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COINS FROM THE 1973 AND 1974 EXCAVATIONS AT HESHBON

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Coins from the 1973 Excavations

The third season of excavations at Heshbon¹ yielded the smallest number of coins: 35. Yet among them was found the long awaited city coin of Esbus (no. 249), minted during the reign of Elagabalus (a.p. 218-222), who elevated the city to municipal status.² This coin is undoubtedly the best specimen of its rare type.³

Other interesting finds of the same year include a denarius or drachma (no. 247) of Trajan (A.D. 98-117) and a stater or tetradrachm (no. 248) of Caracalla (A.D. 211-217). The italicized words are familiar to Bible students: the one (dēnarion) as the ordinary pay for a day's work⁴ or as the "tribute money," the other (statēr), the equivalent of four denarii or a shekel, as for paying the temple dues for two.

No Islamic coins of particular importance were found. The 35 coins are catalogued as follows:⁷

¹ The numismatic reports on the first two sensons: 1968 and 1971, appeared in AUSS 9 (1971): 147-160 and 12 (1974): 35-46 respectively. These earlier reports are referred to by the years in which excavations were made.

² The coins of Esbus, like those of most other cities in the Province of

Arabia, are our only source of information on this status. See Michael Avi-Yonah, The Holy Land (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1966), p. 117.

³ See George F. Hill, Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Arabia, Mesopotamia and Persia (London, 1922), pp. xxxiii, 29-30, Pl. V. no. 2

and Persia (London, 1922), pp. xxxiii, 29-30, Pl. V, no. 2.

'Mt 20:2, 9, 10, 13. The denarius was worth 18 cents, devalued to 8 cents during the reign of Nero (A.D. 54-68). Rev 6:6 may betray the inflationary prices of a later time when about a quart of wheat was sold for a denarius. Cf. Mk 6:37; Mt 14:21, where a denarius is estimated as enough to buy bread for more than 25 people.

6 Mt 22:19. 6 Mt 17:27.

⁷Six coins are not included in this catalogue because of their very poor and hardly recognizable condition. Of these, nos. 263-267 (1517, A.6:3; 1526, D.6:59; 1538, B.2:80; 1540, A.7:61; 1541, Tomb F.16:5) are possibly Late Ro-

Phoenician

234. Similar to no. 1 in the 1968 report. (1644-B.4:88, yellow-brown, crumbly, clayish soil.) Tyre, 96/5 B.c.

Maccabean

235. 103-76 в.с. (1515-A.5:61-62, cleanup debris above bedrock.) Alexander Jannaeus

Similar to no. 47 in the 1971 report.

236 Obv. Double cornucopias; around, from l. below and between horns: "הוול ביוול" ביוול איני בייני איני בייני איני בייני ב (1523-B.4:124, soft, moist, brown soil.) Antigonus Mattathias, 40-37 B.C.

237. 9 s.c.-a.d. 40. (1646-B.3:72, loose brown soil with rocks of various sizes.) Aretas IV

Similar to no. 2 in the 1968 report.

238. (1645-B.4:120E LC, over an E-W wall split into two sections Similar to the preceding. à

239-244. under Locus 7 and over 9.) (1650-1655-Tomb F.18:8, western half of the chamber to the floor

245 Similar to the preceding. (1528-D.1:53, probe trench in SW corner of square.) Uncertain. Obv. Head r., laureate; border.

Horn of plenty r.; ear of barley or wheat l., with pomegranate (?) above.*

Provincial Roman

246. (1524-D.6W:56B, NS wall in SW corner of square.) Judaea; Pontius Pilate, A.D. 31/2.

Similar to no. 5 in the 1968 report.

247.

(1647-D.2:36, continuation of substructure from stair 32.) Denarius (2.93 gm.) of Trajan, ca. A.D. 105."

Head of Trajan (98-117) r., laureate; around: IMP TRAIANO AVG GER DAC P M TR P; plated.

Fortuna standing l., draped, holding rudder or prow in r. hand PRINC; plated.xo and connucopias in l.: around: COS VP P S P Q R OPTIMO

man, belonging either to the reign of Valentinian II, A.B. 375-392, or to that of one of his contemporaries. No. 268 (1649, Tomb F.18:8) is worn beyond beyond

on the rev. are reversed, owing perhaps to a printing error there in mirror "Identical with Hill, Arabia, Pl. XLIX, no. 9, except that l. and r. objects

See Harold Mattingly, Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum

vol. 3: Nerva to Hadrian (London, 1966), p. 30n.

