

History of the Chinese collection at the American Numismatic Society¹

*There is no other section of numismatics
that embraces such a wide range of shapes, material,
different kinds of writing, than that of the Far Eastern Countries.
None are probably so attractive, few more interesting,
and certainly there is not another about which
we are in such complete ignorance.*

Henry A. Ramsden, 1914²

These words were written by Henry A. Ramsden in 1914 and we cannot argue that our knowledge of Far Eastern numismatics has greatly improved since then, for it has not. Only a handful of books have been published on this subject in Western languages in the last century. While coins of the Greek and Latin civilizations draw increasingly scholarly attention, we are still largely ignorant about the bronze coinage of China and other East Asian countries. It is quite astonishing that one of the most exciting and greatest collections of East Asian coinage lies mostly unknown in the American Numismatic Society (ANS). The collection of East Asian coins at the ANS is one of the most important in the world, and comprises more than 37,000 coins and coin-shaped charms from China, Korea, Japan and South East Asia.³ The Chinese coin collection alone contains 29,742 items from early antiquity to the present day⁴. There is also an important collection of books to support research on the collection. Howard F. Bowker's *Numismatic Bibliography of the Far East*, published in 1943, lists the books in Western languages that were in the ANS library. It does not list the books in East Asian languages,⁵ two thirds of which were from Japan, and which included such Chinese classics as *Record of Coins* (*Quanzhi* 泉志) by Hong Zun 洪遵,⁶ the *Imperially Sanctioned Register of Coins* (*Qinding qianlu* 欽定錢錄),⁷ and

¹ In this paper, I have written used the *pinyin* system for romanising Chinese, retaining the old romanization only for familiar names such as Peking (rather than pinyin Beijing). In the quoted passages, I have respected the author's original romanization, and added its *pinyin* equivalent. Chinese characters are written in the traditional form. Unless otherwise indicated, all letters and papers referred to are in the ANS archives.

² Letter from Ramsden to Wood, March 20th, 1914 - Howland Wood Papers, ANS Archives.

³ As of October 2016, the ANS's online database lists 50,060 items from East Asia, among which 29,742 are from China.

⁴ For a short presentation of the ANS collection of Chinese coins see Hoge, Robert W., "Chinese Numismatic in American Museums", *Icomon - Proceedings*, Melbourne, 10-16 October 1998, (Melbourne: Numismatic Association of Australia, 2000), 53.

⁵ Bowker has left though an unpublished bibliography of Chinese books, see Bowker, Howard F. *Bibliography of Chinese numismatic books in A.N.S. Reilly Room collection*, unpublished manuscript (n.d.). ANS library.

⁶ Written in AD 1149, it is the oldest Chinese text on numismatics that has survived. The ANS library has two editions: one published in 1874, and a reprint of the previous edition.

⁷ This book is a catalogue commissioned in 1750 by the Emperor Qianlong, and produced by a team of scholars under the direction of Liang Shizheng 梁詩正. The latter succeeded in completing within one year a comprehensive catalogue of Chinese coins based on the imperial collection. Three copies,

the *Catalogue of Ancient Coins* (*Guquanhui* 古泉匯) by Li Zuoxian 李佐賢⁸. The importance of the East Asian numismatic library at the ANS should not be underestimated.

It is a pity that this collection – so important in terms of size, quality and provenance – draws so little attention. But this has not always been the case. There was a time, in the 1910s, when the Society devoted special attention to the development of East Asian numismatics, and made some exceptional acquisitions.

At the heart of all this activity was Henry A. Ramsden. In a recent post on the ANS blog, he was unfortunately described as a “lesser known collector and dealer”,⁹ so in this paper I will begin with a short biography of Ramsden, and show that he was, in fact, a very important figure in the world of numismatics, and that it is thanks to his specialist knowledge, vision and determination that the ANS assembled a first class collection of East Asian coins. Ramsden was at the heart of a group of a four men, who shared that vision, and I will explain who they were and how they interacted, Ramsden being resident in Yokohama, and the other three based on the East Coast of the United States. I will then give an outline history of the Chinese collection at the ANS, based on my research in the ANS library and archives.¹⁰ Finally, I will show how the “Ro Collection” came to the ANS. I will show that this collection is important not only on account of its contents, but also in terms of its provenance, and restore its identity as the personal collection of the most distinguished Chinese scholar-collector, Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉.

HENRY A. RAMSDEN, SCHOLAR AND DEALER

Henry Alexander Ramsden was born in 1872 in Cuba. His father, Frederick Wollaston Ramsden (1839-1898), a British citizen, had settled there and become the British Consulate in Cuba for the province of Santiago.¹¹ Like his father, Henry Ramsden also joined the British Consular Service, and was subsequently stationed in Barcelona, Spain, Cuba and the Philippines. But he left the Service and was sent to Yokohama, Japan, as a *chargé d'affaire* at the Cuban consulate. He spent most of his remaining life there, marrying a Japanese wife, who was a teacher of the Chinese

all later reprints, are available in the ANS library. This book was part of a larger work titled *Antiquities of the Western Pavilion* (*Xiqing gujian* 西清古鑑), and there is an 1889 reprint in the ANS library.

⁸ The *Catalogue of Ancient Coins*, published in 1864, was the most comprehensive work on Chinese numismatics until the 1930's. It was largely used by collectors and dealers.

⁹ Post written by David Hill in *Pocket change, the blog of the American Numismatic Society*: <http://numismatics.org/pocketchange/lesser-known-collector-and-dealer-h-a-ramsd-en-left-his-mark-at-the-ans/> (accessed on May 16th, 2016).

¹⁰ I would like to thank the Sorbonne University for funding my research visit to the ANS, and the ANS staff for their assistance. I am very grateful to Joseph Ciccone who gave me access to the ANS archives. I am also grateful to Nancy Berliner and Bruce McLaren for giving me access to the Peabody Essex Museum collection and archives, to Francois Thierry for sharing his ideas with me, and to Helen Wang for her helpful comments and suggestions on this paper.

¹¹ Frederick Wollaston Ramsden (1839-1898) was born in Essex, UK. He arrived at the British consulate in Cuba in 1859. In 1886 he married Susana de la Torre y Soler (1850-1948) and was consul for the province of Santiago de Cuba from 1888 to 1898. He passed away in Jamaica during the Spanish-American war. His diary relates these events (S. S. McClure, 1899).

classics, and with whom he had two children¹². He died on January 27th, 1915, aged 43.¹³

Ramsden was one of the most prominent Western specialists on East Asian coinage of his time. His interest in numismatics predated his arrival in Japan: while posted in Barcelona, he published two books: *A list of token and paper note issued for the use of sugar estates in the island of Cuba* (1904) and *Japan: kawan - Ei-Tsu-ho coins* (1906). He decided to settle in East Asia in order to gain access to local resources, such as coins and books, and also to native specialists. His Japanese must have been excellent, as he founded a bilingual journal in English and Japanese, and communicated directly in Japanese with all the members of the Yokohama Numismatic Society¹⁴. In Japan he became acquainted with such important numismatists as Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉 (who had left China following the fall of the Qing dynasty)¹⁵, Katsuyama Gakuyo 勝山岳陽 (a noted Japanese archaeologist and numismatist) and Neil Gordon Munro (author of *Coins of Japan*), and established himself as a pillar of the Japanese numismatic community. An active member of the numismatic societies of Tokyo, Osaka and Yokohama, Ramsden was the editor and publisher of the journal of the Yokohama Ancient Coin Society (*Yokohama Ko Sen Kai* 横浜古泉會, and its successor, the *Numismatic and Philatelic Journal of Japan* (大日本古錢古郵券雜誌); and also published the *Numismatic Monthly* (*Gai Koku Kosen Geppo* 外國古錢月賦).¹⁶ He belonged to a number of numismatic societies overseas: he was a fellow of the Royal Numismatic Society, a member of the American Numismatic Association, and, of course, the American Numismatic Society. He was also an honorary member of the New York Numismatic Club.

Ramsden was prolific, and published a large number of books and articles, in which he sought to make Chinese numismatics more understandable in European-speaking countries. Towards the end of his short life, Ramsden undertook to write a series of *Manuals of Far-Eastern Numismatics*. Two volumes were published: one on *Chinese Paper Money* (1911) and the second on *Chinese early barter and uninscribed money* (1912). His other publications were similarly instructive, and included *Corean coin charms and amulets* (1910), *Siamese porcelain and other tokens* (1911) and *Chinese openwork amulet coins* (1911), all of which were published by Jun Kobayagawa, in Yokohama.¹⁷

In his publications, Ramsden rails against the work of the French numismatist, Terrien de Lacouperie, whom he did not cease to contradict. Terrien de Lacouperie was commissioned by the British Museum in the 1880s to catalogue its East Asian collection. His *Catalogue of Chinese coins from the VIIth century BC to AD 621 including the series in the British Museum* (1892) was designed to be a reference work on Chinese numismatics, on a par with the highly respected British Museum Catalogues of

¹² Henry Kazuo Ramsden (b. 1901) and Susana Katsu Ramsden.

¹³ Wood Howland, Obituary - Henry Alexander Ramsden, *The Numismatist*, October 1915, p. 370-371

¹⁴ It is also possible that his wife also helped him communicate in Japanese.

¹⁵ The copy of Ramsden's *Manual of Far-Eastern numismatics - Chinese Paper Money* (1911) kept at the Bodleian Library, Oxford (Num. Or. d.2) still has between its pages a dedication note to Luo Zhenyu.

¹⁶ The *Gai Koku Kosen Geppo*, published entirely in Japanese, aimed to promote foreign numismatics in Japan, but had little success and disappeared after six issues.

¹⁷ For a list of his publications, see the bibliography.

