

# Inscriptions for the Unpublished Six Abbasid Dinars from the Era of Caliph Harun Al-Rashid Preserved in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo

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## Introduction:

Islamic coins are an important source of Islamic history, antiquities, and civilization. It played an important role in the Islamic era, not only as an important tool in the economic system, but as a badge of the king and the sultan that every ruler was keen to keep as a source of his power. When Harun Al-Rashid ascended the caliphate in the year (170 AH / 786 AD), he was keen on striking dinars in that year and recorded on it some inscriptions containing his name and titles; thus, "Abdullah Harun, Commander of the Believers," and he is the first caliph to record his name on the Islamic dinars, to declare that he is the legitimate caliph and the commander of the believers, after the strong rumors that circulated at the end of the era of his brother Musa Al-Hadi (169 - 170 AH / 785 - 786 AD) that he was deposed from the mandate of the Covenant and pledged allegiance to Jaafar bin Al-Hadi. Al-Rasheed also issued a series of dinars, to which writings were added in a second margin in the back, containing the name of his trustworthy crown prince, the text of which was "ordered by Prince Al-Amin Muhammad bin Commander of the Believers" and the oldest known examples of this new publication date back to the year (177 AH). Also, during the reign of Harun al-Rashid, the dinars witnessed the emergence of the title "Caliph" since the year (184 AH). The names of some governors - especially the governors of Egypt - continued to appear on the dinars, in addition to the appearance of the name "Jaafar" al-Barmaki, Minister of Rashid, on the dinars as well.

The first to enjoy this right in Egypt was the ruler Ali bin Suleiman al-Abbasi, whose name was mentioned "Ali" at the bottom of the writings of the center of the back. Thus, Caliph Harun al-Rashid was the first caliph to record his name, the name of his crown prince, and the names of ministers and governors on gold coins, that was done for the first time.

The Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo preserves six Abbasid dinars bearing important writings from the era of Caliph Harun al-Rashid (170-193 AH / 786-809 AD), which were not previously published or studied before and are published in this research for the first time, namely:

- 1- Dinar minted in the year (172 AH), bearing the name of Musa.
- 2- Dinar minted in the year (173 AH), bearing the name Omar.
- 3- Dinar minted in the year 185 AH, bearing the name of Muhammad al-Amin, the heir to the throne.
- 4- Dinar minted in the year (186 AH), bearing the name Jaafar.
- 5- Dinar minted in the year (188 A.H.).
- 6- Dinar minted in the year (190 AH), bearing the word for the Caliph.

We can classify these six dinars into six styles according to their writings, decorations, and general shapes, which are as follows:

**First Style:**

The general shape of this style is characterized by a central inscription around which the writings revolve in one margin. The writings in the center and the margin are not separated by any circles. The inscriptions on the margin are surrounded from the outside by one linear circle on both the face and the back.

The writings of this model are as follows:

**The Face:**

**Centre:**

لا اله الا / الله وحده / لا شريك له

**Margin:**

محمد رسول الله أرسله بالهدى ودين الحق ليظهره على الدين كله

**The Back:**

**Centre:**

محمد / رسول / الله / موسى

**Margin:**

بسم الله ضرب هذا الدينر سنة اثنتين وسبعين ومئة

In the center of the face came the complete Shahada of Tawheed in three lines in simple Kufic script, which says: There is no god but - God alone - He has no partner. The recording of this complete testimony on Islamic coins began since its Arabization during the reign of Caliph Abd al-Malik bin Marwan (65-86 AH / 684-705 CE) in the year (77 AH / 696 CE), and this testimony continued to be recorded on coins throughout the Umayyad and Abbasid eras.

In the margin of the face, the Quranic quote from Surat Al-Fath verse (28) was mentioned, and the text: "Muhammad, the Messenger of God, sent him with guidance and the religion of truth, to show it to the whole other religions." It is stated in the interpretation of this Quranic quotation that the Messenger (may God bless him and grant him peace) sent from his Lord to fulfill his message to the people, and that God (Glory be to Him) refuses to fulfill his religion even if those who are ungrateful hate it, so his Messenger Muhammad (may God bless him and grant him peace) was sent to show the true religion to all religions.

In the center of the back, there is an inscription of the Muhammadiyah message abbreviated as follows: "Muhammad - the Messenger of God".

