

WHAT DOES HISTORICAL NUMISMATICS SUGGEST ABOUT THE
MONETARY HISTORY OF KHAZARIA IN THE NINTH CENTURY? –
QUESTION REVISITED

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INTRODUCTION

About two decades ago, the late Thomas S. Noonan conducted several comprehensive studies on the nature of the monetary history of Khazaria.¹ His main sources for the study of the topic were the ninth-century dirham (imported Islamic silver coins – mostly issued by the 'Abbāsid Caliphate) hoards from eastern Europe. Based on the available evidence at that time, Noonan concluded that the Khazars did not possess a monetary economy because 1) very few dirham hoards have been discovered within the Khazar lands (the qağanate proper – not including their tributaries such as the Volga Bulghars of the middle Volga and the Slavic, Finno-Ugrian, and Baltic tribes of the upper and middle Dnepr and upper Don-Donets basins) and 2) the Khazars did not mint coins of their own.²

He finished one of his studies on the subject by stating:

In conclusion, several tenth-century Islamic sources indicate that almost all of the valuable exports of Khazaria in fact came from the Volga Bulgar, Rus', and other regions either within or beyond the northern areas of the kaganate. Given the concentration of dirham hoards from these regions, it would appear that already in the ninth century dirhams tended to gravitate toward those areas from whence the Khazar export originated. Coins were thus sent primarily to the areas in which the slaves, furs, honey, and wax were initially obtained or the nearest northern markets and not necessarily to Itil. But, if coins went northward to pay for the furs, honey, slaves, and wax exported to the Islamic world, what remained for the Khazars? If the Khazars made significant profit from their position as middlemen, how was

¹ Th.S. Noonan, "Did the Khazars Possess a Monetary Economy? The Numismatic Evidence," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* [= *AEMAE*] 2 (1982), 219-268; idem., "What Does Historical Numismatics Suggest About the History of Khazaria in the Ninth Century?" *AEMAE* 3 (1983), 265-281.

² Noonan, "Did the Khazars Possess a Monetary Economy," 219-268; idem., "What Does Historical Numismatics Suggest," 265-281; idem., "A Ninth Century Dirham Hoard from Devitsa in Southern Russia," *The Islamic World, Russia and the Vikings, 750-900: The Numismatic Evidence* (Aldershot, 1998), 185-209.

this wealth used? Clearly, historical numismatics raises some fundamental questions about Khazar commerce and the Khazar economy in the ninth century.³

Indeed, Noonan's findings were quite surprising and perplexing, as he well recognized himself. Primary written sources are replete with information regarding Khazaria's great importance in international trade during the ninth century. Khazaria also acted as the principal, if not the only, gateway for the export of dirhams into northern Russia and the Baltic during much of this period. From all of this trade the qaġanate reaped great revenues by levying tariffs on the passing commercial traffic. Therefore, the questions that stand: how could Khazaria manage its extensive cross-continental commercial relations without a monetary economy; and, what did the Khazars do with all of the wealth they generated from this trade? These issues had puzzled Noonan, myself, and undoubtedly other historians ever since his studies on the topic first appeared in the early 1980s.

Pondering on the postulated absence of a monetary economy among the Khazars for many years has brought some useful ideas on how to approach answering these two questions in a new light. Unfortunately, aside from discussing the topic in private conversations, Noonan had not the time to write in detail on this subject before his passing. However, he did express some important tangential thoughts regarding the issue in his other studies.

Thus, he wrote that the paucity of dirham hoard finds in certain cases should not be taken as evidence for an absence of a monetary economy. In explaining the general dearth of dirham hoards discovered in Viking-age Lithuania, Noonan advanced several general theories on hoard deposition in northern Europe. These include: 1) the connection between the volume of commerce and the quantities of coin hoards buried along trade routes (i.e., more volume leads to more hoards) and 2) the connection between hoarding and the existence of major disturbances/turmoil, causing coin-owners to deposit their wealth into the ground for safekeeping. He also observed that the absence of hoards in some economically advanced regions suggests that people did not bury their wealth because they could easily invest it in some sort of a business venture that would bring them greater profit.⁴ In the case of early medieval Lithuania, Noonan had sided with the first of these theories and soundly argued that the nominal number of dirham hoards buried in the area can be explained by the region's marginal role in the cross-continental dirham trade of the period.⁵ Indeed, by far the most important channel for the export of dirhams out of eastern

3 Noonan, "What Does Historical Numismatics Suggest," 280-281.

4 Th.S. Noonan, "Dirham Hoards from Medieval Lithuania," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 23 (1992), 406-407.

5 Noonan, "Dirham Hoards from Medieval Lithuania," 406-407.

Europe into the Baltic, passed through northwestern Russia, negating the Lithuanian lands.⁶

In discussing the paucity of tenth-century dirham hoards from along the upper Volga (a key circuit in the north-south dirham trade route), Noonan offered another explanation – the absence of coin hoard deposits in the region can be connected to the great commercial opportunities to invest capital.⁷ He continued this line of reasoning for other areas of European Russia in saying:

Consequently, it can be argued that relatively few dirhams were buried in Khazaria and Volga Bulgaria because in these lands silver could be profitably invested and bring power, prestige, scarce goods and more dirhams.

He also added:

Paradoxically, the absence of numerous dirhams may, in certain circumstances, be a sign of a more developed local economy in which many coins circulated and where they could be readily used for a variety of purposes.⁸

Thus, in his later studies Noonan was clearly shifting his opinion to siding with the notion that the economy of Khazaria may, in fact, have been monetarised. Below, we will consider this question in more detail based on the study of the infrastructure of the Khazar sector of the "Khazar Way" trade route, the striking of dirhams by the Khazars, and the circulation of some of these coins.

INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE KHAZAR SECTOR OF THE "KHAZAR WAY"

The great scarcity of dirham hoards in the core lands of Khazaria cannot be explained by an absence of trade through the qaġanate. All of the available evidence indicates that Khazaria was a major commercial powerhouse, particularly during the

6 Th.S. Noonan, R.K. Kovalev, "Neizvestnyi klad nachala IX v. iz imeniia M.A. Obolenskogo Dmitrovskogo uezda Moskovskoi gubernii," *Arkheologicheskie vesti* 7 (2000), 211-212; idem., "Bol'shoi klad dirkhemov rannei epokhi Vikingov naidennyi v 2000 g. v g. Kozel'ske, Kaluzhskoi obl.," *Arkheologicheskie vesti* 9 (2002); Th.S. Noonan, "Ninth Century Dirham Hoards from Northwestern Russia and the Southeastern Baltic," *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 13 (1982), 220-244. Also see below.

7 Th.S. Noonan, "The Impact of the Islamic Trade Upon Urbanization in the Rus' lands: The Tenth and Early Eleventh Centuries," *Les Centres proto-urbains russes entre Scandinavie, Byzance et Orient* [Actes du Colloque International tenu au Collège de France en octobre 1997], eds. M. Kazanski, A. Nercessian, and C. Zuckerman (Réalités Byzantines 7) (Paris, 2000), 386.

8 Noonan, "The Impact of the Islamic Trade Upon Urbanization," 386.

ninth century, and most, if not all, trade between the Islamic world and northern Russia and the Baltic passed through its territories via the so-called "Khazar Way" trade route that stretched across the continent from the core lands of Khazaria to the Baltic via northern Russia.⁹ Ibn Khurdādhbeh (writing in ca. 850-885) not only describes large segments of this route, but also speaks of how the Rus' merchants made their connection via it with the Islamic Near East. Thus, he reports that the ar-Rūs/Rus' merchants brought beaver and fox pelts as well as (Frankish) swords from northern Europe/Russia to Khazaria by ship and, thereafter, sailed across the Caspian Sea to its southern coast where they disembarked (sometimes also traded) and transported their goods via camel caravans to Baghdad.¹⁰ There, they traded their goods (for dirhams) and returned to northern Russia via Khazaria. Based on numismatic evidence, this trade can be dated to as early as ca. 800.¹¹ Thus, the general paucity of dirham hoard finds within the territories of Khazaria has to be explained by some other circumstances than the absence of dirham trade through the qağanate.

To find the answer to the scarcity of coin hoard deposits in Khazaria, it is necessary to understand that there was an absence of a need to bury capital thanks to the state of general stability, security, and tranquility within the territories of the qağanate. For much of the ninth century, the north Pontic steppe zone and the adjacent forest-steppe lands to the north were brought under the so-called condition of *Pax Chazarica* or "Khazar Peace" which, in large part, helped to create the so-called Saltovo-Maiaki (Saltovo for short) culture in Khazaria.¹² The methods by which this general state of security in the forest-steppe zone was maintained is particularly well illustrated by the Khazar frontier defenses located in the valleys of the middle

9 Th.S. Noonan, "Khazaria as an Intermediary Between Islam and Eastern Europe in the Second Half of the Ninth Century: The Numismatic Perspective," *AEMAE* 5 (1985), 179-204; idem., "When and How Dirhams First Reached Russia: A Numismatic Critique of the Pirenne Theory," *The Islamic World, Russia and the Vikings, 750-900: The Numismatic Evidence* [Variorum Collected Studies Series] (Ashgate-UK, 1998), 401-469; idem., "Ninth Century Dirham Hoards from European Russia: A Preliminary Analysis," *The Islamic World*, 47-117; idem., "The Regional Composition of Ninth-Century Dirham Hoards from European Russia," *The Islamic World*, 153-165.

10 O. Pritsak, "An Arabic Text on the Trade Route of the Corporation of the ar-Rūs in the Second Half of the Ninth Century," *Folia Orientalia* 12 (1970), 256-257.

11 Th.S. Noonan, "When Did Rūs/Rus' First Visit Khazaria and Baghdad?" *AEMAE* 7 (1987-1991), 213-219.

12 For recent literature and discussion of *Pax Chazarica*, see S.A. Romashov, *Istoricheskaia geografiia Khazarского kaganata (V-XIII vv.)* in *AEMAE* 12 (2002-2003), 81-84. For the Saltovo-Maiaki culture, see S.A. Pletneva, *Ot kochevii k gorodam. Saltovo-Maiatskaia kul'tura* [Materialy i issledovaniia po arkheologii SSSR 142] (Moscow, 1967); idem., *Khazary* (Moscow, 1976); idem., *Kochevniki srednevekov'ia* (Moscow, 1982); idem., *Ocherki Khazarской arkheologii* (Moscow-Jerusalem, 1999); *Maiatskoe gorodishche*, ed. S.A. Pletneva (Moscow, 1984); A.Z. Vinnikov, S.A. Pletneva, *Na severnykh rubezhakh Khazarского kaganata. Maiatskoe poselenie* (Voronezh, 1998).