Greek and Roman coins.¹⁸ Almost immediately after publication, Lacouperie's *Catalogue* won the Stanislas Julien prize in Paris.¹⁹ Ramsden's *Notes on Chinese numismatics* is full of complaints against Lacouperie, and the same negative tone is seen in his correspondence:

I have always considered Lacouperie as a very poor and un-trained practical sino-numismatist, lacking in experience and knowledge of the coins themselves. I have often wondered if his epigraphic deductions were as fantastic as his numismatic conclusions on the theories, which he advances so readily in the "Catalogue of Chinese Coins".²⁰

At that time, there were few people in the Western world with sufficient expertise to evaluate Lacouperie's work, and Ramsden's assertion that he was "second to no one, European or Asiatic, in the judgment of ancient Chinese coins",²¹ should be seen in this light. It was probably his intention that his *Manuals of Far-Eastern Numismatics* would surpass Lacouperie's *Catalogue*, and replace it, but he died before he could complete the series.

In a letter dated May 7th 1911, Ramsden told Robinson about his plans for

[...] a series of handbooks I intend publishing on the "Numismatics of the Far East". It is a big undertaking, but I think a series of Manuals of this kind is needed, not only to popularize, but also to aid collectors of coin of this branch of numismatics. Most of the treatises such as Lacouperie, Lockhart, etc., are too high priced, besides also being too complicated for the general run of collectors. The books I have now in mind, will not only be simple, easy for reference, serving the purposes of a chronological descriptive illustrated catalogue, -(but unpriced, as they are not intended to primarily advertise my firm) - but will also contain, not only every coin mentioned by the works hitherto regarded as the standard ones, leaving out the unimportant sub-varieties, such as different ways of writing one character, &c., but also many specimens hitherto unpublished, will be added.

Ramsden was a renowned collector of East Asian coins.²² His own collection consisted of more than 15,000 coins, and he had a passion for Siamese porcelain tokens.²³ His collection was largely assembled in East Asia, where he had settled in well, working with his brother-in-law, Jun Kobayagawa, a dealer of Japanese stamps and cards. After Ramsden joined the business, Jun Kobayagawa Co. started to deal in coins and antiques as well. The shop was situated at 34, Water Street (水町通り) (see **Fig. 2**).

¹⁸ It was Reginald Stuart Poole's aim, as Keeper of the Department of Coins and Medals at the British Museum, to publish the entire collection, in scholarly catalogues. See Helen Wang and Elizabeth Errington, "The British Museum Catalogues of Indian Coins", in a volume celebrating the life of Nicholas Rhodes, ed. by Sushmita Majumdar, Calcutta (forthcoming).

¹⁹ Helen Wang, 'A short history of Chinese numismatics in European languages', *Early China* 35-36 (2012-2103), pp. 395-429.

²⁰ Letter from Ramsden to Robinson, 8th December 1911.

²¹ Letter from Ramsden to Wood, 26th July 1910.

²² Ramsden's executor made a complete listing of the collection before sending it to the ANS.

²³ Siamese porcelain tokens (known as *pee*) were issued by Chinese gambling houses during the 19th century, and were soon used as money.

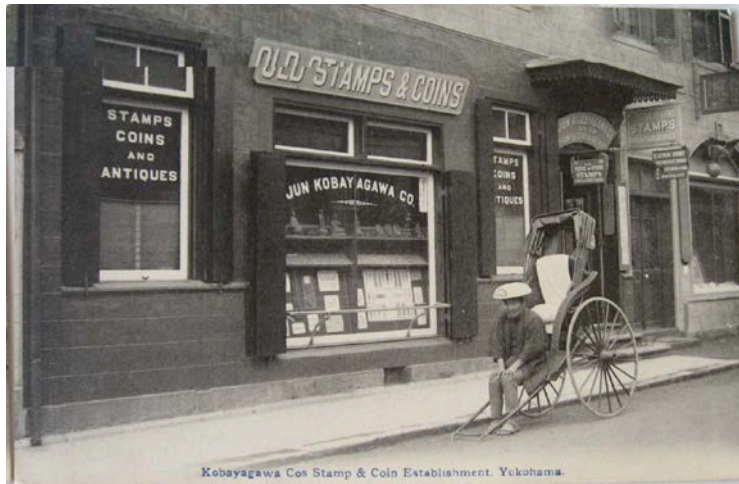


Fig. 2. Kobayagawa Co. Stamp and Coin Establishment, Yokohama, Postcard, ANS archives

A postcard printed by Jun Kobayagawa Co. illustrates how they worked: Ramsden and Jun Kobayagawa led a team of male and female employees (see **Fig. 3**).



Fig. 3. Kobayagawa Co. Stamp and Coin Establishment, Yokohama, Postcard, ANS archives

Many of their clients lived overseas, and they served as middlemen supplying Asian stamps and coins to Western collectors. Ramsden offered advice, and also received special requests that he was eager to satisfy. But in his quest for coins, he kept the best specimens for himself.

Ramsden had a few agents located in the major cities of China, who were actively looking for coins at a time when the market was mostly fed through illegal excavations. He would also travel in person to see large collections. It was the time of the collapse of the Qing dynasty and the Xinhai Revolution in China, and the political context worked in Ramsden's favour, as many collectors sought to liquidate their assets and leave the country. He described the situation in summer 1911:

While I was in China this last summer [1911], I saw that troubles were brewing and I set about, - by the purchase of various collections, whose owners were also anxious as to coming events, and consequently ceded them at reasonable prices - getting as good a stock of coins as was possible in order to supply my requirements for a year or two.²⁴

²⁴ Letter from Ramsden to Robinson, 8th December 1911.

And in spring 1912:

My Peking Agent returned here a few days ago. He says it is very difficult to pick up anything round his neighborhood in the coin line, although other curios, from loot, can be picked up at cheap prices. He is of the same opinion as I am, that most things will go up in China after these troubles, especially coins, as was the case with Japan after the late two wars. My Nanking Agent has returned, but he writes that coins are scarce and dear with a general tendency to still increase. I am beginning to be afraid that soon it will be too late to pick up many good things in China and will afterwards become almost as barren as Japan, although the process will be slower.²⁵

Ramsden's profitable purchases were followed by lean years, during which nothing came up on the antiques market.

In Japan, Ramsden had a local social network of Japanese scholars, and seemed to enjoy their company more than that of European circles.²⁶ Some enjoyed high positions in the Japanese bureaucracy: Koga Yoshimasa (manager at the Osaka mint)²⁷, Professor Uchida Ginzo (the first Chair of History, at Tokyo University, from 1907), S. Hayashi (Secretary of the Tokyo Numismatic Society), M. Fujita, K. Nakazawa, and M. Shitara. Through his social network he quickly learned of any private collection that was coming up for sale. It also enabled him to exchange coins, and rubbings of coins, with other collectors – following the Asian tradition of exchanging gifts as a sign of respect and politeness. Seduced by this idea of sharing, Ramsden decided to publish a journal of rubbings on a monthly basis to be distributed to all members of the Yokohama Numismatic Society, who were keen to show their collections, and share news of recent purchases. In 1909, Ramsden described the Yokohama Numismatic Society as being:

... more like a small family. We meet once (and sometimes two and three times) at the houses of the various members. As I have probably the biggest and possibly the best collection of Chinese Coins, as well as in certain branches of Japanese coins, in this country, to say nothing of foreign coins, we usually make a better show than any of the other Societies in Japan. We hold periodical exhibitions and will be the only Society in Japan represented at Brussels next year.²⁸

Members of the Society would send their rubbings to Ramsden who would then paste them into the journal (see **Fig. 4**). The coins were classified by type and special attention was accorded to the printing of titles and names. A number of coins are noted as belonging to Howland Wood and John Reilly Jr, both in New York, to Neil G. Munro, and to Ramsden himself (see Fig. 4).

²⁵ Letter from Ramsden to Wood, 6th March 1912.

²⁶ Letter from Robinson to Wood, October 15th, 1913: "(Culin) referred to his being out of the social pale, Europeanally speaking, on account of the Japanese wife, etc".

²⁷ Koga Yoshimasa 甲賀宣政 (1860 - 1935) graduated at the Tokyo University. In 1886 (Meiji 19) he was sent to Europe and USA to study the modern minting. After his return he became department manager or Chief Assayer of the gold and silver mint in Osaka.

²⁸ See Document 5: *Rules and Regulations of the Yokohama Society*, and letter from Ramsden to Wood, 17th August 1909. Ramsden and his numismatic friends were planning to attend the International Numismatic Congress, in Brussels, in 1910.

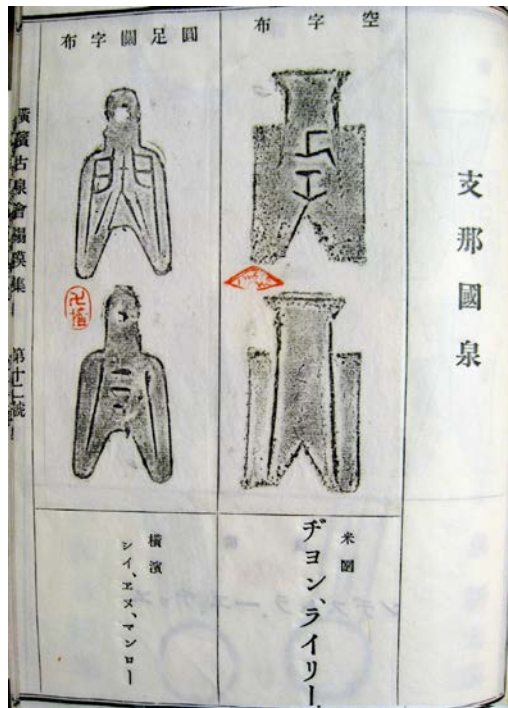


Fig. 4. Yokohama Numismatic Society, n°12,
Peabody Essex Museum Library

In this page from the journal, the caption beneath the spade on the right reads “John Reilly, America”, and the caption beneath the spade on the left reads “Neil Gordon Munro, Yokohama”. It is likely that Ramsden made the rubbing before sending the spade to Reilly. According to East Asian tradition, each collector would stamp his personal seal on rubbings of coins from his collection. It was customary also to stamp one’s seal on books and on paintings. Ramsden and Munro lived in Japan and would have been obliged to have their own seals. The seals in the name of Reilly and Wood were probably made, and used, by Ramsden.²⁹

To Ramsden, numismatics and collecting came first, and coin dealing second. He needed to make a living but did not care too much about making a profit. He spent most of his life studying coins, and writing about them, and in 1910 told Robinson that his coin-dealing business was not to earn a living, but rather a means to stay active.

