

NOTAS BIBLIOGRÁFICAS

ISLAMIC COINS AND THEIR CATALOGUES II: THE COLLECTION OF THE ACADEMIA DE LA HISTORIA

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This is a most welcome book.¹ It is the first proper publication of the Andalusí coins in the collection of the Real Academia de la Historia in Madrid. Another volume is to catalogue the non-Andalusí Islamic coins in the collection, and a third volume will offer material on the study and formation of the collection, looking at origins and provenances, donations, purchases and finds, based on the rich documentation in the archives of the Academia. The volume is not only welcome, it is also important, in several ways. The contents of this collection have not been unknown in the past; they have been used by earlier scholars quite often in the preparation of catalogues and other studies of Andalusí coins; but we have never had a collected scientific publication of the coins in the collection, nor a study of the Academia's coins as a collection. This publication makes available for scholarship (and, it should be said, for coin-lovers as well) a solid catalogue of an important collection; it offers descriptions of every single coin (apart from a few unclassifiable specimens) in the collection; it also offers (mostly digitalised) reproductions of all of them (with the same exceptions), something which, for obvious reasons of expense, is generally rare in the extreme in coin catalogues. We owe thanks to those who produced this catalogue, Alberto Canto García, Tawfiq ibn Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm and Fátima Martín Escudero, and also to the many individuals and organisations who encouraged the project and supported the publication of a work that will need to be on the desk of anyone who works with the coins of al-Andalus.

The collection of Andalusí coins in the Real Academia de la Historia is important, both for the history of al-Andalus and its numismatics and for the

¹ This is a review article of Canto García, Alberto, Ibrāhīm, Tawfiq ibn Ḥāfiẓ, y Martín Escudero, Fátima, *Monedas Andalusíes: Real Academia de la Historia, Catálogo del Gabinete de Antigüedades*, Madrid, Real Academia de la Historia, 2000, 380 pp. many illustrations (Publicaciones del Gabinete de Antigüedades de la Real Academia de la Historia. II. Monedas y medallas, 1.3). For an earlier article in this series see Wasserstein, David J., "Islamic Coins and their catalogues: a problem case", *Al-Qanṭara*, XX, 1999, 221-33.

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history of scholarship in the area. In the field of numismatics, especially of Islamic numismatics, the history of scholarship, as distinct from the history of the societies issuing the coins under study, is significant in itself, and this volume constitutes a useful contribution in this regard as well as in others. When the third volume is published it will be possible to follow in detail the history of the growth of the collection, and the development of scholarly interest in these coins (among much other material from the Islamic past) at the heart of a major nineteenth-century society, one where the twin features of European enterprise and scholarship on Islam came together in a unique fusion.

The collection goes back to the eighteenth century, and a very large amount of documentation about it survives. This is of help in understanding not only the numismatic history of al-Andalus but also the development of scientific and scholarly interest in such material and in the broader history of al-Andalus, in particular as part of the history of the Iberian peninsula more broadly considered. The special position of the Academia de la Historia in Spanish cultural and intellectual life, and of Arabic studies among its membership, means that the history of this collection is no less interesting and important than the collection itself and its contribution to the study of Islam in the peninsula.

The history of the collection goes back in a formal sense to the middle of the eighteenth century, but its real beginnings are to be seen in the second half of the nineteenth century. Around that time two developments were of crucial importance. First, a number of the "Anticuarios" of the Academia were men with a sound knowledge of Arabic and a deep and committed interest in the assembly of Islamic coins of Iberia; they include most of the scholars of whom one thinks today in connection with the development and early successes of historical studies of al-Andalus; and indeed, for most of them their interest in the coins of al-Andalus represented only one part of what were generally much broader interests in all aspects of the recovery and study of the Iberian Islamic past, interests shared often with other members of the Academia itself. Almost all the important early students of the coins of al-Andalus figure here. Secondly, a major series of accessions gave the collection the basic shape that it has today. The steps in this process can be followed via a long series of publications, mainly, but not exclusively, in the pages of the Academia's own *Boletín*.

