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TALL RIFA'AT AND OTHER SYRIAN SITES-SOME REMARKS ¹

Archaeological museums frequently serve as burial grounds for finds and reports of former excavations that have never been sufficiently published. These material results hidden in the museums and galleries, however, might serve to offer answers to numerous ongoing discussions. In the last volume of the *Annals of the Náprstek Museum* 23 (2002), Jiří Militký and Vlastimil Novák undertook such an excavation within the coin trays and archives of the National Gallery. They reported the coin finds of Tall Rifa'at (Tell Erfad), 35 km north of Aleppo, of Tall Sa'd, 37 km east of the Galilean Sea, as well as of Kültepe in Cappadocia and other finds of undetermined places.

Currently I am working on finds and coin circulation in northern Syria and northern Mesopotamia, especially on the coin finds of Harrān (Altınbaşak, Turkey),² al-Raqqā,³ Ḥiṣn Maslama (Madīnat al-Fār),⁴ Kharāb Sayyār⁵ as well as Ḥamāh⁶ and Aleppo.⁷ Together with other reports of finds, especially those of al-Ruṣāfa,⁸ Bālis,⁹ Daḥas (some 40 km west of Aleppo),¹⁰ Tall Abū Danna (some 30 km east of Aleppo)¹¹ and Tall 'Amārna (125 km north-east of Aleppo),¹² the finds of Tall Rifa'at – as V. Novák elucidates – constitute an important source for coin circulation during the Islamic period.

Tell Rifa'at

V. Novák and J. Militký describe twenty-four coins from the Islamic period – including the Byzantine ones of the 10th and 11th century A. D. – from Tall Rifa'at. They belong to the excavation of the years 1924 and 1925 by Bedřich Hrozný. Another twenty-four coins from Tall Rifa'at from the Islamic period were previously published by Peter A. Clayton.¹³ They come from the excavation of M. W. Seton Williams, Institute of Archaeology, London, undertaken in 1956, 1960 and 1964. The slightly different composition of both groups shows that different find spots on a single archaeological site yield different results according to changing settlement patterns. In order to get a full picture of the coin circulation, as many coins as possible from one site must be brought together, including unstratified surface finds.¹⁴ The coin finds of Tall Rifa'at are closely linked to the coin cir-

¹ I am most grateful to Vlastimil Novák who kindly invited me to this review and Rudi Matthee for the careful reading of the English text.

² Heidemann (2002a).

³ Heidemann (1999, 2002b and c).

⁴ Excavation under the direction of Claus-Peter Haase, University of Copenhagen, now Museum for Islamic Art, Berlin.

⁵ Excavation under the direction of Jan-Waalke Meyer, University of Frankfurt a/M, and Murhaf al-Khalaf, Direction General des Antiquités et des Musées de Syrie, al-Raqqā. For the coins see S. Heidemann: *Die Fundmünzen von Ḥarāb Sayyār im Verhältnis zur lokalen Geschichte*. In: *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft* (forthcoming)

⁶ Danish excavation on the citadel of Ḥamāh. The coin finds are partly published by Hammershaimb et al. (1969).

⁷ Excavation under the direction of Kay Kohlmeyer, FHTW Weißensee/Berlin, and Wahid Khayyata, Direction General des Antiquités et des Musées de Syrie, Aleppo.

⁸ Ilisch (1996).

⁹ Hennequin – 'Ush (1978) and with comments and additions by Lowick (1980) and Ilisch (1981).

¹⁰ Morrisson (1980).

¹¹ Doyen (1987).

¹² Callataÿ (1993).

¹³ Clayton (1967), no. 40–72.

¹⁴ Seton Williams (1967) 17, "Most of the coins were picked up from the surface of the site (...)". Clayton (1967) 144 states that "The Byzantine and Islamic periods are represented only by pits cut into the earlier levels."

ulation and copper coin production of Aleppo. The coin distribution over the time is well within the expected range compared to other sites in the region. It corresponds to an uninterrupted settlement continuing up to the Mongol invasion in the 7th/13th century, perhaps up to the Mamlūk period. The gap within the coin sequence from the 3rd/9th century to the 5th/11th century is quite normal for northern Syrian sites and has its reasons in the peculiarities of the coinage system (see below) and in an overall picture of declining and vanishing settlements during the period of Bedouin domination.

The early Byzantine times are represented by a single follis (no. 5) of Anastasius (r. 491–518 A. D.) in Hrozný's share, and the period of Sāsānian occupation and Arab invasion only by a follis of Heraclius (no. 86, dated 616–7 A.D.). The series of Clayton is more substantial here, showing clearly continuity from the early Byzantine period on. The series runs well through Anastasius to Heraclius (Clayton, no. 40–49). After the occupation, early Islamic period is documented by folles of Constans II. (r. 641–688 A.D.) (Clayton, no. 50–52). These folles were still imported from Constantinople in order to meet the demands for petty coinage despite the fact that Syria and northern Mesopotamia did not belong any more to the Byzantine realm. The import ended at about 658.¹⁵ Next is an Arab fals of Byzantine type from Ḥimṣ/Emesa among the Seton Williams finds (Clayton, no. 53). In the early days, Ḥimṣ served as the main garrison city for the war pursued against Byzantium. Then the Islamic-type series starts with a Damascene fals (no. 260, dated ca. 100s/720s, Bone [2000] 376 no. 8.3a) and one from Ḥimṣ (Clayton, no. 54).

In the 'Abbāsīd period Aleppo grew in importance, as is documented here by three coins of al-Manṣūr from the emission of the years 146–148/763–766 (no. 298–299; Clayton, no. 55),¹⁶ but the region still belonged to the Jund Qinnasrīn, whose important emission of 157/773–4 is represented with a single specimen (Clayton, no. 56).¹⁷ The late sixties of the second century/eighties of the eighth century saw a massive import of copper coins from southern Iraq into northern Syria and northern Mesopotamia. Most important among the mints involved are al-Kūfa and Madīnat al-Salām (Clayton, no. 57).¹⁸ The earliest date for this import is 163/779–80. Once in circulation, these coins were soon imitated in order to supplement the circulating stock and to meet the demands for small change. The imitations retain most features and inscriptions of the prototypes. They could be found in most of the excavations with 'Abbāsīd layers in the region. One of those Kūfa-type imitations is no. 263. It belongs to the so called group I of imitations, dated between 167/784–5 to ca. 180/796–7.¹⁹

The latest coin of the early 'Abbāsīd period is no. 264 (Fals, al-Rāfiqa, 208 h., less likely 210 h. [Rev. *mirfaq/-/-/'adl*]; Ilisch [1986], no. 6 or 7; Heidemann [2003], type VIIIa or type X). Although al-Rāfiqa was the capital of the western provinces of the 'Abbāsīd empire at this time, the regular copper coin emissions served only the immediate local needs. Types VIII to X were found in quantities only in al-Raqqā itself. In Ḥarrān (Heidemann [2002a], no. 25) a cast imitation of this type was found. The coin from Tall Rifa'at may be regarded as an accidental loss until further material appears.

Even though copper coins constitute the usual numismatic yield during an excavation, they disappeared for more than two centuries almost from archaeological strata. Among the reasons is the disappearance of 'Abbāsīd copper coins in circulation in the second half of the 3rd/9th century. Silver and gold coin fragments took over the role of small change. Money passed by weight. Later the so called black dirham, *dirham aswad*, a highly alloyed silver coin without any regulated weight, was used for daily transactions. Coin fragments and black dirhams are only occasionally found in excavations, because of their precious metal content. Another reason for the absence of coins in excavations is the diminishing of settlements, in number and size, during the 4th/10th and 5th/11th century.²⁰ The lack of coins finds for this period, does not necessarily indicate anything.

¹⁵ See for this phenomenon Heidemann (1998), pp. 98f.; Phillips – Goodwin (1997).

¹⁶ In Ḥiṣn Maslama/Madīnat al-Fār two specimens (MF95-349, MF93-101).

¹⁷ One was found in Balis (Hennequin – 'Ush [1978], no. 148), one in Daḥas (Morrison [1980] 78, see plate) and one in Antioch (Miles [1948], no. 103).

¹⁸ For a parallel find of the fals, Madīnat al-Salām, 166 h., see one specimen in Ḥarrān (Heidemann [2002a], no. 28).

¹⁹ See in detail for this phenomenon chapter X in Heidemann (2003).

²⁰ Bartl (1994), p. 187, see also p. 116.

V. Novák states that copper coins re-emerged in finds as imported anonymous Byzantine bronze coins. They were struck in Byzantium between the end of the 4th/10th and the 5th/11th century. They took over the role of copper *fulūs* and silver dirhams in the Islamic countries. For almost a century they constituted the main means of exchange in northern Syria and northern Mesopotamia. They were current in northern Syria and the Diyār Muḍar – outside the realm of the Byzantine empire – between ca. 1060 and ca. 1175–1180. In the Diyār Rabi'a their circulation continued probably until the 1220s. The Arabic literary sources call them *qirtās*.²¹ In Tall Rifa'at this period of coin circulation is documented by fifteen specimens (no. 87–89; Clayton, no. 58–69). In this context no. 89 is of particular importance. It was clipped almost to an almond shape. This peculiar way of clipping is particular to coin finds from the Diyār Muḍar and northern Syria, where it has been observed in finds from al-Raqqā²² and Ḥarrān,²³ Daḥas,²⁴ Abū Danna²⁵ and Tall 'Armāna.²⁶ Some coins from northern Syria and the Syrian Jazīra without a certain known provenance show the same pattern of mutilation.²⁷

No. 94 is a well known fals imitating a follis of Constantine X. and Eudokia (r. 1059–1067 A. D.) with distorted Greek inscriptions but done in a particularly recognizable style.²⁸ The mint of this imitation lay probably within the boundaries of northern Syria and northern Mesopotamia. The sites where this type has been found, al-Raqqā and Tall Rifa'at, narrow the region of origin. In Byzantium a major currency reform had taken place in 491/1098. Afterwards only the first emission of copper-tetartera of Alexius I. (r. 1081–1118 A. D.) found their way in considerable quantities to northern Syria and northern Mesopotamia (Clayton, no. 96). Then the import ceased. The growing need of Byzantine folles in northern Syrian and northern Mesopotamian cities demanded their supplementation. The imitations were probably produced when Byzantine folles became scarce in circulation, where they formed the basis of the urban monetary system. The imitations – also those of other Byzantine prototypes – were probably made up to the period of Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Zangī (r. 541–569/1146–1174) or up to the supposed cease of the circulation of Byzantine coppers in 1175/1180 within the Diyār Muḍar and northern Syria.²⁹ During Nūr al-Dīn's reign major reforms of the copper coinage system had occurred. Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd and other contemporary Muslim rulers introduced successfully again indigenous copper coins, for the first time since about 250 years. The Byzantine import from Anatolia was later followed by an import of Rūm-Seljūq copper coins. One of the most frequently encountered types is no. 276 struck by Qilij Arslān II. (r. 551–588/1156–1192).³⁰

No. 275, the identification of this specimen remains uncertain. It seems to be a barbarized coin of a Rūm-Seljūq prototype. The obverse with its square recalls to a fals of 'Izz al-Dīn Kaikāwūs (1. period of reign 644–646/1246–1249. The inscription in this case would be: (...)l-dunyā wa-d(in) (!); cp. Hennequin [1985], no. 1836–1838). The reverse reminds one of barbarized specimens of the fals

²¹ A discussion of the import and the circulation of Byzantine coins can be found in Heidemann (2002b), pp. 387–422.

²² Among eighteen Byzantine coins of this period from the excavation in al-Raqqā seven specimens were clipped (Heidemann [2003], no. 246, 247, 248, 250, 253, 257, 261). Among the coins of the copper hoard of al-Raqqā ('Ushsh [1958–1959]) some folles are mutilated in the same way. All coins on plate IV are clipped except the two post-reform-tetartera of Alexius I.

²³ One among the two folles from Ḥarrān; Heidemann [2002a], no. 41.

²⁴ Morrisson (1980), no. 79, plate III.

²⁵ Doyen (1987), p. 109f. no. 81 (class D, clipped), 82 (Romanus IV., Morrison [1970], no. 1–5, heavily clipped, almond shaped).

²⁶ Callataÿ (1993), p. 37 no. 40 (class C, „monnaie intentionnellement cassée“).

²⁷ See Heidemann (2002b), pp. 410f. with a list of find spots and other references.

²⁸ For a discussion of these imitations see Heidemann (2002b), p. 400. See for published specimens 'Ushsh (1958–1959), plate IV, fig. 7 from al-Raqqā; Althoff (1999), no. 1014, 1015; Dr. Busso Peus Nachf., Frankfurt a/M: Auktion 369 (31. Oktober 2001), no. 1747 (4.93g; fig.).

²⁹ Heidemann (2002b), p. 418. Probably in the Diyār Rabi'a the circulation continued for another forty or fifty years.

³⁰ Heidemann (2002b), p. 418. The first to recognize this phenomenon was N. Lowick (1980) followed by L. Ilisch (1981).

of the three brothers Kaikāwūs II., Qilij Arslān IV. and Kaiqubādh II. who reigned between 647–655/1249–1257 (cp. Tewḥid [1903], no. 580; Ilisch [1996], no. 272). Five of the latter type were found in Ḥarrān (no. 66–70).

During the Ayyūbid period the coin sequence follows with insignificant gaps the series of copper coin emissions in the Ayyūbid principality of Aleppo. The coin from Manbij (no. 274) of the Ayyūbid ruler al-Manṣūr Muḥammad of Ḥamāh and Manbij cannot be seen as an intruder, since – on the basis of changes in types – the principality of Ḥamāh and Aleppo constituted a single area of circulation. The devastation of the Mongol wars following the invasion into Syria 658/1260 were probably due to the gap in the coin-finds until the reign of the Mamlūk ruler al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (3rd reign 709–741/1310–1341) (no. 275; Clayton, no. 71, 72 [al-Ashraf Sha‘bān]).

Unknown localities

No. 302. Fals, Qinnasrīn, 181 h. For a full description of this coin-type see in Heidemann (2003), no. 110.

No. 304. Fals, northern Syrian or northern Mesopotamian imitation of the Kūfa-type, Group II (ca. 180s). This group is characterized by a reverse marginal inscription shortened to *mimmā amara bihī al-Mahdī Muḥammad amīr al-mu‘minīn*. The coin is perhaps cast.

No. 305 is probably a Kūfa-type imitation too. Indication is the double plain circle on the obverse, instead of the three on original coins of al-Kūfa.

No. 308. Cast fals, perhaps on the model of an Kūfa-type imitation. Obverse vanished; reverse reads (...) / – / – / – / baraka. It can be dated between 180s/800s and the 190s/810s, but it can be later also. An argument for the earlier date could be, that later other younger prototypes might be current for the use as mother-coin. (Heidemann [2003], pp. 159–161, group VI).³¹

No. 313. Ayyūbids, al-Zāhir Ghāzī, Fals, Ḥalab, 5(96-597) h., clipped. It needs further observation, how far this clipping might be significant for the coin circulation. A comparable clipped fals of this type was found in Bālis; Hennequin – ‘Ush (1978), p. 357, plate VII.

No. 319. All clearly dated coins of the type, Balog (1980), no. 760, bear the date 653 h. See Heidemann (1994), p. 265.

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³¹ I am grateful to V. Novák for providing me with a photograph of this coin.

- wirtschaftliche Bedingungen in ar-Raqqa und Ḥarrān von der Zeit der beduinischen Vorherrschaft (11. Jh.) bis zu den Seldschuken (12. Jh.) (Islamic History and Civilization. Studies and Texts 40), Leiden.
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