Reilly has probably told you [Robinson] that I have independent means, sufficient especially in this country, to allow me to live comfortably - and the commercial side of my business is not the most important interest. I have resigned and tried to retire on two separate and distinct occasions, but I find I can not be, at my present age, without doing anything and hence my taking up my brother in law's business which is at the same time my hobby. You will therefore under-

²⁹ Wood’s name was transcribed as ホーランド, ウード or as: ハウランド, ウード. Ramsden's name in Japanese was ラムスデン.

stand when I tell you that I play my reputation and name much above any commercial gain.³⁰

But the business side would surely have enhanced his pleasure as a collector, justifying his perpetual search for rare and ancient coins, and enabling him to meet with others, educate them, discuss coins and expand his knowledge.

Ramsden also put together sets of coins, which were intended to give an insight into Chinese coinage. For example, there was

a collection comprising the first inscribed money in ancient China, consisting of Ming Knife sword or Razor Money, Pu or Cloth Money of the Usurper Wang Mang, Metallic [sic] Cowrie of Half Tael in value and Tortoise back coin of An Yang, all, - excepting one, - dating Before Christ, perfect patination

This was an educational set including different forms of coins, of different dates, and bearing different script styles. Ramsden's sets of coins were intended to inspire, and to encourage in their owners a taste for Asian coins.

Ramsden would also build collections to order. Most notably, he helped John Robinson to build his collection³¹

My general plan will be as follows: I will get Lacouperie (the best work of its kind) and go down the entire list of coins mentioned by him. I will take into consideration the coins you already have: I will give you more or less an idea of what I think you ought to have, bearing in mind the representative character of your intended collection.

He advised Robinson on the representative character of the coins selected, and included remarks on Chinese numismatics in his correspondence with Robinson. He also helped Robinson build up a numismatic library, recommending only essential works, and ignoring more recent publications. There was one particular Chinese book that Ramsden considered indispensable: Li Zuoxian's *Catalogue of ancient coins* (古泉匯 *Guquanhui*), first published in the mid-nineteenth century.³²

In January 1914, Ramsden wrote to Robinson:

I thought you had Ku Ch'uan Hwui [古泉匯 pinyin: *Guquanhui*] and its companion Su Ch'uan Hwui [續泉匯 *Xuquanhui*] which is considered the standard work on Chinese Numismatics, published in China in Chinese. It has some 16 and 4 volumes or books, respectively, some 20 books in all. It is the most trustworthy of all native works, the illustrations most correct and the information most reliable. I think I sold two copies of this work to your country, one to Higgings³³ and the other one to Wood. There are many editions, the oldest ones being more expensive than the later one. Prices range from \$16.00 to \$18. the 20 books. I certainly think that you ought to have a copy of this work, as no library, public or private, would be considered worth anything without one.³⁴

³⁰ Letter from Ramsden to Wood, 26th July 1910.

³¹ Letter from Ramsden to Robinson, 23rd November 1910.

³² Letter from Ramsden to Robinson, 2 January 1912.

³³ Probably Frank C. Higgins, Fellow of the Royal Numismatic Society, and President of the New York Numismatic Club. Higgins authored "The Chinese Numismatic Riddle" (The Elder Numismatic Press, NYC, 1910).

³⁴ Letter from Ramsden to Robinson, 2nd January 1912.

In the Robinson library, only four Chinese books are to be found, but they are valuable works such as: the *Complete record of coins and spades* (*Quanpu tongzhi* 泉布統志),³⁵ the *Illustrations of Coin types* (*Qianshitu* 錢式圖),³⁶ the *Imperially Sanctioned Register of Coins* (*Qinding qianlu* 欽定錢錄),³⁷ and, finally, the *Catalogue of Ancient Coins* (*Guquanhui* 古泉匯) and *Supplement of the Catalogue of Coins* (*Xuquanhui* 續泉匯)³⁸.

Although being a dealer enabled Ramsden to see a vast quantity of coins, and to select the best for his own collection, he was never comfortable in the commercial world. He was sensitive of the suspicion it might arouse and the shadow it might cast on him. For this reason, although he was the owner of the business, the company Jun Kobayagawa Co. operated in the name of his brother-in-law. His customers did not know the family connection. Ramsden masked the link by sending two letters at a time: a business letter, giving the price of the purchase, in the name of the company, in which he referred to himself in the third person, and which he signed as Jun Kobayagawa; and a personal letter, in his own name, in which he explained how he had acquired the coin(s), and its historical value.

Ramsden was genuinely interested in advancing and promoting the study of East Asian numismatics. He would have made a superb curator at the ANS, a suggestion that was raised by Howland Wood (who was curator there from 1913), in early 1914:

I state this as you mention that you would like the congenial job that I have. The job is congenial, I will admit, and if everything works out all right, there will be enough room for others here. Some time I may be in a position to say that the Society intends to have the best collection of Far Eastern coins known, and to be known as the authority on the subject. If that time ever comes it may be worth your while to be a part of us. It is now just in the air with a small foundation to work on.³⁹

Ramsden confirmed that he wanted “to dedicate [himself] entirely to numismatic research and publication of the results.”⁴⁰

It was perhaps for this reason that Ramsden wrote his life history in a letter to Wood, summarising his aspirations, and allowing us a rare glimpse of his personality, his business and about that particular period in history. No photos of Ramsden are known, unless he is one of the people in the Jun Kobayagawa postcard (**Fig. 3**)

Sadly, Ramsden did not become a curator at the ANS. He died in January 1915, aged only 43, leaving a distraught wife and two children.

³⁵ By Meng Lin 孟麟 (Qing dynasty).

³⁶ By Xie Kun 謝堃 (1784-1844), published in 1842.

³⁷ See note 6.

³⁸ See note 7, the Supplement was complementing the previous work and was written by Li Zuoxian and his friend Bao Kang in 1875.

³⁹ Letter from Wood to Ramsden, February 16th 1914

⁴⁰ Letter from Ramsden to Wood, 20th March 1914.

THE FOUR MEN WHO DEVELOPED THE EAST ASIAN COIN COLLECTION

By the 1900s Henry Ramsden was already established as an expert in East Asian coins and books, with a growing international reputation. In 1909, he engaged a young man, Howland Wood, to be his middleman in the USA. He was already supplying coins to John Reilly Jr, when Wood introduced him to John Robinson, another major collector. These four men – Ramsden, Wood, Robinson and Reilly - played a crucial role in the establishment and development of the East Asian coin collection at the ANS. I will introduce them briefly below and show how the four men interacted.

Howland Wood

Howland Wood (1877-1938), a graduate of Brown University, and working in the photo-engraving business (1900-1912), had a keen interest in numismatics, especially of the Islamic world. In 1905 he was elected as General Secretary of the American Numismatic Association, a post he held for three years. In 1907, he became Secretary of the Boston Numismatic Society, and reorganized it while he was in post. In 1908 he was one of the founders of the New York Numismatic Club. In 1909 he became a Member of the American Numismatic Society. He was also the editor of *The Numismatist*.⁴¹ As a dealer based in Yokohama, Ramsden needed an agent, or middleman, in the USA, and engaged Wood in this role in 1909. Wood provided Ramsden with the names and addresses of American collectors, and arranged advertisements for Ramsden's company in *The Numismatist*. He also acted for the company, receiving coins and books from Ramsden, and forwarding payments to him. He enjoyed discounts on purchases he made for himself, and sometimes earned a commission from the sales. He also paid Ramsden's various membership fees in the USA. In January 1913, Wood was appointed curator of the ANS.⁴² He wrote monographs on Canadian and Oriental coins and articles on East Asian coinage.⁴³

John Robinson

John Robinson (1846-1925), of Salem, MA, was a botanist and landscape architect, who had developed a taste for numismatics after finding some East Asian coins on his father's desk. His father had spent some years in China, and the young Robinson enlarged the collection, trying to illustrate the coinage of all countries which had coins with characters in the inscriptions: China, Annam, Siam, Japan, Korea, India, the islands of South East Asia, eventually building up a collection of 3,418 coins (including a few from Central Asia, Africa and the Mediterranean countries), which he donated to the Essex Institute in 1913.⁴⁴ At the time of his death, he was curator of the Peabody Museum of Salem. He was also a member of the American Numismatic

⁴¹ "Obituary - Howland Wood", *The Numismatist*, (February 1938): 128-129.

⁴² "Howland Wood", *The Numismatist* (March 1913): 151.

⁴³ See the bibliography for a list of his publications on East Asian coinage.

⁴⁴ A list of the donated coins is included in John Robinson, *Oriental Numismatics - A catalog of the collection of books relating to the Coinage of the East presented to the Essex Institute* (Salem, Massachusetts: The Compiler, 1913), 9-10

Association, the Boston Numismatic Society, the Yokohama numismatic society if Japan and of the Numismatic Society of India at Lucknow⁴⁵.

John Reilly Jr

John Reilly Jr (1876-1931), a graduate of Princeton University, was an electrical engineer. He was President of the Ambroid Company, famous for its Original Liquid Cement (a kind of glue). He served on the Council and Board of Governors of the ANS and was the Society's Treasurer for many years.⁴⁶ He was particularly invested in the life of the Society, and enjoyed a permanent office on its premises, which was named the Reilly Room after his death at the young age of 54. A plethora of membership cards in the Reilly archives confirm his membership of an extensive range of scientific societies: The American Geographical Society, The Merchants Club, the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, and a number of other numismatic societies: The Numismatic and Antiquarian Society of Philadelphia, and The New York Numismatic Club. He was also involved in societies concerned with Asian art such as The American Oriental Society, and was elected as a member of The Asiatic Society of Japan following an introduction from Ramsden. He may have also persuaded the numismatists Howland Wood and E. T. Newell to join him at The Oriental Club.

