

The 'Tubac Ingot'

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[PLATE 26]

THE earliest numismatic item which has been published as emanating from what is now the south-western United States is the 'Tubac Ingot', dated 1707. It was published for the first and only time, as far as I know, in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in 1964, as one of the illustrations to the article 'Numismatics', pl. vi, no. 2. Its types and legends are:

Obv. Jerusalem cross, the four quarters occupied by castle - V - K - castle. Border of dots.
Rev. Latin cross / TUBAC / 1707. [It is unclear whether any letter or device lies beside the cross.] The whole within indented oval.

Circular. Diameter, 43 mm. Pl. 26, 1*

From the illustration the ingot appears to be cast, although the small and deeply indented reverse would be more appropriate to a struck piece. The caption reads, 'Gold coin-ingot issued by the Jesuits in 1707 at their Tubac mission in Arizona.'

No one has hitherto attempted an explanation of the piece and an evaluation of its importance. It is not mentioned in the encyclopaedia article. The plate caption is largely inaccurate. 'Coin-ingot' is not meaningful: the piece carries no mark of weight, fineness, or denomination, and it hardly appears the kind of object to have been carefully calibrated. If the illustration is to scale it is larger than any gold coin ever struck in Mexico. There was never a mission at Tubac, it was a *visita*, a place of calling, for the priests of the mission of Guevavi to the south-east.¹ As to 'issued by the Jesuits in 1707', see below.

It is convenient to begin with the reverse. The locus of production is given as Tubac, the Pima Indian village in Sonora, New Spain, fortified in 1752 by a Spanish garrison. The area passed from the Mexican Republic to the United States by the Gadsden Purchase of 1854, becoming part of the Territory of New Mexico, later of Arizona. Tubac stood (and still stands) on the west bank of the Santa Cruz River, about forty-five miles south of Tucson, twenty miles north of Nogales and the international boundary. The area is today an Arizona state park.² The reverse of the ingot also bears the date

* My thanks are owing to Mrs Carmen Frankl for her sketch of the piece.

¹ John L. Kessel, *Mission of Sorrows: Jesuit Guevavi and the Pimas, 1691-1767* (Tucson, 1970), p. 51.

² A certain confusion appears on some maps. H. H. Bancroft, *History of Arizona and New Mexico* (San Francisco, 1889; reprinted Albuquerque, 1962), correctly places Tubac

1707, some forty-five years before the establishment of the Spanish garrison, and a cross, specifically the Latin cross with a tall staff and a short, high cross-bar. The form is important since the Latin cross has a particularly ecclesiastical flavour, unlike (for example) the decorative Jerusalem or Maltese cross.

The obverse bears the equilateral Jerusalem cross, a symbol which has no immediate Christological significance, but which appeared with lobed ends on silver coins of Mexico since the days of Philip II (1556-98), and with squared ends, as here, on gold since Charles II (1665-1700). On the silver coins the quarters of the cross were always occupied with alternating castles and lions; on the gold each quarter of the cross contained a fleur-de-lis. The cross of the Tubac piece therefore represents a mixture of types: the squared ends appropriate to gold, with the castles of the silver. In addition the lions have been suppressed, their place taken by the initials V and K. The former does not allow of a certain interpretation. However, gold bars attributed to the mint of México during the reign of Philip V (1700-46) and bearing a similar type have been described as remnants of the King's Fifth, so that the V could abbreviate 'fifth', *quinto*, and reveal as well the purpose of the ingot, a remittance to the crown from the mines. Of these México bars, more below. The letter K, on the other hand, allows of but one interpretation. The letter is not used in the Spanish alphabet, and was not during the eighteenth century, but it would have been known and used in the area of Tubac *c.* 1707 in one specific context, as the initial of the great Jesuit missionary who held the cure of souls in that area at that time, Father Eusebio Kino. This is implied in the encyclopaedia caption, 'issued by the Jesuits': one of the legendary Jesuit mines of the South-West, no doubt near Tubac, produced the gold, and it was guaranteed by the initial of the Jesuit father charged with overseeing the religious and many of the secular affairs of what is now Arizona. The initial K falls in that quarter on the cross where fall the assayers' initials on the aforementioned ingots attributed to Philip V. The analogy suggests several possibilities as to the relation of Kino to the extraction or assaying of the gold, to its verification and authorization, and to its modest place in the royal system of mineral taxation. But the ingot reveals nothing more than the involvement of Kino at some point for some purpose, and there is no other documentation.

