

The Coinage of 'Obayda b. Al-Muhāger, ('Amīr Al-Mū'mīnīn Al-khawārej in 'Iraq , 256H./870 AD.)

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Abstract: 'Obayda b. Al-Muhāger was one of the followers of Musāwer Al-khārejī ,who revolted against the 'Abbasid Caliph in Al- Mawṣel. A quarrel and disunity happened between 'Obayda and Musāwer. The reason behind this was a matter in Al-khawārej belief . They fought each other and Musāwer eventually defeated 'Obayda and killed him. Historical sources have no enough information about the quarrel which happened between Musawer and 'Obayda. However Islamic coins are considered an important source for studying Islamic history and shedding more light on this important historical event. In this regard two rare dirhams in the name of 'Obayda were minted in Naṣībīn, dated in 256H. The two Dirhams were never published before. These are the only samples known in the world till now. The first dirham in FINT at Tübingin University in Germany. The second dirham was among the collection of Dr. Ilisch Lutz in Germany and now preserved in the American Numismatic Society in New York .These two rare dirhams, I will try to show, can be of capital important in shedding more light on this important historical event.

Introduction

Abstract: 'Obayda b. Al-Muhāger was one of the followers of Musāwer Al-khārejī, who revolted against the 'Abbasid Caliph in Al- Mawṣel. A quarrel and disunity happened between 'Obayda and Musāwer. The reason behind this was a matter in Al-khawārej belief. They fought each other and Musāwer eventually defeated 'Obayda and killed him. Historical sources have no enough information about the quarrel which happened between Musawer and 'Obayda. However Islamic coins are considered an important source for studying Islamic history and shedding more light on this important historical event. In this regard two rare dirhams in the name of 'Obayda were minted in Naṣībīn, dated in 256H. The two Dirhams were never published before. These are the only samples known in the world till now. The first dirham in FINT at Tübingin University in Germany. The second dirham was among the collection of Dr.

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Musāwer b. 'Abd Al-Ḥamīd b. Musāwer Al-Šārī Al-Baglī Al-Mawṣelī was one of Al-khawārej leaders. He revolted against the 'Abbasid Caliph in Al-Bawāzeg - near Al- Mawṣel - in Ragab 252H. /866AD. (Al-Ṭabrī 1985: 9/188; Ibn Al-Athīr 1998: 6/186-187). He succeeded in defeating the 'Abbasid leader Bendār Al-Ṭabarī in 253H, then attacked Ḥelwan (Al-Ṭabrī 1985: 9/189; Ibn Al-Athīr 1998: 6/190). Musāwer was able to invade and occupy most of Al-Mawṣel territories. He was strong enough to defeat Abū Al-Ḥassan b. Ayoub b. Aḥmed b. 'Omar b. Al-Khaṭṭāb Al-'Adawī Al-Taḡlebī- who succeeded his father in Al-Mawṣel- in Gumada I, 254H (Ibn Al-Athīr 1998: 6/195). In 255H. /869AD, Musāwer succeeded in occupying Al- Mawṣel, after the 'Abbasid ruler 'Abd allah



Fig. 1: AR Dirham Nisibin 256 H . (FINT,Tubingen,Inv. EA6E2,W. : 2.41gm., D.:24mm, unpublished).

b. Sulaymān escaped. Then, Musāwer turned to Al-Ḥadītha - Ḥadīthat Al- Mawṣel – where he settled down there and took it as a place for his residence (Ibn Al-Athīr 1998: 6/205).

Among the followers of Musāwer there was a man from Al-khawārej called ‘Obayda from Banī Zuhayer Al-‘Amrussī as mentioned by Al-Ṭabarī (Al-Ṭabrī 1985: 9/229), or Al- ‘Amrawī according to Ibn Al-Athīr (Ibn Al-Athīr 1998: 6/219). Disagreement broke out between ‘Obayda and Musāwer. The reason behind this was a matter in Al-khawārej belief, the repentance of the mistaken. Musāwer thought that hre repentance was accepted, where as ‘Obayda said it was not accepted. The quarrel over belief issues turned to a military conflict. ‘Obayda gathered a large group of followers and went to Musāwer, who proceeded from Al-Ḥadītha. They met in the suburb of Guhayna -near Al- Mawṣel - in Gumada I, 256H. /870AD.

