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Review of

ADNAN DJAROUEH

Mausūʿat al-ʿumlāt al-waraqīyya al-sūriyya / Encyclopedia of Syrian Paper Money.
Beirut: Dar al-Mourad 2005; ISBN 9953-406-13-8

by
Stefan Heidemann

volume of the excavation "Raqqa II - Die Islamische Stadt", edited by him and Andrea Becker.

Heidemann used the coin finds from al-Raqqa as a source for studying the circulation of small change and as a paradigm for the economic development of the region and the city. Among other achievements, the immobilised imitations of the imported copper coin type from al-Kufa, southern Iraq, were classified for the first time. They are frequent in Syria and northern Mesopotamia. Heidemann brought them into a sequence and possible mints were suggested. Also the coins struck in the metropolis itself bear rich inscriptions and shed new light on the political history of the capital of the Islamic empire. The different types of sources, literary works, coins and archaeological results were combined to reconstruct paradigmatically the economic and political development of the Abbasid metropolis.

S. Heidemann - A. Becker (edd.): Raqqa II - Die islamische Stadt, Mainz (Philipp von Zabern) 2003. ISBN 3-8053-3153-3. Euro 68,50.



Copper fals, hybrid; obverse: al-Raqqa, 181/797-8; reverse: immobilised type of al-Kufa. (OMJ photo-no. SB2541). This coin points to al-Raqqa as one of the mints of the copper coins of the Kufa-type.

Klaus Weber, Ebersberg, Germany, has donated his entire metallurgical documentation on Byzantine scyphates to the Oriental Coin Cabinet Jena, where it is now available for future research. In his recent publication, he explored the relationship between metal composition and mint technique (see ONS NL 176 [2003], p. 2-3).

K. Weber: Erkenntnisse zur Herstellung byzantinischer Elektrum-Skyphaten. In: Jahrbuch für Numismatik und Geldgeschichte 53-54 (2003-2004), p. 25-71.

The Royal Numismatic Society has awarded the Samir-Shamma-Prize 2005 for Islamic numismatics to Stefan Heidemann, Jena University, for his outstanding studies on history, coin circulation and coinage of al-Raqqa at the Euphrates in the period of the residence of the caliph Harun al-Rashid (reigned 786-809).

The prize was established in 1992 by the great benefactor of Islamic numismatics, the late Samir Shamma, and is awarded by the Royal Numismatic Society every two years for the best contribution to Islamic Numismatics.

Since 1989 Stefan Heidemann has been collaborating as historian and field numismatist with the mission of the German Archaeological Institute (DAI) and the Syrian Antiquity Authority in al-Raqqa, Syria. His research interest lies in the relation between urban development and economic conditions in pre-modern societies. Between 1982 and 1994 the DAI under the direction of Michael Meinecke explored the palace area, occupied by the court of Harun al-Rashid. Known as the Caliph of Baghdad in the Arabian Nights, the historical person spent most of his reign in al-Raqqa. The palace district alone covers ten square kilometers. From here, the Abbasid empire - stretching from North Africa to Central Asia - was governed. Heidemann's award-winning studies were published in 2003, in the final publication

Reviews

ADNAN DJAROUEH, *Mausū'at al-'umlāt al-waraqīyya al-sūriyya / Encyclopedia of Syrian Paper Money*, 594 pages, numerous colour illustrations, size 28 x 32 x 4 cm. Beirut: Dar al-Mourad 2005; ISBN 9953-406-13-8; hardcover in linen slipcase, private distribution. Arabic with English foreword and preface.

For information about the project and the availability of the book: <http://www.syrianpapermoney.com>.

Reviewed by Stefan Heidemann

The *Encyclopedia of Syrian Paper Money* offers for the first time a comprehensive collection of information and material on the topic starting from the dissolution of the Ottoman empire to the present day. Significant for the state of preservation of recent Arab heritage may be an anecdote told by the author. In 1997 he was asked about his knowledge of paper money in Syria. He replied it would be a matter of a few days to know everything about it. At that point he did not realise that an eight-year long research had begun. Not even the Syrian Central Bank owns a complete run of every issue.

His efforts resulted in a search for surviving examples and a scrupulous research into the legal framework, the issues, the signatures, the artists and the motifs used. He succeeded in locating an example of almost every issue, but despite all of his

efforts, a few lacunae remain. But despite this, he provides a complete listing. Moreover, this enterprise demonstrates, on the one hand, how necessary such an encyclopaedia is for the preservation of national culture, and, on the other hand, how diligent the author has been. He opens the book with a quotation by the innovative German central banker Hjalmar Schacht (1877-1970), who after WWII advised the Syrian government: "The understanding of the money fuses with the understanding of the nation".

After some initial sections, the author presents an informative historical introduction to the different money-issuing authorities in Syria from the end of the Ottoman empire to the present day (p. 35-56). The first attempt at a paper currency in the Ottoman empire goes back to the year 1840. After WWI with the British and French occupation forces, Ottoman banknotes ceased to be acceptable. The British made Egyptian banknotes legal tender in Syria. While in Damascus the Syrian National Congress, which later proclaimed Faisal ibn Husain as king, was still debating, the French Banque de Syrie in Beirut began to issue the first banknotes for Greater Syria in August 1919 (ill. 1).



25 Piasters from the first issue of August 1919 issued by the 'Banque de Syrie' in Beirut and printed in London while the Syrian National Congress was meeting in Damascus (SY3).

