A NEW RULER OF THE MARWĀNID EMIRATE IN 401/1010 – AND FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS ON THE LEGITIMIZING POWER OF REGICIDE

STEFAN HEIDEMANN¹
In memory of Ulrich Haarmann

1. INTRODUCTION

Using the basis of a coin document, a new ruler of the Marwānid emirate can be identified and thus added to the list of rulers given by C.E. Bosworth in *New Islamic Dynasties*. The circumstances of his accession to the throne shed some new light on the application and spread of regicide as a principle for legitimizing the sovereign power of a ruler, as explored in an article by U. Haarmann in 1990.

2. THE DOCUMENT

A recently examined parcel of a Marwānid coin hoard served as the starting point for the following considerations. It probably originates from northern Mesopotamia. The parcel comprises 22 coins. Eighteen of them belong to the Marwānid dynasty, and the remaining four to the ’Uqailid. The terminal date of the hoard is the year 405/1014-5.²

One coin provides the name of a new ruler of the Marwānid emirate of Mayyāfārīqīn: Amīr Abū Shujāʾ Sharwīn ibn Muhammad, who succeeded in a rebellion during the year 401/1010. On the coin, Sharwīn acknowledges the Būyid ruler Bahāʾ al-Daula (397-403/989-1012) and the Sunnī ’Abbāsid caliph al-Qādir billāh (381-422/991-1031) as overlords, as did his Marwānid predecessor before him. A similar coin, probably of inferior condition, was known to Markov. He, however, read “Abū Shujāʾ Parwīz ibn Muhammad” without tying him to the context of the historical tradition.³ Zambaur accepted this at-

¹ I am particularly grateful to Werner Seibt, Vienna, and Tilman Seidensticker, Jena, for various comments and discussion as to the possibility of an Armenian, Kurdish or Persian origin for the usurper’s name, and to Sami el-Masri, who undertook the careful revision of the English draft.

² This homogeneous group was mixed with a lot of other miscellaneous, significantly earlier and later Islamic silver and copper coins which are now dispersed in trade. No Ḥamdānid or Būyid coins were associated with this group, although it should be taken into account that this group of Marwānid coins might be incomplete contemporary Boards. Cp. Lowick (1979), no. 232 (3924) and 232 (4064).

tribution in his *Généalogie* as well as S. Album. C.E. Bosworth rejected it and made no reference to it. He probably considered it a misattribution of a coin struck by the nearly contemporary Būyid ruler Abū Shujāʾ Sulṭān al-Daula (403-415/1012-1024).

9) Dirham, Mayyāfāriqīn, 401
Sharwīn ibn Muḥammad, Bahāʾ al-Daula, al-Qādir billāh

obv. in circle: 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic Text</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>اللَّهُ لاَ َرَبُّ يَعْلَى وَلَدَى</td>
<td>God, the Lord of Lords</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>صلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَلَدَى</td>
<td>Pray for him, the Lord of Lords</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>الامِيرِ أَبُو شجاع</td>
<td>The prince, Abu Shujāʾ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>سَمِّئُون بن مُحَمَّد</td>
<td>Son of Muhammad</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

rev. in double circle: 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic Text</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>اللَّهُ مَرْحَبُ</td>
<td>God, welcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>بَلَوَّةُ يَعْلَى وَلَدَى الدُّنْيَا</td>
<td>The overlord, the Lord of the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>الامِيرِ أَبُو شجاع</td>
<td>The prince, Abu Shujāʾ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>سَمِّئُون بن مُحَمَّد</td>
<td>Son of Muhammad</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

marginal legends: 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic Text</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>سَمِّئُون بن مُحَمَّد</td>
<td>Son of Muhammad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>بِسْمِ اللَّهِ رَحْمَةً وَلَنَيْنَى</td>
<td>In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(4.85g; 27mm; 2h).

3. THE IDENTITY OF SHARWĪN

The person on the coin is called *Abū Shujāʾ Sharwīn ibn Muḥammad*. Ibn al-Azraq in 'Awad’s edition calls the same person *Sh-r-w-i-th ibn M-m*. The name is also well attested in other contemporary Arabic sources. Sharwīn was the ḥājīb, chamberlain, of the Marwānid ruler Mumahhid al-Daula Abū Manṣūr Saʿīd (387-401/997-1011). Ibn al-Azraq calls the father *M-m*. He was a brave shaikh and the chamberlain of Abū 'Alī al-Ḥasan (380-387/990-997), the predecessor of Mumahhid al-Daula.