¹⁰ Referring to the reigns of Nerva to Hadrian, Mattingly says, "In this period they [plated denarii] usually ofter irregular combinations of types and

(1521-B.3:49, over fallen rocks and soil from E balk.) Stater (13.22 gm.)

COINS FROM HESHBON

248.

of Caracalla, A.D. 211-217.

Obv. Head of Caracalla, laureate; around: ATT. KAI. ANTONINO (sic) CEB; border of dots.

Eagle with wings spread, head r., holding wreath in beak standing on thunderbolt; two stars in field; around: AHMAPX E.Z. THATOC TO F (Gaza?);11 border of dots.

249. (1522-B.4:113, red soil with huwwar bits.) Esbus (Heshbon); Elagabalus, A.D. 218-222. Bust of Elagabalus r., laureate and draped; around: AVT C M

Within a temple showing four columns, central arch and flat AVR ANTONINVS.

roof to wings, city-goddess stands I., wearing turreted crown and short chiton; her r. foot rests on small figure. I. hand rests on the temple wings: A V; in exergue: ECBOVC (Aurelia Esbus) spear or standard and r. holds another small figure; inser, above

Late Roman

250 (1539-B.5:8, reddish-brown soil with huwwar flecks, along N Similar to no. 60 in the 1971 report. of square.) Constans I, A.D. 343-350. balk

251 (1525-D.3:24, top layer E of and level with Locus 21.) Valentinian II. Similar to no. 12 in the 1968 report. A.D. 375-392.

(1529-Tomb F.16:4, Arcosolium W of shaft over Locus 5.) Honorius.

Similar to no. 15 in the 1968 report.

252

Byzantine

253. Similar to no. 17 in the 1968 report; official code no. A instead of C. (1531-G.1:5, tan soil, speckled with limestone pieces.) Anastasius I, A.D. 498-518. Follis of

254.

(1643 D.1:43, reddish mortar) Follis of Justinian I. A.D. 539/40.

Obv. Bust of Justinian I (527-565) facing, wearing cuirass, plumed side; r. hand holds globus cruciger; shield showing horseman on helmet with diadem from which two pearls hang on either border of dots. I. shoulder; cross in r. field; around: DNIVSTINI ANVSPPAVC;

M (prominent mark of value-40 nummi); within: A (official code no.); above: cross; l. segment: ANNO; r. segment: X-II-I (539/40; in exergue: KYZ (Cyzicus); border of dots.

... in general circulation" (ibid., p. xix). in the provinces issuing imitations of imperial coins which might be tolerated mints. It is less certain whether there may not have been irregular local mints other peculiarities, and may be attributed confidently to the work of the false moneyer. We can be certain that they were not issued by the regular

Samaria and Judaea (London. 1914), p. lxxviii, though no such coin is illustrated in the plates. "See George F. Hill, Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Palestine: Galilee,

COINS FROM HESHBON

Ayyūbid (1171-1342)11

255. (1533-G.1:9, along branch), 1186-1216. N balk, a wide wall.) Az-Zähir Ghāzī (Ḥalab

256 Similar to no. 68 in the 1971 report. (1642-G.3:12, topsoil.) Al-'Adil, 1196-1218.

Similar to no. 28 in the 1968 report.

(1530-G.1:1, topsoil.) Uncertain.

Obv. Within two horizontal lines across the field: Al-Malik; traces of borders, the outer dotted.

Arabesque; traces of border.

Mamlük (1250-1517)13

258. (1520-A.6:4, two monolithic stones [pillar column and architrave].) Uncertain.

.../Duriba bi-Dimashk; traces of border

Obliterated.

259. (1519-A.6:4, see no. 258.) Al-Ashraf Sha'ban, 1863-1877

Obv. Obliterated.

RCV. As-Sultān al-Ma[lik]/al-Asliraf Nā [sir] . . .

260. Similar to nos. 91-94 in the 1971 report; pierced (1518---A.6:4, see no. 258.) Az-Zāhir Barķūķ, 1382-1399

Similar to the preceding. (1527—D.4:1, topsoil.)

