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CHINESE SOVIET
COINS AND NOTES

by

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IN VIEW of the publicity given in the past few years to the determined Government drive on the "Red" or "Communist" forces in China, and the more recent events in Shensi the following paper on "Chinese Soviet Coins and Notes" may be of more than a little interest.

Some idea of the difficulties the National Government has had to face will be realized when it is learned that, far from being an unorganized force, the Communists, in spite of constant harassing by Government troops, have been a well enough organized and sufficiently powerful body to establish and maintain in the various areas from time to time under their control, not only their own banks issuing both bonds and notes, but also mints capable of turning out well designed and well struck dollar and subsidiary coins.

Information regarding the various issues is still extremely difficult to obtain, especially from Chinese sources, as the average Chinese is chary of betraying any knowledge of Red ways and means however innocently acquired, and what little is so far known has been gleaned from odd bits of information from missionary and other sources.

The actual coins and notes themselves have also not been easy to come by, owing to the difficulty and danger of getting them out of the Red areas, the penalty for being found in possession of such being said to be generally short and sharp-death.

The first coins known were issued in Hunan in 1931, since when other issues of coins and notes have taken place in the different areas under Red control. The last known are the Szechuan and Shensi issues of 1934 prior to the flight before Government troops into Kansu. There is every probability that further issues have since been made in the last named province, and information regarding this is now being sought.

The coins and notes here described are believed to represent all the Communist issues up to 1934, but, owing to the lack of authentic data, this cannot be considered definite. Coins and notes are possibly in existence that are not listed here, and information about any such will be most gratefully received. Chinese circles report the existence of a Fukien Communist silver dollar, but up to the present no confirmation of this has been obtained.

The various issues in their chronological order are:

- (a) Soviet Government of Hunan Province.
- (b) Soviet Government of Hupeh, Honan and Anhuei Provinces.
- (c) Soviet Government of Kiangsi Province.
- (d) Soviet Government of Fukien, Chekiang and Kiangsi Provinces.
- (e) Soviet Government of Szechuan and Shensi Provinces.

For the purposes of this article only one coin of each issue has been described, the many varieties due to the non-use of master dies, defective dies and other causes being disregarded. In one or two instances a few have been illustrated.

¹ Paper read before the Numismatic Society of China, Shanghai, January 12, 1937.

(a) SOVIET GOVERNMENT OF HUNAN PROVINCE.

1. DOLLAR. Silver.

Obverse: Centre, within a beaded and linear circle, bust of Lenin in profile to the left, Above, in Chinese, "Minted by the Chinese Soviets."

Reverse: Centre, within a linear and headed circle, the Chinese characters for "One Dollar" together with a crossed hammer and sickle.

The description of the above coin is necessarily sketchy as so far I have not been able to obtain a specimen, even for examination, and the photograph of the rubbing which is all I have been able to get up to the present is unfortunately poor.

This coin, known as the "Lenin" dollar, was issued by the Communists in 1931, and is reputed to be the first Soviet coin struck in China. It is extremely rare and only a few specimens are reported to be in existence.

2. DOLLAR. Silver; diameter 39.5 mm.; edge, milled.

Obverse: Centre, within a linear and beaded circle, a five pointed star with a small hammer and sickle superimposed. Top, in Chinese, "Soviet Government of Hunan Province." Bottom, also in Chinese, "Minted in the year 1931."

Reverse: Centre, within an open wreath of barley, the Chinese characters for "One Dollar."

It is interesting to note here the abandoning of the usual Chinese practice of dating coins with the year of the Republic, which in this case would have been the 20th Year, and the adoption of the Western or Christian date, namely, 1931. It will be found that this practice is continued in all subsequent issues, and in some cases the characters are actually written in the Western manner from left to right.

(b) SOVIET GOVERNMENT OF HUPEH, HONAN AND ANHUEI.

3. DOLLAR. Silver; diameter 39.5 mm.; edge, milled.

Obverse: Centre, within a beaded circle, the conventional representation of the Eastern Hemisphere with a crossed hammer and sickle superimposed. Surrounding the design is the exhortation in Chinese "Rise and unite the proletariat of the whole world."