---

4 É. de Zambaur, 1927, p. 136.
The name of the usurper might hint at his ethnic origin. The Christian chronicler Elias of Naṣībīn confirms the name as Sharwīn in Syriac. Given Sharwīn as being the official form of the name, Sh-r-w-h is the grapheme of the Kurdish hypocoristic form Sharō(h). The name Sharwīn itself is well attested for Kurds.

The coin gives the official name of the father as Muḥammad. The name M-m, provided by Ibn al-Azraq, also has a Kurdish background. Mem is a Kurdish vernacular form used for Muḥammad. A later descendant of the Kurdish Marwānid dynasty is acknowledged as bearing the name M-m. Sharō(h) ibn Mem is the hypocoristic name by which the usurper was known among his contemporaries.

4. THE REBELLION OF SHAWIN IBN MUḤAMMAD

The story of the coup d’État by Sharwīn is given at length by Ibn al-Azraq and independently in brief by Elias of Naṣībīn. Ibn Shaddād and Ibn al-Aṭhir rely in their accounts on Ibn al-Azraq. Sharwīn was the omnipotent chamberlain of Mumahhid al-Daula, acting on his behalf. Sharwīn had supported him in a plot against his brother, Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥasan, in order to make him amīr of Mayyāfāriqin. The assassination of Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥasan took place in 387/997 in Āmid, and the actual regicide, Abū Tāhir Yusuf ibn Damna, later became the almost autonomous ruler of the city.

A military slave (ghulām) in the service of Sharwīn, Ibn Falyūs, successfully destroyed the intimate mutual confidence between the amīr, Mumahhid...
al-Daula, and his chamberlain, Sharwīn. Attempts by Sharwīn to poison the amīr failed. Finally, Sharwīn invited the amīr to his nearby stronghold, Ḥiṣn al-Hattākh. At al-Hattākh, Sharwīn finally succeeded in killing Mumahhid al-Daula with his sword after an extensive drinking bout. Ibn al-Azraq relates that it happened at the end of the year 400 or at the beginning of 401, which equates to a period around July 1010. Elias of Naṣibīn provides an exact date, but it does not fit into the trustworthy chronological frame provided by Ibn al-Azraq. According to Elias, the murder took place on Thursday night, Jumādā I, 5th (December 13th/14th, 1010). On the very same night, Sharwīn and Ibn Falyūs rode off to Mayyāfāriqīn, took the city by surprise and brought the Qasr Bani Hamdān, the administrative building of the city, as well as the treasures (al-khazā‘īn), into their possession. Sharwīn sent to the strongholds and cities of the realm of Mumahhid al-Daula in order to bring them under his sway. They all submitted to the “seal of the Amīr” (bi-khātim al-amīr), except for Khwāja Abu l-Qāsim, the Persian governor (wālī) of Arzan, and the brother of the victim, Abū Naṣr Ahmad,19 ruler of Si‘īr,20 who had to take refuge in Arzan. There he was proclaimed ruler by his parents. Abū Naṣr made the Kurdish tribes swear that they would follow him until Sharwīn was slain.

A first attack on Mayyāfāriqīn resulted in the defeat of Sharwīn and the plundering of the suburbs (rabaḍ), but not in the capture of the city itself. But they returned a second time with all their troops and followers. Sharwīn managed, however, to escape with coffers full of money and valuables to Āmid, where he had an ally in the former regicide Ibn Damna. After receiving lots of money, Ibn Damna acknowledged Sharwīn as overlord. But the presence of Sharwīn and Ibn Falyūs resulted in great disturbances within the city. The population was still alarmed because of the earlier assassination of Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥasan. Meanwhile, Abū Naṣr Aḥmad and Khwāja Abu l-Qāsim pursued Sharwīn, and laid siege to the city of Āmid. Negotiations about a surrender started in Tishrīn I 401 (October 1010/beg. șafar, 18th). The hardships of the winter forced Abū Naṣr to withdraw to Arzan in Tishrīn II (November/beg. Raḥīm I, 19th). But he left some men in order to blockade the city. In Shubāt 401 (February 1011/beg. Jumādā II, 20th) he resumed the siege. After a while the city surrendered and Sharwīn was handed over to Abū Naṣr. Ibn al-Azraq reports that Abū Naṣr entered the city in Dhu l-Hijja 401 (beg. July 6th, 1011). Although Abū Naṣr promised him safe-conduct (āmān), Sharwīn was finally strangled at al-Hattākh, and his corpse crucified.21