Reilly spent most of his life in the USA (New York, Boston and Florida). His first visit to East Asia in 1907 sparked an interest in East Asian art, and he made a second trip to China and Japan in 1909 with the intention of building an art collection. Bowker describes him as

an omnivorous collector of everything and anything in any way relating to Far Eastern numismatics. In addition to coins and books on coins, his collection included objects of all kinds in which the coin motif was used in the design or decoration. These include carved figurines in wood and ivory, netsuke, inro, porcelain and cloisonne dishes, brass and bronze statuettes, pictures, fabrics and many other objects too numerous to mention.⁴⁷

Reilly made a third trip to Asia, reaching China in 1926, where he stayed for several months, and collected 3,000 coins. During his lifetime, he put together a collection of 26,000 Chinese coins, ranging from antiquity to contemporary coins – an astonishing collection for someone resident in the USA, without direct access to Chinese dealers. By comparison, most American collections of Chinese coins were assembled by missionaries, diplomats or businessmen who were based in China.⁴⁸ He did not speak Chinese or Japanese, and could not write in those languages either.

Reilly's coin collection was created in the USA. He was in contact with every American and European coin dealer, and he had a cousin, Lili, who had settled in Kobe,

⁴⁵ "Obituary - John Robinson", *The Numismatist* (June 1925): 329.

⁴⁶ "Obituary - John Reilly, Jr", *The Numismatist*, (March 1931): 204-205.

⁴⁷ Bowker, Howard F. "Chinese Books in the Library of the American Numismatic Society", *The Coin Collector's Journal* (August 1940): 231. Reilly's antiques (including lacquer boxes, porcelain dishes, carvings and teapots - some of which were displayed in the Reilly Room) were donated to the ANS along with his collection of coins but were later returned to the family. It is a pity that some coin-related artifacts, such as his lacquer coin cabinet, may have been given back.

⁴⁸ This was true for collectors in Europe too, see Helen Wang, 'A short history of Chinese numismatics in European languages', *Early China* 35-36 (2012-2103), pp. 395-429.

Japan,⁴⁹ but his key contact was Henry Ramsden, whom he had met in Yokohama in 1907. Ramsden had given him a copy of Munro's *Coins of Japan*, which Reilly had read on his way home. Eager to acquire Munro's collection,⁵⁰ Reilly returned to Japan in 1909 and purchased it for ¥4,000.⁵¹ During this visit, Ramsden also introduced him to the Yokohama Numismatic Society.

Reilly paid a fair price when purchasing Chinese coins from Ramsden: first, because the coins were bronze, and second, because there was seldom competition from other collectors. Through the invoices kept by Reilly, we can see that he bought coins for between 15 and 25 dollars a piece.

Introductions c.1910

Around 1910, Ramsden introduced Reilly to Wood, and the two developed strong links and a deep friendship, especially after Wood was appointed curator at the ANS in 1913, where Reilly was the treasurer. Wood introduced a new client, John Robinson, to Ramsden in 1910, and this was to prove another flourishing relationship.

Ramsden wrote to Robinson, 26 April 1910:

In order to avoid you as much inconvenience as possible, and if it meets with your approval, settlement for any coins retained by you may be made to Mr Wood, and to whom you can also send any coins you may wish to return.

And to Wood, 26 July 1910:

Thank you so very much for your introductions which have resulted in the connection with Mr Robinson and I hope to soon hear from him direct as his wants. I am glad that Reilly's personal acquaintance with me has been of help, - and I am certain we can satisfy him.

Although Ramsden was supplying coins to both Robinson and Reilly, it is clear that he prioritized Robinson:

[Ramsden] had a system of sending coins first to Robinson, who took his pick and then sent the balance to Howland Wood in New York, who then arranged that Reilly should purchase those which fitted into his collection.⁵²

The pecking order also applied to news and information: Ramsden would write to Robinson, who would transmit the information to Wood, who would then talk to Reilly.

Ramsden wrote to Robinson, 7 May 1911:

I am writing in detail the above, so that, if you will be so kind, as to show Mr Wood this letter, I will not again have to write to him on this subject.

⁴⁹ Lilian Happer, wife of William Happer.

⁵⁰ Reilly's copy is in the ANS library, and bears manuscript notes evidently by Reilly. It would be interesting to compare the book with the collection.

⁵¹ An invoice for ¥4,000 was issued on June 19th, 1909 by Arthur and Bond Fine Art Gallery in Yokohama.

⁵² Bowker 1943, p. 231.

This arrangement appears to have worked well and set the scene for the future: Ramsden as the source of collections and expertise, Wood as the middleman and subsequently curator, Robinson as a collector (we can assume that Ramsden was instrumental in Robinson's election as a member of the Yokohama Numismatic Society in 1911), and Reilly as a collector and ANS stalwart. Wood's appointment as curator at the ANS in 1913 was a turning point, and strengthened his links with Reilly. The two worked collaboratively to promote East Asian numismatics in the USA through exhibitions, lectures and publications.

HISTORY OF THE EAST ASIAN COIN COLLECTION

The beginnings of an East Asian coin collection

Ramsden, Wood, Robinson and Reilly played crucial roles in developing the East Asian collection of the ANS. An overview of the content of the collection before their intervention helps to measure their influence.

By the early 1910s the ANS had a small collection of Chinese coins. Most were donations received between 1865 and 1893 of contemporary dollars from Hong Kong, then a British colony. The rest were mainly Qing dynasty coins⁵³ with two coins of the Ming dynasty.⁵⁴

The collection was enlarged significantly in 1905 with a large donation from Charles Gregory, a New York City banker, and founder of the firm Charles Gregory and Co. Gregory also had a serious interest in the ANS, he had been a member since 17 January 1888, and subsequently became a Life Member and Patron, and was a member of Oriental Coins Standing Committee at the time of his death in 1915.⁵⁵ It seems that Gregory donated his entire collection of East Asian coins to the ANS, as none were listed in the sale of his estate.⁵⁶ Howard L. Adelson (1958) records that Gregory "donated his collection of 1,411 items including many very rare Chinese, Japanese, and Siamese pieces" and that "this was the first sizeable collection of coins of East Asia to come to the Society."⁵⁷ Gregory's donation brought ancient Chinese coins in the shape of knives and spades into the ANS collection for the first time. The donation included 19 ancient knives, 32 ancient spades, one "key inlaid with gold" (probably a Wang Mang knife bearing the inscription *yi dao ping wuqian* – knife value 5,000), 984 round coins, 12 "silver helmet" (probably silver ingots), 43 "old small" and 11 "old large" coins, two "bell money", three "tally money" and seven "bridge money" (items which were at that time considered by collectors as coins, but are no longer regarded as such), 22 "temple money" (probably amulets) and three contemporary silver coins.⁵⁸ In 1911, Gregory gave to the Society a further 31 Chinese copper coins and two amulets.

⁵³ Coins minted during the Shun Zhi (1638-1661), Kang Xi (1661-1722), Yong Zheng (1722-1735), Qian Long (1735-1796), Jia Qing (1796-1820) and Dao Guang (1820-1850) eras.

⁵⁴ These are coins from the Hong Wu (1368-1398) and Jia Jing (1521-1566) eras.

⁵⁵ See Annual Meeting on 15 January 1916, in *American Journal of Numismatics and Proceedings of the American Numismatic Society* 1915, vol. XLIX (1916), p. xxx and xliii.

⁵⁶ See Gregory Estate Sale, by Chapman, New York, June 19th to 24th, 1915.

⁵⁷ H. Adelson, *The American Numismatic Society 1858-1958*, (1958): 188 - the curatorial database only registers a donation of 1,363 coins.

⁵⁸ See the ANS curatorial database.

Between 1905 and 1911, a few more donations were received, including “32 specimens of ancient Chinese bronze money” from Mr W. W. C. Wilson, of Montreal, in 1910 with ten additional coins later the same year.⁵⁹ In 1911, there was a bequest of 229 bronze coins, along with four gold and 17 silver coins, from China and Japan from the estate of Isaac John Greenwood (1833-1911).⁶⁰

In the early twentieth century, the ANS also housed a private collection of 779 coins from China, Korea, Japan, and Annam, along with 194 medals and amulets. The collection had been arrived in 1893, but was officially donated to the ANS as late as 1926.⁶¹

In 1912, the total amount of Chinese coins in the Society's collection was as follows: 158 ancient coins (spade, knife, *banliang*, and coins minted by Wang Mang), more than 1,300 round coins, 13 ingots and 24 amulets.

The development of the East Asian collection in the 1910s

Ramsden, Wood, Robinson and Reilly sought to establish East Asian numismatics as a field of study in the 1910s. Wood had already written several articles on East Asian coinage in the 1900s, and continued to do so in the 1910s. He also drafted an essay titled *Manuscript of Sen*⁶², which contains two sections – a Catalogue of Chinese, Annamese, Japanese and Javanese coins; and an Index of coin inscriptions. The Chinese characters written in the manuscript suggest that Wood had some knowledge of Chinese, and maybe also of Japanese.

The turning point was the acquisition of the Lo Collection in 1913. I will give outline details of the acquisition of the collection below (for fuller details, see the next section).

The “Ro Collection” (as it was called, owing to a transliteration error)⁶³ was initially loaned to the ANS in 1912 for an exhibition of two months.⁶⁴ It belonged to Henry Ramsden, and had been displayed at the American Numismatic Association Convention in Chicago in summer 1911, and had been in the USA ever since. Adelson

⁵⁹ William Walter Coulthard Wilson (1870-1924), see *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Numismatic Biographies*, on NumismaticMall.com. <https://sites.google.com/site/numismaticmallcom/encyclopedic-dictionary-of-numismatic-biographies/wilson-william-walter-coulthard> (accessed on October 27th 2016).

His donation is recorded in the *American Journal of Numismatics (1897-1924)*, vol. 45, No. 1 (January, 1911), p. 33. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43583620>. Wilson's main interest was in Canadian coins and tokens, but he seems to have collected widely, and special mention was made of « the series of Indian Peace Medals, presented by French and English kings and the Presidents of the United States, [which] is one of the most important ever held in a private collection » in the foreword to the sale of his collection at the Anderson Galleries, New York, 16-18 November (New York: Mitchell Kennerley): 1925.

