The al-Madhāriba Hoard of Gold
Aksumite and Late Roman Coins

STUART MUNRO-HAY

[PLATES 22–9]

An extraordinary find of gold coins of the Ethiopian kingdom of Aksum, together with some late Roman solidi, came recently from the area of al-Madhāriba in the Peoples Democratic Republic of Yemen. The coins were apparently found in a clay pot, which has not been preserved, and which was not accompanied by any other archaeological material. This hoard has added enormously to our knowledge of the Aksumite issues, being the largest single collection of Aksumite coins yet found. It has approximately trebled the total number of gold coins known to date in this extremely rare series.

The hoard was found at al-Madhāriba, some 70 km west of Aden (13.00 N., 44.00 E.) in Lahej Govenorate. Large by any standards, it totalled 1,194 coins, 868 Aksumite and 326 Roman. It is a significant chronological indicator for the Aksumite series, being the first recorded find of Roman and Aksumite pieces together. Previously the only connection, and that a vague one, was supplied by the finding of an Aksumite and a late Roman coin in

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The following abbreviated references are used:

A. with a following number refers to coins in Anzani (1926).


V. with a following number refers to coins in F. Vaccaro, Le Monete di Aksum (Mantua, 1967).
the Yemen in the early years of this century. An imitation of one of the late Roman solidi with the helmeted and cuirassed facing bust on the obverse, and personifications of Roma and Constantinople enthroned together on the reverse, was presented to the British Museum in 1904 (1904, 4-4, 2) by Ali Farah, together with a gold Aksumite coin of Ebana, both coming from the same district, apparently some 200–300 miles north of Aden.

The hoard, some examples of which are now exhibited in the National Museum, Aden, has been studied by the author during visits to Aden over a period of two years at the invitation of the Yemeni Centre for Culture and Archaeological Research, and with the co-operation of the Mission Archéologique Française en République Démocratique et Populaire du Yémen.

The hoard contained coins of the following types:

A. Late Roman solidi. These have not yet been studied closely,¹ but simply sorted into categories according to the style of bust (h/c indicating the helmeted and cuirassed facing bust) and the mint.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Coin</th>
<th>Mint</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constantius II as Caesar; Antioch</td>
<td>2; bust r.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constantius II</td>
<td>40; bust r., 85 h/c</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cyzicus</td>
<td>2; h/c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nicomedia</td>
<td>10; bust r., 68 h/c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lugdunum</td>
<td>1; h/c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arles</td>
<td>1; h/c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constantinople</td>
<td>1; bust r., 26 h/c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sirmium</td>
<td>4; bust r., 17 h/c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thessalonica</td>
<td>9; bust r.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Siscia</td>
<td>5; h/c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>2; bust r., 25 h/c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain: ANAH</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 A very few were photographed in Aden, and I am grateful to David Miller for the following classifications: two examples of the Antioch solidus of Constantius II, bust r.: RIC 81, Cohen 108; two examples of the Antioch solidus of Constantius II, h/c: RIC 88, Cohen 112; the single example of the Antioch solidus of Julian II as Caesar, bust, bareheaded, draped r.: RIC 167, Cohen 22; an example of the Antioch solidus of Jovian, bust r., unpublished mint letter H: RIC 224v.
B. The Aksumite Coins,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>King</th>
<th>Munro-Hay</th>
<th>Nat. Museum of Aden nos.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ëzana A' 1</td>
<td>M-H pp. 84–5</td>
<td>1–25, 173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A' 1a</td>
<td>M-H, pp. 88–9</td>
<td>102–36, 710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A' 1b</td>
<td>M-H, pp. 88–9</td>
<td>137–52, 867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A' 1c</td>
<td>M-H, pp. 88–9</td>
<td>153–72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abana A' 1 and 1a</td>
<td>M-H, pp. 95–6</td>
<td>174–697, 707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymous A' 3</td>
<td>M-H, pp. 98</td>
<td>698–706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymous A' 1</td>
<td>M-H, p. 90</td>
<td>818–63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nezana A' 1</td>
<td>M-H, p. 108</td>
<td>712–16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nezana A' 2</td>
<td>M-H, p. 109</td>
<td>717–19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nezana A' 3</td>
<td>M-H, p. 110</td>
<td>720–6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nezana A' 4</td>
<td>New Type</td>
<td>727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nezoõl A' 1</td>
<td>M-H, pp. 113–14</td>
<td>728–69, 805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymous A' 2</td>
<td>M-H, p. 112</td>
<td>811–17, 868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ousas A' 1</td>
<td>M-H, p. 100</td>
<td>770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ousas A' 1a</td>
<td>M-H, p. 101</td>
<td>771–94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ousana A' 1</td>
<td>M-H, pp. 105–6</td>
<td>796–804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ousanas A' 1</td>
<td>M-H, p. 103</td>
<td>806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaleb A' 1</td>
<td>M-H, p. 116</td>
<td>807–8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaleb A' 2</td>
<td>M-H, p. 118</td>
<td>809–10</td>
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</table>

As with all other Aksumite gold coin-finds reported from the Yemen,² the coins found in the al-Madhäriba hoard extend only from the reign of Ëzana to that of Kaleb. The recorded provenance of the Ëzana A' 1 type in Munro-Hay (p. 85) as Ethiopia is a printing error; those with known provenances all in fact came from South Arabia. The overwhelming majority of provenanced gold Aksumite coins, and, so far, all those belonging to this period (with the proviso noted in the preface of Munro-Hay 1984), come from the Yemen, while none of the earlier or later issues are attested there.

