Oriental Splendour

Islamic Art from German Private Collections

Edition Temmen

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All measures are given in cm, if not otherwise indicated.

The transliteration of Oriental languages follows a simplified version of the convention established by the Encyclopaedia of Islam, Leiden 1960ff.

C.P.H. read and translated all Arabic, Persian, and Ottoman inscriptions on the objects save the coins, which were read by the authors.

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Coins as Works of Art

Stefan Heidemann

Gold and silver coins were legal means of payment, according to Islamic law. If Islamic rulers put their names on the coins, they demonstrated their execution of power. As political documents they contain therefore as a rule: the names of officials from all ranks of the hierarchy of power, starting at the local governor and going right up to the caliph; the place of the mint; the year and sometimes also the month and the day when they were struck. They were produced on the basis of division of labour and their qualitiy was controlled by state institutions.

Despite being a technical mass product, coins also represented artifacts carrying various political meanings. Their character as objects of art depended on the political purpose and circumstances, the economic needs, and the craftsmanship.

The coins shown in this exhibition represent four aspects of art: the multitude of designs within one group of coins; the iconographic representation of political power; courtly donative coins; artists' signatures on coins.

The design of a coin must first of all distinguish denominations. Though following the tastes of time in some ways, the design is conservative rather than innovative.

The first group of gold coins dates from the time shortly before the breakdown of Mamluk rule in Egypt, struck under al-Malik al-Ashraf Qansûh al-Ghûrî (906-922H/1501-1517). This group documents the range of variety of design, the interplay between script arrangement, ornamental framing and calligraphy.

Apart from writing the ruler's name on the coin, the execution of power will be represented most obviously by a symbol.

Baybars (658-667H/1260-1277) was a Mamluk ruler in Egypt and a successful military commander against Mongols and crusaders. He chose the lion as his personal symbol of power which he had struck on coins. Baybars' lion actually marks the beginning of Mamluk heraldics. With the exception of copper coinage, personal symbols of power other than in writing had been unknown to Islamic coinage before. Baybars' lion succeeds in combining a universal symbol of power from the Near East with the Turkish tradition of family or tribe symbols (*tamghâ*), and perhaps even certain aspects of the European heraldic model.

Two groups of coins on exhibition here either form a special series outside of the main-stream coinage of their times: Rum-Seljuk gold coins and Buwayhid coins with die engravers' signatures. Both groups were struck at times when the design of coins was particularly appreciated at princely courts.

Coins were struck as representational gifts for certain courtly occasions. The heyday of these exceptional issues lay in the 10th century in Iran. This tradition continued in the 13th century in Anatolia under the Rum-Seljuks. Although the examples of this exhibition were not particularly struck for courtly occasions they still document the high cultural level of the residential cities in which they were made. The largest collection of these rare issues of Rum-Seljuk gold coins outside of Turkey is presented here.

About one hundred years before craftsmen in the Islamic countries started signing their works, in the two decades between 350H/960 and 370H/980, some die engravers in West Iran cut their names in some of their best dies, as exemplified here by three works of al-Hasan ibn Muhammad, the most prominent Buwayhid engraver. They certainly show the high degree of self-consciousness an outstanding artist of the tenth century might not ony attain, but also express.

The coins are described by the following elements:
Denomination
Minting place
Minting date, first the Islamic, then the Christian year
Persons mentioned in the minting protocol, in hierarchical order
Weight and diameter
Comment

References to collections, literature etc.

