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Roman Coins from the Masson and Mackenzie Collections in the British Museum

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British Museum

The British East India Company's Museum in Leadenhall Street housed an eclectic range of objects that were predominantly collected by those associated with the Company. Charles Masson and Colin Mackenzie were two such individuals. Their collections were acquired by the EIC, and after the closure of the museum in 1878 the majority of the collections were dispersed to various institutions, including the British Museum, the Fitzwilliam Museum, and the Indian Museum in Calcutta. While some coins were transferred to museums, most were sold at auction. In 1995, approximately 10,500 coins were discovered in the British Library's India Office Collections. Some 7000 of these came from Masson's collection, and in December 2011 the majority of the remaining *c.* 4000 coins were traced to the Mackenzie collection.

Among the India Office coins were 117 Roman and Nabatean bronze coins. This article examines them in more detail, also considering by whom, where, and when they were acquired, thus shedding considerable light on Masson and Mackenzie's travels and collecting practices. Furthermore, it highlights the many thousands of late Roman bronze coins, from the fifth to seventh century AD, that were discovered in South India. It also brings out the urgent necessity of conducting a more detailed study to understand this period of Indo-Roman trading relations and the role of the late Roman bronze coins in South India.

Keywords: East India Company; Charles Masson; Colin Mackenzie; India Office Collection; India Office Loan Collection; India Museum; Indo-Roman trade; Late Roman Bronze coins; Nummus Economy

As today, the greatest progress is made when collectors, excavators, and scholars work together, or are even embodied in the same individuals, sharing their evidence and their ideas.

– Joe Cribb, 2007¹

1. Introduction

The 117 Roman coins in the India Office Loan Collection (IOLC) presented here were transferred on permanent loan from the British Library's India Office Collections to the British Museum in 1995 and have been studied as part of the Masson Project. A closer examination of these coins suggests that they fall into three distinct groups based on their likely find spots: Egypt and the eastern Mediterranean, Western Europe, and South India and/or Sri Lanka. It was initially thought possible that Masson acquired all 117 coins. This study reveals, however, that the majority of the coins came from South India and/or Sri Lanka, and were in fact acquired by Colin Mackenzie. Furthermore, the Roman coins from Western Europe were unlikely to have been acquired either by Masson

or Mackenzie. The details and results of this investigation are presented below.

Charles Masson (1800–1853), whose real name was James Lewis,² amassed a huge number and variety of coins and other artefacts over the course of his unusual career and extensive travels through northern India, Afghanistan, Iran, and Iraq.³ Masson travelled through the Middle East in the early 1830s and visited Cairo on his return to England in 1842. While he is known to have acquired some Roman coins from Egypt, and perhaps also during his travels in the Middle East, the poor state of his finances during his final years in London make it unlikely that he purchased more coins, however cheaply, to add to his collection. There is, of course, always the possibility that they were given to him by an individual aware of his numismatic interests. At no time did Masson visit South India or Sri Lanka.

The British East India Company (EIC) acquired Masson's coins in two phases. As the sponsor of his exploration of ancient sites in Afghanistan between 1833 and 1838, the EIC was the recipient of most of his finds.⁴ These were sent to the Company's India Museum in Leadenhall Street, London. Masson was allowed to keep the coins from Begram acquired in

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1837–38, but on his return to England in 1842 he offered them to the India Museum so that they could extract any new specimens. In actuality, they kept the best ones. On Masson's return to London in March 1842 he worked on his own archaeological records and the considerable remaining collection that he personally held until his death in 1853.⁵ His wife, Mary Anne Kilby, died in 1855, and the EIC paid £100 to the guardian of their two children for Masson's remaining papers and coins.⁶ These were then also transferred to the India Museum.

Colonel Colin Mackenzie (1754–1821) left his home on Stornoway, Outer Hebrides, in 1783 and made his way to India where he joined the EIC army, eventually becoming the first Surveyor General of India in 1816.⁷ From the time of his arrival in India, Mackenzie began to collect diverse *materia antiqua* with the aim of writing a history of India.⁸ His military campaigning and surveying, as well as his periods of leave, took him to many far-flung places in India, Sri Lanka, and Java.⁹ He spent the majority of his time in South India, particularly in and around Madras (where he was based for much of his career) as well as on the Deccan. He visited numerous sites in northern India, including Delhi and Calcutta, as well as more ancient sites along the river Ganges.¹⁰ Mackenzie also travelled to Sri Lanka in 1795 as Commanding Engineer during the taking of this island. The Napoleonic Wars took him to Java between 1811 and 1813 as part of the British occupying force.¹¹ His travels provided the perfect opportunity to indulge his interest in history through the exploration and recording of historical places and the acquisition of both historical and contemporary manuscripts and artefacts, including coins. Indeed, Mackenzie's collection was among the largest and most wide-ranging to be put together by a private individual in India during this period. It comprised, for example, a variety of artefacts such as the Amaravati sculptures, part of which are now in the British Museum, and rare manuscripts and coins from almost every region that he visited. In addition to his extraordinary collection, Mackenzie also left more than 1500 personal manuscripts and papers, which H. H. Wilson, the Mint Master at Calcutta and Secretary to the Asiatic Society of Bengal, volunteered to examine and report upon. Wilson subsequently prepared and published a two-volume catalogue of Mackenzie's collections.¹² Mackenzie died in 1821, and in 1822 his widow, Petronella Jacomina Bartels Mackenzie, sold his collections to the EIC for the then princely sum of Rs 100,000.¹³ A document dated 1 January 1823 states that this sale included Mackenzie's manuscripts, drawings, mineral samples, and, of particular relevance here, coins.¹⁴

After the India Museum was closed to the public in 1878, Mackenzie's artefacts were distributed to a range of institutions including the British Museum, British Library, Bodleian Library, the Royal Asiatic Society,

the Indian Museum in Calcutta (now Kolkata), and also the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library in Chennai (formerly Madras).¹⁵ Between 1878 and 1882 most of the Masson collection, which had also been held in the India Museum, and a small proportion of other India Museum coins, approximately 2000 in total (which may have included some of the Mackenzie coins), were transferred to the British Museum.¹⁶ Some of the remaining coins, mostly 'duplicates', were donated to two institutions: the Royal Asiatic Society and the Fitzwilliam Museum.¹⁷ A vast number of the coins remained in the India Office Collection (IOC), and many of these were auctioned off by the Government of India in 1887. The unsold residue, offered to the Fitzwilliam Museum and memorably referred to as 'mere rubbish' by F. W. Thomas in a letter to the then Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum,¹⁸ was returned to the India Office. The India Office itself was closed at the time of Indian Independence in 1947, and in 1985 the India Office Library was incorporated into the British Library. The residual coins remained there until 1995, when the collection was transferred on permanent loan to the British Museum. Elizabeth Errington then began the process of identifying and analysing the material. A second batch of coins was transferred in 2005. Of the *c.* 10,000 coins transferred, *c.* 7000 are identifiable Masson coins; most of the remaining coins are now thought to come from Colin Mackenzie's collection. The identification of the 117 Roman and Nabatean coins, which are thought to be from Masson's and Mackenzie's collections, and the results of a more detailed analysis of them based on this identification, are presented here.

2. Egypt and the eastern Mediterranean

Towards the end of 1841 or in early 1842 Masson sailed from Bombay to Suez and then crossed Egypt overland before travelling to London via France.¹⁹ He reached London in March 1842. Although details about his journey home from India are limited (Masson's *Narrative* does not cover his return journey from India), unpublished manuscripts held at the British Library reveal that Masson 'procured' 260 coins in 'Egypt/Cairo'.²⁰ Masson lists these coins in varying amounts of detail, making it possible to identify four, perhaps five, of the coins in his catalogue with IOLC coins.

Twenty-eight IOLC coins can be reasonably assumed to have been acquired in Egypt. They comprise one, possibly two, Nabatean coins (IOLC 4710, 4720),²¹ nine coins minted in Asia Minor and the eastern Mediterranean (IOLC 4711–13, 4716–18, 4721–22, 4725); and seventeen coins minted in Alexandria (IOLC 4738–41, 4743–55). As a result of Nabatean

geographical proximity to Egypt and the ancient trading links that long existed between these regions, it is not unusual to find Nabatean coins in Egypt. Masson might easily, therefore, have acquired them from Egyptian dealers. Masson did not, however, list any Nabatean coins among those that he acquired in Egypt. Either he did not acquire any, or he was not aware that some of the coins that he had procured were in fact Nabatean. It is notable that IOLC 4710 is in poor condition and IOLC 4720 is very poorly preserved. It may have been to these coins, and one other, that Masson was referring when he wrote that three of the coins that he acquired in Egypt had 'some unknown name'.

