

# The Qurʾān in Context

Historical and Literary Investigations  
into the Qurʾānic Milieu

Stefan Heidemann:  
The Evolving Representation  
of the Early Islamic Empire and  
its Religion on Coin Imagery



EDITED BY

ANGELIKA NEUWIRTH, NICOLAI SINAI,  
AND MICHAEL MARX

TEXTS AND STUDIES ON THE QURʾĀN

BRILL

# The Qur'an in Context

# Texts and Studies on the Qur'ān

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VOLUME 6

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# THE EVOLVING REPRESENTATION OF THE EARLY ISLAMIC EMPIRE AND ITS RELIGION ON COIN IMAGERY\*

Stefan Heidemann

## *The Crucial Early Decades*

How did the theology of Islam and its idea of empire evolve,<sup>1</sup> based on a Hellenistic Roman-Iranian foundation and in the face of Christianity, Judaism, Neo-Platonism, and Zoroastrianism? Since the 1970s, this much debated question has inspired skeptical polemics against what had until then been taken to constitute “established” knowledge.<sup>2</sup> The extremely divergent points of view taken in this controversy at large are possible to maintain because there are few undis-

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\* This contribution began its life as a lecture given at the Seminar of Arabic Studies at the Free University Berlin (May 29, 2006) at the invitation of Angelika Neuwirth. During my further research I profited much from discussions with many colleagues, among them Lutz Ilisch, N. Douglas Nicol, Hans-Christoph Noeske, Ingrid and Wolfgang Schulze and Stuart Sears; I gratefully acknowledge their various contributions. I would especially like to express my gratitude to Susan Tyler-Smith for various comments and her careful reading and improving of the English draft, and to Emilie Norris who undertook the final editing of the text. Illustrations: gold and copper 2:1; silver 1:1.

<sup>1</sup> There is no expression for “empire” or “state” within medieval Islamic sources. *Dār al-Islām* was used to refer to the “territory of Islam” or, more specifically, to the geographic area where Islamic jurisdiction was applied, as opposed to *dār al-ḥarb*, the territory outside Islamic jurisdiction. Early Islam obviously never needed an expression for “empire,” probably because it considered itself to be universal. The government of the caliph, with Islam as the state religion, can nevertheless be defined as “imperial”; see Münkler, *Imperien*.

<sup>2</sup> For a résumé of the past discussion see Sivers, “The Islamic Origins Debate Goes Public.” The recent German debate was initiated by Ohlig/Puin, *Die Dunklen Anfänge*. In the paradigmatic first section Volker Popp attempts to prove an Arab Christianity and the Christian character of the early “Islamic” empire by using numismatic evidence. Three years earlier, he had used the same idea as a leitmotif for a novel published under the pseudonym Mavro di Mezzomorto, *Mohammed auf Abwegen: Entwicklungsroman* (“Mohammed Goes Astray: A Coming-of-Age Novel”) and in a series of articles: “Bildliche Darstellungen,” “Bildliche Darstellungen II,” “Bildliche Darstellungen IV,” “Bildliche Darstellungen V.” Ohlig has restated his and V. Popp’s theory in an article in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (November 21, 2006), which received replies in the same newspaper by Nicolai Sinai (December 28, 2006) and the present author (February 28, 2007).

puted Arabic sources on the first decades of Islam. Yet since the beginning of that discussion, in the 1970s, much progress has been made. Although there has been a growing interest in sources from outside the Arabic-Islamic tradition, it was only in 1997 that Robert Hoyland undertook a systematic examination of parallel literary evidence from non-Muslim sources that predated the existing Arabic texts.<sup>3</sup> In 2003 Jeremy Johns surveyed the extant archeological, epigraphic, and numismatic sources for the first seventy years of Islam, portraying ‘Abd al-Malik’s reign as the most significant turning point of early Islamic history.<sup>4</sup> In 2006 Hoyland added new epigraphic material to the discussion and stressed the important role that Mu‘awiya played in this process.<sup>5</sup> It is against this background that the imagery and text messages to be found on coins became more important than ever, as knowledge of early Islamic coinage has grown tremendously since the 1990s. Much new information is scattered in small articles and auction catalogues. Coins offer the only continuous and contemporary independent and primary source for the period of the genesis of the new religion and its empire from Spain to Central Asia. Frequently, interpretations of Islamic coin imagery by students of political history or the history of art disregard the proper numismatic context of the seventh century CE. The present contribution attempts to provide a brief overview of the development of early Islamic coin imagery according to the present state of research. Yet new discoveries in this rapidly evolving field might significantly change the picture. The present contribution is necessarily built on the research of many colleagues which I gratefully acknowledge.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, especially pp. 545–549, 591–598.

<sup>4</sup> Johns, “First Seventy Years,” has replied to the views of Judith Koren and Yehuda Nevo, published in a series of articles during the 1990s. In 2003 their views were summarized in *Crossroads to Islam*. The two authors make extensive use of numismatics in their arguments (pp. 137–154), but because they do not take the rich research literature of the past twenty years into account, their treatment of the coin evidence and their conclusions may at best be called naive. Their main source of numismatic inspiration was the seminal article by Michael Bates, “History.” Much progress has been made since then. Unfortunately, they seem to have neither personal acquaintance with numismatic sources nor any interest in the appropriate methodology. As a result the delight they take in their “discoveries” is unrestricted by any methodological constraints. For an outspoken review see Foss, “Unorthodox View.”

<sup>5</sup> Hoyland, “New Documentary Texts.”

<sup>6</sup> For an introduction to the numismatics of the early Islamic period, see in chronological order: Bates, “History”; Bates, “Byzantine Coinage and Its Imitations”; Heidemmann, “Merger”; Sears, *Monetary History*; Bone, *Administration*; Treadwell, “The ‘Orans’ Drachms”; Treadwell, *Chronology*; Foss, “Kharijites”; Album/Goodwin, *Sylloge* (see the review by Foss, “Coinage”); Oddy, “Whither Arab-Byzantine Numismatics?”; Phillips, “Currency in Seventh-Century Syria”; Goodwin, *Arab-Byzantine*

*The Representation of Power and Religion up to the Period of the  
Second Fitna*

*The Early Phase: From 636 to About 655/658*

Islamic armies swiftly conquered three major zones of monetary circulation and took over much of their fiscal and monetary organization: in the center the former Byzantine territories, in the east the Sasanian empire, and in the west Germanic North Africa and Spain.



Fig. 1. Heraclius and Heraclius Constantine, *nomisma*, Constantinople, without date (ca. 616–625 CE), Oriental Coin Cabinet Jena inv. no. 2007-04-001 (4.21 g; gift of F. and G. Steppat).



Fig. 2. Anonymous, *follis*, Constantinople, regnal year 3 of Constans II (643–4 CE), Oriental Coin Cabinet Jena inv. no. 303-D05 (4.80 g).

*Coinage*; Foss, “Fixed Points”; Treadwell, “Mihrāb and ‘Anaza”; Ilisch, “Muhammad-Drachms.” For the economic and political history, see Johns, “First Seventy Years,” and Morony, “Economic Boundaries?”

In the Byzantine territories, the workhorse of the fiscal cycle, of taxation, and of state expenditure was the gold *solidus* or *nomisma* weighing about 4.55 g (fig. 1). The money used for daily purchases, the copper *folles* (plural *folles*) (fig. 2), was issued by the treasury and sold to money changers. In 629/30 Heraclius (r. 610–641) concentrated all eastern minting in Constantinople, the imperial capital. *Folles* of the late Heraclius and Constans II were usually anonymous.<sup>7</sup> During the Sasanian occupation of the Roman Middle East, between 606–7 and 628, irregular mints were established in Syria to supplement the circulating stock of copper coins.<sup>8</sup> In the short period of Byzantine resistance against the conquering Islamic army, countermarks were applied on circulating coins.<sup>9</sup>

In the Sasanian empire the coinage of the fiscal cycle was the uniform silver *drahm* of about 4.2 g that was struck during the reign of Khusrū II (r. 590/591–628) in about 34 mints (fig. 8). In Spain and western North Africa, the monetary economy had been in decline since the fifth century. The third of the *nomisma*, the *triens*, or *tremis* (ca. 1.5 g), was the main coin struck in Spain and the rest of western Europe (cf. fig. 27). In North Africa, Carthage was the only mint to continue striking petty coinage.<sup>10</sup>

In the first decades after the battle of Yarmūk in 636 CE and the establishment of the Taurus border zone, Byzantine coppers remained in circulation in Syria, probably until the reform of ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 65–86/685–705) in 77–79/696–699. The obverse shows the emperor or the emperors—here (fig. 2) the standing figure of Constans II (r. 641–668) wearing a crown with a cross, holding a *globus cruciger* in one hand and a long cross in the other. On the reverse, the **m** indicates the Greek numeral 40, the mark of value of the Byzantine standard copper coin, the *folles*. Archeological finds show that from about 641 CE on, Constantinople resumed supplying substantial quantities of newly minted copper coins to its lost provinces, Syria and northern Mesopotamia. Coin imports slowed down at the end of the 640s and came to an end in the late 650s around 655/658,<sup>11</sup> a date

<sup>7</sup> Hahn, *Moneta imperii*, vol. 3, 135–136.

<sup>8</sup> Pottier, *Monnayage de la Syrie*.

<sup>9</sup> Schulze et al., “Heraclian Countermarks.”

<sup>10</sup> Bates, “North Africa.”

<sup>11</sup> Mackensen, *Spätantike Anlage*, 29–30, fn. 98; Phillips/Goodwin, “Seventh-Century Syrian Hoard”; Heidemann, “Merger”; Foss, “Coinage of Syria”; Walmsley, “Coin Frequencies,” and a forthcoming study by Pottier et al., “Pseudo-Byzantine Coinage.”

that coincides roughly with a drop in copper coin production in Constantinople. At the same time, in the year 655 or shortly afterwards, Mu'āwiya (r. 37-60/658-680) concluded a treaty with Byzantium,<sup>12</sup> to be followed by another, and more important, treaty in the year 658.<sup>13</sup>

How should this continued importation of copper coins to the lost provinces be interpreted politically? Rome-Byzantium still thought of itself as the universal world empire, but as one with soft borders, not as a state in the modern sense with well-defined borders that impose separation in a number of respects.<sup>14</sup> The selling of coppers was profitable for the Byzantine treasury. Perhaps arbitrage, the differing copper-to-gold ratio, allowed a fast export. Money changers or merchants might have been brokering the trade. Early Islam, outside the Ḥijāz, was the elite religion of a tribally organized militia. During the period of conquest, the *futūḥ*, the Islamic religion possessed only a rudimentary theology, which was probably even more basic among military units. At that time Islam would almost certainly not have been perceived as a new and equal religion by outsiders, especially when compared with the sophisticated and diverse Christian theology and all other contemporary religious systems such as Judaism, Zoroastrianism, or the pagan pantheon in its late neo-Platonic form. Contemporary Byzantium might have seen the conquest as a menacing rebellion resulting in a temporary loss of authority and—if they had noticed the religious dimension at all—as an Arab heresy of Judeo-Christian origin. Both perceptions would not have necessarily challenged the universal claim of the all-embracing Roman empire, since the idea of Rome was neutral to religion. Uprisings, territorial losses and gains, and heresies constituted a recurrent challenge during more than one millennium of Roman history.<sup>15</sup>

This early situation can be compared in certain respects with the historical situation of the Germanic migration and conquest of the western Roman empire. Despite military defeats, territorial losses, and a different Christian confession, Arianism, Constantinople and the Germanic realms kept the fiction of continuity and sovereignty

<sup>12</sup> Kaplony, *Konstantinopel und Damaskus*, 33–36 (A3). For these changing diplomatic relations see Kennedy, “Byzantine-Arab Diplomacy,” 134–135.

