

AN UMAYYAD LEAD SEAL WITH THE NAME OF THE CALIPH MARWĀN B. MUHAMMAD

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A lead seal from the late Umayyad period inscribed in Arabic (pl. 1) was recently brought to the author's attention.¹ It was apparently found in Israel or Palestinian territory, but its exact provenance is unknown. The seal is round, its size 6 × 6.5 cm and it weighs 140 g. In the center of the back there is a pin which is also made of lead. A similarly shaped object was published by Casanova in 1894 (pl. 2).² Since this latter seal is the only one published that can shed any light on this type of object, we will refer to various other published objects for comparison.

Text

1	بِسْمِ اللَّهِ (؟)
2	[الر]َّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ
3	وَفَوَا الْكَيْلَ وَلَا
4	تَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُخْسِرِ[ين]

¹ I would like to thank Mr. Shraga Qedar for calling my attention to this seal and providing me with a plaster cast. I would also like to thank Prof. M. Sharon for his assistance in reading the text and Dr. A. Elad, who provided much useful advice and read a draft of this paper. A plaster cast was photographed by Z. Radovan.

² P. Casanova, «Sceaux arabes en plomb» *Revue numismatique*, 3rd ser., 12 (1984), 97-126, esp. 97. It reads: '*Abd allāh hishām amīr al-mu'minīn*' (*Abd Allāh Hishām the commander of the faithful [reigned A. H. 105-125/724-743 C.E.]*). Another lead object, identified first as a seal then as a weight, is known. It is not dated explicitly, bears the name of '*Abd al-Malik* (*reigned A.H. 65-86/685-705 C.E.*) and is of a different type than the one published here, having inscriptions on both sides. See O. Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art*, (Yale, 1980). Ill. No. 21; S. Shama, *al-Nuqud al-islamiyya allāti duribat fi Filastīn*, (Damascus, 1980): a plate between pp. 28-29 and on back cover. For the references of the publications of this seal as a weight see A. H. Morton, «*Hisba* and Glass Stamps in Eighth- and Early Ninth-Century Egypt», in Y. Ragib (ed.), *Documents de l'Islam médiéval: nouvelles perspectives de recherche* (Cairo, 1991), pp. 19-42, [hence *Hisba*], p. 38, note 63.

افم [？] في خلافة عبد	5
الله مروان امير ال	6
وممنين اصلاحه الله	7
و اطال بقائه على	8
يدي يزيد بن سليمان [؟] سنة	9
ثمان وعشرين و [مئة]	10

Translation

1. [In the name of Allāh]?
2. the compassionate
3. Give just measure and be not
4. among the defrauders
5. [verb?] during the days of the caliphate of the servant
6. of Allāh, Marwān, the commander of
7. the faithful, may Allāh make him prosper
8. and prolong his life, by
9. Yazīd b. Sulaymān (?) in the year
10. one hundred and twenty eight (=A.D. 745-6)

Commentary

The date places the seal into the reign of Marwān b. Muḥammad (127-132/744-750), the last Umayyad Caliph, known as Marwān II.

Line 1

Only traces of the letters of this line were preserved. It seems to contain the *mīm* of *bi-'sm*, and the upper edges of the letters of *allāh*. The addition is also based on the known formula starting many minor as well as monumental inscriptions.³

³ For inscriptions on glass stamps, see A. H. Morton, *A Catalogue of Early Islamic Glass Stamps* (London, 1985), p. 45, No. 1. and p. 55, No. 42 [henceforth Morton, *Glass Stamps*]. For this expression at the beginning of the marginal inscription on coins, see: a dinar from 76/695-96, J. Walker, *A Catalogue of the Arab-Byzantine and Post-Reform Umayyad Coins* (London, 1956), II, 42, No. P. 13: on silver coins, from 79/698-9, *ibid.*, p. 104, No. Kh. 4; on bronze coins, *ibid.*, p. 43, No. A 5; for the earliest epigraphic evidence, from 31/652, see: *Répertoire chronologique d'épigraphie arabe* (Cairo, 1931-), I, No. 6. [henceforth: *RCEA*].

