

COLLECTORS OF LEGEND

Hans M.F. Schuilman

International Numismatist Extraordinaire



Hans Schuilman (lower right corner) attended the famous Favonuk coin auction.

by David T. Alexander

Hans Maurits Frederick Schuilman was a familiar figure in the numismatic world on both sides of the Atlantic from his arrival in New York in 1939 until his death in 1990.

Born in the great cosmopolitan city of Amsterdam in the Netherlands on May 13, 1913, he was one of those rare Europeans who made himself thoroughly at home in the United States while allowing a charming Old World manner and accent to work persuasively for him among American customers.

The Schuilman numismatic dynasty was well established along Amsterdam's canal-lined Keizergracht since at least 1880, and Hans' father Maurits was a cousin of that illustrious family. Those were the days when European professional numismatists cultivated the image of gentlemanly connoisseurship,

then decimated.

Hans was the only Schuilman to leave Europe as the black clouds of war loomed over Europe in 1939. His cousin Jacques remained in Amsterdam, even after the German invasion in June 1940 that saw the Netherlands overrun, with Queen Wilhelmina forced to flee to London and the country's important Jewish community first menaced and

scholarship and the unhurried wooing of wealthy clients.

Young Hans pursued a classical education at the University of Amsterdam, with graduate work following at the Sorbonne in Paris. He was to be the master of at least five languages and was deeply immersed in classic works and of medieval and modern Europe. In time, he also became highly knowledgeable on Far Eastern and South Asian coins and primitive money.

These years were famously chronicled by the writings of the young Anne Frank. Maurits was one of the thousands of Dutch Jews shipped to the death camps, dying (as the family learned after the war) at Sobibor, a satellite camp of Auschwitz. The senior branch was still conducting its numismatic business as late as 1942, and found ways to survive the war.

After settling in New York City, Hans became a protégé of the great New York Dutch Nazis.

Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging, the headed by Anton Mussert of the enforced by a collaborationist regime of the yellow star and the label *Jood*, were tions, including the compulsory wearing name by Dutch resistors. These regulations as "Six-and-a-Quarter" in a pun on his commissar Arthur Seyss-Inquart, der- under the direction of Nazi Reich-

A full body of racial laws was enacted

continued on next page

Never a scholar or writer, unlike his royal numismatic contemporary King Victor Emanuel III of Italy, Farouk ingested rarities by the hundreds, ordered most of them cleaned to assuage his germ phobia, and scarcely glanced at them again. Since Farouk's speed of payment resembled that of a glacier, Schulman took out a life insurance policy on the king, reasoning that assassination was a fact of life in the Middle East and such insurance could bail him out should Farouk be killed.

Meanwhile, Schulman made good use of their association, proudly displaying the royal coat of arms on his catalogs and basking in the glow of royal patronage. Schulman's insurance plan was ruined when the king was overthrown, not killed, by the Free Officers led by Gen. Muhammad Naguib and Col. Abdel Nasser. The military officers seized all the royal collections and arranged the auctioning of the coins as "The Palace Collections of Egypt" by London's great auction house Sotheby & Co.

Cataloged by Fred Baldwin, the royal collection was presented in one of

the most stoppily prepared catalogs of all history, which saw English-style group lots that included the famed 1913 Liberty Head nickel and the 1933 Saint-Gaudens double eagle (\$20 gold piece) lost in giant runs of their denominations. Schulman was owed more than \$400,000 by the de throne king and, after a great deal of legal maneuvering, he was allowed a credit in the upcoming sale equal to the amount owed to him.

Several Americans attended the sale, including Abe Kosoff, John J. Pittman and James Randall. Braving an unstable and intensely paranoid regime, contenting with trigger-happy guards and utter ignorance of coins and how to handle them, the Americans had an exciting, if hair-raising, time. Schulman himself strove against all these hazards, emerged with a whole hide and satisfied a debt. It may have been his highest moment in a long and checkered numismatic career.

Pictured are just a few of the Schulman sales.



Following in the successful path of Wayne Raymond, Schulman focused his major efforts on developing and servicing a highly select group of private numismatic clients. He was able to succeed in this exacting endeavor largely because of the close rapport he developed with wholesale dealer Burdette G. Johnson of St. Louis. Johnson had access to the splendid collection left by Col. E.H.R. Green and was one of the dealers helping to liquidate parts of the vast collection of millionaire Chicago brewer Virgil M. Brand.

Perhaps the greatest of all American collectors, Brand amassed huge holdings that included more than 350,000 coins and medals. He died suddenly without a will and his two squabbling heirs, his brothers Horace and Armin Brand, spent decades trying to find a successful method to dispose of this continent-sized collection. Johnson consigned substantial numbers of high-priced Brand rarities to Schulman, who found a ready buyer (and a notoriously slow payer) in Egypt's youthful monarch, King Farouk.