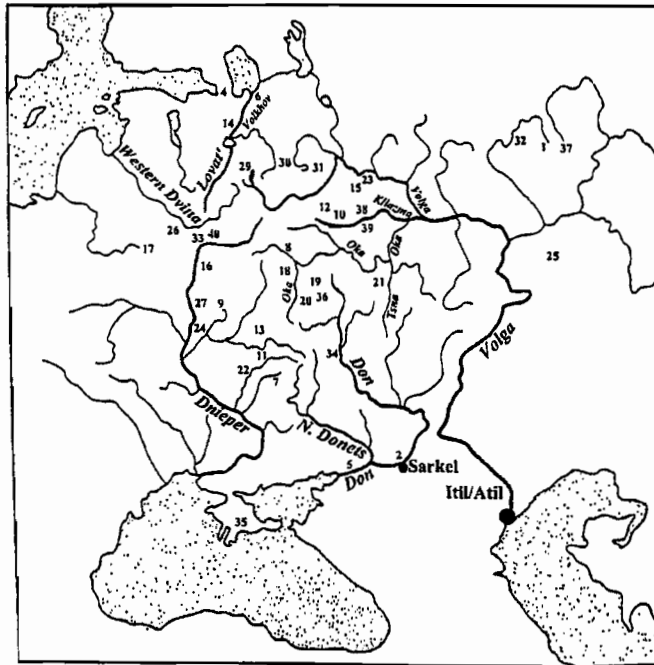
Don-Oskol-Northern Donets rivers. These river basins were situated along the northern periphery of the forest-steppe zone of the qağanate and functioned as the primary circuit in the north-south route system used by Rus' merchants to travel from northern Russia with their goods into Khazaria and further east and return with their dirhams. To date, twenty-four hillforts of various types dating to the eighth-tenth centuries have been identified and studied along the riverbanks of the Northern Donets (eight sites), Volch'ia (one site), Korocha (two sites), Oskol (four sites), Tikhhaia Sosna (seven sites), and middle Don (two sites – including the well-known Maiaki hillfort). Taken all together, these hillforts constitute a defensive network guarding three principal routes: Northern Donets, Oskol, and Tikhhaia Sosna river-systems. All were interconnected by way of river routes and overland roads, comprising one large circuit for the Don river route linking the steppe Khazar lands with the northern forest zone of European Russia.¹³

Most of these hillforts were stone fortresses ("caravansaries"), many of which (type 4) were erected sometime in the second half of the eighth-ninth centuries by the Khazars. Some archaeologists have argued that these forts were constructed based on provincial Byzantine castle prototypes and, indeed, may have been erected with their assistance. These forts were settled by equestrian Iranian-speaking Alans (probably Burtās of Arabic sources) who had migrated to the middle Don from the northern Caucasus sometime in the eighth century. The hillforts of the Northern Donets, Oskol, and Tikhhaia Sosna region constituted an elaborate system of defensive lines for the qağanate as well as stations guarding the trade routes passing through the region.¹⁴

13 G.E. Afanas'ev, *Donskie Alany (The Alans of the Don)* (Moscow, 1993), 124-125, 174. Also see Romashov, *Istoricheskaia geografiia Khazarского kaganata*, 143-149, especially pp. 148-149.

14 Afanas'ev, *Donskie Alany*, 139-140, 147-150; Vinnikov, Pletneva, *Na severnykh rubezhakh Khazarского kaganata*, 36-40. A.Z. Vinnikov and S.A. Pletneva disagree with G.E. Afanas'ev that these fortresses were built to protect the northern territories of the qağanate from potential Slavic incursions since the Slavs were Khazar tributaries and because these stone forts were not strong enough to withstand serious attack. Therefore, they argue, their main function was to control the routes and service the commercial traffic. While it is very likely that this interpretation is correct, it should be remembered that it was the Rus'/Viking raiders, not the Slavic tributary tribes, who could have caused a serious potential threat to this region, if the Khazars did not take precautions by erecting these fortresses. However, there was probably no need to build expensive and heavily fortified strongholds against the Rus' in the ninth century, since it is unlikely that they ever came in great numbers as raiders, at least before the early tenth century. In connection with this, it would be good to remember Mas'ud's account of how the Burtās destroyed the remnants of the Rus' raiders after their expedition into the Caspian in ca. 915. See *A History of Sharvān and Darband in the 10th-11th Centuries*, tr. V. Minorsky (Cambridge, 1958), 153.

The northern limes of the steppe-forest zone was also intimately connected with the southern regions of Khazaria by way of the Don and an extensive network of land roads stretching to the fortress of Sarkel on the lower Don and the numerous fortified and unfortified settlements on the western (right) bank of the river, all of which protected and controlled the routes. From Sarkel, overland roads could be used to reach Itil/Atil (the Khazar capital) at the mouth of the Volga, Samkarč-the/Tamatarakha/Tmutorokan' on the Kerch straights, and Darband on the western Caspian coasts; and, the Don-Azov water-system also provided access to the Crimea by ship.¹⁵



MAP 1: DIRHAM HOARDS IN EASTERN EUROPE – 800-841/42

Hoard, tpq	Hoard, tpq	Hoard, tpq	Hoard, tpq
1. Gorodok, 800	11. Nizhniaia Syrovatka, 812/13	21. Borki, 817	31. Uglich, 832/33
2. Right-Bank Tsemliansk gorodishche, 802	12. Ugodichi, 812/13	22. Novotroitskoe, 819/20	32. Viatka, 835
3. Russia?, 803/04	13. Kremlevskoe, 812/13	23. Sarskoe gorodishche, 820s	33. Kislaia, 837/38

15 S.A. Pletneva, *Sarkel i «shelkovyi» put'* (Voronezh, 1996), 142-149.

4. Petergof, 803/04	14. Kholopii Gorodok, 810-812	24. Iarylovichi, 820/21	34. Devitsa, 837/38
5. Krivianskaia, 805/06	15. Sarskoe gorodishche, 814/15	25. Elmed, 820/21	35. Balka, 837/38
6. Kniashchino, 808/09	16. Orsha?, 814/15	26. Bogushevsk, 822/23	36. Protasovo, 841/42
7. Zavalishino, 809/10	17. Minsk gub., 815/16	27. Kasaliaki, 823/24	37. Lesogurt, 841/42
8. Khitrovka, 810/11	18. Kozel'sk, 815/16	28. Antoninenberg, 823/24?	38. Vyzhigsha I, 841/42
9. Nizhnie Novoselki, 811/12	19. Tula ob., 816/17	29. Demiansk, 824/25	39. Vyzhigsha II, 841/42
10. Glukhovo, 811/12	20. Lopatkovo, 816/17	30. Zagorod'e, 831/32	40. Dobrino, 841/42

The topography of hoards and accounts of written sources confirm the use of the Don basin and its major tributaries as the key circuit for the trade route leading from the heartland of Khazaria into northern Russia as early as ca. 800. The combined evidence of dirham hoards and the geographic information of Ibn Khurdādhbeh on Rus' merchants shows that the route passed from Itil/Atil to a portage from the lower Volga to the lower Don via Sarkel. The route then passed north up the Don to Northern Donets, from where it continued further north to the Oka system and then crossed to the upper Dnepr, upper Volga, or Western Dvina and into the Baltic via the Lovat' – Volkhov – Lake Ladoga – Neva – Gulf of Finland water-system [see Map. 1].¹⁶

Gardīzī (a mid-eleventh century Arabic writer relying on earlier accounts) noted that merchants travel from the lands of the Burtās to Khazaria – presumably from the middle Don to Itil/Atil – by boat and land. He added that the Burtās “have abundant camels and oxen.”¹⁷ Indeed, a graffito-picture of a camel has been discovered at the Maiaki hillfort and donkey bones were uncovered at the Maiaki unfortified settlement dating to the ninth century, both located along the middle Don.¹⁸ In the southern part of the route, camel bones have also been unearthed at Sarkel,¹⁹ Right-Bank Tsimliansk hillfort (located across the river from Sarkel),²⁰ and Kar-

- 16 Noonan, “When Did Rūs/Rus' First Visit Khazaria and Baghdad?,” 213-219; Pritsak, “An Arabic Text,” 256-257; Noonan, Kovalev, “Neizvestnyi klad nachala IX v.,” 211-212; idem., “Bol'shoi klad dirkhemov rannei epokhi Vikingov.” For Sarkel, see Pletneva, *Sarkel i «shelkovyi» put'* and the critique of this work in R.K. Kovalev, “Critica: S.A. Pletneva, *Sarkel i «shelkovyi» put'*,” *AEMAE* 10 (1999), 245-254.
- 17 Gardīzī in A.P. Martinez, “Gardīzī's Two Chapters on the Turks,” *AEMAE* 2 (1982), 156.
- 18 V.E. Flērova, *Graffiti khazarii* (Moscow, 1997), p. 105, Table II: 33; Ia. Matolchi, “Kosti zhivotnykh s gorodishche, selishcha i mogil'nika (1978-1979),” *Maiatskoe gorodishche*, 245-246.
- 19 Pletneva, *Sarkel i «shelkovyi» put'*, 129-130.
- 20 I.I. Liapushkin, “Karnaukhovskoe poselenie,” *Materialy i issledovaniia po arkhologii SSSR* 62 (Moscow, 1958), 313.

naukhovo settlement (just north of Sarkel).²¹ Additionally, archaeologists have discovered camel bones at several Slavic Borshevo culture sites (Titchikha and Bol'shoe Borshevo) along the upper Don dating to the eighth-tenth centuries.²² Thus, there is very strong evidence for the existence of a caravan route and the use of camel and pack animals to transport goods between the core Khazar lands and their Slavic tributaries located to the north of the Khazar limes. The presence of these transport animals at sites ranging from the lower Don to the river's uppermost region traces the route taken by merchants from the core territories of Khazaria in the southern steppe zone to its northern peripheries in forest-steppe and then onto the forest zone in the north, just beyond the borders of the qağanate. It is noteworthy that camel and donkey bones are exceptionally rare finds for this region for any historical period. Thus, the presence of these animals, like the elaborate fortifications in the forest-steppe and steppe region of the qağanate, shows that the Khazars took extraordinary measures to cultivate and maintain a well-developed infrastructure for their trade with the north.

Overall, the available evidence strongly suggests that the vast region stretching from the core steppe lands of the qağanate to its northern forest-steppe frontier had a well-developed commercial infrastructure. The network of routes provided Rus' merchants and others with the necessary accommodations, security, and stability for travel through the territories of Khazaria. This then would in large part help explain why so few dirham hoards have been unearthed within the territories of the qağanate. In light of the amenities and the safety provided by the Khazar forts and well-

21 Pletneva, *Ot kochevii k gorodam*, 147. Prior to the construction of Sarkel on the left bank of the Don, a fortified settlement – Tsimliansk gorodishche, perhaps identifiable with al-Bayḍā' of Arabic sources – was located on the right bank of the river, just opposite of where Sarkel came to be situated. The settlement was destroyed sometime in the first two-three decades of the ninth century, most likely by the Magyars. For the site, see M.I. Artamonov, *Istoriia khazar* (Leningrad, 1962), 298-302, 318 and M. Goldelman, "On the Location of the Khazarian City of al-Bayḍā'," *AEMAE* 10 (1998-1999), 63-71, especially n. 45. It would be of interest to note that imitation Khazar dirhams (not "special issues" of 837/38) have been discovered in a hoard at the site; see A.A. Bykov, "Iz istorii denezhnogo obrashcheniia Khazarii v VIII-IX vv.," *Vostochnye istochniki po istorii narodov Iugo-vostochnoi i Tsentral'noi Evropy* 3 (1974), 57-59. It is quite possible that the Rus' paid their tolls to the Khazars at this fortress as they traveled up and down the Don in the first three decades of the ninth century.