Line 2

This line contains the additional formula sometimes found after the *bi-'sm allāh, al-rahmān al-rahīm*, «the compassionate, the merciful». This formula is not found on either of the two published lead objects mentioned above (in note 2) nor on any published Umayyad glass stamp. It does, however, appear on Umayyad coins, on two undated copper coins which do not carry mint names.⁴ This formula is known from rock inscriptions from the Negev (Har Nafha), one of which bears the date 117/735.⁵ It appears at the beginning of seven bilingual entagia dating 54-57/674-677.⁶ It also appears on five milestones from the days of 'Abd al-Malik.⁷ This formula is found on glass stamps from the 'Abbāsid period: from the reign of the caliph al-Mu'taṣim (218-27/833-42); from the reign of the caliph al-Wāthiq (227-32/841-6); from the days of al-Mutawakkil (232-47/847-61);⁸ and is found on a later glass weight from the period of the Tūlūnid ruler Hārūn b. Khumarawayh (291-2/903-905).⁹

Lines 3-5

These three lines bear the Qur'anic command for honest measurement (from Sura XXVI, 181). It is found as part of the legend on various types of weights from Egypt from the reign of the 'Abbāsid caliph al-Maṇṣūr (136-58/754-75).¹⁰ The heavy glass weights (*ratl*), bearing that Quranic phrase in their legend, were issued for a short period of time 137-9/754-8.¹¹

At the beginning of the fifth line a verb would be expected. The fo-

⁴ Walker, *Arab-Byzantine*, pp. 220-221, Nos. 705-706; 708-711.

⁵ M. Sharon, «Arabic Rock Inscriptions from the Negev», *Ancient Rock Inscriptions: Supplement to Map of Har Nafha* (196) 12-01 (Jerusalem, 1990), pp. 9-35, see p. 22, No. 66.I.

⁶ C. J. Kraemer, *Excavations at Nessana: The Non-Literary Papyri* (Princeton, 1958), Nos. 60-66.

⁷ For the most complete one see M. Sharon «An Arabic Inscription from the Days of 'Abd al-Malik», *BSOAS*, 29 (1966), pp. 367-372; For the rest of these inscriptions see *RCEA I*, Nos. 14-17.

⁸ P. Balog, *Umayyad, 'Abbāsid and Tūlūnid Glass Weights and Vessel Stamps*. Numismatic Studies No. 13 (New York, 1976), pp. 245-6, Nos. 678-9 and *ibid.*, p. 250, No. 688. [Weights] And see Morton, *Glass Stamps*, p. 126, No. 352.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 268, No. 741.

¹⁰ Balog, *Weights*, pp. 127-128, Nos. 349, 350-352; p. 128, No. 354 and p. 131, Nos. 365, 366-370; see Morton, *Glass Stamps*, p. 89, No. 192.

¹¹ Morton, *Glass Stamps*, pp. 91-2, Nos. 199, 200-204, 205.

llowing letters seem apparent: افم . This might be read *uqīma*, perhaps in the sense of «been set up» or «put into a right state». This, however, does not seem likely not only because *aqāma* as a transitive verb generally refers to construction projects and the like, but also because the use in this sense has not been attested elsewhere. On glass weights, words derived from other roots are used in order to explain the actual production of the object: *s-n-*‘, *t-b-*‘, and rarely *kh-t-m*. These three verbs usually come with the formula «ordered so-and-so (the caliph or finance director) *bi-ṭab’/bi-ṣan’/bi-khatm* of such and such weight.» On the present seal, however, the whole structure of the inscription is different and the name of the caliph appears right after the uncertain verb; he, in turn, is followed by the name of the official who executes the work, whatever that might exactly be.¹²

The phrase which helps determine the date begins in the fifth line: *fi khilāfat ‘abd allāh marwān*, «during the days of the caliphate of the servant of Allāh, Marwān». A similar term is used in an inscription found at Nahal ‘Avdat in the Negev:

... كتب في سنة تسع عشر ومائة على خلفة هشام (written in the year 119/738 during the chaliphate of Hishām). The word *khilāfa* in this last instance has a defective spelling.¹³

The stroke of the letter *yāh* in the *fi* goes back on the line towards the previous word, and is similar to the *fi* in a graffito from the excavations at Hammat Gader dated to year A. H. 122/740 C. E.¹⁴

Lines 5-6

‘*Abd Allāh* is not a proper name here. It merely means the «servant of God». This title was used by the Umayyad caliphs from the days of Mu‘āwiya (41-60/661-680).¹⁵

¹² For *ṭab’* and *ṣan’* see Morton, *Glass Stamps*, p. 13; pp. 42-43. For *khatm* see Balog, *Weights*, pp. 35-36. On coins the verb *min ḍarb* appears, for instance *min ḍarb Qinasrīn*; Walker, *Arab-Byzantine*, p. 277, Nos. 914-916.