The Andalusí Islamic collection of the Academia de la Historia contains a little short of four thousand coins. The overwhelming majority are in silver - though it is difficult to discover this from the catalogue, as there is no index or other finding aid indicating the distribution of coins by their material. All periods and dynasties are represented in the collection, from the period immediately following the conquest up to just before the fall of Granada in

1492. The distribution by period or dynasty is as follows: period of the conquest, 557 specimens; the emirate, 420 specimens; the caliphate, 395 specimens; the period of the revolution in Cordoba, 74 specimens (not 76 as stated on p. 26); the taifa states of the fifth/eleventh century, 891 specimens (not 889, as stated on p. 26); the Almoravids and their taifas, 89 specimens (a very impressive 67 of them Almoravid gold); the Almohads and their taifas, 1009 specimens (not 1188, as stated on p. 26); the Nasrids, 297 specimens; and a handful of unclassifiable coins; for a total of 3738 specimens.

The figures alone are impressive, and also interesting. The ratio between the various categories is striking: why so few Almoravid specimens, only 89, as compared with the ten times as many coins of the eleventh-century taifas? And if the great majority of these Almoravid specimens come from a single hoard, as seems likely, then we see even more the effect of the imbalances caused by chance in the construction of a large collection. A thousand Almohad coins - but in fact fully 856 of these are of a single type, the common square dirham, mintless and dateless, Vives no. 2088, Hazard no. 1101, while a further 84 are described as unclassifiable. The remaining sixty or so include three gold specimens of the Almohads, fourteen specimens of the Almohad taifas, and a handful of square dirhams bearing mintnames. On the other hand, the coins representing the period of the caliphate include 395 specimens. Of these 129 are of al-Nāṣir; one is a gold coin of 31X A.H. (no. 978, = Vives type 350), another is a gold specimen of 340 A. H. (no. 1049, = Vives 420). Of al-Ḥakam, there are 79 specimens, of which 2 are in gold, the rest in silver. Of al-Mu'ayyad, in his first reign, there are some 166 (including imitations), of which four are in gold (nos. 1222, of 368 A.H., 1235, of 380 A.H., 1291, of 390 A.H., and 1296, of 391 A.H.). This all seems a little closer to what we might expect. However, as the authors point out, the real reason for the disparities lies in the varied nature of the origins of the coins, coming as they do from chance donations, specialised collections, hoards, and so on. If this is a characteristic of any large collection, it emerges with great force from the numbers and ratios in this collection in particular. It should give pause to those scholars who are still interested in using such figures for attempts to construct serious models for the recovery of information about relative sizes of classical and medieval Islamic mintings. At the very least, they demonstrate that we need to devote special care to excluding the significance of such chance influence as that of a major hoard or a specialist collection for our results.

The collection also contains a large number of rare and important specimens, to which attention is drawn in the introductory sections of the volume. These include no. 1049, a dinar of 'Abd al-Raḥmān III, of 340/951 (referred to above); no. 1359, a fractional dirham, apparently (according to the introductory section, p. 27) minted in north Africa (though the catalogue entry it-

self says “Ceca borrada”), of the 390s A.H. unique of its type; two unique dinar issues of Sulaymān al-Mustaʿīn of the year 404 A.H. (nos. 1444-1445); two specimens of Ibn Ḥumām (nos. 1447-1448), who, I have argued elsewhere, was a ruler for a short time in Cordoba around the year 422/1031, and whose (very rare) coins are of signal importance for our understanding of the nature of the caliphal institution in al-Andalus on the fall of the Umayyads; several rare specimens of the Ḥammūdids; a series of dinars of the rulers of Saragossa in the fifth/eleventh century, mostly unique when listed by Vives at the end of the nineteenth century and apparently still so; the unique dirham of Ḥasan b. Mujāhid of Denia (no. 2241), which raises important questions about the nature of his political relationship with his father; the long series of (also very beautiful) Almoravid dinars, probably all from a single hoard; and the unique undated dirham (no. 3432) which the authors say can be interpreted as in effect possibly the first issue of the Nasrids.

