

The first Communication was—

I.

ON THE COINAGE OF CEYLON DURING THE THIRTEENTH AND FOURTEENTH CENTURIES. BY W. H. SCOTT, M.D., F.S.A. SCOT.

In the course of my examination of the Oriental coins contained in the cabinet of the Society, I found several coins of the ancient rajahs of Ceylon, similar to those first, I believe, read and explained by Mr Prinsep, and recently illustrated by Mr Vaux, in the Numismatic Chronicle for October 1853.

The series preserved in the Society's cabinet was not perfect; but as I happened to possess many examples of these coins, I was fortunately able to complete it, so far as can be done in copper. Of one raja, Lokeswara, only gold coins have, I believe, as yet been discovered.

I have ventured to alter the arrangement proposed by Mr Vaux, in some respects, for reasons which can only be appreciated on an examination of the coins themselves.

These coins may be found engraved in Mr Prinsep's Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal (April 1837, vol. vi. plate 20), and in the Numismatic Chronicle for October 1853. I borrow, in describing these rude coins, the words of Mr Prinsep, (*loc. cit.* p. 300):—"The device on all these coins is the same; a rude standing figure or raja on the obverse, holding a flower in the left hand, and an instrument of warfare in the right. The skirts of the dress are rudely depicted on either side of the body, and the fold of the *dhoti* falls between his legs, which, being taken for a tail, has led some to call him *Hanumán*, but, I think, without reason. There are five dots and a flower to the right. On the reverse, the same figure is more rudely depicted in a sitting attitude. The mode of expressing the face is altogether unique in the history of perverted art."

The first sovereign of whom I find coins of the present class, is a queen, *Lilawati*, widow of *Parakrama Bahu*, of whom three specimens are found here.

The kingdom was governed in her name from A.D. 1202 to 1205, when she was deposed by Sahasa Malla. In 1214 she was, by some revolution in affairs, restored to the throne for about a year, but was again deposed by an usurper, named Lokeswara, who reigned only nine months. After this *Lilawati* again ascended the throne, but remained on it only seven months, and I have no further information connected with her.

It is obvious that her coins, which are pretty numerous, belong to her first

and longest reign, 1202-1205. Of her dethroner, *Sahasa Malla*, the Society possesses four specimens. He reigned from 1205 to 1213.¹ The coins of *Sahasa Malla* are the most frequent of all those of Ceylon, so far as my opportunities of observation have extended.

Next comes *Dharmasoka*, or, as his name occurs on the coins, *Dhammasoka*, an infant of three months only. His reign extended over one year at most; and that this is correct may be supposed from the fact that his coins are the most uncommon of the present series. Only one appears in the cabinet of the Society.

After one year's reign, he was supplanted by the minister of the late sovereign *Sahasa Malla*, who was named *Nayayanga*, or *Nikanga*. He is stated to have reigned only for seventeen days; after which time occurred the first restoration of *Lilawati*, in 1214. Her second restoration took place in 1216. In the same year an usurper, *Parakrama Bahu II.* ascended the throne, and reigned till 1219, in which year a Malabar usurper, named *Magha*, overthrew him, and reigned for twenty-one years after. Of neither of these have any coins as yet been discovered.

In 1240, however, *Vijaya Bahu III.* assumed the sovereignty, and reigned at *Dambadenia* for twenty-four years. To this sovereign, rather than to *Vijaya I.*, do I ascribe the coins classed by Mr Vaux to the latter sovereign, on the ground that a careful comparison of many specimens has convinced me, from the difference of fabric and size, that these coins must be classed along with those of *Parakrama* and *Bhuvaneka*; while the coins of *Lilawati*, *Sahasa Malla*, and *Dhammasoka*, form a separate, and, as I think, earlier division. In fact, if it be admitted that the coins of *Lilawati*, *Sahasa Malla*, and *Dhammasoka* do, as I say, resemble each other in fabric and size, it can hardly be denied that those of *Vijaya*, *Parakrama*, and *Bhuvaneka* do so also, being smaller and in lower relief than the others already mentioned. If so, as the date of *Bhuvaneka I.* is well known, A.D. 1303, it will follow that the coins resembling his must belong to the period closely preceding him, and not to a period long before, (*Vijaya I.* 1071, *Parakrama I.* 1153.) with the intervention of a different style of coinage between them. For these reasons, I class to *Vijaya III.* the coin No. 1, of which one specimen only is possessed by the Society.

¹ I have unfortunately been unable to consult the chronological list of Turnour, and am obliged to rely, for the dates of such sovereigns as are not mentioned in the paper of Mr Vaux, on the only authority I have, a chronological list drawn up by Mr Simon Casie Chitty, in a Ceylon Gazetteer for 1834. Errors may exist in it; but they cannot be of much importance, and the succession of the reigns is of more consequence to my arguments than their precise duration.

I also class to his successor, Parakrama Bahu III., who reigned also at Dambadenia from 1267 onwards for the space of thirty-five years, the coins bearing that name, of which eight specimens are possessed by the Society. He was followed by Vijaya IV., who reigned at Pollannaruwa for two years. Of his successor, Bhuvaneka I., who reigned at Yapahu from 1303 to 1314, one coin only occurs, the last of the series.

Thus it will be seen, that, according to my arrangement, the series extends from 1202 to 1303, a space of one hundred years only. As to the cause of so singular an arrangement in Ceylon as that only these princes should have coined money, while on the continent of India every petty raja issued his own coinage, is hardly to be explained, unless we can suppose Ceylon so deluged with the Indian currency as not to require a native one, or so much addicted to barter as not to wish for one. Possibly, however, coins may be yet discovered extending the numismatic series of this important island to a length more becoming its importance.¹

I will conclude by noting the comparative scarcity of these coins, so far as my experience has extended. In the order of abundance, the names run as follows :—Sahasa Malla, Lilawati, Parakrama, Vijaya, Bhuvaneka, and Dhammasoka, whose coins are by far the scarcest.