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MORE ABOUT COPPER COINS STRUCK IN 1893–1899 WITH THE NAME OF FAISAL BIN TURKI, IMAM OF MUSCAT AND OMAN*

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Abstract. The end of the 19th century was marked by a significant increase in maritime trade between the major ports of the northwestern Indian Ocean — Zanzibar, Mombasa, Mogadishu, Aden, Muscat, Karachi, Bombay, etc. Along with the silver rupees of British India and the Austrian thalers of Maria Theresa, which played the role of national currencies in Arabia and East Africa, the function of small change money in the countries of the region was performed by Indian copper coins — Annas, Paisas and their fractions, sometimes supplemented by local emissions of small change similar by size and metal composition to Indian Paisas. One of such local issuers was Sultan of Muscat and Oman Faisal bin Turki (1888–1913 CE), who ordered to release the ¼ Anna coins in his name with dates from 1311 to 1316 AH (resp.1893–1899 CE), which were circulated in Oman and other countries of the region until the 40s of the XX century. The article devoted to the history of the appearance and geography of circulation of this "trade coin of the Indian Ocean" provides detailed descriptions with complete images of all varieties of coin legends and design elements detected by the moment, supplemented by well-known countermarks with the initials of two subsequent sultans of Muscat and Oman and also overstrikes into the "current coin" of Afghanistan with *Qandahar 1322* dies (1904–05 CE). Considerations are presented regarding the location of the mint in the government area of Muscat, as well as the possible delivery of copper flans for the minting of Omani coins from India. Special attention is paid to documentary evidence of the large-scale minting of these coins dated with 1315 AH at the mint of Ralph Heaton & Sons (Birmingham, UK), which provided the bulk of coins of this type for the small change money circulation of the region at that time.

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О МЕДНЫХ МОНЕТАХ, ЧЕКАНЕННЫХ В 1893–1899 гг. ОТ ИМЕНИ ФЕЙСАЛА ИБН ТУРКИ, ИМАМА МАСКАТА И ОМАНА

В.Н. Настич, Д. Наута, В. Шустер

Аннотация. К концу XIX в. значительно возрос объём морской торговли между основными портами северо-западной части Индийского океана — Занзибаром, Момбасой, Могадишо, Аденом, Маскатом, Карачи, Бомбеем и др. Наряду с серебряными рупиями Британской Индии и австрийскими талерами Марии Терезии, игравшими роль национальных валют в Аравии и Восточной Африке, функцию мелких разменных денег в странах региона выполняли индийские медные монеты — анны, пайсы и их фракции, к которым иногда добавлялись местные выпуски, аналогичные индийским пайсам по размеру и составу металла. Одним из таких локальных эмитентов был султан Маската и Омана Фейсал ибн Турки (1888–1913), при котором чеканились именные монеты номиналом ¼ анны с датами от 1311 до 1316 г. хиджры (1893–1899 г. н. э.), обращавшиеся в Омане и других странах региона вплоть до 40-х гг. XX в. В статье, посвящённой истории появления и географии обращения этой «торговой монеты Индийского океана», приведены подробные описания с полным комплектом иллюстраций всех выявленных к настоящему времени вариантов монетных легенд и разновидностей элементов оформления, дополненные известными надчеканами с инициалами двух последующих султанов Маската и Омана и перечеканами в «ходячую монету» Афганистана — кандагарские пайсы 1322/1904–05 г. Изложены соображения относительно местонахождения монетного двора в правительственном районе Маската, а также о возможном поступлении заготовок для чеканки оманских монет из Индии. Особое внимание уделено документальным свидетельствам об участии в реализации этой эмиссии монетного двора Ralph Heaton & Sons (Бирмингем, Великобритания), на котором была изготовлена значительная часть тиража монет этого типа, датированных 1315 г.х. и составивших основную массу в мелкорозничном денежном обращении региона того времени.

