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COINAGE AND HISTORY IN THE SEVENTH CENTURY NEAR EAST

5



EDITED BY

TONY GOODWIN

Proceedings of the 15th Seventh Century Syrian Numismatic Round Table held at Corpus Christi College, Oxford on 17th and 18th September 2016

Newly published by Archetype in August 2017, vi + 198 pp., illustrated throughout. Price £28.The 18 articles mainly deal with Byzantine and Early Islamic coinage in Syria and Palestine, but there are two articles on weights, one on lead seals and one historical essay. Well over 200 coins are illustrated, most of them for the first time. The definitive study of the Jerash mint will certainly be the fundamental reference for the foreseeable future and three other Arab-Byzantine mints are published here for the first time. Further details available from Tony Goodwin on a.goodwin2@btopenworld.com

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Notes on Some Puzzling Legends on Seventh-Century Arab-Byzantine Coinage

David Woods[1]

The purpose of this paper is to re-examine some of the more puzzling Greek legends on Arab-Byzantine coins of the so-called Imperial Image phase in order to suggest new understandings or readings of the same. One of the key characteristics of coins of the Imperial Image phase that serves to distinguish them from coins of the preceding Pseudo-Byzantine stage is that they begin to display literate new legends in Greek, and sometimes Arabic also, chiefly the names of the mints, but also statements of quality or validity. Nevertheless, some apparently garbled legends do appear in this phase also. In what follows, I will attempt to demonstrate that some of these may make more sense than initially seems to be the case. In other cases, I will attempt simply to explain the origin of the garbled legends.

Pseudo-Damascus Strikes a 'Full' Coin

A rare variant of the hunting figure obverse type from the so-called Pseudo-Damascus mint depicts a standing figure holding a long cross in his right hand and with a bird perched on his left wrist, all surrounded by a legend consisting of five Greek letters (Fig. 1a-b).[2] The letter Ν occurs at the foot of the long cross, the letter Π (or perhaps Κ) above this near its head, the letter Λ occurs beneath the tail of the bird, and this is quickly followed in turn by the letters Є and Ο. The associated reverse, known in two slightly different dies, depicts a large capital Μ with a monogram above and a star below where the workshop number would normally appear on a Byzantine coin. A blundered Arabic inscription, reading *jāza hadhā dimashq wāfiyah* 'this legal; Damascus; full weight' runs clockwise around the capital Μ and into the exergue.

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[2] On this obverse type, see T. Goodwin and R. Gyselen, ***Arab Byzantine Coins from the Irbid Hoard***, RNS Special Publication 53 (London, 2015), pp. 66-70. Goodwin catalogues the variant under discussion as O83H. It only occurs with two reverse dies, 63DW and 132DW. The main difference between the reverse dies consists of the presence or absence of two small crosses on either side of the monogram above the denomination Μ.



Figure1:
(a) Arab-Byzantine follis (x1.5), Pseudo-Damascus mint (20mm, 4.19g: O83H, R63DW).
(b) Arab-Byzantine follis (x1.5), Pseudo-Damascus mint (18mm, 4.13g: O83H, R132DW). Ex Wilkes & Curtis Auction 2 (15 September 2014), lot 47. © Wilkes & Curtis.
(c) Arab-Byzantine follis (x1.5), Damascus mint (18mm, 4.13g). Ex Classical Numismatic Group, E-Auction 298 (13 March 2013), lot 430. © CNG, Inc.
(d) Arab-Byzantine follis, Emesa mint (22mm, 4.19g). Ex Classical Numismatic Group, E-Auction 333 (20 August 2014), lot 421. © CNG, Inc.

