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Lyce Jankowski

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# East Asian Coin Collection at the Ashmolean Museum

## 2014–2017: three years to research a valuable archive

Dr Lyce Jankowski, Sackler fellow, Heberden Coin Room



The Ashmolean Museum in Oxford holds a substantial collection of coins from all over the world from the earliest coinage to the present day. Very few people know that it owns a large collection of East Asian coins, banknotes and amulets. The Collection is currently benefiting from a three year programme (2014–2017) to catalogue and document it.



Tray of coins to be identified and integrated in the main collection

### AIMS

The Ashmolean's East Asian Collection has yet to live up to its importance. We seek to deliver its full research potential by

- Developing a knowledge of the Collection (content, number of coins, provenance, strength of the collection).
- Documenting the Collection on a digital database.
- Making it available for research.

It will then contribute to numismatic studies on East Asian coinage.

### ACTIONS

#### Quantifying the coins

The quantification of the East Asian Collection shows that it is composed as follows:

- Approximately 15,000 Chinese coins – through the entire history of China from 600 BC to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- 3,000 Korean coins – from the Koryŏ period to Korea's first modern milled coinage (1882).
- 1,600 Japanese coins – from the earliest *Wado kaichin* 和同開珎 and including a good variety of imitations of Chinese Song dynasty coins.
- Around 1,000 Vietnamese coins.
- 500 Chinese amulets.
- Banknotes including 3 Ming dynasty banknotes.
- And other numismatic-related objects such as gaming tokens and imitations mounted on panels.

#### Identifying the provenance of the Collection

The significance of the Collection is closely linked to its provenance :

- The Korean coins were gathered by the first western numismatist specializing in Korean coinage, C.T Gardner (1842–1914), author of the authoritative book the *Coinage of Corea*.
- The Japanese and a large part of the Chinese coins belonged to Kutsuki Masatsuna (1750–1802), daimyo of Fukuchiyama, and were included in his *Kokon senka kagami* 古今泉貨鑑.

Collected directly in East Asia, the Ashmolean Collection is first hand material.

#### Cataloguing the coins

The Collection is currently being classified and organized; pictures of the coins are taken and data (weight and measures) are registered.



Labelling the coins

#### HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED ?

Thanks to the help of local volunteers, 2,507 coins have been pictured so far. But we need more help to take pictures and to improve the database. We are looking for e-volunteers with a basic knowledge of Chinese characters and a curiosity for numismatics. If you are interested in participating in this project, contact me: [lyce.jankowski@ashmus.ox.ac.uk](mailto:lyce.jankowski@ashmus.ox.ac.uk).

#### EXPECTED RESULTS

15,000 coins identified within 3 years

The collection will be entirely re-organised and all the coins identified. This will lead to a better understanding of the scope and quality of the Collection.

#### Exhibition planned for 2017

A temporary exhibition devoted to Chinese coinage will be held at the Ashmolean Museum at the beginning of 2017.

#### A Collection available for research

The Collection will be available for research both to visitors and online within the next few years.

It is envisaged that the database will become a very powerful tool for studying East Asian coinage. It will provide images and data on the coins complementing the existing databases of the British Museum, Fitzwilliam Museum and Manchester Museum.



Chinese coins from the duplicate collection



A tray of paranumismatica: Japanese purses

#### WEBOGRAPHY

- 1 Chinese Money Matters <https://twitter.com/huobishi>
- 2 Ashmolean Museum website: <http://www.ashmolean.org>
- 3 British Museum collection on-line: [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/search.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/search.aspx)
- 4 Fitzwilliam Museum database: <http://webapps.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/explorer/>



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