

Coinage and Economy in the
Visigothic Kingdom
and Beyond



Edited by
Andrew Kurt

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Visigothic Kingdom and Beyond*

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Ed. Andrew Kurt

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INTRODUCTION: COINAGE AND ECONOMY IN THE VISIGOTHIC KINGDOM

MICHAEL J. KELLY

The contributions to this volume as a set present scholars of the Visigothic kingdom and the Early Middle Ages with a collective reading of Visigothic coinage that exposes its history and evolution, its oscillating function between symbolic, representational and exchange medium, and the differing layers of meaning to its materiality. The volume's authors demonstrate how Visigothic coins were themselves a network of information that could operate independently and contradictorily across the social, economic, political and religious topographies of the kingdom. They show, as well, how that operability changed depending on material conditions, political realities, and social desires.

In my earlier published research, I offer the idea of the "Isidore moment" and I expose the wide presence of cooperative competition between Visigothic churches, which contended for spiritual authority with one another, for the souls of parishioners and social power beyond their geographical areas through loose alliances or "schools."¹ The coinage of the kingdom demonstrates a similar mapping of decentralized and centralized authority cooperating and competing at the same time. For instance, the ecclesiastical schools that were successful in generating wide support tend to be sites with impressive numismatic records, especially of gold coins, for instance, in

¹ See Michael J. Kelly, "Writing History, Narrating Fulfillment: the 'Isidore-Moment' and the Struggle for the 'Before Now' in Late Antique and Early Medieval Hispania" (PhD diss., University of Leeds, 2015), and Michael J. Kelly, *Isidore of Seville and the "Liber Iudiciorum": The Struggle for the Past in the Visigothic Kingdom*. The Medieval and Early Modern Iberian World 80 (Boston and Leiden: Brill, 2021).

Seville. This volume uncovers and then significantly fleshes out that connection between coinage, metals, authority, and the structure of Visigothic society evident in the numismatic record, while also being critical of the limitations of that record and the historical methodology applied to it.

The volume derived from a symposium held several years ago in New York City,² but it is perhaps even more relevant to the real world today in that it puts right in our face the urgent need for historians and numismatists, and the two related fields, to adjust to the new reality of decentralized digital currencies, especially as they may be precipitating a truly monumental shift away from centuries of tradition of money being derived from some centralized source of power. We are forced to reimagine money, and the Visigothic kingdom provides an excellent study in how forms of currency are updated to historical circumstances, as today with the rise of peer-to-peer money, that alter the sense of what “real” money is. The fundamental aspect of sound money, as defined by the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, are durability, portability, divisibility, fungibility, scarcity, acceptability, and verifiability.³ Visigothic coinage can be tested against this same metric and when it is, as is evident in the contributions that follow, it becomes clear that the Visigothic kingdom grappled in varying degree throughout its history with similar questions over “real” money in a changing fiscal and economic landscape that increasingly localized money production, for example: what is currency in relation to materiality, when is coinage a security (money, fiduciary) versus a commodity (store of value), and from where does money’s value derive, especially evident in the pendulum between centralized and decentralized minting? In all of this, and in Visigothic coinage deploying both fungible and non-fungible elements, the numismatic history of the Visigothic kingdom provides a strikingly timely examination of how the definition, meaning and purpose of money are all historical and therefore do and will transform.

Alan Stahl’s contribution, “The Mediterranean Context of Visigothic Coinage,” frames the historical scope of the volume by placing the Visigothic materials into the wider history of later Roman coins and economy and how those changed over the centuries. In this, Stahl also presents a methodological

² Andrew Kurt and Michael J. Kelly, co-organizers of “Coinage and Economy of the Early Medieval Mediterranean: A Colloquium” held at the American Numismatic Society and Borough of Manhattan Community College (CUNY) in 2019, would like to acknowledge the generous support of The Gladys Kriebel Delmas Foundation that enabled this international symposium to take place.

³ C. Jason Maier, *A Progressive’s Case for Bitcoin* (Bitcoin Magazine Books, 2023), 40.

choice for readers to witness and analyze Visigothic coins as the result of a gradual evolution in economy, politics, materiality, and coinage, as opposed to radical shifts and breaks by Visigoths. This is an excellent way to open dialectical possibilities for this volume, which contains contributions – including Stahl's – that also propose Visigothic shifts.

As is happening today and at other points of political crises and collapses of empires, people and the state in the later Roman empire increasingly turned to gold as a store of wealth. In 309, Constantine introduced the gold solidus (later divided into semissis and tremissis), which became the standard coin throughout the Roman world, and remained the standard in the West until the sixth or seventh century and in the East until the eleventh century; at the inception of the solidus silver and bronze were debased and localized. For instance, Maximus, the Roman usurper in Spain in the mid-380s, as well as the Vandals from the early 400s, issued silver coinage in imitation of the empire. Stahl leaves the reason for this open, but it may have been due to a lack of gold, a fear of directly challenging Roman authority, the nature of the marketplace in Spain, or even, if a show of power, a symbolic return to a greater Roman period.

As the empire in the West transformed, the later emperors and successor kingdoms continued the later imperial tradition of minting gold coins with Christian imagery and in the name of the eastern emperors. The conservative approach of the West was done to maintain stability in a fractured geopolitical (and religious) landscape through the implied legitimacy (value) of the imperial currency. However, local distinctions and radical breaks increasingly appear, from new marks in Italy to the Frankish king Theodebert (r. 533-548) issuing coins in his name.

The earliest tremisses of the post-Roman period appear in the west, some anonymously and some specifically from Mérida during the Suevic period of the fifth century. A generation after Theodebert, the Visigothic king Liuvigild (r. 568-586) issued gold coins in his own name. The imagery of Visigothic coinage evolved with Byzantine coinage and the complex relationship between the Visigothic kingdom and the Byzantine empire, ranging from military and religious foes to sources of imitation and engineering collaboration. In the 680s, the Visigothic king Ervig issued what is possibly the first coinage with the image of Christ.

Spain's role in the evolution of money in the West is evident from Stahl's contribution. But, to me, what may be the most interesting conclusion from Stahl's overview of the evolution of coinage in the period, in the Mediterranean, is the fundamentally different effects on the issue of "what is sound money?" toward the end of the Roman Empire versus in the Early

Middle Ages. Stahl contends that by the fourth century, “objects that did not resemble Imperial issues would hardly have been considered coins.” This means that the state-issued money of the Eastern empire, like the dollar or generally government-backed currency today, had become so obviously “real” money that it left little room for other sources of value (exchange and use). By the turn of the eighth century, this structure of money value had become localized in the West but repeated the governmental underpinning. Type changes on tremisses of the Visigoths once established in the Iberian peninsula, such as to Cross on Steps or Facing Bust, or reversion back to Cross on Steps and some new late seventh-century designs, are informed by the ‘Mediterranean context’. Other contributions in this volume remind us how the Roman empire molded the divergent patterns that emerged. In the final decades of Visigothic rule the addition on the tremis of a male figure of authority apart from king or emperor, namely Jesus, possibly had some bearing on what was “real” money or sound money. This is an intriguing historical lesson for readers as we enter ourselves into a wholly new era of money forms.

In his chapter, **“Innovation and Adaptation in Visigothic Coinage,”** David Yoon amplifies the conclusion that Visigothic coinage represents a balance between tradition and innovation. He introduces the analytically important double question of why some aspects of the past were abandoned and why, and with what were they replaced. One of the changes from the past evident in Visigothic coinage is the decentralization of minting (with bronze minting more openly decentralized), which complements, as Stahl demonstrates, the localization of money value. Visigothic currency, as Yoon shows, continued to attempt to rely on stable, centralized institutions that could (artificially) maintain the values of coinage even when the gold content was unintentionally debased, itself a significant shift from the late-Roman gold tremisses and imperial ability to control coinage. On a methodological level, Yoon observes, “Visigothic gold coins are normally almost entirely gold–silver alloys, making inference from specific-gravity measurements straightforward.” These physical changes, including the alterations of imagery also discussed by Stahl, occurred because of the limited administrative and diminished economic capacity of the Visigothic kingdom over time and relative to the Empire. They show, though, the ability for this form of coinage to adapt to historical circumstances, and even, it would appear, to newly emerging sentiments about sources of power.

Andrew Kurt’s **“Clues from Coins: Stylistic Comparisons of Visigothic Die Engraving as Evidence for Mint Administration,”** builds off his groundbreaking monograph and generational reference book, *Minting, State,*

and Economy in the Visigothic Kingdom.⁴ In “Clues from Coins,” Kurt focuses on Visigothic gold tremisses in further substantiating, as Stahl leads readers toward and Yoon exposes, the significance of the Visigothic break from the highly centralized minting traditions of the Roman world to an exceptionally decentralized minting reality in the Visigothic kingdom. Complementary to this was the importance of the regal series, of Visigothic coins issued in the names of the respective king, *rex*. Visigothic coins themselves, as primary evidence, contain the evidence for such minting practices, the mobility of engravers, and the relationship between local and royal authorities, as evidenced, for instance, in inscription letter forms and bust subtypes, and the production of dies locally. However, the decentralized minting and temporary sites that often moved according to Visigothic military operations worked in cooperation or tandem with less than a dozen mints with ties to the central authorities of the kingdom. In this, the coinage situation was, as Stahl and Yoon broadly maintain, a collaboration of new forms of money value and power with traditional ones. This new form, with its various ways of distinguishing issues, was well suited to the moving demands of Visigothic armies and for regular accounting in crucial moments. However, the longest reigning Visigothic king of the Toledan period, Recceswinth (r. 653-672), shifted the system back toward centralizing control as part of wider changes to authority in the kingdom during his reign, which then saw adaptations in conjunction with ecclesiastical-military ways of the next kings, Wamba (r. 672-680) and Ervig (r. 680-687), including the addition of the image of Jesus to the coinage.

In her chapter, **“Kings, Mints, and Pacts: Coins and Political Alliances in the Visigothic Realm,”** Ruth Pliego elaborates on the attempts to centralize coinage starting with Recceswinth’s successor and father, Chindaswinth (r. 642-653), as a path toward fiscal standardization and political unification. But first, she lays out an interpretive framework that moves the reader from the transformations of coinage and currency leading into and during the Visigothic kingdom and the historical manifestations evident in them to showing regal coinage as a symbol of authority and pivotal to understanding the circles of power in the kingdom. Pliego interjects an important thesis into the volume’s discussion, the issue of the value of currency, specifically of the coinage in the kingdom. She maintains that it operated not purely as a money, that is, as a security, but also as a commodity, as a gift exchange. Given the

⁴ Andrew Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy in the Visigothic Kingdom: From Settlement in Aquitaine through the First Decade of the Muslim Conquest of Spain* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020).

high authority of Judeo-Christian morality in the kingdom, it may be worth noting a passage from the Mishnah, although not mentioned by Pliego and unlikely to be known by anyone in the Visigothic circles of authority, that argues that the act of exchange creates a moral obligation for the seller to hand over the goods.⁵ Whether these circles were rabbinically educated or not, it is not unreasonable to read Pliego's thesis as suggesting that Visigothic coinage played a similar role within wealthy circles of the kingdom: it "tested" the morality of the other side, which, I would argue, is evidenced in the Sixth Council of Toledo's message that it is "inhuman" not to reward the faithful, a moral obligation must be fulfilled.⁶ The same appears to be true at the administrative level; as Pliego shows, the gold tremissis functioned effectively as a "state-guaranteed ingot." Bronze coins and other items are what operated as everyday objects endowed with exchange value.

Thus, Visigothic gold coinage's value was primarily its use value (as physical object) while bronze coins and other items held exchange value (as market worth). This is a crucial notion for understanding Visigothic coinage because it asserts a split of value between currencies in the Visigothic kingdom: whereas one currency, say, a Roman denarius or a US dollar minted on the authority of the federal government, typically contains within it universal use and exchange value, the Visigothic kingdom had multiple currencies, each performing separate parts of the value (and moral) relationship.

Pliego and Kurt agree that the number of mints was reduced during the Chindaswinth-Recceswinth-Wamba era, as the state attempted, as I read it, to become more territorial and administrative, and less personal. Although the final decades of the kingdom revert to decentralized and fragmented minting and control, the mid-century events affected a shift in the coinage and its use

⁵ Mishnah Bava Metzia 4 (interpreted by rabbinical authorities in the Gemara, Talmud Bava Metzia 44a:8).

⁶ Canon 14 of the Sixth Council of Toledo declares it "inhuman" not to reward the faithful, and that the merit of fidelity should be upheld in both human and divine affairs: "Praemium fraudare fidelibus non solum inhumanum sed etiam existit iniustum. Ideoque, cum fidei meritum tam in rebus diuinis quam in humanis non habeatur ingratum, dignum uidetur ut sacerdotali sententia consulamus fidelibus regis." (ed. Gonzalo Martínez Díez and Félix Rodríguez, *La Colección Canónica Hispana* 5 (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1992), 319–20, ls. 267–70. For a discussion of this canon, see Michael J. Kelly, "The Logic of Control: Postulating a Visigothic Ontology of Human Being," in *Leadership, Cohesion and Identity in the Visigothic Kingdom*, ed. Dolores Castro and Fernando Ruchesi, 63–101 (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press. 2023).

value, with its commodity and moral function less effective and a subsequent attempt to sacralize coinage. The history of the coinage, Pliego shows, symbolizes the political history of the kingdom.

Jane Sancinito, in *“Visigothic Circulation: Status Quaestionis,”* traverses the volume’s reader through catharsis toward denouement as she situates the political and economic structures of Visigothic coinage within its longest duration and its relation to foreign currencies, all read against the evidentiary and methodological limitations for reconstructing Visigothic pasts from the coinage; problems with the record include the scattered and chance finds of coin hoards, the way that they are catalogued and presented, and the difficulty of the classifying and historically locating the pseudo-imperial coins. Complementing Pliego’s theses, in particular, Sancinito demonstrates how Visigothic coinage circulated unevenly within the kingdom, relied for everyday use on bronze coins, could operate also beyond the fiscal across three different metals, and that the kingdom’s economic tools were not as standardized as other regions of the Mediterranean. The latter point helps to explain why, along with other reasons relating to the trade of manuscripts, migration, etc., Visigothic coins are found outside the kingdom in areas such as Belgium and Britain. Again, Visigothic coinage was dynamically fungible and non-fungible, consistent and yet decentralized, secular and sacred. To develop a fuller picture of circulation, Sancinito stresses the use of digital tools for mapping out and tracing coin circulation.⁷

In *“Kings & Aristocrats: Power, Competition and Gift Exchange in the Visigothic Kingdom of Toledo,”* Sabrina Orlowski elaborates for the volume reader the role of the sacred in the Visigothic kingdom, allowing for further contextualizing of the numismatic development. Orlowski focuses firstly on the role of the oath in establishing loyalty and relationships, which complements the moral obligation that money circulation created, certainly with the gold coinage, as Pliego shows; as Orlowski contends, “the pledge of fidelity was not unconditional; on the contrary, it created a contractual relationship” and from this a duty. Social standing within elite circles was built from this trust, which is, I would argue, the same belief in the moral duties of commerce and coinage: faith was (and is) the foundational element of social order. Orlowski’s political theses substantiate the numismatic claims

⁷ Of course, I agree with such an assessment, though I also urgently call on our colleagues to seriously explore the possibilities of the Web3 Digital Humanities and decentralized AI, in particular built on Bitcoin and other proof-of-work blockchains, for fulfilling the true goals of accessibility, permanent storage, timestamping and open-access in a green digital environment that our current Web2 Digital Humanities simply cannot fulfill.

made earlier in the volume, that the decentralized (albeit oscillating) nature of coinage, currency and economy in the Visigothic kingdom generated a confused topology of trust, faith and the sense of what genuinely holds value. The confiscation of property (and episcopal positions, I would argue⁸), can be interpreted as having helped to reverse the moral order, or rather, sequence of morality that involved coinage and property, turning duty into punishment.

Liz Wells, in “‘You Have the Two Kings Here:’ Coinage, the Royal Image, and the Nature of Kingship in the Visigothic Kingdom of Toledo and Beyond,” connects the volume’s discourse on Visigothic coinage and currency to the perspectives, methods and findings of art history as a complementing field studying Visigothic materiality. She starts by demonstrating how the royal authority symbolized, communicated and circulated in Visigothic coins was a technique that made power mobile, transferrable over any distance: coins were “miniature manifestations of sovereignty” and “the ultimate mobile art object.” I would say from this that regal coinage was the materiality that connected the abstract to the real, just like history, this book, is a materiality that connects the inexistent or the abstract (past) to reality (present). In this, Visigothic coinage takes on another layer or supplemental layer of significance in being, like Jesus, a physical manifestation connecting the infinite and the finite, the sacred and the secular. And that, I’d contend from the finds of Wells and the other volume authors, the appearance of Jesus on Visigothic coinage in the 680s, a few decades before the kingdom’s demise, represents a collapse of this function and value of Visigothic coinage, as a material object able to connect the sacred and secular.

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⁸ See Kelly, *Isidore of Seville and the “Liber Iudiciorum.”*

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THE MEDITERRANEAN CONTEXT OF VISIGOTHIC COINAGE

Alan M. Stahl*

I. The Late Roman background

By the fourth century CE, the monetary circulation of the Mediterranean world was so dominated by the coins of the Roman Empire that objects that did not resemble Imperial issues would hardly have been considered coins. The Roman coinage after the reforms of Constantine the Great comprised denominations in gold, silver, and bronze.¹ As it was the gold series that was of primary importance in the development of the Visigothic coinage, as well as those of most other early medieval European states, it will be the primary focus of our discussion here. The gold solidus, introduced by Constantine in 309 at a weight of 72 to the Roman pound (about 4.5 grams), would remain unchanged in weight as the standard gold coin of the West well into the medieval period [Fig. 1]. Later in the fourth century, its half, the semissis, and its third, the tremissis, were added to the coinage.

Silver was less significant than gold or bronze in the minting and circulation of most of the fourth-century Empire but was minted regularly in the early fifth century, including in several European mints. Italian mints produced regular issues of silver coins termed by modern numismatists as *siliquae* and half *siliquae*, but silver was rare in the East.

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¹ Richard Abdy, "Tetrarchy and the House of Constantine," in *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Coinage*, ed. William Metcalf (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 584–600.

The bronze denominations were complex and changing, and their relationship to the other coins and the monetary system remains largely obscure. What is clear is that in the fourth century there were different sizes of bronze coins issued simultaneously, and that the enormous quantities found in hoards as well as excavations indicate that the bronze coinage played a substantial monetary role. In the fifth century, the size of Imperial bronze coins decreased as the number of them to the solidus rose; accordingly, minting and circulation probably decreased. Their circulation in the West, especially outside of Italy, appears to have been far less consistent than it had been earlier, and they had little impact on the development of early medieval European coinage. In the second half of the fifth century, the bronze coinage throughout the Empire was gradually concentrated in the production and circulation of tiny coins, known to modern numismatists as *minimi*; their poor striking has resulted in difficulties in attribution and their frequent neglect in excavation reports.

II. The earliest Western imitations

The silver siliquae produced in Italian mints in the early fifth century formed the basis of the earliest series of imitations attributed to Western minters [Fig. 2]. Those signed by the Spanish usurper Maximus give a date and place for some of this imitation, while silver imitations in the name of Honorius are attributed mainly on the basis of find spot, fabric, die axis and stylistic considerations. Siliquae attributed to production by the Vandals in Carthage after their move there in 439 follow the prototype of coins they would have been familiar with when they first entered the Empire in 406, rather than those actually being minted contemporaneously [Fig. 3]. The Vandals never imitated gold issues, nor did they mint gold coins of their own to go with their later silver and bronze issues, which bore the names of Vandal kings and did not copy imagery from Roman coins.

The principal series of coins attributed to European successor states of the fifth and sixth centuries were gold imitations of Imperial prototypes, specifically of the solidus and tremissis denominations.² The choice of gold coinage may have resulted from the use of gold in tribute and federation payments to Germanic rulers before and after they established polities within

² Philip Grierson and Mark Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage 1. The Early Middle Ages (5th-10th centuries)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Alan M. Stahl, "The Transformation of the West," in *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Coinage*, ed. Metcalf, 632–54.

the Empire. Both the gold solidus, weighing about 4.5 grams, and its one-third divisional tremissis would be the models for the new coinages. After the division of the Empire by the sons of Theodosius, Arcadius in the East and Honorius in the West, the imagery on the coins of the mints of the two regions diverged, though there was some overlap, especially in the case of coins minted in one area in the name of an emperor of the other area. On the Eastern issues, a legend in the reverse exergue, under the horizontal line, identifies issues of Constantinople with CON for the initial letters of the mint name, followed by OB for *obryzus*, specially refined gold. In the West, COM, standing for *comes auri*, replaces CON in the formula.³

In the East, that is, for the most part, the mint of Constantinople, the obverse portrait changed around the end of the fourth century from profile (as it had been since the earliest days of the Empire), to a three-quarter facing bust, three quarter in the sense that the ear and diadem ties are visible only on the left side [Figs. 4 and 5]. The emperor is depicted in an elegant form of battle gear, with a jeweled helmet atop a diadem, holding a spear that goes beyond his head with his right and a shield depicting a horseman in his left hand. Somewhat later, the principal reverse type went from being an enthroned goddess (personifying Constantinople in this case) and holding a globe, sometimes with a crowning Victory atop, to a standing Victory holding a jeweled cross [Fig. 6].

The Italian mints were generally well behind Constantinople in the transition of types. The profile obverse remained for most of the fifth century. The reverse of Victory with a cross does appear on the coinage in the name of Galla Placidia, daughter of Theodosius II and wife of Constantius III, but the coinage of the male emperors maintained the image of a triumphant soldier, now holding a cross and trampling a serpentine figure while being crowned by Victory [Figs. 7 and 8]. The three-quarter bust replaced the obverse profile toward the end of the Western Empire, but military reverses remained dominant [Fig. 9].

Imitations of early fifth-century solidi with western European provenances are commonly attributed to the rulers of the Visigothic and Suevi settlers in Gaul and Iberia on the basis of find spots. They bear the usual Western obverse of an imperial bust facing right and feature a reverse legend of Victory of the Emperors around the image of an emperor standing on a submissive captive barbarian while holding a cross and being crowned by a diminutive Victory, an image that must have held an ironic significance for Germanic

³ Philip Grierson and Melinda Mays, *Catalogue of Late Roman Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection* (Washington, D.C., Dumbarton Oaks, 1992), 53.

rulers who had gone from being defeated barbarians to heads of state with their own access to minting [Fig. 10]

The gold coinage of Eastern mints in the early fifth century comprised mainly solidus issues, accompanied by rare silver issues and plentiful copper ones. When tremisses were minted in the East, they bore a reverse of a frontal Victory bearing a wreath and *globus cruciger* in her outstretched hands at more-or-less equal height; her legs are crossed indicating movement toward the right [Fig. 11]. The tremisses of Italian mints of the early fifth century show this figure of Victory in profile moving toward the side, either left or right, bearing the wreath raised and the *globus cruciger* lowered [Fig. 12]. After the first quarter of the century, Western tremisses generally have as their reverse a cross within a wreath [Fig. 13].

The tremisses of Western mints bearing the cross within a wreath reverse served as the basis of what are considered the earliest tremissis issues of the European successor states. Some of these are totally anonymous imitations, but those that identify Latina Emerita can be identified with the Iberian city of Mérida, and hence with the Suevic rulers of the area in the fifth century [Fig. 14].⁴

In the course of the second half of the fifth century, rule in Italy passed from the hands of individuals recognized as colleagues by the Eastern emperors, to a couple of individuals who made their own claim to power, and finally to men recognized as kings of the Ostrogothic nation, ruling with more-or-less tacit acceptance by the Eastern emperors; their coinages often bore the names of those ruling in Constantinople. The coinage minted by Zeno in Constantinople is typical of Eastern issues of this period; with the gold solidus and tremissis of traditional types, no silver, and a bronze coinage mainly represented by tiny pieces with a simple monogram reverse [Fig. 15].

