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257 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*
CHL Y. Meshorer, G. Bijovsky and W. Fischer-Bossert. *Coins of the Holy Land: The Abraham and Marian Sofaer Collection at the American Numismatic Society and the Israel Museum*. Ed. by D. Hendin and A. Meadows. New York 2013
CIL Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum
CNP e.g., L. Kadman. *The Coins of Akko Ptolemais* (Corpus Nummorum Palaestinensium IV). Jerusalem 1961
CPE I C.C. Lorber. *Coins of the Ptolemaic Empire.* Part I: *Ptolemy I through Ptolemy IV,* I*, Precious Metal,* and II, *Bronze*. New York 2018
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
EH I T. Faucher, A. Meadows and C. Lorber eds. *Egyptian Hoards* I: *The Ptolemies* (Bibliothèque d'Étude 168). Cairo 2017.
IEJ *Israel Exploration Journal*
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 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
MIBEC W. Hahn and M. Metlich. *Money of the Incipient Byzantine Empire Continued (Justin II—Revolt of the Heraclii, 565–610)*. (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Numismatik und Geldgeschichte der Universität Wien 13). Vienna 2009
MN American Numismatic Society Museum Notes
NC Numismatic Chronicle
NCirc. *Numismatic Circular*
NNM *Numismatic Notes and Monographs*
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
RRC M.H. Crawford. *Roman Republican Coinage*. Cambridge 1974
SC e.g., A. Houghton and C. Lorber. *Seleucid Coins. A Comprehensive Catalogue; Seleucus I through Antiochus III* I/I: *Introduction, Maps and Catalogue*. New York-Lancaster, Pa.–London 2002
SICA e.g., S. Album and T. Goodwin. *Sylloge of Islamic Coins in the Ashmolean* 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 Kokhba*. Jerusalem-Nyack 2001

ʿAbd al-Malik and the *Shahāda Solidus*

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Abstract
It is argued that ʿAbd al-Malik (685–705) chose the obverse of the so-called *shahāda solidus* that he began striking in *c*. 691 in order to provoke Justinian II (685–695, 705–711) into refusing to accept tribute in this coin. In this way, he hoped to manipulate Justinian into breaking the treaty between the Arab and Byzantine empires. His choice of obverse had nothing to do with Emperor Heraclius (610–641), even though it was based on a Heraclian prototype, but it alluded rather to the manner in which Justinian had risen to power and implicitly questioned the legitimacy of his rule.

Caliph ʿAbd al-Malik (685–705) struck the so-called Standing Caliph *solidus* (Fig. 1a) at Dimashq during the period AH 74–77 (693–697).[1] On the obverse, this coin depicts a long-haired, heavily bearded figure standing with his right hand at the top of a scabbard crossing before him as if about to draw a sword. He uses his left hand to hold the scabbard steady about its center. A long object hangs from his right forearm, probably identifiable as a whip. He is surrounded by an Arabic legend, the *shahāda*, translated as: "In the name of God, there is no god but God alone; Muhammad is the messenger of God". The figure is not identified by name or title on the *solidus*, but the same figure also appears on some contemporary *drachms* where he is specifically identified as the caliph; thus there is no doubt concerning his identity. On the reverse, this coin depicts a small globe atop a pole-on-steps surrounded by an Arabic legend translated as: "In the name of God, this *dinar* was struck in the year XX", varying according to the year.



Fig. 1. **a**. Standing Caliph *solidus* (4.46 g, 20 mm), ANS 1970.63.1; **b**. *shahāda solidus* (4.40 g). Ex Morton & Eden 92, April 26, 2018, Lot 12

1 On the Standing Caliph coinage across all metals (gold, silver, copper) and from all mints, see Goodwin 2018. On the beginning of precious metal coinage at Dimashq under ʿAbd al-Malik, see Treadwell 2009. The classic modern discussion of Arab-Byzantine gold coinage remains Miles 1967.

