



Volume 28

Journal of the Numismatic Association of Australia



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Front cover: Obverse die and medallion of West Australian Newspaper Award (see article "Royal Australian Institute of Architects - WA Chapter award medals")

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President's Report

Our seventh biennial international numismatic conference NAAC2017, which was held in Melbourne in October, was a great success. National Organiser Walter Bloom and the local Organizing Committee chaired by Darren Burgess put together an interesting program, one of the consequences of which was the marvellous selection of papers for this volume of the Journal.

This last year has seen the publication of Peter Lane's *The Coin Cabinet*, and the winning of the Paul Simon Memorial Award by Barrie Newman. Both Peter and Barrie are great contributors to the Association.

Our Vice-President, Darren Burgess, has advised that he won't be renominating at our coming AGM due to the pressure of work and the need to progress some NAV activities. I am grateful to Darren for all the work he puts into the NAA, in particular last year's biennial conference and the Facebook page, not to mention the steady stream of news items. In fact Darren is not completely off the hook as he has become the Victorian State Representative to the Association.

Stewart Wright of Status International has kindly offered us use of a room for the Association's AGM on Monday 16 April (commencing 1pm) at his new premises at 64 Parramatta Rd, Forest Lodge, close to the University of Sydney.

The NAA continues to enjoy sponsorship at a sustainable level, with Noble Numismatics (Gold), Coinworks, Downies (Silver), Drake Sterling, Sterling & Currency and Vintage Coins & Banknotes (Bronze) all contributing to ensure the Association's continued success. However expenses are rising and receipts are falling, even with the steady level of membership. On the positive side, many are taking out ten-year memberships.

I am appreciative of the support of Council and other NAA members throughout the year, and particularly our Secretary, Jonathan Cohen, and Treasurer, Lyn Bloom, who are pivotal in the running of the Association, and our Managing Editor, Gil Davis, for his work in producing this Volume 28 of JNAA.

Walter R Bloom

President, NAA

www.numismatics.org.au

March 2017

Editor's Note

The 28th volume of the journal is a bumper issue and my eighth as Managing Editor. There are eleven articles reflecting a remarkable range of numismatic interests. I am particularly pleased to see the balance of modern Australian and historical numismatic interests, and the excellent scholarship throughout. Many of the articles derive from presentations given at the wonderful NAA conference held in Melbourne from 21-22 October, 2017. I thank the presenters for being willing to quickly turn their talks into articles, despite the hard work this entailed, as well as the dedication of the other contributors.

This journal is the annual publication of the peak numismatic body in the country. As noted in the last volume, I have been working with the President and the Editorial Committee to ensure the standard of all articles we publish compares favourably with the best international numismatic journals. This includes a rigorous double-blind peer-review process. I thank the members of the Editorial Committee (listed below) and the two anonymous reviewers assigned to each article for their prompt and constructive help.

I also wish to express my thanks to the two key people who work quietly and efficiently behind the scenes to help me get this journal out: John O'Connor (Nobles) who proof-reads the articles, and Barrie Newman (Adelaide Mint) who carefully looks after the production process.

In this volume we have six articles on modern Australian topics. The articles by Paul Holland and Walter bloom are numismatic studies respectively of George V pennies and award medals struck by the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, WA chapter. Their treatments are exemplary demonstrations of the 'arcane art' of numismatic studies combining detailed knowledge with keen observation. These are foundational studies for others to follow. Vincent Verheyen uses his expertise in chemistry to analyse surface marks on predecimal proof coins made at the Melbourne branch of the Royal Mint. He successfully demonstrates that some of the marks result from production rather than careless handling, a finding that will have implications for collectors of proofs generally. Jeremy McEachern, Barrie Newman and David Rampling show another side of numismatics – how it can be used to inform our understanding of the past. Their entertaining articles range from illuminating the story of one of Australia's earliest dealers (Rampling on Isidore Kozminsky), to the sporting achievements of one of the country's celebrated early athletes (McEachern on Richmond 'Dick' Eve and the collection of his memorabilia in the National Sports Museum), and even the sorry tale of an 'official' fraudster who nonetheless got away with his misdeeds (Newman on a Ugandan High Commissioner).

