

THE PLANCHET

EDMONTON NUMISMATIC SOCIETY

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Louis XII of France a very prickly customer Page 6





THE PLANCHET

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The Planchet Team:

Editor-In-Chief: Paul Purdie

Content Editor: Chris Hale

Co-Editors: Pierre Driessen & Marc Bink

On-Line Distribution: Pierre Driessen

Printing and Mailing: Howard Gilbey

ON THE COVER:

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From the facade of the Louis XII wing of the Chateau de Blois (see also the picture opposite)

<http://en.wikipedia.org>

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The editors, at their sole discretion, reserve the right to accept or refuse any material submitted for publication.

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About Your Society

Minutes from ENS Monthly Meeting on Sept 10, 2014

David Peter the ENS Vice-President opened the meeting at 1930 hrs and welcomed everyone.

He thanked Jim Vanderleest for hosting the July 6, 2014 ENS BBQ which was a great success!

Two new members were introduced;

- Alex a 16 year old who collects world coins but with a special focus on those of Latvia and Panama.
- Milan who specializes in Canadian coins.

Tickets are now available for our upcoming November 8-9, 2014 coin show. A sign-up sheet for volunteers to assist in support of the show was circulated amongst the members.

A request was made for members to set up displays during our coin show.

Show & Tell

Several items were circulated for the Show & Tell portion of the meeting;

- A 1 groschen Austrian coin with a Nazi swastika counter-stamp,
- The first known Canadian 2002 Proof-Like set with a non-magnetic one cent coin,
- A coin of Victor Emmanuel I in VF condition,

- From Russia, a Alexander I 5 kopek piece,
- A 1795 Kingdom of Naples 20 grana coin,
- Latvia's 2014 Euro set which is that country's first as Latvia only joined the Euro zone on January 1, 2014,
- From Germany a medal listing the 10 Commandments,
- A counterfeit of a 4th century B.C. Greek coin from the island of Sicily,
- Several "Silver Strike" Limited Edition 10 Dollar Gaming Tokens casino from Las Vegas casinos. Some were made of silver while others were silver plated or even colourized. These can be won in "Silver Strike" slot machines.

Presentation

Dan Gosling gave an in-depth talk on the 2014 ANA Convention in Chicago, as well as the 2014 RCNA Convention in Mississauga which he both attended.

Conclusion

Door prizes were drawn and the meeting was adjourned at 2055 hrs.

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ENS Secretary

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@ The Next Meeting

Wednesday, October 8, 2014



Royal Alberta Museum, 12845 - 102 Avenue

Meeting Start Time 7:15pm

- ENS society matters
- November 8 & 9, 2014 ENS Coin Show and Sale update and final preparedness
- submission deadline for lots to be included in the November 2014 Show and Sale Silent Auction
- Show and tell (bring selected items to share with fellow members)
- Presentation:

The Coinage of Turkey by Marcus Molenda

- silent auction
- Coffee, pop and cookies
- Door prize draws

For more information regarding these events, or to add an item to the agenda please send an email to editor_ens@yahoo.ca

P.O. Box 78057, RPO Callingwood, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, T5T 6A1



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Get up-to-date information on club news and coming events.

Talk to other club members and take your club experience to another level. If you have any suggestions please talk to Ermin Chow or the Executive.



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The ENS is now on twitter.

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Get updates on coming events, ask us numismatically related questions, find other friends and stay connected to the numismatic community.



On Porcupines

By Marc Bink



Photo Courtesy of Google Images

Porcupine, (noun): Heavy-bodied, solitary, slow-moving, nocturnal rodent with quills (modified hairs) along the back, tail, and, on certain crested species, the neck and shoulders. The quills are easily detached when touched. The New World species (four genera in family Erethizontidae) are arboreal and have barbed quills; the Old World species (four genera in family Hystricidae) are terrestrial and have unbarbed quills. The North American porcupine (*Erethizon dorsatum*), about 31 in. (80 cm) long with a tail about 12 in. (30 cm) long and quills about 3 in. (8 cm) long, drives its powerful tail against an assailant. For food, it favours the tender tissue beneath tree bark. Crested porcupines, the typical Old World porcupines, run backward, quills erect, into the enemy. They eat roots, fruit, and other vegetation. The African crested porcupine, the largest terrestrial rodent in Europe and Africa, may weigh 60 lb (27kg) and have quills 14 in. (35 cm.) long Webster's Concise Dictionary, 2013 online edition

A philosophy I've subscribed to for many years is "never buy a coin on a hunch", and it has served me well over the years; when I've chosen to follow it. There have been times when I've ignored it. These usually are when the pressure is on, the money is tight but looks about right, the deal is a "one-time-only" sort of thing, and the coin is some rare "hole" in the collection that needs to be filled. Or, so I thought....

That's usually when the wheels fall off.

More often than not, every time I've chosen to ignore that mantra, I end up with something I didn't need, the money I spent was too much, and the coin wasn't what I thought it was.

In some cases, the coin could, and was, sent back, but in most, it was a "buy it now" sort of thing, and to get the money back would've been difficult to say the least. I grow to hate the coin in a hurry, getting a bad feeling when it dawns on me that I've screwed up once more. Buyer's remorse sets in, the inevitable

hand wringing and the "why" questions start, and pretty soon, I'm on a new mission to try to salvage something out of a bad deal by gaining more knowledge and reading more, so that history can never repeat itself.

The problem is that history does inevitably repeat itself, and even worse, the amateur historian (read: me) knows this but can justify it to himself so that it doesn't look like history is actually repeating itself. Everyone else tends to see right through the smoke and mirrors and doesn't buy it.

Ah yes, the trials and tribulations of a coin collector, particularly one who is too idiotic or arrogant to admit he's wrong once in a while, especially when it involves wasting good modern money for old worthless money. I'm pretty sure we've all been there. The point here is that "mistakes were made" (as a certain Albertan ex-politician likes to put it), but I've learned from them and will never do it again.

That is, until the next time, and it seems there always is a next time. There's something about the road to certain place is paved with good intentions. Yeah, I know all about that too...

