

Mystery Mints of the Umayyads

Michael L. Bates

Most Umayyad dirhams have mint names that can be identified and located with the help of the medieval Arabic geographical references, but there are some dirhams with names that have not yet been recognized. The following is a list of these Umayyad "mystery mints" with comments that may be of use to other scholars in the process of identification. The list comes from my card index, which has been used and annotated by several colleagues, including (alphabetically) Stephen Album, Robert Darley-Doran, William Spengler, and James Whitaker. I am grateful to these and others who have contributed to this list, as well as to Album, Helen Mitchell Brown, Joseph Cribb, Tawfiq Ibrahim, Balázs Kapossy, Arlette Nègre, Samir Shamma, and John Slocum for giving me permission to refer to unpublished coins in the collections they own or administer.

This is not "additions and corrections to Walker". Since he wrote, many new dirham mints and mint-date combinations have been discovered, and some errors corrected, but they are not dealt with in this paper. Briefly, the "new" mints identified with certainty are:

Bāzījā

Khusrā

Bihqubādh al-A'lā

Jūr (= Ardashīr Khurra)

Ḥarrān (listed doubtfully by Walker, confirmed by several new specimens)

Ḥimṣ (not known directly but reported to exist)

Māh al-Kūfa

Masābadhān

Mihrijānqudhāq

al-Mawṣil

Nahr būq

To be deleted from Walker's list is Wabā'a, a die engraver's error for Harāt (Leuthold, no. 21).

AHBHR

79: Tawfiq Ibrahim collection (publication forthcoming).

This strange name, in which the second letter is written in the isolated form of H whereas it should be connected to the following B, is nothing more than a reversal of *bi-Harāt*. The engraver reversed the position of the two letter groups *bi-Har* and *āt*. If this explanation is correct, the coin is the third known dirham attributable to the mint of Harāt in 79, the other two being one with the name written normally and one with only the first two letters of the name, HR (discussed separately below). The reverse of this coin has only five annulets.

"Ard"

82: a) Artuk, in *VII. Türk Tarih Kongresi*, pp.796-97.

b) ANS 1977.253.25 (*Annual Report 1977*, p.17, no.28).

The Artuks read this name as 'Urdu' (meaning "camp") and assigned it to Fars province, but several orthographical peculiarities of the issue are otherwise found only on the unique dirham of Ardashir Khurra, 80, and it seems likely that "Ard" is nothing more than a die-engraver's error for Ardashīr Khurra. The two examples cited have the same obverse die.

"Anbīr"

79: Balog, "An Umayyad dirhem struck in 79 H. at Anbīr in Juzjān, Khurasān", *Istituto Orientale di Napoli. Annali* 30 (1970), pp.555-58.

"Anbīr" was identified by Balog as the capital of Jūzjān, the same as the Pahlavi mint name ANBYR which appears on an Arab-Sasanian dirham of 84 with the additional Arabic inscription *bi-Jūzjān*; but this name may be the same as the next one, "Anībār".

"Anībār"

81: a) BM = Codrington, *NC* 1902, p.267, pl.XII no.2 = Walker 309.

b) Iraq Museum = al-Bakrī, p.330 = Naqshabandī/Bakrī, p.97, no.4B.

c) Muhammad Abu-l-Faraj al-'Ush. *The Silver Hoard of Damascus: Sasanian, Arab-Sasanian, Khuwarizmian, and Umayyad; Kept in the National Museum of Damascus*. Damascus: Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums, 1972, p.236 no.59.

89: a) Iraq Museum = Naqshabandī/Bakrī, p.6, no.64.

b) Album collection.