¹³ M. Sharon, «Arabic and Rock Inscriptions from the Negev», 12-01, pp. 9-35. especially pp. 14-16.

¹⁴ N. Amitai-Preiss «Arabic Inscriptions, Graffiti and Games», in *The Roman Baths at Hammat Gader*, ed. Y. Hirshfeld, forthcoming.

¹⁵ For this title see J. Green and Y. Safrir, «Greek Inscriptions from Hammat Gader: A Poem by the Empress Eudocia and Two Building Inscriptions», *Israel Exploration Journal*, 32 (1982), pp. 94-95, see p. 94, inscription 3. See the four milestones from the time of ‘Abd al-Malik; A. Grohmann, *Arabische Paläographie*, II. Teil (Vienna, 1971), p.

Line 6

The name of the Caliph Marwān [b. Muḥammad] is not mentioned on any of the published glass stamps.¹⁶ It does appear on one of the three lead bullae published by Kalus which bear the title *amīr al-mu'minīn*.¹⁷ His name with the title 'Abd Allāh appears, however, on part of a balance arm, on a *tirāz* inscription in the construction inscription of a mosque in Baṣra (from the same year of the seal), and on two more inscriptions, both concerning renovations, one at the port of Tyre, the other at the port of Acre.¹⁸

Lines 6-7

The title *amīr al-mu'minīn*, «commander of the faithful», is found in all early inscriptions and on coins. It is known from the Greek inscription

83. For an inscription from the days of Yazīd II, see L. A. Mayer, «An Eighth-Century Water-Gauge at al-Muwaqqar», *Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities of Palestine*, 12 (1964) pp. 70-74. For the title from the days of al-Šaffāh, the first Abbāsid caliph, see inscription from Bayṣan, in the forthcoming article by A. Elad in Moshe Gil *Festschrift*.

¹⁶ Hardly any caliphs' names are found on glass stamps, and then only for short termed periods. From the Umayyad period, only Yazīd b. 'Abd al-Malik (101-105/720-724) is known to have glass weights with his name.

¹⁷ L. Kalus, *Catalogue des cachets, bulles et talismans islamiques*, (Paris, 1981) p. 61, Nos. 2.2; 2.3 and 2.4 Bulla No. 2.2 was read *min dār/amīr al-mu'mi/nū...*, I read *marwān amīr al-mu'minīn*; see Pl. II, No. 2.A. If this is the case then it seems more likely that this is another mention of this caliph Marwān b. Muḥammad, since Marwān b. al-Ḥakam ruled only for a few months. The names of the other two caliphs mentioned in the two bullae can not be deciphered.

¹⁸ For a balance arm from year 131, see A. H. Morton, in Christie's Sale Catalogue of *Islamic Art and Indian Miniatures*, April 1994, p. 115, item No. 304: *amara bi-hādhā al-mīzān al-amīr labib b. murra* (or *qurra*) *iḥdā wa-thalāthīn wa-mi'a*. For the construction inscription see Grohmann, *Paläographie*, p. 88, citing J. Sauvaget, «Notes de topographie Omeyyade», *Syria*, 24 (1944-45), 57. Part of a *Tirāz* inscription from the cemetery of al-Akhmīn, in Egypt mentions. «*f'Abd Allāh Marwān amīr al-mu'minīn...*». Again, since Marwān b. al-Ḥakam was a caliph for a short time only, it seems reasonable to relate this fabric to Marwān b. Muḥammad, as did the editors of the *RCEA*, I, 28, No. 36. F. Day attributes it to Marwān b. al-Ḥakam; see F. E. Day «The Tiraz Silk of Marwan» in G. C. Miles (ed.), *Archaeologica Orientalia in Memoriam Ernst Herzfeld*, New York, 1952, pp. 39-61. Two more inscriptions with Marwān [b. Muḥammad]'s name are known from a literary source, both concerning renovation, one at the port of Tyre, the other at the port of Acre; *mā amara bi-islāhihi amīr al-mu'minīn marwān wa-jāra 'alā ya-day ziyād b. abī al-ward*; al-Jahshiyārī, *Kitāb al-wuzarā' wa'l-kuttāb* (Cairo, 1938), p. 80. This passage was mentioned by A. Elad in his article «The Coastal Cities of Palestine During the Early Middle Ages», *The Jerusalem Cathedra*, 2 (1981), p. 161 (Hebrew).