In the same period, the gold coinage of the West maintained the profile bust on the obverse and the military reverse on the solidus and the wreath reverse on the tremissis. Only at the beginning of the last quarter of the century was the three-quarter bust and Victory reverse of the solidus, which had been minted in the East for half a century, adopted in Italy [Fig. 16]. The wreathed-cross reverse remained on the tremissis [Fig. 17]. A group of tremisses in the name of the Eastern emperor Zeno are attributed to Odovacar,

⁴ Ruth Pliego, "La moneda de época sueva: Un destello fugaz en la historia monetaria de Gallaecia," in *In Tempore Sueborum. El tiempo de los Suevos en la Gallaecia (411-585). El primer reino medieval de Occidente*, ed. Jorge López Quiroga and Artemio Martínez Tejera (Ourense: Deputación Provincial de Ourense, 2018), 145–56.

who ruled in Italy in the late 470s; the cross reverse makes it evident that they were minted in Italy, which Zeno never effectively ruled [Fig. 18].

III. The sixth century: the rise of western polities

It is with the beginning of the sixth century that a clear distinction can be made between the minting of the Eastern Roman Empire and that of the Western Mediterranean successor states under Germanic kings. As new mints arose in the West, the minting of the East began to shrink to the mint of Constantinople, especially for coins in metals other than bronze.

In the late fifth and early sixth centuries, the Vandals issued a coinage entirely of silver and bronze denominations; gold coins from other mints probably circulated alongside their own issues from Carthage.⁵ The silver Vandal coinage is distinctive in bearing the name of the king on the obverse and a mark of denomination on the reverse [Fig.19]. On the other hand, the bronze coinage of the Vandals lacks the name of the king, or any other minting information, and bears the reverse designation of a denominational structure based on a follis of 42 nummi, rather than the 40 nummi system of Byzantium [Fig. 20]. The chronological priority of the specification of denomination between the Vandal and Byzantine bronzes is uncertain.

Numismatists date the beginning of Byzantine coinage to the reform of Anastasius of 498. In fact, this reform concerned almost entirely the bronze coinage, introducing a marked series of denominations [Fig. 21].⁶ The silver coinage of Anastasius survives in only a handful of examples, probably the result of the incorrect tariffing of its value in relationship to the gold. The gold coinage continued virtually unchanged from that of the fifth century [Figs. 22 and 23]. Of the three denominations, the solidus, its half the semissis, and its third the tremissis, the semissis appears to have had little circulation in the West and no effect on the development of European coinage.

While the coinage issues of the Vandals had little direct effect on the developing European coinages, that of the Ostrogoths was fundamental.⁷ Solidi in the name of Anastasius can be unequivocally attributed to Theoderic the Great on the basis of several divergences [Fig. 24]. The clearest basis of the identification is the appearance of the ligature of R and M appearing in the left field of the reverse, indicating minting in Rome, a city that Anastasius

⁵ Grierson and Blackburn, eds., *Medieval European Coinage* 1, 17–23.

⁶ Wolfgang Hahn and Michael Metlich, *Money of the Incipient Byzantine Empire (Anastasius I-Justinian I, 491-565)* (Vienna: Institut für Numismatik, 2000).

⁷ Michael Metlich, *The Coinage of Ostrogothic Italy* (London: Spink, 2004).

never controlled. The final letter of the circular legend on the reverse of Constantinopolitan issues indicated the *officina* or workshop; the monogram or theta in that place on the coins of Theoderic stands for his name. On the obverse of Eastern coins, the letters PP, standing for Pater Patriae (or possibly Perpetuus), separate the name of the emperor from the abbreviated title Augustus; in Italy this had been rendered as PF, interpreted as Pius Felix (or possibly Perpetuus Felix). On the issues of Theoderic, COMOB appears in the exergue in the place of CONOB, as it had on Italian gold coins of the fifth century. Tremisses of Theoderic in the name of Anastasius lack the mint ligature in the reverse field and theta at the end of the reverse legend but can be distinguished from the Constantinopolitan issues by the PF of the obverse legend and the COM of that in the exergue [Fig. 25].

Gold coins of succeeding Ostrogothic kings omitted the mint signature in the field and royal initial in the reverse legend of the solidi but maintained the PF in the obverse legend and COM in the exergue of solidi and tremisses. The silver coinage of Athalaric had the name of the reigning Byzantine emperor, Justinian, on the obverse with the epithet Augustus, but spelled out his own name on the reverse followed by Rex [Fig. 26]. It was the bronze follis of Theodahad that made the boldest statement of self-identification on the part of a successor ruler; not only is his name and title of king spelled out in the obverse legend, but also the obverse image is of a long-haired, mustached man wearing a distinctive helmet [Fig. 27]. It is perhaps the only true portrait to appear on a circulating coin of the Early Middle Ages from either an Eastern or Western ruler.

The silver and bronze issues of the Ostrogoths, however, like those of the Vandals, had virtually no impact on the succeeding European coinages. It is the Ostrogothic gold solidus and tremissis that would be of major influence in the shaping of the coins of the Burgundians, Franks and Visigoths in the course of the sixth century. The Burgundian king Gundobad (474-516) adapted the solidus format of Theoderic by substituting his personal monogram for the mint mark of Rome on the reverse [Fig. 28]. There is moreover a series of solidi in the name of Anastasius that appear to derive from a combination of both Constantinopolitan and Ostrogothic models; they bear the PP on the obverse but the mint signature on the reverse appears as either COH or COM. Some have letters in the reverse fields that have not been explained [Fig. 29]. This so-called 'pseudo-imperial' series of solidi has been variously attributed to the Merovingian and Visigothic kingdoms of the sixth century; mainly because of the lack of specimens with well-documented find spots, either from hoards or single finds, the attribution of this series remains problematic.

The imagery on the Byzantine solidus evolved in the first half of the sixth century, but western issues inspired by it seldom responded directly to these alterations. The mint of Constantinople altered the reverse on the solidi in the name of Anastasius around 510, conceivably in response to the copying of his coins in the West. The jeweled cross held by Victory was replaced by an elongated thin cross with a loop at the top, reminiscent of the Chi-Rho monogram of Christ [Fig. 30]. Later, the entire reverse was changed, turning the figure to face forward, with a simple cross in the left hand and a *globus cruciger* in the right [Fig. 31]. In this process, the gender of the figure appears to have been made ambiguous; from a clearly feminine image that could only have been the pagan Victory, the figure became neuter and thus possibly a Christian angel.

The solidi minted in the West, by the Ostrogoths and the minters of the pseudo-imperial series, shows a resistance to these Byzantine changes. They adopted the name of the emperor Justinian but accompanied it with anachronistic reverse of the profile Victory with jeweled cross or, at best, that with the looped top [Fig. 32]. The gold coinage of the Merovingian king Theodebert (533-548) stands as an exception to that of the rest of the minters of the age. Not only did Theodebert sign his own name to the obverse of his solidi, but he copied the reverse configuration, and the correct mint signature, from those of his contemporary Justinian. In a passage in the *Gothic Wars*, Procopius recorded Justinian's indignation that a barbarian king was putting his own 'image' on his coins.⁸

Though the solidus was the base denomination of the Byzantine system of gold coinage and served as the prototype for many of the earliest issues of the European successor states, it was its one-third fraction, the tremissis, that was to dominate the coinage of the successor states in the West by the end of the sixth century. Tremisses of Byzantine mints continued virtually unchanged for most of the sixth century, unaffected by the changes in obverse bust or reverse Victory/Angel of the solidus [Fig. 33]. The emperor remained in profile and a clearly female figure of Victory remained with arms stretched to either side, facing forward, though sometimes apparently moving toward the right. The situation in Italy was more dynamic: the Victory in profile walking right reverse of the early fifth century gave way to a cross reverse for most of the remainder of the century, to be changed to the Constantinopolitan Victory moving forward during the Ostrogothic period and following Justinian's reconquest.

⁸ Martha Jenks, "Romanitas and Christianitas in the Coinage of Theodebert I," *Journal of Ancient Christianity* 4 (2000): 338-68.

Across the Alps, the tremissis of Anastasius with the reverse of Victory facing forward served as the prototype of a series of imitations, whose style and provenance indicate a minting in Western Europe, probably by Frankish rulers [Fig. 34]. This attribution is supported by the tremissis in the name of Theodebert, which fits stylistically into the series. The series includes a version characterized as the *boucle perdu* type, in which the diadem ties at the back of the portrait become a loop or buckle, which migrates into the legend and replaces the D of the beginning of Dominus Noster [Fig. 35]. The identification of this series as Frankish is confirmed by find spots and by stylistic ties to the so-called national coinage, characterized by a mint name on the obverse and a minter's name around a cross on the reverse [Fig. 36].

IV. The Visigothic coinage of Iberia

While the Victory walking forward tremissis can be tied at least in part to the coinage of Merovingian rulers, there is another reverse, apparently minted simultaneously and also circulating in Gaul, that leads to the Visigothic coinage of Iberia. Though modern numismatists attribute certain tremisses to the activity of a Byzantine mint in Spain, probably at Cartagena, following the Justinianic conquest of Vandal territories, this mint and series seem not to have had any direct connection to Visigothic coinage [Figs. 37 and 38].

Rather, the Visigothic series can be seen to derive from a distinctive reverse type minted in Gaul in the sixth century. This reverse features a Victory walking to the side, rather than forward, with only one wing visible behind her. This seems to derive from the early fifth-century coinage of the Italian mints, and from the ambiguity of the orientation of the ostensibly forward-facing Victory on Ostrogothic tremisses in the name of Byzantine emperors. The Gallic origin of the type can be seen in the tremissis bearing the monogram of the Burgundian king Gundobad, on which the Victory can be seen to be clearly walking right, with a wreath in one hand and what had been the top of her wing in prototypes looking like a palm branch behind her head [Fig. 39].

This type of Victory walking right imitative tremissis, or 'Victory with Palm and Wreath' as Wallace Tomasini has termed it, continued to develop through the sixth century, with a wide variety of styles and finds in Gaul and Iberia [Figs. 40 and 41].⁹ One group shows a distinct stylistic progression

⁹ Wallace J. Tomasini, *The Barbaric Tremissis in Spain and Southern France, Anastasius to Leovigild*, The American Numismatic Society Numismatic Notes and Monographs 152. New York: The American Numismatic Society, 1964.

towards a linear rendering of types and blundering of legends [Fig. 42]. This series can be linked stylistically to a coin of the Visigothic king Liuvigild, which bears the legend *Leovigildus Rex Inclitus*, without a mint name [Fig. 43]. Within the same reign, the legends begin to identify mints, the obverse portrait is made facing, and the figure of Victory on the Reverse is replaced by an additional facing bust [Fig. 44].¹⁰ Though the facing bust itself has parallels with the obverse depictions on solidus issues of Byzantine emperors, though not their tremisses, there is no obvious prototype for the appearance of a bust on the reverse as well as the obverse.

Toward the end of the sixth century, the Byzantine coinage dropped the figure of Victory/Angel from the reverse of the gold coins, replacing it with a cross – on a flight of steps on the solidus and standing solo on the reverse, with no exergue separating it from the mint signature [Figs. 45 and 46]. Both the Visigothic and the Merovingian coinages moved toward a cross reverse in the course of the seventh century; by this period the solidus had almost disappeared from the West leaving the tremissis as the standard gold denomination. The Visigothic coinage returned to the profile obverse of its origins and of the contemporary Byzantine tremissis but adopted the cross on steps from the Byzantine solidus as its reverse, rather than the simple cross of the Byzantine tremissis [Fig. 47].

There is one final Visigothic coin type that relates to that of Byzantium, the facing head of Erwig's coinage. The facing obverse head, with emanating features atop and to the sides, has been identified as an image of Christ with a cross behind the head [Fig. 48].¹¹ If this is the case, it preceded and perhaps influenced a major change in the iconography of Byzantine coinage. The first issue of the coinage of the emperor Justinian II was of the usual type, with a facing portrait obverse and a cross on steps on the reverse [Fig. 49].¹² At a certain period in his reign, dated tentatively to 692, he issued a revolutionary new type, with Christ on the obverse, with a cross visible behind his head, and the emperor relegated to holding the cross on the reverse [Fig. 50].¹³ It is not clear whether Justinian was reacting to the image on the coins of Erwig,

¹⁰ Ruth Pliego, *La moneda visigoda*. 2 vols. (Seville: Secretariado de Publicaciones, Universidad de Sevilla, 2009).

¹¹ Ruth Pliego, "El origen de la representación de Cristo en la moneda del rey visigodo Ervigio (680-687)," *Numismatica e Antichità Classiche* 42 (2013): 251–62.

¹² Alfred Bellinger and Philip Grierson, *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection*, vol. 2, pt. 2 (Washington, D.C., Dumbarton Oaks, 1968).

¹³ James D. Breckenridge, *The Numismatic Iconography of Justinian II* (New York: The American Numismatic Society, 1959).

or perhaps the imitation of the imagery of Byzantine coins by Islamic issuers in what is known as the Arab-Byzantine coinage series. What is evident is that the Visigothic coinage was part of a Mediterranean-wide development from its inception until its end.

IMAGES

These illustrations are of coins from the collection of the American Numismatic Society. I wish to express my thanks to David Yoon of the ANS for his help in securing the images and permissions for publication.



Fig. 1. Constantine I, gold solidus, Trier, 326-27,
ANS 1944.100.13273 [19.5 mm]



Fig. 2. Honorius, silver siliqua, Milan, 395-402,
ANS 1944.100.54948 [14.5 mm]



Fig. 3. Vandal copy of Italian siliqua, Carthage, mid-fifth century,
ANS 1992.41.53 [15 mm]



Fig. 4. Arcadius, gold solidus, Constantinople, 383-395,
ANS 1944.100.25690 [20.5 mm]



Fig. 5. Arcadius, gold solidus, Constantinople, 397-402,
ANS 1944.100.54789 [20 mm]



Fig. 6. Theodosius II, gold solidus, Constantinople, 420-422,
ANS 1977.158.978 [19.0 mm]



Fig. 7. Galla Placidia, gold solidus, Ravenna, 430-445,
ANS 1944.100.55011 [21 mm]



Fig. 8. Valentinian III, gold solidus, Ravenna, 430-445, ANS 1947.2.533 [21 mm]



Fig. 9. Anthemius, gold solidus, Rome, 467-472, ANS 1944.100.54892 [21.5 mm]



Fig. 10. Visigoths or Suevi?, gold solidus in the name of Libius Severus, ANS 0000.999.56739 [21 mm]



Fig. 11. Theodosius II, gold tremissis, Constantinople, 425-29, ANS 1977.158.981 [13 mm]



Fig. 12. Honorius, gold tremissis, Rome, 404-408, ANS 1944.100.54939 [13 mm]



Fig. 13. Valentinian III, gold tremissis, Milan, 430-455,
ANS 1944.100.54856 [14.5 mm]



Fig. 14. Suevi, gold tremissis, Mérida, 450-485, ANS 2019.31.1 [15.5 mm]



Fig. 15. Zeno, gold solidus, Constantinople, 476-491,
ANS 1968.131.478 [19.5 mm]



Fig. 16. Julius Nepos, gold solidus, Milan, 477-480, ANS 1944.100.54901 [21 mm]



Fig. 17. Julius Nepos, gold tremissis, Rome, 474-475, ANS 1944.100.54896 [12.5 mm]



Fig. 18. Odovacar in the name of Zeno, gold tremissis, Rome, 476-491, ANS 1944.100.20451 [13 mm]



Fig. 19. Gunthamund, silver siliqua of 100 nummi, Carthage, 484-496, ANS 1944.100.73743 [16 mm]



Fig. 20. Vandals, bronze 42 nummus, Carthage,
ANS 1944.100.73746 [27 mm]



Fig. 21. Anastasius, bronze 40 nummus, Constantinople, 498-518,
ANS 1997.31.1 [33 mm]



Fig. 22. Anastasius, gold solidus, Constantinople, 491-518,
ANS 1944.100.1883 [21 mm]



Fig. 23. Anastasius, gold tremissis, Constantinople, 491-518,
ANS 1968.131.514 [13 mm]



Fig. 24. Theoderic in the name of Anastasius, gold solidus, Rome, 492-518, ANS 1967.153.192 [20 mm]



Fig. 25. Theoderic in the name of Anastasius, gold tremissis, Rome 492-518, ANS 1944.100.61953 [13 mm]



Fig. 26. Athalaric, silver quarter siliqua, Rome, 527-534, ANS 1944.100.61966 [11.5 mm]



Fig. 27. Theodahad, bronze 40 nummi, Rome, 534-36, ANS 1944.100.61992 [24 mm]



Fig. 28. Gundobad, gold solidus, 474-516, ANS 2014.44.17 [20 mm]



Fig. 29. Pseudo-Imperial gold solidus in the name of Anastasius,
ANS 0000.999.56740 [20 mm]



Fig. 30. Anastasius, gold solidus, Constantinople, 498-518,
ANS 1947.2.103 [22 mm]



Fig. 31. Justin I, gold solidus, Constantinople, 519-527,
ANS 1980.109.248 [21 mm]



Fig. 32. Pseudo-Imperial gold solidus in the name of Justinian,
ANS 2014.44.19 [21 mm]



Fig. 33. Justinian I, gold tremissis, Constantinople, 527-565,
ANS 2014.44.3 [16 mm]



Fig. 34. Merovingian, gold tremissis, sixth century,
ANS 1944.100.74948 [15 mm]



Fig. 35. Merovingian, gold tremissis, sixth century, ANS 1944.74.3 [15 mm]



Fig. 36. Merovingian, Dorestad, Madelinus minter, seventh century,
ANS 1944.100.74951 [13 mm]



Fig. 37. Justinian I, gold tremissis, Carthago Nova, 552-565,
ANS 2014.44.4 [18 mm]



Fig. 38. Maurice Tiberius, gold tremissis, Carthago Nova, 582-602,
ANS 1956.25.23 [15 mm]



Fig. 39. Gundobad, gold tremissis, 474-516. ANS 2014.44.58 [13 mm]



Fig. 40. Visigothic, gold tremissis, late sixth century, ANS 2014.44.40 [15 mm]



Fig. 41. Visigothic, gold tremissis, late sixth century, ANS 2014.44.36 [12 mm]



Fig. 42. Visigothic, gold tremissis, late sixth century, ANS 2014.45.10 [16 mm]



Fig. 43. Leovigild, gold tremissis, 572-582, ANS 2015.48.4 [19 mm]



Fig. 44. Leovigild, gold tremissis, Toledo, 575-586, ANS 2015.48.11 [16 mm]



Fig. 45. Tiberius II Constantine, gold solidus, Ravenna, 579-582, ANS 1968.131.39 [21 mm]



Fig. 46. Tiberius II Constantine, gold tremissis, Constantinople, 579-582, ANS 1968.131.36 [17 mm]



Fig. 47. Recceswinth, gold tremissis, Toledo, 649-672, ANS 2015.48.358 [18.5 mm]



Fig. 48. Erwig, gold tremissis, Mérida, 680-687. ANS 2015.48.445 [19.5 mm]



Fig. 49. Justinian II, gold solidus, Constantinople, 687-692,
ANS 1986.177.1 [20 mm]



Fig. 50. Justinian II, gold solidus, Constantinople, 692-695, ANS 1944.100.14572
[20 mm]

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INNOVATION AND ADAPTATION IN VISIGOTHIC COINAGE

David Yoon*

The words “continuity” and “catastrophe” are clichés in the discussion of late antiquity, words that serve to summarize and stereotype modern interpretations of social, cultural, and economic changes.¹ The construction of this opposition between continuity and catastrophic change as an intellectual model for framing discussion, however, diverts attention from how in reality change happens all the time. To keep some institutions relatively stable for an extended time in human society typically requires strong and durable forces to act against potential changes. Continuity is inevitable, because change is always based on the past, but change, sometimes major, is also inevitable.

A more interesting way to frame questions might be to ask what things were thought worth the effort of keeping as static as possible and what innovations were adopted in response to changing circumstances. For the coinage of the Visigothic kingdom, there is much to consider on either side of that double question, but the changes may reveal the most about how the Visigothic state worked.

At the most general level, the coinage of the Visigothic kingdom seems very much a continuation of that of the late-Roman world, with its gold tremisses and bronze nummi. However, the mints of the Visigothic kingdom also introduced many innovations which demonstrate concerns or practicalities that differed from the late-Roman system, indicating different problems and challenges faced by the Visigothic regime.

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¹ Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400–800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 11.

I. Patterns of change in the making of Visigothic coins

In the absence of the sort of routine administrative documentation that exists for later periods, all that is known about the organization of the production of coinage in the Visigothic kingdom is inferred from the coins, or rather, from the interaction of the coins and scholarly assumptions that have leaned heavily toward Roman comparisons. But, although the Visigothic monarchy certainly looked toward models from the Roman past and current Constantinople in its rhetorics of power, the workings of its actual administration may have been quite different.

Visigothic bronze coinage is considered to have been produced mostly on a decentralized basis, under the aegis of local or ecclesiastical authorities (a significant point in itself),² while gold coinage is generally considered to have been made under royal authority. What this means is a complex question that depends a great deal on how the administrative system of the Visigothic kingdom worked. A variety of innovations can be seen in Visigothic gold coinage, and they offer a complex picture in which official authority and practical reality meet up in interesting ways.

Many kinds of decisions go into the making of coins: Some are dictated from above, by state authorities; others are matters of practical implementation that are left to the workers. The area that is most likely to have been the subject of official decrees is the metal content (fineness and weight). Legends and designs are also usually specified by ruling authorities, though perhaps not always with precision. Technical details of die-making and flan preparation, on the other hand, are likely to have been left to the workers. With this in mind, a review of some of the changes introduced during the roughly three centuries of Visigothic coinage will provide the basis for hypotheses regarding the organization of production.

A. Metal content

The amount of gold in a coin is determined by two variables in combination: the total mass of the coin and the fineness of the gold alloy. The mass can be ascertained with a balance and well-controlled weights, in the early Middle Ages like today. In the Middle Ages, the fineness of the alloy could be

² Miquel Crusafont, *El sistema monetario visigodo: Cobre y oro* (Barcelona and Madrid: Asociación Numismática Española, 1994), 64–65; Ruth Pliego, “Rethinking the *Minimi* of the Iberian Peninsula and Balearic Islands in Late Antiquity,” *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 12 (2020): 147.

measured with a touchstone, a procedure that required expert knowledge (though within the reach of experienced moneychangers and goldsmiths).³ In short, the amount of gold in a coin was knowable, though not necessarily easily.

That said, the fineness of the alloy could be obfuscated to some degree. Gold is one of the least reactive elements; if a piece of alloyed gold is placed in acid, the alloying element(s) will tend to leach out of the surface more than the gold, leaving a gold-enriched surface. With this technique, a gold-silver alloy could be made to look like purer gold than it actually was, at least temporarily.

Today there are better techniques to measure the fineness of an alloy than a touchstone, but they all have some limitations.⁴ One of the more common methods, x-ray fluorescence, has an important limitation: it measures surface concentrations, which may be misleading if surface depletion has enriched the gold concentration at the surface. Another common method, specific gravity, provides a measurement for the entire coin, but it only gives a single number, from which the proportion of a single element such as gold can only be inferred by making assumptions about any others. However, x-ray fluorescence analyses indicate that Visigothic gold coins are normally almost entirely gold-silver alloys, making inference from specific-gravity measurements straightforward.⁵

Due to the difference between surface and total compositions, the results of x-ray fluorescence and specific gravity are not directly comparable. Extensive sets of measurements of Visigothic coins by each method have been published, showing generally similar trends, despite systematic differences in the reported finenesses.⁶ The charts presented here are based on the largest available set of measurements: a set of specific-gravity measurements (fig. 1),

³ Walo Wächli, "Touching Precious Metals," *Gold Bulletin* 14 (1981): 154–58.

⁴ For a more detailed discussion, see Peter Bartlett, David Yoon and Ruth Pliego, "Weight, Fineness, and Debasement in Visigothic Tremisses from Theudis to Leovigild: New Evidence from the Hoards of Seville and Reccopolis," *American Journal of Numismatics* 29 (2017), 152–54.

