

Negotiating Identity in an International Context under Achaemenid Rule: The Indigenous Coinages of Persian-Period Palestine as an Allegory

OREN TAL

Tel Aviv University

The two centuries of Achaemenid dominion in the Near East, from 538 until 332 B.C.E., constitute a crucial period in the history of the southern part of the fifth Persian Satrapy, Beyond the River. This period was marked by a profound transformation in the economic, political, and cultural life of the region. From the mid-fifth century B.C.E., we witness a transition in the means of payment, from the use of weighed metal to foreign coinage, first attested in the Archaic Greek world (e.g., Balmuth 2001, Kim 2001, 2002; Kroll 1998; 2001; Schaps 2004), and, subsequently, local southern Palestinian issues, which are the subject of this essay.

The weighing of metal in Palestine is best witnessed in *Hacksilber* hoards that are dated as early as the Middle Bronze Age II, according to finds from Shechem, Nahariya, and Megiddo (Kletter 2003: 148), though evidence is meager. The use of *Hacksilber* as a unified form of payment is especially evident in the Iron Age II period in the southern Levant (Golani and Sass 1998; Gitin and Golani 2001, 2004; Kletter 2003, esp. table 1; 2004; Thompson 2003, esp. table 2; Schaps 2004: 53–56). Several hoards were found wrapped in cloth, probably originally a bag (possibly the biblical *šrw* *ksp*, Gen 42:35), and sealed with a device (bullae) to guarantee the contents. A fine example of the use of *Hacksilber* from this period is an ostrakon from Ashkelon dated to the 604 B.C.E. destruction layer that mentions a possible silver payment for grain (Cross 2008: 336–39, no. 1.2). The many seventh-century B.C.E. *Hacksilber* hoards at Ekron and elsewhere in Palestine, it has been suggested, indicate an economic development in which silver was used as currency. In the Bible, units of silver, *šqlym*, are a weight standard for payment, and *bš' ksp* may have been the biblical term for money itself (Gitin and Golani 2001: 36). This early evidence is disputed. It may rather point to a precoinage stage, an “underground economy” in Iron Age Palestine



in which cut units of controlled standard weights constituted a metal economy (Kletter 2003),¹ which existed in the region prior to the traditional date of the “invention” of coinage in the Greco-Lyidian milieu of western Asia Minor between 630 and 600 B.C.E. (le Rider 2001: 59–67). According to Thompson (2003), *Hacksilber* hoards were one of the factors to influence the “invention” of the Greco-Lyidian coinage, which is an adaptation of preexisting Levantine concepts. Thompson argues that the monetary use of silver proliferated throughout Cisjordan during the Iron Age and that this proliferation is linked to the overwhelming preference for silver coinages among the Greeks. In other words, the popularity of silver in the Mediterranean stimulated the Greeks to make use of their native silver sources. The Phoenicians were thus aware of the essential practices involved in coining metal, namely, using a device to indicate weight and purity verification of metal pieces. The Near East may be the region where metal economy was first initiated, which only later was modified into a proper monetary economy in Lydia and Greece. Still, the relation of *Hacksilber* to coins and monetary economy is far from direct, because the first coins were made of electrum, lacked explicit guarantees of authority, and their value still depended on their weight (Kletter 2004).

However, there certainly was a metal (premonetary) economy in pre-Achaemenid Palestine.² The notion of silver as a means of payment was used in certain types of transactions and was used for converting local weight standards into foreign ones. *Hacksilber* hoards were normally wrapped in cloth bags and probably sealed with a clay bulla or bullae (as is evident from the Dor and Tell Keisan hoards). The bulla thus served as a mark of ownership and a guarantee of the purity and/or the

1. Moreover, dozens of *Hacksilber* pieces are found as strays in Palestine and appear frequently on the local antiquities market, and they should be taken into account when evaluating the economic role of *Hacksilber*.

2. The *šql* (e.g., Gen 23:15–16; Lev 27:3, 16; 1 Sam 9:8) was the basic unit of measurement of silver, apparently weighing 11.33 g in Iron Age II Judah, and was used as a standard for payment. Other units are also documented in the Bible, the *qyqr* (e.g., Exod 37:24, 38:24; 2 Kgs 5:22–23), i.e., 3,000 *šqlym*; the *mnh* (e.g., Ezek 45:12, Ezra 2:69), i.e., 50 or 60 *šqlym*; the *bqʿ* (Gen 24:22; Exod 38:26), i.e., a half-*šql*; and the *grh* (Exod 30:13; Lev 27:25; Num 3:47, 18:16; Ezek 45:12), i.e., 1/20 of a *šql*. The *pym* (1 Sam 13:21) formed part (about two-thirds) of the *šql* according to the archaeological findings, whereas the *qšyth* (Gen 33:19, Josh 24:32, Job 42:11) is probably an archaic (pre-Iron Age) weight standard. The *agwrh* (1 Sam 2:36) is a reference to a minute piece of silver, and as previously stated the term *bšʿksp* (Judg 5:19) may have been the biblical word for money itself; see, in general, *Encyclopedia Biblica* 4, s.v. *Midot U-Mishqolot* [Hebrew]; and Schaps 2004: 53–56 and esp. pp. 227–28; DiSegni 1990: 210–18.



weight of silver in Iron Age Palestine, as the conceptual antecedents of the “sealed” Greco-Lyidian coinages. This notion—of certifying the contents of the bag by sealing it with a bulla that had a motif imprinted on it that identified the owner and assured the contents of the bag—can be seen as a step toward the sealing (striking) of the metal itself, namely the invention of the first coins. As Schaps notes of Near East precoinage societies, “If Greece was the cradle of coinage and Lydia its birthplace, the societies of the Near East were its ancestors” (2004: 34).