But this time it actually paid off. I bought an unknown coin on a hunch, and it turned out to be a great deal and an even better "score". I guess there are times when Fortune and Destiny do actually shine down on me, and I don't get hosed. And now here's the caveat. When I did first look at the coin, a few characteristics did stand out for me, and it was more an educated guess than a true gut-feeling hunch. Education and knowledge really are "power", and in this case, I had that on my side and was able to determine that what I was looking at was real enough and potentially old enough to take the chance and make a deal. The other thing is for once, I wasn't playing with a short deck. I had the loaded deck, because I knew my material, and the seller didn't.

It started out innocently enough. A couple of us had decided to go the Wild Rose Antique Show and do some canvassing and advertising for the club. The last thing one expects to find at an antique show are coins. True, one or two of the local dealers had a presence there. But still, antiques and collectibles are mainly what's there. We did see a couple of coins there. There was one dealer who had a couple of blatant fakes that he claimed were tetradrachms of Alexander the Great. He even tried to tell us they were appraised and certified genuine. The things he had were crude, muled knock-offs, like they'd sell for pennies on the pound at archeological sites to tourists. But finding a medieval French coin

at this show would be as bizarre as finding a Napoleonic saddle at a used car dealership, and yet that's exactly what we did.

The person who had it dealt mainly in postcards and other knick-knacks. We were just innocently talking to him, when in this flourish of paper he was moving around, this plastic coin holder with a dark coin in it caught my eye. The slightly irregular shape indicated that it was a crude token or unbelievably old. What would the chances of it being old be here? - slim to none? This is, after all, western Canada. I usually have something in my pocket or am wearing something that is older than anything built or brought into this country, so I wasn't expecting much. To most people in North America, "old" means something from their childhood, and "really old" usually starts at 50 years old. As I said, my belt is older than that. So what does that make something that is potentially medieval in origin? It's mindboggling. I was about to just dismiss it as a token, but I figured any coin, regardless whether it's a comic book token or whatever is worth a look. So I asked to see it. And then ...wow...try not to look too excited... it looked old, really old. The thing that first struck me was the 3 "fleur-de-lis" in a shield with a crown over the top. This I took as a good sign. It was potentially a French regal piece. Then I looked at the legends. I'd seen enough late medieval stuff to know what the font should look like, and this one matched up. It was definitely late medieval English or French. It had quatrefoils and all sorts of devices on it, and that helped sell me on it. In my mind's eye, I pegged it to be either late 15th century or early 16th. The coin was large, very large for a silver piece from that period, and so there was a good likelihood that it would be rare. So far so good. Now for the tough part; was it real? With as many good fakes coming out of the Orient these days, the possibility of this being a counterfeit was very high. So we started dealing, and the dealer wouldn't drop the price to where I was completely comfortable. So we walked away and continued looking around. But the coin still nagged at me. It had to be a good one, the chances of its being a counterfeit were actually slim, and it was just too medieval in appearance. So, after I bought a watch at

another table, we went back. The coin was still there. It took a little more grinding, but we got it. (I can't take credit for the deal, the person with me actually did the negotiating.) We got it pretty cheaply. So if it turned out it was a fake, I didn't stand to lose much. In comparison to what I spent on the coin, I could have easily spent more filling the gas tank of one of my old cars and only made it as far as Red Deer. The next phase was to get it home and do the archeology on it and, getting it properly dated and attributed.

This didn't take too long. There are a number of good websites that have plenty of auction results and are good for research. I figured I'd better approach this as any good, poor, illiterate merchant would have during the medieval period, start with the pictures. Striking pay dirt, I was able to narrow down the date to the reign of Louis XII of France ¹. I was right. The coin is French regal in origin. The 3 fleurs-de-lis were indicative of the Valois family at that time. Since I had the reign, it was then a question of narrowing the search down to the silver issues of Louis XII, so I eliminated the gold. That was great. Then there was the other side, the cross with the fleur-de-lis on each corner. That was good. I was starting to narrow it down from about 25 possible specimens to only about five, all from Lyons Mint. All right; it was a "douzain" But was it one of the "dauphin" issue or this "porc-epic", and what the hell is a "porc-epic" anyway? Now the "dauphin" had a few different things going on with the cross, but it was close, so then, I looked at the other one, and that was it, spot on. What gave it away was the little porcupine underneath the coat of arms. On my coin, that area is worn, so it appeared as a planchet flaw at first. Once I saw the porc-



epic on the sample coin, then mine made sense. I figured out where he was on my coin. It had by this time taken me exactly half an hour to figure out. So what it is, is a "douzain au porc-epic" dated 1507 from the Lyons Mint and minted for Louis XII. It's also very rare and worth considerably more than what I paid for it. The one and only time a hunch has ever paid off for me. It took another ten minutes, but I figured out that a "porc-epic" is French for porcupine, which made the coin all that more interesting.



Photo Courtesy of MI Coins

Paris in 1507 was a completely different place than it is now. There were no flashy outdoor cafes or good restaurants, the Eiffel tower was 400 years off in the future, and Napoleon was probably the surname

of someone's domestic. We tend to romanticise this period of time with images of strong, virtuous and brave knights in shining armour, rescuing damsels in distress from clean, well-kept castles where incredible amounts of food were being served on silver platters by well-liveried domestics. The reality was much different, and the images above may as well have come from Mars. The feudal society that had more or less originated in France was starting to come apart here. France had basically just unified and finished up a long and bitter war with England. Taxation was horrendous, and government finances were even worse. As was usually the case during the Middle Ages, there was always either a war or some sort of pestilence going on to keep things interesting. This period of time was no different, except for the fact that the wars that were being fought were actually being won by the French. But life for the average Frenchman then was still pretty short, filthy and brutal. And this was one of the better times, when the king was actually loved and respected by his subjects, also a rare thing in France.

¹ Louis XII of France, 1462-1515, born Louis of Oleans into a branch of the ruling Valois family, was actually third in succession to the French throne. It was only because his two predecessors had died without heirs that he was able to gain the throne in 1498.

