

The Fate of 200 Coinage Dies for the State Mint of the Z.A.R.

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In his work *Banking and Currency Development in South Africa (1652-1927)*, Professor Dr. E. H. D. Arndt, among other things, focuses on the Mint of the South African Republic (Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek, Z.A.R.).

In connection with the information below, it is sufficient to refer to the following introductory details:

In August 1890, the government of the Z.A.R., in co-operation with the bank concession, granted a mint concession to the "Nationale Bank van de Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek" (National Bank of the South African Republic). According to this concession, the bank was to establish the proposed State Mint at its own expense within 12 months of the adoption of the Mint Act. This law came into force in 1891, and the minting of coins began in 1892.



National Bank of the South African Republic, Pretoria. Source: The Heritage Portal

During the period 1899-1900, during the war, 137,000 and 788,000 gold pounds were minted, respectively. In June of the first year, F. Kraus was the director of the State Mint. Arndt states that before the British occupation of Pretoria (June 1900), unstamped gold pounds were minted by the State Mint because the dies had broken. He adds that new dies were ordered in Europe but were intercepted by the British.

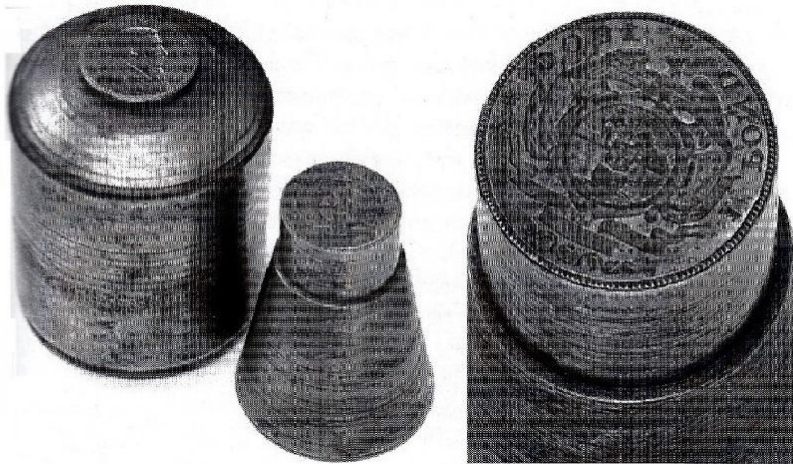
How this happened forms the core of this contribution, which is based on the account provided by F. Kraus.

Kraus's Travel Account

In his travel account, Kraus reports that the local management of the "Nationale Bank" in Pretoria granted him indefinite leave in June 1899 on the condition that he return to Pretoria upon receipt of a telegram from Darmstadt, Germany. Kraus was promised half of his salary, and until September 29, 1899, he was on leave.

On that day, the bank ordered him to return immediately. Additionally, he was instructed to hire an assayer and order dies to mint 2,000,000 gold pounds. The assayer would bring the dies with him, and passports could be obtained from the local consul of the Republic.

On October 4, 1899, the bank telegraphed Kraus to order 200 dies for one-pound coins bearing the year 1900. The dies were manufactured by the Royal Mint in Berlin, and on 4 November, 20 dies would be ready, on 18 November 80, and on 18 December 100. Meanwhile, he hired assayer W. Grimm from Frankfurt am Main and arranged with the Royal Mint for Grimm to bring 20 dies as part of his luggage to Pretoria.



