The Afghan Weights and Measures.

By L. BOGDANOV.

On the 23rd of Pisces A.H. 1304 (=12th March, 1925)[1] a law introducing the metric system in Afghanistan was promulgated by the Afghan Government. The first suggestion of the advisability of such a step happened to be made[2] early in 1923, and after the necessary preliminary elucidations on the subject were obtained[3] by the Afghan authorities concerned, the new law was proclaimed without any further delay.

The law in question was published in the form of a small quarto booklet of six pages in the series of law-books (*Niẓāmnāmą*) published by the Afghan Government since the beginning of the present reign and comprises, besides the articles of the law itself, a brief exordium on the importance of weights and measures in the economical life of a people, showing at the same time the difficulties entailed by the great variety of units of weights and measures in use in the different parts of the country.

The system, as it is introduced by the above law, is a truncated one, taking into account only l e n g t h s, w e i g h t s and c o i n s: no mention is made of the measures either of surfaces, liquids, solids or temperature, in spite of the latter being one of the essentials on which the metric system is based. An acquaintance with the fundamental principles underlying the metric system is taken for granted and no explanation whatever is given with regard either to the derivation of the units or to their inner correlation, which are the factors forming the backbone and the spirit of the system. Why, in the circumstances,

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[1] Since the beginning of the present reign the official Afghan calendar has been a solar one, the year beginning at the vernal equinox, that is to say, on or about the 21st of March. The months of the year are the zodiacal months derived from the corresponding Signs of the Zodiac: *Ḥamal* ("Aries") 30 days; *Thawr* ("Taurus") 31d.; *Jawzā* ("Gemini") 32d.; *Saraṭān* ("Cancer") 31d.; *Asad* ("Lion") 31d.; *Sunbula* ("Virgo", lit. "an ear of corn") 31d.; *Mīzān* ("Libra") 31d., *Aqrab* ("Scorpio") 29d.; *Qaws* ("Sagittarius") 30d.; *Jady* ("Capricorn") 29d.; *Dalv* ("Aquarius") 30d., and *Ḥūt* ("Pisces") 30 days. That era is reckoned from the Flight of the Prophet (A.D. 622, 16th July) like the lunar one used in Afghanistan nowadays only in connection with religious obligations.

[2] By P r o f. A. F o u c h e r, Chief of the French Archaeological Mission to Afghanistan.

[3] From the French Government through the medium of the members of the French Educational Mission to Afghanistan.

preference was given to French measures instead of adopting any other European measures and weights or any of the weights and measures already in use in some parts of the country itself, —remains an open question. Furthermore, all the countries who have, up to the present day, adopted the metric system for daily use have accepted the system as a whole, as a system, and have very becomingly preserved the Latin particles *deci-*, *centi-*, *milli-*, for the fractionals and the Greek particles *deca-*, *hecto-*, *kilo-*, etc. for the multiples of the units. The case of Afghanistan, where the two classic languages are unknown and their very existence hardly suspected, is a unique one. A quite appropriate solution was found in substituting for the Latin parts of the words Persian fractionals and for the Greek particles Pashtū words of the same meaning.

The law itself consists of four Sections (*faṣl*) containing in all fifteen articles. The first three Sections deal with the names and values of the new measures, weights and coins respectively, whilst Section IV (art. 5–15) is devoted to the legal side proper of the question, *i.e.* to the manner in which the new units are gradually to be substituted for the old ones actually in use.

The old measure of length is the *gaz*[1] which is of three kinds:

gaz-i shāh ("the King's *gaz*")[2] equal to 1,0666 m.[3] which is divided into 4 *chārak* ("quarters") or 16 *girih* (lit. "joint" or "knot" roughly taken to be equal to "three finger-breadths"), each *girih* being again divided into 4 *bār*[4] ("part");

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[1] Or *ẕar'* (lit., "cubit") which is the official (Arabic) name of that measure. The word *gaz* altogether superseded by the Arabic term has become obsolete in Persia, but is still used colloquially in Afghanistan.

[2] Used by drapers, linen-merchants, etc.

[3] The correspondences of the Afghan measures and weights with the metric values are quoted from Ḥisāb by A. H. Arjmand; a manual of arithmetic published by the Afghan Ministry of Public Instruction in 1305 A.H. (1926/27 A.D.).

[4] Both the text of the law (Introduction, p. 1) and the above-quoted Manual of Arithmetic by Arjmand (pp. 3, 111 and elsewhere) have got the spelling *bār*, as above. Wollaston's English-Persian Dictionary, when speaking about the Persian measures of length, gives, however, (Appendix, p. 438; see also Phillott, Higher Persian Grammar, p. 213, who probably merely repeats Wollaston) as one of the subdivisions of the *gaz*, —"*bahar, length of one joint of the thumb, or about* 1¼ *inch,*" and further—"2 *bahar*=1 *girah* (*!*), *or about* 2½ *inches.*" The spelling *bahar* with the intercalation of an unnecessary vowel between the two last consonants points to the Indian pronunciation of the Persian word *bahr* "part, portion." In the colloquial Kābulī-Persian the sound *h* in the middle of a word has, however, a tendency to disappear in pronunciation, producing a compensatory lengthening of the preceding vowel, so that the word *bahr* in Kābulī-Persian would sound *bār*, though not necessarily being spelt in that way; the appearance of such a spelling could, however, be explained by the frequent colloquial use of the word, whereat the correct spelling was little by little relegated to oblivion. On the other hand, that confusion in writing of the words *bahr* and *bār*