The correct reading of the Greek legend on the obverse has occasioned some discussion. At first glance, it resembles the legend ΛЄO as found to the immediate right of a standing imperial figure on a common obverse type from Damascus (Fig. 1c). It is generally accepted now that this ΛЄO is probably a corrupt copy of the sequence NЄO from the legend ANA - NЄOϚ as found of the folles of Constans II c.641-48, and that it was continued from a Pseudo-Byzantine coin that had blundered in its imitation of this Byzantine prototype.[3] However, the addition of the new letters N and Π suggests that this legend was now being reworked in some way, so that it was not necessarily as meaningless as the original ΛЄO. Oddy favoured the idea that the part of the legend reading ΛЄON abbreviated the name of an official called Leo or Leontius and that the letter Π (or perhaps K) abbreviated the title of this official, and I initially agreed with him in this.[4] However, I had failed to perceive that the legend actually spelled a full word in good Greek if one reads it clockwise starting with the letter Π: ΠΛЄON. This is the neuter singular form of the adjective *pleos* 'full', and in case, number and gender it resembles the legend KAΛON, from the adjective *kalos* 'good', found on obverse types from the mints at Emesa (Fig. 1d) and Antaradus. On the coins of Emesa, the term KAΛON about the figure or bust on the obverse translates the Arabic *ṭayyib* 'good' in the exergue on the reverse. In similar fashion in this case, ΠΛЄON on the obverse translates the Arabic *wāfiyah* 'full' on the reverse.

[3] See e.g. T. Goodwin, ***Arab-Byzantine Coinage***, Studies in the Khalili Collection IV (London, 2005), p. 67, n. 31; C. Foss, ***Arab-Byzantine Coins: An Introduction, with a Catalogue of the Dumbarton Oaks Collection***, pp. 28, 46.
[4] See A. Oddy, 'Symbolism and Design on the Early Umayyad Coinage', in T. Goodwin (ed.), **Arab-Byzantine Coins and History** (London, 2012), pp. 109-23, at 121-22.



Figure 2:
(a) Solidus of Honorius (x1.5), Ravenna (20mm, 4.5g).Ex Gitbud & Naumann, Auction 1(10 March 2013), lot 324. © Gitbud & Naumann.
(b) Solidus of Valentinian III (x1.5), Rome (22mm, 4.43g). Ex Classical Numismatic Group, Triton XIX (5 January 2016), lot 678. © CNG, Inc.

Two further points are necessary in respect of this unusual variant of the hunting figure obverse type. The first is that no-one seems to have commented previously on the nature of the thick squiggly line running behind the legs of the standing figure starting from the base of the long cross. This seems to be a snake, so that the standing figure is being depicted crushing the head of a snake with the base of his cross. Some early Byzantine issues had displayed emperors, or imperial symbols, crushing snakes. For example, Constantine I struck a follis at Constantinople c.327 whose reverse depicted his new Christian standard, the *labarum*, piercing a serpent in apparent reference to his defeat of his rival Licinius in 324.[5] Again, the western emperor Honorius issued a solidus c.408 whose reverse depicted him holding a staff surmounted by a Christogram and with his right leg planted on a prostrate lion with a serpent-headed tail, a composite beast designed to illustrate God's promise (*Psalms* 91.13) to those who take him as their protector, 'You will trample down lions and snakes, fierce lions and poisonous snakes', where these beasts represent the imperial enemies (Fig. 2a).[6] Finally, the western emperor Valentinian III issued a solidus c.425-55 depicting him holding a long cross in his right hand and with his right foot on a human-headed serpent in continuation of the same theme (Fig. 2b).[7] However, the motif of the pierced or trampled serpent fell from favour subsequently, at least as far as the imperial coinage was concerned, so that that the engraver of the obverse type under discussion was unlikely to have been inspired by recent imperial iconography. As an alternative source of inspiration, one notes that one of the most famous martyrs of late antiquity, St. Theodore the Recruit, was sometimes depicted as a standing figure piercing a serpent with his spear, as on a seal issued by a certain Peter of Euchaita sometime c.650-730.[8] Naturally, the cult of St. Theodore was as popular throughout the greater Syrian region as it was elsewhere, so that, for example, a chapel in his name was attached to the cathedral at Gerasa (dedicated in 562), there was a church of St. Theodore just outside Jerusalem, and a stone carving of him has been found at Aila.[9] One suspects, therefore, that the engraver of the current obverse type was inspired

