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## *Contents*

- 3 WOLFGANG FISCHER-BOSSERT and HAIM GITLER: The Ismailiya Hoard 1983
- 13 NOVELLA VISMARA: Kuprlli or Kherēi: a Problem of Attribution or a Problem of Method?
- 21 YOAV FARHI: A Silver-Plated Samaritan Coin from Tel Dor
- 31 YEHOASHUA ZLOTNIK: A Hoard of Alexander the Great from the Region of Syria
- 41 CATHARINE C. LORBER: A Gold Mnaieion of Ptolemaic Cyprus at Tell Kedesh: Background and Context
- 59 WALTER C. HOLT and NICHOLAS L. WRIGHT: A New Seleucid Bronze Coin and Dura Hoard 13 Revisited
- 67 HAIM GITLER and DANIEL M. MASTER: Cleopatra at Ascalon: Recent Finds from the Leon Levy Expedition
- 99 YANIV SCHAUER: Mint Remains from Excavations in the Citadel of Jerusalem
- 109 JEAN-PHILIPPE FONTANILLE: The Barbarous Coins of Judea
- 123 FERNANDO LÓPEZ SÁNCHEZ: Military Units of Mark Antony and Lucius Verus: Numismatic Recognition of Distinction
- 139 YIGAL RONEN: Coins as Scale Weights
- 143 CECILIA MEIR: Tyrian Sheqels from the 'Isfiya Hoard, Part Two
- 151 JULIAN BAKER: The Tel 'Akko hoard of Venetian *Torneselli*
- 161 RUTH JACOBY: Tokens for *Sheḥita* and *Miqve* from Samarkand
- 167 REVIEW: Nikolaus Schindel, *Sylloge Nummorum Sasanidarum Israel*. Vienna, 2009 (Stuart D. Sears)
- 175 Abbreviations

## ABBREVIATIONS

- AJC* Y. Meshorer *Ancient Jewish Coinage*. Dix Hills, NY 1982
- AJN* *American Journal of Numismatics*
- BMC* e.g., *BMC Arab.*: G.F. Hill. *Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Arabia, Mesopotamia, and Persia*. London 1922
- BMCO* e.g., *BMCO 1*: S. Lane-Poole. *The Coins of the Eastern Khaleefehs in the British Museum. Catalogue of the Oriental Coins in the British Museum 1*. London 1875
- CH* *Coin Hoards*
- CIL* *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*
- CNP* e.g., L. Kadman. *The Coins of Akko Ptolemais* (Corpus Nummorum Palestinensium IV). Jerusalem 1961
- CRE* e.g., H. Mattingly. *The Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum I. Augustus to Vitellius*. London 1923
- DOC* e.g., P. Grierson. *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection 3. Leo III to Nicephorus III 717–1081*. Washington, D.C. 1973
- IEJ* *Israel Exploration Journal*
- IG* *Inscriptiones Graecae*
- IGCH* M. Thompson, O. Mørkholm and C.M. Kraay. *An Inventory of Greek Coin Hoards*. New York 1973
- INJ* *Israel Numismatic Journal*
- INR* *Israel Numismatic Research*
- LA* *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum Liber Annuus*
- LRBC* e.g., P.V. Hill and J.P.C. Kent. Part 1: The Bronze Coinage of the House of Constantine, A.D. 324–46. In *Late Roman Bronze Coinage (A.D. 324–498)*. London 1965. Pp. 4–40
- MIB* e.g., W. Hahn. *Von Anastasius I. bis Justinianus I (491–565)*. *Moneta Imperii Byzantini* 1. Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften Philosophisch-Historische Klasse Denkschriften 109. Veröffentlichungen der Numismatischen Kommission 1. Vienna 1973
- MIBE* e.g., W. Hahn. *Money of the Incipient Byzantine Empire (Anastasius I–Justinian I, 491–565)* (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Numismatik und Geldgeschichte der Universität Wien 6). Vienna 2000
- MN* *American Numismatic Society Museum Notes*
- NC* *Numismatic Chronicle*
- NCirc.* *Numismatic Circular*
- NNM* *Numismatic Notes and Monographs*
- NZ* *Numismatische Zeitschrift*
- RRC* M.H. Crawford. *Roman Republican Coinage*. Cambridge 1974
- RIC* e.g., C.H.V. Sutherland. *The Roman Imperial Coinage I. From 31 BC to AD 69*. London 1984
- RN* *Revue Numismatique*
- RPC* e.g., A. Burnett, M. Amandry and I. Carradice. *From Vespasian to Domitian (AD 69–96). Roman Provincial Coinage 2*. London 1999
- SC* e.g., A. Houghton and C. Lorber. *Seleucid Coins. A Comprehensive Catalogue. Part I. Seleucus I through Antiochus III*. New York, Lancaster, PA and London 2002
- SICA* e.g., S. Album and T. Goodwin. *Sylloge of Islamic Coins in the Ashmolean, Volume 1: The Pre-Reform Coinage of the Early Islamic Period*. Oxford 2002
- SNAT* e.g., L. Ilisch. *Sylloge Numorum Arabicorum Tübingen–Palästina IVa Bilād aš-Šām I*. Tübingen 1993
- SNG* *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum* (with suffix as necessary, e.g. *SNG Cop.*)
- SNR* *Schweizerische Numismatische Rundschau*
- TINC* *Transactions of the International Numismatic Congress*
- TJC* Y. Meshorer. *A Treasury of Jewish Coins from the Persian Period to Bar Kochba*. Jerusalem and Nyack 2001
- ZfN* *Zeitschrift für Numismatik*