Codrington and Walker, tentatively, identified this name as "al-Bayān", a town of the Tigris estuary, but the second letter is not tall enough to be L. Al-'Ush proposed "Anībār", which corresponds better to the name on the coin, but is not a place known to the medieval geographers (nor is any place mentioned with this ductus). Album reads the name as "Astān", but there are not enough teeth in the name to accommodate both an S and a T. The name may be the same as "Anbīr", but the coin of 79 with that name (above) has certainly one less vertical stroke than those of 81 and 89.

al-Jisr

- 80: a) Dār al-Kutub = Rogers *NC* 1874 p.360 = Lane Poole, *NC* 1883 p.214 no.199 = Khedivial p.14 no.90 = Walker p.133 no.Kh.5 = Dār al-Kutub 167.  
 b) Hermitage = Tiesenhausen, *NZ* 1871 p.167 no.1 = Tiesenhausen 2718 = Markov p.1 no.13 = Walker p.131 no.Ties.11.  
 c) ANS 1977.253.14.  
 d) Album collection.
- 81: a) Hermitage = Tiesenhausen, *NZ* 1871 p.167 no.2 = Tiesenhausen 2720 = Markov p.1 no.16 = Walker p.131 no.Ties.12.  
 b) Iraq Museum = al-Bakri, p.330 = Naqshabandī/Bakrī p.50 no.12.  
 c) Ashmolean.  
 d) Shamma collection.  
 e) ANS 1977.253.15.  
 f) Slocum collection.
- 82: a) ANS 1969.65.2.

The name has been read al-Ḥisn, al-Jazīra, and al-Janza, but al-Jisr, proposed by Lane-Poole in 1883, is almost surely correct. Al-Jisr means "the bridge"; the question is, which bridge? Jisr Manbij and Qanṭara Thaḡan near Arrajān have been proposed but the best identification is Jisr Nahrawān near Bāzījā Khusrā, for only Bāzīrā Khusrā, al-Jisr and Bihqubādh al-A'lā share the unusual substitution of the proposition *fī* for *bi* before the mint name.

Janza

- 94: a) Hermitage 106/129 = Markov p.4 no.106 = E. A. Pakhomov, *Monety Azerbaidzhana* (Baku: Izdatelstvo Akademii Nauk Azerbaidzhanskoi SSR, 1959-63), I, p.46.  
 b) ANS 1922.216.1007 = Miles, *RIC* 76 = Walker p.135 no.ANS 25.  
 c) Ashmolean = *Report of the Visitors* 1956, pl. X.  
 d) Album collection.  
 e) private collection, from an Afghan dealer.

Though Miles thought he could see the definite article *al-* affixed to the mint name, those who have examined the ANS specimen after him generally agree that he was misled by a defect in the striking. This mint is therefore not the same as al-Jisr or al-Ḥīra, nor is it the same as al-Jazīra where dirhams were also issued this year. The identification Janza for Ganja (modern Elisabethpol) is almost surely correct and will be sustained by an article in preparation by Denise Spellberg.

al-Ḥīra

- 79: BM 1980.2.3.1. x Nahapetian.  
 80: Nahapetian reportedly had a coin of "al-Janza" 80, but the coin may have been al-Jisr or otherwise incorrectly recorded.  
 Al-Ḥīra, near Kūfa, was the residence of the pre-Islamic Arab Lakhmid kings and continued to be an important town; modern Najaf is on its site. The name on the coin is not al-Jazīra unless the engraver made a mistake ("al-Jazīra" is not known as a dirham mint before 94), nor is there any evidence that *al-* was ever prefixed to the name Janza.

"Dard"

- 93: a) Milan = Leuthold, no.22.  
 b) private collection (photo in ANS).  
 Leuthold explained the name as an error for Darābjird. It should be possible to find a reverse die link with Darābjird dirhams of 93 (or 92 or 94). The letters DRD are unambiguous.

al-Dasākīr

- 88: a) Iraq Museum 1973 ms = Naqshabandī/Bakrī p.73 no.82B.  
 b) ANS 1987.107.1.  
 Al-Naqshabandī and al-Bakrī read al-Dasādir, but the new ANS specimen clarifies the reading: the penultimate letter is connected to the last one and must be a K. The name is therefore the plural of *daskara*, a term from middle Persian *dasta-karta*, which means "estate", "stronghold", or "village" according to the context. *Daskara* is a common place name in Iraq, including a well-known town east of Baghdad, but neither the medieval or modern references mention a place with the plural form. The style of the issue is quite unlike the contemporary dirhams of Wāsiṭ, but similar to those of Damascus and Ḥarrān, suggesting a mint in the North (Jazīra and its dependencies).