Two Probus tetradrachms of Alexandria fit Masson's descriptions: IOLC 4745 ('eagle reverse') and IOLC 4746 ('figure reverse'); as do two Aurelian pieces: IOLC 4743 and IOLC 4744. The fifth coin is a little more problematic. Masson lists one coin as 'Severus?'²² The IOLC collection contains one coin of Severus Alexander (IOLC 4725) and the inscription 'ALEXANDROC' on the obverse reveals the emperor's identity. In addition to the coins that Masson listed by emperor, he also included three coins with 'some unknown name', forty as 'Roman', and thirty-eight as 'Byzantine'.²³ It is rather curious that Masson divided seventy-eight of the coins under the headings 'Roman' and 'Byzantine' without providing any further details as to the authorities under whom these were minted. It is possible that the coins were too worn for their inscriptions to be read; Masson may have felt able to divide them by approximate historical periods. How he himself differentiated between the Roman Empire and the Byzantine period is a little more difficult to determine. Traditionally, the two dates used to indicate the transition from the Roman Empire to the Byzantine period are Constantine's transfer of the capital from Nicomedia to Constantinople in AD 324 and the East-West division of the Roman Empire after Theodosius I's death in AD 395.²⁴ However, numismatists tend to use the date of Anastasius' coinage reform in AD 498 instead. The latest IOLC coin thought to have been acquired in Egypt was, however, an Alexandrian tetradrachm minted under Maximian in AD 289/90, making it at least thirty years too early to be comfortably described as Byzantine. The inscriptions on the remaining IOLC coins acquired in Egypt are discernible when closely inspected. This might suggest that those coins which Masson described as Byzantine have not survived in the IOLC collection.²⁵

3. Western Europe

Nineteen IOLC coins fit the profile of Roman coins found in Western Europe. Where visible, the mints represented are Lyon, Rome, Mediolanum, Gaul, Trier,

and London. The coins range in date from Vespasian in AD 71 to Constantine the Great in AD 316–17.

It was initially thought that Masson may have acquired these coins after his return to London, but I find it unlikely that he purchased any. Masson's financial resources were always limited, if not severely strained, and this situation did not change during the final eleven years (between 1842 and 1853) that he spent in London. Masson received a small pension of £100 *per annum* with which he had to support not only himself and his wife, but also latterly their two children, Charles Lewis Robert (born in 1850) and Isabella Adelaide (born in 1853).²⁶ A small notebook, hand-sewn from scraps of paper, in which Masson recorded his expenses, testifies to his financial constraints and makes it immediately apparent that the purchase of coins at any price would have been a luxury beyond his means. The list of 'avoidable' expenditure included, for example, gin, eels, and a baby's cloak. Masson also made a comparison between 'expenses should have been' and 'were'.²⁷ Given his proclivity for recording in detail his finds and purchases of coins and other antiquities, it is likely that Masson would have mentioned any coins acquired in London, somewhere in his numerous lists of coins.

An alternative explanation has to be found, therefore, to explain their presence among the India Office materials transferred from the British Library to the British Museum on permanent loan in 1995. It is probable that these coins were either donated to the India Museum in London by unknown persons, or that they were purchased locally to add to the museum's collection. Unfortunately the India Museum kept very few records about its vast and wide-ranging collections.²⁸ This makes it very difficult to determine with any precision whether its collections did indeed include any Western Roman copper coins. Two sources that list some of the coins that were originally part of the India Museum are of limited help. One is the Sotheby, Wilkinson, and Hodge auction catalogue that listed, in varying amounts of detail, the coins they auctioned off from the India Museum on behalf of the Government of India in 1887. The other is the British Museum IOC (India Office Collection) accession register, which lists those coins that were acquired from the India Museum in 1882.

The Sotheby, Wilkinson, and Hodge catalogue of August 1887 includes a number of predominantly gold and silver coins. These include five Indian imitations of Roman *aurei* with the bust of Julia Domna on the obverse and those of Caracalla and Geta on the reverse. Five coins are included immediately below this group and described as 'Others, similar'. No specifically Roman copper coins are listed. There are, however, what appear to have been a considerable number of

copper coins that were sold either by weight or in large lots. Lot 874, for example, is described as ‘*Copper. A large lot of Bactrian, Indo Scythic &c., Coins*’. Lots 875–879 are described as ‘*A similar lot.*’ No indication as to the quantity or weight of any of these lots is given, making it impossible for us to determine, even approximately, how many coins made up each lot and frustrating any attempt to identify them. The poor condition of the IOLC Roman coins from Western Europe could have led to them being mixed up and sold with the other copper coins at auction.

The accession register for the IOC coins donated to the British Museum in 1882 includes 75 Roman gold and silver coins; none are copper. Of these coins, three date from the Roman Republican period; 71 coins are Roman Imperial coins ranging in date from Augustus to Leo I. In terms of the place of production of the Roman coins, one was minted in Trier, three in Constantinople, twenty-one in Lugdunum, forty-five in Rome, and two coins are unidentifiable. It is not unlikely that all the IOC Roman coins minted in Western Europe were originally part of one collection that was broken up when the India Museum was closed, so that the more valuable coins could be sold more easily.

4. South India and Sri Lanka

Seventy IOLC coins fit the profile of other late Roman bronze (LRB) coins found in South India and Sri Lanka that have been published by R. Krishnamurthy and R. Walburg respectively.²⁹ As noted above, Masson did not visit South India or Sri Lanka, while Colin Mackenzie stands out as the most likely person to have acquired these coins. This suggestion is borne out by the composition of this group of coins, which closely reflects Mackenzie’s life and travels. The vast majority of these coins are Indian, predominantly from South India, including some coins minted by Tipu Sultan (ruling between 1782 and 1799), while North Indian issues, such as those from Delhi, Gwalior, and Awadh are also represented. They also include Javanese coins and, of course, the Roman bronze coins. It is notable that none postdate Mackenzie’s death in 1821. The presence of six trays of Javanese coins in such a collection is particularly significant, as these can be firmly associated with Mackenzie, who spent some years on Java during the Napoleonic Wars. Wilson listed 6218 coins that had been in Mackenzie’s collection, including over 200 silver and copper Roman coins.³⁰

The Roman IOLC coins proved central to the rediscovery of the Mackenzie coin collection. While there were always doubts as to the provenance of the many, obviously non-Masson IOLC coins, particularly those acquired in regions where Masson did not travel, it was

not until the Roman coins were studied and the most likely collectors of these coins investigated that Mackenzie’s name first arose. James Prinsep’s 1832 article cataloguing the coins in the Asiatic Society of Bengal’s coin cabinet made Mackenzie stand out among those collectors to be considered.³¹ Prinsep regretted that individuals who had collected coins and medals in India

carried their spoil to England, where, indeed, they may be mortified in finding them swallowed up and lost among the immense profusion of similar objects in the public and private cabinets of European antiquarians; and they may perhaps regret that they did not leave them where, from their rarity, they would have been prized, and, from their presence, have promoted the acquisition of further stores for antiquarian research from the wide continent of India.³²

In this context, Prinsep mentioned that Mackenzie’s collections had been purchased by the British East India Company (EIC). Mackenzie’s wife sold them to the EIC soon after his death. Although Mackenzie wrote in 1809 that ‘it would be my ambition to carry home with me [a] body of materials that I conceive may be very interesting to the Public if properly brought forward’, his will was less clear.³³ Mackenzie wrote: ‘I further bequeath to [gap] my collections, on the history and antiquities of India.’³⁴ The gap is tantalising. Whatever his intentions may have been, Mackenzie’s coin collections were thought to be lost, until the overwhelmingly South Indian and Javanese components of the IOLC coins turned out to be the missing Mackenzie coins, as discovered in December 2011.

Many thousands of Late Roman Bronze coins have been found in South India and Sri Lanka. In 2008 Walburg published a detailed study investigating the presence and use of these coins in Sri Lanka.³⁵ The usefulness of Walburg’s comprehensive and analytical work highlights the urgent necessity of undertaking a similar study for LRB coins found in South India. Below is a brief overview of the current state of scholarship relating to the possible reasons behind the presence of such large numbers of these coins in South India and Sri Lanka, and also the way in which they may have been used in these regions.

Literary sources and archaeological material have long since attested the trade between various Indian kingdoms and Roman Egypt,³⁶ although the trade between India and Egypt, which was primarily indirect in nature, began long before the rise of the Roman Empire. It has been suggested that the systematic trade between Egypt and India began in the late first century BC with the Roman annexation of Egypt. It allowed the Romans to sail from the Red Sea, taking advantage of the monsoon regimes and making some direct journeys.



