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**5th Simone Assemani
Symposium
on Islamic coins**

Rome, 29-30 September 2017

**Edited by
Bruno Callegher and
Arianna D'Ottone Rambach**

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PREFACE

The fifth *Simone Assemani Symposium on Islamic coins* was held in Rome on 29-30 September 2017 (cf. programme): a happy and necessary return to the city where our eponym spent his youth, between family and the Maronite College¹ before leaving for Lebanon, the Assemani homeland.

At Rome, on 23 and 24 September 2011, in collaboration with “Sapienza” University of Rome – Italian Institute of Oriental Studies, the Department of Humanities of the University of Trieste and the Vatican Library, there was a meeting of scholars of Islamic coins, their origins and growth over the centuries. This enriched the research, certainly with innovative methodology, on the coins of the Umayyad and Sasanian era, sigillography and on historical-epigraphic topics, especially in numismatics². The positive reception of both the initiative and the volume of the Proceedings suggested continuing these meetings: three meetings were in their own way pioneering but they also consolidated a system of relationships not to be dropped. Thus the 4th Symposium, which was held in Trieste on 25-27 September 2014, tackled mainly the history of studies on Islamic coins especially in its perspective as a discipline set within the vast ambits of Orientalism. Instead, as regards Simone Assemani (SA), the discovery was of great importance of documents and papers referring to unexplored years of his human *peregrinatio*, i.e. his prolonged stay in Trieste, employed in translations and management activities at a merchant company, before moving to Venice to work with Giacomo Nani³.

¹ P. RAPHAËL, *Le rôle du Collège maronite romain dans l'orientalisme aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, Beyrouth 1950, 142-144.

² B. CALLEGHER & A. D'OTTONE, *The 3rd Simone Assemani Symposium on Islamic Coins*, Trieste 2012.

³ The numerous contributions can be found in B. CALLEGHER & A. D'OTTONE RAMBACH, *4th Simone Assemani Symposium on Islamic Coins*, Trieste 2015.

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FONTES INEDITI NUMISMATICAE ORIENTALIS

All numismatists know about the interesting and worthwhile initiative curated, amongst others, by François de Callataÿ, Federica Missere Fontana, Bernhard Woytek, and designated FINA: *Fontes Inediti Numismaticae Antiquae*. Having realised that numismatic studies were essentially based on published works, but that other documents remained in the shadows, unexplored, they went ahead with a search for unpublished material, especially the correspondence between antiquarians and collectors, but also manuscripts, testaments or memoirs of scholars. A goldmine gradually emerged of memoranda, exchanges, discussions, enthusiasms: the cognitive substratum of 18th century numismatics, all of which will greatly consolidate our discipline. The curators set 1800 as the chronological limit (in point of fact in coincidence with the publication of *Doctrina Nummorum Veterum* by Joseph Eckhel: 1737-1798) and confined the investigation to classical numismatics (primarily Greco-Roman).

Nonetheless, although to a lesser extent and despite imperfect knowledge of the sources, in the same period (17th – 18th centuries) interest also arose in the Orient (see Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, Pantheon Books, New York 1978): there were consequently scholarly pioneers who were attracted by the coinage of little known territories and kingdoms, often steeped in mysterious, legendary histories. For a list of the first publications in which single oriental coins (especially Islamic) appear, the monumental catalogues of Christian Dekesel are invaluable. A recent chronological record of the Islamic numismatic bibliography (Marco Callegari, *Alle origini della bibliografia sulla numismatica islamica*, in Bruno Callegher and Arianna D'Ottone

Rambach (eds.): *The 4th Simone Assemani Symposium on Islamic Coins*, Trieste, 26/27 September 2014, Trieste, EUT Edizioni Università di Trieste, 2015, pp. 223-242) indicates as one of the first significant works the *Bibliographia antiquaria, sive Introductio in notitiam scriptorum, qui antiquitates hebraicas, graecas, romanas et christianas scriptis illustraverunt* by Johann Albert Fabricius, printed at Hamburg in 1713. It reports the presence of a coin issued in 1177 by Saladin in the collection of Carolus Cato Curtius, i.e. Charles Caton de Court (1654-1694). This is also reported in the 1695 edition of the work by Andreas Morell, *Specimen universae rei nummariae antiquae*: a certain collectors' interest in oriental coinage, even if modest, can thus be deduced, which is confirmed in various other publications preceding the bibliographic sylloge of 1713. If these references are prodromal, the two key publications were probably those of Georg Jacob Kehr (1692-1740):