<sup>13</sup> Kaplony, *Konstantinopel und Damaskus*, 37–46 (A4).

<sup>14</sup> For the recent research on this aspect of empires see Münkler, *Imperien*.

<sup>15</sup> On the perception that Islam only ascended the monotheist ladder, but did not reach the heights of Christianity, see Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 523–547, esp. 535–538.

of the Roman universal empire alive. In Europe, this fiction was constitutionally upheld until 1806. In the Germanic realms and kingdoms after the conquest, coins, mainly gold, were usually struck in the name and with the image of the emperor, although not always the current one, while others were anonymous. These kingdoms were autonomous both politically and in religious matters. Administrative and legal structures remained basically Latin-Roman. In contrast to the eastern Mediterranean, however, the monetary economy collapsed in almost all of western Europe except Italy.

For these early decades there is no contemporary evidence that the Arab-Islamic leaders developed an imperial ideology of their own. The idea of having a universal empire is different from having a state, with institutions and a governing body.<sup>16</sup> As leaders of the victorious Arab armies, inspired by the teachings of the new prophet, they were probably at first content with their *de facto* rule in the name of the new religion, the appropriation of existing institutions, and fiscal exploitation. Despite their successful conquests, the Arab-Islamic elite may have thought that universal rule could only be achieved within the framework of the Roman empire with its capital at Constantinople. What evidence would support such a hypothesis? Firstly, the idea of Rome was widespread and historically powerful. The Arab population and tribes in Bilād ash-Shām and northern Mesopotamia, especially the Ghassānids, had been exposed to the idea of Rome for almost eight hundred years. In the seventh century, a Hunnish ruler in Central Asia called himself “Caesar of Rome.”<sup>17</sup> Peter Thorau has even pointed to the continuity of the idea of imperial Rome in Ottoman ideology.<sup>18</sup> Secondly, up to the early third/ninth century, campaigns were undertaken to conquer Constantinople, which points to the importance attributed to that city: frequent and large scale attempts occurred in the period under study until about the time of the uprising of the caliph ‘Abdallāh b. az-Zubayr in the 60s/680s.<sup>19</sup> Vice versa, the Byzantines tried to re-establish imperial authority in Palestine and Egypt. Thirdly, al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) relates a ḥadīth of the

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Donner, “The Formation of the Islamic State.” He defines the Islamic “state,” but does not distinguish between the notion of state and that of empire.

<sup>17</sup> Humbach, “Phrom Gesar and the Bactrian Rome”; Humbach, “New Coins from Fromo Kesaro”; Schnädelbach, “A Group of Countermarked Imitative Drahms of Hormizd IV.”

<sup>18</sup> Thorau, “Von Karl dem Großen.”

<sup>19</sup> For a brief overview on the campaigns, see J.H. Mordtmann, “Kustaṭīniyya,” in *EP*, vol. 5, 534–535.

Prophet calling for the conquest of Rome (Constantinople), saying that until that had been accomplished there would be no Day of Judgement.<sup>20</sup> This can be read to mean that the Day of Judgement will come only after the creation of a (Roman) universal empire of Islamic denomination.



Fig. 3. Anonymous, Imitation of a *follis* of Constans II, without mint and date [20s/640s – 50s/670s], validating countermark *li-llāh*; photo Oriental Coin Cabinet Jena no. SB1312.

Already during the Persian occupation of Syria and northern Mesopotamia, local imitation of current Byzantine copper coins supplemented the circulating stock.<sup>21</sup> The situation was similar after the battle of Yarmūk as Henri Pottier and Ingrid and Wolfgang Schulze showed. Again imitations of current Byzantine copper coins emerged. Their emission went smoothly. Most of them comply with the weight standard characterizing *folles* struck in Constantinople probably until their importation ceased. Even weight reductions in Byzantium were immediately adopted in Arab Islamic Syria until the end of the 650s. Between the early 640s and 655/658, a massive import of Constans II-*folles* followed, but local production of imitations—now of the Constans II-type (fig. 3)—continued to meet the excess demand. After the import ended, the weight of the imitations was slightly reduced. They were continuously struck probably up to the mid 660s or even until about 670. The most common imitated type was the “standing

<sup>20</sup> Abel, “Ḥadīṭ sur la prise de Rome.”

<sup>21</sup> For the series struck under Sasanian authority, see Henri Pottier, *Monnayage de la Syrie*. For the later Pseudo-Byzantine coinage, see Goodwin, “Dating,” Pottier et al., “Pseudo-Byzantine Coinage” (forthcoming). I am grateful that the authors have generously shared some of their results with me.



emperor” of Constans II. These coins are encountered in a broad variety and usually have meaningless legends. Obviously, several mints were involved in the production of this pseudo-Byzantine coinage. These cannot yet be located, but their products can sometimes be distinguished from each other by the fabric of their flans, minting techniques and styles. Most likely Ḥims/Emesa, the main Arab garrison city in Syria, was one of the major mints.<sup>22</sup> Fig. 3 shows a close Syrian imitation of a *follis* of Constans II with a later validating countermark *li-llāh*.<sup>23</sup>

Who was responsible for the issue of these imitated coins in Syria and northern Mesopotamia? We do not know who the regulating authorities were, but it is possible that military authorities in the garrisons, local authorities in the cities, money changers, or merchants were involved in their production. We know from the reports on the *futūḥ* that the Christian urban and parochial elite represented the cities when dealing with Islamic military tribal leaders, and that they were the mainstay of early Umayyad civil administration.<sup>24</sup>

*The Phase of Dissociation: Umayyad “Imperial Image” Coppers*



Fig. 4. Anonymous, *fals*, Dimashq, without date (ca. 50s/660 – 74/692); Oriental Coin Cabinet Jena inv. no. 303-D09 (3.84 g).

<sup>22</sup> Pottier et al., “Pseudo-Byzantine Coinage.” For single groups and for detailed studies, see Oddy, “Christian Coinage,” Goodwin, “Imitations of the Folles of Constans II,” and Goodwin, *Arab-Byzantine Coinage*.

<sup>23</sup> Numismatists have called these coins “Pseudo-Byzantine.” On countermarking in this period, see Schulze/Goodwin, *Countermarking*; Schulze, “Countermark.”

<sup>24</sup> For the numismatic interpretation, see Treadwell, *Chronology*.



Fig. 5. Anonymous or *Khālid, fals*, Tiberiados (*ṭabariyya*), without date (ca. 50s/660s – 74/692); Oriental Coin Cabinet Jena inv. no. 303-C04 (4.71 g; ex. coll. Marquis de Lagoy).



Fig. 6. Anonymous, *fals*, Hims/Emesa, without date (ca. 50s/660s – 74/692); validating mark *KAAON* and *ṭayyib*; Oriental Coin Cabinet Jena inv. no. 303-C08 (3.85 g; ex. coll. F. Soret).

The next phase after importation and imitation can be assumed to begin in the 40s–50s/660s–670s, during the reign of Mu‘āwiya.<sup>25</sup> It ends about the years 72 to 74/691 to 694, the years of the Marwānid reforms.<sup>26</sup> Luke Treadwell has conjectured that there was some sort

<sup>25</sup> Johns, “The First Seventy Years,” 421–423, analyzes the evidence of the Nessana papyri and concludes: “a centralised administrative and fiscal apparatus is absent under Mu‘āwiya, and is first introduced under ‘Abd al-Malik and his successors.” However, Foss, “Syrian Coinage of Mu‘āwiya,” and Hoyland, “New Documentary Texts,” 399–401, challenge this view.

<sup>26</sup> The starting date for these series has been a matter of much dispute for the past thirty years. Michael Bates has suggested a “short chronology,” first in 1976 (“Bronze

of coordination, if not centralized policy in this early phase. His assumption complements the picture of a more centralized policy in state building by Mu'awiya, as it is now becoming apparent from inscriptions and papyri.<sup>27</sup> Treadwell focused on the mints of the provincial capitals Dimashq (fig. 4), Ṭabariyya (fig. 5),<sup>28</sup> and Ḥimṣ (fig. 6). These so-called "Imperial Image" coppers still depict Byzantine emperors and crosses, but in contrast to the preceding group of pseudo-Byzantine coins these coppers have carefully prepared flans and well engraved dies; and the quality far exceeds that of the imported Byzantine *folles* struck in Constantinople.<sup>29</sup> Officially recognized regular mints were set up, and were also named on the coins in Greek and/or Arabic. Validating expressions in both languages, such as

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Coinage") and again in 1986 ("History"), claiming that all the Umayyad "Imperial Image" coins were minted between 72 H and 74 H. In 1988–9 Qedar has argued in favor of a "long chronology" that begins with the closing of the Byzantine mint of Antioch in 629/630; see Qedar, "Copper Coinage of Syria." After twenty further years of research, it has become evident that these series are more complex and diverse than originally thought and cannot be fitted into the short time span suggested by Bates. See for example the series of Ḥimṣ: Oddy, "Bust Type," Oddy, "Standing Emperor." The beginning of this series can therefore be roughly dated to the 40s–50s / 660s–670s, the time of the caliph Mu'awiya. For an extensive discussion of Bates' "short chronology" and Qedar's "long chronology," see Treadwell, *Chronology*, 2–6.

<sup>27</sup> Miles, "Early Islamic Inscriptions"; Grohmann, "Zum Papyrusprotokoll in früh-arabischer Zeit"; Green/Tsafir, "Greek Inscriptions"; Donner, "The Formation of the Islamic State"; Foss, "A Syrian Coinage of Mu'awiya"; more material in Hoyland, "New Documentary Texts."