This was established by an agreement between the Ottoman Bank in Constantinople and the French ministry of finance. In March 1920 these notes became legal tender in Syria by an order of the French high commissioner in Beirut. Twenty French francs equalled one 'lira suriyya / livre syrienne'. However it was not until July 1920 that French troops entered Damascus. In 1922 the 'League of Nations' legitimised the French mandate in Syria. In 1924 the 'Banque de Syrie et du Grand Liban' was established, issuing a new 'lira / livre' which remained fixed at the same rate. This pound was legal tender in the 'Federation of Syrian States', the Druze State and Greater Lebanon. The respective issues for Lebanon and Syria for general circulation were only distinguished by the imprints "Syrie" or "Liban". Syria and Lebanon were in monetary terms almost a province of France. At the end of the 1930s a succession of agreements gradually led to the monetary independence of Syria and Lebanon. In 1941, during WWII, French Syria changed to the Sterling-block. In 1946 Syria gained its political but still not its monetary independence. Between 1947 and 1950 Syria and Lebanon put forward different points of view for the future of their monetary systems. Syria separated from the French monetary authority. From 1947 the banknotes were again issued as "lira suriyya / livre syrienne". In 1950 the 'Institut d'Emission de Syrie' was founded, issuing its first paper money in 1953. In 1956 it became the 'Masraf suriyya al-markazi / Banque Centrale de Syrie'. From 1958 the foreign language on the notes changed to English. The political environment remained turbulent - only to mention the unification between Syria and Egypt between 1958 and 1961 - until the "correction movement" of Hafiz al-Asad in 1970. However, the Central Bank remained stable and independent from 1956 onwards.

The first chapter (p. 60-113) gives references to the creation of the design of Syrian paper money and the various legal and security features. This is supplemented by a chronological list of

major events in Syrian history since the end of the Egyptian occupation in 1839, a table of signatures and the identification of the signatories. A list of decrees, laws and regulations concerning every issue is added. The selection of early trial pieces is impressive for its design studies in watercolour by the initial artists. Specimen prints follow. Most interesting is the section on the system of security numbers and letters on the issues between 1925 and 1949.

The substantial catalogue of 200 issues covers more than 400 pages of the second chapter (p. 117-541). Every note of every issue and with all validating secondary imprints are described and illustrated actual size. The advanced printing technology of this book allows readers to study even minute details with a 10 x magnifier. The explanatory text covers technical data, names found on the notes, size of the issue so far known, and a description of every design and illustration. In a few cases where the author was not able to obtain any existing examples of an exceedingly rare issue, he made use of an illustration of a similar issue. This is tacitly indicated by the fact that only the reverse of an issue is illustrated and stated in the index (ill. reverse Sy12=?; Sy15=Sy4; Sy19=Sy9; Sy20=Sy10; Sy31=Sy25; Sy38=Sy33=Sy27; Sy39=Sy34=Sy28). How rare some issues are today becomes clear by the illustration of some worn and restored pieces (cp. Sy46). The denomination is invariably given as 'lira suriyya / livre syrienne' in the description, although the denomination changed over time. With the establishment of the 'Banque du Syrie et du Grand-Liban' in 1925 the name was shortened to 'lira / livre' (Sy22). The 'Banque du Syrie et du Liban' continued this name until independence. In 1947 the currency was renamed 'lira suriyya / livre syrienne' (Sy106).

The banknotes of Syria are not only documents of the country's changing monetary institutions; the images on the banknotes also bear witness to the architectural heritage and natural beauty of Greater Syria. Since the establishment of the "Institut d'Emission" in 1950 the motives have been restricted to those of the Republic of Syria. The traditional major monuments of Syria were illustrated first, the citadel of Aleppo, the Tekkiyye al-Sulaimaniyye and the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus as well as the colonnade of Palmyra. From 1958, the year of Egypt's unification with Syria, industrial workers and farmers were placed on the banknotes. The designs also began to depict all periods of Syrian history, thereby testifying to the continuing success of archaeological exploration and the growing awareness of the country's historical past, like the golden disc and the first cuneiform alphabet discovered in Ugarit (Sy141, 1958) and the restoration of the facade of an Umayyad castle at the National Museum in Damascus (Sy147, 1966). After a regime change in 1966, new motifs highlight the achievements in the development of industry and agriculture, like the harbour of Lattakia and the dam of Rastan near Homs (Sy148). With the new series of 1997 and 1998 the focus was put on recent cultural achievements, likewise the newly founded National Library, the 'Maktabat al-Asad' or the new Saladin monument in Damascus. The last and third chapter (p. 545-585) of the book explores watermarks and security features added to the national currency in 1997. The book concludes with indices of dates, denominations and motives as well as with a bibliography.

This magnificently printed volume is made to please the eye and at the same time provide a wealth of information not found elsewhere. Summarising, Adnan G. Djaroueh meticulously explores and illuminates an important material and visual source for the economic history and culture of Syria. The book surpasses all previous attempts to collect these documents of modern monetary history of Syria ('Attār 1988 and al-Shihābī 2000) and for paper money in its historical depth of those of any other Arab state. It is distinctive by its systematic, scholarly approach. It should be emphasised that it was written and produced not by a Syrian institution but by a private person devoted to the study of the nation's heritage.

Literature mentioned:

‘Attār, ‘Abd al-Rahmān (1988), *Qissat al-nuqūd wal-masārif fī Sūriyya 1880–1980 m*, Damascus.

al-Shihābī, Qutaiba (2000), *Nuqūd al-Shām. Dirāsa tārikhiyya lil-‘umlāt allatī kānat mutadāwila fī l-Shm*, Damascus, esp. p. 171-261.
