

A Hoard from the Wars of the Diadochi in the ‘Kamun Cave’, Western Galilee

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Abstract

The 'Kamun Cave' is a large karst cave located at an altitude of 378 m. above sea level on the Kamun ridge in Western Galilee. At the beginning of March 2015 two cavers who visited the 'Kamun Cave' reported to the Antiquities Theft Prevention Unit of the Israel Antiquities Authority the discovery of an ancient hoard composed of silver jewelry and coins inside one of the inner halls of the cave. Following this discovery, a comprehensive archaeological survey on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority and in cooperation with the Cave Research Center at the Hebrew University was conducted in the cave.

In this article the coins that were included in the hoard and another coin that was found in the survey will be presented and discussed. On the basis of the estimated burial date of the hoard it will be suggested that the cave served as a refuge for a group of people who fled from the fighting that occurred in the region during the wars of the Diadochi.

INTRODUCTION

The ‘Kamun Cave’ is a large karst cave (total length of 225 m.) located at an altitude of 378 m. above sea level on the Kamun ridge in Western Galilee. The hidden and difficult-to-access entrance to the cave is located in the center of a broad hill, on a local ridgeline between Naḥal Shazur and Naḥal Tzuf. The Beit Ha-Qerem valley located to the north and at the foot of the hill where the cave is located, allows relatively easy access to the Phoenician port city of ‘Akko.

INSERT FIG. 1 HERE

Fig. 1. The ‘Kamun Cave’ plan (Drawing: Matan Avital, Ahikam Amihai, Boaz Langford, Micka Ullman)

In early March 2015 two cavers who visited the ‘Kamun Cave’ reported to the

Antiquities Theft Prevention Unit of the Israel Antiquities Authority the discovery of an ancient hoard composed of silver jewelry and coins inside one of the inner halls of the cave. Following this report, a comprehensive archaeological survey on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority and in cooperation with the Cave Research Center at the Hebrew University was conducted in the cave.¹

During the archaeological survey in the cave various artifacts were collected (to be published in the near future), including many fragments of Galilean Coarse Ware storage jars gathered in all parts of the central chamber (Fig. 2; Areas C and D). This pottery attests that **the main** human activity took place throughout **this** hall. The finds indicate that the use of the 'Kamun Cave' dates to the beginning of the Hellenistic Period after a minor presence there during the Iron Age.

INSERT FIG. 2 HERE

Fig. 2. Two broken parts of Galilean Coarse Ware storage jar (Photo: Eitan Klein)

In this article the coins that were part of the hoard, and another coin that was uncovered in the survey, will be presented and discussed. On the basis of the surmised deposition date of the hoard we will suggest that the cave served as a refuge for a group of people who fled from the fighting that occurred in the region during the Wars of the Diadochi.

THE HOARD LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

¹ The survey was directed by Klein on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority. We thank the cavers Reuven and Chen Zakai for discovering the hoard and reporting on it to the Israel Antiquities Authority. We would also like to thank the participants of the survey: Boaz Langford, Micka Ullman, Roi Porat, Amos Frumkin, Nir Distelfeld, Ira Horowitz, Amir Ganor, Gideon Goldenberg, Ronit Lupu, Daniel Ben-Tov, Yinon Shivtiel, Moran Plitvinski, Tehila Eliasi, Matan Avital and the late Ahikam Amihai. Thanks also to the workers of the Artifacts Treatment, Conservation and Laboratories Department headed by Zvi Greenhut: Raisa Vinitzky, Josef Bukengolts, Naama Sukenik, Irena Lidsky-Reznikov and Clara Amit. The article was written during a stay at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies.

The hoard was found lying on a rock inside a natural horizontal crevice (Locus 102) on the southern part of a difficult-to-access eastern wing of the cave (Area E). The hoard (Fig. 3) included two round silver earrings, three boat-shaped silver earrings, two silver rings, five silver bracelets, a stone stamp and a glass seal; objects of this kind were all in frequent use during the late Persian Period, during the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. The closest parallels to this jewelry come from burial caves dating to this period at Kāmid el-Lōz in Lebanon (Poppa 1978; approximately 90 Km from 'Kamun Cave').