<sup>28</sup> Despite the long discussion about the Greek lettering on the coins of Ṭabariyya, its reading is still not firmly established due to the rarity of the coins and the variations in the lettering. De Saulcy, "Lettre à M. Reinaud (1839)," 439–440, fig. 23 (for this specimen see fig. 5), was the first who suggested a name: *XAAED*, probably read as *Khālid*; Stickel, "Neue Ermittlungen," 175–177, pl. no. 1 (this specimen); Stickel, *Handbuch* (1870), 8–13, 65, no. 1 (the plate is a composite drawing from inv. nos. 303-C04 and 303-E01); De Saulcy, "Lettre à Baron de Slane (1871)"; Walker, *Catalogue*, vol. 2, 45–49; Qedar, "Copper Coinage of Syria," pl. 5, no. 14. Meshorer, "Enigmatic Arab-Byzantine Coin," has attempted a new reading on the basis of the examples known to him: he suggested a slightly distorted *KAAON* on the left and right of the "m" with both words sharing the letters *ONO* in the exergue. This has been accepted by Treadwell, *Chronology*, 12, and Foss, "Anomalous Arab-Byzantine Coins," 7–8. Karukstis, "Meshorer's 'Enigmatic Coin' Revisited," has presented four additional specimens, and was able to show that the letters in the exergue sometimes read *ONB* (see also Karukstis, "Another Visit"). Meshorer's reading again seems questionable. On some examples, *XAAED* seems certain (see fig. 5); compare Qedar, "Copper Coinage of Syria," no. 14. V. Popp, in "Bildliche Darstellungen II," emphasizes the original interpretation of De Saulcy as *Khālid*; cf. as well Popp, "Islamgeschichte," 50, fig. 10. The identification of this *Khālid* with the famous conqueror seems unlikely for chronological reasons.

<sup>29</sup> Hahn, *Moneta imperii*, vol. 3, 136.

ΚΑΛΟΝ or *ṭayyib* (both meaning “good”), or *jaʿiz* (current), *wafāʾ li-llāh* (fulfillment to God), *wafiyya* (full), or *bi-smi llāh* (in the name of God) were included in the design.<sup>30</sup>

This established Arabic as the language of the validating authority.<sup>31</sup> In the period of Muʿāwiya, the indigenous population probably retained a strong adherence to traditional Christian symbols and may have shown a tendency to reject coins without crosses.<sup>32</sup> In later sub-phases of the Umayyad “Imperial Image” coins, when people had become used to them, we find more variety, and different Byzantine models were copied.<sup>33</sup> Mint regulation was at the level of military districts (*jund*, pl. *ajnād*), judging by the similarities of the coin design and validating marks used in one district when compared to another. It seems, though, that individual mints retained some freedom in the choice of the final design.<sup>34</sup> To complicate the picture further, these Umayyad “Imperial Image” coins were themselves imitated, sometimes closely, sometimes badly, by unnamed and at present unknown mints. The number of dies for some of these emissions runs into the hundreds.<sup>35</sup> Although some of the Umayyad “Imperial Image” coppers (e.g. Ḥimṣ, fig. 6) were struck in relatively large quantities,<sup>36</sup> their scarcity in archeological finds suggests that they never made up a large part of the circulating stock of copper coins.<sup>37</sup> Most parts of Syria and northern Mesopotamia flourished in economic and demographic terms, and so had a need for petty coinage. Almost no attempt was made to represent the new state or religion on coins. Petty coinage, first and foremost, served as a means of exchange.

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<sup>30</sup> These short expressions have no specific religious connotation and can thus be taken as mere validating marks. For a contrary view see Album/Goodwin, *Sylloge*, 84.

<sup>31</sup> Most likely the use of the Arabic validating expression was meant to reassure the Arab armies who received them as payment that the new coins are as good as the old coppers and the old Sasanian *drahms*.

<sup>32</sup> Palmer, *West-Syrian Chronicles*, 32.

<sup>33</sup> For the suggested economic logic, see Treadwell, *Chronology*, 13.

<sup>34</sup> Treadwell, *Chronology*. For Palestine see Ilisch, *Sylloge*.

<sup>35</sup> Milstein, “Hoard,” and, for a revision, Treadwell, *Chronology*, 6–10, and Goodwin, “Pseudo-Damascus Mint.” For a tentative attribution to a “pseudo-Damascus” mint and an “*al-wafāʾ li-llāh*–mint” in southern Syria, probably in the *Jund al-Urdun*, see Album/Goodwin, *Sylloge*, 87, 90.

<sup>36</sup> See fn. 26, and especially Oddy’s studies.

<sup>37</sup> Foss, “Coinage of Syria”; Treadwell, *Chronology*, 12.



Fig. 7. Anonymous, *nomisma*, without mint (Damascus?), without date (ca. 660–680 CE); *Islamic Coin Auctions* 11 (2006), no. 13 (4.42 g).

An awareness of the cross as a symbol can be seen in a comparatively limited series of imitative gold coins, probably struck in Damascus, closely copying a *nomisma* of Heraclius and his son Heraclius Constantine, with slightly blundered Greek legends (fig. 7). The prominent “cross on steps” on the reverse (fig. 1) was transformed into a “bar on a pole on steps.” Hoard evidence suggests for these imitations a date not much later than 680 CE, about the period of Mu‘āwīya.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, on a rare imitation of a *nomisma* of Phocas (r. 602–610), crosses were changed into “sticks” with a small pellet on the top. Miles has suggested that the latter coin was struck at about the same time as the previous one.<sup>39</sup> At this stage of the development, and in this iconographic context, the new design was probably regarded at first as a mutilated cross. The cross might have been perceived as more than merely a Christian religious symbol and might have also been identified with the rival Byzantine empire.<sup>40</sup> Thus, it could also be described as a “de-Byzantinized” cross. This question will be discussed below in the context of ‘Abd al-Malik’s reforms.

<sup>38</sup> Miles, “Gold Coinage,” 203 (Daphne hoard); Metcalf, “Byzantine Gold Hoards,” 96, pl. 12, no. 2.66 (Nikertai hoard; now American Numismatic Society inv. no. ANS 1983.122.1). *Islamic Coin Auctions* 11 (2006), no. 13, and Foss, “Syrian Coinage of Mu‘āwīya,” have suggested a dating to the time of Mu‘āwīya; compare Treadwell, *Chronology*, 5–6.

<sup>39</sup> Miles, “Gold Coinage,” 207, no. 1. Until now, this coin is known in a single example.

<sup>40</sup> In Byzantium the cross became almost an imperial symbol denoting the victory of the emperor over his enemies; Moorhead, “Iconoclasm,” esp. p. 178. In this context, the image of Christ on the coins of Justinian II (r. 685–695, 705–711) may have played a role.

A passage transmitted by the Maronite chronicle describes the minting of gold and silver coins by Mu'āwiya and their rejection by the population, because these coins did not bear crosses. This text emphasizes the conservative character of precious metal coins.<sup>41</sup> If the passage refers to these gold issues, it suggests that the gold may have been struck by the order of the caliph whereas the issue of copper was organized on a *jund* level. Nevertheless the dating of this passage remains problematic because the minting of silver began in Syria probably not before 72/691-2 and the text might be considered as a misplaced reference to the reforms by 'Abd al-Malik.<sup>42</sup>

### *The Former Sasanian Realm*

How did the currency and visual representation of power and religion develop in the newly conquered lands of Iraq and Iran? The centralized Sasanian empire was attacked at its apogee, despite the devastation and chaos caused by the aftermath of Heraclius' victory. Its administration, its army based on cash payments, and its monetary economy<sup>43</sup> were to a significant degree under control by the center, in contrast to the declining and decentralizing Byzantine empire.<sup>44</sup> Even after the assassination of Khusrū II in 628 CE and the almost complete annihilation of the army at the battle of Nihāwand in 641 CE, institutions and the monetary economy remained intact. The centralized Sasanian state enabled the conquerors to take over the administration swiftly.



Fig. 8. Khusrū II, *drachm*, mint abbreviation 'HM (Hamadhān), regnal year 29 (618–9 CE); Oriental Coin Cabinet Jena inv. no. 302-B05 (3.46 g).

<sup>41</sup> The Maronite chronicle was completed after 664 CE. It discusses the minting of gold and silver coinage by Mu'āwiya, "but it was not accepted, because it has no cross on it" (Palmer, trans., *West-Syrian Chronicles*, 32).

<sup>42</sup> For an attribution to Mu'āwiya see Foss, "A Syriac Coinage of Mu'āwiya." For recent doubts about the dating of the passage see Ilisch, "Muhammad-Drachms," 17.

<sup>43</sup> Sears, *Monetary System*, 349–365.

<sup>44</sup> See Morony, "Economic Boundaries," for a recent account.

The typical late Sasanian *drahm* (fig. 8) of about 4.2 g shows on the obverse the portrait of the *shāhānshāh*—either Khusrū II or Yazdgard III (r. 632–651 CE)—with an enormous winged crown as sign of his royalty. On the reverse the fire altar served as the central symbol of Zoroastrianism, the dualistic Iranian religion. Priest attendants stand on either side. Beside them are abbreviations indicating the mint and the regnal year of the ruler.

From the fifth regnal year (15/635–6) onwards, Yazdgard III, the last *shāhānshāh*, was in retreat. In his twentieth regnal year, in 651 CE, he was assassinated in Marw, the last eastern remnant of his empire. Few coins were minted between the decisive battle of Nihāwand in 641 CE (regnal year 10 or 20 H) and 651 CE. Coins struck in the conquered territories are almost indistinguishable from those struck under the authority of Yazdgard III, except that the mints lay outside his shrinking realm.<sup>45</sup>



Fig. 9. “Yazdgard III,” posthumous, *drahm*, abbreviation SK (Sijistān), regnal year “20 YE” (immobilized date, 31–ca. 41 H / 651–ca. 661 CE); Oriental Coin Cabinet Jena inv. no. 304-C04 (3.49 g; gift of A. D. Mordtmann, Jr., 1874).

The next phase lay between 20 Yazdgard Era (YE) and about 30 YE, or between 31 and 41 Hijrī, or 651 and 661 CE. In contrast to Byzantium, the Sasanian empire collapsed completely and the *shāhānshāh*’s claim to universal rule ended. The Islamic conquerors did not attempt to continue the Sasanian claim of a universal empire until the Abbasids. The outlook of the Syrian Umayyads was different, being closer to the Roman tradition.

Coins continued to be struck in the names and with the portraits of “Khusrū II” or “Yazdgard III”—the portraits are almost identi-

<sup>45</sup> For a thorough study of the coins of Yazdgard III utilized to map the Arab conquest see Tyler-Smith, “Coinage in the Name of Yazdgerd III.” In addition see “Earliest Arab-Sasanian Coins” by Nikitin/Roth who discuss how to distinguish coins struck by mints under the control of Yazdgard III.

cal—and with the fire altar and attendants. The dating was according to the Yazdgard era, although most coins used the immobilized date of 20 YE (fig. 9). Frequently, but not always, additional Arabic validating expressions appear in the obverse margin, usually in the second quadrant, such as *bi-smi llāh* (in the name of God)<sup>46</sup> or *jayyid* (good) as on the Syrian copper coins. These expressions have no specifically Islamic connotations. The resulting picture for the early decades seems to correspond to a situation in which the Sasanian administration remained operational, but functioned at a provincial level and was responsible to Arab governors.<sup>47</sup> In the 30s/650s, possibly in the year 33/653–4, the mint authorities under the jurisdiction of the Baṣra prefecture, began dating coins with Hijrī years written in Pahlawī.<sup>48</sup> The introduction of the new era on coins indicates that the administrative Arabic elite gradually developed an awareness of its Islamic identity, but there was still no overt representation of the Islamic religion and its empire.