There is, however, another approach to this problem, through the career of Kino.³ Born at Trent in 1644, educated to the priesthood, he was sent to Mexico in 1681, and from 1687 made his headquarters in Sonora at his

west of the river on the maps which form the end-papers of his volume, but to the east of the river on pp. 384 and 609. These last are sittings not of the village or garrison, but apparently of the station of the same name on the Southern Pacific Railroad.

³ Herbert E. Bolton, *Rim of Christendom: A Biography of Eusebio Francisco Kino* (New York, 1936).

mission of Dolores. His pastoral obligations toward a sparse and widely scattered populace combined happily with a tremendous curiosity about this vast and little-known area of New Spain. As a result he not only travelled widely, but fortunately preserved much of his experience in writing. Among other areas which he visited repeatedly, he travelled the Santa Cruz River valley at least nine times to San Xavier del Bac, near Tucson, and even more frequently to the two other sites closer to Dolores, namely San Cayetano de Tumacácori and the mission at Guevavi. These journeys ceased after 1702,⁴ partly because Kino's geographical interests were engaged by the lands to the west and the question whether California was a peninsula or an island. From 1702 to the end of his life in 1711 Kino never again travelled the Santa Cruz River, so that he cannot have been in Tubac in 1707 to authorize the ingot. None the less, one could posit that his overriding authority in the region accounted for the appearance of his initial on the piece—if indeed he had such authority.

But the problem is rather more difficult than that, and must be viewed in terms of the history of Tubac itself.⁵ The most significant eighteenth-century date is 1752, the year in which a Spanish garrison was established at Tubac in response to the bloody Pima uprising of 1751. From that day to this Tubac has existed though it has not been continuously inhabited. Its most lively period was to begin in 1856 in the boom which followed the discovery of silver by the Sonora Exploring and Mining Company. But what of the settlement before the Spanish garrison? Baneroft knew of nothing before 1752.⁶ There are, however, indications of a village on the site earlier, references to inhabitants of Tubac in the marriage and baptismal records of Guevavi, of which Tubac was a *visita*. The earliest of these, cited by Bents, date to 1740 and 1741.⁷ If there was a village before this, virtually no one in it was born or married. Kessell has discovered one still earlier reference:

During Holy Week of 1726, [Father] Campos on his way to the Gila paused to christen twenty-five natives at Tumacácori before a gathering of their kin. Just north of San Cayetano at a pleasant place on the river the Padre and his following took a siesta. Here, because another baby was brought forward for baptism, Father Campos recorded the name of the rancheria, perhaps for the first time. Tubac, it was called.⁸

There is no earlier record. Rather, there is good negative evidence. Father Kino wrote voluminous accounts of his travelling ministry and many of these have survived. The largest one suffices to form the bulk of Bolton's two-volume work.⁹ He not only recorded the sequence of his labours in

⁴ Kessell, p. 32.

⁵ Doris W. Bents, *The History of Tubac, 1752-1948* (MA thesis, University of Arizona, 1949).

⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 382.

⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 39.

⁹ Herbert E. Bolton, *Kino's Historical Memoir of Pimería Alta, 1683-1711*, 2 vols. (Cleveland, 1919). See also Fay Jackson Smith, John L. Kessell, and Francis J. Fox, SJ, *Father Kino in Arizona* (Phoenix, 1966), the account of one trip of twenty-seven days, 22 Sept.-18 Oct. 1698.

meticulous detail, but added geographical and ethnographic data. His interest was more than curious: charged with the care of a barely Christian population in circumstances as difficult spiritually as geographically, he could never relax his concern. Thus through the years of repeated journeying through the valley of the Santa Cruz River he would record his familiar progress from Guevavi to Tumaécori to Bae, and back again, preserving an account of both difficulties and successes in spreading and encouraging the faith.¹⁰ In all of this he made not one single mention of Tubac. He traversed this area again and again, visiting and noting the smallest settlements. As Bents remarks, 'Kino must have trod upon the very soil on which the garrison was later to become situated.'¹¹ Yet Tubac was unknown to him. In fact we have Kino's own map of the area.¹² It shows the Santa Cruz River clearly enough, with Guevavi, San Cayetano (del Tumaécori), and San Xavier del Bae as well as a number of rancherías, but there is not a hint of Tubac. The evidence is certain: in Kino's day Tubac did not exist.