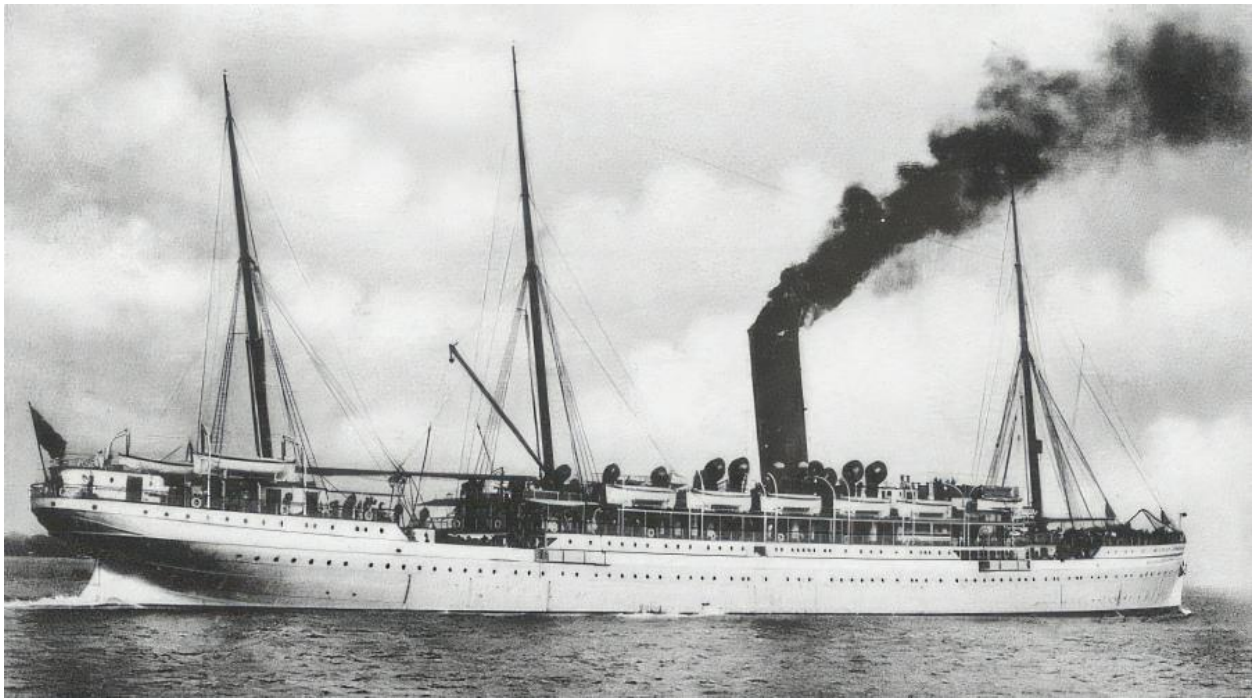
Picture left: Berlin Royal Mint. Source Library of Congress. Picture right: Dies for a 1900 Pond. Source: See part 2 of the WCNS article on the "Perfect Forgery" where Professor Francois Malam is quoted referring to an auction in Denmark by Bruun Rasmussen Auctioneers.

On the same day, Kraus telegraphed the bank management in Pretoria, asking whether he should return via the west coast or the east coast. On October 7, he was informed to take the shortest route.

Kraus then reluctantly decided to travel via Southampton to Cape Town, while instructing Grimm to go via Naples and Lourenço Marques to Pretoria and bring the 20

dies with him. The remaining 180 dies were to be shipped as cargo by the Royal Mint in Berlin via Hamburg to the "Nationale Bank" agency in Lourenço Marques.

Kraus departed from Southampton on October 28, 1899, aboard the *Carisbrook Castle* and arrived in Cape Town on November 14. He approached the local German Consul-General and asked if it was possible to travel to Pretoria via Delagoa Bay. The consul confirmed this, and Kraus booked a place on the *Carisbrook Castle* to Durban.



Carisbrook Castle, a three-masted square-rigger. Source Bandcstaffregister.com

The next day, he visited the local branch manager of the "Nationale Bank" to inquire about letters or instructions from Pretoria. None had arrived, but he learned from the manager, Mr. A. Mathews, that it would be impossible to continue his journey. The English authorities, according to Mathews, were aware of his arrival, considered his journey to Pretoria a hostile act, and planned to close the bank's branch offices in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, and Durban if Kraus continued his journey.

Kraus responded that he was only accountable to the Pretoria head office, but Mathews answered that Kraus would still be arrested in Durban and that it would be in the bank's best interest to comply with the instructions from the London committee. Discussions were held with two Pretoria directors who were in Cape Town on this matter, and a telegram was sent to the London committee. Everyone agreed that Kraus should temporarily stay in Cape Town.

