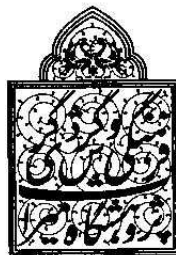


In the Name of God

Rayy Hoard
of
Nishabur Dīnārs

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Abdullah Ghouchani



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Biography

Abdullah Ghouchani was born in 1948 in Baghdad of Iranian parents. He completed his undergraduate education in Iraq and obtained Bachelor of Art in Arabic Literature and Islamic Law and pursued his master's degree in Islamic History in Tehran. He started his career at the Iranian Center for Archeological Research in 1976 and later joined the National Museum of Iran. In 2004, he retired from the Iranian Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism.

He pursued a career as an epigrapher and his concentration was classical scripts especially poetry and history. His first major activity as an epigrapher was reading the inscriptions of Nishapur which included 140 earthenware dishes and it resulted in publications in Persian and English in 1986.

Abdullah continued to participate in various projects as an epigrapher, author, and researcher in many different museums across Iran. But he also established a long history of association with various museums and institutions across the globe; to name a few, the Louvre Museum, Hermitage Museum, the British Museum, Brooklyn Museum, Newark Museum, Purdue University.

Through these universal collaborations, he established connections with numerous other numismatists internationally and inscription on coins became an everlasting interest for him. Nevertheless, any inscription was a joyous adventure to him. This enthusiasm led him to be an extraordinary versatile epigrapher who worked on architectures, luster tiles, coins, metalwork, and textiles; someone who gladly accepted any challenge.

His vast knowledge of Arabic and Persian literature, in addition to the Islamic history, was evident in his writings. All these made Abdullah an invaluable resource who was also always eager to share his experience and knowledge with others. To spread his knowledge, he held a number of workshops in Iran, served as an advisor to several PhD students, and published the results of his research and findings in numerous articles, journals and books in Persian, German and English.

Certainly, the world of Islamic art suffered a great loss with Abdullah's sudden death in Tehran, from Covid-19, on August 7th, 2020. He was the greatest epigrapher in the world in Arabic and Persian, with an exceptional ability to read some of the most illegible inscriptions, who we will not see his like again.

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Content

Foreword	5
Introduction by Assadullah Souren Melikian-Chirvani	7
Preface	11

Biographies of Nishabur Governors

Aḥmad Ibn 'Ismā'il Sāmānī	17
Naṣr Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Ismā'il	17
Nuḥ Ibn Naṣr	19
Abdu'l-Malik Ibn Nuḥ (the first)	22
Manṣūr Ibn Nuḥ (the first) Ibn Naṣr	24
Abū'l-Ḥasan Muḥammad Ibn Sīmjū	25
Nuḥ Ibn Manṣūr Ibn Nuḥ	26
Ḥusām Al-Dawla Tāsh	27
Abu'l-Ḥasan Fā'iq Al-Khāṣṣa	28
Abū 'Alī Sīmjūr	36
Manṣūr Ibn Nuḥ (the second) Ibn Manṣūr	38
Baktūzun	39
Abdu'l-Malik Ibn Nuḥ (the second)	40
'Īlak-khān	44
Maḥmūd the Ghaznawīd	45
Muḥammad the Ghaznawīd	48
Mas'ūd the Ghaznawīd	50
Tughrul-bak	52
Malik-shāh Ibn Muḥammad	55
Abū Shujā' Muḥammad Ibn Malik-shāh	56
Sultān Sanjar	57

Numismatic

Obverses and Reverses	61
Exchange Value and Method	69
The Dilapidated	85
Cryptograms	91
Coins Bearing the Names of Three Deprived Caliphs	103
Mule Coins	113
Yearly Local Die Varieties	121
Light Coins & Brockage Coins	129
Die Engravers	167
Devisions of Islamic World as Reflected on Coins	205

Catalogue

Umayyad	231
'Abbāsīd	232
Rasūlīd of Yemen	274
Sāmānīd	275
Maḥmūd the Ghaznawīd	374
Ghaznawīd	375
Fāṭimīd	401
'Ilak Khānīd	402
Būwayhid/ Būyīd	403
Kākawayhid/ Kākūyīd	407
Slajūqs	408
Khwārezm-shāhs	427
Unknown	428
Copper Coin	428
Bizantine	429
Index of Mint-houses	431
Index of Names and Cities	433
Bibliography (References)	443

Foreword

In 1991, a huge treasury of gold coins was accidentally found in Shah-e Ray (Tehran Province). In the course of borrow-pit operations at Said Raja's Research Center yard پژوهشگاه شهید رجایی, aimed at constructing new buildings, Shah-e Ray Municipality ordered for the loads, taken, at first, to Afsariyye plains, to be used for leveling پارک دایلمان Deylamān Park. Unloading at the new destination, one of the trucks was found to have carried hundreds of gold coins a great number of which were taken away by the people present at the scene.