Andalusi coins are by now very well documented, probably better than those of virtually any other Islamic territory in the pre-modern period. This is because of a singular combination of facts: the Islamic identity and history of the relevant territory for a long period in the middle ages; the discovery of large numbers of coins, both individual specimens and hoards, especially during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a process which continues today; and above all, the fact that the Iberian peninsula was able, as a result of the Reconquest, to participate in the cultural, intellectual and social processes of the Enlightenment and more generally of western modernity in the last two centuries and more. One of the consequences of this is the existence of a social environment which permitted and even encouraged the devotion of large intellectual and material resources to the seeking out, the discovery, the collection, the study, the preservation and the cataloguing of the remains of the medieval past of the Iberian peninsula. Especially in the nineteenth century, Spain (with Portugal lagging behind but also playing its part in this larger overall process) acted much like the other western European countries in seeking out and, in a sense, appropriating for its modern self the past of its own territory. The difference from other such countries lay in the fact that the Iberian states had also an Islamic past. This made them different from the other countries of western Europe, while the fact that they were no longer Islamic made them different from the rest of the Islamic world.

As a result, while this volume is welcome, and important, its publication means that this collection now joins the others which have been published in the past, by and largely for European scholars with European training and skills, European standards and expectations. It means also that the catalogue now before us not only takes its place alongside those earlier ones but has to be judged in their company, both by comparison with them and in terms of the contribution which it makes, together with them, to our knowledge and

understanding of the series described in it and to our ability to use the material which it presents.

The volume contains, following two forewords, a short introduction on the history of the Academia's coin cabinet, an account of the Andalusí coins in the collection, the catalogue itself, and a bibliography. In the catalogue, each coin is pictured; we have transcriptions (only in Arabic) of the inscriptions for each type, information about mint and date, denomination, weight and size, together with bibliographical information. The pictures, which have been digitalized, are all fullsize (though this does not seem to be explicitly stated anywhere), but they are not all of readable quality. This, however, seems to be only in small part a result of the process of reproduction, and more a product of the condition of the coins themselves. Following this we have a "topographical index". This describes itself as an attempt to co-relate the numbering of this catalogue with the earlier reference in the cabinet of the Academia, "su numeración interna y su ubicación". In this index itself we have a co-relation between the catalogue numbers, the cabinet reference, and a "No. Inv." It is not clear from this what to understand. Is the No. Inv. the same as the "numeración interna y ubicación" just referred to? or is it something else? If the first, how does a No. Inv. (always just a number, with many numbers repeated more than once) correspond to the demands implied by 'numeración interna y ubicación'? If it is something else, we should like to know what. In terms of organisation, too, one feels that, since this index follows the numbering of the catalogue exactly, the material contained in it could as easily, and possibly with less expenditure of space and paper, have been included in the body of the catalogue itself. A summary listing in different form could then have served the apparent purpose of this index better. In its present shape, it does not help the user very much.

Following this index there comes a list of the fine figures, or plates, in the volume which offer enlarged reproductions of some of the more important coins in the collection (as well as of some other items relevant to the history of the collection). There are 59 of these, and the list is useful to have. It would have been helpful, though, to indicate here where in the volume to find the 59 reproductions listed, as they are scattered through the book and it is not obvious where any of them might be (nos. 1-19, which include documents and other material as well as coins, are distributed over pp. 17-32; nos. 20-40 are on un-numbered pages between pp. 160 and 161, and nos. 41-59 are between pp. 224-25). It might also have been sensible to indicate at the catalogue entry for each of these coins that there is an enlarged reproduction of the specimen somewhere else in the volume.

An index of mints comes next, followed by an index of rulers. This last is in chronological order, exactly as in the catalogue itself (with the taifas arranged in the order that is traditional in coin catalogues), with a list of the

entries relevant for each following each ruler's name. This too could have been made more useful and less wasteful of space very easily: the rulers could have been listed in alphabetical order, to make them easier to find for those who do not have the names all in their heads in chronological order; as it is, the user must either know when a ruler was in power or search through the entire list in order to find the ruler needed; beyond this (to take the example of 'Abd al-Raḥmān III al-Nāṣir) the entry-numbers could have been reduced to the pattern 978-1126, instead of being given in the form of a bare list of all the numbers between 978 and 1126. As it stands, this list adds nothing to the usefulness of the volume.

A few further quibbles, some of them less important, others more. First, we lack an index of names and titles appearing on these coins. Given the great variety of those that occur, this would have been very helpful. Further, there are no indications of metal. In one sense, this is unnecessary, as the denomination should indicate the metal. In the case of the gold, it is true, this is the case, but in the case of the silver, things are a little more complicated. The dirham issues of al-Mu'ayyad, for example, are generally of silver, and can be seen to be so by looking. But those of the Ḥammūdid al-Mahdī, of which there are 71 in this collection (not to mention 394 dirham fragments) regularly contain so little silver that only charity compels the name. Some indication of the metallic content would have been helpful, here and elsewhere in the volume. In the case of the *fulūs* of the period of the conquest we have no indication at all, so far as I can see, of their metal.