from the days of Mu‘āwiya, found at Ḥammat Gader, on through all the Umayyad and into the ‘Abbāsid period.¹⁹ The formula *aṣlaḥahu allāh* was apparently not a caliphal prerogative. There are examples of it being applied to caliphs as well as to *amīrs*.²⁰ Umayyad inscriptions mentioning caliphs’ names with this formula are also known. It is found on an Umayyad marble slab mentioning the name of Hishām *amīr al-mu’mīnīn*, (105-125/724-743).²¹

Line 8

The formula *aṭāla allāh baqā’ahu*, «may God prolong his life», is relatively rare among glass stamps and appears only in the mid-‘Abbāsid period (242-253/856-867).²² An equivalent term *madda lahu fī al-‘umr* is found in an inscription from the days of Yazīd b. ‘Abd al-Malik, 101-105/720-4, from al-Muwaqqar.²³

Line 9

The formula *‘alā yaday* (through, by means of [such a one]) is followed by the name of Yazīd b. Sulaymān (?). According to Morton, the use of this expression in glass stamps refers exclusively to the the *sāhib al-sūq* or *muhtasib*,²⁴ two related (and perhaps similar) titles. It is thus

¹⁹ Green and Tsafir, *Greek Inscriptions*, p. 94. For coins bearing the title, but not the name or date of a caliph, see Walker, *Arab-Byzantine*, p. 30, No. 99; for coins minted with ‘Abd al-Malik’s name and the title, for instance *ibid.* p. 32, No. 104 and p. 43, No. A. 5; A. 6.

²⁰ For the formula in connection to the caliph Yazīd II (101-5/720-4) see Morton, *Glass Stamps*, p. 51, No. 26; p. 52, No. 28; or with a certain *amīr* from the Umayyad period, see *ibid.* Nos. 148-9 and Nos. 168-9; or on a stamp from the ‘Abbāsid period, see p. 115, Nos. 318-19. The formula *aṣlaḥahu allāh* is found in connection with the mentioned *amīr* (‘Abdallāh b. ‘Alī) in the ‘Abbāsid inscription from the days of al-Saffāh.

²¹ D. C. Baramky, «Excavations at Khirbet el Mefjer. III» in *The Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine (QDAP)* VIII (1939), pp. 51-53, esp. p. 53; and R. W. Hamilton, *Khirbat al-Mafjar: An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley* (Oxford, 1959), p. 43, Pl. LVII, I.

²² Morton, *Glass Stamps*, p. 128, Nos. 364-369, from years 253-54/867-8. For the formula in plural, see *ibid.*, p. 128, No. 362-363.

²³ On the capital of a pillar from al-Muwaqqar: ...*amara bi-binyān hādhīhi al-birkā ‘abd allāh yazīd amīr al-mu’mīnīn*; Mayer, «Al-Muwaqqar», p. 73. This inscription is dated to the reign of the Caliph Yazīd II (101-105/720-724).

²⁴ «*Hisba*,» pp. 26-27.

possible that in this seal, the ‘alā yaday is followed by an individual who held one of these positions. The expression ‘alā yaday is known from monumental inscriptions, as well as from coins and glass stamps generally translated as «at the hands of», or «executed by». The name introduced by this formula is the actual executer of the order.²⁵

Casanova in 1893 had suggested that this category of officials are the *muhtasibs*. His assumption remained speculation until the glass stamps themselves provided the necessary proof.²⁶ The stamps published by Morton, mention the title *muhtasib*, or in one stamp the term *ṣāḥib al-sūq*. (It also appears with the formula of ‘alā yaday... ṣāḥib al-sūq).²⁷ As Crone has said: «it must be clear that the term *muhtasib*, must be early as that of the *ṣāḥib al-sūq*: the two terms merely happen to be attested at slightly different times in the extant literature.»²⁸

Only three of the five new readings of stamps with the formula ‘alā yaday and the title *al-muhtasib* can be dated, by identifying the names found among the list of governors as well as finance directors who functioned in Egypt, which are given in Muḥammad al-Kindī’s book *Kitāb wulāt misr*; none of the stamps carries an explicit date. One stamp is da-