gaz-i-mi'mār ("the *gaz* of the builder"), the use of which is implied by its very name, is divided into 3 *fūt* (English "foot") or 36 *inch* (English "inch")[1] and is a little less in length (0,915 m.) than the preceding;

gaz-i jarīb ("the *gaz* for measuring land") has no subdivisions, the latter being not needed as its use is restricted to the purpose expressed by its name. The *gaz-i jarīb* is the shortest of the three measuring only 0,736 m. and is considered to be the legal *gaz*, that is to say the one recognized as such by the Islamic law. It is therefore also called *gaz-i shar'ī*.[2]

Certain expressions, rather than actual measures, which convey an approximate idea of length are still in use whenever no special precision is required. Such are: *mūy* ("a hair-breadth"); *nākhun* ("a nail-breadth"); *angusht* ("a finger-breadth"); *bilist*, *bālisht*[3] or *vajab* ("a span"); *dast* ("a hand-breadth")[4]; *ẓirā'* ("a cubit"); *gām* ("a step"); *qulāch* ("a fathom"),—all of them derived either from the members of the human body or some peculiar position of the same.

An Afghan road-measure is the *kurūh* equal to 4000 *gaz-i jarīb* or 2769 *gaz-i shāh* approximately, that is about 2944 metres, or nearly three kilometres

The unit of the land-measures is the *jarīb*, a square each side of which is equal to 60 *gaz-i jarīb*, thus representing a surface of 3600 square *gaz-i jarīb*. Its subdivisions are *bisva* of which a *jarīb* contains twenty, further subdivided in 20 *bisvāsa* each. Roughly speaking, one *bisvāsa* is equal to 5,055 square metres; one *bisva* to 101 square metres, and one *jarīb* to 2022 square metres or about half an English acre.

No measures of capacity or liquids exist in Afghanistan, everything of the kind being measured by weight.

The old weights are:

kharvār ("an ass-load") equal to 559 kgs.,[5] which is divided

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can be traced as far back as the Sasanian period: the words *bahr* and *bār* are pretty often confused in writing in Pāhlavī Mss.; see for it Bartholomae' Zum sasanidischen Recht, Part I, p. 41, footnote 1.

As regards the exact length of that measure and its relation to the *girih*, Wollaston (and, for that sake, also Phillott, l.c.) makes certainly a mistake, the *bār* being just the half in length of what he gives for his *bahar*.

[1] This *gaz* is merely the English yard borrowed from India. The English yard, under the name *vār*, is also used for measuring cloth (especially by the Afghan Customs when assessing duty).

[2] Other variants of the *gaz* of less current use are: *gaz-i jūlāh* ("the weaver's *gaz*") and *gaz-i khayyāṭ* ("the tailor's *gaz*").

[3] cf. Ind. "vitasti".

[4] cf. the English "hand" with reference to horses' height.

[5] In Kābul. Other cities and districts have under the same names other weight-values used only within their special area. The name must not be taken too literally. The word means "a donkey's load" (*kharwār* < *khar-bār*=*bār-i khar*) and was probably loosely used at its origin in that general sense. Later on, when it became a measure of weight, it might

into 10 *mann* or 80 *sēr*, the latter containing 4 *chārak* or 16 *pāw* (whether English "pound," or Indian "paw" meaning "a quarter," or a confusion of both ?) The latter is a little lighter than the English pound-avoirdupois (0,4368 kg.). The *paw* contains 4 *khurd* (lit. "small, minute") or 24 *mithqāl*, further subdivided into 24 *nukhud* ("pea") each, the weight of the latter being equal to 0,19 grm.[1]

More minute subdivisions of the *nukhud*, as used by goldsmiths, jewellers and druggists, are: *surkh*[2] (of which the *nukhud* contains four) equal to 8 *birinj* ("rice-grain"); one *birinj* contains 8 *kunjid* ("sesamum seed"); one *kunjid* is ultimately subdivided into 8 *khashkhāsh* ("poppy-seed").

As has been stated above with regard to lengths, some other measures of weight (or rather of capacity) are still in existence and in use along with the officially recognized measures and are freely used in private transactions where no great precision is the object, for instance: *musht* ("a handful"); *lapp* ("a double-handful," *i.e.* as much as can be held between the two palms placed together at a certain angle); *kāsa* ("a bowlful"); *dāman* ("a skirtful"), and so forth.

The old monetary unit is *rūpiya-i kābulī* ("the Kabuli rupee"), as opposed to the Indian rupee which is called *rūpiya-i kalladār* or vulgarly *r. kaldār* (*i.e.* "the rupee with a head on it"—meaning the effigy).