Ключевые слова: Бирмингемский монетный двор; Восточная Аравия; Индийский океан; Маскат и Оман; монетный двор Маскат; надчекан; талер Марии Терезии; пайса; песа; прибрежная торговля; султан Фейсал ибн Турки; Султанат Оман; ¼ анны

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The present paper deals with the background, composition, use and importance of small trade coinage produced for Muscat and Oman that circulated around the north-western area of the Indian Ocean towards the end of the 19th and first decades of the 20th century, together

with minting details and description of obverse and reverse variants including legends of these important regional copper coins, closely connected to the activities of Indian and Arab traders in this part of the world.

A number of varieties of ¼ Anna copper coins of Muscat and Oman dated AH 1311 to AH 1316 have been covered in several coin catalogs [Valentine, 1911, pp. 86–87; Mitchiner, 1977, pp. 233–234; SCWC-8, 2015, pp. 975–977; SCWC-47, 2019, p. 1607; and others], as well as articles (listed in the bibliography which also includes some reference books on the history of the western part of the Indian Ocean) and Internet resources, such as Zeno Database (*Oman*, subcategory 22327 «¼ Anna types»). However, no general work had been available about this series in aggregate until quite lately when a comprehensive catalog showing all known varieties in a typological listing with detailed descriptions and illustrations was published [Cordry, 2021], to which the authors of the current work made a significant contribution.

Historical and geographical background

Since time immemorial, the sultans of Oman and their subjects, facilitated by the seasonal monsoon winds, traded with the East African coast and the Indian subcontinent. From the end of the 17th century onwards they colonised Zanzibar, Pemba and Mafia, and spread their influence to Kilwa and Lamu islands and coastal settlements such as Tanga and Malindi in East Africa. Eventually the Omani Sultanate consisted of two parts, Muscat and Oman in Arabia and Zanzibar and dependencies in East Africa, with the latter branch towards the end of the 19th century becoming the more successful polity, largely as a result of its near-world monopoly in the production of cloves and its slave and ivory trade with the then little explored African mainland which, apart from Arab and Swahili traders, attracted Western (British, French, German and US) explorers and traders with their ships [Coupland, 1928; Coupland, 1939, pp. 4 sq].

After 1856 the coastal strip from along the Somali Benadir coast to northern Mozambique was a territory nominally under suzerainty of the Sultanate of Zanzibar, a situation that remained till the time when colonising German, British and Italian governments made inroads on this dominion from around 1885 onwards. Ties between Oman and Zanzibar strained at times, however remained strong. Thus, towards the end of the 19th century, trade in this vast region had greatly increased along the important maritime merchants' route between Zanzibar, Mombasa, Malindi, Lamu and Pata archipelago, Kismayo, Mogadishu, Hobyo (former Obbia), Aden, into the southern Red Sea — Mokha; along the south Arabian coastline — Mukalla, al-Shihr, Sur, Masqat; into the Persian Gulf — Bushehr, Basra; finally eastward — Gwadar, Karachi and Bombay, which were important ports of the vast trade area of the northwestern Indian Ocean.

After the demise of the medieval Kilwa and Mogadishu sultanates that earlier had issued light copper coins [Album, 1999, Nos. 583–710, pls. 28–33], there were no indigenous metal

currencies worth mentioning in this vast coastal region west of Persia. Along with silver Rupees from India, an enormous amount of silver Austrian Maria Theresa Thaler restrikes with fixed date *1780* circulated as substitute for national currency in Arabia and East Africa [Peetz & Raudnitz, 1898; Hans, 1950, pp. 27–40; Meinhardt, 1952; Semple, 2005; and many others]. The coin was locally referred to as *riyāl faransā*[*wī*] or *riyāl nimsāwī* [French or Austrian Riyal] and was the dominant coinage for big trade since the late 18th century. It was the most popular silver coin in circulation and incidentally an important source for indigenous silver jewelry. It went by several vernacular names in Arabic, related to distinctive features used to check the authenticity of the coin: *abū nuqṭa* 'the one having dot(s)', referring to the pearls on the brooch of the empress; *abū ṭayr* 'the one having bird(s)', referring to the imperial eagle; *abū rīš(a)* 'the one having feather(s)', referring to the eagle's profuse wing and tail feathers; and *abū šūša* 'the one having a crest', allegedly for the high forelock with a diadem on Maria Theresa's head; a few other local names of this coin existed elsewhere in Arabia and East Africa [Peetz & Raudnitz, 1898, pp. 134–135].