Reverse: Centre, within a linear circle, the Chinese characters for "One Dollar." Top, in Chinese, "Soviet Government of Hupeh, Honan and Anhuei Provinces." Right and left, five-pointed star. Bottom, also in Chinese, "Minted in 1932 by the Labourer and Farmer's Bank."

4. DOLLAR. Silver; diameter 39.5 mm.; edge, milled.

Obverse: Similar in general design to No. 3.

Reverse: Centre, within a linear circle, the Chinese characters for "One Dollar." Top, also in Chinese, "Minted in 1932." Right and left, five-pointed star. Bottom, three words in pseudo-Russian script, which are said to read "Soviet Chinese Republic."

The Russian influence is evident in this coin, and it would be interesting if any real light could be thrown on the meaning of the inscription.

(c) SOVIET GOVERNMENT OF KIANGSI PROVINCE.

Here bank notes make their first appearance, and it is again Lenin whose head figures in the inaugural issue.

The descriptions of all notes will be brief as the illustrations speak for themselves. In order to economize on space the reverses have not been illustrated, and, therefore, are not described.

5. DOLLAR. Note issued in 1932. Design in red with a pale green background.

Centre, portrait of Lenin full face; right and left, large five-pointed stars with the characters "One" and "Dollar" superimposed. Top, in Chinese, "Chinese Soviet Republic National Bank." Bottom, "Each note payable on demand with one silver dollar."

6. FIFTY CENTS. Note issued in 1933. Design in purple.

Right and left of centre design, representations of the Eastern and Western Hemispheres with the characters "Five" and "Chiao" (fifty cents) superimposed. Top, "Chinese Soviet Republic National Bank." Bottom, "Every two notes exchangeable for one silver dollar."

7. TEN CENTS. Note issued in 1932. Design in Red.

Centre, in Chinese, "One Chiao" (ten cents). Top, "Chinese Soviet Republic National Bank." Bottom, "Each ten notes exchangeable for one silver dollar."

8. FIVE CENTS. Note issued in 1932. Design in Green.

Centre, a marching host with a banner in the forefront; right and left, representations of the Eastern and Western Hemispheres with the Chinese characters "Five" and "Fen" (five cents) superimposed. Top, "Chinese Soviet Republic National Bank." Bottom, "Every twenty notes exchangeable for one silver dollar."

9. DOLLAR. Note issued in 1932. Design in red and pale green.

Centre, Red flag with white star showing hammer and sickle device superimposed on a map of the Eastern Hemisphere. Right and left, the Chinese characters "One" and "Dollar." Top, also in Chinese, "Soviet Bank of North East Kiangsi." Bottom, "Printed 1932. New printed notes, first issue. Printed by the Soviet Provincial Printing Co."

10. TWENTY CENTS. Silver; diameter, 24 mm.; edge, milled.

Obverse: Centre, within an open wreath, hemisphere with hammer and sickle superimposed, five-pointed star above. Top, in Chinese, "Every five pieces equal one dollar."

Reverse: Centre, the Chinese characters "Two Chiao" (twenty cents). Top, "Chinese Soviet Republic." Bottom, "Western calendar year 1933." Right and left, five-pointed star.

The above coin has at various times been illustrated in numismatic publications, but has been wrongly described as emanating from Hupeh, Szechuan or Shensi, instead of from Kiangsi, to which all evidence points. In this connection the following extracts from "One's Company," a book by Peter Fleming published in 1934, in which he describes his travels in China, prove interesting.

Page 184. Regarding the Red areas in South China.

"One Central and at least two local batiks have been established, and notes and silver coins have been issued, the former bearing the head of Lenin, and the latter the hammer and sickle."

Page 262. Nanfeng.

"Before we parted the magistrate produced one of the silver coins, minted in Shuikin, the Capital of the Red area; these coins together with the notes bearing the head of Lenin, make up a currency which is remarkable, even in these inflationary days, for the paucity of backing behind it. The coin was a twenty cents piece, dated 1933, and bearing the hammer and sickle in addition to the star which is the emblem of the Kuomintang."