The volume also contains five articles on matters historical. Three of them deal with iconography and make fascinating reading, especially when taken together. Bridget McClean looks at Tarentine civic coinage c. 470–450 BC. Charlotte Mann and Rachel Mansfield both deal with iconography under emperors of the Severan dynasty of Rome in the early third century AD. Charlotte deals with the imperial portraiture of Caracalla, while Rachel examines the civic coinage of the eastern city of Antipatris under Elagabalus. The results of their studies are illuminating about how important coins were for disseminating propaganda, and in turn, understanding what was important to the emperors and cities that commissioned them. Christian Cuello takes us to the world of the Visigoths, best known for sacking Rome, but also producers of coinage, some of which reside in the Australian Centre for Ancient Numismatic Studies collection at Macquarie University, which he catalogues and discusses. Finally, Frank Robinson provides a careful study of bank notes of the Empire of Brazil which will be of interest to aficionados of paper money.

There is something for everyone in this volume.

Dr Gil Davis

Managing Editor

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The numismatic interests of Isidore Kozminsky (1870-1944)

David J Rampling

Abstract

The state of Victoria had a numismatic dealership as early as the beginning of the second half of the nineteenth century. Coins formed part of the stock of Messrs. S. Kozminsky & Co. Isidore Kozminsky, the son of the firm's founder and a subsequent partner in its operations, had numismatics amongst his many interests, and oversaw the company's dealings in coins during the early years of the twentieth century. This paper relates what I have been able to learn of this enigmatic figure, and the perspectives he brought to the significance of coins and medals.

Keywords

[Kozminsky] [numismatics] [coins] [coin dealers]

Introduction

The recent closure of the *KOZMINSKY* Bourke Street store in Melbourne,¹ ended an era of 160 years during which time the firm had offered its clientele the finest in jewellery, antiquities and works of art. Less known is the fact that during its early years and up to the 1920s, the Kozminsky name was also associated with numismatics, primarily through the activities of the founder's son, Isidore Kozminsky (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1 Isidore Kozminsky 1870-1944

¹ The closure took place on 10 February, 2017.

The known and uncertain details of the Kozminsky family's history have been recounted in *A Break in the Chain – The Early Kozminskys* by Tangea Tansley, Isidore's grand-daughter. Styled a 'novel', the book is essentially biographical, augmented by an imagination informed through family ties.

The dating of Kozminsky's inaugural business is uncertain. Simon Kozminsky, Isidore's father, is thought to have arrived in Australia from Prussia, on the *Black Swan* in 1856. Simon began his business in the Victorian country town of Mortlake, later acquiring a somewhat rundown business in Melbourne selling curios, precious stones and coins.² He sold the country store and moved to the city sometime after Isidore's birth in 1870. Isidore assisted his father in the business from an early age, and appears to have been more fully involved subsequent to the new store opening in 1887 at the corner of Elizabeth and Bourke Streets (Fig. 2).³ He remained active in the business along with other family members, and later in his own 'Commercial Gallery',⁴ until the Depression of the early 1930s caused S. Kozminsky & Co. to go into voluntary liquidation and the sale of Isidore's Gallery. During the family's ownership of the Melbourne firm, Isidore had several sojourns overseas or interstate, departures both work-related in the case of overseas travel, and family-driven in the case of his four or five years in Sydney shortly after his marriage to Eileen in 1907.