No *Hacksilber* hoards dating to the Neo-Babylonian period and early stage of Achaemenid rule have been found, but hoards were found that include cut pieces of silver or jewelry functioning as bullion, as well as coins. It may be that the Greek Archaic coins replaced the economic role of *Hacksilber*, though in much smaller quantities.³ We know that the local traditional form of weighing pieces of metal was still in use in this transitional period, as many Greek Archaic coins, and especially Athenian tetradrachms,⁴ are found cut into pieces in order to form fractions to be weighed on transactions (cf., e.g., Kraay and Moorey 1968). However, the fact that the first production stage of the coinage of southern Palestine shows a high degree of similarity to some of the proper Athenian and Athenian-styled issues means that some of them were locally produced and may thus be regarded as forerunners of local Philistian types or contemporaneous counterparts. These pieces are sometimes found intentionally cut into rough halves, thirds, and quarters of their original contours, and even into smaller fractions. This enabled the local societies to use smaller denominations of roughly fixed standards while also assuring the silver purity of the piece. The practice of cutting is seen also in some imported fourth-century B.C.E. coins (Gitler 2006).

3. Greek Archaic issues dated to the mid- to late sixth and early fifth centuries B.C.E. are the earliest coins found in Palestine, either retrieved from controlled archaeological excavations or allegedly found as strays on the surface of ancient sites; for listings, see Gitler and Tal 2006a: 13–22.

4. This actually refers to Athenian tetradrachms normally dated to the period between 454 and 413–404 B.C.E. and Athenian-styled tetradrachms (see, e.g., Mildenberg 1993) normally dated to ca. 450–350 B.C.E., for it is difficult to differentiate between authentic Athenian coins and their imitations; for listings, see Gitler and Tal 2006a: 23–30. A differentiation of this sort is normally done on stylistic grounds (level of “canonization” in the depicted motifs), but recent archaeo-metallurgy has shown that in many cases the level of silver purity and the origin of the metal ore in Laurion (Attica) is similar in both authentic and “imititative” coins, a fact that may dismiss the notion of (Eastern) imitations (Gitler, Ponting, and Tal 2009). The commonly accepted idea that the Athenian-styled issues were struck in several Eastern mints, because they show a variety of artistic styles that may imply production in different localities throughout the fifth Persian Satrapy may thus be questioned.



This suggests that the tradition of using silver coins as bullion to be weighed in transactions remained in marginal use during late Persian times and later, side by side with a monetary economy per se.⁵

In what follows, I will discuss the Persian-period coinages of Judah (*yhd*), Samaria (*šmryn*), Philistia, and Edom in their social contexts; some of these coinages were extensively discussed in the scholarly literature, but in the current frame I am limiting myself to some normally overlooked aspects. We should bear in mind however that coins in earlier minting periods were produced randomly, for a limited period of time, and in fixed quantities, in order to meet specific social, political, and economic needs. The similarity and differences in the iconographical motifs of the coins of Judah (*yhd*), Samaria (*šmryn*), Philistia, and Edom stood for similarity and differences in the regions' inhabitants' self-definition.

The Coinage of Judah

Until now, fewer than 30 Persian-period *yhd* coin types (meaning coins of the same type but not of the same denomination) have been documented. The total number of coin-types is in any case relatively small when compared to temporary coinages of Samaria and Philistia. Jerusalem struck small silver coins bearing the geographical name of the province *yhd* (and less frequently *yhwđ*) but sometimes bearing the legends of personal names and titles *yhzqyh hphh*, *yhzqyh*, *ywhnn hkwhn*, *yhwđh*, in Persian times and *yhd*, *yhwđh*, and *yhdh* in Hellenistic (Ptolemaic) times (for the latter, see, e.g., Barag 1999; Meshorer 2001; Gitler and Lorber 2006).⁶ Most of these coins (with the exception of the

5. One should bear in mind that Palestine had a long history of a metal economy in which bronze, silver, gold, and different metal alloys were used in trade. *Hacksilber* hoards found at biblical sites in Palestine provide evidence of the use of metal for its bullion value. It would, then, be feasible that Athenian and Athenian-styled issues laid the foundations for a moneyed economy by the mid-fifth century B.C.E. in Philistia, which prevailed in the greater parts of southern Palestine by the fourth century B.C.E.