[5] ***RIC* VII**, Constantinople no. 19. Constantine refers to Licinius as a serpent in a letter to bishop Eusebius of Caesarea (Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 2.46.2), and had a painting erected at the entrance to his palace depicting him and his sons above a serpent pierced by a weapon and cast into the sea (*Vita Constantini* 3.3.1-3). See P. Bruun, 'The Christian signs on the coins of Constantine', ***Arctos*** 3 (1962), pp. 5-35, at 21-22.
[6] ***RIC* X**, nos 1310-11. For the symbolism, see R. Demougeot, 'La symbolique du lion et du serpent sur les *solidi* des empéreurs d'occident de la première motié du V^{e} siècle', ***Revue Numismatique*** 28 (6th Series) (1986), pp. 94-118.
[7] ***RIC* X**, nos 2001-02, 2005-06, 2010-11, 2014-15, 2018-19, 2024-28.
[8] For this seal, see E. McGeer, J. Nesbitt, and N. Oikonomides, ***Catalogue of Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks and in the Fogg Museum of Art, 4: The East*** (Washington, 2001), pp. 45-6. In general, see C. Walter, 'Saint Theodore and the dragon', in C. Entwistle (ed.), ***Through a Glass Brightly: Studies in Byzantine and Medieval Art and Archaeology Presented to David Buckton*** (Oxford, 2003), pp. 95-106. For translations of the key texts, see now J. Haldon, **A Tale of Two Saints: The Martyrdoms and Miracles of Saints Theodore 'the Recruit' and Theodore 'the General'**, Translated Texts for Byzantinists 2 (Liverpool, 2016).
[9] For the chapel at Gerasa and the carving at Aila, see M. Piccirillo, ***The Mosaics of Jordan*** (Amman, 1992), pp. 117, 337 respectively.

by some such depiction of St. Theodore to depict the standing figure thereupon crushing a snake also.

The second point of further note here concerns the identity and significance of the animal depicted between the letters Π and N on this obverse type. Oddy sought to identify this as a desert hare, the intended victim of the alleged falcon on the figure's wrist.[10] An auction catalogue tentatively identifies it as a deer.[11] However, it better resembles a horse, and its significance probably lies in its action. The position of its legs beneath it suggests that it is running, while the fact that it has twisted its head around in order to look behind it suggests that it fears pursuit. Hence this coin depicts a horse running in flight from an enemy of some type. In the Old Testament, the horse symbolises physical rather than spiritual strength, so that a horse in flight represents the defeat of an enemy relying on physical strength alone.[12] In the light of this symbolism, one is tempted to interpret the running horse of our coin as the symbol of the defeat of an enemy who had relied on physical strength alone. In support of this interpretation, one notes that it is consistent with, and reinforces even, the associated symbolism of the cross on pole piercing a snake, that is, the triumph of the cross over its enemies. Hence the engraver of this obverse type has drawn on both the Old and New Testaments in his search for the images to convey his message that the spiritual strength of the standing figure – the Christian emperor presumably – will enable him to defeat an enemy who places his trust in physical strength alone. In other words, the Byzantine emperor will eventually defeat the Muslim foe through the power of the cross.

Gerasa: So Good They Named It Twice

The display of different standards of literacy on the obverse and reverse of a coin could point to the work of different die engravers in each case, and nowhere is this better illustrated than in the case of an example from Gerasa recently offered for sale (Fig. 3).



Figure 3: Arab-Byzantine follis (x1.5), Gerasa mint (28mm, 10.92g). Ex Athena Numismatics on vcoins.com (SKU z135: dated 11 November 2016). © Athena Numismatics

The obverse depicts the name of the mint town running clockwise to the right of the two seated figures. It reads ΓЄΡΑϽΟΝ, meaning 'of Gerasa', and is in good Greek, although displaying two somewhat unusual features. The first is that it includes a ligature formed from a lower case medial sigma Ͻ and an omicron Ο, where the result looks very like a letter beta that has fallen onto its front. The second feature is the use of the letter omicron where the letter omega would have been more correct. One finds a parallel to this in the obverse legend ЄΝ ΤϬΤΟ ΝΙΚΑ as used upon the folles of Constans II 641-57, where the final Ο of ΤϬΤΟ should actually read ω. Hence the name should more properly have been written as ΓЄΡΑϽΩΝ. However, the legend on the reverse is much