Another criticism, greater than the previous one, concerns cross-references. Much of the value of such catalogues derives from the possibility which they create for comparison with other collections and their catalogues. Here the obvious comparisons are with Vives, for the entire period, and with Miles and Hazard, for the Umayyads and the north African dynasties respectively. There are quite a few references to all of these centrally important works here, but there are a very large number, especially among the Umayyad issues listed here, where such references are lacking.

A still more serious criticism concerns references to actual specimens, especially when the type involved is very rare. Vives, Hazard and Miles all made great and very impressive efforts to track down, identify and list every single surviving specimen of each coin-type that they described. Each of these works is, in different ways, a corpus, and we can use them, in that quality, to great effect. Quite a number of the types which they list are represented in the collection catalogued here. This work does, as I have indicated, give references to such works as those of Vives, Hazard and Miles. Unfortunately, it is rarely, if ever, clear from the text what the reference means. Sometimes a citation means that the coin in question is an example of the type described under the number given in the works of these scholars. Some-

times it means that it is similar. Sometimes it can mean that the actual coin described here is the very same specimen described as listed in one of these other works, one which was known to those and other earlier scholars and included in their works (as distinct from being merely a coin of the same type as those described by them). And sometimes this information would be very useful to have, for example when it is a case of a coin of which only one single specimen is known to survive. Such a case is that listed under number 1453, a dinar of al-Qāsim b. Ḥammūd, of mint al-Andalus and date 411/1020-21. This is Vives 807 and Prieto 66. According to Vives, who offers the practicality of a corpus, the unique specimen was in the Academia de la Historia; Prieto (who does not identify actual specimens) simply says the type is represented by a single specimen, without telling us where it is. This catalogue tells us even less. It simply refers to Prieto 66, without indicating that that scholar's description was (in effect, though not explicitly) actually of this very coin, rather than of a general type represented by this one and, possibly, who knows how many others. This is a case where this catalogue is particularly unhelpful, because Prieto in fact does not refer to actual specimens, but only to general coin-types. And beyond this, in this case Vives included the unique coin in his corpus, but his reference is not included here at all. Examples of this could be multiplied many times over from this catalogue.

Thanks to the pioneer work carried out by the great nineteenth-century scholars, anyone who is interested in the coins of al-Andalus has a good deal of material available with which, one way and another, to investigate many questions related to the numbers of surviving specimens of each issue known. We do not have anything like the same amount of hard facts on such matters available to us for any other Arab-Islamic territory in the middle ages. Anyone interested in such coins needs to have information about such survivals available to him. It can often be worked out from the printed works which we now have. But it is not unreasonable to expect that some of the facts already known should be supplied, or made somehow available, or at the very least referred to, in new works on these coins as they are prepared. Even in a case like this, where what we have before us is not a corpus but merely a catalogue of a single collection, we should have been grateful to have more than the brief indications in the introduction of the rarer specimens which the collection contains.

Maps: each section is introduced by a helpful map, showing where coins were produced by the rulers listed in the pages that follow, so far as these are represented in the collection. These are not all as clear as they might be: thus, the map on p. 166, introducing the taifa section, has a caption informing us that the "término al-Andalus se utiliza en diferentes localizaciones, aunque sólo se indique en Córdoba". This is obscure, at best. If the expression

“al-Andalus” “se indica” only in Cordoba, how could we possibly know that it “se utiliza” elsewhere? In fact it is indicated elsewhere, everywhere that it was used. It is this that causes difficulties for the modern researcher, trying to decide where a coin, with an inscription on it saying that it was minted in “al-Andalus”, was made. The presentation of facts here can be misleading to the uninitiated. For example, in the section introduced by this map, we have, at no. 1939, a coin of the ʿAbbādid al-Muʿtaḍid, who never ruled Cordoba. This coin nevertheless proclaims as its mint-name al-Andalus; it was in fact minted in Seville, like all the other coins of this ruler. (Incidentally, the catalogue lists two gold coins of this ruler; given the extreme rarity of such coins, this might have been worth noting.) Similarly, the map includes as a mint represented in this section the city of Badajoz, but there is no indication anywhere of the identity of the rulers who issued coins there; nor is there an entry in the index of mints for that city; and under the dynasty of the Aftasids, who issued the coins listed under nos. 1949-52, we are told only that their coins were issued at “sin ceca [al-Andalus]”. But they ruled Badajoz (and, incidentally, they did not rule Cordoba). This sort of thing does not help the reader.