Cultural Heritage Directorate of Tehran was immediately informed. This was followed by sending Mr. Ahmad Amiri, the late Mr. Enayatollah Amirlou, and the late Mr. Koushanfar, three of the specialists working at Tehran Directorate, to the park and the research center. A few days of hard work, at last, resulted in finding 244 gold and two copper samples which were transferred to the Directorate.

At the very same time, the Revolutionary Guards succeeded in arresting a number of the people present at the scene. The questioning sessions which followed resulted in finding 1,700 other samples which were, finally, transferred to Central Bank of Iran.

Later, the police succeeded in finding another set of 248 samples in a series of operations performed in relation to exchangers of antiquities. The set, which was proved to have been found at Deylamān Park was transferred to the Cultural Heritage Directorate of Tehran. To the samples found one must add a number of other samples which were destroyed: as one example, the report circulated in the press of those days is worth mentioning which considered the destruction of 300 other gold coins of the set by a jeweler and their re-moulding as gold bars.

Having settled as property of Cultural Heritage Directorate of Tehran, the coins were ordered by Mr. Jalil Golshan, the then Head of the Directorate, to be investigated by this author. A period of painstaking study followed which resulted in the preparation of this author's MA thesis in History, titled *History of Governors of Nāshābūr, as Documented by Coins*. The study encompassed the whole set kept at Tehran Directorate, comprising samples of the Umayyad, 'Abbāsīd, sāmānīd, Būyīd/Būwayhid, Fātimīd, Kākūyīd/ Kākawayīd, 'Ilakhānīd, Rasūlīd of Yemen, Ghaznawīd, and Khwārezm-shāhs.

As for the samples kept at Central Bank of Iran, frequent correspondences were done by different chairmans of the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization, among whom Mr. Hājījat (Eng.), Mr. Zargar (Eng.), Mr. Kazerouni (Eng.), and Mr. Beheshti (Eng.) are worth mentioning. None of the correspondences was fruitful. The effort by Mr. Mirsalīm (Eng.), the then Head of Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, was fruitless, too.

In 1999, the author succeeded in meeting the people in charge at Central Bank of Iran. The negotiations and investigations of the abovementioned MA thesis, encouraged Central Bank of Iran to allow for black-and-white photographs of the 1,700 samples kept there to be taken.

The samples had not been cleaned. The mud coats made reliable readings impossible. Afraid of the coins to lose the original registered weight, the treasurer would not allow the samples to be cleaned. Consequently, the initial black-and-white photos were taken under unsatisfactory circumstances.

The new round of negotiations between this author and Central Bank of Iran on the necessity of availability of exact weights, performed in 2003, resulted in preparation of the exact quantities for the chosen samples. The amounts registered in the present book in front of the samples obtained from Central Bank of Iran are, as a result, the exact weights of the cleaned chosen coins. Unfortunately, the second request by this author regarding taking new photographs of these samples, with the same quality as that of the Directorate of Tehran was not fulfilled by Central Bank of Iran; consequently, the related set of 350 samples has been presented with low quality black-and-white photos.

As is evident from the title, in spite of the fact that the coins were found in Shah-e Ray, they have been attributed to the city of Nīshābūr. The reason is that around 1,800 samples of the whole 2210-member set were found to have been minted in Nīshābūr; the coins minted in Shah-e Ray (Ray) were only 10 in number. It was concluded that the treasury belonged to an anonymous owner who had migrated, in the remote past, from Nīshābūr to the city of Ray.

Regarding their potential to throw light on the history of the region, especially that of the city of Nīshābūr, are the samples of great value. Studies of the samples revealed the fact that it contained coins of all the years the Sāmānid's had ruled over the city. In addition, a number of coins of Nīshābūr mint-houses were found attributable to the Ghaznawid and Seljuq periods.