[10] Oddy, 'Symbolism and Design on the Early Umayyad Coinage', pp. 120-21.
[11] Wilkes and Curtis, Auction 2 (15 September 2014), p. 5, refers to a 'small animal (deer?) in the left field'.
[12] On the horse as a symbol of physical as opposed to spiritual strength, see e.g. *Deuteronomy* 20.1, *Psalms* 33.17, *Proverbs* 21.31, *Isaiah* 31.1.

more problematic. The dealer selling this coin interpreted the legend descending to the left of the denomination Μ and that in the exergue as reading (in transliteration) 'JER and JARO' respectively. This is correct in part. The first three letters descending to the left of the Μ do seem to spell ΓЄΡ, properly transliterated as GER, so forming the first part of the name of Gerasa in Greek. The first letter Γ is upside down with respect to the next two letters, but the intention seems clear nonetheless. In contrast, the legend in the exergue cannot be transliterated as 'JARO', since it only contains three letters, a Greek Ο, a retrograde Ρ, and Α. This does not seem to make sense whether one reads the Greek letters from left to right as ΟΡΑ or from right to left as ΑΡΟ. Fortunately, if one compares this sequence to the legend on the obverse, all becomes clear. The engraver of the reverse die seems to have decided to copy the legend ΓЄΡΑϹΟΝ from the obverse die, and began by engraving the sequence ΓЄΡ in descending order to the left of the denomination Μ. He then ran out of space and decided to continue the remaining sequence ΑϹΟΝ in the exergue. However, he began writing this from right to left rather than vice-versa as was normal in Greek. Next, he misread the ligatured form of the Ϲ and Ο, misinterpreting the Ϲ with the top line extended to form a ligature with the Ο as a Ρ instead. Finally, he ran out of space once more and so had to omit the final letter Ν. The result was that he misspelled the original ΓЄΡΑϹΟΝ as ΓЄΡΑΡΟ instead, but that this was concealed somewhat by the fact that the ΑΡΟ sequence was written from right to left.

Jerusalem and the Triumph of the Cross

The coinage of the Imperial Image phase from Jerusalem is very rare.[13] The basic type depicts a standing emperor holding a long cross and *globus cruciger* on the obverse, and a cursive denomination Ϻ surrounded by the name of Jerusalem in Greek on the reverse. The name is spelled ΙЄΡΟϹΟΛVΜѠΝ, meaning simply 'of Jerusalem', being the genitive case of ΙЄΡΟϹΟΛVΜΑ which is neuter plural in form, where the sequence ΙЄΡΟ descends to the left of the cursive denomination Ϻ, the sequence ϹΟΛV descends to its right, and the final ΜѠΝ runs from left to right in the exergue. There does not seem to be any significant variation in the reverse design, but there appear to be two variants in the obverse design. One variant depicts a legend running around the circumference of the coin, with five letters to the right of the emperor and several more to the left, but the surviving specimens are in such poor condition that it is not possible to read these letters properly. The other variant, know from a single specimen in relatively good condition (Fig. 4a), depicts what appears to be a retrograde Ν to the left of the long cross held by the emperor and a cursive sigma Ϲ to the right of the standing figure.

[13] See the standard discussion of the coinage of Jerusalem by Goodwin, ***Arab-Byzantine Coinage***, pp. 85-102, at 87-88.



(a) (b)

Figure 4:
(a) Arab-Byzantine follis (x 1.5), Jerusalem mint (21mm, 2.68g). Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art.
(b) Byzantine follis of Constans II, Constantinople (24mm, 5.18g). Ex Agora Auctions, Numismatic Auction 64 (24 January 2017), lot 315. © Agora Auctions, Inc.