INSERT FIG. 3 HERE

Fig. 3. The 'Kamun Cave' jewelry and coin hoard (Photos: Clara Amit)

Together with the jewelry, two *tetradrachms* minted in the name of Alexander the Great were found (Cat. Nos. 1 and 2; Figs. 4:1 and 4:2). Traces of warp and woof wool fabric were found on the jewelry, suggesting that the hoard was originally placed inside or wrapped in textile. One bronze coin was also found during the survey in the central chamber of the cave (Area C; Cat. No. 3; Fig. 4:3) and, although not part of the hoard, will also be discussed here.

INSERT FIG. 4 HERE


Fig. 4. Coins from the 'Kamun Cave' archaeological survey (Photos: Clara Amit)

CATALOGUE

1. Reg. No. 1003, L102. IAA 161145.

Alexander the Great, Sardis, 319–315 BCE (Price) or 310–302 BCE (Thompson).

Obv.: Beardless head of Heracles r. wearing lion skin; border of dots

Rev.: Zeus seated l. on throne, holding eagle in r. hand and scepter in l.; in l. field: ; on r., downwards: ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ; border of dots

Š *tetradrachm*, ↑, 17.13 g, 24×26 mm.

Price 1991:334, No. 2664; Thompson 1983:35–36, Series XIX.

2. Reg. No. 1002, L102. IAA 161146.

Alexander the Great, 'Babylon', 311–305 BCE (Price) or 313/2–311/10 BCE (Waggoner).

Obv.: Beardless head of Heracles r. wearing lion skin; border of dots

Rev.: Zeus seated l. on throne, holding eagle in r. hand and scepter in l.; in l. field: 

beneath throne: ΜΙ; on r., downwards: ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟ[Υ]; below throne:
ΒΑΣΙΛΕ[ΩΣ]; border of dots

Š *tetradrachm*, ↓, 17.14 g, 26×27 mm.

Price 1991:476, No. 3746; Waggoner 1968:185, Issue VIII, series 3.

3. Reg. No. 1013, L100. IAA 161144.

Alexander the Great, Caunos, *c.* 320 BCE.

Obv.: Shield; border with dots

Rev.: Helmet; in fields: ear of corn (?) – Κ

Æ, 3.21 g, 14 mm.

Price 1991:275, No. 2072.

Cat. No. 1

The chronology of the Sardian mint in the last two decades of the fourth century is exceedingly vexed. On the one hand, a group of issues linked to others struck in the name of Philip III hold one part of the coinage up before his death in late 317 BCE. On the other hand, the last Alexandrine issues of the mint are linked to issues of Lysimachus and seem to belong in the period immediately after the Battle of Ipsos in 301 BCE. Both Price and Thompson were inclined to suggest a significant gap in production at Sardis between these two groups. For Price this was between *c.* 315 and 301 BCE, and occurred between his numbers 3687 and 2689. For Thompson this was between 319/8 and 310 BCE and Price nos. 2641 and 2642 (her series XV and XVI). According to Price's chronology *Cat. No. 1* would fall in the period *c.* 319–315 BCE, on Thompson's between *c.* 310 and 302 BCE, but the issue is not die- or control-linked to the earlier or the later series. There is one important piece of hoard evidence

in the form of the ‘Aleppo’ 1893 hoard (*IGCH*:208, No. 1516).² Thompson (1983:42) noted that this contained 27 coins of her Series XVI–XIX “in fine to mint condition according to Newell’s notes”. The latest dated coins in the hoard are those of Tyre (Ake), which run down to year 10 (306/5 BCE), suggesting a date of deposit for the Aleppo hoard of *c.* 306–300 BCE. This in turn suggests that Thompson’s Series XIX, and thus our coin, was struck within the period *c.* 310–300 BCE, and that Thompson’s date is to be preferred. The ‘Kamun Cave’ hoard coin appears to have seen very little wear, which perhaps suggests a burial date for the hoard not long after it was struck, in the period *c.* 310–295 BCE.