11. FIVE CENTS. Copper; diameter, 27 mm.; edge, both milled and plain.

Obverse: Centre, within a linear circle, the map of China with hammer and sickle superimposed. Top, in Chinese, "Chinese Soviet Republic." Bottom, also in Chinese, "Each twenty pieces equal to one dollar national currency." Right and left, five-pointed star.

Reverse: The Chinese characters "Five Fen" (five cents) within an open wreath of corn, five-pointed star above.

The two reverses illustrated, one with a small and the other a large star, give an idea of the differences to be met with in the various issues.

12. ONE CENT. Copper; diameter, 17.5 mm.; edge, plain

Obverse: Centre, the numeral "1" superimposed on a crossed hammer and sickle, Above, in Chinese, "Chinese Soviet Republic."

Reverse: The Chinese characters "One Fen" (one cent) within an open wreath of corn, five pointed star above.

(d) SOVIET GOVERNMENT OF FUKIEN, CHEKIANG AND KIANGSI.

13. DOLLAR. Note issued in 1933. Design in red and pale green.

Centre, Red flag with white star showing hammer and sickle device superimposed on a map of the Eastern Hemisphere. Right and left, the Chinese characters "One" and "Dollar." Top, also in Chinese, "Soviet Bank of Fukien, Chekiang and Kiangsi Provinces." Bottom, "Printed 1933. New printed notes, first issue. Printed by the Provincial Soviet Printing Co."

14. TEN CENTS. Note issued in 1933. Design in red and blue.

General design similar to the preceding dollar note issued by the same bank.

15. TEN CASH. No date of issue. Design in blue.

Centre, emblem composed of a large five-pointed star, hammer, and sickle. Right and left, in Chinese, "Copper Currency" and "Ten Cash." Top, also in Chinese, "Soviet Bank of Fukien, Chekiang and Kiangsi Provinces."

16. DOLLAR. Bond issued in 1934. Design in blue.

Centre, two marching figures, one holding a sickle and the other a hammer, with an unfurled banner. Right and left, in Chinese, "One" and "Dollar." Chinese inscription at the top. The meaning of this is not quite clear, a literal

translation being "The Soviet Government of Fukien, Chekiang and Kiangsi Provinces, five times surrounded, for the final decisive battle." Bottom, "Provincial Minister of Finance," "Chang Chih Te."

Details of the bond issue appear on the reverse. The issue was to be \$100,000; to be sold during July, August and September, 1934. The bonds were to bear interest at one percent and to be refunded with accrued interest in July, 1935. The proceeds were to be utilized as follows: 80 percent for fighting expenses; 10 percent finance expenses; and 10 percent for the relief of the wounded.

(e) SOVIET GOVERNMENT OF SZECHUAN AND SHENSI PROVINCES.

17. TWO HUNDRED CASH. Copper; diameter, 35 mm.; edge, plain.

Obverse: Crossed hammer and sickle pointing left with three stars above. Surrounding the design the exhortation in Chinese "Rise and unite the proletariat of the whole world." bottom, four letters, which look like 'e C Z C'.

Reverse: Centre, within an open floral wreath, the figures "200." Top, in Chinese, "Minted by the Szechuan-Shensi Soviet Government Provincial Mint." bottom, "1933 Year."

18. TWO HUNDRED CASH. Copper; diameter, 37.5 mm.; edge, plain.

Obverse: General design similar to No. 17, but the hammer and sickle now point to the right.

Reverse: General design similar to No. 17.

The above two coins are the poorest examples of coinage struck so far by the Communists, and are doubtless illustrative of the straits to which they were reduced by the Government forces at that time. As the illustrations show, the designs are crude and the execution more so. All specimens so far to hand have been found to be imperfectly struck and the design and lettering partially obliterated. It has only been possible to decipher the inscriptions by the study of a number of different specimens, from each of which something has been gleaned. The meaning of the four letters at the bottom of the design on the obverse has yet to be discovered.

19. DOLLAR. Silver; diameter, 39.5 mm.; edge, milled.

Observe: Centre, a hemisphere with crossed hammer and sickle superimposed. Top, in Chinese, "Rise and unite the proletariat of the whole world." Right and left, four-leaved rosettes. Bottom, also in Chinese, "Year 1934."

