

# Copper Coins minted in Damascus in the First and Second Centuries Hijri

## النقود النحاسية المسكوكة في دمشق في القرنين الأول والثاني الهجريين

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### ملخص:

فلوس جمع فلس، وهو الاسم اليوناني اللاتيني، وربما هو الاشتقاق غير المباشر من الأرمينية أو العبرية. ومع ذلك، فقد وصل إلى العرب من البيزنطية، واشتقت كلمة فلوس العربية التي تعني عملات معدنية مصنوعة من النحاس أو البرونز.

عقب الفتح الإسلامي، استخدم العرب هذه الفلوس في التجارة، وحافظوا على العملة الأجنبية الأصلية. وكان وزن الفلوس 30 جراماً خلال عهد الإمبراطور أنستانس الأول (581-491 م)، وكان محفوراً على الجزء الخلفي للعملة الحرف 'م'، وانخفض وزن هذه العملة تدريجياً حتى وصل إلى 6 جرامات خلال الفتح الإسلامي.

عندما غزا العرب المسلمون بلاد الشام لاحظوا أهمية هذه القطع النقدية، وتم سكّها؛ لتكون مماثلة لعملات بيزنطية في طبرية، وقنسرين، وحلب، وحمص، ودمشق، وفلسطين... إلخ.

من خلال النقوش والرسومات، عكست العملات النحاسية التغيرات السياسية والاقتصادية والإدارية التي خضعت لها دمشق تحديداً والدولة الإسلامية بصفة عامة.

يمكننا تقسيم فلس النحاس إلى ثلاثة أنواع رئيسية، كل واحد منها يمثل فترة تاريخية، ونوعاً أو أنواعاً مختلفة، وكذا الشكل العام والرسومات.

يتضمن الجزء الأول الفلوسات العربية البيزنطية إبان الاستيلاء على دمشق في 14هـ / 636م، أي في عهد الخليفة عمر بن الخطاب حتى بداية الإصلاح النقدي، أي التعريب من قبل الخليفة الأموي عبد الملك بن مروان في 73هـ / 692م.

هذا النوع يتكون من نوعين كل منهما مقسم إلى عدة أنواع فرعية. يُظهر النوع الأول الإمبراطور وهو يجلس على عرشه، أما النوع الثاني فيظهر الإمبراطور في عشرين موقفاً مختلفاً. وتعتمد كل المواقف على لغة الحفر، سواء اليونانية اللاتينية أو العربية اليونانية اللاتينية أو العربية اليونانية.

يتضمن الجزء الثاني نقشاً من آل عبد الملك بن مروان، والذي بدأ خلال بداية مرحلة التعريب 77-73هـ / 696-692م؛ حيث تم في هذا العام الانتهاء من التعريب أثناء عهد عبد الملك بن مروان.

يتكون الجزء الثالث من النقود العربية الإسلامية التي تم سكّها في 77هـ، حتى نهاية مرحلة التعريب في نهاية القرن الثاني الهجري. بعدها بقيت النقود النحاسية حتى العصر الحديث.

في هذا البحث نتحدث عن النقود النحاسية، محاولين التفريق بين جميع الأنواع من خلال وصف وتحليل محتوياتها، والاختلاف بين بعضها البعض.

## Introduction

*Fulūs*, the plural of *fals*, is originally a Greek-Latin form (ΦΟΛΛΙΣ), which might derive indirectly from Aramaic or Hebrew.<sup>1</sup> The word reached the Arab world through the Byzantines and was 'Arabicised' from the word *follis*, which most likely meant the struck coinage made of red copper, although it was also used for struck coinage made of bronze.

After the Islamic conquest the Arabs used these *fulūs* in business, retaining the original foreign designation. During the reign of Emperor Anastasius I in 491-518 BCE, the standard weight of the coin was approximately 30 grams, and it carried the capital Greek letter M on the reverse side.<sup>2</sup> However, as time passed, the weight gradually decreased to 6 grams during the period of Islamic conquest.<sup>3</sup>

When the Arab Muslims conquered the territory of Syria, they realised the importance of minting money. Hence, coins were struck, the first imitating Byzantine coins, in Tiberias,<sup>4</sup> Qinnasrin,<sup>5</sup> Aleppo, Hims, Damascus, Filastin etc. Although the purpose of striking this kind of copper coinage was to simplify mathematical calculations, the Arabs were also very interested in the coins' weight and inscriptions. To regulate the weight, special glass scales were created that measured in *qarārūt* and *kharārīb*.<sup>6</sup> It has been affirmed that the value and weight of these coins varied among the different mints and lands. Thus, they possessed a variety of purchasing power, although the relationship or the valid ratio between the coins and the *dirhams* founded at the beginning of the Islamic era was estimated at 1:48 (48 coins equal one *dirham*). However, things changed from one era to the next, and the Arabs did not maintain the weights of Byzantine *follis*, which had become very unstable in the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE. As they had minted the first coins in the same way as the Byzantines, the reverse side of the coins still carried the Greek letter M. However, the front side carried

forms that used to be struck on gold *dinārs*, such as the figure of Heraclius and Constantine, either together or separated or with one of the children. According to Abd al-Rahman Fahmy, the oldest coin that was struck in the Byzantine manner dates to AH 17/CE 638 and was found in Qinnasrin. It displays the same figure as on Heraclius' coinage.<sup>7</sup> J.G. Stickel was able to read the name of the Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab on this coin.<sup>8</sup> However, Taher Raghīb Hussein confirmed that a copper coin found in 1869 in Jerusalem carries the name of Khalid Abu Sulayman (that is, Khalid ibn al-Walid), the place of mint, Tabariyya, as well as the date of mintage, AH 15/CE 636. Furthermore, A. Müller published this coin in his book *Der Islam in Morgenund Abendland* (Berlin, 1887).<sup>9</sup>

With that the Tabariyyan coin is the oldest Arabic coinage existing, if we accept that the coin of Umar ibn al-Khattab dates to AH 17/CE 638, which also applies to his *dirham*. Studies have shown that copper coinage went through various developmental stages, whereby during the initial stage inscriptions and calligraphy in Arabic display Byzantine influence, and in the next stage increasingly more Arabic.

In the third and final stage the coins became completely Islamic, without any Byzantine influence. It could be stated that this coinage went through the same developmental stages as *dinārs* and *dirhams*. Yet, the fact remains that the interest in this copper mintage was not as great as the interest in the main coinage of gold and silver. Therefore, little time was taken in minting these coins; they were limited to moulded copper ingots instead.<sup>10</sup>

With regard to their history or developmental phases during the first and second *hijra* centuries, the copper coins of Damascus<sup>11</sup> do not differ from those found in other cities conquered by the Arabs. The main distinction lies in the history of Damascus as compared to other cities: Damascus was the largest

city in Bilad al-Sham and the capital of the Umayyad Empire for approximately 90 years.

The city of Damascus lies on the borders of the Badiyat al-Sham, in a location that was long the crossroads of military and trade routes. And due to its importance and strategic position, since its founding Damascus was subject to the greed of invaders.<sup>12</sup> It was taken over by the Assyrians in 772 BCE, the Babylonians in 612 BCE, the Persian Achaemenids in 539 BC, the Greeks in 333 BC, the Anabantids in 85 BC and the Romans in 64 BC. The city flourished under their rule, especially after Christianity became the official religion of the Byzantine Empire in CE 392. After the decree of Theodosius, Damascus became an episcopal centre under the control of Antioch,<sup>13</sup> a position that it kept until Sasanian occupation in CE 612. The city regained this status through the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius.<sup>14</sup>

Pertaining to the Arab Muslims' siege of the city, Baladhuri reported: 'When the Muslims were done fighting those who gathered for them in the *marj*, they stayed there for 15 nights, then they went back to the city of Damascus for 14 nights remaining from *Mubarram* in AH 14/CE 635. They conquered the *ghūta* and its churches by force, so the people of the city fortified themselves and closed the gates. Khalid ibn al-Walid went down through the western gate, and Umar ibn al-fias went down. Yazid ibn Abi Sufyan went down the small gate, which was known as Kaysan, and Abu Ubayda ibn al-Jarrah suffered opening Bab al-Jabiya and helped carry a group of Muslims on its wall. Then he set up the fighting with the Romans, so they fought the Muslims strongly; then they turned away, and Abu Ubayda and the Muslims with him opened Bab al-Jabiya by force'.<sup>15</sup>

When the city's inhabitants, who still maintained old commercial connections with the Arabs but held little love for the Byzantines, became assured of Arab victory, their leaders went out secretly<sup>16</sup> and made

agreements with Khalid ibn al-Walid, requiring the safety of the inhabitants, their properties, churches and the gates of their city. Khalid ibn al-Walid wrote the terms of reconciliation himself.<sup>17</sup> The western gate was then opened for the Caliph and his army, and Abu Ubayda met Khalid ibn al-Walid at the old Church of St. John. There Abu Ubayda himself drew up, authorized and signed the conciliation. Thus, the take over of Damascus was peaceful, not by force, as Abu Ubayda wrote to Umar, and the latter abode by that. By contrast, according to the account made by Abu Muhnif and by another author,<sup>18</sup> Khalid entered Damascus by force and Abu Ubayda entered it for making peace; they met in *Zayatin*. The first version, nevertheless, is more certain.<sup>19</sup> This event took place in AH 14/CE 635.