- *Monarchiae asiatico-saracenicae status qualis VII et IX post Christum natum seculum fuit, ex nummis argenteis prisca Arabum scriptura kufica ... et nuper in littore Maris Balthici prope Gedanum effossis*, Lipsiae 1724
- *Monarchae Mogolo-Indici, vel Mogolis magni Aurenk Szeb numisma Indo-Persicum argenteum quinquelibrare rarissimum in solennem renovationem et confirmationem clientelarum urbis ac sedis imperatoriae Dehli, nunc dictae Dschihanabad, signatum*, Lipsiae 1725.

The geography is not casual. We had been expecting that oriental coinage would have interested English or French scholars, but it was among the orientalist of the Baltic countries, particularly in Sweden, that collectors' interest in Islamic numismatics spread following the discovery of a great quantity of *dirhams*, which arrived there owing to contacts that developed along the trade route of the Volga. Regarding this, the pioneering works of G. I. Kehr, *De statu monarchiae Asiatico-Saracenicae e nummis Cuficis prope Gedanum effossis*, Leipzig 1724, the brochure *Nummi Saraceni anno 1712 in agro Slesvicensi aratro detecti* in 1732 by Henricus Scholz, or the more exacting C. Aurivillius, *Disquisitio de numis arabicis, in Sviogothia reperiis*, Upsala 1775. These were continued in B. Tiesenhausen, *Moneti vostochnavo khalifata (Monnaies des Khalifes Orientaux)*, St. Petersburg 1873, pp. XLIV and XLVII and subsequently listed in L.A. Mayer, *Bibliography of Moslem Numismatics, India excepted*, 2nd ed., London 1954; W.S.W. Vaux, *On the discovery of cufic coins in Sweden, and on the shores of the Baltic*, "The Numismatic Chronicle", 13 (1850-1851), pp. 14-23.

We might also add that attention to oriental coins, first and foremost Islamic, was one of the outcomes of the centuries-old undertaking in the registration of numismatic

data, initiated by Charles XI in 1666 with the creation of the *Collegium Antiquitatum*. The oriental (Islamic) section was united first in C.J. Tornberg, *Nummi Cufici Regii Numophylacii Holmiensis, quos omnes in terra Sueciae repertos*, Uppsala 1848 and later in the series *Corpus nummorum saeculorum IX-XI qui in Suecia reperti sunt*, Stockholm 1975-1987 and *Commentationes de nummis saeculorum IX-XI in Suecia repertis*, Stockholm 1987-2001.

Large collections were formed in two Baltic cities: in Gottingen (C. Boehring, *Notizen zur Sammlung orientalischer Münzen der Universität Göttingen*, pp. 61-81, in part. 66-68, and in Rostock (K. Zimmermann, *Inventare des Rostocker Akademischen Münzkabinetts*, pp. 47-59), both studies in *Islamische Numismatik* cited below, but also papers in the *4th Assemani Symposium*).