The recording of this Muhammadiyah message began on Byzantine Arab coins and Arab Sasanian coins before the Caliph Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan Arabized coins in the year (77 AH), then appeared on the Umayyad era until the end of the Abbasid era, and also the Muhammadiyah message came abbreviated in the writings of the back of the Abbasid dinars and dirhams since the rise of this caliphate as he replaced Surat Al-Ikhlās, which was recorded on Umayyad coins, because the Abbasid state adopted a slogan for itself, which is a satisfaction from the family of Muhammad.

The Muhammadiyah message, was abbreviated in the fourth line, then followed by the writings of the center of the back, the name "Musa", which is Musa bin Isa bin Musa al-Abbasi, who took over the Emirate of Egypt three times: the first time was during the years (171-172 AH / 787-788 CE), the second time during the years (175-176 AH / 791-792 CE), and the third time during the years (179-180 AH / 795-796 CE).

By the margin of the back, the incomplete basmalah, followed by the type of currency, which is the “dinar,” then the date of the mint, which is the “seventy-two and a hundred years”. The number of the Sundays was mentioned twice on Islamic coins during the Umayyad and Abbasid eras, in several formulas: two or two and two.

This style is unique from the other five styles attributed to the reign of Caliph Harun al-Rashid, by the presence of the name Musa at the bottom of the inscriptions in the center of the back.

Harun al-Rashid is Harun Ibn al-Mahdi Muhammad ibn al-Mansur Abi Jaafar Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Ali bin Abdullah bin Abbas bin Abdul Muttalib, al-Qurashi al-Hashemi, and his mother, the Khazan. He was born in Shawwal in the year six; it was said, seven, and it was said, forty-eight and a hundred. It was said: He was born in the year fifty and a hundred. He ascended to the throne of the caliphate on the Friday in which his brother Musa al-Hadi died, in the city of peace, on the eighteenth day of the month of Rabi 'al-Awwal, seventy and a hundred, with a covenant from his father, al-Mahdi. Umm Jaafar Zubaydah, the daughter of his uncle Jaafar bin Abi Jaafar al-Mansur, got married in the year sixty-five and a hundred in the life of his father al-Mahdi, and she bore him Muhammad al-Amin, and Harun al-Rashid Battous who died on Saturday for four days from Jumada al-Akhir in the year ninety-three years and his reign was twenty-three years and six Months, and it was said: twenty-three years, two months, and eighteen days, and he took over the caliphate when he was twenty-one and two months old, and he died at the age of forty-four years and four months.

Attributed to this model is a dinar minted in the year (172 AH) (plate No. 1), kept in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, under a registry number (23067), and its weight is (3.85) grams, and its diameter is (18) mm, it belongs to the group in question and it has not been previously published or studied before.

Also many models have been attributed to this style that have been previously published, some of them dated to the year (171 AH), and others dated to the year (172 AH).

### **Second Style:**

This style is similar to the first one in its general shape and the texts of its writings and their arrangement except that in this style there is the name “Omar” instead of the name “Musa” in the same place, and it differs from it in the date of the coinage and the writings and decorations of this style came as follows:

#### **The Face:**

##### **Centre:**

لا اله الا / الله وحده / لا شريك له

##### **Margin:**

محمد رسول الله أرسله بالهدى ودين الحق ليظهره على الدين كله

#### **The Back:**

##### **Centre:**

محمد / رسول / الله / عمر

##### **Margin:**

بسم الله ضرب هذا الدين سنة ثلث وسبعين ومئة

This style is distinguished by the presence of the name “Omar” in the fourth and last line below the writings of the center of the back. It refers either to Omar bin Ghaylan, the governor of Egypt in the year (173 AH / 789 CE), or to Omar bin Mahran, the governor of Egypt in the year (176 AH / 792 AD).

Muhammad Abu al-Faraj al-Ush mentions that Umar was not mentioned among the governors of Egypt in the year (173 AH), and the governor at that time was Muhammad bin Zuhair bin al-Musayyib al-Asadi, but the name of Omar bin Mahran was mentioned as deputy to the honorary governor of Egypt, which is Jaafar bin Yahya al-Barmaki in the year (176 AH). Thus, is it permissible for this to be a factor in the Kharaj or the supervisor of striking the railway in the year (173 AH)? This is permissible because Omar's name remains visible on the dinars minted in (174 and 175 AH).

This model is distinguished from the other six models - the subject of the study - in the presence of the name of Omar at the bottom of the inscriptions in the center back.