Following the conquest, Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab appointed Yazid ibn Abi Sufyan governor of Damascus, who remained in office until his death in AH 18/CE 639. Yazid's brother, Mufiawiya, succeeded him and brought Damascus entirely under his control in AH 31/CE 651. He then built up forces until, after the assassination of Uthman, he was able to wage war against Caliph Ali ibn Abi Talib, which he ultimately won in AH 41/CE 661. After the assassination of Imam Ali at the hands of the Khawarij, Ali's son Hasan relinquished his right to rule. In the meantime, Damascus had become a renowned city of the new Umayyad Empire, reaching a position in world history that it had never reached before nor would reach again after this period.<sup>20</sup> The caliphs fostered the renovation and upkeep of the city in many spheres: agricultural, commercial and architectural, leading Damascus to great prominence among its neighbouring cities: politically, militarily, financially, administratively and commercially. It became one of the most important trade centres in the East until the end of the Umayyad era.<sup>21</sup>

In the mid of the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE the Abbasids spread from Khorasan and gained control over the Umayyad Empire. Marwan ibn Muhammad was defeated, and Abdullah al-Saffah, the first ruler of the Abbasids, assumed power. Abdullah ibn Ali, uncle of the Abbasid al-Saffah, conquered the city of Damascus. The Abbasid forces entered the city immediately, disinterring the graves of the Umayyads and burning them. They tore down the walls, laid waste to the city and usurped the royalty. Damascus remained a refuge for those who were left of the Umayyads and those who still followed them.<sup>22</sup> The Abbasids caliphs established themselves in Iraq. Damascus became a provincial town in the empire; the greatness it had once enjoyed during the time of the Umayyads faded away. Although the political status of the city had vanished, Damascus maintained its important commercial position due to its strategic location, agricultural prosperity, favourable climate, bountiful waters and fertile oases. Throughout the middle ages, Damascus held its far-reaching reputation for the production of fruits and sugar<sup>23</sup> and was further esteemed by scientists, poets and travellers.

## Coins

Copper coins and the calligraphy, decorations as well as the different kinds of inscriptions that they carry have recorded for us a variety of political, financial and administrative changes that the city of Damascus, in specific, and the Arab Islamic empire, in general, underwent. The following study concerns the copper coins that were struck in Damascus during the first and second *hijra* centuries. The coinage is divided into three major sections, each of which represents a specific historical period. Each section, in turn, is subdivided into models or groups of models, which are related in a general way and through the calligraphy that they carry.

## Division into Sections and Groups

The first section comprises Byzantine Arabic coins, struck during the time span from the conquest of the city of Damascus in AH 14/CE 635 under Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab's rule until the beginning of the 'Arabisation' of the coinage in AH 73/CE 692, that is, the time of the Umayyad Caliph Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan. This section is subdivided into two groups, each with various models. The first group shows the emperor seated upon his throne, while the second group shows the emperor in a standing position. The second group consists of 20 different models that differ a little from one another, depending upon the language of inscriptions, which fall into three different styles: the Greek-Latin inscription, the Greek-Latin-Arabic inscription and the Greek-Arabic inscription.

The second section is represented by coins carrying the image of Caliph Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan, which were struck during the time from the beginning of the 'Arabisation' of mintage in AH 73/CE 692 until AH 77/CE 696, the year during which this process ended under Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan.

The third section is represented by pure Arabic Islamic coinage, which was struck after AH 77/CE 696 until the end of the second Islamic century, that is, the end of the period of time chosen for this study.<sup>24</sup> In the following, the coins will be presented according to characteristic models<sup>25</sup> or styles by describing and analysing their distinctive features while highlighting their differences.

### **First Section: Arabic Coins with Byzantine Influence (group 1: model 1 and 2; group 2: three subgroups)**

Coins belonging to this section were struck with the same patterns as found on

Byzantine coins, with the exception of some Arabic words or phrases, which was due to their mintage under Muslim Arab authority. As stated above, this section is divided into two groups.

### First Group: Models showing the emperor seated upon his throne

**Model1** (Walker, 1956, 3 no. 4.), (Fig. 1)

The front side of this model carries an outer circle, in the centre of which is the image of the emperor sitting upon his throne and wearing a long garment; on his head is a crown marked with a cross. In the emperor's right hand is the royal sceptre, 'the archdiocesan crosier; on his left is a sphere with vertical notches. On top of both the sphere and the sceptre is a cross. To the right of the emperor is the image of a bird that resembles an eagle standing upon a post similar to the Latin letter T, as if indicating power. To the emperor's left are the vertically engraved letters A E O.

The reverse side of the model displays the capital Greek letter M in the centre, between and below the two legs of which is a crescent curved downwards with a dot. In



addition, under the letter M are the letters  $\Lambda$  A M. On top of the Greek letter M is a pictogram in the shape of the christogram/stavrogram. We shall see it repeatedly in a relatively similar manner and in the same place on various coins struck in Damascus. To the right of the letter M are other small letters  $\Lambda$  N O, running from the top to the bottom, and to the left are the letters X-III. The letter M indicates the monetary value of the coin, which is 40 *nummis*, while the letters at the bottom of the M indicate the place of mintage, which is Damascus. The letters  $\Lambda$  N O to the right of the M are an abbreviation of the word 'ANNO', and the letters X III on the left usually specify the year in which the coin was struck. This coinage may go back to the twenties of the first Islamic century, if the reading of the second letter as L is correct (although J. Walker rejects this interpretation).<sup>26</sup> In addition, these letters may indicate the number of the place of mintage, according to the Byzantine list of mintage places. The letters on the emperor's left on the front side of the coin may be the beginning of the Greek word 'AEITON', which is analogous with the Arabic word for 'coin'.

**Model2** (Walker, 1956, 4 no. 5), (Fig. 2)

The front side of this model is similar to the front side of the first model in all details, except that above the bird there is an unclear shape and above the king's sceptre are two similar shapes of two detailed long flags that hang downwards. The vertical state of the throne here is shown as separate from its two cylinder-like legs. Surrounding the front side of the coin is an outer circle of identical small nodes.





The reverse side of the coin has the Greek letter M in the centre, on top of which is the shape of a christogram/stavrogram along with various crosses and interlocked letters. Below the letter M and between its two legs is a sign in the shape of a crescent; to the right of the letter M are the two engraved letters A II, and to the left vertically from top to bottom are the letters X III. Thus, we find that the letters meaning the word 'year', are abbreviated here with two letters only; in other words, two letters were left out of the original word 'ANNO'. Thereby, the second letter is upsidedown, due to a mistake in the mintage process.

The sign above the Greek letter M still has no exact determination; it may have indicated, as stated above, the place, the mint or Christ. H. Lavoix explained an almost similar sign on a coin that dates to AH 17/CE 768.<sup>27</sup> However, the name of the place of mintage, which is supposed to be under the letter, is no longer present except for a very vague trace. Nevertheless, we can assume that the place was Damascus.

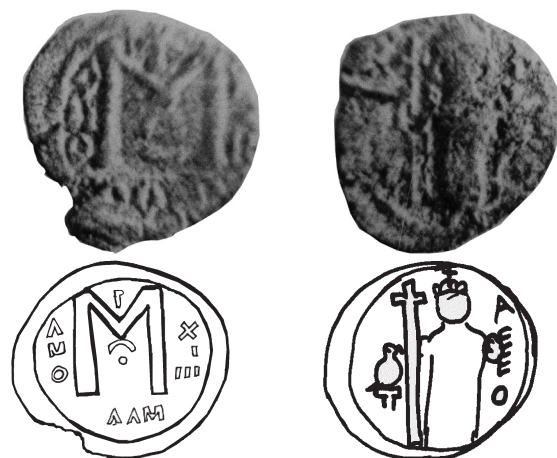
### Second Group: Models showing the emperor standing

This group is constituted by 20 models, some of which contain Greek-Latin, Greek-Latin-Arabic or Greek-Arabic inscriptions. Therefore, they can be distinguished according to the language of the inscriptions. Yet, all of them are similar in that the centre of the front side of all coins displays the image of the emperor in a standing position and exholding a sceptre in his left hand; the reverse side of all of these coins has the Greek letter M at its centre.

#### Models with a Greek-Latin Inscription:

##### Model 1 (Walker, 1956, 5, no. 7), (Fig. 3)

The front side of this model displays an outer circle that contains the image of the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius (CE 610-641) standing in a confronting manner and wearing a long garment and a crown marked with a cross. He holds a long sceptre or archdiocesan crosier in his right hand and in his left hand a sphere encircled by crosses. To the right of the Emperor is the vague trace of a bird standing upon a post; to his left are the letters A E E O engraved vertically.



The reverse side of this model does not differ from that of the first model in the first group, except that the inscription specifying the year in which the coin was struck, located on the left side of the letter M, is corroded at the top.