1a: IOLC.4713 Coin of Gaius (Caligula) and (Straton) Medeos.



1b: IOLC.4718 Coin of Tiberius and Menander.



1c: IOLC.4746 Coin of Probus.



1d: IOLC.4747 Coin of Carus.



1e: IOLC.4753 Coin of Maximian.

1. *Examples of coins acquired by Masson in Egypt.*



2. *Example of a coin possibly acquired in London. IOLC.4734 Coin of Vespasian.*



3a: IOLC.4790 Coin of Honorius.



3b: IOLC.4801 Coin of Honorius.



3c: IOLC.4761 Coin of Constantius II.

3. *Examples of coins probably acquired by Mackenzie in South India and/or Sri Lanka.*

Archaeological evidence indicates that this trade continued to flourish until it declined in the mid-third century AD.³⁷ The fourth century saw a resurgence of these trading relations and Roman involvement may have continued until the sixth and possibly into the seventh century.³⁸ Gold *solidi* dating from the second phase of the Indo-Roman trade have been found in India,³⁹ although more bronze coins of this period seem to have survived. The LRB coins were mainly found in Tamil Nadu and southern Sri Lanka. A comparison between the three sets of coins, those from Tamil Nadu (presented by Krishnamurthy), Sri Lanka (presented by Walburg), and the IOLC coins, is both interesting and revealing (Figure 1).

Krishnamurthy's collection of LRB coins from Tamil Nadu comprises over 4000 coins,⁴⁰ but because of their poor state of preservation he was able to identify only 717 of them.⁴¹ Of the Roman coins found in Sri Lanka, Walburg presented 1430 as reliably verified in terms of provenance.⁴² The graph (Figure 2) presents the results of a comparison between these three sets of coins. The parameters used were the number of coins from each collection that were minted within specific time periods. These periods are based on Walburg's periodization, but they have been adapted to include both Krishnamurthy's coins and those from the Mackenzie collection.⁴³

Despite the considerable difference in the number of coins available for comparison from all three groups, they show a very similar distribution:

- All three groups demonstrate an increase in finds of coins minted in Period IV and Period VII.
- Only the coins from Tamil Nadu show a peak of coins minted in Period X.
- The Mackenzie coins and those from Tamil Nadu peak in Period IV; those found in Sri Lanka do not. Instead, the coins from Sri Lanka show an overall increase in finds of coins minted between AD 330 and 378.
- All three sets of coins show an identical, dramatic peak in coins minted in Period VII (AD 383–408).
- The Mackenzie and Sri Lanka groups then show a gradual decline in coins minted between Period VIII (AD 408) and Period XI (AD 474).
- The Tamil Nadu group shows a sharp decline in coins minted between Periods VIII and IX, followed by a peak in Period X.

The similarity between the Mackenzie and Tamil Nadu coins minted in Period IV and the Mackenzie and Sri Lankan coins minted in AD 408–74 suggests that the Mackenzie collection may comprise coins from both

Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka. Given that the poor state of preservation allowed Krishnamurthy to identify only 717 coins from his collection of over 4000 LRB coins, it is possible that the Tamil Nadu coins, when properly identified, would have shown a similar, gradual decrease from Period VIII to Period XI, rather than the current peak in Period X. Of course, we cannot exclude the possibility that the coins, when properly identified, would still reveal the current trend.

It has not yet been possible to associate any specific IOLC Mackenzie coins with precise find spots, although a thorough investigation of his numerous remaining papers at the British Library, the National Library of Scotland, and the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library in Chennai may prove revealing. Two pieces of information are, however, of use. The first is a reference from Wilson's catalogue that mentions two find spots of some of Mackenzie's Roman coins; the second is a small collection of potsherds from Coimbatore associated with some Roman copper or bronze coins in the British Museum that were possibly formerly in the Mackenzie collection.

In Volume Two of his *Catalogue of Mackenzie's collection*, Wilson divides all of the coins in the Mackenzie collection into five groups: 'Hindu', 'Mohammedan', 'Ancient Europe', 'Modern Europe', and 'Miscellaneous'. He then subdivides these into gold, silver, copper, and lead.⁴⁴ For ancient Europe, Wilson notes thirty-four silver coins and 346 copper coins, but gives an overall total of 280 pieces. While there are thirty-four silver coins in his more detailed list of these coins, only 236 copper coins have been enumerated. Ten seals and cameos are included at the end of the list.⁴⁵ With the addition of these seals and cameos to the number of copper coins, we arrive at a total of 246 items. The most likely explanation for this discrepancy of 110 coins is that it results from a simple typographical error, as Wilson's sums for all of the other coins in the catalogue are accurate.

Fifty-seven of the ancient European coins are specifically identified as Roman, eight as Hellenistic, and thirteen as Arsacid.⁴⁶ The identification of a group of nineteen coins is considered 'uncertain'. For the largest group of 170 coins, the only information recorded is a reference to two find spots in South India: Mahavalipur (more commonly known as Mahabalipuram) and Cudapa (nowadays Kadapa). This is the only occasion on which Wilson refers to find spots for any ancient European coins. It is, however, likely that most if not all of the ancient European coins listed by Wilson were acquired by Mackenzie and his colleagues in India and/or Sri Lanka. Other silver and bronze Hellenistic, early, and late Roman coins have been found in South India, which adds extra weight to this suggestion.⁴⁷

4a

Among these ancient European coins, three lots of copper coins are of particular interest here: five coins of Constantine, nineteen 'uncertain' coins, and the 170 coins found at Mahabalipuram and Kadapa. The IOLC collection includes one bronze coin of Constantine (IOLC 4762), which may be one of the Constantine coins found by Mackenzie and catalogued by Wilson. For nineteen of the ancient European coins, Wilson supplied neither descriptions nor an association with a particular empire or dynasty. Similarly, the only information Wilson offered about the 170 coins was their origin in Mahabalipuram and Kadapa. We are not told how many coins came from each location, and whether they came from hoards or were individual finds. This need not have been due to any oversight on Wilson's part. Mackenzie or his colleagues may not have recorded this information in detail; alternatively, Wilson may have been unable to locate such descriptions among Mackenzie's numerous remaining papers. What is more, the coins may have been in such a poor condition that it was impossible to identify them individually. Their resemblance to some of the Roman, Hellenistic, or Arsacid coins in the Mackenzie collection may have led to their inclusion in this particular section of the catalogue. Given the very poor state of preservation of the overwhelming majority of the LRB coins found in South India, I suggest that the 170 coins, and possibly even the nineteen 'uncertain' coins, were in fact LRB coins. Because of their poor condition, even after cleaning in the British Museum Department of Conservation and Scientific Research, some of these coins could still not be identified precisely.⁴⁸ The history of Mahabalipuram and Kadapa, similar coin finds from these places, and information in Wilson's catalogue may help to bear out this suggestion.

Mahabalipur corresponds to the important ancient city of Mahabalipuram, located on the Northeast coast of Tamil Nadu.⁴⁹ It was the principal port of the Pallava dynasty (ruling from around the fourth to the tenth century AD),⁵⁰ and LRB coins have been found there.⁵¹ The Pallavas maintained contact with Sri Lanka from this port. Kadapa⁵² is the name of both a city and a district. It is located in the modern-day province of Andhra Pradesh, just under two hundred miles north-west of Mahabalipuram and approximately five miles south of the Penna River. Kadapa falls within the territory of the ancient Chola Empire. Although Kadapa itself is not mentioned in the *Periplus Maris Erythraei*, three ports that very likely belonged to the Chola kingdom are referred to: Argaru, Kamara, and Podukê.⁵³ The Romans are known to have traded with the Cholas, and Roman coins have also been found in Kadapa.⁵⁴ Given that other late Roman bronze coins

have been found in both Mahabalipuram and Kadapa, perhaps the 170 coins that Wilson lists as ancient European coins found in Mahabalipuram and Kadapa may have been LRB coins. Possibly other copper coins, including Hellenistic ones, may have been intermingled with them.