So what, if anything, is the significance of these letters? Three factors need to be borne in mind as one ponders their potential significance. The first is that they do not seem to correspond to any letters on the Byzantine model for this particular obverse type. The model seems to be the standing emperor as depicted on the early folles under Constans II c. 641-48. He was surrounded by the legend ЄN TȣTO NIKA, meaning 'In this sign, conquer!', running clockwise starting from the base of the long cross or labarum (Fig. 4b). While it is possible that the retrograde N could preserve the N of the Greek ЄN, although twisted somewhat, the key point here is that the original Byzantine legend does not contain any letter C at all. The second factor to bear in mind is that the long cross held by the emperor is much thicker and more 'monumental' in nature than was the norm upon the Byzantine model. This may have been deliberate, intended to emphasise this aspect of the design, so one should be open to the possibility that the letters may have been intended in reference to the cross in some way. The third factor is that when a mint at Jerusalem had last struck coinage in its own name, at or about the time of its siege by the Persians in 614, it had struck two types of follis, one of which had borne the legend XCNIKA in the exergue, meaning 'Christ conquers!' or 'May Christ conquer!'.[14] By this was meant that Christ conquers through the power of his cross, an implicit reference to the presence of the True Cross in Jerusalem. Hence the emphasis was very much of the victory of the cross.

Taking these factors into account, the obvious suggestion is that the retrograde N and C were intended in abbreviation of some phrase referring to the victory of the cross. The retrograde N seems to have been intended in abbreviation of the Greek noun *nikē* 'victory' and the C in abbreviation of the noun *stauros* 'cross' in the genitive case, so declaring 'The victory of the cross!'. Perhaps this was a generic wish that the Christian Byzantine empire would eventually triumph over the Muslim Arab empire, but one cannot exclude the possibility that the designer or engraver was inspired to a new hope by a recent Byzantine victory. In particular, given the approximate date of this type, identified by Goodwin as an excellent candidate for identification as a very early Imperial Image issue, one wonders whether this type does not represent a reaction to the news of the failure of the first great Arab siege of Constantinople in c.667-68.[15]

[14] See S. Mansfield, 'Heraclean Folles of Jerusalem', in A. Oddy (ed.), ***Coinage and History in the Seventh Century Near East*** (London, 2010), pp. 49-55.
[15] On this siege, especially the date, see M. Jankowiak, 'The First Arab Siege of Constantinople', ***Travaux et Mémoires*** 17 (2013), pp. 1-80.

Heliopolis and an Apparent Retrograde N

Although, as has just been argued, the occurrence of apparently isolated letters on the obverse can sometimes serve to abbreviate an important new message, they more usually serve merely as clues to the Byzantine prototype for this obverse, 'frozen' details mechanically copied from Byzantine model to Arab-Byzantine imitation without any thought as to their true significance. An example from Heliopolis will illustrate this point. Three different obverse types were used on the Imperial Image coins from Heliopolis. Goodwin has identified that depicting two standing facing imperial figures with a long cross-on-steps between them as Type 1, that depicting two standing facing imperial figures with a small cross between their heads as Type 2, and that depicting a single standing facing imperial figure as Type 3, where he favoured identifying the prototype for Type 1 as the obverse of the solidus struck at Constantinople by Constans II c.661-68, the prototype of Type 2 as the obverse either of folles struck under Heraclius c.613-16 or of a half-follis struck under Phocas at Thessalonica, and the prototype of Type 3 as the obverse of the folles struck at Constantinople by Constans II c.641-48.[16]



Figure 5:
(a) Arab-Byzantine follis (x 1.5), Heliopolis mint (20mm, 2.68g). Ex Wilkes & Curtis, Auction 2 (15 September 2014), lot 43. © Wilkes & Curtis.
(b) Byzantine solidus (x 1.5), Constantinople mint (19mm, 4.35g). Ex Classical Numismatic Group, E-Auction 353 (17 June 2016), lot 676. © CNG, Inc.