They fought each other. Musāwer was able to defeat ‘Obayda , kill him, and occupy a lot of ‘Iraq states (Al-Ṭabrī 1985: 9/229; Ibn Al-Athīr 1998: 6/219). Al-khawārej sedition continued under the leadership of Musāwer till his death in 263H. /877 AD. (Ibn Al-Athīr 1998: 6/272).

Although historical sources have no enough information about the quarrel which took place between Musawer Al-Khārijī and one of his followers ‘Obayda from Banī Zuhayer Al-‘Amrussī or Al-‘Amrawī, Islamic coins are considered an important source for studying Islamic history and shedding more light on important historical event. There are two rare dirhams in the name of ‘Obayda, were minted in Naṣībīn dated 256H. These are the only samples known in the world till now.

In this research we publish and study both of them for the first time. The first dirham preserved in FINT, at Tübingin University in Germany (Inv. EA6E2, W. : 2. 41gr. , D. : 24mm, fig. 1). The second dirham was among the collection of Dr. Ilisch Lutz in Germany. It was among a hoard found in ‘Amūdyā in ‘Iraq⁽¹⁾, (W. : 2. 691gr. , D. : 24mm, fig. 2). It was bought by the American Numismatic Society in New York in 1987 (The American Numismatic Society 1990: p. 14, No. 14).

Obverse and reverse fields within double circle and one circle around obverse and reverse margins. Its inscriptions as follows:

Obv. Field:

لا إله إلا الله
 وحده لا شريك له
 لا حكم إلا لله ولو
 كره المشركون

Margin:

بسم الله ضرب هذا الدرهم بنصيبين سنة ستة وخمسين
ومائتين

Rev. Field:

الله
محمد
رسول الله
عبيدة بن المهاجر
أمير المؤمنين

Margin:

محمد رسول الله أرسله بالهدى ودين الحق ليظهره على
الدين كله ولو كره المشركون

But inscriptions in obverse and reverse margins in the second dirham were obliterated.

The first Kalima " لا اله إلا الله وحده لا شريك له " was inscribed in the first and second lines in obverse field which agree with the second Kalima " محمد رسول الله " which came in the first and second lines in reverse field in the declaration of the embracement of 'Obayda of

Islam. The first and second Kalima represent the general slogan for all the Islamic sects with their different doctrines in every place and time for the Sunni, the Shiites and Al-khawārej.

The first and second kalmia agree with the Qur'anic quotation which was inscribed in reverse margin (48: 29 and 9: 33)⁽²⁾. This slogan was also accepted by all the Islamic groups of Sunnis, Shiites and Khawarej as it appeared on all their coins. The Shiites had their own explanation which was different from the Sunnis and Al-khawārej.

The slogan " لا حكم إلا لله و لو كره المشركون " No Rule but for God and If Polytheists Hated" was inscribed in the third and fourth lines in obverse field. The phrase " لا حكم إلا لله " "No Rule but for God" was the slogan raised by Al-khawārej in the battle of Şaffin in 37H. , after the declaration of arbitration between 'Alī b. Abū Ṭāleb and Mu'aūya b. Abū Sufiān, Al-Khawarej refused the principle of arbitration and said⁽³⁾

حكّمون في أمر الله - عز و جل - الرجال. لا حكم إلا لله و لا طاعة لمن عصي الله.

You rule in the matter of Allah, there is no rule but for God and no obedience for who disobey Allah. (Al-Ṭabrī 1985: 5/30; Al-Mas'ūdī n. d. : 3/146; Al-Şhrīstānī n. d: 1/204; Ibn Al-Athīr 1998: 3/212). 'Alī realized what Al-Khawarej seek to declare by this slogan, he replied to them by saying:

الله أكبر. كلمة حق يراد بها باطل . إن سكتوا عممناهم . وإن تكلموا حججناهم . و إن خرجوا علينا قاتلناهم

Allah is Greater, a word of right to mean null and void, if they keep silent, we popularize them, if they speak, we convince them, and if they revolt, we fight them" (Al-Ṭabrī 1985: 5/38; Ibn Al-Athīr 1998: 3/212-213).