The striking of this coin marks an important stage in the development of a distinctive Arab coinage that owed nothing to its Byzantine predecessor. However, this was ʻAbd al-Malik's second attempt at the striking of a gold coin within a short period and it is worth asking what he had changed his mind about, and why he had done so since his first attempt at striking a gold coin, the so-called *shahāda solidus* (Fig. 1b).[2] On the obverse, the *shahāda solidus* depicts three crowned figures standing close together with an orb in each of their right hands. The orbs are all topped by small globes. The central figure is distinguished by his long beard from the other two beardless figures and by the fact that he seems to be standing slightly ahead of the other two. None are armed in any way, and each bends his empty-handed left arm before him. On the reverse, this coin depicts a small globe atop a pole-on-steps surrounded by an Arabic legend, the *shahāda*. Furthermore, a large Greek letter *beta* B occurs in the field to the left of the pole-on-steps and a large Greek *iota* I in the field to its right. No date appears on the coin, but it is normally dated to just before the striking of the Standing Caliph *solidus* on two grounds. First, the identical depiction of the pole-on-steps on the reverse of each type suggests a close date. Second, the fact that the mint at Dimashq began striking silver *drachms* depicting the *shahāda* on the obverse in AH 72 (691/2) suggests that the *shahāda solidus* was probably introduced at about the same time.



Fig. 2. *Solidus* of Heraclius and sons (4.45 g, 18 mm), Constantinople; *MIB* 3:86, No. 48. Ex CNG 492, May 26, 2021, Lot 479

When one compares the Standing Caliph *solidus* to the *shahāda solidus*, the most obvious difference between them lies in the nature of the obverse and the replacement of the three standing figures of the *shahāda solidus* by the one standing figure on the Standing Caliph *solidus*. The second main difference lies in the removal of the Greek letters *beta* B and *iota* I from the fields to the side of the pole-on-steps on the reverse. In one sense, the reason for the removal of both is obvious in that it completes, or rather almost completes, what one might describe

2 There is also a group of apparent imitations of Byzantine *solidi*, primarily of the reign of Heraclius, where the object on the reverse resembles a bar atop a pole-on-steps rather than a globe atop a pole-on-steps and the uprights of the small crosses on the obverses of the prototypes remain visible still. While older works attribute this group to ʻAbd al-Malik (e.g., Bates 1986:239–242; Miles 1967:229), modern commentators attribute them to the caliph Muʿāwiya (661–680) instead (e.g., Shaddel 2021; Bacharach 2010:4–5; Foss 2002:362–363).

as the de-Byzantinization of the *shahāda solidus*. But why did ʿAbd al-Malik not impose his image on the obverse of his new gold coin right from the start? Here one needs to recall that the three standing figures on the obverse of the *shahāda solidus* are closely copied from the obverse used on Constantinopolitan *solidi* during the period 632–641, that is, during the last years of Emperor Heraclius (610–641), when this had depicted Heraclius himself standing between his sons Heraclonas and Heraclius Constantine (Fig. 2).[3] The main difference between the Byzantine original and the Arab imitation lies in the removal of all depictions of the cross. Whereas the three figures of the Byzantine original had displayed a small cross on each of their crowns and a small cross atop each of their orbs, the three figures of the Arab imitation display nothing upon their crowns and only a small globe atop each of their orbs. Nevertheless, no one handling the caliph's new coin could have failed to realize that it depicted three Byzantine emperors rather than the caliph and associates, even if they were not then able to name any of these emperors.[4] Their clothing, attributes, and even their pose, would have been long familiar to everyone from the depiction of Byzantine emperors on Byzantine coins still circulating within the caliphate, if not from their depiction on other remains of former Byzantine rule — statues, mosaics, and other works of art. Hence ʿAbd al-Malik had carefully de-Christianized the obverse of the *shahāda solidus*, but he had not yet de-Byzantinized it. Why not?

I will begin my analysis of this issue with the assumption that the caliph, or his chief advisor, chose the model for the obverse of his new gold coin carefully, that is, that it was not a purely random selection from among the dozen or more varieties of obverse visible on the *solidi* still circulating in the greater Syrian region by the last decade of the seventh century. This is a reasonable assumption given the symbolic importance of these coins as the first gold coins that ʿAbd al-Malik had produced. Furthermore, everything else about the production of these coins suggests care. For example, the crosses were fully and carefully removed from the figures on the obverse, as already noted, and the figures themselves are well depicted in a realistic manner with properly proportioned features.[5] The surviving

3 *MIB* 3:85–86, Nos. 39–53.