The Aksumite coins from the hoard thus date from after the conversion of king Ëzana to Christianity, probably in the 330s, until about the middle of the sixth century, in or just after the reign of Kaleb (the four Kaleb coins in the hoard are fairly worn). The Roman coins in the hoard present a rather curious composition, but this is perhaps not altogether surprising given that they were discovered so far outside the Roman Empire. Although full details of the coins are lacking at present, the great bulk of them are probably to be dated between 350 and 367, a period when solidi were being struck in great quantities, and several hoards of coins of these years have been discovered in Egypt.³ The two coins of Constantius II as Caesar, and especially the

² See Anzani and Munro-Hay for a discussion of these.
specimen of Theodosius II do not, however, belong to this group. The presence of this latter coin, dateable to AD 430–9 and thus some sixty years later than the three coins of Valens, is especially odd. It is also surprising that the hoard should have fifteen coins of Jovian to two of Julian, reversing the normal ratio between these two emperors. The most that can be said is that the Roman coins do not contradict the dating of the Aksumite coins in the hoard to the period c.330 to c.550.

Among the Aksumite coins represented in the hoard are issues formerly known only through unique or extremely rare examples, and several new variant types have been identified.

An interesting feature is that there are no completely new types in the hoard (except Nezana N 4, which is in fact simply a coin struck from an obverse die of Nezana N 1 combined with a reverse die known from the Anonymous N 2 type), and no new kings. Every type of gold coin included in Munro-Hay from Ëzana N 1 to Kaleb N 2 appears in the hoard, except Nezoõl N 2 (which, like the Nezana N 4 mentioned above, is a unique piece resulting from the use of existing dies in a new combination, this time a Nezoõl N 1 reverse die with an obverse die known from both the Nezana N 2 and Anonymous N 2 types), and, significantly, the suspected forgery MHDYS N 1 (Munro-Hay, p. 93). This may very well indicate, given the numbers of the different types present, that the sequence of gold issues between Ëzana and Kaleb as we now have them is complete, even though two kings, MHDYS and Ouazëbas, appear from the style of their only known issues, both in bronze, to fit into the late fourth or early fifth century without gold issues. On the other hand, Eõn, similarly of late fourth or early fifth century date, is known only through his gold issues, now very well represented in the al-Madhâriba hoard. The solution to this problem may partly rest in the anonymous issues, some extensive, in all metals, which also appear to date from this period (but see below); alternatively there may be some pointers in favour of the view that certain Aksumite rulers had associates on the throne, a view particularly propounded by Hahn.4

Perhaps the most important contribution of the hoard to Aksumite numismatic research is the possibility of studying to some extent the die-links, something prevented previously through lack of material, except for one attempt.5 This is of vital importance in linking types and even reigns, as well as giving some hint as to the scale of production of coinage, and information about internal stylistic changes within reigns, and has proved remarkably fruitful during the study of the al-Madhâriba hoard. Analysis of

the gold content of the coins would be a very valuable supplement to the work published and in progress.\(^6\)

It is reported that the collection of Aksumite gold coins now in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna also belonged to a hoard, bought by Müller in Aden in 1898/9, and recorded in the Museum's inventory volume.\(^7\) The hoard has a not dissimilar distribution to the al-Madhāriba hoard: Ezana 1, Eõn 5, Anonymous A' 1 1, Ebana 10, Nezōõl 1, Ousas 3, Ousanas 1, Kaleb 9. Presumably the coins in these hoards were either collected in Ethiopia and brought over in Kaleb's time, or had been gathered while circulating in the Yemen, a fairly natural state of affairs considering that the Yemeni kingdoms no longer had, by this period, any coinage of their own, and were in close contact with Ethiopia, being indeed under direct Ethiopian domination during part of Kaleb's reign. In any event, they were probably buried in the mid-sixth century, perhaps owing to some upheaval connected with the deposition of the Ethiopian viceroy Sumuyafa Ashwa and the expulsion of the Ethiopians, or perhaps during the wars which ended the dynasty of Abreha, Sumuyafa Ashwa's successor.

\(\text{Ezana A' 1 (Munro-Hay, pp. 84–5)}\)

The al-Madhāriba hoard contained twenty-six examples of this issue; nos. 1–25 and 173 (note that al-M. followed by a number designates coins from the hoard; for other abbreviations see the note on p. 00 above). There were sixteen obverse dies, and the coins could be linked with four more examples published by Anzani as his nos. 39–42. Among this total of 30 coins, 17 reverse dies were found. Coins with letters and symbols, perhaps mintmarks, on the obverse were die-linked by their reverses with others lacking such marks, and coins with the four-element tiara or triangular fillet-ties, customary on earlier Aksumite coins, were linked with others lacking these features.

Numerous new mint-marks (if that is what they are) above the king's head on the obverse, were identified to add to the four already known (Munro-Hay, p. 84). These were as follows;

al-M. 1. An unclear combination of dots 🕳️.
al-M. 3. Two dots 🕳️.


al-M. 14–16. The symbol ; possibly this is an ‘l’ or a badly-cut ‘b’ (as on al-M. 10 and 11).