22 V.I. Gromova, "Ostatki mlekoopitaiushchikh iz ranneslavianskikh gorodishche bliz g. Voronezha," *Materialy i issledovaniia po arkheologii SSSR* 8 (Moscow, 1948), 121; V.I. Tsalkin, *Materialy dlia istorii zhivotnovodstva i okhoty v drevnei Rusi* [*Materialy i issledovaniia po arkheologii SSSR* 51] (Moscow, 1956), p. 181, Table 21; idem., "Fauna iz raskopok borschhevskikh i romenskikh gorodishche," *Sovetskaia arkheologiia* 4 (1969), p. 92, Table 1; A.M. Moskalenko, "Gorodishche Tatchikha," *Iz istorii drevnerusskikh poselenii na Donu* (Voronezh, 1965), 68, 285.

developed routes, Rus' merchants – as any other individuals with capital – would have found little reason to deposit their dirhams into the ground when traveling through the secure lands of Khazaria. It was only up north, beyond the limes of Khazaria, where the Rus' felt it necessary to bury their treasures for safekeeping. Lacking a well-developed state structure in the north to guarantee security to traders, individuals with capital had to rely on force of arms and hiding their wealth in the ground to secure its safety. In view of the great number of hoards deposited, but never retrieved, north of the Khazar limes, it would stand to reason that the hoarding method of preserving wealth was often ineffectual, as their owners frequently did not survive to reclaim what they had deposited. In connection with this, it would be good to recall the testimony of Gardīzī regarding personal security in the Rus' lands during the Viking period. He states:

Moreover, they are all faithless (treacherous, *bFwafā*), so that if one person should go [out] to [perform] a necessity (i.e., relieve nature, *be ḥājat*), two or three [other] persons in arm[s] would [have to] go with him to keep watch over him, for if they found one another alone, they would kill [one another].²³

One can only attempt to fathom the many additional reasons why, when, and where the Rus' would bury their dirhams into the ground in northern Russia for their safekeeping. Clearly, conditions were poles apart in the northern lands outside of the qağanate and warranted a different method of dealing with valuables than in Khazaria. The discovery of hundreds of dirham hoards north of the core Khazar territories attests to these different circumstances in Viking-age northern Russia and the Baltic.²⁴ We shall return to the topic of hoarding north of the Khazar limes below. Suffice it to say presently that there is no question that Khazaria acted as the main gateway for the export of dirhams to the north and that it possessed a highly developed and secure commercial infrastructure that did not necessitate individuals with capital to bury it within its territories.

23 Gardīzī in Martinez, "Gardīzī's Two Chapters on the Turks," 169.

24 For an argument that makes the connection between increased hoarding and instability in northern Russia during the early Viking Age, see Th.S. Noonan, R.K. Kovalev, "Klad 873/74 gg. iz Liubyni: Voiny i zakhronenie kladov v epokhu Riurika," *Klady: sostav, khronologiia, interpretatsiia. Materialy tematicheskoi nauchnoi konferentsii (St. Petersburg, November 26-29, 2002)* (St. Petersburg, 2002), 152-156.

KHAZAR COINAGE

The second main objection Noonan had to the existence of a monetary economy in Khazaria rested on the alleged absence of a domestic emission of coins. Indeed, for over a century, numismatists have been at odds over the question of whether the Khazars minted their own coins.²⁵ Recent die-study analysis carried out by Gert Rispling of the Numismatic Institute in Stockholm and the identification of several unique Khazar coin types, which will be discussed below, has conclusively shown that the Khazars did, indeed, emit coins during the ninth century.²⁶ Prior to his passing, Noonan came to verbally express his leanings towards Rispling's argument in favor of Khazar coinage.²⁷

Among the different kinds of coins issued by the Khazars, there is a group of dirhams that is of particular interest since they carry uniquely "Khazar" messages on their legends. This group of the so-called "special issue" 837/38 Khazar dirhams has received preliminary treatment as to the significance of the messages carried on their legends.²⁸ Presently, these coins will be examined for their pattern of circulation in European Russia and the Baltic region during the ninth century. Before en-

25 For arguments in favor of Khazar coinage, see A.A. Bykov, "Devitskii klad kuficheskikh monet," *Tezisy dokladov nauchnoi sessii Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha, Notabr' 1967 g.* (Leningrad, 1967), 66-69; idem., "O khazarskom cekane VIII-IX vv.: Doklad na III vsesoiuznoi konferentsii Arabistov," *Trudy Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha, Numizmatika* 4: 12 (1971), 26-36; idem., "Iz istorii denezhnogo obrashcheniia Khazarii," 26-71; idem., "Zagadochnye monety Devitskogo klada: Iz zapisok starogo numizmata," *Izvestiia Akademii Nauk Estonskoi SSR/Esti NSV Teaduste Akadeemia, Obshchestvennye nauki/Uhiskonnateadused* 1 (1980), 79-86. For arguments against Khazar coinage, see M. Czapkiewicz, "Review of the Article of A.A. Bykov: O khazarskom cekane," *Folia Orientalia* 15 (1974), 306-310; idem., "Some Remarks on the Imitations of Arabic Dirhams From the 8th to 10th Century Based on the Examination of Coin Metal," *Proceedings of the International Numismatic Symposium*, eds. I. Gedai and K. Biró-Sey (Budapest, 1980), 101-107; Noonan, "Did the Khazars Possess a Monetary Economy," 219-268; idem., "A Ninth Century Dirham Hoard from Devitsa," 185-209; E.A. Pakhomov, *Monety Azerbaidzhana* 2 (Baku, 1963), 131.

26 G. Rispling, "A List of Coin Finds Relevant to the Study of Early Islamic-Type Imitations," *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 28: 1-4 [Festschrift for Th.S. Noonan, Vol. 1, ed. by R.K. Kovalev & H.M. Sherman] (2001), 327-328, 332-338; idem., "Khazar Coins in the Name of Moses and Muhammad," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae (Acta Orientalia)* (in the press). Also see I. Hammarberg, G. Rispling, "The Spillings Viking Coin Hoards," *Minerva* 14: 2 (March-April, 2003), 47-48; R.K. Kovalev, "Creating 'Khazar Identity' Through Coins - The 'Special Issue' Dirhams of 837/38," *East Central Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Florin Curta (in the press).

27 R.K. Kovalev, G. Rispling, "Thomas S. Noonan in Memoriam," *Revue numismatique* 158 (2002), 378.

28 Kovalev, "Creating 'Khazar Identity' Through Coins."

gaging in such a discussion, however, it would be useful to consider the questions why, when, and how the Khazars came to strike coins of their own.

Why, When, and How the Khazars Began to Strike Coins

Noonan had observed that a notable decline in the importation of new dirhams into European Russia and the Baltic occurred between ca. 820s-ca. 840s.²⁹ He attributed this decline to the sharp drop in the production of dirhams during the same period in 'Abbāsid mints, especially those in Iraq that had supplied the bulk of the dirhams for trade with eastern Europe. 'Abbāsid mints were least productive in the 820s, particularly during the second half of the decade.³⁰ To compound the problem of fewer new dirhams being struck by Islamic mints for trade with the north, North African dirhams began to disappear from eastern European hoards beginning with ca. 825. Up to ca. 825, North African dirhams struck at such mints as al-'Abbāsiyyah and Ifrīqiyyah constituted about 50 percent on average of all dirhams deposited in eastern Europe. During ca. 825-830s they dropped to as low as 10 percent and by the 840s ceased from being imported altogether. Thus, for reasons that are not yet clear, importation of North African dirhams to European Russia significantly declined beginning with the second quarter of the ninth century.³¹ In an attempt to remedy the dwindling quantities of silver coin imports from North Africa and Iraq, merchants dealing with eastern Europe began to bring greater numbers of dirhams from Transoxiana (in Central Asia), southern Caucasus, and northern Iran, albeit still in highly diminished overall volumes as compared to earlier periods.³²

In light of the decline in Islamic mint production beginning with the 820s and the substantial drop in the importation of North African dirhams into eastern Europe beginning with ca. 825, trade relations between the Rus' of northwestern Russia and Khazaria must have been notably disrupted. After all, the Rus', as observed by Ibn Rūsta (early tenth century) and Gardīzī (mid-eleventh century), accepted only dirhams in exchange for their goods.³³ A reduction in the available coin-stock on the

29 Th.S. Noonan, "The First Major Silver Crisis in Russia and the Baltic, c. 875-c. 900," *HIKUIJIN* 11 (1985), 41-42; idem., "Ninth Century Dirham Hoards from European Russia," 74-75.

30 Th.S. Noonan, "Early 'Abbāsid Mint Output,'" *The Islamic World*, 133-134, 136-137, 154.

31 Noonan, "The Regional Composition of Ninth-Century Dirham Hoards," *The Islamic World*, 153, 160, 163.

32 Noonan, "The Regional Composition of Ninth-Century Dirham Hoards," 160.

33 Ibn Rūsta in D.A. Khvol'son, *Izvestiia o khazarakh, burtasakh, bolgarakh, mad'iarakh, sylvavian i rusi, Abu ali-Akhmeda ben "Omar" ibn-Dasta* (St. Petersburg, 1869), 35-36; Gardīzī in Martinez, "Gardīzī's Two Chapters on the Turks," 158-159.

Khazar monetary market would have discouraged the Rus' from bringing their goods to Khazar bazaars and travel via its territories to other lands, the latter being an essential generator of revenues for the qaġanate from levying tolls on the passing traffic.³⁴ In addition to the Rus' merchants, one must also include another group of individuals who may well have been paid with dirhams by the Khazars – state employees such as troops and administrators (see below). They too required money payment.

To entice Rus' merchants to travel to and through their domains as well as provide payments to state employees, the Khazars began to supplement the depleting dirham-stock available in the qaġanate by initiating their own dirham production sometime just prior to 825. The earliest such coins were discovered in the Hejde hoard (*tpq* 824/25³⁵) and the 1897 hoard of unknown provenance (*tpq* 835), both discovered on the Island of Gotland, Sweden.³⁶

34 According to al-İřtakhri (ca. 932), the Khazar "king" had two sources of income: the first came from the customs-dues on goods transported by land and water routes via Khazaria and the second was tribute. *Hudud al-'Alam* (written in 982) also states that "the well-being (*ni'mat*) and wealth of the king (*mlk*, **malik* or **mulk?*) of the Khazars are mostly from the maritime customs (*bāz-i daryā*)." See *Hudud al-'Alam: "The Regions of the World," A Persian Geography 372 A.H.-982 A.D.*, tr. V. Minorsky, 2nd ed. (London, 1970), 162. Ibn Hawqal (writing in 977-980) implies that the Rus' were among the merchants who paid the tolls, thereby affirming the earlier account of Ibn Khurdādhbeh (writing in ca. 850-885) who noted that the Rus' paid a tithe (10 percent) on the goods they carried to the lands of Islam via Khazaria. See Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 232; Pritsak, "An Arabic Text on the Trade Route," 257. Ibn Faḡlān, a visitor to the middle Volga region in 921-922, also mentions that the Khazar King took a tenth of all goods (including slaves) Rus' merchants and others brought through his lands; see, *The Risāla of Ibn Faḡlān: An Annotated Translation with Introduction*, tr. J.E. McKeithen [Indiana University Dissertation] (Dissertation Abstracts: Ann Arbor, MI, 1979), 125.

35 *tpq* = *terminus post quem* or the year of the latest coin in a hoard, indicating the approximate date of the hoard's deposit. The reasoning behind dating hoards based on the latest coin is connected with the logic that the hoard could not have been deposited before the youngest coin was entered into it; on the other hand, if the hoard was deposited much later than the youngest coin, it would be expected that newer coins would have been added to it before its burial.