Up to the reign of Amīr Ḥabībullāh Khān two kinds of the Kabuli rupee were distinguished: *rūpiya-i khām* ("raw rupee") [see 1][3] and *rūpiya-i pukhta* ("boiled" or "tempered" r.) [see 2],[4] the values attributed to them slightly differing from

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have corresponded in the beginning to a weight-value of that kind. Nowadays, however, although differing in value according to local conceptions (in Persia a *kharvār* contains 100 *mann-i tabrīz* and is equal to 294,4 kgs., that is to say, a little more than a half of the *kharvār* of Kabul) a *kharvār* cannot in any way be considered as a load to be tackled by a donkey who could hardly be expected to carry even a quarter of a *kharvār* which is the average load of a camel. The name *kharvār* has, therefore, to be taken nowadays rather symbolically as expressing "a great weight" not for a man to lift.

[1] It is a very peculiar fact that the weights of the lower denominations, *viz.* the *mithqāl* and the *qirāṭ* (more currently called in Afghanistan and in Persia *nukhud*) are fixed quantities and remain such throughout the Muhammadan world, whereas the higher units of weight have under one and the same name most various values attributed to them even in the different towns of the same country. The *mithqāl* might therefore be considered as the real standard unit of weight in Muhammadan countries.

[2] The seed of the Abrus precatorius, a measure obviously borrowed from India ("rattī").

[3] The legend on the right side of the coin represented here runs: *zarb-i daru-s-salṭana* ("coinage of the capital"). The reverse side (invisible on our photo) bears the name of the ruler: *Amīr 'Abdurraḥmān.*

[4] The right side of the coin on our photo represents a mosque with its *mimbar* surrounded by flags and bayonets (on right and left) and

each other. That difference and the appellation *khām* were cancelled by the late Amīr Ḥabībullāh Khān, but the name *pukhta* remained in use for both kinds of rupee, and the official denomination of the Kabuli rupee (in receipts and other official documents) is even in our days *rūpiya-i pukhta-i kābulī*.

As can be seen from the photographic reproduction given here, the "boiled" rupee is just an ordinary coin made in the way usual for all countries in the world, that is by means of special coining machinery, whereas the shapeless "raw" rupee is made by hand by pouring molten silver from a teapot-shaped vessel into small hollows made of clay, the coin being stamped by hand when still hot.[1] The weight of a one-rupee piece is officially supposed to be equal to 2 *mithqāl*.

Owing to the scarcity of coin in the country, Persian coins (chiefly "double krans"—*du-hazārī* of the new coinage, see footnote) illicitly imported from Persia (which country prohibits the export of silver) are largely used in Afghanistan at a "cours forcé" with the value of one Kabuli rupee attributed to the Persian "double kran" (a "double kran" is, in fact, worth 1¼ Kabuli rupees).

The half-rupee (*nīm-rūpiya*) [see 3, 4*a*, 5][2] is labelled as such, but is colloquially called *qirān*. The monetary unit in the city of Qandahar and its district is the *qirān-i qandahārī* the value of which is 20% higher than that of the Kabuli half-rupee".[3]

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by crossed swords and cannons (underneath). The words *yak rūpiya* appear at the bottom and the whole is enclosed in a (laurel-?) wreath, The reverse side bears the *ṭughrā* "*Amīr 'Abdurraḥmān*" with the title of that sovereign *Ẓiyā'u-l-milla wa-d-dīn* inscribed in *thulth* characters underneath the same. The word "*Kābul*" can be read above the *ṭughrā*. The year 1314 (A.H., lunar=1896/1897) is marked at the very bottom and the whole is again enclosed in a wreath.

[1] A similar distinction between the machine-made and the hand-made coins is observed in Persia, the coins of the two kinds being called respectively "old" and "new": *qirān-i qadīm* and *qirān-i jadīd* (or, in writing,—*qirān-i jadīdu-ẓ-ẓarb-i sulṭānī*: "krans of the new coinage of the realm").

[2] The coin under No. 3 on our photo is a *qirān* of the present reign. The right side represents the traditional mosque, but enclosed in a seven-pointed star. The words *nīm-rūpiya* can be read above the mosque and the whole is surrounded by a wreath similar to the one on the rupee-pieces. The reverse side is occupied by the *ṭughrā* of the present ruler Amīr Amānullāh Khān, on the right of which is inscribed his title *ālīr Ghāzī*. The year is 1302 (A.H., solar, see footnote on p. 1=A.D. 1921/22).

Coin No. 4 is a *qirān* of Amīr 'Abdurraḥmān, and its right side, besides the mosque and the wreath as above, bears on top the word *Kābul*" and at the bottom *nīm-rūpiya*. The reverse side has the usual *ṭughrā* inscribed in a wreath as above, but without the title; the date 1313 (A.H., lunar= A.D. 1895/96) can be read above the *ṭughrā* at the place where the two ends of the wreath meet.

The two coins No. 5 are "raw *qirān*-coins" of the reign of Amīr 'Abdurraḥmān Khān.

[3] The "boiled" Kabuli half-rupees of the present reign [see 3] contain

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A silver coin of the value of one-third of a rupee is the *'abbāsī* [1](popularly also called *tanga*).