Similar to the preceding. (1532-C.1:5, tan soil, speckled with limestone pieces.)

so far does not alter the conclusions on the occupational history in the 1971 report), were struck at Damascus. The coin evidence 259-261, like nos. 41, 45 in the 1968 report and nos. 84-86, 91-94 of provenance. Of the Islamic coins, the Mamlūk fulūs (nos. 257, non-Islamic coins still represent an extensive geographical range taean coins were presumably struck at Petra.14 The rest of the bears any of the ancient mint names of Transjordan. The Nabaof Heshbon made in the 1968 report. Except for the Esbus coin, none of the coins hitherto found

Coins from the 1974 Excavations

B.C. and belonging to the reign of Ptolemy III Euergetes. Another the oldest coin hitherto found at Heshbon, dating from 246-221 the earlier reports. The first coin in this catalogue (no. 269) is The 1974 coins, 38 in number, add two significant points to

for the entire province with the province name-APABIA-on and was probably struck at Bostra, which at first issued coins of the ancient mints of Transjordan. It is a coin of Arabia and hardly recognizable condition), is the first to mention any report and no. 280 in this report—the 2nd being in extremely poor coin (no. 278), besides the Esbus coins (no. 249 in the 1973 the reverse.15 Kingdom. The coin belongs to the reign of Hadrian (a.p. 117-138) Provincia, founded in a.p. 106, after the fall of the Nabataean

study. some observations, one may note the ever increasing number of more pre-Islamic coins were found in the last two years. Among Nabataean coins, 20 to this date, which may warrant a special As might be expected in the lower strata, fewer Islamic and

outside the flan. struck at Aelia (Jerusalem). Among the Mamlük coins, two silver The mint names on these, as on most other Islamic coins, fall dirhamayn and a half-dirham were found (nos. 296, 298, 301). An Umayyad fils (no. 291), like no. 21 in the 1968 report, was

The 38 coins are catalogued as follows: 16

Ptolemaic

221 B.C. (2050-D.3:93, a very sandy, gravelly soil layer.) Ptolemy III, 246-

Head of Zeus Ammon r.

Rev. Two cagles on thunderbolts, facing 1.; inscr. 1.: [ΠΤΟΛΕΜ]ΔΙΟΥ;
r.: obliterated [ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ]; between legs of cagle on 1.: θ; r.: obliterated [BANIAEON]; between legs of eagle border of dots.

Maccabean

270. (1730-C.5:66, hard light brown soil with plaster sherds pockets.) Uncertain. Obv. Obliterated. and ash

Rev. Traces of two cornucopias

[&]quot;End of the Hamah branch.

¹⁶ Baḥrī Mamlük (1250-1382), Burdjī Mamlük (1382-1517)

⁴ Hill, Arabia, p. xii.

[&]quot;Ibid., pp. xxii-xliv, 14-44.

G.9:3) are Byzantine follers showing traces of large M; no. 306 (1733, C.3:59) of the Moslem profession of faith in Kufi; nos. 304-305 (1711, A.9:10 and 2039 ³⁶ Some discernible marks made the following identifications of very poor coins possible: no. 302 (2105, C.5:81) is Late Roman, similar perhaps to no. 16 in the 1968 report; no. 303 (2057, D.4:62) is Umayyad, owing to some traces is worn beyond recognition.

Phoenician

271. Obv. (1768-B.4:211, blackish-brown, thick clay layer.) Tyre, A.D. 64-109.11 Similar to no. 1 in the 1968 report.

Rev. Palm tree with two bunches of fruit; obliterated inser, in the

Nabataean

272 9 B.C.-A.D. 40. Similar to no. 2 in the 1968 report, but 3d line of rev. inscr. off the (1947-C.6:15, a double wall connecting Wall 2 and Wall 4.) Aretas IV

273. (1739-D.3:67, hard surface of huwwar.)

Similar to the preceding, but rev. inscr. obliterated.

274 the square [NS].) (1805-D.3:80, predominantly brown soil layer in the eastern third of

Similar to the preceding, but 3d line of rev. inscr. off the flan.

275 Obv. Bust of Aretas Philopatris r., laureate, with long hair; border (1740-D.3:57c, 2d uncontaminated layer in Locus 57, cistern.) of dots.

276 Rev. between them. (2101—G.10:14, brown soil, loose on top, firmer toward bottom.) Two crossed cornucopias; one or two unintelligible letters

Rabbel II, A.D. 71-106. Busts of Rabbel and Gamilath (his sister and queen) Similar to no. 3 in the 1968 report

Provincial Roman

277 Similar to no. 5 in the 1968 report, but obv. inser, and rev. (1767-D.3:78, soil layer semi-arbitrarily separated from Locus 71.) obliterated. udaea: Pontius Pilate, A.D. 30-32.