In addition to these were three dots : behind the king’s neck on the obverse of al-M. 20–1, and a bar across the base of the wheat or barley-stalk behind the king’s shoulder on the obverse of al-M. 2.

The authenticity of a coin, Anzani’s no. 40, suspected of being a forgery by Hill, but seemingly authenticated by its gold-content is now supported by four other examples of the same obverse die, al-M. 14–16, A. 41), two having also the same reverse die (al-M. 12 and 14).

The chronological position of Êzana has been much disputed. Pirenne recently expressed some of her latest ideas in her review of The Coinage of Aksum in the Revue de Numismatique for 1985, pp. 242–6, and this discussion of the coins from the al-Madhâriba hoard offers a useful opportunity to explore some of these points.

Pirenne notes the two forms of the letter A on Êzana’s coinage. The first type, narrow with three points, is indeed found on the coins with the spelling Êzanas and the pagan symbols of the disc and crescent. The letter-form may be seen on the pagan issues, as for example, Anzani nos. 22, 26, and 28; M-H 36; and particularly clearly on the example in the Bibliothèque Albert I, Brussels, where it is used also for the lambda in BACIAEYC. It is frequent on the pagan silver and bronze, too. However, it is also found frequently on the Êzanas Christian issue, examples being Seaby 1960, 15; M-H 47, A. 32 and 35. By the time of the Êzana A I issue under discussion here, the three-pointed A has become a little broader (as already occasionally on some of Ousanas’ coins and Êzanas’ pagan pieces, e.g. A. 22; on the Êzana A I issue, and on the silver, the spreading of the letters is encouraged, since there is more room for the letters). But it is still frequently found, though by now being superseded by the second type of A mentioned by Pirenne (‘comme une gerbe, liée en haut et reposant sur deux jambes’). It occurs, for example, on

9 Oddy and Munro-Hay, op. cit. in n. 6; p. 77; Munro-Hay, p. 85.
14 Munro-Hay, p. 81.
many of the al-Madhâriba pieces, and can be seen on al-M. 14–16 and A. 40–1, being used for the lambda as well. The second type of A is found on all the Êzanas/Êzana gold, even on some of the pagan issues (e.g. on M-H 37, on JJ 64,\textsuperscript{15} and on the reverse of the Brussels specimen, where it is used, in contrast to the three-pointed type on the obverse, and on the reverse for the first letter of AÆWMITWN, in the word AÆNÈ (Alene; the Greek version of the Ethiopic Halen). Indeed, it is used even on some of Aphilas' and Ousanas' pieces (see for example M-H 12, 13, 15, 16, 21) alongside those kings' usual forms with the dot (Aphilas) or the three points (Ousanas).

Accordingly, the form of the A develops from a type with a central dot to represent the centre bar used only on the coinage of Endubis and Aphilas.\textsuperscript{16} It then adopts the three-pointed shape on coinage of Ousanas and Êzanas both as a pagan and a Christian, and not infrequently on the Êzana A'1 issue also. The three-pointed A, rather broader, continues on the coinage of Eôn (e.g. al-M. 26, 78–9, 86 among many others), and Ebana, e.g. SG 546,\textsuperscript{17} developing towards Pirenne's third type of A, 'à deux courtes jambes larges, écartées et dansantes'. The triangular cross-bar is much finer than the two sides of the A as it grows broader, and is often lost in the striking or on a photograph. The open two-legged type of A, beginning under Ousanas and Êzanas/Êzana, is this same A with the cross-bar either almost invisible, or simply absent. The die-cutters, perhaps, copying designs from coins where it had vanished, began to leave it out more and more frequently, and in the coinage of Eôn and Ebana both types are still to be found together. The form of the A on the coins of Êzanas/Êzana as a Christian actually helps to confirm that these issues belong to the period directly following his pagan issues, and precede those of both Eôn and Ebana, where the linking cross-bar is much less frequent. In addition, it has already been pointed out (opp. ctt. in note 6) that the Êzanas/Êzana issues, though the latter are perhaps a little less well-prepared than the earlier coins, all exhibit numerous stylistic and other features (weight, gold content) which place them together and before all other Christian Aksumite gold issues. Unfortunately the coins of the al-Madhâriba hoard cannot be subjected to specific gravity or other tests, nor has it yet been possible to weigh the coins accurately. But study of the early stylistic features, like the four-element tiara (e.g. A. 43; al-M. 1, 9, 18, 19, 25–6) found on the Êzanas pagan issues and occasionally on the Êzanas Christian issue (e.g. A. 37–8), and the triangular fillet-tie (found only rarely on the Êzana A'1 issue on the obverse, but frequently on the reverse), has been much enhanced by this hoard. Only the occasional exceptional gold coin of Eôn (e.g. BM 1915, 1–8, 78, published in Anzani as his no. 85) has the four-element tiara, or the three-pointed A, or a triangular ribbon, after


\textsuperscript{16} Note 13 above.

\textsuperscript{17} Oddy and Munro-Hay, op. cit.
Êzana (though this latter is found on some silver and bronze issues of anonymous type, and occasionally on Ouzebas' bronze issue).

On all obverse dies of his N 1 issue Êzana holds a straight stick or sceptre, and on the reverse he holds the three-strand fly-whisk. This may be very distinct, curved and with a dot at the end of each strand, e.g. al-M. 7-8, or very much less well defined, as in al-M. 15 and 24.

