

THE
COINAGE OF GRIQUALAND

BY

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Griqualand, of which the more important part is called Griqualand West, in South Africa, is situated immediately north of the Orange River between the Kalahari desert on the west and the Orange River Colony on the east. To the north stretches Bechuanaland and the Transvaal. It is celebrated mainly for its large diamond fields of which Kimberley is the centre and it takes its name from the native population, the most important of which were called the Griquas, a mixed people descended from Dutch Boers and their Hottentot slaves or servants, with an admixture of Kaffir blood. The land was, indeed, often called the country of the Bastards. These people originally maintained a precarious existence by hunting and plunder. They showed but slight traces of civilisation, were unclothed and unhoused, wretched in appearance, disgusting in their habits, and with no moral or religious beliefs or conceptions¹.

The transformation of these unfortunate peoples into a pastoral community enjoying all the real benefits of civilisation, with food in plenty, with houses to live in, with clothing to wear and even money to spend, is one of the many romantic episodes of missionary enterprise. For proof of the time of issue and the reasons for the introduction of their coins a brief review of the circumstances which led up to this transformation is necessary. The two previous writers on the coins of Griqualand, Boyne and Atkins, had, indeed, but hazy notions concerning the matter. The former frankly says " I cannot

1. For an extended account see " Missionary labours and scenes in Southern Africa, " by Robert Moffat, 1846, p. 52, et sq.

learn on what occasion these were struck," adding, "it seems likely that they were issued by the London Missionary Society¹," whilst Atkins, commenting on Boyne's reference, states, "I have made enquiries of the Society's agents, but have learned nothing to justify this supposition²."

Like many of the great accomplishments of the world the mission to the Griquas was the result largely of an accident. It had its origin in the organisation, in 1799, by the London Missionary Society, of an evangel to the Kaffirs, but a deputation of Bushmen, which arrived at Cape Town at the time, and which pleaded for consideration on behalf of their countrymen, was fortuitously the cause of a deflection of part of the little company of workers from the proposed mission field in Kaffraria to the Bushmen of the Zak river. Three missionaries started for that field on the 22nd May, 1799, but it had not been long founded there before it included within its operations the Bastards, or Griquas, and the Corannas of the Orange river. Ultimately the work was chiefly devoted to those tribes, for in 1803 the Zak river mission was moved north to Klaar Water, afterwards known as Griqua-town. This place, which appears on the coins of our title, was situated some distance from the north bank of the Orange river, and by 1804 many of the people of the country had consented to cease from their wandering habits and settle down permanently. At the same time they adopted the dress of Europeans and, after much trouble and care, were trained to cultivate the ground, and to erect houses, schools and mission halls. By the year 1809 the members of the mission church numbered about 800 persons, whilst many acres of land had been brought under cultivation and the country made to produce cattle, sheep and goats in plenty. The conditions of life which rendered necessary, or at least desirable, a metallic medium of exchange had been reached.

The above very brief account of the mission to the Griquas was characteristic of missions in other parts of South Africa and constituted what might be called the pioneer period of missionary work there. Early in the nineteenth century, however, it was felt in England that the various missions in

1. The Silver Tokens of Great Britain and Ireland, the Dependencies and Colonies, 1866, p. 17.

2. The Coins and Tokens of the Possessions and Colonies of the British Empire, 1889, p. 245.

South Africa required co-ordination and, late in the year 1812, the Directors of the London Missionary Society, under whose auspices much of the work had been done, sent out the Rev. John Campbell of Kingsland, himself a Director of the Society, with a view to reorganisation of the existing stations and to select sites for new centres of work. It spoke well for the progress of the mission in Griqualand that Mr. Campbell, early in 1813, first proceeded to Klaar Water, the number of whose Church members had by then reached a total of upwards of 2.600 persons, and, in conjunction with the resident missionary there, he concerted measures for extending the field of work. This is, however, not the place to recount the details of the journeys made, of the establishment of fresh mission stations and of the reorganisation of the existing ones, however interesting their story may be. It need only be stated that this inception of what might be called organised mission work in South Africa was incidentally the direct cause of the issue of the coins of Griqualand; for, in addition to important developments further afield, the original station at Klaar Water was reorganised, rules and regulations were drawn up for the more thorough maintenance of peace and order and for the material well-being of the community, including consideration of the introduction of a metallic medium of exchange. Leading up to this latter point I cannot do better than quote, in full, from Mr. Campbell's own account of his work in South Africa given in his now very scarce book, published in 1815, called "Travels in South Africa undertaken at the request of the London Missionary Society". This work was compiled in diary form and, under the date 7th August, 1813, we have the following remarkable evidence of the time of issue of what is probably the only missionary coinage in our long and varied numismatic history, together with the circumstances which gave rise to it.

