



The Importance of Coins in Historical and Archaeological Studies

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Abstract ;

Islamic coins are considered as an important source that reflects historical and Islamic civilization, serving as a truthful reflection of the era in which they were minted, depicting various economic, political, religious, social, artistic, and other aspects. Indeed, they are considered significant cultural innovations, with their importance lying in their material value. Consequently, coins serve as authentic historical documents, aiding in the understanding of a people's history through names, dates, and cities.

It is worth mentioning that the study of coins is highly credible and valuable due to the valuable information they provide about the economic, social, religious, and artistic conditions of a country. Coins, with their artistic patterns and inscriptions, serve as mirrors reflecting the beliefs and arts of the era in which they were produced.

The question that can be addressed in this research paper revolves around the importance of coins in historical and archaeological studies and other related fields as well as it explores the accuracy of the information conveyed by coins due to their multifaceted role, contributing to the understanding and analysis of the evolution of societies and cultures throughout the ages.

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introduction

To gain a comprehensive understanding of a nation, one must delve into its coins. They serve as the very essence of identity, unveiling all historical and geographical facets, transcending to shed light on artistic characteristics, religious beliefs, economic values, and political significance among nations.

Coins represent a significant phase and a pivotal stage in the economic ideology that Islamic societies did not reach until realizing their importance in constructing and shaping its organizational structures, preserving identity, and forging the relationship between rulers and the governed.

Historical, archaeological, and economic studies affirm the contribution of this vital role of this tangible vital source in consolidating state authority, instilling peace of mind, and contributing to the construction and advancement of civilizations.

They are among the most important historical sources for studying Islamic history, serving as a valuable resource for the history of Islamic society. The study of Islamic coins constitutes official documents whose value and accuracy are difficult to dispute, and the writings and decorations on them correct many historical misconceptions, elucidating

various economic, social, religious, and literary aspects.

The rationale for selecting this research topic includes:

- Considering the study of coins as the most credible due to the valuable information they provide about the political, economic, social, religious, and artistic conditions of countries. Additionally, they are one of the fundamental indicators contributing to writing Islamic history due to their information accuracy. Coins, with their artistic patterns and inscriptions, reflect the beliefs and arts of that era characterized by the integration of local and imported elements. The unparalleled credibility of coin studies, offering profound insights into the political, economic, social, religious, and artistic landscapes.
- They serve as fundamental indicators for reconstructing Islamic history due to their precision and reliability. Moreover, the artistic motifs and inscriptions on coins serve as mirrors reflecting the beliefs and artistry of their era, characterized by the fusion of local and foreign elements.
- The invaluable heritage preserved in museums across the nation, necessitating comprehensive study and analysis of coins.
- A firm commitment to recording history through tangible evidence.

- The richness and artistic diversity encapsulated within these coins.

- The imperative need within Algerian libraries for such scholarly investigations.

Thus, the topic of coins is worthy of study due to the evidence they provide, which cannot be overstated.

The Importance of Coins:

Coins serve as a gateway for various studies, allowing for an examination of several aspects, including:

- Economic and financial history
- Social and urban history
- Political and administrative history
- Artistic Heritage and Metal Techniques (Oustach, 2011;p.31-45)

1. Historical and Civilizational Significance:

It goes without saying that coins represent a crucial aspect of human civilization as they reflect and reveal the level of advancement and sophistication in artistic, organizational, and administrative aspects. This is evident in the meticulous weight measurements and precision in blending metals such as gold, silver, and copper. Beyond their metallurgical aspects, coins serve as historical documents aiding researchers in understanding various

cultural aspects prevalent during the time of their minting. They are considered authentic documents immune to doubt or skepticism, capable of challenging and disproving previous historical narratives based on accurate and clear information. (Al-Jubouri, 2011, p. 28-29).

It must be pointed out that coins also play a vital role in dispelling historical ambiguities, exposing facets of civilizations, and contributing as an assisting factor in building the civilizations of societies. Furthermore, they are indispensable for historical and archaeological researchers, serving as a pillar for the study of ancient economies and reflecting commercial activities and interactions among different societies worldwide. (Abdullah, 2009, p. 59-61)

Coins are among the most important archaeological sources for studying history, serving as official documents whose authenticity is ensured by state supervision to prevent forgery. They shed light on various historical events, revealing mysterious aspects and adding depth to historical narratives. Typically, coins unveil multiple indications about the identity of the nation that minted them, providing insights into various aspects of its civilization and historical glory. (Al-Wais, 2016).