⁵ D. M. Metcalf and F. Schweizer, "Milliprobe Analyses of Some Visigothic, Suevic, and Other Gold Coins of the Early Middle Ages," *Archaeometry* 12 (1970): 173–188; Mário Gomes Marques, João M. Peixoto Cabral and José Rodrigues Marinho, *Ensaio sobre história monetária da monarquia visigoda* (Porto: Sociedade Portuguesa de Numismática, 1995)

⁶ X-ray fluorescence: Marques et al., *Ensaio*, 66–70, 151–70; specific gravity: Andrew Kurt, *Minting, State and Economy in the Visigothic Kingdom: From Settlement in Aquitaine to the First Decades of the Muslim Conquest of Spain* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2020), app. I.

along with corresponding measurements of mass (fig. 2), originally compiled by Lauris Olson, published recently by Andrew Kurt, and extended with additional measurements of coins at the American Numismatic Society by Peter Bartlett, Andrew Kurt, and myself.⁷ From this body of data a number of interesting patterns emerge.

From the beginning, in the early to mid-fifth century, the gold coins minted in Visigothic Gaul tended to be a little lower in mass and fineness than official Roman coins. Occasional coins were made at the official standards followed in Rome or Constantinople – slightly under 1.5 grams of fine gold for a tremissis – especially in the early sixth century, but most Visigothic gold coins are clearly lower than the Roman standards in fineness, and often in mass too.

From the sixth century on, a second generalization can be made: that mass and fineness tended gradually to decline, punctuated by occasional reforms of the coinage. As the standards at which coins were made declined below the ideal, variability tended to increase, with some mints or batches of coins considerably farther from the ideal than others.

However, when there were reforms to bring the coinage back to a standard, they did not always aim at the same ideal value. For mass, there was a brief interval around the year 580 when Liuvigild (r. 569–586) attempted to change the standard to around 1.3 grams. Within a few years, however, he reverted to the Roman standard of 1.5 grams, and this remained the theoretical goal for the remainder of the Visigothic kingdom's life. In fact, late Visigothic tremisses sometimes slightly exceeded 1.5 grams.

Fineness is a different story. When Liuvigild reformed the coinage around 580, he also revised the standard for fineness, which had fallen variably far below the 98% to 99% of Roman coins, to around 75%.⁸ The coinage remained stable for a generation, until the time of Gundemar (r. 610–612), when the

⁷ Olson's data set includes his own measurements of coins at the American Numismatic Society as well as published measurements by W.A. Oddy of coins at the Fitzwilliam and Ashmolean Museums. The measurement methods of the different individuals involved have varied slightly in relative precision, due to use of different immersion fluids (Freon-113 or distilled water by Olson, perfluoro-1-methyldecalin by all others), but all are similar and have produced comparable results. The total data set includes 627 coins, but this includes multiple denominations as well as ancient counterfeits and modern fakes, so the effective sample size of comparable coins is smaller for any one comparison.

⁸ The exact standard is unclear. X-ray fluorescence measurements (which tend to err on the high side) of coins of Liuvigild and Reccared I with Facing Bust types indicate a standard around 78% to 83%: Marques et al., *Ensaïos*, 151–53. Specific gravity measurements (which tend to err on the low side) of the same series indicate a standard around 70% to 75%: Kurt, *Minting, State and Economy*, 308–10.

fineness began gradually to decline. Fineness declined to around 50% by the 640s and increased in variability until sometime during the reign of Chindaswinth (r. 642–653), when it was restored to around 70% to 75%. After stability under Recceswinth (r. 649–672), it began again both to decline on average and to increase in variability. At some point during the sole reign of Wittiza (r. 702–710), the mint of Toletó (present-day Toledo, in central Spain) returned to a fineness around 70%.

It is worth noting the difference between this pattern and the way debasement of coinage usually worked in the Roman Empire. Reductions of standards were a frequent occurrence in earlier Roman coinage, but they were done in a more controlled way. They are interpreted as a deliberate expedient by the imperial fiscal system to provide more coins to cover budgetary shortfalls.⁹ There was some variation in the execution of these changes, especially when the government was divided between two or more emperors, but mints, being directly controlled by government financial officials, evidently tried to conform to current specifications.¹⁰

Roman debasements were generally permanent adjustments to the standard. There were some back-and-forth changes on the fineness of the silver denarius in the first century,¹¹ but otherwise once a standard had been officially lowered, usually the only way a higher standard would be established was through the introduction of a new, higher denomination of coin.¹² And in the case of late Roman gold coins, the official standard did not change at all from the early fourth century until the late tenth century.¹³ This suggests clear administrative intent.

The pattern of Visigothic debasement can be interpreted in various ways. Andrew Kurt has suggested that it occurred when the royal fisc needed increased output of coins, especially at minor mints, for military expenditure

⁹ Kenneth W. Harl, *Coinage in the Roman Economy, 300 B.C. to A.D. 700* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 90.

¹⁰ See, e.g., Lawrence H. Cope, "The Argentiferous Bronze Alloys of the Large Tetrarchic Folles of A.D. 294–307," *Numismatic Chronicle* 7th ser. 8 (1968): 115–49; Lawrence H. Cope, "Roman Imperial Silver Coinage Alloy Standards: The Evidence," *Numismatic Chronicle* 7th ser. 7 (1967): 107–31. Note, however, occasional periods of high variation, followed by returns to standardization, in Jean-Pierre Callu, "Analyses métalliques et inflation: L'Orient romain de 295 à 361/368," in *Hommes et richesses dans l'Empire byzantin*, t. 1 (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1989), 230 fig. 2.

¹¹ Kevin Butcher and Matthew Ponting, "The Reforms of Trajan and the End of the Pre-Neronian Denarius," *Annali dell'Istituto Italiano di Numismatica* 61 (2015): 21–42.

¹² Harl, *Coinage in the Roman Economy*, 146–74.

¹³ Michael F. Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy, c. 300–1450* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 506–10.

during times when gold was in short supply.¹⁴ It might be noted, however, that the lowest standards and greatest variation occurred at times when there is no evidence for major military campaigns, during the reigns of Chintila (r. 636–639), Tulga (r. 639–642), and Egica (r. 687–702). Moreover, there was relatively little debasement during the reigns of some kings known to have campaigned actively, such as Witteric (r. 603–610) and Sisebut (r. 612–621). Bullion supply may well have been an important factor, but military campaigning may have been of relatively limited importance for debasement.

I would suggest, instead, that the prevailing tendency for the gold content of the coins to drift downward seems more like a lack of control (sporadically interrupted by royal interventions) rather than an expression of intentional policy. The attempts by Chindaswinth and Wittiza to restore a standard around 1.5 grams and 70% to 75% fine suggest that this remained the official standard from the last years of Liuvigild to the end of the kingdom, but the increasingly wide variation when standards were low suggests that adherence to the official standard was poorly monitored and frequently unenforced.

Visigothic mints, in other words, were operated differently from Roman mints, with a key difference being that they were generally not closely monitored by government financial officials. At moments of royal attention, they could achieve highly controlled results, but most of the time the standards of weight and fineness were variable and prone to gradual decay.

B. Legends and designs

The information placed on the coins takes various forms, both verbal and pictorial. There is much to be said about the political messages conveyed by both,¹⁵ but here I concentrate on a more routine, utilitarian sort of information. Some of the messages encoded in coins are intended for the administrative use of the governing authority, and these can be particularly informative about the organization of production.

Because of these political and administrative functions, the design specifications for coins are a matter of interest to high-level officials. In this, Visigothic coinage resembled Roman coinage, at least to the extent that major design changes appear to have been made by central directive and introduced at all mints around the same time. However, in some other respects Visigothic

¹⁴ Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy*, 237–40.

¹⁵ See, e.g., S. Steinbach, *Imitation, Innovation und Imperialisierung* (Münster: Lit, 2017).

coins used design information in somewhat different ways from Roman precedents.

To begin with, the coins were fairly direct imitations of current Roman coinage. However, beginning with the last issues in the name of Valentinian III (r. 425–455) and especially those in the name of Libius Severus (r. 461–465), Visigothic tremisses ceased to follow the same designs as the imperial coins.¹⁶ This change, although the designs remained within the iconographic space of Roman imperial coinage, made Visigothic tremisses instantly identifiable as something different from official Roman tremisses, as did a new reverse type, adopted sometime between 491 and 510, featuring Victory holding a palm branch and wreath.¹⁷

The iconographic content of the designs is often the primary motivation for these changes, but the simple fact that a new design is different is sometimes more important. Making the coins visibly distinct both from official imperial coins and from previous Visigothic coins enabled administrators to distinguish recent local coins from older or non-local issues.

This ability to identify specific coin issues is important when standards are intentionally changed or reformed. This may explain some design changes such as the introduction of the Victory with Palm and Wreath reverse around 500 and the introduction of the Facing Busts type around 583–584, both of which coincided with changes to standards. Control marks may also be important for identifying particular batches of metal or particular responsible parties. Visigothic regal coinage sometimes has dots or symbols that have been interpreted as control marks for administrative identification of this sort.¹⁸

However, the most important feature introduced into Visigothic coinage for providing administrative information is the introduction of the names of the king and the mint under Liuvigild around 575–577 and 581–582, respectively. Late-Roman mints had used abbreviated codes as mint marks; the Visigothic practice appears to be a reinvention of the concept, spelling out the name of a place clearly in the oblique or objective case (as distinct from

¹⁶ Philip Grierson and Mark Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 46; Pliego, *Moneda visigoda*, vol. 1, 74.

¹⁷ Wallace J. Tomasini, *The Barbaric Tremissis in Spain and Southern France, Anastasius to Leovigild* (New York: American Numismatic Society, 1964), 25–44.

¹⁸ Peter Bartlett, Gonzalo Cores Uría and María Cruz Cores Gomendio, “The Use of Dots as Control Marks in the Coin Legends at the Visigothic Mint of Ispali during the Reign of Sisebut (612–621),” in *Actas del XIII Congreso Internacional de Numismática, Madrid, 2003* (Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura, 2005), 1127–33.

the nominative case used for the king's name and epithet).¹⁹ Clearly someone decided this information needed to be there so that coins could be identified as current issues from a particular minting operation.

One typical reason for administrators to want to be able to identify which coins came from which mint is so they can attribute blame correctly if coins are sub-standard due to malfeasance by the mint.²⁰ Unlike Merovingian Gaul or Anglo-Saxon England, there was no requirement to put the moneyer's name on the coin along with the location. If the name of the place was sufficient information for attributing blame, this indicates a more controlled relationship of producers to places in the Visigothic kingdom than seems to have existed in the Merovingian and Anglo-Saxon kingdoms.

C. Number of mints

The place names attested on Visigothic coins also document a major decentralization of the minting process relative to Roman practice. Roman minting was very centralized relative to the size of the empire. In the Principate, all of the gold and most of the silver was usually produced at a single mint (in either Lyon or Rome).²¹ Starting from the mid-third century the number of mints increased, but at maximum in the fourth century there were only fourteen or fifteen regular mints operating at the same time.²² This was associated with a highly centralized organization in which the imperial government controlled mints as state facilities, run by government officials and operated at state expense.²³

None of the Roman mints of the fifth century were located in what became the sixth-century Visigothic kingdom. The Visigoths briefly controlled Arles in the fifth century, at a time when a Roman mint may still have existed there,

¹⁹ Visigothic regal coins are a significant, if mostly ignored, source for early Romance grammar: José Antonio Correa Rodríguez, "El latín de las monedas visigodas," in *Latin vulgaire – Latin tardif VII*, ed. Carmen Arias Abellán (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, 2006), 238–40; Paul Gaeng, *A Study of Nominal Inflections in Latin Inscriptions: A Morpho-Syntactic Analysis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, Department of Romance Studies, 1977), 24, 60, 62.

²⁰ Philip Grierson, *Numismatics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 80–81.

²¹ Harl, *Coinage in the Roman Economy*, 75, 86.

²² Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy*, 378–94.

²³ For the early imperial mint of Rome, the staff appear to have been a mix of imperial freedmen and slaves, all probably working for the imperial household: Bernhard E. Woytek, "System and Product in Roman Mints from the Late Republic to the High Principate: Some Current Problems," *Revue Belge de Numismatique* 158 (2012), 101–12.

but otherwise their mints were created *ex nihilo*. Until the late sixth century, when mint names were placed on Visigothic gold, it is not possible to say how many mints were in operation at any one time. But from the 580s to the 710s, almost a hundred mints are known to have produced gold coins in the Visigothic kingdom at one time or another. Not all of them operated at the same time, but in some reigns as many as around fifty mints were in operation, in an area less than one-seventh as large as the fourth-century Roman Empire.²⁴

This pattern is extremely different from the tightly controlled minting of the later Roman empire. Andrew Kurt has pointed out a strong correlation between the locations of minor mints and zones of likely military activity.²⁵ However, it should be noted that the Roman state managed to produce coins to pay a much larger, more professionalized military spread over a much larger area with a much smaller number of mints. The great increase in number of mints indicates a significant change in the way coin production was linked to administration.

In the Roman Empire it was routine to transport large amounts of coins for long distances from the mints to places where the government had payments to make.²⁶ Moreover, at least in the early imperial period, even local or regional coins that were issued in the eastern provinces were sometimes struck in Rome and transported halfway across the empire to be issued.²⁷ Clearly Visigothic mint organization prioritized something other than centralized control or management.

D. Production methods

Roman imperial coins, like most coins of Greco-Roman antiquity, were struck using dies engraved by hand with naturalistic images in modulated relief and with lettering around the edge. The flans are generally thought to have been cast or fused in molds to the correct weight; they were then placed between

²⁴ For mints, see Pliego, *Moneda visigoda*, vol. 1, 148–151. For comparison of areal extent, see estimates in Rein Taagepera, “Size and Duration of Empires: Growth–Decline Curves, 600 B.C. to 600 A.D.,” *Social Science History* 3 (1979), 125–26.

²⁵ Kurt, *Minting, State and Economy*, 195–220.

²⁶ Johan van Heesch, “Transport of Coins in the Later Roman Empire,” *Revue Belge de Numismatique* 152 (2006): 51–61.

²⁷ Kevin Butcher and Bernhard Woytek, “The Grand Scheme of Things: Modelling Coin Production and Coin Distribution in the Roman Empire in the First and Second Centuries AD,” in *Infrastructure and Distribution in Ancient Economies*, ed. Bernhard Woytek (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2019), 253–81.

obverse and reverse dies and struck with a heavy hammer blow.²⁸ The process involved a considerable amount of labor: the imperial mint at Rome in the early second century, for example, appears to have had a staff of at least ninety workers.²⁹ Some of this labor was relatively unskilled, such as swinging a hammer, but the engraving of dies was a skill that must have required long apprenticeship to master.

Visigothic coinage used the same basic method of striking blanks between dies with a hammer, but most other details of the process changed significantly. These changes can generally be summed up as ways of enabling the work to be done with fewer workers, and especially with fewer highly skilled workers.

This is not to say that the coins show a lack of skill. By the standards of hammer-struck coinages, Visigothic gold coins are very well made. The flans are approximately circular, the designs are well-centered on the flans, and the strike is usually strong and clear. Minor errors such as double-struck coins occur occasionally,³⁰ but major striking errors such as brockages are extremely rare or unknown.

The dies also were competently made by skilled workers, but efficiency was clearly the highest priority. They frequently contain small errors that appear to be the result of hasty work (fig. 3). More importantly, a number of innovations were adopted in making dies that can be explained as ways of saving on the most skilled work.

During the sixth century, traditional Roman techniques for engraving dies were abandoned. Instead, a previously minor technique—using a small metal punch to stamp a mark into the die—was elevated to become the major method of creating designs. This changed the appearance of the struck coins, so that the naturalistic *bas-relief* of Roman coins was replaced by relatively abstract, two-dimensional designs made of repeated geometric elements.³¹ The difference can be seen by comparing two Visigothic coins, one from the early sixth century and one from the 580s (figs. 4 and 5).

²⁸ See metallurgical evidence in Nicola George, "Experiments Reproducing Roman Debased Alloys," in *Debasement: Manipulation of Coin Standards in Pre-modern Monetary Systems*, ed. Kevin Butcher (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2020), 75–96.

²⁹ Woytek, "System and Product," 103. This may not include a significant number of workers involved in making dies.

³⁰ Pliego, *Moneda visigoda*, vol. 1, 193.

³¹ David Yoon, "Art, Craft, Innovation, and Efficiency: Early Medieval Minting Technology," *American Numismatic Society Magazine* 14, no. 2 (2015): 18–27.

These two techniques of making a die have very different labor requirements. The hand-engraving method requires a master engraver with long training to spend hours cutting the main design; it is likely that simpler elements such as lettering were carved by less-skilled assistants. It can be calculated for a series of Roman Republican denarii with die marks that the master engravers spent at least three and perhaps six hours on each obverse die.³² By contrast, the punching method requires only moderate skill, and in experimenting with this method David Sellwood found that he could sink a die in fifteen minutes for a simple design and twenty-five minutes for a more complex one.³³ Presumably an experienced die-sinker could do this even more quickly. Thus, one worker could produce around seven to fourteen obverse dies with the Visigothic method in the time it would take an engraver to make one Roman obverse die.

A second innovation concerns making the flans on which coins were struck. Again, a relatively minor method from antiquity—hammering out a thin sheet or strip of metal and then cutting round blanks from the sheet metal—was promoted to become the principal method for making the flans for Visigothic gold coins. In this case the Visigothic method probably requires as much labor or more than the Roman method, though probably less skill. However, it may have had advantages for other reasons related to the adoption of punches for making dies.

The act of striking a coin between dies works by forcing malleable metal to flow into the recesses engraved or punched into the surfaces of the dies. Higher relief on the coin means that more metal has been forced to move. In general, displacing more metal requires greater force to be applied to the dies. When flans are made of molten metal, by casting or fusing, surface tension causes them to be somewhat globular. This shape works well for striking coins with high relief at the center, but it means more metal must be displaced to create a flat coin with low relief. A thin, flat flan allows a flat, low-relief coin

³² Giles F. Carter and Brian G. Carter, "Simulation of a Roman Mint by Computer," in *Proceedings of the 22nd Symposium on Archaeometry*, ed. S.E. Warren and A. Aspinall (Bradford: Schools of Physics and Archaeological Sciences, University of Bradford, 1983), 42, calculated 3.1 hours per die on average. However, they included both obverse and reverse dies in the calculation; the source for the numbers clearly states that engravers are only identified for the obverse dies: T.V. Buttrey, "The Denarii of P. Crepusius and Roman Republican Mint Organization," *American Numismatic Society Museum Notes* 21 (1976), 90–93. The reverses would most likely have been cut by other engravers. If the Carter calculation is redone using only the number of obverse dies, the result is 6.4 hours per die.

³³ David Sellwood, "Medieval Minting Techniques," *British Numismatic Journal* 31 (1962), 58.

to be struck without having to displace a large amount of metal. This has two practical implications for the minting process: less force needs to be used to hit the upper die with a hammer, so that one worker can do the striking process alone (rather than a team of three, as in Roman mints), and because less force is applied to the upper die, it should last longer in use (other things being equal).

Thus, the technical innovations adopted by Visigothic mints can be seen as having two effects. First, they reduced labor requirements, so a mint could realistically operate with only a few workers. Second, and most importantly, they reduced the amount of labor required to supply the dies needed to strike a given number of coins, by making the dies more quickly and probably also by reducing the number of dies needed.

These changes suggest that Visigothic mints were adapting their working methods to a different organizational structure. Instead of massive factory-style operations with scores of workers, they were probably much smaller workshops. And minimizing labor on the making of dies seems to have been important, whereas other stages of the process show no tendency to skimp on labor time. This in turn suggests that fewer die-sinkers were available relative to the demand for dies. When paired with a large increase in the number of mints, some apparently with a low rate of production, this suggests that the making of dies was more centralized than the striking of coins.

II. A model of Visigothic mint administration

Now that a number of changes introduced in the Visigothic monetary system have been described, the next question is how best to explain them. In the absence of administrative documentation, any model will inevitably be hypothetical, but it may be guided by consideration of the reasons that would tend to promote the adoption of these particular innovations.

A few basic conditions constrain the possibilities for likely minting arrangements. First, there is no question that the minting of gold in the Visigothic kingdom was ultimately subject to royal authority. The more-or-less simultaneous adoption of new designs at all mints and the coordination seen in occasional reforms of weight and fineness bespeak response to decrees from the royal administration, the only central institution capable of dictating such changes.³⁴ However, there is no need to assume that royal authority

³⁴ An interesting and puzzling exception is found in the coinage of Wittiza, where improvements in weight and fineness are seen mostly at Toletó, and a new reverse design was introduced only at Toletó.

managed routine operation of mints using exactly the same procedures as in the Roman Empire.

Second, institutional continuity with Roman monetary administration would have been limited. The early Visigothic kings did not assume control of the locations of any higher-level Roman administrative institutions until Euric seized Arles (present-day Arles, in southern France) around 471. At that point his kingdom may have acquired skilled workers from the Roman mint of Arles, but he does not seem to have retained the praetorian prefecture and its administration, or the Roman mint as an organization.³⁵ It is unlikely that any diocesan administration of Hispania survived the period of Suevic domination until the Visigoths took over.³⁶ Without a praetorian prefecture, a diocesan *comes largitionum*, or a functioning Roman mint, new institutions and practices had to be created for the management of the monetary system.

Third, the Roman fiscal system survived in some form at least to the end of the sixth century and perhaps to the end of the kingdom.³⁷ The amount of land liable to taxation may have decreased, much tax may have been paid in kind, and not all writers agree on how the money was spent, but there seems still to have been some sort of political-economic engine for moving coins around on a large scale, and an ongoing need for a supply of new coins.

The early stages of the development of Visigothic coin production are the least clear part of the picture. Some groups of fifth-century coins have been attributed to the Visigoths with varying degrees of confidence,³⁸ but not much can be said about them in the present state of knowledge. They were competently executed derivatives of contemporary Roman coins, without the labor-saving shortcuts that were adopted in the sixth century. They do not seem to be particularly abundant. Unfortunately, this period provides little evidence regarding the organization of production.

³⁵ Marc Heijmans, *Arles durant l'Antiquité tardive* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2004), 76.

³⁶ See the discussion of Roman fiscal institutions in Javier Arce, *Esperando a los árabes* (Madrid: Marcial Pons Historia, 2011), 94–95.

³⁷ For a maximalist view, see Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy*, 179–86. For minimalist views, see Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, 93–102; Felix Retamero, *La continua illusió del moviment perpetu* (Bellaterra: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2000), 169–74.

³⁸ Wilhelm Reinhart, “Die Münzen des tolosanischen Reiches der Westgoten,” *Deutsches Jahrbuch für Numismatik* 1 (1938): 107–35; Georges Depeyrot, “Les émissions wisigothiques de Toulouse (V.^e siècle),” *Acta Numismatica* 16 (1986): 79–104; Cathy E. King, “Roman, Local, and Barbarian Coinages in Fifth-Century Gaul,” in *Fifth-Century Gaul: A Crisis of Identity?*, ed. John Drinkwater and Hugh Elton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 184–95.

The sixth-century types, first produced in the Visigothic kingdom in the name of the emperor Anastasius I (r. 491–518), offer more evidence for how minting worked. They have been the subject of a detailed stylistic analysis that provides a starting point, in the absence of mint marks or other overt administrative messages, for distinguishing the structure of production.³⁹ A uniform type was adopted throughout the regions under Visigothic control, together with an increase in standards of weight and fineness, most likely indicating a central dictate, as mentioned above. However, multiple stylistic traditions soon emerged, suggesting different workshops with little interaction.

From the 550s to the 570s, the amount of stylistic diversity increased considerably, and it was accompanied by increasing divergence of the standards of weight and fineness.⁴⁰ Many small issues of coins from this period appear to have been designed by inexperienced engravers, unassociated with any major mint – quite possibly, some goldsmiths with no previous minting experience were producing small batches of coins on their own initiative.⁴¹ Whatever the institutional arrangements had previously been for minting, it is clear that by this time minting was no longer effectively controlled by any central authority.

The quick and effective introduction of new types and standards in the early 580s is reasonably seen as a re-establishment of royal control over the monetary system. However, one must ask how royal control was exercised. The twenty-seven or twenty-eight minting places known to be paired with Liuvigild's name in coin legends do not make much sense if interpreted as Roman-style state facilities run by treasury officials.⁴² Instead, they suggest a system based on newly enhanced state regulation of private moneyers.

