

INTRODUCTION

This collection was assembled over a period of 30 years, quite by accident. As a numismatist, I am often offered seals and sealings along with coins, and, such is my nature, that I never let anyone go without acquiring something. Often this was a seal or several seals, which I put into storage without further thought. It was several years after I began this practice that, while spring-cleaning my study, I found that I actually had accumulated a large number of seals and sealings. Curiosity prompted closer inspection, which made me realize that this material is as interesting as coins – perhaps even more so as each seal stone is unique and the sealings and tokens hint at their actual usage and bear the marks of their makers' fingerprints. I began to realize that this glyptic material has a story to tell about the societies of these now-vanished peoples who used them. Collecting such objects now became as important to me as my coins, so much so that the objects in this volume represent just a part of my entire seal collection of 1,600 specimens, which includes seals and sealings of the Greco-Bactrian, Saka and Kushana periods.

My desire to publish my glyptic collection arose from a suggestion by Prof. Nicholas Sims-Williams, who was then writing his volumes on the Bactrian documents, that the many specimens in my collection, which cover the period of the documents (4th to 8th centuries CE) and represent the cultures to the north and south of the Hindu Kush, into Gandhara, should be made available to scholars. Nicholas introduced me to Dr. Judith Lerner and her acceptance to organize the relevant material and, as an art historian, to analyze was fortunate. Nicholas undertook the philological aspects of the collection that concern Iranian languages, and Prof. Harry Falk kindly accepted to help with the Brahmi inscriptions. Dr. Michael Alram, of the Munzkabinett of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, kindly volunteered to have the volume published by the Austrian Academy of Sciences as part of a larger project on the cultural history of the Western Himalaya. I have thus much to thank Nicholas, Judith, Harry and Michael for their unstinting support and work in making this publication possible.

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