Were it not for the collaborations on the part of the following individuals and institutions, the present book would never be compiled. As a result, special thanks are, hereby, addressed toward all these colleagues and friends, notable among who are: Dr. Azarmidokht Mashayekh Faridani, and Dr. Hayedeh Laleh, Mr. Naser Nowrouzadeh Chegini, the advisor and the readers to this author's MA thesis, respectively; Mrs. Ilahaye Marziyyah Askari keeper of coins and seals of the National Museum of Iran, Mrs. Parisa Andami Keeper and director of Tamāshāgah-e Pūl, Mr. Mahdizadeh Keeper and director of Malek National Museum, Mr. Isma'īl Amini Moghaddam, who endeavored kindly in translating some texts in German in relation to Byzantine coins; Mr. Jalil Golshan, for his effective supports, both as Chairman to Tehran Directorate of Cultural Heritage and as Deputy in Research Affairs to the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization; Mr. Naser Pazouki, Chariman of Cultural Heritage Tehran Directorate, Ms. Maḥboubeh Ghiyasvand, Treasurer to Cultural Heritage Tehran Directorate, at the time of the start of the present study, and Mr. Moḥammad Seyfī, successor to her, for their kind collaborations and support; Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization, for his kind support in relation to publish the completed work; people working at Bank-note Printing Office, Central Bank of Iran, especially, Mr. Jalilian and Mr. Maḥboubi; and, National Museum of Iran, Tamāshāgah-e Pūl, Malek National Museum, British Museum (Department of Coins and Medals, specailly Dr. venetai porter), and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In addition, I should thank my colleague, Dr. Yadollah Parmoun for his kind endeavor to translate the Biographies of Nīshābūr Governors and Numismatics chapters in Persian into English. Finally, I should thank Dr Assadullah Souren Melikian-Chirvani for writing the introduction for this research.

The author hopes that the present research has the potential to throw fresh light on part of the unknown aspects of the history of Iran, especially, the history of Nīshābūr.

Abdullah Ghouchani Tehran-2017

Introduction

Assadullah Souren Melikian-Chirvani

The coinage of Iran in Islamic times is a source of historical documentation that is only beginning to be properly exploited by historians concerned with the chronology of events. It is virtually ignored by those who touch on the history of Iranian art and culture, even though it represents here too an instrument of almost unassailable precision.

One reason for this neglect is that in their vast majority, Iranian coins have come to light in unknown circumstances. This is largely because chance finds of monetary hoards result in their prompt dispersal across the world, thereby erasing their documentary value.

The importance of Dr Abdullah Ghouchani's exemplary publication of "The Ray hoard of Nishabur Dinars" lies among other remarkable features in the light it partly sheds on the salvage of one of the largest hoards recorded to this day.

Dr Ghouchani recounts to the best of his knowledge the set of circumstances which allowed some of it to escape the usual destructive process. The full story may never be known. There are gaps and uncertainties. Yet, they have no bearing on the validity of his descriptions and conclusions.

In 1370/1991, excavations preliminary to intended construction work were being carried out in the courtyard of the Shahīd Rejā'ī Research Centre in Ray. Lorries carried off the mixture of soil and rubble out of the city to the Afsariyye desert where it is being dumped. Some of it was eventually taken back to serve as groundfill in the city, in Deylaman Park. As the load of one lorry was being discharged, hundreds of gold dinars came to light. Bystanders rushed in to grab all they could.

The matter was quickly reported to the administrators of the Tehran Cultural Heritage Organization who had the reflex of ordering the area to be instantly cordoned off. Within days, Dr Ghouchani writes, 244 gold dinars and two copper coins recovered on the spot were dispatched for safe keeping to the Cultural Heritage Organization depot.

Investigations led to the identification and arrest of a number of individuals alleged to have taken part in the loot. An additional 1700 coins were somehow seized in unspecified circumstances and sent off to the Central Bank of Iran. Later, law and order forces reportedly recovered another 248 coins from traffickers in antiquities who apparently confessed that these too came from Deylaman Park. The 248 coins were also transferred to the Cultural Heritage Organization depot.

The 614 fully preserved gold coins and 2 copper coins published for the first time by Dr Ghouchani come from both sources. Most are sufficiently well preserved to be identified. The great majority were minted in Neyshabur, although small numbers of coins struck by the Rasulid Sultans of the Yemen or the emperors of Byzantium are also included in the publication. While there can never be any certainty that all published coins effectively came to light in the Ray emplacement identified by Dr Ghouchani's sources, there are no reasonable grounds for doubting that the series minted in Neyshabur indeed came from the single find spot which, by a quirk of fate, turned out to be the courtyard of a research institution- the Shahīd Rejā'ī Research Centre.

The hoard points to a continuous flow of commerce between historic 'Erāq of which Ray and the broader Tehran area formed part on the one hand, and Neyshabur, the great metropolis of Khorasan in Eastern Iran, on the other hand. This is a highly significant, if by no means surprising, piece of information.