The point of interest here is that, on one die of obverse Type 2, an object described by Goodwin as a 'retrograde N' appears to the right of the pair of figures (Fig. 5a). However, if one compares this obverse to the reverse of a solidus struck at the seventh workshop at Constantinople during the period c.661-68 (Fig. 5b), a different understanding of this element emerges. As was normal, the solidus displays the number of the workshop at the end of the reverse legend, the numeral Z (= 7) in this case, although it is depicted retrograde. It looks exactly like the alleged retrograde N of the Arab-Byzantine obverse, and occurs in exactly the same spot in respect of the standing figures. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion, therefore, that the apparent retrograde letter N is actually a retrograde numeral Z copied from the Byzantine solidus, that is, that the Arab-Byzantine obverse is based on the reverse of this solidus issued sometime c.661-68. One notes in support of this that a small pellet occurs on each side of the small cross between the heads of the standing figures on the Arab-Byzantine obverse mimicking exactly the terminal pellets of the top lateral of the long cross between the standing figures on the Byzantine reverse.

Damascus and Heliopolis

The obverse of a coin seemingly attributable to Damascus on the basis of the Arabic legend on the reverse displays the Greek legend ΛΟΠΜΑЄ, if read clockwise starting at 1h, to the immediate right

[16] See the standard discussion of the coinage of Heliopolis by Goodwin, ***Arab-Byzantine Coinage***, pp. 49-83, at 51-2.

of a single standing figure, where the letter A is upside down in respect of the other letters (Fig. 6a).[17]



Figure 6:
(a) Arab-Byzantine follis (x 1.5), Damascus mint (20mm, 3.97g). Ex Wilkes & Curtis, Auction 2 (15 September 2014), lot 46. © Wilkes & Curtis.
(b) Arab-Byzantine follis (x 1.5), Heliopolis mint (18mm). Ex Zurqieh on vcoins.com (SKU AA2040: dated 18 June 2016). © Zurqieh Co. L.L.C.

This obverse type seems to imitate a relatively common obverse type from Damascus depicting the legend ΔAMACKOC to the immediate right of a standing figure, and since the legend reads clockwise starting at 1h in that case, one is immediately tempted to read the apparent legend ΛOΠMAЄ in the same manner. The problem, however, is, that read as ΛOΠMAЄ, the inscription makes no sense whatsoever. Given the relatively high standard of engraving and production otherwise, it is difficult to believe that the engraver would have deliberately produced a pseudo-legend consisting of letters chosen at random. The probability, therefore, is that he has accidentally garbled a real Greek legend. Given that he seems to have been imitating the obverse type with ΔAMACKOC to the immediate right of a standing figure, one is tempted to assume that he had intended this legend as a mint mark also. The presence of the ΛOΠ sequence reinforces this suspicion, as it seems to represent part of some place-name ending in *–polis* (-ΠOΛIC) read in reverse. Only three towns whose names ended in this manner produced Arab-Byzantine coinage, Heliopolis, Diospolis and Scythopolis, so they form the obvious starting points for any investigation of this legend. One must also remain open to the possibility that the legend does not necessarily begin with the letter Λ, but with one of the other letters instead. For example, if it began with the Є, it would read ЄΛOΠMA. In this case, one immediately notes a similarity to the mint name on the reverse type used at Heliopolis, with the legend HΛIϑ descending to the left of the numeral M and the legend ΠOΛЄ descending to its right, to be read as HΛIϑΠOΛЄ (ϢC), meaning ‘of Heliopolis’, when properly spelled, although the letters are often blundered. If one begins to read the mint mark starting on the right, but reading upwards rather than downwards, it reads ЄΛOΠ, the start of the legend on our obverse if read beginning with Є. If one then continues from right to left and begins to read the first part of the mint mark also, but reading downwards as intended, one begins with the sequence HΛ. However, these two letters could easily be misread as MA also, and one reverse die does indeed display a squashed H capable of being misread as an M above a Λ that has clearly been transformed into an A (Fig. 6b). It is arguable, therefore, that the legend on our obverse should be read ЄΛOΠMA, where this is a relatively simple misreading of the legend HΛIϑΠOΛЄ from the reverse of the coinage of Heliopolis.

