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Stefan Heidemann:  
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Damascus in 803/1401

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## TĪMŪR'S CAMPMINT DURING THE SIEGE OF DAMASCUS IN 803/1401

### RÉSUMÉ

La conquête de Damas par Timūr en 803/1401 offre un exemple de la manière dont s'y prend Timūr pour extorquer de l'argent durant le siège et comment les autorités administrative et financière de la ville y ont collaboré. C'est surtout le rôle économique, fiscale et politique de l'atelier monétaire "ambulant" de Timūr qui est ici analysé.

L'atelier de campagne avait plusieurs fonctions: a) raffiner l'argent pour alléger le poids du butin et de le reconvertir dans une forme plus appropriée, b) gagner des revenus pour la trésorerie de Timūr, c) servir d'outil de propagande en émettant des monnaies donatives qui informaient des nouvelles conquêtes de Timūr.

*Mots clés* : histoire économique ; Timūr ; atelier monétaire de campagne ; Damas.

### ABSTRACT

The conquest of Damascus by Timūr in 803/1401 provides an example of Timūr's sophisticated way of extorting money during a siege and the ways in which the city's administrative and financial authorities would collaborate in this. In particular, the economic, fiscal and political role of Timūr's campmint is analyzed.

The campmint had different functions, a) to refine the silver so as to lower the weight of the booty that was carried away and to convert the loot into a distributable form; b) to earn revenue for Timūr's treasury; and, c) to serve as a kind of propaganda tool by issuing donative-coins which spread the information of Timūr's new conquest.

*Keywords*: economic history; Timūr; campmint; Damascus.

<sup>1</sup> *The basic research for this article was done during the 41st Summer Seminar of the American Numismatic Society, New York 1993, under the helpful supervision of Michael Bates. I am particularly grateful to Stephen Album, Lutz Ilisch, Rudi Mathee and Maria Subtelny for various comments and support; to Stephen Album who allowed me to use his notes on the collection of the Yapı ve Kredi Bankası, to Lutz Ilisch who kindly permitted me to include the recently acquired tankas of the Tübingen collection in this study and to Rudi Mathee who undertook the careful revision of the English draft.*

## ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die Eroberung von Damaskus durch Timūr im Jahr 803/1401 bietet ein Beispiel für die Strategie Timūrs während einer Belagerung unter der Mitwirkung der städtischen Finanzverwaltung aus einer Stadt Geld zu pressen. Insbesondere die ökonomische, fiskalische und politische Rolle der Feldmünzstätte Timūrs werden dabei untersucht.

Die Feldmünzstätte hatte verschiedene Funktionen: zum einen das Silber zu scheiden, um das Gewicht für den Abtransport zu reduzieren und die Beute in eine auf- und verteilbare Form zu bringen, dann Einnahmen für Timūrs Schatzamt zu erwirtschaften, sowie als Propagandainstrument durch die Ausgabe von Geschenkmünzen, die Timūrs Sieg verkünden sollten.

*Schlüsselwörter* : Wirtschaftsgeschichte; Timūr; Feldmünzstätte; Damaskus.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the recent years I have come across various historical accounts of sieges in the premodern Middle East. My curiosity has often been roused by the economic attempts of the conquerors in trying to exploit the situation. Jean Aubin analyzed in detail the attitude of Timūr towards cities he took.<sup>2</sup> He shows that Timūr generally followed a certain pattern when he forced a city to pay a ransom (*māl-i amān*). When the city was not able to collect it or when the city showed signs of resistance, he ordered a systematic plunder and quite frequently a general massacre. The conquest of Damascus by Timūr in 803/1401 belongs to the best documented sieges of Timūr and the Islamic middle ages as such. It may serve as a model for the extortion of all valuables from a city by him. The siege is related to us by a number of contemporary sources.<sup>3</sup> I will focuss on the monetary aspects of the siege, the role of Timūr's campmint and finally provide some arguments about the reasons for the introduction of the tanka coinage in Timūr's realm.

The events of Damascus and their monetary aspects are transmitted by an Arabic, a Latin and a Persian account written by eyewitnesses or contemporaries living in Syria. These offer thorough descriptions of Timūr's military, diplomatic and fiscal ways of extorting money from the cities he besieged. In addition we have coins struck during the siege.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Aubin (1963).

<sup>3</sup> Fischel in Ibn Khaldūn, *Ta'rif*, trans. Fischel, 1-7, and Mignanelli, *Vita*, trans. Fischel, 202-208, discusses the available sources and the relations among them.

<sup>4</sup> For further eyewitness accounts by contemporaries and slightly later reports that provide no additional information on the monetary aspects of the siege, see Ibn Khaldūn, *Ta'rif*, ed. Ṭanjī, 351-376, trans. Fischel. Ibn 'Arabshāh, *'Ajā'ib*, ed. al-Ḥimṣī, 193-298, trans. Sanders, 117-163; Ibn 'Arabshāh, who was born in Damascus, was a boy of twelve years, when Timūr took Damascus. Ibn Taghribirdī, *Manhal* IV, 118-125. Ṣairafī, *Nuzha* II, 82-84. Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā'* II, 133-140. Shāmī, *Zafarnāma*, 230-237 (on Shāmī see Hinz [1936] 360. Timūr ordered this

The present paper is divided into four main sections.

First: the internal organization of collecting ransom within a city, recounted by the Egyptian al-Maqrizī.<sup>5</sup>

Second: Timūr's argument about the quality of Syrian silver coins, narrated by the Italian merchant Bertrando de Mignanelli.<sup>6</sup>

Third: The role of a campmint during a siege, told by the Persian Sharaf al-Din 'Alī Yazdī.<sup>7</sup>

And fourth: the numismatic evidence as seen in Timūr's own coinage from Damascus.

## 2. AL-MAQRIZĪ - THE INTERNAL URBAN ORGANIZATION FOR COLLECTING THE RANSOM

At the time of Timūr's conquest al-Maqrizī (d. 845/1442)<sup>8</sup> lived in Cairo. But the sources of his description must have been eyewitnesses of this catastrophe, whose reports he probably picked up after 810/1408 when he taught in Damascus.<sup>9</sup>

In the fall of 803/1400 Timūr set out for the second campaign against the Mamlūk Sultanate, having threatened Syria a first time in 796/1393-4.<sup>10</sup> And just like the first time, the Mamlūk regime was unprepared for the invasion.<sup>11</sup> When Timūr entered the vicinity of Damascus after destroying

chronicle to be written as late as 804/1401-2). Jean of Sultāniya, *Mémoire*, 455f. Piloti, *Traité*, 119f. Metsobets'i, *History*, 49-52; see also Minorsky (1955). For the conquest of Damascus in the research literature, see Aubin (1963); Kehren (1978) 105-116; Roemer, *CHI*, 75-77; Roemer (1989), 96-98; Nagel (1993), 325-334.

<sup>5</sup> Maqrizī, *Sulūk III/3*, 1039-1053. See also Ibn Taghribirdī, *Nujūm*, ed. Popper VI, 46-65, ed. Cairo XII, 236-246, trans. Popper, 34-51, and Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' I/2*, 610-623, rely on al-Maqrizī's text.

<sup>6</sup> Mignanelli, *Vita*, ed. Baluzii and trans. Fischel; Ibn Khaldūn, trans. Fischel.

<sup>7</sup> Yazdī, *Zafarnāma*, ed. 'Abbāsī II, 235-256, trans. Pétis de la Croix III, 327-357. On Pétis de la Croix, see Lockhart, *CHI*, 401. On Yazdī, see Hinz (1936) 358f. Yazdī began to compose his chronicle in 801/1398.

<sup>8</sup> See F. Rosenthal, "al-Maqrizī", in: *EP<sup>2</sup>* VI, 193f.

<sup>9</sup> Al-Maqrizī's report about the events is very similar to the description of de Mignanelli, who was in Damascus after the destruction and according to Fischel (1956) 208, might got his informants on the spot of the scene; al-Maqrizī later has this chance too. See also Maqrizī, *Durar II*, 321f., biography of Ibn 'Arabshāh, with whom he talked in length in the year 840/1436-7 and who gave him his book on Timūr.

