

A LATE TENTH-CENTURY FATIMID COIN PURSE FROM BET SHE'AN

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INTRODUCTION

During salvage excavations conducted in 2003 on the southern outskirts of Bet She'an, a small purse containing a variety of Islamic silver currencies and one gold coin dating to the end of the tenth century CE (AH fourth century) was unearthed.¹ The hoard (Fig. 1), a corroded lump of coins fused with textile fragments, was successfully separated in the IAA metal conservation laboratory.² Samples of the textile remains were subsequently analyzed in the organic material laboratory of the IAA (see below, The Textile Remains on the Coins).

Provenance

The purse was discovered in an accumulation of earth fill dated by ceramics to the ninth–eleventh centuries CE (B1022).³ This earth fill covered a twelfth-century Crusader-period

living surface, apparently intended to level the area for the construction of a later Mamluk-period structure (fourteenth–fifteenth centuries CE; see Tepper 2009).

Contents of the Purse

The purse contained a gold *dinar*, two silver *dirhams* and 131 cut silver *dirham* fragments, a total weight of 47.67 g. The textile fragments adhering to the coins indicate that they had been wrapped in a piece of undyed white linen, possibly of Egyptian origin (see below). We assume that the textile fragments were the remains of a coin purse.

Twenty of the coins and the cut *dirham* fractions bore inscriptions (see Catalogue, below), which facilitated their classification. The remaining 114 silver fragments were either too small or too worn for individual identifications. All the identifiable coins in the hoard were minted in *Filastin* (al-Ramla), the administrative capital of Muslim-ruled Palestine from the early eighth century.⁴ Of these, ten were struck by rulers of the Ikhshidid dynasty, which governed Egypt and most of Palestine and Syria, nominally on behalf of the Abbasid caliphs in Baghdad, from AH 323/934 CE until the advent of Fatimid rule in AH 358/969 CE (Gil 1992:473ff.; Bacharach 2006); all ten date to the 960s.

Four of the coins belong to two Ikhshidid rulers. One coin is a single cut *dirham* fraction struck by 'Alī b. Muḥammad Abū' al-Ḥasan (AH 349–355/961–966 CE; No. 1). Two *dirhams* and a silver fragment belong to al-Ḥasan b. 'Ubayd Allah (AH 357–358/968–969 CE; Nos. 2–4), governor of Palestine and vassal to Aḥmad b. 'Alī, the nominal head



Fig. 1. Hoard before cleaning: a corroded lump interspersed with textile fragments.

of the Ikhshidid dynasty (AH 358/969 CE). Another six *dirham* fragments were identified generally as Ikhshidid (Nos. 5–10).

The latest coin in the hoard that can be dated with precision is a gold *dinar* (No. 11) minted under the Qarmatian ruler al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad, who bore the title al-Sa'id al-Ra'is (The Master Chief), struck in the mint of *Filastin* in AH 362/971–972 CE.⁵ This coin provides evidence that the purse was lost not before the 970s. The remaining nine identifiable cut fragments consist of one fragment minted by the Qarmatian ruler al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad Abū 'Alī al-Asam (AH 351–361/962–972 CE; No. 12) and eight dating to the reign of the Fatimid ruler Ma'add b. al-Manṣūr Abū Tamim al-Mu'izz (AH 341–365/953–975 CE; Nos. 13–20).

Many of the *dirham* and cut silver fragments bear tooth marks, evidence that the silver alloy of the coins had been tested by their users (Fig. 2). This seems to reflect the population's growing concern with the increasing fluctuations in the silver content of the *dirham wariq* (a high-grade silver coin) at the end of the tenth century.⁶

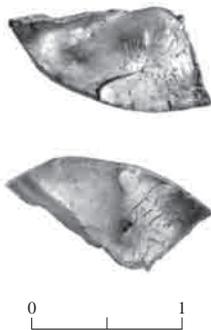


Fig. 2. Tooth marks on a cut-silver fragment.