6. The fact that Jerusalem was virtually the only mint of the Ptolemaic kingdom to strike silver fractions while the Lagids were promoting the use of bronze coinage with a similar range of values is of special interest. After the Greco-Macedonian conquest, the weight standard of the provincial coinage changed, when the *grh* and half-*grh* were replaced by fractions of the obol on the Attic weight standard with a modal weight of 0.19 g for the quarter-obol (Ronen 2003–6). These issues show a clear Ptolemaic iconographic influence (e.g., Meshorer 2001: nos. 29–35; Gitler and Lorber 2006: Group 5) and are dated from circa 301 to 261/260 B.C.E. (Gitler and Lorber 2006). Recently, Gitler and Lorber (2008) suggested that the coins bearing the personal name *yhzqyh hphh* (i.e., Meshorer 2001: nos. 22–23) should be attributed to the period of the Diadochi (after 312 B.C.E.) because of the use of an Attic weight



renowned British Museum *yhd*, “drachm” [Meshorer 2001: no. 1; see, however, in this respect, Gitler and Tal 2006a: 70, 230] and three *yhd* coins of 2.72 g, 2.70 g, and 2.22 g), have two weight groupings, with average weights of 0.48 g and 0.26 g. The coins of these groupings are erroneously yet customarily referred to as obols and hemiobols, rather than the *grh*, that is, 1/24 of Judahite *šql* of 11.4 g, and half-*grh*, that is, 1/48 Judahite *šql* (see, in this respect, Ronen 2003–6). There are also smaller fractions. Stylistically, the coins can be identified as Athenian-styled issues, where normally a depiction of the head of Athena appears on the obverse and the owl and olive spray, together with the paleo-Hebrew (or Aramaic) legend *yhd* (or *yhwđ*) on the reverse (cf. Meshorer 2001: nos. 2–14, 20–23), or Judahite-styled issues, where more varied divinities, humans, animals, and floral-motif depictions are found (cf. Meshorer 2001: nos. 15–19, 24–28). The *yhd* coins’ chronology is debated.⁷

standard apparent from these coins (cf. Ronen 1998: 125); the considerably small number of specimens (31 coins) and, consequently, the unreliable statistical results, as well as the use of Achaemenid title, lead us to question this suggestion. Following Mildenberg (1979), who was of the opinion that *yhzqyh*-type coins (without the Achaemenid title *phh*) should date to the “Macedonian period”—that is, to the period between 332–301 (namely, Macedonian-Diadochi)—Gitler and Lorber (2008) also examined the weights of *yhzqyh*-type coins (Meshorer 2001: nos. 24–26). They found that, except for Meshorer’s (2001) no. 25a, these coins are on the Judahite *šql*/*grh* standard. However, Gitler and Lorber dated Meshorer’s (2001) nos. 14, 20–23, 25a, 27–28 to the “Macedonian period” based either on statistically assumed Attic weight standards (nos. 22–23, 25a; my reservations are noted above) or on stylistic and epigraphic considerations (nos. 14, 21–22, 27–28) (2008: table 1).

7. The Persian-period coinage of Judah is the subject of numerous studies (e.g., Mildenberg 1979, 1994; Rappaport 1981; Machinist 1994; Deutsch 1999; Goldman 2000; Meshorer 2001; Fried 2003). There is a consensus that minting began somewhere in fourth-century B.C.E. Judah but also a debate over the chronological development of the coins, that is, with regard to the date of each type, because the coins are undated, and those bearing personal names and titles can hardly be attributed to known historical figures (see discussion in Gitler and Lorber 2008: 61–65). For example, finds uncovered during “Operation Scroll” led Ariel to conclude that some of the coins attributed by Meshorer to the end of the Persian period (2001: nos. 3, 4, 6, and 8) should be down-dated to the beginning of the Hellenistic period, because they were found with other coins from this period and were believed to have belonged to refugees fleeing the armies of Alexander’s successors (Ariel 2002: 288–90, Caves VII/1 and IV/6, table 3). If Ariel is correct, these Athenian-styled issues usually attributed to the Persian period may be assigned to the beginning of the Hellenistic period. It seems, however, that the beginning of Judahite coin minting should be understood against the Achaemenid imperial policy and the reorganization of the southern frontier of the fifth Persian Satrapy once domination of Egypt came to an end, circa 400–343 B.C.E., that is, the administrative role of the (new border) province of Judah in the Achaemenid Empire (see, in this respect, Fantalkin and Tal 2006: 180–81).



The Coinage of Samaria

In 1982, Meshorer included four Samarian coins in Supplement 1 of his monograph *Ancient Jewish Coinage*. In the contexts of their 1991 publication of the Samaria hoard, Meshorer and Qedar were able to gather 106 different issues (1991; see also Machinist 1994), and in 1999 they published a corpus of 224 Samarian coins (Meshorer and Qedar 1999). As opposed to Philistian coin-type terminology, Meshorer and Qedar defined a “type” as coins of the same type but of a different denomination. Since 1999, new coins have appeared on the antiquities market (Gitler and Tal 2006b; Ronen 2007) and in excavations (Mount Gerizim [Magen 2007: 210–11, fig. 29] and Gan Šoreq [D. T. Ariel, personal communication]), and to date, some 200 “types” are known, that is, coins bearing different motifs. Samaria struck silver (and some silver-plated) coins (erroneously yet customarily referred to as “drachms,” “obols,” “hemiobols” and smaller fractions, rather than the $rb^c \check{s}qln$ [or simply rb^c , with an average weight of 3.63 g], m^cn , that is, $\frac{1}{6} \check{s}ql$ [which comes to 0.61 g on average], and half- m^cn , that is, $\frac{1}{12} \check{s}ql$ [which comes to 0.31 g on average]). There are also smaller fractions, that is $\frac{1}{24} \check{s}ql$ [see in this respect Tal 2007: 20]). There are many types of Samarian coins, but most of them were struck on m^cn and half- m^cn ; the $rb^c \check{s}qln$ are much less frequent. The earliest coin type is dated to ca. 372 B.C.E., and minting continued (though intermittently) until the Macedonian conquest.⁸ Several