<sup>10</sup> For a numismatic document, see Balog (1964) no. 596. He sees in the copper coin issue from Ḥamāh from the year 799/1396-7 with the inscription: *kafā bil-maut wa'zan* (death will be sufficient admonition) a "memento mori", alluding to the danger of the Mongol invasion.

<sup>11</sup> First Timūr took Aleppo on Saturday, Rabi' I 11th, 803/ October 30th, 1400. His son Mirānshāh shortly afterwards took Ḥamāh on Rabi' I 14th/ November 2nd. Roemer, *CHI*, 75-77; Ilisch (1984) 143-153; Nagel (1993) 325-328.

Aleppo, the Amīrs around the boy-sultan al-Nāṣir Faraj (first reign 801-808/1399-1405) decided to retreat from Damascus. This sudden withdrawal on Friday, Jumādā I 21st, 803/ January 7th, 1401, a mere two weeks after their arrival, was a shattering blow to the morale and resistance of the Damascenes. The city lay before Timūr's army without any serious military protection. On the same day the people of Damascus sent a delegation to Timūr. Head of the delegation was the Ḥanbalī judge Ibn Muflīḥ<sup>12</sup>. Timūr pretended to want a treaty (*ṣulḥ*) and praised the city for its excellence as well as for its Koranic blessings. On Saturday morning the opinion of Ibn Muflīḥ to negotiate a surrender prevailed among the notables. First Timūr demanded the *tuquzāt*<sup>13</sup>, which meant a gift of nine items of food, beverage, riding and pack animals (*dawābb*) as a sign of good luck. This was a custom whenever Timūr took a city peacefully (*ṣulḥan*). Ibn Muflīḥ urged the city's judges (*quḍāt*), juristconsults (*fuqahā'*) and merchants (*tujjār*) to give in Timūr's demand. The only official who foresaw the final outcome of these terms of surrender was the commander of the citadel (*nā'ib al-qal'a*), but in vain. The delegation brought the stipulated *tuquzāt* to Timūr and stayed in his camp until Sunday morning. After brief negotiations, Timūr confirmed certain offices among them the judges, the *wazīr*, and the tax-collector (*mustakhrij al-amwāl*) and also issued a decree, *farmān*, promising safety (*amān*) for the city. In exchange he imposed a ransom of — according to the Arab sources — one million dinārs on the inhabitants. The supreme *Dīwān* (*dīwān-i a'lā*) was, according to Yazdī, charged with the general responsibility for collecting the ransom. The commission was made up of three high ranking officers, Shaikh Nūr al-Dīn, Shāhmalik and Allāhdād, together with two scribes (*bitikčiyān*), Khwāja Mas'ūd Samnāni and Jalāl al-Islām. All gates were walled up except the Bāb al-Farādīs, where an accounting office was set up,<sup>14</sup> whereas Ibn Ḥajar and Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba report that only the Bāb al-Ṣaghīr was opened.<sup>15</sup> In fulfilling all of Timūr's demands, the city hoped to survive his arrival<sup>16</sup> and the money was therefore collected among the inhabitants without any

<sup>12</sup> Biography: Sakhāwī, *Dau'* I, 167f.; Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā'* III, 150f.; and Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt* V, 22. Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i'* I/2, 610, notes in a text which is basically compiled from al-Maqrīzī that Ibn Muflīḥ spoke Persian and Turkish; Ibn 'Arabshāh instead spoke about an interpreter between them. See Ibn 'Arabshāh, *'Ajā'ib*, ed. Ḥimṣī, 261, trans. Sander, 147 (misleading translation).

<sup>13</sup> Doerfer (1963-1975) II, 624-629, no. 976.

<sup>14</sup> Yazdī, *Zafarnāma*, ed. 'Abbāsi II, 239, trans. Pétis de la Croix, 334 (Bāb al-Farādīs). See Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal* IV, 122, who mentions Allāhdād too. Aubin (1963) 99f. Manz (1976) 109f., 115, 194, 196, 200.

<sup>15</sup> Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā'* II, 137. Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Dhail*, fol. 177r.

<sup>16</sup> Maqrīzī, *Sulūk* III/3, 1046f.

difficulty and within a short span of time. But not satisfied with the money, Timūr imposed a far larger ransom:

And when the amount of money (*māl*) was completed, Ibn Muflīḥ and his men conveyed it to Tamur, they set it down before him. When he inspected it, he became exceedingly angry, he was not satisfied with it. He ordered Ibn Muflīḥ and those with him to leave him. They were brought out and placed under guard. Then they were obliged to bring 1,000 *tūmān*, and *tūmān* is an expression for ten thousand *dīnārs* of gold (*dīnār min al-dhahab*) although the price of the *dīnār* differs for them. The total should be 10 million *dīnārs*. And they were obliged to this. They returned to the city. ...

Al-Maqrīzī does not explain why Timūr became so enraged when he examined the coins. The reason for his dissatisfaction will become clear from the detailed account of the same event by Bertrando de Mignanelli, which will be discussed below. Al-Maqrīzī does provide a description of how such a systematic extortion of money was executed by the local administration. He continues:

... And they [Ibn Muflīḥ and the delegation, S.H.] imposed it on the people. They levied the payment on the basis of a three-month rent on all real estate in Damascus (*fa-jabau ujrata masākini Dimashqa kullahā 'an thalāthati ashhur*).<sup>17</sup> And they obliged every person, male or female, free or slave, young or old to [contribute, S.H.] ten dirhams.<sup>18</sup> The administrator (*mubāshir*) of each *waqf* [religious endowment, S.H.] were obliged to [contribute a certain amount of their, S.H.] wealth. 100,000 Dirhams were taken from the *auqāf* of the Umayyad mosque and also a certain amount were taken from the remaining *auqāf* of the mosques, of the *masjids*, of the *mashhads* of the *ribāṭs* and *zāwiyās*, according to what was agreed upon.

Great misfortune came upon the people by this extortion. Many of them were tortured with blows. Everybody was preoccupied with the amount imposed on him. Prices rose and the provisions became very scarce. And a *mudd*<sup>19</sup> of wheat — and that are four *aqdāḥ* — rose to forty silver-dirhams.<sup>20</sup> (...)

<sup>17</sup> For a similar method of tax-levying, see Maqrīzī, *Sulūk* III/3, 803; Ibn Taghribirdī, *Nujūm* VI, ed. Popper, 69, trans. Popper, 51; Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā'* II, 134, 140.

<sup>18</sup> Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Dhail*, fol. 179r, l. 7-8, transmits a two-month rent and an obligation of every person of 30 dirhams.

<sup>19</sup> Measure of capacity which equals 2.84 kg of wheat in Syria. 1 *qadaḥ* equals 716.83g of wheat according to al-Qalqashandī. Four *aqdāḥ* in turn equal 2.867kg, which in turn corroborates the first measure. See Hinz (1955) 46, 48.

<sup>20</sup> See Šairafī, *Nuzha* III, 93. He gives one Damascene *ghirāra* of wheat (204.5kg, Hinz [1955] 37f.) at 3,000 *dirham fiḍḍa*. One *ghirāra* is divided into 72 *mudd*. That equals a price of 41.6 *dirham* per *mudd*. For an '*aliqa*, a ration of fodder for a riding

We see the city's financial administration at work here. A poll-tax and a tax on real-estate were levied and demands were made on religious endowments to make contributions.

And the markets were all closed. Nothing was sold except those things, whose equivalent in cash (*thamanuhū*) contributes to the stipulated duty (*al-jibāya al-muqarrara*). And misfortune increased for the people that Timūr's men (*aṣhāb Tamur*) only took dirhams (*al-darāhim*) and dinārs (*al-danānīr*) nothing else and they rejected the *fulūs*<sup>21</sup>. And [the prices] went down; and the point was reached that among themselves the people do not calculate what used to be five *dirham* for not a single *dirham*.<sup>22</sup>

What does this strange calculation mean? During a siege prices usually went up and the people were ready to pay any price for goods. This was the case for basic foodstuff, as al-Maqrizī reports and al-Ṣairafī<sup>23</sup> as well as Yazdī<sup>24</sup> confirm. One also has to take into account the need to feed refugees from northern Syria and the soldiers of Timūr's army.<sup>25</sup> Yet silver-dirhams became scarce on the other hand, because they were now urgently needed to satisfy Timūr's monetary demands. Therefore the price of silver-dirhams as expressed in other goods increased. The extortion went on by progressive demands.