Often, contemporary coin hoards from Ashdod, Caesarea and Tiberias in *Jund Filastin* (Levy 1964; Bacharach 1980; Berman, in prep.) share common features:

1. *Dominance of Silver.* Many hoards buried during this period (970–980s CE) contain high-quality silver *dirhams*, which were the backbone currency of the Abbasid economy.
2. *Local Currency.* Virtually all the hoards include substantial groups of coins issued by local Ikhshidid and Qarmatian rulers, who contested control over Palestine in the 960–970s prior to the establishment of Fatimid rule.
3. *Minted in al-Ramla.* A high proportion of the coins were minted in al-Ramla (*Filastin*), and occasionally, in adjacent regional mints such as that of Damascus.
4. *Presence of Qarmatian Gold.* The hoards contain the occasional gold *dinar*, which was usually minted at al-Ramla by Qarmatian rulers.
5. *Presence of Byzantine Silver.* Occasionally, hoards from this period contain pre-reform Byzantine silver *miliaresia* (ninth–tenth centuries CE), illustrating contacts with the Byzantine currency zone, be it through military expeditions or commerce.⁷ In fact, these *miliaresia* from the reign of Basil (867–886 CE) were often overstruck on Abbasid *dirhams* (Gordus and Metcalf 1970/2). Our hoard did not include pieces of this kind.

CATALOGUE

The catalogue presents the twenty inscribed coins from the hoard. Photographs of these coins appear in Fig. 3.

