues of the “1 Srang” (nos. CH57-CH61).


On p. 19 and in footnotes 98 and 101 are to be found some remarks on Tibet’s currency, mainly based on R. Ekvall and W.D. Shakabpa. Unfortunately some wrong statements by Shakabpa are included and have not been corrected in the light of more recent numismatic publications.


The author visited the Government mint at Trab-shi and observed the minting of silver and copper coins and the printing of bank notes. He adds some remarks on the debasing of coinage and the lack of backing for he notes (p. 238).


The first western attempt to classify the different denominations of Tibet’s modern coins, now outdated.


Description of coins circulating in Tachienlu (Kangding) at the border of Sichuan with Tibet. Silver ingots, Chinese dollars (mostly from Sichuan), Indian rupees, Sichuan rupees, silver bricks (80-240 ounces by weight), gold dust and gold bars circulate in Tachienlu; their relative value fluctuates. Counterfeits of coins are made and even low grade silver ingots are produced. The small fractions of the Sichuan rupees are popular among Chinese and Tibetans as buttons for outer garments. That’s why half rupees were obtained by cutting the rupee pieces into two halves with a sword.


Three Tibetan coins are illustrated on pp. 115-117. These coins are considered to be phantasies struck in the 20th century.


On p. 12 there is a short reference to the coins issued in 1910 and 1914 and to paper money introduced in 1890 and a new issue released in 1914.

Comment: The author’s details given on paper money, based on T.W.D. Shakabpa, are incorrect.


In spite of its title, this booklet lists only coins of autonomous Tibet. The Sino-Tibetan issues are omitted. It contains useful information for beginners, but, unfortunately, there are some wrong statements and omissions in the listing of the issues.


Russian text. About 1900 the author visited the mint at the Potala of Lhasa and observed the coining by the native blacksmiths under the supervision of special lamas. He frequently met with coins bearing the dates 1872 and 1890 A.D. At that time, an Indian was engaged in the construction of a minting machine but Cybikov did not see any coins produced by it. He saw current coins of Nepalese origin, even of the 17th and 18th century. Some Tibetan coins are illustrated.


Quotes from a memorandum by O Hui, Chengde and Ba Chong which contains extracts from a speech made on 26.5. of the 54th year of Qianlong (AD 1788) by the Gorkha leaders Gedengla Sanhai and Halibu. In this speech the Gorkha leaders give as reasons for the invasion of Tibet in 1788 that the Tibetans are taxing the Nepalese traders excessively, that Tibetan traders mix their salt with sand and that the Tibetan council of ministers has ordered a devaluation of the Nepalese silver coinage in Tibet and refuse its further use.

On p. 64 the author refers to a decree to enforce the circulation of every kind of silver coins, no matter how debased. Presumably, the debased (or counterfeit?) coins referred to are the so-called Shigatse tangkas (Craig #27).

For the text of this decree see entry I. 220.


A letter written from Kumbum 11th November 1918, contains the following remarks on the currency in that area of Amdo:

"T’ai-je déjà dit que l’on se sert, ici comme numéraire que de sapkques enfilés en longs chapelets. Cette monnaie lourde, volumineuse, sert à toutes les petites transactions, dés que la somme s’élève, on la solde en argent qu’il faut peser. On compte par once d’argent (ce n’est pas notre once de pharmacien). Il faut toujours avoir sa balance à la main et, comme il n’y a aucun contrôle des poids et mesures, les balances diffèrent beaucoup entre elles, d’où pourparlers à n’en plus finir au sujet des poids aussi bien qu’à celui de la qualité des lingots d’argent dont un grand nombre sont affreusement mélangés d’étain et d’autres matières. Cette <<once>>, le ciel en soit loué - se divise en fractions décimales de 10 chos et 100 puns, cela facilite le calcul. Mais il y a 2000 sapkques dans une <<once>> (l’once s’appelle sang, mais les Européens l’appellent tael - son nom chinois classique et correct) - ces 2000 sapkques forment 4 trompas, c’est-à-dire 4 chapelets de 500 sapkques chacun. Mais les 500 sapkques sont dites <<grandes>> par comparaison à un type qui n’existe plus dans la circulation dont on parle toujours dans les transactions, de sorte que le bouquinier dit: 1000 machers (sapkques) sho (petites) et vous devez comprendre que cela signifie 500 réelles sapkques. S’il dit 1000 machers ta (grandes) c’est bien 1000 machers qu’il faut lui donner. Mais ces mille ne sont point mille du tout. Le compte correct de cent petites sapkques est 47 grandes. Dans les chapelets (les meilleurs, car il y en a de diverses sortes) 94 est dit être 100, mais parfois 92 et même 85 sapkques seulement sont enfilés au lieu de 100."


Reports the chopping of Indian rupees into three or four pieces with a big knife and a hammer in Eastern Tibet.

"The money used in this part of Tibet is the Indian rupee. They do not care about Chinese silver, and we converted all our silver into rupees. Small change does not exist. So the Tibetans adopt the rough and ready expedient of chopping rupees into pieces with a big knife and a hammer. Besides rupees chopped some into three pieces, and some into four pieces, we also found it convenient to carry about some of the Chinese brick tea which is the universal beverage in Tibet. Tea is so indispensable to the Tibetans that the disc shaped "bricks" will pass current everywhere, and are often preferred to silver."


Contains a brief discussion on the coins which Nepal minted for Tibet.


p. 211 “4° Monnaie. Il y a au Thibet une pièce de monnaie en argent, frappée à H’ Lassa par le Leangtay, avec la permission préalable de Pékin. Chaque pièce est ronde et plate, elle pèse une dixième d’once chinoise, et vaut quatre-vingts centimes; d’un côté elle porte en caractères chinois le nom de l’Empereur et l’année de son règne; sur l’autre, on lit encore les mêmes indications en lettres thibétaines, mais rien qui rappelle le gouvernement thibétain de H’Lassa; toutes les pièces sont d’une date postérieure à la conquête du Thibet par le général Yo-kong-yé en 1703. La pièce de
monnaie du Thibet antérieure à cette époque, et qui a cours encore, présente la même forme, pèse un tsien - cinq - fen [sic], c'est à dire trois vingtièmes d'once chinoise, et vaut un franc vingt centimes, [212] mais ne porte sur les deux faces que des lettres sanscrites. Depuis la conquête, H'Lassa n'a plus frappé monnaie pour son propre compte. Aujourd'hui les roupies anglaises et les lingots sont très communs dans le commerce."

p. 304 "Exportations du Thibet en Chine. De l'argent en grande quantité, et dans cet argent beaucoup de roupies anglaises de l'Inde qui sont fondues et remises en globules ou lingots par les Chinois; elles n'ont plus cours à l'est de Ta-tsien-lou. Sur la grande route du Thibet elles ne se pèsent pas, elles comptent pour trois dixièmes d'once chinoise, ce qui vaut de 2 fr. 25 à 2 fr. 30 c.; ailleurs elles se pèsent comme tout autre argent."

p. 299 The lowest quality of Tibetan brick tea is called 'ching-kia'.

"On le vend en paquet ou briques que les thibétains nomment Pa-ka; ces briques ont environ 25 centimètres de longueur sur 20 de largeur, et 0 m. 10 d'épaisseur; elles dévraient peser cinq livres françaises, mais souvent elles ne pèsent que quatre livres et demie ou quatre livres trois quarts. (...) Quatre briques font un ballot ou kor-djrou; trois ballots font une caisse ou garn, deux caisses font une charge d'animal ou guiop. Le thé arrive à Ta-tsien-lou renfermé dans une simple natte de bambou; là, on enveloppe les ballots, les doubles ballots et les caisses dans des peaux de bœufs qui l'empêchent de se perdre et de [300] s'avérer à la pluie. Le ballot de quatre briques acheté à Ta-tsien-lou pour la modique somme de 8 francs (environ 40 centimes la livre de 500 grammes) se revend à Patang [Batang] 15 ou 16 francs, à Kiang-ka [Markam] 19 ou 20 francs, à Tcha-mon-to [Chamdo] 24 francs. A H'Lassa il doit coûter de 30 à 35 francs."

The French author refers to the period 1861 - 1865.


p. 185: "Qianlong éte aussi au Népal le privilège de la frappe de la [186] monnaie tibétaine. Une nouvelle pièce d'argent est créée avec ses divisions dès 1793. Ses caractéristiques la rendent exceptionnelle dans l'histoire des monnaies Qing. La monnaie mandchoue, fondu à Lhassa, ne remplace cependant les anciennes pièces népalaises, même celles de mauvais aloi."

Discussing the reforms introduced in Tibet by Zhao Erh Feng in 1907 the author states:

p. 248: "Dans les échanges commerciaux, seule la monnaie mandchoue, fondu à Chengdu, sera autorisée; avec réalisme, les autorités chinoises accepteront les lingots s'il sont d'argent pur."

p. 253: "A la fin de 1907, Pékin interdit la circulation des roupies anglo-indiennes dans tout l'ouest de l'empire et envisage la création d'une banque à Lhassa pour favoriser les échanges commerciaux sino-tibétains."

p. 268: "Les monnaies en circulation étaient jusqu'alors des pièces mandchoues fondues depuis Qian long, d'anciennes pièces frappées au Népal, des roupies anglo-indiennes et aussi quelques roubles qui pénétraient par le nord. Hormis quelques pièces frappées au Tibet dans la seconde moitié du XIXème siècle et marquées à l'ancien nom du gouvernement tibétain (Ganden P'ho drang Tchoglé Namgyal) le pays n'a toujours pas de monnaie nationale. Thoubten Gyamtsos y rémedie en créant une unité monétaire, le sang, divisée en quatre pièces, les tamka; des billets de 5, 10, 25 ou 100 sang son aussi émis, qui portent l'inscription du Ganden P'hodang. Timbres et monnaies resteront en usage jusqu'au milieu du XXe siècle."

p. 288: "L'ascension de Kunp'hela est renforcée par la création de la Drabshi Lékhoung, un service qui rassemble sous sa seule autorité l'arsenal, la centrale hydro électrique et l'hôtel des Monnaies. Tsarong lui est adjoint (....)."

The minting of coins for Tibet by the Nepalese is discussed. The Kong Par Tangkas are thought to be Nepalese. The "Tibeto-Chinese" coinage and the use of Indian rupees in Tibet are briefly mentioned. The text is partly based on articles by de la Couperie.


pp. 63-64: "After 1620 Nepalese coins were in circulation and were widely accepted by traders throughout Tibet. During the time of the eighth Dalai Lama, Jampel Gyatso (1758-1804), the Regent, Tshemonling Ngawang Tszultrim, proposed the minting of Tibetan coins. Consequently, the first Tibetan coins modelled on the Nepalese, entered circulation in 1792 during the time of Tatshag Tenpai Gonpo. Subsequently, coins made of silver, copper, and gold were minted by the Tibetan Government in denominations called *karma, zho* and *sang*. The value of the coins was reckoned according to their weight in silver. Thus, there were ten karma in one zho, ten zho in one sang, and fifty sang to one *dotshed*. Paper currency was introduced during the reign of the thirteenth Dalai Lama. Notes were issued in denominations of five, ten, [64] fifteen, twenty-five and fifty *tamka*. Eventually, a one-hundred sang note, the highest denomination, was also issued. However, although Tibet had its own currency, most of the transactions that took place at Dartsedo were carried out on the basis of barter."

On p. 86 the author reports forged ten tamka bills given to his father in payment for tea in the Gyashoy Benkar area in 1947.

Comment: The author apparently refers to "ten srang" notes, since in the 1940s no ten tamka notes were in circulation.


p. 26: "He (Chao-Erh-Feng) looted the gold, silver and rare bronze and copper offering vessels and made them into bullets and small coins." (the author refers to the year 1906 and to the areas near Ba Chode Monastery, Chating, Lithang and Gonkar Namling).

p. 32: "To further mark the occasion (the Dalai Lama’s return to Lhasa in December 1909) new silver coins marked with Gaden Podrang - the name of the Tibetan Government - was issued by the Dalai Lama and released into circulation."

p. 78: "After Tsarong’s dismissal from the Cabinet, the Dalai Lama combined the mint, paper currency factory and the ammunition factory under one department called Drapchi Lekhung."


This book contains the reproduction of a document with the seal imprint of the 16th Karmapa. The border of this seal is very similar to the border design of the so called Sucakra Vijaya Tangka. (entry contributed by Nicholas G. Rhodes).


Three Nepalese coins of the Malla dynasty are illustrated as examples of Tibetan coins. This is the earliest known western illustration of coins circulating in Tibet.


Dr. Campbell’s report made after the death of Csoma de Körös in Darjeeling contains some remarks on the currency in possession of Csoma de K. who was preparing a journey to Tibet before he died.

p.152: “Annexed is a detailed list of the contents of the boxes. Among his papers were found the bank-notes for 300 rupees, to which he alluded before his death, and a memorandum regarding
Government papers for 5000 rupees, which is stated in transcript of a letter to the Government, dated 8th February 1842, it was his wish to leave at his death to the Asiatic Society of Bengal for any literary purpose. Cash to the number of 224 rupees of various coinage, and a waist belt containing 26 gold pieces (Dutch ducats, I believe), complete the money part of his effects."


As an appendix the "Twenty-Nine Article Ordinance for the More Efficient Governing of Tibet of 1793 AD" is published. The 3rd article deals with the newly introduced sino-tibetan silver coinage and with the Nepalese and Tibetan Tangkas which were in use at that time.


Jyekundo as a tea-port is second to Tachienlu in importance. Two hundred loads with twenty-four bricks of tea to the load (about 100 pounds) leave Tachienlu each day (1929-36). The tea at Tachienlu costs 48-60 rupees a load, freight 18 Rp. to Jyekundo and 10-12 Rp. more to Lhasa. Thus the tea costing about 78-90 Rp. in Lhasa brings a high profit when sold there at 110-160 Rps if one does not consider the losses on the road from climate, thieves, storage charges in Jyekundo and personal travel expenses of the merchants who must accompany their goods or pay for a representative to safeguard them. About eight to nine thousand loads of tea are sent to Lhasa. Tea which leaves Tachienlu in March and April arrives in Jyekundo in May and June prior to the onset of the monsoon rains. The caravans arrive in Nyachukha in November and December, and in Lhasa before the New Year's festivals. In this schedule the trip to Lhasa consumes a year. (pp. 199-200). Some deals are by barter but small articles are bought with Chinese copper coins. Expensive goods are purchased with silver rupees having the last Manchu Emperor's head engraved on the face and coined by the Chinese for the Tibetan trade. The Tibetan refuse to accept the debased Chinese dollars and Chinese paper money (p. 216).


Some remarks on the monetary system. The lower values are of copper and the greater part of Tibetan trade is carried out in copper values.


Some remarks on the use of commodities as currency. In barter trade commodities are valued in terms of a particular currency.


The article Lhasa contains a brief discussion of the coinage of Tibet and illustrations of a Gaden Tamga, a Kong Par Tamga and a Sino Tibetan Sho of Quien Long, 58th year.


Contains some remarks on the coinage and banknotes of Tibet in the article "Tibet" written by D.S. Snellgrove.


In the early 18th century the currency of Tibet consisted of Nepalese coins, "mandermali". Smaller fractions were silk scarves (K'a-btags) which circulated to the sixth part of a tam-ka, and Areca nuts (Vol. 3, pp. 13-15). (See also entry nr. 1. 171).

In German language. Contains a brief discussion of the Nepalese mohurs struck for Tibet and of the Gaden and Kong Par tangkas and of the sino-tibetan coinage.


P. 306-307: It is reported that Ngoloks accept “Tschangas (Tangkas)” for payment in 1928. The value of 1 tangka is given as 12 Chinese cents of black silver or 8 Chinese cents of silver or 23 German Pfennig.


German text. The author discusses the monetary conditions in the 1910s. The national unit is the tangka (called damkha in Lhasa dialect). In Western Tibet the Indian rupee is more widespread, the same holds true for Eastern Tibet where silver ingots are also current. In Northern Tibet tea bricks are widely in use. The newly minted copper coins are accepted only in areas within 100 miles from Lhasa.


Desideri was a contemporary of the second entry of Tibet by the Chinese (autumn 1720). Shortly afterwards the whole country was flooded with Chinese silver. The Tibetans sent it from Lhasa to Nepal in order to exchange it for money of the three kings who ruled the Kathmandu valley.


A small suff bottle made from two Tibetan machine struck shokang coins (Y 23) is described and illustrated (p. 12). The author thinks that it was made in Tibet. These items are, however, produced in Nepal, but occasionally they are sold in Lhasa curio shops.


A David-Neel used Indian Rupees for her journey. She mentions the striking of Tibetan gold coins in a place near the Norbu Ling (sic). Silver Tangkas and 50 Tael sycee have almost disappeared in Lhasa (in 1924). Earlier (1914-16) she had found plenty of Tangkas in Shigatse. Copper coins are issued but are not used 100 miles away from Lhasa. The paper currency is refused by traders.


A photograph and a short description of a forgery seen in Kathmandu in December 1980.


German text. A short history of the development of currency in Tibet, especially in connection with the Transshimilayan trade. The article is illustrated with photos of 19 coins, some of which published for the first time: Jia Qing, Year 5; 20 Srang, cycle 15, year 55. Also colour photographs of six Tibetan banknotes from the author’s collection are included.

German text. The history of the Sichuan Rupee and an attempt to classify the main types according to two characteristics on obverse and two characteristics on reverse. Based on the author’s collection, a total of nine types are listed. Some mintage figures are supplied. The author negates the existence of “mules” of this denomination. Remarks on the “dollar-size” pieces (2 1/2 rupees) with photos of two types. 19 different types and varieties are pictured.

This article was also published in English:


In 1981, a copper piece with a Chinese inscription overstruck on a Tibetan “5 Sho 16-26”, appeared on the market in Kathmandu. It seems to be a ration token and is considered to be genuine. Two different pieces are illustrated.


In 13 chapters on 68 pages the author introduces the history of currency in Tibet based on the latest research published in Western and Chinese literature. The 40 plates illustrate 155 coins, medals and banknotes, some published for the first time, except two items they are all from the author’s collection. Part of this collection was on display from 25 Sept. 89 till 12 August 1990 in the coin cabinet at Winterthur (Switzerland).


German text. Tibet is rich in gold. Auriferous fields are reported in western and central Tibet. Gold is also found in the rivers in eastern parts between Chiamdo and Tachienlu. According to Chinese sources an Indian 1 Tola gold coin was current in Tibet before 1914. The first gold coin of Tibet was minted 15-52 (AD 1918). In 15-55 (AD 1921) the minting was suspended, the last issue being the rarest. The study is based on a collection of 31 gold coins, the results such as weight, specific weight, gold content, different measurements being summed up in three tables. The author tries to establish criteria for the genuine Tibetan gold coin.


A survey of the currency used in the 20th century in areas inhabited by Tibetans of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan provinces.


17 different chopmarks, all, except three, on Sichuan Rupees, are mentioned and, where possible, also explained. 27 coins with chopmarks are pictured.

Comment: In fact, the marks found on Sichuan rupees should not be called “chops”, since they are mostly found on rupees of the later minting period (after 1930), when the habit of chopping coins was not any more prevailing in China. At least one mark seems to have had official character and could therefore be called a “counterstamp”.

Meanwhile the compiler has come to the conclusion that there exist several countermarks on Sichuan rupees and Tibetan coins which have to be considered as modern fabrications, probably of northern Indian origin.


Four different chronologies for the issue of four early Tibetan coin types are discussed with illustrations of most coins mentioned.

A brief introduction to Tibet’s coinage with illustrations of three common copper coins.


Reports that apart from the Gaden tangka five different copper coins are circulating in Tibet and that the banknotes issued in Lhasa have been withdrawn from circulation, as they could easily be counterfeited.


Importation: "Ta-tsien-lou: thé de la région de Ya-tcheou, toiles, soieries, opium; Atentseu: sucre, thé et toiles de Yun-nan.

Exportation: musc, laine, peaux, fourrures, or, cornes de cerf dures et tendres, plantes médicinales, tapis. Le commerce, tant à Atentseu qu’à Ta-tsien-lou, est souvent un commerce d’échange. Les roupies du Sseu-tch’ouan et des Indes, la piastre chinoise, les lingots d’or, d’argent (10 ou 50 taël), ont cours partout."


Discusses the use of the Tibetan tangka, the Indian rupee and Chinese silver ingots in north-eastern and eastern Tibet.

"La monnaie la plus usuelle dans les limites du royaume de Lha-sa [389] est le tan-ka1, pièce d’argent frappée à Lha-sa par le Talé lama, plus grande, mais beaucoup plus mince que notre franc et contenant une quantité considérable d’alliage. Elle vaut 1/8 d’once d’argent, 2/5 de roupie, soit 0 fr. 94. Il n’a point de monnaie divisionnaire, on se contente de couper le tan-ka en deux, trois ou quatre morceaux selon les besoins. Cette monnaie de Lhasa est peu en faveur hors des états du Talé lama et elle cesse d’avoir cours à une faible distance de la frontière ou n’est acceptée qu’à perte pour 1/3 de roupie ou pour 1/9 d’once.

Au contraire, les lingots d’argent chinois et la roupie anglo-indienne (gor-mo), qui sert quelquefois à orner la chevelure des femmes, passent partout sans subir de dépréciation. Cependant la roupie n’est point reçue par les Tibétains des bords du Kon-knor. Les lingots chinois sont moins fréquent, à cause de leur commodité moindre, mais l’once d’argent (srang) est considérée de l’un à l’autre bout des pays où sonne la langue tibétaine comme la véritable base monétaire. L’once d’argent ne varie pas tandis que la roupie et le tan-ka sont sujets à de légères fluctuations. La première était cotée en 1894 à 0 once 3125, le second 0,125. La valeur de la monnaie d’argent n’a nullement été affecté par la baisse du métal blanc et le prix des denrées est resté stationnaire. Seul l’or a augmenté de prix, mais moins qu’en Turkestan; il ne côte encore que 18 fois son poids d’argent à Lha-sa et 15 fois à Gyé-rgoun-do ou à Ba-t’ang.

Sans doute le même mot que le turc tenga, qui, désigne une monnaie ayant exactement la même valeur."

Pp. 301-302. This is an English translation of the passage on currency in eastern Tibet which is to be found in the French original from which we quote in the previous entry.


German text. A survey of the coins and notes relating to the history of the currency in Tibet. At the time of publication one of the most extensive papers on the currency of Tibet. Photographs of 66 coins and 5 notes are included.


A Japanese article discussing variants of the “Gaden tangka”.


Gives a brief account on minting of coins by Nepal for Tibet.


According to Dr. Filchner, the following foreign denominations were in use: Mongolian Lan-coins, Mexican Dollars called Sining Tael or Sining-Dollar by the naive. Copper coins were accepted in the area north of Lhasa and in Lhasa itself; in Western Tibet, however, only Tibetan silver tangkas were accepted. Apart from this, sycee silver was in common use.


p. 12 “Our money was all in bank-notes for the time being. But in Tibet only solid silver would be accepted, so two years’ finances would have to be carried in Indian rupees.”

p.35 “Tibet is serenely unaffected by the chaotic fluctuations of modern financial systems. Kharndampa arranged that we should get eight Tibetan silver trangkas for one Indian rupee, and that coolies should be paid at the rate of three tangkas a day. (...) Tibetan trangkas, minted at Lhasa are frequently made from melted rupees. They are unmilled coins, stamped with a simple design in Tibetan characters. It is a curious fact that only the rupees with a crown on the King’s head are considered valid in Eastern Tibet. The crownless Edward VII coins are politely but firmly refused as inferior articles.”

p.74 “He (Kharndampa) showed us with pride a specimen of the recently issued Tibetan paper currency, a 50 trangka note, worth about 9 s. 4 d. These notes are used by the merchants of Chamdo, Lhasa and Gyantse, and are never seen by the peasants, who recognize only the silver and copper coins. In some parts of Tibet lumps of silver, in the shape of ponies’ hooves, are used for money.”

Except otherwise stated by the author, these statements refer to Zayul in the year 1935.


In Kyirong the main currency was the Khotrang (This is the Nepalese mohur which was cut into smaller units.).

Copper sheets for the mint are imported from India.


Extracts from narratives of the mission of George Bogle to Tibet and of the journey of Thomas Manning to Lhasa (edited by Clements R. Markham, London, 1876).

The Tibetan dating by 60 year cycles is discussed on pp. 191-192. Dating systems of other Himalayan states like Nepal, Bhutan and Assam are also explained.