There are also a number of misprints, mainly in transliterations of Arabic, though none of these is of any major significance. In transcriptions of the Arabic in the inscriptions on the coins, on the other hand, there are a number of slips: on p. 139, it is not clear why the two sets of transcription appear at all, given that they are identical with the transcription on the preceding page (the obvious explanation, that the first such repetition, for coin no. 1222, is for a gold coin which interrupts a silver series, will not suffice, as there is no difference in the sections of the inscription which are transcribed here); at p. 153, no. 1358 we should presumably read *al-manṣūr*; at p. 185, no. 1847 lege ʿalā allāh; at p. 187, no. 1968 for the word *allāh* in the inscription, above the word *al-ḥamd*, lege *lillāh*; p. 188, no. 1971 for *li-ḥājib* lege *al-ḥājib*; p. 208, no. 2218 lege *al-mustaʿin*; p. 210, no. 2232 for *li-imām* lege *al-imām* (also at p. 211, no. 2240, p. 212, no. 2247, p. 213, no. 2257, p. 214, nos. 2267 and 2270, p. 215, no. 2282); p. 212, no. 2247 lege *al-murtaḍā*; pp. 216-17, nos. 2288-2299 for *billāh* lege *lillāh*; p. 221, no. 2339 for *amīr alī* lege *al-amīr ʿalī*; p. 237, no. 2432 in the transcription of the Arabic in the second segment of the margin of side I, for *l.l.* lege *illā*; p. 238, no. 2433, in the same position, read *al-murtaḍā*; p. 292, no. 3300 for ʿarnāṭa lege *garnāṭa*; and at p. 187, no. 1968 and p. 303, no. 3437, the transcriptions are reversed in relation to the pictures.

It is perhaps in the nature of a book review to concentrate somewhat on the critical and less on the praiseworthy aspects of a book. Many reviewers review the book that they would like to have had before them rather than the book that is in fact there. They see only the drawbacks and ignore the achievement. I have sought here not only to outline the many excellent qualities of the

collection and the catalogue before us, but also to suggest some of the features that we should be looking for as standard in catalogues of such collections. These desiderata seem all the more important when we are dealing with a collection of great importance, one with which scholarship has engaged for well over a century, and one, too, which is now being provided with a catalogue of the highest standard that modern scholarship can offer, put together by scholars who are better acquainted with the Islamic coins of the Iberian peninsula than any alive today. In this case, the difficulties involved in organising a comprehensive listing of a collection with a complex history and composed of many different parts, without losing sight of the divisions and the sectional significance of such divisions, will have been enormous. It is a tribute to the forethought of the scholars responsible for this catalogue that it is already clear, both from what they say in their introductions and (despite its obscurity) from the *Indice Topográfico* at the end that they have taken immense pains to ensure the ability of future scholars to understand these vitally important aspects of the collection's structure. As indicated above, this is only the first volume of a projected three, of which the last will give a great deal of information about the backgrounds of all the coins. Some of the problems mentioned here will doubtless find their solution in that third volume, especially those concerned with the provenance and background of individual specimens. For this reason, among many others, the appearance of the succeeding volumes is eagerly to be awaited.

Let me conclude by laying stress on the overall achievement of this handsome and useful volume. The book is beautifully designed and generously produced, at a price which is surely affordable to all those who will wish to use it. This alone is a considerable virtue in these days. It is in the nature of such a book as this that the real test of its value, a final judgement on its worth, can come only from prolonged use. This book will certainly be much in use, among specialists and others, for many years to come. The catalogue makes available, especially to those who cannot go to the Academia itself to consult them, a reliable and well-produced guide to the contents of a large and important collection. It offers a well-organised listing, complete with reproductions of quality, detailed and generally reliable descriptions, and a brief history, and it is greatly to be welcomed. The scholars who produced it have placed their colleagues in their debt and have done much to advance the study of the numismatics of al-Andalus.