

THE COINS FROM THE 'THIRD MILE ESTATE', ASHQELON

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Fifty-eight coins were found during the excavations at the 'Third Mile Estate,'¹ all made of bronze (see Israel and Erickson-Gini, this volume); twelve were unidentifiable. Both the chronological and the spatial distributions of 40 of the 46 identified coins (Nos. 6–45) conform to the main settlement phase at the site, from the Late Roman and Byzantine periods. Five coins (Nos. 1–5) date to the Hellenistic period, of which fragmentary evidence of occupation was found at the site. Coin Nos. 3 and 4 were found in Area F, which contained many Hellenistic surface sherds. One coin (No. 46) is a solitary Abbasid *fals*.

The earliest coin associated with the Roman and Byzantine occupation at the site was struck by Septimius Severus (with his wife Julia Domna) at Aelia Capitolina (No. 6). The imperial couple's sons, Geta and Caracalla are depicted on its reverse; the latter name is inscribed on a milestone found at the site (see Roll, this volume). Three *pentanummia* (Nos. 43–45)—the latest Byzantine coins from the site—indicate that the estate was occupied at least through the first half of the sixth century CE; two coins (Nos. 43 and 44) are confidently dated between 518 and 538 CE. Although comprising a relatively large assemblage, the 40 Roman and Byzantine coins found at the site are not sufficient for an analysis of occupational gaps at the estate, especially since some of these coins remained in circulation over a very long time.

This assemblage, however, as well as the earlier coins from the site, may shed light on the relationship between the 'Third Mile Estate' and the adjoining site of Ashqelon, Hammama Conduit (Fabian, Nahshoni and

Ein Gedy 1995). The ten identified coins from Hammama Conduit² bear some similarities with the 'Third Mile Estate' assemblage: They include two Hellenistic bronze coins (IAA Nos. 57310, 57312) and the Byzantine coins, dating from the fourth through the first half of the sixth centuries, include *pentanummium*-type coins (IAA Nos. 57305, 57308), one of which (IAA No. 57308) is an imitative issue, as No. 45 may be. Two clearly unofficial issues employing a variation of the chi-rho symbol (IAA Nos. 57304, 57311)—coins related to the *pentanummia*—were also found at Hammama Conduit. The latter is a coin with the chi-rho symbol overstruck on an Alexandrine *dodecanummium*. Although these resemblances cannot determine whether the two sites are parts of one extended estate or two adjacent estates, they clearly indicate the close ties between them.

The large number of *dodecanummium* and smaller denominations at both Hammama Conduit and the 'Third Mile Estate' site may indicate that Ashqelonians preferred small bronzes for daily transactions, taking a cue from nearby Byzantine Egypt. Archaeological excavations at numerous Byzantine sites in Ashqelon have uncovered what appear to be a disproportionate number of small-denomination bronze coins, from *dodecanummium* (e.g., Bijovsky 1999a:204, No. 10; 1999b:109*, No. 1; 2004:120, No. 36; Sokolov and Bijovsky 2007:102, Nos. 27, 28; Hammama, IAA 57307) to single *nummus* denominations (e.g., Bijovsky 1998:102, 104; 2004:120, Nos. 32–34). Particularly common is the *pentanummium* type and its imitations (e.g., Bijovsky 1999b:109*, No. 2; 2004:120, Nos.

25–31; Sokolov and Bijovsky 2007:102, Nos. 21–24, 30–33).

This is not to say that Ashqelonians did not conduct transactions in the larger *follis* denomination; for example, a hoard of folles was uncovered off the coast of Ashqelon (Galili and Sharvit 1998:102). We are, however, suggesting that Egyptian coin currency would naturally have influenced the coast of southern Israel to a point where the abovementioned *pentanummiūm* imitations may have been locally produced. Another locally made imitative coin may be a lead *follis* excavated elsewhere in Ashqelon (Bijovsky 1999c:124*, No. 14). Two imitations of small Axumite bronzes (Bijovsky 1998:82; 2004:117, No. B22; 119, No. 22; Hahn 1994–1999:117) serve as additional examples of Egyptian monetary influences on Ashqelon during the Byzantine period.

