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TWO FREQUENTLY MISDESCRIBED ARTUQID COINS

ДВІ МОНЕТИ АРТУКІДІВ, ЯКІ ЧАСТО НЕПРАВИЛЬНО ОПИСУЮТЬ

Summary

In the following article, two copper coins of the Artuqid ruler Fakhr al-Dīn Qarā Arslān are presented and discussed. These two coins are widely known, but are described and interpreted differently. It will be demonstrated how, through superficial observation and careless description of coins, errors can be found even in the standard literature. Such errors, as will be demonstrated here, lead to interpretations that are largely erroneous.

Keywords: Artuqid, Eastern Anatolia, Northern Syria, Northern Iraq, Fakhr al-Dīn Qarā Arslān, copper coinage.

Анотація

У статті представлено та охарактеризовано дві мідні монети правителя Артуکیدів Фахр ад-Діна Кара Арслана, який правив гілкою Артуکیدів у Хін-Кайфі та Аміді з 539 по 570 рр. хіджри = 1144–1174 роки н. е.

Перша монета, викарбувана у 562 Р. Х. = 1166 р. н. е. Автор ставить питання, чи можна називати цю монету «мідним дирхамом», як це зазвичай буває? Дирхам зазвичай є номіналом срібних монет. На думку автора, на це запитання слід обережно відповісти «так», проте можна сумніватися, на чому наголошує дослідник, чи справді це позначення дирхам використовувалося в повсякденному житті. У статті зазначається, що незважаючи на те, що серед монет Менкуджакідів спостерігається подібне явище, навряд чи видається виправданим позначати дирхемами всі фігурні мідні монети туркменських династій, наприклад, Данішмандідів, Салдукідів, Бегтімуридів, Зангідів або Айюбідів Майяфарікіна.

Друга, досліджена у статті, монета – це рання монета Фахр ад-Діна Кара Арслана з крилатою фігурою на аверсі.

Обидві монети – широко відомі, але описуються та трактуються по-різному. Дана розвідка – це свого роду ілюстрація того, як при побіжному

спостереженні та поверховому описові монет можна знайти помилки навіть у стандартній літературі. А такі помилки, як продемонстровано у викладі, призводять до інтерпретацій, які значною мірою є хибними.

Ключові слова: Артуکید, Східна Анатолія, Північна Сирія, Північний Ірак, Фахр ад-Дін Кара Арслан, карбування, мідні монети.

The Islamic dynasty of the Artuqids (often written as Artukid or Urtukid), an Oghuz ruling house that, divided into three lines, ruled over the eastern Anatolian region of Diyarbakır with its urban centers of Mardin, Diyarbakır, Hışn Kayfa, and Khartpert from about 1101 to 1409.

This article is about two coins of Fakhr al-Dīn Qarā Arslān, who ruled the Artukid branch in Hışn Kayfa and Amid, from 539-570 AH = 1144-1174 AD.

The starting point for this paper is the following coin minted in 562 AH = 1166 AD:



Fig. 1: Copper coin of Fakhr al-Dīn Qarā Arslān, no mint, 562 AH (= 1166 AD)

Schulze collection, 29 mm, 9.70 g, 12 h

Selected references: Spengler/Sayles¹ Type 7, Whelan² Type IV, Album³ 1820.7, Artuk⁴ 4

Picture slightly enlarged

Obverse:

A bare-headed facing bust. There is no mint indication, but to the left and right of the figure is the date of minting in Kufic script: ‘In the year two’ on the right side of the viewer, ‘and sixty and five hundred’ on the left.

Whether the figure is female or male is uncertain. The clothing does not permit a decision. It can be described as follows: the costume is a sort of mantle gathered to a yoke and draped over a plain shirt closing in front. The mantle seems to be folded back on the right breast to form a lapel.⁵

¹ William S. Spengler and Wayne G. Sayles: *Turkoman Figural Bronze Coins and Their Iconography. Vol. 1 – The Artukids*, Lodi, Wisconsin 1992.