Fig. 2: AR Dirham Nisibin 256 H. (American Numismatic society, W. : 2.691gm., D.:24mm, unpublished)

This slogan لا حكم إلا لله was used as a general slogan for all the groups of Al-khawārej. It was used for the first time by Qatrī b. Al-Fugā'h (68-77H. / 688-697AD) the prince of believers Al-khawārej Al-Azāreqa on the Arab - Sassanid dirhams minted in many mints , dated 69H - 77H. (Ramadān 1998: 317-318).

The slogan appeared again on the Islamic dirhams struck in Al-Kufa dated 128H, by Al-Ḍaḥak b. Qays Al-Šībānī (Wurtzel 1978: 185).

, such as a dirham preserved in FINT, at Tübingin University (Inv. AE4B1 , fig. 3, unpublished)⁽⁴⁾.

This slogan لا حكم إلا لله appeared after that on the Islamic dirhams struck in Tanbūk⁽⁵⁾, dated 133H. (Wurtzel 1978: 186) , such as a dirham preserved in FINT, at Tübingin University (Inv. AE4C1, fig. 4, unpublished)⁽⁶⁾.

The slogan of Al-Khawārej "لا حكم إلا لله" "There is No Rule but for God" appeared on the coin of 'Obayda belonged to Al-Khawārej but he added "و لو كره المشركون" "If the Polytheists Hated" to this slogan to become a special slogan among the groups of Al-Khawārej. The phrase "و لو كره المشركون" has an important significance in this slogan, particularly in the context which surrounded the disobedience of 'Obayda for his leader Musāwer. It seems that he was using this phrase to refer to Musāwer and his group. The reason behind this was the juristic quarrel between both of them on the question of the repentance of the mistaken. It seems that this juristic quarrel and the debate around some juristic questions among Al-Khawārej turned into a military conflict.

All of this was motivated 'Obayda to take a distinguished slogan for himself. He had



Fig. 3: AR Dirham Al-Kufa 128 H . (FINT, Tübingen, Inv. AE4B1, unpublished).

political and juristic targets. The same slogan "لا حكم إلا لله" raised by Musāwer because it was a general slogan for Al-Khawārej but 'Obayda added the phrase "و لو كره المشركون" "If the Polytheists Hated" to distinguish his group and followers after his dissidence from Musāwer⁽⁷⁾. It, further, means to attack Musāwer. because of the juristic quarrel between both of them 'Obayda inscribed his name in the third line in reverse field as 'Obayda b. Al-Muhāger "عبيدة بن المهاجر". The name "المهاجر" is not clear on coins⁽⁸⁾, and was not mentioned in the historical sources. Al-Ṭabarī mentioned that he was from Banī Zuhayer Al-'Amrūsī while Ibn Al-Athīr said Al-'Amrawī. Both of them have no presence on these two dirhams.

'Obayda took for himself the title of أمير "Prince of Believers" and inscribed it on the fourth line of reverse field to declare that he is the prince of believers of Al-Khawārej and

not Musāwer. This is after his juristic quarrel and military quarrel with Musāwer. That is why he declared for all Al-Khawārej that he is the new prince of believers. It is well-known that Al-Khawārej, when revolting, took a prince named "prince of believers". Qatrī b. Al-Fugā'h was the first to have this title from Al-Khawārej and inscribed it on his coinage.

Mint name and date were inscribed in the obverse margin. These dirhams were minted in "Nasībīn" and dated 256H⁽⁹⁾. The availability of the mint name "Nasībīn" has a special importance in studying the revolution of 'Obayda against Musāwer because the historical sources do not mention to the territories occupied by 'Obayda taking it as a residence for his revolution. But the inscribing of Nasībīn as a mint on these coins indicates that this city was the center for 'Obayda's revolution. He took it as a place for his migration. The occupation of Nasībīn clarifies the extent of power reached by 'Obayda and his followers. This power enabled him to occupy Nasībīn which was considered the greatest and the best in Al-Gazīrah territories in 'Iraq. Some geographists considered it was better than Al-Mawşel (Le Strange 1985: 124-125).