There was usually an oversupply of knights in the country. Many noble families had at least two or three sons, so while the eldest would usually stay home and mind the fort, the younger ones, who were not in the inheritance, would go off and fight as mercenaries. So while it is true that knights were roaming the countryside, they were not looking for damsels in distress, it was more like they were looking for wenches and plunder, because they probably hadn't been paid whatever was promised them by whichever sovereign they had plead allegiance to. Travel between cities was difficult and incredibly dangerous, as these knights tended to make a sport of killing any of the poor they encountered on the highways. They were usually drunk, but that didn't stop them, only knocked down their inhibitions a little, the skill-sets still had to be maintained. Besides, peasants were cheap, and no one cared about them, so they were free game. If they made a run for it, even better. The game was engaged, and it made for good sport. One was more likely to get beheaded coming across a drunk and disgruntled knight on a roadway than in a town square as a common criminal. Dismembered, rotting corpses littered ditches everywhere. Add to the fact that the French criminal code was incredibly

complex and favoured the nobility, it was apparent to most that none of these knights would ever see justice.

As far as commerce between regions went, things tended to get expensive in times of peace and cheaper in times of war when all the knights were off the highways. For the common folk, the best thing that could happen was that most of the knights were off winning wars in foreign lands and leaving them be. As for the damsels, they were on their own; it was also not a good time to be a woman. Those that were "landed" and had some money behind their name stood a better chance of having at least some semblance of a life. Those that were poor were either worked to death as peasants or found themselves in prostitution. The best way out was to join up with a nunnery, but even they had limited spaces available and were mostly only available to rich widows and fallen nobility. Those who were poor in France at this time, tended to stay poor and died young. There were very few virtuous people in those days. They tended not to last too long, before someone would run them through for meddling into things they shouldn't have. Europe was a very



Louis XII Leaving the Battle of Marignano in 1515

Photo Courtesy of Wikipedia

violent place back then, it certainly wouldn't have earned any stars in a Michelin Guide, if there would have been one printed at that time.

That's not to say there weren't any possibilities. There was a middle class consisting of merchants and lawyers forming up at this time that eventually would doom the feudal society. There were skilled craftsmen backed by trade guilds, serving up training and apprenticeships to those who were gifted. These people were paid well upon completion, if they survived the slavery that was the apprenticeship. For all its inherent faults, there was a legal system and a government who were actively trying to reign in the lawlessness, but this process would take time. They were hobbled by the fact that they needed huge amounts of money to pursue His Majesty's foreign policies, and as such, were incapable of bridging the distrust and loathing that the common folk had for them to make any real changes. But they were trying to climb out of the Dark Ages and in some cases, were making significant strides and improvements.

One of the kings that genuinely cared was Louis XII of France. He had been a delegate to the "Estates General" which was held in 1484, until it was called off due to lack of money and regal support. This Estates General meeting has been considered by historians to be one of the most important ones ever held, right next to the one held in 1789. At the time of the Estates General, Louis was third in line for the throne and known as Louis of Orleans. As a member of the Second Estate, he helped draft up some far reaching legislation that, at the time, King Charles VIII had no desire to act on. So many of the ordinances passed by

the Estates General in 1484 were not enacted until much later in 1498-99, once Louis of Orleans ascended to the throne of France. Some of the legislation he acted on, that was beneficial to re-establishing the trust of the common people, were ordinances regarding taxation (1510), justice (1499, 1510) and religion (1499). With these ordinances, he reigned in his nobles, codified the legal code and levied fines or prison sentences on wayward or corrupt officials. He earned the moniker in France of "Le Pere du Peuple" (Father of the People) because of his attempts to reform and restore decency to the government.



Louis XII
Photo Courtesy of Wikipedia

But he was also a product of his age, and as such, was engaged in numerous wars and slaughter. He continued the war started by his predecessor, Charles VIII 2, in Italy. The "Italian Wars", as they became known, were actually a series of skirmishes and battles that were fought primarily between

the Kingdom of France and the Italian city-states of Milan and Venice. These wars were a drawn out affair that lasted from 1494 to 1559, long after all the initiators were dead. Louis had a few bones to pick with the Milanese, after one of their leaders betrayed the French back in 1494, resulting in Louis's launching a claim that Milan rightfully belonged to him through inheritance. Needless to say, this was contested, and possession of Milan see-sawed back and forth between the French and the Italians. Finally though, in 1501, Milan was occupied by the French and was used as a springboard for other campaigns against the other Italian city-states. At first, Louis was very successful. He removed a few despots, installed pro-French factions and opened up trade. But then he made a few mistakes which eventually became his undoing. He alienated supporters by aiding the Pope Alexander VI 3 in a foolish campaign. This stretched his resources, and

2 Charles VIII of France, 1470-1498. 3. Pope Alexander VI, 1431 -1503. He was a Borgia pope and as such, a fine piece of work.

in order to stop the Pope from going after him, he then compounded this by bringing in Spain as an ally and dividing Italy up. He probably had no idea this was a mistake, and eventually it became a problem when the alliance with Spain collapsed as predicted in 1502. The person who predicted this and the outcome of the Italian campaign was none other than Niccolo Machiavelli 4 in "The Prince" in chapter 3. After some successes against the "League of Cambrai" in 1508, things started to go sour for the French. By 1510, the full weight of Pope Julius II 5 and all the City-states was bearing down on Louis. The French were eventually driven out of Milan by the Swiss in 1513.

Louis XII did a lot of good things for France when he wasn't off slaughtering Italians. His



Jeanne de Valois (Joan of France)

Photo Courtesy of Wikipedia

fiscal reforms of 1504 and 1508 endeared him to his people. However, there is no word of whether or not he reduced taxes imposed on his people, just that he improved and tightened collection procedures. His personal life was a bit of a mess though. He had a wife (imposed on him by the previous King Louis,) whom he desperately wanted to get rid of. The problem was there was no way he could prove consanguinity (which would have likely been the truth), and he was the age of majority, when he married her. Joan of France 6 was the daughter of Louis XI who was the second cousin of the eventual Louis XII. He couldn't prove that she was half out of her mind either. In fact, she had full control of her wits and actually one-upped her husband a few times. So Louis embarked on a very public and very modern (by our standards) smear campaign which really held nothing back.