The smallest silver coin (nowadays very rare) is the *sannār* [see 6][2] (abbr. from *ṣad dīnār*) of the value of one-sixth of the rupee.

Coins of a higher denomination are of the value of 2½ rupees Kabuli[3] [see 7][4] and of 5 rupees Kabuli [see 8][5].

A rupee is divided into 60 *paysa* (commonly also called *pūl*, both of these words, especially the former, being used in Afghanistan for "money" in general). A *paysa* is a yellow-coloured coin made of latten brass [see 9 and 10]. In the reign of Amīr Ḥabībullāh the *paysa* was coined exactly of the size and thickness of the "boiled" half-rupee. The *paysa* of the last few years is not thicker than the paper on which these lines are being written. During the reign of Amīr 'Abdurraḥmān and previous to it the one-*paysa* pieces were coined in red copper [see 11].

Further small change coins are of the value of 5 *paysa* (commonly called *yak-shāhī*—"one shāhī"), of 10 *paysa* (*du-shāhī*)[6] [see 12], of 15 *paysa* (*si-shāhī* [see 13] and of of 20 *paysa*

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a great percentage of alloy, whereas all the other Afghan silver coins are made of pure, or almost pure silver. The alloy in these half-rupees (which gives them a greenish-yellow colouring) is so great that the money changers of the N.-W. Frontier do not accept them at all.—

[1] The name *'abbāsī* as well as those of its subdivisions is borrowed from Persia: the name of that coin is derived from Shāh 'Abbās the Great (1587–1628) by whom it was introduced in Persia, where it still exists, though nowadays not as a coin, but as a mere name. That coin must have either remained in use in Afghanistan from the days of Shāh 'Abbās at whose time Herat and Qandahar were Persian cities, or else was imported later during the XVIII century, as in Persia itself it had entirely disappeared as far back as the beginning of the reign of Fatḥ-'Alī Shāh (1797–1834). Anyhow the *'abbāsī* in Afghanistan, as well as in Persia, contains four shāhī, a coin also introduced by Shāh 'Abbās. And yet the Persian standard unit (*qirān*) contains twenty shāhī, whereas its Afghan namesake (the half-rupee also called *qirān*) numbers only six shāhī, of which the rupee contains twelve.—

[2] The name *sannār* is also borrowed from Persia, where it is now adays a nickel coin of the value of two *shāhī*.—

[3] Persian five-*qirān* pieces are also used as equivalents of 2½ rupees Kabuli.—

[4] These 2½ rupee-coins are struck more or less on the same pattern as the one-rupee pieces already described. The legend *du nīm rūpiya* (meaning "two *and* a-half rupees") is visible above the already mentioned Afghan coat-of-arms (a mosque enclosed in a seven-pointed star) where the two ends of the encircling wreath meet. The reverse side bears the *ṭughrā* of Amīr Amānullāh Khān, with his title "*al-Ghāzī*" to its right. The *ṭughrā* is surmounted by a small five-pointed star. Underneath the *ṭughrā* one can read the year: 1299 (A. H., solar, see footnote on p. 1=A.D. 1920/21.).

[5] Of the two five-rupee coins No. 8, the first one belongs to the reign of Amīr 'Abdurraḥmān and the second is a coin of his successor Amīr Ḥabībullāh.

[6] Also called *sannārī* (from the Persian *sannār—ṣad dīnār*).

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(*chahār shāhī* or *yak tanga*,[1] popularly also called *yak 'abbāsī*) [see 14].

The Afghan currency being strictly monometallic, the gold coins (*ṭilā*) of 40, 20 [see 15], 10 [see 16] and 5 rupees-[see 17] value have never had any circulation as such, being chiefly used for distribution to the people on some festive occasions by the rulers or as gifts from the people to the ruler on similar occasions. Their value is in consequence always fluctuating a little, but always averaging a premium of about 50% above their nominal value.

There being no bank in Afghanistan, no bank-notes or treasury-notes are issued and the currency is limited to the silver and copper coins above described. That state of things

is very trying when larger sums are involved in some transaction. The usual method of avoiding that drawback is by having recourse to some foreign currency (English gold and treasury-notes, Indian currency notes, and the like) or to cheques on some bank in India, the amount being calculated in accordance with the rate of exchange of the day.

A timid attempt at introducing sub rosa some kind of currency-note into circulation was, however, made some time ago. A kind of promissory note was issued by the Treasury of *Dāru-l-Amān* (the new capital of Afghanistan, still under construction, some ten miles to the South of Kābul). These notes were to serve for the payment of the workmen employed on its construction, but not being accepted as money

[1] The *tanga* in circulation in Northern Afghanistan (Turkestan, Qaṭaghan, Badakhshān) which is called *tanga-i bukhārāyī* ("the Bokhara *tanga*") is worth 22 *paysa*.

in the bazar of Kābul (or anywhere else), these notes very soon died a quiet, natural death.