36 A few Khazar imitation dirhams have also been discovered in the Krogen (Norway, 1862), the Right-bank Tsimliansk fortified site (Russia, 1958), and the Janów Pomorski I (Truso, Poland) hoards. However, the Krogen hoard is mainly a silver objects hoard, thereby not provided with a conclusive *tpq* date; the Right-bank Tsimliansk hoard had numerous fragments which were poorly identified and, thus, also has a very tentative *tpq* date of 809/10; and, the so-called Janów Pomorski I hoard, as noted by Mateusz Bogucki, is not a hoard at all, but a collection of stray finds from the archaeological digs which were inadequately described in their initial publication. The two hoards from Gotland

Striking coins in imitation of the Islamic dirham was not unique to Khazaria. Other contemporary states of western Eurasia also issued their "official" and "unofficial" currencies based on the dirham, either in full imitation of the Islamic coin (e.g., the Volga Bulghārs and the Rus'³⁷) or using its silver for coining Christian state currencies (e.g., Byzantium and western European kingdoms such as Anglo-Saxon England³⁸). Due to its exceptionally high-silver content, universal acceptance, and widespread circulation throughout much of medieval western and central Eurasia, the Islamic dirham was equivalent to the modern dollar in its worldwide recognition and utility in exchange. Of course, in Christian lands, the dirham – with

noted above are the two earliest hoards with adequate *tpq* which contain imitation Khazar dirhams. Data for all of these hoards derives from Th.S. Noonan, *Dirham Hoards from Medieval Western Eurasia, c. 700-c. 1100* [Commentationes De Nummis Saeculorum IX-XI in Suecia Repertis. Nova series 13] (Stockholm) (in preparation).

37 For the Volga Bulghār imitations ("unofficial") and later state ("official") Islamic dirhams, see R.R. Vasmer, "O monetakh Volzhskikh Bolgar X veka," *Izvestiia obshchestva arkheologii, istorii i etnografii pre Kazanskom universitete im. V.I. Ul'ianova-Lenina* 33:1 (Kazan', 1926), 29-60; S.A. Ianina, "Novye dannye o monetnom chekane Volzhskoi Bolgarii X v.," *Materialy i issledovaniia po arkheologii SSSR* 111 (Moscow, 1962), 179-204; G. Rispling, "The Volga Bulgarian imitative coinage of al-Amir Yaltawar ('Barman') and Mikail b. Jafar," *Sigtuna Papers: Proceedings of the Sigtuna Symposium On Viking-Age Coinage 1-4 June 1989*, eds. K. Jonsson and B. Malmer [Commentationes de Nummis Saeculorum IX-XI in Suecia Repertis. Nova Series 6] (Stockholm-London, 1990), 275-282. For the Rus' imitations which carry Christian crosses and birds inside the Kufic legends, see G. Rispling, "Coins with crosses and bird heads – Christian imitations of Islamic coins?," *Fornvännen* 82 (1987), 75-87; E. Lindberger, "The Falcon, the Raven and the Dove. Some bird motifs on medieval coins," *Eastern Connections Part One: The Falcon Motif*, ed. B. Ambrosiani [Birka Studies 5] (Stockholm, 2001), 29-86.

38 The contemporary Byzantines and some of the western European Christian states such as Anglo-Saxon England also used dirhams for striking their own coins. However, unlike the Khazars, Volga Bulghārs, and the early (pre-state conversion – 988/89) Rus', they made conscious efforts to eliminate any Islamic connections to their coins. The Byzantine milliaresion and the English pennies were either re-melted and used to strike new coins or, as in some Byzantine examples, struck over the dirhams (not always very successfully since some Kufic characters are still visible on the legends) with local dies carrying Christian symbols. For these dirham-milliaresion Byzantine re-struck coins, see G.C. Miles, "Byzantine Milliaresion and the Arab Dirhem: Some Notes on their Relationships," *American Numismatic Society Museum Notes*, 9 (1960), 189-218. Also see D.R. Sear, *Byzantine Coins and their Values* (London, 1974), pp. 254 (№1554), 260 (№1595). For evidence of the use of Islamic silver in Anglo-Saxon pennies of the 860s, see A. Gordus, "Neutron Activation Analysis of Coins and Coin-Streaks," *Methods of Chemical and Metallurgical Investigation of Ancient Coinage*, eds. E.T. Hall-D.M. Metcalf (London, 1972), 433; H. McKarrell-R.B.K. Stevenson, "Some Analyses of Anglo-Saxon and Associated Oriental Silver Coinage," *Methods of Chemical and Metallurgical Investigation*, 205.

its profession of the Islamic faith and political allegiance to the caliph in Baghdad – would have been unacceptable for local circulation. Hence, these coins were re-struck or melted down into bullion for minting Christian coinage. For the Khazars, however, the choice of minting their coins based fully on the dirham model made perfect sense. The dirham was well known in the lands of Khazaria because of the qağanate's intermediary role in trade relations between the Islamic world and northern Europe during the ninth century; and the Rus' were accustomed to receiving this high-quality silver coin with Kufic inscriptions. While there is no reason to think that the Rus' could read the Arabic coin legends, undoubtedly they knew a good dirham when they saw one and accepted it in exchange for their merchandise, provided that it was within the same weight range and made of the same high-quality silver as the official Islamic dirham issues.

Indeed, the early Khazar imitation dirhams, aside from carrying obvious misspellings in Arabic, mistakes in Kufic orthography, and erroneous mints, dates, rulers, and their combinations – none of which would have been noticeable to the Rus'³⁹ – were not augmented to carry any specifically Khazar political or religious messages/symbolism. These imitations were simply made to look like Islamic dirhams. In fact, they are so close to the originals that it takes a keen and trained eye of a modern numismatist to discern Khazar imitations from “official,” caliphal dirhams. Studies of the fineness of the silver content and weight of Khazar imitations have shown that these coins were just as heavy and just as pure as any of the contemporary “official” Islamic dirhams.⁴⁰ Thus, the Khazar imitation, “unofficial” dirhams would have been just as attractive and acceptable to the Rus' as any of the “official” Islamic dirhams. Based on the discovery of these coins in Baltic hoards beginning with ca. 825, it appears that these coins fully served their function.

The above conclusions raise one obvious and fundamental question that must be addressed: what was the source of Khazar silver for the striking of their imitations? Surely, they did not just re-strike “official” caliphal dirhams into “unofficial” caliphal dirhams. If the Khazars would have debased their imitations or struck their coins with lower weights in order to skim-off some silver from the “official” caliphal coins, it would have been reasonable to assume that they struck their imitations in order to make a profit in addition to supplementing the coin-stock. However, as noted above, this was not the case: Khazar coins were of the same weight and fineness standard as the “official” Islamic dirhams. Hence the question why re-

³⁹ There is no reason to think that most Rus', if any at all, could read Kufic script. The available evidence points to their lack of knowledge of Arabic: writing between ca. 850-885, Ibn Khurdādhbeh noted that when the Rus' traveled from the southern shore of the Caspian Sea to trade in Baghdad they needed *ṣaqlab* eunuchs as interpreters. See Pritsak, “An Arabic Text on the Trade Route,” 257.

⁴⁰ Bykov, “Iz istorii denezhnogo obrashcheniia Khazarii,” 45-46.

strike dirhams into imitation dirhams without making any substantive changes to the legends of the coins, with no intentional loss of silver due to added impurities, or weight depreciation? Aside for being an utterly pointless venture, it was, after all, also expensive to run mints. It would thus stand to reason that the Khazars did not utilize “official” caliphal dirhams for striking their “unofficial” imitations. Such a conclusion would also correspond to our basic premise that the reason why the Khazars initiated the minting of imitation dirhams was precisely because fewer dirhams were being imported into eastern Europe. So, the question remains – what was the source of the silver for Khazar imitations?

The *Darband-Nāmah* mentions the existence of silver mines within the territories of Khazaria – at the source of the Terek river in the northern Caucasus (Karachai-Cherkess region) – and that it was used to pay the Khazar frontier troops stationed in the region.⁴¹ While the reliability of *Darband-Nāmah* has been questioned due to its late compilation, in this particular instance it appears that this account can be trusted.⁴² Large silver-lead deposits are indeed known in an extended area just to the west of the upper Terek region (Karachai-Balkaria area of North Ossetia-Alania) and have been mined from ancient times until the present.⁴³ These mines were brought to the attention of the Muscovite state by the Terek *voivode* (military-administrative official) I.A. Dashkov in 1629 who noted the existence of silver deposits in the land of the “Balkarians.”⁴⁴ During the early Middle Ages, the mines were particularly active in the eighth-ninth centuries⁴⁵ – the period when the Khazars minted their coins. Thus, it is quite possible that the Khazars used this silver reserve for the striking of their imitation dirhams.

- 41 *Darband-Nāmah*, ed. and tr. A. Kazem-Beg (St. Petersburg, 1851), 477; Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 227, n. 43.
- 42 For the discussion of this work and its problems, see V.V. Bartol'd, “K voprosu o proiskhozhdenii *Derbend-Nāme*,” *Sochineniia*, vol. 8 (Moscow, 1963), 469-480; Minorsky, *A History of Sharvān and Darband*, 5-9.
- 43 Silver and silver-lead ore deposits in Ossetia are extracted at Sadonskoe, Zgidskoe, Buronskoe, Fiagdonskoe, Kholstinskoe, Arkhonskoe, and other mines. See V.M. Derviz, “O mestorozhdeniakh srebro-svintsovykh i tsinkovykh rud v Gornoi Osetii i Digorii,” *Izvestiia geologicheskogo komiteta* 36, №2 (1917), 725-768; *Geologiya i poleznye vestiiia geologicheskogo komiteta* 36, №2 (1917), 725-768; *Geologiya i poleznye vestiiia geologicheskogo komiteta* 36, №2 (1917), 725-768; *Geologiya i poleznye vestiiia geologicheskogo komiteta* 36, №2 (1917), 725-768; Derviz reports that the enriched lead-zinc ore contains from 150 to 1200 grams of silver per ton of ore.
- 44 I.M. Miziyev (Miziev), *The History of the Karachai-Balkarian People: From the Ancient Times to Joining Russia in Mingi-Tau* (Elbrus) I (Jan.-Feb.) (Nalchik, 1994), 7-104, 206-213; Eng. tr. P.B. Ibanov (Moscow, 1997) <http://www.akba.org/english/khistory3.html>.
- 45 V.B. Deopik, “Klassifikatsiia i khronologiia alanskikh ukrashenii VI-IX vv.” *Materiialy i issledovaniia po arkheologii SSSR* №114 (Moscow, 1963), 146; V.B. Kovalevskaia, “Severokavkazskie drevnosti,” *Stepi Evrazii v epokhu srednevekov'ia* [Arkheologiia SSSR], ed. S.A. Pletneva (Moscow, 1981), 85.

In addition to the Terek mines, another possible source of silver for the Khazars may have come in the form of the *nuqra* or the medieval Islamic silver ingot, which had no particular weight standard, but was accepted on the merit of its high silver content.⁴⁶ While there is no direct evidence for the importation of *nuqras* into Khazaria, silver ingots have been found in northern Russian dirham hoards of the first half of the ninth century, including one that also contained Khazar imitation dirhams.⁴⁷ It is very likely that these ingots were imported from the Islamic world into Khazaria and subsequently re-exported north along with dirhams. Since these ingots would have come to northern Russia via Khazaria, they would have been available to Khazar moneyers charged with the striking of dirhams. In this connection, it would be of interest to note that the Sāmānid amīrs reigning in Bukhārā during the tenth century demanded that all ingots of silver passing through their lands be brought to their capital city.⁴⁸ Much of this silver was probably minted into local Bukhārā dirhams.⁴⁹ Perhaps the Khazars imposed similar demands on merchants who transported silver from the Arab lands to or through the qaḡanate. The Khazars could have obtained these ingots from the merchants as part of their toll dues for passing through the qaḡanate. Subsequently, the *nuqras* would have been converted into Khazar dirhams – coins most widely recognized by the Rus' as well as anyone else inhabiting or visiting the lands of the qaḡanate.

