Theodosius I by the gold tremisis, a third of the solidus, a more convenient and, thus, generally a more common denomination than the 1½-scripulum. A recently acquired example of this denomination of the emperor Arcadius struck at the mint of Milan is, however, a rarity (Pl. xiii, 5). This mint in the later fourth century was at first only sporadically active when the emperor's presence there required an output in the precious metals, but later, as the city became a regular imperial residence, output became more consistent. In the period between 383 and the summer of 387 Valentinian II at first issued very little coinage for his colleague Theodosius and his son Arcadius, and it was only as the danger from the usurper Maximus increased, and Valentinian's need of the support from Theodosius became more pressing, that the coinage for the eastern colleagues becomes somewhat more frequent. It is to the earlier period that the present tremisis of Arcadius belongs.

The last coin is a very rare early solidus of Theodosius II.[5] This emperor, the son of Arcadius, the eastern Augustus, was born in 401, but as early as 402 he was associated as Augustus with his father and his uncle Honorius. The small narrow bust of this coin is typical of the early issues of Theodosius II, but that the issue is very early is apparent from the reverse. Issues at Constantinople for the brothers Arcadius and Honorius have the inscription CONCORDIA AVGG, followed by a Greek numeral indicating the *officina*. The die of the present coin is one for the older emperors, with the reading CONCORDIA AVGGS (stigma = 6) altered to read AVGGG, indicating the association of Theodosius II as the third Augustus (Pl. xiii, 6).

R. A. G. CARSON

1 Hess Sale, 27 March 1956, lot 405.
2 SHA *Diadumenian* 3. 2.
3 Dorotheum Sale, 13 June 1955, lot 2235.
4 Ciani Sale, 7 May 1955, lot 459.
5 Hess Sale, 5 April 1955, lot 164.

ORIENTAL COINS

THE Department of Coins and Medals has, in recent years, acquired some notable Oriental coins, which are illustrated on Pl. xiii, 7–12. All are silver with the exception of the last one, which is gold.

Sassanian coins, as a general rule, are common, but within the series there are occasional rarities. The drachm reproduced (Pl. xiii, 7) is one of these. It shows on the obverse the facing bust of the founder of the Sassanian Dynasty, Ardashir I (A.D. 224–41), and on the reverse the bust of his father Pāpak facing to the left. The Pehlevi legend reads: *The Divine Ardashīr the King son of the Divine Pāpak the King*. Only a few specimens are known of this coin, and the present one is the best preserved.[1] It was probably minted by Ardashīr at Istakhr, the ancient Persepolis, in A.D. 211/12, when he succeeded his father as ruler of Persis before his overwhelming defeat of the last Parthian monarch, Artabanus,

in 224, and the establishment of the Sassanian Empire with himself as King of Kings of Iran. This remarkable piece, a most attractive example of Sassanian numismatic art, is said to have been found by chance on the banks of the River Eden near Rockcliffe in Cumberland, just above high-water mark. The coin was purchased with money from the Roebling Fund.

The next item (Pl. xiii, 8) is a drachm of one of the last kings of the same Dynasty, namely Khusrau V (A.D. 632/3). Very little is known concerning this tragic young monarch, whose coins are exceedingly rare. Only three specimens are recorded, including the present one. The obverse bears the conventional bust of the Sassanian king, facing to the right and wearing a winged crown. On the reverse can be seen the Zoroastrian fire-altar flanked by two attendants. The mint-signature NIHČ (location uncertain) is on the right; on the left is the date (year) 2, i.e. A.D. 633. The coin came from the collection of the late Sir Charles Oman.

When the Sassanian Empire was swallowed up by the Islamic hordes from Arabia the conquerors wisely adopted the style of coinage current in their new domains. The Caliphs and Governors kept on their silver coins the conventional portrait of the Sassanian king with winged head-dress on the obverse, and the fire-altar and two attendants on the reverse. Even the legends in Pehlevi were for a long time retained, with occasional Arabic ones interspersed. The two dirhams illustrated (Pl. xiii, 9 and 10) are typical specimens of this Arab–Sassanian coinage. Both are extremely rare. No. 9 has a Pehlevi legend on the obverse which reads: *'Abd al-Malik Commander of the Faithful*; while traces can be seen in the margin of the Arabic legend: *In the name of Allah.* On the right of the fire-altar on the reverse is the signature of the mint of Dārābjird in Persia, while on the left is the date equivalent to A.D. 691. The coin is unfortunately somewhat worn and has been mounted for suspension. It is, however, an unpublished variety. 'Abd al-Malik is, of course, the fifth Umaiyad Caliph, 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān, who reigned A.D. 684–705.

