

# HOARD A

Hoard A was found in northern Syria in 1960. Like the Syria 1957 Hoard (to the right of this case), its exact find location is unknown. It contained 31 gold *solidi*, all from the years 641-650 – an unusually short time span for a gold hoard of this period (compare the Carthage 1945 and Tunis 1954 Hoards in the case opposite).

The 7th century was a time of continuing conflict in the region of Syria and the entire Levant, first between the Byzantine and Persian Sasanian Empires, from 602, then with the emergent Caliphate from the 630s. In this context, it is likely that the Byzantine Syrian who buried these coins did so to protect them from looting. That the coins from this hoard were produced within a decade of each other may indicate that they represent recently acquired wealth.



## Concave coins: towers or tiddlywinks?

From the mid-11th century, the Byzantine Empire began to strike coins with a concave shape, like those in the Syria 1957 Hoard (to the right of this case). Suggestions for why they did this range from the practical – the shape made them easier to stack or more difficult to make forgeries, to the somewhat bizarre – the shape made playing tiddlywinks easier! Though the extent of the concavity differs (compare the two coins displayed here), this coin shape became a distinctive feature of Byzantine coins from the 11th century to the final fall of Byzantium to the Ottomans in 1453.



Electrum aspron trachy of Manouel I (1143-1180), Constantinople, B5704



Electrum aspron trachy of Manouel I (1143-1180), Thessalonike, B5785

# THE SYRIA 1957 HOARD



Gold histamenon nomisma of Constantine X (1059-1067), Constantinople, B5369



Gold histamenon nomisma of Constantine X (1059-1067), Constantinople, B5370



Gold histamenon nomisma of Constantine X (1059-1067), Constantinople, B5371



Gold histamenon nomisma of Constantine X (1059-1067), Constantinople, B5373



Gold histamenon nomisma of Constantine X (1059-1067), Constantinople, B5376



Gold histamenon nomisma of Constantine X (1059-1067), Constantinople, B5377



Gold histamenon nomisma of Romanos IV (1067-1071), Constantinople, B5421



Gold histamenon nomisma of Romanos IV (1067-1071), Constantinople, B5424

This hoard was found, as its name suggests, in Syria in 1957. It is said to have been discovered 'on the Turkish-Syrian border' but, like Hoard A, its exact find location is unknown. It consists of only 15 coins, all gold. Of these, 14 were struck between the years 1059 and 1071, while the other comes from the reign of Michael VII (1071-1078). The hoard was therefore probably buried during his reign, or perhaps shortly after.

Despite the rise and fall of regional powers between the deposition of Hoard A and of the Syria 1957 Hoard, northern Syria remained an important border region into the period of the Crusades and beyond, even to the present day. This particular hoard of Byzantine coins would have been buried not long after the decisive battle of Manzikert (1071), which took place close to modern Turkey's border with Syria. The battle was an important point in a general power shift towards the Seljuk Turks. It is likely that the 11th-century Syrian who buried this hoard, like the 7th-century Syrian who buried Hoard A, did so to protect the contents from looters.