Fig. 2 Kozminsky's Store, 1887-1910

-
- 2 Simon probably initiated his son's interest in numismatics. His authorship of a letter dated 2 April, 1889 addressed to the Deputy Master of the Melbourne branch of the Royal Mint, prefigures concerns raised by his son many years later (spelling as per original) – *Sir, I have received 4 Gold Jubilee Camemoration Medals of our Queen & the Custum department regard them as a dutible artickle of Commerce & I think them as a work of Art especially designd for the Jubilee of Queen Victoria. Would you kindly favour me with an expression of your opinion, which I will deem a favour. You will excuse me for troubing you but as this is an especial case, I remain your obl. Sernt., Simon Kozminsky, Corner of Bourk & Elizabeth St.* (Royal Mint Melbourne records, PROV, correspondence VPRS 643/P0000/68)
 - 3 In 1910 the business moved to the Block Arcade in Collins Street. A further move to Little Collins Street occurred under new owners following the Great Depression, and again in 1975, some years after a further change of ownership, to the corner of Bourke and McKillop Streets. (www.jewelleryworld.net.au/2008/11/19/kozminsky-the-jewel-in-melbournes-crown/)
 - 4 Isidore established what he called his 'Commercial Gallery', in 1925 at Collins Gate, 377 Little Collins Street.

Gaps in Isidore's personal history derive in part from a lack of primary material. He apparently burnt many of his private papers and degree certificates when overcome by emotions aroused by the family's antipathy towards his marriage.⁵ Nevertheless, he was sufficiently productive as a writer and newspaper correspondent on numismatic topics, for us to surmise that he made a significant contribution to this field of endeavour.

Isidore's numismatic pursuits may be conveniently grouped under three broad headings: commercial trade, literary works and contributions to the 'Common Good'. These categories are not mutually exclusive and there is much overlap. All Isidore's activities were infused with his wide learning and interest in ancient, esoteric, and Jewish culture.

Commerce

An appreciation of Kozminsky's retail trade in coins and medals is provided by a catalogue of numismatic items for sale compiled by Isidore, and published around the turn of the century (Fig. 3).⁶ In eleven pages of double column, densely packed type, 470 coins are described and priced, interspersed with references to large quantities of unlisted stock. The range of material is impressive, extending from ancient Greek and Roman coins, through mediaeval hammered pieces to modern coinages, with gold, silver and bronze all represented.



Fig. 3 Sale Catalogue c. 1902

⁵ Tansley informed me that this event was witnessed by her father.

⁶ *Catalogue of some Ancient and Modern Coins in Gold, Silver, and Bronze, Selected from the well known Stock of Messrs. S. Kozminsky & Co., And offered for Sale at their well-known House, Corner of Bourke and Elizabeth Streets (Opposite General Post Office), Melbourne.* The catalogue is undated, but an inspection copy was sent to *The Australasian* newspaper and acknowledged in their issue of May 10, 1902, informing its readers that the catalogue "is published to give persons interested in such matters an idea of the value of ancient and recent pieces of the kinds usually inquired after". The atypical spelling of the firm's name on the cover of the catalogue is unexplained.

Each series of coins is prefixed by a few introductory comments. Under the heading 'Coins and Tokens of Australasia,' Isidore tantalizingly records that "as it is our intention to devote a special catalogue to the coinage of Australasia, all that is necessary here is to briefly notice some few of our numerous specimens in stock ...". To my knowledge a 'special catalogue' was never published, and so we must be content to wonder at the abbreviated list, which included an Adelaide Gold Ingot at £50, a Holy Dollar at £5, a Dump for £1, a pair of 'Adelaide Sovereigns' first and second issues for £8, and various tokens from sixpence upwards.

Isidore must have been one of the first in this country to take an interest in Oriental numismatics. The final page of the sale catalogue records "A unique collection of ancient coins of China dating from 1250 B.C. comprising Cloth Merchant, Temple Garment, Knife, Key and other money ... and some pieces of extreme rarity ...". The terms used to describe the early spade coins are in keeping with Isidore's singularly poetic nomenclature evident on other pages of the Catalogue. As a postscript to a listing of eighty Roman bronze coins, he notes: "These firm metallic leaves are of great assistance to the student of Roman history".

An appreciation of beauty and romance are also much in evidence. In describing a tetradrachm of Antiochus he lyricises "the graceful nude female, sitting on the cortina, marks the reverse as one of the most beautiful and artistic ever produced on a coin". And again, introducing a listing of coins of Bactria, "This ancient kingdom, for centuries lost to the world, has a wild and fascinating history".