Moreover, coins not only determine their own date of minting but also, when found in a specific location, assist in identifying

the time and place of their production. In this way, coins have made a significant contribution to enriching historical knowledge, especially when documents remain silent or fail to convey information. (Al-Anaswah, 2016, p. 157-158)

Due to the substantial role played by Islamic coins as authentic mirrors reflecting various aspects of the state – politically, religiously, doctrinally, economically, and socially – they have greatly contributed to unveiling hidden facts and realities overlooked by historical sources, travelers' accounts, and geographers. (Rizki, 2013, p. 15)

Coins, as official documents, are not easily subject to doubt and serve as the primary reference in case of conflicting narratives. The importance of coins as historical sources is emphasized in Saleh Ben Qorba's book on Moroccan coins, where he states, "...as they reveal many hidden facts and historical truths neglected by historians." (Ben Qorba, 1986, p. 13-15) Coins provide a clear historical guide through the date of minting, the ruler or emperor's name, and the state emblem, whether symbolic or religious. (Abdullah, 2009, p. 59-61)

Coins not only determine their own date but also, when discovered in a specific location, help in establishing the historical timeline of that place. For instance, finding a coin inside an old house allows us to compare the age of the residence with the

coin's date. If a coin is discovered in the foundation of a building, it must be older than the structure itself. Therefore, coins serve as crucial means for dating historical periods. (Oustach, 2011).

Additionally, the study of coins enables the unraveling of historical, economic, political, and other civilizational mysteries.

2.The Political and Military Importance of Coins.

Coins are considered one of the political documents and pillars of the state, bearing one of the three distinctive symbols of the king (coinage, supplication from the pulpits, and style). (Zaidan, 2012, p. 138).

They serve as an absolute emblem and a symbol of glory that every ruler is keen on adopting upon ascending the throne of their state (Al-Anaswah, 2016, p. 157-158). Immediately upon assuming power, rulers ensure the issuance of coins. The coinage not only reveals the glory of the nation but also reflects its relations with neighboring and contemporary countries. Additionally, it serves as a comprehensive record containing the names and titles of kings, sultans, and princes, shedding light on the political circumstances rulers experienced, indicating their strength or weakness.

Coins serve as evidence of control over affairs, and that is why most rebels sought to mint their own currency. Moreover, coins clarify political and geographical

boundaries of any state by mentioning the names of cities, sometimes indicating the nature of the relationship between the ruler and the ruled. (Al-Jubouri, 2011, p. 28-29)

Coins represent an aspect of the authority of the caliph, sultan, or ruler, or whoever acts on their behalf. (Ben Qorba, 1986, p. 13-15) As Ibn Khaldun said, they are a "necessary function for the king, as it distinguishes genuine from counterfeit among people during transactions." (Ibn Khaldun, n d, pp. 285, 321).

Additionally, Ibn Khaldun mentions, "Know that the structure of rule is based on two essentials: the first being the military and coercion, and the second being wealth, the backbone of those armies." (Ibn Khaldun, n d, pp. 285, 321)

Coins shed light on many political events that either confirm or refute the allegiance of governors or regions to the caliphate. Minting coins is considered a declaration of independence, affirming the pillars of governance, the success of state policies, and the expansion of its influence. (Zaitouni, 2011-2012, p. 12) Coins are a symbol among the king's symbols, with the king's name engraved on them. The classification of coins aids in the study of kings and provides a record of titles that highlight significant political events.

In coins, the manifestations of the state are also evident. We can discern the political situation, civil transactions, legal

relationships, standard weights, lines, and their developments, as well as other aspects of civilization that are related to them. The classification of these coins aids in studying ruling families in Islamic history and accurately determining the dates of their rule. The registration of mint cities on these coins illustrates the extent of influence of each ruler and the regions under their authority. (Al-Azzawi, 1958, p.5).

If we want to understand the political power of a certain entity, we must study its coins. Coins represent its identity, revealing all its historical and geographical characteristics, going beyond to illuminate its artistic features, religious beliefs, economic value, and political weight among various successive authorities. (Al-Anaswah, 2016, p. 157-158) They unveil the identity of many political groups that had a distinct entity enabling them to mint currency as a symbol of their sovereignty and active political presence. (Karbou, 2013).