**Eôn AV 1, 1a, 1b, and 1c (Munro-Hay pp. 88-9)**

Our knowledge of the gold coins of Eôn of all four types has been enormously increased by the al-Madhâriba hoard. The 156 coins of this king (al-M. 26–172, 864–7, 869, 708–10) comprised 83 of the AV 1 type, 36 of AV 1a, 17 of AV 1b, and 20 of AV 1c. The hoard provided several different forms of the legends, but all belong to one of the four types already identified. The types AV 1 and AV 1a were linked by one reverse die (al-M. 42–6, 866, and a coin in the Castello Sforzesco, Milan), with al-M. 130–6 and SG 540, A. 93, and V. 39.18 Types AV 1b and 1c were also linked by the reverse die used for al-M. 148–9, 867, and SG 539, with al-M. 155. The curious mirror-image writing of the royal name, first commented on by Buttrey19 and identified with Eôn by Munro-Hay20 was evidently a repeated error; three such reverse dies have now been identified, combined with six obverse dies.

Some comments about the lettering and other features of the Eôn gold have been noted above. By far the greater number of the coins have a simplified form of lettering, where C serves for C, B, or E, H serves for H and N, and A serves for A and A. As had already occasionally occurred on the Christian Êzana coinage (e.g. A. 36 obv.; A. 42; A. 39 and 40 rev.) the B is written on Eôn's coins nearly always as C; exceptions are found, however, where the B still appears (e.g. al-M. 78–90 obverse, also on the reverse of 78–9, 86–8) but it is very rare. Reversed letters are also very common indeed.

Incidentally, this B, where written clearly, occurs only in the triplets BAC and BAX, but never in ACA, where it would be expected if the interpretation XABACHNQN were to be read.21

The four-element tiara becomes very rare for Eôn (see above, and al-M. 80), and the triangular ribbon, relatively common for the Êzana AV 1 issue, is now only exceptionally used (e.g. al-M. 26–7 obv., 86 rev., 102 rev.). The great majority of Eôn's coins show the king's figure on the obverse as an upright bust wearing a tall, even slightly outward-splayed, tiara, very similar to that of Êzana, and wearing similar robes to Êzana. Where there is no mint-

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mark above Ėzana’s head on his obverses, (e.g. al-M. 2, 18–21, 24–5) his coins closely resemble those of Eōn. The wheat or barley-stalks flanking the royal bust on Ėzana’s pieces do not meet over the king’s head, and the points of the tiara touch the uppermost part of them, or sometimes they allow the tiara to reach between them to the inner beaded circle; exactly the same prevails for Eōn. Only one die (al-M. 42–6) shows Eōn in the more hunched pose with a lower tiara under joined grain-stalks which is much more common for Ebana; though Ebana too has coins of the former type, particularly those of his dies bearing mint-marks.

Regoudy, identifying Eōn with a certain Hiuna mentioned in the Book of the Himyarites, placed him after Ebana.22 Pirenne also has some comments to make about the chronological position of the coins of Eōn: ‘... je situerais Ebana avant Eōn parce que, le type dégénérant, on voit disparaître le sceptre et le chasse-mouches des mains du roi, et cela après Ėzanas chrétien et Ebana. Ils ont disparu chez Eōn; cela me paraît primer la légère supériorité des pièces d’Eōn, en pourcentage d’or.’23 This is a surprising remark, since the sceptre and the so-called fly-whisk are clear on many already published examples of Eōn’s coins, e.g. A. 85–8, often rather better depicted than on any Ebana coins; and this is confirmed by their appearance on by far the majority of the al-Madhāriba pieces. They cannot be considered to have disappeared during the reign of Eōn; they are also missing on a number of Ebana coins, but occur intermittently until Kaleb (e.g. A. 130, 132; M-H 112; Hahn 41c; SG 592), being visible in one combination or another on many of the Ousas/Ousana coins and those of Nezoōl.

The straight stick or sceptre (longer or shorter as the die-cutter depicted it) normal for the Ėzana A’1 issue, is held by king Eōn on most of his obverse dies; it cannot be seen on al-M. 35, 90, 129–36, 150–60, 165–72; it is vestigial on 137–47. In some cases the king seems rather to hold a short curved stick, perhaps the vestigial remains of the fly-whisk: al-M. 102–21, 161–4. On al-M. 122–7 traces of the three strands of the fly-whisk can just be discerned. It is, evidently, sometimes difficult to distinguish between the straight stick or the vestigial fly-whisk, but it is certain that in most cases one or other is present. The coin al-M. 36 has the same small bar across one of the wheat or barley-stalks as seen on the Ėzana piece al-M. 2, though in front of the king rather than behind him.

On the reverse, king Eōn often holds a fly-whisk every bit as well defined as that held by Ėzana (see above); e.g. al-M. 26. He may also hold the straight stick or sceptre rather than the fly-whisk, e.g. al-M. 38–41, and the piece 1568 in the Castello Sforzesco, Milan, or apparently in some cases, nothing at all, e.g. al-M. 42–6, 106–21, and A. 92–3.

Either the sceptre or the fly-whisk is always present on Eõn’s coins, except in a very few instances, e.g. al-M. 129–36 where nothing is shown in the king’s hands on either obverse or reverse. In the hoard, of 35 obverse dies of Eõn, 24 can be distinguished as holding the stick, whether long, medium, or vestigial (with no stick or very short vestigial sticks commonest for the Λ 1b and 1c types). Eõn never holds the fly-whisk on the obverse, as Ebana occasionally does.