Nasībīn mint started issuing coins during the 'Abbasid period since year 251H. (Zambaur 1968: 256). That is why when 'Obayda revolted against Musāwer and occupied Nasībīn, he found its mint working on the production of 'Abbasid coins. Thus, he used it to issue these coins in his name.

These dirhams dated 256H. We notice that the number of the units was written "سنة" gender and not "ست" by the feminine form as usual on the coins. We notice that the number of hundreds "مائتين" was obliterated in the dirham

of the American Numismatic Society.

The date of this dirham corresponds with what was mentioned by Al-Ṭabarī that 'Obayda revolution against Musāwer was in the same year (256H.) Al-Ṭabarī mentioned that 'Obayda revolution against Musāwer ended in Gumada I in 256H when he defeated 'Obayda and killed him. However, the narration of Ibn AL-Athīr is not clear in this matter. He dealt with this incident among the incidents of the year 256H. He mentioned that the defeat of 'Obayda and his death was in Gumada I in 257H. What was narrated by Al-Ṭabarī is certain. This was supported by these coins also.

It remains for us to comment on the weight of these two dirhams. The first dirham preserved in Tübingin University weights 2. 41gr. The second dirham preserved in the American Numismatics Society is about 2. 69gr. Both of them were below than the normal legislative weight of



Fig. 4: AR Dirham Tanbuk 133 H. (FINT, Tubingen, Inv. AE4C1, unpublished).

the Islamic dirham (2. 97gr.)⁽¹⁰⁾. This is due to the fact that the aim of these coins is the public relation and propaganda side to the revolution of 'Obayda and not the economical side. This is in addition to the weakness of the economic possibilities of such a revolution, which didn't enable this revolutionist to issue his dirhams according to the legislative weight as would be the case with stable dynasties that have stable economic resources for their Mints.

The Conclusion

In the light of what I pointed out in the last few pages , the importance of Islamic coins as an invaluable source for studying Islamic history should become clear. These coins are symbols of the king or sultan. The revolutionists and dissidents realized the important role played by the coins for public relation, that is why they issued them. They recorded on them their names, principles and the slogans on which their revolutions were based. This is quite clear in our study of the two dirhams struck by 'Obayda b. Al-Muhāger, one of Al-Khawārej leaders. The historical sources referred to his revolution briefly , and this did not help us to understand the religious and political dimensions of his revolution. This was done by the coins which are considered an important source to study such revolutions. It was also a definite and unquestionable document because it was struck by the revolutionist himself.

It became clear through studying these two dirhams that the full name of this revolutionist is "عبيدة بن المهاجر" 'Obayda b. Al-Muhāger, although the name "المهاجر" is not clear on coins , and was not mentioned in the historical sources. They said that he is 'Obayda from Banī Zuhayer Al-'Amrūsī according to Al-Ṭabarī, or as Ibn

Al-Athīr said Al-'Amrawī. Both of them have no presence on these two dirhams.

The historical sources have ignored the great importance of the revolution of 'Obayda b. Al-Muhāger against Musāwer - intentionally or unintentionally. They did not discover the significance of the quarrel between them. They referred to the juristic quarrel between them. But 'Obayda to be called the title "prince of believers" clarifies the extension of quarrel to the political side and the leadership of Al-Khawārej. 'Obayda declared that he was the new prince of believers to Al-Khawārej. This was before the quarrel turned to the military conflict in 256H/870AD. All of this came to an end with the murder of 'Obayda.

The importance of 'Obayda revolution was clear in the fact that though it was short we have these two dirhams. This dates back in the first level to the occupation of 'Obayda of Nasībīn the most greatest country of Al-Gazīrah. He made it the place of his immigration. This was not mentioned in the historical sources. But the coins discovered clarify the geographical extension of 'Obayda revolution. Its headquarters was in the city of Nasībīn, when he used its active mint - meanwhile-in issuing these coins.

Furthermore, the coins struck by 'Obayda carried the new slogan "لا حكم الا لله و لو كره" "There is No Rule but for God and if the Polytheists Hated", adopted by himself after his leadership of Al-Khawārej. This slogan was marked by 'Obayda revolution and his coins. It was never used before or after 'Obayda on the coins of any group of Al-Khawārej. 'Obayda added the phrase "و لو كره المشركون" "If the Polytheists Hated" to the general slogan of Al-Khawārej that is "There is No Rule but

for God" to distinguish himself and his group. Moreover, he used the juristic quarrel with Musāwer to accuse him of polytheism and disbelief. He declared that he was the prince of believers of Al-Khawarej and their leader ever

if the polytheists hated.