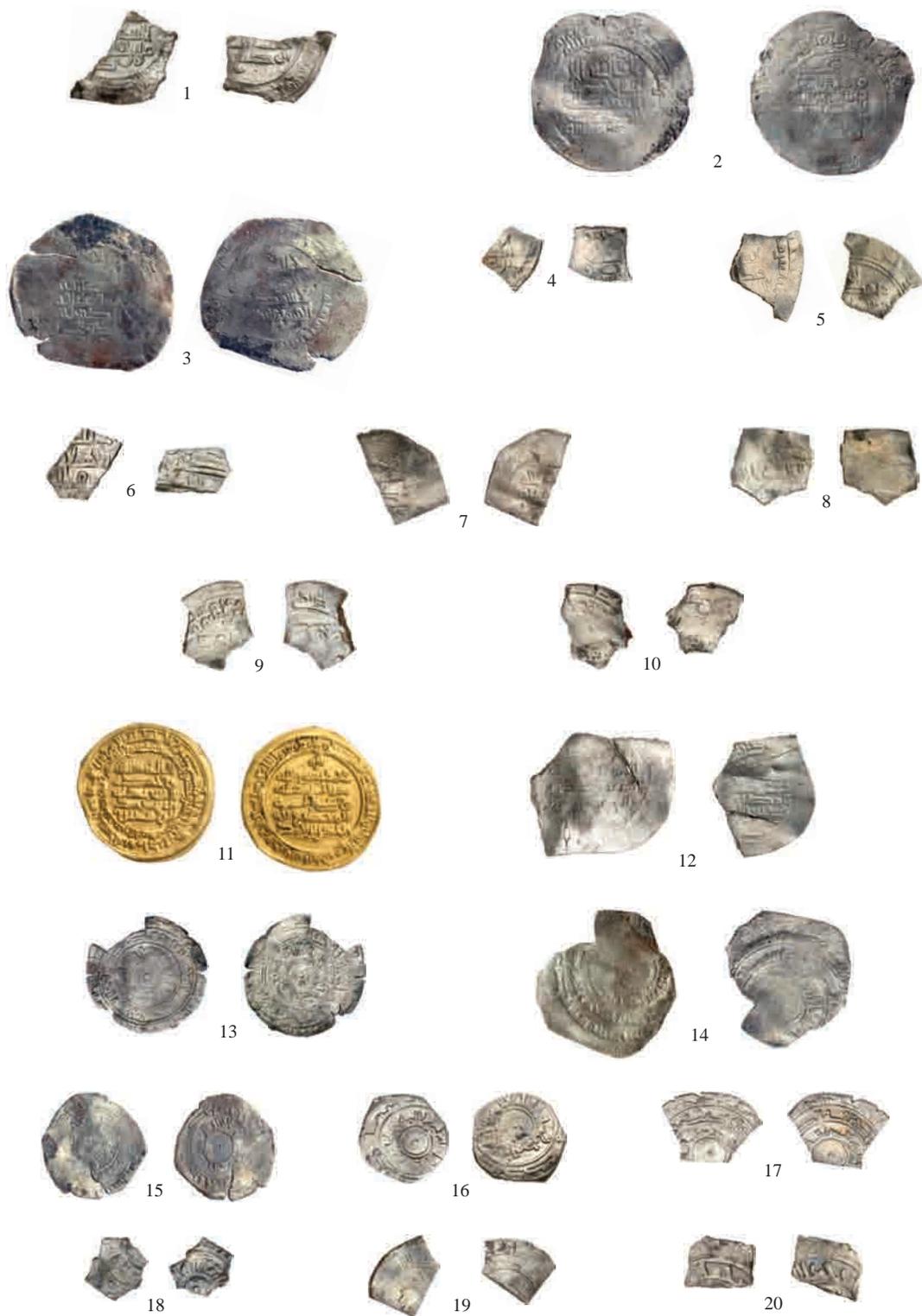


Fig. 3.

CATALOGUE

Cat. No.	Weight (g)	Size (mm)	Obverse	Reverse	Date (AH/CE)	Mint	Reference	IAA No.
IKHSHIDIDS 'Alī b. Muḥammad, Abū' al-Ḥasan AH 349–355/961–966 CE cites the Caliph al-Muti', AH 334–363/946–974 CE, Silver fraction cut of Dirham								
1	0.90	10–15	Center: لا اله الا الله وحده لا شريك له علي بن الا [خشيد]ك Margin: [---]فلسطين سنة خمسين و [---]	Center: او على اله المطيع لله Margin: Qur'an IX, 33 (adaptation)	35[.]/96[.]	Filastin	Bacharach 2006:139, No. 195	107941
Al-Ḥasan b. 'Ubayd Allah as Vassal of Ahmad b. 'Alī, AH 357–358/968–969 CE cites the Caliph al-Muti', AH 334–363/946–974 CE, Silver Dirham								
2	2.30	25	Center: لا اله الا الله وحده لا شريك له الحسن ابن عبيد الله Inner Margin: [---] خمسين وتلثمية Margin: الله الامر من قبل ومن بعد ويومئذ [---]	Center: لله محمد رسول الله صلى الله عليه وعلى اله المطيع الله احمد بن علي Margin: محمد رسول الله ارسله باليهدى [---]	357–358/ 968–969	Filastin	Cf. Bacharach 2006:140, No. 201	107932
3	2.75	25	Same Inner Margin: [---] بفلسطين سنة ثمان وخمسين وتلثمية	Same	Same	Same	Same	107933
Silver fraction of Dirham								
4	0.31	8–9	[---] الحسن ابن عبيد الله	Same	Missing	Uncertain		107958
Ikhshidids uncertain Silver fraction of Dirham								
5	0.65	11–12	Center: لا اله الا الله وحده لا شريك له Inner Margin: [---] فلسطين [---] Margin illegible	Same	Same	Filastin?		107947
6	0.22	8–12	Center: [---] او حده لا شريك له [---]	المطيع لله [---]	Missing	Same		107960
7	0.51	11–14	Same	لله محمد رسول الله [---]	Same	Missing		107944
8	0.62	11–12	[---] لا اله الا الله [---]	Effaced	Same	Same		107946
9	0.75	11–13	Inner margin: [---] خمسين وثلاث مائة [---]	Illegible	35[.]/96[.]	Same		107950
10	0.74	10–11	Inner margin: [---] هذا الدرهم [---]	Same	Missing	Same		107951
QARMATIANS Al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad Abū 'Alī al-Aṣam, AH 351–361/962–972 CE bearing the title al-Sa'id al-Ra'is (The Master Chief) cites the Caliph al-Muti', AH 334–363/ 946–974 CE, Gold Dinar								
11	3.85	21	Center: لا لله الا الله وحده لا شريك له السيد الرئيس Inner margin legend: بسم الله ضرب هذا الدين في فلسطين سنة اثنتين و ثلاثمائة Margin: Qur'an XXX, 3–4 (adaptation)	Center: لله محمد رسول الله صلى الله عليه وعلى اله المطيع لله الحسن بن احمد Margin: Qur'an IX, 33 (adaptation)	362/972	Filastin	Cf. Nicol, Nabarawy and Bacharach 1982:66, No. 2261	107931

CATALOGUE (cont.)