# Tokens for *Sheḥita* and *Miqve* from Samarkand

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## Abstract

This article deals with an unexpected find in Samarkand, central Asia — tokens of ritual slaughter and ritual bath — which are typical for western communities.

Every Jewish community is expected to provide its members with some basic services that enable them to uphold Jewish law in daily life. These services include the financial support of various religious functionaries, such as the *shohet* (ritual slaughterer) and the *melamed* (teacher). Their salaries were made possible by the donations of wealthy members of the community and by a system of taxation on services provided to the community. One way the community leadership collected money to support these people was through the sale of tokens to be given as payment to the *shohet* or to the *balanit* (bath attendant) at the community *miqve* (ritual bath). These functionaries would then return the tokens to the community coffer to be reused.

Very few dies/tokens relating to *sheḥita* (ritual slaughter) practices have been published. The earliest known are two tokens from Rome, the denomination marked on them is **B** (for “biacco”) a denomination used by the popes between 1547–1849 CE (Fig. 1). Since the tokens are well preserved it may be assumed that they were struck late in this period (Berman 1941:179). The Rome *sheḥita* tokens were struck on both sides. On one side are the Hebrew and Italian phrases: either גדול עור גדול לשחיטת עור (“[payment] for slaughtering a large fowl”) and POLLO GRANDE or קטן עור קטן לשחיטת עור (“[payment] for slaughtering a small fowl”) and POLLO PICCOLO. On the other side of the token is the abbreviation ת"ת which usually stands for תלמוד תורה (roughly translated as “Jewish primary school,” Berman 1941:180–181; Meshorer 2006:146).<sup>1</sup>

A set of three dies for minting *sheḥita* tokens, deriving from Mannheim are now in the Israel Museum. Depicted is a wreath surrounded by the inscription: קהל מנהיגים תק"ה לפ"ק (“Community of Mannheim, [Jewish calendar year] 5405”). The date 5405 is the Jewish-calendar equivalent of 1745. Within the wreath of each die is a word indicating one of the different types of animals to be slaughtered:

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Ira Rezak for introducing me to Berman’s book on the subject.



Fig. 1. *Shehita* tokens from the Papal State

שור (bull; Fig. 2 left), פרה (cow; Fig. 2 middle), or דקה [שחיטה] (small cattle; Fig. 2 right). A star appears below each of these categories.<sup>2</sup>

The Eretz Israel Museum in Tel Aviv has two undated tokens from Jerusalem. One bears the inscription: ועד העיר האשכנזי שחיטה דקה ("The Ashkenazi City Council; Ritual Slaughter of Small Cattle" not illus.). The other (Fig. 3) is an almost square token (26×25 mm) with small squares in each corner. In the middle is inscribed: שכר/שחיטה/דקה ("payment for the slaughter of small cattle"). This second token is a bronze bracteate (struck such that its letters are raised on one side and sunken on the other), and as such is similar to the subject of this article, the newly documented finds from Samarkand, which are discussed below.<sup>3</sup>

Tokens for *shehita* and *miqve* were used mainly in the Ashkenazi communities in Europe. In Jerusalem they were used both by the Ashkenazim and Sephardim. However, there has been no record thus far of this custom among the Jews in the East and no finds of tokens from this part of the world have been published.

2 I would like to thank Haya Benjamin for letting me examine these seals.

3 I would like to thank Cecilia Meir for enabling me to examine these tokens and introducing me to the bibliography on the subject (Meir 2005).



