

'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,¹ 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.

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

'LOOP PATTERN' DECORATING LEAD SARCOPHAGI

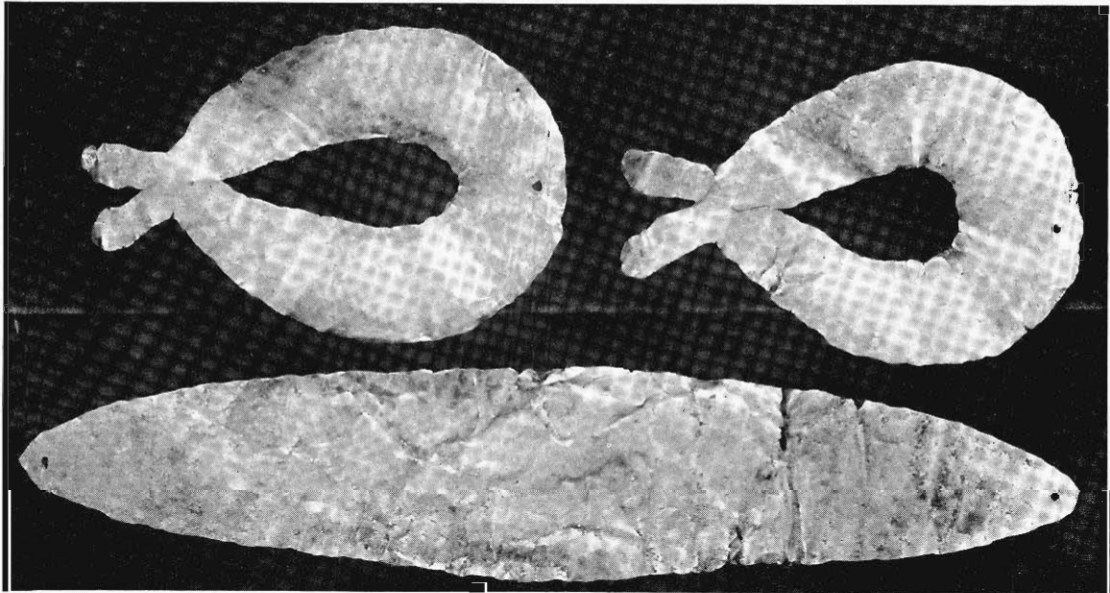
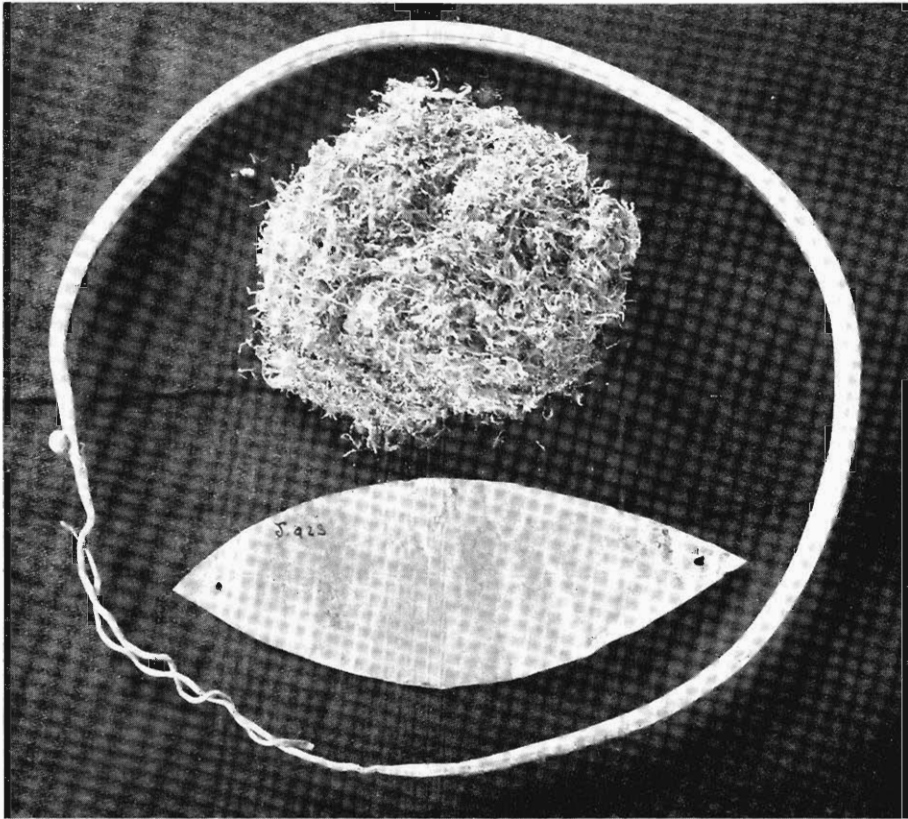
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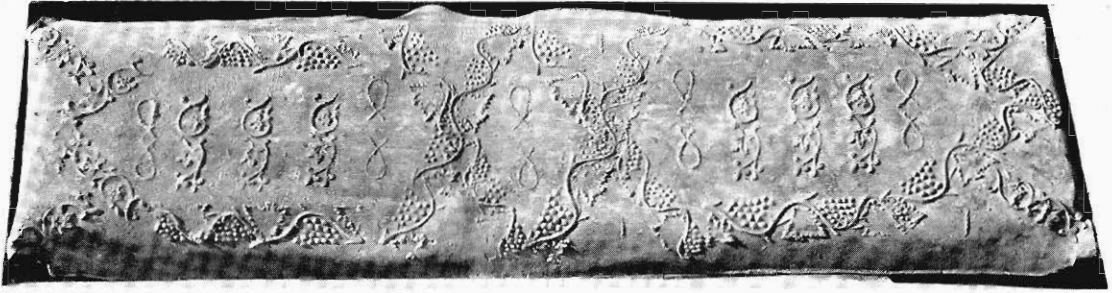
IN November 1926 it was reported that, some years prior to that date, lead sarcophagi had been seen by local inhabitants when digging up stones in a plot of land situated a little east of the hamlet known as Khurbet al-Khasas (about 2 kilometres east of Ascalon). A sounding was consequently made and 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).