Usually, a symbol of the city or state is placed on the back of the coin, often expressing a specific legend related to a particular occasion, such as commemorative coins. (Abdullah, 2009, p. 59-61).

In any case, history tells us that whenever a state attempted to build an empire, it sought to impose its currency and laws side by side. (Abdullah, 2009, p. 59-61).

3.Economic Importance

Coins hold significant economic importance due to the accurate information they provide. They stand out as the primary documents that help us understand the economy of any nation. As the saying goes, "To know a nation comprehensively, study its economic systems, especially its coins." Through coins, we gain insights into the economic conditions of nations. (Al-Jubouri, 2011, p. 28-29).

It is possible to infer the stages of economic development for any country through the study of its coins, revealing whether the country that minted these coins experienced economic crises, recessions, or witnessed prosperity and growth. Additionally, they help clarify the extent of advancement in the economic systems prevalent in these countries, as well as identifying the locations of mineral resources such as gold and silver. There are many unknown issues related to finances, and coins have played a role in uncovering these unknown matters. (Al-Jubouri, 2011, p. 28-29).

The study of coins also sheds light on the economic status of the Islamic world throughout historical periods by understanding the caliber and weight of the coins. (Al-Anaswah, 2016, p. 157-158) This is connected to the economies of the states and their policies, legislations, as well as various commercial and civil affairs. (Al-Azzawi, 1958, p. 5)

Coins are considered an authentic source with official value among historical sources. The type of coins (gold, silver, copper) and knowledge of their weight all contribute to studying economic and artistic history, confirming the accuracy and stability of information that cannot be easily questioned. (Ben Qorba, 1986, p. 13-15).

Furthermore, the study of coins can provide insights into the economic, urban, commercial, and military development based on the volume of coins issued at a specific time. Governments issued coins to pay soldiers' salaries, fund infrastructure projects and public services, and cover other transactions. Therefore, coins serve as a mirror reflecting the overall activity of any country. (Abdullah, 2009, p. 59-61).

4.Artistic importance

The artistic significance of coins is closely linked to Islamic arts. The inscriptions on coins help identify the historical writings engraved on them and study their political, historical, and religious implications. (Al-Anaswah, 2016, p. 157-158).

This topic is of interest to researchers in general historical studies, given its importance as a source for historians and researchers, especially in its connection to Islamic arts such as historical inscriptions and the evolution of Arabic calligraphy. The inscriptions on coins, containing titles, names, dates, or phrases and slogans of

rulers and sultans, can reveal many historical facts. (Ben Qorba, 1986, p. 13-15).

On this basis, coins can be considered a broad field of research and study in many aspects of the history of nations and states in general, and in the history of Islamic countries in particular. (Oustach, 2011) This makes the study of coins an important source for the history of myths, traditions, and arts in general. (Abdullah, 2009, p. 59-61).

The spread of coins beyond the borders where they were minted indicates the extent of political and commercial activity of certain countries (Abdullah, 2009, p. 59-1). The drawings on the back of the coins,

similar to stamps in our modern era, serve as a means of advertising and drawing attention to important events in the country, its leaders, or its symbols. (Abdullah, 2009, p. 59-61).

Coins serve as an important reference for studying various artistic styles and their evolution across different eras. They allow tracing the stages of rise and decline in these artistic forms, including fashion, decorative arts, and especially calligraphy. The evolution of Arabic calligraphy, going through various stages and styles, has added a unique aesthetic to Islamic coins, distinguishing them from others. (Al-Wais, 2016)

4. CONCLUSION

The science of numismatics has become one of the disciplines whose religious and artistic significance cannot be overlooked. Coins, being among the most credible documents and evidence, bear symbols, inscriptions, and geometric shapes that make them crucial for understanding historical eras deeply rooted in antiquity, often shrouded in mystery, errors, and historical misconceptions.

Numismatics is considered an important source for comprehending these historical periods that have been surrounded by much ambiguity. Since

coins are a fundamental component of identity, they hold significant value in the profound understanding of culture and history.

Furthermore, numismatics is deemed an effective tool in the hands of researchers, particularly those interested in economic history, as it serves as a necessary means for examining and studying exchange processes and tracking economic developments.

Appendix



A collection of coins dating back to the Ottoman period in Algeria

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