<https://ia902705.us.archive.org/7/items/importantnumisma00ande/importantnumisma00ande.pdf> (accessed on October 27th 2016).

⁶⁰ Isaac John Greenwood joined the ANS in 1859. In 1911, He gave the Society his collection of more than 3,000 coins, medals and banknotes, as well as his numismatic books, see Adelson (1958): 192.

⁶¹ The donation was registered in the name of S.W. Adler. No biographical information can be found on him.

⁶² Now in the Reilly archives.

⁶³ Adelson (1958): 339 note 120.

⁶⁴ ANS (1912).

(1958) assumed that Howland Wood had discovered the coins at the Convention and had taken them back to the ANS.⁶⁵ In fact, Ramsden had asked Wood to help find a buyer for this collection.

Ramsden had known about the Lo collection since at least 1910, had seen it in Peking in December 1910, purchased it in early 1911, and collected it in Peking in March 1911. He was hoping to sell it to the ANS. He appreciated the quality and rarity of the collection, and highlighted a couple of key selling points to Wood, in December 1910: not only were all the pieces genuine, the collection would enable the ANS to outshine the British Museum's collection of early Chinese money!

Wood had received the collection in June 2011. Ramsden had prepared it beautifully for sale, with an asking price of £3,000.⁶⁶ It was not an exorbitant amount, averaging less than \$6 per coin, when some individual pieces were worth as much as \$150 each. For comparison, another collection – the Bahr Collection – which was about half the size (about 230 ancient coins) was offered to Reilly during the fall of 1912 for \$1,500.⁶⁷

However, members of the ANS were reticent, and considered it to be overvalued. Why? First, demand for East Asian coins was limited in western countries. Second, the collection was composed of bronze coins, which made it not so attractive. Third, there was the fear of forgeries which makes collectors cautious with coinages they do not know well. These arguments have been raised by almost every Western museum or numismatic society at some time, and helps to explain why the majority of Chinese coin collections in western museums have been donations. But the ANS had at that time a very poor collection of East Asian coins compared to other museums on the east coast: The Smithsonian Institution already had the Glover Collection,⁶⁸ a donation of 1,237 Chinese coins and charms, and the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology had assembled a collection of about 4,000 Chinese coins.⁶⁹ The Lo collection presented a wonderful opportunity for the ANS. However, the asking price proved to be a real problem and delayed the purchase considerably.

The Lo Collection remained on display at the ANS, and twenty months after its arrival, the ANS finally made a decision to purchase it. A *pro-forma* invoice in the ANS archives gives the value of the collection as \$2,500. It was purchased by a consortium of donors in January 1913, who donated it to the ANS on March 31st 1913.

The Report of the Director, for April 1913, records:⁷⁰

The Lo Collection of Ancient Coins of China, which has been on exhibition here

⁶⁵ "Wood had evidently gone to the American Numismatic Association's convention in Chicago and discovered the coins there", in Adelson (1958): 190.

⁶⁶ Letter from Belden to Wood, September 13th, 1911. Belden (1862-1931) was the director of the American Numismatic Society from 1909 to 1915.

⁶⁷ I found a list of this collection in Reilly's papers. He called it the Bahr collection: probably referring to Abel W. Bahr, a merchant and a collector of Chinese art (paintings, porcelains, jades and others.)

⁶⁸ George B. Glover, of the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs Service, donated 2,025 pieces from his collection to the Smithsonian in 1897. See Ellen R. Feingold, *The Value of Money* (Smithsonian Institution, Washington, 2015), p. 178.

⁶⁹ Hoge (2000):56.

⁷⁰ See ANS archives.

for the past year, has been presented to the Society by Messrs. William B. Osgood Field, Archer M. Huntington, Edward T. Newell, Henry A. Ramsden and J. Sanford Saltus.

This collection contains five hundred and eleven specimens of Chinese money before the round coins were adopted, all of which are undoubtedly genuine, and is one of the best in the world.

Supplementing this collection, Mr. Charles Gregory has presented two Chinese terra cotta molds with two fragmentary castings therefrom and a perfect coin, all of the period of Wang Mang 7 to 14 A. D.⁷¹

Apart from Ramsden, none of the donors in the consortium appear to have had a particular interest in East Asian numismatics. William Bradhurst Osgood Field (1870-1949) and Archer Milton Huntington (1870-1955) were both well-known New York philanthropists. Edward Theodore Newell (1886-1941) was a renowned numismatist, specializing in Greek coins, and was President of the ANS from 1916 to 1941.⁷² John Sanford Saltus (1853-1922) was known for his interest in medallic art and books, and served the ANS in various capacities.⁷³

In April 1913, Howland Wood (1877-1938), who had been appointed the ANS curator three months earlier, described the collection in more detail in *The Numismatist*:

I would like to say a few words about the Ro collection of ancient Chinese coins. These you will notice are all of the odd shape and are, with a few exceptions, much rarer than the more numerous round pieces. The collection was formed by an educated Chinese scholar, who knew his subject, and is, as far as I know, unlike any other collection of its kind that has been gotten together. First, because it was formed at Peking where the better class of things Chinese generally drift to, and secondly because a thorough knowledge of Chinese numismatics was behind the acquiring of these pieces. Most collections that come to this country are picked up over there by either Chinese or foreigners who know little of the subject and have not the powers of discrimination.

Every one of these coins is absolutely genuine — something unheard of in a collection of ancient Chinese coins either here or in Europe. Many public collections in the various museums, though seemingly large and extensive on paper, are really overrun with counterfeits. I understand that this collection is far larger in the kind of pieces represented than any other collection, as it contains over five hundred pieces, all genuine.⁷⁴

The acquisition of the Lo Collection led to increased activity relating to East Asian coinage at the ANS. In May 1913, Reilly gave a lecture on the “Modern Struck Coins of China”.

Ramsden wrote to Wood, 14 May 1913:

What a grand idea of yours to hold periodic meetings where special series of Far Eastern coins are exhibited and discussed. Think of the educational value and how it will help to popularize and advance the interest in the coinages of these countries! (...) You have also by these means hit on a magnificent idea to keep our friend Reilly's interest from lagging, although I have always found him pretty constant to his first love.

⁷¹ Object registered as 1913.38, published in Bates (2004): 41-45.

⁷² See biography of Newell, <http://numismatics.org/authority/newell> (accessed on November 25th, 2016).

⁷³ See biography of Saltus. <http://numismatics.org/authority/saltus> (accessed on November 25th, 2016).

⁷⁴ WOOD (1913, p. 218-219).

Coins from Reilly's, and Howland Wood's collections, were displayed:⁷⁵

The coins exhibited numbered over 570, all struck since 1889, or else bearing on the subject. The collections of Mr. Reilly and Mr. Wood were combined so as to make a continuous exhibit, showing both obverses and reverses, and the series was given added value by a map showing the minting places. The various essays and trial pieces of the tael made an interesting side line, and especially noteworthy were some trial Shanghai taels minted at Hong Kong. The new Republican issues and the rebel and miscellaneous private issues attracted much attention.⁷⁶

In 1914, a Committee on Oriental Coins was created, consisting of Charles Gregory, E. T. Newell, Rev. J. B. Nies, J. Reilly Jr. and H. Wood. All but Nies have been mentioned above. Nies published on Middle Eastern glass seals and weights, and was almost certainly known to Newell, if not to the others.⁷⁷

This small group of people actively sought to expand and promote the existing collection. Duplicates from the so-called Ro Collection were sold to create the *Ro Fund*, which was used to purchase new pieces for the collection (including an Anyi spade in 1914). The committee also organized a permanent exhibition, which was presented in seven cases.⁷⁸ These activities and the plans to develop both the collection and library are stated in the Committee's report for 1914:⁷⁹

The countries classed as "Oriental" appear to have struck no distinctly new coin types during the past year.

China has issued a wonderfully artistic set of government notes, printed by the American Bank Note Company.

There have been no notable discoveries, nor has any sale of importance been reported.

The famous Glover collection of Far Eastern Coins is again on view in the National Museum in Washington.

Quite a number of articles on oriental coins were published last year, but none worth special mention here. The writings of our fellow-member, H.A. Ramsden, of Yokohama, continue to be the best on sino-numismatics.

Our library lacks hundreds of books and pamphlets on Orientals, which we really need, if efficient work is to be done here.

The Society's cabinet contains some of the finest and rarest pieces from the Orient, but it also has wide gaps in many series, too numerous for space here. Many coins could be supplied at small cost.

The idea has been expressed several times that our Society should pay special attention to its Far Eastern collection, because of this country's historic and present interest, diplomatically and commercially, in the great nations on the other side of the Pacific. As their principal coinage is copper, in numerous interesting and curious varieties, many of great age and low cost, beginners and specialists should be encouraged in this rich field.

⁷⁵ *Proceedings of the ANS* (1913).

⁷⁶ ANS (1913, p. 281-285).

⁷⁷ For example, J.B. Nies, « Kufic glass weights and bottle lamps », *Proceedings of the American Numismatic and Archaeological Society*, 1902, pp. 45-55. Newell also had a collection of glass weights, which were published in George C. Miles, *Early Arabic Glass Weights and Stamps*, ANS Numismatic Notes and Monographs no. 111 (1948), Preface, p. vi.

⁷⁸ ANS (1915, p. 65-66).

⁷⁹ Proceedings of the American Numismatic Society from February 21, 1914 to January 16, 1915 and list of officers and members, *American Journal of Numismatics*, vol. 48 (1914), pp. i, iii-xlv, xlvii-lviii – the report is on pp. xxxi-xxxii. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43587817>

During the past year there have been on exhibition in this building a number of oriental coins, medals, decorations, paper money, tokens, and other objects, relating to oriental numismatics. At present, there are seven cases full of interesting and instructive material from the Orient, arranged in an attractive manner. In one case are excellent examples of the odd shaped, early coins of China, showing the development of these strange pieces. Two cases contain fragments of clay molds, complete castings, and finished strings of "cash", showing method of manufacture and use of these obsolete coins. Another case shows how the oriental collector catalogues, displays and stores his collection, by books illustrated with inked rubbings and fancy lacquered and ivory boxes and brocaded bags for pet coins.