4 Treadwell 2009:367 claimed that the three figures on the new coin are "a generic symbol of rulership, free of their original imperial Christian connotations". Yet the imperial or Byzantine elements — the crowns and orbs — are still visible, even if the Christian element, the crosses, was removed. However, he rightly rejected the suggestions by Bates (1986:243) both that the clothing of the figures has been Arabicized, rather than merely simplified due to a lack of technical ability, and that the figures may represent three Arabs, ʿAbd al-Malik with two heirs perhaps.

5 One may contrast the depiction of these figures on the *shahāda solidus* to their much clumsier depiction on the obverse of the Imperial Image phase of Arab-Byzantine bronze coins from Tiberias in order to appreciate the greater care taken in the reproduction of their common model.

specimens of this type also seem to have been well struck with the dies properly centered.[6] Hence ʿAbd al-Malik probably had some particular reason for deciding to base the obverse of his new coin on that of the Constantinopolitan *solidi* of the period 632–641 rather than on a more contemporary Byzantine obverse or even use his own image instead. Of course, it is easy to understand why he might have avoided copying the depiction of the current emperor, Justinian II (685–695, 705–711) from the most recent Byzantine *solidi* onto his new *solidus*. He might have found it particularly humiliating to place his depiction on the coinage given that he was currently paying him a large annual tribute in return for a truce, but it surely was not much less humiliating to place any Byzantine emperor, or symbol of Byzantine authority, on his coinage.

It is tempting to assume that the caliph's decision to depict three Byzantine emperors on the obverse of his new gold coin rather than himself was an attempt to render the coin more acceptable if not to the general population within the caliphate used to handling Byzantine *solidi* of this obverse type, then perhaps to the Byzantine authorities, or even to the emperor himself.[7] Certainly, a large proportion of the *solidi* circulating within the greater Syrian region during the late seventh century were of the same type as his prototype for this obverse. For example, a hoard deposited at Dimashq in *c*. 690 contained 12 *solidi* of this type out of a total of 50 (24%) (Metcalf 1980:103–104). Similarly, another hoard deposited at Reḥob in *c*. 686 contained 9 *solidi* of this type from a total of 28 (33%) (Bijovsky 2012:153–154), while a hoard deposited at Bet She'an in *c*. 681 contained 169 *solidi* of this type out of a total of 751 (23%) (Bijovsky 2002:203–212). Hence it is easy to assume that the population might have felt somewhat reassured by the general familiarity of the obverse on the new *solidus*. The problem with this assumption, however, is that it underestimates the damage already done to the acceptability of this new coin by the systematic removal of the cross from the imperial image on the obverse and, more importantly, by the glaring damage done to the cross on its reverse.

Byzantine *solidi* had traditionally depicted a large cross-on-steps on the reverse and the pole-on-steps of the caliph's new coin represented a very obvious rejection of this cross. To those who noted this change, it probably seemed no more than a blasphemous mutilation of a sacred symbol, despite the best efforts of some modern commentators to place a more positive spin on it.[8] The negative reaction of the

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6 For catalogues of surviving specimens, see Miles 1967:210–211 (8 specimens); Treadwell 2009:363–364 (9 specimens).

7 So Treadwell (2009:367), who argued that the three standing emperors type was chosen because it was "a familiar component of the circulating monetary stock".

8 Heidemann 2010:32 argued that it is an urban column, "a non-religious symbol of urban pride". He was anticipated in this by Lane Poole 1875:256 who referred to a cross "modified into a pillar with a globular capital". Even if this were true, though, the fact remains that it would have struck most observers as no more than a mutilated

Christian community within the caliphate to some gold and silver coins without crosses that Caliph Muʿāwiya (661–680) was reported to have struck is a reminder both that many people did pay attention to the designs upon their coins and that they were particularly attentive to the treatment of the cross on them, whatever their precise reason.[9] There is no reason why they should have been any more receptive of ʿAbd al-Malik's new *solidus* with its 'mutilated' cross about 30 years later at most than they were of the coins that they believed Muʿāwiya to have produced.