The ingot therefore cannot be accepted as genuine, and for other reasons as well. It is said to have been 'issued by the Jesuits', deriving no doubt from their legendary mines. But the mines *are* nothing but legend, they never existed. The fabulous wealth of the supposed Jesuit mines is one of the oldest chestnuts of South-West history, and was exposed as fiction already in the last century when Bancroft wrote of the 'popular but wholly unfounded traditions . . . of rich mines worked by the Jesuits'.¹³ Again, Kino makes no references to mining in the area of Tubac, where he could have claimed spectacular success if the ingot were to be believed; nor to mining or minting by himself or his Jesuit colleagues. Further, the area was sparsely populated, and such inhabitants as there were lived in simple poverty. In all of Arizona

there was no Spanish occupation beyond a narrow region of the Santa Cruz valley, and even there only two missions, Bac and Guevavi, with a few rancherías de visita, under resident padres from 1732, or possibly 1720, and protected in their precarious existence by the Tubac presidio from 1752 . . . The Arizona missions were never more than two, and they were never prosperous. So, also, the rich mines and prosperous haciendas, with which the country is pictured as having been dotted, are purely imaginary, resting only on vague traditions . . . and on the well-known mineral wealth of later times.¹⁴

¹⁰ Drawing on Kino's accounts Bolton has mapped the numerous journeys which he took from his mission at Dolores (*Memoir*, vol. 2, facing p. 232).

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 6.

¹² Reproduced as the frontispiece of Bolton, *Memoir*, vol. 1.

¹³ *Op. cit.*, p. 362. Cf. the article by the Revd Charles W. Polzer, SJ, of the Southwest Mission Research Center, 'Legends of lost missions and mines', *The Smoke Signal* (Tucson), no. 18 (Fall, 1968), 170-83. Myths have their own history, and Polzer makes the illuminating observation, at pp. 182-3, that some of those pertaining to the great mines and treasures of the Jesuits were 'apparently . . . the creation of . . . the members and promoters of the [nineteenth-century] Aztec Mining Syndicate of Arizona', in their encouragement of prospective stockholders. The myths, however, survive, and Polzer's essay is a systematic debunking of the whole congeries of fables still proffered by popularizing writers on the South-West.

¹⁴ Bancroft, pp. 373-4, cf. pp. 399-400.

Kessell reports two inventories taken at Guevavi, the first in 1761 on the transfer of the mission from Father Gerstner to his successor, Father Pfefferkorn.¹⁵ The amount of money, or at least of metal on hand, totalled 82 pesos in gold—the equivalent of 5 coins of 8 escudos and 1 of 1 escudo—and 61 pesos in silver. And this was an extravagance of wealth compared to that listed in the inventory of 1767 when the Guevavi mission had 21 pesos 6 reales in ‘reales’—i.e. in coined money?—plus 2 pesos 3 reales in gold, and 11 pesos 4 reales in silver, while neither Tumaácócori nor San Xavier del Bac were credited with any money at all.¹⁶

The Tubac ingot is false, and has no historical meaning or value. It is the construction of a forger of our own day who has produced a pastiche of historical and numismatic detail which does not make sense. Historically, he has created an ingot from an area which did not have the mines to produce the metal, from a town which did not exist, with a hint of Jesuit involvement—the initial K and the Latin cross—deriving from fables about the supposed wealth of the members of that order in Arizona. Numismatically, he has used an obverse type which in the Mexican context is a mélange of two types which had been kept carefully distinct between the gold and silver coinage. In fact the one analogy is found not in Mexico but on the late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century gold coinage of Lima, where the square-ended Jerusalem cross occurs as here, with castles in the first and fourth quarters, and within a dotted border.¹⁷ But the Tubac type differs from both the Mexican and the Peruvian, and from all other issues bearing the Jerusalem cross, in that the second and third quarters are taken up not with lions but with initials, thus: castle – V – K – castle. There is only one parallel to this format, that found on some of the gold bars attributed to Philip V, where a punch of very similar design shows the squared cross within dotted or dot-and-dash border, the four quarters of the cross being occupied not by alternating castles and lions but by castle – V – MF – castle (Pl. 26, 2). The initials MF are appropriate for the assayers at the México mint during the period to which the bars are dated, 1741–6; and they provide an apparent justification for reading the K of the Tubac ingot as abbreviating the name of Kino and indicating his official responsibility for the piece. But it is impossible to take this parallel seriously, for two reasons. (1) The Tubac ingot bears the date 1707; the México bars, 1741–6. The Tubac piece could not have been imitated from the bars if the dates were to be believed. (2) The dates cannot be believed: the bars which provide the parallel are themselves fabrications of the mid twentieth century. No genuine Mexican ingots of Philip V exist. I present this case in great detail elsewhere, and refer

¹⁵ Kessell, p. 200.