He graphically and publically showed how his wife was supposed to be malformed and therefore unable to consummate the marriage. She responded and proved that he, at one time, had bragged to courtiers about getting it on three times in one night with her. He countered that there must have been some witchcraft going on inhibiting his performance, to which she asked, in light of his previous claim of non-consummation, how it was that he knew how it was to do the deed with her?

Louis managed to get out of that mess and married the queen dowager Anne of Brittany. Ostensibly, this was done to keep France and Brittany united and not for love. She was reluctant to marry him, but together, they managed to have two daughters and four stillborn sons. When this marriage obviously produced no heirs, Louis went shopping elsewhere and married a member of another family that was also blessed with genetic

4 Niccolo Machiavelli, 1469-1527. He was a writer who produced a fine piece of work, wrote and fostered a cynical philosophy of Realpolitik that bears his name. 5

5 Pope Julius II, 1444-1513. He was the "warrior Pope" who also had St. Peter's razed to the ground for rebuilding.

6 Joan of France, 1464-1505. Married in 1476 to Louis of Orleans, and divorced in 1498, she then went on to found her own monastic order and was canonized by the Catholic Church in 1950.

7 Anne of Brittany, 1477-1514. She was married three times and spent most of her adult life pregnant. Only two daughters of hers survived into adulthood.



Jean Bourdichon (Anne of Brittany)
Photo Courtesy of Wikipedia



Mary Tudor

Photo Courtesy of Wikipedia

dysfunctions, Mary Tudor 8, sister of Henry VIII of England. Considering how dour and lacklustre Henry was, his sister must

8 Mary Tudor, 1496-1533, married Louis XII in secret in 1514, but was widowed shortly thereafter. She eloped with the man her brothersent to fetch her and wasonly spared at Wolsey's insistance and because Henry VIII, king of England, actually liked his sister and the man she married. However, she fell out with King Henry VIIover his choice of women (she knew and couldn't stand Anne Boleyn). In fact, she was at loggerheads with him when she suddenly and conveniently died.

have been a lot more entertaining. She was apparently very good looking too. They got married in secret and without Henry's blessing which almost reignited an old war. Their saving grace was the fact that Henry was more concerned with legitimizing his own marriage and getting his dead brother's marriage annulled to get into another scrap. He had his hands full with Spain and was busy plundering his father's carefully restocked treasury. Anyway, Louis was only married to her for three months, before he died, apparently "in action", worn out and exhausted from trying to produce an heir. The official explanation was "gout".

So that was Louis, what about the porcupine? Why is it significant? It would appear that the porcupine had been around in French heraldry for a couple of generations by that point. It originated in Orleans, as an order in response to the Duke of Burgundy's aggressive tendencies. Apparently, a porcupine is slow but sturdy and once put in a pinch, can be very aggressive, "projecting" its quills in the direction of trouble. It was sort of a "don't mess with me" message that the Duke of Orleans wanted to create. Orleans conferred the



title on only 25 of his most loyal knights, so membership was limited and coveted. Louis XII was one of its members and was permitted to wear the proper cloaks and uniform of the order. Louis selected the porcupine as his personal "symbol"

at the start of the Italian campaign, and it figures prominently in French paintings or illustrations from that period. Louis admired the porcupine's tenacity, strength and ability to absorb punishment, all the while going on the offensive. There were only two coins issued with the porcupine or "porc-epic" on them, a gold ecu and the douzain. Both are scarce and coveted by collectors of French medieval coinage. But in all this glorification of porcupines, what everyone seems to have forgotten is just how dense a porcupine actually is, both in terms body mass and lack of brains. I can attest to that just having hit one with my poor Buick on the highway recently. While I got lucky and didn't lose a tire, there were quills everywhere. It made a horrible bang and weakened the strut and took out my wheel alignment as I ran over it. Just what the poor unfortunate creature was thinking when it decided to cross a very busy highway is anyone's guess.

And then finally, what did the coin buy? The French monetary system of the day was very confusing. There were units of account as well as units of actual cash. The coins from this period were made in gold, silver and billon. Billon is an alloy of copper and silver, usually between 60 and 80 % copper. In some cases, the silver content could be as low as 2%. French coins were alloyed with either copper or mercury. Mercury would allow the coin to maintain a silvery look, while keeping the weight to something approximating what it would be if the coin was made from sterling. The Romans had figured out how to debase coinage centuries before, and all throughout the Middle Ages into the present time, people or governments have been debasing, or "re-valuing" currencies, whenever insolvency is approached. France was no exception. Silver was pretty scarce at this time, the huge deposit at Joachimsthal in Bohemia was just beginning to come into play but hadn't made it to France yet. So there were still a

lot of billon coins circulating.

The main circulating coin made at the time was called a "blanc"⁹. It was valued at between five and ten deniers. The denier was the most basic form of currency. It was more or less descended from the old Roman "denarius" or silver penny. In fact, the symbol for penny in England up until the beginning of the decimal currency was "d", as it was in France. And just like in the English system, 240 deniers made a pound or "livre". Twelve deniers also added up to one "sou" or "sol", based on the old Roman "Solidus". So this was the basic system, but it was more or less used in that way as a system of account. Most people who dealt with cash used deniers, blancs and douzains. Only noblemen or wealthy merchants would ever see the gold coins. Most average people could only dream of ever seeing one. So there were essentially two concurrent systems of cash floating around, one silver and one gold.

What's interesting to see is how similar coins and denominations evolved across Europe. In France, the blanc was the dominant coin. In Italy it was the grosso, and in parts of Germany it was the albus, or weissspfennig, or the groschen, and in the Hanseatic League, it was the schilling. In England, the same size coin was called a groat, and it was assessed at four pence. What all of these coins had in common was their essential size and specifications. They were very close to one another, so in essence, they could be traded internationally. And until the advent of the thaler sized coin in the mid-1500s, these were the coins of basic commerce.