Furthermore, Kraus discovered his letters and reports, which he had sent from Darmstadt to the bank in Pretoria before his departure, in Mathews' office. All had been

intercepted by the British censor, and from the contents of these letters, it was clear that Grimm would arrive in Lourenço Marques around December 6, 1899, aboard the German steamship *König*.



Colorized picture (left) of Lourenço Marques harbor circa 1890s. Source: delagoabayworld. com. Picture right. The British Consulate in Lourenço Marques during the Boer War where the stolen dies were probably stored temporarily. Source: Cambridge Digital Library.

Based on this information, Mathews informed Kraus that the British authorities wanted both Grimm and the 20 dies to come to Cape Town. With this in mind, a bank employee, a certain Ford, was sent to Lourenço Marques with a letter written by Kraus, instructing Grimm to follow Ford's orders, travel with him to Cape Town, and hand over the dies against a receipt. In this way, a trap was set, and Ford was sent to Lourenço Marques to carry out his assignment.

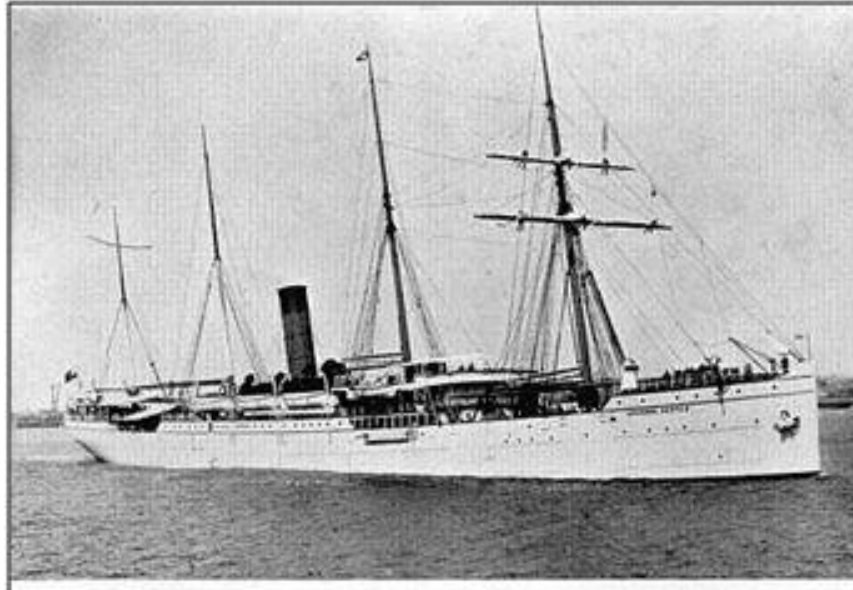
Grimm received Kraus's instructions from Ford aboard the *König*, and the bank agency manager in Lourenço Marques had already bought a ticket for Grimm to continue the journey to Cape Town. However, Grimm became suspicious when he saw the secretary of the British consulate engaged in conversation with Ford, while he was constantly surrounded by people whom he feared might be members of the security police.

Grimm refused to hand over the dies to Ford, locking them in a suitcase in his cabin. While he was having a meal, a member of the British consulate broke open his suitcase and stole the dies.

On Christmas Day 1899, Ford returned to Cape Town to report on his partially failed mission. He had left the dies at the bank's Durban branch, and Kraus gave Mathews instructions on how to protect them from rust. In Cape Town, Kraus realized that due to the war, he could not travel to Pretoria. He discussed his situation with Mathews and De Gheest, and by the end of December 1899, the British authorities granted Kraus

permission to leave for Germany, provided he assured them that he would not return to the South African Republic during the war.

In his travel account, Kraus states that he did not give this assurance. He left for Europe on January 5, 1900, aboard the *Arundel Castle*. In London, he had discussions with the bank's London committee, which approved of his actions.