When they thought that the collection of the ransom-money, 10 million dinārs, was completed, Ibn Muflīḥ and his men conveyed it to Timūr. But again a disagreement arose. Timūr complained:

This money is according to our reckoning rather 3 million *dīnār*. So there remains onto you still 7 million *dīnār*. It seems that you are in default.<sup>26</sup>

or pack animal, the prices rose to half a *dīnār* or 40 *dirhams*. Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā'* II, 139, and Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Dhail*, fol. 181r, report the price of wheat (probably per *mudd*), as 40 *dirhams*, for the time immediately after Timūr's withdrawal. At the beginning of the year 803 Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Dhail*, fol. 170r, had reported that the Egyptian *irdabb* of wheat (69.6kg = 24.5 Syrian *mudd*) was expensive with 50 dirhams (1 *mudd* = 2.04 dirham), and the prices were almost the same in Syria. And on fol. 179r, he tells about the price of one *ghirāra* of 360 dirham (1 *mudd* = 5 dirham) which rose during the siege to 1,480 dirham (1 *mudd* = 20.6 dirham).

<sup>21</sup> In Syria and even more so in Egypt at that time, copper money named *dirham min al-fulūs* was the money of daily expenses and of the lower classes. See Bacharach (1967) 238-250; Allouche (1994) 16f.; and Schultz (1995) 165-231.

<sup>22</sup> Maqrizī, *Sulūk* III/3, 1048f. See Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā'* II, 138; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Dhail*, fol. 179v, l. 11-12; Mignanelli, *Vita*, ed. Baluzii, 137 right column, trans. Fischel, 224.

<sup>23</sup> Ṣairafī, *Nuzha* III, 93.

<sup>24</sup> Yazdī, *Zafarnāma*, 242, trans. Pétis de la Croix III, 339.

<sup>25</sup> Maqrizī, *Sulūk* III/3, 1036.

<sup>26</sup> Maqrizī, *Sulūk* III/3, 1049.

Timūr was not satisfied, and pretended not to take into account what the Egyptian army left in Damascus in terms of money, weapons and animals. He considered those items as his own property without any further notice, as he did with all that had been left by the merchants and others who had fled.<sup>27</sup> The people of Damascus hurried to bring all these to Timūr. Finally Timūr demanded every riding or pack animal as well as every weapon within the city. When Ibn Muflīḥ claimed that there was nothing left to squeeze, Timūr interpreted this behaviour as a form of resistance.<sup>28</sup> He ordered the arrest of the men who accompanied Ibn Muflīḥ, demanding that all the quarters, streets and dwellings of the city be recorded with the intention of organizing a systematic plunder. The plunder was executed under the supervision of the *dīwān-i a'lā*<sup>29</sup>. Every quarter of the city was entrusted to an officer accompanied, according to Yazdī, by *muḥassilān*<sup>30</sup>, tax-collectors. For nineteen days the officers went street by street, house by house and forced the people under torture to deliver all precious metal and other valuable belongings to them.<sup>31</sup> By Tuesday, Rajab 28th/ March 15th they had finished their duty. What was left by them was allowed to be looted by the rank and file of Timūr's army. These entered the city the following day, and proceeded to pillage and plunder, torture and ravish with untold inhumanity. On Friday, Sha'bān 2nd/ March 18th, a swarm of locusts entered the Ghūta of Damascus and stayed for several days. On the next day, Saturday, Sha'bān 3rd/ March 19th, Timūr withdrew from the ruins of Damascus towards northern Mesopotamia and Iraq. On the way he sacked Ḥamāh, the third largest city of Syria, too. Timūr's overlordship over Damascus lasted two and a half month, from Jumādā I 22nd, 803/ January 8th, 1401 to Sha'bān 3rd/ March 19th.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Aubin (1963) 103. See Ibn 'Arabshāh, *'Ajā'ib*, ed. Himṣī, 257f., trans. Sanders, 146; Mignanelli, *Vita*, ed. Beluzii, 136 left column, trans. Fischel, 218f. Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Dhail*, fol. 178r, l. 26.

<sup>28</sup> See Aubin (1963) 111f.

<sup>29</sup> The *dīwān-i a'lā* is not mentioned by al-Maqrīzī, but see Yazdī, *Zafarnāma*, ed. 'Abbāsī II, 239, trans. Pétis de la Croix III, 334; Ibn 'Arabshāh, *'Ajā'ib*, ed. al-Himṣī, 259, 265, trans. Sanders, 146, 150. Aubin (1963) 99f. Manz (1989) 110, 116, 169.

<sup>30</sup> About this office, see Manz (1989) 115, 171.

<sup>31</sup> See Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā'* II, 138 (reports on seventeen days, but this may be due to the common error between the Arabic 7 and 9). Mignanelli, *Vita*, ed. Beluzii, 136 right column, 137 right column, trans. Fischel, 219f., 224.

<sup>32</sup> Maqrīzī, *Sulūk* III/3, 1048-1051. See Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā'* II, 138. Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbā, *Dhail*, fol. 181r. For a synopsis of the financial extortion of the city, see Fischel, *Commentary*, in Ibn Khaldūn, trans. Fischel, 93-96. According to Yazdī, Timūr left on Sha'bān 4th/ March 20th, Yazdī, *Zafarnāma*, ed. 'Abbāsī II, 249, trans. Pétis de la Croix III, 347.

### 3. BERTRANDO DE MIGNANELLI - THE QUALITY OF SYRIAN SILVER

We have another independent report about Timūr's conquest of Damascus and the monetary situation. The Italian merchant Bertrando de Mignanelli lived in Damascus at that time.<sup>33</sup> But that winter he spent in Jerusalem, where he heard about Timūr's invasion into Syria. He fled to Cairo and returned via Cyprus to Damascus in the fall of 1402. Later while residing in Constance in southern Germany, he wrote the *Vita Tamerlani* or *Ruina Damasci*. Although his description is very similar to al-Maqrizī's, Fischel, who translated the *Vita*, assumed that he hardly could have used literary sources at this early stage, and therefore concluded that he must have had personal informants after his return to Damascus.<sup>34</sup> De Mignanelli explained the afore-mentioned rage of Timūr as he was faced with the coins, that had been collected at the beginning of the extortion:

At least he [Ibn Mufliḥ, S.H.] reached a reconciliation by agreeing him [Timūr, S.H.] to give with him one million six hundred thousand drachmas of silver (*dragmas argenti*). They did not specify what kind of drachmas these were (actually they were similar to the drachmas of Damascus [*dragmas Damasci*]), but they amounted to eighty thousand<sup>35</sup> ducats.

Four days later they brought the drachmas of this kind to him. Thomor wished to see and to touch the money, which was somewhat more than half of silver, and the rest of copper, as was the custom of the whole province, namely, of Syria and Egypt. ...

De Mignanelli shows his familiarity with the Damascene coinage. The implied exchange-rate of 1:20 between Venetian ducats and Syrian dirhams is well within the parameters of exchange rates as we know them from other sources of this period.<sup>36</sup> Ill. 1 shows an Aleppean dirham struck two years

<sup>33</sup> For his biography, see Fischel, in: Mignanelli, *Vita*, 206f.

<sup>34</sup> Fischel, in: Mignanelli, *Vita*, 202f.

<sup>35</sup> Fischel translated the text on the basis of a manuscript preserved in the Bibliotheca Comunale in Siena. Obviously an error occurred: "*eight hundred thousand*", whereas the edition of the text by Baluzii has "*octuaginta milia*". Given an approximate exchange-rate of 1:20 the latter must be the right amount.