Abbreviations used in the description of the coins:
AR silver coin
AU gold coin
d.i. die identity

Gold Ashrafîs issued by Qansûh al-Ghûrî
Ornament and design

Qansûh al-Ghûrî (906-922H/1501-1517) was the last important Mamluk ruler in Egypt before the Ottoman conquest. Like his predecessors, he continued minting a gold coin nominal called *Ashrafî*. The name is derived from al-Malik al-Ashraf Barsbay (825-841H/1422-1437), who wanted to create a nominal which could compete with the European gold coins in Near Eastern circulation. Through the Indian trade via Alexandria lots of European coins were floating into Egypt. Because of their constant high fineness and weight, they were well accepted in trade and for hoarding. In weight as well as in fineness the *Ashrafîs* were only slightly inferior to the ducats. According to the Gresham law which states, that bad money drives away good money, the Egyptian gold coins played a more important part in the circulation, whereas the public preferred the European nominations for hoarding. The gold coin introduced by Barsbay is characterized by inscriptions on either side which are divided by three ornamental lines. This strict form was abandoned under Qansûh al-Ghûrî. The *Ashrafî* was then produced in a number of graphical varieties. Determined by political tradition, coins usually carry a fixed canon of inscriptions and further details. On the series of coins shown here, these consist of:
on the obverse the ruler's name: *as-Sultân al-Malik al-Ashraf Qansûh al-Ghûrî* with the eulogy: *may his victory be a glorious one*;
on the reverse the religious inscription: *there is no God but God, Muhammad is the messenger of God, who has sent him with the right guidance* and the reference to minting place and year of struck.

These elements of the inscription remain unaltered as opposed to their division and framing. Differences in the designs of coins often have technical reasons, especially they serve to distinguish between two types of coins or different mints. For example, the Damascene ones have six-lobed or eight-lobed medaillons on the obverse which the Cairene *Ashrafîs* lack.

12a
Ashrafî, (Cairo), date illegible

3.22g; 14mm

s. Balog 1964, no. 868

The five line inscription is divided on both sides by three "S"-lines.


12b
Ashrafî, (Cairo), date illegible

3.22g; 14mm
s. Balog 1964, no. 871

The legends are rare, both sides are divided by three "Z"-lines.


12c
Ashrafî, (Cairo), date illegible

2.79g; 15mm

s. Balog 1964, no. 869

The middle "S"-line on the obverse is interrupted by a node ornament as it is often found on buildings and in textiles. The reverse is divided by three "Z"-lines.


12d
Ashrafi, (Cairo), 917H/1511-2

3.34g; 18mm

Balog 1964, no. 879

On both sides the legends are divided by three looping lines. On the reverse there is a little lily in the second segment.


12e
Ashrafi, mint illegible, 913H/1507-8

3.37g; 15mm

On this coin, the "S"-lines are on the obverse. They are replaced on the reverse by beaded lines.


12f
Ashrafi, Damascus, 918H/1512-3

3.29g; 14mm

Balog 1964, no. 884

Like on all *Ashrafis*, the obverse with the ruler's name is devided by three "Z"-lines. On the reverse, there is a six-lobed medaillon inserted into the inscription which is divided by ornamental lines. The medaillon provides the minting place and date.


12g
Ashrafi, without indication of mint nor date

3.29g; 14mm

Balog 1964, no. 886


The obverse is here completely filled with the eight-lobed medaillon. The latter contains the ruler's name. The marginal legend encircling it supplies the ruler's titles. The reverse carries conventional design.

Dinars by Baybars
A ruler represented by a lion symbol

A lion symbolizes the reign of Baybars I of Egypt. It is represented on coins as well as in architectural decoration. It is the starting point of an intricate non-European heraldry (Mayer 1933; Meinecke 1972, 1974, 1990). Sauvaget translated correctly the name "Baybars", etymologically "prince-tiger", as "Tiger-Prince". Nevertheless, the lion of Baybars is not a so-called "speaking blazon". Thorau pointed out that the contemporaries indeed recognized a lion in the wild cat depicted in Baybar's coat of arms (Thorau 1987, 17).

Meinecke interpreted Baybars' lion as being derived from the English lion and saw Mamluk heraldics as "Western use of coats of arms adapted to special [Islamic] developments" (Meinecke 1990, 38). Undisputably European heraldry to a certain degree had an effect on the Oriental system and symbols. However, prior to the period in question, there existed an ancient tradition of iconographic symbols, depicted on coins and representing political power.

The lion of Baybars as a starting point of the Mamluk heraldry combines two traditions: an iconographic sign as universal symbol of power and the Turkish *tamghâ* as a mark of ownership and representation of the rule of a group. Nevertheless, their synthesis might have been stimulated from abroad.