The legend on the note represented here is as follows:—

In the four corners of the note is written the same word "one" in four languages: *yaw* (Pashtū), *yak* (Persian), *ēk* (Hindustānī) and *bir* (Turkish). The upper middle-part of the frame bears the arms of the Afghan Government (inscribed in a seven-pointed star a mosque, with a minaret and a flag on each side and the *miḥrāb* and *mimbar* visible in the middle, above two crossed swords). The inscription in large *thulth* characters runs: *Shahr-i Dāru-l-Amān* ("The City of Dāru-l-Amān") on both sides of which is written in small *nasta'līq* characters: *mudīr-i muḥāsaba-i shahr-i Dāru-l-Amān* ("The Director of Accountancy of the City of D.A."). Facing these words, on each side of the frame the date of issue 1301 (A.H., solar, see footnote on p. 1=A D. 1922/23) is inscribed. The number 8005 of the note is repeated twice in its upper corners. The last line is occupied by the statement that "this note will be accepted by the Treasury of the City of Dāru-l-Amān for the value mentioned thereon."

The note is ornamented by a design representing carpenter's, mason's and builder's tools, all in a line at the bottom of the note.

In the middle of the inferior part of the frame the words *yak rūpiya-i kābulī* ("one Kabuli rupee") are inscribed in fine *nasta'līq* characters. The colour of the note is pink on a white surface and the other side of the note is blank.

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The new measures as they are defined by the law in question are:

Measures of Length (Section I, Art. 1).

The unit of length is the *mītar* (English "metre") called also, on the same page, a few lines further *matar* (French "mètre").

The measures derived from it are explained literally as follows:

"one-tenth of a *mītar*"	=	"one tenth part of the m."
"one-hundredth" of a *mītar*	=	"one hundredth of the m."
"one-thousandth" of a *mītar*	=	"one thousandth of the m."
"*lasmatrī*	=	10 *mītar*
"*salmatrī*	=	100 *mītar*
"*zarmatrī*	=	1000 *mītar*
"*laszaramatrī*	=	10000 *mītar*

Weights (Sect. II, Art. 2).

The unit of weight is the *girām* (French "gramme"). Its fractionals are: "One-tenth of a *girām*" equals "one tenth part of a *girām*" etc., etc., etc. Its multiples are:

"*lasgirāma*	=	10 *girām*
"*salgirāma*	=	100 *girām*
"*zargirāma*	=	1000 *girām*
"*laszaragirāma*	=	10000 *girām*

Coins (Sect. III, Art. 3).

The monetary unit, although not specially defined in the text of the law seems to be the silver *afghānī*.

That part of the law runs:

"The weights and the values of the new coins, in which the prices of commodities are to be calculated and transactions are to be effected, are as follows:

(1) *Gold Coins.*

	Name.	Weight.	Value.
(*a*)	one *amānī*	6 *girām*	20 *afghānī*
(*b*)	half *amānī*	3 *girām*	10 *afghānī*

(2) *Silver Coins.*

	Name.	Weight.	Value.
(*a*)	one *afghānī*	*lasgirāma*	100 *pūl.*
(*b*)	half *afghāni*	5 *girām*	50 *pūl.*
(*c*)	20-*pūlī*	2 *girām*	20 *pūl.*

(3) *Copper Coins.*

	Name.	Weight.	Value.
(*a*)	2-*pūlī*	2 *girām*	2 *pūl.*
(*b*)	5-*pūlī*	3 *girām*	5 *pūl.*
(*c*)	10-*pūlī*	6 *girām*	10 *pūl.*

Art. 4 of the law gives a comparative table of the values of the old and the new currency, namely:

11 rupees Kabuli = 10 *afghānī*.
1 rupee Kabuli = 91 *pūl*.
one Kabuli *girān* = 45 ,,
one '*abbāsī* = 30 ,,
si-shāhī = 22 ,,
sannārī = 15 ,,
yak-shāhī = 7 ,,
du-paysa = 3 ,,

The names *afghānī*, given to the silver unit, and *amānī* designating the gold coin of the realm, are adaptations on the pattern of the French "franc" and "louis d'or" or "napoléon," the former derived from the name of the country, the latter—from the name of its ruler. The value on par of the *afghānī*, is exactly the same as that of the gold franc, and yet, there is a strange discrepancy in weight between the two: the French, silver coin weighs only 5 grammes, whereas the weight of the *afghānī*, as seen above, is exactly double of this But that, of course, is a question of higher finance and exchange with which the present brief sketch is not meant to deal. It might be merely mentioned here that the seeming discrepancy is obviously due to the fact that France is a country with a gold standard, whereas the standard of the Afghan currency is silver.

Art. 4 of the law concludes by an explanation to the effect that the values of the above comparative table from the *qirān* downwards hold good only in cases where the value of a single old coin has to be reduced into the new fractionals. Wherever larger sums are concerned they are to be converted into the new currency by means of multiplying the figure of rupees by 10 and dividing the result by 11, and the balance of fractionals has to be dealt with in accordance with the table, thus reducing the necessary error to ½-a *pūl* which is an altogether negligible quantity. As a matter of fact, in the whole descending scale, from the *qirān* downwards, an error amounting to ½-a *pūl* had to be consciously admitted, as there is no coin of such a denomination. Beginning with the Kabuli rupee, we may notice that its value is marked in the table as that of 91 *pūl*, though in reality it amounts to 90, (900) .... only, and the value of the *qirān* would in consequence be 45, (450) .... or thereabouts, and not 45 *pūl* only, as shown by the table, giving a loss of about ½-a *pūl*. That loss is again repeated in the case of the 15-*paysa* coin, once more for the 5-*paysa* coin and finally in the countervalue of the 2-*paysa* coin.