Fig. 10. Georgia, Bagratids, Stepanos II (r. 639–663 CE), *drahm*, (Tiflis?), without date; Oriental Coin Cabinet inv. no. 302-C04 (3.03 g; ex coll. H.A. Zwick, 1840); Mayer, *Sylloge*, 110, no. 1001.

<sup>46</sup> *Bi-smi llāh* is a general phrase without any specific Islamic content, therefore it is likely to be used here only as a mark of validation; compare Donner, “Believers,” 40. Crone and Hinds, *God’s Caliph*, 24–25, instead believed that the use of Allāh, God, in this phrase is the beginning of an Islamic propaganda predating the use of the name of Muhammad. Allāh, however, is the God common to all contemporary religions in the Middle East. This assumption misled them to postulate that *khalīfat Allāh* was the most important and programmatic title of the early caliphs. The epigraphic and numismatic evidence proves, however, that “commander of the believer” was the more important title (see fn. 52), and that the invocation of the messengership of Muhammad was the first distinct Islamic slogan (see the discussion of fig. 14). This misconception of the role of Muhammad in the evolving propaganda and of the title *khalīfat Allāh* in the coin protocol gave their book a false start in argumentation.

<sup>47</sup> Sears, *Monetary History*, 377–402. See also the summary by Album in Album/Goodwin, *Sylloge*, 34–37.

<sup>48</sup> Album/Goodwin, *Sylloge*, 8–9.



Contemporary Georgia shows that religious iconographic symbols were of importance in coin imagery elsewhere. Christian Georgia had belonged to the Sasanian realm and was part of the circulation zone of the Sasanian *drahm*. A strong sense of religious identity is found here at about the same time as the immobilized year “20 YE” *drahms* were being minted.<sup>49</sup> New coins, supplementing the circulating stock (fig. 10), show on the obverse a portrait resembling that of Hormizd IV (r. 579–590 CE), but the Georgian inscription names the Bagratid king Stepanos, who reigned between 18/639 and 43/663. On the reverse, the fire altar was distinctly replaced by a Christian altar with a cross on top.



Fig. 11. ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Āmir b. Kurayz, governor of the Baṣra-prefecture, *drahm*, abbreviation *DP* (probably Fasā in the Dārābjird district), year “43” H (immobilized date, ca. 43–47/663–668); Oriental Coin Cabinet Jena inv. no. 2005-15-002 (4.04 g; gift of H. Wilski).

The third and fourth phases<sup>50</sup> in development of the coin design cover approximately the years 30 to 60 YE, 40 to 72 H, or 661 to 681 CE, i.e. the Sufyānid period up to the Second *Fitna*. As in Syria, a gradual regulation of the administration, including minting, is visible on the coins. The names of *Khusrū* and *Yazdgard* were replaced, at first occasionally and then regularly from 50/671 with the names of the provincial governors in Pahlawī script (fig. 11). These are placed in front of the traditional portrait of the *shāhānshāh*. At many mints, the Yazdgard era ceased to be used and was replaced with the Hijrī year.

<sup>49</sup> About the same time, imitations of Sasanian *drahms* of Hormizd IV with a fire altar on the reverse are also known from the Caucasus region, but instead of the mint abbreviation they have the Pahlawī-Aramaic word *zwzwn*, meaning “silver” (*drahm*); they most commonly bear the immobilized date “six.”

<sup>50</sup> The phases are according to Album in Album/Goodwin, *Sylloge*.



Fig. 12. Mu'āwiya, "amīr of the believers" in Pahlawī, *drahm*, abbreviation D' (Dārābjird in Fārs), year "43" H (immobilized date; 54–55/673–675), clipped rim; Oriental Coin Cabinet Jena inv. no. 304-B07 (2.06 g; ex coll. F. Soret, ex coll. Sprewitz).

Dārābjird in the province of Fārs was important in the history of the Sasanian dynasty. It must also have had a special place in the early Islamic empire, though this has not yet been explored. Dārābjird and the mints related to it struck coins in the name of the caliphs for some time, more than any other mint. Coins in the name of Mu'āwiya were only struck here (fig. 12).<sup>51</sup> His Arab title is written in Pahlawī script and the second part translated into Persian as "amīr of the believers," stressing his role as leader of the Islamic elite.<sup>52</sup>

Some years after the First *Fitna*, between 656 and 661 CE, Umayyad governors began to affirm their rule with a reference to God in Arabic. The first was the governor of the East, Ziyād b. Abī Sufyān (r. 50–64/670–684). Since 47/667–8, he promulgated regularly his authority with the legend *bi-smi llāhi rabbī*, "In the name of God, my lord." Other governors followed his example and added after *rabb* their own name, for example: *bi-smi llāhi rabbi l-ḥakam*, "In the name of God,

<sup>51</sup> See Album/Goodwin, *Sylloge*, nos. 245–246, 269. Hoyland, "New Documentary Texts," 399, accepts an old, and incorrect, reading of "41" by J. Walker and is thus misled in his conclusions.

<sup>52</sup> The title *amīr al-mu'minīn* was the most important and prominent title of royalty. The title *khalīfa* came second, if it existed at all at that point in history. Donner, "From Believers to Muslims," has suggested that the term *mu'minūn*, "believers," signified all "believers" in God and the Last Day. It is obvious that the term *mu'minūn* was used earlier than the later designation *muslimūn* in surviving inscriptions. According to Donner *mu'minūn* included Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians. This wide ecumenical interpretation should be narrowed down, however. We do not know how far belief in the prophethood of Muhammad was essential to the group which termed itself "believers," but probably it was essential to their identity. Numismatic evidence shows that acknowledgement of his messengership was the first of all representations of Islam on coins. The title "amīr of the believers" also implies that these "believers" had to acknowledge the "commander" as their theocratic leader. On the one hand, the title ascribes an elite status to the "believers," while it does, on the other hand, reflect a certain religious openness, the universalistic attitude of the Islamic elite. Cf. Hoyland, "New Documentary Texts," 404–406, 409–410.

the lord of al-Ḥakam” b. al-‘Āṣ, who was Umayyad governor of the Kirmān province between 56/675–6 and 58/677–8.<sup>53</sup>

*The Second Fitna—Zubayrid and Khārijite challenges*



Fig. 13. ‘Abdallāh b. az-Zubayr, “*amīr* of the believers” in Pahlawī, *drahm*, abbreviation D’-J (Jahrum in the Dārābjird district), year 60 YE (72/692); Oriental Coin Cabinet Jena inv. no. 2005-15-004 (4.12 g; gift of H. Wilski).

The Second *Fitna*—the Zubayrid movement and caliphate of Ibn az-Zubayr between 681 and 693 CE—and the much fiercer Khārijite challenge between 687 and 697 CE constitute the fifth phase in the movement towards the first inclusion of Islamic symbols on coins, and they mark the watershed in the development towards a clear iconographic expression of the new religion and state. ‘Abdallāh b. az-Zubayr was a close, venerated member of the family of the Prophet. He emphasized the religious character of the caliphate and demanded a state in accordance with the principles of Islam, whatever this meant at the time. After Mu‘āwiya’s death in 60/680, ‘Abdallāh b. az-Zubayr strongly opposed the Sufyānid claim for the caliphate and was supported in many parts of the empire. His policy and goals are only known indirectly through the anti-Umayyad historiography of the Abbasids. Study of the coins now available for this period enables us to write a more accurate history of his caliphate.<sup>54</sup>

‘Abdallāh b. az-Zubayr’s name first appeared on coins of Kirmān in 62/681–2. In the year 64/684, after the death of the Umayyad caliph Yazīd, the coins show that he assumed the imperial title “*amīr* of the believers” (fig. 13). In the year 67/687, his brother Muṣ‘ab secured

<sup>53</sup> Album/Goodwin, *Sylloge*, 12–15; Sears, “Legitimation.”

<sup>54</sup> Rotter, *Bürgerkrieg*, focuses on literary evidence, as these coinages were little known at that time. Mochiri’s early study, *Arab-Sasanian Civil War Coinage*, suffers from the fact that it follows the then current hypothesis that the main series of Khārijite coinage used post-Yazdgard era dates; also the immobilized dates had not yet been recognized as such.

Basra, Iraq and the territories to the east as far as Sijistān. The Umayyads seemed to have lost their cause. The coin designs of the Zubayrid governors in Iraq and Iran remained almost the same as before, with the portrait of the *shāhānshāh* and the fire altar and its attendants.



Fig. 14. ‘Abd al-Malik b. ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Āmir, Zubayrid governor, *drahm*, abbreviation *BYSh* (Bishāpūr), year 66 H (685–6 CE); Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, in Album/Goodwin, *Sylloge*, vol. 1, no. 152 (4.23 g).

Between the years 66/685 and 69/688–9, the Zubayrid governor of the East placed the Arabic legend *Muḥammad rasūl Allāh*, “Muhammad is the messenger of God,” on the obverse margin of the coins for the first time. These were struck in Bishāpūr in the Fārs province (fig. 14).



Fig. 15. Anonymous, *drahm*, mint ‘*KWL*’ (Aqūlā), year 70 H (689–90 CE); Sotheby’s, *Auction* (March 18, 1983), no. 80.

According to a scrutinizing numismatic analysis by Lutz Ilisch, the Zubayrid authorities of Aqūlā, the older twin city just north of the important garrison town of Kufa, went probably in the year 70/689–90 a step further.<sup>55</sup> Coins were created with the legend “Muhammad (is)

<sup>55</sup> Ilisch, “Muhammad-Drachms.” Until further evidence is discovered, the dating of the coins to the year 70 H does leave some, albeit marginal, doubts.

the messenger of God” in front of the portrait of the *shāhānshāh* and—for the first time—the profession of faith and the unity of God, the *shahāda*<sup>56</sup> was placed in Arabic on the obverse margin (fig. 15): *bi-smi llāhi lā ilāha illā llāh waḥdahū* (“In the name of God, there is no deity other than God alone”).

In the same year, 70/689–90, an anonymous coin with the Pahlawī inscription “Muhammad is the messenger of God” in place of the governor’s name in front of the portrait was struck in the Kirmān province (*GRM KRM’N*), then probably under Khārijite control.<sup>57</sup> Zubayrids and Khārijites thus propagated the new Islamic imperial rule with reference to the Prophet and putative<sup>58</sup> founder of the state on the obverse, which is the usual side for the sovereign. The acknowledgement and invocation of the messengership of Muhammad was obviously the fundamental characteristic of the new religion. Even ideologically opposed groups referred to him in the same way and with the same phrase. With the growing debate over a community built on Islamic principles, the representation of Islam and its state became essential for the legitimization of power.<sup>59</sup> These changes were the first successful attempts in coin protocol, and they heralded the next decisive changes in the religious and imperial self-image of the elite.