So how did the douzain fit in? Obviously it was valued at 12 deniers, which was higher than the average blanc in circulation at the time. By the early 16th century, there were two circulating blancs; a "petit blanc" worth five deniers, and a "grande blanc" worth ten deniers. Pay

⁹ The Blanc coin was initially designed to be 3 grams and made from at least .500 silver. It was debased throughout its run.

¹⁰ The douzain au porc-epic: 2.86 grams, 26mm diameter. Legends: *Obv.* LVDOVICVS:FRANCORVM:REX

Rev. SIT:NOMEN:DNI:BENEDICTVM

was calculated in deniers, and paid out in blancs or whatever unit was available. Just to illustrate what things were worth in those days, a skilled carpenter made five deniers per day. A master mason was paid eight deniers per day. A foot soldier or archer made three deniers a day. Farmers were lucky if they received a denier a day for whatever produce they could sell. And then there were taxes, and this is where all the cash in society would dry up. Peasants paid both the State as well as their feudal lord who owned the property they were farming. Instead of paying the lord outright, he just took a large portion of the cash their goods generated and paid the peasants a salary in return. And after he was through with them, the king's tax collector came calling. So it was imperative to watch one's pennies, otherwise what little the peasant had was seized, or the peasant was put in stocks, or worse yet, executed.

So cash flowed more in towns and cities than it did in rural areas where barter was still practiced. The barter system had one other advantage, it was virtually untaxable. And thus began Europe's legacy of working "black" or off the grid to avoid taxes. One of the reasons most states don't prosecute "black" work is because it more or less has been going on for centuries and is an "acceptable" evil. Also with the "black" arts is prostitution, and during the early 16th century, the services a Parisian prostitute provided was worth ten deniers, or a blanc. If one paid with a douzain, one could expect change back.

So if the blanc and the douzain were the high end of the coinage used, what was the low end? This was called monnaie noir, or black money, and these were denominations expressed in deniers, half deniers, deniers tournois or paris, etc. The one thing that they all had in common is that they were made of incredibly low grade billon so as to be black in appearance. The other thing was

that there was no money to be made in their manufacture, so those that were in circulation tended to circulate forever, and there were constant shortages of small change. Demand for small change always exceeded supply. A loaf of bread would cost two deniers in good years, a blanc in bad. Chances are that in the illicit transaction mentioned above, due to the fact that small change was in such short supply, no change would have been returned on the douzain. The poor were generally given "black money" as alms, but whenever there was a coinage shortage, they went hungry. Because of the constant currency debasements that were going on in this period, the values of and what this black money could buy was constantly changing. Theoretically, the coins should have been changed too, but they were only changed or recalled whenever conditions were right for the mint, and some profit could be gleaned from their manufacture. Otherwise, daily commerce was left to tokens and jetons, if there was no small regal change available.

This is why my "douzain au porc-epic" is very rare. Not that many were made, and those that were probably ended up for the most part in a melt pot due to the constant debasement of the coinage, as the French State went broke for the umpteenth time. There might be an explanation why it is in relatively good shape and not worn down to a blank. These coins were hoarded and cherished. They were regal issues and not the black money, so they had quite a bit of buying power. Those that weren't and circulated, or were exported out, generally ended up in a melting pot somewhere. So mine might have gotten lost or was buried in a wall somewhere, only to be rediscovered in the 20th century or so. Who knows. The fact is, it somehow ended up on a postcard collector's table 507 years after it was minted, somewhere in the middle of western Canada, ignored and unappreciated, until I came around and liberated it on a hunch.

I'm still doing the research on this coin. Apparently, the position of the quatrefoils can tell me when it was made and who made it. The problem is there isn't a book on these things in the English language, and my high school French is pathetic to say the least. So it's going to be an interesting ride.

But now I have a new appreciation for porcupines...



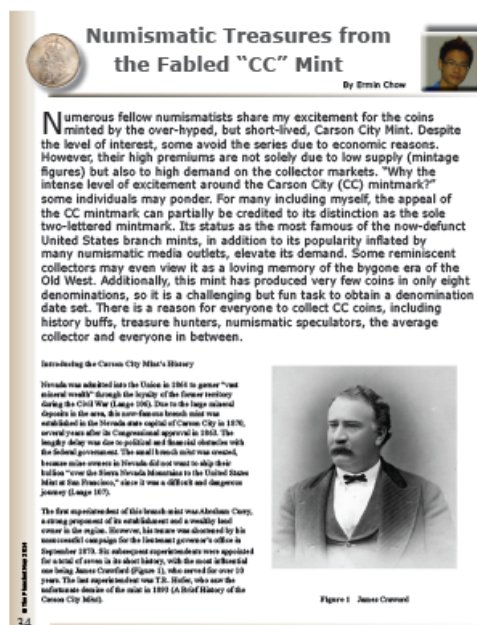
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Ermin Chow Wins, Again

The Planchet is pleased to congratulate Ermin Chow for winning the American Numismatic Association's Kenneth E. Bressett Young Numismatist Literary Award – First Place, for his article "Numismatic Treasures from the Fabled CC Mint" about the history of the Carson City Mint which appeared in the August edition.

We were also pleasantly surprised to learn he had also won the award last year for his article "Canadian Tire Money as a Numismatic Collectible" and the ANA's David Bowers Young Literary Award (available to a younger age group) the year before for his article "Canada Enters the World of Polymer". These articles also appeared in the Planchet. Ermin has also won the RCNA's Guy Potter Literary Award and a scholarship from the Pacific Northwest Numismatic Association.



Ermin Chow was awarded first place for the Kenneth E. Bressett Young Numismatist Literary Award for ages 18 to 22.



I Guess I am Stuck on Augustus

63 BC - 14 AD

By Terence Cheesman

In keeping with the observance of the 2000th anniversary of the death of Augustus, I decided to continue with another coin minted by him. Augustus has a very large and varied coinage which he used to advertise his accomplishments and programs. It is even thought he was a coin collector, a thought which is intriguing, but lacks any literary support. However, whether or not he was a numismatist, he used his coinage to advance his cause with skill and intelligence.