The possible period for executing the *sikka* in Mayyāfāriqīn was limited, according to Ibn al-Azraq, to the time from the end of 400 or beginning of 401 (about July-August 1010) up to Tishrīn I 401/October 1010. A coin of Mumahhid al-Daula from Mayyāfāriqīn with the minting date 401 narrows the possible timespan to the beginning of 401 (beg. August 15th). Sharwīn was in possession of the treasure of Mayyāfāriqīn, so that he had enough means to produce a coin bearing his name.

Abū Naṣr ibn Marwān, after gaining control over Mayyāfāriqīn, also started to mint coins in his own name. He received a *laqab*, Naṣr al-Daula, and an investiture diploma from the caliph as late as the 7th Dhu l-Ḥijja 403 (June 19th, 1013), as Ibn al-Azraq reports and the coins confirm.

5. REGICIDE AND SOVEREIGNTY

In an article in 1990, Ulrich Haarmann elucidates the principle of “Regicide and the Law of the Turks”: He who kills the king will be king himself. U. Haarmann starts with some examples from the early Mamlūk sultanate in Egypt, where the principle is mentioned as “*asat al-turk,*” the “law (or custom) of the Turks.” Then he goes back in time with his last example, the assassination of the Marwānid ruler Abū Ḥaṣan in 387/997. The principle of regicide was explicitly mentioned, but without a reference to signify it was a Turkoman principle. The person who killed the amīr was the aforementioned Ibn Damna. Although the principle was mentioned and Ibn Damna later became the real ruler of the city, he never went so far as to occupy the actual position of the murdered amīr, in theory – *kuṭba* and *sikka* – and in practice – ruler of Mayyāfāriqīn. Ibn al-Azraq states that Ibn Damna agreed to pay Mumahhid al-Daula an annual tribute, and to include his name in the *kuṭba* and *sikka*.

The coup d’État of Sharwīn seems to provide another example of the principle of regicide, although Ibn al-Azraq does not mention the principle as he does in the case of the murder of Abū Ḥaṣan. But the principle was well known among the protagonists, since some of them, like Sharwīn himself, had also taken part in the first plot. Sharwīn killed Mumahhid al-Daula with his

---

22 The *sikka* is the coin protocol, which serves in the medieval Islamic world as a proof of rulership beside the inclusion of the name of the ruler in the *kuṭba*, Friday prayer.
23 A. Markov, 1896, no. 19.
25 Cp. coin, no. 11 to no. 13.
26 H.F. Amedroz, 1903, p. 131. H. Busse, 1969, p. 171, no. 61, placed the investiture with the *laqab* in the year 401.
29 Cp. coin no. 1 and 10.
own hands. Ibn al-Azraq, however, presents as reason for the assassination the treachery of Ibn Falyūs, who made Sharwīn fearful of his own murder by Mumahhid al-Daula. Sharwīn in fact became amīr in place of the amīr. As far as the sources tell us, he had no family ties to the ruling house, nor is he mentioned as an important tribal leader. In fact, he had no other claim for his accession except that he was the regicide. The coin document shows that he actually usurped the title of amīr in the place of his victim and executed the formal proof of sovereignty: the sikka. And he used the “seal of the amīr” as further proof. This distinguishes him significantly from Ibn Damna. But his usurpation did not remain unchallenged. The population of Mayyāfāriqīn had to be intimidated before it showed obedience; the governor of Arzan, a Persian who originated from Isfahān, organized the suppression of the revolt; and the Marwānid family itself resisted Sharwīn.32