8. In fact, Meshorer and Qedar’s date of 372 B.C.E. for the beginning of Samarian coin minting is subjective (1999: 71). It is actually based on the idea that coins nos. 1 and 2, which bear the personal name $\text{CIAB}^{\text{TPA}}\Phi$ (that is, $\Phi\text{APN[A]BAZ[O]C}$), written in retrograde from right to left in West Semitic style, with the Greek *nu* replaced by an Aramaic *gimel* and the Greek *zeta* replaced by an Aramaic *zayin* (which may be indirect evidence for a local Semitic die engraver) and with two vowels missing, refer to the satrap Pharnabazos/us of Dascylium (northwestern Anatolia, 413–388/7 B.C.E.). In fact, we do not know of any direct historical connection between the satrap Pharnabazos with the province of Samaria, and these coins’ *terminus ante quem*, if truly connected to the satrap Pharnabazos, should be dated to the year 388/7 B.C.E. His involvement in the Near East may be connected with the unsuccessful Achaemenid attempts at reconquering Egypt (389–387 B.C.E.), possibly with the aid of local (Palestinian) forces and supplies (Isocrates, *Panegyricus* 140). Unlike other southern Palestinian coinages, there are also two dated Samarian coin types bearing the motif of a seated Achaemenid satrap with the numerals IIII[^] (= 14) on the obverse and the great Achaemenid king sacrificing a bull on the reverse (Meshorer and Qedar 1999: nos. 4–6). One of these coin types (no. 4) has the Aramaic letters *bet* and *tav* (בת) together with the numerals on the obverse and the Greek legend $\text{BA}/\Gamma\text{ABA}/\text{TAC}$ on the reverse. It is reasonable to assume that these numerals refer to regnal years of the great Achaemenid king similarly to the dating of the Wadi Daliyeh papyri (Gropp 2001). The personal name $\text{Βαγαβ}^{\text{α}}\text{τ}^{\text{α}}\text{ς}$ (in Greek) or בת (abbreviated in Aramaic yet reconstructed $\text{בגב}^{\text{ת}}$ based on the Greek) is probably derived from the



Samarian coins show the geographical name of the province, that is, *šmryn*, in full or abbreviated as *šmry*, *šmrn*, *šmr*, *šm*, *šn*, or just a *š*, written in Aramaic. Samarian coins show also a variety of private names; these can normally refer to Samarian governors and possibly prefects (both are written in Aramaic), as can be correlated from the contemporaneous historical and epigraphic sources (see, e.g., Eshel 2007). The personal names of Achaemenid satraps may also be assumed, and these are normally written in Greek (when they appear without additional names in Aramaic).⁹ We should bear in mind that most of the Samarian coins do not bear inscriptions. They are defined as Samarian on the basis of circulation, fabric, metrology, and especially iconography. The main artistic influence of the Samarian coinage is categorically Achaemenid (or Phoenician that had its roots in Achaemenid artform), and it can be safely deduced that more than half the Samarian coin types show Achaemenid motifs and artistic influences.

Iranian *baga*, “deity,” which may form the name of a satrap (or local governor) but is unfortunately unknown from historical and epigraphic sources. There is no apparent reason to dismiss the possibility of year 14 of Artaxerxes II and come up with the year 390/89 B.C.E. for these coins (contra Meshorer and Qedar’s attribution of year 14 of Artaxerxes III, 346/5 B.C.E., based on these coin types’ appearance in the Nablus hoard, the burial date of which is 338/7 B.C.E. as is attested from the dated Tyrian coins; see, in this respect, Elayi and Elayi 1993: 230, where an earlier burial date, ca. 355 B.C.E., is proposed). There is no point, however, in assuming that these dated coins are the earliest Samarian coins ever minted, and the beginning of coin minting should be understood against Samaria’s suspected involvement in the Achaemenid attempts at reconquering Egypt in the early fourth century B.C.E. and its growing administrative role in the reorganization of the southern frontier of the fifth Persian Satrapy once domination of Egypt came to an end, around 400–343 B.C.E., as was the case in the province of Judah. In any case, coin minting in the Province of Samaria came to an end with the Greco-Macedonian conquest and possibly “resumed” only under the Seleucids (that is, in the days of Antiochus IX).