"Dastaq"

- 89: ANS 1977.253.21 = *Annual Report* 1977, p.17 no.30.  
 This name is surely an engraver's error for "Dimishq", Damascus, because the coin has points under the B's of *bi-D* . . . and *ḡuriba* as found on the dirhams of no other mint. A reverse die link with Damascus of the same year has not yet been found, however.

al-Daybul

- 95: a) Milan = Leuthold, no.9.  
 b) Berne Museum — published (Kaposy ?)  
 c) private collection.  
 Leuthold identified this as the town in Sind (in modern Pakistan), conquered in 92 H., and his opinion is supported by several eminent students of the series, but we really need more evidence for such a radical attribution. The dirhams look like normal Eastern coins of their time. The dies could, of course, have been engraved in Iraq or by Iraqi engravers and sent to al-Daybul to mint the booty from the recent conquest. The provenance of the three specimens is unknown.

Ralsa

90: Shamma collection.

Shamma suggests that this is a place in Armenia erroneously spelled Dalsa by the medieval geographers. The epigraphical style is that of Damascus and the North, not Wāsiṭ. The second letter might be a B, etc., but looks more like L.

al-Sāmiyya

131: Walker 925 and many others.

The mint of this very common issue has yet to be identified. The epigraphy and annulets place it indubitably in Iraq or its immediate dependencies. The name could also be "al-Shāmiyya".

"Sūfi"

99: Iraq Museum 5355 msm = Naqshabandī/Bakrī p.104 no.176.

This is surely a dirham of Marw, misread.

al-'Āl

97: a) Hermitage = Tiesenhausen, *NZ* 1871, p.168 = Markov, no.146 = Tiesenhausen 334 = Walker p.7 no.Ties.15.

b) ANS 1971.316.682.

c) Album collection.

Tiesenhausen (p.xxviii) identified this mint name as a district west of Baghdad called Astān al-A'lā. The identification has never been substantiated and seems flimsy. Al-'Āl and al-A'lā are not synonyms, and there are other places with al-A'lā in their name.

"Fīl"

79: Walker p.170 no.B36 and at least 7 others.

80: Album collection x Ancient Arts FPL 5-6/1979 no.206.

Walker originally suggested a place in Khwārizm, but as he noted, the Arabs in 79 H. were years away from the conquest of that country. He speculated on a connection with the Arab-Sasanian mint PYL which we can now place in Kirmān; but since Kirmān province seems to have had only one mint in the post-reform era, using the province name, "Fīl" is not likely to be the same as PYL. The first consonant of the name could be F, Q, or M, and the second B, T, Th, N, or Y.

"al-Qandal"

96: a) ANS 1977.253.26 = *Annual Report* 1977, p.17 no.29.

b) Album collection.

c) specimen in Czechoslovakia, presumably of this date, mentioned to me by Dr. Jarmila Stepková in 1976.

The issue has the rectilinear epigraphy of Wāsiṭ, though more irregular. The first letter (after the article) can be Q, F, or M; the second B, T, Th, N, or Y; the last might be A but is more probably L. There was an al-Qandal near Baṣra, but it was only a hamlet.

al-KR

89: BN.

On the unique specimen, the area of the mint name is slightly blurred. The first letter after the article could be a D/Dh (but it does seem to be connected to the letter following), and the last letter could be N or W instead of R/Z. There is no *fī* before *sana* and *wāw* on the reverse is on the second line.

Māh

96 a) Milan = Leuthold, no.17.

b) ANS 1971.316.1279.

c - g) at least 5 others.

Māh is the Persian name of the province known to the Greeks as Media and since the Islamic era as Jibāl. Māh, *sic*, is probably only a variant of Māhay, the next mint name, but might be somewhere else. The coins do not seem to be of the same style as those of Māhay.

Māhay

90 - 98: very common.