Also, attributed to this model is a dinar coined in the year (173 AH) (plate No. 2), kept in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, under a registry number (23068), its weight is (3.79) grams, and its diameter is (13) mm.

This style also belongs to many of the models that were previously published, including: Eight models published by Dr. Abdel-Rahman Fahmy, which are preserved in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo in addition to two models published by Muhammad Abu al-Faraj al-Ush which are preserved in the Qatar National Museum, one of them is dated to the year (173 AH), and the other is dated to the year (174 AH).

### **Third Style:**

This style is similar to the first and second styles in the general shape and the texts of the writings and their arrangement on the face only, but this style differs from them in the presence of central writings around which writings revolve in two margins instead of the one margin in the two mentioned styles, and the center writings do not separate from the writings of the inner margin and the outer margin are circular, but only the outer margin is surrounded by a circle. The writings of this model are as follows:

#### **The Face:**

##### **Centre:**

لا اله الا / الله وحده / لا شريك له

##### **Margin:**

محمد رسول الله أرسله بالهدى ودين الحق ليظهره على الدين كله

#### **The Back:**

##### **Centre:**

محمد / رسول / الله

##### **Inner Margin**

مما أمر به الامير الامين محمد بن امير المؤمنين

##### **Outer Margin:**

بسم الله ضرب هذا الدين سنة خمس وثمانين ومئة

In the inner margin of the back came the following writing: "From what the Honest Prince Muhammad bin Amir al-Mu'minin ordered." the phrase: "from what he commanded" was recorded on the money to clarify that the caliph, the ruler, the governor, the worker, or the prince has the right to issue it, and it is known that the successors of the Banu Umayyad retained the right to strike gold and silver coins, while they gave up the right to strike money for the governors of the regions and their workers, considering that the money is not the main currency of the state, but rather a local currency whose circulation is limited within the borders of the state or the region with which it was coined, so the governors and workers competed in

registering their names for the money issued by them. The minting houses of their states and the phrase "from what was ordered" was engraved on it to confirm that this money was minted under their care and under their supervision, and it turned out that they are the owners of the legal right to strike this money in their names.

It is worth noting that Caliph Harun al-Rashid made an important development regarding the dinars, as the phrase "what he commanded" was inscribed on it in the first line of the writings of the Dhahr Center for Dinars minted in the year (170 AH). It is the first time that this phrase appears on dinars in the Islamic era. The reason for this is that Al-Rasheed took over the caliphate in the year (170 AH), so he recorded this phrase on his dinars to distinguish it from the dinars minted by Caliph Musa al-Hadi in the year (170 AH).

In this style, the phrase "from what he commanded" was written, followed by the name "the Honest Prince Al-Amin Muhammad bin Amir al-Mu'minin" in an internal margin added to the inscriptions on the back of the dinars that he minted and bearing the name of his crown prince and dated from the years (181 AH) to (187 AH), (190 AH).

After the phrase "by what he commanded" came the title of Emir, followed by the title the Honest.

The title of prince in the language of command and authority; it is one of the job titles that are used as honorary titles. Its use in Islam as the name of the position goes back to the time of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) when he meant the mandate over the government or the leadership of the army and so on, and it was also used in the sense of general guardianship in this advanced era. The Emir used as a title was indicative of the position of the governors of the cities of the General Islamic Caliphate, as indicated by the oldest known inscriptions. So, the governor, Abd al-Aziz bin Marawan, was named in an inscription dated (69 AH) on one of the arches in Fustat, and on Khuzaymah ibn Hazim during the reign of al-Hadi in a coin dated in the year (170 AH) in the Haronism.

The title Prince was not only used to refer to a position, but it was also used as an honorary title since the Umayyad era, so for example it was given to Al-Walid bin Abdul Malik in the succession of his father in the text of the establishment dated in the year (81 AH) in the Burqi Palace, and to Muhammad al-Amin in a coin dated in the year (183 AH). In the Abbasid state, the title was given to the crown prince, even if he was not the son of the caliph, and the clearest example of that is to call al-Rida, the crown prince of al-Ma'mun, in a coin dated in the year (203 AH).

As for the title of Prince of Believers, it is from the Honesty against treachery. This title was a special adjective for Muhammad ibn Harun al-Rashid. The first adjective of the caliphs' epithets was mentioned on "Al Mamoun", so the epithets of the caliphs were not mentioned during the supplication of Al Mamoun before "Al Amin".