**Model 2** (Lavoix, 1887, 1, no. 1.)

This model is very much like the former model, differing only in the shape of the sign above the Greek letter M. Here it has the shape of the Greek letter P, under which there are a few lines. Lavoix explains that this shape indicates the name 'Christ' and assures that the letters X V II to the left of the letter M and written vertically date the coin to AH 17/CE 638.

**Models with a Greek-Latin-Arabic Inscription:**

**Model 1** (Walker, 1956, 9 no. 26), (Fig. 4)

The face of this model carries the usual image of the emperor standing, with a pointed beard. On his right is a T-shaped post with an eagle upon it. At the bottom the two Latin letters L K appear upside-down, due to a mistake in the inscription or mintage. By means of these two letters, researchers were able to date this coin, for they signify '23'. Thus, this coin was struck in AH 23/CE 643, that is, at the end of Umar's era and the beginning of Uthman ibn Affan's reign. One could say that the number 23 indicates the 23 years that passed from the beginning of the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius' control, who ruled 31 years (CE 610-640); therefore, the date of the mintage for this coin would be AH 12/CE 633. However, this is improbable, if we regard our introductory statement that all studies have shown that the oldest coin



found goes back to AH 15/636 or AH 17/CE 638 at the earliest. To the left of the emperor are three letters A B O, engraved vertically from top to bottom; thereby we can recognise that the second letter appears reversed through a mistake in inscription or mintage. As mentioned above, these letters are an abbreviation for the Latin word 'ANNO', which means 'year'. There is also a rosette with six petals. Surrounding the face of the coin are two unclear outer circles. The reverse side is surrounded by a single outer circle, and in its centre is the Greek letter M with the shape of a christogram/stavrogram above it. There is also the letter L above the right leg of the letter M. Under the letter M and between its two legs is a crescent, displaying the word *wafihī*, which means that the coin is of approved mintage and legitimate for use, because it fulfils the necessary criteria, such as calligraphy, decoration, and weight).<sup>28</sup> Therefore, this coinage is sufficient, has the valid weight and is permissible for use. It is just like the word 'legitimate' (*jā'iz*), which appears many times on various coins struck in various places at the same time.

To the right of the letter M is the name of the place of mintage, Damascus, inscribed vertically from top to bottom; to the right of the letter are a few vague markings. This coin is the first model that carries the name of the place of mintage, Damascus, written in the Arabic language to the right of the letter M on the reverse of the coin. It is also the first that carried the word *wafibi*, which appears repeatedly on models with Greek-Arabic inscriptions.

**Model 2** (Walker, 1956, 9 no. p. 3.)

The front side of this model does not differ from the face of the one before, and the same applies to the reverse side. However, there is increasing doubt about the word to the right of the Greek letter M. Moreover, the letter L above the Greek letter was deleted and replaced with unclear interlocked signs or letters. They may be signs and symbols, for which it is difficult to find a precise literal explanation.

#### **Models with a Greek-Arabic Inscription:**

**Model 1** (Walker, 1956, 6, no. 12), (Fig. 5)

An outer circle surrounds the front side of this model, in the centre of which is the image of the Emperor Heraclius standing in a confronting manner and wearing long clothes. There is a crown marked with a cross on his head, and a long sceptre in his right hand (the archdiocesan crosier), while in his left hand is a sphere encircled by crosses. On the right side of the Emperor is a post, with the clear shape of a bird with spread wings upon it. The inscription on the margin starts at the top and continues counter clockwise with the letters: Δ AMA Σ KO Σ.<sup>29</sup> It is clear that these are Greek letters that compose one word. It is likely



that these letters mean the name of the mint, Damascus, in Greek.

The reverse side is bordered by an outer circle, with the Greek M in the centre, which, as mentioned before, indicates the monetary value of the coin: here 40 *nummis*. On top of this letter is the shape P, which may indicate the place of mintage or the name 'Christ', as Lavoix proposed. Under the Greek letter M is a long horizontal line, which has a shorter line above it. Between the two legs of the Greek letter M and under the long line is the name of the mint, Damascus, written in simple Kufic letters. As the word for mintage is written on the right and the word 'legitimate' (*jā'iz*) is written on the left, this signifies that the coin is proper and legitimate in its mintage, sufficient in its weight and permissible for use. Words like these appear increasingly after this. In addition, this model will become the ideal shape for all struck pieces with Greek-Arabic inscriptions. Therefore, subsequent examples do not differ from it except for small details.



**Model 2** (Walker, 1956, 6, no. 14), (Fig. 6)

The front side of this model does not differ from that of the previous model 1, here the inscription on the margin reads  $\Delta A M A \Sigma K O \Sigma$ . The inscription starts at the bottom right with a few circles or spheres and a rosette that has seven petals. The front side of the coin is framed by two concentric circles composed of small nodes, one next to the other. The reverse displays a circle of small adjacent nodes and the Greek letter  $M$  topped by a christogram/stavrogram shape in the centre. Under the letter  $M$  and between its legs is a large crescent, then a long line with the name of the mint, Damascus, in simple Kufic script. The word for 'struck' is found to the right of the letter and a trace of what was supposed to be the word 'legitimate' is on the left, but it is mostly indistinguishable.

**Model 3** (Walker 1956, 7 no. 15)

The front side of this model does not differ from the front side of model 1, except that the shape of the bird and

the other inscriptions to the left of the emperor are flattened and unclear. The marginal inscription runs clockwise and consists of the letters  $A P O N \Omega$ , which may be calligraphy or something else. The front side of the model is framed by an outer circle. The reverse side is bordered by an outer circle and displays the Greek letter  $M$  in the centre with the shape of a christogram/stavrogram above it. Under the letter  $M$  is a crescent, and under the crescent is a long line. Underneath this line is the name of the place of mintage, Damascus, in simple Kufic script. The word 'struck' (*duriba*) appears to the left of the letter  $M$  and the word 'legitimate' (*ja'iz*) appears to the right in an imprecise way. Both words are written vertically from top to bottom.

**Model 4** (Walker, 1956, 7, no. 16)

The front side is very similar to the front side of the previous model 3, although here the bird is very distinct. The reverse side is bordered by two outer circles, with the Greek letter  $M$  in the centre. In addition, above the  $M$  is an f-shaped stavrogram, and under it is the name of the mint, Damascus. The word 'struck' on the left side is flattened, but the word 'legitimate' on the right can be read easily.

**Model 5** (Walker, 1956, 7 no. 17)

This model is also similar to the previous models, in that it has the image of the emperor on the front side. Here, however, to the right of the emperor and above the T-shape is the branch of a palm tree, instead of a bird. There is also the vague shape of a rosette with six petals to the left of the emperor. The margin contains an

inscription in clockwise direction: I H Ω O, and two outer circles frame the front side. The reverse side is also bordered by two outer circles, with the Greek letter Min the centre and the christogram/stavrogram and the crescent above and below. The word 'struck' is engraved on the left, while the word 'legitimate' is engraved upside down on the right. Under the letter M is the name of the place of mintage, Damascus, engraved in Kufic script. In general, this coin seems inferior in its manufacture and not of the usual quality.

**Model 6** (Walker, 1956, 7 no. 18)

The front side of this model is similar to that of the previous model, differing in the marginal inscription which is now Λ O Ω. The reverse is bordered by two outer circles with the Greek letter Min the centre. Above the letter M is the shape of the christogram/stavrogram and between its legs the shape of the crescent. The name of the place of mintage is *mashq*, which is the word for Damascus in Arabic, but with the letter *d* deleted at the beginning. The word for 'mintage' is engraved on the left and the word 'legitimate' on its right. Apparently the coin was weakly struck, and no precise control was made of the inscription of the letters on the coin.

**Model 7** (Walker, 1956, 7 no. 19)

This model is exactly like the previous one, differing only in the presence of the bird above the T-shape. The inscription on the left of the emperor is also clockwise, reading: Λ O Ω. The front side is framed by two outer circles made of small nodes in a row.

**Model 8** (Walker, 1956, 7 no. 20)

The model is similar to the previous ones, but here again is the branch of a tree above the T-shape. The inscription on the left of the emperor is Λ Σ Φ, written vertically from the top to bottom, and the outer circle surrounding the front side can be seen clearly at the top.

**Model 9** (Walker, 1956, 7 no. 21)

This model does not differ from the previous model, except that the front side is framed by a single outer circle, which is distinct at the bottom; the shape above the T-shape is not confirmed. The reverse side is bordered by two outer circles, and the word 'legitimate' is written from bottom to top.

**Model 10** (Walker, 1956, 8 no. 22)

The main difference in this model from the one before is that here the T-shape is smaller and the bird standing above it is higher and more extended. The letters of the word to the left of the emperor run from top to bottom: A E O, whereby the letter O appears to be worn away. There is also an outer circle made of small adjacent nodes encircling the front. On the reverse, there is only a slight difference in the change in the shape of the sign that stands underneath and between the two legs of the letter M; thus, the word 'legitimate' here appears in the normal manner.

**Model 11** (Walker, 1956, 8 no. 23.)

The front side of this model is similar to the front side of the previous one, except that the bird that was above the T-shape is replaced here by an unimportant shape. The letters of the word to the left of the emperor are directed vertically from top

to bottom, reading: E... The letter O has been changed into a small dot. On the reverse there is also a change in the shape of the sign below and between the legs of the Greek letter M. Faint traces indicate that the reverse was framed by two outer circles.

**Model 12** (Walker, 1956, 8 no. 24) This model also does not differ from the first ideal model of those with a Greek-Arabic inscription. Although much of the front side as well as the reverse appear worn, the model does not differ except in the shape of the sign that is below and between the legs of the Greek letter M, which became a short straight line.

**Model 13** (Walker, 1956, 8 no. ANS 1), (Fig. 7) On the front side is the image of the emperor standing in a confronting manner, but the shape T is now at the emperor's elbow; instead of a bird or the branch of a palm tree above it, there is the inscription of an extended circular or oval shape. The emperor holds the archdiocesan crosier in his right hand. On his left are the letters EOA, vertically from top to bottom. Framing the front side is an outer circle made of small nodes in a row. The reverse is bordered by an outer circle with the Greek letter M in the centre. Above the letter is the shape of the christogram/stavrogram, which has two dots on its sides. Under the Greek letter M, between its legs, is a star-shape with a long line underneath it, and below that the word 'legitimate'. To the left of the letter M is the name of the place of mintage, Damascus, written vertically from top to bottom; to the right of the letter are a few shapes, which Walker



has read as *dirham*. With this conclusion, this model differs from the previous ones in that this inscription does not carry the word for mintage, but the word 'legitimate' instead of the name of the place of mint, Damascus, which has moved to the right side.

**Model 14** (Walker, 1956, 8 no. ANS 2) The front side here does not differ from the previous model, noting only that on this model there are no shapes above the T. The inscription on the left of the emperor is mostly worn, with little left except for a trace of the first letter which has the shape of the numeral eight (Λ). Similarly, the reverse does not differ from the previous model except for the existence of the letter L above the right leg of the Greek letter M. The two dots on both sides of the shape have been deleted. Around the reverse side is an outer circle.

**Model 15** (Walker, 1956, 9 no. p. 1.) Here the shape T has been deleted from the front side, and the branch of the palm tree remains alone. The letter L on the reverse

has been deleted, but everything else on this model is similar to the previous one.

**Model 16** (Walker, 1956, 9 no. p. 2.) The front side of this model differs from the ideal shape of these Greek-Arabic inscriptions through the rosette with eight petals under the right arm of the emperor. The marginal inscription is counter clockwise, reading: ΔΑΜΑΣΚΟΣ, which means, as previously stated, Damascus, written in the Greek language. The reverse of this model is exactly like the reverse of the previous model. In general, just like the first model, this one is distinctive from the others in that it carries the name of Damascus twice: on the front in Greek and on the back in Arabic.

Of the sixteen models in the first section described above, we can recognise that the coins struck in Damascus are distinguished by the similarity of the front side, which depicts the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius standing as if for confrontation, wearing long clothes and a crown marked with a cross on his head. In his right hand is a sceptre or an archdiocesan crosier, while in his left hand there is a sphere encircled by crosses. On his right side there is usually the shape of a T, which carries a bird or eagle, the branch of a palm tree (models 5 and 8), or an oval shape (model 13). In addition, model 11 displays a distinctive shape above the T-shape, the T-shape on model 14 has nothing further above it, and, finally, the T-shape on model 15 has disappeared while the branch of the palm tree remains alone.

The front side of all of these examples displays to the left of the emperor an

inscription that can be read: ΛΕΟ – ΑΕΟ – Ο Ω – ΛΕ – ΛΣΦ – ΑΒΟ – ΛΕ Ε Ο. The meaning of these letters remains mysterious and controversial. Lavoix states: ‘The explanation of the various existing written symbols ΛΣΦ – ΑΕΟ – ΛΣΟ was in most cases a subject of unsuccessful attempts to understand them and an interest in finding a satisfying answer to their meaning. By the way, I have allowed myself to offer an explanation, for some of these letters which were on the monetary coins that read ΑΕΦ. I see that these letters are the beginning of the word ‘ΑΕΙΤΟΝ’, which is analogous to the Arabic word coin’.<sup>30</sup>

In my opinion, these interpretations, even though they are very few, offer an acceptable interpretation for these letters and a good reason for the continuation of its existence on coins struck during the Islamic era. Models 1, 2 and 16 carry the name of the place in which they were struck, Damascus, but in Greek letters, Δ Α Μ Α Σ Κ Ο Σ, while only models 1 and 16 carry the name Damascus twice: the first on the front in Greek, and the second on the reverse in the Arabic Kufic script under the Greek letter M.

Concerning the differences that can be discerned, it is the reverse side that is distinguished by an abundance of inscriptions in different shapes around the central figure, i.e. the Greek letter M. This letter is present on each model, with the name of the place of mintage, Damascus, engraved below it and the word ‘struck’ to its left. To the right, the word ‘legitimate’ usually appears in simple Kufi script. In addition, one example, model 13, has the

name of the mintage place, Damascus, to the left of the letter M. The word 'sufficient' is written below it, whereas the word to its right was difficult to read or was only calligraphy with no meaning. J. Walker had read it as *dirham*, but we do not agree with him.

The figures that were placed above the Greek letter M are many. Although the differences between them are minor, we interpret them as indications of a mint, place of mintage or, as Lavoix proposed, a sign alluding to Christ. In addition, the sign between the legs of the Greek letter M is not counted among these figures. The meaning of these signs remains controversial, but they may not distract from the meaning of the previous signs. We must take into consideration that it is difficult to interpret the symbols literally and precisely, because the same symbol contains something of vagueness that was intended to be mystifying. Most likely, there were always one or two outer circles bordering the front and reverse sides of the coin.

### **Second Section: Arabic Coins Carrying the Image of the Standing Caliph Abd Al-Malik Ibn Maran**

After their conquest, the Arab rulers felt that the newly conquered land was in need of a greater monetary flow in order to pay the salaries of soldiers and various matters of the empire. These necessities led them to mint copper and silver coins in the Byzantine and Sasanian fashion respectively. The need multiplied after the Umayyads took control, the territory of the empire expanded and its regulations and functions developed. Therefore, the amount of struck money and the number of mints increased, although the need for

foreign gold Byzantine coinage remained until the middle of the reign of the fifth Umayyad Caliph, Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan (AH 65–86/ CE 684–705), who started the Arabisation process in AH 73/CE 692 and completed it in AH 77/ CE 696. However, the Umayyad Byzantine style is distinguished by a special characteristic on the front side of the coinage, which appeared since Mufawiya's control and after: the new image of a person standing, holding a sword and wearing long clothes and a Bedouin headdress that covers the shoulders<sup>31</sup>. Umayyad coins continued to carry this new inscription until the Arabisation process was accomplished in AH 77/CE 696. It is an outstanding feature on the coins of Caliph Abd al-Malik. Whereas the pieces bearing this figure and made during the time of the first Umayyad Caliph Mu'awiya ibn Abi Sufyan (AH 41–61/ AD 661–680) are rare, the coins that are preserved from the time of Abd al-Malik were many and belonged to many different mints. The front side of these coins carries the picture of a standing man, Caliph Abd al-Malik, holding a sword in his right hand and gripping it with his left hand as a symbol of 'imamate'. The image is always surrounded by Kufic calligraphy. The reverse shows the shape of a cross, on top of which is a sphere penetrated by a stick with three levels. The name of the mintage place, Damascus, is present, and in the margin is the testimony that sometimes follows the phrase: In the name of Allah.<sup>32</sup>

#### **Model 1** (Fahmi, 1957, 405 no. 849)

In the centre of the front side of this model is the image of Caliph Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan, standing, his hair falling on his shoulders (this may be a *kaffiya* hanging down on his shoulders) and holding a sword (sign of imamate) in his right hand while gripping his



sheath with the left hand. The margin of the front side of the model carries the calligraphy: 'Caliph...Commander of the Faithful', in simple Kufic script and running clockwise. The reverse side carries a depiction of an axis for a cross taking the shape of a ball penetrated by a post with three steps. In addition, to the right is the word '*bi-Dimashq*' and to the left the word '*wāfin*' (sufficient); thereby it should be noted that the first letter is inverted due to a mistake in mintage. The marginal writing on the reverse runs clockwise as well and carries the testimony following the phrase: In the name of Allah, there is no God but Allah. As noted above, the words 'legitimate' and 'sufficient' do not differ from each other in meaning. All of these words assure that the coin has the appropriate weight. The shape at the centre of the reverse is an alteration of the cross, found on Byzantine coins; here it is used solely as a beautifying design.

**Model 2,**<sup>33</sup> (Fig. 8) The centre of both the front and the reverse sides of this model does not differ from the previous one; it carries a clear and detailed picture of the features of the caliph's face and clothes. Here, however, the word '*wāfin*' is not present to the left of the modified cross on the reverse. The main difference between the two models is found in the margin on the front side: an inscription that runs clockwise and reads: Abd al-Malik ... The Commander of the Faithful. The entire Islamic monotheistic testimony is found in the margin on the reverse of this model and is also written clockwise. The front and reverse sides are bordered by an outer circle of small adjacent nodes. In general, this coin is well struck, rare and carries another new special characteristic, which makes it distinct from



all other models before it: It carries the name of the Umayyad Caliph Abd al-Malik.

**Model 3** (Walker, 1956, 26 no. 86) The centre of both the front and reverse sides of this model does not differ from the previous model. The difference lies in the margin of the front side, which carries the Islamic monotheistic testimony that is written clockwise. The outer circle bordering the front side is quite worn. The marginal writing on the reverse runs clockwise too, starting at the top and reading: There is no God but Allah, alone, Muhammad is the messenger of Allah. It should be noted that the part 'In the name of Allah' is missing at the beginning of the margin, where the outer circle is quite worn.

**Model 4** (Walker, 1956, 27 no. 88) This model does not differ from the previous one, concerning the centre of both the front and reverse sides. The front margin carries the Islamic monotheistic testimony while the reverse margin displays the Muhammadan message.

**Model 5** (Walker, 1956, 27 no. 91) The centre of the front side of this model does not differ from the previous one, while its margin carries the name of the ‘Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him’, which is written to the right of the standing caliph. The reverse of this model is like that of model 3, but here, in the margin, it appears that there is a sixth model.

**Model 6** (Lavoix, 1887, nos. 49-51) The centre of the front and reverse sides also do not differ from those of the previous models of this section. However, in the margin of the front side there is part of the Islamic monotheistic testimony, which is followed by a group of new words, which read: ‘There is no God but Allah, Muhammad defeats through Him’. This ending is seen here for the first time. The full testimony is written in the margin on the reverse: There is no God but Allah, Muhammad is the messenger of Allah. Thereby, the letter *wāw* from the word *rasūl* is connected to the last letter of the word.

**Model 7** (Lavoix, 1887, no. 71) The difference here is also found in the margin on both the front and reverse sides. The front margin carries the writing that reads: ‘Belonging to Abdullah Abd al-Malik, Commander of the Faithful’, while the reverse margin holds the whole testimony. What is new here is the presence of the word ‘Abdullah’ before the name of the caliph.

As described above, the coins of this second section date to AH 73-77/CE 692-696. Islamic numismatists have disagreed about the time during which the coins were struck. Both G. Miles and P. Grierson are of the opinion that these coins with the image

of Abd al-Malik were struck during the same period of the ‘Golden *ḍinārs*’, *i.e.* AH 73-77/CE 692-696. Contrarily, Walker maintains that these coins were struck approximately 20 years before the date mentioned. Nevertheless, M. Bates agrees with Miles and Grierson, adding that there are mints that began mintage following the Byzantine style in AH 72/CE 692; they were located in Damascus, Hims, Tartus, Baalbak and Tiberias.<sup>34</sup> Although I am inclined towards the opinions of both Miles and Grierson, I do not find Walker’s opinion very far from being correct, especially as I know that the image of the standing caliph appeared on the coins of Mufiawiya ibn Abi Sufyan, struck in the same Byzantine style. This has been pointed out in historical sources (for example, Maqrizi wrote that Mufiawiya struck a *ḍinār*, which had the image of a knight carrying a sword. Aside from the metal of the coin struck here, whether copper or gold, this image did indeed appear on Mufiawiya’s coins).<sup>35</sup> If this were confirmed by coin pieces, it would clearly support Walker’s opinion. On the contrary, there is general agreement that Arabic coinage appeared in AH 77/CE 696, according to historical sources and the oldest preserved pieces of coinage.

### The Third Section: Pure Arabic Islamic Coins

The coins concerned in this section are those that appeared after the above mentioned process of Arabisation (AH 73-77/CE 692-696) associated with the Caliph Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan.<sup>36</sup> A distinction between earlier coins<sup>37</sup> and later coins<sup>38</sup> in this process cannot be justified.<sup>39</sup> The pure Islamic style of coins appeared first in

Damascus, the capital of the Umayyad Empire, from which it gradually disseminated, and other mints followed later in this style.

**Model 1** (Walker, 1956, 249 no. 812) (Fig. 9) The centre of the front side of this model has a small circle, in which there is a rosette with six petals; it is surrounded by a margin, in which the summarized Islamic monotheistic testimony is written counter clockwise: There is no God but Allah alone. The centre of the reverse side also carries a small circle, which contains a pentagonal star; in the margin is the counter clockwise inscription that reads: This coin was struck in Damascus.



**Model 2** (Walker, 1956, 249 no. 816) (Fig. 10) This model carries the inscription in the centre. On the front side the summarized testimony is written in three parallel lines, which are surrounded by two outer circles. In the centre of the reverse side are two words, one above the other: 'Damascus' and 'legitimate'. Above the first word is the branch of a palm tree with four leaves. The reverse is surrounded by two parallel outer circles connected by various small circles, taking the shape of a group of the letter

*mim*. The word 'legitimate' first appears on coins belonging to this section after its initial appearance on various models with Greek-Arabic inscriptions of the first section. As mentioned above, its meaning is similar to the word 'appropriate' and 'sufficient', which signifies that the coinage has the correct weight and is legitimate for use.



**Model 3** (Fahmi, 1957, 414 no. 967) This model is similar to the previous one, but there are no outer circles on the front or reverse, and the branch of the palm tree on the reverse has the shape of hexagonal star, due to imprecise mintage.

**Model 4** (Fahmi, 1957, 414, no. 966) This model is also like the previous one, but differs through the absence of any shape above the word 'Damascus' and through the outer circle encircling the centre of the reverse.

**Model 5** (Fahmi, 1957, 414, no. 964) Here the writings in the centre of the reverse are limited to two parallel lines instead of three as in the previous model. The word 'alone' is deleted from the summarized testimony, so that it reads: There is no God but Allah. The centre is surrounded by two outer circles.

**Model 5a** (Walker, 1956, 249 no. 15)  
This model is also very similar to the previous one, except for the writing on the front side, which is in a square. The writing on the reverse is as on the previous model with the addition of an ornament that looks like a rosette on the right of a palm tree branch located above the word 'Damascus'. There are no traces of any outer circles on the reverse.

**Model 6** (Fahmi, 1957, 412 no. 957)  
On both sides, front and reverse, there is neither an outer margin nor an outer circle. In the centre of both sides are three parallel lines of inscription, which reads, on the front: There is no God but Allah alone, and on the back: This coin was struck in Damascus.

**Model 7**<sup>40</sup> This model is similar to the previous model, except that there is a palm tree branch with six leaves under the writing at the centre of the reverse.

**Model 8** (Fahmi, 1957, 415, no. 969-970)  
Here there is no trace of the palm tree branch below the inscription on the reverse. Additionally, there are three parallel outer circles around the front side and one single circle surrounds the reverse.

**Model 9** (Fahmi, 1957, 413 no. 962)  
This model does not differ from the previous model, except that the front side has no outer circles, while two encircle the reverse side.

**Model 10** (Fahmi, 1957, 412 no. 959)  
The front side of this model consists of the summarized monotheistic testimony written in the centre in three parallel lines: There is no God but Allah alone; surrounding the front side is an outer circle. The reverse carries two lines, one above the other: mintage and Damascus. Above the word for mintage is

also the shape of a flower with five petals, one of which is struck outside the coin.

**Model 11** (Fahmi, 1957, 412 no. 960)  
Here the flower with five petals above the inscription in the reverse centre has the shape of a hexagon star. Surrounding both the front and reverse are two circles, connected to each other by four circles in the shape of a group of the letter 'ms' in Arabic.

**Model 12** (Fahmi, 1957, 413 no. 961)  
The front side of this model is similar to that of the previous one, but without any surrounding outer circle. The reverse carries one word, Damascus, the name of the mint. Above it is the shape of a flower, which almost looks like a lily. Surrounding the reverse are two outer circles, which are connected to each other by circles in the shape of a group of the letter 'ms' in Arabic. This coin is of special note due to the sparse inscription on the reverse.

**Model 13** (Lane-Poole, 1984, 114 no. 835-838)  
The front side of this model does not differ from the front of the previous model, whereas its reverse has three parallel lines of inscription at its centre: This coin [was struck] in Damascus.

**Model 14** (Walker, 1956, 251 no. 829), (Fig. 11)  
This model is similar to models 6, 7, 8 and 9, in that the centre of the front side carries the summarized testimony and is surrounded by three outer circles. In the centre of the reverse the place of mint is noted in three parallel lines: This coin (was struck) in Damascus. This model differs from those mentioned in that its reverse has a margin that is bordered by two outer circles, which are dissected at the top by the shape of a large crescent with a dot inside





of it. Parts of the inscription in the margin are worn away, but the following words can still be read: In the name of Allah... Muhammad is the messenger of Allah. They are written counter clockwise. The missing words on the worn part of the margin were unknown, until we noted Walker's mention in his catalogue of a coin that resembles this one in its writings and decoration which reads as follows:<sup>41</sup> In the name of Allah, my Lord is Allah, Muhammad is the messenger of Allah. This new phrase, 'In the name of Allah, my Lord is Allah' may have first appeared on silver coins, which the Muslims struck imitating the Sasanian *drachms*.<sup>42</sup>

**Model 15** (Walker, 1956, 251 no. 830) This model is very similar to the previous one, except that here the small dot as above inside the crescent on the reverse margin has the shape of a small circle.

**Model 16** (Walker, 1956, 251 no. 832) This model differs from the previous one in that the shape of the small circle, which was inside the crescent in the reverse margin, is a hexagonal star.

**Model 17** (Walker, 1956, 251 no. 831) Here is a difference in the reverse margin, where the testimony is shortened to become: In the name of Allah Muhammad is the messenger of Allah. This is written counter clockwise. However, the crescent and its contents are completely worn away.

**Model 18** (Walker, 1956, 250 no. 822) The front side of this model is exactly like the previous one, except that the front side is bordered by two outer circles. The reverse differs from all previous models, in that it contains the Muhammadan message written in two parallel lines, under which the place of mint is mentioned, as follows: Muhammad -the messenger of Allah- Damascus. There is also a shape in upward direction above the writing on the reverse. This crescent with a dot inside is similar to the one on model 14, as its two ends connect to the innermost of the two outer circles and it opens to a space between the two circles.

**Model 19** (Fahmi, 1957, 413 no. 963) The front side of this model resembles the previous one through the single outer circle, while the reverse differs. There the inscription in the centre is distributed over five parallel lines. Each line has only one word: In the first line the word for mint, followed by three lines that carry the Muhammadan message, then the fifth line with the place of mintage. This model is distinguished by the shape of a torch of fire<sup>43</sup> shown on the right side of the reverse: It is characteristic of Sasanian *drachms*.

**Model 20** (Walker, 1956, 252 no. 835), (Fig. 12) The front side also does not differ from the former model, except for the four parallel outer circles that border it. The centre



of the reverse carries the Muhammadan message in three lines as follows:

Mohammed -messenger- of Allah. Encircling the centre is a margin, in which the following inscription runs counter clockwise: In the name of Allah, this coin is struck in Damascus. There is also an outer circle bordering the reverse. This coin displays some differences as far as the distribution of the writings on the reverse is concerned. The Muhammadan testimony is placed in the centre, whereas the usual place of mintage is now placed in the margin after the phrase 'In the Name of Allah'.

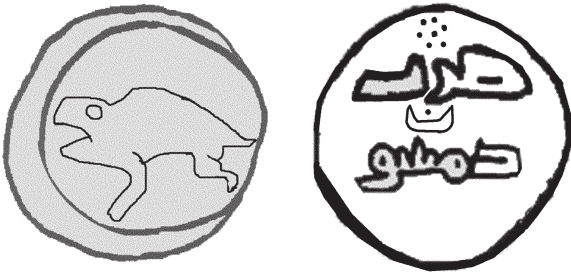
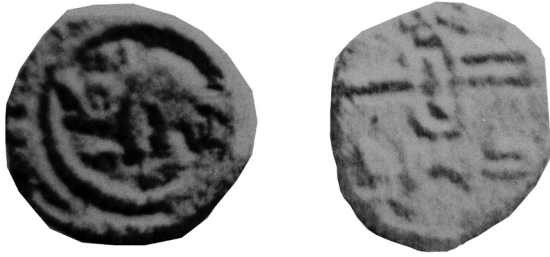


**Model 21** (Walker, 1956, 252 no. 836) This model is very similar to the previous one with the simple difference, that there are three instead of four outer circles bordering the front side. Also, the letter *fā* ('in') is replaced by the letter *bā* ('in'), so that the margin reads as follows: In the name of Allah, this coin was struck in Damascus.

**Model 22** (Walker, 1956, 253 no. 837) This is very similar to the previous model,

except that there are two outer circles bordering the front side, which are connected to each other by three small circles in the shape of a group of the letter *mim* in Arabic. Two words of the marginal inscription are deleted, which are 'this coin', so that the margin reads as follows: In The Name of Allah, Damascus Mintage. In addition, the reverse is bordered by a single outer circle. Abdurrahman Fahmi mentioned a coin similar to this one, which differs slightly through a mintage mistake in the writing on the front side: The word Allah is repeated twice.<sup>44</sup>

**Model 23** (Walker, 1956, 249 no. B. 46), (Fig. 13) This model is distinguished by the depiction of a jerboa<sup>45</sup> in the centre on the front side. The jerboa looks to the right, and the margin around the animal contains an unclear inscription. The centre of the reverse contains two parallel words: mint and Damascus. Above the first word are six pearl-shaped dots encircling a seventh dot in the centre. Above the second word and between the two words is the shape of a crescent, opening upwards with a dot inside. There is no trace of an outer circle as margin. The presence of an animal on this model raises some questions, yet this is not very unusual; it appears on various coins struck in Homs.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, the tradition of engraving images of animals on currency has a long past, and it continued during the Islamic era. For example, the image of a horse<sup>47</sup> or an elephant<sup>48</sup> is found on some coins in Hims. The special characteristics of this particular coin distinguish it from all other previous models: the image of the jerboa and the shape of the dots and crescent in the centre of the reverse.



**Model 24** (Walker, 1956, 249 no. 819)

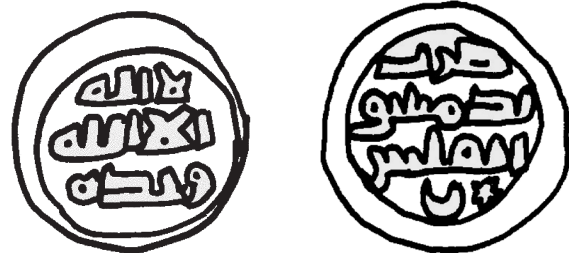
The front side of this model carries the summarized testimony in three parallel lines. Surrounding the front side are three outer parallel circles that are connected by small circles in the shape of a group of the letter *mm* in Arabic. The reverse is exactly like that of the previous model.

**Model 25** (Walker, 1956, 250 no. 820)

Here the reverse is bordered by two parallel outer circles that are connected by small circles in the shape of a group of the letter *mm*.

**Model 26** (Walker, 1956, 251 no. 828), (Fig. 14) The front side of this model does not differ from that of the previous models. However, here the unprecedented order of the inscription on the reverse is noteworthy. The word 'coin' is mentioned last on the reverse, as if this word were added later after the minting process or because of a mistake made in the word order. Namely, the word 'coin' usually follows the name of the mint, as we have seen above. The centre of the front

side shows the summarized testimony written in three lines. Below is the branch of a palm tree with six leaves, and two outer circles border the front side. The centre of the reverse is written in three parallel lines as follows: struck -in Damascus- this coin. Below this writing is a small crescent that opens upwards and has two small stars on both sides. The reverse is bordered by an outer circle.



**Model 27** (Walker, 1956, 253 no. P. 130), (Fig. 15) This model is similar to the rest of the Umayyad coins mentioned above, yet this coin has special characteristics and new differences that distinguish it from the others and, thus, make it a rare and important coin. The name of Walid ibn Abd al-Malik, who ordered the coin to be struck, is inscribed in the entire margin of the front side, which makes it the first coin in this section that bears the name of the Umayyad caliph. In the margin on the reverse is the date of mintage, which is AH 87/CE 705, *i.e.* one year after al-Walid received the caliphate.

This coin is well struck, and the inscription is distinct. Thus, both the front and the reverse side have a centre and a margin enclosed within two circles, made with great care and craftsmanship.



In the centre of the front side is the summarized testimony written in three parallel lines, as follows: There is no God -but Allah-alone. Above the last word is the shape of a rosette with five petals. Surrounding the centre are two outer circles, and the margin between them carries the counter clockwise inscription, which reads: of what was ordered by Abdullah al-Walid, Commander of the Faithful. The centre on the reverse side contains the Muhammadan message in three parallel lines. Above the name of the prophet Mohammed is the image of an eagle standing upon a post. The centre of the reverse is surrounded by two outer circles that enclose the margin with an inscription that begins at the top and reads: In the name of Allah. This coin was struck in Damascus in AH 87/CE 705.

The presence of the eagle in the above centre of the reverse is quite distinct. It may

be a symbol used by the Umayyads as a symbol of their power against their enemies: the Khawarij, Alides and those who did not adhere to the caliphate laws. It also reminds us of the symbol found on coins of the first section that display Byzantine influence; they were struck in Damascus before the beginning of the Arabisation process.

**Model 28** (Walker, 1956, 253 no. B. 48) This model differs from the previous model only in the disappearance of the flower (the rosette) with its five petals from the centre of the front side. In addition, the figure of the eagle has disappeared from above the centre on the reverse and, of course, there is the change in the date of mintage.

H. Nützel mentioned this coin under number 1996, which is preserved in the collection of the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin.<sup>49</sup>

**Model 29** (Walker, 1956, 254 no. 839) In this model we see an unprecedented characteristic that has not appeared on any previous coin: an arch of the Daphne plant or laurel (*laurus nobilis*) in the shape of a diadem encircling the reverse. Other than this feature, there is great similarity between this model and the previous one. Here the margins are shortened on both the front and reverse sides, and the name of the person (the caliph), who ordered the mintage, is deleted on the front. However, the date of the mintage remains in the centre of the reverse, making it easy to identify the name of the ruler, who is the Umayyad Caliph Yazid ibn Abd al-Malik (AH 101-105/CE 720-724). The centre of the front has, as usual, the summarized testimony: There is no God -but Allah- alone. This is surrounded by two outer

circles that enclose five ring-shaped forms, which are well distributed throughout the space. The reverse is, as noted, surrounded by an arch of laurel in the shape of a diadem, topped by a beautiful ring-shaped form; in its centre are three parallel lines, inscribed as follows: In Damascus -year two- and a hundred (hundred and two). The laurel was known since Roman times and still was a plant that symbolises conquest and victory; the meaning that it indicates here is not far from what we have mentioned.

**Model 30** (Walker, 1956, 253 no. 840) This model is very similar to the previous one with the single difference in the number of outer circles surrounding the front side. Here, there are three circles, with no small ones between them in the shape of a group of the Arabic letter *mim*.

**Model 31** (Fahmi, 1957, 411 no. 955) This model does not differ from the previous two models, which carry the date of mintage; the front side's centre resembles them in the presence of the testimony in three parallel lines. In addition, the centre is bordered by two parallel circles, which are connected by circles in the shape of a group of the letter *mim*. The reverse is surrounded by an outer circle, in the centre of which is written as mintage: Damascus. Above the word 'struck' is the figure of a rosette with five petals, like the ones seen before in previous models; here the rosette is somewhat larger. Around the reverse's centre is a margin, which has the date of mintage, some parts of which are worn. Nevertheless, we can still read: one hundred and four. According to the date of mintage, we can assume that the ruler who ordered this mintage was Yazid ibn Abdullah, the ninth Umayyad caliph.

**Model 32** (Fahmi, 1957, 411 no. 956; Walker 1956, 254 no. 841), (Fig. 16) The writing and decoration on this model differ from those of the previous ones. Here, there is no monotheistic testimony or Mohammadan message, but only the place of mintage in the centre of the front side and the date in the centre of the reverse. As the centre of the front side contains writing within a square, this coin reminds us of the repeated fifth model in this section. However, here we can note that the writing on the reverse is also within a square. Both squares are connected to the outer circle on the front and reverse by four circles in the shape of a group of the letter *mim* in Arabic. Moreover, there are three parallel lines on the front that read: struck -in Damascus- year. In the centre of the reverse are three other lines which read: one hundred-twenty-six. The mintage date enables us to identify the caliph who ordered the mintage of this coin: namely, one of Caliph al-Walid's two sons, Yazid or Ibrahim, who both ruled for a few months of the same year AH 126/CE 743.

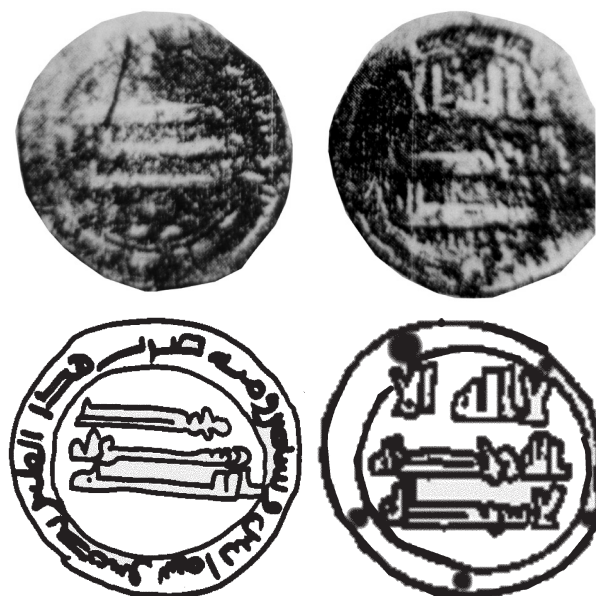




**Model 33** (Fahmi, 1957, 416, no. 972)<sup>50</sup>  
 The front side of this model contains a new phenomenon: the complete written monotheistic testimony on the coinage, which has analogies on coins of the Abbasid era. Here, in the centre of the front side is the monotheistic phrase written in four lines: In the name of Allah -There is no God but Allah -alone- there is no partner with Him. The centre is encircled by a margin that reads: struck in Damascus. The centre of the reverse displays the Muhammadan message, written in three lines with a single word in each line, as follows: Muhammad -Messenger- of Allah. The margin carries the phrase: this coin was struck. However, there must have been a mistake in mintage of the front and reverse's margin, as we can note a lack of conformity between the writings in the margins. Perhaps, the front side carried the reverse's margin (*i.e.* the words: this coin, struck), and, therefore, the reverse's margin would become: in Damascus, instead of the phrase: struck in Damascus (which, as noted, is on the margin of the front side).

As mentioned above, Damascus suffered in all spheres of life and administration during the late Umayyad era and the Abbasid era, when the caliphate centre moved from Damascus to Iraq. This had a direct effect as well upon the Damascus mint, causing it to become the weakest of all mints, regarding activity and mintage. During the Abbasid era the products of Damascus became the least of all currencies, whether golden, silver, copper or bronze. Hence, the copper coins preserved from this period are so rare that here we have only one example.

**Model 34** (Fahmi, 1957, 765 no. 474), (Fig. 17) In this model there is a notably great development in the writing, as compared to previous ones. This is due to the influence brought by the Abbasids, pertaining to Islamic mintage of all kinds. On the front of this model, we see that the Islamic monotheistic testimony is complete, not summarised, but still contained in three parallel lines in the centre, reading: There is no God but Allah -Allah alone- there is no partner with Him. The front is bordered by two parallel outer circles that are connected from the inside by five smaller circles in the shape of a group of the letter *mim* in Arabic. The reverse still carries the Muhammadan message as was usual during the time of the Umayyad Empire in three parallel lines: Mohammed -is the messenger of - Allah. The reverse's centre is surrounded by a margin in which the name of the place of mintage and the date of mintage are stated: In the name of Allah, this coin was struck in Damascus in one hundred and ninety two.<sup>51</sup>





Thus, it can be stated here that all of the coins listed in this section are almost similar, in that their front side contains the summarized monotheistic testimony in three parallel lines, and that the front sides are surrounded by one, two, three or four outer circles. The centre of the reverse usually contains the Muhammadan Message in three parallel lines. In addition, it may instead contain the name of the mint, as in the following: 'This coin was struck in Damascus', 'Damascus mintage' or 'Damascus' only, each of which would be followed by part of the phrase: In the name of Allah. The reverse may also contain an outer margin; in this case, the coin may contain the name of the mint, while the words with the Muhammadan message would be in the centre.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, we may state that the copper coins of the city of Damascus do not differ from those of other Islamic cities as far as the course of their development is concerned, having been first influenced by the Byzantine style during the first and second Islamic centuries, then carrying the picture of Caliph Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan and, finally, to become purely Arabic. All types of coins from each period of time described above had various features and characteristics in common. These shared properties facilitate in distinguishing these models from other types; and this is not surprising, since throughout the Umayyad era Damascus was the first city in the Islamic Empire. Therefore, all that was issued from Damascus was the ideal. It was this ideal that was then followed by all other cities under the rule of this large empire, which indeed had made the greatest achievements in sphere of coinage of all kinds: gold, silver and copper. The Arabised Umayyad model, which Damascus first adopted and then spread to all other cities, was maintained by

almost all succeeding Islamic eras. If Henri Lavoix's opinion is correct, then the first and second models with Greek-Latin inscriptions in the group of the standing emperor with Byzantium influences would go back in mintage to AH 17/CE 768, which would make Damascus the oldest mint in the Islamic era.

Accordingly, coins of the first section are distinguished by the presence of the emperor, who holds the archdiocesan crosier in his right hand as a sign of Christian leadership. Those of the second section display on the front side the image of the caliph holding a sword in his right hand as a sign of the imamate of the Muslims. In addition, while the reverse of the first section's coins carries the capital Greek letter M surrounded by the name of the mint, the second sections coins carries the form of a modified cross with the name of the mint around it as well.

We have seen that both sides of coins of the third section have a central and a marginal field, whereby the centre of the front side usually carries the Islamic monotheistic testimony written in three parallel lines as follows: There is no God -but Allah- alone. On the other hand, the centre of the reverse usually carries the Muhammadan message written in three parallel lines as follows: Mohammed -Messenger- of Allah. The name of the place of mintage is usually engraved on the reverse, either in the centre or in the margin. We can also note that Muslim artisans created new motifs for decorating coins of the third section that made less use of human or animal images, which were the common decoration on coins of the first and second sections. Instead, the artisans were inclined towards geometric designs, like circles and squares, as well as vegetal ones, like rosettes with five or six petals, palm tree branches with a few leaves or the branches of Daphne. In general, the inscriptions on coinage of the first section still contain some Greek or Latin words, while in the second section they are

all in Arabic, written in simple Kufic script. Coinage of the third section shows an increase in quantity and precision in craftsmanship.

#### Notes:

- 1 Abdulrahman Fahmi, *Sanag al-sikka fi fajr al-islām* (Cairo, 1957), 38.
- 2 Musa al-Husayni al-Mazandarani, *Ta'rikh al-nuqūd al-islāmiyya* (Beirut, 1988), 165.
- 3 Fahmi, *Sanag al-sikka fi fajr al-islām*, 38.
- 4 A city on Lake Tabariyya in Palestine, which became the capital of the Galilee emirate during the time of the Crusades.
- 5 A village in northern Syria that was once on the caravan route between Aleppo and Antioch.
- 6 Hassan al-Hallaq, *Tafriḥ al-nuqūd wa-l-dawāwim fi l-'aSr al-'umawī* (Beirut, 1978), 17.
- 7 Herculean, today the city of Argyle in Turkey.
- 8 Fahmi, *Sanag al-sikka fi fajr al-islām*, 38.
- 9 Thaer discusses the matter in details. See: Taher Raghīb Hussein, *Al-nuqūd al-islāmiyya al-awali* (Cairo, 1984), 41-44.
- 10 Abdulrahman Fahmi, *Mausū'at al-nuqūd al-'arabiyya wa-'ilm al-nummiyyāt, Fajr al-sikka al-islāmiyya* (Cairo, 1945) 234.
- 11 Damascus, or Jilliḳ, is the oldest capital in history that was continuously populated throughout time. It is said that the name originates from an Aramaic dead word *mashq*, with the prefix *dāl*. The name was mentioned in this form in hieroglyphic texts and meant the blossoming land or the luxuriant garden.
- 12 Damascus lies 691 m asl at 33° 21' (latitude) and 36° 18' (longitude).
- 13 Antioch is located on the Orontes River. It was established by Seleucus I Nicator in the year 307 BCE, at which time Christians took their first name as Christians. It was an Apostolic See as was Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, and Jerusalem.
- 14 Heraclius (CE 610-641), whose era witnessed many wars and radical developments in the East. He organized the army, defeated the Avars and attacked the Persians. When the Arab conquest began, Heraclius' armies were defeated and between CE 634 and CE 642 the Byzantine Empire lost Syria, Palestine, Iraq and Egypt.
- 15 Ahmed Ibn Yahya al-Baladhuri, *Futūḥ al-buldān* (Beirut, 1983), 127-128.
- 16 It is mentioned that the leader of the men of Damascus was Bishop Mansur Ibn Sarjun according to Baladhuri's account, the father of Hanna al-Dimashqi, as others mention.
- 17 Baladhuri mentioned the text of reconciliation and its conditions in details. See: al-Baladhuri, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 128.
- 18 Also mentioned by Ibn 'Asakir in his *History*.
- 19 al-Baladhuri, *Futūḥ al-buldān* 129.
- 20 *Dā'irat al-mafīārifa al-islāmiyya* (Beirut), vol. 9, 269 (entry: Damascus).
- 21 M. Lombard, *The Golden Age of Islam* (Amsterdam, 1975), 28.
- 22 Lombard, *The Golden Age of Islam*, 28.
- 23 Lombard, *The Golden Age of Islam* 27.
- 24 We have followed in this division the same kind Ra'fat al-Nabrawi adopted in: R. al-Nabrawi, 'Al-fulūs al-nuhāsiya al-madrūba bi-Hims khilāl al-qirnayn al-awal wa-l-thāni al-hijriyayn', *Majallat al-'uSūr* 6 (1991), 43-70.
- 25 What is meant by the model here, or as what some call it, the issuance or the fashion is the exactly identical coins in their writing, disposition and main decoration, which are well known and large in shape and may have been struck in one shape or more in one period of time. See: al-Nabrawi, *Majallat al-'uSūr* 6 (1991), 47.
- 26 Hussein, *Al-nuqūd al-islāmiyya al-awali*, 53-54.
- 27 H. Lavoix, *Catalogue des monnaies musulmanes de la Bibliothèque Nationale, Khalifes orientaux* (Paris, 1887), no. 1.
- 28 al-Nabrawi, *Majallat al-'uSūr* 6 (1991), 47-48.
- 29 Editor's note: Due to printing conventions, the Greek letter Sigma appears in this article in his more ancient shape, Σ, whereas the form of the letter on the coins resembles a Latin (C). Likewise, the Greek letter Omega appears here as a majuscule, Ω, whereas the shape of the letter on the coins resembles more the minuscule form or a modern W.
- 30 Lavoix, *Catalogue des monnaies musulmanes de la Bibliothèque Nationale, Khalifes orientaux*, 4.
- 31 *Al-nuqūd al-islāmiyya al-awali*, 71.
- 32 George Naif al-Qasoos published a special group of Umayyad copper coins and mentioned about 70 minted coins, which he ascribed to the mint of Damascus. He divided them into: Empire Models, the Standing Caliph Models and the Writing Models. He also published one model of this group. For more information see G.N. al-Qasoos, *Nummiyyāt nuḥāsiyya umawīyya jadida min majmūfiya khāsa musāhama fi ifiādat nazr fi nummiyyāt bilād al-shām* (2004), 338-361.

- 33 Spink Zürich Auction 22, 1987: *Coins of the Arab World*. (catalogued by Robert and Elisabeth Darley-Doran).
- 34 Al-Nabrawi, *Majallat al-'uSür* 6 (1991), 49.
- 35 *Al-nuqūd al-islāmiyya al-awali*, 79.
- 36 Knowing that this attempt was proceeded by two others to develop the used coinage, the first of which was done by Muflawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan, and the second by Musfiab ibn al-Zubayr, Abdullah's brother, when he was a revolutionist against the Umayyads in Iraq AH 70/CE 689.
- 37 Muhammed al-Khouli sees that the full Arabisation of the copper coins started before the Arabisation of gold and silver coins (M. al-Khouli, 'Al-sikka fi madinat Hims ibbān al-'ahd al-umawi', *al-Majallat al-tārīkhīyya* 5 (1990), 78, no. 1. See the reply by Raffat al-Nabrawi to him. See: al-Nabrawi, *Majallat al-'uSür* 6 (1991), 51-52.
- 38 Taher Raghīb Hussein is of the view that the appearance of the pure Islamic model of coins came late, due to the fact that this was an internal matter with no great importance or ties with the international market, which relied on gold, silver or both of these metals. Thus, the pure Islamic coins appeared gradually in AH 87/CE 705 and after. Hussein, *Al-nuqūd al-islāmiyya al-awali*, 118-119.
- 39 al-Nabrawi, *Majallat al-'uSür* 6 (1991), 52.
- 40 J. Walker, *A catalogue of the Arab Byzantine and Post Reform Umayyad Coins* (London, 1956), 252 no. B.47.
- 41 Walker, *A catalogue of the Arab Byzantine and Post Reform Umayyad Coins*, 129, 251.
- 42 Hussein, *Al-nuqūd al-islāmiyya al-awali*, 62 and its margin.
- 43 This torch goes back to the influence that had reached the Muslims through the silver Sasanian coinage. It carried on the reverse the picture of a fire torch as a symbol to the god Ahura Mazda; the ox god in the Zoroastrianism religion which was widespread in Persian lands. The torch remained as a decorative element on the silver coins which the Arab Muslims struck until the Arabisation process during the Islamic era. However, it usually appeared on the front, as in the silver coins in the time of Caliph Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan.
- 44 Fahmi, *Sanag al-sikka fi fajr al-islām*, 414, no. 965.
- 45 The jerboa (*al-yarbüfi*) is a desert rodent with a long tail like a rat, long hind legs, a potbelly and short front legs, thus resembling a kangaroo somewhat. It has the same colour as a deer. Its offspring is called *dirSin* Arabic and lives underground. It digs underground nests and makes a tunnel which has various entrances facing the direction of the blowing wind. These entries are called *nāfaqā*, *qāSafiā*, *dāmā* and *rahtā*. If the jerboa is pursued through one entrance, it goes out from another. Jerboas are animals that follow a leader, so when jerboas want to leave their bur rows and seek food, the leader goes out and scouts. If there is nothing to fear, it signals the rest with a loud cry: al-Nabrawi, *Majallat al-'uSür* 6 (1991), 51, note: 58.
- 46 al-Nabrawi, *Majallat al-'uSür* 6 (1991), 51, 54-55, models numbers 7. 18. 19. 20. 21.
- 47 al-Nabrawi, *Majallat al-'uSür* 6 (1991), 60 section 3: model 4.
- 48 al-Nabrawi, *Majallat al-'uSür* 6 (1991), 54 section 3: model 17.
- 49 Walker, *A Catalogue of the Arab Byzantine and Post Reform Umayyad Coins*, 253 no. B.48.
- 50 He mentioned it along with the Umayyad coins, about which we have some reserve.
- 51 In his book S. Lane-Poole mentioned two other coins that are similar to this. S. Lane-Poole, *Catalogue of the Collection of Arabic Coins preserved in the Khedivial Library in Cairo* (Cairo, 1984), 121 no. 867-868.