Coin no. 10 is an exceedingly rare example of the same type as the previous one, but with the Pehlevi legend *Khālid ibn 'Abdallah* and the marginal legend in Arabic: *In the name of Allah; Muhammad is the Apostle of Allah.* On the reverse the Pehlevi legends give the mint-name *Basra*, and the date (A.H.) 75 = A.D. 694. Khālid was the Governor of the great fortress-city of Basra in Iraq under the Caliph 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān, and was actually deposed in the year the coin was minted. Only one other specimen of Khālid's coinage of the mint of Basra was known[2] until this much finer example was generously presented to the Museum by Dr. Robert Göbl of Vienna University.

The Arab–Sassanian type of coin in the East in due course was displaced by the pure Muhammadan type without images, following the celebrated coinage reform under the Caliph 'Abd al-Malik,[3] but in the province of Ṭabaristān, south

of the Caspian Sea, the Arab–Sassanian type still lingered on even until the time of the ʿAbbāsid Caliphs. The coins of the Arab Governors of Ṭabaristān were, however, of much smaller module, in fact they were hemidrachms or half-dirhams. Through the generosity of Mr. M. Azizbeglou of Teheran the Museum has been presented with a particularly fine specimen of one of these coins of a kind that was previously known only by a rather indifferent example in the Berlin Museum.[4] This coin (Pl. xiii, 11) shows on the obverse the usual Sassanian type of bust with winged crown facing to the right. The Pehlevi legend in the field and the Arabic legend in the margin read *ʿUmar ibn al-ʿAlā*. On the reverse the Pehlevi legend on the right of the fire-altar and attendants reads *Ṭabaristān*; while on the left is the date in Pehlevi equivalent to A.D. 776.

The British Museum's collection of gold coins of the Imperial Gupta Dynasty of India is perhaps the finest in the world.[5] It is, therefore, all the more gratifying to record a most notable addition to that series in the form of a gold stater of King Kumāragupta I (A.D. 414–55). The king appears on the obverse on horseback with sword in hand, riding to the right, attacking a rhinoceros. The legend has been read as *Kumāragupta is continually victorious*. On the reverse there is depicted the goddess Gaṅgā standing to the left on an elephant-headed crocodile holding a lotus in its trunk; behind stands a female attendant holding an umbrella. The legend reads: *His Majesty who has the sword of the mighty Indra*.[6] The coin, which is extremely rare, is undoubtedly a most valuable specimen of Indian *Kleinkunst*, of high artistic merit and throwing some light on hunting in ancient India.

J. WALKER

[1] For other examples see F. D. J. Paruck, *Sassanian Coins*, pl. 1, nos. 4–10.

[2] See *B.M. Catalogue of Arab–Sassanian Coins*, p. 109, fig. 5.

[3] See *B.M. Catalogue of Arab–Byzantine and Post-Reform Umaiyad Coins*, pp. liii ff.

[4] See H. Nützel: *Katalog der orientalischen Münzen*, i, no. 215, pl. iii.

[5] See *B.M. Catalogue of the Coins of the Gupta Dynasties*.

[6] I am indebted to the late Dr. John Allan for the interpretation of these two legends.

NEW BABYLONIAN CHRONICLES

FEW of the many cuneiform inscriptions of the Neo-Babylonian, sometimes called Chaldaean Empire (626–539 B.C.) are historical narratives. The history of this period has to a great extent, therefore, to be reconstructed from Old Testament or from classical sources such as Berossus, a priest of Babylon in the fourth century B.C.,[1] and from the scanty historical allusions made in the building inscriptions of the rulers of the period. An important exception is a group of documents, called 'The Babylonian Chronicle' after the title given to the first text published in 1887.[2] That tablet (B.M. 92502) outlined the history of Babylonia from the rule of Nabu-naṣir to Šamaš-šum-ukin (i.e. *c.* 747–648 B.C.) and was itself a copy of an older and damaged text made in the twenty-second