Fig. 16. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Āmir, Zubayrid governor, *drahm*, abbreviation SK (Sijistān), year 72 H (691–2 CE); coll. Mohsen Faroughi.

<sup>56</sup> In the secondary literature the *shahāda* is sometimes defined to also include the invocation of the messengership of Muhammad. Here the term denotes only the profession of the unity of God.

<sup>57</sup> Shams-Eshragh, “An Interesting Arab-Sasanian Dirham”; Foss, “A New and Unusual Dirham”; Islamic Coin Auctions 9 (2004), no. 3172; see also below, fn. 65. For the history of the Khārijites, see Foss, “Kharijites and Their Coinage.”

<sup>58</sup> In his role as founder of the Islamic empire the prophet Muhammad, is as putative as Osman for the Ottoman empire, and Romulus and Remus or Aeneas for the Roman empire.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Donner, “Believers,” 40–41, on the growing role of the public representation of Muhammad.

In the year 72/691–2, the Zubayrid governor of the remote province of Sijistān in south-eastern Iran, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Āmir, brother of the aforementioned innovative governor of the east, went a step further by replacing the Zoroastrian fire altar and attendants with the profession of the new faith (*shahāda*); Iraj Mochiri has read the Pahlawī script thus: “Seventy-two / No God but he / another God does not exist / Muhammad (is) the messenger of God / SK (mint abbreviation for Sijistān)” (fig. 16).<sup>60</sup> The *shahāda* appears here in Pahlawī script and in the Persian language.<sup>61</sup> Replacing the fire altar in the same way as the altar with a cross in Georgia, it is the first known “iconic” symbol of the Islamic religion and its empire. The Zubayrid governors had targeted the ideological and religious deficiencies of the Sufyānid Umayyad regime. The probable audience of these coins’ ideological message was not only the new Arab military elite, but also the old Persian speaking Zoroastrian elite that controlled the civil administration in the east.

In the provinces under Khārijite control, Islamic religious propaganda addressed in Arabic the crucial question of legitimate power, that is, who should guide the believers: *lā hukma illā li-llāh*, “guidance/judgement belongs only to God,” and *bi-smi llāhi waliyyi l-amr*, “in the name of God, the master of authority.”<sup>62</sup> In 72/691–2, the Marwānids re-conquered Iraq, and in the next year, 73/692, brutally suppressed the caliphate of ‘Abdallāh b. az-Zubayr in Mecca. The ideologically much more aggressive Khārijite movement, though, still controlled much of Iran.

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<sup>60</sup> Mochiri, “A Pahlavi Forerunner,” 168–172; Sears, “A Hybrid Imitation,” 137–169; Ilisch, Review of American Journal of Numismatics 1, corrects the attribution of Sears; Johns, “The First Seventy Years,” 426–427. I would like to thank Dieter Weber for confirming Mochiri’s reading of the Pahlawī legend.

<sup>61</sup> Donner, “From Believers to Muslims,” 47, is wrong when he assigned the date of the first *shahāda* on coins to the years 66 and 67 H; only the reference to Muhammad can be found on them.

<sup>62</sup> Sears, “Legitimation”; Foss, “Kharijites.”

*The New Ideological Form of the Umayyad Empire**Trial and Error in the Symbolic Representation of Islam and its Empire*

The reforms and activities of ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān and his omnipotent governor of the east, al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf, can be seen on the one hand as an attempt to integrate the defeated moderate Zubayrid movement, and on the other hand, as a forceful reaction to the ongoing and ideologically much more potent Khārījite challenge. It was now at the latest, if not before, that the idea of an Islamic universal empire in its own ideological right arose. Mecca was too far away for a representative imperial religious cult to be successfully controlled. In 72/691–2 ‘Abd al-Malik built the present Dome of the Rock and the Aqṣā Mosque in Jerusalem, which were in all likelihood the first architectural manifestations of the new Islamic empire.<sup>63</sup> The choice of Jerusalem placed the imperial state religion in the tradition of Judaism and Christianity and in the center of the medieval world.

The elements of traditional coin design were reconsidered as well. The designers of these coins had to balance two necessities: firstly, the traditional conservatism of precious metal coin design in order to make these coins acceptable to the public, and secondly, the need to create a symbolic rhetoric for both Islam and its empire. Between 72/691–2 and 77/696–7, the Marwānid government experimented with new symbols and designs; not all the imagery is fully understood today. These experiments followed different but related courses in Syria, in the super-provinces of Kufa and Basra, and in the northern provinces (Jazīra, Armenia, and Azerbaijan).

The recurrent theme of all these coin designs was the inclusion of the formula *Muḥammad rasūl Allāh*, and increasingly the profession of the unity of God. These legends were the symbol of Islam comparable to the cross, fire altar, and menorah. Muhammad, the all-but-human messenger of God, was raised to a position almost as sacred as the divine revelation itself. The anachronistic iconographic symbols on the coins, however, were secondary in ideological terms and had to serve as recognizable marks to make the coins acceptable in cir-

<sup>63</sup> ‘Abd al-Malik may have followed the Byzantine model of erecting imperial religious buildings; see Gibb, “Arab-Byzantine Relations,” 50–51, and Rabbat, “Meaning of the Dome of the Rock.”

culuation. Based on the Zubayrid innovations and slogans on coins, the search process for appropriate new designs and symbolic representations of the Marwānid empire and its religion seems to have started in Damascus in 72/691–2. The process in the prefectures Basra and Kufa and the northern provinces followed a different but parallel course. With the exception of some coppers, the new emissions were anonymous.

*The First Attempts in Syria: The Years 72–74/691–694*



Fig. 17. Anonymous, *nomisma*, without mint (Damascus?), without year (ca. late 60s–72 / late 680s until 691–2 CE); Spink, *Auction 18* (1986), no. 86.

At the latest in 72/691–2, ‘Abd al-Malik began to experiment with coin designs in Syria. His administration chose yet another circulating type of Heraclius’ *nomisma* as a model, even leaving the anachronistic Greek inscription in place (fig. 17). The obverse shows three standing emperors still wearing tiny crosses on top of their crowns. On the reverse, the cross, being the symbol of the Christian Byzantine empire, was replaced by a “bar on a pole on steps.” The same symbol had been used before in the time of Mu‘āwiya (fig. 7). The emblems of the rival Christian empire were gradually removed, while the recognizable design pattern of the circulating Byzantine gold coinage was retained.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Walker, *Catalogue*, vol. 2, 18, no. 54, pl. v; Miles, “Earliest Arab Gold Coinage,” 209–210, nos. 4–5.





Fig. 18. Anonymous, *drahm*, Damascus, year 72 H (691–2 CE); Peus, *Auktion 380* (2004), no. 988 (3.80 g).

Before 72/691–2, silver *drahms* were not known to have been minted in Syria. On the basis of the coin type, style, and mint technology, L. Ilisch ascertained that at least one workshop from Aqūlā/Kufa was brought to Damascus to introduce a silver coin type in 72/691–2. It was similar to the previous Zubayrid issues of Aqūlā. Like the Aqūlā *drahms* of 70/689–90 (fig. 15), the new Marwānid Damascus *drahms* (fig. 18) were modeled on the current Sasanian *drahm* retaining the images of the *shāhānshāh* and the fire altar with attendants. The coins are anonymous; the Arabic invocation *Muḥammad rasūl Allāh* is placed in front of the portrait, however at first without the profession of the unity of God. Similar coins were struck in Ḥimṣ in 72/691–2.<sup>65</sup> *Drahms* naming only a *MHMT* in Pahlawī and/or *Muḥammad* in Arabic without titles or reference to the messengership might come from further mints, such al-Ḥīra, close to Kufa, Ḥarrān, and/or one mint in the Jund Qinnasrīn in Syria.<sup>66</sup> The Zubayrid propaganda was adopted as suitable for the ongoing power struggle with the Khārijites.

<sup>65</sup> Album/Goodwin, *Sylloge*, no. 305 (year 72 H).

<sup>66</sup> For the “Muhammad *drahms*,” Sears (“Sasanian Style Coins” and “Transitional *Drahms*”) has suggested mints in northern provinces of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the Jazīra (Ḥarrān). He has identified the name Muhammad with the name of the Marwānid governor of the northern super-province and brother of ‘Abd al-Malik, Muḥammad b. Marwān. Ilisch, “Muhammad-Drachms,” has re-examined these coins; he is much more cautious in their attributions and provides more material for comparison. As the origin of the Muhammad *drahms*, he has suggested different mints such as Ḥarrān, al-Ḥīra, and an unidentified mint in the Jund Qinnasrīn (p. 24), while excluding almost Azerbaijan and Armenia. The Muhammad *drahms* are undated. Ilisch assumes that the inclusion of the name Muhammad or “MHMT” followed the same idea as the *Muḥammad rasūl Allāh-drahms*. In the cases where the name Muhammad is found twice on the coins, he supposes that at least one might refer to the Prophet. The earliest date for al-Ḥīra would thus be 66/685–6 under Zubayrid control, for Ḥarrān and the one in the Jund Qinnasrīn 72/691–2 under Marwānid control.



Fig. 19. Anonymous, *drahm*, Damascus, year 73 H (692–3 CE); Peus, *Auktion 380* (2004), no. 989 (3.69 g).

From 72/691–2 to 74/693–4, the name *Khusrū* in Pahlawī is again found in front of the portrait (fig. 19) so that the design, except for the Arabic invocation of Muhammad, remains the recognizable standard *drahm* design.<sup>67</sup> In the year 73/692–3 the invocation of the messenger of God, Muhammad, was supplemented with an Arabic *shahāda* in the obverse margin of the silver, and probably also on the undated gold coins of Damascus (fig. 20 and 21) and on the *drahms* of Kufa (fig. 29).



Fig. 20. Anonymous, *nomisma*, without mint (Damascus), without date (73–74/692–694); Spink, *Auction 18* (1986), no. 87.