Mackenzie was made aware of the presence of Roman coins in Coimbatore by 1808, when William Garrow, the Collector of this province, informed Mackenzie that an Augustan *denarius* had been found among silver punch-marked coins in a field at Penar, Coimbatore.⁵⁵ Such information may have led Mackenzie further to investigate the presence of such coins in Coimbatore and elsewhere in India. Mackenzie dispatched his Maratta translator, Babu Rao, along part of the Tamil Nadu coast in order to collect both coins and information of a historical nature.⁵⁶ In his catalogue of Mackenzie's collection, Wilson includes Babu Rao's reports as a specimen of those produced by Mackenzie's 'native' collectors. From this, we can tell that part of Babu Rao's remit was to procure gold and copper Roman coins and, more importantly, that he succeeded. He collected some coins at Mahabalipuram, although he does not record whether these were Roman or not.⁵⁷ He also employed some fishermen at Alampara, where an old fisherwoman had formerly found two *aurei*, to search for Roman coins, but they were only able to find one Roman copper coin on this occasion.

When the India Museum was closed, nine sherds of a small earthenware pot were transferred to the British Museum via the South Kensington Museum.⁵⁸ Two notes are associated with them. The first reads: 'Fragments of earthen vessel found with Roman coins found at Vellalloor in Coimbatore.' Jennifer Howes has identified this handwriting as likely being that of Colin Mackenzie.⁵⁹ The second note reads: 'Rec[eive]d via Palmook. 13 Oct 1842. Fragments of the vessel in which the coins were found. Referred to in letter from the P[rovincia]l [?] Coll[ecto]r of Coimbatore dated 18th June 1842.'⁶⁰ There is also a reference to these sherds and coins in the South Kensington Museum Register: 'Fragments of earthen vessel, found with Roman coins at Vellalloor in Coimbatore, and 24 copper or bronze coins.'⁶¹ It is certainly possible that some of the late Roman bronze coins in the IOLC collection may be associated with these sherds. It has proved to be quite difficult to date the pot sherds precisely, partly because the ceramic chronologies for this region are not yet very well worked out. The type appears to be a variant of Russet-Coated Painted Ware (black and red) from the early Historic period.⁶²

It is certainly notable that the majority of the ancient European coins (the group of 170 coins) as listed by Wilson were found in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, so in South India. Based on their provenance, their

description as copper coins, and the fact that Wilson did not identify them in any detail or under any other heading, I suggest that the coins from Kudapa and Mahabalipuram were predominantly, if not entirely, LRB coins.

4b

While many thousands of LRB coins have been discovered in South India and Sri Lanka, the earliest records are from R. H. C. Tufnell (1887–88) and J. Still (1907), and it was from the nineteenth century onwards that they began to be studied in greater detail. Hypotheses also began to be put forward to explain the presence of so many of these low denomination coins in South India and southern Sri Lanka in particular. Tufnell, writing in 1887–88 about coins found in Madura, suggested that they were ‘struck on the spot and were not importations from Rome’.⁶³ The reason given was that such coins were ‘not the kind of money that one would expect the rich Roman merchant to bring in payment for the luxuries of the East’.⁶⁴ Instead, he believed that they pointed to the existence of Roman settlements of agents who collected local produce and conveyed it to the ships of their employers when they arrived into port.⁶⁵ Tufnell further suggested that these coins were ‘struck specially for the purpose of trade with a pauper population... they are of so small a value as to be what one would expect to find in use when dealing with a people so poor as the early Hindus’.⁶⁶ This reference to apparently universal Indian poverty is particularly curious in view of his earlier comment that copper coins were not sufficient for Roman merchants to purchase expensive luxury Indian goods.

R. Sewell took a similar line in 1904, writing that ‘though as a general rule it may be held that the presence of Roman coins does not necessarily imply the presence of Roman traders, it seems with regard to Madura almost impossible to account for this state of things except on the supposition that Roman subjects had taken up their residence here and made the city their home, temporary if not permanent’.⁶⁷ Considering the limited evidence available about such coins from South India in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it is not surprising that Sewell interpreted this as evidence of a Roman settlement. Sewell also agreed with Tufnell that the coins were used to make small, daily purchases from the local Indian population. By contrast, in 1886 W. Elliot proposed that ‘these poor copper pieces could only have been dropped by mariners and traders frequenting the places where they now lie’.⁶⁸ This view appears to have been based on their find spots in or near dunes and sand-knolls by fishing hamlets on the sea shore.⁶⁹

There is no indication in Elliot’s work that he believed that these coins were used by Romans or Indians for trading purposes in South India. In 1924 H. W. Codrington produced the first important work on those coins found in Sri Lanka. Based on a quite detailed analysis of evidence, he found that numerous, usually rather worn bronze coins were found at almost every port in Sri Lanka (except Trincomalee) and also at a variety of locations in the interior.⁷⁰ This led him to suggest that these coins ‘formed the currency of the Island’.⁷¹

Similarly, modern scholarship presents a range of opinions in relation to the presence and use of LRB coins in South India and Sri Lanka. In general, these two regions tend to be dealt with separately and, where they are discussed together, it is often assumed that the LRB coins arrived and were used at both places in either the same or a similar way. Walburg’s pioneering work clearly illustrates that this was not necessarily the case, and that regional distributions and history need to be taken into account in order to present a plausible hypothesis for each region.

Based on a detailed and critical investigation, Walburg proposed that LRB coins were most likely shipped as merchandise into Sri Lanka from South India during the second quarter of the fifth century AD, and were not imported directly to Sri Lanka from the Mediterranean world. Furthermore, Walburg’s research suggests that these coins, and their imitations, probably functioned as ‘special purpose money’ for essentially monastic purposes, whereas punch-marked coins and their imitations were used as ‘all purpose money’ (or general currency) in Sri Lanka.⁷² This is in contrast to, for example, A. Burnett, who suggested that the LRB coins were used as coinage in Sri Lanka, while some also functioned as dedications in a religious context, for example those found at the Jetavanārāma *stūpa* in Anuradhapura.⁷³ M. Mitchiner likewise thought that the LRB coins were acceptable currency in Sri Lanka, but he did not specify how and by whom the currency was used.⁷⁴

For South India, B. Chattopadhyaya proposed that the imported Roman currency supplemented the apparently ‘inadequate’ supply of local currency.⁷⁵ Krishnamurthy suggested that both the Romans (or their agents) and the local population would have used these coins for their daily commercial transactions at Madurai, Karur, and Tirukkōilur, where the majority of the late Roman bronze coins have been found.⁷⁶ Mitchiner hypothesised that in the AD 330s the Romans began making bulk payments for their purchases in copper coins. He also made two distinctions.⁷⁷

Firstly, that some southern Indian kingdoms accepted payments made with the copper coins, whereas others only accepted gold. Secondly, he differentiated between

Table 1. The 28 IOLC coins acquired by Masson in Egypt.