This predominance of the stick or sceptre is exactly the same as for Ebana (see below), but Ebana’s coinage lacks such features as the four-element tiara, triangular fillet-tie, or the more elaborate tripartite fly-whisk terminating with dots (except rarely, e.g. al-M. 360; and there on the obverse); though, as for Êzana, many of the coins of Ebana bear small symbols or mint-marks above the king’s head on the obverse.

Pirenne is correct in noting that there is only an insignificant difference between the two kings from the point of view of the gold fineness of their issues; without SG 536,24 which has the highest gold content yet found for a coin of Eõn, 92 per cent, the next is SG 537 at 85 per cent, itself well above the remaining five coins measured, which cluster from 69–75.8 per cent. The coin SG 536 (BM 1908, 10-6, 6) has none of the early features; whereas SG 537 (BM 1915, 1–8, 78) has many of them. Presumably, then, the high reading for SG 536 is merely exceptional, perhaps the result of the reminting of an earlier coin, though it may be significant that both coins with higher gold content are of Eõn’s Λ 1 type, with correct legends. It may be that Eõn at first issued coins to the standard set by the Êzanas/Êzana issues, but later made a considerable reduction (c. 10 per cent); or we may simply be missing analyses for the coins with intermediate gold finenesses, which we do have for the commoner Ebana coins.

Conceivably Ebana was actually associated with Eõn at some later stage in his reign; a solution which would explain such parallels as the use or non-use of the stick/sceptre and fly-whisk, the rare cross-bar on the grain-stalk in front of the king, or the same errors in the legend which produced the Ebana Λ 1a type and the Eõn Λ 1a and 1c types. It has been noted above that Eõn’s coins, and some of those of Ebana with the mint-marks, have similarities with those of Êzana, but that while Eõn has only one die (so far) with the lower and more hunched royal figure, Ebana has many. Eõn also maintains the custom, employed by all the pagan Aksumite kings and Êzana(s) as a Christian, of using his ‘Bisi’ name on his coinage. It seems, then, that the number of earlier stylistic features on Eõn’s coins still, pace Mile Pirenne, give him some chronological precedence over Ebana (see also below).

24 Oddy and Munro-Hay, op. cit. in n. 6.
EBANA $N$ 1 and 1a (Munro-Hay, pp. 95–6) and ANONYMOUS $N$ 3 (Munro-Hay, p. 98)

The coins of the Ebana $N$ 1 issue formed the bulk of the al-Madhãriba hoard, 538 examples (al-M. 174–697, 707), and are easily the commonest of Aksumite gold issues. The associated Anonymous $N$ 3 issue (al-M. 698–706) and Ebana’s $N$ 1a type (al-M. 679–85) still remain relatively scarce, both being represented by a single pair of obverse and reverse dies. The latter has the same variant, and presumably erroneous, obverse legend as the Eõn variants $N$ 1a and 1c, supporting the suggestion of a close association of these two rulers; but no dies common to both kings have yet been found.

A number of new mint-marks were found among the al-Madhãriba coins of Ebana, situated above the royal bust on the obverse, to add to the seven already known (Munro-Hay, p. 96). Since it is hoped to complete the work on Ebana’s coins shortly, only those with previously unpublished mint-marks, or other particularly interesting features are illustrated. The new mint-marks are as follows:

al-M. 249–57 have the symbol of the disc and crescent.
al-M. 288 has the letter $n$.
al-M. 355–9 have a small cross.

The number of die-links between the reverses of these pieces indicates that coins with different marks were issued at more or less the same time, probably in some sort of series. The Ëzana $N$ 1 issue seems to have been the first to use Ge’ez letters for these marks, and both it and the Ebana issue also use combinations of dots such as those found on Ëzanas’ pagan issue $N$ 1a. A fair number of Ebana’s coins have a dot above the king’s head on the reverse, as on some issues of Eõn (e.g. al-M. 36, 42–6), and on some of Ëzanas’ pagan coins (e.g. M-H 37) and Christian coins (e.g. Seaby 1960, 15; A. 36), but not on the Ëzana $N$ 1 type.

Comments on the form of the letters have been noted above. The B is sometimes written correctly (see al-M. 360 obverse, and the reverses of the many examples which still retain it in the name Ebana). The N, as for Eõn, often adopts the Ge’ez form. The letter-forms and general appearance of the coins are very close to those of Eõn, but, as previously noted, Ebana lacks some of the earlier features noted for Eõn. He does, however, use mint-marks; but these continue into the reign of Ousana, and their omission by Eõn is thus no useful chronological indicator.

A rare variant of the name Ebana appears to read Ëzana (e.g. al-M. 260, 340–3, 674, all from the same reverse die), the Z being written like a crooked N. Only al-M. 340–3 of the three different obverse dies bears a mint-mark, a lambda.
The coins al-M. 669–76 have the same small bar across the wheat- or barley-stalk observed for Ezana (al-M. 2) and Eön (al-M. 36), and two dots flank the stalk in front of the king's chin on al-M. 466–82.

