

BOOK REVIEWS

A Late Sasanian Hoard from Orumiyeh. Daryoosh Akbarzadeh and Nikolaus Schindel. Austrian Academy of Sciences. 2017. 304 pp. (ISBN-13: 978-3700179566).

A Late Sasanian Hoard from Orumiyeh presents an extraordinary coin hoard within the Sylloge Nummorum Sasanidarum (SNS) series for the first time. The book lists 1267 silver coins from Khusro I (531-579 AD) to Khusro II (590-628 AD) /posthumous which were found in 2007 in the Piran-Shahr region in north-western Iran. Piran-Shahr is located 120 km north west of Orumiyeh City in West Azarbayjan Province. The book answers questions about the monetary system and economic history of the late Sasanian period. Orumiyeh Museum houses the 1267 drachmas which form a constituent part of Sasanian mint history.

The “Sylloge Nummorum Sasanidarum (SNS) international joint research project being undertaken by the Numismatic Commission of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna, Mondes Iranien et Indien (UMR 7528), and the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique is the published collections of Sasanian coins housed in the museums.”¹ Previous SNS publications were about the different collections of Berlin, Paris, Vienna, and Israel museums (by well-known European scholars, i.e., M. Alram, F. Sinisi, and N. Schindel), but this book publishes the largest and the most important hoard ever discovered in Iran. In addition, an Iranian scholar, Daryoosh Akbarzadeh, is the first Iranian author of an SNS publication and worked on the hoard as one of the two authors.

¹ Sylloge Nummorum Sasanidarum Israel

The hoard of Orumiyeh was collected from a specific historical site which establishes the authenticity of the hoard. Daryoosh Akbarzadeh, the first author, is a prominent Iranian scholar who has written several articles and books about ancient Iran. N. Schindel, a well-known Austrian scholar, is one of the best numismatists in the world.

The book contains two main chapters: The Orumiyeh Hoard in Context and Catalogue. Indices, Abbreviations, and Bibliography are the other parts of the second chapter.

The first chapter details the metal analysis coin by coin and then compares the rate of silver content in different regality (pp. 15-18). The XRF analysis on 10 percent of the entire find was done in one of the best Iranian technical institutes, which is a huge advantage of the book in comparison with previous volumes. Also, the authors try to compare the hoard with other published hoards to make a clear way for future research.

The book makes any kind of research more comfortable by making a short overview of the hoards entered into the SNS project database. The information includes “find spots, closing date, published and tables of mints and years” (pp. 19-48). At the end, the various hoards from unknown sites are also arranged in ascending order by their date of publication (pp. 49-55). Then the authors compare the relevant hoards with the Orumiyeh hoard. The comparison gives new and fundamental information about different factors such as the percentage of coins found from different rulers in selected hoards (table 70), the percentage of Sasanian coins after Khusro II in the selected hoards (table 71), and coins from different years in the selected hoards (table 72). The other useful content in this chapter is a review of the mint signatures in the selected hoards and the distribution of the Orumiyeh hoard (table 73, 74). Although the authors try to give a clear analysis of the hoards, it might have been better to allocate a specific part for writing a conclusion about all they have found. However, they prefer to continue the analytic information up to the end of the first chapter. In addition, it is worth mentioning that the most brilliant characteristic of the book is the different tables which contain the coin analysis, mints, and reign years (king per year).

The second chapter addresses the typology of the Sasanian coins at first by introducing the following kings and queens: Khusro I (531-578 AD), Ohrmazd IV (578-590 AD), Khusro II (590-628 AD), Ohrmazd VI (630S), and Azarmigdukht VI (630S) (pp. 71-73). The arrangement of the catalog obeys the principles of SNS² and

² Schindel 2004

SNS Israel³. The coins are organized by king, mint, and type (pp. 75-295). However, some of the coins remain unknown, and the authors were not able to find exact records about them.

The book presents clear photos of the coins. The photos are taken and published in high resolution. The obverse and reverse of each coin are printed separately which is a new method in the SNS series and shows how the book is incomparable with previous ones.

Like the other books of SNS, the book is a high quality publication and two eminent scholars, Michael Alram and Rika Gylselen, have edited it and also written a preface. As with other publications in the SNS series, the book has few editorial and technical errors.

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³ Schindel 2009