It is not to say that some of the messages were a bit obscure. a number of the types seem a bit odd to us living 2000 years after his death. One has to remember that the propaganda was never meant for us but to be viewed in the context of the rapidly changing political and social dynamic he found himself in. One of the more obscure types was minted in the years just after the decisive victory over Marc Antony and the Ptolemaic queen Cleopatra at Actium in 31.B.C. Actium, and the subsequent march on Alexandria Egypt, in the following year led to the collapse of the Ptolemaic Kingdom of Egypt as well as the ending of Antony's administration of the eastern Roman Empire.

To say that there was a difference in style between Antony and Octavian would be an

understatement. Some of the actions Antony took in the governing of his part of the empire became part of the casus belli that led to war between the two. Antony had turned over to Cleopatra some of the territories lost by her kingdom during the previous century. Furthermore Antony envisioned a much larger role for the children fathered by him and Cleopatra in the eastern part of the Roman Empire. This did not sit well with Octavian who thought that handing over to the Ptolemies land conquered by Romans to be a bit hard to swallow. The war also brought into question what to do with the various petty kings in the eastern part of the empire. Though some, like Herod of Judaea took the opportunity to abandon Anthony and join Octavian, many did not. Also many of the civic administrations supported Antony with men and ships.



Thus, all of these would have to be assessed and in certain cases purged. Some of the kingdoms were dissolved, the territory either being subject to direct Roman rule or handed over to other kings deemed loyal to Octavian. Some of the civic administrations were also purged as well. It was to acknowledge this process that this coin was minted.


The obverse features the bust of Octavian as Jupiter Terminus. A lightning bolt, the symbol of Jupiter, is behind his head. The image of this god is rather unusual. It is a sculpture with a head and upper body above a plain, squared lower section which is planted into the ground. Often, male genitalia are carved at the appropriate height. This form of sculpture originated in Greece. Jupiter Terminus was the god of boundaries including those between nations. The origins of this god is obscure. It seems likely that the concept of boundaries, having some level of sacredness, comes from the fact that most division of land is the result of agreement among men. Thus Jupiter Terminus, a god with no mythology, came about from an activity viewed as sacred. By placing a bust of himself as Jupiter Terminus, Octavian was indicating that he was making right all the errors perpetuated in the east by his rival Antony. As this coin was minted at an Italian mint, possibly Rome itself, the target audience was not the eastern peoples subject to these changes but the people of Rome and Italy, who formed the nucleus of Octavian's power. During the war, Octavian promised to make things right in the

east. This coin suggests that at least on this promise, Octavian delivered.

The reverse continues the story. Here the image depicts Octavian wearing a toga, seated on a curule chair and holding Victory in his right hand. The legend reads IMP CAESAR. Roughly translated, it would read the "Victorious Army Commander Caesar". Again, this coin continues the artful ballet that was started by Octavian in the series I discussed some weeks ago. As before, Octavian shows he has god like powers and on this reverse he also shows that he is respectful of Roman constitutional norms. Though the figure of victory clearly alludes to the recent military successes over Antony and Cleopatra, the image of him togate, seated in the chair of a Roman magistrate, indicates that even the great reorganization of the lands of the eastern empire was done under Roman constitutional norms.

The vast coinage minted by Octavian, during and after his war with Antony and Cleopatra, is filled with carefully nuanced messages in which Octavian tried to convey his policies and ideas to the people of Rome and the peoples of her empire. The coinage is a vital resource in the effort to try to understand this important transition point in Roman history, and because the imagery is so rich and varied, the series is a lot of fun to study and collect.





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The Year of the Mini-Me

Opting for the Cute Instead of the Magnificent

By Wayne Hansen



In the end, it depends on your financial resources, your interest in small things and of course your tolerance for ridicule. There were many ancient silver coins in the archaic and classical periods that were minted in both large and small denominations. Given the rarity and the artistry of many of these coin types and the high demand from the collector market for the larger denominations, the prices for the best examples are very high and going higher, making many, or sometimes all, of them unobtainable. As a counter to the lemming-like instinct to rush off the cliff and buy an overly expensive coin, one strategy I have used in the past year is to purchase a small version of some highly popular stater or tetradrachm denominations. This works best when the smaller coin's style, execution and presentation closely resemble that of the larger companion issue.

The Search

In the space of six months in mid-2013 (my 'Year of the Mini-Me'), I bought three small silver coins that were modeled on highly desirable, elusive and expensive larger denominations. Alexander I of Macedon minted one of the three acquisitions in Aigai, while the other two were struck by the city-states of Ainos and Rhegion (see map in Figure 1). The three coins form a little group with a similar general appearance and fabric. They were all struck before 400 BC during the early part of the classical period, they all weigh around two grams, and they all measure 13 to 14 mm in diameter. Geographically, two were minted in the territories north of Greece, and one was issued in the toe of the Italian boot. I didn't necessarily want to obtain the smallest issues

of those particular mints, even though the smallest sizes tend to be the least expensive. Instead, I wanted a smaller denomination of each with a flan wide enough in diameter to allow the ancient carver to reproduce the essential artistic design elements of the larger coin version (not a cartoon facsimile). That being said, as in the case of the Alexander I coin, the smaller fabric did not always allow the complete design to be used on the smaller die. Design elements may, or may not, have been reduced or simplified in the transition to a lower denomination type, so the buyer has to examine available coin issues carefully. The Alexander I denomination that I chose only managed to retain the standing horse part of the horse/warrior combination found on the equivalent tetradrachm, but the horse itself is wonderful.

There is often no middle ground when it comes to the range of silver denominations offered to collectors for certain low-mintage classical Greek coins. As with the examples featured here, either you see one large denomination such as a tetradrachm or stater (the stater is usually a didrachm size) that is coincidentally extremely

scarce and expensive, or there is a more plentiful supply of cheaper, small denominations like obols/litras, diobols or tetrobols from which to choose. If drachms exist at all, they are much less common than the smaller denominations. So it is generally slim-pickin's when it comes to adding these coins to a collection.