9. Only few Samarian coins show Greek legends (cf. Meshorer and Qedar 1999: nos. 1–2, 4, 40, 114). The names $\text{CIABTPA}\Phi$ (no. 1), $\text{TPA}\Phi$ (no. 2, which depicts the first four letters from the right of no. 1) and BA/TABA/TAC (no. 4) are discussed above (n. 8). The other name, $\text{IEY}\Sigma$ (no. 40), that is, Zeus, on the obverse with a depiction of seated divinity, yet with the personal name *yhwʿnh* on the reverse, is obviously imitating in its obverse a Cilician coin type (cf. Meshorer and Qedar 1999: 29). Interestingly, the depiction of the first letter as Greek *zeta* in the form of what may appear as an Aramaic *zayin* (𐤆) may provide even more indirect evidence for a local Semitic die engraver, as with nos. 1–2. The name $\text{KAEY}\Sigma$ (no. 114) may either be the genitive suffix of the divinity Heracles, for the obverse shows a bearded, frontally depicted divinity, or less likely the genitive suffix of another personal Greek name (such as Aristocles, Sophocles, etc.), which may hint at a name of a satrap. This coin also, however, depicts on the reverse an abbreviated form of a personal name that may be read *ʿd*, *ʿr*, or *ʿw*; Meshorer and Qedar provided no readings but provided readings for “two rings.”



The Coinage of Philistia

Philistian coins (the so-called Philisto-Arabian coins) are the earliest Palestinian coinage minted under Achaemenid rule (Gitler and Tal 2006a). These coins were “formally” issued by the minting authorities of Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Gaza, the three coastal cities of Philistia (southwestern Palestine), as early as the 440s B.C.E.¹⁰ It is thus in Persian-period Philistia where the development of the metal economy of Palestine from *Hacksilber* to coins (Archaic and Athenian) and proper local monetary economy began. Philistia’s early coinage was probably confined to silver (and some silver-plated) “large” denominations, that is, the *šql*, weighing 14.32 g on average (yet customarily referred to as “tetradrachm”). By the fourth century B.C.E., proper monetary economy is evident in the Philistian coinage, for each coin type is normally produced in three different denominations: the *rb^c šql* or simply *rb^c* (with an average weight of 3.58 g), customarily referred to as “drachm,” the *m^h* (which comes to 0.60 g on average), customarily referred to as “obol,” and the half-*m^h* (which comes to 0.30 g on average), customarily referred to as “hemiobol” (Gitler and Tal 2006a: 315–28; Tal 2007: 21–22). To date, some 350 Philistian coin types are known, that is, coins bearing different motifs regardless their denomination. The coins’ motifs reflect contemporary fashions, foreign influences and a broad local imagery. Philistian coins show the name of the minting authorities, that is, Ashdod (*ʾšdd*, *šdd*—with ʾ as a pictograph of a bull’s head, or in abbreviated forms, ʾ*d*, ʾ*š*, and *šd*) written in Aramaic; Ashkelon (*ʾn* or ʾ alone) written in Phoenician;¹¹ Gaza (*ʿzh*, or in abbreviated forms ʿ*z*, *z^c* or *c* alone) and *m* (denoting Marnas—Gaza’s primary deity). All are normally

10. The revised chronology of the Philistian coins was studied in full by Gitler and Tal (2006a: 63–68). The main body of evidence for the considerable early dating of this coinage is its appearance in two hoards with burial dates of ca. 445 B.C.E. (Jordan hoard, *IGCH* 1482) and ca. 410 B.C.E. (Delta hoard, *IGCH* 1650). There is also evidence from artistic comparanda, with historical implications. Minting continued up to the Greco-Macedonian conquest and “resumed” in Gaza under Ptolemy II and in Ashkelon under Ptolemy IV. The right to mint coins in Philistia should be seen also in the contexts of the Achaemenid struggle with Egypt in the mid-fifth century B.C.E. (464–454 B.C.E.; Herodotus, III 12, 15; VII, 7; Thucydides, I 104, 110; Diodorus Siculus, XI 71, 74–75), and the use of Philistian cities as havens and “launching bases” for reorganization and supply. By granting the permission to mint coins, these cities enjoyed (partial) autonomy, for civic coins as symbols of sovereignty and independence carried political implications, which also had economic benefits.

11. There is a noted preference for the use of Phoenician script in most legends attributed to the coins of Ashkelon; this is specifically true for the coins of Ashkelon, where ʾ appears alone. Interestingly, this is corroborated by the recently published Persian-period ostraca from the site (cf. Cross 2008: 350–65).



written in lapidary Aramaic, but most depictions of the letter ϵ (as a full circle) are actually Phoenician script. There are also coins with isolated or two–three (Aramaic) letters the meanings of which are uncertain, but we should bear in mind that most of the Philistian coins do not bear inscriptions, nor do they bear dates. They are defined Philistian on the basis of circulation, fabric, metrology, and especially iconography. The iconography of the Philistian coinage was influenced by Western (Greek, Eastern Greek, and Southern Anatolian), Eastern (Phoenician and Achaemenid in the broad sense of the term), and Egyptian sources. However, the most striking influence on the Philistian coinage is notably Athenian. The people of Philistia observed these foreign motifs and more often than not adopted and adapted them to local use.