²⁵ The pool at al-Muwaqqar has been built by the care of ‘Abd Allāh b. Sulaym, about whom Mayer says that he was «a man fairly high in the Umayyad hierarchy may be taken for granted because of the word ‘alā yaday, by which he is introduced in this inscription»; Mayer, «Muwaqqar», p. 74. Balog translated the expression literally as «at the hands of», Balog, *Weights*, from p. 58, No. 62 on. Morton translated it in the same way as Balog; Morton, *Glass Stamps*, p. 52, No. 27 ff; *idem*, *Hisba*, p. 21, No. 1. It should be noted that the term at least on glass stamps appeared for the first time during Yazīd b. ‘Abd al-Malik’s reign. Ettinghausen translated the formula as «executed by»; R. Ettinghausen «An Umayyad Pound Weight» in *The Journal of the Walkers Art Gallery*, 1939, pp. 73-76, esp. 73. Walter translated the formula on coins as «at the hands of...», and added it precedes the name of the prefect or the Finance Director, Walker, *Arab-Byzantine*, p. civ. The formula is attested on a coin minted in Atrib, Egypt from 132 (the reign of Marwān b. Muḥammad, [A. H. 127-132]). *ibid.*, p. 227, No. ANS. 37.

²⁶ Morton, *Hisba*, p. 21, No. 1. Another man, Ziyād b. Abī al-Ward, who served as the secretary in charge of the correspondence in the office responsible for the expenses of the caliph Marwān b. Muḥammad, is mentioned as the man in charge of the renovations at the Tyre and Akre ports; see Elad «The Coastal Cities» and note 19 there for earlier citations of this important passage. See also *ibid.*, note 15. For the title from the days of al-Saffāḥ in the inscription from Baysān, see Elad in «Al-Saffāḥ».

²⁷ P. Casanova, «Catalogue des pièces de verre des époques byzantine et arabe de la collection Fouquet» *Mémoires publiées par les membres de la Mission Archéologique Française au Caire*, VI, 3, (1893), p. 349. For the rejection of Casanova’s suggestion by different scholars, see Morton, *Hisba*, p. 33, note 6.

²⁸ P. Crone, *Roman Provincial and Islamic Law: The Origins of the Islamic Patronate* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 107-108. I want to thank Prof. H. Lazarus-Yafeh for this reference.

ted to 238-242/852-856,²⁹ another to 242-253/856-867.³⁰ The earliest stamp given by Morton is the first epigraphic record of a *muhtasib* known. It has the name of the governor 'Alī b. Sulaymān who was in this office in Egypt between 169-171/786-787, and the *muhtasib*, who was Mu'āwiya b. Zufār.³¹ In the light of this glass stamp, which combines the formula '*alā yaday*' before his name, with the title *al-muhtasib* found after his name, Morton proposed that all these officials who appear after the formula of '*alā yaday*', «were in fact essentially *muhtasib*-». Morton was cautious in his conclusion, saying that this Mu'āwiya b. Zufār, who was clearly a *muhtasib*, appears with the same formula which precedes the names of several other individuals whose titles are not given on the stamps, but «as far as glass weights and measures are concerned, performing the function [of the *muhtasib*]».»³²

As for the name *Yazīd* b. [Sulaymān], a few letters are clearly seen from the name of the father of *Yazīd* -*sīn*, *lām* and *mīm*: the latter has a long ending beneath the line. This can be read as *Salmān* or *Salamah*. Since a man of that name could not be found by me, the possibility of Sulayman was checked, because the name could have a *yā'* before the *mīm*. Only one *Yazīd* b. Sulaymān was found: *Yazīd* b. Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān b. al-Hakam b. 'Umar b. al-'Āṣ b. Umayya b. 'Abd Shams al-Umawī. He was the son of the seventh Umayyad caliph, and is mentioned in al-Tabarī, as residing in Filastīn.³³ After al-Walīd b. 'Abd al-Malik was killed, he was one of the two candidates for the caliphate (A. H. 126/743-744). *Yazīd* b. Sulaymān summoned the people of Filastīn to fight against *Yazīd* b. al-Walīd. *Yazīd* b. Sulaymān lost the campaign to *Yazīd* b. al-Walīd, who became the next caliph. Ibn 'Asākir states that *Yazīd* b. Sulaymān was the governor of *jund* Filastīn.³⁴ It is doubtful that this member of the Umayyad family is the executive mentioned in this seal, since it was not an especially exalted

²⁹ Morton, *Hisba*, p. 22, No. 3.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 23, No. 4.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 25, stamp No. 5, p. 24 (fig. 3). A similar explicit formula plus the title is seen on an 'Abbasid glass stamp from the days of the governor *Yazīd* b. 'Abdallāh al-Turkī (242-253/856-867); *ibid.* p. 23, No. 4.