Cat. No.	Weight (g)	Size (mm)	Obverse	Reverse	Date (AH/CE)	Mint	Reference	IAA No.
Cut Silver Dirham								
12	1.30	16–21	لا للة الا الله وحده الا شريك له [---]	[---] المطيع للة الحسن بن احمد	Missing	Filastin?	Cf. Ilisch 1993:18, Nos. 153, 154	107937
FATIMIDS Ma'add b. al-Mansūr, Abū Tamim al-Mu'izz AH 341–365/953–975 CE, Silver half Dirham (clipped)								
13	1.30	18	Marginal legend: محمد رسول الله ارسله بالهدى ودين الحق Central legend: [وعلى افضل] الوصين ووزير خير الرسلين Inner legend: لاله الا الله محمد رسول الله	Marginal legend: بسم الله ضرب [---] ست واربعين ثلثمائة Central legend: [---] الامام معد لتوحيد الاله الصدق Inner legend: المعز لدين الله امير المؤمنين	346/957	Missing	Cf. Nicol 2006:60, No. 439	107935
14	1.82	21	Same, legends illegible	Marginal legend: بسم الله ضرب [---] وثلثمائة Central legend: [---] الامام معد [---] Inner legend: [---] الله امير المؤمنين	Missing	Missing	Same	107934
15	1.20	16	Same	Marginal legend: [---] سبيع وحمسين [---] Central legend: [---] الامام معد لتوحيد [---] Inner legend: المعز [---] الله امير المؤمنين	357?/967	Same	Same	107936
Silver fraction of Dirham								
16	0.55	13	Marginal legend missing Central legend: [---] وعلى افضل [---] Inner legend: لاله الا الله محمد رسول الله	Marginal legend missing Central legend: [---] الامام [---] Inner legend: [---] الله امير المؤمنين	Missing	Missing		107938
17	0.50	15	Margin and central legends illegible Inner legend: لاله الا الله محمد رسول الله	Marginal legend: [---] ضرب هذا الدرهم [---] Central legend: [---] الامام معد [---]	Same	Same		107949
18	0.12	8–9	Same	Central legend: [---] الامام معد [---]	Same	Same		107969
19	0.45	10–11	Same	Same	Same	Same		107962
20	0.12	-	Same	Same	Same	Same		107966

DISCUSSION

Significance of the Cut Silver Pieces

In one respect, the Bet She'an hoard differs from other excavated and published hoards of this period from southern Bilād al-Shām:⁸ it includes a large number (131) of cut silver

pieces. Very little is known about the circulation of these cut silver fractions, mainly because of a lack of verifiable archaeological material. However, unpublished data from controlled excavations in Israel,⁹ including more than twenty single finds of such early cut silver pieces from the late Abbasid/early Fatimid

