THE COINS OF THE LATER ILKHANIDS: 
A TYPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS 

BY 
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Ghāzān Khān was undoubtedly the most brilliant of the Ilkhanid rulers of Persia: not only a commander and statesman, he was also a linguist, architect and bibliophile. One of his most lasting contributions was the reorganization of Iran’s financial system. Upon his accession to the throne, the economy was in total chaos: his predecessor Gaykhatū’s stop-gap issue of paper money to fill an empty treasury had been a fiasco 2), and the civil wars among Gaykhatū, Baydū, and Ghāzān had done nothing to restore trade or confidence in the economy. Under the direction of his vizier Rashīd al-Dīn, Ghāzān delivered an edict ordering the standardization of the coinage in weight, purity, and type 3). Ghāzān’s standard double-dirham became the basis of Iran’s monetary system for the next century.

At varying intervals, however, the standard type was changed: a new shape cartouche was introduced, with slight variations in legend. These new types were sometimes issued at a modified weight standard. This paper will analyze the successive standard issues of Ghāzān and his two successors, Uljaytū and Abū Sa’īd, in order to show when and why these new types were introduced. Following a description of the successive types 4), the changes will be explained through

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1) The basic research for this article was done at the American Numismatic Society’s 1979 Graduate Seminar in Numismatics. I would like to thank the ANS staff, particularly Dr. Michael Bates, for their support. Frequently quoted sources will be given in abbreviated form only: see the List of Abbreviations at the end for complete citations.


4) In addition to direct study of the ANS collection, I have used the published
an investigation of the metrology and a correlation of these changes in type with economic and political history. Another article will pursue the problem of mint organization and regionalization within this standard imperial system 5).

Following his reform of the coinage, Ghāzān issued only one standard type of coin (fig. 1) 6). Inside a circular obverse 7) is a pentagonal cartouche with the profession of faith and the mint; the margin contains the date. On the reverse Ghāzān adopted a new formula in uighur with his name inserted in Arabic:

ometen
ropumdakun
nazar mohammad
siniqan rajjat
bās

catalogues of the collections in the British Museum (BMC), Istanbul Archaeological Museum (Artuk), and the Istanbul Imperial Museum (Mubarak); references will be given to coins illustrated in these catalogues. I have also consulted the articles in Arabic by Mrs. Mahīb al-Bakrī on the collection in the Baghdad Museum: “Islamic Coins of the Ilkhanid Period in the Baghdad Museum,” Sumer 25/1-2 (1969) 115-126 (coins of Ghāzān); “The Coins of the Sultan Uljaytu Khudābanda Muhammad Khān... in the Iraq Museum,” Al-Maskūkāt I/3 (1972) 28-45; and “The Coins of Sultan Abu Sa‘īd Bahādur Khān in the ‘Iraq Museum," Sumer 26 (1970) 291-328; as well as Sayyid Jamāl Ṭābātābā’ī’s Persian catalogue of the Tabriz Museum Collection, Islamic Coins: Ilkhanid and Gorganid Periods (Tabriz: 1347/1969). I was also fortunate in being able to consult the unpublished notes of Stephen Album not only on his own extensive collection but also on the coins of the Ashmolean Museum, the British Museum, the Bibliothèque Nationale, and the Yapi ve Kredi Bankasi Collection. I have not, however, included coins from the Leningrad Collection as published by A. Markov, Inventarnyi katalog Musul’manskikh monet Imperatorskogo Ermitazha (St. Petersburg, 1896). The latter describes the coins only cursorily, and it is so replete with errors as to be more confusing than useful for this study. A new catalogue of this extensive collection, as well as fuller publication of those in Iran, would undoubtedly add further data, especially for the problem of mint organization and regionalization.


6) BMC VI, 89 and 96; Mubarak 39; Artuk 2219 is a six-dirham piece which is basically the same with the addition of two outer Qur’ānic borders (9:33 on the obverse and 3:25 on the reverse).

7) I have arbitrarily designated the face with the profession of faith as the obverse.