Since none of the coins from the Byzantine phase of occupation at the ‘Third Mile Estate’ and the adjoining Hammama site date later than the first half of the sixth century, it may suggest that both sites were adversely affected by the cyclical series of plagues that struck the region beginning in mid-542 CE (Conrad 1986:146; Ariel 2002:297–300). This interpretation is

not necessarily contradicted by the appearance of coins from the second half of the sixth and even the first half of the seventh centuries CE in the numismatic finds from many recent excavations in Ashqelon (as well as in the hoard noted above). While large cities do not generally go out of existence when plagues strike (but see Allen 1979:12), the depletion of population and economic downsizing often affects satellite sites, such as the ‘Third Mile Estate’ and the adjacent site of Hammama. However, the proposal that the ‘Third Mile Estate’ was affected by the ‘Justinianic Plague’ is by no means certain. In fact, the latest Byzantine coins from the site (Nos. 42–45), as well as the sole Abbasid coin (No. 46), were found in one restricted context at the ‘Third Mile Estate’, the *frigidarium*. This may imply that with the exclusion of that spot, the estate had ceased to function as such. On the other hand, the suggestion that the ceramics date throughout the sixth century and into the early seventh century CE (see Israel and Erickson-Gini, this volume) argues for the continued occupation of the site despite the absence of numismatic evidence for the second half of the sixth century CE.

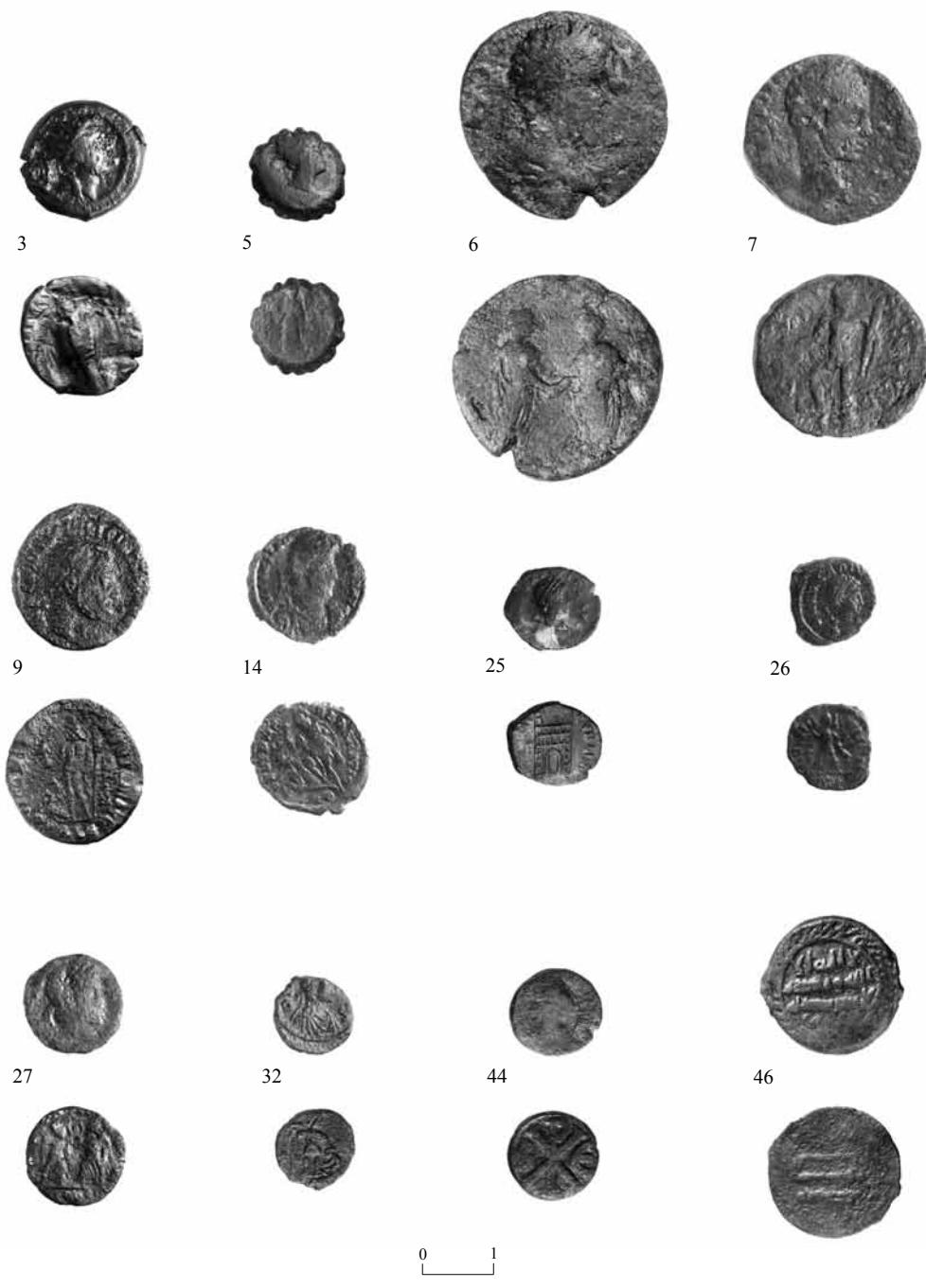


Fig. 1.