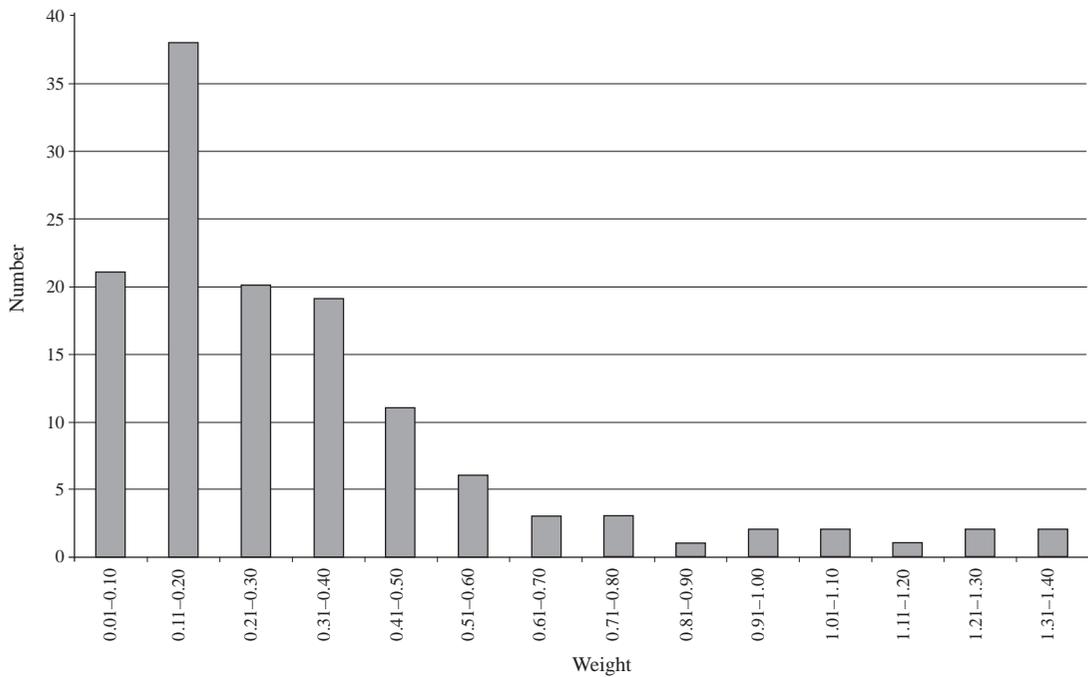


Fig. 4. Distribution of silver *dirhams* cut into small fractions, according to weight.

periods, hint at their use as daily currency. Apparently, the custom of using small cut silver pieces as legal tender for small denominations originated with the disappearance of the copper *fulus*, which had served in small-currency transactions throughout the Abbasid Empire at the end of the ninth century. The local economy compensated by cutting up silver *dirhams* into small fractions according to weight (Fig. 4), to be used as small change during the tenth century (Heidemann 2002:365–366).

Most of the pieces (109; 83% of the cuttings in the hoard) weigh up to 0.5 g. Of these, the largest group of cut pieces (38) includes those weighing between 0.11 and 0.20 g, presumably representing the smaller (in weight) Islamic denominations, such as the *habba* (c. 0.04 g), the *qīrāt* (c. 0.19 g) and the *daniq* (c. 0.5 g), which were used for small change in everyday transactions (Hinze 1955:12–13, 27; Levy 1964:51).¹⁰ The importance of these fractional denominations throughout the Islamic monetary zone should not be underestimated. Although the gold *dinar* was the standard coin within the

Fatimid-ruled territories (Goitein 1967:360; Nicol 2006:xi), numismatic evidence shows that good-quality silver *dirhams* and their fractions circulated in abundance at least until the reign of al-Hākim (AH 386–411/996–1021 CE; Balog 1961:144; Kool 1999:59–64; Nicol 2006). Contracts from this period in the Cairo *Geniza* frequently mention the use of cut *dirham* fractions as legal tender in daily transactions. They were referred to as *al-Dahārim al-mutaqatti'a* (irregularly-shaped cut dirham pieces; Goitein 1967:385). For example, in the first half of the eleventh century, the price of a house in the Abbasid heartland (Wasit and Bagdad) was calculated not only in *dirham*, but in the fractional *daniq* and *qīrāt* (Heidemann 2002:315).

The presence of these cut silver fragments in Iran, the Arabian Peninsula, northern Mesopotamia, Syria and as far west as Andalusia (Spain) attests that the practice was prevalent throughout the Abbasid currency zone, even though Islamic jurists condemned it (Brown 1984; Ilisch 1990; Domenech-Belda

2001; Heidemann 2002:365–367; 2003:108, n. 21).

Interestingly, evidence gleaned from hoards and single finds in Syria and Israel reveals that the use of silver for ‘cut’ money was restricted to the time spanning the end of the ninth to the end of the tenth centuries. From the eleventh century onward, cut silver was usually supplanted by three other coin types, two of silver and one of gold, particularly in southern Bilād al-Shām. The two silver types consisted of round silver *dirhams*, clipped to weight, and small low-grade billon silver *dirhams*, issued in a wide range of weights (Balog 1961:116–122; Nicol 2006:xii). More than one hundred single finds of these types, most of them unpublished, are known from some twenty excavated sites. The third type consisted of gold *dinar* cut into small fractions, attested by the presence of such small gold fractions in Fatimid hoards.¹¹ This custom continued during the Crusader and Ayyubid periods (Kool 2006:108–109).