Thus, the loss throughout the table amounts to about 2 *pūl*, which is not compensated by the 0,1 *pūl* in excess adopted by the table for the value of one rupee Kabuli. Should we, therefore, when reducing some large sum into the new currency calculate that reduction on the base of the value of some of the smaller coins, the error and the loss might be considerable, hence the necessity of calculating such larger sums on the base of 11 rupees for 10 *afghānī* and having recourse to the fractional values of the table only for the indivisible balance of the calculation.

We can see from the above, that the reform, besides its other advantages, has certainly attained the purpose of simplifying the currency and reducing the number of the coins expressing the same. Instead of five copper coins of the old currency,

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we have now to deal with three coins only, *viz.* 2-*pūl*, 5-*pūl*, and 10-*pūl* coins [see 18, 19, 20].

All the three coins represented on our photo are struck on the same pattern: the figure expressing the value of the coin is surrounded by a thin circle partly enclosed in a wreath, and the word *pūl* is inscribed in the upper part of the coin. The reverse side of all the three coins alike bears the *ṭughrā* of the present ruler enclosed in a circle together with his title "*al-Ghāzī*" and the date 1304 (A.H., solar, see footnote on p. 419=A.D. 1925-26) again partly enclosed in a wreath exactly similar to the one seen on the obverse side. The word "*Afghānistān*" occupies the uppermost part on this side of the coin.

The number of silver coins is reduced in the new system of currency to three, [see 21, 22, 23] as against four (or even seven if we take into consideration the "raw" coins and the differently shaped coins of previous reigns) of the old currency.

What has been said here with regard to the new copper-coins applies to the silver coins in so far as their uniformity is concerned: they all have a mosque in a wreath on their obverse side with the year of the reign in which they were struck (7th, 8th, or 9th, as it may be) inscribed underneath. The reverse side bears the usual *ṭughrā* with the title of the king to its right, with the solar Muhammadan date below the same and the value of the coin inscribed at its topmost part.

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Sect. IV of the law comprising Art. 5–15 deals with the legal side proper of the reform, *viz.* the regulations regarding its gradual introduction and the conditions under which the substitution of the new weights, measures and coins for the old ones is to be completed.

Government Offices are expected to introduce the new system inside of three years: during the year 1305 (ending on March 21st, 1927) the entries in their ledgers are to bear as far as possible a mention of the new values along with the old ones; during 1306 (ending on March 20th, 1928) the mention of the new values becomes obligatory, whereas during the year 1307 (ending on March 21st, 1929) the old measures are no more officially recognized and only tolerated along with the new values in Government ledgers, whenever the officials in charge of the accountancy departments may feel the need of their preservation throughout the year. Henceforward, however, all the accountancy of the Government Offices is to be drawn up in the new terms only (art. 5).

"The new weights[1] and metres will be manufactured "by the Government and distributed to all parts of Afghanistan "(art. 6).

"The distribution of the new weights[1] and metres to the "population will be done by the municipalities wherever such "exist. In other localities they will be distributed by the "prefects of police or by the local district officers or sub-district "officers, wherever the functions of the prefect of police are "discharged by them (art. 7).

"An equitable price,[2] the same for all parts of the realm, "for the new weights and metres will be established by the "Minister of Finance. Persons unable to disburse the full value "of the same in cash will be allowed to pay by instalments "within a period of six months (art. 8).

"Old weights in iron, cast-iron and brass, and old measures in "iron will be accepted from the population at the above mentioned "centres of distribution for the value of the metal contained "therein on the purchase of the new weights and measures "(art. 9).

"Permits for manufacturing the new weights and measures "according to the prescribed models will be granted by the "Government in the provinces to private persons on application. "These weights and measures will have, however, to be stamped "at the office of the Governor or Lieutenant-Governor of the "province before being permitted to be used (art. 10).

"Until the necessary numbers of sets of the new weights "can be provided for all villages, the population of the same "will be allowed to continue using their old weights after having "had them compared with the new models (art. 11).

"Private persons in cities who will manufacture and use "their own weights will be liable to prosecution according "to the terms of art. 14 (art. 12).

"Weights and measures without the aforesaid official mark "will be considered as null and void in the seats of Governors, "Lieutenant-Governors and Commissioners of Divisions. The "Municipal Officers and the prefects of police will prevent "any transactions being carried on in such centres by means of "weights and measures devoid of the official mark. Persons

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[1] Lit. "stones": the prevailing custom in Afghanistan of using ordinary cobble-stones for weighing purposes (especially when weighing bulky commodities like wood, coal, grain, potatoes, etc.) has resulted in the habit of applying the word "stone" as a generic name for any kind of weights, whether they be actually raw-stones or real weights cast in metal. Cf. the English "stone" equalling 14 pounds, the origin of which might be due to similar reasons.