“Special Issue 837/38 Khazar Coins”

While the Khazar production of coins starting with ca. 825 made perfect commercial sense, and their full adoption of the dirham model for their coinage was con-

46 For the melting down of vessels made of precious metals into ingots for easy transfer of the bullion, see al-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī: An Annotated Translation*, tr. F. Rosenthal, vol. 38 [The Return of the Caliphate of Baghdad] (New York, 1985), 176.

47 Some of the best examples are: Kniashchino, Ladoga uezd, Russia, 1874, hoard *tpq* 808/09 contained more than 365 Sasanian drachms and Islamic dirhams alongside 2 silver ingots; Uglich, Iaroslavl' province, Russia, 1879, hoard *tpq* 828/29 contained 205 whole and 909 fragments of Sasanian drachms and Islamic dirhams (and 2 *Arḍ al-Khazar* dirhams) alongside 5 silver ingots; Vyzhigsha II, Iur'ev-Pol'skii raion, Vladimir oblast, Russia, 1983, hoard *tpq* 841/42 contained hundreds of silver Sasanian drachms and Islamic dirhams alongside 15 trapezoidal-grained rods, ca. 20 cm in length; see A.E. Leont'ev, “Raskipki v Rostove Velikom i na gorodishche Vyzhegsha,” *Arkheologicheskie otkrytiia 1985 goda* (Moscow, 1987), 77-78; Noonan, *Dirham Hoards from Medieval Western Eurasia*.

48 W. Barthold, *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion* (London, 1958), 239.

49 R.K. Kovalev, “Mint Output in Tenth-Century Bukhārā: A Case Study of Dirham Production and Monetary Circulation in Northern Europe,” *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 28: 1-4, 260.

nected to economic as well as practical circumstances, in the year AH 223 (AD 837/38) the situation had drastically changed – albeit for only a very short while. That year, the Khazars issued the so-called “special issue” 837/38 coins – *Arḍ al-Khazar*, “Moses,” and “tamgha” (✱) dirhams – which, while imitating much of the traditional features of the “official” caliphal dirhams, demonstrate subtle, but profoundly important alterations. In an earlier study, I have advanced the possibility that the emission of these three unique coins can be connected to the official conversion of the Khazar state to Judaism and the changes that occurred in the Khazar political structure, both occurring in 837/38.⁵⁰ These dirhams were struck mainly for political-religious purposes as they were meant to disseminate via the messages found on their legends the new state ideology. It was also argued that the Khazars ceased to issue these special types of coins just a year later because they miserably failed to fulfill their propaganda function: all were exported beyond the territories of the qaḡanate immediately after they were struck, hence, they hardly saw a day of circulation in Khazaria.⁵¹ Thus, in a way, these coins can be seen as experimental issues that failed.

To this group of unique coins one can also add the so-called “Jalīl/Khalīl” dirham type. All four of these coin types are interlinked by virtue of being struck by the same dies, stylistic qualities, chronology of issue, and find-spots. Each of these coin types will be briefly discussed below.

Arḍ al-Khazar Dirhams

The *Arḍ al-Khazar* dirhams are unique in two main ways. First, they contain the name of the mint – *Arḍ al-Khazar*, meaning “Land of the Khazars.” Second, they include the actual date of the emission of the coin (December 3, 837–November 22, 838). The *Arḍ al-Khazar* coins form a very tight-knit chronological, stylistic, and die-link group – they all date to 837/38 and, according to Rispling, are part of die-chain 108.⁵² One other feature of these dirhams that tie them directly to the others found in this group is that in certain cases they were struck with a die carrying *Arḍ al-Khazar* on one side of the coin and with another die that struck the “tamgha” on the other side, hence linking them to the same workshop and chronology.⁵³ To date, 81 *Arḍ al-Khazar* coins have been discovered, the earliest of which occur in hoards dating to 837/38. Sixty-two of these coins were deposited in eleven hoards dating to the ninth century [see Table 1].

50 Kovalev, “Creating ‘Khazar Identity’ Through Coins.”

51 Kovalev, “Creating ‘Khazar Identity’ Through Coins.”

52 Rispling, “Khazar Coins in the Name of Moses and Muhammad.”

53 Such have been found in the Spillings 2 and Ralswiek hoards. I should like to thank Gert Ruspling for sharing this information with me.

“Moses” Dirhams

The “Moses” dirhams are unique in one key way – in the standard formula of the *shahāda* or *kalima*, the Islamic declaration of faith (found in a circle on the reverse of the coin on regular caliphal dirhams), the die-engraver added an extra unprecedented statement at the bottom, which reads in Arabic: *Mūsā rasūl Allāh* or “Moses is the Apostle/Messenger of Allah/God” – a clear reference to the Khazar conversion to Judaism.⁵⁴ Unlike the *Arḍ al-Khazar* dirhams, the “Moses” coins carry fictitious dates and mints since they were imitations of caliphal dirham legends. However, they belong to die-chain 108 – the same die used for striking some of the 837/38 *Arḍ al-Khazar* coins – and share many stylistic features.⁵⁵ Based on this, the “Moses” and the *Arḍ al-Khazar* dirhams were issued by the same workshop at roughly the same time. Since the “Moses” dirhams were discovered in hoards together with the *Arḍ al-Khazar* coins (some deposited as early as 837/38, but not before), the date of the “Moses” emission can be established with precision to 837/38.⁵⁶ Thus far, 5 “Moses” coins have been discovered – all of which were deposited in four hoards dating to the ninth century [see Table 1].

“Tamgha” (𐤔) Dirhams

The “tamgha” (personal-tribal/clan identity mark or symbol) dirhams are unique in one fundamental way – practically all of them carry the sign 𐤔 located within the bottom section of the circle on the obverse or reverse side of the coin. As the “Moses” dirhams, the “tamgha” coins were minted with fictitious dates and mints, i.e., they imitated caliphal dirham legends. However, like the other two “special issue” Khazar coins, the “tamgha” dirhams are not only stylistically very close to these coins but are also part of die-chain 108.⁵⁷ Based on this, it can be determined that the “tamgha” dirhams were issued by the same workshop at about the same time as the other two coins – in 837/38. Since the “tamgha” coins were discovered

⁵⁴ This reverse was almost certainly a copy of an official caliphal dirham minted in Baṣrah in AH 160-163 (776/77-779/80) which contained the name “Muḥammad” who was at that time the governor of the city. In carving his die, the Khazar die-cutter used this dirham as a model, but intentionally substituted the statement *Mūsā rasūl Allāh* for the name of the governor. See Rispling, “Khazar Coins in the Name of Moses and Muhammad.”

⁵⁵ Rispling, “Khazar Coins in the Name of Moses and Muhammad.”

⁵⁶ In other words, if these dirhams had been issued somewhat earlier, it would stand to reason that they would have occurred in earlier hoards. At the same time, they could not have been issued later since they occur in *tpq* 837/38 hoards. The same applies to the “tamgha” and “Jalīl/Khalīl” dirhams.

⁵⁷ Rispling, “Khazar Coins in the Name of Moses and Muhammad.”

in hoards together with the *Arḍ al-Khazar* and “Moses” dirhams (some deposited as early as 837/38, but not before), it can be gathered that these coins were issued at the same exact time, i.e., 837/38. To date, 78 “tamgha” coins of known provenance have been found – 65 of which were deposited in ten hoards dating to the ninth century [see Table 1].

“Jalīl/Khalīl” Dirhams

In his examination of this coin type, Lutz Ilisch was able to read “Jalīl” or “Khalīl” on the obverse margin of the coin. The Arabic names Jalīl (“great, lofty, important”) or Khalīl (“friend, bosom friend, lover”) were rather common to Muslims, Christians as well as Jews during the period in question. It is possible that “Jalīl/Khalīl” was the name of the die-cutter who engraved the die used for striking this type of coins.⁵⁸

Like the “Moses” and “tamgha” dirhams, the official dates of issue of the “Jalīl/Khalīl” coins are false because they are imitations. However, because “Jalīl/Khalīl” dirhams were struck by the same die as the other three coin types, it can be determined that this dirham type was issued by the same workshop at about the same time as the other three coins – in 837/38. Since the “Jalīl/Khalīl” dirhams were discovered in the same hoards (one deposited as early as 837/38) together with the *Arḍ al-Khazar*, “Moses,” and “tamgha” dirhams, it can be gathered that these coins were issued at the same exact time, i.e., 837/38. To date, 18 “Jalīl/Khalīl” dirhams have been discovered – 17 of which were deposited in two hoards dating to the ninth century [see Table 1].

⁵⁸ If Jalīl – meaning “great, lofty, important” – was what was actually engraved on the die (not Khalīl), perhaps the die-cutter was making a statement about his craft, not writing his own name, i.e., “Jalīl” was his epithet. The inclusion of the name of the die-engraver is not unique to medieval Islamic coins: to date at least 52 coins with die-cutter’s names dating to the tenth century have been identified on Sāmānid, Volga Bulghār, and Buwaihid dirhams. See C.M. Bier, “The Work of al-Hasan b. Muhammad, die engraver at Isbahān and al-Muhammadiyya,” *The American Numismatic Society, Museum Notes* 24 (1979), 243-256; G. Rispling, “Names of die engravers on 10th century Islamic coins,” *Festschrift Till Lars O. Lagerqvist* (Stockholm, 1989), 329-335. Also, it is interesting to note is that it is clear that the die-engraver was not just imitating ‘Abbāsīd dirhams, but obviously had knowledge of Kufic script since he could inscribe his own name on the die.

CIRCULATION OF KHAZAR COINS

It must be stressed from the start that the Khazars continued to mint dirhams after the failed 837/38 experimental issues.⁵⁹ However, with the exception of the four unique types of dirhams described above, all datable to a very specific year of issue, the rest of the Khazar coins cannot be dated with any such precision. For this reason, in order to understand the circulation of Khazar coins in the qaġanate and beyond its territories, one has to turn to the "special issue" 837/38 Khazar dirhams.

Of the 164 "special issue" 837/38 dirhams thus far discovered, 149 specimens or 90.8 percent of their total number were deposited in sixteen ninth-century hoards. Table 1 will act as our database for these four curious dirham types. The sixteen ninth-century hoards that have been discovered with these dirhams all come from central and northern Russia and the Baltic region – Russia (74.5% of the total), Sweden (18.1% of the total), Finland (2.7% of the total), Estonia (2.7 of the total), and Germany (2% of the total). In addition, it must be noted that the rest of these dirhams – found in post-ninth century hoards – were also all discovered north of the Khazar lands. Thus, whatever the reason why the Khazars minted these coins, they were all destined to come into the hands of Rus' merchants who exported them to northern Europe alongside other types of dirhams.

Of the 149 "special issue" Khazar dirhams deposited in ninth-century hoards, 109 coins or 73.2 percent come from only six hoards [№№1-6] – all dating to the year of the dirhams' issue, based on *tpq* – 837/38. In part, the huge number of dirhams deposited that year can be attributed to the fact that most of them come from two unique hoards – Kislaia (containing 42 *Arġ al-Khazar* dirhams) and Devitsa (containing 42 "tamgha," 1 "Moses," and 15 "Jaġl/Khalil" dirhams). Thus, these two coin assemblages preserved by far the largest number (100 dirhams or 67.1%) of all "special issue" Khazar dirhams deposited in the ninth century. At the same time, it seems that it is no mere accident that the bulk of these coins were deposited immediately after being struck by the Khazars. To better understand these two hoards, it would be of use to look at them and others deposited in northern Europe in 837/38 more closely.