As for the date of 'Obayda coins, it agreed with the date determined by the historical sources as the start of 'Obayda revolution against Musāwer which was in 256H.

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ملخص: عبدة بن المهاجر من أتباع مساور الخارجي الذي ثار بالموصل ضد الخلافة العباسية. وقد حدث خلاف في عقيدة الخوارج بين مساور وعبدة، واقتتلا بسبب ذلك، وانتهى الأمر بمقتل عبدة علي يد مساور. ولم تذكر المصادر التاريخية معلومات كافية عن هذه الحادثة، ولكن النقود- التي تعد مصدرا مهما من مصادر التاريخ الإسلامي- ألفت الضوء عليها، من خلال درهمنين نادرين باسم عبدة ضرب نصيين سنة ٢٥٦هـ، لم يسبق نشرهما أو دراستهما من قبل. وهما النموذجان الوحيدان المعروفان على مستوى العالم لهذا الخارجي؛ الأول محفوظ بمركز المسكوكات الإسلامية بجامعة توبنجن بألمانيا، والثاني كان ضمن مجموعة الدكتور اليش لوتز بألمانيا، ثم انتقل إلى ملكية جمعية النميات الأمريكية بنيويورك سنة ١٩٨٧م.

Notes

- 1 Many Thanks to Dr. Ilisch Lutz, who allowed to me to publish this coins, and give me all information about 'Amūdīā dirham, which recorded in manuscript, Ilisch Lutz MSCI. Description of 'Amūdīā Hoard , part I, No. 258.
- 2 This obliterated part on the second dirham which is preserved in the American Numismatics Society.
- 3 The first one say this slogan Yazīd b. 'Aṣem ,or 'Arūah b. 'Audayah.(Al-Ṭabrī 1985:5/30; Ibn Sahl Al-'skarī 1987:250).
- 4 Inscriptions as follows, Obv. Field: لا إله إلا الله وحده/ لا شريك له
Inner Margin: بسم الله ضرب هذا الدرهم بالكوفة سنة ثمان وعشرين ومئة
Outer Margin: لا حكم إلا لله
Rev. Field: الله أحد الله/ الصمد لم يلد و/لم يولد ولم يكن/ له كفوا أحد
Margin: محمد رسول الله أرسله بالهدى و دين الحق ليظهره علي الدين كله ولو كره المشركون
- 5 Some scholars read mint name Bīābard (Wurtzel 1978: 186) ()
- 6 () Inscriptions as follows , Obv. Field: لا إله إلا الله وحده/ لا شريك له
Inner Margin: بسم الله ضرب هذا الدرهم بتنبوك سنة ثلث وثلثين ومئة
Outer Margin: لا حكم إلا لله
Rev. Field: الله أحد الله/ الصمد لم يلد و/لم يولد ولم يكن/ له كفوا أحد
Margin: محمد رسول الله أرسله بالهدى و دين الحق ليظهره علي الدين كله ولو كره المشركون
- 7 The distinguished slogan for some of Al-Khawarej groups was previously taken by 'Atṭya b. Al-Aswad (70-77H/689-696AD) after his dissidence from Al-Khawarej Al-Azareqa under the leadership of Qatrī b. Al-Fuḡā'h.This slogan was used on the coins of Al-Khawarej Al-Azareqa , so 'Atṭya b. Al- Aswad used another new slogan on his coins which is:

" In the Name of Allah the Ruler **بِسْمِ اللَّهِ وَلِي الْأَمْرِ**"

. (Ramadan 1998 ,220-221)

- 8 Dr. Ilisch Lutz read this name **الحماجر**,but the letters on coins near **المهاجر** not **الحماجر**
- 9 This obliterated part on the second dirham which is preserved in the American Numismatics Society.
- 10 The 'Abbasid dirham's minted in Nasībīn dated 251H weights 3.07gr,3.12gr.dated 272H weights 4.7gr.(Al-'Ush 1984:No.2021,2024,2073)

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