This is the first time that this phrase was recorded, followed by the name of the crown prince on the dinars in the Islamic era, and the reason for recording this phrase on the coins minted by the order of Al-Amin Muhammad is due to what historical sources mentioned about the Caliph Al-Rasheed taking the pledge of allegiance to his son Muhammad in the mandate of the Covenant after him. Thus, he was titled by "The Honest" in the year (175 AH / 791 AD).

The name Muhammad al-Amin is followed by the phrase "Ibn Amir al-Mu'minin", which means heir apparent. The title of Ibn Commander of the Believers is the first official title to appear in the inscriptions, titled to Al-Walid bin Abdul Malik in the text of the establishment

of the year (81 AH) in the Burqi Palace. Some may interpret this title as nothing but a phrase that indicates the kinship between Al-Walid and the Commander of the Believers. However, by comparing the inscriptions in which the title is mentioned, it becomes clear that he was called the son of the Caliph if he was the Crown Prince, and from here a general honorary title with which the son of the Caliph is called in the case of the mandate of the Covenant. The title continued to be used with this meaning also in the Abbasid state, so it was given, for example, to the Mahdi in a coin dated to the year (146 AH) in irrigation, and to "Al Amin" in a coin dated to the year (183 AH).

As for the title of Commander of the Believers, it is one of the compound titles based on the title of Amir. The title of Commander of the Believers was the second title of the caliphs in appearance and it came after the title of Caliph, and the first to be called Umar ibn al-Khattab (may God be pleased with him) (13-23 AH / 634-64 AD), and since the era of Umar, this title has become one of the general titles of the caliphs, and it became known to the caliphs, and the claimant of the caliphate throughout the Islamic world, so Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan was named in archaeological inscriptions dated to (86 AH), and on pieces of money coined in Baalbek, Aleppo, and Homs, and on a coin from Bukhara, the lineage of which goes back to al-Ma'mun. The title of "Commander of the Believers" was mentioned on early Islamic coins with great pahlavi on dirhams, and on a fils minted in Nishapur in the year 147 AH), and on a dirham minted in the city of peace in the year 157 AH) and other Abbasid coins that are contemporary to it.

It is noted that the title of Commander of the Believers is registered in the place that was designated to register the name of the Abbasid crown prince or his title, such as the title of Commissioner to God, which is the title of Ja'far ibn al-Caliph who is dependent on God, and Abu al-Abbas ibn Amir al-Mu'minin is the crown prince of the Caliph al-Muqtadir and he is later to Caliph Radi.

This model is distinguished from the other five models - the subject of the study - with two written margins on the back, while the other five models include only one margin. This model is attributed to a model of the dinar the subject of study, which is a dinar that was minted in the year 185 AH (plate number 3), preserved in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo under a record number (24543), with a weight of (4.023) grams and a diameter of (14) mm, which has not been previously published or studied before.

Many of the previously published models are attributed to this model: models dated from the year (181 AH) to the year (186 AH).

#### **Fourth Style:**

It is similar to the two styles: the first and the second in the general form and the texts of the writings and their arrangement except for the presence of the name "Jaafar" in the same place where the name "Musa" and "Omar" were registered in the first and second styles, in addition to the date of minting.

#### **The Face:**

#### **Centre:**

لا اله الا / الله وحده / لا شريك له

#### **Margin:**

محمد رسول الله أرسله بالهدى ودين الحق ليظهره على الدين كله

#### **The Back:**

**Centre:**

محمد/ رسول/ الله / جعفر

**Margin:**

بسم الله ضرب هذا الدينر سنة ست وثمانين ومئة

In this style there is the name "Jaafar" at the bottom of the writings of the center of the back, and this Jaafar is Jaafar bin Yahya bin Barmak, the minister of the Caliph Harun al-Rashid and the keeper of his secrets, who was appointed an honorary governor of Egypt, but whoever carried out the work of the emirate on his behalf, such as Omar bin Mahran in the year 176 AH. This style is unique from the other five models - the subject of the study - by the presence of the name "Jaafar" at the bottom of the inscriptions in the center of the face, instead of the name "Omar" and "Musa" in the first and second styles.

Attributed to this model of dinars is the subject of the study: a dinar that was struck in the year (186 AH), on which the name of Jaafar is recorded (plate number 4), preserved in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo under a record number (26094), its weight is (4.23) grams, and its diameter is (16) mm, it was never before Studied or published.

