

## **An Overview of the Coin Symbols of the Islamic Era (١-٦٥٦ AH)**

### **Abstract**

Coins are among the most imperative means of financial and economic communication and have long been a means of transferring culture and beliefs. Before Islam, Roman dinars and Iranian dirhams were popular among Arabs containing the images of Khosravan and rituals of Zoroastrianism and Christianity. In the first years of the Islamic caliphate, Muslims were not able to change the coins due to the occupations resulting from the conquests and lack of familiarity with the coinage technique. From the establishment of the Islamic caliphate and the development of Islam among different ethnic groups and nations, the need to multiply and unify money became necessary for commercial activities and tax payments; furthermore, the necessity to change the symbols of the previous and new governments were also present. In this study, it is premeditated that how are such symbols and rituals are chosen to include the beliefs, goals and overall image of the religion? The current research was carried out using descriptive and analytical method and relying on data from library sources. The findings of the research indicate that the first Islamic coins with verses from the Qur'an were created in ٧٥ AH by Abdul Malik. Surah Ikhlas was the first verse to be engraved on coins. After that, coins with verses of the Quran were minted in most coins.

### **Research aims:**

١. Recognizing the evolution of coins in the early Islamic centuries.
٢. Examination of Quranic symbols in Islamic coins (٦٥٦-١ AH).

### **Research questions:**

١. What was the state of coinage and its coordinates in the early Islamic centuries?
٢. What was the position of Quranic symbols in Islamic coins in the first centuries Hijri?

**Keywords:** Quranic symbols, coins, Islamic era, coinage

## Introduction

With the advent of Islam and the spread of Islamic culture, many Arab civilizations were influenced by this culture. Although in the early Islamic centuries and the lack of development of administrative and economic structures, Muslims were largely influenced by great cultures such as Iran and Rome, but they gradually succeeded in creating civilizational ideas compatible with Islamic culture. The economic structure was one of the most important aspects of the Islamic society which changed to a great extent in the early Islamic centuries. From the very first years of the emergence of Islam, the Qur'an entered different areas of Muslim life. In various matters, they relied on the verses of the Qur'an and were influenced by such Holy verses. This influence was so profound and all-encompassing that the verses of the Qur'an were quickly imprinted on accessories, textiles, buildings and books; moreover, they adorned many Islamic works with various verses of the Holy Qur'an. This issue led to the creation of Quranic symbols on practical and artistic works in the Islamic world. Coins are among the most important works remaining from the Islamic era that gained a new identity with the verses of the Qur'an. In this article, the multiplication of Quranic verses and Quranic symbols from the beginning to the end of the Abbasid era is briefly examined in four axes. Also, before Islam, Roman dinars and Iranian dirhams were popular among Arabs. According to Balazhari, the Herakles dinar and Baghli dirham reached the people of Makkah, and if it was not pure gold and wire, people would not trade with such coinage (Balazhari, ١٩٨٥: ٢١٨). According to sources, at the end of the Sassanid era, Iranian money had become impure and the weights and values of dirhams differed from each as Balazhari mentions five different weights for dirham only in Hirah (Balazari, ١٩٨٥: ٤٨٦).

The review of the background of the present research indicates that so far no independent research with this title has been published, nevertheless, several articles have investigated the coordinates and themes of Islamic coins, some of these works are mentioned below. Haji Tabar (٢٠١٣) in an article titled "Identification of the role of Shi'ism on Alavi Coinage of Tabaristan" has investigated the religious themes related to Shiites on Islamic coins. John Walker (٢٠١٠) in an article titled "The Coins of the Second Safari Period" has investigated the coordinates of a number of Islamic coins. Qayyim and Sediq (٢٠١٧) in an article entitled "The Causes and Stages of the Interpretation and Modification of Islamic Coins with an Emphasis on the Period of Abd al-Malik bin Marwan Umayyad" have investigated a part of the thematic and structural developments of Islamic coins during the first century Hegira.

With these interpretations, the present research aims to investigate the Qur'anic symbols in Islamic coins during the first centuries Hegira in a descriptive and analytical manner by relying on the data of library sources.

## **Conclusion**

Coins have always been considered as an imperative means of commercial and cultural exchange and the motivation of communication and promotion in diverse ages. Therefore, governments mint coins in order to transfer rituals and portray their independence and power. Islamic coinage was not done all at once, since the first years of the Islamic caliphate, efforts were made by Omar and other caliphs and Muslim princes and rulers to mint Islamic coins. During these periods, the only sign of the new religion was the mention of Bismillah, which was carved on top of the mosques and next to the images of the Sassanid kings. Finally, after ٧٠ years of the emergence of Islam, Muslims replaced the Sassanid and Roman symbols of the Quran as symbols of the religious-cultural identity of the Islamic society. Thus, the first Islamic coin was minted during the time of Abd al-Malik bin Marwan with Kufic script and the verses of Surah Ikhlas and the verse ٣٣ of the Surah To'be. This coin became a model for Islamic coins until the end of Abbasid rule and even afterward. According to the coin of Abd al-Malik, only calligraphy was used for decoration, text and margins in other Islamic coins, and except in very limited cases such as the time of Al-Buyeh, images were never used in coin ornamentations. Apart from the year and place of minting and the name of the Amir or caliph, the verses of the Qur'an were printed on both sides of the coin. The verses emphasized Monotheism and Prophethood, the two principles of Muslim faith. In addition to the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphate, independent and semi-independent governments, as well as opponents of the caliphate, minted coins. Moreover, they applied Qur'anic verses to spread their views and opinions. Along with the Abbasid caliphate, two powerful caliphates, the Umayyads of Andalusia and the Fatimids of Egypt, were formed in the Islamic West. These governments minted coins in order to separate themselves from the Abbasids. In addition to the Fatimids who were Shiites, the Idrisians in Tunisia and the apostles in Yemen used verses in their mosques that show the principle of Imamate. The Fatimids even engraved the name of Ali (PBUH) on their coins. A look at the Islamic coins between the years ١-٦٥٦ AH displays how political competition and religious differences affected the coins. It is thought-provoking that all the groups and currents involved used the verses of the Qur'an to prove their authenticity.

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