Ulrich Haarmann inquires whether Ibn Damna was a Kurd, Turcoman or Arab. With this query he raises the problem of why the regicide principle, known in the early Mamlūk period as “the law of the Turks,” was applied in Āmid, half a century before the first Turkoman tribes immigrated into Anatolia and northern Syria. He concludes: “One is tempted to suggest that we rather face a custom of nomadic tribesmen of the vast regions to the North (the Dasht-i Qipchaq, the homeland of the Bahri Mamluks) and to the South (Eastern Anatolia, Armenia and Adharbayjan, the Kurdish territories) of the Caucasus. (...) Direct connections between the two episodes [in Egypt and Āmid, S.H.] will, however, be as difficult to establish as it will be desirable to find a broader and more representative documentation on the “law of the Turks.””33

The case of Sharwīn is the second example of the application of the regicide principle within the Kurdish-Marwānid context. It confirms U. Haarmann’s suggestions that the case of Ibn Damna was not unique. The rule was much more common and not limited to the Turks alone. It was spread among non-Turkoman, nomadic groups such as the Kurds. But the resistance which Sharwīn met, however, points to an erosion of the legitimizing power among the Kurdish tribes and within the rest of the non-nomadic society in the Diyār Bakr, in favour of the dynastic principle.

6. SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF THE HOARD

The legend is only given in those cases where citations of literature are not sufficient. Apparently unpublished coins are marked with an asterisk. The usual formulas in the central legend of the obverse and reverse are abbreviated with ‘-’. The number of circles surrounding the central legend is given with ‘l’, only in those cases which differ from the usual pattern of one circle on the re-

32 Ibn al-Azraq, Tārīkh, pp. 91, 93.
verse and none on the obverse. In addition to the usual technical data of weight and diameter, the die-axis is given according to the clock-face (h).

**Marwānīds**

Mumahhid al-Daula Abū Mansūr Saʿīd (387-401/997-1010)

1. Āmid 401
   - 4.16g; 27mm; 11h. Markov 1896, p. 338, no. 20. Type of BMCO III, p. 26, no. 52.

2. Mayyāfāriqīn 393
   - 3.14g; 25mm; 8h. BMCO III, p. 26, no. 51 (393h.).

3* Mayyāfāriqīn 395
   - 3.00g; 23mm; 11h. Markov 1896, p. 337, no. 9. Type of BMCO III, p. 26, no. 51 (393h.).

4. Mayyāfāriqīn 396

5. Mayyafāriqīn 397(4?)
   - 4.49g; 27mm; 12h. BMCO III, p. 26, no. 52 (397h.). R. Vasmer, 1927, p. 16, no. 16 (397h.). N.D. Nicol – R. el-Nabarawy, – J.L. Bacharach, 1982, no. 3225 (394h.). See grapheme of mintplace, first alif is missing. The year 397 seems more probable because the grapheme confirms to that on Vasmer’s specimen.

6. Mayyafāriqīn 399
   - 4.80g; 26mm; 7h. Markov 1896, p. 337, no. 14. Type of BMCO III, no. 52. Grapheme of mintplace like no. 5. *Obv. die = no. 7; tear-shaped ringlet on the right side of the first line.*

7. Mayyafāriqīn 399
   - 5.00g; 27mm; 5h. Markov 1896, p. 337, no. 14. Type of BMCO III, no. 52. *Obv.-die = no. 6.*

8* Mayyafāriqīn 400
   - 4.25g; 27mm; 10h. Type of BMCO III, no. 52. Grapheme of mintplace like no. 5.

Sharwān ibn Muhammad (401/1010-11)

9. (Mayya)fāriqīn (40)1
   - 4.85g; 27mm; 2h. Markov 1896, p. 338, no. 20.

Naṣr al-Daula Abū Naṣr Ahmad (401-453/1011-1061)

10. (Āmi)d 404

11. Mayyafāriqīn (40)1

12. Mayyafāriqīn (401-3)
    - 4.31g; 25mm; 12h. Markov 1896, p. 338, no. 22-24. As no. 11 but *obv.: 1 and below dot. Rev.: 1 above rasūl dot.*

13. Mayyafāriqīn (403?)

14. Mayyafāriqīn 403
    - 7.12g; 29mm; 5h. *Obv.: 1/-/-/Naṣr al-Daula/ Abū Naṣr/ dot. Rev. as BMCO III, p. 26, no. 52, below dot.*

15. Mayyafāriqīn 403
    - 6.28g; 28mm; 6h. BMCO IX, p. 271, no. 52d (403h.). See grapheme of the mintplace, second alif is also missing. *Obv.: 1 and Rev.: 1 and below dot.*
16 Mayyafarīqīn  (403-5)  3.46g; 24mm; 7h. Type of BMCO IX, p. 271, no. 52d (403h.). Obv.: 1 and below on the left side three dots :: Rev.: 1.