On the obverse of many Ebana coins with the mint-marks the straight stick or sceptre (e.g. on al-M. 242–57, 262–3, 309–33, 346–54, 355–7) appears, or, very rarely, the fly-whisk (e.g. on al-M. 273–83), but these are absent on e.g. al-M. 258–9, 260–1, 264–72, 284–7, 288, 289–95, 296–308, 344–5. On coins without mint-marks the fly-whisk may, exceptionally, appear on the obverse (e.g. al-M. 360, cited above), but most frequently the stick is shown (e.g. al-M. 361, 362–4, 384–91, etc.), though sometimes it is absent (e.g. al-M. 174–6, 177–200, 201–41, 484–94, 498–503, 576–9, etc.). In sum, of 54 obverse dies (including the Anonymous N 3 type), the stick appears 34 times; on two of these it may rather be the vestigial fly-whisk (al-M. 646–68 and 686, 692–3). The fly-whisk occurs clearly only on two dies (al-M. 273–83 and 360). On the remaining dies nothing can be distinguished, though in a few cases it might be so faint as to be invisible in the photos.

On the reverse the king frequently holds the fly-whisk, or simply seems to be holding the grain-stalk in front of him, while the stick appears very rarely (e.g. al-M. 518).

On two obverse dies (al-M. 174–6, 177–200, and 201–41) Ebana uses the variant legend with CYN instead CIN, a variant otherwise only observed on the reverse of the Anonymous N 1 and 2 types (Munro-Hay, 1984, 90 and 112).

It has been noted above that the gold coinages of Ebana and Eön have certain similarities, which might support the thesis of Hahn25 that some of the Aksumite rulers occupied the throne jointly (though he does not postulate this for the two rulers in question). With the much greater number of dies provided for study by the al-Madhāriba hoard, it has become clear that one cannot find a simple line of development from one king's coins to the next, and that there are many parallels. The coins of Ebana with the earliest features seem to include those with mint-marks; and these also appear among the coins of Ebana with higher gold finenesses.

Anonymous N 1 (Munro-Hay, p. 90)

The al-Madhāriba hoard contained 46 coins of this issue, al-M. 818–63, with only four obverse and three reverse types. A very few other dies exist: M-H 62 has a different obverse type but the same reverse as al-M. 833–4, 837–9, 841–5, 847–8, 850, M-H 60–1, while M-H 63 has different dies altogether. This points to a relatively restricted output, like the other anonymous gold issues (see below).

On the only one of the obverse dies where a mint-mark appears above the

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25 Hahn, op. cit. in n. 4.
king’s head (al-M. 818–28) the king holds a short stick, as he also does on al-M. 851–63. The other two dies show him apparently holding the grain-stalk in front of him. On the obverse dies represented only by M-H 62 and 63, the king is also shown with the stick. On the reverse the king holds a stick or a vestigial fly-whisk (al-M. 829–32, 851–63, and M-H 63). There are none of the earlier features such as the four-element tiara and triangular fillet-tie. No die-links with coins of Eõn or Ebana have yet been found, though the same legend and other features appear on all these issues.

Stylistically, the Anonymous A 1 coins are closely associated with Ebana’s coinage, and have been attributed to the period between Eõn and Ebana, filling the position of the missing gold of MHDYS and/or Ouazêbas.26

In two papers designed to offer variant views on Aksumite chronology, Munro-Hay and Hahn discussed the place of the Anonymous A 1 issue, based on a new suggestion that for stylistic reasons the former placing had to be abandoned, however convenient it might seem in assigning gold issues to kings formerly without them.27 It was instead proposed that the issue seems more likely to follow, or at least occur during, the reign of Ebana. Hahn noted that this ‘would entirely disturb the distribution of coin types in the (admittedly) problematical 5th century.’ However, the increasing number of coins available for study necessitates a reconsideration.

Ebana’s silver issue R 1 was sometimes overstruck on coins of the anonymous issue R 1, and the anonymous bronze issue AE 228 similarly on coins of MHDYS (Munro-Hay, pp. 86, 97, 99). If this was done simultaneously, as Hahn plausibly suggests, Ebana was responsible for the issue of a completely new series of coins, introducing the style using a royal bust with the tiara on silver and copper for the first time. The first anonymous bronze issue, AE 1 (Munro-Hay, p. 87), may have been produced by Ëzana sometime after his conversion in the 330s (otherwise only one Christian bronze is known for him, the Ëzanas AE 1 coin published in Munro-Hay, p. 83) and lasted for some time until superseded by a new bronze issue of the same denomination, probably that of MHDYS. Ouazêbas’ bronzes, heavier than the anonymous ones, seem to have been of a higher denomination. If the theory of the Anonymous A 1 coins supplying the gold for Ouazêbas and MHDYS is rejected, it is possible that these two kings depended on the gold of Ëzana and Eõn, as well as the anonymous R 1 issue, for their other metals. Coins of Ouazêbas are not uncommon, those of MHDYS being rather rarer; possibly they represent only a relatively brief

26 Munro-Hay, p. 29; Hahn, op. cit. in n. 4.
span of time between the reigns of Êzana and Eõn, the latter king continuing to use the Anonymous \( R \) 1 (and even the bronze of (an earlier associate?) MHDYS), until Ebana replaced both metals.

The small number of dies compared to the numbers of coins known for this issue does not give the impression that it was intended to serve as the gold coinage for two reigns, while comparisons of style and fineness tend to make it look more like an issue within the coinage of Ebana than anything else.