No.	Date (AD)	Reverse inscription	Reverse type	Mint	Ruler	Obverse inscription	Cat. ref.	Freq.	IOLC
1	4 th -3 rd cent. BC	?	Two cornucopiae, crossed	Nabatea	Aretas IV	Illegible	BMC Greek (Arabia), p. 10.32	1	4710
2	?	?	Standing figure? Apollo, crown, laurel branch - all in wreath	?	Unknown	Illegible	?	1	4720
3	14-37	ΣΑΡΑΙΑΝΩΝ	Apollo, crown, laurel branch - all in wreath	Sardis (Caesarea)	Tiberius	ΟΠΙΝΑΣΑΚΑΜΟΣ	RPC 2990 (closest)	1	4716
4	14-37	Illegible	Two priests ploughing	Philippi?	Tiberius	ΤΙ ΑΥΓ ΔΡΥΣΥΣ CAESAR	RPC 1658	1	4717
5	14-37	ΑΙ[ΕΧΑΝΔΡΟΥ] ΑΝΤΙ[]	Artemis - cult statue with supports	Ephesus	Tiberius-Alexander	[ΑΡΧΙ]ΕΡΕΩΣ	RPC 2617	1	4722
6	19-23	ΑΙΖΑΝΙΤΩΝ ΕΠΙ ΜΕΝΑΝΑΡΟΥ	Zeus of Aezani, eagle, sceptre	Aezani	Tiberius-Menander	ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΣ	RPC 3068	1	4718
7-8	37-41	ΑΙΖΑΝΙΤΩΝ ΕΠΙ ΣΤΡΑΤΩΝΟΣ ΜΗΑΗΟΥ	Zeus of Aezani standing left	Aezani	Gaius (Caligula)-(Straton) Medeos	ΓΑΙΟΥΣ ΚΑΙΣΑΡ	RPC 3076, 3075	2	4711 4713
9	54-68	ΒΑΡΓΑΣΙΩΝΩΝ	Heracles, club, lion skin	Bargasa	Nero	ΝΕΡΩΝ ΚΑΙΣΑΡ	RPC 2828(?)	1	4721
10	98-117 /117-138	ΜΕΛΙΑΗΤΟΠΟΛΕΙ ΤΩΝ	Athena helmeted bust	Mysia	Hadrian-Trajan	ΑΝΤΙΚΤΙΑΙΑ ΑΑΡΙΑΝΟ	BMC Greek (Mysia) pl. 21 cf. Miletopolis, pl. 10	1	4712
11	222-235	S-C DE	S-C above, eagle below, all within laurel wreath	Antioch	Severus Alexander	ΑΥΤ ΚΑΙ ΜΑΡ ΑΥ CE ALEXANDROCC	McAlee, pp. 312-313	1	4725
12-14	268-269	L B	Eagle, wreath in beak	Alexandria	Claudius II Gothicus	ΑΥΤΚΚΑΥ ΔΙΟCC ΕΒ	BMC 2332, 2335	3	4739 4740 4741
15	270	Λ Δ ΙΑCΟΒΑΒΑΛΛΑΑΘ ΟCΑΘΗΝΥΑCΡ	Bust right, laureate, <i>paludamentum</i> and cuirass	Alexandria	Aurelian	Λ Α ΑΚΑΛΑΟ ΜΑΥΡ Η ΛΙΑΝΟCC ΕΒ	BMC 2384	1	4744
16	ruled 270-276	?	Eagle, wreath in beak	Alexandria	Aurelian	ΑΚΑΛΛΟΜΑΥΡΗΛΙΑΝΟCCΕΒ	Milne 4388	1	4743
17	276/77	L B	Eagle, wreath in beak	Alexandria	Probus	ΑΚΜΑΥΠΙΡΟ ΒΟCCEB	BMC 2427	1	4745
18	276/8	B L	Elpis standing left	Alexandria	Probus	ΑΚΜΑΥΠΙΡΟ ΒΟCCEB	BMC 2427	1	4746
19	282/3	L A	Dikaiosyne standing left	Alexandria	Carus	ΑΚΜΑΚΑ ΡΟCCEB	BMC 2441	1	4747
20	ruled 284-305	?	Dikaiosyne standing left	Alexandria	Diocletian	ΔΙΚΑΗΤΙ ΑΝΟCC ΕΒ	BMC 2488	1	4738
21	284/5	L A	Tyche recumbent left	Alexandria	Diocletian	ΑΚΤΟΥΑΛΔ ΙΟΚΛΗΤ ΙΑΝΟCCΕΒ	BMC 2527	1	4751
22	285/6	L A	Eagle, wreath in beak	Alexandria	Maximian	ΑΚΜΟΥΑΜΑ ΕΙΜΙΑΝ ΟCCEB	BMC 2594	1	4754
23	285/7	L A	Eirene standing left	Alexandria	Maximian	ΑΚΜΟΥΑΜΑΙΜ ΙΑΝΟCCΕΒ	BMC 2552	1	4755
24	286/7	L B	Elpis standing left	Alexandria	Maximian	ΑΚΜΟΥΑΜΑΙΜΙΑΝ ΟCCEB	BMC 2556	1	4752
25	287/8	L Δ	Athena standing left	Alexandria	Diocletian	ΑΚΤΟΥΑΔΙΟΚΛΗΤΙΑ ΝΟCCEB	BMC 2483	1	4749
26-27	288/9	L E	Eusebia of city standing left	Alexandria	Diocletian	ΑΚΤΟΥΑΔΙΟΚΛΗΤΙΑ ΑΝΟCCΕΒ	BMC 2511	2	4748 4750
28	289/90	L E	Tyche standing left	Alexandria	Maximian	ΜΑΙΜΙΑΝΟCCΕΒ	BMC 2587	1	4753

the monetary and non-monetary economies of South Indian kingdoms: the Pandyas, Cholas, and Vels of Karur accepted the bronze coins, while the Kongu Rattas, Cheras, and Ay did not.⁷⁸ Although in his seminar contribution Burnett primarily focused on Sri Lanka,⁷⁹ he also looked at the LRB coins found in South India and interpreted the evidence as suggesting that they circulated as coins in this region.⁸⁰ D. W. MacDowall proposed that, like the gold and silver Roman coins before them, the bronze coins exported to South India in the later fourth and early fifth centuries were valued for their metal content.⁸¹

There is the additional problem of the ancient Greek and Phoenician coins found in South India. While few authors have dealt with the LRB coins found in South India, even fewer have looked at the Hellenistic copper coins also found in this region. Krishnamurthy has interpreted the presence of such coins as indicating direct trade between this region and the Mediterranean world from the start of the first millennium BC, undertaken initially by the Phoenicians and, later, Hellenistic Greeks.⁸² D. W. Roller makes a similar deduction, arguing that the Greek coins, mainly from the second century BC, found in and around Karur, arrived via direct Greek trade to South India that began with Eudoxus' voyage.⁸³ Roller finds it 'implausible' that the Greek coins only appeared during Roman trade with India.⁸⁴ Although Mitchiner agrees that the Phoenician coins are likely to have arrived in India prior to the Roman conquest of Egypt in 30 BC, he is more circumspect about the Hellenistic coins.⁸⁵ He suggests that, while some of the Hellenistic coins may

have arrived with Phoenician traders, others may well have remained in circulation until they were shipped to India during the first and second centuries AD.⁸⁶ Burnett more convincingly argues that these coins arrived in South India and possibly Sri Lanka at the same time and in the same way as the LRB coins, as they fit the profile of hoards found in the eastern Mediterranean that date to the later Roman Empire.⁸⁷

4c

There is little doubt that an in-depth study of the late Roman bronze coins found in South India is long overdue. Research is needed that takes into account the precise locations in which these coins were found, hoard compositions (where available), and the archaeology and history of the region. A comparison between the LRB coins found in South India and Sri Lanka is also necessary. The history and coinage of the later Roman Empire must be taken into account in order to ascertain why particular issues appear to be better represented than others. T. S. N. Moorhead, for example, surmises that the presence of LRB coins in South India and Sri Lanka might show the extension of the Mediterranean 'nummus economy' to the region.⁸⁸ Burnett⁸⁹ and MacDowall⁹⁰ have raised important questions about the value of such coins within the Roman Empire and the effect of, for example, the decree of AD 396,⁹¹ recorded in the Theodosian Code, which stated that twenty-five pounds of bronze were valued at one gold *solidus*.

Table 2. The coins acquired by Charles Masson in 'Cairo/Egypt'¹ with matching IOLC coins that may be identified with some of these².

Authority	Reverse type	No. of coins	Possible IOLC match
Alexander		1	
Ptolemy	The eagle	26	
	Two eagles	5	
	Peculiar bust	2	
	(Lead or silver?)	1	
Cleopatra		1	
Roman		40	
Probus	'Eagle'- reverse	48	4745
	'Figure'- reverse	36	4746
Severus?		1	4725
Aurelian		29	4743, 4744
Tacitus	'Eagle'- reverse	3	
	'Figure'- reverse	6	
Some unknown name		3	
Sundry Probus & Aurelian		19	
Ptolemy		1	
Byzantine coins		38	
Total		260	

¹ Charles Masson Uncatalogued manuscript, British Library India Office Collection, Bundle 1, F2v and F3: list of 260 'Coins procured in Egypt/Cairo', watermark 1843.

² All the information presented in this table is quoted *verbatim* from Charles Masson's own notes.

Table 3. The 19 IOLC coins probably procured in London.