As a young man, Farouk was a charismatic figure, a stark contrast to his grandfather and dictatorial father King Fuad. Initially adored by his people, Farouk was once touted as a candidate for a restored Caliphate of Sunni Islam, a post vacant since the last sultan of Ottoman Turkey had been deposed in 1922. The king adored coins, especially those of the United States, pursuing gold coins and patterns with special vigor.

Researcher Martin Gengerke lists 101 Schulman sales in his *American Numismatic Auctions*, last published in hard copy in 1990. An in-depth review of Schulman and his career appears in John W. Adams' *United States Numismatic Literature, Volume II, Twentieth Century Auction Catalogs*, published in 1990.

Schulman's image was that of an international numismatist, although he handled his share of great American rarities, especially in the field of pioneer gold. As Adams points out, Schulman never received the credit due him for his work with U.S. coins, possibly because to him they were of lesser importance than his first love, world coinage.

Researcher Martin Gengerke lists without illustrations. First auction sale on March 30, 1940—one which included 709 lots of gold and crowns, Schulman held his already possessed, especially of world coinage. Employing the knowledge he amassed over the first decades of his dealership, Schulman gave the young man a free run into the enormous inventory he had

Numismatic language was being liberalized to cover a variety of needs in selling foreign material.

This tendency is seen in all of Schulman's sales, but the first such catalog encountered by this writer was that for the September 1956 sale entitled the "Remarkable Collection of the Crowns of the World," an orange-covered catalog offering 2,354 lots. Here, many of the cataloger's quirky habits emerged to confuse specialists in world coins, then guided by two definitive catalogs, *Coins of the World, 20th Century Issues* and *19th Century Issues*, published by Schulman's old mentor Wayne Raymond.

One repeated problem in this and other Schulman auction catalogs was the listing of all kinds of medals as coins. Simply stated, medals were then hard to sell in the absence of any significant body of medal collectors, but sold freely after they appeared as freshly christened coins in Schulman sales. To a young collector, such listing verged on numismatic heresy. Examples of this kind of cataloging were sprinkled throughout the text. For instance, one silver piece was described as "Berlin Shooting taler 1890. German eagle. View of city. Ornate Unc. (5.00).". This lot was one of the vast body of German shooting medals, none of them coins, but this key fact was nowhere to be found in the catalog listings.

Schulman enlarged the canon of Germany's Weimar Republic commemoratives when he published this description of a famous 1920s nationalist protest medal: "Black Shame Taler (1919). French colonial soldier attack-ing German woman at point of bayonet (sic) ... Brill. Proof. Wornser-Gibbs Collections. PLATE (50.00).". This lot was actually a popular patriotic medal struck by L. Chr. Lauer of Nürnberg, protesting excesses of French colonial occupation troops on the Rhine, grouped bare-facedly among the official coins of this era.

Schulman's role in the little-explored area of odd and curious money, today more generally known as primitive money, was decidedly more creative. For years, his catalogs were freighted with a wide variety of brass weights, small sculptures and other knickknacks, all transformed into "primitive money used by the Bong-Bonga [or some other] tribe" in some remote mountains or on some obscure atoll.

Collector Howard D. Gibbs was then the great guru of primitive money, and his collection would ultimately be sold in four parts by Schulman.

Auctions were to provide the largest component of his numismatic life but were not the whole story. Just after World War II, Schulman teamed with Hans W. Holzer to publish an ambitious 372-page hardcover book, *The Coin Collector's Almanac*, published at his New York offices at 545 Fifth Ave. An impressive editorial board following the names of Schulman and Holzer included Howard D. Gibbs, Frank J. Katen, Robert I. Nesmith and Maurice Restrepo.

The book covered an impressive list of facets, including the basics of coin collecting from how coins are made to storage and preservation, numismatic terminology, grading, counterfeiting, cleaning, shipping and insurance, heraldry, a bibliography and a list of Latin place names. Part II reviewed coins of the world country by country, from the United States and Canada to Europe, the Orient and Africa. All in all, this was a remarkable work, but one that is essentially forgotten today.

No later editions appeared of this valuable effort, and rumor among numismatists who knew the two authors suggested a falling-out that may have blocked continued publication. Co-author Holzer continued as an active writer in several fields, including the occult, well into the 1990s.

Another colorful 1946 Schulman project created pattern coins for the new United Nations. Joining him in this venture were Abe Kosoff and Abner Kreisberg, eager to show what a U.N. coinage might look like in a world still full of optimism for this successor the League of Nations. Schulman suggested the denomination "ducaton," from an important 18th-century silver trade coin of the old United Provinces of the Netherlands.

Designed by medalist Karl Gruppe, the crown-sized essay ducaton presented the flags of the "Big Five" nations and a rendition of the Four Freedoms. Pieces were struck in gold for presentation to U.N. Secretary-General Trygve Lie and in silver and bronze for sale to collectors. The project foundered when objections to the gold issue were received from the United States Treasury and its Office of Domestic Gold and Silver Operations (ODGSO), citing federal gold regulations dating back to President Franklin D. Roosevelt's executive orders of March 1933.