Smaller denominations needed for daily transactions were in short supply and consisted primarily of British East India Company (EIC) Quarter Anna copper coins (equal to 1 *Paisa* or *Pice*, resp. $^1/_{64}$ Indian Rupee) which the Bombay Mint started to strike in 1833; besides these, EIC $^1/_{12}$ Anna were also in use [Darley-Doran, 2014, pp. 30–33]. The French traveller Denis de Rivoyre, who visited Muscat around 1880, noted that almost all external trade had been monopolised by Banians, Hindu merchants from India, who were also present in numbers in most ports around the Arabian Sea, the Persian Gulf and the southern Red Sea [De Rivoyre, s. a., p. 150]. Hence it is not surprising that British-Indian coins were common and widely used in regional trade.

To alleviate this shortage of small change, two different copper *Pysa* coins were struck for Zanzibar in AH 1299 (1881–82 CE) and AH 1304 (1886–87 CE) [SCWC-8, 2015, p. 1288], and the Imperial British East Africa Company struck *Pice* coins for Mombasa in 1888 CE / AH 1306 [SCWC-8, 2015, p. 962]. Those issues gained acceptance because they were of about same size, weight and value as the well known EIC and subsequent British India Government Quarter Anna coins [SCWC-8, 2015, pp. 749–751]. The German East Africa Company (Deutsch-Ostafrikanische Gesellschaft, DOA) struck coins called *Pesa* and dated 1890–1892 CE / AH 1307–1309 for use in their DOA-territories [SCWC-8, 2015, p. 366]. However, no denomination was indicated on all the above mentioned coins. Similarly, *One* (*1*) *Pice* coins dated 1897 to 1899 were struck for the British East Africa Protectorate [SCWC-8, 2015, p. 283]. In Ethiopia a coin of weight and size comparable with those other 'Quarter Anna' kinds of coins [SCWC-8, 2015, p. 309] locally called *Besa*, was struck in a limited mintage at the Addis Ababa Mint under emperor Menelik II (reigned 1889–1913), [Gill, 1991, p. 109]. Starting from 1909, copper coins of king Vittorio Emanuele III were introduced in Italian Somaliland (Somalia Italiana) to the value of 1 *Besa*, 2 and 4 *Bese* [Gill, 1991, pp. 205–206], denominations which, like the preceding colonial issues as 'successor coins' of the ¼ Anna, found their origin in the word *Paisa*.

In addition to the copper coins of the East India Company and later British India Government, the *Pysa* from Zanzibar and *Pice* from Mombasa were also countermarked by the sultan of Quʿaiti State of Shihr and Mukalla (British Eastern Aden Protectorate) in AH 1307 (1889–90 CE) [SCWC-8, 2015, p. 1287]. The Quʿaiti State struck copper coins of 5 Khumsi in AH 1315 (1897–98 CE) and AH 1318 (1900–01 CE) with dimensions and design related to the ¼ Anna coins of Muscat and Oman [SCWC-8, 2015, pp. 975–977].

The variety in spellings — *paisa* (with plural *paise*) [Hindi], *pice* [English], *baisa*, *baiza*, *pysa*, *pesa*, *besa*, *poisha*, *pyas* etc. — definitely boils down to the old Indian denomination *paysa / paisa*, known since the 18th century. The word *pesa* thus has become regionally, and in Swahili officially, a generic word for 'money', all thanks to this single, almost universal copper coin. Save for Afghanistan (until 1924 and briefly in 1929), modern independent states Oman, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Myanmar to the present day use denominations derived from this same word.

When in 1889 (AH 1306–07) the Bombay Mint ceased the production of all copper coins, the flow of popular British India coppers to Oman was interrupted and the Omani sultan undertook to mint his own coinage from 1893 to 1899 with the mint name **MUSCAT** (Arab. مسقط *Masqaṭ*). The mint was reportedly located in the government area of Muscat, across from the former Sharia Court in the building which also housed the Passport Office.