The Coinage of Edom

A so-far unknown group of peculiar Athenian-styled Palestinian coins was recently identified as Edomite coinage (Gitler, Tal, and van Alfen 2007). These coins, including mainly $rb\epsilon \check{s}qln$ (“drachms” of 4.0 g on average) and also $m\epsilon n$ (“obols” of 0.74 g on average), were struck from worn obverse dies (that is, dies damaged by prolonged use), which were then recut and repolished. As a result, the coins’ obverses in many cases are simply dome-shaped, with no traces of Athena’s head or helmet being recognizable, whereas the reverses normally show the owl, olive spray (and crescent), and the legend AΘE in a bad-to-fair condition. The coins’ distribution suggests that they circulated in the boundaries of what we define as Edom in the later part of the Persian period (fourth century B.C.E.) and might well have been the silver money mentioned in several of the Edomite ostraca (Tal 2007: 17–19).

Negotiating Identities

It is a well-known fact that coin minting shares economic, political, and social aspects. From an economic point of view, monetizing the local economy granted the ruling authorities a fixed income from each series of coins they produced. Coined money, by virtue of its being legal tender is more valuable than uncoined metal, which was used during Iron Age II. From a political point of view, “city coins” emphasized the relative autonomy of the “minting” cities and provinces of Palestine, vouched for the status of the cities and provinces under Achaemenid rule, and were a means to control the local population. From a social point of view, early Palestinian coins were, to some extent, a token of collective definition and used shared visual art to establish a connection between function and image. In a period when identity was



EISENBRAUNS

Offprint from:

Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers, and Manfred Oeming, eds.,

Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period: Negotiating . . . Context

© Copyright 2011 Eisenbrauns. All rights reserved.

mostly indigenous, coins formed part of the shared social and cultural resources of a given urban center and/or its province. City coins are tokens of a shared identity and evidence of developed “metropolitan” life. Palestinian coins served the public needs of these cities and provinces as well as the needs of the minting authorities, as a means of political control. They were also a form of communication between the authorities and the inhabitants of their regions of circulation, transmitting information through certain motifs.

If we are to compare the number of coin types in the coinage of Philistia with that of Samaria, Judah, and Edom, Philistia had twice as many coin types as Samaria (when comparison is based on the motif depicted alone and denominations are excluded), and far more than Judah and Edom. Of course, the term *coin type* is often used for coins of the same type but not of the same denomination (as was the case in the coinages of Judah and Samaria), but Philistian coin types are still exceedingly numerous. However, because the coinage of Philistia involved three minting authorities, and those of Samaria, Judah, and Edom apparently involved one each, ratios may be understood differently.

What can be said from a social point of view of these “multicultural” or “multiethnic” coins but for ideas that without further evidence partially remain in the theoretical realm? If we are to follow the line previously stated that coins are a token of collective definition (or even self identity), for they formed part of the shared social and cultural resources, it seems that Philistian coins as iconographic, multiply influenced coins (Gitler and Tal 2006a) attest to a “cosmopolitan” Philistian society under Achaemenid rule that was “international” in its essence. The region’s geographic location as a crossroads of Palestine, Egypt, and Arabia and a maritime gateway for the Eastern Mediterranean and beyond lends support to an assumption of this sort. This is to say that, given the region’s history under the Philistines, Neo-Assyrians, and Neo-Babylonians, by the time the Achaemenids gained full control over Philistia and brought prosperity to the region, its population must have been most varied. Given the fact that the Philistian population of Persian times can be seen as groups of people whose identity may have been primarily jurisdictional (i.e., Ashdodians, Ashkelonians, and Gazaians), the coins may be the token of their collective “cosmopolitan” definition. On the other hand, can we assume that the lack of an obverse type in the Edomite coins (Gitler, Tal, and van Alfen 2007) and the idea that a single coin type was used can be related to an Edomite cult? If these coins served as *temple* money (or were for a “religious” head tax due in Edomite society), the appearance of a foreign deity (Athena) on the coinage might have been most unwelcome. We might also seek an explanation regarding the poles of the socioreligious and the economic,



EISENBRAUNS

Offprint from:

Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers, and Manfred Oeming, eds.,
Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period: Negotiating . . . Context
 © Copyright 2011 Eisenbrauns. All rights reserved.

insofar as social and economic traditionalism might have influenced the unique aspects of these coins. We know that *Hacksilber* circulated alongside coins in fourth-century B.C.E. Palestine, as it had for centuries before (Gitler 2006). Because these Edomite dome-shaped coins resemble the dumpy flans found in *Hacksilber* hoards, it may have helped to ease the acceptance of this new form of money to those who were reluctant to use it, especially in a “fringe zone” such as late-Persian-period Edom. How does this explanation fit our social understanding of the *yhd* coins (Meshorer 2001)? On the one hand, some scholars accept the idea that *yhd* coins too are temple money per se, that is, being more oriented to temple payments (the Jewish head tax). Can Jews be considered less separatist than Edomites during the fourth century B.C.E. in this respect, because they accept foreign deities (such as Athena), animal depictions (such as owl and eagle) and the Achaemenid great king in their coins, and moreover in temple-related payments? Can we understand the Samaritan coinage differently (Meshorer and Qedar 1999), as a token of Samaritan loyalty to the throne based on the fact that most Samaritan coins show strong Achaemenid influence? The fact that the ruling class of the city of Samaria showed loyalty to the Achaemenid king by killing Alexander’s newly appointed governor, Andromachos, on the eve of the city surrender to the Greco-Macedonian army (Rufus, *History of Alexander* 8–11) may point in this direction.¹² These thoughts can be developed extensively, but without external evidence they will remain in the philosophical realm.