17 Mayyafarīqīn  405  3.77g; 26mm; 1h. BMCO IX, p. 271, no. 52h (405h.). dies = no. 18. On obv. and rev. below dot.

18 Mayyafarīqīn  405  4.00g; 26mm; 9h. dies = no. 17.

'Usqailids

Ḥuṣān al-Daula Abū Ḥassān al-Muqallad (385-391/996-1001)

19 Sinjār  390  1.68g; 23mm; 6h. Markov 1896, p. 333, no. 18. Obv.: -/{-al-malik Bahāʾ al-Daula/Ḥuṣān al-Daula/ Abū Ḥassān. Rev.: -/-|-ṣallā Allāh 'alaihi/ al-Qādir billāh/ four dots ::.

Nūr al-Daula Abū Muṣʿab Mariḥ ibn Musayyib (393-397/1003-1006)


C.J. Tornberg correctly read the kunya Abū Muṣʿab for the first time in 1848, (Numi Cufici, Stockholm, p. 267, no. 5; Mosul, 393) and later N. Bauer too (“Der Münzfund von Spanko bei St. Petersburg”, Zeitschrift für Numismatik 26 [1926], pp. 75-94, see p. 76, no. 6; Naṣībīn 395). These coins make it evident that Nūr al-Daula does have Abū Muṣʿab as kunya. However Muṣʿab is found as ism in H.C. Kay, 1886, p. 512, genealogical table between p. 526 and p. 527, É. de Zambaur, 1927, G. Degener, 1987, p. 209, S. Album, 1993, p. 21, revised edition, 1998, p. 47 and C.E. Bosworth, 1996, p. 91. This error was set by Ibn Khallikān, Wafāyāt, trans. De Slane III, p. 418, ed. ‘Abbās V, p. 263. De Slane, on the basis of the Cairo edition, gives the kunya and ism as being Abū Marrakḫ Muṣʿab. Iḥsān ‘Abbās decided for M-r-h and provides a further variant, M-r-j, in one of the manuscripts. M-r-h was in fact the ism. Elias of Naṣībīn, pp. 102, 152, confirms it as being in Syriac amīr M-r-h, probably vocalized Mariḥ.34 He reports that Mariḥ died on Sunday, Ṣafar, 14th 397 (December 12th, 1006).

Muʿtamid al-Daula Qirvāš ibn al-Muqallad  391-442/1001-1050


22* al-Mawṣil  398  3.48g; 24mm; 6h. As no. 21. Obv. above and below legend dot. Rev.: on the right side of lillāh dot; below legend ḥāʾ and left of it dot.

7. Bibliography


BMCO IX. St. Lane-Poole, Catalogue of Oriental Coins in the British Museum IX, Additions to the Oriental Collection 1876-1888, (London, 1889).


1) Āmid, 401

2) Mayyāfāriqīn, 393
3) Mayyafāriqīn, 395

4) Mayyafāriqīn, 396

5) Mayyafāriqīn, 397(4?)
6) Mayyafāriqīn, 399

7) Mayyafāriqīn, 399

8) Mayyafāriqīn, 400
9) (Mayya)fāriqīn, (40)1

10) (Āmi)d, 404

11) Mayyafāriqīn, (40)1
12) Mayyafārīqīn, (401-403)

13) Mayyafārīqīn, (403?)

14) Mayyafārīqīn, 403
15) Mayyafariqin, 403

16) Mayyafariqin, (403-405)

17) Mayyafariqin, 405
18) Mayyafariqin, 405

19) Sinjar, 390

20) al-Mawṣil, 39(4?)
21) Balad, 397

22) al-Mawṣil, 398

Scale of the illustrations: 1: 0.5