**Nezana/Anonymous \( N \) 2/Nezoõl**

These coins are subsumed in one group since they are the only ones in the Christian series which return to a type without the beaded inner circle dividing the royal bust from the surrounding legend. Furthermore, coins of the two kings Nezana and Nezoõl, and the Anonymous \( N \) 2 issue, are all die-linked together, strongly suggesting that Nezana and Nezoõl, as already postulated from the monogram on Nezana’s silver issue, were colleagues on the throne. The lack of an inner circle around the royal bust allowed the spreading which enabled the ‘humped’ style of the robes to develop here as it also developed on the Anonymous \( A\)E 2 issue (Munro-Hay, p. 99); this bronze issue appears to have served all the rulers from Ebana to Kaleb, who otherwise issued only gold and silver coins during this period.

**Nezana \( A \) 1-4 (Munro-Hay, pp. 108-10)**

The very rare coins of Nezana previously known belonged to three types, and, in addition to more examples of each of these, a fourth type has been added by the al-Madhāriba hoard. The hoard provided 16 coins of this king, 5 \( A \) 1 (al-M. 712-16), 3 \( A \) 2 (717-19), 7 \( A \) 3 (720-6), and a single example of \( A \) 4 (727).

The \( A \) 1 pieces all had the same obverse die as the coin Buttrey 3 already known, and were also linked to the \( A \) 4 piece al-M. 727. Two reverse dies were represented. That of al-M. 712-13 was die-linked with the reverse of Nezana \( A \) 2 (al-M. 717-19); that of al-M. 714-16 was die-linked with the reverse of Buttrey 3\(^{30}\) and with the Nezana \( A \) 3 piece V. 47.

The \( A \) 2 examples also had only one obverse die, distinguished by the Ge’ez letter M near the king’s chin. This obverse is also the same as the only previously published piece, A. 177, and is linked with both the Anonymous \( A \) 2 issue, al-M. 811-13; Buttrey 2; and with Nezoõl’s \( A \) 2. The latter is still known only from the unique piece SG 584, ANS no. 1977, 158.1350, of a type unfortunately not represented in the al-Madhāriba hoard.

Nezana’s \( A \) 3 was represented by four obverses, all apparently different from the only known example, V. 47 (though details on Vaccaro’s photo are difficult to see), and three reverses. One obverse, al-M. 726, was die-linked

\(^{29}\) Munro-Hay, p. 111.  
\(^{30}\) See Buttrey, op. cit. in n. 19.
with the obverse of a Nezoöl $\mathcal{A}$ 1 piece, al-M. 741. The reverse of V. 47 was die-linked with Buttrey 3, of Nezana's $\mathcal{A}$ 1 type.

Finally the $\mathcal{A}$ 4 type, as noted in the introduction, is linked through its obverse with Nezana $\mathcal{A}$ 1 and through the reverse with the Anonymous $\mathcal{A}$ 2 type (al-M. 812, 814–17, and V. 36).

On the $\mathcal{A}$ 1 type Nezana holds neither stick nor fly-whisk on obverse or reverse. The die-linked reverse of $\mathcal{A}$ 2 is similar, but here the obverse shows the king holding a stick or sceptre. On $\mathcal{A}$ 3 the obverse shows either a drooping stick (a vestigial fly-whisk?—al-M. 720–1), a fly-whisk consisting of a double branch terminating with dots (al-M. 726), or a straight stick (al-M. 722–5), while the reverse shows nothing (al-M. 720–1, 725–6(?)), or the drooping stick (722–4). The $\mathcal{A}$ 4 obverse, die-linked to $\mathcal{A}$ 1, shows nothing in the king's hand, but the reverse, die-linked to the Anonymous $\mathcal{A}$ 2 type, shows a bent or curved stick. There are occasional symbols or mint-marks in the field on the Nezana $\mathcal{A}$ 3 type; in the case of al-M. 725 there are three dots behind the king's shoulder on the obverse, while al-M. 722–4 have a crescent before the chin.

Anonymous $\mathcal{A}$ 2 (Munro-Hay, p. 112)

This issue, with exactly the same legend as the Anonymous $\mathcal{A}$ 1 type but without an inner beaded circle, was represented in the hoard by eight coins (al-M. 811–17, 868), with two obverse dies. One, al-M. 811–13, and Buttrey 2, with the mint-mark of a Ge'ez M, is die-linked with the obverse of Nezana $\mathcal{A}$ 2 (al-M. 717–19, A. 177) and the unique Nezoöl $\mathcal{A}$ 2 piece noted above. The condition of the die appears to worsen between Anonymous $\mathcal{A}$ 2/Nezana and Nezoöl, perhaps indicating that the type was a product of the mint in Nezana's time. The reverses of al-M. 811, 813, and Buttrey 2 are die-linked. The second obverse is known from al-M. 814–17, 868, and V. 36, and lacks any mint-mark. All these have the same reverse, die-linked also to the reverse of al-M. 812.

Nezoöl $\mathcal{A}$ 1 (Munro-Hay, pp. 113–14)

The coins of Nezoöl's $\mathcal{A}$ 1 issue were well represented in the al-Madhäriba hoard, with 43 examples, al-M. 728–69, 805. The fact that the hoard contained no example of this king's $\mathcal{A}$ 2 type, which is known from only one example,31 probably confirms that it was struck in error, using the old die employed by Nezana and on the Anonymous $\mathcal{A}$ 2 issue.