In Tibet’s early days, trading was carried on by exchange of commodities. Later, the Tibetan developed their own form of currency. The silver pieces were known as “ngul” (coin), taking the following forms: ten karma to one sho; ten sho to one srang; fifty srang to one dotse. The Nepalese tamka was added to the coinage, being the equivalent of about one and a half sho. In 1792 the Tibetans established their own system of currency with the coins bearing a Tibetan inscription.


pp. 179-180: “The monetary system of the Thibetians consists entirely of silver coins, which are somewhat larger, but not so thick as our francs. On one side, they bear inscriptions in Thibetian, Parsee, or Indian characters; on the other, a crown composed of eight small, round flowers. To facilitate commerce, these coins are cut into pieces determining its value. The entire coin is called Tchan-Ka [tang-ka]. A Tche-ptche [khap-che (kha-phyed)] is one half of the Tchan-Ka; or, in other words, is a piece of four flowers only. The Cho-Kan [sho-gang] has five flowers, the Ka-gan [ka'-gang] three. In the larger commercial operations, they employ silver ingots, which are weighed in a Roman balance, upon the decimal system.”

According to the English editors the transcriptions placed in square brackets were supplied by the French scholar Paul Pelliot. The transcription of the French Tcheptche should, however, be phyed brgyad, referring to seven and half (skar). Kha-phyed refers to one and half (skar), i.e. half of a ka'-gang. (WB).


Note on the Gaden Tangka in the form of advertising. Reports that in 1948 5 Million Gaden Tangkas were melted to produce the 10 Srang coin.


On p. 33 extracts from the Imperial Records of the Qing Dynasty are reproduced referring to a decree disposing the setting up of a mint for Tibetan silver coins in 1791.

The title page of an official document given by the Grand Minister Resident of Tibet and the imperial envoy to kalons about the circulation of silver coins is illustrated. Examples of Sino-tibetan silver coins to which this document as well as the Twenty-nine Article Ordinance for the More Efficient Governing of Tibet (1793) refer are reproduced.


The author mentions two gold coins of Tibet, a yellow one and a red one with a lower silver content. Now we know that the red coin is actually a Chinese forgery of a genuine Tibetan coin (p. 10 of the English edition). Several Tibetan coins are illustrated.


An important work on gold, silver and copper currency. References to Tibet are scattered throughout the book.

The author’s reference to a Tibetan gold coin, minted between 1909 and 1911, is incorrect, since no gold coins were struck before 1918. The illustrated coin (no. 5, p. 18) is actually the modern 20 srang gold coin.


Despite of some errors, this work was considered for many years as the best catalog of Tibetan coins, particularly of the Sino-Tibetan series.


Contains some remarks on the silver tangka and its fractions.

p. 461: “Commodities are either bartered or bought with regular coins. I should more strictly say the coin, there being only one kind of coin, and that is a twenty-four sen silver piece. [...] The unit of transaction being four sen there are six graduations of value between this minimum and a tanka, each possessing a distinct denomination. Thus four sen is called a khakang, eight sen a karma, twelve sen a chyekka, sixteen sen a shokang, twenty sen a kabchi and twenty-four sen a tangka.”


The Kong-par tangkas, dated 13-46, 13-47, 15-24 and 15-25 which at that time were not included in the Craig- and Yeoman-catalogues are reported together with three none existing dates for this coin type: 13-48, 13-49 and 13-50. The ornamental lines encompassing the date on the obverse of these coins are interpreted as the Buddhist symbol “OM”.


Tibet started using its own money in the late 1700’s. At first there was only one denomination, the silver tangka, weighing roughly 5 grams. It was originally a Nepalese coin. In 1909, a decimal monetary system, consisting of skar, sho and srang, was introduced: ten skar equal one sho, ten sho equal one srang. A list of interpretations is added, enabling the collector to decipher the dates and legends on native Tibetan coins, which are fascinating one they are fully understood.


Work on modern Tibetan coins, including estimated mintage figures, based on information collected from former Tibetan government officials.


German text. In Kham (Eastern Tibet) in the period ca. 1835 till 1950 the Sichuan rupee and its imitations were current, almost exclusively.


A description of Sichuan rupees. The coin featuring the Emperor’s bust without collar is the earliest issue, the piece with the “large bust” is the latest item. Two varieties in the shape of the Chinese characters for “4” are indicated. The crown size issue is a forgery. With illustrations.


A tangka and three modern issues are illustrated.

Three coins are described in some detail. However, the one that is similar in design to the gold piece is actually a silver trial-strike of a Chinese forgery of the 20 Srang gold coin, dated 15-54. The second piece is a “2 tangka” (Y # 15).


This is an offprint taken from Nouveau Journal Asiatique, Vol. 4, Paris 1829, pp. 81-158 and Vol. 6, Paris 1830, pp. 161-246.

A translation of the Chinese original Wei Tsang Thou Chy or Notes on the provinces 'Wei' and 'Zang', with maps and plates. This text is extracted from the Si tsang ki or Memorial of western Zang, dated Qian Long, year 56 (AD 1791).


German text. A short introduction to the dating of Tibetan coins.


In Russian language. On p. 36, one sino-tibetan coin, two Tibetan tangkas and 4 Nepalese Mohars, struck for Tibet, are illustrated and briefly described.


German text. This numismatic dictionary contains an article on the Tibetan tangka and on the use of tea bricks as money.


p. 134 “Eight Tibetan taels equalled one silver dollar circulating in China proper during the early years of this century.”

Comment: Instead of “taels” one should probably read “tangkas”.


Notes on the cutting of tankas (sic) and on the exchange value of the Indian rupee (1 rupee = 3 tankas). The intrinsic value of the tangka is given as “four and a fifth pennies” (sic for “annas”).


A photograph of “Silver Lhasa Coins”. A Kongpar-tangka, a Gaden-tangka and two jaus of Ladakh are illustrated (p. 281).

Some remarks on currency in Tibet in the 18th century based on Bogle and Turner’s writings.


p. 149: “The Tibetan silver coinage in general use was quite unsuited to large scale international purchases. The Lhasa Government still failed to appreciate that the simple printing of currency notes on paper without any guarantee, let alone backing in bullion, did not result in a form of money acceptable to the outside world.”

Footnote 287 (p. 172) contains a very brief historical survey of Tibet’s currency.


Reports (among others) a forgery of the 1/2 Sichuan rupee Y #2, which has recently been discovered in Vietnam.


The floral design in the centre of the obverse of the Gaden tangka was explained by a Lama informant to Laufer as a dpag bsam ljon shing “wish-granting tree” (Sanskrit: Kalpalata).


A special dollar is minted at Chengdu, for use at Tashienlu, on the Tibetan border. This dollar is smaller than the Sichuan dollar and is nominally worth 5 mace. Indian rupees are also in use along the border of Tibet.


The author gives a personal report on how she started collecting Tibetan coins. Three common Tibetan coins are illustrated and the “Eight Lucky Symbols” as they appear on the second “monk tangka” are briefly explained. Probably the only article on Tibetan coins published in the Philippines.


German text. An introduction to the history of Tibet’s currency and to the exhibition “Money from Tibet” (collection of Dr. Karl Gabrisch) in the coin cabinet of the Swiss town of Winterthur.


On pp. 20-21 the author gives a very brief summary of the minting of coins and printing of paper money during the rule of the 13th Dalai Lama. On p. 35 the Tibetan trade mission, sent to USA and England under the leadership of the Tibetan Finance Minister W.D. Shakabpa is mentioned. The official purpose of this mission was to purchase gold for the Tibetan coinage.

The term “zhangge” is explained as copper coin which equals one 20th of a tael of Tibetan silver.


Comment: It is somewhat difficult to understand what the author means to say in the second sentence: “The half dollar of Szechuen and the [Indian] rupee are almost of the same size, but they differ considerably as to their respective value, the change of the former being about 3 to 1 in favour of the rupee”. We believe that it is impossible that he wants to say that the Indian rupee is worth three times more than the Sichuan rupee, unless he is referring exclusively to the Sichuan rupee struck in Kangding in the 1930s which has a fairly low silver content.


The Bank which was set up by the Chinese in Lhasa (date is not given, but probably 1953/4) did not accept Tibetan currency for remittances to India. “Only traders who could show legitimate possession of Chinese silver, obtained through sales to the Chinese, secured drafts for further purchases (in India)”.


pp. 87-88: “I now come to a matter of more practical importance, namely the price at which China tea actually sells at Lhasa. Though A-K expressly mentions the two [88] classes of coarse teas called Chupa and Gyépa, he fails to observe the instructive meaning of the words themselves. Pa in Tibetan corresponds to the Hindustani word walla for which we have no precise English equivalent. Chu means ten and Gyé means eight. Chupa simply means “ten-walla” and Gyé pa “eight-walla”. Now it happens that these classes of brick tea are actually used in Tibet as currency. The terms used to describe them merely indicate their conventional value in tankas (six annas). The conventional value therefore of a brick (about 5 pounds) of Chupa is Rs 3-12-0, and of a brick of Gyépa is Rs 3. Besides these there are fine teas, made up, some in bricks of different sizes, some even of leaf. The first quality of “Duthang”, for instance, is sold at Lhasa at 4 srang or Rs 10 for a brick of 6 pounds, and the second at Rs 7 for a brick of 5 pounds or at about Rs 1-10-0 and Rs 1-6-0 a pound respectively.”

p. 95: There are no copper mines in Tibet, or at least the people have not been able to discover any which they could work for copper. The Tibetans get large supplies of copper from Nepal and Calcutta. Conveyance from Nepal being very expensive, people now turn to Calcutta as the cheapest market for copper.

pp. 96-97: Tibet gold, obtained as payment for goods by the Newars, is conjectured to be upwards of ten lakhs a year. As the coinage of Tibet is much adulterated, the Kashmiris and Newar merchants sell their goods at a discount over the chief coinage (tanka) to provide for the adulteration. When they return to Nepal, they dispose of their silver by exchange for gold or gold-dust. The Nepalese Government having prohibited by law the importation of silver into Nepal, the Newar merchants find it easy to barter in gold, and the Tibet Government naturally yield to the claims of the Newars to leave their silver in Tibet. The coinage of Tibet having no outlet remains in the country, and lessens the extent of annual coinage in the mint. The gold dust and gold pieces annually going out of the country necessitate the further working of the mines, which yield a steady [97] supply. The Newar merchants, who are strictly prohibited from bringing Tibetan, Nepal, or British...
Indian silver coins into Nepal, carry down gold to dispose off the same with advantage. This saves them much trouble as to the conveyance, security on the way, and time. They refine the Tibet gold-dust, which is usually impure, and gain considerably thereby.


An interesting first hand account on Tibetan currency and Tibetan monetary policy. Can be considered as a *locus classicus* on Tibetan money.


on p. 92 the author mentions that in Lhasa one Tibetan thanka (sic) was worth 15 cents of the Chinese silver dollar (with the portrait of Yuan Shikai) in the early 1950’s.

p. 104-105 “With truly Chinese ingenuity, the Communists devised a special currency operation to finance this formidable project [the Sichuan - Lhasa highway]. All Tibetans, and particularly Khambas, set great store by silver in any form. The Chinese therefore methodically collected all silver sacrificial vessels and religious ornaments in China proper and in the border provinces for melting down into bullion. They set up a mint in Chengtu, on the Chinese side of the border, where faithful replicas of the popular ‘Republican’ dollar were turned out in large quantities. Besides supplying the currency of the highway labour force, these heavy, picturesque coins came in useful for financing trade between Tibet and India and in buying the good will of selected Tibetan aristocrats, lamas and merchants.”

The author is referring to the Yuan Shikai dollar.


p. 194: “Indian rupees circulate in the market as freely as Tibetan *trunka*. Rupees are actually much sought after. The Tibetan coinage is brass and silver; there used to be gold coins, too, but these have now vanished from circulation. The silver coins have an attractive, archaic look. There is also paper money - notes of ten, fifty, a hundred and five hundred *trunka*; they are huge notes, covered with fantastic patterns in bright colours, showing the Tibetan lion, the mountains, the Eight Glorious Emblems, as well as impressive stamps and seals.”

The author refers to the Lhasa market in the late 1940’s.


Some notes on currency (p. CXXIII) and coins (pp. 128-129).


Russian text. Based on a little-known Chinese work, “Koerkha Chilueh”, the dates of the first coins issued in Tibet are stated to be A.D. 1763, 1764, 1785 and 1791-2, prior to a decree by the Emperor.

Russian text. A longer excursion into Tibetan monetary policy.

I.159. Martynov, Alexander S.: "Some Aspects of the Qing Policy in Tibet at the close of the 18th Century. (Prehistory of the Manzhou Invasion of Nepal in 1792)"


Discussion of the coinage problem which existed between Tibet and Nepal after Prithvi Narayan Shah had conquered the Kathmandu Valley and of the somewhat belated reaction of the Manzhou Government to the conflict between Nepal and Tibet.


"The Manchu authorities ordered "Zva-dmar-pa’s guilded statue to be moulded into coins to be distributed among soldiers as payment."


A very instructive report on coins and the monetary system mainly of Eastern Tibet and the border areas between China and Tibet.


The author discusses the different coin units, mentions the debasement of the currency and that Tibet has three mints and that a fourth is being established in the Chumbi valley.

p. 440-441 "The Tibetans have found their mint a paying proposition, on account of the debased coinage which they issue and force the people to accept. In addition to the commoner copper coins, none of which are worth their face-value, a number of silver coins used to be issued, a trangka coin, a coin worth six and two thirds trangkas, as well as a gold coin worth 133 1/3 trangkas; but with the march of civilization the Tibetans, or rather Tsarong Shape, who is master of the mint, has found that it is cheaper to print paper money than to issue silver coins; and so now Tibet has also a paper currency with notes for ten, fifteen, and twenty-five trangkas. No wonder that in place of the old single mint Tibet has now three mints and is establishing a forth in the Chumbi Valley. One can only wonder how long this debasement of the currency can go before it results in a financial smash. Tsarong no doubt sees this and is trying to strengthen the financial standing of the Government by a very bold move. This is no less than a law to force the lands owned by the monasteries and the privileged nobility to pay their fair share of taxes."


A short sketch of the monetary history of Tibet.


Contains a short paragraph on the minting of coins and printing of paper money after 1930. "Directly under the Cabinet was the Finance and Mint Department (Dra zhi Ngü-khang), which was established in 1920 and located at Drazhi near Lhasa." (pp. 65-66).

Reports that only two different kinds of silver tangkas are circulating: Sino-tibetan tangkas and a type of tangka which has a Tibetan inscription on one side and a round crown composed of eight petals on the other side, called "tchan-ka" which is cut into pieces the value of which is determined by the number of petals found on them.


On pp. 32-40 and 210-212 the author gives a quite detailed account of Nepal’s right to mint coins for Tibet from silver supplied by the latter and of the problems which arose in the 18th century between Tibet and Nepal, owing to the decreasing silver content of the coins minted in the Kathmandu valley for Tibet.


Contains three plates on which a 100 and a 10 Srang paper note and 4 modern Tibetan coins are illustrated.


On p. 174 a reference to a Tibetan Government Mint located between Yatung and Phari Dzong “worked by a ‘Health Robinson’ water-wheel, where coins and paper money of birch-bark paper used to be made.”


A short, illustrated introduction to Tibetan coins and banknotes.


“It was considered against the rule not to bargain for buying something. You heard the jingle of silver; paper money was not in favour. People paid in coins by weight. Where and when they were coined did not matter. Chinese currency of the old days, Indian rupees of the colonial times, even roubles from the time of Nicholas II, the last tsar of Russia, would do. To make sure that the metal was genuine, the coins were struck on a stone.”

The author refers to the Lhasa market in 1955.

The author also reports that in 1955 fox skin was used as money among the nomads of the Dam valley near the Nyainqentanglha Range in Northern Tibet.


Some notes on the minting of the “tamga Gabo” (white tangka).


p. 356: Besides musk, the fine wool, and cow tails. Thibet produces great quantities of gold, either washed from the sands of the Sampoo, or lesser rivers, or dug out of the mines. The Lama never uses any in his mint, but it is exchanged for the articles of commerce.

A) Nepal: The coinage of the Malla Dynasties forms a homogenous complex, spread over a period of about two centuries (1560-1769). With a single exception (a gold coin of Jaya Prakash Malla of Kathmandu, dated 1736), the Malla coinage is exclusively of silver. The basic coin was the “mohar”, struck for the first time by Mahendra Malla of Kathmandu (c. 1550-1570) in imitation of the Moghul coinage. From this coin derives the name “mahendramallii”, by which the Nepalese mohar was known until the Gurkha conquest. The fractions in common use were the half mohar (“sukii” or “suka”) and the quarter mohar (“sukica”).

B) Tibet: According to an agreement between Mahendra Malla and the Tibetan authorities, his mohar became legal tender also in that region, for which a special type was struck. Later on, the privilege was extended to the mint of Bhatgaon, which gradually succeeded in obtaining the monopoly of the supply of coins for Tibet. In spite of the gradual reduction of the silver content in the mohar under the last Malla rulers, this system continued until the Gurkha conquest of 1769 and even much later. For the first three quarters of the 18th century, the mahendramallii was the only coin circulating in Tibet. When smaller fractions were required, the Nepalese mohar coin was divided into parts or fragments. The Chinese tael was in circulation particularly in the eastern regions.

In part III (Vol II) of the same work (Rome, 1953) the “Breve Relazione del P. Domenico da Fano (1713)” [Short Relation of Father Domenico da Fano (1713)] is published (pp. 3-37). This report contains one of the earliest and most detailed western description of Tibet’s currency (pp. 13-15):

“II denaro che corre in Lassa e per tutto il regno è una moneta che viene da Nekpal, chiamata in quel regno manderal [mahendramallii], e i Butiani la chiamano petanh [bal-tam]. Questa è una moneta rotonda, come sarebbero due paoli o un cavalotto di Bologna; sono imprese in esse alcune lettere col nome del Re, regno e anno che sono state fatte. Li buttiani da queste monete imprese fuori dal loro regno ne formano una propria, ma idealmente, e la chiamano tangh, che consta di 6 petanh e due terzi, che sarebbero alla nostra usanza tredici paoli e un terzo. Sopra questa moneta ideale hanno alcune bilancie accomodate a tanga per tanga, a mezza per mezza, a petanh per petanh, a due terzi, a un terzo e mezzo terzo. E quando uno non ha di queste monete, basta che abbia il mio besogno. Se poi il prezzo della cosa non corra per tutto; ma se si vuol pagare con l’argento, il viandante chiama la moneta, et in tal caso sopra l’argento non monetato vi si perde dieci per cento.45)

Per le cose poi minute si servono d’un certa commutazione; per esempio ho bisogno d’un poco di latte, d’erbe, sale ecc.: prendo un poco di thè o di tabacco o di butiro ecc., e con queste cose avverò il mio besogno. Se poi la prezzo della cosa che vogliono comprare arriva alla sesta parte de un petanh, non è necessario che li dia l’argento, ma vi sono alcuni fazzoletti de seta, che corrono per questo prezzo, purché siano almeno quadrati; se poi sono più lunghe che quadri, sono come traboccanti, e così corrono senza misurarsi.46) Hanno l’uso ancora di un’altra moneta, con la quale dividono questo fazzoletto sino alla 20ª parte, e questi sono alcuni frutti che vengano dall’Industano. Questi frutti al di dentro sono come noci moscate, ma non hanno odore, e la figura non è totalmente consimile; e sono chiamati nel Butant Cuiù [go-yu]. E li fazzoletti de seta che vengano della China e servano nel Butant per moneta, si chiamano Mansè o Mancià [man-tsi].47)

Quando poi si fa viaggio, bisogna portarsi seco varie cose, come mansè, thè, sale, butiro, tabacco per fumara di quello della China, una certa tela che si chiamano Samsò [zam-zo] che si spende parimente per fazzoletti, kat [had], cuiù ecc.,48) perché quando si guinge all’abitato e si addimanda un poco di cianh [c’an] orzata per bevere, un poco di paglia per le bestie, un poco di sterco d’animale per fare il fuoco ecc., non sono obbligati a prendere alcuna cosa determinata, ma addimandano quello che hanno bisogno, e se uno no l’ha, quando ti vedessero crepare non te lo daranno. Non voglio dir per questo che l’argento non corra per tutto; ma se si vuol pagare con l’argento, il viandante non troverà il suo conto. Et anco mi sono trovato aver bisogno d’un poco di farina d’orzo per mangiare, et un’altra volta un pugno de riso, disco un pugno, e con l’argento non lo potei avere, quantunque per cosidire mi morissi di fame per aver camminato tutto il giorno antecedente, et avendo trovato quantità di neve su le montagne, non la potei passare quel giorno; le provisioni erano finite e bisognò dormire, o per dir meglio passar quella notte, tra la neve; ed il giorno seguente trovai uno che me diede un pugno di granturco per un poco di tabacco.
Sulle monete correnti nel Tibet e Nepal nella prima metà del sec. XVIII vedi Parte IV, Appendice I. Qui basterà ricordare che il tangh qui menzionato non è il *tam-k’a*, ma il *dual-sran*.

I *k’a-brags*, i fazzoletti che accompagnano qualsiasi dono o missiva e che vengono presentati o scambiati durante ogni visita di riguardo, servono anche da moneta. Ciò è il caso soprattutto per le due qualità migliori, di seta, chiamate *nam-mdsos* ed a-se; TUCCI, Lhasa, p. 65.


*Zam-zo* secondo il dizionario di S. Ch. Das è un cuscino di stoffa simile al velluto, il che non collima con la <<tela che si spende per fazzoletti>> dell’A. *Had* è il frutto di una specie di pero selvatico (*Pyrus betulaefolia*), il mongolo *qat*; LAUFER, p. 487 n. 194. Su cuio o *go-yu* vedi la nota precedente.


“The PLA [= People’s Liberation Army] [before 1959] paid for all supplies bought from the [Tibetan] population, conscientiously, with silver coins (*Da-yans*). They produced an enormous inflation by their numbers until they were exported for profit to India and were melted down at the Bombay mint. They were replaced by paper notes, thus imprisoning the Tibetans irretrievably in the stream of worthless Chinese currency.”


Introduction to the Newari alphabet and inscriptions on the Malla coinage (pp. 178-186) and to the Tibetan alphabet and inscriptions on the Tibetan issues (pp. 187-191).


“A large quantity of tea comes into Ta-tsien-lu, principally from Ya-Chow-Fu. It is of a very coarse description, and is made up in slabs about forty inches long, nine wide, and three and a half thick, weighing perhaps twelve to fifteen pounds each, and are wrapped in matting. [...] At Ta-tsien-lu the slabs of tea are cut up into so-called bricks which are packed in hide and taken by the caravans to all parts of Tibet. Indian rupees are here plentiful, and are a recognized currency. Russian roubles are also found, and in increasing numbers.”

The author refers to the years 1887/1888.


Possibly the earliest illustration and description of two of the Sino-tibetan issues in the name of emperor *chah chhchin* (sic), year 8 and 25.


p. 24 (2) Currency. “There is a Tibetan silver coin known as *tenga* or *tanka* (corrupted from the Hindi word *tanka*, a rupee). It is about the size of a half-penny but not thicker than a sixpence, and contains silver to the value of about $1/2$. Tengas are cut into halves, thirds, or quarters to form
coins of smaller denomination. Indian rupees, worth 2 1/2 to 3 tengas, are also current, as likewise are Chinese rupees. They are often melted down and pass by weight as sycee.

The srang, worth 2 1/2 Indian rupees, appears to be a measure of value, as it presents an ounce of silver. It is therefore, the equivalent of the Chinese tael. The sho is evidently a tenth of a srang.


p. 57: “In 1927, the Government of Tibet sent several lay and monk officials to India to study the works and methods of the minting of coins and the printing of currency notes.”

See also the section “Medals, Decorations and Militaria”.


An interesting listing of daily wages of Tibetan artisans in 1947. Between 1950 and 1958, the prices for grain multiplied due to the effects of the Chinese occupation, e.g. the price for 1 American pint (0.55 liter) [of barley beer?] went up from c. 1 srang to c. 7.5 srang.


p. 39: “Silver and gold were employed as measures as early as the seventh century in Tibet and in the eighteenth century, Nepalese coins were introduced, in a limited form, as currency. The Tibetans issued their own coinage bearing the seal of the lion in the 1790’s and paper money in 1890, but none of the currency was ever backed by reserves. Most taxes and other payments were made in produce and service rather than in currency.”

This passage is typical for the incorrect statements regarding Tibetan currency which can be found in several western tibetological works.


The Yuan Shi-kai dollar was restruck by the Chinese Communists in the mid-1950’s, primarily for circulation in Tibet. All the coins examined were dated to the 3rd year of the Republic. One can distinguish the restrike from the normal issue by the character “yuan” on the reverse, the top half of which has a closed triangle in the restrikes, whereas in the normal coins this triangle is left open. With illustrations.