Much less, and mostly scholarly repetition, was done in the rest of Europe. Certainly, in 1723 the *Sicilia numismatica* by Filippo Paruta (1552-1629) was reprinted in Lyons, with additions by Leonardo Agostino and under the supervision of the Dutchman Siegbert Havercamp. A general change can be dated to the mid-18th century. Publications regarding Kufic nummi multiplied: in 1749 Flaminio Corner recorded the finding of a substantial hoard of *dinars* during the demolition of a church in Venice; ten years later, in Paris, Jean- Jacques Barthélemy published the treatise *Dissertation sur les médailles arabes*. But they were in particular the years of Johann Jacob Reiske, Oluf Gerhard Tychsen, Carsten Niebuhr, Carl Aurivillius, Jonas Hallenberg, and William Marsden (1754-1836), in his turn a pioneer with his *Numismata orientalia* on the study of Eastern Asian coinage, but especially J.G.C. Adler, *Museum cuficum Borgianum* 1782 and successive editions, as well as Simone Assemani. The collections had been formed, publishing them became urgent (see S. Heidemann, *Die Entwicklung der Methoden in der Islamischen Numismatik im 18. Jahrhundert. War Johann Jacob Reiske ihr Begründer?*, in *Johann Jacob Reiske – Leben und Wirkung. Ein Leipziger Byzantinist und Begründer der Orientalistik im 18. Jahrhundert*, G. Ebert und T. Hanstein eds., Leipzig, Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, pp. 147-202). Yet few scholars mastered Arabic; some more or less boasted about it as inferred from the correspondence of Simone Assemani including on the Vella case, both with Oluf Gerhard Tychsen, and with Gaetano Cattaneo, keeper of the Numismatic Museum in Milan, with whom he discussed a coin today defined as Arab-Byzantine. Even more uncertain was the knowledge of other languages of East Asia. The wide range of the scientific discussion in those letters (attributions, errors in interpretation and linguistic queries, because the epigraphic/paleographic part is obviously more than essential to the understanding not only of Arabic numismatics but also for Sassanian, Indian and Chinese coins) suggested conducting a census and making the documentation available that will lead to systematic editions of the 19th century, with a delay of almost a century with respect to classical numismatics. The interest is not so much in errors or new attributions, but rather to investigate the motivations for collecting oriental

money, retrace the itineraries of the exchanges, understand the contribution of travellers or missionaries, study ancient discoveries of single coins or hoards, up to the forming of the big collections. An example is that of L.L. Sawaszkiewicz, *Le Génie de l'Orient, commenté par ses monuments monétaires*, a catalogue of the 2683 coins in the “Cabinet Musulman”, printed in Brussels in 1846, complete with 105 drawings. Similarly, because it is near us, the Numismatic Cabinet in Milan deserves renewed attention, where specimens were gathered from the Arrigoni, Collato, Assemani collections and in particular, I.G. Lipsius, numismatist and bibliophile of Dresden, author of the famed *Bibliotheca Numaria, sive Catalogus auctorum qui usque ad finem seculi XVIII de re monetaria aut numis scripserunt*, Lipsiae 1801. An unexplored field of enquiry is that of the engraving of plates with coins with a Kufic/Arabic inscription or in other oriental languages: who were the engravers and what linguistic expertise did they have (did they copy or actually read?) because few knew oriental languages. In the letters the correspondents very often accompanied their descriptions of coins with *frottage*, in order to overcome the margin of error in the transcriptions.

All this material and the work of numerous numismatists deserves to be cited, brought again to the attention of scholars, both to report their existence and to initiate a history of the studies in the wake of the consolidated experience that has been gained over the years on classical numismatics.

The 5th Simone Assemani Symposium appeared to be a suitable occasion to propose FINO, *Fontes Inediti Numismaticae Orientalis* (see logo) in search for a possible method to make unpublished documents available: correspondence, memoirs, discussions, descriptions of collections or sale of collections, records or diaries of journeys, with particular attention to the coins of eastern countries.

The procedures could be those most sustainable and at the same time widely accessible: create a *repository archive* in which to transfer PDF files of studies, editions of documents, photographic material, reproductions of letters and anything considered relevant. Experience teaches us that good intentions can only become reality through people's work. For this it is proposed to create a coordinating board, with one or two colleagues from each country who freely join forces motivated by historical-numismatic research. We could also fix a first appointment in 2020. On that occasion a chronological limit will be defined [perhaps the years of publication of the catalogues by Henri-Michel Lavoix (1820-1892) and Stanley Lane-Poole (1854-1932), as criterion for the collection and subsequent publication of the documents in order to make them accessible, primarily via consultation on line.

The success of this proposal is entrusted to the cooperation of those who would be willing to actively participate.