A lot more is to be learnt from the new mine of information now open to historians, that is not to be found in written sources. Some of it concerns finer points of detail. Outlining the history of Sultan Toghrul's reign. Dr Ghouchani notes that the Seljukid ruler chose Neyshabur as the seat of government in 428 H. /1037 A.D. Chronicles provide conflicting information on this precise date. According to Żahīr ad-Dīn Neyshābūrī, Toghrul Beg entered Neyshabur in Ramaḍān 429 H./ 1039 A.D. Rāvandī on the other hand says that Toghrul took the dignity name [*laqab*] Rokn ad-Dīn in 427¹ H./ 1036 A.D and made Neyshabur the seat of his government in 428 H./ 1037 A.D. This may not be entirely accurate.

Coins minted in Neyshabur were struck to the name of the Ghaznevid Mas'ūd in 428 and 429 H./ 1039 A.D (nr.537 to 542, pp. 398-400). However, as Dr Ghouchani very plausibly observes, Neyshabur may have changed hands a number of times in the course of a troubled period.

In his important chapter on "The value of coins and the method of settling transactions", Dr Ghouchani dismisses a widely held misconception. It is generally taken for granted that accounts were settled by paying out sums according to the nominal value of coins. In fact, the sums were calculated according to weight.

In his chapter dealing with "Brockage" (p.125), Dr Ghouchani discusses light weight drachmas which could vary from half a dirḥam (1.48 grammes) to one qīrāt (0.2 grammes), or even one hobbe (0.1 grammes). These "light weight coins" were essentially destined for festive occasions such as Shādgolī (Shādkulī in arabised form) when they would be showered on crowds. This custom, the writer notes, was carried into Qajar times, as late as the 13th/ 19th century.

1. The Persian and English editions have a typo: the date at which Toghril is said to have taken the *laqab* is given as 437 H./ 1046 A.D, not 427 H./1036 A.D.

Not least among the contributions to details of history, a number of rare coins are published by Dr Ghouhani. For instance, a gold dinar weighting 0.72 grammes and measuring 2.2 cm. across, which is now in the Cultural Heritage Institute dates from the short reign of Arsalān Arghū b. Moḥammad who was murdered by his bonded officer [*gholām*] in 490 H./ 1091 A.D (p.133).

Perhaps the most novel contribution of Dr Ghouhani's book lies in what I would call " **The Art of Coinage** ". The Iranian scholar was the first to reveal the existence of multiple dies cast in the same year in the same city. His groundbreaking essay, "The dates of Abu'l Najm Badr b. Ḥasanwayh [Persian Ḥasanūye]'s rule according to his coinage" was published twelve years ago in Persian in the "Journal of Archaeology and History" [*Majalle-ye Bāstān-shenāsī va Tārīkh*], Tehran 1373/1994, nr.2, pp.46-65. Dr Ghouhani considered several possible reasons. One is raising economic prosperity. Another, more mundane, is the fragility of the metal used for making dies. In either case, multiple dies would have been required in the same mint if only to strike coins in sufficiently large numbers.

Without making too much of a single discovery which can by no means be considered to project a faithful picture of past reality, it is nevertheless interesting to note for example the variations observed under the rule of Abū Ja'afar Maṣṣūr. Two types of dies were used in 145 H. /762-63 A.D and 146; three in 147; two in 149; three in 151; two in 152; two in 154 and in 155; nine in 157; three in 158; two in 162; two in 163; four in 167; five in 168; two in 170.

Aside from numismatists, few will be aware that die-makers signed their work. Their names, cited in historical sources, rarely occur on actual coins. Until now, only three Buyid coins carrying the die-maker's name introduced by the word '*amal*' ("the work of" in Arabic, also used as a loan word in Persian) were published. Two are signed "al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad". Of the three that were known, two were minted under Rokn ad-Dowle, the Buyid governor of Isfahan and Arrajān in 358 H. / 969 A.D, and the third one under Rokn ad-Dowle's son.

To these Dr Ghouhani adds many more. To give one example, the learned scholar illustrates and publishes (p.167) a coin in the National Museum of Iran. The name of the die-maker appears simply as "Ḥasan", in tiny characters (visible in fig. 9&10, p.167).

A large number of coins signed on the verso were found in Rayy (p. 171). The name, not entirely legible, may be read "Blḥrt" (Abū'l- Ḥārīt), or "Blḥrb" (Abū'l-Ḥarb). Their dates range from 318 to 358. On two coins, p.174, the die-maker's name which is clearly legible appears on both sides. One carries the longer form Bū'l- Ḥārith b. Badr or possibly Bū'l- Ḥarb b. Naṣr.

In the course of his study, Dr Ghouhani discusses a number of issues, which have a bearing on the cultural history of Iran. To that effect, he extends his investigations to coins other than those reputedly belonging to the hoard of Neyshabur.

