

SELJUQ SILVER DIRHAMS WITH PALAEOLOGAN COUNTERMARKS

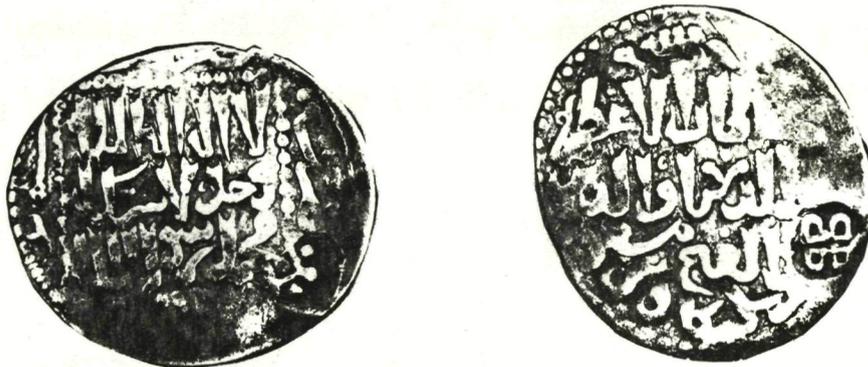
Simon Bendall & Michael Broome

Introduction

In 1878 Gustave Schlumberger published three Seljuq dirhams bearing double countermarks of Palaeologan form (1). One side depicts a geometric pattern made up of a diamond with pellets on each point and each face, while the other depicts the two Palaeologan B's back to back. He wrote, (in French) "I have received on different occasions in the last two years, silver coins of the Seljuq sultans of Iconium, bearing clear countermarks of the two B's so frequently represented on the Rhodian coinage. These Arab coins all belong to the 13th century. It is quite certain that the countermarks were applied in Rhodes at this period, very probably by one of the Seigneurs of Rhodes, in order to give free circulation to the coinage of a neighbouring country which circulated abundantly in the island". But is there sufficient evidence to endorse Schlumberger's conviction about this attribution?

Recorded Specimens

So far fifteen coins have been recorded, although it has been possible to obtain photographs or casts of only twelve of them. All were originally struck for the Seljuqs of Rum between 671/1272 and 689/1290. They are silver coins weighing between 2.60 and 2.90 grams, being of a type that fifty years earlier had been named as dirhams. Countermarked coins are known for two rulers only - Kai Khusru III, who ruled between 663/1264 and 681/1282, and his successor Mas'ud II, who was acknowledged in Siwas in 679/1280 and became sole Seljuq Sultan in 681/1282 when Kai Khusru died.



The ten known specimens of Kai Khusru's coins come from only three mints; Sivas, Arzinjan and Gümüşbazar, all of which had a fairly prolific output at this time. Arzinjan and probably Gümüşbazar were in the mining areas to the north east of Sivas, which was one of the main towns of Seljuq Anatolia. On the other hand, all the five countermarked coins of Mas'ud are from the mint of Sivas, and there seems little doubt that the coins used for countermarking were gathered together in or around that town.

The latest countermarked coin can be dated to 689/1290. Although only the last digit of the date is visible, this particular obverse legend, with an extended Kalima, was used only at the mints of Sivas, Samasur and Sinub. Other specimens from Sivas with the extended Kalima are dated AH 688, 690 and 692. This coin, therefore, is most probably 689 and this is the earliest date at which the countermark could have been applied.

Punch Dies

Several dies appear to have been used to apply the countermarks, and some die linking is evident. The same "double B" punch was used on two coins, both of Kai Khusru III, but unfortunately, both are without identifiable mint or date; two other coins of the same ruler share another punch - one was Sivas

(673/1275) and the other of Gümüşbazar (676/1278). Strongest evidence for the countermarking taking place at one time comes from two pairs of coins which also share punches. The first pair consists of a Sivas coin of Kai Khusru III of 678/1280, which shares a punch with another coin of Mas'ud II from Sivas, with a date between 680/1281 and 689/1290. More importantly, a coin of Kai Khusru from the mint of Gümüşbazar, of uncertain date, shares a punch with the latest coin of Mas'ud II from Sivas, of 689/1290. The salient feature of this die linkage is that the punch started to break up, and it is quite evident from its deteriorating state that the earlier coin, that of Kai Khusru, was countermarked after the later coin of Mas'ud. This sequence indicates that at least one, and probably all coins of Kai Khusru were countermarked after 689/1290, and that all the coins used for countermarking were circulating in or around Sivas at that time.