¹⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 183 n. 78.

¹⁷ Humberto F. Burzio, *Diccionario de la moneda hispanoamericana* (Santiago de Chile, 1956–8), vol. 1, p. 106; pl. 39, 256, etc.

the reader there if he wishes to pursue the point.¹⁸ Far from supporting the Tubac piece, the bars help to confirm that it is not genuine.

In fact the typological analogies between the ingot and the bars imply that both bodies of material derive from the same modern source. The context in which the ingot made its only public appearance further suggests that such is the case, even if one cannot independently place and date its manufacture for want of evidence. The Tubac ingot was unknown before its illustration in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in 1964, where all the pieces on pl. vi appeared 'by courtesy of Ford Numismatic Publications'. Adjacent to the ingot on the same plate is a representative illustration of the above-mentioned false bars, described as 'issued under the reign of Philip V . . . Minted in Mexico City and dated 1744'. Also on the plate are illustrated two US Assay pieces of \$50 and \$200 denomination, said to have been issued in San Francisco in 1853. These lie beyond my competence, but are believed by some who work in the field to be false as well. One hopes that a definitive publication will settle that point in the near future.

It is perhaps not an accident that both the Tubac ingot and the México bars appear to date to the first half of the eighteenth century. That was an exciting but poorly documented age, when the history of the US South-West began to assume a form. Nor are these the only forgeries to have been fathered on Philip V. The nineteenth century saw the fabrication of the infamous Peralta claim, allegedly deriving from a benefaction of the same emperor, which agitated the Territories of Arizona and New Mexico for more than a decade in the 1880s and 1890s.¹⁹ Wasteful of others' time and money, all three inventions can now be safely laid to rest as historical nullities.²⁰

ADDENDUM

It were well to note the existence of a cast silver ingot bearing Kino's name, but not overtly associated with Tubac and having no apparent relation to the gold ingot (Pl. 26, 3). The uniface example illustrated here appeared in the sales catalogue of Joseph Lepczyk of East Lansing, Michigan, for 6-7 April 1979, no. 1316. In the lower l. quarter of the cross is the letter V (in imitation of the V in the upper r. quarter of the Tubac and Philip V

¹⁸ 'False Mexican colonial gold bars', in *Memorias de la Academia mexicana de estudios numismáticos* 3, No. 9 (July, 1973-June, 1974), 21-42.

¹⁹ Donald M. Powell, *The Peralta Grant* (Norman, Oklahoma, 1960); E. H. Cookridge, *The Baron of Arizona* (New York, 1967).

²⁰ It is gratifying to add that early in 1972 the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* received a letter from Mr Hollis Cook, Supervisor of Tubac Presidio State Historic Park, who independently questioned the Tubac ingot and pointed up some of the difficulties raised above—the date appearing on the ingot, the obscurity of its origin, the allegation that there had been a mission at Tubac. On 5 Apr. 1972 a copy of Mr Cook's letter was forwarded by the editors to the contributor of the illustration, requesting comments on the questions raised therein. Mr Cook tells me that no answer has been received.

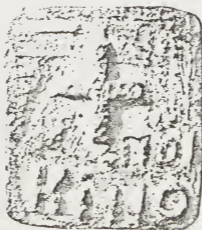
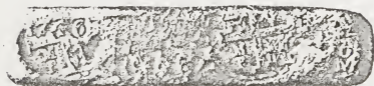
ingots?); in the lower r. quarter the date 1701, in number shapes inappropriate to that date; below, KĪNO. I owe to the Revd Polzer the information that this is one of a number of ingots contrived in the South-West c.1956 and bearing a variety of pseudo-historical legends and symbols. Aside from the fundamental implausibility of the piece, metallurgical analysis of similar examples has revealed the presence of a modern flux.



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BUTTREY, THE 'TUBAC INGOT'