Hoard Name and Find Spot	<i>tpq</i> – date of deposit	<i>tpq</i> Islamic	<i>tpq</i> Khazar	Number of Coins in Hoard/ Number of Khazar Imitations	<i>Arġ al-Khazar</i>	"Moses"	"Tamgha"	Other Khazar Imitations
1 Norrkvïe, Grötlingbo parish, Gotland, Sweden	837/38 ?	835	837/38?	30 / 1	0	0	1	0
2. Devitsa, Russia	837/38	223 AH (837/38)	837/38?	323 / 86	0	0	42	44
3. Kislaia, Russia	837/38	220 AH (835)	223 AH (837/38)	670 / 110	42	1	0	67 (15 "Jaġl/Khalil")
4. Kohtel/Kohtla, Estonia	837/38	220 AH (835)	223 AH (837/38)	481 / 16	1	1	2	12
5., Housulanmäki, Vähäkyrö, Österbotten, Finland	837/38	223 AH (837/38)	223 AH (837/38)	20 / 1	1	0	0	0
6. Svedjelandet, Geta, Åland, Finland	837/38	221 AH (835/36)	223 AH (837/38)	107 / 3	1	2	0	0
7. Ocksarve I, Hense, Gotland, Sweden	840/41	226 AH (840/41)	837/38?	437 / 10	0	0	3	7
8. Vyzhigska I, Russia	841/42	227 AH (841/42)	837/38?	1278 / 26	0	0	1	25
9. Vyzhigska II, Russia	841/42	227 AH (841/42)	223 AH (837/38)	508 / 2	2	0	0	0
10. Dobrino, Russia	841/42	227 AH (841/42)	223 AH (837/38)	527 or 537? / 12	1	0	4	7 (2 "Jaġl/Khalil")
11. Ralswiek, Rügen, Germany	841/42	227 AH (841/42)	223 AH (837/38)	2211 / 4	1	0	2	1
12. Svenskens, Endre, Gotland, Sweden	856/57	242 AH (856/57)	223 AH (837/38)	277 / 4	1	0	1	2
13. Fittja, Fittja, Uppland, Sweden	866/67	252 AH (866/67)	837/38?	136 / 1	0	0	1	0
14. Spillings 1, Gotland, Sweden ⁶⁰	867	253 AH (867)	223 AH (837/38)	ca. 5200 / 3	1	0	0	2
15. Shumilovo, Russia	870/71	257 AH (870/71)	223 AH (837/38)	1326 / 1	1	0	0	0
16. Spillings 2, Gotland, Sweden ⁶¹	870/71	257 AH (870/71)	223 AH (837/38)	ca. 9100 / 34	10	1	8	15
TOTAL	-	-	-	-	62	5	65	182 (17 "Jaġl/Khalil")

Table 1: Hoards with "Special Issue" Khazar Dirhams – 837/38-870/71

⁵⁹ Rispling, "A List of Coin Finds, 327-328, 332-338.

⁶⁰ Of these ca. 5200 coins, only 560 have so far been examined. In light of this, it would not be out of the question that more Khazar dirhams would be identified in the future.

⁶¹ Of these ca. 9100 coins, about half (4667) have so far been examined.

TPQ 837/38 Khazar Dirham Hoards**Devitsa Hoard [Map 1: №34]**

The hoard was discovered along the Devitsa river, a western tributary of the middle Don and just east of the headwaters of the Oskol river, some 10-12 km north from the borders of the Saltovo culture/Khazar limes (i.e., north of the Bol'shoe, Dmitriev, and Maiaki fortified settlements). This hoard is sometimes incorrectly listed as coming from the Saltovo culture – but it did not, and thus has to be removed from the very short list of dirham hoards discovered in Khazaria. The Devitsa hoard was deposited right in the midst of the main cluster of Slavic Borshevo culture settlements (south of Ramon' and north of Bol'shoe and Maloe Borshevo, and Titchikha).⁶² While the hoard was not discovered at a settlement, the key site of Zhivotinskoe hillfort on the Voronezh river (which merges with the Don just south of Devitsa) was located some 40 km northeast of Devitsa. Archaeologists who have done considerable work at Zhivotinskoe believe that it lay along a "caravan route" from Khazaria to northern Russia.⁶³ In light of this, the Devitsa hoard can be seen as a deposit made by a merchant who wanted to secure his capital soon after passing through the Khazar frontier forts and entering the Slavic Borshevo lands. Very possibly, the hoard was deposited at a time when the merchant was traveling from the Oskol to the Don via portage and the Devitsa on his way to Zhivotinskoe on the Voronezh.

The Devitsa hoard contained a total of 323 coins: 42 "tamgha" dirhams and 44 other Khazar imitations in addition to 237 other types of coins (dirhams as well as 5 Sasanian drachms). Thus, 26.6 percent of the coins discovered in this hoard were Khazar in origin and had 64.6 percent of all "tamgha" dirhams deposited in the ninth century. The extraordinary quantity of Khazar imitations and the unprecedented concentration of "tamgha" dirhams discovered in this hoard strongly suggest that the individual who added these Khazar coins to Devitsa had direct access to the Khazar monetary market where these dirhams were widely found in circulation (a bazaar in İtil/Atıl?). The fact that there is such a huge number of "tamgha" dirhams in this hoard may also suggest that these coins were very recently minted and widely available for trade at the time they entered the coin assemblage.

62 For these sites, see P.P. Efimenko, P.N. Tret'iakov, *Drevnerusskie poseleniia na Donu [Materialy i issledovaniia po arkheologii SSSR 8]* (Moscow, 1948); A.N. Moskalenko, *Gorodishche Titchikha. Iz istorii drevnerusskikh poselenii na Donu* (Voronezh, 1965).

63 A.P. Motsia, A.Kh. Khalikov, *Bulgar-Kiev. Puti, sviazi, sud'by* (Kiev, 1997), 134-136; A.Z. Vinnikov, "Slavianskoe Zhivotinskoe gorodishche na r. Voronezhe," *Put' iz Bulgara v Kiev* (Kazan', 1992), 114-132.

Kislaia Hoard [Map 1: №33; Map 2]

The hoard was deposited inside a clay hand-made pot at an unfortified settlement (Kislye) of the ninth century situated along the bank of the Zherespee river, a tributary of the Kasplia-Dnepr system in Smolensk region. The route towards the Baltic from this site could have followed up into the Western Dvina or the Lovat'-Volkhov-Lake Ladoga-Neva-Gulf of Finland waterway system. In this way, the Kislaia hoard was deposited near the end of the northern part of the "Khazar Way."

In addition to the coins found in the pot, in the ground just below it, several dozen other dirhams were discovered piled up in stacks. Archaeologists who have excavated the settlement note that the hoard was buried in the ground just below the surface, i.e., into the last cultural layer deposited at the site. This means that the settlement ceased to exist immediately after the hoard was buried.⁶⁴ Quite possibly, the settlement was destroyed in an attack (a Viking raid?) and this would explain why the hoard was interned into the ground in the first place. It may also explain why the owner of the hoard did not retrieve it – i.e., they were killed, captured, or fled somewhere to never return to reclaim their hidden property.

The Kislaia hoard contained a total of 670 coins: 42 *Arđ al-Khazar* dirhams, 1 "Moses," 15 "Jalil/Khalil," 52 other Khazar imitations in addition to 561 other types of coins (dirhams as well as 4 Sasanian drachms and 1 Danish-Hedeby coin). In this way, 16.4 percent of the coins deposited in this hoard were Khazar in origin and had 67.7 percent of all *Arđ al-Khazar* dirhams deposited in the ninth century. Again, as the Devitsa hoard, Kislaia has an unusually large number of Khazar imitations, but instead of having an extraordinary number of "tamgha" dirhams the latter contained a great number of *Arđ al-Khazar* issues. Perhaps, this may suggest that at the time the merchant was in Khazaria and added coins to his coin assemblage, the *Arđ al-Khazar* dirhams were very recently minted and released into the economy, thereby making them widely available on the Khazar monetary market (a bazaar in İtil/Atıl?).

Unlike the Devitsa hoard, the Kislaia coin assemblage was deposited by an individual operating at the opposite, northern end of the "Khazar Way." In view of the high concentration of Khazar dirhams and its quick deposit, it stands to reason that the hoard (or at least its base) remained intact as it passed through the northern lands to the near end of the "Khazar Way." Hence, it appears that the merchant who assembled this hoard was operating directly between the core lands of Khazaria and the Baltic region.

Interestingly, based on the discovery of the Hedeby coin dating to ca. 825 in the Kislaia hoard, this same merchant seems to have had direct contact with the larger

64 E.A. Shmidt, "Raskopki v Smolenskoj oblasti," *Arkheologicheskie otkrytiia 1968 goda* (Moscow, 1969), 63-64; E.A. Shmidt, *Arkheologicheskie pamiatniki Smolenskoj oblasti* (Moscow, 1976), 214-216; idem., *Drevnerusskie arkheologicheskie pamiatniki Smolenskoj oblasti*, vol. 2 (Smolensk, 1983), 77.

world of the Viking-age Baltic. Finds of Hedeby coins in ninth-century dirham hoards are extremely rare. Aside from Kislaiia, there are only two other hoards with dirhams that also contain Hedeby coins: 3 were discovered in a dirhams hoard (*tpq* 867 or later) at the town of Hedeby (in Schleswig-Holstein) itself and 2 were recently discovered in the Spillings 2 hoard (*tpq* 870/71) at Othem, Gotland, Sweden.⁶⁵ It would thus appear that the individual who had assembled this hoard had a very wide-ranging network of commercial relations that stretched directly from the western Baltic to Khazaria, if not as far as Baghdād in the east.

Norrkvie Hoard [Map 2]

The hoard was discovered in Norrkvie, Grötlingbo parish, on the Island of Gotland, located off the coast of Sweden. The Norrkvie hoard contained a total of 30 coins: 1 "tamgha" dirham in addition to 29 other Islamic dirhams and Sasanian and Arab-Sasanian drachms. Thus, only 3.3 percent of the dirhams deposited in this hoard were Khazar in origin. While the latest "official" dirham found in this hoard dates to 835, based on the Khazar "tamgha" it can be dated to the date of issue of this coin – 837/38. This is the eleventh-oldest hoard of dirhams discovered to date in Sweden; thus, it represents the continuation of trade relations between Sweden and European Russia.

Kochtel/Kohtla Hoard [Map 2]

The hoard was discovered in Ida-Virumaa, Estonia, near the coast of the Baltic Sea. This is the earliest dirham hoard thus far discovered in the southeastern Baltic region. The Kochtel/Kohtla hoard contained a total of 481 coins: 1 *Arđ al-Khazar*, 1 "Moses," 2 "tamgha," 12 other Khazar imitation dirhams in addition to 465 other dirhams. Thus, only 3.3 percent of the dirhams deposited in this hoard were Khazar in origin and had a relatively nominal number of all types of Khazar dirhams. Despite this, the hoard is interesting for several reasons. First, the fact that it did include three of the four unique Khazar issues and deposited immediately after its arrival in the region suggests that its owner had close, if not direct, contact with Khazaria. Second, as noted above, this hoard is the earliest dirham deposit in the southeastern Baltic. Its find represents the entrance of the southeastern Baltic region into the larger sphere of commercial relations between northern Europe and the East via the lands of the Khazars.