278 (1743-D.4:41, some hummar rocks, fairly loose, with loose brown soil sloping to W balk.) Arabia; Hadrian, A.D. 117-138. Bust of Hadrian r., laureate, undraped; around: [AVTOKPAT KAICAP T]PAIANOC ADPIANOC C; border of dots.

279 Bust of Arabia r., wearing turreted crown and flowing mantle; each arm holding a small scated figure of a child; in exergue: APABIA; traces of border.

joint principate of Antonius Pius and Marcus Aurelius, A.D. Obv. Bust of Pius (138-161) r. bearded laureate and (1713-D.2:44, clearing debris of winter erosion.) Aelia Capitolina; Bust of Pius (138-161) r., bearded, laureate, and draped obliterated inscr. around. 146-161.

Bust of Aurelius (161-180) r., bareheaded and draped; around: AVRELIO CAES AVG; in exergue: CA[C] (Colonia Aelia Capitolina) 18

280. surface of varying thickness, extending over the With the exception of part of the rev. (exergue: [ECB]OVC), inser. is Similar to no. 249 in the 1973 report, but in extremely poor condition. (2104-B.1:13, variegated brown-black soil covered (Heshbon); Elagabalus, A.D. 218-222. by a huwwar square.) Esbus

(1710-C.5, bulk trim.) Gallienus, A.D. 267.10

Obv. Bust of Gallienus (253-268) r., radiate and draped; around:

[GA]LLIENV[S...]; border of dots.

Mercury standing 1, holding purse and caduceus; around:

FIDES A[VG]; in exergue: PXV (Tribunician year [A.D.

282 was cut.) Maximian, A.D. 296-305. (1702-A.7:97, hard packed, light brown, gravelly soil on which mosaic foundation, Loci 94-96, was set and into which tabun foundation pit

Obv. Bust of Maximian r., radiate and draped; around: IMP C M AV MAXIMIANV[S...].

Emperor standing r., holding paragonium, receiving Victory on globe from Jupiter, standing l., holding scepter; around: CONCONCOR[DIA MI]LITVM; in the field: KA (mark of value) 🕶

283. stantine I, A.D. 306-337. (1731-G.9:2, hard packed, grayish brown, gravelly soil layer.)

Obv. Bust of Constantine I r., laureate and draped; around: IMP C CONSTANTINUS P F AVG.

284 Valens, A.D. 364-378. Rev. Three standards; around: S P Q R OPTIMO PRINCIPI. (1736-G.5B:31, soil layer W of Wall 15 and running up and running up to it.)

Obv. Bust of Valens r., with pearl diadem and cuirass; around: D N VALEN....

Rev. Emperor advancing r. with standard in l. hand and dragging a captive with the r.; around: GLORIA ROMANORVM.

285. (2058-G.5F:1, arbitrary soil layer all over the square above rock tumble from reservoir wall.)

286 for *tabun A.7:73* was dug, extending down to bedrock.) Theodosius I, Similar to the preceding, but inscr. is obliterated. (1701-A.5:77, hard packed, light brown, gravelly soil on which mosaic A.D. 378-395. 73 installation was founded, Loci 74-76, into which foundation pit

Traces of bust, r.

Victory advancing 1., dragging a captive; around: [SALV]S REIP[VBLICAE]; in exergue: SMAN (Antioch).

<sup>259.

&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Cf. Hill, Palestine, p. 88, nos. 34, 35. "Hill, Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Phoenicia (London, 1910), pp. 258

²⁰ See Percy H. Webb, *Valerian to Florian*, vol. 5, pt. 1 of *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, ed. by Harold Mattingly et al. (London, 1962), 184-185, no. 607. 20 Cf. ibid., pt. 2, p. 610, nn. 1, 2.

287 (2059-C.3:53, reddish-brown soil with chunks of huwwar.) Uncertain.

Obv. Bust r., laureate and draped; blundered inscr. around.

Rev. Sol standing l., radiate head, draped, holding a crown (?);
around: SOLI INVICTO [COMITI]; obliterated inscr. in exergue.

Byzantine

288. stones, and limestone chips, SW corner of square.) Nummus of (2042-A.9:76, hard packed white plaster surface, with red dirt, small Justinian I, A.D. 527-565.

Bust of Justinian I r., with pearl diadem and cuirassed

Chrismon.