Which forms of representation of power were found on Islamic coins prior to Baybars? With the exception of some early coins and of donative coins, gold and silver coins in the Islamic world carried writing, though copper coins in some periods of the Islamic history provided many iconographic signs and universal symbols of power.

Under the Umayyads, the sovereign power was represented by the name of the prophet Muhammad, i. e. of the founder of the Islamic empire, and by a reference to God. Only later the name of the overlord or also the names of the lower-ranking potentates were added as proof for the execution of power.

Ever since Turkish tribes advanced into the Islamic world and seized the power, a further element was occasionally added to the design of coins. This was the *tamghâ* which probably originated in a simple mark of ownership related to a tribe or a family. Thus, the Seljuk rulers since Tughril Beg (429-455H/1038-1063) were represented by bow and arrow and the North Mesopotamian dynasty of the Artukids of Mardin by two "V"-like angles, arranged one over the other, above two short lines. The *tamghâ* of the Zangids consisted of two crescent moons, facing outwards in an "X"-like form.

Ever since Turkish rulers seized the reins of power in Syria, Northern Mesopotamia and Anatolia, a rich iconography evolved, first of all on copper coins, including symbols of power (antique portraits, Byzantine emperors, Islamic rulers on thrones), allegories of planets, double-headed eagles, dragons, etc. These were, however, not related to a individual ruler or to a specific ruling dynasty. The combination of a graphic representation with a *tamghâ* or a ruler's name respectively could indicate a family's or an individual's power, though. Some of these images are derived from symbols of power. There are examples of double-headed eagles, carrying on their chest the *tamghâ* of the Artukids, the caliph's name or the name of one of the Ayyubids. From the end of the Great Seljuk empire *tamghâ*s were not depicted on gold and silver coins any more.

The Rum-Seljuk ruler Sulaymânshâh (592-600H/1195-1203) first introduced a universal symbol of power to silver coins for general circulation: a horseman gallopping to the right with a battle-axe over his right shoulder (a unique gold *dînâr* of this type: YKB 8355). Somewhat later, Kaykhusraw struck, as from 636H/1240-1 onwards, another universal symbol of power (YKB 8872): a lion running to the left under a human-faced sun. In the contemporary Christian kingdom of Armenia Minor, there also existed lion-type coins.

In Syria and Egypt, under the Kurdish dynasty of the Ayyubids - the direct predecessors of the Mamluks - neither *tamghâ*s nor graphic representations were used on copper, silver or gold coins. Only in the Ayyubid territories east of the Euphrates, copper coins depicted images.

When the Ayyubids in the middle of the 13th Century could not any longer protect their lands against the threatening crusaders and Mongols, the Mamluks conquered first Egypt, in 648H/1250, and then Syria, in 658H/1260.

The Mamluks were originally slaves of Turkish origin from South Russia, that were imported as élite troups for the Ayyubids.

Aybak (648-655H/1251-1257) was the first Mamluk ruler, who, in the year 652H/1254-5, had struck his name on coins. On these pieces he cited his dead lord's name, that of the Ayyubid as-Sâlih Ayyûb, with the latter's full title. He added his own name without any title. Presumably, this restraint indicates that the new régime felt a lack of legitimacy. Above his name, Aybak probably used a *tamghâ* as his tribe's symbol, made up by an upside down angle which was flanked by three dots on the left and right (Balog 1964, no. 76). His son and minor successor, al-Mansûr 'Alî (655-657H/1257-1259), was already mentioned with full royal title (al-Malik al-Mansûr), but he abandoned the *tamghâ*. His successor Qutuz followed his