This mint is traditionally transliterated Māhī but Māhay, "the two Medias", is correct. Part of the province Māh (see the previous entry) was assigned to be governed from Kūfa and part to Baṣra. The two parts were called Māh al-Kūfa and Māh al-Baṣra, "Media of Kūfa" and "of Baṣra". The mint of Māh al-Kūfa, which issued dirhams in 81 at least (ANS 1966.126.127), and appears again in the 9th and 10th centuries, is assumed to be Dīnawār, but Morony (p.22) suggests that Ḥulwān, a city in the western foothills of the mountains, was the administrative center of this part of the province. The mint Māh al-Baṣra issued dirhams at the beginning of the reformed dirham coinage, 79 - 81 and 83 (probably also in 82). This must have been at Nihāwand. The mint name Māhay evinces an era when the two Māhs were combined administratively. The coinage does not define the period of the merger; dirhams begin at Māhay in 90 because only then were provincial mints in the East allowed to open again after seven years, and closed in 98 as minting began to be recentralized at Wāsiṭ. The two areas were combined as one probably until at least 129, when 'Abd Allāh b. Mu'āwiya issued coins at Māhay. The question then is, what was the location of the mint for the two Māhs? It was certainly not Ḥulwān, which issued dirhams with its own name in 90, 91, and 93. Probably Māhay was either Māh al-Kūfa (Dīnawār) or Māh al-Baṣra (Nihāwand) — but which? (Leuthold puts forward a similar argument in his discussion of Māh, 96.)

"al-Nīq"

89: Leuthold collection = al-'Ush, "Rare Islamic Coins: Additions", in *Near Eastern Numismatics, Iconography, Epigraphy and History: Studies in Honor of George C. Miles* (ed. Dickran K. Kouymjian; Beirut, 1974), p.192 no.2.

Al-'Ush read this name as al-Nīq, but admitted that this was completely hypothetical. Both the first and second consonants (after the article) could be any of the five letters B, T, Th, N, or Y. Bathq, "flood-gate", is a common name element in Iraq, but none of the places named al-Bathq or Bathq . . . seem to have been large enough to have a mint. The epigraphical style is that of Damascus and the North, not Iraq.

HR

79: BN 1976.474.

Curjel suggested reading this name "HZ" as a short form of "Hūz", the presumed singular of Ahwāz. The mint would then be one of the components of that city. His suggestion requires a great many conjectures. Another possibility is that the letters are HR, an engraver's mistake for Harāt. A dirham of Harāt, 79, exists (ANS 1977.253.3); otherwise there are no reform type dirhams until 90. The Harāt dirham has seven reverse annulets, while the HR/HZ dirham has only five. AHBHR, discussed above, is probably yet another anomalous issue of Harāt.

A few general suggestions for future study may be made. The "mystery mints" are likely to be located in the North (Jazīra, Armenia, Adharbayjan, Arran and Georgia) or in the East (Iraq and Iran). They will not be in Syria, Egypt or the Maghrib, where minting was monopolized at Damascus, Ifrīqiyya and al-Andalus (reports of a dirham from Ḥimṣ open the possibility of new Syrian dirham discoveries, but they will surely be from the already known fals mints). In the years 79 - 83 dozens of mints operated in the East, while almost no dirhams are known from the North, so "mystery mints" of these years should be in Iraq or Iran. Conversely, in 83 and 84 all Eastern mints were closed to centralize minting at Wāsiṭ from 84 to 89, while a number of Northern mints are known, so the unidentified mint names of 84 - 89 were probably in Jazīra, Armenia or elsewhere in the North. It cannot be excluded that an Eastern town might have briefly had a mint for some special purpose, but there is another consideration. In 85 Wāsiṭ adopted a new, severely rectilinear, epigraphy that became characteristic of the East (starting in 90), while Damascus and the North retain a quite different curvilinear epigraphy. Also in Damascus and the North, after 80, the preposition *fī* is never used before the word *sana*, while in the East it is always found until 99 H. These characteristics can help to distinguish between issues of the North and the East. Starting in 90 there were again dozens of mints in Iraq and Iran, but nearly all were closed down again starting in 98. After 100, minting was severely restricted to a few well-known centers and there are no unknown mints except al-Sāmiyya, a mint of the chaotic era of the anti-Umayyad revolution.

Finally, there is a superb new reference for the administrative geography of Iraq and environs in the 7th - 8th centuries: Chapter 3 of Michael Morony, *Iraq . . .* which is almost identical to his article "Continuity and Change in the Administrative Geography of Late Sasanian and Early Islamic al-'Iraq", *Iran* 20 (1982), pp.1-50; in the latter publication there are more and better maps.