The importance of the images appearing on these coins lies in the fact that “pictures are a more permanent and immediate form of communication than words, and even than writing, especially where literacy was slight. . . . What those pictures were, reflects on the society they served” (Boardman 2000: 325). The motifs chosen to be represented on these coins functioned as permanent and immediate forms of communication, especially in an age in which coins were the principal form of “mass media” and were regarded primarily as statements of municipal, dynastic, or religious power. These images reflect contemporary fashions, sometimes displaying foreign influences, but in most cases they exhibit a broad local imagery found only on these coins.

12. There are scholars who find the reason for this act in the idea that the appointment of Andromachos brought to an end the line of (native) Samaritan governors (e.g., Crown 1989: 9–10), but the current evidence at hand (Eshel 2007) does not allow us to support a view such as this. An act of loyalty to the Achaemenid throne may provide a better explanation; given the fact that Alexander was in Egypt at the time, and it was unclear from a Samaritan point of view whether the Greco-Macedonian troops would manage to win the battlefield.



Bibliography

- Ariel, D. T.
2002 The Coins from the Surveys and Excavations of Caves in the Northern Judean Desert. *Atiqot* 4: 281–304.
- Barag, D.
1999 The Coinage of Yehud and the Ptolemies. *Israel Numismatic Journal* 13: 27–38.
- Balmuth, M. S., ed.
2001 *Hacksilber to Coinage: New Insights into the Monetary History of the Near East and Greece*. New York: American Numismatic Society.
- Boardman, J.
2000 Images and Media in the Greek World. Pp. 323–37 in *Images as Media: Sources for the Cultural History of the Near East and the Eastern Mediterranean (1st millennium BCE)*, ed. C. Uehlinger. Freiburg: Academic Press / Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Crown, A. D.
1989 *The Samaritans*. Tübingen: Mohr Sibeck.
- Cross, F. M.
2008 Inscriptions in Phoenician and Other Scripts. Pp. 333–72 in *Ashkelon 1: Introduction and Overview (1985–2006)*, ed. L. E. Stager, J. D. Schloen, and D. M. Master. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.
- Deutsch, R.
1999 Five Unrecorded “Yehud” Silver Coins. *Israel Numismatic Journal* 13: 25–26.
- DiSegni, L.
1990 The Weight Systems in Palestine. Pp. 202–20 in *Commerce in Palestine throughout the Ages*, ed. B. Z. Kedar, T. Dothan, and S. Safrai. Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi and Israel Exploration Society. [Hebrew]
- Elayi, J., and Elayi, A. G.
1993 *Trésors de monnaies phéniciennes et circulation monétaire (V^e–IV^e s.av. J.-C.* Paris: Gabalda.
- Eshel, H.
2007 The Governors of Samaria in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries B.C.E. Pp. 223–34 in *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E.*, ed. O. Lipschits, G. N. Knoppers, and R. Albertz. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.
- Fantalkin, A., and Tal, O.
2006 Redating Lachish Level I: Identifying Achaemenid Imperial Policy at the Southern Frontier of the Fifth Satrapy. Pp. 167–97 in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*, ed. O. Lipschits and M. Oeming. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.
- Fried, L. S.
2003 A Silver Coin of Yohanan Hakkohen. *Transeuphratène* 26: 65–85.



EISENBRAUNS

Offprint from:

Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers, and Manfred Oeming, eds.,

Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period: Negotiating . . . Context

© Copyright 2011 Eisenbrauns. All rights reserved.

- Gitin, S., and Golani, A.
 2001 The Tel Miqne-Ekron Silver Hoards: The Assyrian and Phoenician Connections. Pp. 27–48 in *Hacksilber to Coinage: New Insights into the Monetary History of the Near East and Greece*, ed. M. S. Balmuth. New York: American Numismatic Society.
- 2004 A Silver-Based Monetary Economy in the Seventh Century BCE: A Response to Raz Kletter. *Levant* 36: 203–5.
- Gitler, H.
 2006 A Hacksilber and Cut Athenian Tetradrachm Hoard from the Environs of Samaria: Late Fourth Century BCE. *Israel Numismatic Research* 1: 5–14.
- Gitler, H., and Lorber, C.
 2006 A New Chronology for the Ptolemaic Coins of Judah. *American Journal of Numismatics* (2nd Series) 18: 1–41.
- 2008 A New Chronology for the *Yehizkyah* Coins of Judah. *Swiss Numismatic Review* 87: 61–82.
- Gitler, H., Ponting, M., and Tal, O.
 2009 Athenian Tetradrachms from Tel Mikhal (Israel): A Metallurgical Perspective. *American Journal of Numismatics*, Second Series 21: 29–49.
- Gitler, H., and Tal, O.
 2006a *The Coinage of Philistia of the Fifth and Fourth Centuries BC: A Study of the Earliest Coins of Palestine*. Milan: Ennerre.
- 2006b Coins with the Aramaic Legend *Šhrw* and Other Unrecorded Samaritan Issues. *Swiss Numismatic Review* 85: 47–68.
- Gitler, H., Tal, O., and Alfen, P. van
 2007 Silver Dome-shaped Coins from Persian-period Southern Palestine. *Israel Numismatic Research* 2: 47–62.
- Golani, A., and Sass, B.
 1998 Three Seventh-Century B.C.E. Hoards of Silver Jewelry from Tel Miqne-Ekron. *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 311: 57–81.
- Goldman, Z.
 2000 The Sign of the Lily: Its Source, Significance and History in Antiquity, Part 2. *Shnaton: An Annual for Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies* 12: 105–43. [Hebrew]
- Gropp, D. M.
 2001 The Samaria Papyri from Wadi Daliyeh. Pp. 1–116 in *Wadi Daliyeh II: The Samaria Papyri from Wadi Daliyeh*. DJD 28. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Kim, H. S.
 2001 Archaic Coinage as Evidence for the Use of Money. Pp. 7–21 in *Money and Its Uses in the Ancient Greek World*, ed. A. R. Meadows and K. Shipton. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 2002 Small Change and the Moneyed Economy. Pp. 44–51 in *Money, Labor and Land: Approaches to the Economies of Ancient Greece*, ed. P. Cartledge, E. Cohen, and P. Foxhall. London: Routledge.