style. In the years 656-658H/1258-1260, the Mongols invaded Iraq and Syria but withdrew most of their troups, when the Great Khân passed away in China. Baybars distinguished himself in battles against the Mongols as well as by fighting the crusaders. He seized the reins of power in Egypt and Syria in 658H/1268 and became one of the most important rulers of the Middle Ages. During the first days of his supremacy, he had dirhams struck in Cairo which, in their design, corresponded entirely to the ones of his predecessor Qutuz (UT, CE7-C2, published in: Bacharach 1968, no. 39A/1). But within the same year he introduced a new type of silver coin and started minting gold *dînâr*s. On these coins, he added an individual symbol of power to his name and title: the lion. The Mamluk chronicler al-Maqrîzî reported: "And he put his blazon (*rank*) on *dirhams*, and this was the image of a lion (*sabû'*)" (Maqrîzî, 68). Thus both traditions of the Islamic symbols of power were combined and the Mamluk heraldry burst forth: the lion as a universal symbol of power combined with the tradition of the *tamghâ*. The *tamghâ* had represented a family or a tribe, the lion of Baybars, however, represented, according to the chroniclers, not a group, but an individual: the sovereign.

Members of the courtly and military households derived their coats of arms from the sultan's by adding symbols to the sultan's blazon. Baybars' son, Baraka Khân (676-678H/1277-1279), also wore a lion in his blazon. On coins from Damascus a *tamghâ* is put in front of the lion: a triangle with small ringlets at the angles. An *amîr* of Baybars' household wore the lion of Baybars in his blazon, together with a serviette as a symbol of his office of high steward (Meinecke 1972, 224).

13a
Dînâr, Cairo, 659H/1261

6.86g; 23mm; pierced

Baybars

Coll. Balog (in: Balog 1964, no. 2, mint misread as "Alexandria"). A total of 5 examples is known.

13b
Dînâr, Alexandria, 659H/1261

4.54g; 23mm; pierced

Baybars

Coll. ANS-UM 1002.1.1257 (published in: Balog 1964, no. 28). Lane-Poole IV, 1889, no. 473. A total of 6 examples is known.

13a and 13b belong to Baybars' first gold coins. They correspond to the coins of his predecessors in their formal design. The obverse side shows Baybars' name together with his simple title as *al-Malik az-Zâhir*; underneath the title is the lion. The reverse carries the Islamic creed.

13c
Dînâr, Cairo, 659H/1261

5.18g; 22mm

Baybars, al-Mustansir billâh (caliph 659-660H/1261)

Balog 1964, no. 37. A total of 8 examples is known.

After the conquest of Baghdad al-Mustansir billâh sought refuge with beduins in Iraq. For political reasons Baybars decided to

acknowledge him as caliph, whereas the caliph transferred the supreme power in the Islamic world to him. Baybars documented this by adding the name of the caliph on the coins and his own title *as-Sultân al-Malik az-Zâhir*. Ibn Wâsil, at that time judge in Gizeh, commented on occasion of the oath of allegiance: "And *dînârs* and *dirhams* with his [al-Mustansir's] name were scattered" (Ibn Wâsil, fol. 171r).

13d
Dînâr, Damascus, date illegible

Baybars

After al-Mustansir billâh, the new caliph, had been killed in a battle against the Mongols near Baghdad at the end of 660H/beginning of 1261, his name was removed from the coins. In its stead, the Islamic creed was put on the coins. This coin is the only example of its kind that is known up to date.

Stefan Heidemann

al-Hasan ibn Muhammad - A die engraver of the 4thH/10th century

Names of local officials are sometimes cited on Umayyad and Abbasid copper coins. Many other works of Islamic art and craftsmanship carry the artists' signatures. Signatures on coins, however, are a remarkable exception in many ways (Meinecke 1982).

The first to discover a signature on a coin, in 1938, was George C. Miles. It was a silver *dirham* from Isfahan, struck in 358H/968-9. Miles read an inscription only approximately 5mm long and 1.5mm high between the first two letters of the Arabic word *qabla* on the obverse, saying: *'amal al-Hasan ibn Muhammad* (the work of al-Hasan ibn Muhammad) (Miles 1938). Forty years later C. M. Bier found another coin with the signature of this engraver (Bier 1979): a silver *dirham* from al-Muhammadiyya (Rayy near Tehran) from the year 362H/972-3. She was the first to assign unsigned dies (Isfahan 366H/970-1) to al-Hasan ibn Muhammad for stylistic reasons (ANS 5.61) (s. the dirham of the ANS (5.61g) from 360H; a further example, die-linked in the obverse, from 360H in Spink 1989, no. 384 (4.65g); another example in Schulten 1990, no. 1266, die-linked only in the obverse).