Drawings of two coins of very different styles, dated Ch’ien Lung Year 61 and recorded for the first time. This date is unexpected because the Chinese Emperor Ch’ien Lung only reigned for 60 years and abdicated on 6th February 1796. These Sino-Tibetan coins must have been struck in the weeks before the news of the abdication of Ch’ien Lung had reached Lhasa.


An extremely rare rupee with legends on both sides poorly written and difficult to interpret. The Chinese characters on the obverse are translated “Lu Kuan Yin (?)” (Tachienlu Customs Enough Silver (?)); the Tibetan inscriptions on the reverse read “nged gsum sho dar” (three sho of Tachienlu, genuine silver). The date of issue is probably between 1890 and 1903.

A short note on a forgery of the Tibet 7 1/2 skar 15-43 (A.D. 1909; Y # 11). It can be distinguished by one letter in the word below the lion which is written in a different way. Apart from this, the forgery is of good workmanship and could easily deceive.


*I.185. Rhodes, Nicholas G.: Tibetan Mints. ONS Information Sheet, No. 19, 1978. Personal research enables the author to list ten mints established in Tibet during the last 150 years. These are Dodpal, Giamda, Tip Arsenal, Dode, Mekyi, Ser-khang, Norbu Tsoki, Takpo, Tapchi and Dogu. Each mint is classed with different types of coins produced there, according to historical sources or statements made by the author. The report is completed with drawings of 15 coins and two maps illustrating the locations of the mints “outside Lhasa” and “in and around Lhasa”, respectively.


*I.187. Rhodes, Nicholas G.: The Gaden Tangka of Tibet. ONS Occasional Paper. No. 17, January 1983. (20 pp.) Contains “Appendix I: Description of Main Classes and Varieties”; with 20 drawings and “Appendix II: An Analysis of Weight Standards”; with a list of tangkas, weighed by C. Valdettaro and by the author. This is the best substantiated work on the Gaden tangka to date. The author’s comments on the secret marks on the tangkas, probably introduced partly as a method of detecting forgeries and partly to identify the date of issue and the official responsible for the mint, represent most useful and original research.


*I.189. Rhodes, Nicholas G.: “Some Sino-Tibetan Forgeries.” In: NIB, Vol 20, Nr. 11 1986, pp. 254-257. The author discusses 3 Sino-Tibetan “5 Fen” issues (Chia Ching Yr. 8, Tao Kuang Yr. 1 and Hsien Feng Yr. 3) which were offered in the Money Company auction, Sept. 1986 and states that all these pieces are forgeries. The paper contains 6 drawings of the mentioned issues.

*I.190. Rhodes, Nicholas G.: “Some Sino-Tibetan Coins Formerly in Peking.” In: NIB, Vol. 20, Nr. 12, 1986, pp. 283-285. In 1937 Huang Peng-hsiao published a small book entitled “Coins of the Ching Dynasty” and mentioned some Sino-Tibetan coins said to have been presented to the Emperor as examples of
those issued throughout the Empire. The author analyses 9 Sino-Tibetan coins mentioned and pictured but hitherto unknown to collectors.


This is a rare coin attributed to ca. 1840 AD. The inscription, identical on both sides, is in the so-called “Hor-yig” or “Phags-pa” script and means “Suchakra Vijaya” which can be translated as “The Victory of the Dharma (the Buddhist doctrine).”


A unique copper pattern with the denomination “50 silver srang” dated in the Tibetan year 925 and in Christian year 1951 and a smaller copper pattern “5 srang” from the author’s collection are described and pictured.


A historical sketch on silver coins of the Himalayan states Cooch Behar, Bhutan, Nepal, Garhwal and Ladakh which were minted for the Transhimalayan wool trade with Tibet and play an important part in the numismatic history of that country.


The 1 Sho brass dated 16-1 (1927) and the 5 Sho silver dated 16-4 (1930) should probably be regarded as patterns. It is supposed that the first mentioned coin was struck by Messrs. Taylor and Challen in Birmingham in 1923. The second coin appeared in Nepal in 1969. The rev. of the no. 2 is the re-engraved die of the coin no. 1 done by the Tibetans themselves to strike the 5 Sho silver, which was never issued in quantity.


The author tries to date three early Tibetan Tangkas (which are undated) taking as base the “Qing Ding Guo Er Ka Ji Lue” (The records of the Emperor’s decisions regarding relations with the Gorkhas). He includes translations of chapter XI and XII of this important Chinese document as appendix. He also discusses the Sino-Tibetan trial issues, dated 57th year of Qian Long which are all extremely rare. He illustrates all five pieces which are known from Western Collections and a recently published book in Chinese about Tibet’s coinage by Xiao Huaiyuan (see section IX).


Details of the production of large numbers of forgeries (mostly of the copper shokang) in Calcutta in the mid 1920’s are described. The forged types are illustrated.


In Tibetan Medical Paintings recently published, there is a most unexpected numismatic reference. 23 paintings illustrate various forms of silver ingots in the form of Indian, Nepalese, Bhutanese, Russian and Khampa Zho-kha-ma currency.

Reports a gold mohur of Aurangzeb, dated 1076 AH, Year 8 (1665/66 A.D.) bearing the mint name Tibet-i-Kalan. The author suggests that it was probably struck in some mint in Kashmir by order of the king of Ladakh (and with the permission of the Moghul emperor) who used it to pay tribute to Aurangzeb in AD 1665.


An illustrated article on two rare Sino-Tibetan coins that have never been fully recorded before: 1) a very rare “1/2 Qian” of Qian Long, year 57 (A.D. 1792). The Tibetan inscription “Bod-kyi Rin-po-che” means “Tibetan Rinpoche”, a reference to the Dalai Lama. 2) “1 Qian” of Jia Qing, year 6 (A.D. 1801) with Tibetan, Chinese and Manchu inscription, fully translated by the authors.


p. 41 [p. 569 in the reprint]: “As another mark of friendship the Government of India would sell fine silver considerably below market prices and free of duty.” [As a result of the mission under Colonel Weir to Lhasa in August 1930]

Comment: This silver must have been used to mint the 3 Srang silver coins dated 16-7 and 16-8 (1933 and 1934).


p. 183: “The tea is the most important item in Tibetan culinary art, and any one who can make it to suit the fastidious is indeed clever. The tea used is the brick tea, made of coarse leaves and small twigs of the tea plant in China, pressed into bricks bound around by basket work, and sent up to the Tibetan border on the backs of coolies, and then into the interior of Tibet on the backs of oxen. There are three principal grades and the best grade goes in very large quantities to Lhasa.”

The preparation of tea is also described (pp. 183-184). Short description of the “Ja-Lam” (tea road from Ta-chien-lu to Nagch’uk’a) on p. 271. Apparently the use of tea bricks as money is not mentioned.

The author reports that 8 tangkas are exchanged for 1 Chinese tael and that rupees are used in the area north of Nagch’uk’a (p. 261).


The medium of exchange in Tibet is a silver coin called “gaden tranka” which weighs 1 ch’ien 5 fen. This coin can be divided, the fractions being in use.


Notes on Tibetan coins and currency in Eastern Tibet and drawings of fractions of the Tibetan tranka.

pp. 277-282: An extensive discussion of the tea trade, different qualities of tea bricks and their use as currency.


A few notes on coins, under “currency” on p. 259 and passim.

pp. 718-719: “A Chinese author, called Wei Yuan, in his work entitled Sheng-Wuchi (Book XIV, p. 53), says that in ancient times the Tibetan used cowrie shells and knife-shaped coins, but that since the Sung, Chin, and Ming periods (i.e., since the twelfth century) they have used silver. He further adds that since the Cheng-tung period of the Ming (A.D. 1436) they have paid their taxes (or tribute to Cina) in silver coins.

As far as my information goes the present coinage of Tibet has been in use since the middle of the eighteenth century. It comprises only one coin, a silver one called *tranka*, of the nominal value of about 16 cents of our money. Fractional currency is made by cutting the tranka into pieces. (Land of the Lamas, p. 207) The only mint I know of is at Lha’asa. The trankas minted there bear on the obverse the inscription *Jyal-wai Gadan p’odrang chyog-las*, “From the Jyal-wa’s castle of Gadan”, *Jyal-wa* standing for *Jyal-wa jya-mts’o*, the usual title of the Tale lama. On the reverse are the eight signs of good luck, each enclosed in a small circle, and in the center is what I take to be a lotus flower. These trankas are colloquially called *Gadan tranka*.

Coins of similar value, but minted in Nepal, Indian rupees and Chinese bullion, are also in use, and rupees, from their purity and the impossibility of counterfeiting them, are in much greater demand than [719] the native coins or even Chinese bullion, the purity of which the people have no means of testing. [...] In most parts of the country money is but little used, the people bartering for most of the things they require. Brick tea is used to such an extent in their mercantile transactions that it is, for all practical purposes, a unit of value. Salt, *tsamba*, boots in the Kokonor, *pulo*, cotton cloth, and even walnuts (in the Bat’ang country), are accepted without a murmur instead of silver, and in most places one or any of these articles are preferred to it.”


pp. 53-54: “To put an end to the difficulties which had arisen between the Gorkhas and the Tibetans resulting from the use of debased coins in Tibet, and from the inability they had heretofore shown to regulate exchange, the Imperial Government ordered the establishment of a mint in Lhasa [in AD 1792] and the coining of two silver coins of the standard weights of 1 mace and 1/2 mace respectively 1).


On pp. 148-149 a discussion of the “Tibetan Era” used on Tibetan banknotes. The author suggests that adding 256 to the T.E. date gives the Western date.


Lists two Sino-Tibetan coins (1 Tao Kwang and 1 Chien Lung) and two Gaden Tamgas.

"With astonishment we look at the sho, the only copper coin of Tibet in circulation. We saw neither silver nor gold in the dzongs nor in popular use. Although the minting of the small copper coins is poor, yet how grandiose is the inscription: "The government is victorious in all directions." It is astonishing that the half-sho and the quarter-sho are bigger than the sho itself."


Spanish text. On p. 124 a brief survey on the coins of Tibet is given.


The author provides details of the wages in Tibet. Her listing gives a good idea of the value of local currency within Tibet (p. 141).


On p. 33 the author illustrates and describes a 1 Strang coin, Xuan tung year 1, bearing several small Chinese chops. This and another coin of the same type sold in the Money Company Hongkong auction Sept. 25, 1982 are the only examples of Tibetan coins with chops known to the author who believes that some Tibetan tangkas with chops should exist.


A short note on dating modern issues.


A German language introduction to the Tibetan currency system explained with the help of two tables and illustrations of a copper shokang, a silver Tangka with Lantsa inscription and a blue 50 Tam banknote.

This article is already listed in the philatelic section of the Hellrigl/Gabrisch Bibliography.


Reports the cutting of rupees in Eastern Tibet (Jekundo) in the late 1930's.


Similar report on rupees which are struck in Tatsienlu (Kanding) and cut in half in Eastern Tibet, the two halves diminishing in size as they change hands on their way to Jyekundo, as each person who handles these is entitled to cut away further bits as his interest.

dass das durchschlagene Silberstück nicht halbmondförmig bleibt, sondern auf seinem Wanderweg ins Innere immer sichelförmigere Gestalt annimmt und selbstredend an Kaufkraft auch die entsprechende Einbusse erleidet. Hier in Jekundo, der nachweislich letzten Etappenstation des abnehmenden Silbermondes, sollen wir nun gründlich übers Ohr gehauen werden. Auf diese Weise will uns der Kaufmann um mehrere tausend Rupien betrügen und behauptet mit der unschuldigsten Miene der Welt, dass er sein Geld wieder nach Tatsienlu zurücklaufen lassen müsse, wenn wir uns mit seinen Forderungen nicht einverstanden erklärt. So zwingt uns der Gauner, die halben Rupien unter fast untragbaren Verlusten anzunehmen.”

German text. Includes a short article on “tangka” and on the different kinds of sycee used in Tibet.

An attempt to classify the Tibetan Gaden tangka.

*I.219. Semans, Scott: “Some more Forgeries”. In: ONS NL; No. 50, August 1977.
A forgery of the Tibetan 2 1/2 skar (Y # A19), dated 15-55, is currently found in India. It is easy to detect, as the figures “1” and “5” in the date are connected and the tail of the “5” is split. Also the style of this forgery is generally wrong.

This volume reproduces in colour 107 documents from the Archives of the Tibet Autonomous Region. Most of these are translated into English. Two documents are of relevance for the history of Tibetan money:

1. The 29-Article Imperial Ordinance. Article 3 deals with coinage and is translated into English as follows:

“The Tibetan tramka (a silver coin) has long been known to contain a lot of impurities. Henceforth, coins shall be minted with pure silver. The new coins, like the old ones, shall weigh one and a half qian each and be convertible to Han silver money at the rate of six pure silver tramka to a one liang [Before 1949, One jin (500 grammes) = 16 liang (10 liang today), One liang = 10 qian = 31.25 grammes, One qian = 3.125 grammes] Han silver coin. One liang of Han silver coin contains nine qian of silver, the one qian difference going to pay for the cost of manufacture. Silver coins minted by the government of Tibet or Nepal that contain no impurities shall be converted at the exchange rate quoted above. All the old tramka plus newly minted tramka not up to standard shall be converted into Han silver at the rate of eight such coins to one liang of Han silver money, and henceforth no tramka containing impurities are to be minted.”

2. Notice Issued by the Resident Minister Sheng Tai and Living Buddha Demo Concerning the Circulation of Silver Coins (AD 1891):

“Vice Commander Sheng, Resident Minister in Tibet by Imperial Order, and Living Buddha Demo, Assistant in the Administration of District Affairs, hereby issue the following important notice:

We all know that silver coins have been in circulation in Tibet for many years, but recently some bad elements have been arbitrarily deciding on the percentage of silver in the coins, whether old or new, shiny or worn, thus creating money circulation problems. This may well give rise to quarrels and conflicts, running counter to the purpose of issuing money, which is for the convenience of the people. Therefore, it has been decided to put samples of silver coins on display, along with the following instructions. This is to inform all Han and Tibetan soldiers and civilians in Upper and Lower Tibet, plus the guild hall members, merchants and monks from the three major monasteries, plus all Kanbas, Mongolians, Gurkhas and Bhutanese that henceforth all types of silver coins, old or new, shiny or worn, as shown in the displays, are to be kept in circulation, without discrimina-
Dealing in coins made of copper, iron, tin or lead is forbidden. Whoever is found by local Han or Tibetan officials to be illegally selling or using such coins shall be penalized severely and expeditiously in public. Cutting off the rim of a one half dollar coin is forbidden. Whoever is found violating this rule shall be punished severely without leniency. We, the Minister and the Living Buddha, are impartial and trustworthy. Do not step outside the law or you will regret it later. Abide strictly by these instructions. This is the end of the instructions.

[Numeral for the day is missing in the original document] the fourth day of the 5th month of the 17th year of Guangxu (1891)

To be put up at the market of Gyangze. Do not deface these instructions in any way.”


p. 39: “Prithvinarayan Shah was very much interested in the circulation of his coins in Tibet, and as soon as he conquered the Kathmandu Valley he sent a deputation to Tibet with newly minted coins of proper alloy struck in his name. However, Tibet refused to accept them for circulation until Prithvinarayan had undertaken to buy at face value all the debased Malla coins. No agreement could be reached between Tibet and Nepal on the value of silver and that of coins to be minted in Nepal for Tibet in future, and on the exchange rate to be established between the new coins and the debased old coins of the Malla rulers. Prithvinarayan refused to accept responsibility for the coin sent by his enemies, whereas Tibet insisted that as it had paid full value even for the debased coins, it was up to Nepal to take them back even at a loss.”

p.56: One of the terms mentioned in a treaty concluded between Tibet and Nepal in 1789 was the following:

“Tibet agreed to accept and use Nepali coins, minted by the Nepal Government, and to exchange the Nepali currency at the rate of one new coin for one and one-half (1 1/2) old coins. (This was a compromise between the Nepali demand that the ratio be 1 new to 2 old coins and the Tibetan position that the exchange should be on a basis of equality.)”


pp. 10-11: *Currency*. After 1750 Nepalese coins were circulated in Tibet. In 1792 Tibetans struck their own *tamka* using Nepalese coins as a model. The Tibetan government introduced paper currency in 1890. Government-held gold reserves backed up the currency notes.

Comment: The year 1890 for the introduction of paper currency is based on an erroneous conversion of the Tibetan Era year, indicated on the first notes, into western year. In fact paper currency was introduced only in 1912/13.


This article was originally published in Tibetan language (see below, section X).


On p. 205 some remarks on currency: “It is a patent fact, however, that the Indian rupee with all its fractions and also the Indian copper coinage, are freely current in this part of Tibet, and I am informed, on good authority, that they are preferred in trade to the Tibetan coin and frequently to barter. Even the Nepalese coinage takes prior rank to that of Lhasa in the popular estimation. Indian notes and British gold are still looked on with suspicion in this part of Tibet, which is in some ways a remarkable fact, as in the tracts of Nepal adjacent to these parts (and there is considerable communication between that country and Taklakot) Indian notes are at a heavy premium.”

Article in Nepalese language. A Tangka of the type C # 27 and a Kong Par Tangka dated 15-24 are illustrated together with two Nepalese coins.


Some comments on Bertsch’s article, suggesting that the countermark on the Spanish American coin is not Tibetan, but represents an abbreviated cursive form of the Chinese character “shou”.


Refers to the article “The Tibetan 3 Sho Copper Coin” by W. Bertsch and agrees that the pieces showing Chinese characters overstruck on Tibetan 3 Sho and 5 Sho copper coins are ration tokens for four liang of grain.


Basing his statements on interviews with Rinchen Paljor and Jampa Gyaltsen (Dharamsala, 1989) the author writes:

“All Tibetans were required to exchange their Tibetan money for Chinese yuan at the rate of only 50 percent of that before the revolt [of 1959]. The Chinese silver dollars, dayan, were exchanged one for one for paper yuan. Many Tibetans kept their Tibetan money because they hoped that the Dalai Lama would return and Tibet would recover its independence; many also kept the silver dayan because they trusted worth of silver more than that of Chinese paper money. After a short (7 to 10 days) exchange period, both Tibetan money and dayan were declared worthless.”


Contains some remarks on Dorjiev’s occupation in the Tibetan mint.


Among others the treaties dealing with the right of Nepal to coin money for Tibet are summarized:
1. The Agreement of Kuti (1615-20 AD).
2. Second treaty of Kuti (1661-80)
3. The Kana Treaty of 1775
4. Two Treaties of Kyirong (1789)


Gives surveys of Nepal’s minting activities for Tibet by the Malla (pp. 102-104) and Saha kings (pp. 119-120 and 192-195).


German text. A very early record of the issue of the Sichuan rupee and its fractions, with notes on the historical background.

Some remarks on Tibetan currency and measures and prices of butter in footnotes 10 and 12.


An interesting remark that a half tanga called jav is also current in Western Tibet (p. 130). The “jav” is actually the ja’u or timasha of Ladakh, presumably minted for the benefit of the wool trade between Western Tibet and Kashmir, via Ladakh.


Gives a brief description of the coins circulating in Tibet after the 13th Dalai Lama returned from his exile in India in January 1913.

p. 68: “Tibetan coins in currency by that time were the silver coins minted by the Tibetan government and those minted by the Ch’ing government and coppers as auxiliary coins which were also minted by the Ch’ing government. The Dalai Lama wanted to drive away all the Chinese coins, so that only Tibetan coins would be in juse. He promulgated the law to this end. Naturally there came a shortage in the number of coins in circulation and there arose a need for auxiliary coins of smaller denominations. He ordered the minting of the of the coppers in imitation of the copper and nickel coins of India. I was often consulted by him about this problem. I happened to find copper sheets which were imported from India for the mint bore the name Fujitagumi of the Kosaka Copper Mine, Japan. I also advised him that Japan adopted gold standard. He also decided to mint the gold coins because Tibet is a gold producing country. Unfortunately, these coins were of pure gold, and thrifty foreigners bought them up and they were absorbed by India, so that the minting and circulation of gold coins had to be stopped. Instead, paper notes now appeared to take their place. From this field, the modernization of Tibet was pushed by the Dalai Lama.”


On pp. 784-85 the author gives a transcription and translation of a sale contract found in Dunhuang (Pelliot, Fonts TibeTain nr. 1094) in which the price for an ox is given as 3 srang of dmar. In footnote 7 the author explains that dmar usually means copper but may refer to “red gold” in this context. “However, the Chinese contracts of the same period clearly indicate that money, including coins made of copper, was not in use under [sic] Tibetan-controlled Dunhuang. Instead, grain and cloth (esp. silk) were used as the media for disbursements.”


p. 110: A brief survey of Tibet’s currency. In 1925 two officials from the Tibetan mint were sent to Calcutta to buy printing presses and learn how to use them. In the 1920’s Tsarong initiates the creation of a gold reserve for the backing of Tibet’s paper currency.

1.239. Teichmann, Eric: Travels of a Consular Officer in Eastern Tibet. Cambridge 1922.

Apart from the trangkas, rupees are universally current in Tibet and its border lands from Ladakh to Tachienlu. These rupees are both Indian and Chinese; the Chinese rupees, which were originally produced in imitation of the Indian coins, are minted at Chengdu in Szechuan, and bear the head of the former Chinese Emperor, Kuang Hsu (p.146).

The trangka is a Lhasa minted silver coin, exchanging three to a rupee; with the exception of those recently minted they are for the most part thin, battered, defaced and irregular in circumference; but
in Tibetan territory we always carried a good stock of them as they form a useful subdivision of the rupee; where they are not available, one has to make use of rupees cut in half (p. 186).


Reports that Indian rupees must have been current in Tibet to some small extent. An extensive discussion of the word “tangka” and similar forms as used in different periods and different countries, with numerous quotations, is to be found on pp. 235-244.


One of the classical reports on the early history of currency in Tibet. The author describes the mintage of the Malla kings of Nepal on behalf of Tibet, and the Sino-Tibetan issues. There are some errors, discovered and corrected by later writers. Sixteen coins are illustrated.


p. 156: “Among his [Tsarong’s] duties today is that of the head of the mint, which manufactures all the coins used in the country, as well as prints paper money and postage stamps [after 1933].


This work includes a chapter called La tradition tibétaine (pp. 83-85) in which 35 Tibetan coins (including a mohar of Ranjit Malla of Bhaktapur struck for Tibet) are described. The Malla coin and a Sino-tibetan 1 Sho silver coin of Qian Long, year 59, are illustrated.


A short description of a “tram-sang” coin. The obverse shows a lion in a circle, the reverse bears the date 15-43 (A.D. 1909). This is actually the “tam srang gang”, called “sranggor” by the Tibetans, the srang coin classified as Y # 12.


A full page advertising offering proof restrikes of the Tibetan 10 Srang issue of 1950 (Y-29a), struck in cupronickel, silver and gold by the Valcambi Mint in Switzerland, claiming that these were authorized by the XIVth Dalai Lama.


A full page advertising offering proof restrikes in copper, silver and gold of the 5 Sho copper coin of 1947, claiming that these were authorized by the XIVth Dalai Lama.


On pp. 50 and 54 a brief survey of the coinage problem existing between Nepal and Tibet in the 18th century. The introduction of new coinage in Tibet, minted in a new mint at Lhasa with the help of Chinese experts at the end of the 18th century is mentioned.

p. 54: “The money coined by the Gurkhas, which had been the source of trouble between Nepal and Tibet, was declared suppressed [in 1792];154) a new uniform currency bearing the title of the Emperor was issued by the Tibetan treasury and a mint with Chinese experts was established.155) 154) Kau-tsung shih-lu, Chap. 1415, pp. 15a - b. From the Chinese official record, it was the old Tibetan silver coins that were debased and mixed with copper; the Gurkhas had therefore asked for
a better rate of exchange of their own coins. cf. Rockhill, *Dalai Lamas*, p. 50, which says that the Gurkhas made high handed attempts to force their debased silver coins upon Tibet. A fuller explanation on this point is given by Cammann, pp. 108-11, based mainly upon Colonel Kirkpatrick’s *Account of the Kingdom of Nepal*.

155) For details and subsequent modifications, see reports to the Emperor in Weitsang t’ung chih, I, Chap. 10, 191-195.”


