

The Griquatown tokens – Did they ever circulate?

A quick summation.

The source of every single publication referring to the Griquatown tokens circulating can be traced back to Parson's 1927 booklet "*The coinage of Griqualand*" prepared by him on behalf of Spink & Son. You don't have to be an expert to see for yourself how poorly researched Parsons claims are.

A scan of his booklet can be seen online at: <http://www.tokencoins.com/parsons/>

It is a fact that Spink & Son now distance themselves from Parsons booklet and support the more recent research by Scott Balson who finds that the silver tokens were produced as day and half day labour tokens but completely failed. ie not one token ever circulated even though they did arrive in Griquatown c1817. The origins and purpose of the copper Griquatown tokens are in question.

The findings by Balson, which are now adopted by Krause and Stanley Gibbons as well, have very firm foundations.

There are many logical reasons to come to the conclusion that not one token ever circulated as money in Griquatown.

To start with the missionary, William Anderson, who resided at Griquatown between 1815 and 1820 wrote many journals and letters. These are now stored in the library of London University's *School of Oriental & African Studies* (SOAS) who hold the archives of the London Missionary Society (LMS).

Peter Anderson, who wrote William Anderson's biography "*Weapons of Peace*" in 1995 spent eight months (Monday to Friday) going through all the journals and letters written by Anderson, Campbell, Moffat, Burchell, Philip etc at SOAS and never saw one reference to the tokens.

In 2016, he states in an email to Balson: *I certainly do not recall in any of the letters and journals any mention of local coinage/token in Griquatown during Anderson's time there. ... it is my impression that had there been local coins produced and circulating during his time he would surely have mentioned this in his letters or journals.*

This email can be seen online at this link: <http://www.tokencoins.com/petera.htm>

In fact the only direct reference to the Griquatown tokens is by Helm who replaced Anderson in 1820. He asks the LMS "what am I to do with the greatest part of them" and refers to Anderson disposing of a few in the past. Apart from Helm's comment about the confusion over their value – which supports the day labour theory – that is the totality of the records from that time referring to these tokens. For the record the meaning of the word "disposed" is to "get rid of permanently".

As you can see these brief references by Helm in no way suggest the tokens circulated at any time and the lack of reference to them provides a compelling argument that they completely failed and not one ever circulated.

This argument is supported by many known facts. Here are the most important:

- 1 When Anderson returned to Griquatown from Cape Town in 1814 the people there had lost faith in him. In fact the major Griqua families left Griquatown leaving the settlement a ghost town until 1820.
- 2 There was no shop in Griquatown in which to trade the tokens.
- 3 There was no hole in the tokens to facilitate carrying them with their beads.
- 4 The people there had no understanding of money (Prof Arndt)
- 5 The tokens are never listed as assets anywhere, at any time, by the LMS at Griquatown
- 6 There is not one reference to them by Campbell in his second book covering his trip to South Africa and Griquatown in 1820. In fact Campbell's only related comment in this book is that "regular trades do not exist in Griquatown".

In conclusion considering the lack of reference to them by Anderson and the known facts outlined above it is illogical and misleading to claim that even one Griquatown token ever circulated.

Scott Balson

More at: <http://www.tokencoins.com/book.htm#key>