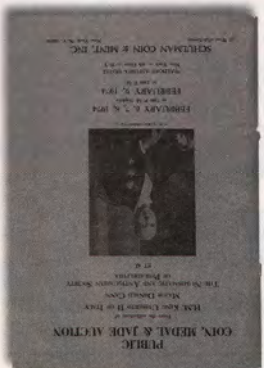
Always a fervent advocate of gold in numismatics, Schulman would try again 21 years later, when he promoted gold coins from the South Pacific Kingdom of Tonga portraying the statueque Queen Salote. Despite the coins' issuance by a British protected state,

ODGSO denied the Tonga koula piece and its fractions any license to enter the United States.

Another Schulman contribution to world coinage was the 1960-65 coinage bearing the name of the tiny nation of Andorra, located high in the Pyrenees between Spain and France under the joint rule of the Spanish bishop of Urgel and the president of France. Inscribed with the Catalan language were 25- and 50-diner coins struck by West Germany's Munich Mint in silver for sale to collectors, gold and platinum for presentation purposes. These coins were subsequently found not to have been authorized by the Andorran authorities. Most of Schulman's energies in the long term were devoted to auctions. He held only five auctions during the War II, but the pace picked up in 1950 and continued to the end of the series in March 1975. From 1957 through 1967, he operated in partnership with Abner Kreisberg of Beverly Hills, California, and New York. The partnership conducted such famous sales as those of the Adolphe Menjou, Gustav Lichtenfels, James W. Curtis and Brand-Lichtenfels collections.

Here, showmanship began emerging. The sale bearing the name of Hollywood leading man Menjou contained but a handful of double eagles that actually belonged to the actor. Menjou's name on the cover and title page occupied virtually as much space as his own coins, the rest of the lots being provided by other consignors. The name "Golden Sale" set the pattern for later colorful names, such as the "Atomic Sale" of June 1961 and the "Treasures of Two Oceans Sale" of February 1969.

By the mid-1950s, advanced collectors of what were then called foreign coins had grown resive over trends in Schulman's cataloging. It was increasingly apparent that the storyteller was winning out over the scientific or classical numismatist and descriptions were



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A glimpse into Schulman's approach to finding primitive money was provided by John J. Ford Jr. at a meeting of the Numismatic Bibliomania Society (NBS) at an American Numismatic Association convention a few years ago.

Ford recalled attending a numismatic convention in Cincinnati in the 1960s. He took a stroll for the exercise each morning, passing through a run-down neighborhood slated for demolition. He always carried a stick while walking, so he stooped to pick up a twisted upright from a rusted wrought-iron fence in front of an abandoned house. He returned to the coin show and idly set the twisted iron down as he set up his table for the day.

William Fox Steinberg, then a prominent dealer in New York, came by and asked for the iron rod. Ford explained to Howard D. Gibbs, the collection of Chinese coins, the collection of Bowdoin College and that reportedly of former King Umberto II of Italy—but failure and its last sale was held on March 3, 1975. Schulman left the next month for an agitated retirement in Alicante, Spain, after suffering a heart attack on the sidewalk before his corporations' offices following an unsuccessful attempt to recover his library.

Near the end of his life, Schulman returned to New York as a principal in a new investor-oriented firm called Asset Services Inc., composed largely of former executives from the New York office of Kagnin's Numismatic Services. Although Asset Services dealt exclusively in U.S. coins for a network of investors, the Schulman name proved a drawing card for the new firm. Its operations ended when the State of New York brought a complex action against Asset Services, Kagnin's and First Meridian, a financial planning firm accused of many violations of the state's investment laws.

Hans M.F. Schulman died before this complicated legal action was settled. His massive card-file system of tracking world rarities appearing at auction was later donated to the ANA Museum, which also holds a collection of his auction catalogs and other writings.

In retrospect, Schulman must be regarded as a phenomenon of the U.S. numismatic scene that had no equal. It can be said that he did much to increase American interest in ancient and world coins—and whatever else, it must be admitted that he added more sparkle and spice to the numismatic mix than any of his contemporaries.



Hans M.F. Schulman from page 70

Franklin Mint, Schulman's new corporation promptly announced a new medal series: "The Medallic History of Coins and Banking." More than 100,000 direct-mail brochures and solicitations were sent to prospective buyers, pointing out the fine-art and limited-edition appeal of the projected series. Just over 100 positive responses were received, making the new series one of the greatest failures in the history of direct mail. A version of this story was a highlight of a little-read novel, *The Silver Bears*, written under the byline of Patsy Lepera a couple of years later, in which a character all too carefully based on Schulman made an appearance.

The "Schulman Coin and Mint" name appeared on some 26 auction sales, including "name" sales liquidating the primitive-money collection of Howard D. Gibbs, Eduard Kann's Chinese coins, the collection of Bowdoin College and that reportedly of former King Umberto II of Italy—but failure and its last sale was held on March 3, 1975. Schulman left the next month for an agitated retirement in Alicante, Spain, after suffering a heart attack on the sidewalk before his corporations' offices following an unsuccessful attempt to recover his library.

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