A case is filled with Mohammedan [Islamic] and colonial coin types from Asia; another with the principal types of China, Japan, Annam and Cambodia. The seventh case shows Annamese and Siamese coins and a good lot of the curious porcelain tokens of the latter country. The cowries and stone monies are on view among the primitive exhibit. The current coins of Japan and Kiao Chao [Kiautschou; pinyin: Jiaozhou 膠州] are also on exhibition. We showed this year the various forms of the dollar used in the Orient, also a great many varieties of paper money from Japan and China.

Most of Asia manufactures its own money, but recently Paris has struck silver and Brussels copper and nickel for Siam.

General interest in oriental numismatics is, undoubtedly, increasing. 1914 has been a very encouraging year for your Oriental Coin Committee, and we expect at least, to double our activities in 1915.

Very respectfully,
John Reilly, Jr., Chairman
Howland Wood,
Charles Gregory,
James B. Nies,
Committee.

Unfortunately, things did not turn out as hoped. Within six months of that report, two members of the Committee had died: Ramsden on 27 January 1915, and Gregory on 20 May 1915. The Committee on Oriental Coins reported to the Society's members at the Annual Meeting, on 15 January 1916:

During the past year the field of Oriental numismatics has been very quiet.

Your Committee has no knowledge of any important finds or sales, except the find of gold quarter dinars at Cordoba, buried about the middle of the fifth century A.H. (about the middle of the eleventh century A.D.) containing some unpublished pieces of Spanish Arab Kings, including many struck at Palermo during the Arabian occupation. The whole find is very interesting as the quarter dinars are a scarce denomination.

The appearance of any articles on oriental subjects has, no doubt been delayed by the great war.

Some notes on certain pieces of Chinese paper money, by A. Mac F. Davis, were published this fall. Two articles, by H.A. Ramsden, have appeared since his death; the first, in Spink's Numismatic Circular, on "The Origin of Chinese Cash"; the second, in the Numismatic Chronicle, on "The Ancient Coins of Lin-tzu [pinyin: Linzi]".

Far Eastern numismatics have suffered a great loss in the death of Henry Alexander Ramsden, at Yokohama, January 27th last.

He was a patron and associate of the Society.

As editor, author, student, and enthusiastic collector he had no equal, and there seems to be none to fill his place. His valuable and interesting monthly, The Numismatic and Philatelic Journal of Japan, died with its editor.

We have here and now a great opportunity to continue some of the good work begun by Mr Ramsden. We have the material within our reach. Our Chinese collection is the best in rare pieces in any museum, and, if we include several public

and private collections in our Eastern States, there is no equal sino-numismatic field in the world. Much fundamental research is needed before our knowledge of this important subject is on par with many more popular subjects.

Our greatest weakness is in the library. Your committee respectfully recommends the purchase or donation of the most necessary reference works. These are absolutely essential for starting the simplest kind of work.

The committee regrets the loss of its member, Mr Charles Gregory, who died May 20th.

Respectfully submitted,
John Reilly, Jr, Chairman
James B. Nies,
Howland Wood,
Committee.

What happened after Ramsden's death?

Ramsden's death⁸⁰ robbed Wood, Reilly and Robinson not only of their expert coin dealer, but of a very dear friend. The news took some time to reach them, mainly due to Jun Kobayagawa's minimal English and their minimal Japanese. Reilly raised the question of Ramsden's collection. He had previously arranged to buy Ramsden's entire collection of Chinese round coins, and insisted on this point in a letter to Ramsden's executor, William Holst:

I have many pieces from the Ramsden collection and in October, 1914, we began arrangements for me to receive over twenty-five hundred of his Chinese coins. Mr. Ramsden's letters to me from October 12th, 1914,⁸¹ cover this proposition, which was halted by his death.⁸²

John Robinson also campaigned for the Ramsden collection to come to the ANS. He tirelessly sent out letters, with the only aim in mind: to buy back the Ramsden collection. Robinson did not want the collection himself; his own collection was already as he desired it, and the Ramsden collection (which was five times the size of Robinson's) was far too large for him.

Reilly wanted to buy the collection for the ANS, for scientific purposes:

In fact Mr. Wood and I are interested only so far as the collection will advance the work we were doing here with Ramsden's help. In other words, we look on the collection as if it were the assets of a going business, and we want everything in any way connected with it, in order to continue the fine work begun by the late owner. Such, I am sure was Ramsden's wish.⁸³

But Holst, as executor, was obliged to follow the late Ramsden's will. There was no mention of Reilly in the will. However, Ramsden had decided to offer the collection to Wood,

My Far-Eastern coin collection, including all books on Far-Eastern numismatics, either in Japanese, Chinese or other languages, are to be kept separate from my other posses-

⁸⁰ He died, after three weeks of illness, of *typhoid abdominalis*, in the General Hospital of Yokohama.

⁸¹ I found no trace of such letters.

⁸² Letter from Reilly to Holst, March 1st, 1916.

⁸³ Letter from Reilly to C.K. Marshall Martin, March 1st, 1916. C.K. Marshall Martin (1862-1949) was the Director of the Grand Hotel in Yokohama and a collector of Japanese art.

sions, and I recommend that they are offered en bloc to Mr. Wood of New York for a sum of not less than ¥30,000.- which includes the collection of Siamese porcelain tokens, charms etc.etc. Should this price be unobtainable, the collection to be kept intact until my son grows up, but should he at majority not take an interest in continuing this collection, it is to be presented in its entirety to the British Museum, London, to bear my name. Under no condition single pieces of this collection should be disposed of.⁸⁴

Wood could not afford to purchase Ramsden's collection, nor could the ANS. But Reilly, who had sufficient means, purchased both the coin collection (15,000 coins) and the library at the price given in Ramsden's will.⁸⁵

The coins and amulets in Ramsden's collection arrived with rubbings and a sketch of each item in the collection (see **Fig. 5**). Before the advent of photography - and also because Chinese coins are flat, with an inscription rather than a pictorial design - rubbings were the most convenient way to reproduce coins,⁸⁶ and inscriptions on stone or bronze. Rubbings were the only established mean of spreading knowledge of work of art among scholarly circles. For East Asian collectors, rubbings could be as valuable as the objects themselves.⁸⁷

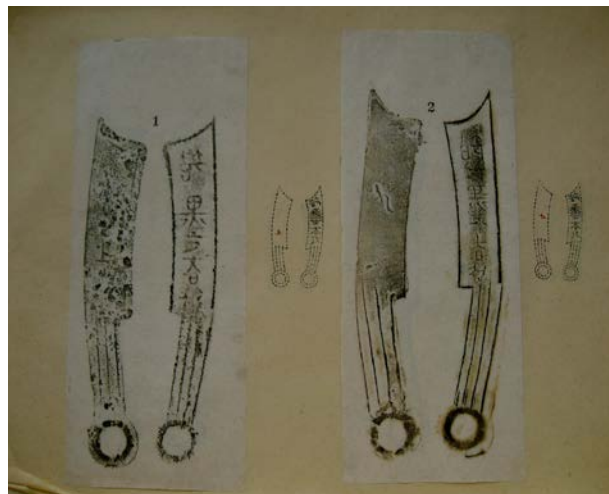


Fig. 5 Rubbings and sketches of knife money in the Ramsden collection, ANS archives

The Reilly Collection

⁸⁴ Extract from Codicil n°2 to Mr. Henry Alexander Ramsden's testament.

⁸⁵ The coin collection was sold for ¥30,000 by James Eades and Co.

⁸⁶ A rubbing is obtained by placing a soaked paper over the surface of the coin and then rubbing the paper with a marking tool. The sunken areas remain unstained and the raised areas are duplicated on the paper. Producing a rubbing can bring out text that is difficult to read.

⁸⁷ The rubbings of the Ramsden collection are kept in the ANS archives, and are composed of fourteen parts: Early Barter and uninscribed Money; Spade coins; Square Footed Ku-Pu Coins; Pointed Footed Ku-Pu Coins; Miscellaneous Ku-Pu Coins; Large Knife Coins; Pointed and Kan-tan coins; Ming knife coins; Chinese coin-charms and Amulets; Modern Chinese copper coins and Chinese Openwork Amulet coins; Corean coins and coin charms; Japanese coins and coin charms; Siamese Porcelain and other Tokens; Anamese coins, Japanese medals and Miscellaneous. Two sections of the collection are missing: "Wang Mang Pu and Knife coins" and "Ancient Chinese round coins". Eighty rubbings of round coins are enclosed in Reilly's papers in the ANS Archives and could be a part of the missing sections.

In 1917 John Reilly Jr had an office at the ANS, and brought with him his collection of coins and books. In effect, he occupied the position that Wood had suggested to Ramsden: a permanent office at the ANS, without a salary.

While Ramsden had been particularly interested in antiquity, Reilly's true interest lay in modern struck coinage. But he continued Ramsden's ambition to promote Chinese numismatics in the USA. He gave lectures, organized exhibitions with Wood, and was an active member of the Committee on Oriental Coinage. He continued to expand his collection, reaching the astonishing number of 26,000 coins from across Asia, which now constitutes the most important part of the ANS East Asian coin collection. Reilly created his collection by purchasing entire collections. Reilly kept his invoices in this office at the ANS, and it would be interesting to identify the origins of the collections.⁸⁸ Reilly's daughter, Miss Frances Reilly, donated Reilly's collection to the society in 1936.⁸⁹ His numismatic library was also donated to the ANS. Many Chinese references, dating for the most of them to the 19th century, are to be found. (see list in Annexe).

THE LUO ZHENYU COLLECTION

(restoring the identity of the Ro (Lo) Collection)

We have so far explored the route taken by Chinese coins when arriving in the USA, being transferred between Wood, Robinson and Reilly. It is now worth exploring how Ramsden acquired Chinese coins in East Asia, which he would ultimately send to collectors overseas. In that regard, the example of the Lo collection proves significant.