" We had a meeting with all the male inhabitants of the settlement who were in the town (i.e. of Klaar Water) to consider various points, especially about regulations for the protection of the lives and property of the community".

After explanations,

" every person present considered that laws should be made... The whole people likewise resolved that henceforth they should be called Griquas instead of Bastard Hot-tentots and the place called Griqua-town instead of Klaar Water".

Mr. Campbell then drew up some general laws, mainly concerning punishments for crimes. At the same meeting it was resolved that Judges should be appointed and a Court of Appeal constituted. It was further decided to mark out the limits of the country "in the course of a month".

The above references serve to show the high state of social well-being and advancement to which the inhabitants of Klaar Water had attained, a condition ripe for the introduction of a coinage. They also indicate the circumstances under which the name of Griquatown displaced that of Klaar Water with the consequent introduction of the former, instead of the latter, name on the coins to be hereinafter described. As to the published evidence for these the following remarkable resolution made at the same meeting of the inhabitants of Klaar Water bears directly on the subject, and clearly shows the origin and approximate time of issue of the coins under consideration.

"It was likewise resolved that as they had no circulating medium amongst them by which they could purchase any small article, such as knives, scissors (sic) etc., etc., supposing a shop to be established amongst them — which they were anxious there should be — they should apply to the Missionary Society to get silver pieces of different value coined for them in England, which the missionaries would take for their allowance from the Society, having Griquatown marked on them. It is probable that if this were adopted in a short time they would circulate amongst all the nations about, and be a great convenience".

By the early part of 1814 Mr. Campbell had completed his labours in South Africa and, on the 13th February in that year, he set sail for England from Cape Town. On his arrival home he took early steps towards provision of the coins required by the inhabitants of Griqua Town, as Klaar Water should now be called. He seems to have acted on his own initiative in the matter without consulting his fellow Directors of the London Missionary Society. Mr. David Chamberlin, the present Managing Editor under the Society, informs me that he is strongly under the impression that Mr. Campbell negotiated the manufacture and supply of the coins privately, for no correspondence or resolutions on the subject have been discovered in the archives of the Society.

This would be in accord with the virile and independent character of the famous divine, as witnessed by his drawing

up, on his own initiative, of laws for preservation of the peace and the punishment of crime in Griqualand.

Supplies of the coins were made by the well-known die-sinker, Thomas Halliday, and sent out to South Africa in 1815 followed by a further consignment in 1816. This is evident from old correspondence emanating from Mr. Halliday in a private collection, formed before 1820, which included figures 2 and 4 hereafter shown. These were given by the maker to the original owner and were not part of the consignments sent to Griqualand and brought back again to this country, the bulk of which, after a short period of circulation were, through fluctuating prices of metals at the time, and like other colonial emissions of the same period, melted down. A few circulated specimens have trickled over to this country, of which figures 1 and 3 are examples. The former was obtained in Kimberley, and is now in the collection of R. Donald Bain Esq. The latter is in the cabinet of Dr A. N. Brushfield. It is probable that the proof-like specimens in our cabinets were never intended for Griqualand and may not have been struck with the initial supplies. The absence of the date on the coins indicates that the dies were, probably on the grounds of economy, intended to be used indefinitely until worn out. They were, in fact, used for two years as there is only one instance recorded, or known, of a difference in die, namely, the fivepence comprising lot 408 in the famous Murdoch collection of colonial coins, dispersed in 1903. The slight difference lies mainly in the form of the olive branch held in the beak of the dove, and it occurs also on the farthing, the obverse die of which is the same as that of the fivepence.

It will be noticed that I have throughout adopted the wider term of coins, instead of the more restricted name of tokens hitherto used, and the reasons for this are that the record of Mr. Campbell's labours shows that they were provided for a governing body of people, however humble, living a self contained existence, and that it was intended that they should form a national issue of money not only for Griqualand but also for the tribes round about. Indeed, the position of the Griquas was, at the time of our survey, and for many years after, one of independence of the Government at Cape Town. Under their elected chief, Waterboer, who afterwards by treaty received a sum of money per annum from the Colonial Government for the support of schools in his country,

they made their land an effective buffer State to the North West boundary of Cape Colony¹.