Date of Countermarking

At this date the Seljuq lands had separated into two sections. The Mongols, through Mas'ud II's supporters, controlled Sivas and areas to the north and east, whereas Konya, the old capital, and its immediate vicinity were controlled by local Turkmen tribes. By 699/1300 the Mongols had extended their rule to Konya, and they had already begun to strike coins of normal Ilkhanid type in Sivas by 696/1297. The Seljuq types used for countermarking would have lost their status as an official coinage, probably in 696/1297 when the Mongol Ghazan Mahmud abandoned the Ilkhanid attempt to introduce a paper currency and lowered the weight of the dirham from c. 2.90 grams to 2.16 grams.

Thus, the period 689/1290 to 696/1297 probably represents the period of countermarking. Sivas, however, was far from Rhodes, and the period was one of war and turmoil in Anatolia, with different Turkmen tribes vying for control in the south. In 690/1291 Gaykhatu, victor in the battle for the Ilkhan throne, sent an army to ravage the country to the south and west of Konya, thus effectively blocking the trade routes through the area. However, Sivas in the north seems to have been better placed, and the Genoese merchants resident there are known to have maintained their international trade between Europe and the East. (2).

Provenance

No provenance has been recorded apart from Schlumberger's assertion that he acquired his three specimens from Rhodes c. 1875-1876. This same period saw the British Museum's acquisition of no less than four specimens. The fact that seven of the fifteen currently known specimens of these countermarked coins appeared in this short period might indicate a dispersed hoard, but there is no indication of this in the records. Two of the British Museum's coins were acquired from a Mr. Nahoum Dimitri, who gave his address as No. 8, Leicester Square. The street directory for this period lists the householder as Mrs. Elizabeth Hammond, staymaker, who perhaps took in lodgers. Mr. Dimitri also sold Greek coins to the British Museum, but these were of cities in Cilicia, Pamphylia, Syria and Phoenicia, with the odd coin from Galatia and Bithynia - certainly coins from the eastern end of the Mediterranean rather than from Rhodes. Two other coins were acquired by the museum at this time from Mr. J.T. Stanton, who was manager of the Continental Bank in Lombard Street. This purchase also contained Greek coins, but of Crete, north-west Turkey, south west Turkey (including Caria), central Turkey and Cilicia; Islamic coins in the group consisted of dirhams of the Seljuqs of Rum.

Rhodian Hoard

Schlumberger stated that Seljuq dirhams circulated abundantly in Rhodes, but there is little evidence of this. Certainly there are no reports of Seljuq coins in any quantity whatsoever in Rhodes during recent years. However, there is one hoard found in Rhodes in the 1930's which probably included a number of Seljuq dirhams. (3) In a cave a little above the chapel of Monte Paradiso were found 34 Byzantine hyperpyra - 20 of John III of Nicaea (1222-1254), 13 of Michael VIII (1258-1282) and 1 of Andronicus II (presumably of his sole reign and thus dating from 1282-1295). In addition there were found (possibly in the hoard but possibly not, the text is not clear) 39 Islamic silver coins, many indecipherable. Those coins that could be classified were dated between 617/1220 and 689/1290. No further information was given. Not only, therefore, were the Islamic coins contemporaneous with the Byzantine gold, but the date of the latest dirham was also the same as that of the latest counter-marked coin. Presumably there were no countermarked coins in the hoard or they would have been remarked upon. Of course, these Islamic coins might possibly not have been Seljuq. There is a chance that they could have been either Mamluk or from the Ayyubids of Aleppo, but the fact that the quoted dates encompass the complete range of the Seljuq silver normally encountered points strongly towards them being Seljuq.

The history of Rhodes at this period is complex but obscure. From 1282 it was ruled, more or less, by the Genoese Andre Moresco and his brother, Ludovic, both nephews of Andronicus II's admiral, Vignolo de Vignoli. Rhodes was held in fief from the Byzantine emperor. Schlumberger (4) quotes Hopf's statement that the brothers had, however, to share the island with the Turks of the mainland who were, more than they, the true masters of Rhodes. Could Andre Moresco have been in a position to countermark Seljuq dirhams in Rhodes, and if he did, why did he?