The Function of the Hoard

The extremely small size of the individual cuttings masks the fact that the cut silver represented a considerable amount of money. According to contemporary currency standards, the accumulated weight of silver pieces in the hoard, c. 44 g, was the equivalent of about sixteen to seventeen silver *dirhams*, which equaled more or less one gold *dinar*.¹² Together with the gold *dinar*, the contents of the purse were sufficient to sustain a family of modest means for at least a month (Goitein 1982:309, n. 13). Significantly, the lack of imported coins and the presence of the cuttings show that the contents of the purse were definitely not a savings stash but a sizeable cash purse for everyday transactions.

The discovery of a purse filled with so large a sum of cash on the margins of Bet She'an, an important urban center during the Byzantine and Umayyad periods that declined after the devastating earthquake of 749 CE to a small rural hamlet, seems somewhat enigmatic.¹³ Its presence may have been related to the need for

cash in connection with the operation of a dozen or so massive flourmills built upon the remains of the city center and adjacent areas at the end of the ninth–tenth centuries CE (Gaby Mazor, pers. comm.).¹⁴ This large industrial-sized rural complex apparently provided milling services to the entire hinterland of Abbasid–early Fatimid Baysān. Our hoard would appear to be connected to the economic activity surrounding these installations at the end of the tenth century CE.

Monetary Significance of the Hoard

With the disintegration of the Abbasid state in the 950s and the rise of independent local rulers, a process of regionalization of the silver and gold currencies began (Heidemann 2002:369). Thus, by the second quarter of the tenth century, the number of mints still striking the official silver *dirham* on behalf of the Abbasid caliph had dwindled substantially. At the same time, virtually autonomous rulers and governors such as the Ikhshidids and Qarmatians began to usurp the *sikka*—the exclusive privilege of the caliph to mint coins—and took control of mint cities like al-Ramla (*Filastin*) in regions under their rule. These rulers added their own names and honorific titles, such as al-Ikhshid (belonging to al-Ikhshid) or al-Sa'id al-Ra'is (The Master Chief) in addition to the caliph's *laqab*, al-Muti' (the one who obeys Allah; Ilisch 1993:14–20; Bacharach 2006:38–39). Eventually, under the Shi'ite Fatimid ruler Mu'izz (AH 341–365/953–975 CE) the hegemony of the Sunni caliph in Baghdad ceased. A radical new coin type with a concentric-circle design was introduced and the *laqab* of the Fatimid ruler replaced that of the Abbasid caliph on coins minted in al-Ramla from AH 359/November 969 CE onward (Nicol 2006:48).

These developments find an echo in the presence within the hoard of Ikhshidid, Qarmatian and Fatimid coins. Like other, previously mentioned hoards from this period, these coins, for example, *dirhams* struck under two of the last Ikhshidid rulers, 'Ali b. al-Ikhshidid (AH 349–355/961–966 CE) and

Aḥmad b. ‘Ali (AH 357–358/968–969 CE); the name of the de-facto ruler of Muslim Palestine, al-Ḥasan b. ‘Ubayd Allah, who appears on both Ikhshidid and Qarmatian issues; and the large presence of silver struck under the Fatimid ruler al-Mu‘izz, who conquered Ikhshidid-controlled Egypt in July 969 (Bacharach 2006:81)—all illustrate shifts in political and military domination over *Jund Filastin* from AH 357/967 CE until the establishment of Fatimid rule. More important, hoards from this period clearly show that silver currencies, consisting of full *dirham* and their fractions produced in the mint of al-Ramla, were the staple of the monetary regime in *Jund Filastin* until the massive influx of Fatimid gold from Egypt and North Africa during the long reign of al-Mustansir (AH 427–487/1036–1094 CE).