At the time Boyne published his reference to these coins, in 1866, only two denominations, in silver, called by him the shilling size and the sixpenny size, were known. When Atkins referred to them in 1889 the halfpenny in bronze was added; but since that time the farthing has been discovered, and it seems not unlikely that the penny was intended to be struck.

The following is a description of the coins :



Fig. 1, Tenpence, R., R.D. Bain Collection.

Obv. A dove flying, with an olive branch in its mouth.

Rev. The place name, GRIQUA TOWN, divided by the figure 10, for value in pence : an ornament above and below the figure.

Edge : Milled with oblique lines.



Fig. 2, Fivepence, R., H.A. Parsons Collection.

Obv. A dove flying, with an olive branch in its mouth.

Rev. The place name, GRIQUA TOWN, divided by the numerals IIII for value in pence : an ornament above and below the numerals.

1. Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa, by David Livingstone, LL.D., D.C.L., Chapter V.

Edge : Milled with oblique lines.



Fig. 3, Halfpenny, Æ., A.N. Brushfield Collection.

Obv. A dove flying, with an olive branch in its mouth.

Rev. The place name, GRIQUA TOWN, divided by the fraction $\frac{1}{2}$: no ornaments in the field.

Edge : Milled with nearly straight lines.

A specimen of the halfpenny with plain edge is in the author's collection.



Fig. 4, Farthing, Æ., H.A. Parsons Collection.

Obv. A dove flying, with an olive branch in its mouth.

Rev. The place name, GRIQUA TOWN, divided by the fraction $\frac{1}{4}$: no ornaments in the field.

Edge : Milled with oblique lines.

A specimen of the farthing with plain edge is in the author's collection.

Mr. Henry Garside informs me that he is under the impression that he saw, some years ago, gold proofs of the tenpence and fivepence. Mr. W. C. Wells has also seen a specimen of the fivepence in gold. I have, however, not been able to trace the whereabouts of these coins.

In the sale of coins held in the rooms of Messrs Sotheby and Co, 23rd to 26th November, 1925, proof impressions of the half-penny and farthing in gilt metal appeared. They were stated in the catalogue to have come from the collection of the late Mr. Saxty of Bath.

The copper coins of Griqualand appear to be scarcer than the silver ones for the farthing was unknown to Atkins. This may be due to the native predilection for bright silver currency in preference to the duller copper coins. It is significant that the Griquas asked the Rev. John Campbell only to obtain silver pieces for them.

I can find no evidence that any further currency was made for use in Griqua Town after 1816. The country went through many political troubles caused by marauding Corannas, Hottentots and other tribes, and finally a dearth of water was the cause of the original site being abandoned¹.

The following pieces purporting to be of Griqualand should be mentioned. They have not, so far, been published or illustrated, at least in this country.



Fig. 5, Penny, Æ., H. A. Parsons Collection.

Obv. Head of Queen Victoria to left surrounded by an inscription as follows : VICTORIA D : G : BRITANNIAR : REG : F : D :

Rev. A dove flying, with an an olive branch in its mouth, between the place name, GRIQUA TOWN, divided by two stars forming stops.



Fig. 6, Penny, Æ., A. N. Brushfield Collection.

1. Missionary labours and scenes in Southern Africa, by Robert Moffat, 1846, p. 56.

Obv. Head of Queen Victoria to left surrounded by an inscription as follows : VICTORIA D : G : BRITANNIAR : REG : F : D :

Rev. A dove flying, with an olive branch in its mouth. Above, the place name, GRIQUA TOWN. Below, the date, 1890. The inscription is divided by six stars, three to left and three to right.

It will be observed that the date of issue of these pieces is 1890, but, as Griqualand was established as a British Colony in 1871 to afford protection to the diamond seekers, and British currency was then used, as in other parts of South Africa, they can have no authorised connection with the country. It is understood that they were fabricated in Berlin. All the specimens I have seen are in uncirculated condition.

Although the coins of Griqualand are of no great age (and it is indeed curious that the circumstances of their issue have for so long eluded correct explanation), they form one of the most interesting emissions in the numismatic history of the British Empire and they are unique in the sense of being the only missionary coinage of Christianity. Their designs are pleasing and appropriate.

They have long been eagerly sought after by collectors and as they are of very uncommon occurrence they realize high prices when, now and again, specimens come into the market. This may have been one of the reasons, actuating the motive for their imitation in 1890, or at least for the use again of the main design of the dove of peace carrying the olive branch of hope.