Reverse: Centre, within a beaded circle, the characters for "One Dollar." Top, in Chinese, "Chinese Soviet Republic." Bottom, also in Chinese, "Made by the Szechuan-Shensi Provincial Mint." Right and left, solid-bodied five-pointed star.

Three reverses are illustrated to give an idea of the considerable variation in the size and shape of the stars in most specimens met with.

20. DOLLAR. Silver; diameter, 39.5 mm.; edge, milled.

Obverse: Generally similar to No. 19.

Reverse: Generally similar to No. 19 but the stars are now formed of interlaced lines.

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21. FIVE HUNDRED CASH. Copper; diameter, 33 to 35 mm.; edge, plain.

Obverse: Centre, five pointed star encircled with a wreath of corn, the whole superimposed with a crossed hammer and sickle. Top, in Chinese, "Rise and unite the proletariat of the whole world." Right and left, five-pointed star. Bottom, also in Chinese, "Year 1934."

Reverse: Centre, within a linear circle, the figures "500." Top, in Chinese, "Minted by the Soviets of Szechuan and Shensi Provinces.", Right and left, five-pointed star. Bottom, also in Chinese, "Five Hundred Cash."

22. TWO HUNDRED CASH. Copper; diameter, 29 mm.; edge, plain.

Observe: Practically all star with the inevitable hammer and sickle superimposed. Four characters between the upper points of the star, which read, "Bolshevize the whole of Szechuan." Bottom, in numerals "1934," the figure "4" being reversed.

Reverse: Centre, within a linear circle, the figures "200." Top, in Chinese, "Soviets of Szechuan and Shensi Provinces." Bottom, "Two Hundred Cash." Right and left, "Copper" and "Currency."

23. TWO HUNDRED CASH. Copper; diameter, 29 mm.; edge, plain.

Obverse: Similar to No. 22.

Reverse: Similar to No. 22, but the figure "4," which was reversed, now appears corrected.

This coin is not illustrated.

24. THREE THOUSAND CASH. Note issued in 1923. Printed in black on cloth.

Centre, a clenched fist within a five-pointed star superimposed on a crossed hammer and sickle. Immediately below the characters "San Chuan" (three strings of 1000 cash each). The other inscriptions are, top, (1) "Rise and unite the proletariat of the whole world;" (2) "Soviet Government of Szechuan and Shensi Provinces;" (3) "Labourers' and Farmers' Bank." Bottom, "Year 1933."

This note is particularly interesting from the fact that it is printed on cloth. The material generally used is an ordinary grey-white cotton cloth, but specimens printed on light and dark blue cloth are also in existence. These are comparatively rare.