[2] The price charged by the Government Workshop ("*Māshīnkhāna*") of Kābul for a full set (in iron) of the new weights is 320 rupees Kabuli, that is to say, roughly speaking about 150 rupees Indian.

"using such weights and measures will be liable to prosecution "under the penal law (art. 13).

"Should any deviation from the prescribed models be "discovered in weights and measures bearing the official mark "or in the weights and measures manufactured in villages on "the pattern of the prescribed models, the persons using such "weights and measures will be liable to a correctional punish- "ment under the penal laws (art. 14).

"The new weights and metres will be gradually introduced "during the period beginning 1305 to end 1307. From the "beginning of 1308 (March 22nd, 1929) the old weights and "measures will be abolished altogether. Persons who will "carry on transactions by means of the old weights and "measures after that date will be liable to correctional punish- "ment (art. 15).

"The present regulations constitute a part of the laws "of the realm, and we hereby order the articles of the same to "be forthwith put into force. [L. S. Amīr Amānullāh Khān "al-Ghāzī]."

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A few days after the promulgation of the law in question, more exactly on the 29th day of Pisces (=18th March, 1925), at 2 p.m., representatives from the various Government Offices, merchants, artisans and agriculturists were assembled in the Conservatory Hall (*Gulkhāna*) of the Palace, where they were addressed by the King on the subject of the new measures. Having pointed out in his speech the drawbacks connected with the old weights and measures and the old currency and the advantages offered by the new decimal units, the King explained to the assembly the correlations between the new standard units and their multiples and fractionals and the manner of converting the old values into the new decimal weights and measures.

When speaking about the new currency the King pointed out that there are three units (*vāḥid*) in it: the copper-unit—*pūl*, the silver-unit—*afghānī* and the gold-unit—*amānī*, and that no other determinative words should be added to these names: one must not call the new copper-coin *pūl-i naw* ("new *pūl*"), nor the silver-coin *rūpiya-i afghānī*, nor the gold-coin *ṭilā-yi amānī*, but simply *pūl*, *afghānī*, *amānī*.[1]

That warning, however, did not altogether dispel the natural tendency of the population to apply a two-worded name to the coins, especially to the silver one on the analogy of the *rūpiya-i kābulī* and *rūpiya-i kalladār*. The fact that the

1 "*Amān-i Afghān*" No. 50 dated 30th of Pisces 1304 (=17th March, 1925).

old copper unit was formerly indiscriminately called either *paysa* (Indian word for "money") or *pūl* (Persian word meaning "money") resulted in a natural desire amongst the population to distinguish somehow the new coin from the old one by applying to the former the qualificative *naw* ("new"). As regards the word *ṭilā* (lit., "gold", "golden coin") being added to the word *amānī*, the reason for it might lie in the gold coins of Bokhara of the name which are freely circulated in Northern Afghanistan.

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A few words remain to be said concerning the material facts connected with the introduction of the new weights and measures and coinage and its immediate results on the economical life of the country.

A revaluation of the currency and similar operations are not a new thing for Afghanistan. H. W. Bellew, who visited the country during the reign of Dost-Muḥammad, mentions four instances[1] within the space of six months when the Governor of Qandahār, Sardār Ghulām Ḥaidar Khān, the then heir-apparent, withdrew from circulation twice all the copper coin of the city (end of July 1857 and January 26th, 1858), once all the silver coin (November 20th, 1857) and once both the copper and the silver coin (December 31st, 1857), after having declared each time the coin "depreciated to one half its previous value". In the first of these cases the copper coin called in and bought at half its original value by the Sardār's Treasury "*was re-stamped, and after a few days, again issued at the usual value of the coin*". In the cases of the silver coin there does not seem to have been any restamping, as Bellew merely states that "*after a few days detention the coin was again circulated at its original value*". Which of these two courses was adopted on the two other occasions,—is not mentioned.

Such operations might have been, and probably were, going on throughout the country and throughout the last century. Their object, however, was wholly one-sided and did not go beyond a sporadic increase of the funds of the Treasury of a city.

The present reform widely differs in many ways from the above described acts of the local rulers which were always performed ad hoc and without any further effect. Still the advantages of the reform for the Afghan Treasury cannot be, and certainly were not, wholly ignored, if we only judge by the rapidity with which the idea of the reform was adopted by the Government. The profits of the Treasury on this occasion

[1] H. W. Bellew, Journal of a Political Mission to Afghanistan in 1857, London, 1862, pp. 283-4, 332, 372 and 383.

could not have been so high as to their percentage, but certainly were quite appreciable in their amount.