Figure 1 – Map Showing the Three 'Mini-Me' Mint Sites

Different Parameters

The diameters and fabric of my three little silver coins are similar, leading one to think they might be the same denomination. But since the coins were minted in different places, up to several decades apart, their physical characteristics do indeed vary. To start with, each was struck to a different weight standard resulting in small differences in their theoretical target weight. Also, the facing lion of Rhegion is considered to be a hemidrachm (basically a triobol) on the basis of its lower proportionate weight, rather than the tetrobol denomination given to the other two coins. It might be useful to note here that Greek tetradrachms were comprised of 4 drachms, and each drachm was comprised of six obols. A tetrobol was therefore 1/6th of a tetradrachm, whose weight depended on the specific weight standard employed by the particular mint in question at that particular time (mints sometimes changed weight standards, such as when Macedon switched to the Athenian attic standard at the time of Alexander the

Great's Asian conquest).

Figures 2, 3 and 4 in the following section provide photos and descriptions of each of my new coins, together with a photo of the comparable large denomination issue.

Descriptions and Comparisons

Each of my featured small coins can be paired with an equivalent tetradrachm from the same mint and the same era. I have shown such tetradrachm examples from commerce, and I have added a few comments regarding context and the high relative values of the larger coins. Needless to say, the three tetradrachms overpower each of my much smaller coins by sheer force of their size, their sculptural relief and their abundance of artistic detail. The point is, however, that a small denomination, when carefully chosen, can reflect many of the attributes of the larger, unattainable version. Many such similarities confirm that the paired coins were denominations of the same coin issue,

1. Alexander I Tetradrachm Comparison

Background: Alexander I was an important Macedonian king who reigned from 498-454 BC, at a time when Macedon was expanding into adjacent tribal areas and gaining access to valuable silver and gold mines. During his early rule, Macedon and other northern lands were occupied by Persia, until Persia was defeated by Greece in 480 BC. Alexander's consolidation of Macedonian land and power provided a base for Macedon's imperial conquest of northern Greece and Asia in the next century, under Philip II and his son Alexander III. Please see *The Planchet*, April 2012, "Two Staters of Archelaos and the Emerging Macedonian Kingdom" for my in-depth article on this important series of Macedonian coins.

Alexander I coins are uncommon, since they are from a very early regnal date, and they were struck by a remote tribal society. Alexander's single rider tetradrachm is especially rare – it was issued alongside a series of his octodrachms

that portrayed a hunter/warrior standing beside a powerful, sturdy horse rather than riding it. The equivalent tetradrachms can be confused with those of Alexander's successor, Perdikkas II, although Alexander's tetradrachms are quite distinctive.

My tetradrachm resembles the tetradrachm in Figure 2a in several ways. The coins have a smooth, flattened flan with an incuse reverse punch, while the obverse displays a finely delineated horse standing on a ground line with its front left leg raised. The horses on both coins have a linear style of tail similar to various early and contemporary tribal octadrachms and dodecadrachms produced in Macedon and surrounding territories. Moreover, both show a single square box enclosing the reverse figure, all within a square incuse punch. With the additional surface area on the large Alexander tetradrachm, the carver was able to fit more elements into the design, which also served to make the denominations more obvious.



Figure 2a. Kings of Macedon, Tetradrachm of Alexander I - Issued 460-454 BC (13.29g, 11h). Mint: Aigai. Thraco-Macedonian weight standard. Obv: Huntsman, warrior or king mounted on horse, carrying two spears, right. Rev: Goat forepart right, head reverted; within single linear square. (Photo courtesy Nomos 3, sold for \$8000 US).

*Alexander's mounted horseman was a new obverse type for the tetradrachm. The goat was a symbol of Aigai, the capitol city of Macedon and mint location. In homage, Archelaos used the same obverse/reverse types on his first stater thirty years later (see aforementioned *The Planchet* article, April 2012).*



Figure 2b. Kings of Macedon, Tetrobol of Alexander I - 476-460 BC (2.13g, 14.0x13.1mm, 12h). Mint: Aigai. Thraco-Macedonian weight standard. Obv: Horse standing, right. Rev: Warrior's Corinthian helmet right; within single linear square. (Collection of the author and photo by the author; purchased from Classical Numismatic Group for \$300 US).

I was struck by the exceptional style, good grade and great metal condition of this very scarce, very early, classical tetrobol. It can be separated from later tetrobol issues of Perdikkas II by the fine style of the horse with linear tail profile, the single tail on the helmet crest, the lack of crest baseline on the helmet and the single linear square enclosing the reverse design. The marvelous horse is contrasted with the rather crudely depicted helmet, but even the helmet is honest and charming in its own way. You will note that there is an indented, wedge shaped zone above the helmet crest. It denotes a void on the die at the same depth as the crest, which likely indicates that a piece of the die broke off up to the crest edge, an ancient error was covered up, or perhaps a letter or symbol was removed from the original die. The flat surface of the wedge is the original flan

2. Rhegion Hemidrachm Comparison

Background: Rhegion (current Reggio di Calabria) was located at the bottom of the Italian toe adjacent to the narrow, strategic strait that separated it from Sicily. Early tetradrachms of Rhegion tyrant Anaxilas, from 480-466 BC, resembled the issues of Sicilian Messina across the strait, including its mule cart

and leaping hare. However, after democracy took hold in 466, the facing lion head motif became Rhegion's obverse badge, recalling a type used on Samian coinage (migrants had arrived in Rhegion from Samos in the early 5th century, and some earlier Rhegion coins included a lion head). Rhegion coinage ceased in 387 BC, when the Syracusan tyrant Dionysios destroyed the city.

It's a little painful to show a sample Rhegion tetradrachm for my 'magnificent-cute' comparison. The celators in this city created masterful classical dies in the Greek style, and the obverse die on the chosen coin is exceptionally artistic (earlier tetradrachm dies were less so). Any facing lion head tetradrachm, especially one of those struck in Rhegion, has been on my imaginary want-list since the first

amphibians crawled out of the primordial ooze. My new hemidrachm does capture the proportions and sensibilities of the tetradrachm style on a small scale, although the larger denomination obviously presents a more sculptured and nuanced design on both obverse and reverse. Note: 'PH' in Greek is 'RH' in Latin – the start of the city name 'PHŦINON' as seen on the Rhegion tetradrachm.