Cat. No. 2

The chronology of the mint of Babylon has been no less debated than that of Sardis. Cat. No. 2 is a minor variant of Price 3746 (the monogram in left field appears to have no horizontal element). Price dated the issues with control MI to the period after Antigonus’ rule in Mesopotamia, which ended in 311 BCE, but offered no clear rationale for his range of 311–305 BCE. Waggoner (1968:185) arrived at her more precise dates of 313/2–311/10 BCE on the basis of the inclusion of a small number of coins of her Issue VIII, series 3 (to which her series 2 is die linked, and from which it should probably not be chronologically distinguished) as the latest Babylonian coins in the Abu Hommos 1919 hoard (*IGCH*:234, No. 1667). The date of deposit of this hoard she took to be *c.* 311 BCE on the basis of its Ptolemaic contents: it contained early reduced-weight coins of Ptolemy I, which Newell had thought to have been introduced *c.* 312 BCE. However, as Lorber (2012) has now argued, the date of this weight reduction is more likely to be *c.* 305 BCE. The Abu Hommos hoard’s date must be lowered accordingly, and so must the date of its Babylonian contents. On this basis, the *terminus ante quem* for the striking of the ‘Kamun Cave’ coin becomes *c.* 305 BCE. Price’s chronology for this issue looks, therefore, to be correct. Given that our specimen has

² For the composition and likely date of this hoard see Duyrat 2005:133.

seen virtually no wear, it suggests a date of deposit for the ‘Kamun Cave’ hoard within the period *c.* 311–300 BCE.

Cat. No. 3

The bronze coin discovered as a single find in the central chamber of the cave is of a type assigned by Price to ‘Miletus or Mylasa’, with a date of *c.* 320 BCE. The mint attribution was strongly challenged by Ashton (2004), who pointed out on the basis of findspots that a mint in southwestern Asia Minor is far more likely. He suggested Caunos in Caria. The date of the production of this coin assigned by Price is approximate, and the condition of our specimen suggests that it has seen some wear. It was probably lost in the last two decades of the fourth century, but no further precision is possible.

HISTORICAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The finds discovered in the cave indicate intensive human activity only during one major period, at the beginning of the Hellenistic Period. The massive use of Galilean Coarse Ware storage jars suggests that the refugees who fled to the cave belonged to the Autochthonic/Semitic population who lived in the Galilee during this period (Frankel et al. 2001:61–62). It is possible that the refugees originated from Ḥorbat Kamun, *c.* 2.5 km east of the cave and at the top of the Kamun ridge, where a clay *mortarium* from the Persian or the beginning of the Hellenistic Period was recently published, attesting to a settlement in those periods at the site (Hartal 2012:48–46, Fig. 2:17), or they may have originated from other settlements that existed in the nearby area during this period.

As detailed above, the silver jewelry hoard with two *tetradrachms* in the name of Alexander the Great was deposited in the eastern wing (Area E) of the cave. The bronze coin found in the central chamber dating back to about 320 BCE, close to the time when the bundle of jewelry and coins was concealed, suggests that those who were in the central hall (Area C) hid their precious possessions in this hidden and difficult-to-access wing. As noted in the commentary, consideration of the production dates and comparative freshness of the two coins from the hoard (Figs. 4:1 and 4:2) suggest that it was concealed most probably within the decade 310–300 BCE.

There are several possibilities regarding the date and reason for the refugees’ flight to the

cave. Diodorus Siculus describes how Ptolemy I, after his victory over Demetrius Poliorcetes in 312 BCE at Gaza, continued with his army to fight against the cities of Phoenicia:

"Ptolemy sent the captured soldiers off into Egypt, ordering them to be distributed among the nomes; but he himself, after giving a magnificent burial to all those of his own men who had died in the battle, went with his forces against the cities of Phoenicia, besieging some of them and winning others by persuasion" (Diod. Sic., *Bibliotheca Historica* 19:85.4)³