Mints run by government officials at state expense are more controlled and secure, and for this reason they are often favored by rich, centralized states. However, they are also very expensive to operate, which is why many governments historically have preferred to have minting done by private businesses that pay fees to the government and put their own capital at risk, in the hope of profiting from minting fees. In this case, minting was already being done privately, in practice, regardless of what the legal theory was, so

³⁹ Tomasini, *Barbaric Tremissis*.

⁴⁰ Bartlett et al., "Weight, Fineness, and Debasement," 178–82.

⁴¹ David Yoon and Peter Bartlett, "The Transitional Visigothic Coinage of Leovigild: A Die Study and Metrological Comparison of Tomasini's JII 5 Category," *Revue Numismatique* 178 (2021): 295–333.

⁴² The exact number of minting places is uncertain due to questions about authenticity: Pliego, *Moneda visigoda*, vol. 1, 151.

regularizing (and monetizing) this practice was the simple, sensible way to regain control of the monetary system.

As we have seen, the production of dies appears to have been a limiting point in the system. In a comparable situation of a state with centralizing ambitions but limited administrative capacity, the kings of late-Saxon England controlled minting and obtained revenue from it by requiring an annual fee from moneyers and by (partially) centralizing production of dies and selling them to moneyers for a fee.⁴³

A similar system, but with greater royal control, would explain why production of dies required increases of efficiency in the Visigothic kingdom—a relatively small number of die-sinkers would have been supplying the dies for many mints. Strong evidence for such a system of die control can be seen in Kurt's stylistic study of early seventh-century coins.⁴⁴ He has shown clearly how the work of individual die-sinkers can be seen at multiple mints. The relationship of individual workers to mints is partially regional but not entirely, suggesting that no administrative hierarchy such as provincial officials was involved. It seems that as long as dies were purchased from a royal workshop, only practical issues such as distance or convenience dictated which one.

Such a system of private but royally licensed moneyers would also explain the observed pattern of debasement. When minting is done at state expense, the mint workers do not have to worry about the difference in metal content between old, worn or clipped coins that the mint receives and new, full-standard coins that they produce. For private moneyers, however, the difference comes out of their profits, so they have an incentive to adjust their standards slightly downward to resemble worn coins in circulation.⁴⁵ If there were any moments of coordinated royal debasement, they are difficult to see against the background of uneven but widespread deterioration. The evidence that a higher legal standard remained the goal for Chindasuinth and Wittiza suggests that the decline was primarily done at local initiative, as does the divergence between mints in the degree of debasement.⁴⁶

⁴³ Martin Allen, *Mints and Money in Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 182–83.

⁴⁴ Kurt, *Minting, State and Economy*, 149–55, App. II. For balancing the demand for and supply of dies at mints – to say nothing of making the best use of the die-sinkers' valued time – it is most likely that dies were sent from the die-sinker's workshop to the mint, rather than the die-sinker traveling around to many mints as suggested by Kurt.

⁴⁵ Peter Spufford, *Money and Its Use in Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 243, 312.

⁴⁶ Spufford, *Money and Its Use*, 101.

Although in practice it did not suffice to maintain standards, the addition of the names of minting locations to the coins can be seen as a way of providing some ability to monitor the moneyers, theoretically enabling royal officials to identify the issuers of substandard coins. The significant reduction in the number of mints operating under Recceswinth may also have been intended as a more effective way to facilitate royal control of minting quality.⁴⁷

III. Conclusions

In summary, the absence of surviving Roman institutions for the production of money in the Visigothic kingdom forced its people and its rulers to create their own system. Although Roman models and assumptions were inevitably part of the intellectual environment within which Visigothic coinage developed, the lack of functioning precedents at hand also allowed the flexibility to improvise new solutions. Like most administrative solutions in states whose administrative capacities are limited, Visigothic coinage relied on a large measure of local or private initiative leavened with an admixture of central control and exploitation.⁴⁸

This is not to deny the fundamental importance of the state and its fiscal cycle in the monetary system. It does, however, open up additional possibilities for how coins entered that cycle. In addition to coins being produced for use in state expenditures, this model also allows coins to have been produced for taxpayers to use in payments to the state, or indeed for use in other monetized sectors of the economy, without which the fiscal circuit could not be completed. In an economy with weak monetization and little input of new precious metal, a dispersed, decentralized system of minting optimizes the ability of mints to attract bullion for striking into coins.

Another point that should be clear from this examination of the Visigothic gold coinage is the pivotal role of Liuvigild in re-structuring the monetary system. Faced with a system that had badly broken down – again, regardless of whether it was originally meant to be centrally controlled or not – he re-established order and consistent standards. This was not done by demanding

⁴⁷ Kurt, *Minting, State and Economy*, 240.

⁴⁸ Discussion of private and public power in the Visigothic kingdom is traditionally discussed in terms of “proto-feudalism,” but Damián Fernández, “Statehood, Taxation, and State Infrastructural Power in Visigothic Iberia,” in *Ancient States and Infrastructural Power*, ed. Clifford Ando and Seth Richardson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 243–71, shows how private roles in administration can instead be seen in terms of creative solutions to administrative problems.

a return to an imperial ideal: Liuvigild's reforms accepted much of what had happened in the preceding decades, ratifying a decentralized system with metal standards significantly lower than the Roman ones.

The argument that this involved partial royal control over private moneyers would fit an overall picture of how the Visigothic state, with centralizing ambitions but limited administrative means, creatively adapted itself. The technical innovations in Visigothic coinage provide indirect evidence of how a state with economic and administrative resources that were very different from those of the Roman Empire managed to maintain the strongest monarchy and fiscal system of seventh-century Western Europe, through a readiness to find new solutions to new problems.

Postscript

This essay was written in 2020, based on a conference presentation in 2019. Since that time, a number of relevant publications have appeared, one of which is especially necessary to mention. In his *Making Money in the Early Middle Ages*, Rory Naismith presented a framework for describing relationships of minting to the state and the wider public. In terms of his discussion, the hypothesis presented here can be seen as having much in common with his second model: minting that is motivated to a substantial extent by state demands but actually taking place as mediated through demand from the tax-paying public rather than through state action.⁴⁹

Acknowledgments

The participants in the Networks and Neighbours conference on Coinage and Money in 2019 discussed the presentation on which this is based very extensively, and their questions and comments were an important guide in writing this text, for which I owe them all my gratitude. In addition, I thank Peter Bartlett and Andrew Kurt for allowing me to include their unpublished specific-gravity measurements in Figure 1. Some of the ideas presented here were inspired by discussions with Peter Bartlett, Andrew Kurt, and Michael Bates. None of these individuals should be held responsible for the debating positions that I have chosen, but I thank them for provoking me to think.

⁴⁹ Rory Naismith, *Making Money in the Early Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023), 54.

FIGURES

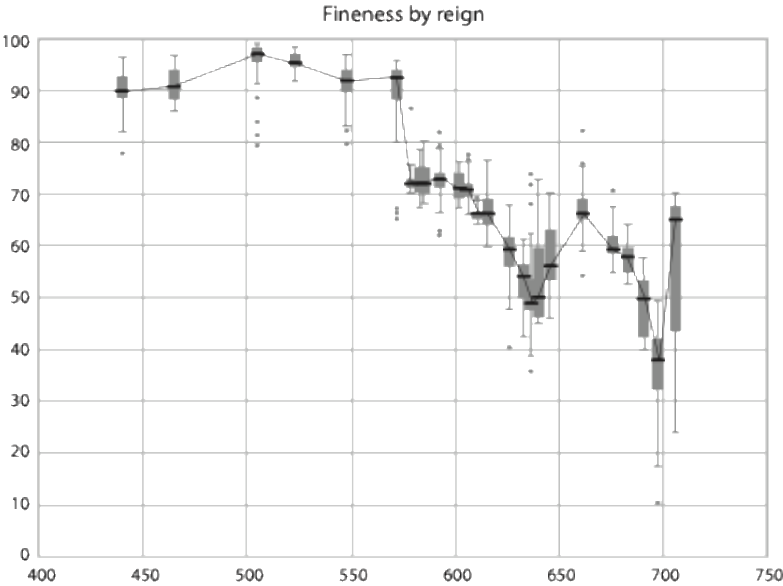


Fig. 1. Fineness in percent of Visigothic gold tremisses by median date of reign or issue period (box plots showing median, interquartile range, inner fences, and outliers; n = 596).

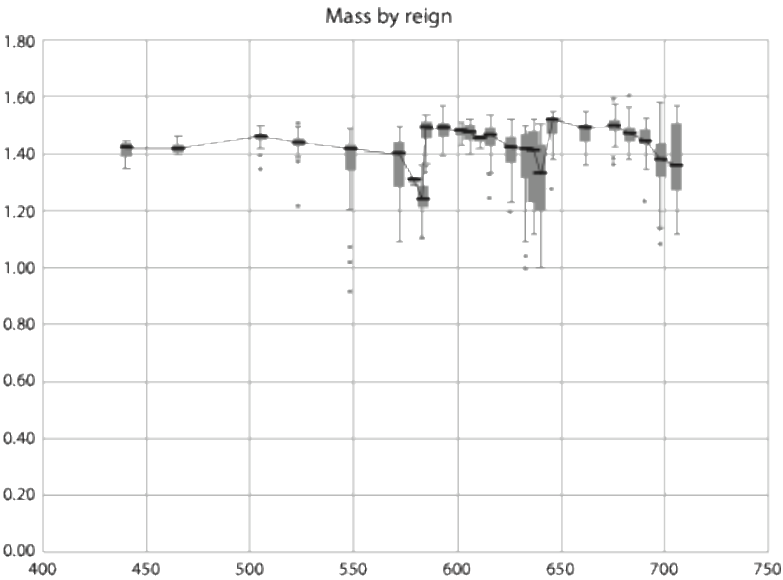


Fig. 2. Mass in grams of Visigothic gold tremisses by median date of reign or issue period (box plots showing median, interquartile range, inner fences, and outliers; n = 567).



Fig. 3. Gold tremissis of Recceswinth (653–672) from the mint of Cordoba. The die-sinker appears to have punched in the serifs of the letters first, then joined them up. In the second and third letters on the obverse, it can be seen that the middle arm of the letter “E” has been mistakenly connected to the “C” rather than to the stem of “E.” ANS 2015.48.379, American Numismatic Society.



Fig. 4. Gold tremissis from the Visigothic kingdom in the name of Anastasius I (491–518). The figures and lettering were made by engraving the face of the die with burin and drill. ANS 2014.44.32, American Numismatic Society.



Fig. 5. Gold tremissis of Liuvigild from the mint of Toledo. Note how the designs are mostly made with a variety of triangular, crescent-shaped, and ring-shaped punches; some engraving is still evident in the neck and chin on the obverse and in straight lines. ANS 2015.48.7, American Numismatic Society.

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CLUES FROM COINS: STYLISTIC COMPARISONS OF VISIGOTHIC DIE ENGRAVING AS EVIDENCE FOR MINT ADMINISTRATION*

Andrew Kurt**

From the last quarter of the sixth century until the successful Arab invasion of Hispania in 711, Visigothic minting expressed a monarchical character that departed in various ways from the phases of Roman imitation of the previous century and a half. Encircling the king's bust in the center of the obverse of the tremissis, soon the only confirmed regal denomination, was his name and title, "Rex". The variety of styles of the royal bust "type" – the essential form of the central image – and the extensive network of mints at which the gold coins were struck are two interrelated aspects. The matter is highly complex, however, and has not been studied extensively.

Close examination of the rendering of busts as well as of diversity in epigraphical style offers undeveloped potential. The thousands of remaining Visigothic coins, a still only partially tapped material source, disclose information about the minting scheme, a major part of the administration of the kingdom.¹ From here new deductions and questions can be generated.

* I am very grateful for a Casey Numismatic Research Fund Award from the Royal Numismatic Society in 2022, which enabled me to conduct research for this article at the Museo Arqueológico Nacional in Madrid.

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¹ On the monetary system and the value of coins as a historical source see Andrew Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy in the Visigothic Kingdom: From Settlement in Aquitaine through the First Decade of the Muslim Conquest of Spain* (Amsterdam, 2020); Ruth Pliego Vázquez, *La moneda visigoda*, 2 vols. (Sevilla, 2009); Sebastian Steinbach, *Imitation, Innovation und Imperialisierung Geldwesen und Münzprägung als wirtschaftshistorische Quellen zur ethnischen Identität und Herrschaftsorganisation des spanischen Westgotenreiches* (ca. 572-714) (Berlin, 2017); and Rory Naismith, *Making Money in the Early Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ, 2023), esp. pp. 246-53 on coinage of the Visigoths.

Much more readily in the “regal series” inaugurated by Liuvigild in the 570s, as monarch and mint are named on tremisses and soon (in 584) a new Facing Bust type appeared universally on both sides, we can trace the geographical contours of style groups to gain a good sense of mint associations by way of engravers of the dies behind all tremisses struck in these centuries in the Visigothic kingdom. The evidence reveals an operational framework that associates numerous peripheral mints with the royal capital and others with provincial centers. What this means is that mobile die cutters from key mints were responsible for most of the coinage issued in the first seventy-five years of the “regal series,” and their general movements can be mapped.

As minting developed in the maturing Visigothic and Merovingian kingdoms of the sixth century, the Roman pattern of striking gold at extremely few, highly central mints was flipped on its head. Visigothic tremisses were churned out now at two or more dozen mints at any one time, always in the capital city of each of the six provinces but also at peripheral mints, mostly in a wide stretch well south of Toledo. Most of the great gains of the scholarship to this point have revolved around the work of proper identification of the coins (reign and place of issue), charting this information (enabling conclusions to be drawn about minting on a broad scale or more minutely), and recording the vast array of bust sub-types and their significance. It is my assertion that elaborate study of the style of the royal busts at the center of the gold pieces and the inscriptions surrounding them provides a basis for recovering aspects of the operations of the mint network that would remain unknown in the absence of contemporary documentation.

In the past a provincial organization has been thought to have governed the minting apparatus, based on some obvious similarities in coins coming from within each of the six territorial divisions and an evident provincial structure in the kingdom’s administration.² Such a minting organization can now be called into question.³ The particular bust forms and general

² On the kingdom’s provinces as a basis of territorial and minting administration see Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy in the Visigothic Kingdom*, 130-34, 148, 182f. See Pablo C. Díaz, “El esquema provincial en el contexto administrativo de la monarquía visigoda de Toledo,” *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez* [online], 49-2 (2019), accessed November 30, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.4000/mcv.11009>. Díaz takes a refined look at the development of provinces into administrative units rather than merely geographical markers; he sees this occurring during the period of Liuvigild and Reccared, although he does not view provinces as having clear administrative power. I view their role between center and locality as more robust, not least in monetary matters broadly compassed.

³ The concept of provincial types governs much of the perspective of the main works before recent decades: Aloïss Heiss, *Description générale des monnaies des Rois Wisigoths d’Espagne*

appearance of tremisses were not determined by a tight provincial supervision that controlled the mints within each administrative enclave but instead were dependent on peripatetic die engravers who frequently ranged across the sectional borders. Around nine permanently active mints can be seen as primary sites, with special administrative importance involving tax collection and treasury dispersal.⁴ Since minting in the many secondary – ultimately impermanent – mints can usually be associated with war and conquest, engravers can be seen as an indispensable part of the success of the Visigothic monarchy revived by Liuvigild (r. 568–586) and his son Reccared (r. 586–601), who undertook sizeable campaigns and greatly increased emissions.

Charting stylistic traits allows us to accompany in some way the busy path of the craftsman directly responsible for the emission of gold currency in a territory taken from the rival peninsular kingdom just after the Facing Bust design had been introduced. The annexation in 585 of the Suevic lands in the northwest, comprised of upper Lusitania and what became the province of Gallaecia, involved the services of the engraver from the royal city of Toledo (Toledo on the coins, thus labeled the “Toledo hand”). War-related inscriptions with “Victor,” “Victoria,” or “in” (such as “in Tude”) on Reccared’s coins in the area are likely to be associated with the actual presence of Reccared in the conquest and immediately afterward. More remarkably, the same engraver can be associated with military minting well south of the capital. And this same engraver will move between large tracts for decades, while continuing

(Paris, 1872); Pío Beltrán Villagrasa, *Las monedas visigodas acuñadas en la Suevia española (Diócesis de Iría, Lucus, Aureense, Tude y Asturias)*, in *Boletín de la Comisión Provincial de Monumentos Históricos y Artísticos de Orense*, 101–106 (Mar. 1915 to Jan.–Feb. 1916); Felipe Mateu y Llopis, *Catálogo de las monedas previsigodas y visigodas del Gabinete numismático del Museo arqueológico nacional* (Madrid, 1936); George C. Miles, *The Coinage of the Visigoths of Spain: Leovigild to Achila II* (New York, 1952). Also M. Ruíz Trapero, “En torno a la moneda visigoda,” *Documenta & Instrumenta* 1 (2004), 179–201 at 183. <https://revistas.ucm.es/index.php/DOCU/article/view/DOCU0404110179>. A. Pliego, *La moneda visigoda* follows this framework but facilitates a nuanced approach with an index of types corresponding to minting sites (see v. 1, 29–35) and a continual reference to type forms through coverage of the many reigns. See Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy in the Visigothic Kingdom*, 144–49.

⁴ Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy in the Visigothic Kingdom*, 173–245. *Ibid.*, 135–44 discusses the overall network of mints as well as ways of categorizing them in terms of longevity and output; the criteria of minting during five reigns in a row qualify a site as a major as opposed to minor mint, and of these there were over twenty.

to make dies for the coins of Toledo.⁵ This essay primarily expands the author's case for the identifiable styles of several other engravers busy at multiple mints, still a new area of research in Visigothic studies. It incorporates style attributions from the outstanding collection of Visigothic tremisses (or trientes) at the Museo Arqueológico Nacional in Madrid (MAN).⁶

I. Investigation of coin styles to perceive minting habits

Minting operations is a field of significant inquiry regarding the dominant barbarian regime in Hispania where, apart from minor considerations in the late Roman period and the Suevian kingdom along the northwestern coast, the actual creation of coinage was introduced in most of the peninsula by the Visigoths starting in probably the early sixth century. From the early decades of their kingdom established in 419 in southwestern Gaul the Visigothic monarchy had taken up monetary administration including minting. In the fifth century the kingdom's emissions, almost exclusively gold coins, directly imitated Roman currency in standards and appearance. No written record describes actual minting operations by the Visigothic realm at any point from the settlement in Aquitaine until the loss to Muslim invaders starting in 711. Never the less, loads of circumstantial evidence rooted mostly in the coinage itself suggests that the employment of a small minting apparatus in the early decades of the Visigothic settlement in Gaul developed into a much fuller system over many decades, guided by the Roman coinage model both past and present yet forming its own stylistic rendering on gold issues – from closely imitative to “pseudo-imperial Visigothic” emerging in the sixth century – and establishing a novel network of multiple mint sites. The “regal” series began in stages of experimentation as part of the state formation accelerated during the rule of Liuvigild. A valuable question is how the Visigothic state would carry out the making of currency in the new heartland of their kingdom that eventually claimed the entire Iberian Peninsula together with the Provence region, a rule that continued to endure there for over two centuries.

⁵ Ibid., 151-53; more fully developed in Andrew Kurt, “Forging a New Minting Apparatus Under Leovigild and His Son Reccared,” in *Coins and Money in the Middle Ages: Studies in Honor of Alan Stahl*, American Numismatic Society (New York, 2026).

⁶ The American Numismatic Society (ANS) in New York City, which holds the preeminent collection of Visigothic coins, served as the main basis for specific observations and conclusions regarding style in Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy in the Visigothic Kingdom*.

Stamped currency leaves a visual trace of the artisan at the core of the actual functioning of minting. Coin-making required the preparation of gold blanks and dies, for obverse and reverse, with which to stamp them into coins (see Fig. 1 below). Die cutting of Visigothic tremisses was performed with the aid of punches.⁷ In the absence of direct evidence on minting personnel, it cannot be known whether the engraver was also the minter, meaning the chief of the emissions site. We may suppose from general practice reaching back to Roman precedents that workers with separate skills and tasks worked in tandem. Thus the men who prepared blanks, or *flans*, after smelting, and the hammerer who stamped coins by striking dies into blanks were simple laborers whose work must be seen as separate from die cutting at least where large-scale production took place.⁸



Fig. 1. Simulation of a die (on right) used for the obverse side of a tremis, Reccared – Elvora, ANS 2015.48.56

In a general survey of the sort of information numismatics can yield, Andrew Burnett noted that by detailed study of style “it is possible to establish an objective physical link between different coins.”⁹ In fact when so-called die linkage is verifiable, one potential reading is that it “provides

⁷ All features were carved or punched into the iron or possibly steel dies in “*intaglio*,” i.e., into the smoothed surface, so that when gold blanks were hammered between the die faces an impression in low relief emerged on coins.

⁸ On mint staff see Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy in the Visigothic Kingdom*, 124-30 and Rory Naismith, *Making Money in the Early Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ, 2023), 48-50. See also the contribution by David Yoon in this volume.

⁹ Andrew M. Burnett, *Coins: Interpreting the Past* (Berkeley, CA, 1991), 16, specifically referring to examination of punches used in cutting dies.

evidence that they were made at the same place and time.”¹⁰ Another reason is possible: dies could be transported for use in stamping coins elsewhere. Fifth-century Western imperial gold coinage was almost always tied to the presence of the emperor and his court. Minting of gold, and the dies or die workmanship underpinning that activity of prime interest to the state, sometimes shifted geographically because the court was in movement. Under Placidia (r. 423-437) the same dies were used to create some gold pieces at Rome as well as at Aquileia.¹¹ Yet even when distinct dies were used for obverse as well as for reverse in the vast majority of coin issues, similarities in surviving coins often manifest the same hand behind the engraving. Meticulous observation of repeated unique characteristics together with differentiation from other styles gives grounds for associating coins with a specific die sinker.

Among the several thousands of remaining Visigothic tremisses, the coin style on each – and the collective variety of style groups that can be formed from the corpus – is not merely an incidental element of possible relevance for understanding minor artistic expression but more significantly offers a clue to the mint organization. Hypothetical relation can then be made to other activities such as the exercise of taxation or war or perhaps to royal movements. While a specialized field, numismatics opens doors to aspects of money and administration that have considerable ramifications. Since it can easily be accepted that production of money was crucial in the intertwined political, economic, and religious dimensions of the kingdom, greater knowledge of it has the potential to yield further insights into broader aspects of administration and life.¹²

¹⁰ Ibid., 17f. Die linkage occurs when two or more obverses or reverses are from the same die.

¹¹ Ibid., 18; also Kenneth Atkinson, *Empress Galla Placidia and the Fall of the Roman Empire* (Jefferson, NC, 2020), 132. The year was 425. The dies in question are necessarily obverse dies, since the reverse side is where reference is made to the place of minting, here two different cities.

¹² In addition to the literature in n. 1 above, other treatment of the role of coinage in Visigothic society includes: Santiago Castellanos, “The Political Nature of Taxation in Visigothic Spain,” *Early Medieval Europe* 12 (2003), 201–28; *ibid.*, “Tributa and *Historiae*: Scale and Power at a Turning Point in Post-Roman Spain,” in *Scale and Scale Change in the Early Middle Ages: Exploring Landscape, Local Society, and the World Beyond*, ed. Julio Escalona and Andrew Reynolds (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 187–214; Santiago Castellanos and Iñaki Martín Viso, “The Local Articulation of Central Power in the North of the Iberian Peninsula (500–1000),” *Early Medieval Europe* 13 (2005), 1–42; F. Retamero, “La moneda del *regnum gothorum* (ca. 575–714). Una revisión del registro numismático,” in *Between Taxation and Rent: Fiscal Problems from Late Antiquity to Early Middle Ages*, ed.