25. ONE THOUSAND CASH. Note issued in 1934. Printed in blue and red.

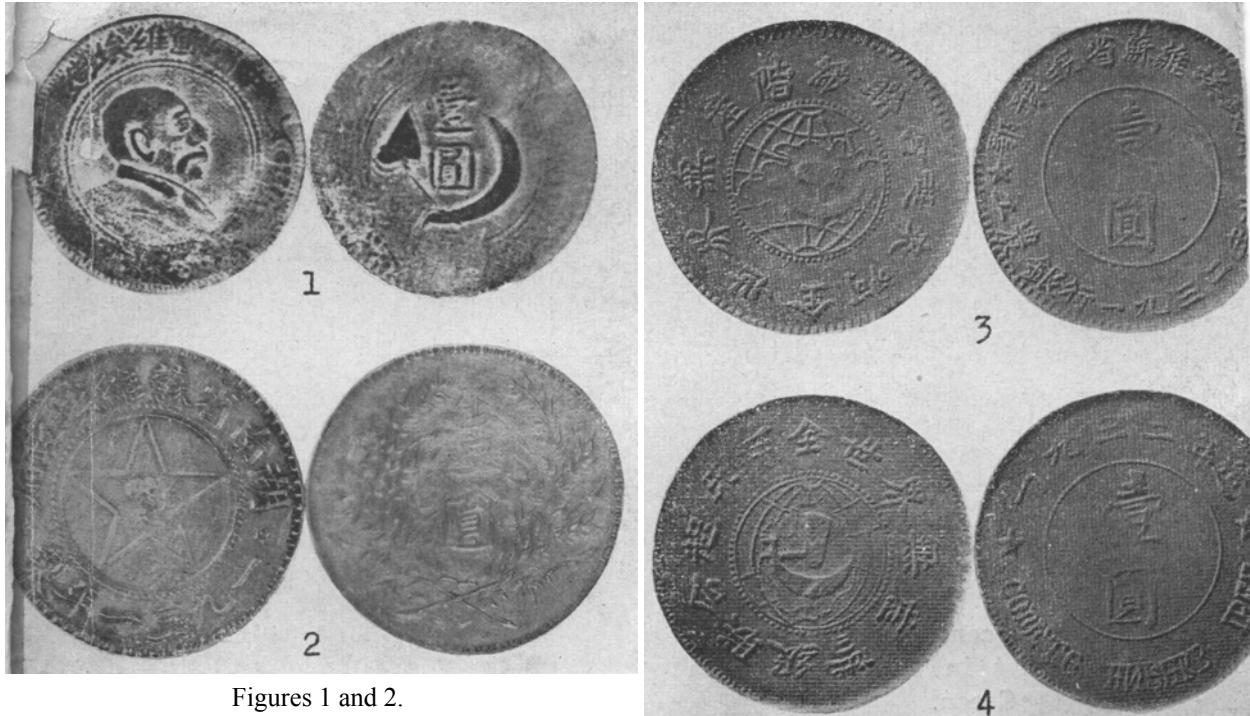
26. THREE THOUSAND CASH. Note issued in 1934. Printed in blue, green and red.

27. DOLLAR. Note issued in 1933. Printed in green.

28. DOLLAR. Note issued in 1933. Printed in green on cloth.

29. DOLLAR. Note issued in 1934. Printed in red and blue.

Information regarding the last five notes (Nos. 25 to 29) has only just come to hand, and it is regretted that further details and illustrations could not be obtained in time for inclusion in this article.



Figures 1 and 2.
Silver Dollars minted by the Reds in Hunan Province in 1931.

Figures 3 and 4.
Silver Dollars minted by the
Reds for use in Hupeh, Honan
and Anhuei Provinces in 1932.



< Figure 5. A Communist
Dollar Note with Lenin's Por-
trait issued in Kiangsi Province
in 1932. Red on a pale Green
Background.



Figure 6. A Fifty-cent Note issued
by the Soviet Government of Kiangsi
Province in 1933. Design in Purple.





Figure 7.

A Ten-cent Note issued by the Kiangsi
Communist Government in 1932.
Design in Red.

Figure 8.

A Five-cent Note put out by the
Kiangsi Soviet in 1932.
Design in Green

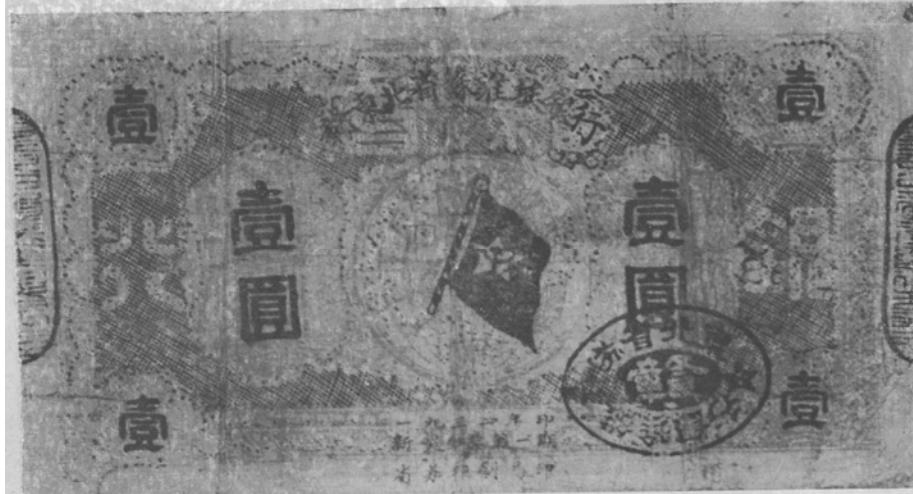


Figure 9.