Signatures of Buwayhid die engravers are not the first ones in the Islamic world. G. Rispling, who works on coin finds from the Viking age (9th-11th centuries) in Sweden, found signatures of four different die engravers on Samanid coins, and of two on Volga-Bulgarian ones (Rispling 1989). Most of the signed dies come from the Samanid die engraver Mujîb. He signed his works in the decade between 293 and 302H/905-915. He worked for the mint in Banjhir, today in Afghanistan, and other mints nearby (Rispling 1989). Mujîb and al-Hasan ibn Muhammad are the only die engravers who created an oeuvre at various minting places over a period of several years, according to our present knowledge.

In the case of al-Hasan ibn Muhammad, three mints which issued signed coin dies are known: Arrajan, Isfahan, and al-Muhammadiyya. Works from all three places are presented here. According to the present state of survey of the materials (a corpus of Buwayhid coins is being prepared in Oxford, by L. Treadwell), al-Hasan ibn Muhammad was the first Buwayhid die engraver to sign some of his works with his name. It is an object of dispute whether singular letters on coins from before al-Hasan's time can be interpreted as die engravers' signatures. Of al-Hasan ibn Muhammad, nine coins out of seven signed die pairs are known. He, however, always signed his dies *'amal al-Hasan ibn Muhammad* at the above mentioned place on the obverse die. In the following, unsigned examples are only mentioned, if they are struck in years with signed dies and if a definite assignment can be made on the basis of stylistic characteristics. The example assigned to al-Hasan ibn Muhammad by Bier is also included.

The earliest piece, which is also shown here, comes from Arrajan, 354H/965-7. The die engraving and the execution of the mint clearly distinguish it from normal Arrajan coins of the period which were done, for a couple of years, in a comparatively crude style (s. Münzzentrum 1979, no. 1009; another example in a private collection).

Arrajan, 354H/965, signed, s. cat. no. 15a
2nd die, unsigned, UT ED7-C4 (2.98g), UT-LI

In the course of the same year, al-Hasan ibn Muhammad started working for the mint in Isfahan (= Isbahan). Isfahan was the residence of the young Buwayhid prince Mu'ayyad ad-Dawla. A number of signed and unsigned die pairs by al-Hasan ibn Muhammad are known from the years between 354H/965 and 360H/970-1:

- *Isbahan 354H*/965, signed, UT EE2-A2 (3.76g)
- *Isbahan 356H*/966-7, signed, UT 91-16-71 (3.81g)
- *Isbahan 358H*/968-9, signed, ANS 1935.70.74 (4.95g), UT EE2-A4 (3.67g; 29mm), d.i.
- 2nd die pair, signed, see below cat. no. 15b (4.55g; 29mm)
- 3rd die pair, unsigned, Schulten 1990, no. 1265 (3.60g); BMK Acc. 316H/1902 (chipped edges, 2.88g, no die comparison)
- *Isbahan 359H*/969-70, signed, UT EE2-A5 (4.25g)
- *Isbahan 360H*/970-1, unsigned, ANS 71.316 (5.61g; 31mm); Spink 1989, no. 384 (4.65g); Schulten 1990, no. 1266 (3.76g), only obverse d.i.; UT EE2-A6 (4.55g; no die comparison)
- different distribution of inscription, unsigned, BMK Acc. 1144H/1902 (pierced, chipped edges, 3.79g).

The next mint, for which al-Hasan ibn Muhammad is known to have cut signed dies, is al-Muhammadiyya. This town was the residence of the overlord of the Buwayhid family confederation, Rukn ad-Dawla. The examples signed by al-Hasan ibn Muhammad date from the year 362H/972-3.