- Kletter, R.
 1998 *Economic Keystones: The Weight System of the Kingdom of Judah*. Sheffield: Continuum.
 2003 Iron Age Hoards of Precious Metals in Palestine: An "Underground Economy"? *Levant* 35: 139–52.
 2004 Coinage before Coins? A Response. *Levant* 36: 207–10.
- Kraay, C. M., and Moorey, P. R. S.
 1968 Two Fifth Century Hoards from the Near East. *Revue Numismatique* (6th series) 10: 181–235.
- Kroll, J. H.
 1998 Silver in Solon's Laws. Pp. 225–32 in *Studies in Greek Numismatics in Memory of Martin Jessop Price*, ed. R. Ashton and S. Hurter. London: Oxbow.
 2001 A Small Find of Silver Bullion from Egypt. *American Journal of Numismatics* 13: 1–20.
- Machinist, P.
 1994 The First Coins of Judah and Samaria: Numismatics and History in the Achaemenid and Early Hellenistic Periods. Pp. 365–80 in *Achaemenid History*, vol. 8: *Continuity and Change*, ed. H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg, A. Kuhrt, and M. C. Root. Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten.
- Magen, Y.
 2007 The Dating of the First Phase of the Samaritan Temple of Mount Gerizim in Light of the Archaeological Evidence. Pp. 157–211 in *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E.*, ed. O. Lipschits, G. N. Knoppers, and R. Albertz. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.
- Meshorer, Y.
 1982 *Ancient Jewish Coinage*. 2 vols. Dix Hills, NY: Amphora.
 2001 *A Treasury of Jewish Coins: From the Persian Period to Bar Kochba*. New York: Yad Izhak Ben Zvi and Amphora.
- Meshorer, Y., and Qedar, S.
 1991 *The Coinage of Samaria in the Fourth Century B.C.E.* Jerusalem: Numismatic Fine Art International.
 1999 *Samaritan Coinage*. Jerusalem: Israel Numismatic Society.
- Mildenberg, L.
 1979 Yehud: A Preliminary Study of the Provincial Coinage of Judaea. Pp. 183–96 in *Greek Numismatics and Archaeology: Essays in Honor of Margaret Thompson*, ed. O. Mørkholm and N. M. Waggoner. Wetteren: Ancient World.
 1993 Über das Münzwesen im Reich der Achämeniden. *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* 26: 55–79.
 1994 On the Money Circulation in Palestine from Artaxerxes II till Ptolemy I. Preliminary Studies of the Local Coinage in the Fifth Persian Satrapy, Part 5. *Transeuphratène* 7: 63–71.
- Rappaport, U.
 1981 The First Judaeian Coinage. *Journal of Jewish Studies* 32: 1–17.



EISENBRAUNS

Offprint from:

Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers, and Manfred Oeming, eds.,
Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period: Negotiating . . . Context
 © Copyright 2011 Eisenbrauns. All rights reserved.

Rider, G. le

- 2001 *La naissance de la monnaie: Pratiques monétaires de l'Orient ancien*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Ronen, Y.

- 2003–6 Some Observations on the Coinage of Yehud. *Israel Numismatic Journal* 15: 28–31.

- 2007 Twenty Unrecorded Samaritan Coins. *Israel Numismatic Research* 2: 29–34.

Schaps, D. M.

- 2004 *The Invention of Coinage and the Monetization of Ancient Greece*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Tal, O.

- 2007 Coin Denominations and Weight Standards in Fourth-Century BCE Palestine. *Israel Numismatic Research* 2: 17–28.

Thompson, C. M.

- 2003 Sealed Silver in Iron Age Cisjordan and the “Invention” of Coinage. *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 22: 67–107.



EISENBRAUNS

Offprint from:

Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers, and Manfred Oeming, eds.,

Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period: Negotiating . . . Context

© Copyright 2011 Eisenbrauns. All rights reserved.