With the introduction and use of modern colonial and national currencies in the 20th century, the wide circulation of ¼ Anna copper coins, Maria Theresa Thaler and Indian Rupee coins in the north-western Indian Ocean trade areas slowly got out of use. Until 1940, Maria Theresa Thaler and Indian Rupee remained the main currencies circulating in Muscat and Oman. For that time 1 Maria Theresa Thaler was equated to 230 copper Paisa (= 57½ Anna), whereas the Indian silver Rupee traditionally comprised 16 Annas or 64 Paise / Pice. Also depending on location, the value of copper fixed to the Maria Theresa Thaler (.875 fineness) varied considerably, moving up and down along with the price of silver as well as the demand and supply for silver current coins. During all that time copper ¼ Anna coins of Muscat and Oman continued to be used as small change.

In 1940 Sultan Saʿid, who for most of his reign resided in Salala, the capital of the Dhofar region (southern Oman), introduced a new monetary system in the sultanate, based upon the *Riyal*, actually the Maria Theresa Thaler, renamed into 1 *Dhofari / Saʿidi Rial* and declared consisting of 200 *Baisa* (on the coins dated AH 1365 also *Baiza*), each in turn equated to ¼ Anna copper coin [Darley-Doran, 1990, pp. 73–77, 79–82].

Chronology

Sultan Sayyid Faisal bin Turki Al Bu Saʿid, ruled AH 1305–1331 (1888–1913 CE)

Sultan Sayyid Taimur bin Faisal Al Bu Saʿid, ruled AH 1331–1350 (1913–1932 CE)

Sultan Sayyid Saʿid bin Taimur Al Bu Saʿid, ruled AH 1350–1390 (1932–1970 CE)

Coinage of AH 1311

The first coinage of Muscat and Oman was introduced in AH 1311 (1893–94 CE) by Sultan Faisal bin Turki of the Al (Bu) Saʿid dynasty and consisted of a $^1/_{12}$ Anna (*Pie*) and a $^1/_4$ Anna (*Paisa*), both featuring on the obverse a view of Al-Jalali Fort of Muscat, the sultan's palace with palm trees and two vessels afloat in front [Cordry, 2021]. The smaller $^1/_{12}$ Anna coins (2.60 g, 17.5 mm), apparently less in demand than the ¼ Anna, did not become popular and ceased to be minted by the following year.



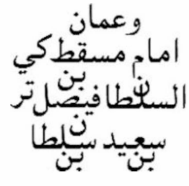
a *b* *c* *d*

Fig. 1. $^1/_{12}$ Anna AH 1311 (*a*) and $^1/_4$ Anna AH 1311 (*b*–*d*), obverse[4]

The **obverse** central inscription of the AH 1311 issues shows the denomination in English as **1|12 ANNA**, respectively **1/4 ANNA** below the fort and harbor view (Fig. 1). The legend we find in the margin [starting from 12h clockwise] reads

SULTAN FESSAL BIN TOORKY • I3II • IMAUM OF MUSCAT & OMAN

The **reverse** of the AH 1311 issues shows a six-line inscription in Arabic within a wreath, of which the four central lines looking like



should read in the line succession 3–4–2–1 and thus

السلطان فيصل بن تركي بن سعيد بن سلطان امام مسقط وعمان

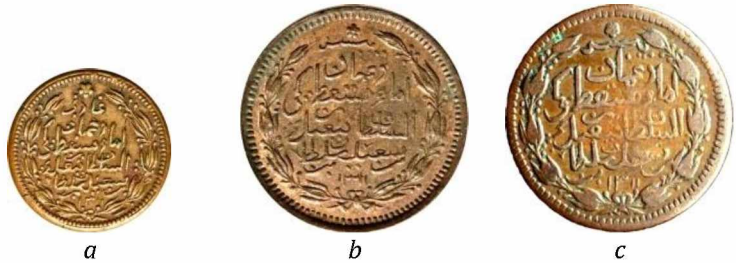
al-sulṭān Fayṣal bin Turkī bin Saʿīd bin sulṭān, imām Masqaṭ wa-ʿUmān

plus غازي *ġāzī* on $^1/_{12}$ Anna, resp. پيسه *paysah* on ¼ Anna added above; the date in figures — ١٣١١ *1311* is shown below on both denominations (Fig. 2).