- *al-Muhammadiyya 362H*/972-3, signed, UT EE7-A2 (2.58g)
- signed, but signature erased on the die, ANS (3.55g; 29mm) in Bier 1979. A die comparison with the Tübingen example has not been possible yet.

- 2nd die pair, unsigned, UT EE7-A3 (3.17g)
- *dînâr*, unsigned, see below cat. no. 15c (3.82g; 23mm)

On the example of the ANS, Bier did not only discover the signature, but she also found out that somebody had tried to erase it. No signatures exist on dies of al-Hasan ibn Muhammad after 362H/972-3. The signatures on the coins from al-Muhammadiyya and Qazwin, approximately 100km to the North-West in the Jibal, indicate other names after 362H/972-3, but they clearly carry his stylistic features as for example the crescent-shaped *nûn* in *Rukn* and the "whip-lash" of the *yâ'* in *'Alî*.

- *al-Muhammadiyya, 368H*/978-9, signed: *Muhammad wa-'Alî*, ANS 1965.65.243H (3.89g; 26mm) in Bier 1979
- *al-Muhammadiyya, 368H*/978-9, signed: *Khulayd*?, UT EE7-D7 (3.83g)
- *Qazwin, 364H*/974-5, signature(?) dissolved at the outer edge into four individual letters each, obverse: *Mu-ha-mma-d*, reverse: *wa-'Ayt*, UT EE8-D3 (3.27g); M&M 1991, no. 1144
- *Qazwin, 367H*/977-8, signature in the usual place: *'amal Muhammad*, UT EE8-D6 (3.75g), UT EE8-D7 (3.87g); Album 1984, no. 946.

At the present state of research, we cannot decide whether the signature *Muhammad wa-'Alî* refers to a die engraver or is meant as a religious device related to the prophet and his son-in-law. These coins, however, either belong to the work of al-Hasan ibn Muhammad or to that of one of his pupils. The *Muhammad* who signed the die from Qazwin, 367H, also copied stylistic features of al-Hasan ibn Muhammad. As Bier pointed out, under an art-historical aspect, the examination of the Buwayhid coins might assign a far larger number of dies from the above-mentioned mints as well as of some others in the Jibal and in Tabaristan, to his work.

The coins signed by al-Hasan ibn Muhammad and by Mujîb lead to a number of questions concerning the organization of coin production and the purpose of the signatures. Were die engravers just itinerant craftsmen, working in several towns, or did they stay put in one town, where they were commissioned to cut dies, which were then sent to different mints? It was not an unusual practice to produce dies in a place far away from the mint that is mentioned on the coins (Ilisch 1982). Presumably Mujîb, who worked within a rather small region, lived and worked in Banjhir, now and then cutting dies for neighbouring mints. Al-Hasan ibn Muhammad lived for some years in Isfahan, as is well documented by his oeuvre. He is likely to have later moved on to al-Muhammadiyya, the metropolis of the Buwayhid kingdom, and to also have made dies for other mints in the Jibal region. The few dies known from Arrajan, i. e. the ones that so clearly differ in their quality from the many normal issues, cannot serve as proof for the assumption that al-Hasan ibn Muhammad also stayed in that town.

But why were dies signed under the Buwayhids? The signed dies date all from the heyday of Buwayhid donative coinage, between 350H/961 and 390H/1000 (Ilisch 1978 and Ilisch 1984, 31-34).

Donative coins were presented on occasions such as oath of allegiance, honour of poets and ambassadors, new year, wedding, birth, circumcision, and others.

In Iran, the production of donative coins may be traced back to the pre-Islamic times of the Sasanians. Buwayhid donative coins sometimes represent the ruler in a Sasanian style; or they carry poems to eulogize and congratulate the receiver. Some also provide the name the donator. Common coins often did not meet the high aesthetic standards demanded for courtly occasions. Since the 9th century, therefore, perfect coins had been struck from time to time; the Persian word for such coins is *durust*. Does this imply that the signed coins belong to that type of donative coins, the *durust*s?

