

ORIGINS OF ISLAMIC COINAGE

AN INTRODUCTION

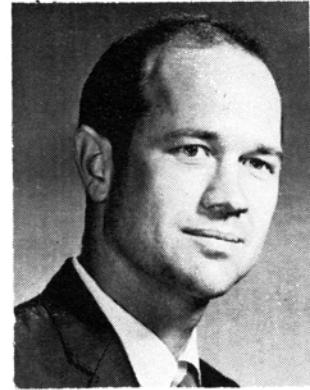
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NORMAN TOTTEN IS IN HIS FOURTH YEAR AS ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF HISTORY AT BENTLEY COLLEGE, WALTHAM, MASSACHUSETTS. FOR THREE YEARS PREVIOUS HE WAS DIRECTOR OF ADMISSIONS, BOSTON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY. HE TEACHES COURSES IN WESTERN CIVILIZATION, MEDIEVAL EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST (ANCIENT, ISLAMIC AND CONTEMPORARY).



LAST SUMMER HE TRAVELED IN GREECE, TURKEY, IRAN, KUWAIT, IRAQ, EGYPT, LEBANON, CYPRUS AND ISRAEL. IT WAS HIS FOURTH TRIP TO THIS AREA. IN 1962 HE WAS A SITE SUPERVISOR WITH DR. HANK FRANKEN'S ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS AT TELL DEIR ALLA, JORDAN.

NEXT SUMMER HE WILL ACCOMPANY STUDENTS TO THE SORBONNE, UNIVERSITY OF PARIS, FOR FRENCH STUDIES (PROGRAM OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR FOREIGN STUDY), DEPARTING JUNE 27. HE WILL ALSO CONDUCT A TWO-WEEK TOUR TO GREECE, EGYPT, LEBANON AND ISRAEL (WHOLESALE TOURS INTERNATIONAL), DEPARTING NEXT NEW YEAR'S EVE. ANYONE INTERESTED IN EITHER OPPORTUNITY SHOULD WRITE PROFESSOR TOTTEN AT BENTLEY COLLEGE, WALTHAM, MASSACHUSETTS, 02154.

HE RECEIVED HIS B.A. FROM HENDRIX COLLEGE, HIS S.T.B. AND M.A. FROM BOSTON UNIVERSITY, WHERE HE IS NOW A PH.D. CANDIDATE. HIS MAJOR RECENT STUDIES HAVE BEEN WITH DR. REINHOLD S. SCHUMANN IN EUROPEAN MEDIEVAL HISTORY, DR. IRENE L. GENDZIER IN THE ISLAMIC MIDDLE EAST, AND DR. RODMAN R. HENRY IN CLASSICAL TIMES.

HE BELONGS TO THE FOLLOWING PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION, AMERICAN NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION, ARCHAEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE OF AMERICA, INDIA-ASIATIC NUMISMATIC SOCIETY, NEW ENGLAND HISTORY TEACHER'S ASSOCIATION (MEMBER OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD), AMERICAN NUMISMATIC SOCIETY.

PREFACE

I AM WRITING FOR THOSE WHO ARE NOT SCHOLARS IN THIS FIELD, WHO EITHER DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO THE SOURCES ON WHICH THIS WORK IS BASED OR WHO WOULD LIKE MORE OF A LAYMAN'S APPROACH THAN WOULD OTHERWISE BE POSSIBLE. WHILE ONLY MAJOR ISSUES AND DEVELOPMENTS ARE DEALT WITH, THE BIBLIOGRAPHY CAN LEAD ONE TO IMPORTANT SOURCES FOR A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF EARLY ISLAMIC ICONOGRAPHY AND ECONOMICS THROUGH NUMISMATICS.

SO FAR AS I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ASCERTAIN, NO COMPARABLY UP-TO-DATE INTRODUCTION TO THIS SUBJECT HAS PREVIOUSLY BEEN WRITTEN--AND, IN FACT, COULD NOT HAVE BEEN WRITTEN PRIOR TO THE RELATIVELY RECENT ADVANCES IN UNDERSTANDING OF THE ORIGINS OF ISLAMIC COINAGE THROUGH THE PENETRATING LIFE-LONG SCHOLARSHIP OF SUCH MEN AS PHILIP GRIERSON, GEORGE C. MILES AND THE LATE JOHN WALKER. OF COURSE, THE FINAL CHAPTER IS UNFINISHED; THERE WILL CONTINUE TO BE NEW DISCOVERIES AND NEW INSIGHTS.

I AM PERSONALLY INDEBTED TO MICHAEL L. BATES, ASSOCIATE CURATOR OF ISLAMIC COINS, THE AMERICAN NUMISMATIC SOCIETY, FOR SUGGESTIONS IN BOTH BIBLIOGRAPHY AND MANUSCRIPT.