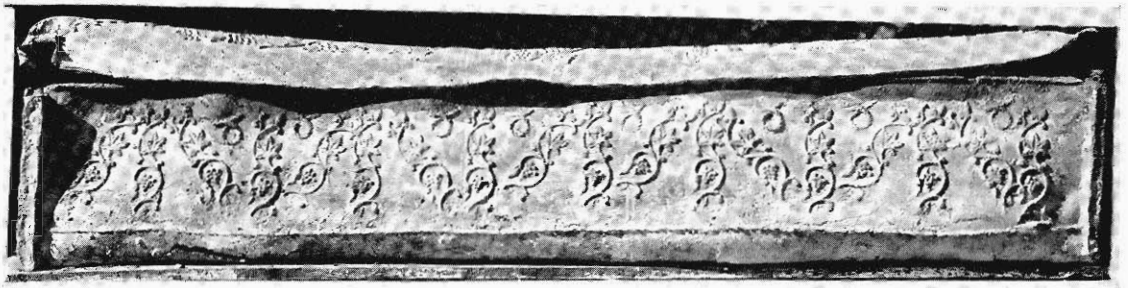
It is suggested that these loop forms may represent bread; and, in support of this suggestion it has been observed that, at the present day, there is a custom among members of the Orthodox Church in Palestine (at such festivals as those of Easter and of the Assumption, and, even more, on the occasion 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.





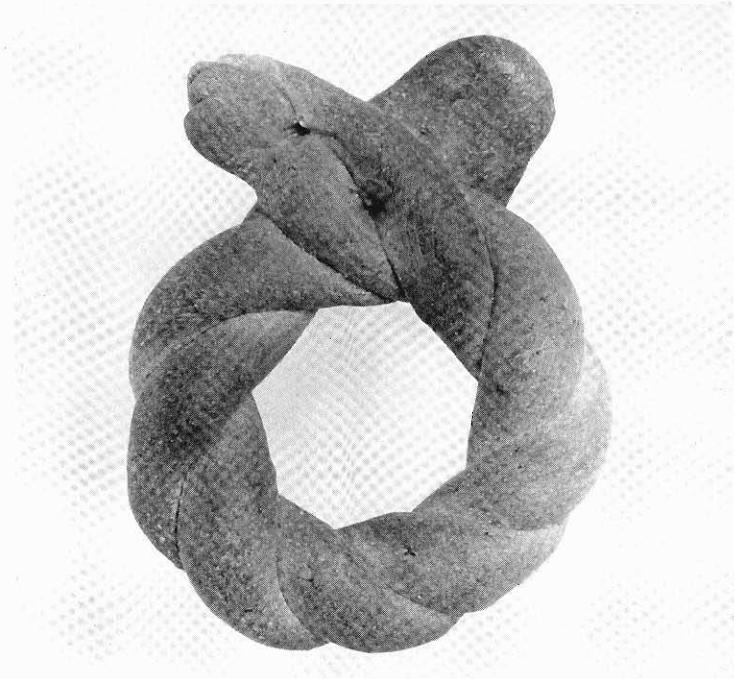
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LOOPED BREAD