Al-Hasan ibn Muhammad was active in two important royal cities. Mu'ayyad ad-Dawla, the son of the Buwayhid ruler Rukn ad-Dawla, resided in Isfahan. He was born in 330H/942 (Ibn al-Athîr VIII 392, 511, 527). For a list of coins from Isfahan under Mu'ayyad ad-Dawla see Miles (1938). The first signed coin from 354H/965 only named the father; but in 356H/966-7 already, the coins mention Mu'ayyad ad-Dawla as governor of Isfahan. In 360H/970-1, Mu'ayyad ad-Dawla made Sâhib Abû l-Qâsim Ismâ'îl ibn 'Abbâd (born in 326H/937-8, died in 385H/995), his childhood compagnion, vizier in Isfahan (Ibn al-Athîr VIII, 617, 352; IX, 110; Mez 1922, 95f.; Busse 1969, 356, 507, 511f.). Sâhib ibn 'Abbâd became one of the most important viziers of Buwayhid history. The chronicles tell us that he had donative coins made (Ibn al-Athîr IX, 59. His donative coins in sources and comments in: Ilisch 1984, 33-34). A donative coin struck by his order in al-Muhammadiyya in 380H/990-1 is owned by the Paris Bibliothèque Nationale.

As from 365H/976, Mu'ayyad ad-Dawla was also lord of the Jibal province with its capital al-Muhammadiyya. This town was the subsequent place of al-Hasan ibn Muhammad's activities.

The signed coins show many typical features of perfect coins, the *durust*s. Almost all of them are technically perfectly struck. This becomes particularly apparent in the example

from Arrajan (cat. no. 15a) which clearly stands out against the crude serial coins. Unsigned examples by the same hand, are sometimes struck less carefully, their style is more negligent in the details. The gold *dînâr* (cat. no. 15c) is also remarkably designed. Sometimes, current coins were high quality works, too. No criterion is known to clearly distinguish between *durust*s and unsigned means of payment nor does any example of a coin, definitely identified as a donative coin, carry a die engraver's signature. Therefore, we have to consider the signed pieces as particularly crisp and well designed coins representing means of payment in ageneral sense, not as pieces especially minted for the court. However, excellent current coins were possibly used for donative purposes.

As we cannot define an interrelation between die engravers' signatures and the Buwayhid court, we try to find another interpretation for the signatures. According to Meinecke, Islamic artists started signing their artifacts - be it works of craftsmanship or architecture - in Iran somewhere between 1050 and 1100 and continued doing so for about three centuries. The engravers' signatures of the Buwayhid period preceded them by about 70 years. Nevertheless, some of the conditions Meinecke considered to be favourable for the later development of artists' signatures (s. Meinecke 1982), may be traced in the social and economic context, in which die engravers' signed their works. In the late Middle Ages, high quality work and signatures correlated in many cases, as pointed out by Meinecke. By signing his work, the artist rises himself above the subordinate rank of a craftsman. His pride in artifacts created by himself indirectly reflects his contemporaries' recognition of his talents. Also, there may have grown a tendency among artists to distinguish themselves from their colleagues by signing their work. This will explain the signatures of several contemporaries encountered on artifacts. In the period Meinecke referred to, Islamic arts and craftsmanship reached their widest range of visual variety. How can we apply these theses to the Buwayhid die engravers?

Signed dies excel in quality, calligraphy, design, and technical execution. Taking into account that possibly the Buwayhid custom of donatives was practised even outside the courtly circles, works of good die engravers were most probably well-esteemed by educated contemporaries. A great number of unsigned dies from the Jibal can be assigned to al-Hasan ibn Muhammad who worked for both royal cities, al-Muhammadiyya and Isfahan. Therefore, he was probably recognized as a well-known and distinguished craftsman. He must have been conspicious of the outstanding quality of his work. A tendency among die engravers towards differentiation, expressed in signatures, cannot be excluded: at that time, there were several engravers who signed their works. With the exception of donative coins, the range of visual variety in coin design started to widen at the time of al-Hasan ibn Muhammad. It reached its peak, however, only after 390H/1000, at a time from which we lack evidence of signatures.