It has been suggested in some numismatic sources [Darley-Doran, 2014, p. 29–30; and others] that *Ghaz*(*i*) was an official denomination assigned to $^1/_{12}$ Anna coin, though there is little evidence so far to support this assumption. The word غازي *ġāzī* placed at the top of the

[4] All illustrations are shown at ×1.2 enlargement.

reverse, literally meaning '[the victorious] warrior [for the faith]', is an attribute to the word *sulṭān* occurring twice lower down in the central inscription. As this single word was relatively easy to read for literate Omani users, such as some traders, shopkeepers, craftsmen



a *b* *c*

Fig. 2. $^{1}/_{12}$ Anna AH 1311 (*a*) and $^{1}/_{4}$ Anna AH 1311 (*b, c*), reverse

etc., it may have become the colloquial denomination for this small coin. Incidentally, the term shows formal resemblance to a copper denomination used in the Safavid coinage of Iran and Transcaucasia (late 16th to 17th centuries) — *ġāz* or *qāz*, otherwise *qāzbegī*; however, no direct connection could be traced between those remote Persian coin names and *ġāzī* on $^{1}/_{12}$ Anna of Muscat and Oman. Moreover it was uncommon in Islamic coining practice to include the name of a denomination in Arabic script on a coin.



Fig. 3. ¼ Anna AH 1311, trial strike in silver (obverse and reverse)

A rare ¼ Anna specimen of 10.25 g, struck in .925 silver [London Coins, auction 158, September 2017, lot 1243], was thought to be a trial strike for testing the dies intended for the Muscat Mint (Fig. 3). Could these curious items have been an off-metal presentation strike by the mint, possibly in India (or England?), which produced the dies for the AH 1311 coinage, sent to the Omani sultan for approval?

Coinage of AH 1312–1316

In the ensuing years from AH 1312 (1894–95 CE) to AH 1316 (1898–99 CE), the Al-Jalali Fort design for the coin obverse was abandoned and a new type with the mint name and denomination **¼ ANNA** continued to be produced [Cordry, 2021]. An unusually large number of different dies with varying standards of perfection, sometimes very crudely engraved, is known for this coinage, with most of the AH 1312 issue struck with rather crude hand-cut dies (see below, Fig. 4*a–d*). All issues dated AH 1312–1316 show numerous varieties of inscription layouts, border design as well as number and length of rim denticles, along with different

starting positions of the obverse marginal legend; so-called mules (combinations of incompatible dies) are also encountered, including a very rare strike showing AH 1312 obverse (Fig. 4*e*) combined with AH 1311 reverse (Fig. 2*b*). Especially abundant are varieties among coins struck at the Muscat Mint with the most common date AH 1315, which also can show the year in completely retrograde sequence — ٥١٣١ (Fig. 4*l*) or with digit *3* only backwards — ١٣١٥ (Fig. 4*m*). Mintage figures in general, except for strikes of The Mint, Birmingham, are not available.

We have no reason to assume that coin dies were prepared at the Muscat Mint. It is a mere conjecture that, in view of close trade relations to India, the very coin dies, apart from the shipment of AH 1315 dated series struck at The Mint, Birmingham, could have been fabricated there. Regardless of dies, all coins appear to be machine-struck; the mechanical coining press probably came from England. The mint machinery must have been quite simple and slow, fully operational with estimated coining frequency within 1 to 2 pieces per second [Darley-Doran, 2014, p. 32]. The Muscat Mint was apparently closed in AH 1316 (1897–98 CE), which is the last certainly known date for this coinage.

The refining of metal and the production of coin blanks were carried out elsewhere. The most likely source, except for the coins struck at The Mint, Birmingham, is India where several government and princely states' mints were operating at the time.