The Textile Remains on the Coins

Several remnants of textile that adhered to the coins (Tepper 2009) were analyzed. The samples (Fig. 5) showed them to consist of undyed, S-spun (anti-clockwise) white linen, possibly bleached. The fragments were woven in a high-density plain-weave technique (16



Fig. 5. Textiles adhering to coins.

threads per cm for both the warp and the weft) and the threads were of uneven thickness.

These textile remnants are of exceptional value to researchers, as linen finds from the north of the country are rarely encountered (Shimony and Shamir 1994:97–98). While S-spun linen fragments from the Neolithic period to the Middle Ages have been found in Israel, cultivation of flax had declined following the Arab conquest, and, by the early Middle Ages had ceased almost entirely. Nonetheless, flax and its byproducts were still popular locally and were imported from various countries, particularly Egypt (Amar 1998:114).

The use of bleached-linen textiles seems to have been common, but they rarely appear in excavation reports. Forbes (1956:27–30) and Hall (1986:9) argue that bleached linen originated in Egypt. However, local finds from ‘En Raḥel (Shamir 1999:96), El-Masaia Cave and Qumran (Bélis 2003; Orit Shamir, personal observation) were definitely not imported from Egypt, as they lack the same number of threads observed in the Egyptian textiles.

Similar examples of medieval textiles adhering to coins were found at other local sites: at Bet She’an, two silver Mamluk *dirham* hoards were unearthed in the medieval fortress (Berman 1995:42); at Baniyas, two hoards of Ayyubid and Mamluk coins were found with remains of cotton adhering to them (Orit Shamir, personal observation).¹⁵ As Islamic-period clothing lacked pockets in the modern sense, these textiles would seem to have been part of a purse or small pouch in which the coins were kept. The relatively minute size of the corroded coin lump (2 × 4 cm) indicates that the purse or pouch was small.

NOTES

¹ This article was written by Robert Kool, of the IAA Coin Department, Ariel Berman, who identified the Islamic coins, and Orit Shamir of the IAA, who analyzed the textile remains. The salvage

excavation (Permit No. A-3919; map ref. NIG 711400–500/247600) was directed on behalf of the IAA by Yotam Tepper in June 2003 in preparation for the laying of a sewer system and the building of

a commercial center. For the excavation report, see Tepper 2009; for a preliminary report on the hoard, see Berman, Kool and Shamir 2009. The excavations were financed by the Bet She'an Economic Development Corporation.

² The hoard was carefully separated by Lena Kupershmidt, head of the IAA Metals Conservation Laboratory, and photographed by Clara Amit.

³ During the salvage excavation, 49 additional single coins were found, not in any stratigraphical context; of these, 32 were identified. These coins date from the early third to the late seventeenth centuries. Except for five Roman provincial and Byzantine copper coins, the majority of these single finds belong to the Umayyad (6 coins), Ayyubid (7) and Mamluk (10) periods. The latest find was a copper *manghir* of Sulaymān II (1687–1691 CE).

⁴ The name *Filastin* was first applied to the administrative and military district (*Jund*) established by the Arab conquerors on the territory of Byzantine *Palaestina Prima*. From the AH fourth century/tenth century CE onward, *Jund Filastin* extended eastward, including the region to the north of the Dead Sea and to the south, as far as the Gulf of 'Aqaba and the area of the present-day Negev and Mt. Sinai. Al-Ramla was established as the administrative capital of *Jund Filastin* during the governorship of Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Malik, according to the Abbasid historians Baladhuri (d. AH 279/892 CE; Baladhuri 1916:220–221) and Tabari (d. AH 310/923 CE; Hinds 1990). Sulaymān's presence in *Jund Filastin* was recorded as early as AH 90/709 CE, when he acted as governor. He succeeded his brother al-Walid as caliph in AH 96/715 CE. According to Ilisch (1993:12–20) and Schindel (2002), al-Ramla functioned as an administrative capital with its own *sikka* (mint), minting copper *fulus* as early as AH 90/708–709 CE or AH 92–96/710–714 CE.

⁵ Apparently, the production of *dinars* in Ramla (*Filastin*) was more extensive than in Fustaṭ (Misr) during this period (Bacharach 2006:90).