Diodorus went on to note that Ptolemy held these cities for a while but later, when Antigonus Monophthalmus arrived in the area, Ptolemy withdrew from Phoenicia back to Egypt, destroying a number of coastal cities, including 'Akko:

"Deciding therefore, to leave Syria, he razed the most noteworthy of the cities that he had captured: Ake in Phoenician Syria, and Ioppe, Samaria, and Gaza in Syria; then he himself, taking the army and what of the booty it was possible to drive or carry, returned into Egypt" (Diod. Sic., *Bibliotheca Historica* 19:3.7)⁴

It is now accepted that the Battle of Gaza took place in the winter of 312/1 BCE (Errington 1977:496–500; Billows 1997:134, No. 67), and therefore most scholars have assigned both Ptolemy's military conquests in Phoenicia and the destruction of the city of 'Akko as part of his retreat to Egypt to 311 BCE (Billows 1997:129; Boiy 2007:145–146; Meeus 2012:89–92). This is probably too early to be the historical circumstance within which the 'Kamun Cave' hoard was buried.

A more plausible candidate for the time when the cave might have been used for refuge is year 306 BCE. During this year Antigonus and Demetrius launched their campaign against Egypt itself. Diodorus mentioned that the great army assembled for battle advanced through the cities of Phoenicia and the coastal plain to the south:

³ ὁ δὲ Πτολεμαῖος τοὺς μὲν ἀλόντας στρατιώτας ἀποστείλας εἰς Αἴγυπτον προσέταξεν ἐπὶ τὰς νομαρχίας διελεῖν, αὐτὸς δὲ θάψας τῶν ἰδίων τοὺς ἐν τῇ μάχῃ τελευτήσαντας ἅπαντας μεγαλοπρεπῶς μετὰ τῆς δυνάμεως ἐπήει τῶν κατὰ Φοινίκην πόλεων τὰς μὲν πολιορκῶν, τὰς δὲ πειθοῖ προσαγόμενος.

⁴ διὸ καὶ κρίνας ἐκλιπεῖν τὴν Συρίαν κατέσκαψε τὰς ἀξιολογωτάτας τῶν κεκρατημένων πόλεων, Ἄκην μὲν τῆς Φοινίκης Συρίας, Ἰόππην δὲ καὶ Σαμάρειαν καὶ Γάζαν τῆς Συρίας, αὐτὸς δὲ τὴν δύναμιν ἀναλαβὼν καὶ τῶν χρημάτων ὅσα δυνατὸν ἦν ἄγειν ἢ φέρειν ἐπανῆλθεν εἰς Αἴγυπτον.

"He had decided to make a campaign against Egypt. So he himself took command of the land army and advanced through Coele Syria with more than eighty thousand foot soldiers, about eight thousand horsemen, and eighty-three elephants. Giving the fleet to Demetrius, he ordered him to follow along the coast in contact with the army as it advanced...." (Diod. Sic., *Bibliotheca Historica* 20:73.1–2).⁵

Although no battles took place in Palestine, it is clear that the region saw massive troop movements in this campaign.

Another candidate for the reason and date of refuge in the cave are the governmental changes that took place in Palestine in 301 BCE, when Ptolemy I gained control of the area, as described by Diodorus:

“As for Seleucus, after the partition of the Kingdom of Antigonus, he took his army and went to Phoenicia, where, in accordance with the terms of the agreement, he endeavoured to appropriate Coele Syria. But Ptolemy had already occupied the cities of that region....” (Diod. Sic., *Bibliotheca Historica* 21:1.5).⁶

But in this case the sources do not report whether this takeover was accompanied by military activity.