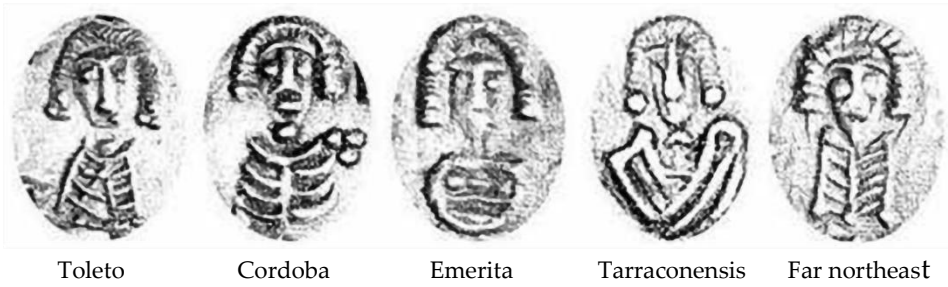


Fig. 2. Principal facing bust type forms. The examples shown are:

Liuvigild – Toledo, ANS 2016.29.9;

Reccared – Cordoba, ANS 2015.48.41; Liuvigild – Emerita, ANS 2015.48.20;

Sisebut – Tarragona, ANS 2013.40.1; Liuvigild – Rodas, ANS 2016.29.4¹³

Starting in Liuvigild's final years, the Visigothic tremisses themselves had become regularized in terms of standards of weight and fineness and the constituent imagery of the dual facing bust.¹⁴ Since the royal bust **sub-types** in the regal series – variations of the general bust form – were not part of a parallel regularization of minting in an essentially provincial schema, it leads us to ask how minting operations were run.¹⁵ (Fig. 2 below displays the principal facing bust type forms, of which there is a range of execution

Pablo C. Díaz and Iñaki Martín Viso (Bari: Edipuglia, 2011), 189-220; and Ruth Pliego, "Figura et potentia. Coin and Power in the Visigothic Kingdom," in *The Visigothic Kingdom: The Negotiation of Power in Post-Roman Iberia*, ed. S. Panzram & P. Pachá (Amsterdam, 2020), 235-55.

¹³ The examples correspond to type categories 2 through 6 in Ruth Pliego, *La moneda visigoda* (Seville, 2009), v. 1, 29-34, 157. Photos in this chapter from the collection of the American Numismatic Society (ANS) are from MANTIS, the Open Access online database of the ANS, with permissions granted for the publication of this work. Photos from the Museo Arqueológico Nacional (MAN) in Madrid are the copyright of Andrew Kurt.

¹⁴ Facing busts were replaced by profile bust on obverses during the joint reign of Chindaswinth and Recceswinth (649-653), then later a variety of types emblazoned the gold pieces. The usual reverse starting under Recceswinth was the cross-on-steps taken up at one stage by Liuvigild. Reigns of the period under consideration are as follows: LIUVIGILD (568-586) ~ RECCARED (586-601) ~ LIUVA II (601-603) ~ WITTERIC (603-610) ~ GUNDEMAR (610-612) ~ SISEBUT (612-621) ~ RECCARED II (621) ~ SUINTHILA (621-631) ~ SISENAND (631-636) ~ IUDILA (632-633), usurper ~ CHINTILA (636-639) ~ TULGA (639-642) ~ CHINDASWINTH (642-649/joint rule 649-653).

¹⁵ In the literature "type" is often used when it is clear from the context that the reference is not to the broad categories (profile bust, facing bust [FB], etc.) for which this term applies but instead specific forms of facing bust type, for instance. For this reason I refer to sub-types or specify that a specific form of the basic type is indicated. I follow the index of types (= sub-types of FB) in Pliego, *La moneda visigoda*, v. 1, 29-35.

constituting sub-types.) Close examination of the various bust sub-types and particular execution of inscriptions reveals that die cutting, a key facet of minting, does not strictly exhibit such a jurisdictional system based on provinces. Instead, regional sub-types and stylistic patterns dominated, some staying within province boundaries but some dispersed in parts of more than one province. Why? It is due to the labor of several individual die engravers or their teams detectable across several reigns at various cities sometimes hundreds of kilometers away, at other times in a smaller circuit. This is a significant point because it draws a direct connection between the places where currency was pounded out.

Mint names can be confidently deemed to represent the places of issue, as confirmed by the preponderance of local or relatively local single finds and by hoard evidence. The variety of epigraphic and bust styles also implies die cutting was not carried out centrally for the distribution of dies to each respective mint throughout the realm. Rather, the production of dies right at the city or town proclaimed on reverse by engravers who often moved around between mint-sites is strongly suggested by the combination of stylistic variation yet at the same time regional likenesses, characteristics that can more naturally be construed as reflecting vicissitudes of craftsmen traveling about and at times working in some conjunction with workers in the area, such as local goldsmiths. It is also suggested by the fact that no obverse die links (with the king's name) between different mints have been noted. Furthermore, centralized sinking of dies is improbable given the evidence, for several reasons: (1) It would entail a very cumbersome practice of some official and engraved dies having to travel back and forth to a central point of die-making; (2) named minting sites would have to be known ahead of time at the Toletum mint, for example, which belies the fluidity of the conquest scenario in Gallaecia alone, where numerous mints opened up under Liuvigild, Reccared, and subsequent rulers; (3) victory slogans have an immediacy about them and often imply the king's own presence – "VICTORIA IN TVDE," "IN TVDE," "IN LVCO VICTOR," and similar in the far northwest, or "SISEBVTVSREꝰ - ꝰVICTORBARBI" in the mid-south. Accompaniment of a royal treasure on campaigns as hinted in the contemporary record conforms to a common custom of the age, whether in late Roman or Germanic contexts.¹⁶ The present ongoing study implies that the presence of die engravers was just as important. Locally targeted

¹⁶ See further in Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy in the Visigothic Kingdom*, 202 n. 612. Kurt, "Forging a New Minting Apparatus" discusses the correspondence of die making and military engagement.

propaganda, channeling of revenue in gold, and a convenient medium of expenditure combined in the hands of this skilled laborer.

The absence of obverse die links among separate mint sites is a synchronic point, giving us some sense of coin production across numerous sites at a given time, in this case during the reign of Liuvigild or Reccared or any early seventh-century Gothic king. Neither have die links been noted diachronically – across different reigns – even from the same mint (i.e., linked reverses exist only within individual reigns but not beyond). Both facts can be explained as a result of a policy of destroying engraved dies after their immediate use. This harmonizes with the assessment of frequent travel by die sinkers as well as with the surprisingly large number of Visigothic dies considered further below.

II. The main engraving styles and the engravers behind them

Ten separate engraving styles emerge from the research to date surrounding the first half of the “regal” series. Each attributed “hand” has an abbreviated form for convenience.

- 1) The “southern engraver” (“So.”) worked exclusively in the center-south.
- 2) The “Ispali engraver” (“Isp.”) started at the mint in Seville and traveled eastward and southward.
- 3) “Baetica/Carthaginensis” (“B/C”), who worked along both sides of the border between these two provinces, is now posited to have begun at Seville and subsequently to have journeyed to the far southeast corner of the realm.
- 4) The “Cordoba engraver” (“Cord.”) was active at Cordoba and possibly a few other mints not very far away.
- 5) The “Toledo engraver” (“Tol.”), or perhaps workshop, has left the greatest trail of work, from the central region of the kingdom to certain southern mints and far into the west and northwest.
- 6) The “Barcinona engraver” (“Barc.”) labored in late ancient Barcelona and surrounding cities.
- 7) The “Narbona engraver” (“N”) was presumably based in that provincial capital of the distant northeast province of Narbonensis. His movements were probably quite limited.
- 8) The “Cesaragusta engraver” (“Ces.”) traveled from ancient Zaragoza to a few nearby mint-sites.
- 9) The “Tarrocona engraver” (“Tarr.”) made fairly limited treks along the coast but labored mostly at what is today Tarragona.

- 10) The “Emerita engraver” (“Emer.”) worked at the extraordinarily important mint of ancient Mérida in the southwest, but also had a significant influence in the western region of the kingdom now in today’s Portugal.

A small visual sample here of the results of this study illustrates emissions from individual engravers in numerous places. The full table of attributions at the conclusion of this essay contains a large array of coins with detailed points of comparison.¹⁷ A single engraver naturally can manifest some variation in letter formation, and periodically this will be observed even on the same coin. For example, for the R in the Witteric-Eliberri coin of the “B/C” hand below (Fig. 12, MAN 2008.115.40), the diagonal stem can meet the vertical stem either halfway up or at the top, which in other specimens of this engraver tends to lead to the top loop being more detached. The key is to look for patterns, particularly with ideosyncratic details.



Fig. 3. Suinthila – Acci, MAN 2008.115.210



Fig. 4. Suinthila – Tucci, ANS 2015.48.230

¹⁷ The table enlarges the one in Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy in the Visigothic Kingdom*, 344-67. It represents a careful, broad survey extending from Liuvigild through Sisesand and in some cases beyond, but is not meant to be exhaustive. It provides explanations of stylistic assignments and at the same time an opportunity for others to test and perhaps expand on the conclusions offered.



Fig. 5. Sisenand – Mentesa, ANS 2016.29.80¹⁸



Fig. 6. Sisenand – Eliberri, MAN 2008.115.226¹⁹

Above: **The “Southern engraver” (“So.”).** From the corpus at present, this hand can be said to have started in the time of Suinthila’s rule, much later than the others. Of the southern engraving styles analyzed in this essay, “So.” is the most easily recognizable by its forked cuirass (military vestment), thin face usually with V-shaped mouth, eyebrows unconnected with eyes or a nose, and thick wedges and letters. The S is top-heavy and usually descends below the line of letters, L’s horizontal stem is formed with a tiny triangular punch, R and E have detached parts. More notes on the distinctiveness of this hand as well as others are provided in the full table at the end and in the sections following the illustrations.

¹⁸ The inscription reads ✠SISENAND:SR – ✠PIVSMENTES.

¹⁹ The inscription reads ✠SISE[NA]NDVSI – [P]IVSELBERI.



Fig. 7. Wittheric – Ispali, MAN 2008.115.44



Fig. 8. Gundemar – Ispali, MAN 2008.115.58



Fig. 9. Suinthila – Tucci, ANS 2015.48.227²⁰



Fig. 10. Suinthila – Acci, MAN 2008.115.209

²⁰ This coin is identical to Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy in the Visigothic Kingdom*, 340f, pl. IV, (F).

Above: The “Ispali engraver” (“Isp.”). Note similarities in the busts, including the cuirass, although there is diverse execution over the years by this craftsman of lengthy tenure. A repeated pattern of this engraving style is the left lean of letters. Also common here is a peculiar cutting of A/V (with diagonal stems meeting high on the top/bottom wedge, giving that wedge an exaggerated scale in the letter, and the base of ending wedges at an angle); E formed very neatly; S (typically taller than other letters and larger on the top half); on reverse a similar P-I-V (P normally with detached loop, as also D). Careful observation confirms several differences from other hands examined.



Fig. 11. Suinthila – Acci, MAN 2008.115.209



Fig. 12. Witteric-Eliberri, MAN 2008.115.40



Fig. 13. Sisebut – Mentesa, MAN 2008.115.125



Fig. 14. Sisebut – Mentesa, MAN 2008.115.126

Above and below: **The “Baetica/Carthaginensis engraver” (“B/C”).** Immediately notable are the resemblance in face and bust, often imperfectly centered, and the backward lean of letters. In all of the examples, A/V have uneven stems and a prominent, squared wedge at top or bottom, unstable S, distinctive R (diagonal stem sometimes touching toward the center of vertical stem, sometimes higher up and with smaller loop). In the photos below, examples from MAN are admixed with coins in the ANS collection.²¹ Though displaying variant forms, they have enough similarity to assign them to the same engraver. Although the letters are thicker and the wedges more detached, they exhibit similar A/V and R. In the less careful letter forms – at some points even backwards or upside down – one can sense a hastiness commensurate with wartime minting, a circumstance signified by the VI for VICTOR at the end of the reverse legend of MAN 2008.115.70 (Fig. 15).



Fig. 15. Sisebut – Barbi, MAN 2008.115.70

²¹ ANS 2015.48.109 and 110 (Figs. 17 and 18) are identical to *ibid.*, 340f, pl. IV (C) and (D).



Fig. 16. Sisebut – Barbi, MAN 2008.115.71



Fig. 17. Sisebut – Eliberri, ANS 2015.48.109



Fig. 18. Sisebut – Eliberri, ANS 2015.48.110



Fig. 19. Reccared – Toledo, ANS 2015.48.38



Fig. 20. Reccared – Toledo, MAN 2008.115.26



Fig. 21. Reccared – Senabria, MAN 2008.115.29²²



Fig. 22. Sisebut – Calapa, MAN 2008.115.138



Fig. 23. Sisebut – Semure, MAN 2008.115.140

Above (Figs. 19-23): The “Toledo engraver” (“Tol.”). Fig. 21, MAN 2008.115.29, is either from a die worked by this hand or perhaps is in a style heavily

²² The inscription reads ✠RECCAREDVSRE – SENABRIAVICTOR (starting at 2:00).

influenced by this hand (see comments in concluding table). The obverse seems particularly close to the images and epigraphy of the other tremisses from Reccared's reign; as for the reverse, in considering its different letter sizing one must observe that more letters had to be included to accommodate the mint name. The triens of the Gallaecian mint Calapa (Fig. 22, MAN 2008.115.138) exhibits the same characteristics as Toledo coins both contemporary and going back to Reccared, as illustrated here. I have deemed the Sisebut-Semure tremissis (Fig. 23, MAN 2008.115.140) "possibly by the Toledo engraver". Singularity of the cuirass form and the face on reverse produces doubt, yet other aspects (esp. S-I-S, B, later S, R, final E, and reverse P-I-V) resemble contemporary Toledo coins in addition to others seen in this selection. At very least "Tol." appears to be a guiding hand. A much fuller focus on this die sinker in a separate publication elucidates the vast extent of his travels from center to south to northwest.²³

Adding a style study of MAN Visigothic tremisses to published results of a similar study based on the collection of the American Numismatic Society has allowed the author to broaden the assignment of certain "hands" to more mints and to a longer span of engravers' activity. The MAN collection confirms the start of the "Baetica/Carthiginensis hand" ("B/C") under Reccared. It also helps corroborate my previous attributions to the "Toledo hand." The museum's many Toledo emissions and greater number of Gallaecian tremisses bring further to light the handiwork of this exceptionally active engraver. (See the map of the artisan's overall itinerary in Figs. 24 & 25.) MAN's collection also clarifies that two separate hands were active at the great mint of Emerita, a discovery expounded later in this essay.

²³ Kurt, "Forging a New Minting Apparatus."

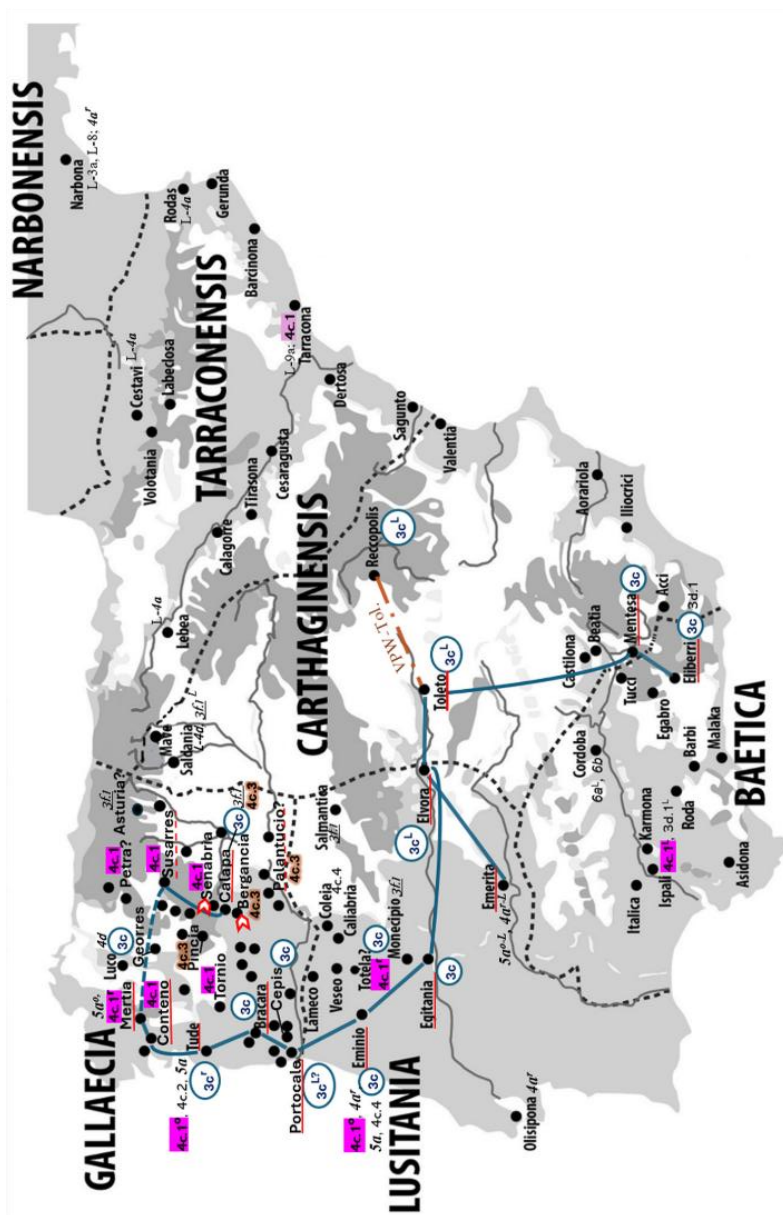


Fig. 24. Map of the route of the “Toledo engraver” and selected early Visigothic Facing Busts sub-types he employed during the reign of Reccared²⁴; map ©Andrew Kurt

²⁴ Reproduced from Kurt, "Forging a New Minting Apparatus" and based on attributions and sub-types elaborated therein. The map focuses on the reign of Reccared. Bust type designations are those found in Pliego, *La moneda visigoda*, v. 1, 29-35. See "L" for

are a strong clue, and the assignments correspond to an ensemble of data.²⁶ Inconsistent spelling of the king's name or the city may well result from local variations and engravers' frequent movements; this often occurred at the same mint and by the same hand.²⁷

On the first level, the geographical pattern that emerges of stylistic likenesses on the coins leads us to better understand how the engraving behind all issues was arranged. It was attested above that there is not a provincial configuration of sub-types and engravers' activity that could indicate an order of minting to that effect. We can only loosely refer to provincial styles, since provinces did not have their own specific type. There is only a more frequent sub-type within some provinces, such as the ones employed consistently at Emerita and frequently taken up at nearby mints.²⁸ Very few of the bust sub-types were associated with just one of the six provinces, or a region within a province.

It has been previously established that the actual striking of coinage was carried out at the locations labeled on the reverses. We have likewise noted above that local fabrication of the dies required for minting can be seen as part of the process.²⁹ The key point is that most mint-sites can be envisioned as positioned along the route of a traveling engraver playing an essential role in satisfying the need for issuing currency at each place. Almost two dozen minting places were relatively permanent, with a substantial output for the

²⁶ Based on early experience in determining style groups in order to arrive at individuated engravers, I had largely assumed an engraver always used the same bust sub-type. However, I have discovered that while this was sometimes true, it was not always so.

²⁷ Variant spelling of king's name: see Philip Grierson and Mark Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage*, v. 1 (Cambridge, 1986), 52. Pliego, *La moneda visigoda*, v. 1 offers helpful observations concerning spelling (183-86) and some technical aspects, as well as the notion that goldsmiths were involved in minting (190-95).

²⁸ Octavio Gil Farrés, "Algunos aspectos de la numismática visigoda: consideraciones acerca del "tipo tercero" de Leovigildo," *Numisma* 5 (no. 17, 1955), 25-61 and *ibid.*, "La moneda sueva y visigoda," in *Historia de España*, v. 3, ed. R. Menéndez Pidal (3rd ed.; Madrid, 1963), 177-91 correctly pointed out a minting arrangement not merely following provincial boundaries, and referred to some "mobile mints." However, his assertions were based on inadequate notions and essentially on cuirass forms alone; he also mistakenly asserted that some dies were used in multiple mint-sites in Gallaecia. The study and accompanying maps in Mateu y Llopis, *Catálogo* are helpful in so far as they recognize specific styles carrying over into more than one province, although the work does not explicitly consider the class of engravers behind this.

²⁹ I also discuss this in Kurt, "Forging a New Minting Apparatus." On mint-names as signifying the actual locations where coins were struck: Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy in the Visigothic Kingdom*, 128, 205, 243.

duration of the Visigothic kingdom, or at least for most reigns. These included capital cities of the six provinces and several other cities of significance (e.g., Cordoba and Barcinona). The trails of die cutters included one or several of these primary mints, and sometimes can be shown to have emanated from one of the more major workshops. As explained further below, the reason for the wide majority of mint sites and for the peregrinations of several engravers serving them was the engagement of Visigothic armies. Military fronts occasioned new minting sites staffed by itinerant personnel.

The engravers I have identified, normally on the move between cities and even provinces, were responsible for a panoply of bust sub-types, each artisan usually employing more than one. When an engraver crossed provincial lines he did not for that reason automatically change the sub-type he utilized; die cutters did not *adhere to* different particular types in that way. What have been characterized as provincial styles saw exceptions because engravers on a circuit were the determining factor, continuing a specific type they were used to using elsewhere or creating a modified form. For instance, this happened when the hand designated “B/C” active in Ispali at the turn of the seventh century later crossed from Baetica into Carthaginensis to begin work at Mentesa and eventually other sites further east (see Path of the “B/C” engraver below). “Tol.” used the same sub-type (3c in Pliego’s classification) in numerous places in his travels through practically the length of the realm, in which he traversed four provinces. But “Tol.” appears to have adapted to the local sub-type of the major mint at Emerita.³⁰ And die cutters did sometimes create a new sub-type. Occasions when the same worker or team can be tied to more than one bust sub-type, as with the “Toleto hand” in the northwest for instance, suggest either adaptation to new instructions for coin design or latitude in carrying out this work. What could have been the motivation for engravers to vary die designs as they traveled beyond one province? It would have served the immediate identification for easy counting in order to ensure control of production, as explored later in this essay.³¹

Both the minting apparatus and craftsmen’s movements correlate to warfare as known from the historical record.³² Engraver itinerancy and zones of conflict are connected at least on the border of the Justinianic occupation

³⁰ Associations between “Tol.” and “Emer.” are probed below.

³¹ Busts of differing sub-type can be identified as from a single hand by epigraphic features and perhaps some element in the face, hair, or cuirass.

³² For a broad discussion of military-related minting and references in others’ scholarship see Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy in the Visigothic Kingdom*, 191-210.

zone in the southeast starting in the mid-sixth century and lasting around three quarters of a century, and also in the northwestern sector – northern Lusitania and what became the Visigothic province of Gallaecia, annexed in 585 but with some Suevic reverberations afterward. Precisely in these large areas gold coin was issued at numerous cities and towns. Often a single hand crafted dies for multiple places in these zones.

III. Specific conclusions from style study

A new attribution, only implied in my previous research, can be assessed for coins coming from the singularly productive mint of Emerita. The “Emerita hand” (abbrev. “Emer.”) carved dies in the early Facing Busts period solely for that city’s tremisses, it seems, yet its unique styles of cuirass were occasionally copied in the northwestern sector of the kingdom. All extant Emerita tremisses in Liuvigild’s name, both cross-on-steps and – more abundantly – Facing Busts, include “Victoria” or “Victor” on reverse. In Reccared’s trientes the epithet “Victor” continued, all of these coming from the “Emerita hand” as well. However, the style of some of the coins *without* the victory slogan on reverse, from Reccared’s day to the 640s, match the “Toledo hand.” In others also with “Pius” instead of “Victor,” the execution of busts and inscriptions suggests more copying of style than deriving from the engraver of the royal city. It will be evident to anyone on close inspection that “Tol.” and “Emer.” hands bear resemblance, if one looks beyond the quite distinct bust forms between them (details of the face are often alike).³³

A hypothesis may be offered. There are strong hints that Emerita was visited by the engraver from the royal capital. The die cutting at Emerita was sometimes carried out by these two (or more) engravers working in tandem, whereby cross-influences and yet certain distinctions resulted, though some of the coinage came from one engraver present in both places as well as in many others – i.e., the “Toledo hand” described above. If the “Tol.” engraver did in fact strike dies at Emerita, he used different sub-types than he was used to, adopting the Emeritan forms. This also was the case with the same engraver at times as he traveled through parts of Gallaecia.³⁴ In that new

³³ Besides the Reccared specimens, one can easily observe how all the coins at MAN in Sisebut’s name from Toledo (MAN 2008.115.130-137) and all those from Emerita (MAN 2008.115.143-155) have a verifiable resemblance (see details in the table concluding this chapter).