[17] Foss, ***Arab-Byzantine Coins***, p. 130, no. 39, publishes an example so worn that he was only able to read the first three letters of this inscription, and even then read them as ΛOT rather than ΛOΠ.

Canatha or Thaanach?



Figure 7: Arab-Byzantine follis (x1.5), 'Canatha' mint (28mm, 9.37g). Ex Heritage Auctions, CICF World and Ancient Coins Signature Auction (10 April 2014), lot 24058. © Heritage Auctions.

Scythopolis and Gerasa struck large module coins imitating the folles of Justin II and Sophia (565-74), and while another group of similar size and design has also been credited to Abila, the apparent mint-mark on those coins is best explained as a corruption of the name of Gerasa rather than as Abila.[18] Yet another group of coins of similar size and design to the coinage of Scythopolis and Gerasa has recently been identified, and attributed to Canatha (Qanawat in modern Syria). The mint-mark on these coins occurs on the obverse, exactly as on the coins of Scythopolis and Gerasa. To focus on the best preserved example with all the letters correctly formed (Fig. 7), if one reads the obverse legend in an anti-clockwise direction starting with the K next to the head of the left-hand figure, then it appears to read KAANAΘ, and one can immediately understand the temptation to interpret this in reference to Canatha.[19] However, three factors give pause to thought before accepting this interpretation. First, the mint name on the coins from Scythopolis and Gerasa normally reads in clockwise direction, not in the anti-clockwise direction necessary to produce the reading KAANAΘ here. Second, the mint name on the coins from Scythopolis and Gerasa is normally spelled in full, but the interpretation of the legend KAANAΘ as Canatha requires that at least one, if not two, letters have been omitted. To be more precise, the name Canatha is neuter plural in form in Greek, so that, if the mint-name were to be written in the nominative case, just as the name of Scythopolis is written on its coins, then it should be written KANAΘA. However, if it were to be written in the genitive case meaning 'of Canatha', just as the name of Gerasa is written on its coins, it should be written KANAΘΩN (or –ON perhaps) instead. Third, the name of Canatha in Greek was normally spelled either KANATA or KANAΘA.[20] There does not seem to be any evidence that it was ever spelled KAANATA or KAANAΘA.

In the light of the above factors, one needs to ask what the result is if one reads the inscription in clockwise direction instead. Would that make sense? That produces the reading ΘANAAK, a close approximation to the ancient name of modern Ti'inik in the Palestinian West Bank, about 13 km northwest of the city of Jenin (Fig. 8). The Old Testament mentions it on several different occasions spelling its name variously either Thaanach (ΘAANAX: 1 *Chronicle* 7:29), Thanak (ΘANAK: *Judges*

[18] On the coinage of Scythopolis, see A. Oddy, 'The Phase 2 Coinage of Scythopolis under Mu'awiya and His Successors', in A. Oddy, I. Schulze, and W. Schulze (eds.), ***Coinage and History in the Seventh Century Near East 4*** (London, 2015), pp. 151-77. In support of a mint at Abila, see A. Oddy, 'The Coinage of Abila in the Early Umayyad Period', ***Aram*** 23 (2011), pp. 337-46. Arguing against this interpretation, see D. Woods, 'Abila: A Phantom Arab-Byzantine Mint', ***Israel Numismatic Research*** 11 (2016), pp. 141-51.

[19] See also Andrew Oddy's article 'A new Byzantine-Arab mint: Canatha of the Decapolis' elsewhere in this volume.

[20] It appears as such on several of the coins struck there during the 1st-2nd centuries AD. See A. Spijkerman, ***The Coins of the Decapolis and Provincia Arabia***, Studii Biblici Franciscani Collectio Maior 25 (Jerusalem, 1978), pp. 90-95.

1:27), or Thanaach (ΘΑΝΑΑΧ: *Judges* 5:19). My suggestion, therefore, is that ΘΑΝΑΑΚ represents another slight variation in this name. Writing c.AD325, Eusebius of Caesarea confirms that there was a 'very large village' on the site then.[21] However, modern excavations have focussed on the Bronze Age remains of the ancient tell rather than the Byzantine village to the side of this.[22] Worse still, the modern settlement now covers the Byzantine remains. The result is that almost nothing is known the Byzantine village, how flourishing or not it really was, although it did survive into the Crusader period.