Picture of the Arundel Castle circa 1890s. Source: samilitaryhistory.org

Kraus and the Z.A.R. Embassy

Back in Darmstadt, Kraus wrote to the Republic's embassy in Brussels on February 20, 1900, stating that he had been recalled to Pretoria by telegram in September 1899, had undertaken the return journey in October, and, after being prevented from continuing his journey in Cape Town, had returned to Germany. He asked if Dr. Leyds was interested in his travel account and promised to send it as soon as possible if so.

On March 1, 1900, Kraus was informed that it was only natural that he fully inform the government in Pretoria, and that he had been dismissed from his position as the director of the State Mint by order of the same government.

The next day, Kraus replied that he had already sent such a report to his rightful superiors, namely the directors of the "Nationale Bank" in Pretoria, on February 7 of that year, but had not addressed the government. He pointed out that his appointment came from the bank, with a mutual six-month notice period, and that the agreement was still in effect as he had received no notice of termination from either Pretoria or London.

On March 3, the embassy secretary, Jonkheer F. A. van der Hoeven, replied curtly that Kraus was dismissed because the government blamed him for the dies falling into English hands. Kraus considered this answer an insult. He further explained that during

the Jameson Raid in December 1895, he had been one of five representatives of the German association who had unconditionally offered their services to the Transvaal State President and carried a rifle.

Kraus then outlined his fate in Cape Town and London. There, he met the bank's branch manager, Mr. La Thangue, and asked him where the remaining 180 dies were. The branch manager replied that they were still in Hamburg. On February 3, 1900, Kraus inquired with the Royal Mint in Berlin whether the dies had been shipped and paid for. He learned that the consul-general of the South African Republic had requested that no further consignments be sent to Kraus.

Kraus concluded his letter with a request not to be condemned without consideration of his explanation. On March 21, 1900, he was informed that his travel account had been received, but Dr. Leyds, who was in Paris, would decide whether to respond to Kraus's letter upon his return.



Willem Johannes Leyds was the ZA Republic's special envoy in Brussels. Source picture left: Wikipedia. Picture right: journals.openedition.org.

On March 30, 1900, Kraus reported that in January, he had offered his services to the bank's London committee and asked to travel to Pretoria via the east coast. He had received no response. Since February, 28, however, the committee had granted him 1,000 pounds, payable upon his arrival in Pretoria. He also informed the committee that he had already offered his services to the Republican government.

This marked the end of the correspondence between Kraus and the embassy of the Z.A.R.

Comments:

When the ZAR National Bank telegraphed Kraus on October 4, 1899, to order 200 dies for one-pound coins bearing the year 1900, the Boer War has not started yet, as it only broke out 7 days later on the 11th of October.

From Ploeger's account, we deduce that of the 200 dies made for striking 1900-dated ponde, only 20 were sent to South Africa (and only after the war has started). These were stolen by members of the British Consulate in Lourenço Marques. The 20 dies were then taken and stored at the Durban branch of the National Bank. The remaining 180 dies that were to be shipped as cargo by the Royal Mint in Berlin via Hamburg to the National Bank agency in Lourenço Marques, seemingly never arrived in South Africa, at least not during the war.

We will remember that as late as February 3, 1900, Kraus inquired with the Royal Mint in Berlin whether the dies had been shipped and paid for. He learned that the consul-general of the South African Republic had requested that no further consignments be sent to Kraus.

Two points of interest: -

Firstly, if no 1900 dies reached Pretoria during the war years, with what dies were the 1900 ponde struck? According to Professor Francois Malan of the University of Pretoria, in a letter from Reitz (State Secretary of the South African Republic at the time) to Leyds on 17 January 1900, Reitz stated that Delfos & Co in Pretoria was busy manufacturing dies for the Mint in case the next batch of dies from Berlin also fall in enemy hands. These were probably the dies with which the 1900 ponde were struck with.

Secondly, numismatists like Brian Hern has written in the past that the well-known "99" over stamped 1898 ponde were made by the Pretoria Mint because the 1899 dies were intercepted in Lourenço Marques by the English. Ploeger's research, however, shows that it was actually the 1900 dies that were stolen in Mozambique. There is no record of any 1899 dies ever being manufactured.