Housulanmäki Hoard [Map 2]

This hoard was discovered in Housulanmäki, Vähäkylä parish, Österbotten, Finland, near the northeastern coast of the Baltic Sea. This is the earliest dirham

hoard thus far discovered in Finland. It contained a total of 20 coins: 1 *Arđ al-Khazar* in addition to 18 other dirhams and 1 Sasanian drachm. Thus, only 5 percent of the coins deposited in this hoard were Khazar in origin. Being the earliest dirham hoard discovered in Finland, it can be viewed as a testament to the inclusion of Finland into the larger sphere of cross-continental trade relations between the Baltic and the East via Khazaria involving dirhams. Perhaps its importation into this region may be connected to the development of Viking-age Baltic fur trade with Finland.

Svedjelandet Hoard [Map 2]

This hoard was discovered in Geta-Svedjelandet, on the Island of Åland located in the middle of the northern Baltic Sea – situated between Finland and Sweden. This is the earliest dirham hoard thus far discovered on Åland. The hoard contained a total of 107 coins: 1 *Arđ al-Khazar*, 2 "Moses," 90 other types of dirhams, and 14 Sasanian drachms. Thus, only 2.8 percent of the coins deposited in this hoard were Khazar in origin.

Like the Housulanmäki hoard, Svedjelandet is not only relatively small in size but also contains very few Khazar dirhams, as compared to the Estonian Kochtel/Kohtla hoard and even less in comparison to the two hoards found in Russia. It thus appears that this hoard, like Housulanmäki, was a product of a much larger hoard (such as Devitsa or Kislaiia, and perhaps even Kochtel/Kohtla) that had been broken up and its contents dispersed. As dirham hoards were exported further and further north, away from their place of assemblage, the likelihood of the dispersion of dirhams increased.

Based on the chronology of Housulanmäki and the presence of the unique *Arđ al-Khazar* dirham, Tuukka Talvio makes the logical suggestion that it along with the Svedjelandet hoard "very possibly represent the profits of one commercial venture undertaken some time in the early ninth century."⁶⁶ Indeed, one can suggest that the Kochtel/Kohtla hoard, and perhaps even the two from Russia and the Swedish Norrkvie hoard, represent the commercial activities of one group of merchants (Rus') operating from the Near East to the Baltic via Khazaria and northern Russia. On reaching the Baltic coast, the large hoards were broken up into smaller parcels and sent to various destinations along the coast, perhaps for purchasing pelts and other northern commodities which, in turn, were sent south in exchange for more dirhams.

Overall, like the Housulanmäki hoard of coastal Finland and the Kochtel/Kohtla hoard of coastal Estonia, Svedjelandet can be directly linked to the expanding trade relations throughout the eastern Baltic lands, as new regions joined in the cross-

⁶⁵ R. Wiechmann, *Edelmetalldepots der Wikingerzeit in Schleswig-Holstein* (Offa-Bücher, Band 77) (Neumünster, 1996), pp. 226-227, №4; Noonan, *Dirham Hoards from Medieval Western Eurasia*.

⁶⁶ T. Talvio, "Finland's Place in Viking-Age Relations Between Sweden and the Eastern Baltic/Northern Russia: The Numismatic Evidence," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 13 (1982), 249.

continental Baltic-Eastern dirham trade. All three of these hoards were the earliest deposits of dirhams in these lands, and all contained Khazar coins. These observations lead to the conclusion that the Khazar production of dirhams notably contributed to the development of trade in the Baltic. It is also clear that these Khazar dirhams were carried at lightning speed from their place of emission to entirely new commercial areas of northern Europe where they opened up novel commercial opportunities, which in turn brought many more dirhams in the following decades and centuries into the Baltic.



MAP 2: TPQ 837/38 DIRHAM HOARDS IN THE BALTIC REGION WITH "SPECIAL ISSUE" KHAZAR COINS

Post- TPQ 837/38 Dirham Hoards With "Special Issue" Khazar Dirhams

The remaining 40 coins or 26.8 percent of all "special issue" 837/38 dirhams discovered in ninth-century hoards come from ten post-837/38 coin assemblages. All

of these coins, however, were in the ground far before the century was over. Thus, between 840/41-841/42 16 more were buried in five hoards [Table 1: №№7-11] and between 856/57-870/71 24 more in five other hoards [Table 1: №№12-16]. In this way, 10.7 percent were deposited in the ground some 2-5 years after their issue; and, the remaining 16.1 percent within some fifteen years thereafter. Thus, 83.9 percent of all Khazar "special issue" dirhams that had been deposited in the ninth century had circulated, entered into hoards, and interned into the ground within a span of half a decade (837/38-841/42) after being struck. Since no "special issue" Khazar dirhams have been found within the territories of Khazaria itself, it is quite likely that most, if not all, of these coins were exported north immediately or very soon after they were struck. Once in the north, most of these coins also did not see much circulation, as the overwhelming majority of them were very soon deposited.

The topographic distribution of the post-837/38 hoards with "special issue" Khazar dirhams is also quite revealing. Thus, while the 837/38 hoards tended to be restricted to Russia and the eastern Baltic, the post-837/38 hoard find spots not only include the same regions, but also extend westwards to Sweden (mainland and Gotland) and Ralswiek (a West Slavic settlement) on the Island of Rügen, Germany, in the southwestern Baltic [Map 2]. The latter two regions received their hoards with "special issue" Khazar dirhams as early as 840/41. Thus, these dirhams traveled from Khazaria to the coast of Germany and deposited in less than half a decade, underscoring the great rapidity and efficiency with which commerce operated in early Viking-age northwestern Eurasia.

One other observation needs to be made in reference to the pre- and post-837/38 hoards with "special issue" Khazar dirhams. In 837/38, three hoards were deposited in eastern Europe – two with a great number of "special issue" Khazar dirhams (Devitsa and Kischlaia) and one without these coins (discovered in Balka, Crimea [Map 1: №35]). The last of these is a very rare example of a dirham hoard discovered within the territories of Khazaria.⁶⁷ After 837/38 there are no hoards with or without Khazar dirhams from Russia until 841/42, when dirham importation not only resumed, but also greatly increases in volume for much of the rest of the ninth century. The very year dirham importation recommenced – in 841/42 – five hoards were deposited in northern Russia (Protasovo, Lesogurt, Vyzhigsha I, Vyzhigsha II, and Dobrino), three of which contained "special issue" 837/38 dirhams (Vyzhigsha I and II, Dobrino). It is tempting to propose a thought to explain this curious interlude in dirham deposition.

⁶⁷ This hoard was discovered in 1999, containing 36 dirhams. See V.A. Sidorenko, "Podrazhaniia abbasidskikh dirkhemam i dinaram v monetnom obrashchenii Tavriki khazar-skogo vremeni," *Materialy po arkheologii, istorii i etnografii Tavrii* 9 (Semferopol', 2002), 437-454. It should be noted that Sidorenko's reading of "al-Khazar" on the Zaranj, A.H. 192 dirham is erroneous, since it should be read as "al-Ḥakam." I should like to thank Gert Rispling for pointing out this error.

The 830s were very eventful years for Khazar relations with their neighbors. Among the most noteworthy of these was the westward migration of the Magyars (future Hungarians) from the lower Kama-Belaia river basins into Khazar territories where they came to nomadise for the next half century.⁶⁸ While the precise territory they occupied – known as *Lebedia* in the sources – is disputed in scholarship, it does seem that the Măgyars were stationed west of the Don and probably came to control the north Pontic steppe zone from the Don to as far west as Pannonia.⁶⁹ Magyar migration into the Russian-Ukrainian steppe and the disruption it brought to the Khazar state almost certainly occurred in ca. 836.⁷⁰ There is also little doubt that Magyar penetration into territories west of the Don and occupation of the steppe in ca. 836 not only meant that the Khazars had lost all their western steppe lands, but also that it brought about a significant disruption to the commercial routes which the Rus' had been using to trade between northern Europe, Byzantine Crimea, Khazaria, and the Islamic Near East since the turn of the ninth century. All of these developments prompted the Khazars to request assistance from the Byzantines with the building of Sarkel.⁷¹ The Khazar embassy with the appeal was received in Constantinople in late summer 839.⁷² Shortly thereafter (probably in 840-841⁷³), the fortress was erected at a strategic location on the lower Don, no doubt for defense purposes, mainly aimed at protecting Khazar territories from Magyar incursions.⁷⁴

With the above in mind, it can be suggested that the 837/38 Kislaia and Devitsa hoards represent the last of the commercial traffic through besieged Khazaria. It is also tempting to attribute the unique Balka hoard found in the Crimea to Rus' commerce, since Ibn Khurdādhbeh specifically noted that Rus' merchants traveled to the Crimea.⁷⁵ Perhaps, due to the general instability in the north Pontic steppe zone, Rus' merchants deposited the hoard for safekeeping but were unable to reclaim it later. The absence of "special issue" Khazar dirhams from this hoard (a common characteristic of all hoards deposited in 837/38) is also interesting, since it suggests

68 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio* I, tr. R.J.H. Jenkins, 2nd ed. (Washington D.C. 1967), 182-185; K. Tsukerman, "Vengry v strane levedii: novaia derzhava na granitsakh Vizantii i Khazarii ok. 836-889 g.," *Materialy po arkhologii, istorii i etnografii Tavrii* 6 (Semferopol', 1998), 664-665.

69 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio* I, 171-173; Tsukerman, "Vengry v strane levedii," 659-664.

70 Tsukerman, "Vengry v strane levedii," 659-665.

71 For Sarkel, see Pletneva, *Sarkel i "shelkovyi" put'*; Kovalev, "Critica: S.A. Pletneva, *Sarkel*, 245-254; Tsukerman, "Vengry v strane levedii," 677-682.

72 W. Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival, 780-842* (Stanford, 1988), 297, 313; C. Zuckerman, "Two Notes on the Early History of the *thema* of Cherson," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 21 (1997), 212.

73 Zuckerman, "Two Notes," 214.

74 Tsukerman, "Vengry v strane levedii," 662, 665-666.

75 Pritsak, "An Arabic Text," 256-257.

that the coin assemblage did not pass through the core lands of the qağanate where these coins were apparently readily available.

In connection to the above, it would be good to recall that there is direct written evidence substantiating the great dangers and unrest in the north Pontic steppe in the late 830s. The *Annals of St. Bertin* records that on May 18, 839 two Rus' emissaries were received in Ingelheim on the Rhine along with a Byzantine embassy sent by Theophilos to Louis the Pious. The *Annals* relate that the two Rus' envoys claimed that they were sent to Constantinople by the Rus' qağan "for the sake of friendship" and that they were unable to return to their land by the same route they took because it was blocked by "primitive tribes that were very fierce and savage, and Theophilus did not wish them to return that way in case some disaster befell them."⁷⁶ Therefore, they traveled back to northwestern Russia via central Europe and the Baltic. Like the Rus' envoys, Rus' merchants must also have had great difficulties in making their usual connections between northern Russia and Khazaria via the "Khazar Way" at this precise period, thereby explaining the 837/38-841/42 interlude in commercial relations between the two regions.

Circumstances had clearly changed by 841/42 when five hoards (Protasovo, Lesogurt, Vyzhigsha I, Vyzhigsha II, and Dobrino) were deposited in northern Russia that same year. These and dozens of other hoards followed for much of the rest of the ninth century, thereby symbolizing the rejuvenation of trade relations thanks in large part to the building of Sarkel the previous year (840-841).