³² Morton, *ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

³³ Al-Tabarī, *Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk*, Cairo, IX, 266; See also Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rīkh madīnat dimashq*, (Amman, 1989), XVIII, 290, who mentions the fact that this member of the Umayyad family living in the Ghūṭa of Dimashq but had arrived in Filastīn.

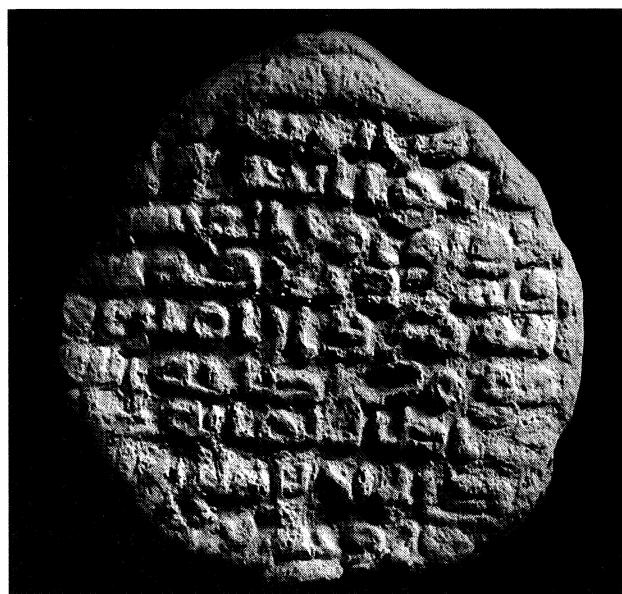
³⁴ Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rīkh*, XVIII, 290. See also Al-Tabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, IX, 266-68.

position, and would have been below the dignity of a senior member of the royal family. However, the possibility of this Umayyad scion being the individual mentioned in this seal cannot be ruled out. Yazīd b. Sulaymān is not mentioned by al-Ṭabarī after the events of this year 126 and the rebellion.

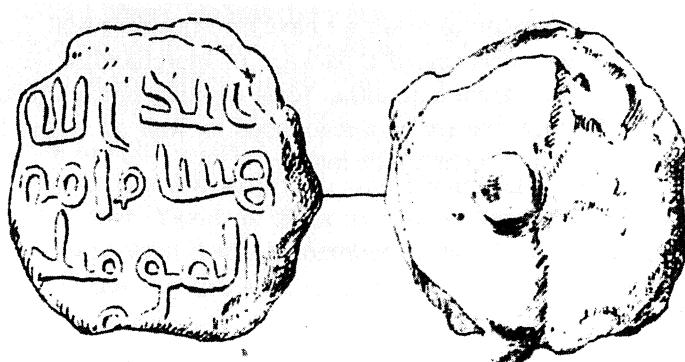
Line 10

Only the upper part of the letter *thā'* of the word *thamān* is seen at the extreme right edge of this line. The rest of the word is clearly seen as *mīm*, *alīf* and *nūn*, the combination with the addition of *wa-’ishrīn wā/mi’ā*. In spite of the fact that word indicating the digit of the hundred is out of the flan of the seal, it is confirmed as 128 (745-746) by the reading: «of the days of the caliphate of Marwān».

In summary, we have here an Umayyad seal, from the days of the caliph Marwān b. Muḥammad, featuring Umayyad formulae. The object that most resembles our seal is Hishām's seal published by Casanova, but this seal of Hishām, bearing a short legend, does not give us any formulae for comparison to those we have on Marwān's seal. It may be assumed that these seals sealed a package or merchandise, since they have a lead pin for attachment, either for a wooden box, cloth sack, or ceramic jug. Further research on lead seals as well as in the literary sources may shed more light on the matter.



Pl. 1



Pl. 2