As far as Emperor Justinian II was concerned, there is no reason to believe that he would have been any less outraged than other Christians at the treatment of the cross-on-steps of the traditional Byzantine *solidus* on the new coin. He would hardly have been pleased either at the removal of crosses from the imperial image. His attitude to the place of religion on the coinage, the fact that he was a firm supporter of such ostentatious religiosity, can be gauged from his introduction of a new *solidus* in 691 depicting the bust of Christ on the obverse and a legend describing himself as the Servant of Christ on the reverse.[10] So, as far as the acceptability of the coin was concerned, it did not matter what emperor, or how many of them, the caliph placed on its obverse when his treatment of the cross, particularly on the reverse, so outraged Christian sensibilities anyway. Indeed, it probably did not matter whether he placed any emperor at all on the coinage. He might just as well have depicted himself on the coin, as he would do on the Standing Caliph *solidus* next, such was the damage that he had already done to the acceptability of this coin. For this reason, therefore, any attempt to argue that ʿAbd al-Malik placed a familiar imperial obverse on his new *shahāda solidus* in order to make it more acceptable to potential users is not convincing. Indeed, he failed if that was his intention, because there is good evidence that Justinian rejected this coin and the small number of surviving specimens does not encourage the assumption that it saw widespread popular usage either, although there may have been other reasons for this.

It is generally accepted now that the evidence of the Byzantine chronicler Theophanes Confessor (d. 818) proves that Justinian objected strongly to the design of the *shahāda solidus*. Theophanes described how Justinian refused to accept Arab payment of the tribute due to him in 691, as follows:

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cross, so strong are the similarities between it and the traditional cross-on-steps. On the strength of the Christian devotion to the cult of the cross at this period, see Garipzanov 2018:81–105.

9 This event is recorded only in the *Maronite Chronicle*. For a translation, see Palmer 1993:32. On the probable identity of the coins allegedly struck by Muʿāwiya, see Woods 2015. The different forms of crosses on the reverse of Byzantine precious metal coins effectively acted as denominational marks, and would have been carefully noted for this reason alone.

10 *MIB* 3:165–166, Nos. 8–9.

> In this year Justinian foolishly broke the peace with Abimelech [‘Abd al-Malik]; for he strove in his folly to move the population of the island of Cyprus and refused to accept the minted coin that had been sent by Abimelech because it was of a new kind that had never been made before. As the Cypriots were crossing, a multitude of them drowned or died of illness, and the remainder returned to Cyprus. When Abimelech had been informed of this, he diabolically feigned to be begging that peace should not be broken and that Justinian should accept his currency, seeing that the Arabs could not suffer the Roman imprint on their own currency; and inasmuch as the gold was paid by weight the Romans did not suffer any loss from the fact that the Arabs were minting new coin. Justinian mistook his plea as a sign of fear, not understanding that their concern was to stop the incursions of the Mardaites and then break the peace under a seemingly reasonable pretext; which, indeed, came to pass.[11]

It is clear from this that ‘Abd al-Malik tried to pay his tribute in 691 with a new type of gold coin and most commentators now agree that this was the *shahāda solidus*.[12] It is not clear how he had paid this tribute previously, or why he could not pay it in the same way again. Perhaps he had finally exhausted the supply of Byzantine *solidi* within the caliphate. On the other hand, the successes that his forces won during the renewed war with the Byzantines suggest that he had probably been confident in his ability to pursue this war right from the start. This then raises the question whether he had deliberately engineered the dispute over the tribute by striking coins that he knew would be unacceptable to the emperor and seeking to pay the tribute in them. Theophanes seems to have thought so, and while his story of how a sly caliph manipulated an arrogant young emperor is consistent with his general bias against both, this does not necessarily prove it false. ‘Abd al-Malik may well have sought to manipulate Justinian exactly as Theophanes alleged.