³⁴ See Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy in the Visigothic Kingdom*, 152f and *ibid.*, “Forging a New Minting Apparatus.”

territory a good reason to have taken up the unique Emeritan sub-types would be to preserve a visual tool for quick identification, a practice elaborated below. At Emerita usage of the same sub-types by seemingly separate hands would negate this feature, though it is possible tucking a letter on the bottom of the reverse legend within the extension of the king's cuirass was meant as a distinguishing element of particular issues for the same purpose.³⁵



Fig. 26. Reccared – Toletum, MAN 2008.115.26



Fig. 27. Reccared – Emerita, MAN 2008.115.30



Fig. 28. Reccared – Senabria, MAN 2008.115.29



Fig. 29. Reccared – Emerita, MAN 2008.115.33

³⁵ As far as I have been able to verify at this time, this is not a habit of “Tol.” alone.

Above: Emerita tremisses paralleled with Toledo and other issues. While Figs. 26 and 27, MAN 2008.115.26 and 2008.115.30, reflect a very similar epigraphic rendering, the three other Reccared – Emerita issues in the MAN collection show wedges with wide serifs and other smaller distinctions (cf. Fig. 29, 2008.115.33). A and V of these Emerita specimens have angled wedges, not a characteristic of the “Tol.” style. On the other hand, a notable similarity is the sideways position of the final S on reverse at Emerita sometimes, a feature otherwise found almost solely at Toledo. Rather obvious likeness between 2008.115.30 from Emerita and 2008.115.29 of Senabria, Figs. 27 and 28, most especially the reverse letters, poses the possibility that the “Emerita hand” that I suppose to be behind the former coin was responsible for the die cut at Senabria in recently annexed Gallaecia. For the researcher the most difficult aspect in comparing between coins of Toledo and Emerita is not the difference in sub-type, which can be taken as an intentional distinction between products of the two prominent cities of the realm, but rather the similitude between these specimens on the one hand and yet how dissimilar certain emissions of Emerita begin to appear. Other samples in the table under “Emer.” are less alike and imply the labor of separate artisans in that busy workshop.



Fig. 30. Reccared – Emerita, MAN 1971.71.11



Fig. 31. Reccared – Egitania, ANS 2015.48.237

One more noteworthy addition to the “Emer.” attribution is the observation that Suinthila-Egitania trientes are from this same hand. (See photos above.) Numerous details in the table reaffirm the point. More study will have to be done to determine whether this die cutter traveled in previous

decades as well. It cannot be deemed extraordinary that the mint of Egitania, not far to the northwest within the same province of Lusitania, should have been in the operational orbit of the principal workshop at Emerita, especially while other engravers to the west were pulled further in that direction. Here is the first documentation of this extension of the unique Emerita attribution.

IV. New lights on currency in the kingdom's southern domain

One of several engravers circulating in the kingdom's southern parts was the "Baetica/Carthaginensis hand" (abbrev. "B/C"), so called because he operated largely among multiple mint-sites on either side of the provincial border area. The present study now extends the "B/C" style attribution formerly traced to the first decade of the seventh century back further in time, to the final decade or so of the sixth century, and entails a geographical expansion of the engraver's activity to Ispali, today's Seville, likely his original base (see the Path of the engravers below). Our findings point to this hand as a second die-cutter involved in producing gold coinage at that city's major mint. In a previous publication I identified a specific style of most engraving there, labeling it the "Ispali hand," or "Isp."³⁶ There is evident likeness between "Isp." and "B/C" engraving styles as the expansion of the minting system took off in the reign of Reccared, but two separate styles are in question.³⁷ The Madrid museum's Ispali issues from the reigns of Reccared and Liuva II (MAN 2008/115/20-25 and 35, cf. Fig. 32) correspond to the "B/C" hand previously assigned only for the provincial border area by way of numerous examples starting in the name of Witteric.³⁸ We can see both similitude and differentiation in comparing Witteric and Gundemar's Ispali issues of "Isp." (including MAN 2008/115/42-44 in the table at the end of this chapter, cf. Figs.

³⁶ Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy in the Visigothic Kingdom*, 150f.

³⁷ MAN 2008/115/42-44 of Witteric-Ispali are close in appearance to my "B/C" attributions in *ibid.*, 340f, pl. IV(A-D) (Sisebut-Acci, -Barbi, -Eliberri), esp. the top-heavy S and the R, and these present a particularly challenging assignment. Tremisses of the "Ispali engraver" ("Isp.") exemplified in *ibid.*, pl. IV(E,F) are slightly neater and exhibit less likeness in the busts and faces (e.g., in the well-separated eyebrows). Early regal Toledo & Ispali emissions have a likeness suggesting at least a cross-influence. See *ibid.*, 336f, pl. II, G & H (Reccared-Toledo & -Ispali) and *ibid.*, 342f, pl. V, 1324 & 1325 (Reccared-Toledo & -Ispali) and 1328 (Liuva II-Ispali).

³⁸ Cf. Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy in the Visigothic Kingdom*, 353. Toledo & Ispali emissions have a likeness suggesting at least a cross-influence. See *ibid.*, 336-37, pl. II, G & H (Reccared-Toledo & -Ispali) and *ibid.*, 342-43, pl. V, 1324 & 1325 (Reccared-Toledo & -Ispali) and 1328 (Liuva II-Ispali).

35 and 37) with these kings' Eliberri tremisses of "B/C" style (MAN 2008/115/40, 41, 55, cf. Figs. 34 and 36). Reccared's Ispali coins of the MAN collection have the fuller R of "B/C" (as also in no. 41 reverse, cf. Fig. 36); E with three detached punches for cross stems; awkward S; heavy left lean of letters starting around 5:00; irregular letter size and uneven positioning for a less neat appearance than the "Isp." hand.³⁹ The reverses of nos. 21 (Fig. 32) and 22 (see the table) are good examples of the tall, etched-in letters of "B/C," as well as the eyebrows flowing directly into the nose; the ends of the hair have the typical several small dots.⁴⁰



Fig. 32. Reccared – Ispali, MAN 2008.115.21 ("B/C")



Fig. 33. Gundemar – Ispali, MAN 2008.115.58 ("Isp.")

³⁹ E.g., Ispali specimens in *ibid.*, 340-41, pl. IV, E & F.

⁴⁰ Compare MAN 2008/115/40, 41 (Witteric – Eliberri) of the "B/C" engraver to MAN 2008/115/42-44 (Witteric – Ispali) assigned to the "Isp." engraver: Varying styles of the cross at the top of the legend are shared by both mints, and busts and letters often seem of the same style. In general, however, coins assigned to "B/C" such as Eliberri's have taller letters in which there is more etching between stems, contrasting with letters formed more from wedge punches with little or no etching between in the "Isp." attribution. The letter P of "B/C" is usually thin with a small attached loop, versus a wider P with detached loop; R has fuller loops and stems.



Fig. 34. Witteric-Eliberri, MAN 2008.115.40 ("B/C")



Fig. 35. Witteric-Ispali, MAN 2008.115.42 ("Isp.")



Fig. 36. Witteric-Eliberri, MAN 2008.115.41 ("B/C")



Fig. 37. Witteric-Ispali, MAN 2008.115.44 ("Isp.")

Ispali tremisses nos. 42 and 44, Figs. 35 and 37, assigned to "Isp." have a longer face as well as eyebrows separated from each other and from the nose; R is less fully formed and the diagonal stem usually lands slightly lower; A/V

have angled ending wedges, the horizontal stem of E bends backward a bit; C is slightly tilted and its ending wedges are not straight. Inclusion of a second cross at the end (11:00) standing for X may signify a separate worker, though this may just as easily be a control mark used by a single hand for a later or earlier issue. The obverse cross of nos. 40 & 41 of Eliberri ("B/C") in Figs. 34 and 36 is tilted and begins just left of center; a strong leftward lean and different look of P on reverse is typical of this style. On the whole the differentiation is subtle.

The likeness between the styles must have to do with the proximity of the artisans. By Witteric's reign at the latest, the engraving patterns of "B/C" show up far to the east of Ispali at Eliberri and soon Mentesa, where previously "Tol." was responsible for sinking dies; thus the different style discloses a shift of responsibility for this area to an artisan from the mint at Seville. Then under Sisebut this die sinker traveled to Acci, Barbi, and towards the southeastern coast at Iliocrici and Aorariola.⁴¹ The distant travel to these two new sites of minting near the Byzantine headquarters at Carthago Spartaria (Cartagena) is a unique contemporary witness to the beginnings of an assault not reaching its completion until the next reign. Under Suinthila (621-31), the "Isp." engraver was active at Acci and Mentesa (see the Path of the engraver laid out below). From the several engravers in evidence at Acci, Mentesa, and Tucci during Suinthila's reign, we can perceive a shifting of mint personnel during these decades toward the central-southern region of the kingdom when the war against Byzantine occupation was reaching its climax. As Acci, Mentesa, and Tucci each had three engravers active during Suinthila's reign, the reasonable conclusion points to that area as a zone with a special urgency for coinage.⁴² Coin evidence in conjunction with the contemporary narrative record implies that the surge in temporary minting correlates best to military expenditure, for both soldiers' salaries and supplies.⁴³ In the next reign the "Isp." engraver may have retreated – likely with a small minting team – from Acci and Mentesa, as the research to date has not revealed this style apart

⁴¹ It is possible new finds would alter this picture, but the contours should still remain intact.

⁴² Cordoba also had three engravers during this period. The "Cordoba hand" ("Cord.") had long represented the only style there, but in the reign of Suinthila the "Southern hand" ("So.") and "Isp." also appear.

⁴³ See Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy in the Visigothic Kingdom*, 191-210; see also *ibid.*, 161-72 on how this could affect metallurgical standards. Other possible motives for such remarkable short-term emissions include the opening of taxation in recovered territory and the conversion of foreign currency.

from Tucci (a small proportion of its output) and Seville itself, in the five years Sisenand reigned (631-636), at which time the war had been concluded.

In the immediately following years (Chintila, r. 636-639) the "B/C" hand took over the engraving role of "Isp." at Tucci in what can be viewed as a post-war consolidation (though "So." continued making dies there for at least a short time, as revealed by a single surviving example, and "Isp." was amply engaged at Cordoba and Ispali). Already the travels of "B/C" had been decreasing. His activity at Barbi distinguishes this artisan from others in the south in the climax of the war. Ispali is identified also as his place of origin.

Path of the "B/C" engraver	Path of the "Isp." engraver
RECCARED: Ispali	RECCARED: Ispali
LIUVA II: Ispali	LIUVA II: Ispali
WITTERIC: Mentesa – Eliberri	WITTERIC: Ispali
GUNDEMAR: Mentesa – Eliberri	GUNDEMAR: Ispali
SISEBUT: Mentesa – Eliberri – Barbi – Acci – Iliocrici – Aorariola	SISEBUT: Ispali – Tucci?
SUINTHILA: Mentesa – Eliberri – Barbi	SUINTHILA: Ispali – Cordoba – Tucci – Mentesa – Acci – Asidona
SISENAND: Barbi	SISENAND: Ispali – Cordoba – Tucci – Asidona
CHINTILA: Tucci	CHINTILA: Ispali – Cordoba

While more comprehensive stylistic study will be useful, and absolute conclusions cannot be drawn from engraver movements, it fits the sum of the evidence to view Ispali's second engraver as supporting the engagements of the army further east by adding mint personnel there. After Reccared's and Liuva II's reign, this "B/C" engraver never returned to Ispali, as the substantial surviving corpus implies. He enjoyed great longevity in the center of what is modern Andalucía.⁴⁴ Happenstance modern discoveries have brought us particularly close to his labors. The chance unearthing in 1891 of the giant "La Capilla" hoard and the find in the 1980s of a hoard of several thousand Visigothic gold pieces have rendered a high number of die links among Suinthila's Barbi coins, which derives from the burial of the treasures

⁴⁴ So also regarding regional work in parallel, observations in the appended table that connect the "Isp." hand to coins of Gundemar and more than a single example from Witteric fill a chronological gap that helps to reconfirm this as one of the prolific die-sinkers through decades.

nearby in that reign and the next (La Capilla during the rule of Sisenand, 631-636, and Fuentes de Andalucía during the rule of Suinthila, 621-631), before the coins struck at that mint had a chance to disperse more widely.⁴⁵ We do not find such a clustering of the hoard's coins attributable to the "Isp." engraver. Presumably a few years prior to burial a sizeable set of Barbi coins from dies by the "B/C" hand went into the hoards not long after issue.

The work of the "Southern hand" ("So.") only surfaces in the 620s, but this hand accounts for a good deal of coinage in at least five cities: Acci, Cordoba, Eliberri, Mentesa, and Tucci. He continued under Sisenand to have a central role in the minting at all of these towns, and at this time also cut dies at Castellona and far-away Ilici on the southeast coast, then in Chintila's reign produced dies at a host of mints including Barbi and Egabro. The erratic spelling (e.g., at Mentesa) and execution of bust are commensurate with a heavy workload. A reasonable deduction is that in this period of pressing need for coinage he emerged from Cordoba, from which he traveled eastward and maintained his essential work zone in the border area between eastern Baetica and lower Carthaginensis.

This third engraver that I suppose was an offshoot likely from Cordoba traveled amid numerous cities where final confrontation against Byzantium and the war's aftermath were occurring. A conjecturable itinerary can be laid out (underlined mint names denote emissions also from the "Isp." hand, italicized mint names from "B/C"):

Path of the "So." engraver

SUINTHILA: Cordoba – Tucci – Mentesa⁴⁶ – *Eliberri* – Acci

SISENAND: Cordoba – Castellona – Tucci – Mentesa – *Eliberri* – Acci – Ilici

CHINTILA: Cordoba – Tucci – Mentesa – Egabro – Barbi – *Eliberri* – Acci

TULGA: Cordoba – Beatia – Tucci – Barbi – *Eliberri*

⁴⁵ See Pliego, *La moneda visigoda*, v. 2, 234-41 on La Capilla; for Fuentes de Andalucía see Ruth Pliego, "Visigothic Currency: Recent Developments and Data for Its Study," in *Framing Power in Visigothic Society: Discourses, Devices, and Artifacts*, ed. Céline Martin and Eleonora Dell'Elicine (Amsterdam, 2020), 181-216. Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy in the Visigothic Kingdom*, 354f lists nearly forty Suinthila-Barbi issues, noting die links.

⁴⁶ Easily observable is the erratic character of the inscriptions, including spelling, and the heavy use of marks. These traits continue during Sisenand, when the engraving of a cross sometimes replaces the monarch's face. See the photos above of examples of "So.," specifically the obverse of ANS 2016.29.80 in Fig. 5.

Although the attribution to Cordoba is made less certain by that mint's distinct bust styles and more pronounced letter forms (such as R), crosses substituting for faces at several of the "So." sites listed mimic the cross used in place of the cuirass sometimes at Cordoba. I sense a meshing of style elements and take the numerous similarities to denote a single craftsman. Other fusing of elements occurred. A surviving Sisenand-Tucci tremissis appears unmistakably as the vestige of two engravers' work. The obverse is from a die of "Isp.," whereas the reverse is from a die clearly from "So.," as discerned from bust sub-type, spelling, and execution of the letters.⁴⁷ Some Sisebut-Eliberri issues matching the "B/C" style enclose busts of Emerita type, otherwise absent in the south.

There is no doubting the considerable movement of the engravers in the southern zone, as well as adaptability. A further clue in this regard is the working of dies by the "Southern hand" for Sisenand at Iliocrici, when a decade or two earlier "B/C" performed the task there. One other point should not go without remarking. Iudila, a failed usurper during an early stage of Sisenand's rule, minted currency at Eliberri from dies by this "Southern hand."⁴⁸ It makes sense that a challenger would co-opt the local mint workers to produce his own currency. It would be the most obvious way to carry out minting. He also secured the services of the engraver at Emerita temporarily. The occurrences further attest to the cutting of dies locally, since it is hard to imagine a centralized or controlled regionalized engraving that would allow the making of an obverse with Iudila's name.

Multiple hands and mixing of hands noted at numerous southern mints is not a phenomena found almost anywhere apart from wartime. Elaboration of the currency production is what the coins reveal on this more intricate level of inspection that goes beyond the mere tallying of surviving coins, always fraught with the dangers of hoard bias or other coincidence which might not reflect the reality of the time accurately. Spans of intensified minting are when symbols or abbreviation marks could be apt as control marks. Three separate engravers show activity at Mentesa and Acci – "B/C," "Isp.," and "So.," from the 610s to the 630s. When we come to Suinthila's reign two separate engravers are in evidence at Tucci, Mentesa, and Acci – "Isp." and "So." At

⁴⁷ Pliego, *La moneda visigoda*, v. 2, 463.1 (p. 297). Ibid., pp. 296-97, series 462 through 465 of Sisenand-Tucci are mostly "Isp." designs, but the "So." hand was involved in 463-465. The spelling matches the latter engraver's custom, never the less the reverse epithet has IVSTVS used by "Isp." and not the usual PIVS of the "Southern engraver."

⁴⁸ Iudila also minted at Emerita, these coins apparently from the "Emerita hand." See Pliego, *La moneda visigoda*, v. 2, 303. The few extant coins may correspond to very sparse emissions.

Tucci the "Isp." hand used symbols (•• on obverse as substitute for A and between one and three stacked dots either as abbreviation or not; and ••• on reverse as abbreviation).⁴⁹ The fact that the same bust sub-type was used and the letter forms are similar at the three places renders these coins not easily distinguishable. This opens the possibility that the symbols may have served at least in part to distinguish the emissions of the different engravers in that city then, perhaps to keep track more easily of coins struck for distinct purposes. At Castelona the minting in Sisenand's reign entailed the labor of two engravers, "So." and another hand, possibly "Isp."⁵⁰ Some of the coins deriving from both die cutters contain symbols, primarily a dot or dots at the end of one of the inscriptions. This makes sense from an administrative perspective, during a period of relatively huge output in the central-southern area 100-200 km north of the coast, where Visigothic troops were at the height of a decades-long series of offensives to remove the Byzantine troops occupying an enclave stretching from their main base at Carthago Spartaria. Once more we can recognize a concerted effort at keeping order in a complex monetary and political environment.⁵¹ A coordinated, in some way centralized plan must lie behind the minting mechanics.

In the extreme south issues from Asidona during Suinthila's rule (621-631) come from the die cutter labeled "Isp.," also active at Ispali, Cordoba, Tucci, Mentesa, and Acci; the last three were also on the path of other minters in the same period⁵² (see mint-lists above). Asidona and Tucci emissions have similar use of dots as abbreviations. Dies assumably by this engraver for Sisenand (r. 631-636) continued to be made at least at Ispali, Asidona, and Tucci.⁵³ However, some question of the attribution remains because at Asidona the form of D is different, as is R (short, punched stem is positioned low, and the loop of P is detached), yet otherwise similar forms and the same neat look and bust-type provide a basis for the attribution. The changes in letter D occur at Asidona, but not at Tucci.

Suinthila-Barbi issues, all from the "B/C" hand,⁵⁴ sometimes had one or two dots but not as a letter substitute. In the next reign use of dots accelerated.

⁴⁹ See Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy in the Visigothic Kingdom*, 340f, pl. IV, F and H.

⁵⁰ Pliego, *La moneda visigoda*, v. 2, 280f.

⁵¹ On easy identification for purposes of minting control see Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy in the Visigothic Kingdom*, 105, 129f, 139 n. 409, 156, 183, 365.

⁵² Cf. *ibid.*, 340f, pl. IV, E & F.

⁵³ For known specimens and numerous photos see Pliego, *La moneda visigoda*, v. 2, 286 and 296f.

⁵⁴ Typical characteristics include: Obv. – left lean, small A, A/V stems meet before the horizontal-punch serif, D is backwards, R is formed as a tall, left-slanting A with small

Sisenand–Barbi tremisses often included two or three dots (sometimes ••), not usually as abbreviation, a fact that once again implies an addition with intended meaning. Given the variety this engraver employed in the same years at Barbi as well as Eliberri, there must have been a need to easily identify different issues as well as different mints. Limited literacy could have been a factor in this custom.

Other, lesser discoveries emerge through extant specimens from this very time. Yet another engraver was behind the coins issued at Malaka under Sisenand. Its style is close to the “B/C” hand but is unique. The engraving and the mint itself was only temporary, known only from this five-year reign.⁵⁵ One or two additional short-term mints in the southern quarter give the immediate impression of being *sui generis* in style. They require a closer look than has been afforded at this time.

V. Observations on engraving work in Gallaecia

The impressive itinerary of the “Toledo hand” (“Tol.”) that reached well into Gallaecia has been explored in a separate publication.⁵⁶ In that study the MAN collection permitted northwestern mints to be newly added to the “Tol.” attribution – Calapa with certainty, Senabria and Georres with less confidence but demonstrating at least a copying of the Toledan style. A small but possibly significant observation regards spelling variations from the norm: ✠WITTIRICVSRE (e.g., MAN 2008/115/48, Senabria), ✠SESEBVTVSRE (MAN 2008/115/141, Senabria), ✠SISIBVTVS*RE (MAN 2008/115/139, Georres).⁵⁷ Additionally, special marks were employed, such as: Witteric-Senabria (no. 48, an X at the end of rev.), Sisebut-Georres (no. 139, * on obv.), Sisebut-Semure (Fig. 23, MAN 2008/115/140, : in place of the final S on rev.), Sisebut-Calapa (Fig., 22, MAN 2008/115/138, •• on rev. between the two words), Sisebut-Emerita (an X at the end of rev.).⁵⁸ These could be privy marks or some

loop. Rev. – The cuirass slants downward on the left; P is wide and lightly attached, A is small.

⁵⁵ See Pliego, *La moneda visigoda*, v. 2, 296. The four coins bear resemblance to “So,” but not closely in the rendering of the face and the S. It is close to the “B/C” sub-type (but not face) and epigraphy (✠, use of large triangular wedges, A-N, D, R, but at Malaka the S is straight and neat).

⁵⁶ Kurt, “Forging a New Minting Apparatus”; see Figs. 24 and 25 above.

⁵⁷ See respectively Pliego, *La moneda visigoda*, v. 2, 147, no. 209.2; 203, no. 323.2; 199, no. 307.2.

⁵⁸ See respectively *ibid.*, 147, no. 209.2; 199, no. 307.2; 202, no. 321.1; 199, no. 303.1; 193, no. 286c.1.

other control devices like those that appear on roughly a third of the Visigothic gold currency.⁵⁹ Perhaps these served the same purpose of facilitating accounting that I suppose for marks used heavily in the south. A general point worth reiterating is that Gallaecian bust sub-types were sometimes that of "Tol." and in other cases were unique, reflecting a few different local engravers, perhaps goldsmiths. Some of these also were peripatetic, but in a much smaller circuit than "Tol." or the die-cutters in the south.

VI. Conclusions from the different numismatic vantage point

What prompted the activity of engravers through a course leading them to multiple cities? The answer at a simple level would be that their habits were in response to a need for coinage, whether that was driven by an authority above or was propelled by forces at a local level. The need might be for new coinage or for re-minting of pre-existing currency. And because frequently engravers were on the move between cities, we can say their function was intermittent. Perhaps die-engraving and stamping of new coins lasted just a few weeks or months in a single place, then a circuit was followed until at some point these sites were revisited. The timing would have to allow for periods of travel. What dictated this specific engraving, and presumably the entire minting cycle, is unrecorded. Some of the movement of the person or team responsible for emitting coins can be clearly associated with war zones.