According to records [Sweeny, 1981, p. 190], in 1898 more than 19 million pieces of ¼ Anna coins dated AH 1315 had been ordered by the firm E.W. Carling & Co. of London from the mint of Ralph Heaton & Sons (The Mint, Birmingham), in four separate batches, each with different flan weight specifications (5.80 g, 5.55 g, 5.26 g and 5.23 g), the production of which through 1898 extended into 1899. In addition, in September 1898 three tons of copper blanks of 5.79 g each were ordered for the Muscat Mint, totalling almost 600,000 pieces, which presumably were used for the local minting of ¼ Anna coins dated AH 1316.

AH 1315 coins struck at The Mint, Birmingham, coming from one original pair of dies (see below, Fig. 9)[5], as well as those issues with similar appearance and also dated AH 1315 (see below, Fig. 10*a*–*c*), possibly struck in India, come in enormous quantity and represent the core of the Muscat and Oman copper coinage.

Legends and design of AH 1312–1316 coinage

All coins show inscriptions both in English and Arabic. The **obverse** circular legend in English, placed in the margin on all issues and starting at different 'clock face' positions, comes in various spellings of ruler's name and title. The standard variety

• FESSUL BIN TURKEE IMAM OF MUSCAT AND OMAN

[5] Rare specimen strikes in nickel and aluminum from AH 1315 dies of The Mint, Birmingham, are reported to exist [Darley-Doran, 2014, p. 31].

known for all available dates is often displayed in uneven lettering and no spaces separating words, sometimes showing a raised dot instead, beginning/finishing with one • or two •• dots, a dot between short dashes ⁝, a star ★ (sometimes looking like a 5-petaled flower bud ✶), a dotted lozenge ✣, an empty gap, or without any separator at the junction of the circular legend.

Several alterations and distortions of the circular legend fixed on some coins are as follows:



Fig. 4. ¼ Anna 1312–1316, obverse legend and text separator variants

• FESSUL • BIN • TURKEE • IMAUM • MUSCAT • (Fig. 4*a*, on some AH 1312);

•• FESSUL • BIN • TURKEE • IMAM • MUSCAT (Fig. 4*b*, on some AH 1312);

✣ FESSUL BIN • TURKEE • IMAUM • MUSCAT ♀ OMAN (Fig. 4*c*, on some AH 1312);

• FESSUL BIN TURKEE • IMAM • MUSCAT • OMAUN (Fig. 4*d*, on some AH 1312);

⁝ FESSUL BIN TURKEE IMAM OF MUSCAT AND OMAN (Fig. 4*e*, on some AH 1312);

• FESSUL BIN TURKEE IMAM OF MUSCAT AND OMAN (Fig. 4*f*, on some AH 1313);

FESSUL BIN TURKIE IMAM OF MUSCAT AND OMAN (Fig. 4*g*, on some AH 1313);

★ FESSUL BIN TURKEE IMAM OF MUSCAT & OMAN (Fig. 4*h*–*i*; on some AH 1314 and 1315);

✱ FESSUL BIN TURKEE IMAM OF MUSCAT & OMAN (Fig. 4*j*; on some AH 1315);

★ FESSUL BIN TURKEE IMAM OF MUSCT AND OMAN (Fig. 4*k*–*m*, on some AH 1315);

FESSUL BIN TURKEE IMAM OF MUSCAT AND OMAN (Fig. 4*n*, on some AH 1316);

• FESSUL BIN TURKEE IMAM OF MUSCAT & OMAN (Fig. 4*p*, on some AH 1316).

The central inscription on the obverse of AH 1312–1316 issues shows **¼ ANNA** in line (e.g. Fig. 4*a*–*i*, *m*–*p*) or more scarcely **ANNA / ¼** in two lines (Fig. 4*j*–*l*), plus the date in Arabic figures and the mint name ضرب في / مسقط *ḍuriba fī Masqaṭ* 'struck at Muscat' added above and reading bottom-to-top.