289 (1811-D.1:74, reddish brown to almost tan, firmly packed soil.) Follis of Tiberius II, A.D. 580/1.

Bust of Tiberius II (578-82), facing, wearing consular robes and side; r. hand holds mappa, l. scepter with eagle surmounted by a cross; around: [OM] TIbCONS. TANTPPAV [I]: border. regalia, crown with a cross and two pearls hanging on either

Rev. In (prominent mark of value-40 nummi); above: co-emperor in 574); in exergue: CON (Constantinople) segment: ANNO; r. segment: U-II (year 7 from his becoming

Umayyad

290. Obv. (1737-A.8:1, surface and top soil, rock tumble, across entire square.) Obliterated.

291. (1946-C.7:34, medium brown, hard packed soil layer with huwwar Rev. Central dot surrounded by a semicircle and three serrate circles.

Lā ilah illā 'llah/waḥda/h Ailīā; border

chunks.)

Rev. Muḥammad/Rasül/Allah; border.

293 (2062—C.8:3, light brown subsoil under C.8:2.)

Obv. Similar to no. 26 in the 1968 report, but no traces of border. Rev. Obliterated.

Ayyābid (1171-1342)¤

293. (1769-C.5:11, loose, powdery gray soil.) Al-'Aziz 'Uthman (Egyptian branch), 1193-1198.

Obv. 'Uthman/al-Malik al-'Aziz; ornament beneath; border with illegible margin.

suf (continuation of the last line) /Bin al-Malik an-Nāşir (last two consonants downward)/Yū (continued as the border with illegible margin. lst line);

294. οьу. (1738-E.4:4, light grayish brown, very loose lens.) Al-'Adil, 1196-1218. ... /ad-Dīn/al-Malik al-'A[dil]/ ...; border of dots; traces of obliterated margin.

Rev. obliterated margin. . /Abū Bakr Bin . . . / . . .; border of dots; traces of

295 (2061-C.8:3, light brown sub-soil under C.8:2.) Obliterated. Uncertain

Rev. Arabesque within circle.

Mamlūk (1250-1517)∞

296. of a doorway in extreme SW corner.) Dirham (2.61 gm.) of an-Nāşir Muhammad, 1293-1294, 1299-1309, 1310-1341. (1735-A.9:7, fill dirt. sterile, in SW corner of square, with evidence

(1741-B.7:10, loose brown soil under Locus 3.)

297 Allah (continuation of 2d line) /wa mā an-naṣr [illā min 'ind] (continued as the 1st line) /lā ilah illā ['llah Muḥammad]/ . . . ; traces of border.

Rev · · · /Nāṣir ad-Dunyā [wa]/'d-Dīn Muḥammad Bin Ķa[lāŭn]/

298 (1924-A.9:34, hard packed brown dirt, with charcoal and white granules, SW corner of square.) Dirham (3.22 gm.) of An-Näşir Hasan, 1347-51, 1354-61.

χ_{CV} Obv. . . . /[Lā] īlah īllā 'llah/[Muḥammad] Rasūl Allah ā/rsalahu bi-'l-hudā. [As-Sul]tān al-Malik/[an-Nā]sir Nāsir ad-Dun[yā/wa 'd-]Dīn

299.

Ḥasan [Bin] al-Mal[ik]

(2063-C.6, balk trim.) Al-Manşür Şalāh ad-Dīn Muḥammad, 1361

Obv. Obliterated.

300. (1712-C.6:22, hard packed brown soil with lighter brown clay, some orange soil, some huwwar and small stones.) [As-Suliā]n al-Malik/[al-Mansū]r Muḥammad; traces of border.

301. Similar to no. 41 in the 1968 report.

Obv. . . . / . . . illä 'llah Muḥammad / . . . Allah Rev. Az-Zāhir . . . / as-Sulţān al-Malik/ . . (1960-A.9:34, see no. 298.) Half-dirham (0.90 gm.). Uncertain. ārsalahu/

scheduled for the summer of 1976. are in sight. A final report is planned to follow the excavations on the occupational history of Heshbon through the coin evidence ancient mints of Transjordan (nos. 278, 280). No new conclusions Heshbon (no. 278), but also two more specimens from the The 1974 coins yielded not only the oldest coin found at

[#] End of the Ḥamāh branch

²² Baḥrī Mamlūk (1250-1382), Burdjī Mamlūk (1382-1517)