How did the Lo Collection come to the ANS?

The ANS records give only the briefest indication about the provenance of the Lo Collection. From Howland Wood's appraisal (see above), it was assumed the collector was male, that he was "an educated Chinese scholar, who knew his subject" and that the collection was put together in Peking. Another description of the collection⁹⁰ records that it was

formed by Professor Ro of the University of Peking [and included] five hundred eleven specimens of Chinese money, all issued prior to the Christian era and before the use of round coinage was adopted in China.

In fact, the Lo Collection had been in the USA since 1911. It had been displayed in Chicago during the American Numismatic Association Convention in summer 1911.

⁸⁸ I have found, for example, letters written to the widow of Albert Schroeder (1851- c. 1917), a major specialist on South East Asian coins, about the sale of her husband's collection of Siamese coins, the current whereabouts of which we do not know. It seems that Reilly was not interested in this collection.

⁸⁹ It is based on this collection, that Wang Yü-Ch'üan wrote *Early Chinese coinage* (Numismatic Notes and Monographs, n°122, New York: American Numismatic Society, 1951).

⁹⁰ ANS (1914, p. 14).

Adelson (1958) affirms that Howland Wood saw the collection in Chicago, and took it back to the ANS.⁹¹ However the truth is slightly different.

The Lo Collection had been entrusted to Wood by Ramsden, with the aim of finding a purchaser in Chicago. As a coin dealer based in Yokohama, Ramsden had several agents located in the main cities of China to provide him with new discoveries and collections available for purchase. Towards the end of the Qing dynasty, mounting political troubles led many scholars to dispose of their collections. Ramsden heard that Mr Ro's collection was available. He already knew of Mr Ro, and had purchased coins from him previously. Ramsden went in person to Peking to see the collection and he related this meeting to his old friend Wood in a letter, dated December 2nd 1910.⁹²

When I was in Peking this last time, I carefully examined and inspected the collection of ancient Chinese coins belonging to Mr. Ro, who has been amassing them for nigh on 30 years. He is the rector of the Chinese Higher School or University at Peking and is considered the greatest Chinese authority on the subject. His collection is certainly the biggest and most important in China, and embraces nearly all series. ...

As I believe he now recognizes that my collection has passed his, or that his principal interest is now directed to the collecting and studying of writings on old bone⁹³ (similar to the two samples I sent you) he intimated to me his desire of selling his collection in bloc, that is to say, that part which embraces the ancient representative coinage of China, but no circular or round ones.

Whatever Mr Ro's motives for selling his collection, it is clear that Ramsden could see and appreciate its value. It comprised, he wrote in his letter to Wood, "some 4 to 5 hundred specimens comprising all series, some of them very strong - and includes only GENUINE specimens".⁹⁴ He had an option on it, and was trying to find a purchaser. He was in contact with a German museum, but was also thinking of the ANS. In 1910, Howland Wood was not yet curator at the ANS; he was active in numismatic circles and acted as a middleman for Ramsden to supply the American market. In Ramsden's opinion the Lo collection offered a splendid opportunity, one of its main selling points being that it easily overshadowed the British Museum's collection of pre-Qin coins both in terms of quantity and quality:

The British Museum collection has only 150 specimens of this class (the ancient representative money) and of these the greater part of the rarer kind are IMITATIONS! This collection would be 3 times the size and more than 3 times in importance since it has all series represented with genuine specimens. The price is ridiculous in view of its importance and that is why I am not going to let the opportunity pass.⁹⁵

Ramsden purchased the collection at the beginning of 1911, but was not able to collect it immediately.

⁹¹ "Wood had evidently gone to the American Numismatic Association's convention in Chicago and discovered the coins there", in Adelson (1958): 190.

⁹² Letter from Ramsden to Wood, 2nd December 1910.

⁹³ The old bones, also called oracle bones or *jiaguwen*, are fragments of turtle plastron that were used for divination purposes and were the most ancient form of Chinese script dating back to the Shang Dynasty (1600 BC -1046 BC).

⁹⁴ Letter from Ramsden to Wood, 2nd December 1910.

⁹⁵ Letter from Ramsden to Wood, 18st April 1910.

He wrote to Robinson on February 11th, 1911:⁹⁶

I intended going to Peking this month to take charge of that big collection which I have bought, but the quarantine and other measures imposed on account of the plague, make it impossible for me. My Peking agent is in charge of this and the collection ought to be here by the end of this month. Then I will have my hands full!

Ramsden took possession of the collection at the beginning of March 1911, and wrote to Robinson

I note what you say about the A.N.S. and the large collection of Chinese Coins I have just bought from Peking. I think it will be hard for anyone to decide anything until they can see the collection itself. It requires the eye to be cast in it and then it will do the trick, but I do not think it can be done unless one sees the collection itself. (...) I have no doubt a purchaser could be found without much difficulty, provided he was able to see the actual specimens which comprise the collection. They are so attractive and fascinating that they would not fail if seen, as they would speak for themselves.

He spent the next three months mounting the entire collection on boards, doing everything himself:⁹⁷

I did put a great deal of work into it - and this is no mere "figure of speech", since I even did personally the fret work part of fitting in the coins, as well as writing all the characters not only on the small papers next to each coin, but also in the *uchigata* book, etc. I was kept three full months at work on this, and I would not lightly again undertake a similar job.

He undertook this work with the aim of selling the collection, complete with all relevant information. He took rubbings of the coins, and compiled a catalogue of the collection,⁹⁸ with which even an absolute beginner could have enjoyed the collection. There was no real need to put the coins on boards (coins could travel in small envelopes without any problem). But Ramsden insisted on doing it, because it made a nice display and showed off the quality of the collection. He knew that few people understood enough about Chinese coins to be able to judge the quality of the collection from a written description, and Wood had convinced him that nothing could be done without actually seeing the collection.⁹⁹

The collection, along with the catalogue, was sent to Howland Wood, in the USA, on June 21st 1911.¹⁰⁰ Today, there is no trace of the catalogue in the ANS archives. The boards probably disappeared a long time ago. Ramsden had mounted several coins on each board, so they were probably quite large and bulky, and from the beginning the ANS had found it difficult to store them.

⁹⁶ Letter from Ramsden to Robinson, 11th February 1911.

⁹⁷ Letter from Ramsden to Wood, 23rd August 1911. *Uchigata* are a kind of rubbing done in Japan.

⁹⁸ The catalogue was sent with the collection on June 21st, 1911 to Wood. No trace of the catalogue or the rubbings is to be found in the archives.

⁹⁹ Letter from Ramsden to Robinson, 13th March 1911.

¹⁰⁰ Letter from Jun Kobayagawa to Wood, 21st June, 1911.

As we do not know exactly the final price that the consortium paid for the collection, we must assume it was in the region of \$2,500, with Ramsden contributing up to \$500 and the remaining \$2,000 raised by the other members of the consortium.¹⁰¹

In other words, Ramsden was both the seller and a co-purchaser of the collection. This raises a number of questions, not least the question of benefit to himself. Was he a philanthropist who wanted to save this collection, or a dealer trying to run a profitable business? He had originally paid between 3,500 and 4,000 Mexican dollars (US\$ 1,500 to 1,750) for the collection.¹⁰² He had also had to pay his agent in Peking, shipment of the collection and had spent three months working on the collection. After two years of negotiation, he finally received \$2,000 from the ANS. Ramsden did not make much from the sale.

The *pro-forma* invoice also raises questions. The invoice gives the value of the collection as \$2,500,¹⁰³ but we know that Wood had proposed the collection to the ANS for \$3,000.¹⁰⁴ Belden had asked for favourable price for the ANS, and when Wood refused an offer of \$2,500, had said "You certainly are up against something of a problem".¹⁰⁵

We also know that Ramsden had asked Wood to take charge of the collection and to find a purchaser. He was strongly advised to promote it, and was offered a commission of 5% that he never claimed. Was the difference of \$500 for his personal undertaking? It was not a small sum (one fifth of his annual salary) – he was appointed as curator at the ANS in January 1913 with an annual salary of \$2,500 – and he held out as long as he could, hence the delay in the negotiations.

Fortunately, Ramsden was patient enough to wait for the ANS to make its final decision. During the negotiations, he made a trip to Europe, where he had the opportunity to discuss the collection with other museums. He offered the Lo Collection to the Hermitage Museum, the British Museum and the Cabinet des Médailles in Paris,¹⁰⁶ but without any success.

Identifying Mr Lo, the “educated Chinese scholar”

In his correspondence Ramsden referred to Mr Ro of Peking. But Ramsden was fluent in Japanese rather than Chinese, and it seems that he transliterated the name in a Japanese way, rather than the standard Wade-Giles or EFEO methods for Chinese during that period.¹⁰⁷ In other words, Ramsden read the family name 羅 in the Japanese way as *Ra*. This character is transcribed as *Lo* in the Wade-Giles romanisation,

¹⁰¹ See Letter from Belden to Wood, September 13th, 1911.

¹⁰² Mexican dollars were widely exchanged during 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century for foreign trade in China and in Japan.

¹⁰³ Letter from Jun Kobayagawa to Wood, 21st June, 1911.

¹⁰⁴ Letter from Belden to Wood, September 13th, 1911.

¹⁰⁵ Letter from B. Belden to Wood, 5th April 1912: "You certainly are up against something of a problem" (responding to Wood's refusal of an offer of \$2,500).

¹⁰⁶ Ramsden visited the Cabinet des Médailles on October 15th and 18th, 1912. On his first visit, he looked at "Japanese and Chinese coins"; on his second visit, he looked at "Far-Eastern coinage". See manuscript *Registre des visiteurs du Cabinet des Médailles*, for the year 1912.

¹⁰⁷ EFEO (literally Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient) is a transliteration system invented by the French school of Eastern Studies. The Yale and Pinyin systems had not yet been created at that time.

and as *Luo* in pinyin. Thus, the Ro Collection should be the Lo collection, and in pinyin, the Luo Collection.

