

COINS OF THE AMIRS OF CRETE IN THE HERAKLEION MUSEUMS

In April 1956 I was very fortunate in being able to make a journey to Crete¹ in search of epigraphical and other archaeological traces of the Arab occupation of the island during the 9th and 10th centuries. While my primary objective was to discover Arabic inscriptions on stone, I sought every opportunity throughout the island to examine post - classical coins in the hope of finding specimens of the coinage of the Arab Amirs, similar to those unearthed not long ago in excavating for the foundations of the new hotel opposite the post - office on Odos 25 Augustou in Herakleion². Now and then my search was successful: among lots of miscellaneous unattributed coins of the Byzantine, Venetian or Ottoman periods a few of these Arab coins would turn up, and among them were not only specimens identical with those already published but also others of hitherto unknown types.

In Herakleion Mr. N. Platon, Director of the Archaeological Museum and Ephore of Antiquities in Crete, was kind enough to permit me to look through unattributed coins in that museum and in the Historical Museum. In the former I found 19 specimens of the Amirs and in the Historical Museum, two more. The description of these 21 specimens is the substance of the present article. May I take this opportunity to express my thanks to Mr. Platon, to Mrs. Platon at the Historical Museum and to Mr. Stylianos Alexiou for their ready cooperation and their interest in my search. While I am not yet prepared to give final attributions to these specimens or to undertake a comprehensive treatment of the coinage of the Amirs of Crete, I believe that there are certain advantages in publishing simple descriptions and illustrations of these coins at this time. It is my earnest hope that by bringing to the notice of archaeologists

¹) With the support of a grant from the American Philosophical Society.

²) See my little article, A recent find of coins of the Amirs of Crete, in «Κρητικά Χρονικά», 1955, pp. 149 - 151.

the appearance and general characteristics of the Arab coins of Crete more such material may come to light. Surely only a very small percentage of the total number of specimens above ground on the island has come to my attention, and doubtless many individuals in Crete possess or have seen coins similar or related to those described here, but have not known their identity. May I take this occasion to urge those who are interested in the mediaeval history of Crete to bring Arab coins that come their way to Mr. Platon or to Mr. Alexiou so that they may be recorded. Mention should be made of the fact that the Amirs struck coins not only in bronze (*fulūs*), but also in gold (*dinars*) and in silver (*dirhems*)³, although I met with none of these latter in my travels in Crete.

The discovery of more specimens in gold and silver would go far toward solving some of the problems of attribution which the undated bronze coins present. Among the *fulūs* in the Herakleion collections are specimens bearing the names of Shu'aib alone (classes A, B and C, below), and of Shu'aib and 'Umar (class D). These names are already known through Dr. Walker's article (class A=Walker, no. 6; class B=Walker, no. 7; class D=Walker, no. 5), and through my own publication of the coins found in digging the foundations of the new hotel at Herakleion. But it will be noted that the coins described below include several new names and combinations of names: 'Umar and Yūsuf (class E), 'Ali ibn Yūsuf (class F), 'Ali ibn (?) Ahmad (class G), and Ahmad and Shu'aib (class H). While I have some tentative ideas about the attribution of these new types, I hesitate to advance them until we have more material to work with. At this stage our chronology has very few fixed points. The important dates are these: we know that Crete was definitively captured by the Arabs in the summer of 212 A. H. (827 A. D.); that there are gold coins of Shu'aib dated 271 A. H. (884/885 A. D.), 275 (888/889 A. D.) and 281 (894/895 A. D.)⁴; that Ni-

³) Four dinars are described by Dr. John Walker in his article, 'The Coins of the Amīrs of Crete', in *Numismatic Chronicle*, 1953, pp. 125 - 130. A silver dirhem will be discussed by Ulla Linder Welin of Lund, Sweden, in a forthcoming issue of the same journal. Since writing these lines Mrs. Welin's article has appeared in *NC*, 1955, pp 211 - 214.

⁴) But there is probably at least one other Shu'aib, aside from this one and the grandfather of Abu - Hafs, in the genealogy.

cephorus Phocas recovered the island in 350 A. H. (961 A. D.); and incidentally that the name of the last Amir was 'Abd al-'Azīz. In short at this moment it is safe to say only that the coins described below date roughly between 235 and 338 A. H., that is, ca. 850 - 950 A. D. Eventually, let us hope with the assistance of more numismatic material and perhaps other epigraphical documents, we may be able to assign the several types to more accurate dates.

One important fact emerges from our knowledge of the existence of these coins: the Arabs who occupied Crete for one hundred and thirty-eight years were not, as has commonly been supposed, simple pirates. Their leaders, at least, constituted a family dynasty with a recognized, if perhaps contested, line of succession, and they could boast of a sufficiently prosperous economy and well organized administration to issue coins in three metals in their own names.

The following specimens are all of bronze. Diameters are given in millimeters. Weights were not recorded.

A. With the name of Shu'aib on the reverse.

1. Obverse

لا اله الا *There is no God except*

الله وحده لا *Allah; He is One; there is no*

شريك له *partner with him.*

Triple border: dots, linear, dots.

Reverse

محمد *Muhammad*

رسول *is the Messenger*

الله *of Allah.*

شعيب *Shu'aib*

Double border: inner dots, outer linear.

Legends partially effaced.

Herakleion Museum, temporary no. 5 (21 mm.).

2. Similar to No 1. Borders similar. Legends partially effaced.

Herakleion Museum, temporary no. 9 (21 mm.).

3. Similar to No. 1. Borders obscure. Legends largely effaced.

Herakleion Museum, temporary no. 11 (20 mm.)