The gold coinage followed the same course. The beginning of this series is presumably contemporary with the inclusion of the *shahāda*

<sup>67</sup> Bates, “History,” 243–244; Miles, “Some Arab-Sasanian and Related Coins,” 191–192, no. 6 (72 H) Jazzar, “Arab-Sassanian Dirham” (72 H); Album/Goodwin, *Sylloge*, no. 278 (72 H), no. 279 (73 H); Peus 380 (2004), no. 988 (73 H); Islamic Coin Auction 9 (2004), no. 3173 (73 H) = Baldwin’s, New York Sale 9 (2005), no. 230 (73 H) = Classical Numismatic Group, *Mail Bid* 69 (2005), no. 1914; Shams-Eshragh, *Study*, 95 no. 137 (73 H); Miles, “Mihrāb and ‘Anazah,” pl. xxviii, no. 4 (74 H, coll. P. Balog); Walker, *Catalogue*, vol. 1, 23 no. DD1 (74 H).

on silver *drahms*.<sup>68</sup> Probably in 73/691–2, but before the year 74/693–4, the crosses were finally removed from the conventional and now meaningless image of the emperors, and the symbol on the reverse was replaced by a “globe on a pole on steps.” Probably parallel to the silver issues (fig. 19), the profession of faith, including the unity of God and invocation of the messenger of God, Muhammad, encircled the central symbol (fig. 20). The “globe/bar on a pole on steps” and these invocations had now become frequently used symbols.<sup>69</sup>

*A Consistent Formula for Syria and Northern Mesopotamia:  
The Caliph as the Representation of the Empire*



Fig. 21. Anonymous, *dīnār*, without mint (Damascus), year 77 H (696 CE); Oriental Coin Cabinet Jena inv. no. 303-A02 (4.45 g; ex coll. Soret, ex coll. Peretier).



Fig. 22. 'Abd al-Malik, *fals*, Qinnasrīn, without date (74–77/693–696); Oriental Coin Cabinet Jena inv. no. 303-F08 (3.15 g).

<sup>68</sup> Bates, “History,” 246.

<sup>69</sup> Miles, “Earliest Arab Gold Coinage,” 210–211.



Fig. 23. Anonymous, titles *amir al-mu'minin* and *khalifat Allāh, fals*, Manbij, without date (74–77/692–696); Oriental Coin Cabinet Jena inv. no. 303-G06 (2.7 g).



Fig. 24. Anonymous, titles *amir al-mu'minin* and *khalifat Allāh, drahm*, without mint (Damascus), year 75 H (694–5 CE); Gorny und Mosch (2007), no. 5599 (3.34 g).

Between the years 74/693–4 and 77/696, the next ideologically more consistent, and indeed almost unified, iconographic representation of the empire was created for Syria, in gold, copper, and in silver (figs. 21–24). The obverse of the gold and copper coins shows the image of the “standing caliph.” The precious metal coins are anonymous, giving only titles, but some copper issues name ‘Abd al-Malik. Luke Treadwell has suggested a connection with the earlier introduction of a standing *khaṭīb* in Kufa that will be dealt with below.<sup>70</sup> An important mark of the figure’s imperial status is his long, broad sword sheathed in a scabbard, the hilt firmly in his grip.<sup>71</sup> On the

<sup>70</sup> Treadwell, “The ‘Orans’ Drachms,” 254, 259–260.

<sup>71</sup> Hoyland, “Writing,” 593–596, without taking the numismatic and historical context into proper consideration, attempts to argue that the image is the “standing Prophet” rather than the “standing caliph.” His main argument is that the standing figure on the copper coins of Jerusalem, Ḥarrān, and al-Ruhā’ is accompanied with the name Muhammad, on account of which Hoyland identified him as the Prophet.

gold *dīnār*, the caliph is surrounded by the Arabic *shahāda* and the invocation of the messengership of Muhammad. The reverse repeats the “globe on a pole on steps.”<sup>72</sup>

The design seems to have been modified on copper coins, except for Palestine where the Byzantine numeral **m** (40) was retained.<sup>73</sup> The reverse uses the familiar “globe on a pole on steps” type, but with the addition of an ellipse, the resulting design resembling the Greek letter *phi*, which was first noted by John Walker.<sup>74</sup> The precise rendering of the “globe (or other tops) on a pole with ellipse” varied considerably at the different mints in Bilād al-Shām and the western Jazīra.

On the silver coins in Damascus in 75/694–5, the image of the *shāhānshāh* remained on the obverse as the iconic mark of the *drahm*. The standing ruler is placed on the reverse (fig. 24). On either sides of his image, the title *amīr al-mu’minīn* was inscribed for the first time in Arabic language and script. Also on this coin, another title appears for the first time on a dated document, namely, reference to the emperor as *khalīfat Allāh*, “deputy of God,” in defective archaic writing (KhLFT ’LLH). The title enhanced his claim to political-religious leadership.<sup>75</sup> Both titles are also occasionally found on the paral-

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He also cites Foss, “First Century,” 758, who states that in the Hellenistic period the inscription accompanies the image. However, both overlook the fact that in the seventh century the inscription and the text are separated, as has been explained above. Hoyland also adduces the fact that the image of Christ on Byzantine coins and the “standing figure” both have long flowing hair. A forthcoming study by Ingrid and Wolfgang Schulze (see fn. 72) on the iconography of the “standing person” will show a wide variety of hairstyles and headdresses; this was consequently not a defining feature of the image. There are indeed some rare coins from Yubnā, not mentioned by Hoyland, where the standing figure is adorned with a halo, which in the late Roman period indicates divinity, accompanied by the statement *Muhammad rasūl Allāh*; see Goodwin, *Arab-Byzantine Coinage*, 93, 110. The fact that Yubnā is only a provincial mint suggests that its iconographic interpretation is not representative of the main series. Furthermore, not only did the Prophet achieve an almost divine status, but the caliph regarded himself as “deputy of God.”

<sup>72</sup> Miles, “Earliest Arab Gold Coinage,” 212–229. Currently Ingrid and Wolfgang Schulze are working on the details of the numismatic iconography of ‘Abd al-Malik: “Kupfermünzen Abd al-Maliks aus Harran und anderen Münzstätten der Jazira,” lecture presented during the regional meeting of the Oriental Numismatic Society, Bamberg/Germany, May 13–14, 2006.

<sup>73</sup> Goodwin, “Jund Filastin”; Goodwin, *Arab-Byzantine Coinage*.

<sup>74</sup> Walker, *Catalogue*, vol. 1, xxiii.

<sup>75</sup> For a summary of the discussion about this title see Rotter, *Bürgerkrieg*, 33–35. Crone/Hinds, *God’s Caliph*, 4–23, esp. 20–21 and fn. 81, propose that ‘Uthmān (r. 23–35/644–656) was the first who adopted the title *khalīfat Allāh*. Later references aside, their only seemingly contemporary source is a poem by Ḥassān b. Thābit (d. by 54/674). However, Rotter, *Bürgerkrieg*, 34, 248, rejects the line in question as a later Umayyad addition, see ‘Arafat, “Historical Background,” 278. Madelung’s pro-

lel copper coinage (fig. 23). These *drahms*, the following ones from Damascus, and the first emission of the reformed type of 79/698 do not give the mint name. Ilisch has inferred that ‘Abd al-Malik had intended to concentrate all the minting of silver in Damascus, as he did with the minting of gold coins, according to the Byzantine model of coin production; the mint name on the coin thus would have appeared to be unnecessary. Concerning the silver coinage, however, this centralization failed due to the significant differences to the fiscal and monetary organization of Iran.<sup>76</sup>



Fig. 25. Anonymous, titles *amīr al-mu‘minīn* and *khalīfat Allāh*, *drahm*, without mint (Damascus), without date (ca. 75–79/694–698); Baldwin’s, *Auction 26* (2001), no. 1569.

The depiction of a ruler on both sides may not have been a satisfactory design, as Treadwell has suggested. The solution to this problem was probably a new coin type with the caliph’s half bust and the arch. It does not entirely deviate from the accepted Sasanian appearance of *drahms*, but nevertheless created an ideologically more consistent design (fig. 25). It was also anonymous, but with imperial titles, though it had neither mint name nor date. Presumably, it was struck in Damascus between 75/694–5 and 79/697–8. Instead of the con-

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nounced criticism in *Succession*, 46, fn. 51, of Crone’s and Hind’s position should also be questioned. Along with the Sunnī theology, he supposes that Abū Bakr (r. 11–13/632–634) had adopted the more modest title “deputy of the messenger of God” (*khalīfat rasūl Allāh*) which was supposedly altered by the Umayyads to the ambitious title of “deputy of God.” For the title *khalīfat rasūl Allāh*, however, there is no contemporary evidence. Taking into account that the title *khālīfat Allāh* came second to that of the “commander of the believers,” and that the title *khalīfa* is for the first time attested on contemporary documents—coins—of ‘Abd al-Malik, the earlier existence of either *khalīfa* title should be questioned. If *khālīfat Allāh* was used before ‘Abd al-Malik at all, then probably more as an honorific than as a title for the office. See as well above fn. 46, 52.

<sup>76</sup> Ilisch, “Muhammad-Drachms,” 23.

ventional portrait of the *shāhānshāh*, a new half length portrait was created, with a globe on top of the headgear or cap. It was close to Sasanian iconography, yet distinctive. The figure's hand firmly holds the hilt of his broad sheathed sword similar to the "standing caliph" type. This newly created image can be understood as the representation of the caliph. The name "Khusrū", placed again in front of the portrait, has been reduced to a meaningless part of a conventional coin design. The margin carries the *shahāda* and the reference to Muhammad that had become the norm by now. The reverse shows an arch on columns with capitals. On either side of the arch are the imperial titles, as on the standing caliph *drahm*. The arch covers a lance or spear, and on either side is the inscription *naṣr Allāh* ("the victory of God") or *naṣara Allāh* ("may God give assistance"). Treadwell has discarded the earlier interpretation of the arch as prayer-niche, *mihrāb*, on art-historical reasons. Instead, he has looked for parallels in late Roman iconography, where in some cases the arch serves as a symbol of the Temple that is occasionally occupied by a menorah, while in other cases it is the *sacrum* covering the Holy Cross of Golgatha that was also in Jerusalem. Despite these far-reaching interpretations of specific buildings, the framing arch was mainly part of a late Roman convention to frame any image, here a lance, which is, according to the inscription, a symbol of victory.<sup>77</sup>

The iconographic significance of the "bar/globe on a pole on steps" and its variations are no longer known. The different representations must be considered as a group, but they lack an unambiguous counterpart in the growing corpus of early Islamic imagery. Various interpretations have been suggested, but none is entirely satisfactory because of the lack of parallel sources in literature and iconography. In 1952 George C. Miles saw it as a *qaḍīb*, a ceremonial staff or rod of the Prophet, which had become an item of the royal insignia of the Umayyad caliphs. None of the surviving images of caliphs, however, shows a staff.<sup>78</sup> Alternatively, in 1999 Nadia Jamil has inter-

<sup>77</sup> For this type see Treadwell, "The 'Orans' Drachms," and Treadwell, "Mihrāb and 'Anaza." Treadwell has convincingly argued against earlier interpretations as *Mihrāb* and *'Anaza*, the lance of the Prophet, and especially against the influential opinion of George C. Miles in "Mihrāb and 'Anazah." As a further argument against Miles's interpretation, one may add that the *'anaza* was a gift to the Prophet by az-Zubayr, the father of 'Abdallāh b. az-Zubayr, the opponent of the Marwānids. See Miles, "'Anaza," in *EP*, vol. 1, 482.