<sup>36</sup> In the second half of the 8th/14th century, especially at the beginning of Faraj's reign there was a massive influx of Venetian ducats, as is observed and confirmed by several sources. The ducat began to dominate the Middle Eastern markets at that time. It is unclear whether de Mignanelli used the term *ducat* in order to provide rough figures about the sums involved for his European readership or whether the term *ducat* reflects the contemporary domination of European gold coins in the market of Damascus. But according to Bacharach (1994) 99, prior to 1399 the ducat did not become the dominant gold coin in Mamlūk territory. According to Bacharach (1967) the European sources mention a number of exchange rates for the fourteenth century, with a rate of one ducat to 18 dirhams being the most frequently cited; Bacharach (1967) 157, 160-167; Bacharach (1994). But at the beginning of the year

before Timūr's invasion in 801/1398-9. Aleppo was at that time the principal mint of Syria for silver coins. The circulation was dominated by the coinage of Farāj's father *al-Zāhir* Barqūq. The term for the dirham in the sources is *dirham ḡāhirī*. The term is either, and most probably derived from *al-Zāhir* Baibars, who instituted an important coinage reform in 659/1261,<sup>37</sup> or from *al-Zāhir* Barqūq himself.<sup>38</sup> The intended weight of the dirhams lies between 2.7g and 2.8g. But the coins passed in trade by their weight.<sup>39</sup> The actual silver content is as de Mignanelli describes. These dirhams were tested by Jere Bacharach, who found the silver content to be between 48% and 57%.<sup>40</sup> And Qalqashandī was convinced about the inferior quality of Syrian coinage after 800/1397-8, too. He speaks of a silver content of merely a third, which seems to be an exaggeration.<sup>41</sup> De Mignanelli continued:

... When Thomor saw it and handled it, he pretended to be upset and angry, because he knew well the nature of the coin and the condition of the Province. Thomor said, "What is this?" The Cadis answered, "It is the money promised to you". Thomor asked, "How much did you promise?" They answered, "One million six hundred thousand". Thomor said, "That is true". The Cadis said, "Then take it gladly, here it is". Thomor said to them, "I have always heard that you Damascenes were not men, but infernal demons, enemies of God's law and of humanity, full of wickedness, and men who did not keep their promises." He [Timūr, S.H.] spoke the truth because<sup>42</sup> the people of Damascus were completely evil men. "Do you wish to deceive me as you have others with your counterfeit and worthless money which is spurned by all?" Then on the spot he had brought into presence of all some of the drachmas of his own country (*de dragmis Patriae suae*).

803/1401 al-Maqrīzī in Egypt mentions an exchange rate of 1 *dinār ifrāntī* - that is the ducat - to 29 *dirhams*; Maqrīzī, *Sulūk* III/3, 1027. However al-Maqrīzī reflects the Egyptian monetary situation rather than the Syrian one, which at that time was different, see Bacharach (1971) 269.

<sup>37</sup> About this reform see S. Heidemann, *Das Aleppiner Kalifat*, Leiden 1994, 254f.

<sup>38</sup> See Bacharach (1971) 268, advocates Baibars as the name-giver.

<sup>39</sup> The weight standard of the dirhams are not strictly observed but vary considerably. See Schultz (1995) 72-136, 143, especially the table on p. 129.

<sup>40</sup> Bacharach (1967) 202; Schultz (1995) 143.

<sup>41</sup> Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḡ* III, 467. However, two of the dirhams of Barqūq analyzed by Bacharach - Gordus (1968) 307, 310f., showed a silver content as low as 25-27%.

<sup>42</sup> Fischel translates "... the truth who said that the people...". Obviously he read in that manuscript, which was at his disposal, "*qui*" instead of "*quia*". It is a commentary on the Damascenes given by de Mignanelli himself. About de Mignanelli's judgement on the Damascenes see de Mignanelli, *Vita*, ed. Baluzii, 138, trans. Fischel, 225f. I owe this note to the courtesy of Christian Tornau, Jena.

These were of pure silver and so much heavier than those of Damascus. That one of Thomor's coins valued <sup>43</sup> more than twelve of Damascus. Thomor then said to them, "This money of mine, which I know, has value, wherever I have carried on any business it is honored. Your counterfeit money, which I have never seen, has no value and is condemned by all". When the four Cadis heard this, they stood half dead with fright, and said weeping, "It is impossible to bring this matter to a close and be of service to you". Then the captains and leaders began to shout with a loud voice, "Put an end to the agreement which has been made, and let us deal with them, for we know what must be done with these good-for-nothing people". Thomor said to them, "Hold my sons. Though you ask for what is just, it is best that you be patient for a while". Then he called the Cadis aside and said, "Observe the outburst of those men who ask for what is just. See what they are threatening to do to you. Therefore, you must either give your consent to the pact regarding the payment which has now passed from my hands, or appeal to the mercy of these men". The Cadis were confused and struck with fear and asked to be let off until the following day, in order that they might be able to discuss these difficulties with their fellow-citizen and give a complete answer. This was granted. (...) Finally because of their fear and to avoid worse they decided to pay, and the pay they did, namely nine hundred and sixty thousand ducats.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Fischel translates this word with "weighed".

<sup>44</sup> Mignanelli, *Vita*, trans. Fischel, 221-223; ed. Baluzii, 137: "& finaliter pacisuntur secum sibi dare unum milionem, & sexcenta milia dragmas argenti, non exspecificando cuiusmodi dragmae sint illae, quae quidem secundum dragmas Damasci, ascendebant ad Ducatos octuaginta milia; & dum post quatuor dies hujusmodi dragmas portare sibi, voluit Thomor hanc pecuniam tangere, & videre, quae pecunia revera est aliquantum ultra dimidiam de argento, & residuum est de Cupro, ut moris est totius Provinciae videlicet Siriae, & Egipti, & dum cerneret, & tangeret fecte commotus, & inflammatus, quia bene conditionem monetae, & Provinciae sciebat, dixit: quid est hoc? Dicunt Cadj; est pecunia vobis promissa, quibus dixit Thomor: Quantum promisistis? Respondent illi; unum milionem, & sexcenta milia dragmarum. Dixit Thomor; hoc est verissimum. Dicunt Cadj; ergo capite bono vultu; ista est. Quibus tunc dixit Thomor. Ego semper audivi, vos Damascenos esse non homines, set Demones infernales, inimicos Deis legis, & humanitatis, plenos pravitate, & promissorum minime servatores. Verum dicebat tamen, quia mali homines erant universaliter Damasceni. Vultis ne me advenam, ut alios supplantare, vestra falsa, & iniqua moneta, quae ab omnibus abhorretur? & e vestigio fecit coram omnibus portari de dragmis Patriae suae, quae puri argenti, & adeo graviore illis Damasci erant, quod una de illis Thomor magis, quam duodecim de Damasco valebat, dicens; super ista moneta mea, quam cognosco, ubique laudata pactum feci, non super vestra falsa, quam numquam vidi, & ab omnibus est damnata. Quatuor vero Cadj haec audientes semimortui remanserunt, &

The silver coin, which Timūr mentioned, was a tanka<sup>45</sup> of about 6.15g to 6.20g<sup>46</sup> of almost pure silver.<sup>47</sup> The usual tanka is two to three times heavier than the usual *dirham zāhiri*, which is almost half of copper. The ratio of 12:1 seems to be an exaggeration. The tanka was introduced by Timūr in successive stages, first in Herat in the year 792/1390, and spread over Timūr's realm in the years 795/1392-3 to 797/1394-5.<sup>48</sup> Although

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*flentes dicebant, ista non posse perficere, nec servare. Et tunc Capitanei, & Ductores istorum alta voce clamare ceperunt dicendo: Pactum factum scindite, & sinite nos cum eis laborare, scimus enim quid sit cum istis nequam agendum. Quibus dicit Thomor: Sinite Filii, licet justum petatis decet vos pro modico spatio habere patientiam; & illos Cadj ad partem vocat, & dicit: Videte clamorem istorum, qui justa petant, & ea, quae vobis facere minantur. Opportet ergo vos, vel annuere compactis super huiusmodi solutione, quae per manus meas transivit, vel ad eorum misericordiam devenire. Qui Cadj timore concussi attoniti, & perplessi supplicant usque ad diem crastinam tollerari, ut possint cum civibus internis ista tam ardua praticare, & plenarie respondere; quod consentitur. (...) Et in fine pre timore, & ad evitandum pejora deliberant solvere, & solverunt videlicet noningenta & sexaginta milia ducatorum."*

<sup>45</sup> About the origin and meaning of the word, see Vasmer (1930); Wright - Nevill (1924); Hodivälä (1928b); Doerfer (1963-1975) II, 587-592, no. 946; Hinz (1971) 307-9.

