

PREFACE

The present catalogue is another witness of the seminal cooperation established between the Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften (with the direct and fundamental involvement of two main institutions, the *Numismatische Kommission* and the *Institut für Iranistik*) and the Ravenna Campus of the University of Bologna. This study, in fact, finds its origins in the field activities developed by the Italian Mission (University of Bologna and Italian Institute of Africa and the Orient) in the Yaghnob Valley, which included a significant number of collateral activities, as, for instance, a systematic recognition – that soon became a deeper investigation – of the numismatic heritage preserved in Tajik State collections. The Italian Mission in Tajikistan has strongly benefitted by the support of various colleagues of the Austrian Academy, in particular Michael Alram and Velizar Sadovski: the first scholar gently accepted of hosting in the Austrian most prestigious *Sylloge Nummorum Sasanidarum* Gariboldi's catalogue, while Sadovski directly joined and contributed to improve very many of our activities in this project. It is also through the kind mediation of the Austrian Academy that we had the opportunity to develop a cordial and efficient collaboration with the Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan in Austria. I must also thank for the Austrian institutional and scientific support Dr. Florian Schwartz, Director of the Institut für Iranistik, and a number of Tajik scholars, who offered their help in this research, and who made possible the indispensable access to the local numismatic collections with untiring and generous participation in spite of many practical difficulties: in particular I want to mention Dr. Rahim Masov, Director of the Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tajikistan, Dr. Davlatkhoja Dovudi, Dr. Nargis Khojaeva, Dr. Rauf Razakov and Dr. Abduvali Sharipov, Director of the National Museum of Tajikistan.

Although it could seem peculiar that a mission dedicated to an ethno-linguistic minority as the Yaghnob one has produced also field research on ancient numismatics, I want to underline that we tried to maintain a general approach to the historical background of this community and to its Sogdian origins. Thus, we tried to analyse the economic and social role of the Yaghnob people (and of other tribes of mountaineers along the Zarafšān Valley) in the larger framework of history. In other words, our main idea was that of reconsidering the complexity of both the Yaghnob and the Matcha Valleys (and their ancient and modern people) in close connection with the wider Zarafšān area, so studying the Late Antique documents of any kind in order to better frame the historical role of the little Yaghnob district. We have recently published a part of our final historical evaluations (Panaino/Gariboldi/Ognibene 2013), which finally permit to consider the Yaghnob Valley as an interesting chapter of the global history of (Late) Antiquity, and not just as an erratic rock in the panorama of Tajik culture. In this process of reconstruction, the economic and numismatic materials have been a remarkably important source, to which Gariboldi has dedicated the first systematic investigation.

Even if this volume closes one of our main projects in that country, we hope that new perspectives of collaborations will soon appear in order to emphasize the cultural importance of an area of Central Asia that still needs deeper care and investigation in a new vision of the preservation of the material and immaterial cultural heritage.

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