A Dollar Note issued in
1932 by the Kiangsi
Soviet.
Design is in Red
and Pale Green.

Figure 15.

On the Right is a Ten-cash
Note for use in Fukien,
Chekiang and Kiangsi.
Design is in Blue.





Figure 10.

Obverse and Reverse of a Twenty-cent Silver Coin issued in 1933 by the Kiangsi Soviet.



Figure 11.

Five-cent Copper Pieces issued by the Kiangsi Soviet.



Figure 12.

One-cent Copper Piece issued by the Kiangsi Soviet.



Figure 13.

A Dollar Note for use in Fukien, Chekiang and Kiangsi. Design in Red and Pale Green. Not to be confused with the Note shown in Figure 9.



Figure 14.

A Ten-cent Note issued in 1933 by the Soviet Government of Fukien, Chekiang and Kiangsi. Design in Red and Blue.





Figure 17. A Two Hundred Cash Copper Piece. Dated 1933.

Figure 18. A Two Hundred Cash Copper Piece. Dated 1933

Figure 19. A Silver Dollar. Dated 1934.

Figure 20. A Silver Dollar. Dated 1934

Figure 21. A Five Hundred Cash Copper Piece. Dated 1934

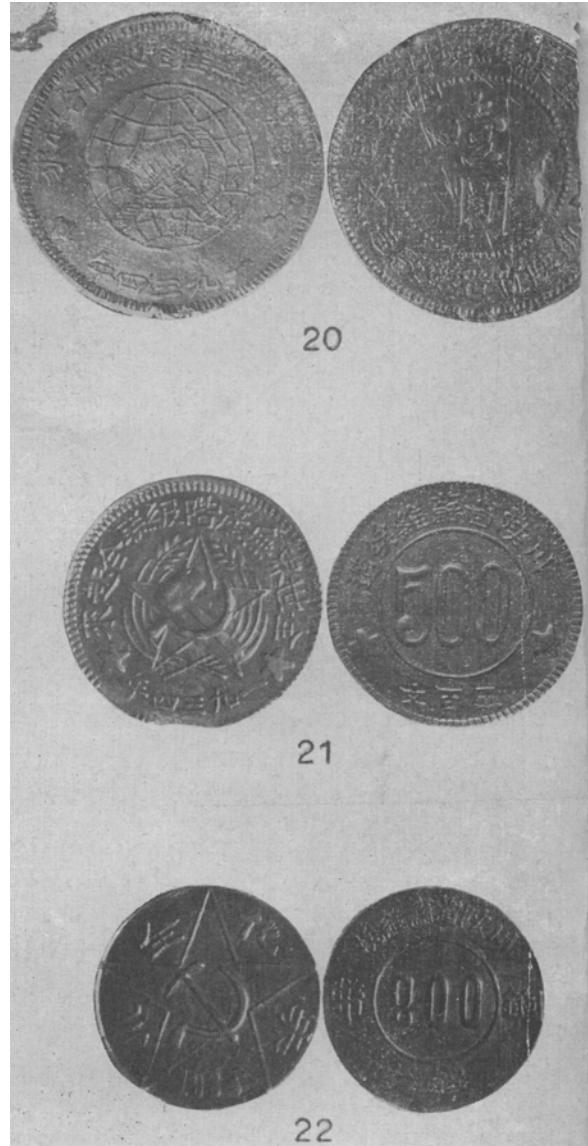


Figure 22. A Two Hundred Cash Copper Piece. Dated 1934



All the Coins shown on this Page
were issued by the Soviet
Government of Szechuan and
Shensi





Figure 16.

Above is shown a Bond Issue Note of the Soviet Government of Fukien, Chekiang and Kiangsi, dated 1934. Design is in Blue.

Figure 24.

On the Right is a Three Thousand Cash Note issued by the Soviet Government of Szechuan and Shensi Provinces in 1933. It is printed in Black on White or Blue Cotton Cloth.