<sup>46</sup> The standard of the tanka was obviously not tightly controled. A frequency table, based on the coins of the ANS, the UT, as well as on coins mentioned in the literature, yielded a sample of 106 coins. If one put some outliers aside, the sample comprises of 103 coins. One hundred percent are under 6.25g, 93% under 6.20g, 86% under 6.15g and 80% under 6.10g. The curve does have two peaks, one at 6.1g and a second at 5.8g. The second lower peak may indicate a clipping of older tankas during the weight reduction of Shāh Rukh between 807/1404-5 and 827/1423-4, which was not detected on the first sight of the coin. This weight reduction brought the tanka down to 5.65g.

<sup>47</sup> No large-scale test on the fineness of Timūr's coinage has been done so far. The tradition of Mongol currencies demanded a pure silver coinage, although some of Timūr's tankas have an alloyed look. This may, however, be due to the circumstances of the minting.

<sup>48</sup> The numismatic evidence suggests that the first phase of the coinage reform took place in Transoxiana, probably in the year 774/1372-3 (Markov [1896] 563, no. 333). A new silver denomination of about 1.5g to 1.54g was introduced. It was not just one of the repeated weight reductions, but the replacement of the former Transoxianian dirham, which was 1/6 *dinār kapakī* (1.3g-1.35g) by a foreign weight standard. As far as we know, none of the previously current Chaghatay *dinār kapakīs*, a silver 7.8g-denomination, were minted in Timūr's reign, nor is its ratio to the new 1.5g-denomination known. In Herat at that time, a heavy silver denomination of about 7g was struck during the rule of the Kart dynasty. The name of this denomination is unknown. In the year 783/1381 Herat became the capital of Timūr's eastern provinces, except for Transoxiana. After Timūr had accomplished his conquests of the east, the standard of the heavy Kart 7g-coin spread from Herat to other mints, where it was not in use before, located in the former realm of the Amir Walī (757-788/1356-1386), including Astarābād (789h.; ANS 1972.210.26; UT-HG10-E5; UT-HG10-E6), Damghān (788h.; UT-HH1-D1) and probably also Simnān (see Album [1993] no. 7372). The spread of this 7g-denomination within

Timūr is regarded as a world-conqueror, he in fact never left the sphere of Mongol-Persian currencies, where only pure silver coins were minted. Only during his Syrian campaign he entered a region with a different monetary tradition. The inferior fineness of the Syrian coinage was used as an argument to threaten the Damascenes in order to squeeze more money out of them. It provided the political cause for imposing a far larger ransom.

#### 4. YAZDĪ, THE CAMPMINT AND THE NUMISMATIC EVIDENCE

We also have a Persian-Mongol account about Timūr's complaints over the debased silver-coinage of Syria and the striking of coins in Damascus. Yazdī (d. 850/1450) wrote a history on Timūr's campaigns. Its value for us lies in the fact that it is the only available description of the campmint and its function during a siege.

Because the current coinage (*naqd-i rāyij*) in that country was debased *zāhirī* silver (*nuqra-yi maghshūsh-i zāhirī*) and towards the intent to lighten the burden of it, they minted according to an order (*farmān*) and a current decision silver and gold, after reducing and purifying it. They issued *tankajāt* of 100 mithqāl, 50 mithqāl and other [weights, S.H.] in the name (*ism*) and titulature (*alqāb*) of the exalted emperor. And there was so much silver among the soldiers (*dar miyān-i lashkāriyān*) that the revenue of the mint of the exalted camp (*hāṣil-i dār al-darb-i urdū-yi a'lā*) reached within a short time 600,000 *dīnār-i kapakī*. And an order was issued to send out letters of conquest to the residence of the imperial seat [Samarqand, S.H.] and the other kingdoms of Īrān and Tūrān. The eloquent scribes and the skillful writers with pens, which are delicate in performing and elegant in embellishing, set out to write the letters of victory. The heralds swift as a lightning went to the corners and sides of the world and they sent of those gold and silver *tankajāt*, which had been embellished in the throne of Syria [*takht-i Shām*,

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the east can be regarded as a second phase in the tanka-reform. The year 792/1390 marks the third phase, that of the introduction of the tanka itself. As far as we know from the coins, the tanka was first struck in Herat in 792/1390. This new denomination has an intended weight of 6.15g to 6.2g, as confirmed by a frequency table (see above). It also seems that, prior to 795/1392-3, as far as we know, tankas were only minted in Jurjān (793h.; UT-HH3-A5 and B1) too. The spread of the tanka-denomination throughout the mints of Timūr's realm occurred between the years 795/1392-3 and 797/1394-5. The weight of a tanka is about four times the 1.5/1.54g of the silver coin of Samarqand, introduced ten years earlier. The political background to this reform in Herat may be the takeover of direct political control in Herat by a Timūrid prince in 791/1389. Fragner, *CHI* VI, 558f. Album et. al., "Coins", 27. Potter (1992) 50-54. I am indebted to Stephen Album for his various comments on Timūr's introduction of the tanka; personal letter, February 16, 1994.

Damascus, S.H.] with the glorious aura (*farr*) of the exalted name, to the lords and the princes and the rest of the nobles and notables of the realms of Īrān and Tūrān.<sup>49</sup>

Yazdī reports that the Syrian dirhams were brought to a campmint (*dār al-ḍarb-i urdū-yi a'lā*) and reminted. He gives several reasons for the minting. These tankas of Damascus were not made for the use and benefit of the population or for the economic integration of conquered Syria into the Timūr's empire. They were struck with the intention "to lighten the burden" to reduce the weight of the alloyed silver and to have booty in a convenient form, so it could be easily distributed and transported.

Yazdī reports the revenue of the campmint as high as 600,000 *dīnār kapakī*. This means, that the campmint produced revenue, probably for the *dīwān-i a'lā*, Timūr's financial authority. The term used by Yazdī of the revenue, *ḥāṣil*, seems to indicate that the campmint was not a mere subordinate workshop of the *dīwān* itself which processed looted precious metal, but a separate enterprise. The relation between the campmint and the *dīwān* can be interpreted in accordance with the frequently described and usual relation between stationary mints and the treasury: the mint is farmed out to an entrepreneur, who had to pay a fixed rent or a part of the seignorage.<sup>50</sup> The campmint which produced revenue for the *dīwān-i a'lā* might be part of the ambulant *bāzār* accompanying the army, sometimes called *ūrdūbāzār*<sup>51</sup> too.

*Dīnār kapakī*, the term used for the amount of the revenue, is the expression for Iranian money of account. Its value in terms of tankas or grams of silver is not easy to determine for Timūr's reign. The last *dīnār kapakī* actually struck under the last Chaghatay rulers had a weight of about 7.8g silver. But that was before Timūr took power in Samarqand. Its value decreased over time. For the period of Timūr's reign we have no figures for the value of *dīnār kapakī*. At the time of Shāh Rukh (807-850/1405-1447) it had a value of about half a *tanka*.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless the amount of the looted

<sup>49</sup> Yazdī, *Zafarnāma*, ed. 'Abbāsi II, 243; trans. Pétis de la Croix III, 341f.

<sup>50</sup> See Album et al., "Coins", 32f. Rabino di Borgomale (1945) 2f.

<sup>51</sup> See Aubin (1956) 390.