The *dirham* of 362H possibly offers an explanation for the abrupt ending of the practice of die engravers to sign their works. The die, from which al-Hasan ibn Muhammad's signature was erased, is the most recent example of his signature known hitherto, although he probably worked in al-Muhammadiyya for another number of years. Though not knowing the reason for the signature's erasure, we may presume that the practice of signing was obviously disapproved. Taking into account the general artistic activities of his period, we must consider al-Hasan ibn Muhammad's practice of occasionally signing his works as rather unique. The wish to exclusively limit the mentioning of names on coins to the common political and religious repertory for representation may offer a further explanation for the erasure of his name.

Al-Hasan ibn Muhammad and Mujîb belong to the small group of artists of the pre-Seljuk period known by name. Being mass products, coins are more likely to survive than, for example, works of architecture. Therefore, future studies will probably reconstruct al-Hasan ibn Muhammd's complete oeuvre, especially as his works of art carry date and place of origin.

15a

'Adud ad-Dawla (338-372H/949-983)

Dirham, Arrajan, 354H/965

3.67g; 31mm

'Adud ad-Dawla, Rukn ad-Dawla (335-366H/947-977), al-Mutî' lillâh (caliph 334-363H/946-974)

Die engraver: al-Hasan ibn Muhammad

As usual, the signature is on the obverse between the first two letters

of the Arabic word *qabla*. The flan is well prepared, the coin is perfectly struck, and the calligraphy is good.

15b

Mu'ayyad ad-Dawla (governor of Isfahan at the latest from 344H/955-6 to 373H/983)

Dirham, Isfahan, 358H/968-9

4.55g; 29mm.

Mu'ayyad ad-Dawla, 'Adud ad-Dawla, Rukn ad-Dawla, al-Mutî' lillâh.

Die engraver: al-Hasan ibn Muhammad.

The *dirham* is well struck. With its weight of 4.55g, the coin is much heavier than the normal Buwayhid *dirhams* of that time (approx. 3.66g). *'Amal al-Hasan ibn Muhammad* can be deciphered between the first two letters of the word *qabla*. The minute inscription is a little blurred because of the double-striking.

15c

Rukn ad-Dawla (335-366H/947-977)

***Dînâr*, al-Muhammadiyya, 362H/972-3**

3.82g; 23mm.

Rukn ad-Dawla, Mutî' lillâh.
Die engraver: al-Hasan ibn Muhammad (unsigned)
The coin belongs to al-Muhammadiyya, the capital of Rukn ad-Dawla. Apart from the usual Koranic inscriptions (Koran XXX, 3 [4] and IX, 33) there is, on the obverse and the reverse, an additional eulogy whose significance remains unexplained. Obverse: *ya-YMN ? * tâ'ir * wa-a''wa * nasr*; reverse: *ya-YNB ? * dawla * wa-amadda * umr*. Several *dirhams* carrying al-Hasan ibn Muhammad's signature have survived from that year. There are three other examples for an inscription like the above-mentioned one:
- a donative coin from al-Muhammadiyya, 387H/997-8 (Sotheby's 1984, no. 127; s. Album 1984, no. 946 (dirham, Qazwin, 367, *'amal Muhammad*)
- a *dînâr* from the same mint from 403H/1012-3
- a *dirham* from Qazwin, 367H/977-8, carrying the die engraver's signature *'amal Muhammad* (see above).

For an assignment to the work of al-Hasan ibn Muhammad or his pupils several stylistic reasons can be pointed out, e. g. the *nûn* in *Rukn* or the "whip-lash" of the *yâ'* in *'Alî*. There are also noticeable elements of design such as the cable-shaped torsion of the *dâl* in *Muhammad*.

Abbreviations

ANS: American Numismatic Society
ANSMN: American Numismatic Society Museum Notes
BMK: Berliner Münzkabinett, Berlin
RCE: Répertoire Chronologique d'Epigraphie Arabe
UT: Universitätssammlung Tübingen, LI: stock of Ilisch
YKB: Yapı ve Kredi Bankası, Istanbul

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