The weight of a one-rupee piece, as seen above, is equal to 2 *mithqāl*, *i.e.* 9,1 grammes. Now, the *afghānī* weighs 10 grammes. Thus, on the face of it, no material profit could have been derived from recoining eleven old coins into ten new ones. The percentage of the alloy in the old coin is, however, exceedingly small, especially in the older "raw" rupees, whereas in the *afghānī* the alloy, though probably not exceeding the limit considered as legal, is an unknown quantity[1] and is certainly comparatively high. That difference in standard, minute as it may be for a single coin, might be very considerable whenever the whole currency of the realm is concerned.

During the period mentioned in the law (art. 5), *i.e.* up to March 21st, 1929, the old coin ought to be absorbed gradually by the Treasury, that is to say all the old coin flowing in there in its normal course will be duly recoined and thrown into circulation under its new shape. At the same time the population is supposed to hand over of their own accord all the old coin to the Treasury, where it will be exchanged for the new currency. Taking into consideration that the conditions of the exchange are thoroughly fair and laid down in the body of the law itself (eleven *rūpiya-i kābulī* for ten *afghānī*) and that there is very little use for silver (except as coin) in Muhammadan countries,[2] we have ground to presume that all the old coin will duly find its way to the Treasury in order to be restamped.

All the above holds good with regard to the copper coin as well, with the exception of the 15-*paysa* pieces which were declared worthless[3] from the very first day after the publication of the new law. It is not quite clear what fate is in store for the one-*paysa* pieces made of latten brass, though on the face of it they ought to be exchanged in the general manner. Still it is possible that they may remain in circulation as a kind of additional coin.

The profits which the Afghan Government might expect to derive from the propagation of the new weights among the population are not inconsiderable. One has only to take into

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[1] No mention of the standard of the metal used for the new coin is made anywhere in the new law.

[2] The Islamic law does not encourage the use of silver spoons, dishes, etc.

[3] The amount of false 15-*paysa* coins in circulation was at a certain moment far greater than the real coin of that denomination and the false coins were accepted by the population without any objection owing to the scarcity of the real coin of that value. The false coins differ from the real ones only as regards their thickness: the false coin is very thin, the real one has normal proportions (see No. 13, where the first of the two coins is a false one and the second a good one).

consideration the fact mentioned above regarding raw stones being used throughout the country as weights and the very elevated price of the new metal weights, to see that the clause about the old weights "in iron, cast-iron and brass" being accepted in part payment at the purchase of the new weights is but an euphemism.

The immediate results of the introduction of the new currency were twofold. In the first instance the reform resulted in the depreciation of the Kabuli rupee on the foreign market (that is to say in Peshawar which is the only place where the Kabuli rupee is quoted): immediately after the new law was published the rate of the exchange for the Kabuli rupee dropped by 10% thus lowering the *afghānī* on the market to the position formerly occupied by the Kabuli rupee. On the other hand the prices of the ordinary commodities of life in Afghanistan itself gradually went up, and there is every reason to presume that at the expiration of the period stipulated by the new law the prices for these commodities will be calculated in *afghānī* instead of so many Kabuli rupees, which will mean a general rise in prices of 10%.[1]

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To sum up,—after the reform will have been completed the situation which will present itself will be as follows:—

For coins	..decimal.
,, measures of length	.. ,,
,, measures of surface	..old Afghan.
,, measures of capacity	.. nil.
,, measures of liquids	.. nil.
,, measures of temperature	.. nil.
,, weights	..decimal.

Certain minor points have to be also taken into consideration, namely, that although most of the measures and weights introduced by the law, like the metre, all the weights and all the coins, will have to be accepted by the population and have come to stay as their old equivalents will be withdrawn from circulation by the Government, still certain of the old measures, especially those which do not require material symbols to express them, will survive. The names *shāhī*, *sannār* and *'abbāsī* will most probably stick to the new coins to denote combinations analogous to those formerly expressed by them. It is hardly probable that the old *kurūh*, neither abolished nor even mentioned by the new law, should cede its place as road-

[1] An almost immediate favourable result of the introduction of the metric system in Afghanistan was, however, its recent premature (since April, 1928) and unexpected admission into the Universal Postal Union.

measure to the new and unwonted *zarmatrī*. We must not forget as well that the surface or land-measure (*jarīb*), along with its fractionals, is based also on the old *gaz*, which certainly will survive at least in connection with the *jarīb*. The English yard (*vār*) will certainly continue to co-exist with the *mītar* in the customs, whenever cloth, etc., of British origin, with lengths calculated in yards, is imported. The builders, carpenters, joiners, etc., will not so easily part with the *fūt* and the *inch* to which they are accustomed. In short, we shall meet with a peculiar state of symbiosis in the domain of measures.

A similar (as far as currency is concerned) reform in Persia due to the efforts of Nāṣiru-d-Dīn Shāh, by whom in 1877 the coinage was concentrated at the Government Mint in Tehran under a fixed form obligatory for the whole country, had a most salutary effect on its economical life.

The reform in Afghanistan with which we are concerned represents, however, a step towards the simplification not only of the currency, but of the measures and weights as well, at least in so far as it means a unification of the same throughout the realm, and has consequently more far-reaching effects. We may therefore consider that, with all its limitations, the introduction of the metric system in Afghanistan marks an epoch in the history of the country and brings it one step nearer modern civilized life.

September, 1928.