The funds of the Barley Supply Office were mainly derived from taxes collected in kind. In footnote 5 the major Tibetan currency units are mentioned.


p. 13: “By 1949 it was clear that the stock of ammunition and arms in Tibet’s possession would be wholly inadequate to counter a Chinese offensive, and so the Kashag agreed to sanction further military expenditure. For this they took silver coins (tangka) from the Potala treasury, worth four hundred thousand rupees, and minted them into 10 srang silver coins to meet the costs of military pay and supplies.”

As source the British Foreign Office file FO 371-84453: MR, 15 February 1950 is given.

p. 94-95: “As a part of their propaganda, the Communists had always stated that they would pay for everything they acquired. Chinese money was, however, not accepted by the Tibetans (since it could not be exchanged in India); with great ingenuity, the Chinese collected silver ornaments and religious objects in China which were melted down into bullion. In Chengdu a special mint was set up to produce the old Nationalist silver dollar known as Da Yuan. This was used exclusively in Tibet. The circulation of the Da Yuan in Tibet served two purposes: first it was acceptable to Tibetans because it could be melted down and resold. Second, the large-scale use of Da Yuan meant that the Chinese were able to undermine the circulation of Tibetan currency and make it virtually worthless.

There was a popular saying that the Chinese dispensed silver coins like a shower of rain. The Da Yuan were smuggled to India, where there was a great demand for silver. Sinha reported to the GOL: ‘the Kutrás [aristocrats] have done well by themselves as a result of the influx of Chinese into Tibet, for the Chinese desperately needed goods and services (monopolised by the Kutrás), and were almost incredibly over-generous in meeting their obligations with large sums of silver dollars, squandered with the liberality of princes and the sleek abandon of rakes’.

In two footnotes the author gives as sources: Mangeot Sylvain: The Adventures of a Manchurian. The Story of Lobsang Tondup (see above) and the following Foreign Office File: FO 371-99659: MR, 15 December 1951.


p. 184: “Bullion was somewhat reduced in worth in comparison with the year 1783. A potree, or pulse of gold dust, the same quantity that then sold for twenty-one indermillees, was procurable of a purer quality for nineteen and twenty indermillees. A talent of silver which was then 500, was 450 indermillees; so that the exchange was much in favour of the trader.”

This account is on Gosseyn Poorunger’s voyage to Tibet from April 1785 to October 1785. It is dated Calcutta, February 8, 1786. (indermillee = mohur of the Malla kings)

A very small quantity of specie, and that of a base standard, is current in Tibet. It is the silver coin of Nepal, here termed ndermillee; each is in value about one-third of a sicca-rupee, and they are cut into halves, third parts, and quarters. This, which is the only money, serves to obtain the exigencies of life, but never enters into important contracts in the larger concerns of trade; in all such transactions, the equivalent is made in bullion, that is, talents of gold and silver, which bear a value, in proportion to the purity and specific gravity of the metal.


The author gives this summary of his article: “Traditional trade in Tibet and its borderworlds rested on the local and regional exchange of salt, wool, grain and tea. In addition to this barter complex, there was a long-distance trade in luxury goods like musk, medicinal herbs, and precious stones, which initially focused on monastic fairs and supra-regional places of pilgrimage. On top of that, and perhaps increasingly so with monastic and government control over its mining operations, gold too, by virtue of its low weight for value, served as a long-distance bridging trade commodity, in particular in its quality as payment for the numerous tea imports from China into Tibet (p. 48).”

p. 45: “Actually, very little of the Tibetan gold found its way to India, rather, Indian silver rupees were coming in, so as to pay for the wool exported to Ladakh and Kashmir.”


Private Tibetan orders from the first decade of the 20th century are mentioned regarding legends on Tibetan coins which should not make reference to the Chinese emperor but include Tibetan dates. (p.127) References to Nepal minting coins for Tibet on pp. 26, 27, 43, 45 and passim.


Gives a brief account of Prithvi Narayan Shah’s attempt to solve the coinage problem which existed between Nepal and Tibet in the second half of the 18th century.


French language. An illustrated introduction to Tibet’s coinage history including several passages translated from “The Development of Currency in Tibet” by N.G. Rhodes without giving credit to this author.


Drawings of five coins and a reprint of the paper “The Silver Coinage of Tibet” by Terrien de Lacouperie.


“As trade in Tibet is chiefly by exchange or barter, and comparatively few articles are paid for in cash, bricks of tea are often used as a convenient currency instead of money, being in such universal demand, whilst in the same time they are limited in production, fairly portable, and of nearly uniform size. Money is, [354] however, also current and coined by the Tibetans at their mint in Lhasa [footnote 1: The mint is called Gahldan p’odang. (“The Happy Palace” a title of Potala)]. It
is in the form of crudely fashioned silver pieces about the size of a half penny, but thin as a sixpence, and modelled after the Nepalese "Tangka", which Indian name it also bears. Tibet used to import these coins from Nepal, but has for several years been minting its own and retaining on it the eight lucky symbols [footnote 2: see page 224, footnote]. It is of its silver value, being equivalent of a fivepence, and like its Nepalese prototype is clipped into half, a third, or a quarter to form coins of smaller denomination. The almighty Indian rupee is, however, in great demand, and the image of the late Queen-Empress upon it was regarded with reverential awe as being the effigy of the mild form of the dread Buddhist Goddess, who is called "The Great Queen". As our money consisted mainly of the new rupees bearing the head of the King-Emperor most of the Tibetans at first refused to receive these unaccustomed coins which they called "The Lama's head". Russian roubles were found, also a Chinese coin bearing a Turkish legend on the reverse and some pure bullion in the form of Chinese ingots of silver as "shoes" (Tibetan Dotsa), in value about Rs. 150.

p. 477: (Appendix X Trade - Imports and Exports). "The process of manufacture of these bricks is well known. The cakes weigh about 4 1/2 lbs. each, and being in such universal demand and fairly portable and uniform in size, they pass as money at their market value. In Lhasa the commoner kinds are of two kinds, Chupa or "tens", because they cost 10 tankas each, or Rs. 10/3; and Gyepa, or "eights", costing 8 tankas or Rs 8/3, but the market price is usually higher than this. [...] For unbuttered tea, which the wealthier classes drink, a much better quality is used called Dint'ang, at Rs 6 to 8 a brick."


On p. 10 a Tibetan 1 srang coin of the type Y 12 is illustrated. This coin was sold in the Hong Kong Money Company Auction of 25th September 1982 as lot nr. 833. The obverse of this coin bears a small Chinese chop (seen on the loin's rump).

Comment: Tibetan coins with Chinese chops are rare. This coin may be evidence that some Tibetan coins did reach China and were treated like other foreign silver coins which circulated in China (see also entry nr. 1.212).


1,072,865 Tibetan coins were minted in Chengtu during 1911 (pp. 126-127).


It is reported that Shakapba sold copper left overs of the Lhasa mint to India with a good profit.

"Il [Shakapba] avait remarqué qu'à Lhassa l'atelier de la monnaie qui produisait les pièces de cuivre jetait les déchets de métal après la frappe. Ce fut Shamokabo qui lui donna l'idée de recueillir les déchets et de les revendre en Inde où le cuivre avait atteint des cours très élevés. Il en résultat [sic] de bénéfices tels que le grand Pangdatshang lui-même en fut jaloux."


The first extensive work on earlier Tibetan currency, unfortunately containing errors which diminish its value for reference purposes. 29 Sino-Tibetan and Nepalese issues for Tibet are illustrated.


Translation of the autobiography by Shabkar Tsogdruk Rangdrol (1781 - 1851). A brief survey of Tibet's currency is given, mainly based on Nicholas Rhodes' article "The Development of Currency in Tibet."
p. 328 “I was also offered thirty gold tanka-coins, [...]”


On p. 13 a short biography of Chang-ngö-pa (Ringang) who in 1935 set up the hydro-electric plant in Trapshi.

Of interest are also the bibliographical notes on Kunphela and Tsarong Shabpe who were in charge of the mint in the 1930’s.


Some remarks on the Tibetan Government mint which was visited by Mr. Williamson in 1933. The book also includes two photographs of the Trabshi Lekhung mint taken by F. Williamson.


The three issues are approximately five grains lighter than the Indian Victoria rupees. On the reverse they bear the inscription “Sze Chuan Seng Tsao” (“minted in the Province of Szechuan”). With illustrations.


An excellent article on the monetary history of Tibet. According to Chinese sources, in former times cowries and knife-shaped coins were current in Tibet. Silver has been known as a medium of exchange since the 12th century. Later, the minting of coins took place in three periods: Nepalese issues on behalf of Tibet, Sino-Tibetan coins and native Tibetan issues. With illustrations.


The Sichuan rupee minted in dollar-size (as Tibet-Tael) is a fantasy.


The first general circulation of the Sichuan rupee was recorded at Chungking in November, 1902. It was not an immediate success. Thereafter, the daily output of the mint averaged about 5,000 dragon coins a day, with the addition of Szechuan rupees, from 1903 (p. 191).


The author gives important details on the Sichuan rupee. There are two main types: 1) Bust of the Emperor Kuang Hsu, without collar (obverse), horizontal rosette (reverse). This issue, produced in 1903 (or late 1902), was regarded in Western China as being the best. 2) Bust with collar; vertical rosette. Mules of the two main types exist, but they are rare. During the republican period, a rupee with a crude “large head” and inferior silver content, appeared at Tachienlu.


On p. 169 a table shows the mintage figures of the Sichuan rupees and its fractions struck at the Chengtu mint between 1903 and 1916.

The mint at Lhasa was established in 1792 (p. 71).


"In Monyul in ancient times shells, iron rings and copper coins were used as money."


"Sometime later (after 1793), in Lhasa was installed a deputy liangwu in charge of coining money."

I.A. Coins (Unpublished Material)


Listed and illustrated is a selection of Tibetan coins from the collection of W. Bertsch.


Article prepared about 1993/94 and planned for publication in NIB. Discusses and illustrates all copper and silver coins which mention the era "Shon Tong" (Xuan Tong) in their legends.


Varieties of the eight Buddhist emblems and the dots or squiggles placed outside the petals are taken as a guideline for the attempt to classify the Gaden tangka.


Relates the historical background of the early sino-tibetan issues and represents an attempt to classify the varieties of the coins struck in the names of Qien Long, Jia Qing and Dao Guang.


So far only the first two chapters have been edited by Adam Green. These give a general introduction to Tibet and deal with the Malla coinage of Nepal.


A table of 58 varieties is given (with drawings).


An introduction to the coinage, including foreign coins used in Tibet and cut coins with a list of known dates and major varieties of Tibetan coins.

A complete listing of the Valdettaro coins with occasional illustrations and charts explaining varieties of Kong-par and Gaden tangkas.

**Note:** Unpublished documents related to the coinage and/or the banknotes of Tibet may be found in the following archives:

India Office Library, London
National Archives of India, New Delhi. (In March 1999 I was informed by this institution that documents related to Tibet are available for studies only if dated before 31 December, 1912.)
National Archives, Kathmandu, Nepal
Archives of the Foreign Ministry, Kathmandu, Nepal.

### I.B. The Coinage of the Hsi Hsia Empire (Western Languages)

The Hsi Hsia (Western Hsia, spelt “Xi Xia” in Pinyin transcription) Empire was established in the 10th century AD and declared its independence from China of the Sung dynasty in A.D. 1032 under the Hsi Hsia emperor Yuan Hao. The Hsi Hsia empire was destroyed by Genghis Khan in 1227 A.D. Most of the rulers of independent Hsi Hsia struck coins in the style of Chinese cash, some of which are inscribed with the peculiar Hsi Hsia script which - as most authorities believe - was invented during the rule of emperor Yuan Hao. The Hsi Hsia empire roughly occupied the lands which nowadays form the Gansu province in northwest China and included large areas with Tibetan speaking population.


A history of the Tangut Empire, with a list of its rulers and description of 12 coins, with drawings.


Article not seen by the compiler.


Translation of inscriptions on two Tangut coins in Tangut characters: “T’ien Tzu Pao Ch’ien” and “Ta An Pao Ch’ien”, the second and third Nien Hao of the same sovereign Hui Tsung (A.D. 1068-1087).


A drawing and description of a coin with Tangut characters of Hui Tsung (1068-1087 A.D.) with the 4th Nien Hao “Ta An” of this emperor.


A short historical survey of the monuments with Tangut script and a list of the Tangut rulers.

**I.B.6. Rhodes, Nicholas G.:** “A Large Coin of the Western Hsia Dynasty”. In: *ONS NL*, Nr. 100, Feb. - May 1986.

A large coin of Ch’ien Yu (1171-94) of the Western Hsia Dynasty is illustrated and discussed.

Japanese text. With drawings of 11 coins.


German text. Some remarks on Tangut coins (pp. 93-94) with drawings of two coins with Tangut characters and a photograph (No. 119 on plate 19) of the coin T'ien Shen Yuan Pao.


The author discusses certain characteristics of the Tangut script which are particularly difficult to decipher on coins, and illustrates the Tangut inscriptions on seven coins of Hsi Hsia.
II. Medals and Militaria


p. 130: "The Dalai Lama gave me also a very large gold medal, six and a quarter inches in circumference, weighing more than four ounces, and more than ninety percent pure gold, as a mark of intimate friendship. On the one side runs the inscription in Tibetan, "From the Dalai Lama who holds the Thunderbolt, Lord of all the Buddhists on earth. Given on the fourth day of the fifth month of the Water Rat year." On he other side is a partial translation in English, and a Wheel of Religion in the centre." (Bell refers to June, 1912).


In this compilation the author describes and illustrates more than 40 army badges from various private collections. The badges date from the first part of the 20th century and were used by both ordinary troops (badges in bronze) and officers (badges in silver).


While the cover of the book gives Dalien F. Collins as compiler, on the first page John G. Brant is mentioned as compilder and editor, whereas Collins figures as publisher.

The bronze and silver medals for the Youghhusband expedition are briefly discussed. "About 850 silver medals were issued to British recipients, and about 2,500 to Indian troops."


The military escort of the British Mission to Lhasa consisted of four companies of the Royal Fusiliers and two Maxim crews from the Norfolk regiment and the Royal Irish Rifles.


In an appendix to chapter four, entitled "The Dogra Prisoners in Tibet: Their Liberation after fifteen Years" (pp. 84-92) the author mentions that in 1856 106 erstwhile soldiers of Zorawar Singh’s army reached Nepal after having lived as prisoners of war in Tibet for 15 years; out of these, 65 agreed to return to Jammu and Kashmir State, and they were presented with a silver medal with the portrait of Surendra Bikram Sah and a Persian inscription. This medal was struck in Kathmandu and is illustrated on p. 88.


Sixteen regimental medals are pictured (fourteen for the first time) and the regiments’s history is mentioned. Besides this a pattern of a medal of 1854 (not issued) is also pictured.

On pp. 61 and 62 the Tibet medal with Gyantse bar of 1904/04 is illustrated and briefly described.


Under nr. 139 the copper and silver issues of the Younghusband Expedition medals are listed.


The Younghusband Expedition medal “was authorized on 1st February 1905, to be awarded to all who took part in the Tibet Mission and to troops accompanying it who served beyond Silgari [sic for Siliguri] between 13th December 1903, and 23rd September 1904.” The medal is illustrated with the Gyantse bar as nr. 138, a brief summary of the expedition is given and the regiments which participated are enumerated.


German language article on Nepalese military campaign medals issued to members of the army who participated in the Nepal-Tibet war of 1854-56.


The copper and silver Younghusband Expedition medals are listed as nr. 152.


A medal presented by the 6th Panchen Lama to Edward VIII on the occasion of the latter’s accession is described and illustrated. The medal is displayed in the National Army Museum in London and was most probably produced in China and sent to England by the exiled Panchen Lama in 1936.


A brief historical survey of the British Mission to Lhasa, 1903-04. The Tibet Medal in silver was to be given to all who took part in the mission or were with the escort. One bar “Gyantse” was given to all those who participated in the actions in that area between 3rd May and 6th July, 1904. The medals were named around the edge in neat “running script”. Bronze medals, with or without the Gyantse bar, were given to native carriers and porters who accompanied the Mission and are usually named “S. & T.” (Supply and Transport) Corps.

II.13. Purves, Alec A.: *Collecting Medals and Decorations*.

For the Tibet 1904-04 Younghusband Expedition medals with unofficial bars exist having smaller, compact letters; also a bar with slightly larger letters than normal exists, but it is not known whether this is an unofficial or whether it may be from a Calcutta Mint die.


“Dasang Dadul [Tsarong] received his personal name inscribed on a gold medallion from the Dalai Lama himself as a reward for engaging in battle for two days the Chinese detachment which had almost overtaken the fleeing Dalai Lama at the Chaksam ferry on the Tsangpo and thus not merely saving the life of the Dalai Lama but also facilitating his escape to India in 1910.”

A medal with the portrait of king Surendra of Nepal on obverse and an Urdu legend on reverse is illustrated. This medal was given to former prisoners of war which were taken from western Tibet to Lhasa after the failed Tibet campaign of Zorawar Singh in 1841. Most of these prisoners were released by the Tibetans in 1856 and sent to Nepal. Specimens of the illustrated silver medal were given to those former prisoners who agreed to be repatriated to Jammu.


A philatelic article which includes a brief description (with illustration) of a silver medal with Gyantse bar of the 1903/04 Younghusbalid Expedition.


The book contains a plate with illustrations of three medals which were awarded by the 13th Dalai Lama to D. D. Tsarong in 1916. On p. 51 the medals are described as follows: “... Tsarong was awarded three medals by His Holiness. One gold medal (about three inches in diameter) was for his gallant work in organizing a modern army for Tibet. One silver medal was for attaining first place in the dismantling and assembling of Mauser pistols. The third medal was for coming in first in target shooting while on horseback.”

The book also contains short references to the Sertarn (p. 52), Norbu Tsokyil (p. 74-75) and Drapshi (p. 84) mints and to the printing of paper currency (pp. 99-100).


Discussion and illustration of a copper-bronze medal with the obverse Chinese inscription “Chou chun ti shen” (Spells permitting the repose of spirits) and a reverse inscription in Lantsa characters which the author is unable to read. The author assumes that only few medals of this kind can have been minted and that they may have circulated in Tibet rather than China and “served some single specific historical occasion”. The medal is tentatively attributed to the Huan-Chung (Sining) mint in Kansu which was established in 1723 or 1724.

II.A. Unpublished Material on Militaria


The author describes and illustrates more than 40 army badges dating from the first part of the 20th century and used by both ordinary troops (badges in bronze) and officers (badges in silver).

A slightly different version of this catalogue was published in the form of an article in the *Tibet Journal* (see section II)
III. Paper Money


Reports notes of the Farmers Bank of China, surcharged in Tibetan language.


Records notes of 1, 5 and 10 Yuan, placed into circulation by the Central Bank’s branch in Kanting, Sikang province. Unfortunately no description of these notes is given.


A brief introduction to the different issues of Tibetan notes with numerous incorrect statements. The face of a 100 Srang note is illustrated.


A brief introduction to Tibetan paper money. “From about 1932, the paper was manufactured in Kyemdong, in the district of Dzagpo, a famous paper-making center in southern Tibet, and only the printing was done in Lhasa, with electrically-worked machinery from England.” A translation of the legend of the early Tam issues is given. The five Tam, the multicoloured 50 Tam, the 10 Srang and the 100 Srang notes are described. A multicoloured 50 Tam note dated T.E. 1673 and a 100 Srang note are illustrated on Plate 17 (p. 51).


Introduction to Tibetan paper money in French language based on “A Study of Tibetan Paper Money” by W. Bertsch (see below).


Claims that the srang-notes are printed on ‘edible’ rice paper. Chinese issues overprinted with Tibetan characters for use by Tibetan communities in China include those of the Manchu-Mongol Bank of Colonisation, the China and South Sea Bank, and the Central Bank of China.


A brief introduction to Tibetan paper money. It is erroneously reported that the first notes were printed in 1915 and that the Srang notes were introduced in 1945. The red seals are attributed to the Panchen Lama and the black ones to the Dalai Lama. The legend in four lines as found on the early issues and the 10 Srang notes is translated.

A short survey of Tibetan paper money, unfortunately a repetition of many errors known from other sources.


The forged 50 Tam note can be recognized by the fully drawn petals of the flowers located on the horizontal middle line of the obverse of the notes. Two different genuine and one possibly forged note are illustrated.


The author publishes a 10 Tam note, dated T.E. 1658 (=AD 1912) and suggests that the early 15, 25 and 50 Tam notes which are only known with the date T.E. 1659, may have been issued already with date T.E. 1658. Most of the notes dated T.E. 1659, are obviously printed from blocks with the 1659 altered from an original 1658. Also mentioned is a forgery of the 50 Tam note T.E. 1659 and a printing block is illustrated which may have been a pattern for a note which was planned in the 1950s but was never issued.


German text. A survey on Tibetan Paper money based on western and Chinese sources and the author’s own research with many illustrations of banknotes from the author’s collection.


A historical and numismatic survey of Tibetan banknotes based on Chinese and western sources and illustrated with colour plates showing notes from the author’s collection. A detailed catalogue lists all known types and dates of Tibetan banknotes.


Contains a brief discussion of the first banknote series in Tam and gives a list of 10, 15, 25 and blue 50 Tam notes known to exist in private and public collections.


This article has been extracted from the manuscript which formed the base for the publication “A Study of Tibetan Paper Money” (see above).


Variants existing among the early red 10 Tam and blue or purple 50 Tam notes are interpreted as being possible security devices.


A multicoloured 50 tam note dated T.E. 1682 with a serial number belonging to the range used for the notes dated T.E. 1677 is identified as a note which must have been stolen from the mint or bank and released for circulation after having been unexpertly numbered and stamped with a forged red seal. Unfortunately this article is published without the proper illustrations and cannot be understood without them.

Based on a metal block for a 10 Tam note and on several metal blocks for the 25 and 100 Srang notes, the author discusses the printing technique used for the Tibetan banknotes.


In German language. Four paper notes issued in the 1940's by Tashi Dargyas monastery (eastern Tibet) and intended for the purchase of high quality tea bricks from the monastic storerooms are illustrated (two issues of “half rupee” and two issues of “one rupee”) and described and a brief discussion of the use of brick tea in Tibet is given.


In German language. Ration coupons and related items which were used in Tibet during the “Cultural Revolution” and thereafter are discussed in their historical context and their inscriptions are explained. Many examples are illustrated.


Illustrates and describes four paper notes issued by the bkra-shis dar-rgyas monastery in northeastern Tibet and given to monks who regularly attended the debating sessions. The notes could be exchanged for high quality tea bricks from the monastery’s stores and may have functioned as local currency in the area surrounding the monastery. A countermarked Sichuan rupee, probably from the Litang area, is also illustrated and its possible use is discussed.


Same article as the one listed above as nr. III.18a.


The Tibetan overprint “sgror-mo lnga” on a five yuan note of the Farmers Bank of China is discussed and in the author’s opinion the overprint may be genuine. The relevant note is illustrated, a ten yuan note of the same bank with Tibetan overprint is also mentioned and it is suggested that these notes were issued in the late 1930s in Kangding, the former capital of the Xikang province (located in what is now part of Sichuan province).


Illustrated catalogue of ration coupons which were issued in Tibet under Chinese authority during and after the Cultural Revolution. The Tibetan legends found on the coupons were explained and the historical contexts which led to their circulation is briefly described (for a similar publication in German language see entry nr. III.18).


Three 100 Srang and two 25 Srang notes were examined. The paper seems to be a blend of fibers of Daphne Papyracea and Daphne Bholua. The notes consist of two layers of paper which were glued
together before printing. The “security legend”, which appears like a watermark, was printed on the verso sheet in the case of a delaminated 25 Srang note. It was printed in inverted script on the back of the face layer in the case of a delaminated 100 Srang note.

(B.N. Shrestha found a third interior layer of paper on which the security legend was printed, but when interviewed in 1995 by the compiler he could not remember which notes he had delaminated and was no longer in possession of the delaminated notes.)*

It is likely that both methods of producing the security legend were used even within the same series of banknotes.)


Illustration and description of a 5 Srang note (Serial Nr. ka 024831).


Reports a 100 Srang note with inverted security legend discovered by the Hong Kong collector Anil Kumar Jain. A 100 Srang note with this error (serial number za/110528) is illustrated together with a note which has the normal security legend (ser. nr. na/1 17179).


The multicoloured 50 Tam note dated T.E. 1680 (= A.D. 1934) is recorded for the first time.


The cover of this catalogue illustrates a 5 Srang note (serial nr. 66927). On p. 34 the following Tibetan notes are listed: 7 1/2 Srang (= 50 Tam), 5, 10, 25 and 100 Srang.


Contains some remarks on the Tibetan banknotes and illustrations of the backsides of the 25 Tam, the blue 50 Tam and the 100 Srang notes. The obverse of a 25 Srang note is also illustrated (nr. 117-119).