Fig. 2. Three *shehita* dies from Mannheim, Germany

In the exhibit of Jewish articles in the Samarkand Museum (housed in the Kalantarov Residence) are three tokens and a die.<sup>4</sup> A 40 mm circular die and two of the tokens deal with *shehita*. In the center of the die is a Star of David with small central circle. Around this is a Hebrew inscription reading inward: צויתך (‘‘And you shall slaughter as I have commanded you’’ [Deut. 12:21]) and the name of the city reading outward: סמרקנד (‘‘Samarkand’’). Fig. 4a is a side view of the die, while Fig. 4b is a view of the matrix. Fig. 4c is a token — a bracteate — struck from the die.

<sup>4</sup> These tokens were recorded in the Samarkand Museum by those documenting objects for the Center for Jewish Art of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in the summer of 1992 (Jacoby 2009).



Fig. 3. *Shehita* token from Jerusalem



Fig. 4. Samarkand *shehita* die and token: a. side view of die; b. face of die; c. token struck from the die

The other token relating to *shehita* is square (25×25 mm) and bears on three of its sides the inscription *ויבחתם/כאשר/צויתך* (Deut. 12:21). A small hole is pierced near the fourth side. The hole may have enabled storage of the tokens by their recipients. In the middle appears the word *עוף* (“fowl”) but there is no mention of a city’s name. Under the word *עוף* is found a depiction of a butcher’s knife (Fig. 5).

The third token from Samarkand deals with the *miqve*. This is the only *miqve* token known to me, although there must have been others as stated by Kisch (1959:171–172).<sup>5</sup> The token is a bracteate. Its shape is octagonal (with uneven sides, the longest side being 40 mm, Fig. 6). In the center is a Star of David

<sup>5</sup> The term *miqve geld* appears in Yiddish literature and most likely refers to tokens like this one. I would like to thank Yehiel Goldhaber for pointing out to me the Yiddish use of the term.





Fig. 5. A *shehita* token for small fowl

pierced by a hole, also possibly enabling storage of tokens. The inscription around the star reads • מקוה טהרה • סמרקנד • (“Ritual Bath • Samarkand •”).



Fig. 6. A *miqve* token

Seals usually bear intaglio letters (in negative) so that the impressed letters on the final product will be in relief and easily read. The object in the Samarkand Museum, however, is not a seal but a die, i.e., it did not impress soft materials but struck thick flans and created bracteates out of them. The bracteate technology was well known by the time of the objects in discussed in this article. It was common for bracteate dies to be engraved in relief (Fig. 5) and function as obverse (trussell, lower) dies. A thin flan was placed upon the die and covered with a layer of soft wood or lead. This was struck by a hammer resulting in the reverse side appearing in relief. This technology is confirmed by the shape of the back of the Samarkand *shehita* die. Its cylindrical back is shaped to fit into an apparatus. The Mannheim dies, on the other hand, are normal intaglio dies shaped so as to be hand-held as reverse dies. Consequently it is not certain that the tokens struck by them were bracteates.

The practice of using *shehita* and *miqve* tokens was very likely introduced into Bukhara and Samarkand at the beginning of the twentieth century. From the

historic records of the Jewish community in Bukhara and Samarkand one learns that these two matters — kosher meat and *miqva'ot* (ritual baths) — were the subject of dispute between 1793 and 1920. The first date relates to the tenure of Rabbi Joseph Maman-HaMa'aravi (1793–1822), an emissary to Bukhara who is considered to have saved that Jewish community from assimilation. The latter date marks the end of the sojourn of Rabbi Shlomo Yehuda Leib (Ashkenazi, Kasarnovski) Eliesrov known as שיל"א (Shila) who had come to the region as an emissary (שד"ר) in 1890 and later became the community rabbi. Shila, who belonged to the Lubavitch (Chabad) Hassidic movement, disapproved of the existing *shehita* and *miqve* systems in Samarkand and trained pupils according to his way.<sup>6</sup> In his role as rabbi, Shila may have introduced the community to the use of tokens and thus placed some controls on these aspects of community life. Thus, it is very likely that Shila was responsible for the practice of ritual slaughter and *miqve* tokens in Samarkand.

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6 For details of Shila's turbulent biography see: Pozailov 2008:253–272, 429–430; Kaganovich 1999; Rabin 1959:169–170, 278–279; Tager 1971:73–74; Eshel 1965:89–91. In 1920 Shila fled Samarkand upon the takeover of the Communist regime.