



## Research on the Coins of the Ilkhanate Era in the Museums of Sepah Bank, National Museum, Maragheh, and Zanjan

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### Extended abstract

The Ilkhanate period represents a pivotal era in Iranian history following the Mongol invasion, marked by profound political, economic, and cultural transformations. Coins from this period serve as invaluable sources, offering diverse and precise insights into the conditions of Ilkhanate rule. Overall, the coinage system during the Ilkhanate period did not undergo significant changes compared to its predecessors. Specifically, the obverse of the coins featured the name of the Ilkhan, while the reverse, despite religious variations, included the Shahada (declaration of faith). This continuity may be attributed to the Iranian populace's familiarity with dynastic changes throughout Islamic Iranian history. By maintaining a coinage style similar to previous regimes, the Ilkhans were able to signal political changes in Iran in a familiar manner, avoiding additional political costs. The religious symbols chosen for the coins during the reign of many Ilkhans appear to have been carefully selected. For instance, Verse 26 of Surah Al-Imran is inscribed on numerous Ilkhanate coins. This verse conveys the message that sovereignty is a divine gift bestowed upon whomever God wills. Through this action, the Ilkhans sought to present their rule as divinely ordained, implying that resistance against them was contrary to God's will.

One of the significant contributions of Ilkhanate coins lies in reconstructing the political history of this period. Many Ilkhanate coins bear the name of the Ilkhan, official titles, and the year of minting. This information allows historians to accurately examine the succession of Ilkhanate rulers. From a political history perspective, this research indicates that, contrary to some scholars' assertions, the political independence of the Ilkhans from the Khans based in Mongolia or China dates back to the era of Abaqa Khan, not Ghazan Khan. Some researchers argue that the title of "Khan" was removed from the coins starting in Ghazan's era. However, this study reveals that, first, the title of "Khan" was also omitted in some instances before Ghazan, such as during the reign of Gaykhatu. Secondly, as observed in these coins, the personal name of the Khans is only inscribed on the coins during the reign of Hulagu, and thereafter, we only see the title of "Khan" without specifying the individual's name. The inclusion of the title "Khan" on coins after Hulagu suggests that it could refer both to the Khan residing in Mongolia or China and to the Ilkhans of Iran. In other words, this research posits that the Ilkhans of Iran pursued a path of political independence immediately after Hulagu,



and even from the time of Hulagu's brother Mongke's death and Kublai's rise to power. This is because the coins of Hulagu, after Kublai's accession to the throne, still bear the name of the deceased Khan, Mongke, rather than Kublai.

Ilkhanate coins, based on their minting locations, also reflect the political geography of the Ilkhanate. For example, until the reign of Oljeitu, Gilan, despite being within the geographical boundaries of Iran, lacked a mint because its administration was in the hands of local rulers. However, from this period onward, Lahijan was added as a mint to the Ilkhanate's collection of mints. Additionally, these coins reveal the extent of the influence of the local rulers of Fars and Kerman, especially the ruling women, in the internal politics of the Ilkhanate government. Another important aspect of studying coins is that they reflect the religious and ideological developments of the Ilkhanate period. While the Ilkhans maintained the Islamic symbols inscribed on the coins of previous Islamic governments, this did not prevent them from displaying their own or their consorts' religious preferences within these symbols. For example, the coins of Abaqa feature Christian symbols due to his wife being the daughter of the Byzantine Emperor and a Christian. As is well known, changing names upon religious conversion was common among the Mongols. This change of name is clearly visible in the coins minted by Tekudar, Ghazan, and Oljeitu, who converted to different faiths. Furthermore, the coins of the Islamized Ilkhans, especially Ghazan and Oljeitu, contain various worldly and religious titles that demonstrate the worldly status of the Sultan and his religious mission. These titles include "King of the World," "Victorious in Faith," "Glory of the Faith," and others.

The findings of this research refute the belief held by previous researchers that Oljeitu renounced Shi'ism due to resistance from opposing factions after converting to Shi'ism. This is because, in the coins examined in this study, all coins minted in the last year of Oljeitu's reign bear complete Shi'ite symbols. It was only after his death that Sunni symbols, such as the names of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, were once again inscribed on the coins by his son, Abu Sa'id. This religious expression continued to appear on the coins minted after the fall of the Ilkhanate, during the rule of the puppet Khans. The research method used in this study is descriptive and analytical.

**Keywords:** Mongols, Ilkhanate, Coins, Foreign Relations, Religion, Language.

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