At Constantinople the sole reign of Andronicus is hitherto entirely lacking in silver coinage, but as there exists a scyphate silver trachy for the joint reign of Andronicus II and Michael IX, silver coins of Andronicus when they appear should also be scyphate. Andronicus II's introduction of the flat silver basilikon took place shortly after 1295, a little later possibly than the countermarking of the Seljuq dirhams, and his basilikon was almost a full gram lighter than the dirham. It seems unlikely that the counter-marking was carried out at Constantinople. More probably it was applied in Asia Minor by an authority owing allegiance to the Byzantine Emperor.

Other Possibilities

It is a faint possibility that the countermarks could have been applied in one of the Byzantine cities such as Philadelphia or Smyrna. Coin finds at Pergamum indicate that, although the Byzantines held the city well into the 14th century, the coin supply had dried up by about 1285. (Unusually for a Byzantine site, there exist at Pergamum as many post 1200 as pre 1200 coins,). This dearth does not mean that coins of the last 30 or 40 years of Byzantine occupation are totally absent, but that it is obvious that large scale arrival of small change had ceased. There is also some indication of the unofficial production of copper coinage for local use in the city. In times of shortage, one would have expected the Byzantines to have produced their own silver coinage, however crude - many of the Byzantine coins at this time are indeed crude - rather than countermarking the coins of their enemies but even crude coins need mint technicians and equipment and it may, on occasion, have seemed preferable to cut the small punches and make use of the good silver represented by Seljuq coins.

Conclusion

The only conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that Schlumberger's original attribution to Rhodes has been neither proven nor disproven. The date and area of origin before countermarking has been narrowed down but no historical event has been uncovered that would point to a need for Paleologan countermarks to be applied in Rhodes to Seljuq coins. It is possible that a shortage of coin in Byzantine towns in Anatolia when under siege by the Seljuqs could provide a possible cause for countermarking but there is no supporting evidence to set against Schlumberger's categorical assertion that the coins he illustrated came from Rhodes.

References

1. Schlumberger G. Numismatique de l'Orient Latin.
2. Cahen. Pre-Ottoman Turkey p.322.
3. Memorie : Istituto Storico - Archeologico di Rodi, iii 1938.
4. op cit p.217.

NOTE: This paper is based on a talk given by one of the authors to the Annual Birmingham Byzantine Symposium in March 1985.

Countermarked Seljuq Silver Coins

A. Kai Khusru III AH663-681/1264-1282 AD

	<u>Date</u>	<u>Mint</u>	<u>References and Location</u>
1.	671	(Gü)müshbazar	BMC IX 266* (There dated 6x6) (N.Dimitri 1877.4.3.2.)
2.	673	Sivas	B.M.uncatalogued (P.J.Stanton 1877.7. 4.21.)
3.	675	Madinat Arzinjan	BMC IX 272 ^f (R.Paton 1896.3.7.4.)
4.	676	(Gü)müshbazar	BMC IX 274P (there assigned to Sivas and dated 671) (N.Dimitri 1877.4.3.8.)
5.	678	Sivas	Mitchiner 2391 Mitchiner collection
6.	678	?	Schlumberger Pl. XIX/17 CMMBN/5/1900
7.	?	(Gü)müshbazar	BMC IX 280 ^c (there assigned to Qonya) (P.J.Stanton)
8.	?	?	B.M. uncatalogued (1931.9.11.3.)
9.	?	?	A.H.Baldwin stock Feb. 1984.
10.	674??	?	Slacum collection

B. Mas'ud II AH681-697/1282-1297AD (but from AH679 in Sivas)

11.	(68) ⁷ / ₉	Sivas ?	A.H. Baldwin stock Feb. 1984.
12.	68x	Sivas	B.M.C. 111 294
13.	68x	Sivas	Münzkabinett Berlin
14.	?	Sivas	Schlumberger Pl.XIX 16 CMMBN/5/1909
15.	6xx	Sivas ?	Schlumberger Pl.IX 8 location unknown.