² Estelle Jane Whelan: *The public figure. Political iconography in medieval Mesopotamia*, London 2006.

³ Stephen Album: *Checklist of Islamic Coins*, 3rd edition, Santa Rosa CA 2011.

⁴ Ibrahim and Cevriye Artuk: *Artukoğullari Sikkeleri*, Istanbul 1993.

⁵ Description of the costume after Whelan p. 153.

Reverse:

In the centre is the title, name and genealogy of Fakhr al-Dīn Qarā Arslān in four lines: (‘Malik al-umarā / Qarā Arslān bin / Dā’ūd ibn / Sukmān bin Artuq’); in the outer margins name and title of the ‘Abbasid caliph al-Mustanjid (al-Imām al-Mustanjid billāh) who died five years before.

Is it permissible to call this coin a ‘copper dirham’, as it commonly is? Dirham is usually the denomination for silver coins. This question must cautiously be answered with a yes, because the designation al-Dirham appears on an earlier coin of Fakhr al-Dīn Qarā Arslān (Spengler/Sayles Type 1) and also can be read on a later Artukid coin of Mardin (Spengler/Sayles Type 32). However, it may be doubted whether this designation as dirham was actually used in daily life. Spengler/Sayles write about this: ‘If, in fact, these coins were known in their day as ‘dirhams’, it could only have been in a generic sense without relation to the contemporary silver dirhams which maintained quite a regular weight standard’.⁶

Although there is a similar phenomenon among the coins of the Menkujakids, it hardly seems justified, however, to label as dirhams all figural copper coins of the Turkoman dynasties, such as those of the Dānishmandids, Saldukids, Begtimurids, Zangids or Ayyūbids of Mayyāfariqīn.

The Turkoman figural copper coins often show motives of the ancient world. Therefore, the question must be asked: What does the obverse of Fig. 1 show us? Spengler/Sayles with a penchant for astrological interpretations refer to an Artukid mirror from the early 13th century and interpret the figure on the obverse as a ‘male’ planet, a personification of Jupiter.⁷ Although the book by Spengler/Sayles has attained the status of a standard work as far as numismatic description is concerned, their interpretations are not infrequently dubious and have not always been adopted by scholars. We know that coins with Byzantine motifs were struck several times under Fakhr al-Dīn Qarā Arslān. It is therefore likely that this is similar. The image on the obverse of our coin is an imitation of an anonymous Byzantine follis of class A which were certainly still circulating in larger quantities in the Artukid territory. An interesting detail in favour of this is the centre-parting of the hair that can be found on the Byzantine anonymous folles class A.⁸

⁶ Spengler/Sayles p. xiv.

⁷ Spengler/Sayles p. 22.

⁸ Whelan p. 154.



Fig. 2: Byzantine anonymous copper follis Class A2, Constantinople mint, attributed to the joint reign of Basil II and Constantine VIII, circa 976-1025
Obolos Webauction 12, March 2019, lot 922, 27 mm, 10.73 g, 6 h
Selected references: DOC A2.40a, Sear 1813
Picture slightly enlarged

Now we turn to the next coin, whose description in Spengler/Sayles must be corrected:



Fig. 3: Copper coin of Fakhr al-Dīn Qarā Arslān, no mint, 570 AH (= 1174 AD)
Schulze collection, 27 mm, 7.98 g, 5 h
Selected references: Spengler/Sayles Type 8, Whelan Type IV, Album 1820.8, Artuk 5
Picture slightly enlarged

For the description of this coin, reference can be made to that of Figure 1 with two exceptions for the obverse: first, the date of five hundred and seventy only occurs on the left side;⁹ second, on the right side there is a standing winged figure.

