

Another token mold and lead token from Crusader Arsur (Apollonia)

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ANOTHER TOKEN MOLD AND LEAD
TOKEN FROM CRUSADER ARSUR (APOLLONIA)

Introduction

Excavations at Apollonia (Arsuf/Arsur, ca 12 km north of Tel-Aviv) over the past three decades have uncovered crucial material evidence for the use of lead token money in the Crusader kingdom of Jerusalem in the form of molds and lead tokens¹. Like in Medieval Western Europe, such lead token money provided Frankish settlers in the East with a rudimentary form of cash for daily transactions when insufficient coins were in circulation.²

Recent excavations there at the castle of Crusader Arsur (2018–2020) have unearthed an additional mold and a single token produced from the same mold. These finds can be added to the previously published molds and tokens found in the grounds of the castle and the adjacent township.³ The combination of the present two finds prove beyond doubt our previous assumption that these tokens were produced locally.

Excavation of the castle

Extensive excavations since 1977 have uncovered vivid evidence of the Frankish town of Arsur and a concentric castle built in the northern end of the walled town (1101–1265). The construction of the castle was closely connected to the Ibelin dynasty rise as the most powerful landed family both in Lusignan Cyprus and in the mainland kingdom of Jerusalem in the thirteenth century, and its struggle against the Hohenstaufen forces in *Outremer*.⁴ Historical sources indicated that during the lordship of John II of Ibelin (ca 1211–1258) the construction of a concentric castle in the northeastern part of the township (1241) commenced.⁵ After twenty years, in 1261, the entire seignory including the castle was leased to the Order of St John (Hospitallers), who refortified both the town and castle.⁶ In

¹ KOOL–TAL 2015.

² KOOL 2013.

³ KOOL–TAL 2015.

⁴ JACOBY 1986; EDBURY 1997; COUREAS 2015, pp. 63–64.

⁵ «En l’an de M.CC.XLI, Johan d’Eybelin, fis dou seignor de Baruth, comensa à fermer le chasteau d’Arsuf», see GESTES DE CHIPROIS, p. 124.

⁶ CART. HOSP. III, 2972, 3047.

1265, following a two-month siege, the fortified town and castle were destroyed by the Mamluks.⁷

Between 1998–2000 excavations uncovered major parts of the castle.⁸ Following these, more excavations in 2009–2010, 2012, as well as the 2018–2020 seasons have shed light on the construction phases and architectural modifications carried out by the Hospitallers after obtaining the lease in 1261.

The recent 2018–2020 seasons have concentrated on the castle's western façade, where two floor levels were identified and the location and remains of a chapel, reflecting the two periods of construction in the castle's history, that of the Ibelins (1240s) and that of the Hospitallers (1260s).⁹ As it stands, the castle's western façade consists of three halls, a central one and a northern one that by now are fully excavated, and a southern one to be excavated in the future (*Fig. 1*). The central hall was likely a connecting hall (at least in its Hospitaller stage) between the inner parts of the castle and the seashore as is evident from an opening with a marble-made threshold in its south-western corner leading to an outer ramp that probably led from the hall down to the coast. The northern hall was likely a stable and a working area (at least in its Hospitaller stage) as is evident from several troughs, tying stones and plastered floors, walls and sewage channels. The small finds include ceramics, mainly thirteenth-century pottery forms, glass vessels and windows (both grisaille and stained glass), and several coins. During the Mamluk siege these halls underwent additional changes and were afterwards looted for their building stones. Both the mold and token discussed here came from destruction fills in the western façade central hall dated to 1265.



Fig. 1a The castle of Arsur (Apollonia-Arsuf) – an overview looking northwest (photograph by Or Fialkov, September 2019).

⁷ AMITAI 2005.

⁸ ROLL 2007, pp. 50–94

⁹ SHOTTEN-HALLEL – YOHANAN – TAL 2020.



Fig. 1b Aerial view of the western façade, looking east (photograph by Or Fialkov, September 2019).

A new lead token mold and token

Two stone-mold fragments dated to the period of occupation of the castle by the Hospitaller Order (1261–1265) were previously published.¹⁰ One mold came from the 1265 destruction layer of the inner part of the castle's northeastern semicircular tower, excavated by I. Roll in 1999. A second mold was discovered in 2010 in a fill that had accumulated above the 1265 destruction layer of the castle's western façade central hall.

Our third mold came from the same central hall but was found significantly this time *in situ* in the 1265 destruction fill. The new mold fragment consists of one of originally two superimposed slabs to produce tokens.¹¹ The main channel through which the molten lead was poured is clearly visible in the center of the slab. It connected via smaller pouring channels to circular depressions, to cast six identical tokens. The carved design of the depressions consisting of a T-shaped incision flanked by five dots, three above, and two, left and right.

Mold (*Fig. 2*)

Apollonia-Arsūf (2020 season); Area F (Crusader Castle, Western Façade; Central Hall); Locus 2940, Reg. No. 28765 (1265 destruction fill)

Material: Limestone (chalky)

Dimensions: maximum height: 12.5 cm; maximum width: 7.4 cm; maximum thickness: 4.2 cm

Number of cavities preserved: 6

Diameter of cavities: 20–21 mm

¹⁰ KOOL-TAL 2015, pp. 218–221.

¹¹ KOOL 2013, pp. 302–303.

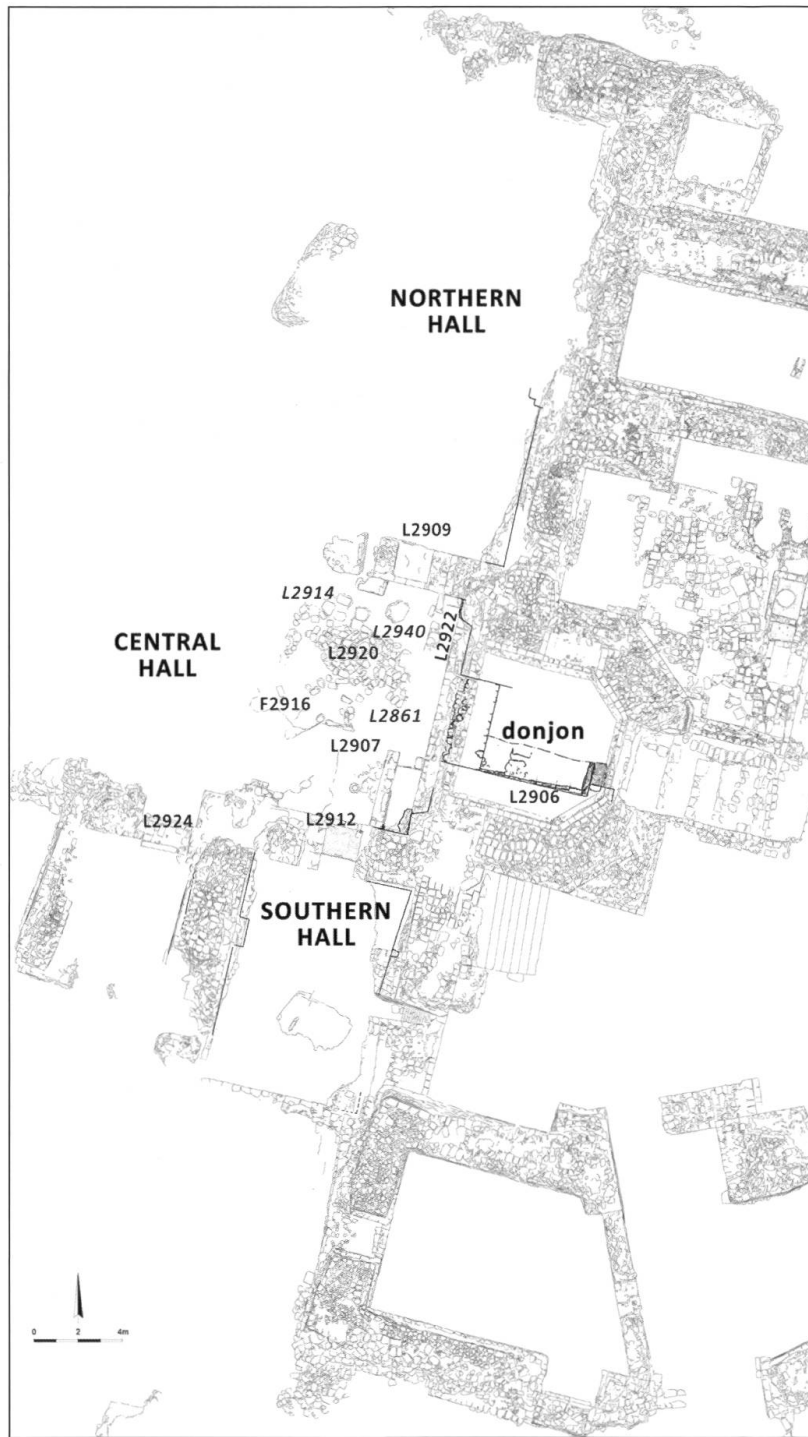


Fig. 1c Plan of the western façade as of the 2020 (XXIX season)
(drawing by Slava Pirsky and Sergei Alon).

Until 2015, a total of ten lead tokens were found at Apollonia/Arsur during excavations carried out between 1977–2015. All were single finds originating in the castle's adjoining *burgus*/town. Among these were also three identical tokens with inscriptions mentioning in Latin and Old French the name of the *burgus* or castle of Arsur.¹²

Our latest token was excavated in the castle's western façade central hall in 2018. Both the above mold and the token came from the same hall, discovered only 2 m apart from each other (Loci 2914 and 2940 respectively; *Fig. 1*). One side of the token shows a T surrounded by five dots (*Fig. 3a*), fully matching the design of the above mold's six depressions (*Fig. 3c*). The contextual proximity of the two finds, the identical design and dimension of the token, clearly demonstrates that the token was produced in the abovementioned mold. The second side of the token shows an eight-spoked «water wheel» (*Fig. 3b*), allowing us to reconstruct the design of the depressions in the missing slab. The «waterwheel» design, brought from Europe where it was thought to be connected to the local use of flour mills, was quite common on Crusader period tokens.¹³

Token (*Fig. 3a–b*)

Apollonia-Arsūf (2018 season); Area F (Crusader Castle, Western Façade; Central Hall); Locus 2914, Reg. No. 28452 (1265 destruction fill).

Obv. T-shape strokes flanked by five points.

Rev. eight-spoked water wheel.

Pb (brownish-gray patina), 10.11 g, 21 mm in diam.

Part of the flan's cut channel attachment is visible along the margins.

Conclusion

The decades long excavations at the Apollonia site provide a unique opportunity for an in-depth study of the monetary economy of a middle-size township and castle in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Until now some 190 single find coins, spanning the period of the town's transition from a Fatimid port town to a Frankish *burgus* and castle in the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries, were meticulously excavated. We already mentioned before that the seigneurie of Arsur never struck its own regular denier coinage unlike other lordships like Jaffa, Sidon, Tyre and Beirut in the thirteenth century kingdom of Jerusalem.¹⁴ But the excavated coin evidence does show that in Arsur lead token money constituted at least 5 % of the total circulating coinages of this period and 14 % of the official European denier-type money found at the site, demonstrating that such locally struck lead money played a far more important role in the economy of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem than was previously thought.

¹² KOOL-TAL 2015, pp. 224–226.

¹³ KOOL 2013, pp. 298; 311; 320–334

¹⁴ KOOL-TAL 2015, pp. 226–227.



Fig. 2 The mold (photograph by Sasha Flit).

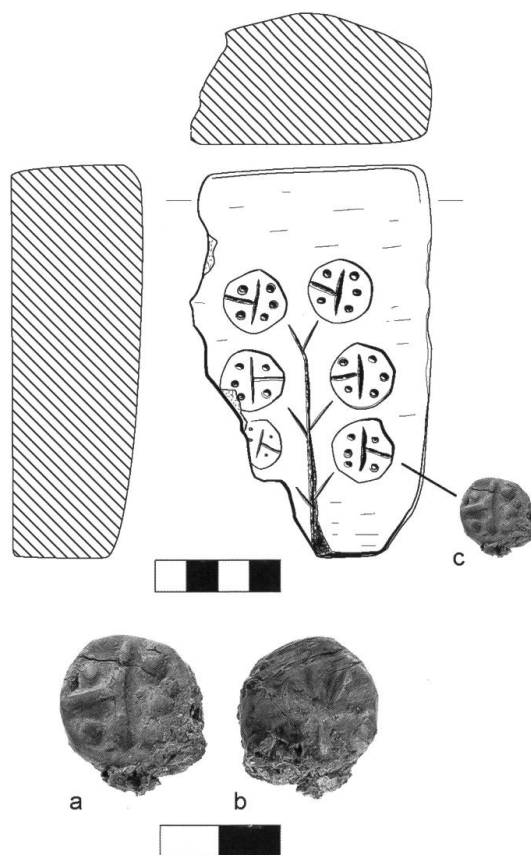


Fig. 3 The mold and token; a) Token obverse; b) Token reverse; c) Token position in the mold (drawing by Yulia Gotlieb; photograph by Sasha Flit).

Abstract

This short article discusses a newly discovered token mold and lead token retrieved during archaeological excavations at the castle of Arsur (Apollonia-Arsūf) over the past two years. It provides further proof previously promulgated by us that locally cast unofficial lead money formed an integral part of the «cash» used by Frankish settlers in the lordship of Arsur. This type of lead money played a far more important role in the economy of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem than was generally thought.

Zusammenfassung

Während der Ausgrabungen der letzten zwei Jahre in der Burg von Arsur (Apollonia-Arsūf) wurde eine Gussform und ein Bleitoken gefunden. Dieser Fund liefert weitere Indizien für eine schon früher von uns vorgebrachte These, dass lokal hergestelltes Bleigeld einen wichtigen Bestandteil in der Geldwirtschaft der fränkischen Siedler dieser Region ausmachte. Dabei dürfte diese Art von Bleigeld in der Wirtschaft des Königreichs Jerusalem eine bedeutend grössere Rolle gespielt haben als bisher angenommen.

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