CATALOGUE¹

Cat. No.	Area/ Locus	Basket	Weight (g)	Diam. (mm)	Axis	Obverse	Reverse	Date (CE)	Mint	Reference	Notes	IAA No.
Alexander the Great (during his life and possibly posthumous; c. 333–315 BCE)												
1	E/493	398	5.55	18	↑	Beardless head of Heracles r.	[---] Quiver and bow					42535
Seleucids												
Antiochus III? (222–187 BCE)												
2	E/401	304b	1.34	11	↑ ?	Head r.?	[---] Apollo sig. l., holding bow and arrow			Antioch?	Cf. Houghton and Spaer 1998:86, Nos. 573–590	42507
Antiochus IV (175–164 BCE)												
3*	F/519	395	3.01	18	↑	Diademed, radiate head r.	[---] Artemis stg. facing, holding long torch in r.		'Akko-Ptolemais	Houghton and Spaer 1998:158, No. 1144		42540
4	F/515	350b	2.74	15	↑	Radiate head r. Fillet border	[BA]ΣΙΑΕ[ΩΣΑΝΤΙΟΧΟΥ] Veiled and draped female figure, stg. facing, holding long scepter or torch		Same	Cf. Houghton and Spaer 1998:56, Nos. 1131–1138	Serrated	42539
5*	E/499	343	2.38	14	↑	Same. To l.: ♀	[---] Same		Same	Same	Same	42536
Roman Provincial												
Septimius Severus (193–211 CE)												
6*	E/426	288	18.36	30	↑	[---] Jugate busts of Septimius Severus and Julia Domna r.	[---] Caracalla and Geta togate, stg. l. facing each other, clasping hands		Aelia Capitolina	Meshorer 1989:88, No. 81		42518
Elagabalus (218–222 CE)												
7*	E/422	287a	14.02	25	↑	[---] Laureate bust r., seen from behind(?)	ACK[A]ΛW BK[T] Heracles stg. l.; in r. hand, Victory(?); in l., club	218/19		BM/C Pal.:138, No. 244		42509
8	E/401	179a	4.98	22	↑	[---] Radiate bust r.	Second half of third century CE					42505

¹ Coins bearing an asterisk are illustrated in Fig. 1.

CATALOGUE (cont.)

Cat. No.	Area/ Locus	Basket	Weight (g)	Diam. (mm)	Axis	Obverse	Reverse	Date (CE)	Mint	Reference	Notes	IAA No.
Roman Imperial Licinius I (308–324 CE) – <i>follis</i>												
9*	E/422	287c	3.89	19 × 21	↑	IMP C VAL[IC]IN LIC[NIVS PF AVG]	I[OVI CON]S[+]ERATORI AVGG Laureate head r. Jupiter stg. l., leaning on scepter with eagle, holding Victory on globe in r. hand; eagle with wreath to l.; in l. field: Wreath/T/N; in ex.: ALE	315	Alexandria	RIC VII:705, No. 10		42511
341–346 CE												
10	E/450	403b	1.98	15	↓	DN CONSTI[...]P Pearl-diademed bust r., draped and cuirassed	VOT[?]XX/M[V]T/XXX Within wreath; in ex.: [C] ONS[?]		Constantinople	Cf. LRBC I:24, No. 1064		42531
Constantius II (324–361 CE)												
11	E/ Surf.	401a	2.87	16	↖	DN CONSTAN- [TIVS PF AVG]	[---] Virtus spearing falling horseman; in ex.: SM[••]	351– 361		Cf. LRBC II:78, No. 1687		42502
12	E/450	403a	2.55	16	↓	DN CONSTAN- [TIVS PF AVG]	[---] Same, but mintmark illegible	Same		Cf. LRBC II:87, No. 2039		42530
13	E/430	301d	2.24	20	↓	[DN CONSTAN]- [TIVS PF AVG]	[---] Same	Same		Same		42522
14*	E/624	379	1.70	17	↘	DN CONSTAN- [TIVS PF AVG]	FEL TEMP-REPARATIO Same; in ex.: [---]O	Same		Same		42542
351–361 CE												
15	E/441	286d	1.64	18	↑	[---] Same	FEL TEMP [REPARATIO] Same	Same		Same		42528
16	E/450	403c	2.09	16	↖	[---] Same	[---] Same	Same		Same		42532
17	E/422	287z	1.72	16	↓	[---] Pearl- diademed, draped bust r.	[---] Virtus stg. facing, head l., holding spear and globe	355– 361		Cf. LRBC II:87, No. 2053		42516

CATALOGUE (cont.)