No.	Date (AD)	Reverse inscription	Reverse type	Mint	Ruler	Obverse inscription	Cat. ref.	Freq.	IOLC
29	71	PROVIDENT / S C	Altar	Lyon	Vespasian	IMP CAES VESPASIAN AVG COS III	RIC 1166	1	4734
30	71	? LIBERTAS PVBLICA / S C	Libertas (?) standing left	Rome	Vespasian	IMP CAES VESPASIAN AVG COS III	RIC 309	1	4735
31	103–111	SPQR OPTIMO PRINCIPI S C	Victory standing right	Rome	Trajan	VIC DAC	RIC 527	1	4736
32	141	AETERNITAS S C	Aeternitas seated left	Rome	Faustina the Elder	DIVA AVG FAVSTINA	RIC 1103	1	4737
33	ruled 253–268	APOLLINI CONS AVG	Centaur, globe, rudder	?	Gallienus	GALLIENVS AVG	Besly & Bland 1386	1	4729
34	ruled 253–269	VIRTVS AVGVSTI	Virtus, globe	?	Gallienus	GALLIENVS AVG	Besly & Bland 1278	1	4731
35	269–274	?	Worn	?	Victorinus~ Tetricus I	Illegible	?	1	4826
36	ruled 270–275	ORIENS AVG	Sol standing left	Mediolanum	Aurelian	AVRELIANVS AVG	RIC 135	1	4742
37–38	ruled 270–85	CONSECRATIO	Altar flames	?	Claudius	DIVO CLAVDIO	Besly & Bland 2875 / 2873	2	4726 4727
39	ruled 270–86	ANNONA AVG	Ammon, corn ears, cornucopia, ship's prow	?	Claudius	DIVO CLAVDIO	Bland & Burnmett 1119–1120	1	4728
40	ruled 271–274	?	Pax standing left	?	Tetricus I	PAX AVG	Besly & Bland 2986	1	4733
41	ruled 273–274	PIETAS AVGG	Unclear	Gaul	Tetricus II	C PIV ESV / C P E TETRICVS CAES	Bland & Burnmett 1544	1	4730
42	c.275–285	?	Salus feeding snake at altar	?	?	Illegible	?	1	4732
43	275–285	?	Standing figure; Salus feeding snake at altar (?)	?	?	Illegible	?	1	4828
44	275–285	?	Standing figure	?	?	Illegible	?	1	4829
45	313–315	SOLI INVIC-TO COMITI	Sol radiate, globe	Trier	Constantine I	CONSTANTINVS P F AVG	RIC 46–47	1	4756
46	316–317	SOLI INVIC-TO COMITI	Sol standing, globe	London	Constantine I	IMP CONSTANTINVS AVG / CONSTANTINVS P F AVG	RIC 89/109	1	4757
47	330–339	?	Salus feeding snake at altar	?	?	GLORIA EXERCITVS	?	1	4724

Table 4. The 70 IOLC coins probably acquired by Mackenzie in South India and/or Sri Lanka.

No.	Date (AD)	Reverse inscription	Reverse type	Mint	Ruler	Obverse inscription	Cat. ref.	Freq.	IOLC
48	317–320	IOVI CONS-ERVATORI CAESS	Jupiter standing left	Antioch	Licinius II	D N VAL LICIN LICINVS NOB C	RIC 29	1	4759
49	321–324	IOVI CONS-ERVATORI	Jupiter standing left	Heraclaea	Licinius I	IMP C VAL LICIN LICINIVS P F AVG	RIC 52	1	4758
50	335–337	GLOR-IA EXERC-ITVS	Two soldiers, one standard	Alexandria	Constantianus II	CONSTANTINVS IVN NOB C	RIC 66	1	4761
51	335–341	GLORIA EXERCITVS	Worn. Two soldiers, one standard (?)	?	Constantianus II	Illegible	?	1	4760
52	347–348	VN-MR	Emperor standing right	Constantinople	Constantine I	DV CONSTANTI-NVS PT AVG	RIC 68	1	4762
53–55	347–348	VOT/XX/MVLT/XXX D N CONSTA-NS P F AVG-VOT/XX/MVLT/ XXX	Legend within wreath	?, Heraclaea	Constans-Constantianus II	D N CONSTAN-TINVS P F AVG	RIC 76, 47	3	4763 4764 (Heraclaea) 4765
56	351–355	FEL TEMP-REPARATIO	Soldier advancing left, spearing falling horseman	Heraclaea	Constantianus II	D N CONSTAN-TINVS P F AVG	RIC 90	1	4767
57–59	355–361	SPES REI-PVBLICAE	Emperor standing left	Constantinople	Constantianus II	D N CONSTAN-TINVS P F AVG	RIC 151	3	4768 4769 4770
60	355–378	Illegible	?	?	?	Illegible	?	1	4795
61	366–367	SECVRITAS - REI PVBLICAE	Victory standing left	Constantinople	Valens	DN VALENS - PF AVG	LRBC 2088	1	4774
62–63	366–367	SECVRITAS - REI PVBLICAE	Victory, wreath, palm	Constantinople	Valentinian I	DN VALENTINI- ANVS PF AVG	LRBC 2087	2	4772 4773
64	366–375	GLORIA RO- MANORVM	Emperor dragging captive right and holding standard in left	Constantinople	Valens	DN VALENS - PF AVG	LRBC 2086/2107	1	4771
65	378–383	CONCOR-DIA AVGGG	Roma seated, facing	Constantinople	Gratian	DN GRATIA-NVS PF AVG	LRBC 2121	1	4776
66	378–383	CONCOR-DIA AVGGG	Constantinopolis, globe, sceptre	Cyzicus	Theodosius I	DN THEODO-SIVS PF AVG	LRBC 2536	1	4775
67–74	383–392	SALVS REI-PVBLICAE	Victory, trophy, captive	Antioch(2), Constantinople (4), Cyzicus(2)	Theodosius I	Illegible	LRBC 2761ff., 2183, 2184/2192, 2568ff.	8	4780 4786 4787 4784 4781 4782 4778 4779
75	383	VOT/X/MVLT/XX	Legend within wreath	?	Valentinian II	DN VALENTINIANVS PF AVG	LRBC 2156	1	4766
76–80	383–392	SALVS REI - PVBLICAE	Victory, trophy, captive	Constantinople (3), Cyzicus (2)	Arcadius	DN ARCADIVS PF AVG	LRBC 2185, 2568ff., 2570/ 2578	2	4785 4788 4822 4777 4783
81	383–393	SALVS REI-PVBLICAE	Victory, trophy, captive	Constantinople (2), Cyzicus (2)	Maximian	Illegible	LRBC 2183	1	4789
82	393–395	GLORIA ROMANORVM	Emperor, <i>labarum</i> , globe	Cyzicus	Theodosius I	DN THEODO-SIVS PF AVG	LRBC 2571	1	4723
83	393–395	GLORIA ROMANORVM	Emperor, <i>labarum</i> , globe	Antioch	Honorius	DN HONORIVS PF AVG	LRBC 2790	1	4790
84–85	395–401	VIRTVS EXERCITI	Emperor standing facing	?	Honorius	DN HONORI-VS PF AVG	LRBC 2581, 2205	2	4801 4824

(Continued)

No.	Date (AD)	Reverse inscription	Reverse type	Mint	Ruler	Obverse inscription	Cat. ref.	Freq.	IOLC
86-91	395-401	VIRTUS EXERCITI	Emperor standing facing	Constantinople	Arcadius-Honorius	DN [ARCADI / HONORI]-VS PF AVG	LRBC 2205, 2797-2794	6	4791 4794 4798 4802 4803
92	395-401	VIRTUS EXERCITI	Emperor with spear and shield, on horseback	Nicomedia	Arcadius-Honorius	DN ARCADI-VS PF AVG	LRBC 2440	1	4800
93-95	395-401	VIRTUS EXERCITI	Emperor standing facing	Constantinople	Arcadius	DN ARCADI-VS PF AVG	LRBC 2205	3	4792 4793 4799
96	395-401	VIRTUS EXERCITI	Emperor standing facing	Constantinople	?	DN [ARCADI / HONORI]-VS PF AVG	LRBC 2205	1	4827
97	395-408	CONCORDIA AVGG	Constantinopolis seated facing	Constantinople	?	Illegible	LRBC 2210	1	4796
98	395-409	CONCOR-DIA AVGGG or CONCORDIA AVGG GLORIA ROMANORVM	Roma seated, facing	Constantinople	?	Illegible	LRBC 2121/2210	1	4797
99-107	406-408	GLORIA ROMANORVM	Three emperors standing, facing	?	?	Illegible	LRBC 2801-2804, 2214	9	4805 4806 4807 4808 4809 4810 4811 4812 4825
108	408-423	GLORIA ROMANORVM	Two emperors standing, facing	?	Theodosius II	DN THEODO-SIVS PF AVG	LRBC 1876	1	4813
109	423-425	SALVS REI-PVBLICAE	Victory advancing to left	Rome	Iohannes	D N THEODOSI-VS P F AVG	RIC 1912ff.	1	4814
110-111	425-435	Illegible	Cross in wreath	Eastern (Thessalonica, Heraclaea, Constantinople, Nicomedia, Cyzicus, Antioch or Alexandria)	Theodosius II	D N THEODOSIVS P F AVG	RIC 440ff.	1	4815 4816
112	457-474	Illegible	Leo I's regular Latin monogram within wreath	Heraclaea	Leo I	D N LE-ON VG	RIC 682ff.	1	4817
113	565-578	Illegible	?	?	Justin II	Illegible	DOC I 60a	1	4823
114-117	4th-5th cent.	Illegible	?	?	?	Illegible	? ?	4	4818 4819 4820 4821

Table 5. Summary of the Mackenzie LRB coins found in South India and/or Sri Lanka.