If engraving and minting sometimes coincided with the collection of taxation, the question arises how that timing was determined. Areas may have established different dates for the gathering of taxes, given the limited availability of minters, or at least of engravers. If not, collected revenues in stamped coin or unstamped precious metal must have been kept for some time under guard until the engraver arrived. The old gold was melted down for new coin. One more clue of operations is the phenomenon already observed above, that dies apparently were not reused in later years even by the same engraver, as indicated by the complete absence of links across reigns in mint-places where the same stylistic peculiarities over a long span are quite

⁵⁹ A highly useful if necessarily limited study of marks was first offered in Peter Bartlett, Gonzalo Cores Uria and Maria Cruz Cores Gomendio, "The Use of Dots as Control Marks in the Coin Legends at the Visigothic Mint of Ispali During the Reign of Sisebut (612-21)," *XIII Congreso Internacional de Numismática* (Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura, 2003), 1127-33. Late Roman and Byzantine use of control marks, although in forms different from Visigothic, is a likely inspiration.

clear. There is no indication that dies circulated. No Visigothic dies are extant, as holds true throughout the early medieval centuries broadly, yet the number of dies made was very large. The natural conclusion would be that dies were regularly destroyed, perhaps immediately after a sole period of use. Research has shown the relatively short circulation of tremisses (10–20 years), corresponding to frequent re-minting and therefore rapid creation of dies.⁶⁰

It is well established in the scholarship that the minting of gold in the kingdom was not only a royal prerogative but was also centrally directed. This attestation is based on maintenance throughout the realm of denomination (tremissis), basic standards, general type (Facing Bust on both sides from late in Liuvigild's reign up to Recceswinth's), the fixed set of inscriptions.⁶¹ The present study can add to this in some way in exposing a system that at one level established the general mint operations in administrative capitals and major cities but at another level responded aptly to an extraordinary need for coin for many years in war zones with shifting, sometimes new, personnel. In the process the engraver of the *urbs regium* had a direct role, as witnessed in his movements in the southern and northwestern conflict areas. But his involvement appears to extend even beyond this. Resemblance between the "Tol." and "Emer." styles is noted above. Furthermore some of Emerita's emissions may have come from the "Toledo hand"; if so, he adapted to the local mint's bust form, possibly an identification aid. Emissions of "Toledo" and "Ispali" also have a likeness

⁶⁰ David Yoon, "Modelling the Lifetime in Circulation of Visigothic Gold Coins," in *Proceedings of the XVI International Numismatic Congress, 11–16.09.2022, Warsaw*, vol. 3: *Medieval Numismatics*, ed. Jarosław Bodzek, Aleksander Bursche, and Anna Zapolska (Turnhout: Brepols, 2025), 107–14; a version is also available as *ibid.*, "The Lifetime in Circulation of Visigothic Coins," *Pocket Change* (blog), *American Numismatic Society*, May 12, 2020, <https://numismatics.org/pocketchange/visigothic/>. Yoon utilizes hoard data to demonstrate a fairly short period of circulation, a fact commensurate with currency in the very early medieval period. Cf. Bartlett et al., "Use of Dots," where it is estimated for Ispali during Sisebut's reign that more than 20 dies per year were used. Pliego, "Visigothic Currency," 181 observes the rapid die turnover in the kingdom; see also *ibid.*, *Moneda visigoda*, v. 1, 191 on the contemporary melting down and recycling of the gold coins.

⁶¹ Royal control, albeit with localisms, is demonstrated in Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy in the Visigothic Kingdom*, 76, 105, 156f, 231–45. See also Pliego, *La moneda visigoda*, v. 1 and Steinbach, *Imitation, Innovation und Imperialisierung*. In Kurt, "Forging a New Minting Apparatus" I explain that ongoing use of several bust designs from Reccared's day alone implies an organized framework of the developing minting system at a key stage of Hispania as it united under Visigothic rule.

suggesting at least a cross-influence.⁶² Who directed all the minting activity? A supervisor at the court had to have provided direction on the essentials, and possibly mint-places, even levels of production. There is reason to believe it was an official called the *comes thesaurorum*.⁶³ One more hint at central direction is the fact that mobile minting does not remain a constant in the long period of the “regal series.” In the vast reduction of mints during the coinage reforms completed during Recceswinth’s rule the itinerancy of engravers ceased, possibly to be taken up again later at a small number of peripheral mint-sites.⁶⁴

In sum, careful style examination allows us to put several important pieces together to form a clearer understanding of how coin production functioned.

1) The Visigothic monetary system utilized numerous engravers from the 580s to around 650, but not as many as the number of mints, which came to a little over 100 in total or a few dozens at any given time.

2) The itinerant character of engraving is detectable when style comparisons are made across the wide spectrum of mints and reigns. Taking into account variations in spelling on coins by the same engraver, and sometimes spelling errors, one is led to suspect engravers were illiterate.⁶⁵ This was likely true even of the Toletto die cutter.

3) In working backward from Visigothic coins known today, when traveling die cutters can be traced to a starting point it is to a major mint. Toledo was the origin of “Tol.,” Ispali the origin of “Isp.” and “B/C,” Cordoba the origin of “Cord.” and “So.”

4) Not only huge spikes in mint output but also the setting of engravers in motion can be associated with known zones of military confrontation. As

⁶² See Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy in the Visigothic Kingdom*, 336-37, pl. II, G & H (Reccared-Toletto & -Ispali) and *ibid.*, 342-43, pl. V, 1324 & 1325 (Reccared-Toletto & -Ispali) and 1328 (Liuva II-Ispali).

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 55, 131-34, 155-57, 205, 233. When it comes to specific bust-types and legends, it is useful to keep in mind Philip Grierson’s observation: “[...] one suspects that despite the general “regal” appearance of the coinage [at peripheral mints] much really depends on local initiative.” Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage*, v. 1, 53.

⁶⁴ The question merits further study, though a superficial review indicates a different organizational model without mobile die cutters and whatever crew traveling with them. Scholarship has discerned in the same decades a turning point as taxes were less efficiently collected and some degree of a standing army including garrisons employed earlier all but disappeared, and recourse was made to private armies.

⁶⁵ Among many examples by which illiteracy is suspected, see the spelling variations in Reccared – Emino coins in Pliego, *La moneda visigoda*, v. 2, 111f, esp. no. 121.1, which is correctly rendered “RECCAREDAES” (see photo). See also Sisenand – Eliberri (MAN 2008.115.226) of the “Southern engraver” illustrated above in Fig. 6.

was the practice in late Roman minting, personnel were sent out from an established workshop. Evidence suggests the "Toleto hand" accompanied the king when he took part in campaigns.⁶⁶

5) The "Toleto hand" had some place in the direction of minting coming from the center. Apart from the direct activity of "Tol." at numerous mints, its stylistic influences hint at interactions, although the role of this engraver is hard to work out precisely. He should be regarded as an agent of centralization in some degree, even if that is not fully clear and his influence is not evident in the northeast of the kingdom, which appears to have had a separate development.

6) In the vast majority of the minting of the south and perhaps throughout the kingdom in the first half-century of the Facing Bust type, individual engravers used very few distinct sub-types. The dots often added between letters may have been used when engravers occasionally crossed over into a different sub-type, though this point is inconclusive at this stage of study. Assorted distinguishing symbols may be surmised to have assisted in easy identification and thereby careful administration of the currency.

7) Those involved in minting in the Visigothic realm never used the same obverse die in two or more places, and there is no known instance of a reverse die used for more than a single reign. The use of dies was often quite extensive but also brief, and the itinerant pace of die cutters was rapid enough to comprise several mints perhaps in few years, possibly even in a single year. The more the system of die working is explored, the more it instills a sense of the considerable volume of Visigothic gold of the regal series. Reminting and new die cutting go together, and both encourage the idea that contemporary output was greater than what the limited extant coinage suggests and what the preponderance of the scholarship has supposed. Many dies and huge production also reinforces the need for a foresighted mint administration that incorporated both regular mints and their crews as well as adaptability in setting up new places of emissions.

8) Future work may be able to draw a connection between cycles of both minting activity and taxation. This entails the query of how mints obtained gold.

Mint administration had an organizing principle combining an overall centralized direction and territorial responsibility revolving around provincial centers, but hinging operationally around the function of engravers. Once the sharp condensing of mints was carried out when Recceswinth took the throne, a different way of operating was put in place

⁶⁶ For further discussion see Kurt, "Forging a New Minting Apparatus."

that may have utilized itinerant engravers only very occasionally in later decades, when a few other mint-sites issued gold temporarily.



Index of Visigothic die engraver attributions

This study augments the numerous engraver attributions in Andrew Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy in the Visigothic Kingdom: From Settlement in Aquitaine through the First Decade of the Muslim Conquest of Spain*, published by Amsterdam University Press in 2020. A complete explanation of the methodology of the stylistic analysis that comprises Appendix II of the book can be found in the early pages of that lengthy section.⁶⁷ Abbreviations, several plates of illustrations, and a substantial table detailing many engraving styles in the first half-century of “regal” Visigothic currency are furnished in that appendix.

The following set of symbols and abbreviations appear in the table:

- > = the reasons for an attribution to a particular engraver
- * = very similar; the resemblance suggests the work of a single engraver
- ** = extremely similar; the resemblance strongly indicates the work of a single engraver
- obv. = obverse
- rev. = reverse
- + = the cross at 12:00 on facing-busts tremisses
- pl. = plate
- incl. = including
- esp. = especially

Institutional and bibliographical references in the table:

ANS	American Numismatic Society (New York, NY)
Aureo	Auction catalogs of Aureo, S. A., under the title of <i>Subasta Numismática</i> .
BM	British Museum, coins as referenced in Pliego 2009.
Chaves	Rafael Chaves and María José Chaves, <i>Acuñaciones previsigodas y visigodas en Hispania, desde Honorio a Achila II</i>

⁶⁷ Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy in the Visigothic Kingdom*, 329-33. The complete Appendix II is in 329-86.

- (Madrid, 1984).
- CNV** Jesús Vico Monteoliva, María Cruz Cores Gomendio, and Gonzalo Cores Uría, *Corpus Nummorum Visigothorum: ca. 575-714, Leovigildus-Achila* (Madrid: the authors, 2006).
- Ensaaios** Mário Gomes Marques, J. M. Peixoto Cabral, and J. Rodriguez Marinho, *Ensaaios sobre história monetária da monarquia visigoda* (Porto, 1995).
- GNC** J. Amorós and Antonia Mata Berruezo, *Catálogo de las monedas visigodas del Gabinete Numismático de Cataluña* (Barcelona, 1952).
- Heiss** Aloiss Heiss, *Description générale des monnaies de rois wisigoths d’Espagne* (Paris, 1872).
- HSA** Hispanic Society of America; until recent decades it owned most Visigothic and other coinage on loan at ANS.
- IVDJ** Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan (Madrid), coins as referenced in Pliego 2009.
- Kurt 2020** Andrew Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy in the Visigothic Kingdom: From Settlement in Aquitaine through the First Decade of the Muslim Conquest of Spain*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020.
- Leu Photos** Photos of four hundred Visigothic tremisses obtained by Bank Leu (now Leu Numismatik) in the 1980s, the originals of which were given to the ANS and carefully consulted by the author in the 1990s.
- M.** George C. Miles, *The Coinage of the Visigoths of Spain: Leovigild to Achila II* (New York, NY, 1952). It contains thirty-eight plates of black-and-white photos of coins from the American Numismatic Society’s collection. For each coin there is a corresponding catalog number; plate numbers in the table are from Miles where ‘M.’ is referenced.
- Madrid 1936** Felipe Mateu y Llopis, *Catálogo de las monedas previsigodas y visigodas del Gabinete Numismático del Museo Arqueológico Nacional* (Madrid, 1936).
- MAN** Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid.
- MEC** Philip Grierson and Michael Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage* (vol. I: *The Early Middle Ages [5th-10th centuries]*) (London, 1986).
- NAC** *Numismatica Ars Classica* (London-Zurich-Milan), coins as referenced in Pliego 2009.
- Pliego 2009** Ruth Pliego Vázquez, *La moneda visigoda*, vol. 2 (Seville,

2009). Includes photos from many private collections cited in the table by name and item number followed by Pliego's catalog number.

SB 42

Swiss Bank Corporation, *Gold- und Silbermünzen: Auktion 42* (Basel, 21-23 January 1997). Visigothic tremisses: 2548 to 2709.

'SOUTHERN ENGRAVER' ('So.')

King	Mint	Coin	Reasons for attribution of obverse	Additional comments about style of reverse
Suinthila	Acci	M. 218(a) / ANS 2015.48.138 = HSA 16236 (pl. XI.4); in Kurt 2020, 340f, pl. IV (G).	Prototype.	
"	Acci	MAN 2008/115/210		
"	Acci	MAN 2008/115/211		
"	Cordoba	SB 42, no. 2630		
"	Elberri	M. 227(b) / ANS 2015.48.194 = HSA 16239 (pl. XIII.2)	Prototype. See ANS 2015.48.231 (Suinthila-Tucci).	
"	Mentesa	M. 219(b) / ANS 2015.48.147 = HSA 16213	(Mentesa coins listed here) > Bust **; letters **, esp. A/V (angled wedges), T, L, R, E, P-I-V-S.	
"	Tucci	M. 229(a) / ANS 2015.48.230 = HSA 16230 (pl. XIV.12); this coin with photo is Pliego 2009, 387a.1. In Kurt 2020, 340f, pl. IV (H).	All Pliego 2009, 387 and 388 series with photos are of 'So.' Spelling is somewhat erratic; king's name is usually without H.	
"	Tucci	M. 229(g) / ANS 2015.48.231 = HSA 16290 (pl. XV.4)	Prototype. Note the formation of cross and letters almost solely by the use of triangle wedges, the left lean of letters, the top-heavy initial S, the dot or triangle horizontal stem of L, the distinctive R, the use of small punches for all parts of the face, the forked cuirass.	
Sisenand	Acci	M. 257(b) / ANS 2016.29.64 = HSA 16300 = Pliego 2009, 279, 438a.1 See many examples in Pliego, v.2, 279f	All aspects **	All aspects **
"	Acci	GNC, pl. VIII.92 & pl. IX.93	As with all the coins listed on this page, these Sisenand tremisses are distinct from 'Isp.' coins > cf. top-heavy S, lack of neat execution, minimal D, less neat R (more a separated right wedge, with no connector drawn to main stem; detached loop).	

"	Castelona	M. 258(b) = Pliego 2009, 281, 441d.2	All aspects **	All aspects **
"	Castelona	M. 258(f) / ANS 2016.29.72 = HSA 16305 (pl. XVII.9)	Cf. ANS 2016.29.116 (Sisenand-Tucci) > All aspects **, esp. bust, letters S and R.	
"	Castelona	GNC, pl. IX.96 (probably 97 also)		
"	Eliberri	(Ex Pinto, private coll.) = Pliego 2009, 291, 457b.1 <i>See many examples in Pliego, v.2, 291f</i>	All aspects **	All aspects **
"	Eliberri	M. 268(c) / ANS 2013.40.34 = HSA 16318 (pl. XIX.13)	Probably 'Southern engraver' > Bust **: + **; letters, esp. S, R, E (wide wedges for stem, tiny wedges to the right).	
"	Eliberri	GNC, pl. IX.102, 103		
"	Eliberri	MAN 2008/115/226		
"	Illocrici	SB 42, 2658 = Pliego 2009, 282, 442.1	Cf. esp. ANS 2016.29.116 (Sisenand-Tucci) > All aspects **, esp. S-I-S, S-R.	All aspects **
"	Mentesa	CNV 353.2 = Pliego 2009, 283, 445c.2 <i>See many examples in Pliego, v.2, 282-84</i>	All aspects **	All aspects **
"	Mentesa	M. 262(b) / ANS 2016.29.80 = HSA 16378 (pl. XVIII.2)		
"	Mentesa	MEC, no. 246		
"	Tucci	M. 271(i) / ANS 2016.29.116 = HSA 16400 = Pliego 2009, 298, 465.1	Prototype. Mint spelled with on Cas at Acci, e.g., Pliego 2009, 279f	All aspects **
Iudila	Eliberri	M. 278 = Pliego 2009, 303, 471.1	All aspects **	All aspects **
Chintila	Acci	M. 283(a) / ANS 2016.29.121 = HSA 16455 = Pliego 2009, 306, 476b.1	All aspects **, incl. large wedges, lopsided S	All aspects **
"	Acci	M. 283(b) (pl. XXII.13)	Obverse probably by this engraver > Bust *: + **: letters **, though backwards here.	All aspects **, esp. bust, letter S.
"	Barbi	Chaves 1992, 51 = Pliego 2009, 309, 485.1	All aspects **	All aspects **
"	Egabro	M. 292(c)	All aspects **	All aspects **, except face has cross in middle (as at Mentesa)

"	Eliberri	Christie's 62 = Pliego 2009, 310, 491a.2	All aspects **	All aspects **
"	Eliberri	M. 290 / HSA 16457 (pl. XXII.16)	Probably the 'Southern engraver' > All aspects * or **, though less neat here.	
"	Eliberri	MEC, no. 248	All aspects **	All aspects **, except face has cross in middle (as at Egabro). Note: cross instead of cuirass at Cordoba, Pliego 2009, 310, 488.1
"	Mentesa	CNV 375.2 = Pliego 2009, 307, 481.1	All aspects **	All aspects *
"	Tucci	M. 292(b) = Pliego 2009, 312, 494.1	Probably the 'Southern engraver' > All aspects *	Same as obv.
Tulga	Barbi	M. 305(b) = Pliego 2009, 319, 513b.1	Probably the 'Southern engraver' > All aspects * except bust is smaller, face thinner	
"	Beatia	M. 303 = Pliego 2009, 318, 511b.1	All aspects *	All aspects *
"	Cordoba	See many examples in Pliego, v.2, 320f.	Probably the 'Southern engraver' > face and most letters *, but bust sub-type is unique and R is fuller and neater	
"	Eliberri	CNV 393 = Pliego 2009, 322, 516a.1	Bust **: backward lean of letters, A (slanted wedges), R, E (faint horizontal stems)	Face, except has cross in middle (as at Egabro, Mentesa); bust is Cordoban type.
"	Tucci	Ruth Pliego, 'Visigothic Currency: Recent Developments and Data for its Study' in <i>Framing Power in Visigothic Society</i> , ed. E. Dell'Elicine and C. Martin (Amsterdam, 2020), 192, pl. 18.	Bust: face *: letters * (mostly of thick wedges), L without horizontal stem (an infrequent trait of this hand), R.	Bust: face *: fuller C than 'B/C' hand.

'ISPALI ENGRAVER' ('Isp.')

King	Mint	Coin	Reasons for attribution of obverse	Additional comments about style of reverse
Reccared	Ispali	M. 86(a) / ANS 2015.48.48 = HSA 16509 (pl. V.18); in Kurt 2020, 336f, pl. II (H)	Busts** have the typical long, thin face of this engraver. Drawn-in letters use wide and neat wedges. E (with arched back) and S are thin.	
"	Ispali	NAC 25, 662 = Pliego 2009, 105b.11 Note: See Kurt 2020, 336f, pl. II: 'Isp.' 'Tol.' have subtle differences.	Cf. Pliego 2009, 98a.16 (Reccared-Toledo) > Face*, letter forms * esp. R, A, D.	
"	Ispali	CNV 69.2 (b/2) = Pliego 2009, 105c.2	Cf. Pliego 2009, 98a.18 (Reccared-Toledo) > all aspects *, A and D **.	
Liuvia II	Ispali	Aureo, 16-17 Dec. 1997; in Kurt 2020, 342f, pl. V, 1328		
Witteric	Ispali	Aureo, 16-17 Dec. 1997; in Kurt 2020, 342f, pl. V, 1331		
"	Ispali	MAN 2008/115/42	N.b.: In these specific series from Ispali, S is often backwards (but not 60, 61), yet the same letter forms are employed, incl. frequent wide V (rev.) and distinctive G, D (faint loop). E, R. In the face the eyebrows are separate rather than continuing into the nose as in 'B/C' hand.	N.b. backward left lean of letters as on Eliberri coins ('B/C' hand).
"	Ispali	MAN 2008/115/43		Cf. ibid., pl. IV(D) of 'B/C' hand > * Letters esp. P.
"	Ispali	MAN 2008/115/44		Cf. 40 (Eliberri, 'B/C' hand) and 42 above (Ispali) > Bust; +*, P, L*.
Gundemar	Ispali	MAN 2008/115/56		Similar backward lean of letters. R and S differ (backwards on no. 56 obv.).
"	Ispali	MAN 2008/115/57		
"	Ispali	MAN 2008/115/58	series continued below	Cf. pl. IV(E & F) > Letters similar to this 'Isp.' style, but bust closer to G & H of 'So.' style.

"	Ispali	MAN 2008/115/59	series continued from above	Cf. nos. 58-60 with no. 55 (Eliberri, 'B/C' engraver) > Bust*, but minute differences; +** but letter forms differ, esp. P, L.	
"	Ispali	MAN 2008/115/60			
"	Ispali	MAN 2008/115/61		Bust is closest to other Ispali coins here, but similar also to MAN 2008/115/55 of Eliberri ('B/C' engraver); letters are * or **, esp. G (with tongue stroke), S, E. Cf. Pliego 2009, 334.1, 2 below (Sisebut-Ispali)**	
Reccared II	Acci	(Cores, private coll., Madrid) = Pliego 2009, 330a.1			
"	Ispali	(Cores, private coll., Madrid) = Pliego 2009, 334.1			
Sisebut	Ispali	(Cores, private coll., Madrid) = Pliego 2009, 274f.1			
"	Ispali	(Lázaro, private coll.) = Pliego 2009, 184, 276d.5		This and the Reccared II specimens share the typical characteristics of this hand, incl. the S-R sequence with S slightly larger and hanging low. All aspects **	Note the heavy use of dots, presumably mint marks or distinctive accounting marks. All aspects **
"	Tucci	See many examples in Pliego, v.2, 178-86 CNV 220 = Pliego 2009, 186, 279.4		Probably 'isp.' (cf. Pliego 276d.5) > all aspects ** except R (more attached diagonal stem), hair ending in triangle	Same
Suinthila	Acci	(FAJO, private coll., Seville) = Pliego 2009, 347a.1; see also 347b.1, 347c.1-3, 347d.1, 347f.1		The vast majority of Suinthila-Acci coins are of 'So.', but these demonstrate characteristics of 'isp.' described below and under 'So.' above.	
"	Acci	MAN 2008.115.209			
"	Asidona	(Cores, private coll., Madrid) = Pliego 2009, 365a.2		Cf. Pliego 2009, 381a.56 (Suinthila-Ispali) > all aspects * or **, incl. wide eyebrows.	
"	Asidona	(FAJO, private coll., Seville) = Pliego 2009, 365a.10			
"	Cordoba	M. 226(a) / ANS 2015.48.181 = HSA 16155 (pl. XII.10)			
"	Ispali	M. 228(a) / ANS 2016.29.49 = HSA 16218 (pl. XIV.3)		Prototype.	
"	Ispali	M. 228(a) / ANS 2013.40.10 = HSA 16227		Cf. ANS 2016.29.49 (Suinthila-Ispali) > Bust*; +*; letters (esp. R, T, not formed only by wedges as with the 'southern engraver') and spacing.	