The book also contains an extensive chapter on the coinage of Tibet with illustrations of several coins (pp. 156-165). On p. 164 a table shows the equivalents of the value of Tibetan currency in Indian rupees, German marks, U.S. dollars and Chinese taels for the year 1958.


The Tibetan banknotes are an object of curiosity and even in Lhasa traders refuse to accept them.


English translation of the previous publication in French.


The author illustrates the black seals found on Tibetan banknotes and gives transcriptions and translations of their texts. However, not being familiar with recent Chinese and Western publications on Tibetan paper money, he suggests erroneous dates for the use of these seals and the corresponding banknotes.

Kunga Samten Dewatshang reports forged 10 srang notes (the author calls them “10 Tam notes”, but considering the period he is referring to, the year 1947, he must mean 10 Srang notes) in the Gyashoy Benkar area. The village headman of Gyashoy Benkar had instructions from Lhasa to arrest any person found in possession of forged notes.

The author also mentions a mint in Shol (p. 57) and gives a brief survey of Tibet’s currency (pp. 63-64).


It is reported that in 1947 the Kashag decided to arrest Gedun Choephel who was suspected of being a communist spy. The Lhasa Mepons (Magistrates) were instructed, however, to arrest Gedun Choephel on the ground of malung counterfeit 100 Srang notes.

Phuntsog Wangyal had founded the Tibetan Communist Party in the early 1930s. “Phuntsog Wangyal’s group had secretly counterfeited Tibetan Hundred Srang notes in Peking to meet their expenses but spent them only when needed to escape detection under the different name of association of Young Tibetans under Oath.”


“In 1937 the regent Radreng had introduced a new paper currency worth 100 Srang. Formerly the Dalai Lama XIII did not issue any currency worth more than 7.5 Srang. This financial policy of the regent was a failure since it tended to raise the price of all commodities.”


The following dates for the multicolored 50 Tam note are recorded: T.E. 1678, 1679, 1681, 1682, 1683 and 1686.


The 10 Srang note dated T.E. 1690 is recorded for the first time.


Appointment of Kumbela as head of Trabshi Lotrû Laygung (Trabshi Electrical Machine Office) in 1931. This complex merged previously separate offices such as the various coin and currency mints.

The idea of sending a trade mission abroad originated in the Trabshi Mint in 1947 and was mainly promoted by Tsarong who wanted to see Tibet’s currency notes backed by gold or some other commodity.


A brief description of the Srang issues and of the multicoloured 50 Tam, which the author calls a “7 1/2 Srang” note. Both sides of each type of these notes are illustrated.


Includes the illustration of a 1 rupee note (sgor-mo gcig) of the Tashi Dargyas (bkra shis dar rgyas) monastery with serial nr. 321. Notes of 1/2 and one rupee of this type were sold in 1999 and 2000 in IBNS Auctions (see entry nr. VII.1).


All attempts to forge Tibetan banknotes were thwarted by the inability of the forgers to imitate the calligraphy of the handwritten serial numbers on the notes.


The 10 Tam note T.E. 1659 with serial nr. 18080 is illustrated.

The book also contains an Appendix A, entitled The Tibetan Monetary System. (p. 76 of the second edition).


On the back cover the faces of the following notes are illustrated: 5 Tam, missing black seal, ser. nr. 9061; 10 Tam, T.E. 1659/58, ser. nr. 19252; 15 Tam, T.E. 1659/58, ser. nr. 2799; 25 Tam, yellow, T.E. 1659, ser. nr. 54165 and 50 Tam (blue), T.E. 1659, ser. nr. 50461.

On p. 56 the following comment: "This group of notes is documented to have been together since 1951. The notes were given to U.S. official (sic) from a member of 1948 Tibetan Trade mission to the United States. The five trade mission members was (sic) scheduled to meet President Truman. (...)"

Comment: The member of the trade mission who presented the notes was Surkhang Shape.


Reports the counterfeiting of 100 Srang notes by an artist from Outer Mongolia, called Dharma.


Illustrates and describes a purple 15 Tam (serial nr. 4375), a yellow 25 Tam (called "3 sangs or 7 1/2 shyos"; serial nr. 39236), a blue 50 Tam (called "7 1/2 sangs"; serial nr. ?), a multicoloured 50 Tam dated T.E. 1675 and a 10 Srang, dated T.A. 1692.

Comment: It is likely that these notes were part of the samples brought to the USA in 1948 by the Tibetan Trade Mission.


A multicoloured 50 Tam note and the 5, 10, 25 and 100 Srang notes are illustrated.


p. 27: In 1949 the Tibetans in Lhasa preferred Indian or Tibetan paper currency to coins.

The 1, 5, 10, 50 and 100 Yuan notes of the Central Bank of China with overprint in Tibetan are described and illustrated. The author suggests that these notes were printed in Burma during the Second World War, probably in 1944 (p. 171).


Discusses some interesting variants of the multicoloured 50 Tam note. The tablets which contain the handwritten serial numbers were enlarged from originally 19 mm to 22.5 mm in length on later issues in order to accommodate the higher serial numbers. Most of the 50 Tam notes dated T.E. 1677 bear an additional red seal which was stamped on genuine banknotes after inspection which became necessary because false 50 Tam banknotes had been discovered in 1930.


Brief introduction to Tibetan paper currency and a review of the publication Tibetan Paper Currency by B. N. Shrestha.


Includes colour illustrations of Tibetan banknotes and a detailed catalogue of all known dates and varieties along with their estimated collector’s value.


“Near the plain of Lingma Thang, we passed the Government Mint, where Tibetan paper money used to be printed on hand-made willow-bark paper by power developed by a ‘Health Robinson’ water-wheel.”

This work also contains a reference to Grva-bzhi mint (p. 41) and to a mint located between Yatung and Phari Dzong (p. 174).


Visiting the market in Lhasa in 1955 the author observes: “(...) paper money was not in favour.”


This was the best work on Tibetan paper notes till 1987, when B.N. Shrestha’s monograph appeared (cf. entry III.52) The issues for Sikang province with Tibetan script and the Central Bank of China issues with Tibetan overprint most probably never circulated in Tibet according to the author. All notes which were produced in Tibet are listed and the following notes are illustrated: 15 Tam (purple), serial nr. 12132, 50 Tam (blue), serial nr. ?, multicoloured 50 Tam dated T.E. 1675 and another one dated 1687, a 10 Srang dated T.E. 1692, and a 5, 25 and 100 Srang note. The date T.E. 1689 for the multicoloured 50 Tam note has been recorded by Panish, but could never been confirmed. Most probably he refers to a 1686 note the date of which was misread.


See following entry.

The author solves definitively the problem of the dating on Tibetan banknotes and gives the conversion factor of Tibetan Era + 254 = A.D. - date.


The author states that the Tibetan Government introduced paper currency in 1890 and that Government-held gold reserves backed up the currency notes.

Comment: Since Shakabpa was Finance Secretary in independent Tibet his statements were taken as authoritative and some authors repeated the date 1890, as the year when the first Tibetan notes were issued. The first Tibetan banknotes of 5, 10, 15, 25 and 50 Tam to which Shakabpa refers, bear the date T.E. 1658 or 1659 (1912 or 1913 A.D.). Banknotes with earlier dates have never been discovered, nor are Tibetan banknotes mentioned by any foreigner who visited Tibet before 1912.


p.98: “In 1947 the Tibetan government’s grain and gold reserves were low, and there was also a need to introduce the circulation of paper currency. Therefore the need to develop Tibet’s own gold reserves to back the currency in circulation became urgent. Tsarong Dzasa, Tshipon Shakabpa and Trungyinchemo Cawtang, who jointly administered the Trapchi mint, discussed the dia of purchasing gold from abroad.


So far the most thorough work on Tibetan banknotes published in English, profusely illustrated with photocopies of notes from the author’s collection which may be the best existing. The black seals are read for the first time, many details of the design of the notes are explained and, based on the recorded serial numbers of surviving notes, fairly exact figures of the total numbers printed of each denomination are given. The following rare early notes are illustrated: 1) 10 Tam (red), dated T.E. 1658, black and red seals missing, serial nr. 3600. 2) 10 Tam (red), dated 1659, serial nr. 16211. 3) 15 Tam (reddish violet), serial nr. 5654, 25 Tam, serial nr. 18180 and 50 Tam (blue), serial nr. 23346. Also a forged blue 50 Tam note and some forged Srang notes are illustrated. (cf. entry nr. III.44)

For a review of this book written by N.G. Rhodes see ONS Newsletter Nr. 109, November/December 1987.

(Abstract written by K. Gabrisch: The basic publication on Tibetan paper money with numerous photocopy-illustrations of notes from the author’s collection. It also deals with forgeries and contains tables which allow the collector to identify any note, Tibetan number or letter which appear on notes.)


A so far unique 10 Srang note without serial numbers, dated T. E. 1686 is illustrated and the possibility of it being either a forgery or an early trial print is discussed.

III.54. Slobodnik, Martin: “Tibetské papierové platidla v hodnote 50 tam z r. 1926, 100 srang z. 1937, 5 a 10 srang z r. 1941. (Tibetan paper money with the nominal values 50
Well researched, illustrated article in Slovakian language. Discusses the issue of Tibetan paper money in its historical and economic context and explains the seals and the iconographic elements found on the late 50 tam and the srang notes. The author gives a summary in English.


Based on multicoloured 50 Tam notes from his own collection and those of other collectors the author studies and illustrates variants of the printing blocks with which the legend in four lines and the denomination were printed on the obverse of the notes.


“During the Dalai Lama’s reign, there was no paper currency worth more than 7 1/2 srang, but Regent Reting introduced a new paper currency worth 100 srang, and this tended to raise the price of every product.”

(cf. the above quoted text from Dhondup)


“Shortly after Tsarong’s degradation from the Kashag, His Holiness set up a new government department, called the Traphi Lekhung, to take care of the mint, the paper currency factory and the ammunition factory. (...) In 1925 two officials from the mint were sent to Calcutta to buy printing presses and learn how to use them. After a lot of paper currency had been printed Tsarong said that this was not good for the country and suggested that we should have a gold reserve. So every year three hundred small slabs of gold, each weighing twenty-seven tolas, were put away in the Potala. This gold was imported from India - along with silver and copper for the mint - because our own mining was not well developed.”


It is reported that in Chamdo and Batang in eastern Tibet Tibetan silver money and banknotes from Lhasa have driven out Chinese copper coins.


A 10 Srang note, dated 1691 is illustrated. The red seal is identified as that of the Dalai Lama, while the black seal is of the Ka-Sha (cabinet).


Zhang Yintang’s report on Tibet to the Board of Foreign affairs (1907) contained the suggestion to “take back the right to mint silver and copper coins and the right to print paper currencies. Set up banks to help with the circulation of money. These banks will be the sole institutions responsible for paying troops and government officials.” (p. 233)

About 1925 a bank was set up, first managed by Phunkhang Kung and later concurrently by Tsarong Dzaza. “Also put in circulation were Tibetan monetary certificates in a number of denominations such as fifty tramka and one hundred tramka. These certificats could not be cashed, but their issues were kept below a ceiling, and each new issue required the withdrawal from circulation of the previous one”. (p. 320).
The Tibetan Trade Mission which arrived in Washington in July 1948, hoped to obtain a loan of USD 8,000,000 to back the Tibetan currency. (p. 415)

Comment: This is the only reference from which one could deduce that paper money was already printed before 1912. But most probably “the right to print paper currencies” was not used by the Tibetans at that time (1907).


This article was also published in Tibetan and Chinese language in the corresponding issues of China’s Tibet (krung go’i bod ljongs and Zhong-guo Xi-zang).

A brief historical survey of the Tibetan bank note issues, some remarks on the paper used for the notes and a table giving the number of 100 Srang notes which were issued between 1939 and 1959.

III. A. Paper Money (Unpublished Material)


This album includes 98 colour illustrations of rare 5, 10, 15, 25 and 50 Tam notes and gives a list recording the serial numbers and black seal types of all notes (excluding the multicoloured 50 Tam note) which are presently known to exist.


Contains 15 black and white and 3 colour plates on which rare notes and one 10 Tam printing block are illustrated, all items not to be found in the original album.


Explains the dating system and gives a list of all known denominations with their different dates.
IV. Primitive Money
(Currency other than Coins and Paper money)


German text. Includes a brief discussion of sycee silver with two photographs (pp. 59-61).


Gives a good account of the tea trade.


Brick tea is discussed on pp. 379-385.


Gives a quite detailed description of the tea bricks which are made in Yatchou. The bricks of best quality are about 20 to 30 centimeters long and less large. The second quality tea bricks are about double this size and the ones for the third quality still larger. The bricks are carried by porters in bamboo baskets to Tatsien lou, from where the bricks are transported to Tibet by yaks. For the markets in central Tibet the bricks are repacked in yak hides while those to be distributed in Eastern Tibet remain in their original bamboo packing.


Gives an account of the production in Yunnan of tea cakes for the Tibet trade; these have the shape of a heart.

P. 164: <<Seven cakes make up a "tong" (a section of thick bamboo), and eighteen “tong” a basket. Each basket contains 126 cakes of tea. Usually a pack animal can carry two baskets, with a total of about 105 to 110 jin (two jin = one kilogram).>>

<<The steaming and pressing methods in making Yunnan tea into cakes are similar to those for Sichuan brick tea. A cake of Yunnan tea consists of three layers of tea, different in quality, and the best quality of tea is on the surface, so its surface layer looks quite good. But the shortcoming of Yunnan Jinch'a is that the size and quality are not standardized.>>


p. 143-144: "The staple trade is tea. It is brought from China in the form of bricks wrapped in basket-work packages and carried by coolies on the back, the usual load being nine packages of
seventeen catties each.*From Dartsendo the tea is distributed over Tibet in two ways. In the "small road business" (hsiao lu) it is carried by yak to Litang and Jyekundo and places on this side of these towns, the tea being left in the original packages but wrapped loosely in yak skin. In this business the tea-brick is usually of very inferior quality. In the "big road business" (ta lu) the tea goes by yak caravan to Lhasa, the loads not being broken this side of Jyekundo. At Dartsendo the cost of a tea-brick such as is used in the Lhasa trade averages, for good and indifferent qualities, about Rs. 1 1/2; purchasing in large quantities for export it would work out at an average of R.1.†

*One carrier whom I passed on the road had on his back sixteen packages of eighteen catties each, = 374 1/2 lbs., but he was not travelling more than about seven miles a day. I am assured that, for such short distances, 28 stone is no uncommon weight, and that heavier loads are known.

† Money table: -

| 5 Karma (cents) | 1 Pice |
| 6 Pice | 1 Tranka, about 3 d. |
| 3 Trankas | 1 Chinese Rupee, about 9 1/2 d. |
| 2 1/2 Rupees | Mex. $1."

Comment: The first line in the Money table should probably read: 2 1/2 Karma (cents) = 1 Pice.

(WB)

Gives a quite detailed description of the tea routes from Dartsendo (Kangding) to Lhasa, and of transportation costs and taxes to be paid by the tea merchants. Average selling price of a tea-brick in Lhasa is 6 rupees.


On page 2 a bronze (without clasp) and silver (with Gyantse bar) medal of the Younghusband Expedition 1903/04 are illustrated and described as Nr. S12 and S13.


Mainly based on Chinese sources, this article deals with Chinese silver and gold ingots.


This is the best and most extensive English language work on this subject. Based on the extensive collection of sycee in the British museum, the author explains the production of ingots, their use, the Chinese names given to them and how to date the pieces. In the catalogue section 1300 specimens are listed with full transcriptions and translations of their legends. Most of the listed pieces are illustrated on 71 plates. Forgeries, hoards, metallurgy, paper sycee are discussed in appendices.


p. 60: "Even when payment is not made in butter, the value of commodities and even currency are quoted in weight units of butter, for example, 2 pounds (Tibetan) for a square cloth, or 5 pounds of butter for a Chinese silver dollar. It is, indeed, a currency based on its own utilitarian value in the economy. In technology, at its oldest oilest stage, when no longer acceptable as food, it is the universally used tanning agent for softening all the hides used in making many artifacts of a pack-and-saddle existence, and for all the sheepskins used for clothing. In social relationships it is the preferred gift in the reciprocal attitudes and responsibilities created by the gift-exchange system; in religious observances it is the universally preferred offering, because it fuels the millions of butter lamps in Tibetan shrines and temples."

Brick tea is made in China for export to Mongolia, Tibet and Russia. Some years ago its preparation in India was seriously considered, but the project was not developed. Brick tea intended for Tibet consists of leaf, stalks and even twigs, whilst that for the Russian market is made mainly from tea dust and siftings. Both black and green teas are compressed into bricks.

In the modern factories at Hankow, which used to supply the Russian market, the carefully graded dusts are steamed in cotton bags and poured into wooden moulds in which the brick was formed by hydraulic pressure. The making of the poorer grade bricks for Tibet is largely in the hands of the Chinese. The leaf is steamed until it is moist and pliable and then rammed into wooden moulds, where it is left to dry and harden.

Further remarks on tea bricks are to be found on pp. 103 sqq. Tablets, made from tea dust, for the Russian market; bricks, made from leaves and stalks, for the Mongolian and Tibetan market.


A brief introduction to the use of tea bricks as currency. Reports that a sword is valued at three tea bricks, a horse at 20 tea bricks. With an illustration of what is most probably a modern tea brick, especially made for collectors.


p. 71: “In the 19th and early part of this century the tea consumed in Tibet arrived from China in the form of compressed bricks which were easily portable, each clearly marked with an indication of its quality, and each category being relatively uniform in size. Because of this certain of these tea bricks served as standard of value and were used as currency for purchases and in the settlement of debts.”

These remarks on the use of tea bricks as currency are based on Desgodins and W. W. Rockhill.


German text (translation from Russian). Tibet imported 6,500 tons of tea bricks annually, c. 4,000 of them via Kang-tib [sic] (p. 56).


A tea brick is illustrated showing a Chinese character (resembling “tien”) which is pressed into it in incuse.

Some remarks on brick tea and its different qualities as well as its use as currency in Tibet. Partly based on a pamphlet on Chinese tea for Tibet, authored by Abbé Desgodins and printed by the Bengal Secretarial Press in the 1880's.

"There are 5 standards or qualities of brick-tea prepared for the Tibetan market, sorted according to the more or less perfect degree of fermentation and the greater or lesser admixture of wood with the leaves. The staple brick or 3rd standard called Guie-pa by the Tibetans and Pa-chang-kin by the Chinese is by far the most generally used in Tibet, not only as beverage, but as staple of trade and as the common money of traders, and it is therefore most important that tea of that quality should be made up of the exact weight."


Contains some remarks on and photographs of sycee (pp. 105-106) and a brief discussion of "tea money" with illustrations of examples from Mongolia, China and Burma.


Sycee is discussed with many illustrations on pp. 322-329. Tea Money on pp. 337-342 with many, mostly modern, examples illustrated. Deoganta (ceremonial bells) are mentioned as being used as money in Tibet (pp. 130-31).


p. 173: "The natives have no coinage and do not use the Khan's [Kublai Khan's] paper currency; but for money they use salt."

p. 176: "Let me tell you next about their money. They have gold in bars and weigh it out by saggi; and it is valued according to its weight. But they have no coined money bearing a stamp. For small change they do as follows. They have salt water from which they make salt by boiling it in pans. When they have boiled it for an hour, they let it solidify in moulds, forming blocks of the size of a twopenny loaf, flat below and rounded on top. When the blocks are ready, they are laid on heated stones beside the fire to dry and harden. On these blocks they set the Great Khan's stamp. And currency of this sort is made only by his agents. Eighty of these blocks are worth a saggio of gold. But traders come with these blocks to the people who live among the mountains in wild and out-of-the-way places and receive a saggio of gold for sixty, fifty, or forty blocks, according as the place is more isolated and cut off from cities and civilized people. Here the natives cannot dispose of their gold and other wares, such as musk, for want of purchasers. So they sell gold cheap, because they find it in rivers and lakes as you have heard. These traders travel all over the highlands of Tibet, where the salt money is also current. They make an immense profit, because the people use this salt in food as well as for buying the necessities of life; but in the cities they almost invariably use fragments of the blocks for food and spend the unbroken blocks."

*The passage on p. 173 refers to eastern Tibet, the passage on p. 176 to the provinces of Kaindu (present day western Sichuan).*


Notes on tea bricks used as currency between Tibet and China (pp. 222-223) and some remarks on silver ingots (p. 246).

The tea is the most important item in Tibetan culinary art, and any one who can make it to suit the fastidious is indeed clever. The tea used is the brick tea, made of coarse leaves and small twigs of the tea plant in China, pressed into bricks bound around by basket work, and sent up to the Tibetan border on the backs of coolies, and then into the interior of Tibet on the backs of oxen. There are three principal grades and the best grade goes in very large quantities to Lhasa."
The preparation of tea is also described (pp. 183-184). Short description of the "Ja-Lam" (tea road from Ta-chien-lu to Nagch'uk'a) on p. 271. Apparently the use of tea bricks as money is not mentioned.

Tea is manufactured in China, compressed into bricks of various sizes and sometimes stamped with a value that varies according to the quality of the tea.

The author discusses the size of tea bricks, weight, grades of tea used, machinery involved, processes, manufacturers, marketing and costs. The business flourished especially from 1875 to 1900. First in Mongolia, later in Tibet, the bricks assumed a value and were used in trade (at one time five tea bricks were equal to one ounce of silver). In the 1920's Russia became the principle importer though for food rather than as a medium of exchange. Since 1935 the business has noticeably declined.

Contains some remarks on the border trade at Tachienlu and the estimated amounts of brick tea imported by Tibet via this border town.

The author gives important details on the tea trade: "Today brick tea goes principally to Tibet, Sinkiang and Manchuria. 1901 appears to have been the peak of brick-tea production. There was a big trade between Russia and China, but the Russian Revolution in 1917 killed that trade. It is
interesting to note that even to this day brick tea serves as a form of currency in Sinkiang and Mongolia. A caravan can be paid for in brick tea instead of in dollars."


Contains a brief discussion of brick-tea currency and its use in Siberia, Mongolia and Tibet. With illustration of a rectangular block from Russia and a round one from Yunnan.
V. Catalogues


The three notes with Tibetan overprints, issued by the Provincial Bank of Xikang, are listed, but not illustrated.


On pp. 617-618 a Tibetan gold coin of 15-52 date, a 1 Srang, 1st year Xuan Tong, a 1 Srang, dated 15-43 and a 10 Srang dated 16-24 are illustrated. Curiously, the place of minting of these coins is given as “Chengtu”.


Contains a listing of Tibetan and Nepalese coins and banknotes, which was the best available at the time of publication.


Phantasies in the style of known sino-tibetan coins, phantasy coins related to Sichuan rupees and modern medallic issues struck by the Franklin Mint and the Royal Australian Mint are listed with illustrations.


As nrs. 311 and 312 Srang issues are listed, the first being of type Y 9, the second of type Y 12.


Two different phantasies in the style of the Tibetan 20 Srang gold coin are illustrated. The second type shows the design of a pagoda on the reverse. This “pagoda” is most probably a Chinese character.

The listing of these phantasies was excluded from subsequent editions of this work.

This well known publication, often referred to as the “bible” of coin collectors or as the “telephone book”, is edited on a yearly base since 1972.

Since the early 1990s this catalogue has been divided into three parts, one covering the 18th, one for the 19th and one for the 20th century (see following entries).


This catalogue covers the complete range of Tibetan coin issues from the 18th century early tangkas till the last issues of the 1950s.


Apart from the 20th century coinage of Tibet which had been listed in previous editions of this standard work, several rare patterns and a grain token are listed for the first time.


A good survey of Tibetan coins, despite of some omissions, especially in the Sino-Tibetan series.


Russian text. 35 Tibetan coins are listed, 23 are illustrated. The catalogue lists a 2 1/2 Sichuan rupee: this dollar-sized coin is actually a phantasy.


Similar listing to the one given in the “Standard Guide to South Asian Coins and Paper Money from D.D. 1556” (entry nr. V.2), but with less illustrations and excluding the issues for Sikang. The 5, 10, 50 and 100 Yuan of the Central Bank of China (1936 A.D.) with Tibetan overprint are listed on pp. 271 - 272 with an illustration of the 10 Yuan note.


The half, 1 and 5 Yuan notes for the Sikang province are listed with illustrations of the first two values. All these notes have Tibetan and Chinese legends.


The 1, 5, 10, 50 and 100 Yuan notes issued in 1936 by the Central Bank of China and bearing overprints in Tibetan are listed with an illustration of the 10 Yuan note. Also listed are the 50 c. and 1 Yuan note of the Sikang Provincial Bank of 1939 with an illustration of the 50 c. note.

VI. Selection of Auction and Sales Catalogues
(Coins and Primitive Money)

Includes the George Blaker collection of Indo-greek, Kushan, Gupta, Nepal and Tibet coins.
Among the Tibetan coins (lot nr. 1453-1522) are three rare tangkas with Vartula script and two
varieties of the “Sucakra Vijaya” Tangka.

Lists and illustrates numerous rare Tibetan coins and patterns.

VI.3. Brilliant, Lawrence B. and Girija E: *Himalayan Numismatics*. Chelsea, Michigan,
Spring 1983.
Numerous Tibetan coins are listed and illustrated. Among these are the following rare coins: Nr.
194-196: three early tangkas with eight times the syllable “dza” in Vartula script. Lot 197: Sucakra
Vijaya tangka. Lot 226: copper token of 4 Liang, struck on a copper 5 Sho coin. The catalogue also
includes Nepalese coins of the Licchavi, Malla and Saha dynasties.

VI.4. China Guardian Stamps and Coins: *1997 Spring Auctions*, Beijing, April 20,
1997.
Lot 1557 illustrates a half Sichuan rupee which is described as “Sichuan Guangxu 10c essay copper
coin”. The estimate RMB 46,000-50,000 is given.

Hoboken, New Jersey, Nov. 30 to December 2, 1967.
Included are the following Sino-tibetan coins: Lot 2297: 1 sho, silver Hsien Feng, 3rd year. Lot
2298: 1/2 sho, silver, Hsien Feng 3rd year. Lot 2299: 1 sho, silver, Tung Chih, 2nd year. Lot 2300:
1 sho, silver, Kuang Hsu, 4th year. With illustrations, except lot 2298.
*Comment: It is doubtful whether these coins are genuine.*

VI.5a. Flack, Geoffrey: *Tibet & The Himalayas*. A Price List. Vancouver, Canada,
On page 2 a bronze (without clasp) and silver (with Gyantse bar) medal of the Younghusband
Expedition 1903/04 are illustrated and described as Nr. S12 and S13.

1970.
German text. A large group of Tibetan (lots 1995-2085) and Nepalese coins (lots 1914-1988) are
included (with illustrations).

Kushans, Guptas, Sultans of Delhi, Mughals, British India, Afghanistan, Persia, Burma
Siam, China, Tibet, Central and South America*. London, 16-17th June, 1937.
Lot 265: Phantasy gold coin in the style of the 20 srang gold coin, but with obverse date 15-51 and a Chinese character in the centre of the reverse. Lot 266: Gold striking of Sichuan rupee.


Tibetan coins: lots 681-1001. Sycee: lots 1059-1064. Lot 985 is a 1/2 sho of Qian Long, dated 58, with erroneous Tibetan legend on reverse: "lu" instead of "lung" and brgyad (eight) written with retrograde letters; this coin is most probably a forgery.


Lots 542 and 543: Szechuan rupee and Szechuan 1/2 rupee in gold. With illustrations.


A group of Tibetan coins from the collection of Kenneth R. Seachman is offered. Among these are the following rare coins: Lot 729: 20 Srang gold coin, dated 15-52, lot 730: 20 Srang gold coin, dated 15-53 and lot 731: gold coin, dated 15-54. Lot 731-A: a Sichuan rupee with the emperor’s portrait on both sides (not being a brockage). Lot 736: 5 Sho, silver Y # 8. Lots 749 and 750: two 5 Sho silver coins of the type Y # 32.


Contains most of the Tibetan coins and Sichuan rupees of the Edward Kann collection.


Lot 335 is a 1 Srang coin dated 15-43, described as “double ruppe”. This may be among the earliest appearances of this coin in a western auction.


p. 167: Lot P 618: large Wood Block for printing paper money, with many characters carved on face, in rows. Rare.

Lot KP 619: Bronze Bell Coin 1500 AD. Inscription. Rare.

Lot KP 620: Pilgrim Money. A most unusual specimen. Hand-made ornately hammered brass bottle or jug, 4 x 5" given to important travellers by head Lama, and symbolizing “Everlasting Sustenance.” All Tibetans, no matter how humble or rich, were obliged to give help, food or lodging to bearer. Extremely rare. About 1600 [illustrated is a small bottle with inscription in six Lantsa script characters arranged in a circle like on a coin; certainly the object does not represent money (comment by compiler).]


Lots 1342-1447. Among others, a large size Sichuan rupee phantasy in silver, a 1 Srang coin, dated 15-43 and a medallie issue with a portrait of the 14th Dalai Lama. With illustrations.


Lot 1060: Thin wood money 2 1/2 x 52”. Long native inscr., ca. 1804. Very rare.
Lot 1061: Large bronze temple coin 1700-50, 6 inches high.
Both lots are listed as “Tibet”. No illustrations.


Lots 1430 and 1431 are bronze and brass pieces described as sinkiang coins for use in Tibet. Lot 1430 has the Nepalese inscription “Shri shri shri Surendra Vikrama Saha Deva” on reverse. Both coins are probably phantasies. Lots 1517 and 1518 are two fantasy silver coins in the style of the early Sino-tibetan coinage.


Sichuan rupees: lots 688-702.


Tea brick money: lots 496-497, with illustrations.


Lot 1991 is a phantasy gold coin with obverse as the 1/4 Sichuan rupee and reverse design of five bats arranged around a central monogram. Lot 1992 is a gold coin in the style of the 20 Srang coins, but with the date 15-51 on obverse and a Chinese character in the centre of the reverse (similar to the coin illustrated in the first edition of Friedberg, Gold Coins of the World).


Lot 2900: Sichuan 1/2 rupee in gold. Lot 2925: Phantasy in the style of the 20 Srang gold coin, but with date 15-51 on obverse and design of pagoda (Chinese character?) in the centre of the reverse.


The first part of this auction catalogue contains *The Halpert Collection of Tibetan and Nepalese Currency* and represents the largest group of Tibetan coins and banknotes which was offered in an auction sale to this date. Most of the coins are illustrated in black and white (some in colour) and all obverses of the rare banknotes are illustrated in colour and makes this catalogue one of the major references on Tibetan currency.


An important group of Nepalese and Tibetan coins as well as Sichuan rupees and their fractions. Among the most interesting coins are lot 1802 and 1901 (two varieties of the rare Lukuan rupee) and lot 1857 (the very rare tangka pattern, Qian Long, year 57).

**VI.27. Stack’s:** *Catalogue of rare United States and Foreign Gold and Silver Coins.* New York, 4th and 5th June 1940.

Lot 747 is the 20 Srang gold coin, dated 15-54 (possibly a Chinese forgery). Lot 748 is a phantasy in the style of the 20 Srang gold coin, but dated 15-51 on obverse and showing a Chinese character in the centre of the reverse.


Lot 192: the 1920 20 Srang silver coin is actually a trial strike of the well known Chinese forgery of the Tibetan gold coin.

**VI.29. The Money Co. Auctions:** *Rare Coin Auction Number Five.* Tarzana, 30 June 1980.

Tibetan Coins: lots 660-695. Lot 690 is the rare 1 Srang, dated 15-48 and lot 686 a Sucakra Vijaya tangka.


Lot 163: This 20 Srang pattern in silver is a forgery.


Lot 214: a gold trial strike of the 2 1/2 Sichuan rupee - a fantasy.


Lot 1194 is the Tibet “silver cake” K # 1479. The obverse inscription is translated as “Tibet, 1 Tael”, the reverse inscription as “Made in the Official Furnace” and “Valuable Coin of the Kuang Hsu (Regime)”. The auctioneers state that this coin was produced in Tibet. Lots 1195 to 1209 are Sino Tibetan coins of Chien Lung, Chia Ching and Tao Kwang. Lots 1210 to 1227 are Sichuan rupees and Tibetan coins including a Sucakra Vijaya tangka (lot 1227). Almost all coins are illustrated.

**VI.33. The Money Company:** *Public Auction.* Hongkong, September 1986.

Lot 895: 1/2 sho Xien Feng, first year. Lot 896: 1/2 sho, Dao Guang, first year. Lot 897: 1/2 sho, Jia Jin, eight year (Reverse: Tibetan word for “eight” brgya’d is written retrograde). These three coins are believed to be forgeries or phantasies.


Lots 391-393 are 5 Tam banknotes, lot 394 a 50 Tam note of T.E. 1687, lot 394 a 5 Srang note, lot 396 a 10 Srang note and lot 397 a 25 Srang note. Lot 419 is a half Sichuan rupee in gold, lot 479 a 20 Srang gold coin, dated 15-54, lot 775 a Sucakra Vijaya tangka, lot 778 an obverse brockage of
a copper shokang, lot 782 a cut Sichuan rupee with Chinese countermark, lot 786 a quarter Sichuan rupee struck in copper and lot 918 a Lama dollar K # B75. All banknotes and coins are illustrated.


VII. Auction Catalogues
(Paper Money)

Lot nrs. 3713-3716 are notes issued by Tashi Dargas monastery in Eastern Tibet. Two notes are 1/2 rupee (sgor phyed) and two notes 1 rupee (sgor gcig). See also the section "Chinese Publications on Paper Money".

On p. 9 a blue 50 tam note of the second block type, dated T.E. 1659, serial nr. 48069, is illustrated.
Comment: This note is from a small hoard of early 50 tam notes which was discovered in Lhasa in the second half of 2001.

Lot 2099, with photograph: 50 Tam note blue, dated Tibetan Era 1659 (A.D. 1913).

A violet 15 Tam note, serial number 6054, is described and the face of the note illustrated.

VII.4. Spink & Son Ltd.: *Banknotes. Sale Nr. 1205*, London, 30 September 1999, lot 716 (pp. 94 and 97).
A 50 Tam note, dated 1687, serial nr. 963773, is described and the face of the note is illustrated in colour.
VIII. Numismatic and General Bibliographies

Note: Many of the general bibliographies on Tibet record several titles on its monetary history, but not all have been listed here.

This is a semiannual publication dedicated to recent numismatic literature published worldwide and occasionally records new titles on Tibet and neighbouring areas.

Lists several articles and catalogues which contain references to Tibetan numismatics.

Presents extensive quotations from western literature on Chinese chops. The chopping of Tibetan coins hardly ever occurred and is mentioned only in two publications.

Under “Western Literature on Coins Struck in Tibet.” 103 titles are listed. Under the heading “Western Literature on Tibetan Paper Money.” 38 items and under “Chinese Language Publications on the Coins struck in Tibet” 42 items are listed. Also two Chinese articles on Tibetan paper money and threee publications in Tibetan Language on Tibetan numismatics are listed. Nearly all bibliographic data are accompanied by a short summary of the contents of the publications.

This is an expanded edition of the earlier work by the same author: Select Numismatic Bibliography, Washington D.C., 1965. It contains 5 titles on Tibetan coins and two on Tibetan paper money (pp. 1038-39 and 1165).

An important work listing several articles on topics related to Tibetan numismatics.


Briefly discusses some Chinese and Western publications on the coinage of Tibet.


The numismatic part of this work is divided into the following chapters: A) Coins, B) Paper Money, C) Medals, D) Primitive Money, E) Catalogues and F) Selected Auction Catalogues, with a total of about 320 numismatic entries. It forms the base of the present sourcebook.


With more than 11,000 titles listed this is the most extensive bibliography on Tibet published so far. It includes publications in western languages as well as in Chinese and Japanese published up to 1975.

The listing is given alphabetically by authors. Unfortunately the bibliography does not include a subject index, hence its consultation is very time consuming.


This is the catalogue of the western literature in the library of the Tibetan Monastic Institute of Rikon (Switzerland). In section E 6 “Realia” one numismatic article on Tibetan paper money is listed.


Based on the holdings of Chinese numismatic literature collected by members of the Coin Department of the British Museum the author lists 70 numismatic works which have been published (in the form of books; articles are not listed) in China after 1982. An abstract has been added to each entry.

The following supplements were published by Helen Wang: these also include, abstracts of articles published in Chinese numismatic journals, especially those which appeared in China Numismatics (Zhong Guo Qian Bi), as well as numismatic news of China:

IX. Chinese Language Publications on Coins and Related Subjects

Note: This compilation is based on a draft written by Karl Gabrisch which was subsequently revised and enlarged by Nicholas Rhodes and contains additions made by Wolfgang Bertsch.

Works listed with incomplete bibliographical details are either quoted as found in Chinese publications or the details were not available for other reasons. Publications which deal with coins only or with both paper money and coins are listed in section IX, while publications dealing exclusively with paper money are to be found in section IX A. Section IX B includes Chinese articles on the Hsi Hsia (Xi Xia) coinage.

The Chinese characters of older publications are transcribed according to the Wade Gile system, while the names of the authors and the titles of recent publications are transcribed using the Pinyin system as used in present day China.

A list of Chinese publications on Tibet, published from 1949 to 1995 which includes titles on trade, economy and currency of ancient and modern Tibet can be found in the following publications:


IX.1 Anonymous: The Record of the Emperors decisions regarding relations with the Gorkhas (Guo Er Ka Ji Lue). Chapter XI & XIII.

Important primary source regarding the currency situation in 1792, and the first Tibetan coins of 1763/64 and 1785.


General survey of recent research on Tibetan currency.

IX.6. Anonymous: (Numismatic Research Institute of the institute of Finance of the Tibet Branch of the People’s Bank of China): “Xi Zang Di Fang Zhen Fu De Zhao Bi

The modern Tibetan mint Gova-bzhi las khungs was officially opened on 18 Nov. 1931 and replaced the earlier mints Gova-bzhi (founded in 1914 as machine factory) Me khyim (founded in 1917), Luo-Dui (founded in 1920) and Dog-sde (founded in 1922).

The article discusses the organization, the income of the mint and its departments located outside the main plant like a paper factory in Jing-Dong and banks in Shigatse and Gyantse. An account of the machinery used in the mint, also of the kind of paper money printed and the coins minted is given including figures for the amount of notes printed, the number of coins struck and the production techniques used.

In the early 1950s there existed a project in the mint to buy up Yuan Shikai dollars at the rate of 15 srang each, to melt them down and to recoin them as 25 and 50 srang low grade silver issues.


IX.11. Anonymous: 0058 Report to the Emperor from the Finance Department and the Home and Tax Ministry about the further striking of Tibet Dollars for use in the Frontier Region, from 29th day, 12th month of 31st year of Guan Xu (Archive for Frontier Affairs, Volume IV).

IX.12. Anonymous: 0264 Complete Explanation of the Value of the Tibet Dollar with 3 Qian + 2 Fen, from the Finance Ministry and the Mints, from 9th day, 1st month of Xuan Tong 1st year, (Archive of Frontier Affairs, Volume IV).

IX.13. Anonymous: 0303 Striking of Copper Dollars for the Region West of Kangding and the fixing of the Exchange Rate, from the 4th day, 4th month of Xuan Tong, 1st year. (Archive of Frontier Affairs, Volume IV).


IX.15. Anonymous: 0656 Official Communication about the exchange Rate between Tibet Dollars and Copper Dollars, 6th month, Xuan Tong year 2. (Archive of Frontier Affairs, Volume IV).

IX.16. Anonymous: 0801 Report from Officials of the Salt and Grain Office on the accumulation of Copper Dollars and the resulting measures undertaken. 23rd day, 3rd month, Xuan Tong year 3. (Archive of Frontier Affairs, Volume IV).


Catalogue listing Tibetan silver coins and Sichuan rupees with prices in Chinese yuan, illustrated with rubbings and some plates, of which one is dedicated to Tibetan silver coins.

IX.18a. Cai Ning and Li Tong: *Zhong Guo Hui Zhang (Chinese Badges)*. Bai Hua Wen Yi Chu Ban Zhe (Hundred Flowers Literature Publishing House), 20001.

Seven badges with Tibetan inscriptions, produced after 1959, are illustrated and described (nrs 237, 324, 370, 371, 377, 391, 515).


Short note, pointing out that the Tibetan silver coins were the first silver coins to be issued in China.


Judging by the first part of the book which appears as well in English translation, the author tries to interpret Tibet’s currency primarily as part of Tibet’s economic and cultural history. Numismatically he hardly contributes anything to Tibet’s currency history which is not known already from previous Chinese publications. As is usual with Chinese authors who write on this subject, he ignores the extensive Western numismatic literature on Tibet. A catalogue of major coins is given and the book has several colour plates of reasonable quality, unfortunately with some illustrations and legends being mismatched. Illustrations of two dies of rare patterns, one shokang die and one die for a 50 Srang issue featuring the Potala, are published for the first time. Most of the rare coins and banknotes which are illustrated are from the collection of the Lhasa Branch of the People’s bank of China and were previously published by Zhu Jing zhong, Ci Ren Ping Cuo & Yan Lunzhang: *Introduction to the Tibetan Regional Currency (Yuan Xi Zhang Di Fang Qian Bi Gai Kuang)*. Institute for Financial Affairs of the People’s Bank of China in Tibet. Lhasa, 1988.


Contains a brief discussion of the Sichuan rupee and of the Tibetan silver coinage (illustrated with rubbings).


A Gaden tangka and a 5 srang note (nr. ka 028869) are illustrated and their legends are explained.


A 100 wen copper coin of Xikang, Yr 15 is described, as is a Sichuan rupee with no collar and vertical rosette. Both coins are described as scarce.


Detailed account of the circulation of British Indian rupees in Eastern Tibet.


On pp. 2-9 there are two articles on Tibetan coins with drawings (obv. and rev.) of seven Tibetan modern copper and silver coins.

*IX.28. Chiang, Chung Ch’uan: Chung kuo Yin Nieh Pi T’u Shuo (Illustrations of Chinese Gold, Silver and Nickel Coins), Shanghai, 1939 (257 pp.).

Chinese and English text. On pp. 11-18 Tibetan coins are listed with 17 drawings:


A rare book containing the official documents of the campaign of 1791-92 in Tibet and Nepal. It contains the only mention of the first coins minted in Tibet: 1763 and 1764 A.D., by the Demo-chutuchta (leaves 11 and 12a), and 1785 A.D., with a higher silver content, by the 8th Dalai Lama (leaves 11 and 20). These mintages are completely unknown to numismatists. Unfortunately, these issues are neither described nor illustrated - we only know that the Tibetan issues did not differ greatly from their Nepalese prototypes. To the knowledge of the compiler (K. Gabrisch) these early Tibetan coins are not confirmed by any other Chinese source.


General description of Tibetan currency. It is noted that a numismatic collection exists in the Institute for Financial Affairs of the People’s Bank of China. This collection consists of 4000 items, including metal dies, and blocks for printing banknotes. Also there is an archive of some 200 documents.


With the help of a dated pair of dies of the so-called “monk-tangka (Y # 31)”, an undated drawing of this coin and other documentary evidence the authors establish that in the years 1953 and 1954 331292 pieces of this special tangka were struck, making it Tibet’s last coin issue. The authors also publish a drawing of an apparently unissued Gaden Tangka of the same period, which could have served as alternative design for the monk tangka.

IX.32. Ding Jin Jun: (article in which a document referring to the issue of silver coins for Tibet during the late Qian Long period is published). In: China Numismatics (Zhong Guo Qian Bi), Beijing 1995, 3rd issue (nr. 50), pp. 23-25.

IX.32.a. Ding Jin Jun: “When were the first Sichuan rupees of the late Qing cast?” In: China Numismatics (Zhong Guo Qian Bi) Beijing 2000, fourth issue (nr. 71), pp. 7-9.

The author outlines the arrival of British merchants in Tibet, their promotion of Indian rupees in Tibet (welcomed by Tibetans who liked silver coins) to the extent that they threatened existing currency systems. To fight back, the Chinese made silver coins at Chengdu and put them into circulation west of Daqianlu. The author presents the conflicting accounts in different references, and concludes that the Sichuan silver coins were made between 1905-7.

IX.33. Dong Wenchao: An Overview of China’s Gold & Silver Coins of Past Ages - the Gold and Silver Coins and Medals of Modern China. Beijing, 1992. pp. 69-70 (gold coins); pp. 139-165 (Qing Dynasty silver coins); pp. 627-638 (Republic of China Period, silver coins).

An impressive book, with bilingual text, Chinese and English. Of particular interest are the 5 Fen of Jia Qing Year 1 (no.142), the base anepigraphic copy of Ranajit Malla, apparently with number “45” (no. 127), and the 1951 patterns (nos. 1406-09).

IX.34. Feng Mingxin: “The History of Currency Circulation in the Province of Xikang and Tibet.” In: Business in Xikang (Quartely), Vol. 9 (Date ? - probably before 1945)


Short article on the Sichuan Rupee.

IX.36. Fong Hanyong: “Research on the Trade Route from Sichuan across Tibet to India during the Tang Dynasty. (Tang Dai Xi Su Jing Tu Fan Tong Zu Lu Xian Kao)”. In: Tibetan Studies, 4 (1985), pp. 77-81.

IX.37. Fu Songxia: 1031 The Issue of Copper Coins Zhi-qian and their Exchange Rate. 6th day, 8th month, Xuan Tong year 3. Archive for Frontier Affairs, Volume IV.


A detailed account of the introduction of silver coins in Qian Long Yr. 57, based on imperial records, together with an account of the introduction of the Sichuan rupee.


Three varieties of the Lion Cash of Sichuan, and the 100 wen of Xikang (Year 15, year 19, copper, and year 19, brass) are described and illustrated.


Description of the use of the Sichuan rupees, including cut pieces, silver ingots, silver coins from Yunnan and paper money in Xikang province during the early years of the Republic, up to about 1940.


On p. 104, three lion cash (5 fen) of Sichuan are illustrated, and on pp. 212-215 various copper coins are listed, including two fantasy pieces - one silver Qian Long type with pagoda, and a 15-43 7.5 sKar with portrait in centre.

IX.43. Huang Kangxian: “The Tea-Trade between Sichuan and Tibet during the Qing Dynasty. (Qing Ji Si Chuan Yi Xi Zhang Xi Zhang Jian De Ca Ye Mao Yi)”. In: (?), pp. 38-51.

A detailed account of the tea-trade, well documented from European and other sources, with references to the use of silver rupees.

Chinese text. The Sino-Tibetan Hsien Feng issues are "samples", perhaps "genuine patterns", made in China for Imperial inspection.


Contains a quite extensive listing (with line drawings or photographs) of Tibetan silver coins and of Sichuan rupees.


Much detailed and useful information on the use of coins in north-eastern Tibet, including prices of commodities and the use of paper money during the 1920's and 1930's.

IX.47. Lang Sa: "Xizang Yinbi Kao (Research on Tibetan Silver Coins)". In: Lhasa He, 1994.1(Nr. 11) pp. 62-64.

Description (no illustrations) of various Tibetan silver coins, including the 1763 issue, the 13-45 coin described as struck in Jue Mu Ka Gou in the Gongbu region and the 50 srang coin with the view of the Potala. Some interesting comments.


A light-weight book, with information mainly derived from Kann: One unusual silver coin, probably a fantasy piece of Jia Qing, is illustrated opposite p. 48. This coin is not known from other sources.

IX.49. Li Feng: "An attempt to analyse the historical background behind the minting by Tibet of its own coinage". In: Min Zu Yan Jing, 1992.2, pp. 85-87.

IX.50. Lian Yu: see book by Fu Fengpei (editor), which publishes the Imperial reports of Lian Yu.


Includes comments on the number of Sichuan rupees issued, and their use.


Brief comments on the 3 Srang silver coin of 1932/33, called "black money" after the 13th Dalai Lama had died, and about the cutting of Nepalese coins in Tibet.

IX.55. Lu Rongquan: "The important witness of the unified China in politics". In: Wuxi Qianbi (Wuxi Numismatics) 1991, second issue, pp. 38-44.

An introduction to the coinage of Tibet with 30 rubbings of Tibetan coins, Indian and Sichuan rupees and Nepalese mohars.

IX.56. Ma Ding Xiang: "Tibetan Silver Coins Struck in the first year of the Republic of China. (Ming Guo Yuan Nian Xi Zhang Bi)". In: Qian Bi, Nr. 30.

This important work gives a brief description and illustrations of the sino-tibetan 1/2 Sho and 1 Sho, dated year 1, and of the 1/2 Sho and 1 Sho, dated year 3, struck in silver in the name of Xien Feng. (all these issues are believed to be fantasies)


One of the most comprehensive listing of Tibet's gold (p. 251), silver (pp. 370-384) and copper (pp. 792-800) coins, including some rare patterns. The Lukuan rupee (p. 526) and the Sichuan rupees (pp. 527-529) are also included. All coins are illustrated.