A number of coin hoards dating to the last two decades of the fourth century BCE are known from Palestine and the surrounding area, which clearly attest to the lack of stability in the region during the Wars of the Diadochi. The data was most recently been surveyed by Duyrat (2016) who listed the following hoards from the immediate region:⁷

⁵ ἔκρινε δὲ στρατεύειν ἐπὶ τὴν Αἴγυπτον. αὐτὸς μὲν οὖν τοῦ πεζοῦ στρατεύματος ἀφηγούμενος προῆγε διὰ τῆς Κοίλης Συρίας, ἔχων πεζοὺς μὲν πλείους τῶν ὀκτακισμυρίων, ἵππεῖς δὲ περὶ ὀκτακισχιλίουσ, ἐλέφαντας δὲ τρισὶ πλείους τῶν ὀγδοήκοντα· τῷ δὲ Δημητρίῳ παραδοὺς τὸν στόλον συνέταξε συμπαραπλεῖν ἅμα πορευομένη τῆ δυνάμει....

⁶ Ὅτι Σέλευκος μετὰ τὴν διαίρεσιν τῆς Ἀντιγόνου βασιλείας ἀναλαβὼν τὴν δύναμιν παρεγένετο εἰς Φοινίκην καὶ ἐπεχείρησε κατὰ τὰς γενομένας συνθήκας τὴν Κοίλην Συρίαν ἰδιοποιεῖσθαι. προκατειληφότος δὲ τὰς ἐν αὐτῇ πόλεις Πτολεμαίου....

⁷ We provide the numbering of the hoards from Duyrat's catalogue (pp. 75–85). For a map of finds of this period see p. 548, Map 7. Numerous other hoards without firm findspots may belong in this list too.

91. Tel Michal 1977–1980 (*CH* 10.256). After 325–320 BCE.⁸ Kindler 1989.

99. Kirbet el-Kerak 1936 (*IGCH* 1510 = *CH* 8.587 = *CH* 9.462). *c.* 323–320 BCE.

Baramki 1945.

105. Tel Tsippor 1960 (*IGCH* 1514). *c.* 311–305 BCE.⁹ Rahmani 1966.

109. Jericho 1991 (*CH* 8.215). *c.* 305 BCE.

111. Ashkelon 1990 (*CH* 8.220). *c.* 305–290 BCE.

The evidence for the deposit of Alexanders in Syrian hoards was analyzed by Duyrat (2011), where she noted a pronounced spike in hoard deposition with the arrival of Alexander the Great, continuing into the early 320s, after which ‘les chiffres restent relativement élevés jusqu’à 295, reflétant l’insécurité persistante en Syrie durant la conquête les troupes fraîches rejoignant l’armée et les vétérans de retour vers leurs foyers sont amenés à traverser la région s’ils ne sont pas dirigés vers l’Asie Mineure – puis durant les luttes entre les Diadoques qui conduisent la région à passer sous différentes autorités, imposées souvent les armes à la main.’¹⁰

In any case, the finds discovered in the ‘Kamun Cave’ add yet more evidence for the political instability which prevailed in the region during the Wars of the Diadochi.

⁸ For a date in 311 BCE following the withdrawal of Ptolemy I back to Egypt from the Phoenician coast see Ariel 2006:80.

⁹ Rahmani determined that the coins were minted between 317–312 BCE and only one coin from the mint of Ecbatana was minted between 311–303 BCE. Therefore he set the date of the entire hoard for 311 BCE or later (Rahmani 1966). In fact the issue of Ecbatana present is one of the very earliest produced by the mint (Price 1991:491, No. 3889), which probably began to strike *c.* 311 BCE. 311 BCE is thus the terminus post quem for deposit of Tel Tsippor. That it is not likely to have been buried much later that this is suggested by the issues of Tyre (‘Ake’) present. These run down to Year 33 (Price 1991:413, No. 3286: 314/3 BCE), but probably not much later (2 coins have illegible dates and are struck from obverse dies unknown to Newell). The Babylonian issues run down to Issue VIII series 2 and 3 (Price 1991:473-7, No. 3704 [7], 3708 [1], 3722 [1], 3726 [1], 2746 [12], 3751 [2]), which were present, as we have noted, in the Abu Hommos hoard, deposited *c.* 305 BCE. The Tell Tsippor and Kamun Cave hoards both look to contain issues down to *c.* 305 BCE, therefore.

¹⁰ Duyrat 2011:420–421, Figs. 1 and 2 and p. 422 (quotation).

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