Nezoöl $\mathcal{A}$ 1 is represented by sixteen obverse and twelve reverse types (none of the latter linked with the reverse of the $\mathcal{A}$ 2 issue). Most of the previously-known Nezoöl $\mathcal{A}$ 1 coins can be linked by one or both dies with

the coins from the hoard. The obverse of al-M. 741 is linked with the obverse of the Nezana N 3 piece al-M. 726.

On the obverse the king holds a fly-whisk (al-M. 728–30, 737–41, are double, terminating in dots; al-M. 731–6 is triple, also terminating in dots), a drooping stick (perhaps a vestigial fly-whisk); al-M. 742 (where it actually springs from the grain-stalk held by the king), 743–56, 766–7—where it is extremely short—768, 805), or a straight stick (al-M. 757–65, 769). On the reverse the double or tripartite fly-whisk with dots occurs on most dies, though a number have only the vestigial form (e.g. al-M. 742, 746–52, 755–6, 766–7).

Ousas/Ousana/Ousanas

The coins bearing these three names are subsumed under one heading as it seems very probable, from the die-links in the al-Madhāriba hoard, that they were all contemporary. Given the similarity of the names, it appears most likely that Ousas is an abbreviation of Ousana(s), and that all these coins belong to one reign; though, as in the case of Nezana and Nezoöl, it remains possible that they represent two contemporary rulers. The Ousas/Ousana(s) series includes coins both with and without the inner beaded circle.

Ousas N 1 (Munro-Hay, p. 100)

The unique Ousas N 1, A. 182, also from the Yemen, is now represented with another obverse die by al-M. 770. The reverse of this new example is die-linked with the Ousas N 1a type by al-M. 773, 792, and 794, and Sotheby 1.2.1984, 305.

Ousas N 1a (Munro-Hay, p. 101)

The al-Madhāriba hoard contained twenty-four coins of the Ousas N 1a issue, die-linked by the obverse and/or reverse to most of the examples already known. In addition to the link with Ousas N 1 noted above, the reverse die found on al-M. 771, 781, 783 is that used for Ousanas N 1, al-M. 806, which has the same dies as A. 181. Neither the obverse nor the reverse link with the only other known example, Sternberg 20–1.11.1986, 241.

Behind the grain-stalk behind the king's head on the obverse of several Ousas N 1a coins were small symbols, as follows;

al-M. 771–3, a crescent \( \mathcal{\Lambda} \).
al-M. 781–3, a V lying on its side \( \mathcal{V} \).
al-M. 784–92, a small incomplete circle \( \mathcal{\mathcal{O}} \).
al-M. 793, the symbol \( \mathcal{\mathcal{T}} \).
al-M. 794, the symbol \( \mathcal{\mathcal{F}} \).
None of the Ousas N 1a coins bore the symbol B found on Sternberg 20–1.11.1986, 240.

As far as can be seen (it is not always very distinct) the Ousas N 1 and 1a and Ousanas N 1 types show the king with a stick or sceptre on the obverse, and the fly-whisk, if somewhat rudimentary, on the reverse. On the obverse of the N 2 type the king holds a tripartite fly-whisk with dots at the end of each strand; nothing is shown on the reverse. The tiara is depicted in a rather square fashion on the N 1 and 1a types, as on some of the gold of Kaleb (see below).32

Ousas N 2 (Munro-Hay, p. 102)

Ousas' N 2 issue is still very rare, and only one example came from the al-Madhāriba hoard, al-M. 795, linked by both dies to SG 562 and a piece in the Brereton Collection.33 The reverse of these pieces is also from the same die as the reverse of al-M. 800–2, Ousana N 1.

Ousana N 1 (Munro-Hay, pp. 105–6)

Nine coins of Ousana were found in the al-Madhāriba hoard, al-M. 796–804. Of the four obverse and four reverse dies, only the reverse die of al-M. 800–2, linked with Ousas N 2 al-M. 795, was not previously known.

On the obverse, Ousana generally holds a short drooping stick (or it emerges from the grain-stalk in front of the king, as on al-M. 796–9). The reverse usually shows a rudimentary fly-whisk. No new mint-marks were found among the coins of this type in the al-Madhāriba hoard.

Ousanas N 1 (Munro-Hay, p. 103)

See above, under Ousas N 1a, for the single coin of this type, al-M. 806.

Kaleb N 1 (Munro-Hay, p. 116) and N 2 (Munro-Hay, p. 118)

Four coins of Kaleb were found (al-M. 807–10). The two examples of the N 1 type, al-M. 807–8, were linked by both dies, and the reverse was also linked with A. 128 and A. 128 bis. The symbol behind the grain-stalk behind the king's head on the obverse is reminiscent of the symbol on al-M. 771–3 of Ousas.

The previously unique example of the N 2 type is now known from two more specimens, al-M. 809–10. The coin A. 134, which Anzani knew as part of the collection of the Royal Asiatic Society, London, was untraceable when The Coinage of Aksum was written (Munro-Hay, p. 118). Both the al-

33 Numbered SG 652 in Munro-Hay, Oddy and Cowell, op. cit. in n. 5.
Madhāriba examples are struck from the same pair of dies as A. 134. Clearly visible on the al-Madhāriba pieces is the symbol (cf. al-M. 793 of Ousas) behind the grain-stalk behind the king’s head on the obverse; both this and the reverse type are indications that Kaleb’s coinage probably directly succeeded that of the Ousas/Ousana/Ousanas series.