Figure 3a. Bruttium, Tetradrachm of Rhegion - 415-387 BC (17.05g, 22mm, 10h). Mint: Rhegion. Attic weight standard. Obv: Facing lion scalp. Rev: PHŦINON; Laureate head of Apollo right, olive sprig to left. (Photo courtesy Classical Numismatic Group Triton XVI, sold for \$16,500 US).

A truly wonderful coin, somewhat compromised on the reverse, although the style of the Apollo head is good. The obverse with its facing lion scalp is absolutely/ archetypically magnificent and iconic, being both high relief and exuberantly sculptural. It portrays a beautiful and lively lion motif that easily conveys the wealth and vitality of that Greek city-state these 2,500 years later.



Figure 3b. Bruttium, Hemidrachm of Rhegion - 415-387 BC (1.89g, 13.6x12.8mm, 11h). Mint: Rhegion. Attic weight standard. Obv: Facing lion scalp. Rev: PH; Twig of olive branch with two leaves and two olives. (Collection of the author and photo by the author; purchased from Dirk Lobbers on MA Coins for \$240 US).

I liked this coin because it was similar in style to the iconic tetradrachm above and it was in exceptionally good shape. It was also larger and heavier than the much more common litra issue (only 0.75 g) that has similar types. All in all, it is a rather cute collection addition.

3. Ainos Tetrobol Comparison

Background: Ainos was neither powerful nor rich, owing to its geographic position north of Greece. It had pastures enough for the goats but not much else. It only minted coins between the time Persia was defeated on the Greek mainland, in 480 BC, and the expansion of Macedon under Philip II and Alexander III, circa 340 BC. However, many of its tetradrachm dies achieved remarkable artistic heights, and Ainos coins are particularly coveted for their veneration of the god Hermes.

The large and small Ainos coins shown below were obviously struck in the same period, given their similar design elements. Earlier coins were more rigid in style, while three or four decades later, the Ainos tetradrachms were reduced in weight to the Rhodian standard, and the Hermes obverse became a facing head portrait. Many Ainos tetradrachms are more superbly rendered and better preserved than this one, but the obverse die of this coin can be compared nicely with my tetrobol.



Figure 4a. Thrace, Tetradrachm of Ainos – Circa 415 BC (16.23g, 22mm).

Mint: Ainos. Attic weight standard, reduced. Obv: Head of Hermes right wearing a petasos studded around the edge with beads or rivets. Rev: AIN-I; Goat walking right, vine to right. (Photo courtesy Hess-Divo 321, sold for \$12,000 US).

This is one of the less dramatic of the Ainos portrait dies of Hermes, who is messenger of the gods, an intermediary between the mortal and the divine, plus a protector and patron of travellers, herdsman, orators, writers and athletes. It shows him with a calm, gentle demeanor similar to the obverse style of my tetrobol.

For the next issue of *The Planchet*

Please have edited feature articles and
advertising submitted to me by November 15,
2014

Paul Purdie
Editor
ppurdie@telus.net



Figure 4b. Thrace, Tetrobol of Ainos - 410-408 BC (2.65g, 13.3x12.2mm, 7h).

Mint: Ainos. Attic weight standard, reduced. Obv: Head of Hermes right, wearing metal or leather petasos, studded with rivets or beads. Rev: AINI; Goat walking right with right front leg raised over crab in defensive stance below. (Collection of the author and photo by the author; purchased from Dmitry Markov for \$350 US).

Again, this coin is larger and heavier than the much more common diobol issue that has similar types. In fact, the seller listed it as a diobol even though it is clearly not. This heavier version is sometimes called a drachm (six obols), though it is not quite heavy enough. The price was reasonable, given that it was the scarcer denomination, and the metal quality was good. The style is plain but accomplished. Hermes is a rare type on Greek coins, so it was good to find one that shows his unusual rimmed, studded helmet.

In Closing...

Small coins are not entirely satisfying if your aim is to impress others. There are certainly times, however, when the tiniest coins can get the most attention – especially in a display setting. My three featured coins are like a consolation prize in some ways, but I believe they are nice examples of their types and they add further depth to my collection. They also fit right into the extensive and collectible group of

cute, little coins issued by many ancient cities and rulers.


Perhaps it will yet be possible to obtain one of the high-grade Hermes or facing lion head tetradrachms. Perhaps also corruption, pestilence and telemarketing will be abolished. The dream still lives.



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New Membership Applications

No new members this month

These individuals have applied for membership into the Edmonton Numismatic Society. Pending any objections from the membership at large, these individuals will be accepted as "Members in Good Standing", effective this publishing date. Any objections to the aforementioned applications must be submitted in writing to the Secretary of the Edmonton Numismatic Society, and will be evaluated by the Executive Committee on a case-by-case basis.

Coming Events

October 8, 2014 - ENS October Meeting - Royal Alberta Museum, 7:15 pm start.

November 8 & 9, 2014 - *Edmonton's Fall Coin Show and Sale, Edmonton Hotel & Conference Centre, 4520 - 76 Ave, Edmonton, Alberta, T6B 0A5, dealers wishing to attend call 780-270-6312.*

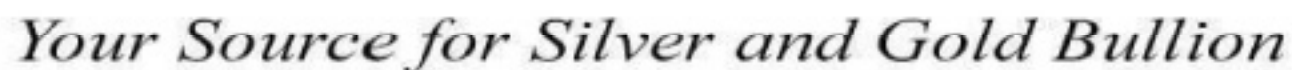
November 12, 2014 - ENS November Meeting - Royal Alberta Museum, 7:15 pm start.

December 10, 2014 - ENS December Meeting - Royal Alberta Museum, 7:15 pm start. Live auction with all proceeds to charity.

January 14, 2015 - ENS January Meeting - Royal Alberta Museum, 7:15 pm start.

February 11, 2015 - ENS January Meeting - Royal Alberta Museum, 7:15 pm start.

To list your coming events - send them to editor_ens@yahoo.ca.



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