4. Similar to No. 1. Outer borders effaced. Legends partially effaced.

Herakleion Museum, temporary no. 14 (20 mm.).

5. Similar to No. 1. Only inner border of dots preserved on obverse; reverse border as No. 1. Legends partially effaced.

Herakleion Museum, temporary no. 16 (18 mm.).

B. Two-line obverse: with name of Shu'aib on the reverse.

6. Obverse

لا اله

There is no God

الا اله

except Allah.

Reverse

محمد

Muhammad

رسول

is the Messenger

الله

of Allah.

شعيب

Shu'aib

Linear border.

Linear border.

Herakleion Museum, temporary no. 2 (17 mm.).

C. Muling of two reverses with the name of Shu'aib.

7. Obverse

محمد

Muhammad

رسول

is the Messenger

الله

of Allah.

شعيب

Shu'aib

Reverse

محمد

Muhammad

رسول

is the Messenger

الله

of Allah.

شعيب

Shu'aib

Border of dots.

Border of dots.

Legends partially effaced.

Herakleion Museum, temporary no. 17 (19 mm.).

D. With the name of 'Umar on the obverse: Shu'aib on the reverse.

8. Obverse

لا اله الا

There is no God except

الله وحده لا

Allah; He is One; there is no

شريك له

partner with him.

عمر

'Umar

Triple border: dots, linear, dots.



Δ. Θεοτοκόπουλος: Προσωπογραφία Καρδινάλιου.
Πρώην Συλλογή Πιντάλ, Μαδρίτη.



Bronze Coins of the Amirs of Crete
in the Herakleion Museums.

Reverse

محمد *Muhammad*

رسول *is the Messenger*

الله *of Allah.*

شعيب *Shu'aib*

Border as obverse.

Herakleion Historical Museum, temporary no. 1 (21 mm.).
This specimen was found in a vineyard near the village of Phoinikia, about six kilometers southwest of Herakleion.

9. Similar to No. 8, but name beneath the obverse largely effaced, and borders obscure.

Herakleion Museum, temporary no. 3 (20 mm.).

10. Similar to No. 8, borders obscure.

Herakleion Museum, temporary no. 6 (19 mm.).

11. Similar to No. 8, but legends partially effaced, name on the reverse off the flan, and triple borders blurred.

Herakleion Museum, temporary no. 10 (19 mm.).

12. Similar to No. 8, but legends partially effaced and borders obscure.

Herakleion Museum, temporary no. 12 (19 mm.).

13. Similar to No. 8, but first line of obverse largely effaced, and outer borders obscure.

Herakleion Museum, temporary no. 13 (19 mm.).

14. Similar to No. 8, but obverse largely effaced and badly corroded (bronze disease?), and only one reverse border preserved.

Herakleion Museum, temporary no. 19 (19 mm.).

E. With the name of 'Umar on the obverse; Yūsuf on the reverse.

15. Obverse

لا اله الا *There is no God except*

الله وحده لا *Allah; He is One; there is no*
partner with him.

شريك له

عمر *'Umar*

Inner border of dots; outer linear border.

Legends partially effaced.

Reverse

محمد *Muhammad*

رسول *is the Messenger*

الله *of Allah.*

يوسف *Yūsuf*

Border as obverse?

Herakleion Museum, temporary no. 7 (20 mm.).

16. As No. 15, but legends partially effaced, obverse double border obscure, reverse triple border (of dots?).

Herakleion Museum, temporary no. 18 (20 mm.).

F. With the name of 'Ali ibn Yūsuf on the reverse.

17. Obverse

لا اله الا *There is no God except*

الله وحده *Allah; He is One;*

لا شريك له *there is no partner with him.*

Inner border of dots; outer linear border.

Reverse

محمد *Muhammad*

رسول الله *is the Messenger of Allah*

علي بن يوسف *'Ali b. Yūsuf*

Border of dots.

Herakleion Museum, temporary no. 1 (20 mm.).

18. Similar to No. 17, but name on reverse largely effaced, and single border of dots only preserved on obverse and reverse.

Herakleion Museum, temporary no. 4 (19 mm.).

G. With the name of ibn (?) Ahmad on the obverse: 'Ali on the reverse.

19. Obverse

لا اله الا *There is no God except*

الله وحده لا *Allah; He is One; there is no*

شريك له *partner with him.*

[بن ؟] احمد *[bin?] Ahmad*

Borders obscure. Legends partially effaced.

Reverse

محمد *Muhammad*
 رسول *is the Messenger*
 الله *of Allah.*
 علي *'Ali*

Herakleion Museum, temporary no. 15 (20 mm.)

The name «Ahmad» on the obverse is quite clear, but what I have taken to be «bin» (that is, «ibn», «son of») is obscure and may actually not be present. Part of the name «'Ali» on the reverse is obliterated but there can be no doubt about the reading,

20. Similar to No. 19, but only the tops of the letters of the name on the obverse are on the flan, and the word «bin» (?), if it exists, is off the flan. «'Ali» is complete on the reverse. The obverse appears to have a double border of dots; the reverse border is obscure. The coin is pierced at the top of the obverse (which is also the top of the reverse).

Herakleion Museum, temporary no. 8 (20 mm.).

H. With the name of Ahmad on the obverse; Shu'aib on the reverse.

21. Obverse

لا اله الا *There is no God except*
 الله وحده لا *Allah; He is One; there is no*
 شريك له *partner with him.*
 احمد *Ahmad*

Double border of dots. Legends partially effaced.

Reverse

محمد *Muhammad*
 رسول *is the Messenger*
 الله *of Allah*
 شعيب *Shu'aib*

Border as obverse.

Herakleion Historical Museum, temporary no. 2 (20 mm.).

GEORGE C. MILES