While Isidore's skill as a writer was obviously engaged in the service of enticing the interest of potential customers, his enthusiasm for coins was undoubtedly genuine. In her book, Tansley notes that he "had thought of himself as a dealer in antiques, but in truth he was a collector". Nevertheless, the need to operate a viable business is conveyed in a couple of sentences on the last page of the Catalogue – "Orders for less than five shillings respectfully declined", and "Cash must accompany all orders."

Kozminsky's entrepreneurial zeal was extended to wooing institutions. In March 1912, he corresponded with Alfred Chitty, then recently appointed numismatist of the Public Library Museum and Art Gallery of South Australia, sending him coins on approval, as possible purchases for the collection. His hand-written letter accompanied the coins.

210 Clarendon Street
East Melbourne

March 5, 1912

Dear Mr Chitty

I am sending for approval the 30 pieces I wrote to you about. They are all carefully classified and priced as low as I can get them. Several pieces are very rare as you will see and one or two not in the British Museum. The 30 pieces come to £24-3-6 at reduced prices for a public institution – of course, if it is not desired to take the collection, a selection can be made. I am in a position to guarantee the coins to be absolutely genuine without the shadow of doubt.

*Yours in sincerity
Isidore Kozminsky*

It is noteworthy that 1912 was the year Isidore published his book *Numbers – Their Meaning and Magic*, numerology being one of his many interests. It may be stretching credulity, but do the “30 pieces” twice designated and the rather odd amount of £24-3-6 have some esoteric meaning? Certainly the ‘thirty pieces’ betrayal, of Biblical significance, would have been familiar in Isidore’s Jewish upbringing, and to his interest in religion. He writes of the number 30 that it “must be regarded as 3”, giving his reasons, and that 3 “is the number of highest wisdom and worth, of harmony and action, perfect love ... and ... plenty, fruitfulness and exertion”, perhaps aspirations he hoped would facilitate a sale. And is there an unconscious tension between these laudable ends and a ‘betrayal’ of the coins of which he was undoubtedly fond, perhaps also signified in the composite number of 15, this being the added value of the numerals in £24-3-6, and noted in his book as representing evil and “the temptation of man”?

Attached to the letter is a listing of thirty Greek coins. In a Memorandum, to the Accessions Committee, Chitty notes that “these coins would not make any great show being very small; still they would be desirable in the collection. Should the committee decline to purchase the lot, it would be well to secure Nos ...”. Chitty lists six coins amounting to an expenditure of just under six pounds.

Literature

Isidore was a Fellow of the Royal Numismatic Society from 1901 to 1932, and was elected to a number of other learned societies, but I am unaware of his having published numismatic papers in their journals. His numismatic writings were, however, widely distributed in Australian newspapers, and offered to a more select readership in *The Antiquarian Gazette*, a monthly, then quarterly publication that he founded and edited between 1906 and 1911.

The first issue of *The Antiquarian Gazette*, stated its founder's intention in typically poetic prose, "to include...articles from known writers on the world of yesterday, illustrated by objects which have passed through the night of years to behold the light of day", adding by way of his commercial interest that "not the least important department will be that devoted to...articles offered for sale at the office of *The Antiquarian Gazette*". True to his intention, Isidore regularly included a listing of coins of comparable scope and quality to those offered by British and European dealers. The various issues of the *Gazette* include articles on a range of topics, the numismatic contributions including essays by Alfred Chitty and Dr Arthur Andrews. One correspondent, having come across a holey dollar amongst "some old coins in a shop window" wondered about the cutting process that produced them. Isidore's editorial comment, as in other issues of his journal, showed his appreciation of a notable provenance, mentioning that he "had a number of ancient pieces from the well known cabinet of the Marquis of Strozzi of Florence, which had anciently been cut into halves and quarters".