IX.59. Ma Xiang: *The Earliest Silver Coins with a portrait in China. (Zhong Guo Zhui Zhao Yao Ren Wu Tu Xiang De Ying Bi)*. Place and date (?)


The following English translation of this important work has been published: Translated by Edward H. Kaplan. *A Monetary History of China*, 2 Volumes. Western Washington University 1993.


Article in two parts introducing the coinage of Tibet with explanations of the coin legends and some design details, illustrated with many rubbings.


Illustrated is a Lukuan rupee, a British Indian Victoria rupee and three Sichuan rupees, one of the latter with the emperor's bust facing right.

IX.64. Qian Yu: "The Coin Inscriptions on the Tibetan Coins struck during the Qing Dynasty. (Qing Dai Xi Zhang Ying Bi De Bi Wen)" In: *China Numismatics (Zhong Guo Qian Bi)*, No. 26, 1989.3, pp. 66-71 and p. 50.


Rubbings of three silver sho coins of Qian Long, dated year 58, 59 and 60 are to be found along with some comments.


Tibetan silver and copper coins as well as Sichuan rupees are illustrated. The most unusual coins illustrated are a 1/2 Sho (or 3/4 Sho?) of Jia Qing, year 1 (nr. 43) and a sho of Qia Jing, year 8 which shows the Tibetan word for "eight" (brgyad) spelt with a reversed character for "brgya" (nr. 44).

Very general description of old Tibetan coins and currency system. Mention is made of the Kong-par tamka dated 13-46 being struck at Jue-Mu-Zong-Ka-Go in Gong-bu District.


Important coins are the 5 Fen of Jia Qing Yr. 3, C1-8 and the Lu Kuan Silver Coin C1-35. The former has never reappeared, while the latter was again published by E. Kann, and is now in the collection of N.G. Rhodes.


Some Tibetan Silver Coins are illustrated.


Chapter II discusses and illustrates cowries, (pp. 11-15). The book contains illustrations of 20th century Tibetan silver (p. 269) and copper coins (p. 274) which circulated in Yunnan.


Interesting, but probably fantasy, copper cash of Qian Long of three different sizes are illustrated, and their background explained.

*IX.73. Tong-Yuan, Li: Hsi-tsang yu pi kao (A Study of Tibetan Stamps and Currency). Taipei 1959 (228 pp.).

A detailed description of Nepalese and Chinese issues on behalf of Tibet (mainly based on Kann’s catalogue) and coins of autonomous Tibet. The author mentions a unique coin, perhaps a pattern, of Jia Qing, held by the Chinese National Museum at Taipei. It is a Sino-Tibetan issue well defined as a coin for cutting, diameter 34-38 mm, thickness 1 mm (photo 34 on p. 48). The author gives detailed information on the mintage of the Sichuan rupee and on the rate of exchange, between Chinese and Tibetan money at the Chinese border, in the 1930’s. A short chapter on banknotes includes different Chinese issues with overprints in Tibetan script and currency notes of autonomous Tibet.


Important article on Sichuan rupees. The “Lu Guan” rupee is said to have been issued by the district Governor, Liu Tingshu at Kangding between 25th and 27th year of Guang Xu (1899-1901), and immediately preceded the Sichuan rupee, but this is a supposition, because the documents regarding the issue of this coin have not yet been located. The 1/2 rupee was struck in 1904, 1905, 1907 & 1912, while the 1/4 rupee was struck only in 1904, 1905 & 1912. Countermarked coins were issued by the “Procurement committee”, set up in the Li-tang Monastery. The Kanding mint was opened on 4 May 1930, and 4000 rupees could be struck there each day, until it closed in 1942; this mint is described in some detail. In 1918, a banknote was issued with the image and value of a Sichuan rupee, rose-red in colour, and the size of two matchboxes - 300.000 were issued. Then in 1937 a further small issue of 1 Yuan notes was made. 9853 pieces were issued, but of these only 128 pieces were not ultimately withdrawn. The third banknote series was issued over 2 years, 1939 to 1941 - 1/2, 1 & 5 yuan notes, to a total value of 21 million yuan.

A number of cut coins are illustrated, the value they represented is explained and the way they were used described.


First publication in China of the first coins struck in Tibet in the 28/29th and 50th years of Qian Long, using the source materials from the Guo-erh-ka Ji-lue.


Die varieties of the copper 1 Sho coin dated 16-6 to 16-12 are described, and the interesting comment is made that between 1938 and 1946, coins were struck bearing earlier dates, but these late productions were thinner and lighter. No further method of identifying these later productions is proposed.


Article giving an introduction to the coinage and paper money of Tibet and illustrating some sino-tibetan silver coins and a rare 15 Tam note with the serial nr. 14248.

**IX.79. Wang Haiyan:** “The Tibetan 50 Srang Silver and Copper Coin (Xi Zang Wu Shi Liang Yin Bi Zhe Zhi Tong Yuan Bi)”. In: *China Numismatics (Zhong Guo Qian Bi)*, 1995.4, pp. 39.

Illustrates and discusses a rare 50 Srang pattern, dated “rab lo 925” and “spyi lo 1951”.


The 1 Srang coins, Y. 9 & Y.12 are briefly described. It is noted that they are of fine silver (96%), and only 80 pieces could be made per day at “Za-Ci” mint using machines brought from central China. Hence with an issue period of about 8 months, the total production was only about 15,000 pieces.


Important article on the Dzungar copper pul struck in Yarkand, which circulated from c. 1700 to 1760. Reference is also made to the Dzungar invasion of Tibet by Tsewang Rabten in 1716.


Mentions that the Tibetan mint north of Lhasa, which uses water power, has been closed, and requests permission to use the building as a base to establish a Chinese mint.

**IX.83. Xiao Huaiyuan:** “The Issue and Circulation of the Tibetan Local Coinage (Xi Zhang Di Fang Huo Bi De Fa Xing Yu Liu Tong)”. In: *Tibetan Studies*, Chengdu, 1983, Nr. 2, pp. 16-25.

**IX.84. Xiao Huaiyuan:** *The History of Coinage of Tibet (Xizurzg Difeng Huobishi)*, Beijing, 1987.
An important, illustrated 140 page book about the coins and banknotes of Tibet, with much information, partly based on Tibetan archives and not found elsewhere.

**IX.85. Xu Shu**, Chen Han Yan and Xu Lei: *Yin Bi De Shou Cang Yu Jian Ding*. Beijing, 1993, pp. 29-31, 46-47, 132-144 and 272-274.

Catalogue on Chinese silver coins including notes on the Sichuan rupee and on Tibetan silver coins with photographs and rubbings.


**IX.87. Yan Lunzhang**: “Different Meanings on the article written by Zhang Hueixin (Mr. Kuizing?) <<Translation of Tibetan Inscription on Tibetan Silver Coins>> (Zhang Zi Hui Xing Xian Seng <<Xi Zhang Ji Zhu Ying Bi Zhang Wen Han Yi>> Shang Que)”. In: *China Numismatics (Zhong Guo Qian Bi)*, 1987.3, p. 78.


**IX.89. Yang Wencao**: “On the Silver Coins struck in Tibet during the Qing Dynasty (Guan Yu Qing Chao Xi Zang Ming Jian He Di Fang Zi Zhi Ying Yi Yi)” In: *Suzhou Numismatics*, 1990, No. 6, p. 38.

Insignificant article, describing the Kong-par Tamka.


Some medals (decorations) with Tibetan and Chinese legends are described and illustrated.


Tibetan silver coins are illustrated on pp. 49-69, Sichuan rupees on pp. 113-115.

The silver and copper coins with lion were struck by Ying Changheng for use in the military expedition to Tibet in 1912. They only circulated in the border area between Sichuan and Tibet, but were based on the currency system of Tibet, not that of Sichuan.

**IX.92. Yue Shi**: “Is the Sichuan Rupee with the Countermark Jun-Yong-Ping for Military Use? (Si-chuan Lu Bi Jia Gai Jun Yong Ping Ying Bi Bian)”. In: China Numismatics (Zhong Guo Qian Bi), No. 28, 1990.1, p. 74.

A countermarked Sichuan rupee is attributed to the Li Tang Monastery, and it was not produced for military use, as has been previously suggested.


The authors consider that in the early 20th century, silver coins were made in Sichuan to resist the Indian rupee aggressively promoted in China by British trading interests in Tibet following the Sino-British treaties concerning Tibet in 1890, 1893. (1) British aggression: the over-valued Indian rupee was used exploitatively to gain silver and raw material in this undeveloped region; (2) Chinese retaliation: coins made in Sichuan to resist Indian rupee; (3) significance of the currency war: the production of 17,500,000 Tibetan dollar coins, and 140,000 half-dollar coins in Chengdu 1902-
16 was effective in limiting circulation of Indian rupees; it brought currency changes to Tibet and Western Sichuan; and helped development of trade in the region.

(This summary was published by Helen Wang, "Zhongguo Qianbi/China Numismatics - Summary of Contents. Issues 70 (2000/3) and 71 (2000/4)." in: ONS NL, no. 167, Spring 2001, p. 26.)


Various minor die varieties of the 3 Srang silver coins are described. The 16-20 coins are said to be extremely rare.


An interesting article about the history of the Chengdu mint from 24th Year of Guang-Xu until about 1912.

IX.97. Zhang Kewu: "Fu Kang An’s Economic Considerations in his Handling of Tibetan Affairs (Fu Kang An Zai Chu Li Xi Zhang Shi Wu Zhong De Rue Gan Jing Shi Xiang)". Tibetan Studies, Chengdu, Sichuan, No. 1, 1985, pp. 23-32.

A detailed analysis of the introduction of the Sino-Tibetan coins in 57th and 58th year of Qian Long.

IX.98. Zhang Quanwu: "The 'Tea-Horse Trade' between Tibet and Central China during the Ming Dynasty (Ming Dai Ne Di Tong Zhang Qui De Cai Ma Mao Yi)".

IX.99. Zhang Shoping: "Tibetan Coins through the Qian Long, Jia Qing, Dao Guang and Xuan Tong years of the Qing Dynasty, with a brief introduction of Mr Zhang Huang’s Collection. (Xi-Zang-Qian-Jia-Dao-Xuan Si-Chao-Ying-Bi)". In: Numismatic World Bimonthly, 40, Taibei, July 15, 1983, pp. 45-62.

A representative group of Sino-Tibetan coins is described and illustrated.


Various statistics given of the Yunnan trade between 1921 and 1934. No obvious numismatic references.


Brief description of the war between Nepal and Tibet in 1855, and the opium wars between China and Britain. The circulation of Indian rupees in Kanding after 1894 is described, and the striking of the Sichuan rupee, but strangely, this is stated to have been approved on 4th Feb. 1906, after a report from Governor Xi-Liang on 29 Nov. 1905 (31st year of Guang-Xu).

IX.102. Zhao Erfeng: 0425 Archive of the Finance Department: Report to the Emperor from Zhao Erfeng regarding the issue of copper dollars and of transport costs in the
area west of Kangding. 30th day, 10th month, Xuan Tong, year 1. (Archive for Frontier Affairs, Volume IV).


IX.104. Zhen Zelu: "Xian-feng Coins". In: The Numismatic Forum Bimonthly (Qian-Bi-Tian-Di). Place and date (?)
The two silver Tibetan coins of Xian-feng in the Palace Museum are illustrated from the drawings in the catalogue, and are described as pattern pieces.

IX.105. Zhou Zhiliang: "Sichuan Rupee with the Chinese Counterstamp 'Jun-Yong-Ping' on the obverse (Si Chuan Ru Bi Jia Gai Jun Yong Ping Yi Bi)". In: China Numismatics, 1983.3 (nr. 22), p. 67.

A countermarked Sichuan rupee is attributed to the period immediately after November 1911, and possibly for military use. The attribution is unconvincing, as the countermark is wrongly read, and the coin countermarked in this way is very debased, and clearly belongs to the series struck in the 1930's.


A booklet which was distributed by the Lhasa branch of the people's bank of China. Gives a historical survey on Tibet's currency quoting from some Tibetan ordinances which refer to the issuing of coins or paper money in Lhasa. Many colour illustrations of Tibetan coins and banknotes are included.


First publication of the interesting anepigraphic tamka, wt. 5.63 g, with one side copied from Ranajit Malla of Bhatgaon, and with a detailed commentary on the documentary evidence for coins struck in Tibet in 1763/64 and 1785. The coin was apparently purchased in the coin market in Octagon Street, a few weeks before the article was written. Part of the pseudo-arabic legend, copied from a Bengali coin, is read as "Tamka", but this seems far-fetched. Similarly, the interpretation of five and three dots as the number "23" is very unconvincing. The number "45" in Tibetan numerals is read at the top of one side, but this also is very dubious. The authors consider the possibility that the coin may be identified with the one struck by the Dalai Lama in 1785, but that is also not convincing, as that coin is said to have been of a finer standard, and the piece discussed in the article is certainly very debased, judging by other specimens seen. (Nicholas Rhodes).


Varieties of the copper shokang dated 15-52 are discussed and illustrated.

IX.110. Zou Da Mu: (title not certain). In: Shaanxi Jinrong, 1995.1, pp. 73-76.

Illustrated are three brockages, one of which is an obverse brockage of a Tibetan copper shokang.
IX.111. Zou Da Mu: “Xi Zhang San Qian Tong Bi Kao (Examining the Tibetan 3 Sho Copper Coin)”. In: Qian Bi Yan Jiu (Numismatic Investigation), Shaanxi Jin Rong (Shanxi Finance), 1995.3, pp. 4-5.

IX. A. Chinese Language Publications on Paper Money and Related Items

IX.A.1 Anonymous: “Banknotes of the Yuan Dynasty found in the Sakya Temple, Tibet (Xi Zhang Sa-Jia Si Fa Shian De Yuan Dai Zi Bi)”. Administrative Committee for Cultural Treasures in Tibet. In: Wen Wu, 9, 1975, pp. 32-34.

Two banknotes dated from the Chung T'ung (1260-64) and T'ung hsing (1264-95) era were discovered in Sakya Monastery. See article by Zhang Huying below for further historical background.


Paper notes of 1/2 and 1 yuan, issued in the 1930’s and 1940’s by the Tashi Dargyas monastery in Tibet for the purchase of brick tea (10 Yuan = 1 tea brick of the best quality) are reported.  

Comment: Four such notes (two 1/2 rupee and two 1 rupee notes) were discovered and auctioned in USA in 1998 (see section of auction catalogues).


Overprinted notes were first issued in Kangding on 22nd November 1941, in denominations 1, 5 & 10 yuan. Later 100 yuan notes were issued, and the 1 & 5 yuan notes ceased to be overprinted as there was only limited demand for the small denominations. The overprinted 50 yuan notes are all forgeries, and there is discussion regarding various forgeries of these notes, and the false claim that they were made for military use in Burma.


Text quoted directly from an article entitled “Tibetan Paper Money System”, in the Monthly Report of the Central Bank, dated 31. 12. 1949, vol. 2, chapt. 12, p. 113. An interesting account detailing some of the inflationary pressures that were at least partly brought about by the issue of paper money in Tibet in the years after 1926. Includes the illustration of the face of a 100 Srang note.


Three banknotes of Xikang province (1/2, 1 and 5 yuan) with overprints in Tibetan language are illustrated on p. 123.

The catalogue also contains illustrations of the multicoloured 50 Tam and of 5, 10 and 100 Srang notes (pp. 222-223).


A 1 Yuan note of the Central Bank of China with serial number G/Y 850021 and bearing Tibetan overprint is illustrated as number T820-1. The author suggests that notes of the Central Bank of China with Tibetan overprints were used by the Chinese Expeditionary Forces in Burma during the Second World War.


In autumn 1948, a number of banknotes overprinted in Tibetan appeared on the Shanghai numismatic market. Various attributions of these notes are discussed, and the conclusion reached that they are all forgeries.


A careful examination of the 50 Yuan notes of the Central Bank with Tibetan overprint reveals that they must be modern fabrications, since the authors discovered four different types of overprints in a small block of notes with serial numbers ranging from C/H 160112L to C/H 160690L. The forger is most probably a Mr. Qian Wannen who wrote that these notes are rarities in his “Monography of the Paper Notes of the Central Bank”, but who also published an article, signed as “Ansen” and entitled “Short Report on Collecting Stamps and Coins” in which he declares that the overprinted Central Bank Notes are all forgeries. Since they could not find any documentary evidence for the issue of the overprinted notes, the authors think that all values (1, 5, 10, 50 and 100 Yuan) are forgeries.


The authors somewhat revise their opinion expressed in an article following an article by Mr. Bur Wen. They now believe that all 50 Yuan notes with Tibetan overprint are forgeries while there are both genuine and forged notes among the remaining values. Mentions an article in Ying-Hang-Zhou-Bao (Bank Weekly) of 2.12.1941 and from Mr. Dai Mingli, formerly in charge of the coins & banknotes under the Guo Min Tang regime, who indicated that they were issued in Kangding in 1941 to the value of 10 million yuan.


A comprehensive survey of all written material about the overprinted notes. Genuine pieces are identified as 1 Yuan with K/X and H/Y letters and 10 Yuan notes with C/G and F/D. The Farmer’s Bank notes come in two denominations, 5 & 10 Yuan, with Tibetan denomination “sGor-mo INga” and “sGor-mo bCu”, and were issued about 1935.

Most of the information contained in this article is already to be found in the article by Wu Chouzhong & Gu Wenbin (see previous entry).


The values of 5 und 10 Yuan of the Farmers Bank with Tibetan overprints are listed as nrs. 4-3-54 and 4-3-55 (no illustrations). The Notes of the Central Bank of China of 1, 5, 10, 50 and 100 yuan are illustrated and described.

Various variants of 100 Yuan notes with Tibetan overprints are illustrated.


Apart from the well known Xikang issues with Tibetan legends issued in Kangding between 1939 and 1941, a 2 Jiao (20 Cent) note of 1949 is described. This latter note does not have an inscription in Tibetan.

A brief discussion of Tibetan notes with a catalogue and some illustrations on pp. 161-3.


The background to the Yuan Dynasty banknotes discovered in 1959 in Sakya Monastery is discussed. See article in Wen Wu, 1975.9


Common 10 Srang and 100 Srang banknotes are described and illustrated.


Two Tibetan 100 Srang notes and one multicoloured 50 Tam note are illustrated on p. 455. A brief discussion on Tibetan banknote issues on pp. 109-710.

Issues for Sikang, including those with Tibetan legends, are illustrated on pp. 435-436 and briefly described on pp. 703-704.


Two notes of the Farmers Bank of China (issued in 1935) of 5 and 10 yuan with Tibetan overprints sgor-mo lnga and sgor-mo bcu are illustrated as nr. 1125 and 1126.


According to Wu Chou Zhong and Gu Wenbin (see above nr. IX.A.9) the fourth chapter of this rare book discusses the overprinting with Tibetan legends of the 1936 banknote issue of the Central bank of China. The overprints were applied to the 1, 5 and 10 Yuan notes in 1941 in order to forward these to the Kangding branch of the Central Bank of China.
IX.B. Chinese Publications on the Coinage of the Xi Xia (Hsi Hsia)

IX.B.1. Anonymous: The objects of West Xia found in Wuwei county of Gansu province (Gan Su Wu Wei Fa Xian Yi Pi Xi Xia Yi Wu). In: Kao Gu (Archeology), Nr. 3, 1974, pp. 200-204.

IX.B.2. Chen Bingyin: “Some Problems Regarding West Xia Coins. (Guan Yu Xi Xia Qian Bi De Ji Ge Wen Ti)”. In Zhong Guo Qianbi (China Numismatics), 3, 1989, pp. 18-23.


IX.B.4. Dai Baoting: “The two west Xia Coins 'Da An Bao Qian' with West Xia inscription (Xi Xia Wen Da An Bao Qian Ling Ping)”. In: Qian Bi, nr. 7.

IX.B.5. Dai Jing: “The West Xia Script and West Xia Coinage (Xi Xia Wen Yu Xi Xia Qian Bi)”. In: Zhong Guo Qianbi (China Numismatics), 2, 1993.


IX.B.7. Fang Leyu: “The West Xia coin 'Zhen Guan Chung Bao’ with Chinese inscription”. In: Qian Bi, no. 16.


IX.B.11. Lue Muyuan: “The West Xia copper coin ‘Tian Sen Yuan Bao’ with the inscription ‘Xi’ (west) on the reverse”. In: Qian Bi, nr. 23.

IX.B.12. Ma Dingxiang: “The coin ‘Qian You Yuan Bao’.” In Qian Bi, nr. 21.


IX.B.14. Niu Dasheng: “Discovering and identifying West Xia coins with West Xia inscriptions (Xi Xia Qian Bi Zhong Xi Xia Wen Qian De Fa Xian Yu Ren Shi)”. In Zhong Guo Qianbi (China Numismatics), 4, 1985, pp. 11-15.


IX.B.18a. Niu Dahan and Ren Yongxun: The Western Xia Fu Bao Qian and Korean Han Tong Bao coins found in excavations in the Mongolian community of the Yan-Chi District in Ningxia”. In: China Numismatics, 1988, no. 2, pp. 52-54.


IX.B.19. Shi Jinbo, Bai Bing and Wu Fongyun: Cultural Relics of the Western Xia (Xi Xia Wen Wu). Place and date (?).

Chapter II of this work deals with currency.


IX.B.21. Wu Weichen: “Two West Xia Coins were discovered in the town of Ningbuo (Ning Buo Jian Xuan Chu Liang Mei Xi Xia Qian)”. In Zhong Guo Qianbi (China Numismatics), 4, 1993, p. 19.


IX.B.23. Zhao Quanzi: “Report on a recently discovered West Xia coin with West Xia inscription (Jie Shao Xing Fa Xian Yi Zhong Xi Xia Wen Qian)”. In: Qian Bi, Nr. 3.
X. Tibetan Language Publications

X.1. Agvan Dorjiev (Ngawang Lobsang): Chos brgyad gdon gyis byas te rgyal kham don med nyul ba yi dam chos nor gyis dbul ba'i sprang bstan gzugs shig gi bgyi brjod gtam (Communications of a person who, although dressed as a monk, is troubled by Mara’s eight worldly desires, travels from place to place without aim and who possesses neither worldly nor spiritual treasures or wisdom.). Published with commentary by Khensur Ngawang Nima. Mundgod (?) 1985 or 1986.

This is Agvan Dorjiev’s autobiography written in about 1924. On p. 41 (21 according to the Tibeto-Burmese pagination) the author mentions that he suggested the construction of a water wheel to power machines for the production of silver Tangkas.


This book contains an appendix entitled “bod dngul rtsis stangs dang 'dra par”, written by the editor. The modern Tibetan coinage as well as the banknotes are briefly discussed and a selection of coins and banknotes, mostly from the collection of the Tibet House in New Delhi, is illustrated with colour photographs.

X.2a. blo bzangs tshe brtan and Tshe dhang stobs Idan: bod rang skyong ljongs srid lo rgyus rig gnas dpyad gzi'i rgyu chha u yon lhan gis rtsom sgrig byas pa. spyi'i 'don thangs 13 pa. mi rigs dpe skrung khang, Lhasa 1991.

This book contains a chapter on “lor khang las khungs” which was established in 1918 and was responsible for the issue of Tibetan paper money and coins (p. 60) and on “grva bzhi glog 'phrul las khungs”, the Tibetan government mint and arsenal which was reorganized in 1931 (pp. 71-72).


On pp. 5-6 a small chapter entitled “grva bzhi glog éphrul las khungs” gives a brief account of the Tibetan government mint between 1931 and 1959.


The first volume contains a paragraph entitled dngul gyi spro 'len (the use of money). pp. 95-99.

Shakabpa who was Finance Secretary in Tibet before the Chinese takeover, gives a historical account of the coinage and paper money of Tibet, largely from memory with some information not found elsewhere but unfortunately also including several incorrect statements. Subsequently, this article was published in English (see above).


on pp. 994-996 of the second volume a chronological listing of Tibetan coins and banknotes is given.
XI. Bordering Areas to the South of Tibet

Note: Most of the publications listed in the catalogue section contain chapters on the coinage of the countries and areas listed below.