No.	Reverse inscription	Date (AD)	Freq.
48	IOVI CONSERVATORI CAESS	317–320	1
49	IOVI CONSERVATORI	321–324	1
49	GLORIA EXERCITVS	330–339	1
50	GLORIA EXERCITVS	335–337	1
51	GLORIA EXERCITVS	335–341	1
52	VN-MR	347–348	1
53–55	VOT/XX/MVLT	347–348	3
56	FEL TEMP REPARATIO	351–355	1
57–59	SPES REI PVBLICAE	355–361	3
60	Illegible	355–378	1
61–63	SECVRITAS REI PVBLICAE	366–367	3
64	GLORIA ROMANORVM	366–375	1
65–66	CONCORDIA DIA AVGGG	378–383	2
67–74, 76–77	SALVS REI PVBLICAE	383–392	10
75	VOT/X/MVLT/XX	383	1
78	SALVS REI PVBLICAE	383–393	1
79–80	GLORIA ROMANORVM	393–395	2
81–93	VIRTVS EXERCITI	395–401	13
94–95	CONCORDIA AVGG	395–408	2
96–103	GLORIA ROMANORVM	406–408	9
104	GLORIA ROMANORVM	408–423	1
105	SALVS REI PVBLICAE	423–425	1
106	Illegible	425–435	1
107	Illegible	457–474	1
108	–	565–578	1
109–112	–	4 th –5 th cent.	4

Table 6. The Roman copper coins from the Mackenzie Collection as listed by H. H. Wilson.

No.	Description	Frequency
1–3	Augustus	3
4	Claudius Caesar	1
5–6	Julia Augusta	2
7–8	Vespasian	2
9–10	Domitian	2
11	Nerva	1
12–16	Trajan	5
17–19	Adrian	3
20–21	Antoninus Pius	2
22	Faustina	1
23–24	Gordian	2
25	Philip	1
26	Gallienus	1
27–28	Claudius	2
29–30	Aurelian	2
31	Florian	1
32	Probus	1
33	Carus	1
34	Victorinus	1
35	Posthumus	1
36	Constantius Chlorus	1
37–41	Constantine	5
42–61	Uncertain	19
62–232	Coins found at Mahavalipur and Cudapa	170

The current evidence suggests that LRB coins were indeed shipped from a region where their value was low (the Roman Empire) to a region where their value was higher (India). The coins may have functioned as convenient ballast used by merchants engaged in the Indo-Roman trade. While in South India some LRB coins may have been valued for their metal content alone, it is likely that they were used as currency in both South India and Sri Lanka. A detailed study of these coins is an integral part of evaluating the wider implications of the Indo-Roman and South Indian-Sri Lankan trade. Such research would help illuminate the scale and duration of trading links between the Mediterranean world, South India, and Sri Lanka. It would also provide a more detailed insight into the market for Indian goods and commodities in the eastern and western parts of the Roman Empire and their consumption in these regions.

Conclusion

The Roman coins in the IOLC collection derive from at least three separate, original collections, with the majority of the coins coming from the Masson and Mackenzie collections. Masson almost certainly acquired from Egypt the twenty-eight coins that originate from Egypt and the eastern Mediterranean. It is likely that Mackenzie and his colleagues were responsible for collecting the coins that tend to be found in South India and Sri Lanka. Only the coins from Western Europe cannot be linked to a specific collector or collectors.

The 117 coins presented here provide an insight into Masson and Mackenzie's collecting practices, as well as into the diverse composition of their collections. The rediscovery of the Mackenzie collection at the British Museum, the survival not only of a considerable number of Mackenzie's coins, but also of his papers and much of his varied Indian *materia antiqua*, is fortunate. It presents a unique opportunity to study, through Mackenzie and his colleagues, not only late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century collecting practices, but also the history of South India.

Abbreviations used in the tables

Besly & Bland – E. Besly, R. Bland, and others, *The Cunetio Treasure: Roman Coinage of the Third Century A.D.* (London: British Museum Press, 1983)

Bland & Burnett – *The Normanby Hoard and Other Roman Coin Hoards*, ed. by R. Bland and A. Burnett (London: British Museum Press, 1988)

BMC (Alexandria) – R. S. Poole, *Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum* (London: British Museum Press, 1892)

McAlee – R. McAlee, *The Coins of Roman Antioch* (Lancaster: Classical Numismatic Group, 2007)

Milne – J. G. Milne, *Catalogue of Alexandrian Coins* (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, 1933)

RPC – A. Burnett, M. Amandry, and P. Ripollès, *Roman Provincial Coinage* (London: British Museum Press, 1992)

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NOTES

1. E. Errington and V. Sarkhosh Curtis, *From Persepolis to the Punjab: Exploring Ancient Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan* (London: British Museum Press, 2007), p. 207.
2. G. Whitteridge, *Charles Masson of Afghanistan: Explorer, Archaeologist, Numismatist, and Intelligence Agent* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1986), p. 1.
3. For further information about Masson's career, see *ibid.* and E. Errington, 'Charles Masson', *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (2004) <<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/masson-charles>> [accessed 12 March 2012]. Please note that modern names have been used for the regions through which Masson travelled, for reasons of consistency and clarity.
4. Errington and Sarkhosh Curtis, p. 13.
5. Whitteridge, p. 157.
6. Errington, 'Charles Masson'.
7. C. E. Buckland, *Dictionary of Indian Biography* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1906), p. 263.
8. J. Howes, *Illustrating India: The Early Colonial Investigations of Colin Mackenzie (1784–1821)* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 2; Buckland, p. 262; C. Allen, *The Buddha and the Sahibs: The Men Who Discovered India's Lost Religion* (London: John Murray, 2002), p. 117.
9. Allen, p. 120.
10. Howes, pp. 196, 198–201, 208.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7, 192–93; H. H. Wilson, *Mackenzie Collection: A Descriptive Catalogue of the Oriental Manuscripts and other Articles Illustrative of the Literature, History, Statistics, and Antiquities of the South of India; Collected by the Late Lieut. Col. Colin Mackenzie, Surveyor of India, 2 vols* (Calcutta: Asiatic Press, 1828), I, xiii.
12. Wilson.
13. Howes, p. 227; Allen, p. 123.
14. Howes, p. 227; IOR F/4/867, Coll. 22924, ff. 15–27.
15. Howes, p. 1; Buckland, p. 263; Allen, pp. 123–24.
16. E. Errington, 'Discovering ancient Afghanistan. The Masson Collection', *Minerva*, 13.6 (2002), 53–55.
17. R. Desmond, *The India Museum, 1801–1879* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1982), pp. 38–39.
18. F. W. Thomas, letter to S. C. Cockerell, Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum, dated 15 November 1912, Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum Library Archives – cf. Errington and Sarkhosh Curtis, p. 13.
19. Whitteridge, p. 157.
20. Charles Masson, Uncatalogued manuscript, British Library India Office Collection, Bundle 1, f. 2v and f. 3: list of 260 'Coins procured in Egypt/Cairo', watermark 1843.
21. IOLC 4720 is too worn to be identified with any accuracy.
22. Charles Masson, Uncatalogued manuscript: list of 260 'Coins procured in Egypt/Cairo', watermark 1843.
23. Charles Masson, Uncatalogued manuscript: list of 260 'Coins procured in Egypt/Cairo', watermark 1843.
24. A. Cameron, *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity, AD 395–600* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 7, 128, discusses this complex question at greater length.
25. It must be noted that all of the IOLC coins were cleaned and conserved by the British Museum prior to their identification in this study. Masson did not have this benefit, so may not have been able to see the inscriptions clearly.
26. Errington and Sarkhosh Curtis, p. 12.
27. Charles Masson Uncatalogued manuscript, British Library India Office Collection, Bundle 2: scrap notebook, watermark 1853, f. 14v.
28. Errington and Sarkhosh Curtis, p. 14.
29. R. Krishnamurthy, *Ancient Greek and Phoenician Coins from Karur, Tamil Nadu, India* (Chennai:

- Garnet, 2009); R. Walburg, *Coins and Tokens from Ancient Ceylon; Ancient Ruhuna: Sri Lankan-German Archaeological Project in the Southern Province, Vol. 2*, Forschungen zur Archäologie außereuropäischer Kulturen, V (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2008).
30. Wilson, II, ccxxiv.
 31. J. Prinsep, 'On the Ancient Roman Coins in the Cabinet of the Asiatic Society', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (September 1832), pp. 392–408.
 32. *Ibid.*, p. 392.
 33. Letter dated 28 February 1809. NAS, GD46/17/10, f. 523. See Howes, p. 2.
 34. IOR L/AG/34/29/33, ff. 249–53.
 35. Walburg.
 36. For ancient sources, see for example Pliny, *Natural History*, trans. by H. Rackham, 10 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938–63), VI, 101–06; Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, trans. by H. L. Jones, 8 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1917–32), I, chapter 2.5.12; *The Periplus Maris Erythraei: Text with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, trans. by L. Casson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989). A considerable number of recent books and articles discuss various aspects of the trade. For a good overview, see for example R. Tomber, *Indo-Roman Trade: From Pots to Pepper* (London: Duckworth, 2008).
 37. Tomber, pp. 154, 161.
 38. *Ibid.*, p. 161.
 39. Gold coins from the second major phase of Indo-Roman trade have also been found in India. See for example P. Turner, *Roman Coins from India* (London: Royal Numismatic Society, 1989), esp. pp. 48, 86, 116; P. Berghaus, 'Roman Coins from India and their Imitations', in *Coinage, Trade, and Economy, January 8th–11th 1991*, ed. by A. K. Jha (Nashik: Indian Institute of Research in Numismatic Studies, 1991), pp. 108–121.
 40. R. Krishnamurthy, *Late Roman Copper Coins from South India: Karur, Madurai, and Tirukkoilur*, 2nd edn (Chennai: Garnet, 2007), p. viii.
 41. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
 42. Walburg, p. 53. Walburg bases his selection of these coins on their verified provenance and other confirmed data.
 43. Walburg, p. 53.
 44. Wilson, II, ccxxiv.
 45. *Ibid.*, II, ccxxx.
 46. Wilson's inclusion of the Arsacid coins under the heading 'Ancient Europe' is curious, because the Arsacids were Parthians. Wilson lists them without further qualification. I assume that he thought that they fit under the 'Ancient Europe' heading better than under any of the others. The IOC Register has fourteen coins listed as Parthian (IOC 404–17) and nine coins listed as Partho-Persian (IOC 418–26). Lots 742–47 from the India Museum sale as presented in the Sotheby, Wilkinson, and Hodge Catalogue of 1887 included a number of Parthian and Sasanian silver and copper coins.
 47. See, for example, M. Mitchiner, *The Coinage and History of Southern India. Part One: Karnataka – Andhra* (London: Hawkins, 1998), pp. 110–18; M. Mitchiner, *Coin Circulation in Southernmost India* (Maharashtra: Indian Institute of Research in Numismatic Studies, 1995), pp. 84–88, 94–98.
 48. R. H. C. Tufnell, *Hints to Coin Collectors in South India, Parts I and II*, 2 vols (Madras: Scott Stamp and Coin Company, 1887–88), II, 4 mentions how poor the condition of such coins is, writing: 'On the obverse of all that I have met with appears an emperor's head, but so worn that with one or two exceptions the features are well nigh obliterated. In one or two specimens a faint trace of an inscription appears running around the obverse, but hitherto I have not come across a single specimen in which more than one or two letters are distinguishable.' Mitchiner, *Coin Circulation*, p. 94 reiterates this, writing: 'Many of these late Roman small copper coins are no longer well enough preserved to identify them by reading the emperor's name. Some general attributions can be made on the basis of coin size and reverse design.'
 49. Wilson, II, 238 also refers to Mahabalipuram as 'Mahabalipur'.
 50. D. Ludden, *India and South Asia: A Short History* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2002), p. 37.
 51. Mitchiner, *Coinage and History*, pp. 116–18; Mitchiner, *Coin Circulation*, p. 13; M. Wheeler, 'Arikamedu: An Indo-Roman Trading Station on the East Coast of India', *Ancient India: Bulletin of the Archaeological Survey of India*, 2 (1946), nos. 24–25, Appendix I, pp. 116–21: 'Roman Coins, First Century BC to Fourth Century AD, Found in India and Ceylon'.
 52. Also spelled 'Cuddapah'.
 53. *Periplus Maris Erythraei*, chapters 59.20.1, 60.20.6.
 54. For example, see R. Sewell, 'Roman Coins Found in India', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (October 1904), pp. 591–637 (pp. 599, 602). Sewell mentioned that Roman gold coins dating to AD 68–217 had been found in both the Cuddapah (Kudapa) and Nellore districts.
 55. J. Allan, *Catalogue of the Indian Coins in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1967), p. liv.

56. Wilson, II, ccxlvii.
57. *Ibid.*, II, ccxlvii.
58. South Kensington Register, p. 29, no. 1120 (unpublished). The South Kensington Museum had its origins in the Great Exhibition of 1851 and was later renamed the Victoria and Albert Museum.
59. Personal correspondence. Jennifer Howes is the Curator of India Office prints, drawings, and photographs at the British Library.
60. *The Imperial Gazetteer of India, vol. 4* (Oxford: [n. pub.], 1907), p. 49 refers to the head of the District as the 'Provinces Collector and Magistrate'. Reconstruction kindly provided by Joe Cribb and Elizabeth Errington.
61. South Kensington Museum Register, p. 29, no. 1120 (formerly East India Company's India Museum no. 14).
62. Roberta Tomber kindly looked at the pot sherds in person and forwarded the details and a photograph to her colleagues, V. Selvakumar, K. Rajan, and Gwen Kelly, who identified them more precisely from this information.
63. Tufnell, II, 2.
64. *Ibid.*, II, 3.
65. *Ibid.*, II, 3.
66. *Ibid.*, II, 4.
67. Sewell, pp. 614–15.
68. W. Elliot, *Coins of Southern India* (London: The International Numismata Orientalia, 1886), p. 35.
69. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
70. The exception was Trincomalee. H. W. Codrington, *Ceylon Coins and Currency, Memoirs of the Colombo Museum*, ed. by J. Pearson, Series A, III (Colombo: Ceylon Government, 1924), p. 33.
71. Codrington, p. 33.
72. Walburg, p. 343.
73. A. Burnett, 'Roman Coins from India and Sri Lanka', in *Origin, Evolution, and Circulation of Foreign Coins in the Indian Ocean*, ed. by O. Bopearachchi and D. P. M. Weerakkody (New Delhi: Manohar, 1998), pp. 186–87. On page 185 and, more recently, in personal communication with the author (4 July 2012) Burnett suggests that the available evidence regarding the pattern of finds in both South India and Sri Lanka indicates that the material arrived at one or more points within the region and was then diffused across a wider area. Burnett emphasised, however, that this is not a firm conclusion and further research may shed more light.
74. Mitchiner, *Coinage and History*, p. 117. Burnett, p. 185 writes that coins were exported to Sri Lanka from the Roman Empire.
75. B. Chattopadhyaya, *Coins and Currency Systems in South India, c. AD 225–1300* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1977), p. 117.
76. Krishnamurthy, *Late Roman Copper Coins*, p. 94.
77. Mitchiner, *Coinage and History*, p. 122.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 123.
79. The title of the seminar was 'Circulation of Foreign Coins in Sri Lanka and Ancient Sea Routes in the Indian Ocean'. The meeting took place in Colombo, Sri Lanka, between 8 and 10 September 1994. For further information, see Editors' Note in *Origin, Evolution, and Circulation of Foreign Coins in the Indian Ocean*.
80. Burnett, pp. 183, 187.
81. D. W. MacDowall, 'Foreign Coins Found in India: In View of the Monetary Systems Operating in the Countries of Their Origin', in *Foreign Coins Found in the Indian Subcontinent: 8th–10th January, 1995; 4th International Colloquium, Nashik, Indian Institute of Research in Numismatic Studies*, ed. by D. W. MacDowall and A. Jha (Nashik: Indian Institute of Research in Numismatic Studies, 1995), pp. 9–14 (p. 13).
82. Krishnamurthy, *Ancient Greek and Phoenician Coins*, pp. 73–74.
83. D. W. Roller, 'A Note on Greek Coins from Tamilnadu', *Numismatic Digest*, 19 (1995), 37–41 (p. 39).
84. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
85. Mitchiner, *Coin Circulation*, pp. 84–85; Mitchiner, *Coinage and History*, pp. 112–14.
86. Mitchiner, *Coin Circulation*, p. 85; Mitchiner, *Coinage and History*, pp. 110–11.
87. Burnett, p. 186.
88. T. S. N. Moorhead, 'The Coinage of the Later Roman Empire, 364–498', in *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Coinage*, ed. by W. Metcalf (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 601–32 (p. 624). The 'nummus economy' refers, broadly speaking, to an economy based on the use of *nummi* (small copper coins). For more information see *ibid.*, pp. 621–624.
89. Burnett, p. 186.
90. MacDowall, p. 13.
91. Theodosian Code, 11.21.2.