<sup>52</sup> The term *dīnār kapakī* presumably goes back to the coinage reform of the Chaghatay Sultan Kapak Khān (718-726/1318-1326) early in the 8th/14th century; see Oliver (1891). Only for the period of Timūr's successor Shāh Rukh we do have two statements referring to a relation between the struck *tanka* and the money of account called *dīnār kapakī*. These state that 1 *tanka* coin equals 2 *dīnār kapakī*. The first citation dates from the early time of Shāh Rukh's reign, which was a period of a reduced weight standard for the *tanka* of about 5.65g (prevailing 807/1404-5 to 827/1423-4). Doerfer (1963-1975) III, 580, no. 1616, citing Samarqandī, *Maṭla'* I, 80, told: "3 *dīnār kapakī* which are 2 *mithqāl* of minted silver in perfect fineness (*si dīnār-i kapakī ki dū mithqāl-i nuqra-yi maskūki tamām 'iyār buvad*)", cf. Album et. al., "Coins", 29. Since the accepted *mithqāl-*

and processed money must have been many times higher than its profit of 600,000 *dīnār kapakī*.

Yazdī reports about tankas of multiple weight, about *tankajāt* in gold and silver with a weight of several mithqāl. The context shows that those *tankajāt* mentioned were not the standard denomination but heavy precious metal coins in gold and silver, here meant for donative as well as for propaganda purposes.<sup>53</sup> They were designed to commemorate the victory over the *throne of Syria*. And together with the letters of victory they should show and present proof of Tīmūr's new conquest to the leading military class of the entire empire.<sup>54</sup>

## 5. THE NUMISMATIC EVIDENCE

Few coins have survived the period of Tīmūr's occupation of Damascus. They can be distinguished as products of a mint different from the regular mint of Damascus. Criteria are the design, and even more importantly, the language applied. Nine coins are known to exist. One in the American Numismatic Society (see Catalog, no.1, ill. 2), five in the Yapı ve Kredi Bankası in Istanbul, studied by Stephen Album,<sup>55</sup> one in the

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weight for this period is about 4.3g to 4.6g (Hinz [1955] 5f.), the weight of a *dīnār kapakī* lies between 2.86g or 3.07g. That is roughly half of the intended *tanka*-weight, be it the early standard of Shāh-Rukh or the previous one of Tīmūr. A second ratio is provided by an accounting manual from the middle of the 9th/14th century. According to Walther Hinz, this unpublished manual explicitly states that 1 *tanka* is 2 *dīnār kapakī*; (Hinz [1947-9] and Hinz [1957] 369, cites Qumī, *Shams al-siyāq*, Aya Sofya no. 3986, fol. 121v). Even if one rejects both equations for the period of the siege of Damascus, the fact remains that the *dīnār kapakī* is a unit of account and should not be confused in a simple equation with the *tanka*.

<sup>53</sup> The word *tanka* or *tankajāt* is used in the sense of donative coins for example see Shāmi, *Zafarnāma* I, 286, and Samarqandī, *Maṭla'*, 697, Doerfer (1963-1975) II, 588, no. 946. The literal evidence for *tanka* in the sense of the 6.2g-standard denomination is — to my knowledge — only to be found in sources from different cultures and languages. De Clavijo, *Embajada*, ed. Sreznevskij, 316, trans. Le Strange, 276f., refers to this denomination when he describes the coins in use in Samarqand as *tangaes*, worth two Spanish *reales*. A *real* in 14th century Spain had a weight of about 3.50g; cf. Heiss (1962) 84f. But another passage of De Clavijo's report mentions *tagaes* in Samarqand; De Clavijo, *Embajada*, ed. Sreznevskij 263, trans. Le Strange, 232. It seems to refer to a considerable lighter denomination, probably the 1.5g-coin. And the Armenian chronicler Metsobts'i, *History*, 51, mentions in his report on the sack of Damascus 1,000 *tanks* as fine for all those soldiers who were unable to bring a head of a Damascene. He also mentions *tank* in different contexts, cf. 79, 91f., 101.

<sup>54</sup> On the question of multiples in the Mongol context in general, see cf. Hodivälä (1928a).

<sup>55</sup> A copy of his manuscript of his study on the collection of the Yapı ve Kredi Bankası is available in the library of the ANS.

former collection of Robert Grossman<sup>56</sup> (see Catalog, no. 2, ill. 3), now held in the University collection in Tübingen. Lutz Ilisch discovered two further, very peculiar ones, and commented on them in the annual report of the Forschungsstelle in Tübingen (see Catalog, no. 5 and 6, ill. 4 and 5).<sup>57</sup>

The coins of Timūr from Damascus follow the usual Mongol-Persian pattern for tankas in their protocol and in their design. All — except the two new discoveries in Tübingen — weight between 6.10g and 6.25g, which correspond the tanka-weight. Both Tübingen coins from Damascus are reported to be double-weight tankas of about 12g. The one coin in the ANS collection, the only one I have been able to examine physically, has a specific gravity of 10.161, which corresponds to a fineness of about 82% of silver, which is far better than the average Syrian *dirham zāhiri* of that time. But no generalization can be drawn from the examination of a single coin. At least eight different reverse dies — the side with the name of the ruler — are known among the nine coins. This implies that despite their actual scarcity the emission struck during the two monthes of the siege must have

<sup>56</sup> Personal letter from June 1993.

<sup>57</sup> Ilisch (1998) 19-22; *Oriental Numismatic Society Newsletter* 152 (1997) 1; see also Ilisch (1978) 76-78. In the context of Timūr's emission of gold multiples, L. Ilisch draws attention to a simultaneous emission of extraordinary gold multiples for donative purposes by the Mamlūk treasurer Yalbughā al-Sālimī in Egypt on Rajab 1st 803/February 15th 1401 (Maqrīzī, *Sulūk* III/3, 1055; Ibn Taghribirdī, *Nujūm* VI, 71). He considers that al-Sālimī might have taken the idea to issue these multiples from Timūr. Although the chroniclers make no connection between Timūr's and al-Sālimī's emissions, Ilisch derives his argument from the fact that al-Sālimī's multiples in Egypt follow Timūr's within less than two months. However, the circumstances of both emissions permits an independent explanation for al-Sālimī's multiples, which should be taken into account. A precedent for a donation of multiple gold-coins in Mamlūk Egypt which is documented in the chronicles occurs in the year 791/1389. The amīr Miṭāsh presented two gold coins of 100 and 200 *mithqāl* weight to his bride after the first night (Maqrīzī, *Sulūk* III/3, 661; Ibn Taghribirdī, *Nujūm* V, 478; Bacharach [1968] 171). Al-Sālimī was innovative in monetary matters already a couple of weeks earlier. On Jumādā I 20th/ January 6th 1401, while al-Nāṣir Faraj was still in Damascus, al-Sālimī had introduced a new gold coin of weighing one *mithqāl* in Egypt, passing now by tale and not by weight, the traditional way gold coins circulate in Egypt (Maqrīzī, *Sulūk* III/3, 1041; see Balog [1964] 279-280). Al-Sālimī used for his multiple coins different denominations than Timūr: 101, 91 *mithqāl* and so forth down to 10 *mithqāl*. Although al-Maqrīzī does not comment on it, al-Sālimī's multiples seem not to be issued for diplomatic purposes or to commemorate at least a political victory — Timūr was still devastating Damascus at this time. The first of Rajab is conceived as the night in which God will grant every supplication of the believers, and people on the occasion offer rich gifts to relatives (Kister [1978] 220-221); M. J. Kister, "Radjab", In: *El*<sup>2</sup> VIII, 373-375; Langner [1983] 38f.). It is likely that on that day a donation (*nafaqa*) was made with the intention of raising army morale.

been relatively large. This is corroborated by Yazdī's statement on the revenue of the mint and the description of the loot carried away.<sup>58</sup>