In his letter to Wood, dated December 2nd 1910, Ramsden gives very little information about the owner of the collection. But he gives crucial information about his occupation: ¹⁰⁸

He is the rector of the Chinese Higher School or University at Peking and is considered the greatest Chinese authority on the subject [of coins].

What Ramsden refers to as the "Chinese Higher School or University at Peking" must be the *Jingshi daxue tang* 京师大学堂, an imperial school and the forerunner of Peking University (created in 1912). The director of the school was Liu Tingshen 刘廷琛, being its head from January 1908 to September 1910. But among the seven vice-rectors of the school there was a professor by the name of Luo Zhenyu.

While I was telling François Thierry, Senior Curator at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), in Paris, about my research, he had jokingly suggested that Mr Ro might be Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉, the most famous Chinese archaeologist, numismatist and epigrapher of his time. At the time it had seemed barely credible, but it was beginning to seem plausible.

Ramsden's Mr Ro lived in Peking, taught at the *Jingshi daxuetang*, and was one of seven vice-rectors of the school.¹⁰⁹ So did Luo Zhenyu. Luo Zhenyu had left China in 1911 to settle in Kyoto, and Ramsden had met him there:¹¹⁰

I have just returned from the south of this country, where I went to see old coin friends. It was more with the object of pleasure than business, as most of my time was spent seeing collections and visiting museums. I also saw Mr. Ro, the Chinaman who was at Peking as Rector of the University, but since the change of regime has come to live in this country. The collection now in the American Numismatic Society's possession once belonged to him.

Clearly, Mr Ro and Luo Zhenyu had a lot of things in common. The final proof was found in an article published in the *Numismatic and Philatelic Journal of Japan* (of which there is a copy in the ANS library), concerning the donation of the "Ro collection" from a number of members of the ANS. The journal was bilingual,¹¹¹ and the Japanese version of the title provides us with the complete name of Mr Ro, which is indeed 羅振玉 Luo Zhenyu.

Luo Zhenyu (1866-1940), a native of Huai'an, Jiangsu, was an antiquary and a philologist. He was also a major figure at the end of the Qing dynasty, known for the new ideas he had about education. Determined to contribute to the development of non-urban China, he created the *Agronomical Society (Nongxue she)* 農學社 in 1896 and translated texts and articles from English or Japanese on agriculture. With the aim of promoting English and Japanese studies in China, he also created a teaching school in 1898 in Shanghai, called the *Dongwen Xueshe* 東文學社.

¹⁰⁸ Letter from Ramsden to Wood, 2nd December 1910.

¹⁰⁹ He was the director of the agricultural department of the school.

¹¹⁰ Letter from Ramsden to Robinson, 30th June 1914.

¹¹¹ Some texts were entirely translated; for others, only the title was translated.



Fig. 6. Portrait of Luo Zhenyu¹¹²

Luo Zhenyu was also involved in politics. As a Qing loyalist, he disapproved of the creation of the Republic of China in 1911, and left the country. He spent eight years in exile in Japan, where he published scholarly books and sold Chinese paintings for a living¹¹³. He acted for the restoration of the Emperor Puyi.

Luo Zhenyu was a scholar interested in many fields, including philology, epigraphy, and numismatics, and dedicated himself to the publication of the new material he found. The *Complete Works of Mr. Luo Xuetang* (*Luo Xuetang xiansheng quanji* 羅雪堂先生全集) contained a collection of 183 essays.¹¹⁴ He made major contributions to Chinese scholarship. I will highlight three of these below: early epigraphy, preservation of cultural remains, and preservation of archives.

In his work on early epigraphy, Luo was one of the first scholars to decipher oracle bone inscriptions, the most ancient form of writing found in China, and his book *Review on divinatory scripts of Shang dynasty* (*Yinshang zhenbu wenzi kao* 殷商貞卜文字考) was published in 1910. He researched inscriptions on bronzes of the Shang and Zhou dynasties and on bamboo slips of the Han dynasty found at Juyan along the Silk Road. He was the first modern scholar to become interested in the Tangut script

¹¹² Coole (1967) :404.

¹¹³ For more details on his activities as a publisher or an art dealer see Shana J. Brown, *Pastimes: from art and antiquarianism to modern Chinese historiography* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2011), 103-120. See also Hong Zaixin's 'A Newly Made Marketable 'Leftover': Luo Zhenyu's Scholarship and Art business in Kyoto (1911-1919)' in *Lost Generation - Luo Zhenyu, Qing Loyalists and the Formation of Modern Chinese Culture*, ed. by Yang Chia-Ling and Whitfield, Roderick. (London: Saffron, 2012), 142-171.

¹¹⁴ Xuetang was the courtesy name that Luo Zhenyu adopted in 1916. On the origin and the significance of this name see Hong, *Lost Generation*, 154-157.

of the Xi Xia (Western Xia), and published on this subject.¹¹⁵ His book *Introduction to the Xi Xia script (Xi Xia guo shu lüeshuo 西夏國書略說* (1914) is one of the most important studies on Xi Xia coin inscriptions, while his *Collection of official seals from the Western Xia (Xi Xia Guanyin Jicun 西夏官印集存* (1927) publishes thirty-three official Tangut seals.

Luo tried to preserve Chinese cultural remains, beginning with oracle bones, and was one of the first scholars to visit the site of Anyang where the first known oracle bones were found. He also emphasized the cultural and historical interest of *mingqi* 明器 (mortuary items made specially for burials), especially from the Tang dynasty. He played an active role in the preservation of materials from Dunhuang. In 1909 he had examined some of the manuscripts that the French archaeologist Paul Pelliot (1878-1945) had brought from the Dunhuang caves to Peking, and through the Board of Education, organized the protection of the Dunhuang manuscripts. This included the safe removal to Peking of some 8,000 manuscripts that remained in the Dunhuang caves after the visits of Sir Aurel Stein and Paul Pelliot.

Luo also tried to preserve the Imperial Archives by organizing their transfer to the Board of Education in 1908. When large parts of the collection were sold in 1922, he tried to buy the books and documents back.

Luo Zhenyu was a keen collector of all kind of antiquities. He had an extensive collection of traditional scholar's collectibles, such as paintings, calligraphies, bronze vessels and seals. But he was also interested in new categories of antiquities such as oracle bones and was the first to collect *mingqi*. His interest in coins dated back to a meeting in 1895 with Hu Yizan 胡義贊 (1831-1912), a Chinese coin collector, who introduced him to numismatics¹¹⁶. Although he sold his entire collection of coins to Ramsden in 1911, this did not signal the end of his interest in coins. He continued to buy ancient coins, including the entire collection of Li Zuoxian 李佐賢 (1807-1876), author of *Catalogue Ancient Coins (Guquanhui 古泉匯)*.¹¹⁷ And in 1914 he published an *Illustrated Catalogue of currencies of four dynasties* (i.e. Jin, Yuan, Ming and Qing) (*Sichao chaobi tulu 四朝鈔幣圖錄*).

In short, the Luo Zhenyu Collection at the ANS belonged to one of China's most distinguished scholars, and its importance should not be underestimated. It is based on this collection that he produced some of his theories on ancient numismatics.¹¹⁸

CONCLUSION

From the history of the East Asian coin collection at the ANS we can infer that its development was not a succession of random donations, but was strongly linked to

¹¹⁵ Tangut is a Tibeto-Burman language that was used in the Xi Xia Empire (1032-1227).

¹¹⁶ As numismatics was not his main interest, we can have some doubts about the quality of the coins he possessed. I did not examine all the coins directly, but the few hollow head spades illustrated on the ANS website (<http://numismatics.org/search/results?q=Luo%20Zhenyu> - consulted on February 3rd) are genuine. The fact that Luo Zhenyu has also sold some doubtful Chinese paintings, while in Japan, could also cast a shade on this collection of coins. It would be worth exploring where Luo Zhenyu's coins originally came from.

¹¹⁷ Oral conversation with Liu Yun, curator of bronze collections at the Liaoning Provincial Museum, August 2007.

¹¹⁸ His main ideas on ancient numismatics are summarized by Guan Hanheng 关汉亨 (2013).

the personality of one curator, Howland Wood. Although Wood is better known for his contribution to the knowledge of Islamic coinage, his influence was key in convincing the society to acquire Chinese coins. Not a specialist of East Asian coinage himself, he relied on Henry Ramsden's expertise, which prove immensely valuable. We can argue that the fine quality of the coin collection in the ANS is related first to the involvement of collectors, such as John Reilly within the society, and secondly to the existence of a good and closely knit social network of collectors, dealers and curators: this is illustrated in our case by the connections between H. Wood, J. Reilly, J. Robinson and H. Ramsden. These connections enabled the ANS to acquire first class collections: the Luo Zhenyu's, which comprises 500 specimens from pre-imperial times, and within the Reilly's collection, the Ramsden's collection which is comprehensive and includes many varieties. Both being gathered directly in East Asia, these two collections have good specimens and are less concerned by the production of forgeries, which usually filled foreigners' collections and are numerous in Western or American museums. The identification of the 'Ro' collection as the Luo Zhenyu's demonstrates that provenance studies can successfully reconstruct the entire journey of a collection. This was made possible thanks to the quality of the ANS archives, which, well preserved and catalogued, are an exceptional resource for scholars. Assessing the provenance of the collection is a major concern for museums especially for foreign objects acquired during the 20th century. As stated in the *Provenance guide* of the International Foundation for Art research, provenance research is important for establishing the ownership of an object and assessing its authenticity. It also adds value to the object, as a distinguished provenance has a positive impact on its value. But provenance research is also a window on collecting priorities, a record of social networks and an indicator of market conditions influencing the growth of collections in museums. As such, the journey of Luo Zhenyu's collection illustrates the intense efforts made by two individuals, H. Wood a curator, and H. Ramsden, a dealer, to promote Chinese numismatics in America at the beginning of 20th century. At that time Chinese coinage was raising little interest in the US. This enabled the ANS to acquire its major collection, which has not revealed yet all its treasures.

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Abbreviations used

AJN American Journal of Numismatics
NC Numismatic Chronicle
NPJJ Numismatic and Philatelic Journal of Japan (Yokohama, 1913-1914).

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