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Review

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Reviews

An extremely detailed 'Index sélectif des noms et des notions se rapportant au judaïsme en Arabie' (pp. 539–562) closes this volume, which will surely become an indispensable reference work for all scholars dealing with Judaism in Antique Arabia.

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WOLFGANG HAHN and VINCENT WEST, *Sylloge of Aksumite Coins in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford* (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford, 2016). 159 pp., 1 map. Price: £40.00. ISBN: 978-1-910807-10-1.

This volume is a systematic catalogue of the 600 Aksumite coins (excluding forgeries) held in the Heberden Coin Room of the Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archeology, University of Oxford. Like other coins belonging to the same period and of the same kind, part of the collection is on permanent display in the new Ashmolean (opened December 2009) for research and teaching purposes. The collection covers the whole sequence of Aksum's coin-striking kings from the third to the seventh century CE, and numismatics is one of the most important sources for this period. In 1984, the Ashmolean collection amounted to only sixty-five coins. In 2004, the private collector Bent Juel-Jensen (1922–2006) generously donated what became the most important part of the collection. Together with further donations from Juel-Jensen up to 2006, this donation has increased the Ashmolean collection that now contains over 535 coins.

The authors of this catalogue, the well-known specialists in Aksumite coinage, Wolfgang Hahn, of the University of Vienna, and Vincent West, have not always shared the same ideas and views on several questions related to Aksumite coinage. In this volume, however, they present a unified view of the state of the art in the field, not without caveats on doubtful cases. They also revise some of the arguments made in the last comprehensive monograph by Stuart Munro-Hay and the same Bent Juel-Jensen some twenty years ago, *Aksumite Coinage. A revised and enlarged edition of The Coinage of Aksum* (London: Spink, 1995). In fact, the type orders used in this latter work are adopted for the arrangement of coins in the present catalogue.

The concise Introduction (pp. 9–19, 'Aksumite Coinage Again', by Wolfgang Hahn, preceded by a map on p. 8 and with an overview table on p. 17) offers an updated guide to Aksumite numismatics and a comprehensive list with a summary of the coinage of the eighteen coin-striking Ak-

sumite kings known so far (in chronological order, from c.295 to c.620 BCE: Endybis, Aphilas, Ousanas I, WZB, Ezanas, Ouazebas, Noe, MHDYS, Ebana, Nezana = Nezool, Ousanas II, Kaleb, Armeh = Alla Amidas, WZN = Ella Gabaz = AGD, Israel, Gersem, Joel, and Hethasas = HTZ).¹ The growth of the Ashmolean collection is briefly but clearly illustrated by Vincent West (pp. 20–23, ‘History of the Collection’), who also sketches an interesting profile of Bent Juel-Jensen, a physician who developed a special interest in Ethiopia as a collector of manuscripts (also donated to the Bodleian Library in Oxford) and coins. An updated bibliography (pp. 23–27), the criteria of the arrangement of the coins (p. 28) and of Gəʿəz transcription (p. 29), and a list of provenances (pp. 30–32) precede the actual substantial catalogue (pp. 34–159). The catalogue itself consists of a description of the coins which is strictly numismatic in character, in a very synthetic form, providing no further elements of historical discussion or interpretation. Two pages (pp. 158–159) are devoted to nine coins considered ‘Forgeries and Fantasies’.

This lavishly illustrated book—63 of 159 pages are given over to the colour figures, obverse and reverse, of 595 coins plus forgeries, at twice their actual size—certainly does justice to one of the richest collections of Aksumite coins worldwide. Unparalleled in its stock of gold coins, it also possesses actual unicas, such as the whole series of four golden coins issued by King Aphilas (‘unit, half, quarter, and eighth’), including the ‘still unique gold half unit’ (p. 21). It is to be hoped that, more than twenty years after Munro-Hay and Juel-Jensen’s 1995 influential monograph and several preparatory works,² the authors of this valuable catalogue will dedicate themselves to the publication of a new comprehensive monograph to serve as the new standard reference work on the coinage of Aksum.

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¹ A regularly updated bibliography and complete census of Aksumite coins can be found on the website <http://www.vincentwest.org.uk/aksum/aksum.htm> which also includes entries from the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, not considered by Hahn and West in this volume.

² See for instance the series of short notes published by Wolfgang Hahn in the *Journal of the Oriental Numismatic Society* (see pp. 24–25 in the book and the index online at http://www.orientalnumismaticociety.org/ons_journal) where both his own and other hypotheses are thoroughly revised.