THANKS ARE DUE CHARLES PANISH, COLIN BRUCE AND BRUCE BRAUN FOR ASSISTANCE IN OBTAINING AND CLASSIFYING SOME OF THE COINS IN MY OWN COLLECTION WHICH ARE HEREIN ILLUSTRATED. I AM GRATEFUL TO LLOYD AND BARBARA PRENTICE, RALPH MATHESON, THE STAFF OF ZONE 5 PHOTOGRAPHER'S WORKSHOP, AND PAMELA HOUSLEY FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IN PHOTOGRAPHING AND PRINTING. I AM ALSO INDEBTED TO THE AMERICAN NUMISMATIC SOCIETY (ANS) FOR PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE PHOTOGRAPHS OF SOME RARE SPECIMENS FROM ITS OWN AND OTHER COLLECTIONS.

COINS ARE ILLUSTRATED SLIGHTLY OVERSIZE, EXCEPT WHERE AN ASTERISK FOLLOWS "ANS PHOTO," MEANING NORMAL-SIZE REPRODUCTION, FROM MILES' "THE EARLIEST ARAB GOLD COINAGE."

AN = Gold, AE = Bronze, AR = Silver

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REVERSE, MUCH ENLARGED
STANDING CALIPH DINAR

ROBERT W. MORRIS COLLECTION
ANS PHOTO

ORIGINS OF ISLAMIC COINAGE

NORMAN TOTTEN

I

PROTOTYPES

THERE WAS NO LOCAL ARAB COINAGE AT THE TIME OF MUHAMMAD'S BIRTH IN MECCA, 570 AD. IN FACT, ARABIA HAD BEEN WITHOUT AN INDEPENDENT COINAGE SINCE THAT OF THE FIRST-CENTURY HIMARITES. BARTER, BULLION AND USE OF THE COINS OF OTHERS FOR SMALL TRANSACTIONS WERE APPARENTLY SUFFICIENT.

THE TWO GREAT MIDDLE EASTERN EMPIRES OF THE TIME WERE CHRISTIAN BYZANTIUM AND ZOROASTRIAN (SASANIAN) PERSIA. BY MUHAMMAD'S DEATH IN 632 AD THESE EMPIRES HAD MUTUALLY WEAKENED EACH OTHER THROUGH MILITARY CONTESTS. BY THE TIME OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE Umayyad Dynasty in 661 AD, THE ARABS--UNDER THE BANNER OF THEIR NEW FAITH, ISLAM--HAD CONQUERED THE ENTIRE SASANIAN EMPIRE AND THE SYRIA-PALESTINE-NORTH AFRICA PORTION OF BYZANTIUM. AT FIRST THE MUSLIM ARABS BOTH EXPLOITED AND ADOPTED MANY ELEMENTS OF THESE TWO GREAT CIVILIZATIONS, INCLUDING COINAGE--BYZANTINE GOLD AND BRONZE AND SASANIAN SILVER.

BYZANTIUM



SOLIDUS, AN
MINT: CONSTANTINOPLE
HERACLIUS (610-641 AD)



7 A



FIRST 40 NUMMIA
COIN ("FOLLIS")

MINT: NICOMEDIA

ANASTASIUS (491-518 AD)

40 NUMMIA COINS
("FOLLES"), AE
CONSTANS II (641-668 AD)



OBVERSE: STANDING EMPEROR
AND "ENT O NIKAI"

REVERSE: CURSIVE AND
UNCIAL M, INSCRIPTION



SASANIAN



DIRHEM, AR, UNDATED
MINT: BANJIHAR (BN)
FIROZ I (459-484 AD)



DIRHEM, AR, 619 AD
MINT: HAMADAN
KHUSRAU II (590-627 AD)

EARLIEST ARAB BRONZE



FROM ABOUT 640 AD, DURING THE CALIPHATES OF UMAR (634-644 AD) AND UTHMAN (644-656 AD), IN SYRIA AND PALESTINE THE ARABS BEGAN ADAPTING BYZANTINE LOCAL BRONZES, ADDING KUFIC-ARABIC WORDS. THE SPECIMENS AT LEFT MODIFY COINS OF CONSTANS II (SEE SECTION I). THE MINT IS WRITTEN IN GREEK (EMESOS) AND ARABIC (HIMS), PRESENT-DAY HOMS, SYRIA. THE REVERSE-SIDE "M" IS THE BYZANTINE LETTER REPRESENTING "40," (I.E., 40 NUMMIA). THE CROSS ABOVE THE "M" IS RETAINED ON THE FIRST SPECIMEN, THOUGH PERHAPS INTERPRETED AS A FOUR-POINTED STAR, SINCE A MOON CRESCENT (HILLĀL) APPEARS BELOW THE CENTER OF THE "M." ON THE OTHERS A SIX-POINTED STAR IS SUBSTITUTED FOR THE CROSS. YET ON THE OBVERSE OF ALL THREE COINS THE CROSSES ON THE EMPEROR'S CROWN, STAFF AND ORB ARE RETAINED. IT IS CLEAR THAT AT THIS PERIOD THE ARABS WERE MORE CONCERNED WITH ADAPTING THEMSELVES TO LOCAL USAGES THAN WITH REPLACING THEM BY SOMETHING TOTALLY NEW.

THE COIN AT RIGHT MAY POSSIBLY NOT BE ARABIC, BUT SOME OTHER EASTERN COPY-ADAPTATION OF THE CONSTANS FOLLIS, THOUGH FAINT TRACES ON THE REVERSE INDICATE POSSIBILITY OF THE HIMS MINT.