Separating the legend in margin from the central inscription we find solid linear inner circles (Fig. 4*b*–*h*, *k*–*n*) or dotted inner circles (AH 1315 and AH 1316 only, Fig. 4*i*, *j* and *p*). More scarcely, coins without any border circle (AH 1312 only, Fig. 4*a*) also exist, in some cases due to a weak strike with the circle, present in the die but virtually lost on the coin.



a *b* *c* *d* *e* *f*

Fig. 5. ¼ Anna AH 1312–1316, reverse with wreath, five-line inscription variants

The **reverse** of many issues AH 1312–1315 shows a five-line Arabic inscription in different calligraphic styles, always reading from bottom upwards. The five-line inscription reads

فيصل بن / تركي بن سعيد / بن سلطان / امام مسقط / وعمان

Fayṣal bin Turkī bin Saʿīd bin sulṭān, imām Masqaṭ wa-ʿUmān

and comes with a wreath around (Fig. 5), or without it (Fig. 6). Wreaths come in several varieties (design of leaves and binding ribbons below, number of bunches etc.), sometimes with one or four dots, otherwise with a star added at the top. Some strikes show an outer border of denticles, the number and length of which can vary.



g *h* *i* *j*

Fig. 6. ¼ Anna AH 1312–1316, reverse without wreath, five-line inscription variants

A shorter three-line reverse Arabic inscription introduced in AH 1313, used along with the five-line inscription up to AH 1315 and found on all strikes of AH 1316, comes in different (four at least) main calligraphic patterns and reads

فيصل بن / تركي سلطان / عمان

Fayṣal bin Turkī, sulṭān [of] ʿUmān

always in wreath, either with star above (Fig. 7) or without it (Fig. 8).

According to V. Nastich, it may be possible that subsequent working dies, based on master stamps of the Birmingham design (Fig. 9) showing a regular triangular shape **Δ** for the Arabic digit **٥** *5* (the darker metallic color being an additional feature), but with differing date digits, could be used for the minting of ¼ Anna coins at other mints, e.g. Indian, in order to keep up the supply of these coins without having to order them all the way from England.



a *b* *c*

d *e*

Fig. 7. ¼ Anna AH 1312–1316, reverse with star above wreath, three-line inscription variants



f *g* *h* *i* *j*

Fig. 8. ¼ Anna AH 1312–1316, reverse without star above wreath, three-line inscription variants



Fig. 9. ¼ Anna AH 1315, strike of The Mint, Birmingham (obverse and reverse)



a *b* *c*

Fig. 10. ¼ Anna AH 1315, possibly struck in India (obverse and reverse)

Versions of this Birmingham design exist with year *1315* on obverse showing three different shapes of digit ٥ *5* (rounded, elongated or slanted) and minor deviations in the script of the reverse legend (Fig. 10*a*–*c*). Another speculation, perhaps less cogent, admits that the dies, wherever engraved, could initially show the date as just ١٣١ *131*, resp. without the final digit, to be used later in the operating mint(s) with a view to later application of ٥ *5* and possibly also ٦ *6* (provided for the next year), thus indicating the real date of issue.

Issues dated AH 1318, reported in some sources, are actually AH 1315 strikes showing the top of a misshapen Persian style ۵ *5* that looks like a raised ٨ *8* (Fig. 11). Issues reported with AH 1319 evidently show a worn Persian style ۶ *6* that looks like an oblique Arabic ٩ *9* on AH 1316 strikes.



a *b*

Fig. 11. ¼ Anna AH 1315 with defective ۵ *5*, looking like AH 1318 (obverse and reverse)

Countermarked coinage

Sultan Faisal was succeeded by his son Sultan Taimur. During his long reign (AH 1331–1350, 1913–1932 CE) the ¼ Anna AH 1315 of his predecessor struck at The Mint, Birmingham, also known as the 'black Paisa', probably because of specific dark patination (Fig. 9), as well as those issues also dated AH 1315 but apparently struck in India (Fig. 10*a*–*c*), constituted the bulk of copper coins in circulation. Some of those, and possibly also other ¼ Anna coins being in use by that time, were countermarked with Arabic letters ﺴﺖ [***S*** below ***T***] (Fig. 12), thought to stand for *Sulṭān Taymūr* or *Sayyid Taymūr* [Cordry, 2021]. Several graphic variants of the '***ST***' countermark are known.