The reverse of cat. no. 2 (ill. 3) bears the usual protocol for Timūr and the Chaghatay Sultan Maḥmūd Khān, whom Timūr acknowledged as overlord. One of the tankas in the Yapı ve Kredi Bankası (Cat. no. 4) also bears the name of Timūr's heir apparent Muḥammad Sulṭān, who accompanied his grandfather during the Syrian campaign. The inclusion of the prince's name in the *sikka*<sup>59</sup> confirms al-Maqrizī's and Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba's statement, that his name was acknowledged in the *khuṭba* read in the Umayyad mosque.<sup>60</sup> In the margins of the coins we can read the mint and date: Damascus in the year 803. But instead of the usual Arabic phrase *ḍuriba bi-Dimashq*, it was struck in Damascus, the Persian language was applied: *ḍarb-i Dimashq*, the striking of Damascus. The visual difference in the grapheme between the Arabic and the Persian phrase lies in the absence of the Arabic prefix *bi-*: in. The missing *bi-* was not an error by the die-engraver because the other coins show this grapheme as well.<sup>61</sup>

We see that the campmint used the name of the besieged city instead of the more general name *ūrdū* or *bāzār*. We encounter those terms for a campmint frequently on coins of the Īlkhān empire and some of its successor states. Up to now no coin of Timūr is known to bear a mint name like *ūrdū* or *bāzār*. Finally on the basis of the Damascene coins we have to presume that Timūr's campmint generally used the name of the nearest neighbouring city. Timūr's coinage in Damascus can be taken as an explanatory model for many other mintnames appearing anew on Timūr's coinage and of those coins struck in his name but without any mint and date,

<sup>58</sup> Yazdī, *Zafarnāma*, ed. 'Abbāsī II, 246, trans. Pétis de la Croix III, 346f. Ibn 'Arabshāh, *'Ajā'ib*, ed. Ḥimṣī, 287-289, trans. Sanders, 158f.

<sup>59</sup> The *sikka* is the coin protocol, which serves in the medieval Islamic world as a proof of rulership beside the inclusion of the name of the ruler in the *khuṭba*, Friday-prayer.

<sup>60</sup> Album, Yapı ve Kredi Bankası, no. 1-107. Al-Maqrizī, *Sulūk* III/3, 1048, transmits that Muḥammad Sulṭān was included in the Friday Prayer: "(...) All Friday prayers and community ceased in Damascus. (...) Friday prayers were held there only twice. The first on Friday Jumādā II 19th [February 4th]. The Khaṭīb of the Omayyad mosque prayed in it for the sultan Maḥmūd and the heir apparent, the son of the Amīr Timūr Kūrgān (walī 'ahdihi ibn al-amīr Timūr Kurkān)." Ibn Qāḍī Shuba, *Dhail*, fol. 177v: "and on this day the Friday prayer was held and it was prayed for sultan Maḥmūd Qān, then for amīr Timūr Kūrgān, then for the heir apparent Muḥammad Sulṭān." About the Friday prayer see Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, ed. Popper VI, 64f, ed. Cairo XII, 242, trans. Popper XIV, 48. And without mentioning the heir, Yazdī, *Zafarnāma*, ed. 'Abbāsī II, 239, trans. Pétis de la Croix III, 334f.

<sup>61</sup> In Ilisch (1998) no. 12, here cat. no. 2, occurred an error in the description of the legend of this coin, see catalogue.

sometimes in a rather blurred style which exhibits carelessness, probably due to haste.

The new double tankas mentioned (Cat. no. 5 and 6, ill. 4 and 5), which were recently discovered and commented by Lutz Ilisch, provide further evidence for the role of campmint in processing the booty. Double weight or multiple tankas<sup>62</sup> were not encountered previously anywhere else in the Tīmūrid realm, but frequently mentioned in the literature as donatives.<sup>63</sup> But these double tankas are obviously not those donative multiples mentioned by Yazdi to praise Tīmūr's victory. The dies of both are badly engraved. The coins are struck without care. They seem to confirm the haste with which the enormous wealth of Damascus had to be refined and reminted. With double-weight coins the huge amount of silver could be processed twice as fast.

No specimen of Tīmūr's Damascus coins is reported to come from Syrian soil, the region where the mint operated. The five tankas in the Istanbul Yapı ve Kredi Bankası collection probably originate from Anatolia and the two coins from the Tübingen collection originate probably from the markets in Pakistan.<sup>64</sup> This corroborates the statement that these coins were used to bring the booty in a convenient form to carry it and to distribute it among his army, which left Syria afterwards for other destinations. It contradicts the common assumption that coins circulated in the region where the mint was located.

Because the amount of money carried away must have been huge, comprising almost the whole stock of precious metal of at least three major Syrian cities, Aleppo, Ḥamāh and Damascus, it is likely that this affected the circulation and monetary system in Syria.<sup>65</sup> For this hypothesis we have a rather indirect confirmation. Numismatists have observed that silver coins of the late Bahri/early Burji period seem to be quite rare compared to the early Bahri-Mamlūk period. And the literal evidence by al-Maqrizī<sup>66</sup> and others<sup>67</sup> seems to confirm this observation at first glance. Qalqashandī

<sup>62</sup> For a further new discovery of a double tanka, now L. Ilisch in Auction Dr. Busso Peus Nachf., Frankfurt a/M, Katalog 353, 29th-31st October 1997, no. 1209, Astārābād 915/1509-1510.

<sup>63</sup> See also Shāmī, *Zafarnāma* I, 286; Samarqandī, *Maṭla'*, 697.

<sup>64</sup> The markets in Pakistan accumulated during the nineties numismatic and other antiquarian material from Afghanistan, Tājikistān, Pakistan, West-Iran and north-west India.

<sup>65</sup> Bacharach (1971) 271, refers to a chronicler who speaks of the scarcity of silver in Damascus after the sack of city in the year 804/1401. Unfortunately Bacharach does not provide his source.

<sup>66</sup> See Maqrizī, *Shudhūr*, ed. Karmali, 68. Bacharach (1971) 268.

<sup>67</sup> See Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā'* II, 145. After reporting events of Damascus he speaks about a severe shortage of silver — referring probably to Egypt, but without connecting both events.

speaks about a cessation of the silver trade from Europe.<sup>68</sup> But the textual sources refer mainly to the Egyptian situation. We have reason to consider Syria separately in regard to monetary affairs during that time.<sup>69</sup> My own observation on the basis of die-comparison of the late coins in the so-called Mintāsh hoard from northern Syria (last coin 792/1389-90)<sup>70</sup> and further observations on the literary sources by W. Schultz<sup>71</sup> suggest that these Mamlūk dirhams must have been minted in huge quantities. Bacharach made the same observation. He saw in the Mamlūk-Indian trade the main source for the drain of silver bullion from the Mamlūk realm.<sup>72</sup> And Qalqashandī confirms that, although the production Egypt almost ceased, in Syria still dirhams continued to be minted, though in a bad quality.<sup>73</sup> Timūr's systematic plunder might be reflected in their scarcity nowadays and must be taken into consideration in the analysis of the scarcity of silver money in the early Burji period.<sup>74</sup>

## 6. CONCLUSION

What can be learned from Timūr's siege of Damascus and the Damascene coinage?

First: Damascus provides an example of a very efficient and sophisticated way of extorting money during a siege with the collaboration of the city's financial administration. Their tools to spread the burden were a poll-tax, a real-estate-tax and contributions of religious endowments.

<sup>68</sup> Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* III, 467.

<sup>69</sup> Bacharach (1971) 269, 271. See Maqrizī, *Sulūk* III/3, 1121, where in the year 806/1403-4 prices in Syria are given in *dirham fiḍḍa*, silver-dirhams, whereas for Egypt copper-dirhams are used.

<sup>70</sup> Mentioned in Schultz (1995) 154. The Mintāsh hoard appeared in the German market in 1987 mixed with other Mamlūk silver coins and hoards, altogether more than 5,000 coins. I had the opportunity to record the coins from al-Manṣūr 'Alī to the rebel Mintāsh, which appeared as a homogenous group in this lot. It contained several hundreds of dirhams. For some groups within the hoard die-studies were made, before it was completely dispersed in the market.

<sup>71</sup> Schultz (1995) 159-162.

<sup>72</sup> Bacharach (1994) 98-100.

<sup>73</sup> Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* III, 467.