<sup>78</sup> Miles, "Mihrāb and 'Anazah," 165; Miles, "The Iconography of Umayyad Coinage"; Hoyland, "Writing," 601, fn. 67, repeats this interpretation without adding new evidence.

preted the symbol as the *qutb* or *omphalos*, the linchpin of the world, a parallel to the cross of Golgatha that is seen on the Byzantine gold *nomismas* (fig. 1), and which also signified the center of the world. This would point to Jerusalem, the center of the imperial religious cult. She supported her hypothesis with evidence from early Arab poetry stressing the importance of the *qutb* in the early world view. According to Nadia Jamil, the rotation of the world might be visually expressed in the ellipse on the copper coins (figs. 22 and 23). Her suggestion of a foreshortened representation of circular movement, though, raises serious doubts.<sup>79</sup>



Fig. 26. The Bab al-‘Amūd in Jerusalem on the Madaba map; photograph by David Bjorgen (2005) in *Wikipedia*, “Madaba” (Dec. 2007).

Hanswulf Bloedhorn has suggested another plausible interpretation.<sup>80</sup> On the famous mosaic map of Jerusalem in Madaba (sixth century CE),<sup>81</sup> a monumental Roman column is depicted as a pole on steps with something on top (capital, globe?) standing on the plaza in front

<sup>79</sup> Miles, “Mihrāb and ‘Anazah”; Jamil, “Caliph and Qutb.”

<sup>80</sup> I owe gratefully the initial idea to Hanswulf Bloedhorn, the further argumentation is mine; e-mail, dated to March 3, 2007.

<sup>81</sup> On the recent discussion of the dating of the mosaics see Arnould, *Les arcs romaines*, 251.



of the northern gate of the city, today the Damascus Gate (fig. 26). In the early Islamic period this column was still a landmark. Al-Muqaddasī (d. 381/991)<sup>82</sup> and other writers knew the nearby gate as that of the “column,” as Bāb al-‘Amūd.<sup>83</sup> Such monolithic columns symbolized urban and civic pride and were a common feature in late Roman and even Umayyad cities, and therefore understandable even without a specific allusion to Jerusalem.<sup>84</sup> In this interpretation, the pellet on the top of the pole on the coins might represent a globe without cross, and the bar might stand for an empty platform or capital. The urban column would then be a non-religious symbol, and it would be close enough to the Byzantine Christian “cross on steps” in order to serve as recognizable mark of value.



Fig. 27. Anonymous, *triens/thulth*, Africa (Qairawān), without date (ca. 90–93/708–711), with a corrupt Latin version of the *basmala*<sup>85</sup> and of the *shahāda*; Oriental Coin Cabinet Jena inv. no. 305-B02 (1.37g; ex coll. F. Soret).<sup>86</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan*, 167.

<sup>83</sup> ‘Amūd is a singular form (*fa‘ūl*) and not a plural, as is sometimes supposed.

<sup>84</sup> Baumann, “Spätantikes Säulenmonument,” attempts to show that the column on the Madaba map of Jerusalem serves as a mere *topos* in the depiction of late Roman cities in the Middle East. Yet the rich material presented by him makes the opposite conclusion likely, namely, that such a column in Jerusalem did indeed exist, although the final archeological proof is still missing. For information on the Damascus Gate in general with an extensive bibliography, see Biederstein/Bloedhorn, *Jerusalem*, vol. 2, 271–275; Wightman, *Damascus Gate*, esp. p. 103. C. Arnould, *Les arcs romaines*, esp. p. 151, “Remarques,” and “La porte de Damas,” esp. p. 109, stresses the monumentality and emblematic character of the Roman gate in Jerusalem, but considers the existence of the column hypothetical. A similar column is visible on the mosaics in the Lion church and in St. Stephen’s church in Umm al-Rasas in Jordan. In these mosaics, too, the column is shown at the intra-mural side of the gate of Kastron Mephaa (present day Umm al-Rasas). In the center of the forum of Jerash a column may have stood as well; the base was about 2×2 m; see Harding, “Recent Work on the Jerash Forum,” 14. Although Harding thought it could only support a statue, Alan Walmsley leaves this undecided at present. I am grateful to A. Walmsley for his comment on the matter.

<sup>85</sup> *In nomine Domini misericordis* [...].

<sup>86</sup> Balaguer, *Émisiones transicionales*, 80, 150, nos. 63–64. Album/Goodwin, *Sylloge*, no. 740. The full Latin *shahāda* reads: *Non est Deus nisi Deus est similis*.

This function of the symbol is apparent on North African gold coins.<sup>87</sup> On earlier Byzantine gold coins, not only in North Africa, the differences in the design of the cross distinguish different denominations.<sup>88</sup> The sign of the Byzantine *nomisma* was the “cross potent on steps.” This was altered in North Africa to a “bar or pole on steps.” The sign for the Byzantine *semmissis* was the “cross standing on a globe”; this was continued as “globe on a pole on steps” on Islamic *semisses*. The globe, or pellet, was even retained on the later epigraphic half *dīnār* as a distinguishing mark.<sup>89</sup> The sign for the Byzantine *tremissis*, a cross potent, frequently within a wreath or circular inscription, was transformed into the early Islamic “bar on a pole on steps” marking the value of an Islamic *tremissis* or *thulth* (fig. 27).<sup>90</sup> The different appearances of the “bar/globe on a pole on steps” as, first and foremost, a mark of value is supported by its continuous use until the end of the first century Hijrī on local gold coinage of North Africa, even after the final symbolic expression of the empire on coins was established in 77–78/696–698.<sup>91</sup>

In Syria, the only gold coin struck was the *nomisma/dīnār*. A distinguishing mark for a denomination was not necessary, but one does observe a recognizable design that connects the *dīnār* with the previous Byzantine *nomisma*. The “steps” of the cross potent were the most distinct design element of the reverse of the *nomisma*. In the period of Mu‘āwīya the “bar on a pole on steps” had probably appeared for the first time (fig. 7); but without any parallel inscription or related symbol, it is not possible to interpret it as anything more than a de-Christianized or de-Byzantinized object on “steps.” As political and religious symbols, the cross and the fire altar were different. The cross was not only a political symbol of the power of the rival emperor, but also an object of worship like the icon of Christ, so it was seen as idolatry from the Islamic vantage point.<sup>92</sup> On early Islamic *drahms* the fire altar was never altered, probably because it never became a symbol of Sasanian power in the same way as the cross, and it remained a mere ritual object. The de-Christianized or de-Byzantinized cross on steps became

<sup>87</sup> The last Byzantine gold coin in Carthage was struck in 695–6; see Bates, “North Africa,” 10.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Hahn, *Moneta imperii*, vol. 3.

<sup>89</sup> Miles, *The Coinage of the Umayyads of Spain*, 116, no. 2b, pl. 1.

<sup>90</sup> Walker, *Catalogue*, vol. 2, xxxii, xl–xli, 64–78; Balaguer, *Émisiones transicionales*; Bates, “Coinage of Spain,” esp. pp. 272–273, 282.

<sup>91</sup> I owe much of this argument to a discussion with Hans-Christoph Noeske.

<sup>92</sup> Griffith, “Images.”

a conservative symbol for the value of the coin, like the *shāhānshāh* or the image of the emperor. The “*phi*-shaped symbol on steps” should be considered as a mere mark of value for the copper coins, too, replacing the Greek **M** or **m**. It might thus simply be regarded as being a Greek *phi* for *folis*, as John Walker has alluded.<sup>93</sup> Whatever the original symbolic meaning of these images might have been, it was obviously secondary to their function as marks of value, and it fell into oblivion after ‘Abd al-Malik’s reforms. The lance and the “globe/bar on a pole on steps,” or column, should hence be viewed as non-ven-erated objects of pride, power, and victory, and as a substitute for the symbols of the other religions.

*Developments in the Basra and Kufa Prefectures*



Fig. 28. Bishr b. Marwān, *drahm*, mint ‘KWL’ (Aqūlā), year 73 H (692–3 CE), coll. Azizbeglou from Treadwell, “The ‘Orans’ Drachms,” 262, no. A3.

In the Basra and Kufa prefectures and in the northern provinces, different designs were chosen; most important is the iconography developed in Kufa that is probably related to that in Damascus. Between 73/692–3 and 75/694–5, Bishr b. Marwān, the caliph’s brother and governor of the Kufa prefecture, struck coins in Aqūlā, and in 75/694–5, he minted coins also in Basra. In 73/692 he started a series of coins comparable to those of Damascus struck in the same year; that is, they were anonymous, still with the bust of the *shāhānshāh* and the fire altar, and with reference to Muhammad and the profession of faith in the obverse margin. Later in the same year, though, he changed the design. The fire altar with its two attendants was replaced by a praying figure, a *khaṭīb*, with an attendant on either

<sup>93</sup> Walker, *Catalogue*, vol. 1, xxiii.

side, and with the invocations in the obverse margin (fig. 28) as before. Luke Treadwell has proved that the image records an act of devotion. Surprisingly, in the following years, 74 and 75 H, the marginal invocations were shortened to a mere reference to Muhammad as the messenger of God, obviously the most important part of the Islamic legend. During the years 65–75/684–695, the gesture of raising the hands (*raf al-yadayn*) in prayer was controversial among the Muslims. Treadwell has shown that the Zubayrid governor of Basra had presumably set a precedent with this gesture which his Marwānid successor then mimicked. He concludes that the *khaṭīb* “was intended to be read as visual extension of the *shahāda* of the obverse.” The praying *khaṭīb* and his audience, the two attendants, is the first early Islamic image on coins. The name Bishr b. Marwān, placed directly under the *khaṭīb*, presumably only on the first emission, might suggest that the figure was originally intended to represent the governor. The naming of the figure was abandoned in 73/692–3, obviously in line with the anonymous Syrian precious metal coinage.<sup>94</sup>

In the years 73/692–3 to 75/694–5, Khālid b. ‘Abdallāh, the Marwānid governor of the Basra-prefecture, placed the Arabic phrase *Muḥammad rasūl Allāh* on his Sasanian style coins in the mints of Basra and Bishāpūr.<sup>95</sup> Bishr b. Marwān also struck briefly in Basra in 75/694–5 (see above). His successor al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf continued to include *Muḥammad rasūl Allāh*, but added the *shahāda* on his coins of Bishāpūr from 76/695–6 to 79/698–9.<sup>96</sup> At the same time, also in the Umayyad northern provinces, presumably in Azerbaijan, undated *drahms* were minted based on the Hormizd IV–type with the invocation of the unity of God and the messengership of Muhammad in Arabic.<sup>97</sup>

To sum up, the Marwānids finally took over as the essential symbols of Islam on coins the Zubayrid invocation of Muhammad as mes-

<sup>94</sup> Treadwell, “The ‘Orans’ Drachms,” 263.

