



# ORIENTAL NUMISMATIC SOCIETY

*Secretary General*  
Nicholas Rhodes,  
28 Napier Gardens, Hythe,  
Kent CT21 6DD, U.K.

*Newsletter Editor:*  
Mr. S. Goron,  
74 Outram Road, Croydon,  
Surrey, CR0 6XF, U.K.  
E-mail: s.goron@cablenet.co.uk

## Regional Secretaries:

*General:* Mr. R. Senior,  
Butleigh Court Tower, Butleigh,  
Glastonbury, Soms, BA6 8SA, U.K.  
E-mail: rcsenior@yahoo.com

*Europe:* Mr. J. Lingen,  
Dr. A. Schweitzerstr. 29,  
2861 XZ Bergambacht, Netherlands.  
E-mail: lingen@wxs.nl

*U.K. & Eire:* Mr. P. Smith,  
9 Grandison Road, London SW11 6LS, U.K.  
E-mail: peter.smith@9grandison.freemove.co.uk

*America:* Mr. W. B. Warden, Jr.,  
P.O. Box 356, New Hope,  
PA 18938, U.S.A.  
E-mail: wbwardenjr@earthlink.net

*South Asia:* Mr. K. K. Maheshwari,  
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214 Nariman Point,  
Mumbai, 400 021 India.

*Pakistan Chapter:* Mr. S. M. Mirza,  
2-98-E Panorama Centre, Blue Area,  
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£15, H.F.I. 45, FF 150, \$30.

## NEWSLETTER

# No. 163

## Spring 2000

### Mas'ūd al-Khwārizmī in Kāshghar 660/1261-2

Stefan Heidemann, Jena

A new dating of the coins of al-Mas'ūd al-Khwārizmī was recently proposed by Alexander Akin (ONS-Newsletter 160) with an illustration following in the next issue. Venetia Porter, who published the coins of the Aurel Stein collection, identified the Mas'ūd al-Khwārizmī mentioned on the coins with Mas'ūd ibn Maḥmūd Yalawach the Mongol governor of Transoxiana during the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century, who died in 688/1289 (cp. Bosworth). The overwhelming bulk of Mas'ūd's coins from the mint of Kāshghar is characterised by rather blundered inscriptions. The marginal legends, in particular, are usually badly engraved and hard to decipher. Tobias Mayer's Tübingen Sylloge, entry no. 542-566, exhibits the whole range in the different stages of deterioration of the design.

Venetia Porter reads a part of the date as 68x h.. Mayer proposes the reading of the date on the obverse of one of the coins as (6)6x h.. although with a question mark. Whereas the central legends are well read by Tobias Mayer, Akin rejects Mayer's reading for the reverse centre suggesting a new reading for the first line (*ṣāhib a'ẓam* or *amīr*) as well as for the reverse margin. The obverse margin remains undeciphered. Akin attempted to read the date of the coins on the basis of "over a dozen" coins of a large group as 650 h. (cp. Album, no. 1975). Probably the best readable specimen is illustrated in ONS Newsletter 161. The actual date of the coins, however, is still the subject of some dispute. Some years ago the present author had the chance to examine a large parcel of a hoard of Mas'ūd al-Khwārizmī coins comprising about 2,000 items. This portion was possibly drawn from the same original source as the part Akin saw. Most of them were in the usual blundered style too, like the ones illustrated in the Sylloge. But a few of them had a very neat, distinct style of calligraphy (no. 1) which is not represented in the Sylloge: Kūfī in the centres, an elegant variant of Naskhī in the margins. These coins may have stood at the beginning of the series. They clearly confirm Mayer's proposed reading of the reverse centre:

Obverse: لا اله الا / الله محمد / رسول الله  
Reverse: ضرب بامر / مسعود / الجوارزمي

*struck on the order of Mas'ūd al-Khwārizmī*

On the coin of neat style illustrated (no.1) - the only example I saw of this particular style with recognisable margins - the mint/date formula is on the obverse and the Koranic inscription on the reverse margin. For most of the still clearly readable coins of better style (no. 2-6), however, the mint/date formula is on the reverse and the Koranic verse on the obverse. This seems to be the correct order of the inscriptions because the reverse marginal legend is nothing more than a continuation of the central inscription: On the obverse: religious texts; on the reverse: the issuer, mint and date. The distribution of the legends on coin no.1 may just be an exception. The reverse margin could be reconstructed on the specimens examined as follows:

في بلدة كاشغر في شهور سنة ستون و ستمائة

*In the city of Kāshghar in the months of the year 660*

On some specimens, where the legend is only partially visible, the *shuhūr* (months) looks, rather like a *sab'ūn* (seventy), because the character *hā'* is sometimes formed in a rather curious way. The whole phrase was composed by someone who was unfamiliar with Arab grammar and with the usual coin formulae. From a grammatical point of view the word *sixty* should be in the second case: *sittīn* and not *sittūn* as on the coins. The reconstructed legend on the obverse, except no.4, is a phrase from Koran LXI, verse 13:

نصر من الله وفتح قريب وبشر المؤمنين

*Help from Allah and victory is near and bring good news to the believers*

No.4 belongs, according to its obverse, to the group of specimens of deteriorating style, because in the obverse central legend the *lām* of *rasūl* is missing. The same holds true obviously for the margin. The margin repeats three times the phrase:

بحر (؟) رسول الله

According to the inscription, the type was issued in Kāshghar in Muḥarram 675/June-July 1275. It is again a frozen date probably used during an uncertain period after 675/1275. I would suggest that the side with the S-shaped Tamgha is the obverse because the marginal phrase starts here. I have not yet been able to read or interpret the central legend or symbols of the reverse.

Both dates 660/1261-2 and Muḥarram 675/June-July 1275 leave a period of about fifteen years for the production of the 660-series and its blundered derivatives. For two coins of the 675-type I recorded an overstrike on the 660-type. Moreover, the 675-type underwent a period of deterioration both in fabric as in engraving, for which examples were well represented in the hoard. That means that the hoard was buried probably several years after 675/1275.

The following coins are a selection of the most readable obverse/reverse margins of the 660-type from the parcel mentioned. They are now located in a private collection in Berlin. There were more coins with partially readable margins which all confirm the above proposed reading. In order to support the eye in recognising the inscriptions a transcription of what is visible on the coins illustrated is given. The illustrations are double size.

#### Literature

Album, Stephen: *A Checklist of Islamic Coins*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Santa Rosa, 1998

Bosworth, Clifford E.: "Mas'ūd Beg" in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) VI, p. 782f.

Mayer, Tobias: *Sylloge Numorum Arabicorum, Nord- und Ostzentrasien XVb Mittelasien II*, Tübingen, 1998

Porter, Venetia: "The Islamic Coins collected by Stein in Chinese Central Asia". K. Tanabe – J. Cribb – H. Wang (ed.): *Studies in Silk Road Coins and Culture. Papers in honour of Professor Ikuro Hirayama on his 65<sup>th</sup> birthday*, Kamakura, 1997, pp. 201-220.

What the first grapheme means is not clear. It could be a blundered Muḥammad, some unreadable name or a Tamgha, similar to the one frequently found on Chaghatay coins (see below the coin of 675 h.). Most likely it is a misunderstood amalgam of *naṣr min allāh* and *rasūl(1) allāh*.

The photo in ONS-Newsletter 161 shows what Akin obviously misinterpreted as *khamṣīn* in order to date the type into the year 650 h.. It can be proved that what he read as fifty is in fact a part of the word *shuhūr*. The reading starts on the right side: (... *kā*)*shghar* (fī *shu*)*hūr*(r...). The misinterpretation is due to the curiously formed *hā'* and its connection to the following *waw*. Compare the drawing:

(...kā) سرغر (مع سحرور...)

And what Tobias Meyer interpreted on the obverse of Sylloge. no. 542, as (6)6x (?) can be read with the knowledge of the whole phrase as: (...*qar*)*ib wa-bashshir* (...).

The next type represented in the hoard is also the next in the sequence of Kāshghar. It is the terminal type of the parcel examined and comprised about a fifth of the whole. It is represented in the Sylloge only with one specimen (no. 567). Because the marginal inscriptions are not fully documented in the literature, they are provided here. It can be reconstructed as follows:

obverse: ضرب هذا الدرهم ببلدة كاشغر  
reverse: في محرم سنة خمس سبعين و ستمائة



1.



No. 1, (3.66 g; 29 mm; 4h):

Obverse: (...*k*)*āshghar* (fī *shu*)*hūr*(r...). Reverse: *naṣr* (...) *fath* *qar*(ib...)



2



3



4



5



6



No. 2. (6.18 g; 29 mm; 1h):

Obverse: *naṣr (...) bashshir al-mu'minīn*. Reverse: *fī baldat kāsh(ghar...)*

No. 3. (5.46 g; 30 mm; 12h):

Obverse: *naṣr min allāh wa'l fath qar(īb...)*. Reverse: beginning at 8h:

*fī bald(at) k(āshghar) fī shuhūr sana(t sittūn) wa-sittumī'a*

No. 4. (6.84 g; 32 mm; 10h):

Obverse legend see above. Reverse: *(...ba)ldat kāsh(ghar fī shuhūr) sanat sittūn (...)*

No. 5. (6.26 g; 20 mm; 1h):

Obverse: (...). Reverse: *fī (...shu)hūr (...)* *sittūn wa-sittumī'a*

No. 6. (4.66 g; 30 mm; 1h):

Obverse: *naṣr min allāh wa'l fath qar(īb ...)*. Reverse: *fī baldat kāshgh(ar...) sittūn wa-sittumī'a*