a *b* *c* *d*

Fig. 12. ﺴﺖ [**S** below **T**] countermark on ¼ Anna (obverse)

In 1932 when Sultan Taimur abdicated in favor of his son Sultan Saʿid (AH 1350–1390, 1932–1970 CE), some ¼ Anna AH 1315 coins, side by side with more scarce earlier ¼ Anna coins (AH 1312 has been reported) being by that time in circulation were countermarked with Arabic letters س [***S*** below ***S***] (Fig. 13), thought to stand for *Sulṭān Saʿīd* or *Sayyid Saʿīd* [Cordry, 2021]. Several graphic variants of the '***SS***' countermark in two different sizes, 8 and 10 mm, and with letters overlapping (Fig. 13*a*–*c*) or parted (Fig. 13*d*) are known.



a *b* *c* *d*

Fig. 13. س [**S** below **S**] countermark on ¼ Anna (obverse)

Specimens with both countermarks applied consequently on Obv. of the same coin, apparently exceptionally rare, are also known (Fig. 14).



Fig. 14. ت [**S** below **T**] and س [**S** below **S**] countermarks on ¼ Anna (obverse)

An uncommon 'cross-border' event occurred some time earlier in Afghanistan. In order to make up for the shortfall of small change in the southern provinces of that country, starting in 1904, a fair number of ¼ Anna coins of Muscat and Oman, mostly struck at The Mint with the date AH 1315, Birmingham, were overstruck with Arabic script legend قندهار ۱۳۲۲ *'Qandahār 1322'* [1904–05 CE] on obverse and '*miḥrāb-o minbar*'[6] (either within a thick linear circle around or without it, the latter possibly due to deficient strike) on reverse [SCWC-47, 2019, p. 232; Cordry, 2021]. At least three distinct variants of the *'Qandahār 1322'* overstrike are known (see Fig. 15*a*–*f*). Several more ¼ Anna host coins with other dates may exist (AH 1316 has been confidently detected[7]: see Fig. 15*f*). Similar countermarks were also

[6] The main part of mosque interior, forming the central element in the official coat of arms of modern Afghanistan.

[7] Private collection (Russia): undertype host with die combination corresponding to #SC-67 [Cordry, 2021].

applied to copper ¼ Anna of British India and copper 50 Dinar of Iran (the type with radiant sunface, dated between AH 1293–1308, 1876–91 CE), apparently on a significant scale [SCWC-47, 2019, p. 232].



Fig. 15. ‘*Qandahār 1322*’ قندهار ١٣٢٢ overstrikes on ¼ Anna (obverse and reverse) (hosts *a*–*e* — AH 1315; host *f* — AH 1316)

Specifications

The ¼ Anna coins struck at Muscat Mint and, to a lesser degree, those of AH 1315 struck in unalloyed copper at The Mint, Birmingham, or possibly also in India, come with variations in metrology [Cordry, 2021]. In practice, real weights from 4.70 g to 7.30 g are recorded, while diameters range from 24.8 mm to 26.7 mm. Coin flans normally have plain edges, rather often without raised rims; variations in thickness as well as mutually rotated dies (with Obv. ↔ Rev. orientation other than 12h) are known. Alongside copper and red bronze of various shades, infrequent specimens in yellow copper (brass) are also encountered. Finally, scholars as well as coin collectors and coin dealers should consult the recent work by Scott Cordry for the occurrence of numerous varieties and die combinations, thereby bearing in mind that, apart from those listed there, even more may come to light.

For decades ¼ Anna copper coins have been serving as 'Indian Ocean trade currency'. Even today we might come across a good number of ¼ Anna coins including crude contemporary forgeries (some cast) in antique and curio shops in the old *souqs* and markets of port towns of the Arabian Sea, the Persian Gulf and along the Swahili and Somali Benadir coasts. As the coins were widely used until the early 1940s, most of those available are considerably worn and corroded.

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