There are also many models attributed to this style that were previously published, including some dinars preserved in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, it was struck during the period from (177 AH) to the year (186 AH). Some dinars that were previously published and preserved in the Qatar National Museum, were minted during the period of (176 AH) to the year (186 AH).

**Fifth Style:**

It is similar to the styles: the first, second and fourth in terms of the general shape and the texts of the writings and their arrangement, except for the absence of a name under the writings of the center of the back in this style, in addition to the date of the minting, the writings and decorations of this style came as follows:

**The Face:****Centre:**

لا اله الا / الله وحده / لا شريك له

**Margin:**

محمد رسول الله أرسله بالهدى ودين الحق ليظهره على الدين كله

**The Back:****Centre:**

محمد/ رسول/ الله

**Margin:**

بسم الله ضرب هذا الدينر سنة ثمان وثمانين ومئة

This style is unique from the other four models in that the writings in the center of the back contain only three lines, the text of which is: "Muhammad-Rasul-Allah" and does not include names, and this style is the only one of the six styles that includes three lines in the center of the back and does not include any names.

This model of the group in question belongs to a dinar that was minted in the year (188 AH) (plate number 5), and preserved in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo under a record number (29033), its weight is (4.23) grams, and its diameter is (13) mm. It has not been studied or published before.

Many of the models that were previously published and preserved in the Qatar National Museum were also included in this style, which were minted during the period of (188 AH) to (190 AH), and this shows that this model was struck during this period.

#### **Sixth Style:**

It is similar to the styles: the first, second, fourth and fifth in terms of the general shape and the texts of the writings and their arrangement, except for the presence of the word “Caliph” under the writings of the center of the back of this style, as well as the date of minting. The writings and decorations of this style came as follows:

#### **The Face:**

##### **Centre:**

لا اله الا / الله وحده / لا شريك له

##### **Margin:**

محمد رسول الله أرسله بالهدى ودين الحق ليظهره على الدين كله

#### **The Back:**

##### **Centre:**

محمد / رسول / الله / للخليفة

##### **Margin:**

بسم الله ضرب هذا الدين سنة تسعين ومئة

This style is distinguished from the other five by the presence of the word “Caliph” under the inscriptions in the center back. It means Caliph Harun al-Rashid.

The title of Caliph was used as a title for the supreme ruler to whom the command to supervise the Islamic nation, it was assigned after the death of the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace). Abu Bakr al-Siddiq (may God be pleased with him) was the first one to be granted such title (may God be pleased with him) (11-13 AH) for the ruling of Muslims. In the Abbasid state, it meant the caliphate of God, and what is clear is the appearance of the title “Caliph of God” on a piece of money in the name of al-Ma'mun (198-218 AH) in the year (203 AH) in Muhammadiyah. Over time he extracted his political authority from the Abbasid Imam, so the meaning of the title became closer to the religious presidency. The Umayyad increased the number of coins and their incomes on a cash dated in the year (161 AH) from Armenia in the name of the Mahdi al-Abbasi.

This model of the group in question belongs to a dinar minted in the year (190 AH), bearing the word "for the caliph" (plate number 6), preserved in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo under a record number (23072), its weight is (3.86) grams, and its diameter is (13) mm. This one also was never subjected to study or publication before.

Also, belonging to this model many of the models that were previously published and preserved in the National Museum of Qatar that were minted during the years (190 AH), until the year (193 AH).

#### **In light of the above, we have reached the following results:**

- 1- Publication and study of writings of six Abbasid dinars dating back to the reign of Caliph Harun al-Rashid preserved in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, which were not previously published or studied before.
- 2- We have classified these six dinars, which are the subject of the study, with their inscriptions, decorations and general shape into six styles, each of which differs from the other.

3- We analyzed and interpreted the writings of these six models separately in light of the different circumstances of the Caliph Harun al-Rashid, especially the names such as Musa, Umar and Muhammad al-Amin, as well as titles such as the title of Emir, Ibn Amir al-Mu'minin, and others.

4- We learned in this research - through what reached our knowledge - that the fifth model had begun to be struck from the year (188 AH) until the year (190 AH).

5- We have also learned in this research - as far as we know - that the sixth type that includes a word for the caliph began to be struck from the year (190 AH) until the year (192 AH).