⁶ A visible reduction of silver content occurred in c. 1000 CE, when *dirhams* were weighed and prices noted in *dirham* weights (Heidemann 2002:369–370).

⁷ The Byzantine monetary system at this time was a sophisticated tri-metallic system consisting of the gold *nomisma* for trade and taxing, and the silver *miliaresion* and the copper *folles* for smaller daily purchases. Both tenth-century hoards from Ashdod and Tiberias contained a Byzantine silver *miliaresion*—the Ashdod hoard, of Basil I and Constantine (868–879 CE) and the Tiberias hoard, of Constantine VII and Romanus II (945–959 CE). These fiduciary coins were reckoned at between

12 to 14 units to the gold *nomisma* (Hendy 1985:503–505). In comparison, the *dirham* usually fluctuated between 14 to 20 units to a gold *dinar* (Miles 1960). For the Byzantine reconquest of northern Syria under Nicophorus II Phocas (963–969) and John Tzimiskes (969–976), see Treadgold 1997:498–512; Cheynet 2006:1–16.

⁸ Five silver and mixed silver/gold/bronze hoards have been unearthed at Bet She'an, but they are all of earlier, Umayyad silver, dating to the destruction of the town by the 749 CE earthquake (Amitai-Preiss 2000–2002).

⁹ The nine sites are (from south to north): 'En Marzev in the southern Negev (A-741, Yosef Porath; Berman and Ariel, forthcoming); Tel Yavne (A-6025, Eli Yannai); Jerusalem (Old City, A-5509, Hervé Barbé; Western Wall Excavations, A-5002, Shlomit Weksler-Bdolah; Herod's Gate Excavations, A-4467, Gideon Avni; City of David Excavations, A-4347, Ronny Reich; Binyane Ha-'Uma Excavations, A-4903, Rina Avner), Lod/Lyddā (A-4253, Eli Haddad), Ramla (A-2194, Don Glick), Ramla-South (A-4454, Alexander Onn), Shoham (A-2294, Uzi Ad), Yafa (Old City, A-2374, Martin Peilstöcker), Arsuf/Appolonia (Season 1, 1977, Israel Roll) and Zefat (al-Watta, A-3708, Michael Cohen).

¹⁰ The *danaq/daniq* is not mentioned by Hinz (1955) in his list of weight measures. It belongs to the *dirham* weight system and its fractions. In general, six *danaq/daniq* equal one *dirham* (Grohmann 1954:145; Heidemann, pers. comm. 02/04/07). The *daniq* is mentioned relatively frequently in the *Geniza* papers (Goitein 1965:7).

¹¹ For cut-gold fragments present in two Fatimid-period hoards from Jerusalem, see Berman 1976. Cut-gold fragments were also retrieved from a Fatimid-period gold hoard excavated in Ramla in 2005 (Kool and Berman, in prep.).

¹² The standard *dirham* weighed 2.97 g. However, studies show that *dirhams* were often reduced by approximately 10% during the Fatimid period to 2.6 g (Balog 1961:122).

¹³ Excavations conducted by Dina Avshalom-Gorni west of the Roman amphitheater at Bet She'an in 1994 unearthed an early Abbasid-period hoard dating to the reign of Muḥammad al-Maḥḍi (775–785 CE) that had been buried in a pot. The hoard contained 110 *dirhams*, the majority minted in Medinat as-Salam (Bagdad), in addition to specimens minted in Maḥmadiyah (Teheran), Baṣra (southern Iraq) and al-Bab (Darbend on the coast of the Caspian Sea; identified by Ariel Berman). These coins were presumably brought from the East in one parcel. They also attest to the *dirham*'s widespread

circulation and use throughout the Abbasid empire during the eighth and ninth centuries CE.

¹⁴For more information on archaeological remains at Abbasid Baysān, see Petersen 2005:70; Sion 2000:40–42.

¹⁵Remains of an earlier hoard wrapped in a textile are known from 'Ein Feshka (Bélis 2003:242–243). Eighteen coins of Agrippa II were concealed in a small sack of which only the cloth's impression had been preserved.

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