* * *

Our database makes it quite clear that the Khazar "special issue" dirhams are often the latest (youngest) coins found in hoards containing these issues. All six hoards [Table 1: №№1-6] dating to 837/38 discovered in the north of Khazaria contain Khazar dirhams struck the same year they were deposited. This observation should not be surprising, however, since it would be natural to expect the Rus' to obtain the latest coins struck (newest) in Khazaria, the last stop along their itinerary before venturing north of the Khazar lands. What is surprising is the striking speed with which these coins and the hoards which contained them were carried north. As noted above, 73.2 percent of all "special issue" 837/38 Khazar dirhams found themselves transported to northern Europe within a year or less of being minted.

The observation that Khazar dirhams were carried from the qağanate to northern Europe at lightning speed deserves a special pause. Apparently, the inhabitants and probably visitors to the qağanate utilized the dirhams available on the Khazar monetary market in various commercial ventures, mainly by trading them for Rus'

76 *The Annals of St-Bertin: Ninth Century Histories*: vol. I, tr. J.L. Nelson (New York, 1991), 44.

merchandize. They used the opportunity to invest their capital in lieu of depositing it into the ground – a highly unproductive method of storing wealth – thanks to *Pax Chazarica*. For as long as Rus' merchants brought desired goods to Khazaria, the locals could trade their dirhams for the Rus' merchandise. Based on our numismatic findings, it appears that this is precisely what transpired. Investment in international trade thus is the second reason why so few coin hoards have been found within the territories of the qağanate.

Based on the above observations, it would appear that Khazar dirhams were mainly export coins. A very similar conclusion was reached when examining the production and circulation of dirhams minted by the Sāmānids of central Asia in the late ninth through the late tenth centuries. As with Khazaria, relatively few dirham hoards (composed of locally-struck dirhams or imports from other Islamic lands) have been discovered within the Sāmānid domains. Like the Khazar dirhams, those struck by the Sāmānids were exported to northern Europe within a year or less after being struck.⁷⁷ However, the above conclusions should not necessarily be taken as evidence that the export function of the dirhams drove the Sāmānids and the Khazars to strike these coins specifically for trade. While most of the dirhams available in the lands of these two states were exported very soon after being emitted to the northern European markets – where clearly there was a higher value and demand for silver than in central Asia – these coins could also serve local commercial needs before exiting to the north. The great commercial opportunities that these coins offered the local merchants, however, had the effect of very quickly removing them out of the monetary markets of both states.

All of the above conclusions permit us to revisit one of the more fundamental questions Noonan posed: “But, if coins went northward to pay for the furs, honey, slaves, and wax exported to the Islamic world, what remained for the Khazars? If the Khazars made significant profit from their position as middlemen, how was this wealth used?”⁷⁸ The answer, it seems to me, should be first sought in clarifying what is meant by “Khazars.” After all, there was the Khazar state and then there

77 Th.S. Noonan, R.K. Kovalev, “The Dirham Output and Monetary Circulation of a Secondary Sāmānid Mint: A Case Study of Balkh,” *Moneta Mediaevalis: Studia numizmatyczne i historyczne ofiarowane Profesorowi Stanisławowi Suchodolskiemu w 65. rocznicę urodzin*, ed. R. Kiersnowski, et al (Warsaw, 2002), 163-174; R.K. Kovalev, “Mint Output in Tenth-Century Bukhara,” 245-271; idem., “Dirham Mint Output of Sāmānid Samarqand and its Connection to the Beginnings of Trade with Northern Europe (10th century),” *Histoire et Mesure [Monnaie et espace]*, vol. 17, №3-4 (2002), 197-216; “The Mint of al-Shāsh: The Vehicle For the Origins and Continuation of Trade Relations Between Viking-Age Northern Europe and Sāmānid Central Asia,” *AEMAE* 12 (2002-2003), 47-79.

78 Noonan, “What Does Historical Numismatics Suggest,” 280-281.

were the Khazars (i.e., inhabitants of Khazaria); and, both, while intrinsically interconnected, used the available wealth in different ways.

To begin with the Khazar state – the answer can be found in the condition of the qağanate itself in the ninth century, or, rather – *Pax Chazarica*. The situation of general security within the lands of Khazaria – due in large part to the large standing army and the numerous forts erected to protect its territories and commerce – must have been very expensive to maintain. As noted, the *Darband-Nāmah* specifically mentions that the Khazars paid their frontier troops stationed in the northern Caucasus with silver mined in the Terek river region⁷⁹ – very likely with Khazar coins minted from this silver. Al-Mas'ūdī (writing in the first half of the tenth century) also relates that: “Among the eastern kings of this region only the Khazar king has troops receiving stipends (*murtaziqa?*)”⁸⁰ – perhaps also paid with Khazar-issued coins.⁸¹ Among these troops were the 7,000-12,000 Khwārazmian (*al-Lārisiyā/Ors*) heavy-cavalry guard mercenaries.⁸² Hence, it is easy to argue that much of the Khazar wealth was spent on defense and maintenance of *Pax Chazarica*.

But, *Pax Chazarica* did not just come about because of the active Khazar territorial defense policies. To achieve “Khazar Peace,” the qağanate had to also be effectively and efficiently administered, requiring first and foremost a well-developed bureaucratic apparatus and legal structure (including internal security). Based on the available sources, the Khazar state had both – vezirs and undoubtedly many lesser administrators (including mint-masters, incidentally) and courtiers were employed by the qağan and beg; and, Christian, Jewish, pagan, and Muslim judges (*qādī*) were also in the employment of the state.⁸³ One may also add to the salaries of these officials the state's subsidy of religious institutions – namely the temples and the priestly class (pagan and Jewish after the conversion). All of these individuals and the support apparatus had to be sustained financially by the state.

While there is no way of telling how much of the state's budget was spent on maintaining frontier defenses, internal security, bureaucracy, and religious institutions (not to mention roads, state public buildings and the like), the costs would have been enormous. These expenses must have been paid for by the revenues the qağanate generated by collecting tolls from the commercial traffic, the collection of capital in the form of coins (dirhams) and/or natural products (furs, slaves, honey,

79 *Darband-Nāmah*, 477.

80 Mas'ūdī in *A History of Sharvān and Darband*, 147.

81 Kovalev, “Creating ‘Khazar Identity’ Through Coins.”

82 See, for instance, the accounts of Mas'ūdī in *A History of Sharvān and Darband*, 146-147 and Ibn Faḍlān, *Risāla*, 158-159.

83 Mas'ūdī in *A History of Sharvān and Darband*, 146-147; Ibn Faḍlān, *Risāla*, 154-155, 158-159; Ḥudūd al-‘Ālam, 162 and Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 232-233.

wax) from the Khazar tributaries, and taxes (probably partially also in dirhams) from the inhabitants of Khazaria itself.

Turning to the inhabitants of Khazaria – first there were the individuals employed by the state. On receiving their salaries, in addition to paying their taxes to the state,⁸⁴ they would have spent their dirhams on goods, services, and investment, thereby releasing a large portion of their dirhams onto the Khazar monetary market. Seeing that the Khazar economy was highly diverse – based on animal husbandry, hunting-gathering, fishing, craft-production, agriculture, viniculture, as well as domestic and international trade⁸⁵ – residents of the qağanate had a great many options of how to invest their capital on the most profitable ventures. Since there was clearly a very high demand for silver north of the Khazar lands, most of the dirhams were invested (initially or after some low-velocity circulation in Khazaria) in the commercial sector of the economy. In this way, dirhams were very quickly siphoned away from the qağanate by way of Rus' merchants who carried them north, depositing some in hoards on their way in the forest regions of northern Russia where conditions often warranted merchants to bury their capital in the ground for safekeeping. The rest of these dirhams – including those minted by the Khazars – Rus' merchants used for opening up and expanding markets in the eastern Baltic (Finland, Åland, Estonia) and further west, thereby stimulating the development of commerce between northern Europe and Khazaria.

In sum, to the questions “what remained for the Khazars” from their role as middlemen in international trade and “how was this wealth used?” – the answer seems to be: on the one hand, significant capital, used for the maintenance of the Khazar state and *Pax Chazarica*, and, on the other, dirhams that were used for investment in commerce by the inhabitants of the qağanate.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, at first glance, the great paucity of coin hoard deposits within the lands of Khazaria seems to strongly point to the absence of a monetary economy in the qağanate. In the recent past, the unresolved dispute over whether the Khazars minted their own coins has swayed scholarship to side with the notion that, indeed, the Khazars did not have a monetary economy. However, the recently advanced evidence that conclusively argues in favor of the production of coins by the Khazars

⁸⁴ Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 232.

⁸⁵ Th.S. Noonan, “What Can Archaeology Tell Us About the Economy of Khazaria,” *The Archaeology of the Steppes: Methods And Strategies*, ed. B. Genito [Istituto Universitario Orientale, Dipartimento di Studi Asiatici, Series Minor, XLIV] (Naples, 1994), 331-345; idem., “The Khazar Economy,” *AEAMe* 9 (1995-1997), 253-318.

necessitates a major reconsideration of the nature of the qağanate's monetary economy.

The available numismatic evidence suggests that the Khazars began to issue their own silver coins in imitation of Islamic dirhams starting ca. 825 in order to supplement the dwindling imported coin-stock in the form of dirhams into their lands beginning at about the same period. They continued to strike coins during the ninth century, although little is presently known about most of these coins. The main exceptions are the so-called “special issue” dirhams minted by the Khazars in 837/38.

The Khazar desire to increase the volume of coins available inside the territories of the qağanate was connected to the needs of the Rus' merchants who came to trade there and demanded dirhams in return, and also to pay for state expenditures. Both were indispensable to the maintenance of the so-called “Khazar Peace” – *Pax Chazarica* – something that brought tranquility to the lands of the qağanate and fostered international trade. While the latter supplied the Khazars with substantial revenues in the form of levies being placed on their commercial traffic, the former provided the necessary frontier defenses, internal security, and bureaucracy for the state to function properly. The revenues collected from the commercial traffic were used as payments to state employees (military and administrative), who in turn used the capital for a variety of economic purposes, thereby defusing it into the economy. In this way, Rus' trade and the capital it generated for the state was intimately interconnected with the proper fiscal functioning of Khazaria. Rus' merchants also offered great investment opportunities to the residents of the qağanate who had dirhams at their disposal, since they could be profitably traded for Rus' goods.

Numismatic research based on the well-dated “special issue” Khazar dirhams shows that these coins – as undoubtedly others minted by the Khazars alongside those imported into Khazaria from other lands – shows that silver coins circulated very little within the domains of the qağanate, largely because of the great investment opportunities they offered to all parties involved in their trade. Thus, the Khazars did have a monetary economy, albeit a somewhat strange one, but not unique for this period. The inhabitants of Khazaria simply used the great volume of dirhams available to them for trade with the Rus'. Silver coins plainly could not remain in circulation for very long within the core lands of Khazaria because there was such great opportunity to invest the coins in trade with Rus' merchants who were always ready to exchange their northern commodities for dirhams. After obtaining dirhams in Khazaria, Rus' merchants also invested them in seeking and opening up new markets in the eastern Baltic (Finland, Åland, Estonia) and expanding trade links to the western Baltic. In turn, this led to the greater growth of commerce, something that benefited all parties involved in this cross-continental trade between the Baltic and the Islamic East.