Cat. No.	Area/ Locus	Basket	Weight (g)	Diam. (mm)	Axis	Obverse	Reverse	Date (CE)	Mint	Reference	Notes	IAA No.
18	E/422	287b	2.05	13	↑	[---] Draped bust r.	[---] Same			Cf. <i>LRCB</i> II:87, No. 2054	42510	
364-375 CE												
19	E/480	318	2.22	18	↓	DN[---] Pearl- diademed, draped bust r.	[SECVRITAS- REIPVBLICAE] Victory advancing l., holding palm branch and wreath			Cf. <i>LRCB</i> II:87, No. 2071	42533	
Theodosius I (379-395 CE)												
20	E/401	304a	1.21	14	→	[---]PF AVG Pearl- diademed, draped bust r.	VOT/X/MVL/T/XX Within wreath			Cf. <i>LRCB</i> II:89, No. 2158	42506	
21	E/ Surf.	401b	1.28	12	↑	DN THEODO- SVS PF [AVG] Pearl-diademed, draped bust r.	SALVS REI-[PVBLICAE] Victory advancing l., dragging captive and holding trophy, in l. field: +	383- 395		Cf. <i>LRCB</i> II:101, No. 2761	42503	
22	E/441	286b	1.10	12	↓	DN THEODO- SVS PF AVG]	[---] Same, but in l. field: ♀	383- 395		Cf. <i>LRCB</i> II:89, No. 2184	42527	
23	E/422	287f	0.90	14	↑	DN THEODO- O-SV[S PF AVG] Same	[---] Same	383- 395		Same	42514	
24	E/ Surf.	378	0.87	11	↖	DN THEODO- SVS PF AVG] Same	[---] Same	383- 395		Same	42501	
25*	E/441	300c	1.07	14	↘	DN ARICADIVS PF AVG Pearl- diademed, draped bust r.	Arcadius (383- 408 CE)			Thessalonica	<i>LRCB</i> II:82, No. 1866	42529

CATALOGUE (cont.)

CATALOGUE (cont.)

Cat. No.	Area/ Locus	Basket	Weight (g)	Diam. (mm)	Axis	Obverse	Reverse	Date (CE)	Mint	Reference	Notes	IAA No.
Fourth century CE												
34	E/418	127	2.30	16	↑	[---] Head or bust r.	[---] Figure sig.				<i>Securitas Reipublicae?</i>	42508
35	C/209	407	0.86	12	↑	DN[---] Bust r.	[---] Same					42499
36	E/422	287f	0.77	12	↓	[---] Same	[---] Same					42515
37	D/117	176	1.49	15		Obliterated	[---] Same				<i>Spes Reipublicae?</i>	42500
38	C/202	168	0.89	13		[---] Head or bust r.	Obliterated					42498
Fourth-fifth centuries CE												
39	F/515	350a	0.70	8 × 11	↓	[---] Bust r.	[---] Figure sig.					42538
40	E/401	179	1.06	11		[---] Pearl-diademed, draped bust r.	Obliterated				Imitative issue?	42504
41	E/441	286a	1.01	13		[---] Pearl-diademed bust r.	Same					42526
42	E/430	301	0.97	11		[---] Bust r.	Same					42521
Byzantine 518–538 CE, Pentanummium												
43	E/430	301b	2.08	14	↓	[---] Bust r.	ꝝ To l.; B; to r.: E		Constant	Cf. DOC 1:45, No. 21b		42524
44*	E/430	301e	2.06	14	↙	[---] Same	Same		Constant	Same		42523
45	E/430	301c	1.53	12	↑	[---] Bust r.	ꝝ ?			Cf. DOC 1:45, No. 21		42525
Abbasids Anonymous, Fals												
46*	E/426	167	3.11	20		Within cablelike border: \ ي \ ن \ ل \ و \ ح \ و \ ه \ ل \ ش \ ر \ ي \ ك \ ل \ م \ ن \ ب \ ل \ س \ م \ ن \ ظ \ ل \ ق \ ل \ ف \ ن	Within circle: محمد \ رسول الله Outside marginal legend: الله صرحب \ القلنس بل سنة سنج غشودلخن	AH 217 = 832	Al-Ramlah	Iliisch 1993:14, Nos. 96–102		42517

NOTES

¹ The coins were cleaned in the IAA laboratories, headed by Ella Altmark, and photographed by Sando Mendrea. The Abbasid coin was kindly identified by Ariel Berman.

² Our thanks to Peter Fabian for his permission to note the coins here.

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