XI.A. Bhutan


190 coins are described and illustrated


Short article on the different positions of the four symbols found on Bhutanese silver coins, classified by Rhodes “Period IV, group B”.


p. 212 (from Captain R. Boileau Pemberton’s report): “6. The coin which circulates in the country is almost confined to a silver one called ‘Deba’, nominally of the value of the Company’s half Rupee. A prejudice appears to have at one time existed against the introduction of mints or any modification of systematic coinge; but when by the invasion of Cooch Behar, the Bootan Government had obtained possession of the dies which were used by the Rajas of that Province in their coinage of the Narrainee Rupee, the practice was introduced into the Hills, and being found profitable, gradually extended from Poonakh and Tassisudon to the castles of the Soubahs, where the Deb Rupee is now coined; but as the degree of purity of the metal is entirely dependent on the personal honesty of the Soubah, so great a variety is found in the standard value of the coin that it is altogether rejected by the inhabitants of the plains and Dooars, in which latter Narrainee Rupees still circulate extensively; they are daily, however, becoming more scarce, for the Booteahs, whenever they can obtain them, carry them into the Hills, re-melt and alloy them, and in the deteriorated forms of the Deba Rupee they are again circulated in the Hills.”


The first attempt to classify the series of coins of Bhutan and their prototypes, the coins of Cooch Behar.


Illustrates and discusses the 100 Ngultrum note showing the portrait of King Jigme Singye Wangchuk on one side.


So far the best chronological classification of the undated Bhutanese coins with description and line drawings of many varieties.


The article which is illustrated with line drawings presents an excellent survey on what is known so far on Bhutanese coins.


P. 149: “Coinage: The circulation of Nepali coins as legal tender in Bhutan has also already been referred to. What needs to be added here, however, is that such minting, as was being done in Sikkim by the Nepalese between 1788 and 1892 AD., was also prevalent in Bhutan. [12 Satyamohan Joshi, Nepal Rashtriya Mudra, ‘Nepalese National Coins’, Sajha Prakashan, Kathmandu, B.S. 2042, p. 66; also Walsh, E.H., The Coinage of Nepal, Indological Book House, Delhi, 1973, p. 25] Such coins, said to have been minted by the earlier Nepalese settlers, bore the Sun and Moon symbols on the two sides along with the words “Raja Dharma Deva” in the centre in Devnagari script. [13 Unpublished materials in the possession of Bipin Dev Dhungel]”

XI.B. Ladakh and Garhwal


p. 534: “Coinage. - In Ladák one meets with the coinage as well as the merchandise of all surrounding countries. The only native coin is the silver jao or jo, which is worth really 2 1/2 annas but is made to pass for 1/5 rupee.

The Chinese silver ingot, called yambu by the Yárkandis, dotsat or tamikma (horses’ hoofs) by the Tibetans, and kurus (i.e., hoofs) by the natives of India. They consist of lumps of pure silver, often
bent like a horse-shoe, and are imported from Yārkand, to which country they are brought from Kathay, or Northern China. A silver ingot weighs about 166 2/3 tolas, and therefore is valued at the same number of rupees. Six of them are worth about Rs. 1,000. In Dr. Cayley’s trade report a silver ingot is valued at Rs. 170. (Cunningham - H. Strachey.)


The Nepalese coins are of silver, each being worth half a rupee, or two jaos of Ladakh (p. 254).


The name of the coin “jau” means “a little tea”.


A hoard of 67 coins from Ladakh forming part of the three earliest issues of Ladakh and a hitherto unknown type are described. Also mentioned are their prototypes, the earlier coins of Garhwal without mint-name (three types are illustrated). Photographs of 13 coins are included.


The first survey on the coins of Ladakh, now superseded by contributions of N.G. Rhodes.


Remarks on sources of revenue and trade with Tibet (pp. 158-163).


Four types of the copper coins struck by Ranbir Singh for Ladakh are described.


The Garhwal timashas circulated in Western Tibet during the 17th and 18th centuries. Around 1771, Ladakh introduces its own coin called “ja’u”, primarily struck for circulation in Western Tibet. Few ja’u were struck after 1857, but they remained in circulation well into the 20th century, although their origin was not always understood. Later visitors to Western Tibet erroneously referred to the Ladakh ja’u (or timasha) as a Tibetan coin.


Describes and illustrates a rare rupee dated to the 29th year of Fath Shah (AD 1693) and a quarter rupee of the same ruler.

**XI.C. Nepal**

Only a selection of the numismatic literature on Nepal can be given here. Nepal would
deserve an own numismatic bibliography which so far has not been compiled. For obvious reasons I gave preference to those titles which discuss Nepal’s minting activities for Tibet and Nepal’s coins circulating in Tibet. The best selection of western numismatic literature on Nepal can be found in the work by Rhodes, Gabrisch and Valdettaro (The Coinage of Nepal) and of Nepalese numismatic literature in the work by Jagadish Chandra Regmi (Malla Coins).

Publications on Nepalese coinage after 1900 have not been included.


Article not seen by the compiler.


Available documents prove that another Dharmapatra between Nepal and Tibet was signed after nine months of the Kerong treaty to solve the coinage problem in April 1790 (Baisakha Sudi 2, Roy 1, 1847 V.S. The Dharmapatra reads:

Facilities will be given to the merchants and subjects of Nepal (Gorkha). Bhot agrees that Mohars (a half rupee coin) of the Shah kings will only be circulated in Tibet at a ratio of two Malla (de-based) Mohars that were in circulation.

Bhot agrees to refrain from minting the Mohars of Nepal (Gorkha). From now onward the Nepalese shall mint only Suka-Suki (one fourth and one-fifth of a rupee coin) and send them for circulation in Tibet. Nepal (Gorkha) and Bhot both agree not to alter this treaty even when a high officer of Bhot wishes to do so. Whoever will alter this treaty will be looked down upon by the king of Nepal (Gorkha) and whoever will follow it with will be looked upon.

(Poka No. 18, Dharmapatra of 1790 signed between Nepal and Tibet, Foreign Ministry Archives.)


A silver mohar, struck in the name of the Malla rules Jaya Prakash Malla, dated Nepal Samvat 880 (AD 1760) is illustrated and described.


Saha coins from king Surendra till Mahendra are surveyed with remarks on the legends and iconographic details found on the coins.

Publishes a well known winged lion type Licchavi coin of Nepal.


Description of 27 coins not mentioned - or not illustrated - in the catalogues available to collectors.


Among others, the author mentions a hoard of Licchavi coins which were unearthed in Tibet. Unfortunately, the author could not verify this information.


German text. A short sketch of the numismatic history of mediaeval Nepal, with pictures of 3 coins.


Sixteen regimental medals are pictured (fourteen for the first time) and the regiments' history is mentioned. Besides this is a pattern of a medal of 1854 (not issued) is also pictured.


German text. Description and photograph of a dam of Nripendra Malla of Kathmandu.


German text. One 1/4 Mohar of Nripendra Malla and two 1/4 Mohars of Parthivendra Malla are recorded and illustrated.


Short article with one illustration.


34 contemporary forgeries and fantasies of Malla coins are described and illustrated.


A brief introduction into the coinage of Nepal with illustration of two Malla coins.

A survey of Nepal's coins from the beginning till the end of the Malla Dynasty with some remarks on the coins specially minted for Tibet.


Chapter III (pp. 31-39) of this work is dedicated to the Licchavi Coinage of Nepal.


 Twelve already well known coins of the Licchavi period of Nepal are briefly described and illustrated.


In German language. The chronology and the meaning of the earliest Nepalese coins of the late 6th and early 7th century A.D. are discussed, based on the find of two Licchavi coins during excavations in Mustang in 1992.


Chapter VIII of this article is dedicated to the Lichchhavī (sic) coinage.


On page 7 and 8 a brief historical survey of Nepal’s coinage is given and an example of one coin in each of the Lichchhaveli, Malla and Shah periods is illustrated


The authors publish a Dharamapatra (treaty; normally transcribed as "dharmapatra") concluded in 1775 between Tibet by the representatives of the Dalai Lama and Nepal by the represtatives of Pratap Simha, confirming the exclusive right of Nepal to mint coins for Tibet and allowing Nepal to send Newar traders to Shigatse and Lhasa on a permanent basis.


Nepali text. The illustrated catalogue of Nepalese coins contains a section on Malla coins which played an important part in Tibetan numismatic history.


A list of Nepalese coins of the Licchavi, Malla and Shaha periods. The coins are not illustrated, only their inscriptions, both in Devanagari characters and romanized, are given. Of use to the advanced student who is familiar with the Newari and Devanagari alphabets.
This is an English translation of Nepali Mudrako Vikas taken from Nepali Rastriya Mudra, Lalitpur 2019 (AD 1962), pp. 6-12 (see above). The author describes the religious influence on the design of Licchavi-, Malla- and Saha coinage.


German text. Description of a gold coin with the legend “Shri Sivasya” and of a silver coin with the legend “Shri” on obverse and a sitting lion to right on reverse. Both coins are illustrated and attributed to king Sivadeva (A.D. 1098-1126).

German text. This paper deals with coins of the three Malla kingdoms of Nepal, i.e. Kathmandu, Bhadgaon and Patan. 33 hitherto unrecorded or not fully recorded coins are described and illustrated.

German text. Three coins of the Licchavi dynasty are described and illustrated together with two coins from the period between the Licchavi and Malla dynasties.

German Text. Four different varieties of a “jawa” with pictures. The weights of these tiny coins vary from 0.013-0.032 g.

Remarks on the coinage of king Sivadeva (ca. 1098-1126) on p. 135-138.

Some remarks on the mohar of Bhupatindra Malla dated N.E. 816, specially struck for Tibet. The Tibetans called it Pan-nying Tang-ka (old nepalese coinage), Dung-tang (spear Tang-ka) or Dung-tse (spear point).

Appendix XXV (pp. 305-330) represents an important work on the Nepalese coinage.

A supplement to the catalogue of the coins of this ruler - published by Walsh in “Coinage of Nepal” - with data from the collection of the British Museum. The author also makes several amendments
to Walsh’s reading of dates. A table shows the theoretical standard of silver and gold coins and the actual weight of the coins in the British Museum.


The author records three unknown denominations of the coinage of Jaya Ranajita Malla (1/8, 1/16, and 1/64 of a Mohar) from the collection of the British Museum.


Some problems regarding the Lichhavi coinage are discussed on p. 84-85. “...there is hardly any doubt that the ancient copper coins were made with the help of embossing dies used manually, somewhat like modern post-marks on molten pieces or sheets of copper”.


Introduction into how to read the legends on some Malla coins not previously illustrated.


pp. 402-403 description and drawings of a few Lichhavi coins


French text. Despite of many errors this is a helpful catalogue of Nepalese coins, except for the Licchavi issues. With many photographs of good quality.


This is a translation of an article which originally was published in Nepali language: “Nepal ra Tibbat ko Sambandha.” In: Pragati, Year 2, No. 4, n.d. (1955), pp. 103-114.

A 17th century treaty concluded between Tibet and the Kathmandu ruler Pratap malla is discussed. This treaty was signed by Kaji Bhima Malla, a relative of king Pratap Malla and among others included the provision that Nepal is allowed to mint coins required by Tibet.

Another treaty concluded between king Jaya Prakash malla of Kathmandu and king Prithvi Narayan Shah of Gorkha in 1814 Vikrama Samvat (= A.D. 1757) is mentioned: this treaty “stipulated that Gorkha and Kantipur (Kathmandu) should send their respective coins for circulation in Tibet in equal amounts.”


On pp. 64 sqq. a historical survey of Nepalese currency is given.


A coin of the so-called “tanka standard coinage” (c. 1560-1639) and of “Ala-ud-din”-type is described and illustrated.

Mentioned and partly illustrated are 39 Malla coins not recorded by E.H. Walsh (Vol. 2, Appendix 3, pp. 1022-1041 and one plate).


An extensive listing of the Malla coinage of Nepal accompanied by plates which are reproductions of the ones included in E.H. Walsh’s “The Coinage of Nepal.” Contains a very useful bibliography which lists many titles in Nepalese language.


Contains some references to Nepal’s attempts to mint coins for Tibet in the early 19th century (p. 160).


The author records his own experiences in buying old coins in Nepal. Several Nepalese silver coins and a Tibetan 20 Srang gold coin, dated 15-53, are illustrated.


Report on a Nepalese coin called “jawa”, struck in silver and gold and weighing between 0.008 and 0.014 grams.


During the reign of Rana Bahadur (1777-1799) and Girvan Yuddha (1799-1816) Nepal struck copper coins with Arabic inscriptions. Drawings of 11 coins are included.


For the first time, the authors attribute some small silver and gold coins to a King Sivadeva (A.D. 1098-1126), a ruler in medieval Nepal. The coins are illustrated.


Now the standard work on this subject. Includes chapters on the coinage minted by Nepal for Tibet during the Malla and early Saha dynasty.

For a review by Wolfgang Bertsch see: NIB, Vol. 25, Nr. 9 (September 1990), pp. 218-219. This review was also published in Postal Himal, Quarterly of the Nepal and Tibet Philatelic Study Circle, no. 73, 1st Quarter 1993, p. 21.


The author illustrates a silver tanka in the style of the coins of the Sultans of Delhi which he believes was struck in Nepal in about 1600 A.D., since a small Newari character for "shri" is seen on the reverse of the coin.


Illustrated is a newly discovered copper coin with standing bull facing left and the legend "Sri Pashupati" above (obverse) which the author attributes to about 641 AD when Narendra Deva ascended the throne.


Pp. 2-5. Gives a historical review of the coinage of Nepal, unfortunately with many incorrect statements.


Description of 41 coins, in part unrecorded, of Yoganarendra Malla, Lokaparaksha Malla and Indra Malla. All coins are illustrated.


On pp. 17-18 a brief discussion of the Malla kings minting coins for Tibet in the 18th century and on pp. 48 a paragraph on Prithvinarayan Shah’s attempt (in the second half of the eighteenth century) to continue with the profitable arrangement which gave Nepal the exclusive right to mint coins for Tibet.


This publication includes a chapter entitled “Monetary System” which gives a brief survey of Nepal’s coinage with emphasis on the early Saha period.


The minting of coins for Tibet during the Malla dynasty and the devaluation of the Malla coins towards the end of this dynasty are briefly discussed.


This coin is recorded for the first time. It is an early example of Nepalese coins of which only few had been adequately recorded when this article was published. With one photograph.

The author records a silver coin of this ruler dated Samvat 783, Chaitra sudi 9. This coin shows that the ruler's coronation took place in A.D. 1662 and not in A.D. 1672 as stated by D.R. Regmi (Medieval Nepal, Calcutta 1966).


Until the publication of the monography authored by N. G. Rhodes, K. Gabrisch and C. Valdettaro (see above) this was the fundamental work on the Nepalese coinage and, therefore, also on the Tibetan coinage of the 18th century. Unfortunately, Walsh's unfamiliarity with the old Newari numbering system led him to commit a considerable number of errors in reading the dates of many of the coins. His errors were often copied by later writers.

XI.D. Sikkim


The earliest known coin of Sikkim, a "doli paisa" is described and illustrated. It is of rectangular shape, made of copper, weighs 10.567 gms and its size is 1.1 X 1.3 mm (printing error for: 11 X 13 mm). Thickness 0.5 mm. It is an imitation of the "doli paisa" of Nepal and was minted by the Newar traders of Siklum between 1882 and 1885.


The Doli Paisa appears to be the earliest known coin of Sikkim. A description of one Doli Paisa is given.


It is possible that the Doli Paisa of Sikkim was imitated from that of Nepal. It appears that the Doli Paisa was in circulation in Sikkim right from samvat 1906 (1849 AD) till even after samvat 1939 (i.e 1882 AD) when the Sikkim coin (Chepte paisa) came into being. The Sikkim coins were at first in circulation in Nepal but became unacceptable to the Government of that country because of their insufficient weight.


Important and unknown documents relating to the origin and minting of the Doli paisa and Chepte paisa are published.


A monograph on Sikkimese numismatic history, 86 pp and 9 pl. with 32 photos of coins (also doli paisa).

Historical comments on old currency of Sikkim with description and picture of the Sikkim pice.


“A separate, if short-lived coinage also underlined the Sikkimese sovereignty. Minting began when a Newar landlord, Laxmidas Pradhan, leased a tract of land on the Rungjet river, cleared the jungle, and brought in Magars and Kamis to work copper deposits at Pachekhani, Bhotangkhani, and Tukhani. He also engaged shroffs from Darjeeling, paying them between Rs 12 and Rs 20 a month. The coins were inscribed in Devanagari Sri Sri Sri Sikkimpari Maharaj on one side and Sri Sri Sri Sikkim Sarkar on the other. Though Thutob Namgyal approved, many of the Bhutiya kuzis superstitiously feared that the exploitation of the treasures below the earth would be visited by sickness of men and cattle, and by failure of crops. The experiment lasted for only two years; it was discontinued in 1885 when Darjeeling’s deputy commissioner would not allow durbar currency to circulate in British territory.”

Description of a lot of eight “doli paisa” collected at Gangtok. With illustrations.

A short historical introduction and a list of three types with many varieties of the Sikkimese paisa. Drawings of four coins.

XI.E. Other Areas

Illustrated is a brass object used as currency by the Abors of the Siang Valley on the Assam-Tibet frontier. It is shown that the prototype of this object could be a brass snuff-taking tray from northern Nigeria of which an example is illustrated.

p. 537: “Besides the division of rupees into annas and pice, which are the same all over the British possessions, an anna in Garhwal is subdivided into two takka or 4 pice, each pice into two Kachchi or four dhelas; 20 cowrie (shells) go into one dhela. Another mode formerly in use was four annas make one timash, two timashe one dheli, two dhelis one Kachcha rupee and five timaish one Kuldar or milled Farukkabad rupee. The Tibetan or Lhasa timashi weighs 40 grains, and one hundred of them are worth £ 23-7-9 of our money. The old Gorkhali timaish weighed 33.2 grains each, whilst the modern Nepal timaish still current in parts of the hills are of less value, one set being worth little more than nineteen and the other about nine rupees per hundred. The old Srinagar rupee weighed 85.5 grains.”

Queries concerning an article on Cooch Behar by V. Chowdhury and P.Ray.


An Assamese trade Rupee, dated Saka 1570 with the Chinese inscription Pao Tsang is described and illustrated. The authors suggest that his rupee may have been struck for possible trade between Assam and China (via Yunnan) and not with Tibet as was suggested earlier by N.G. Rhodes who illustrated an identical rupee (An Assamese-Tibetan Coin. In: Numismatic Circular, July-August 1975, pp. 288-289).


Illustrated and described is an octogonal silver rupee, dated VS 1757 (A.D. 1750) which commemorates the visit of Fateh Shah of Grahwal at the temple of Badarinath. A note of the editor suggests a somewhat different reading of the coin’s legend.


Discusses the use of dankis (metal bowls) as currency among the Abors and kindred tribes. Bells are used as currency by the Padam, Panggis and Minyongs.


Remarks on the use as currency and as storage of wealth of Tibetan bells among the Daflas and Miris of the Subansari area (Arunachal Pradesh).


Deals with currency in Gilgit. Baltistan and Chittral and also contains some remarks on the use of currency in ancient Tibet as mentioned in documents from Dun Huang.


p.98 “Gold was calculated by the ‘Phetang’ equal to seven and a half ‘Mashas’. Gold dust tied up in a piece of cloth was current as coin at eight rupees per ‘Phetang’. Silver was computed at the ‘Jyu’ or ‘Timasha’ and the ‘Gorma’ or current Bareli and Farrukhabad rupee, both equivalent to four ‘Jyu’. The ‘Jyu’ was coined at Ladakh of very uncertain standard. In Garhwal it was called Gangatashi and passed for more than five to the minted Farrukhabad rupee. In large payments, ingots called ‘Lakalo’ or ‘Doja’ were used. These had the Lhasa stamp on them and were very pure silver. The ‘Doja’ weighed seven hundred and sixty ‘Jyus’ and were current for something less than two hundred rupees. Srinagar ‘Timasha’, Ladakh ‘Jyu’, Bareli and Farrukhabad rupee and the ‘Nagtang’ or ‘Tanka’, the Tibetan coin, all were accepted in the marts and tent colonies of Hundes. Post 1954 period however, witnessed the entrance of ‘Dhayang’, the Chinese coin which in due course of time forced the coins out of circulation.”
Hundes or Hundes Desh is a western Tibetan district, bordering on Garhwal and Kumaon. It has also been described as Swarnesh, Swarnagotra or Hairnuarta, signifying gold country. Rudok was the district from where gold was chiefly excavated.


A coin, unique in the Assamese series, is illustrated and described for the first time. It is of octagonal shape and bears Chinese characters on both sides, transcribed as “Tsang Pao”. The date, in Bengali numerals, is 1570 Saka era (A.D. 1648). According to the author, this coin seems to be a solitary survivor of an ill-fated attempt at an Assamese-Tibetan coinage.

See above, the article by Chowdhary and Ray.


After the conquest of Ladakh, the Dogra rulers coined also for this country. The Ladakhi coins were also current in Western Tibet. All coins are illustrated and their legends explained.


“Most of the trade was conducted on a barter basis. It is only after 1960 that the Kinnauri economy has become monetized in a significant way. The Kinnaurs were essentially intermediate handlers exchanging the produce of Tibet with that of the lower hills and plains in India. These exchange relations were carried on in a series of trade fairs at Rampur [capital of Bushahr to which Kinnaur belonged], Leh, Patseo [Lahul] and Gartok.”


p. 13, note 23: At the time of my visit [1936], the Chinese dollar, or yuan, was the equivalent of 50 cents in American currency: Chinese paper money, which even at the time had a considerably lower rate of exchange, was not accepted by the nomads.

pp. 26-27: During the first years of the Chinese Republic, yuan came into use in place of unminted silver (tael). In 1936, there was no [27] paper money among the Fantzu, but it will soon replace silver, which is being recalled by Chinese officials.

p. 37 Smaller units of exchange are the ch’uan and copper coins. One yuan equals 11 1/2 ch’uan; 4 ch’uan equal 36 fen; one ch’uan equals 49 copper coins.

[The territory of the Mewu Fantzu is located south of the great lamasery of Heh-tso and east of the old part of Taochow (Lin-t’an)]


The author denies the Bengal influence on Nepal coins as suggested by E. H. Walsh and the view being later on accepted by Stapleton (J.A.S.B., p. 162, 1910). The former thinks that the circle of
dots around the margin and the small circle in the middle of the Malla coins together with “the enclosure of the inscription within a square area” and the imitation Arabic script appearing on them, have been copied from the coins of Ghiyath-ud-din Mahmud, Muhammad Shah Ghazi and Ghiyas-ud-din Bahadur of Bengal. What Walsh considers to be Bengal influence is perhaps a modification of the designs - a circle of crude dots around the margin and a rayed circle in the middle found on most of the seventh and eighth century coins of Nepal. The square enclosure seems to be a geometrical figure created by the placing of the “svastika” marks repeatedly found on the coins of mediaeval Nepal. The imitation Arabic script was possibly introduced to keep the contemporary Mughal rulers in good humour and to make the coins acceptable to the Indian merchants acquainted with Mughal coins bearing Arabic letters. It is interesting to note that Malla and Gurkha full mohar conformed to half the weight of Mughal rupee weighing 180 grains (summary by K. Gabrisch).


pp. 190-191: “The silver metallic currency in this province consists, principally, of new [191] Farruckhabad rupees. A few old Farruckhabad and Bareilly rupees are to be met with in circulation, as also Mahendar Mullees, a Gorkha coin, which passes for six annas. The copper coin is pice, 176 of which equal one Farruckhabad rupee: cowries are not used. In Gerhwal, in addition to the above, there is a three anna piece called timash’, which is a favorite coin there. Under the former government, a mint for stamping the Timash’, existed in Srinagar: this has now been abolished, and this description of money having, in consequence, become scarce, has been greatly enhanced in its nominal value. Five only, instead of six, as formerly, are now procurable for the new Farruckhabad rupees, the intrinsic worth is not much above two annas. The current rupee of account, throughout the province, is the same, being equivalent to 12 annas, new Farruckhabad rupees. Gold coins are merely purchased for their metal, for making ornaments; a Calcutta sicca gold mohur sells, in the market here, for 19 Farruckhabad rupees, and other gold mohurs in proportion. The Tartar gold does not fetch more than from 14 to 15 rupees the tola. In Gerhwal, copper, in weight, would appear to have been once the principal medium of exchange. This circumstance, no doubt, arose from the metal forming the staple commodity of the country. In adherence to old usages, the Zemindars of Gerhwal, even now, in many of their contracts, stipulate a part of the price in a given weight of copper, but as this is no longer plentiful, the whole amount is paid in silver coin.”


Discusses the use of brick tea “as a medium of exchange over a wide area of central Asia: northward across Mongolia to the Siberian Frontier, southward to the Pamirs and Tibet, and eastward at least as far as the borders of Asiatic Russia.” Illustrated is a rectangular specimen bearing the letter “K”, collected in about 1893 in eastern Russia and a round brick manufactured in Yunnan in 1890 and obtained in eastern Mongolia.
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