To take but one example, the author illustrates (p.221, figs.41 and 42 respectively): a silver coin struck in 192 H. / 807-08 A.D under Naṣr b. Sa'ad now in the National Museum of Iran. On the verso, the name Abar-Shahr is clearly legible. On the recto, we read the name Neyshabur. Is Abar-Shahr another name for Neyshabur, Dr Ghouchani asks, or did it designate a specific part of Neyshabur? He does not directly give the answer, but provides the evidence that seems to settle the question: "There are many coins in this book which were minted in Neyshabur, while other coins from the first two centuries of the Muslim era were minted in "Abar-Shahr". He then notes that a copper coin was issued by al-Khattāb b. Yazīd in the year 145 H. / 762-63 A.D in the mint of Abar-Shahr. That strongly suggests that Abar-Shahr was a name commonly used in the early Islamic period, and that it was eventually superseded by that of Neyshabur. Whether that went along with modifications in the urban layout, Abar-Shahr possibly standing for "old" Neyshabur, and Neyshabur for a more recent part of the city, cannot be determined.

In a number of cases, the name of a province appears on the recto while that of a city is struck on the verso. In 191 H. /806-07 A.D, the names of the province of Sīstān, spelt in its early arabized form "Sijistān", and that of the city of Zaranj are thus found on a silver coin which was minted under the rule of Naṣr b. Sa'ad (fig.19, p.215). In 169 H. /785-86 A.D, a silver coin carries the name "Armīniya" (Armenia) on one side, and "Hārūnābad" on the other. It was minted under Hārūn ar-Rasīd before his accession to the Caliphate (pp.223-24, fig.49-52). Dr Ghouchani asks whether Hārūnābad is part of Armenia, or simply an alternative name for Armenia. The latter can probably be ruled out. Persian names in "-ābād" refer to towns, not regions. The name "Hārūnābad" (which is not entered in geographical treatises) raises problems that historians will be eager to address.

Last but not least, a significant contribution of such a book lies in the wealth of epigraphic material, localized and dated. It is equally valuable to the chronicler of events for the titulature introducing or accompanying rulers' names and to the art historian keen to date calligraphy. It is very much to the credit of the Cultural Heritage of Iran Organization (Sāzmān-e Mīrās-e Farhangī-e Irān) to have published the original Persian edition of Dr Ghouchani's highly important monograph. This is a labor of love by the most accomplished epigrapher in Persian and Arabic anywhere in the East as in the West.

Abdullah Ghouchani's impressive command of Iranian literature in both languages has allowed him to produce a book that will remain as the indispensable handbook on early Iranian coinage for decades to come.

Assadullah Souren Melikian-Chirvani

London- 2006

Preface

Playing the role of the first pieces of evidence to consult to unravel historical issues, epigraphs and coins are of great importance to historians. The study of the samples found at Shahid Rajā'i Research Center presented attractive historical issues to this author.

Regarding the fact that the great majority of the preserved samples were found to have been minted in Nīshābūr, the research was, naturally, guided, in the first place, in the direction of providing biographies of the governors of the city mentioned on them. The biographical descriptions would not include lives of the minority of other governors registered on the rest of the coins: these included the Umayyid, 'Abbāssid, Būyid/Būwayhid, Kākūyid/Kākawayid, Fātimid and ..., among others. Attractions of the present research were not confined to the Nīshābūr samples, however: As just one example, all of the samples belonging to the Kākūye/Kākawayid dynasty have registered on themselves the name *dushmanzār* as the founder of the dynasty's name; the name has, nevertheless, been preserved as *dushmanziyār* in other historical documents.

The biographies provided are the product of the information found in historical texts added to the information gathered from the present study on the coins. To these the texts on epigraphs have been added. These, on the whole, include information about the Sāmānid governors and their agents, as well as the Ghaznawid and the Seljūqid governors.

In addition, valuable historical facts were understood in relation to numismatics, itself, part of which is original. To these one must add a number of arguments in relation to some unresolved issues in numismatics, derived from some related historical and/or literary texts, which have resulted in introduction of new ways of tackling the problems.

Considering the fact that, while surveying the arguments, the reader, no doubt, would encounter such technical terms as the "Reverse" and the "Obverse", a chapter was decided to be included in the text on these issues. The text, which has been based on the related historical and/or literary literature, as well as the information on the samples under study, addresses a number of the debated aspects. Among the major findings prevailing throughout the text, the fact is worth mentioning that in case of the coins bearing no specifications in relation to the governor (e.g. the Umayyad as well as early 'Abbāssid samples), the face which mentioned the sentence: