

appears from several Arabic inscriptions', he wrote '[the castle] was built by Sultan Szelah-eddyn', confusing the greater Saladin with the lesser.<sup>1</sup> How far the castle was damaged by the Mongols and to what extent it was altered in the course of repairs it is hard to tell. During their rapid sweep through the country in the spring and summer of 1260 they cannot have had much opportunity for destroying at all thoroughly the nine castles which they captured. Fourteenth-century travellers were as much impressed as ever with the impregnable strength of 'Ajlūn. It can hardly have been in the sorry state which called for such hasty rebuilding as the patchwork of smaller masonry along the western faces of the keep, or at the south-west angle of the castle. This corner was so shattered that it has had to be heavily buttressed. Masonry of this sort cannot compare with the Mamluk additions to Kerak. On general grounds the suggestion that it belongs to Fakhr ad-dīn, the seventeenth-century pasha of Acre, is not unlikely.<sup>2</sup> Or perhaps it represents nothing more than local efforts on the part of the inhabitants to make good the effects of earthquakes, the common doom of the best buildings of the country.

The castle seems to have suffered heavily in the great earthquake of 1837. Before the recent work access was difficult, yet when Burckhardt visited the castle in 1812 it was still inhabited 'by about forty persons of the great family of Barekat'. His experiences with the residents are perhaps more remarkable than his observations on the building itself. He wrote:<sup>3</sup>

'It is the residence of the chief of the district of Adjeloun. The house of Barekat, in whom the authority has for many years resided, had lately been quarrelling about it among themselves; the chief, Yousef al-Barekat, had been besieged for several months in the castle; he was now gone to the Aga of Tabaria, to engage him in his interests; and his family were left in the castle with strict instructions not to let any unknown person enter it, and to keep the gate secured. I had letters of recommendation from Yousef, the Mutsellim of Damascus; when I arrived at the castle gate all the inhabitants assembled upon the wall to enquire who I was and what I wanted. I explained to them the nature of my visit, and showed them the Mutsellim's letter, upon which they opened the iron gate, but continued to entertain great suspicion of me until a man who could read having been sent for, my letter was read aloud; all the family then vied in civilities towards me, especially when I told them I intended to proceed to Tabaria. . . .'

C. N. J.

<sup>1</sup> J. L. Burckhardt, *Travels in Syria and the Holy Land*, 1822, p. 267.

<sup>2</sup> *Revue Biblique*, 1928, p. 432, where a small garrison of Ibrahim Pasha is also mentioned.

<sup>3</sup> *Travels*, 1822, p. 266.

(*To be continued.*)

## A FATIMID COIN-DIE

IN October 1926 the Museum acquired a coin-die (Inventory No. 1. 1070) reported to have been found at Amman. It consists of two cylinders made of bronze, now slightly corroded. Their total height is 117 mm., and the diameter of each face measures 28 mm. The bottom of the pile has been cut into a tooth-shaped form probably for the purpose of driving it into a wooden stand. The top of the trussel is slightly spread as from the blows of a hammer. The designs are engraved in both trussel and pile.

The inscriptions on the coin-faces read as follows:

*Obverse* (produced by the pile):

First margin: Apostolic mission up to **ولو كره** ال

Second margin: illegible.

In centre: محمد رسول الله  
على ولي الله

*Reverse*:

First margin: بسم الله ضرب هذا الدينير بمصر سنة اثن وسبعين وثلثمائة<sup>(1)</sup>

Second margin: عبد الله ووليه نزار الامام العزيز بالله امير [المؤمنين]

In centre: pellet within circle.

The die served, therefore, in the production of gold coins of the Fatimid Khalif Abū Manṣūr Nazār al-'Azīz billāh in the year 372 H. (A.D. 982-3) in Cairo.

'The subject' of coin-dies 'is one in which it is particularly desirable to guard against forgeries.'<sup>1</sup> Bearing this warning in mind, we examined our coin-die with special care before it was acquired. There is no doubt that the die is an ancient object, but the problem that does arise is whether it was actually used in the official mint (*dār al-ḍarb*), or in the workshop of some forger.

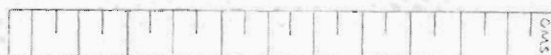
Comparing the coin-face of our die with two dinars of Nazār struck in Cairo in 372, casts of which are reproduced on Pl. XXVII, fig. 3, 4,<sup>2</sup> we note two points of difference. One of these is an addition to the text, the words

<sup>1</sup> Hill, 'Ancient Methods of Coining', *Numismatic Chronicle*, 1922, p. 13 n. 33. Similar warnings in Kubitschek, 'Münzstempel des Nationalmuseums in Sofia', *Numismatische Zeitschrift*, N.F., Vol. XVIII, 1925, pp. 133-5.

<sup>2</sup> Lane-Poole, B.M. IV, No. 58, p. 15; Lavoix, *Catalogue, Égypte et Syrie*, No. 145, p. 62.



1



2



3

4

A FATIMID COIN-DIE



'Muḥammad is the Apostle of Allāh, 'Alī is the Friend of Allāh', in the centre of the obverse of the die being missing in the dinars in London and Paris, both of which show a pellet within a circle instead. The other point of difference is in the character of the engraving on the dinars; for whilst the letters on the cast have graceful and well-set vertical strokes occupying as large a space as possible of each circle, those on the die are thinner and show much more of the background of their respective circles, and are engraved in a rather unsteady hand.

The die obviously being an ancient counterfeit, the question arises as to the originator of the fraud. Was it a private individual or an organized body? Naturally we should think first of those Crusaders who freely copied Fatimid coins. But comparing the die with the coins published by Lavoix,<sup>1</sup> we observe two differences: one as to date, the other as to style. The examples quoted by the French numismatist are modelled after dinars of very late Fatimids (457 and 516 A.H.), whereas our die served to produce coins dated 372 A.H.; moreover, the script of the Crusaders' forgeries showed a tendency, as time went on, to become flat and wide, like the letters on their own Latin coinage, which is just the opposite to what we considered to be the main characteristics of our dinar as compared with genuine pieces. We are probably justified, therefore, in assuming that we are here dealing with a die made by some private individual under the Fatimids, very likely before the time of the Crusaders, and possibly not long after 372 A.H.

L. A. M.

<sup>1</sup> *Monnaies à légendes arabes, frappées en Syrie par les Croisés*, Paris, 1877.

## 'LOOP PATTERN' DECORATING LEAD SARCOPHAGI

IN November 1926 it was reported that, some years prior to that date, lead sarcophagi had been seen by local inhabitants when digging up stones in a plot of land situated a little east of the hamlet known as Khurbet al-Khasas (about 2 kilometres east of Ascalon). A sounding was consequently made and disclosed the remains of a burial chamber; and, at a depth of about 3 metres, a platform constructed against the southern wall of the chamber. On this platform were fragments of a lead sarcophagus. To the east of this platform the floor was found at a depth of 5 metres. The area of this floor measured approximately 4 metres (north and south) by 2.50 (east and west). In this area three lead sarcophagi were discovered orientated east and west. The two northernmost sarcophagi contained nothing, and their lids were broken; but the southernmost was undamaged. In it the following objects were found: (1) a gold 'mouthpiece'; (2) a gold necklace; (3) a gold head-band (?); (4) six pieces of gold-foil of looped form; (5) bronze coins of the time of Constantine or a little later, too corroded to be legible; and (6) some gold thread. These objects, with the exception of the coins, are illustrated in Pl. XXVIII, and the sarcophagus itself in Pl. XXIX, 1, 2. The sides of the sarcophagus (which is now in the Palestine Museum) are decorated with a vine pattern; the lid is similarly decorated but has, in addition, a number of rope-like loops of a form resembling that of the gold-foil loops found in the sarcophagus.

In the spring of 1927 another lead sarcophagus (also in the Museum) decorated with similar loop forms was found at Ramallah (Pl. XXIX, 3).

It is suggested that these loop forms may represent bread; and, in support of this suggestion it has been observed that, at the present day, there is a custom among members of the Orthodox Church in Palestine (at such festivals as those of Easter and of the Assumption, and, even more, on the occasion of the weaning of an infant) to make bread in the form of loops with free ends, a form identical with that of the loops decorating the sarcophagi illustrated in Pl. XXIX. Pl. XXX represents examples of the forms in which this bread is made.

E. T. R.