*Abbreviations*

ANS - American Numismatic Society.

al-Bakrī - Mahāb Darwīsh al-Bakrī, "Nawādir al-maskūkāt fī al-mathāf al-'irāqī", *Sumer* 26 (1970), pp.329-37.

BM - British Museum.

BN - Bibliothèque Nationale.

Dār al-Kutub - Norman D. Nicol, Raafat el-Nabarawy, and Jere L. Bacharach, *Catalog of the Islamic Coins, Glass Weights, Dies and Medals in the Egyptian National Library, Cairo*. American Research Center in Egypt / Catalogs. Malibu, CA: 1982.

Khedivial - Stanley Lane-Poole, *Catalogue of the Collection of Arabic Coins Preserved in the Khedivial Library at Cairo*, London, 1897.

Leuthold - Enrico Leuthold Jr., "Monete Cufiche Dell'I. R. Museo di Milano", *Notizie dal Chiostrò del Monastero Maggiore* 1968, pp.59-62.

Markov - A. Markov, *Inventarnii katalog musulmanskih monet Imperatorskavo Ermitazha*. St. Petersburg, 1896.

Milan - Civihe raccolte archeologiche e numismatiche, Milano (see Leuthold).

Morony - Morony Iraq . . .

NC - *Numismatic Chronicle*.

Naqshabandī/Bakrī - Nāṣir Maḥmūd al-Naqshabandī and Mahāb Darwīsh al-Bakrī, *al-Dirham al-umawī al-mu'arrab*, Baghdad, 1974.

NZ - *Numismatische Zeitschrift*.

RIC - George C. Miles, *Rare Islamic Coins*. ANS Numismatic Notes and Monographs 118. New York, 1950.

Tiesenhausen - V. Tiesenhausen, *Monety vostochnavo chalifata*. St. Petersburg, 1873.

Walker - John Walker, *A Catalogue of the Muhammadan Coins in the British Museum, II: A Catalogue of the Arab-Byzantine and Post-Reform Umayyad Coins . . .* (London, 1956).

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ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS

Inadvertently, the first draft of this paper was printed instead of the author's final copy. We apologise to the author and the reader. This sheet, providing the major corrections, is part of OP 22 and should be kept with it.

Messrs. Stephen Album, Samir Shamma and James Whitaker read the first draft of the article and made many helpful comments and corrections, including the following:

"Āstān"

- 89: a) Iraq Museum = Naqshabandi/Bakri p.6, no. 64  
b) Album collection

According to Album, this mint name is clearly different from "Anbīr" and "Anībār". There are four teeth after the *alif*, the first three of the same height and shorter than the fourth. Astan was the name of many places in Iraq and Diyar Mudar and meant merely "district" or "sub-province". Which one is meant by this mint name is uncertain.

"Anībār"

- 81 d) Sotheby auction 1/6/1987, no. 651.  
89 These coins are now assigned to Āstān (see above).

Janza

Ganja, which was known as Elisabethpol in Tsarist times, has been called Kirovabad since 1935.

"Marinān or Maziyan"

- 92 a) Yapi ve Kredi Bank = Tuncay Aykut, *Emevi Sikkeleri: Post Reform Umayyad Coins* (Yapi ve Kredi Bankasi Numismatik Yayinlari II; Istanbul, 1982, no. 96).  
b) Spink Zurich auction 18 (18/2/86) no. 153.

The letter before the *alif* looks like *yā* or *nūn* (or a similar letter) but does not seem to be connected to the next letter on the Spink specimen. The mint name has a point above and another below the preposition *bi*, two points vertically (actually, diagonally) below the letter that seems like *yā*, and a point above the last letter. Aykut identified the name as a corrupt form of Maysān, which is not *ipso facto* impossible, but there are no dirhams of Maysān or any other Iraqi mint, except Wāsiṭ, known for 92. One would prefer to look elsewhere. The Spink cataloguer proposes Marinān or Maziyan; possible readings, but with no indication that such places actually exist; and suggests that the style is typical of Jibāl province.

Abbreviations

The full reference for Morony's 1984 publication is Michael Morony, *Iraq After the Muslim Conquest*, Princeton UP 1984.