His interest in Chinese coins is conveyed in a short article with accompanying photographs published in *The World's News* in November 1904. He describes ancient knife and spade coins as "razor money" and "garment money", further qualifying the latter as illustrative of trousers, a shirt and an overdress. He also includes, for comparison, a photograph of a tetradrachm of Alexander the Great, "one of the most beautiful coins I have seen ... The Chinese can claim the invention of the first metallic currency, but they never conceived anything more lovely from an artistic point of view than this".

Twenty-five years on, he was still contributing informative articles to the press. A lengthy essay entitled "Pieces of Eight – Once the World's standard coin" appeared in *The Argus Camera Supplement* of 15 June 1929. The article detailed the welcome and use these coins achieved in Australia, the West Indies and elsewhere. Perhaps, not surprisingly, with the reader's attention drawn to Spanish doubloons, tales of buried treasure featured in the follow-up correspondence.

Common Good

Numismatic queries to the press were frequently forwarded to Isidore for a response. An excerpt from one lengthy reply under the heading 'Old Coins Identified' and published in *The Australasian* of 9 July 1898, conveys a sense of his commitment and knowledge:

Of the four rubbings submitted, three are taken from coins of the Seleucidae, the Greek Kings of Syria; therefore, I take the liberty of describing them a little out of the order given.

No. 2 – Small bronze of King Antiochus I of Syria, 282-261 B.C.

Obverse, head of the king

Reverse, a nobly-executed naked figure of Apollo sitting on the Cortina

He then goes on to give a potted history of the reign, before giving his appraisal of the coin and its value, a style adopted for each of the four coins.

The reverse of this coin is the finest of the whole series of the Seleucidae. The value of the pieces ranges between 2/- and 4/-.

Isidore's engaging prose is evident in his other descriptions. A coin of Antiochus IV, informs the reader that the king was "a raving madman", and contrary to his eulogistic appraisal of the first coin, he describes a coin of Antiochus X as "most inartistic ... composed of potin or base metal".

Spade Guineas were the subject of enquiries to *The Leader* in 1912 and again in 1915. All the coins he thought to be spurious, but suggested getting them "tested by putting under acid to see if they are gold", adding that "it is hard to tell if coins are genuine without an inspection by an expert". In an article published in *The Argus* of 1 December 1928, entitled 'Forgeries of the Antique – How collectors are tricked', he wrote: "It is astonishing how many of these fake guineas reached Australia. Some years ago, while digging ... in a garden of my old home in Middle Harbour, Sydney, we turned up a quantity of them, together with some Australian tokens and part of an old sword".

He was not averse to expressing views which he believed were in the public interest and possibly his own. The following letter to the Editor was published in newspapers across several States in September 1903:

Sir, – It will no doubt come as a surprise to students of numismatics in our Commonwealth to learn that it has been decided to place an impost duty of 20 per cent. on ancient coins, which I believe are now to be classified as fancy goods! I fail myself to understand how these specimens of ancient or mediaeval art can be included in any department of fancy goods. They are works of art, metallic leaves of history, and it seems preposterous to tax art or education in any way. Most countries of the world delight to welcome art works that teach so much. Here we seem to view things in another way. – Yours, etc ...

A letter signed with the pseudonym "Education" addressed to the Editor of the Melbourne newspaper, *The Argus* of 15 December 1905, dealt with an issue familiar to present day critics, namely the inadequate displaying of public coin collections. The letter prompted a response from Isidore:

Sir – "Education's" letter touches on a subject of interest to students of antiquities. It has often been a puzzle to me why the trustees of the National Museum should permit the valuable collection of coins which they have acquired to be hidden from public view, whilst a useful purpose could be served by exhibiting them. Valuable relics and antiquities are in the possession of the Museum authorities. Cannot the trustees find space to exhibit them?– Yours, &c.

He was more specific in a letter addressed to the Editor of *The Age*:

... concerning the introduction of cabinets of coins, &c., down the centre of the galleries ... It would certainly be better if the trustees could allow separate space for the exhibition of coins, curios and antiquities, and so keep the departments distinct ...

Other interests

It would be a disservice to Isidore's legacy not to mention some of the other pursuits in which he excelled. The *Kozminsky* establishment had, along with its coins and medals, a fine display of jewels and gems of every description as well as works by established and contemporary artists. Isidore developed a singular knowledge of gemstones, culminating in his authorship of *The Magic and Science of Jewels and Stones*, first published in 1922. It remains, according to one critic, "the finest and most comprehensive book on the subject. No one had a knowledge of jewels and stones – both in science and in superstition – to match Isidore Kozminsky. It is a work of great erudition ... a beautiful book; a treasury of treasures"⁷.

His interests encompassed astrology, kabbalah and other esoteric and arcane subjects, many of which formed the subject of publications. He wrote a short monograph on the occultism of the Australian Aboriginal,⁸ a paper apparently so well received that he published a sequel.⁹ Early in his career he had tried his hand at fiction in a short story entitled *A Jew's Revenge*.¹⁰

Newspaper notices regularly reported Isidore Kozminsky's activities, and convey a picture of entrepreneurial zeal across a very broad canvas.

In addition to this successful professional and public life, there appear to have been troublesome personal issues that arose from having married outside the Jewish faith. While Isidore had adopted Judaism, the fact that his mother was a Gentile does not seem to have mitigated his parents' resentment of his having repeated their example in marrying Eileen, the daughter of a prominent Victorian psychiatrist.¹¹ This 'break in the chain', incorporated in the title of Tansley's biographical novel, appears to have been deeply felt. It lay behind Isidore's fit of passion in setting fire to many personal documents, the couple's removal to Sydney for a number of years, their eventual emigration to England in 1935, and the strangest development of all, his decision to change his name. In 1936 he was apparently jubilant to receive from the Supreme Court of Judicature notice acknowledging that he was henceforth to be known as Francis Coton.

7 <http://harpermc Alpineblack.blogspot.com.au/2017/03/isidore-kozminsky-magic-and-science-of.html>

8 *Introductory Address on The Occultism of the Australian Aboriginal*, J. C. Stephens Printer, Melbourne, (undated, c. 1898)

9 *The Occultism of the Australian Aboriginal*, No. 2, J. C. Stephens Printer, Melbourne, (undated, c. 1900)

10 *Jewish Herald*, 21 Feb., 1896, p. 10

11 Dr William Watkins

Numismatic pursuits do not appear to have featured in his later years, although he retained his Fellowship of the Royal Numismatic Society until 1932.

Isidore Kozminsky remains something of an enigma. His Doctor of Science degree has no known provenance, and yet seems justified by his learning. The source of his intense interest in the outer realms of science and occult knowledge had only a tenuous connection to his professional life, and his personal torment of faith and family estrangement seemed magically resolved in assuming a new name.

Mystery also surrounds his demise. According to one version he contracted pneumonia while sheltering during the London air-raids; another that he died after being knocked down an escalator on the London underground.¹²

Isidore was survived by his wife, a son and a daughter, but numismatics no longer featured within the Kozminsky pantheon.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Dr Tangea Tansley for her encouraging and informative replies to my enquiries about her grandfather. Her book, *A Break in the Chain – The Early Kozminskys*, has provided the necessary background for understanding the complexity of Isidore's various pursuits. I also wish to thank Peter Lane for providing me with a copy of Isidore Kozminsky's correspondence with Alfred Chitty, and Dr Vince Verheyen for acquainting me with Simon Kozminsky's correspondence with the Royal Mint Melbourne. The paper has benefited from the helpful criticisms of two anonymous referees, to whom I extend my grateful thanks.

Author

David Rampling is a retired psychiatrist with a research interest in the historic coinage of Scotland. He has enjoyed a road less travelled in exploring the numismatic interests of Isidore Kozminsky, and the congenial correspondence that has accompanied this journey. David is a Fellow of the NSSA.

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¹² Tansley informed me that her father was in no doubt that Isidore's death was a result of the incident on the London underground.

See also: https://www.astro.com/astrodatbank/Kozminsky,_Isidore



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