<sup>95</sup> Album/Goodwin, *Sylloge*, 32, nos. 106, 191, 192. Crone/Hinds, *God’s Caliph*, 25, and later Hoyland, in *Seeing Islam*, 695, have accepted Walker’s (*Catalogue*, vol. 1, 108, no. 213) reading of 71 H, which should however be corrected to 73 H.

<sup>96</sup> Album/Goodwin, *Sylloge*, nos. 214–225.

<sup>97</sup> Sears, “Transitional Drahms,” 80–86, 100–101 (4 coins known to Sears). On the left side of the fire altar the coins bear the expression *zwwn*, meaning “silver” *drachm*. They continue the series of coins without the *shahāda* (see above, fn. 49). In 73/692–3 or 74/693–4, Maslama b. ‘Abd al-Malik conquered Azerbaijan. These coins might have been struck between 73/692–3 and 78–79/697–9. Sears, however, considers a shorter span of time, until 75/694–5.

senger of God and the Arabic *shahāda*. The phase of Marwānid experimentation between 72/691–2 and 77/696–7 shows the growing uneasiness with conventional coin designs alternating between necessary conservatism and ideologically driven innovation. Many of the iconographic symbols can be seen as non-Christian or non-Zoroastrian. Some of them, such as the lance for God's victory and the *khaṭīb*, might have a plausible Islamic meaning, and the standing caliph or his half portrait is unambiguously the representation of the empire, though precious metal coins remained anonymous. The other symbols are primarily marks of value, and any secondary meaning remains speculative. As far as the present state of research is concerned, none of the other objects—i.e., the arch or the column, if the latter is interpreted correctly—can be convincingly established as a religious Islamic symbol.

*The Profession of Faith as the Symbol of Religion, and the Word of God as the Symbol of Universal Empire*



Fig. 29. Anonymous, *dīnār*, without mint (Damascus), year 93 H (711–2 CE), Oriental Coin Cabinet Jena inv. no. 306-A02 (4.23 g).

Between late 77/696 and 79/699, the definitive symbolic representation of Islam and the Islamic empire was introduced on coinage. This occurred immediately after the victory over the Khārijite caliph Qaṭarī b. al-Fujā'a, and must be seen as a response to legitimize Marwānid rule in the entire empire with Islamic propaganda common to all Muslim factions. This reform was not organized at a district or provincial level, but centrally, by the caliph in Damascus, in close cooperation with al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf, the supreme governor of the former

Sasanian east. In 77/696, new *dīnārs* were produced (fig. 29), probably in Damascus, at 4.25 g slightly lighter than the Byzantine *nomisma*. They bear the new religious symbols of Islam and its empire, the *shahāda*, encircled by the Qur'anic *risāla*, the prophetic mission of Muhammad (a shortened version of Qur'an 9:33), and on the opposite side the word of God, the beginning of *Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ* (a shortened variation of surah 112), surrounded by the date of the striking.



Fig. 30. Anonymous, *dirham*, al-Kūfa, year 79 H (698–9 CE), Oriental Coin Cabinet Jena inv. no. 305-H10 (2.87 g; ex coll. Waidhas, Berlin 1856).

Late in the year 78/697–8, al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf, the governor of the East, ordered the reform of the *dirhams* in his realm. The new coins weighed about 2.8 g to 2.9 g with slight regional differences. The new design was very similar to that of the new *dīnārs*, but in addition carried the mint name, as was the practice on Sasanian-style *drahms*. As far as we can currently tell, the reform began in Kufa,<sup>98</sup> Azerbaijan,<sup>99</sup> Armenia,<sup>100</sup> Jayy,<sup>101</sup> and Shaqq at-Taymara<sup>102</sup> in the Jibāl. The following year saw the adoption of the new design by more than forty mints all over the east (fig. 30), many of them in the former regions of Khārijite dominance, and in the imperial capital Damascus.<sup>103</sup>

Until the time of the Abbasid caliph al-Manṣūr (r. 136–58/754–775), precious metal coins remained anonymous. Not only the name

<sup>98</sup> Sotheby's, Auction May 27, 1999, no. 132; Klat, *Catalogue*, 202, no. 539.

<sup>99</sup> Broome, "Rare Umayyad Dirham of Adharbaijan"; Sotheby's, Auction November 16–17, 2000, no. 7; Klat, *Catalogue*, 36, no. 23b.

<sup>100</sup> Naqshabandi/Bakrī, *Ad-Dirham al-umawī*, 29–30, 46, 145 (no. 14472 *mīm-sīn*); Klat, *Catalogue*, 43, no. 45.

<sup>101</sup> Peus, *Katalog* 369, no. 1467.

<sup>102</sup> ANS collection inv. no. 1971.316.1273; Islamic Coin Auctions 13 (2007), no. 15. Ilisch, in Peus, *Katalog* 369, 80–81, discusses at length the sequence of dirham issues of the year 78 H. The "al-Baṣra 78" specimen from the Subhi Bey collection is indeed dated to 79 H, as stated by Mordtmann and proven with an illustration, see Subhi Bey/Mordtmann, "Les commencements."

<sup>103</sup> Klat, *Catalogue*.

of the ruler but also his image were removed from any representation of the empire on precious metal coins. This constituted a historically unprecedented breach with Hellenistic coin imagery going back about a millennium in the Roman west and the Iranian east. The Hellenistic tradition, which placed the image of the ruler on one side, was irrevocably abandoned, and thus something new came into being.<sup>104</sup> The change was prepared during the Zubayrid and Khārijite wars by the almost complete separation of the meaningless images, serving as mere marks of value, and the Arabic inscriptions carrying ideological messages.

On the silver coins, the ruler's side bears the word of God, a variation of the complete *Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ*, surrounded by the *risāla*, a variation of Qur'an 9:33, both representing the sovereignty of God and constituting almost a concession to Khārijite thinking. The *shahāda* is found on the opposite side. On coins in the Hellenistic tradition, this is the side used for religious symbols. The aniconism of the precious metal coins for circulation is the result of the new "iconic" symbols: the Qur'anic Word of God as an expression of sovereignty, and the profession of faith as an expression of the religion. The now meaningless iconographic designs were abandoned. Anonymity did not mean modesty, because the new Islamic universal emperor claimed to be nothing less than *khalīfat Allāh*, "the deputy of God."<sup>105</sup> This presupposes an entirely new understanding of the role of the Islamic empire and its religion.

*Summary of the History of Early Islamic Coinage and the  
Representation of Empire and Religion*

Early Islamic coin iconography reveals the search for an identity of the Arab-Islamic state that finally lead to a suitable formula to represent the new, all-embracing Islamic universal empire in its own ideological right. Until the period of the Zubayrid and Khārijite wars, almost no distinct imperial representation on coins can be discerned,

<sup>104</sup> For the art-historical aspects of these innovative Qur'anic legends, see Hillenbrand, "For God, Empire and Mammon." He also sees epigraphic seals of the Sasanians as models for the design, though this is much more the case with the Zubayrid Pahlawī *shahāda*-dirham, see above fn. 60.

<sup>105</sup> By contrast, Hillenbrand, "For God, Empire and Mammon," 26, views the epigraphic coinage as a consequence of the ruler's modesty—a modesty that we know did not exist.

neither in the former Byzantine and Sasanian territories nor in previously Germanic lands. In the early seventh century, in the Byzantine and the Sasanian empires alike, coin designs were conservative and standardized in orders to serve primarily as marks of value, rather than as bearers of meaning.

In the first phase, until the late 650s, the Byzantine empire still exported copper coins into its former provinces in large quantities. Controlled local imitations of Byzantine coppers met the excess demand. Repeated attempts to conquer Constantinople can be interpreted as indicating the new Arab-Islamic elite's wish to inherit the Roman claim of universal rulership. From about the late 650s until the uprising of 'Abdallāh b. az-Zubayr, the Second *Fitna*, minting was gradually regulated at the level of the provinces and districts. In the Syria and northern Mesopotamia, mint names and words in Greek and Arabic were added to validate coins in circulation. The image of a Byzantine emperor with cross insignia was still used for these coins.

In the former Sasanian territories, there was almost no disruption in the administration of coin production. The anachronistic images of the *shāhānshāhs*, and the symbol of Zoroastrianism, the fire altar, remained the standard design until the reign of 'Abd al-Malik. Gradually, validating expressions in Arabic and the names of governors were added, and the dating of coins switched from the obsolete Yazdgard era to the new Hijrī dating. Since 47/667–8 some governors in the provinces affirmed their rule with a general reference to God. But there was no attempt by the “commander of the believers” to claim the universal rule asserted by Sasanians. This was left to the Abbasids.

The most serious political, military, and ideological challenge to the Umayyad regime was the Second *Fitna*, the caliphate of 'Abdallāh b. az-Zubayr between 62/681–2 and 73/692 and the even more aggressive Khārijite movement between 68/687 and 78/697. For the first time in 66/685–6, Zubayrid governors, as a manifestation of the new Islamic imperial self-consciousness, put on coins the invocation of the messengership of Muhammad, and then—presumably in 70/689–90—extended it by the profession of the unity of God. In 72/691–2, one Zubayrid governor in the remote province of Sijistān even replaced the fire altar of Zoroastrianism with these invocations in the Persian language and written in the Pahlawī script. These “iconic” written statements are indeed the first symbols of Islam, and



comparable to the cross, fire altar, and menorah. The Khārijite leaders, too, placed distinctive religious slogans on their coins challenging the claim of the Umayyads to rule, with the expression that there is only guidance by God. The Khārijite beliefs, though, were not at all a common denominator among all Muslims.

The reform attempts of ‘Abd al-Malik and al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf can be seen as a reply to these challenges, in an attempt to integrate the Zubayrid movement and to face the ideological Khārijite menace. In Jerusalem, the Dome of the Rock became the visual center of the new imperial Islamic cult. In the period between 72/691 and 77–78/694–698, the various attempts to find images to represent both religion and empire on the coins show the growing awareness of the need for such symbols as well as the difficulties in finding suitable expressions. The *shahāda* and the reference to Muhammad as the messenger of God became standard. Many of these iconographic symbols are still not well understood, though probably they served primarily as a standard mark of value. Luke Treadwell explained that “the new Muslim iconography was secondary to its inscriptional program.”<sup>106</sup>

After the suppression of the Khārijites in the years 77–78/696–8, the coin design was radically changed. Precious metal coinage finally became anonymous as it had been in Syria before; iconographic representations were abandoned. This coin design constituted a historically unprecedented breach with the Hellenistic tradition of coin imagery. The Islamic empire had finally found its distinctive symbolic form of representation: the bare “iconic” Word of God, surah 112 of the Qur’an, representing the sovereignty of the new universal empire, along with the statement of Muhammad’s prophetic mission in Qur’an 9:33; and the profession of faith, the *shahāda*, which symbolizes the new distinct religion.

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<sup>106</sup> Treadwell, “The ‘Orans’ Drachms,” 260.

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