For the obverse Spengler/Sayles give the following description: ‘Figure similar to S/S Type 7 but with addition of a small winged figure, holding a bow, standing left in the right field, and the date in cursive Kufic in the left field; all with a beaded circle’.¹⁰ The assertion that the winged figure is holding a bow is incorrect. What Spengler/Sayles interpret as a bow is in fact nothing other than the left lock of hair of the facing bust, which is designed in the same way as the right one. And this error leads to another

⁹ In kufic script 570 takes up less space than 562.

¹⁰ Spengler/Sayles p. 23.

mistake when Spengler/Sayles write in their art historical analysis: ‘The winged figure undoubtedly represents Eros or Cupid, a fact noted by Edhem,¹¹ and it provides the first clearly identifiable attribute in the long series of personifications on Artuqid coinage’. Finally, they come to the conclusion: ‘It is very probable that the issuing of the coin type commemorates a significant and specific astronomical event’.¹² This interpretation cannot be seriously considered.

This also applies to a proposal made by Judith G. Kolbas in an essay from 1998, which also contains a review of Spengler/Sayles¹³: Kolbas rejects Spengler/Sayles’ interpretation of the curved form as a bow, but also fails to see that this is a lock of hair. Instead, she refers to the curved shape in the hand of the ‘flying figure’ as *hadag*. Apart from the fact that the tiny figure is not depicted as flying at all, we need to clarify what a *hadag* is. Kolbas described a *hadag* as a ceremonial cloth that is still in use today in Central Asia. In Mongolia, for example, it represents the sky god Tingri.¹⁴ It is obvious that the lock of hair cannot be interpreted as a ceremonial cloth simply because of its small size. Apart from that, the Central Asian deity world is unlikely to have played a role in the coins of the Artuqids. Thus, Kolbas’ interpretation must also be rejected.

To conclude these considerations, it is interesting to look at an early coin of Fakhr al-Dīn Qarā Arslān with a winged figure on the obverse:



Fig. 4: Copper coin of Fakhr al-Dīn Qarā Arslān, no mint, no date

Künker auction 137, March 2008, lot 4127, 11.18 g

Selected references: Spengler/Sayles Type 3, Whelan Type V, Album 1820.3, Artuk 6

Picture slightly enlarged

The obverse of this coin was struck after the model of a Roman coin, namely the reverse of a solidus of Constantine I (307–337 AD).

Obverse:

¹¹ I. Ghalib Edhem, *Catalogue des monnaies Turcomanes du Musée Impérial Ottoman*, Constantinople 1894, p. 163 but with the addition that it is an imitation of Byzantine coins.

¹² Spengler/Sayles p. 24.

¹³ Judith G. Kolbas, Developments in Jazīran Pictorial Coinage, *Numismatic Chronicle* Vol. 158, 1998, pp. 259–285.

¹⁴ Kolbas pp. 271 f.

VICTORIA CONSTANTINI AVG, Victory advancing right, holding a board with the inscription VOT-XXX. Below is the mint name Sis.

Reverse:

Name, title and genealogy of Fakhr al-Dīn Qarā Arslān. Al-Malik al-‘Ālim al-Ādil/Fakhr al-Din/Ibn Dā’ūd. Qarārsalān (right) ibn Artuq (left).

Without a doubt, the winged figure is derived from the Roman goddess of victory.

It therefore makes sense to call the winged figure in Figure 3 also a victory, as for example suggested by Whelan, Hennequin¹⁵ or Album. But many authors who have dealt with this coin assume that it is an angel. Most, however, remain neutral and refer to the tiny figure as what it represents, a winged figure. This is certainly the best solution at present. It can be concluded that the die cutter has filled the space vacated by the shortened date with a small figure. Whether he really thought of a victory or an angel during his work can no longer be determined.

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¹⁵ Gilles Hennequin: *Catalogue des monnaies musulmanes de la Bibliothèque Nationale. Asie pré-mongole: les Salgūqs et leurs successeurs*, Paris 1985, no. 869; Whelan p. 154; Album no. 1820.3.