<sup>74</sup> With the plunder by Timūr's army at least four silver hoards might be associated: A hoard of 347 coins from Syria (last readable coin bears the date 799), recorded by M. Broome (ca. 1993), a hoard of 276 coins (last readable coin bears the date 801) in the University Collection of Tübingen (Schultz [1995] 154, no. 13); a hoard of 146 coins (last readable date 801) excavations of Hamāh (Hammershaimb - Thomson [1969] no. 477-538; Schultz [1995] 155, no. 16) and a hoard of about 2,000 coins from the excavations within the citadel of Aleppo under the direction of Wahid Khayyata, Aleppo, and Kay Kohlmeyer, Berlin, currently studied by Julia Gonnella, Berlin.

Second: The campmint had different functions. a) to refine the silver and convert the loot into a distributable form, b) to earn revenue for Timūr's treasury from the plunder through seignorage, c) to be used as a kind of propaganda tool by issuing donative-coins which spread the information of Timūr's new conquest with proof of his rulership.

Third: The campmint with the name of Damascus contradicts several suppositions usually made by numismatists. The coins did not circulate in the region where the mint was located or were not intended to circulate in the region, where they were minted and struck. They were struck to be carried away to distant places. The campmint used the name of the conquered city. The products of the very same mobile mint can bear as many mint-names as many cities Timūr's army passed.

Finally the case of Damascus is the only one that provides information about the production of such tankas and their use. Therefore Timūr's tankas can be seen as a coinage introduced to serve the needs of a conqueror and its expanding empire, which covered different currency zones.<sup>75</sup> It was a standard denomination and a unified coinage designed to ease and to speed military, fiscal or trade transactions. The tanka must have simplified payments in an empire where vast amounts of money and wealth were transferred, huge armies were moved and masses of people were displaced.

## 7. CATALOGUE

The standard obverse of any Timūrid coin of that time exhibits the Islamic creed, the *shahāda*. It is surrounded by the names of the first four so called rightly guided caliphs of Islam: *Abū Bakr*, *'Umar*, *'Uthmān* and *'Alī*. The description of the marginal legends starts with the section at the top and follows counterclockwise.

Abbreviations used for the different collections: ANS-American Numismatic Society, New York; UT-University collection, Tübingen; YKB-Yapı ve Kredi Bankası, Istanbul. The coins of the YKB are cited on the basis of a manuscript by Stephen Album, kept in the ANS library.

<sup>75</sup> The concept of the different currency zones evolving after the collapse of the Ilkhān empire was introduced by Stephen Album. See Album et al., "Coins".

## 1. Tanka, Damascus, 803

Timūr, Maḥmūd Khān

Ob. and rev. line-square within line-dot-line-circle

obverse: knot above *ilāh*

reverse:

لا اله الا

السلطان محمود خان

الله محمد

امير تيمو  ر كوركان

رسول الله

خلد الله ملكه

margins:

ضرب / دمشق / في سنة / (ثلاث وثمانائة) (ابو بكر) / (عمر) / عثمان / . علي .

ANS (0000.999.16285; 6.13g, 27mm, 9h; photo S.H.) [Ill. 2]. Album, YKB, no. 1-20 (6.22g), and 1-21 (6.10g, same ob. die as 1-20), no. 1-69 (6.30g).

The die engraving is very carefully executed especially on the obverse. A vocalisation of the Muslim creed is intended. Remarkable is the *hā'* which is placed above the last letter of Allāh, like in calligraphic manuscripts. But the position of the *shadda* in the third line shows that these diacriticals are set rather deliberately. In the center of the reverse three ringlets are found, Timūr's blazon or *tamghā*. Adjunct to it a kind of crossed ellipses<sup>76</sup> are placed; compare no. 6.

## 2. Tanka, Damascus, 803

Timūr, Maḥmūd Khān

Ob. and rev. line-square within line-dot-line circle

obverse: knot above *ilāh*

reverse:

لا اله الا

السلطان محمود

الله محمد

خان الامير تيمور

رسول الله

كوركان خلد ملكه

margins:

ضرب / دمشق / في سنة / ثلاث وثمانائة (ابو بكر) / . عمر / عثمان / علي

UT (97-9-2; 6,22g; 23,5mm; 7h; ex. Coll. Robert Grossman; photo L. Ilisch; Ilisch [1998] no. 12) [Ill. 3].

<sup>76</sup> There exists a parallel tanka from Timūr's reign with the same adjunct symbol from Kāshān, in the Iranian Kirmān province. See Hennequin (1985) 191, no. 2, pl. XIX (misattributed to Yazd). This cruciform *tamghā* also appears on later coins of Kāshān.

## 3. Tanka, Damascus, 803

Timūr, Maḥmūd Khān

Ob. and rev. line-square within line-dot-circle

obverse:

like no.1

reverse:

السلطان محمود

خان امير تيمور كور

كان خلد ا (لله ملكه)

Rev. margin:

ضرب / دمشق / (في سنة) / ٨٠٠٣

Album, YKB, no. 1-70 (6.25g; the description is without diacriticals on the coin).

## 4. Tanka, Damascus, 803

Timūr, Muḥammad Sulṭān, Maḥmūd Khān

Obverse and reverse within line-square within line-dot-circle

obverse:

like no.1

reverse:

سلطان محمود خان

الامير تيمور كور كان

ولي العهد اميرزاده

محمد سلطان خلد الله (ملكه)

Rv. margin:

(ضرب) / (في سنة) / دمشق / ثلاث وثمانائة

Album, YKB, no. 1-107 (6.25g; the description is without diacriticals on the coin).

In addition to the Arabic title for Muḥammad Sulṭān as heir apparent, *walī al-ahd*, the Persian term *amīrzāde*, son of the amīr, is applied too. The use of *amīrzāde* instead of the usual term for an imperial heir, *pādshāhzāde*, son of the emperor, is derived from Timūr's own title *amīr*.

## 5. Double Tanka, Damascus, 803

Timūr, Maḥmūd Khān

Obverse and reverse in line-dot-line-circle

obverse: knot above *ilāh*,

reverse:

leaf above *lām* of *rasūl*.

سلطان

لا اله الا

محمود خان يرلغى

الله ﷺ محمد

امير تيمور . . . كوركان

رسول الله

اكمنو ضرب خلد ملكه

Ob. margin:

دمشق ٨٠٣

ابو بكر/ عمر/ عثمان/ علي

UT (97-1-32; 12.03g; 34mm; 11h; photo L. Ilisch; Ilisch [1998] no. 13) [Ill. 4].

## 6. Double Tanka, (Damascus?), (803?)

Timūr, Muḥammad Sulṭān, Maḥmūd Khān

Obverse and reverse in line-dot-line-circle

obverse: knot above *ilāh*,

reverse:

above *rasūl* crossed ellipses

سلطان

like on no. 1.

لا اله الا

محمود خان يرلغى (تيمور؟)

الله ﷺ محمد

كوركان ○ ○ اكمنو و(لي)

رسول الله

العهد محمد سلطان

Ob. margin:

(دمشق ٨٠٣؟)

ابو بكر/ عمر/ عثمان/ علي

UT (97-1-33; 12.10g; 35mm; 5h; photo L. Ilisch; Ilisch [1998] no. 14) [Ill. 5].

The last line of the reverse is unfortunately missing. L. Ilisch attributes no. 6 to Damascus. His reasons are the style, the unusual weight encountered on coin no. 6, and the appearance of this coin together with no. 5. However, given an ambulant campmint following Timūr's campaign, this coins could have been struck anywhere in these years, but in a close connection with the Damascus issue and the Syrian campaign.

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- Ill. 4. Double tanka, Damascus, 803. UT, Inv.-no. 97-1-32.
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Scale of the illustrations: 1:0,5.



III. 1. Dirham zāhiri, Aleppo, 801. UT collection.



III. 2. Tanka, Damascus, 803. ANS, Inv.-no. 0000.999.16285.



III. 3. Tanka, Damascus, 803. UT, Inv.-no. 97-9-2.

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Ill. 4. Double tanka, Damascus, 803. UT, Inv.-no. 97-1-32.



Ill. 5. Double tanka, (Damascus?), (803?). UT, Inv.-no. 97-1-33.