The very fact that ‘Abd al-Malik had begun to strike *solidi*, usurping what the Byzantines saw as the imperial prerogative, would probably have angered Justinian in itself, but the caliph was not prepared to leave it at that. The mutilation of the cross-on-steps on the reverse of the new *solidus* would have helped inflame Justinian’s anger, but then there was the question of whether, or how, the obverse of the new coin might also be made to serve the same purpose. It is my suggestion, therefore, that ‘Abd al-Malik deliberately picked the obverse of his new *solidus* in order to anger Justinian and to help provoke the rejection of his coin. He did this by picking an obverse that would seem to allude to the controversial circumstances surrounding

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11 Theophanes Confessor *Chron*. AM 6183 (690/1). Translation from Mango and Scott 1997:509–510.

12 See e.g., Humphreys 2013:243; Morrisson and Prigent 2013:581.

the rise of Justinian to the rank of Augustus. Emperor Constans II (641–668) had appointed his eldest son Constantine IV as Augustus in 654 and his two younger sons, Heraclius and Tiberius, as *Augusti* in 659. Constantine IV had then ruled in association with his two younger brothers until he deposed them in 681 in order to clear the way for the sole accession of his son Justinian. However, he did not do this without serious opposition at the time, resulting in his severe mutilation of at least one senior person who had dared to oppose him in this. Drawing upon the lost chronicle of Theophilus of Edessa (d. 785), the anonymous author of the *Chronicle of 1234* described this controversy as follows:

> Constantine cast out his brothers from the rule because he had a son, an arrogant youth whose name was Justinian. His father thought that this latter was worthy of the dignity of the rule and so he plotted to cast off his brothers and enthrone his son. He began to curry favor with the Romans, now with flattery and gifts, now with deceit and cunning subterfuge. Most of the leading men of the Romans he won over to his designs, but there was a certain Leo, a valiant and distinguished man, who did not accede to the will of the king. Rather he said: 'It is not right to reject now men who have ruled alongside the king. Even our gold currency has three busts portrayed on it. I will not give my support nor will I consent.' The king ordered that his tongue be severed and as he went off followed by the people, he said shouting: 'A trinity rules in heaven and a trinity rules on earth. I will not deny the trinity in heaven nor reject the trinity on earth'. While he was shouting out these words at the top of his voice he received his punishment.[13]

So the last time that three Byzantine emperors ruled together was when Constantine IV and his two brothers did so from 668 to 681. The *solidi* struck during this period had always acknowledged the joint rule of the three, but they had never depicted the three *Augusti* standing together. Instead, they had always depicted the bust of the senior of the three, Constantine IV, on the obverse, and the figures of the other two brothers on the reverse. The only time that a *solidus* depicted the three brothers standing together was when Constans II struck a short-lived type of *solidus* in 659 in apparent commemoration of the promotion of his two younger sons to the rank

13 Translation from Hoyland 2011:174. Michael the Syrian, who also drew upon Theophilus of Edessa in this matter, recorded that Leo's hands and feet were removed as well as his tongue. The only other source for this event apart from Theophilus is a displaced entry in Theophanes Confessor *Chron*. AM 6161 (668/9), taken from a Constantinopolitan source. There, an unspecified number of soldiers from the Anatolic Theme were executed by impalement for opposing the deposition of Constantine's brothers. For a full discussion, see Turner 2003.

of Augustus in that year.[14] That was a relatively scarce type. For example, neither the hoard deposited at Dimashq in *c*. 690, nor that deposited at Reḥob in *c*. 686, contained any specimens, while that deposited at Bet She'an in *c*. 681 contained only 7 specimens out of 751 coins (<1%) (Bijovsky 2002:224–225). This means that neither 'Abd al-Malik, nor his advisors, are likely to have encountered this type as they considered the design of the new *solidus*, while, as already noted, they would have encountered large numbers of Constantinopolitan *solidi* from 632 to 641 depicting Heraclius and his two sons on their obverse. However, since these coins did not bear any obverse legends, neither 'Abd al-Malik, nor his advisors, would necessarily have known that they had depicted Heraclius with his sons. They may well have thought that they had depicted Constantine IV with his two brothers.