The final argument in support of the reading of the mint name in reference to ancient Thaanach rather than Canatha concerns the proximity of these settlements to Scythopolis and Gerasa. As the crow flies, Thaanach is about 26km from Scythopolis and 69km from Gerasa. On the other hand, Canatha is about 109km from Scythopolis and 86km from Gerasa. So Thaanach is much nearer than Canatha to both Scythopolis and Gerasa, and was far more likely to have been influenced by trade and other connections with them than was Canatha. Indeed, Canatha is only 90km from Damascus, and was situated only slightly east of the main road between Damascus and Bostra, and so more likely to have fallen within its economic hinterland than that of Scythopolis or Gerasa.

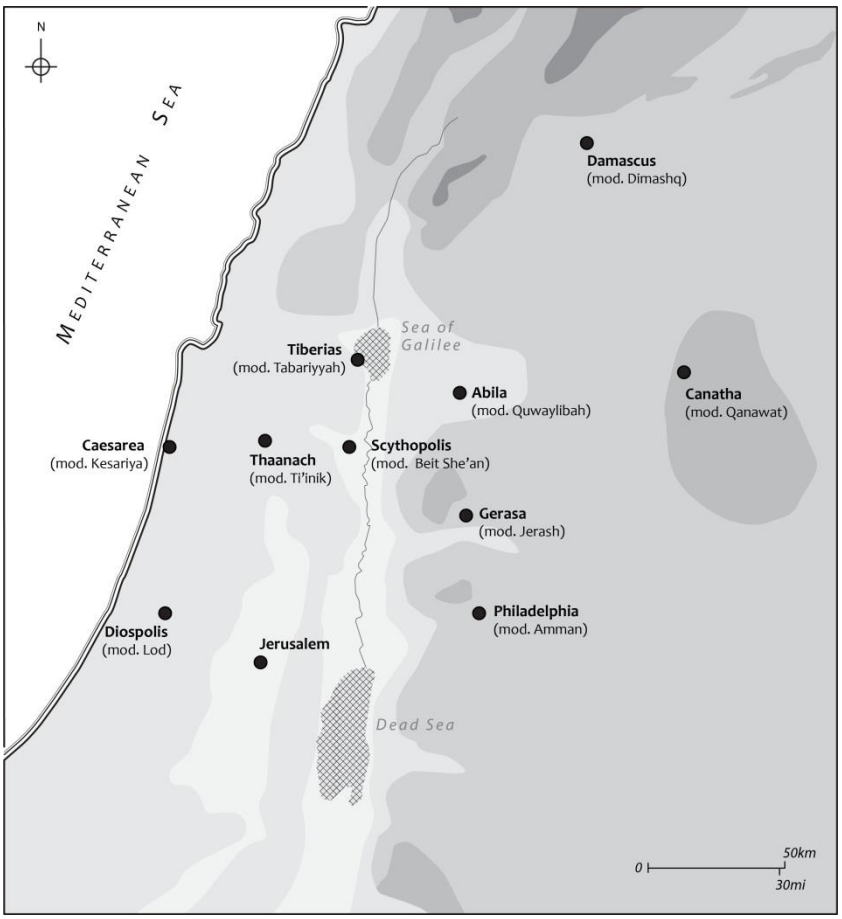


Figure 8: Map locating ancient Thaanach/Thanaach.

[21] Eusebius, *Onomasticon* 504, refers to a κώμη μεγίστη, which Jerome translates as *villa pergrandis*. See R.S. Notley and Z. Safrai, ***Eusebius, Onomasticon: A Triglott Edition with Notes and Commentary*** (Leiden, 2005), p. 96.
[22] For a summary of the evidence, and a bibliography, see e.g. S. Kreuzer, 'Taanach', in D.N. Freedman (ed.), **Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible**, (Grand Rapids, 2000), pp. 1268-69.