It is my argument, therefore, that 'Abd al-Malik probably did not realize that the obverse chosen as the prototype for the obverse of his new coin depicted Heraclius with his two sons rather than Constantine IV with his two brothers. In reality, however, this mistake did not matter, because the very depiction of three standing emperors, regardless of their precise identities, would immediately have reminded the viewers of when three emperors had last ruled together and how and why two of these had been deposed. It would have reminded them that the accession of Justinian II as Augustus and sole ruler had not been guaranteed and that one of his brothers might have succeeded Constantine IV as senior Augustus if he had not deposed them first. In effect, this type raised a serious question mark over the legitimacy of Justinian's rule as sole emperor, if not his very status as Augustus, and nothing could have been more guaranteed to provoke his anger than this.

Finally, some brief comments on the significance of the Greek letters *beta* Β and *iota* Ι in the fields to the side of the pole-on-steps on the reverse of the *shahāda solidus* are necessary here. As a pair, they are reminiscent of the symbols that occur in the fields to the side of the cross-on-steps on Constantinopolitan *solidi* struck during the period 635–639. These coins depict a Heraclian monogram ⁜ in the field to the left of the cross and either Θ, Ι, Ⱥ (a monogram of Ι and Α), or Ɓ (a monogram of Ι and Β) in apparent reference to indiction years 9 (635/6), 10 (636/7), 11 (637/8), and 12 (638/9) respectively in the field to the right of the cross. It has been suggested that the Β and Ι are no more than a reversed copy of the number ΙΒ (= 12) on the *dodecanummia* of Alexandria in Egypt (Lane Poole 1875:256). It has also been suggested that they are a reversed copy of the Ι and Β found on some earlier imitations of the Constantinopolitan *solidus* of indiction year 12.[15] It is my suggestion that the Β was created when the engraver removed the horizontal bar from the Heraclian monogram in order to remove the cross from it. He then assumed that what remained had been intended as a Β and represented it accordingly.

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14 *MIB* 3:125–126, Nos. 39–42. For the date, see Woods 2015:177–178.

15 Bates 1986:243: "the letters are reversed in order probably because the engraver, accustomed to inscribing Arabic from right to left, read the letters that way also."

In support of this argument, one notes the manner in which the earlier form of the Heraclian monogram, that is, the form without the cross-bar, was transformed into a symbol resembling a B on some early Arab-Byzantine imitations of the *folles* struck on Cyprus during the period 626–629 (Fig. 3).[16] The fact that the engraver of the *shahāda solidus* removed the cross from the Heraclian monogram without recognizing the true reading and significance of this monogram is important. It highlights once more the great care taken in the design of the *shahāda solidus*, in this case, to remove any potential crosses from the Byzantine original used as its model. As to the identity of this Byzantine original, the above reconstruction suggests that it depicted a Heraclian monogram in the field to the left of the cross and an I in the field to its right, that is, that it was a *solidus* struck in indiction year 10 (636/7).



Fig. 3. Arab-Byzantine *fals* imitating a *follis* of Cyprus (7.34 g, 25 mm). Ex Numismatik Naumann 55, July 7, 2017, Lot 740

In summary, while ʿAbd al-Malik may have had good economic or financial reasons for beginning to strike a new gold coin in *c*. 691, his decisions about the appearance of this coin were dictated by his short-term political aim of provoking Emperor Justinian to break his treaty with the caliphate. It was not just about provoking him to refuse to accept payment in this particular coin, but also about provoking him to declare the treaty null and void and to do something that broke its previous terms. ʿAbd al-Malik's decision to depict a mutilated cross-on-steps on one side of his new *solidus* was offensive not just to Justinian, but to all Christians. Yet it was not personal in the way that his decision to depict three standing emperors in apparent allusion to the joint rule of Constantine IV with his brothers was. Once ʿAbd al-Malik's use of this obverse had served his purpose in helping to provoke Justinian to break the treaty, he felt free to replace it with the standing caliph instead and to abandon any appearance of submission to the empire suggested by the continued use of such imperial imagery.

16 On the different forms of the Heraclian monogram, see Woods 2020:101–105.

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