"	Ispali	M. 228(a) / ANS 2015.48.214 = HSA 16245	Prototype.		
"	Mentesa	M. 219(a) / ANS 2015.48.142 = HSA 8100 (pl. XI.7)	Cf. ANS 2015.48.224 (Suinthila-Tucci)	Cf. ANS 2015.48.224	
"	Tucci	M. 229(c) / ANS 2015.48.224 = HSA 16256	Cf. esp. ANS 2015.48.142 (Suinthila-Mentesa) > All aspects **, incl. letter height (3.6mm), band width (17.5mm), large flan size; same letter forms, esp. peculiar L followed by . . Cf. ANS 2015.48.181 (Suinthila-Cordoba)** > Bust * (on all 3 coins the hair ends even with the chin, formed in a wedge shape - Ispali coins have a dot instead; cuirass: form *, bottom has connected dots); see letter forms and position of S-V, N-T-H-I, R-E; L with dots, omits final A of Suinthila; + y wedges connected by thin lines in the center.	Cf. esp. ANS 2015.48.142 rev. > Bust** ; + *; size, spacing and form of letters, esp. T. Cf. ANS 2015.48.181 rev. > See esp. size, spacing and form of P-I-V-S.	
"	Tucci	MAN 2008.115.202			
"	Tucci	MAN 2008.115.203			
Sisenand	Asidona	Bode Museum, Berlin = Pliego 2009, 286, 451b.2	Cf. esp. Pliego 2009, 459m.1 and 460b.3 (Sisenand-Ispali) > Bust **; letters, esp. awkward S-R sequence with S larger	P-I-V-S very similar to these Ispali coins and those in the series.	
"	Cordoba	M. 267(k) = Pliego 2009, 289, 455e.1 See many examples in Pliego, v.2, 288-90	Bust ** (incl. slightly curved line below cuirass), face **: letters* incl. backward lean, S-I-S-E-N* (some backwards S as at Ispali), R (less detached than 'So.'). A/V	A *, P-I-V-S *. Note variations of R, D at Cordoba.	
"	Ispali	M. 269(g) / ANS 2015.48.299 = HSA 16428	Cf. esp. ANS 2015.48.214 (Suinthila-Ispali) > Bust *; + **: esp. letters S, N, V, R-E. Also cf. ANS 2015.48.208 (in Kurt 2020, App II, pl. IV).	Bust *; + *; all letter forms **	
"	Tucci	M. 271(h) / ANS 2016.29.114 = HSA 16402 = Pliego 2009, 297, 462h.1 See many examples in Pliego, v.2, 296f	All aspects **	All aspects **	

Chintila	Cordoba	M. 288 / ANS 2016.29.122 = Pliego 2009, 309, 487d.1 See many examples in <i>Pliego</i> , v.2, 309f.	Probably the 'Southern engraver' > All aspects *, except Cordoba sub-types differ from usual 'So.' types, and R is fuller and neater	All aspects *
"	Cordoba	CNV 365 = Pliego 2009, 309, 486b.1 See many examples in <i>Pliego</i> , v.2, 309f	Cf. Ex Pinto 74 and LBZ (14-10-1986) 46 (both Ispali) > All aspects * or **	All aspects * or **
"	Ispali	Ex Pinto 74 = Pliego 2009, 311, 492b.4		
"	Ispali	LBZ (14-10-1986) 46 = Pliego 2009, 311, 492c.2		

'BAETICA / CARTHAGINENSIS ENGRAVER' ('B/C')

King	Mint	Coin	Reasons for attribution of obverse	Additional comments about style of reverse
Reccared	Ispali	MAN 2008/115/20	Cf. Kurt 2020, 340f, pl. IV (D) (Sisebut-Eliberri) > +, bust *. R-E (bis). Cf. also BM 1849 in Kurt 2020, 353 (Witteric-Eliberri) > Bust, face. R-E-X *. Reverse > P-I-V-S*, second S, L *.	Bust *; position of P-I-V-S * (esp. S).
"	Ispali	MAN 2008/115/21	Cf. Kurt 2020, 340f, pl. IV (D) (Sisebut-Eliberri) > +*, V-S-R-E*.	Bust*; P-I-V-S*.
"	Ispali	MAN 2008/115/22	Cf. Kurt 2020, 340f, pl. IV (D) (Sisebut-Eliberri)	
"	Ispali	MAN 2008/115/23		
"	Ispali	MAN 2008/115/24		
"	Ispali	MAN 2008/115/25		
Liuva II	Ispali	MAN 2008/115/35	Cf. Kurt 2020, 340f, pl. IV (D) (Sisebut-Eliberri) > +, face *, letters esp. A/V, heavy look of wedges.	Cf. same > Bust *; all letters, esp. **P-I-V-S-I.

Witteric	Eliberri	M. 139(a) (pl. VII.11) = BM 1849, 0620.11, or 18A	Bust **: + **: letters ** (very tall, thin; typical leftward lean of 'B/C'), R (fully formed and as prototypes). Cf. coins of Mentesa (this coin = Pliego 2009, 198a.1 close to Witteric-Mentesa tremisses in ibid., esp. 183e.1).	
"	Eliberri	MAN 2008/115/40 N.b. Flans and letters of Eliberri tremisses are larger than at most mints. Spelling as Wittericus is common throughout kingdom.	Cf. Kurt 2020, 340f, pl. IV (D) (Sisebut-Eliberri) > **: All aspects incl. + (positioned just left of center at top of legend), thin face, V-S-R-E.	Cf. same > **: All aspects esp. P (small loop), L, R (leaning backward), B-E-R-R-I.
"	Eliberri	MAN 2008/115/41		
"	Mentesa	Yndias 1263 = Pliego 2009, 183e.1	Same as above.	
Gundemar	Eliberri	MAN 2008/115/55	Cf. MAN 2008/115/40, 41 (Witteric-Eliberri) > Bust **: + **: letter forms & positions * or **, esp. A-R-V-S-R-E. Cf. Kurt 2020, 340f, pl. IV (C & D) (Sisebut-Eliberri) > Bust **: + **: letter forms *.	Cf. nos. 40, 41 > Many similar features among these three coins. Cf. pl. IV(C & D) > Bust **: most letter forms **, esp. pl. IV(D).
"	Mentesa	MAN 2008/115/62	Cf. Kurt 2020, 340f, pl. IV (C & D) (Sisebut-Eliberri) > Bust*: backward lean of letters, lines drawn between wedges; S* (thin, awkward), R (like an A with loop scratched in). Shares tall letters of this engraver. Cf. no. 55 (Eliberri) above > eyebrows flow into nose; tall letters, similar form; G tongue stroke (as also no. 61 of Ispali, however).	Cf. no. 55 above > all aspects ** incl. heavy left lean of letters; P with closed, neat loop.
Sisebut	Acci	(Bartlett 54, private coll., Costa Rica) = Pliego 2009, 257c.5	Same as above.	

"	"	CNV 222 = Pliego 2009, 258.1	Cf. This coin and CNV 223 & 224 > Bust incl. face and hair*; +*; left lean of letters; S (variants, straight top). R esp. its angle and how bottom wedge meets next letter. Typical of 'B/C': letter sizes vary, E (awkward wedges), B (thin loops), T-V-S-R-E, A & V (wides wedges top & bottom), S hanging lower than neighboring letters.	
"	Aorariola	CNV 223 = Pliego 2009, 167, 259.1	Cf. CNV 222	
"	Barbi	(Bartlett 67, private coll., Costa Rica) = Pliego 2009, 269d.1	Same as above.	
"	Barbi	Ensaïos, pl. IV.72	Bust **; +* (see ANS 2015.48.109 rev.); all letter forms **.	All aspects **, esp. P-I-V-S, R.
"	Eliberri	M. 186(a) / ANS 2015.48.109 = HSA 16106 (pl. IX.8); in Kurt 2020, 340f, pl. IV (C)	Prototype. Note distinctive R of this hand, a slanted, complete A with a small wedge on top right. Busts of this hand possibly copied bust style of 'So.'	
"	Iliocrici	CNV 224 = Pliego 2009, 167, 260.1		
"	Mentesa	M. 181(a) / see Heiss, no. 8 (pl. IX.4)	Cf. ANS 2015.48.109 (Sisebut-Eliberri) > Bust*; +*; letter forms and position, esp. S-1-S, B-V, S-R; E's horizontal wedges go well beyond vertical stem, unlike Ispali coins on same pl.	Cf. ANS 2015.48.109 > Cuirass*; +*; most letter forms, esp. P (see also 2015.48.109 obv. T).
Suinthila	Barbi	M. 224(a) / ANS 2015.48.162 = HSA 16143 (pl. XII.4)	Prototype. Note the use of wide, thin wedges for the letters, while the stems rely less on wedges and more on engraved lines than those of other engravers. Cf. ANS 2015.48.109 (Sisebut-Eliberri) > Bust*; +* (cf. ANS 2015.48.109 rev.);	Cf. ANS 2015.48.109 > All aspects **, esp. letters B, R, I (very short).

"	Barbi	(Estrada, private coll.) = Pliego 2009, 366i.9. See many examples in <i>Pliego</i> , v. 2, 230-34	letter forms, esp. R, E, A/V, B (wedges unattached to stem); same severe left lean of letters.	All aspects **	All aspects **
"	Eliberri	(Corés, private coll.) = Pliego 2009, 240, 374f.1 All examples in photos in <i>Pliego</i> , v. 2, 240-41 are 'B/C'	All aspects **	All aspects **	All aspects **
"	Mentesa	Aureo (27-4-2000) 1192 = Pliego 2009, 350h.1 See many examples in <i>Pliego</i> , v. 2, 220-22 (series 350)	All aspects * or **	All aspects * or **	All aspects * or **
Sisenand	Barbi	M. 266(e) / ANS 2016.29.86 = HSA 16302 = Pliego 2009, 453d.1 See many examples in <i>Pliego</i> , v. 2, 286-87	All aspects **	All aspects **	All aspects **
Chintila	Tucci	CNV 371 = Pliego 2009, 312, 493.2	> Bust*, face ** (esp. brow); A (wide serif), R		

'TOLETO ENGRAVER' ('Tol.')

King	Mint	Coin	Reasons for attribution of obverse	Additional comments about style of reverse
Leovigild	Elvora	M. 37(a) / ANS 2015.48.17 = HSA 16010	Prototype	
"	Elvora	M. 37(a) / ANS 2016.29.16 = HSA 15984 (pl. III.5); in Kurt 2020, 336f, pl. II (F)		
"	Reccopolis	M. 23(a) / ANS 2016.29.7 = HSA 16006 (Profile/COS) (pl. II.9); in Kurt 2020, 336f, pl. II (A)	Cf. ANS 2015.48.6 (Toledo Profile/COS) > All aspects**, esp. letters L, S, R (but not B).	
"	Toledo	M. 29(c) / ANS 2015.48.10 = HSA 15995 (pl. II.14)	All aspects**.	
"	Toledo	M. 29(a) / ANS 2015.48.11 = HSA 15996 (pl. II.12)	All aspects**, but letters slightly larger here.	
Reccared	<u>Central</u> <u>Carthaginensis</u> Elvora	M. 90(a) / ANS 2015.48.53 = HSA 16022	All aspects**, but letters slightly larger here.	
"	Elvora	M. 90(c) / ANS 2015.48.56 = HSA 16025 (pl. VI.4)	Cf. ANS 2015.48.70 (Reccared-Emerita) > Bust (face)*; legend**.	Cf. ANS 2015.48.70 > Letters A, 1-V-S, R, E (tail)**.
"	Elvora	Ensaios, pl. I.15	Cf. Ensaios, pl. I.9 (Reccared-Toledo) & 1.20 (Reccared-Emerita) > Bust*; legend**.	Cf. Ensaios, pl. I.9 & I.20 > Bust (cuirass)*; letters T, E, L.
"	Toledo	M. 81(c) / ANS 2015.48.38 = HSA 16060, now ANS 2015.48.38	Prototype	
"	Toledo	M. 81(a) / ANS 2015.48.29 = HSA 16055 (pl. V.6)	N.b.: Close to Tude triens below (ANS 2016.29.36)*.	
"	Toledo	MAN 1971/18/8	Cf. Kurt 2020, 338f, pl. III (33) (Liuvia II-Toledo) > + (middle line angled), bust, hair (longer on right).	+ (lopsided); T-O-L-E-T-O* (wide T, small O, long L).
"	Toledo	MAN 2008/115/26	Cf. Kurt 2020, 356 – prototype (Leovigild-Elvora) > all letters incl. positions**, esp. C-A-R-E-D-V-S, X (backward slant). N.B. neat compass mark.	All aspects*, incl. exact position of cuirass.

"	Toledo	MAN 2008/115/27	All aspects **.	All aspects **.
"	Toledo	MAN 2008/115/28	N.B. neat compass mark.	
"	<u>Gallaecia</u> Bergancia	M. 103(a) / see Heiss, no. 4 (pl. VI.18) = Pliego 2009, 130.1	<i>Influenced by 'Tol.' hand but different engraver? > head, several letters *, incl. R (note two different forms), D (also formed in two ways), A (3 wedges), S (thin and larger than other letters; set apart and sometimes horizontal). Same hand as at Senabria and Susarres (cf. Pliego 2009, 147.1 & 148.1) > all aspects * or **</i>	
"	Bracara	(Orol, private coll., Madrid) = Pliego 2009, 132a.1	Cf. Pliego 2009, 98a.18, 98b.11 > all aspects * or ** except spelling (Reccaridus); however, Reccareidus was also inscribed at Braga.	
"	Calapa	CM.PG.11250-2006 (Fitzwilliam Museum) = CNV 80 = Pliego 2009, 134.1	Cf. Pliego 2009, 98b.77 (Toledo) > all aspects *	All aspects *
"	Conteno	M. 88 (pl. VI.1) = Pliego 2009, 136b.1	Cf. ANS 2015.48.56 (Reccared-Elvora) > Bust*; + **, all aspects of epigraphy **. Cf. Pliego 2009, 98b.58 (Toledo) > all aspects **	Cf. ANS 2015.48.56 > Letters T, S (large). Cf. Pliego 2009, 98b.58 > all aspects **
"	Mertia	(Alba, private coll., France) = Pliego 2009, 141.1	<i>Probably by 'Tol.' engraver. All aspects * or **, incl. face, although cuirass diverges in type on both sides (obv. is close to Emerita type and appears on a Tude coin) and diagonal stem of R touches baseline. Style of M is that on Eminio coins of 'Tol.' hand. Same hand as at Palantuticio (cf. Pliego 2009, 142.1).</i>	Letters on rev. are larger here.
"	Palantuticio	(private coll.) = Pliego 2009, 142.1	<i>Probably by 'Tol.' engraver. All aspects *, except face and cuirass seem adapted – but similar to a rare sub-type of Toledo (cf. Pliego 2009, 98e.1) associated with</i>	

"				Cordoba. <i>Same hand as at Mertia (cf. Pliego 2009, 141.1).</i> All aspects **	
"	Portocale	(Costa, private coll., Portugal) = Pliego 2009, 146a.1; also 146b.1, 146c.1,2	Ensaïos, pl. II.32; in Kurt 2020, 338f, pl. III (32).	Cf. Ensaïos, pl. II.33 (Liuva II-Toleto) > Letters *, esp. A, R, E, P.2 Cf. Ensaïos, pl. II.31 (Eminio) > +*; letters *, esp. D-V-S (S on this coin is larger).	Cf. Ensaïos, pl. II.33 > O and L are both small but positioned high, P-I-V-S*. Cf. Ensaïos, pl. II.31 > letters*; P-I-V-S**.
*	Senabria ('Victor' on rev.)	MAN 2008/115/29 (= P.147.1, p. 118)		<i>Influenced by 'Tol.' hand but different engraver?</i> Almost all aspects **, esp. + (backward slant), letters R-E, D. But not Δ, V (bottom of punches are at an angle), S (irregular, but not same tilt), R (perpendicular small stem). N.B. possible trace of compass mark above bust, as seen on many Toleto coins. <i>Same engraver as at Bergancia and Susarres (cf. Pliego 2009, 130.1 & 148.1) > all aspects **, except spelling and form of D at Susarres).</i>	T-O-R* (high, small O but less well formed)
"	Sussarres / Susarros	M. 101 / ANS 2016.29.35 = HSA 16061 (pl. VI.16) = Pliego 2009, 148.1		<i>Probably 'Tol.' engraver. Cf. Pliego 2009, 98 b.77 (Reccared-Toleto) > All aspects * or ** except spelling and D. Cf. Ensaïos, pl. 1.9 (Reccared-Toleto) * > Bust, letters. Cf. M. 103(a) (Reccared-Bergancia) ** > See busts, + (both coins omit reverse +), letter S.</i>	Cf. Ensaïos, pl. I.9 > Bust **
"	Tude	M. 113 / ANS 2016.29.36 = HSA 16062 (pl. VI.19) = Pliego 2009,		Several letters * > R (note two different forms), D (also formed in two ways), A (3	

		151.1	wedges), S (thin and larger than other letters; set apart and sometimes horizontal). Cf. Toileto trientes above. Cf. Pliego 2009, 98b.77 (Toileto) > all aspects * but bust type slightly different.	
"	Tude	M. 114 = Pliego 2009, 151.2	Cf. Pliego 2009, 98b.77 & other Toileto exemplars > all aspects ** but bust is <i>Emeritan</i> type.	
"	Vallesalsa	CVN 98 = Pliego 2009, 153.1	Cf. Pliego 2009, 98b.58 (Reccared-Toileto) & 43d.1 (Leovigild-Toileto) > all aspects * or **.	
"	<u>Lusitania</u> . Egitania	Madrid 1936, p. 358 (= Heiss, no. 10)	Cf. Ensaios, pl. II.28 (Reccared-Emerita) > Bust**, +**, all aspects of epigraphy *.	Cf. Ensaios, pl. II.28 > All aspects of epigraphy *.
"	Egitania	M. 89 = Pliego 2009, 111a.1	Cf. = Pliego 2009, 98b.77 (Reccared-Toileto) > Letters*; small differences in bust, but similar.	Typical unevenness of letter size and backward lean of 'Tol.' hand. P**.
"	Emerita	M. 93(b) (pl. VI.8) M. 94(d) (1/3) / ANS 2015.48.70 = HSA 16035 (pl. VI.13) N.b., Only Reccared coins in 'Emerita Plus' (rev.) series, not 'Emerita Victor' (rev.) series, are attributed to 'Tol.'; see modification in R (diagonal stem) and D (detached loop).	Some letters * > R (in two different forms, one of them the style found on most Toileto coins), D (loop very small or detached on Emerita coins), A, S. Cf. ANS 2015.48.70 (Emerita) & 2015.48.32, 2015.48.34 (Toileto) > All letters**, face*, but <i>Emeritan</i> sub-type.	P (detached loop), S (sideways)
"	Emerita	Ensaios, pl. II.28	Cf. SB 42, no. 2561 & M. pl. V.6, 7 (all Reccared-Toileto) > All aspects * except bust.	
"	Eminio	Ensaios, pl. II.30	Numerous letters * > R, E, A, D, D-V-S	Slanted S as in 'Tol.'
"	Eminio	Ensaios, pl. II.31 = Pliego 2009, 119.4; in Kurt 2020, 338f, pl. III (31)	See above.	
"	Eminio	M. 95(a) = Pliego 2009, 118.1	Cf. Pliego 2009, 98a.16 etc. (Reccared-Toileto) > face **, but different bust type; letters * or **.	

"	Eminio	M. 96(f) = Pliego 2009, 120b.2	Cf. = Pliego 2009, 98b.58 (Reccared-Toleto) > all aspects **.	
"	Baetica Barren Cartaginensis Elberri	M. 83(a) / ANS 2016.29.31 = HSA 16065 (pl. V.13)	Cf. ANS 2015.48.39 (Reccared-Toleto) > Bust**; +**; obv. letters and slant**; R, E, A, S-R-E. Cf. ANS 2015.48.29 (Reccared-Toleto) > All aspects *, though cuirass style is slightly different. Cf. ANS 2015.48.48 (Reccared-Ispali) > All aspects **	
"	Elberri	M. 83(c) / ANS 2015.48.44 = HSA 16023 (pl. V.14)	Cf. ANS 2015.48.50 (Reccared-Ispali) > All aspects**	
"	Mentesa	Madrid 1936, p.313	Cf. SB 42, no. 2561 (Reccared-Toleto) > All aspects **.	
"	Mentesa	IVDJ 3554 = Pliego 2009, 95b.1	Cf. Pliego 2009, 98a.9 and 98b.58 (Reccared-Toleto) > All aspects **.	
Liuvia II	Elvora	Madrid 1936, p. 304, pl. XXIX		
"	Elvora	NAC 25, 671 = Pliego 2009, 164a.8	Cf. MAN 105.298 (Liuvia II-Toleto) > All aspects **.	
"	Elvora	Barral 1976, 179, 66 = Pliego 2009, 112a.18	Cf. = Pliego 2009, 98b.11 (Reccared-Toleto) > all aspects **.	
"	Elvora			
"	Emerita	Ensaios, pl. II.36; in Kurt 2020, 338f, pl. III (36)		
"	Emerita	Ensaios, pl. II.37; in Kurt 2020, 338f, pl. III (37)		
"	Portocale	Ensaios, pl. II.38; in Kurt 2020, 338f, pl. III (38)	Cf. Ensaios, pl. II.32 (Reccared-Portocale) > +*; bust **; most letter forms *. Cf. Kurt 2020, 338f, pl. III.33 (Liuvia II-Toleto) > bust*, face**; but spelling and spacing differ.	
"	Toleto	M. 119 / ANS 2015.48.72 = HSA 16075 (pl. VII.2)	Cf. ANS 2015.48.38 (Reccared-Toleto) > All aspects **. Cf. ANS 2015.48.53 (Reccared-Elvora) > All aspects *.	Cf. ANS 2015.48.38 > All aspects**. Cf. ANS 2015.48.53 > All aspects**, esp. letters T, E.

"	Toleto	Ensaïos, pl. II.33; in Kurt 2020, 338f, pl. III (33).		
"	Toleto	MAN 105298 = Pliego 2009, 160b.2	Cf. Kurt 2020, 356, two prototypes: 1/ ANS 2015.48.38 (Reccared-Toleto) > Bust; +*; letters esp. R-E.; 2/ ANS 2015.48.17 (Leovigild-Elvora) > similar, but small variations incl. face and bust, position of O.	ANS 2015.48.38 (Reccared-Toleto) > Bust; +*; All letters** esp. O (small, elevated), S (sideways).
"	Toleto	MAN 2008/115/36 = Pliego 2009, 160b.3	Cf. Kurt 2020, 356, ANS 2015.48.38 (Reccared-Toleto) > Bust; +*; letters* esp. R-E, A, X.	N.b. scratches, re-punched Q(x2), possibly redrawn cuirass.
Witteric	Bergancia	M. 147 / ANS 2016.29.44 = HSA 16094 (pl. VIII. I)	Possibly 'Toleto engraver'; cf. ANS 2015.48.77 (Witteric-Toleto) & ANS 2015.48.83 (Witteric-Elvora) > Bust*; +*; epigraphy*, esp. R. But Bergancia coin differs in the bust, spelling (one V), R, S.	Cf. Pliego 2009, 186 e.1 (Witteric-Toleto) > face, S* (backwards)
"	Bracara	Heiss, pl. IV.3	Probably 'Toleto engraver'; cf. Heiss, pl. IV.19 (Witteric-Toleto) & ANS 2015.48.77 (same) > Face and hair *, +*; letters *.	
"	Bracara	ANS 2016.29.45 = HSA 57.559	Same as above.	
"	Elvora	M. 142(a) / ANS 2015.48.83 = HSA 16081 (pl. VII.13)	Cf. ANS 2015.48.77 (Witteric-Toleto) > All aspects **	Cf. ANS 2015.48.77 > All aspects **, esp. face, letters T, E, I-V, R (see ANS 2015.48.77 obverse).
"	Emerita	M. 143(e) / ANS 2015.48.85 = HSA 16085 (pl. VII.15)	Possibly 'Toleto engraver'; cf. ANS 2015.48.77 (Witteric-Toleto) > Face (eyebrows formed together with nose, ending in a triangular wedge); letters T, C-V-S. Cf. M. 139(a)1 (Witteric-Elberri) > Face (but not the rest of the bust); +*; letters, esp. C-V- S-R-E **.	Cf. ANS 2015.48.77 > +*; letters I-V-S (S on its side). Cf. M. 139(a)1 > Face; +*; letters P-I-V.

"	Eminio	M. 144 / Stuttgart, no. 1344 (pl. VII.16)	Cf. ANS 2015.48.83 (Witteric-Elvora) > Head; +; epigraphy. For similarities to Toletó coins see Pliego 2009, 186a.2 (note obv. face**) and 186e.1.	Reverse is more like ANS 2015.48.85 (Emerita).
"	Mentesa	M. 135(a) = Ensaios, pl. III.41 = Pliego 2009, 183a.1 Cf. Pliego 2009, 183f.1 (Mentesa) & 186b.23 (Toletó) > **	Probably 'Toletó engraver'; cf. ANS 2015.48.77 (Witteric-Toletó) > Bust; epigraphy* (except R). Appears definitely to be by the same engraver as M. 139(a) (Witteric-Elberri) > Bust; epigraphy**. Cf. this coin (= Pliego 2009, 183a.1) plus another of this mint (ibid., 183d.1) and Witteric-Iminio (ibid., 195a.1). Cf. also IVDJ 3554 above (Reccared-Mentesa).	
"	Toletó	M. 137(a) / ANS 2015.48.77 = HSA 16088 (pl. VII.10)	Later prototype	Cf. ANS 2015.48.72 (Witteric-Toletó) > All aspects**.
"	Toletó	MAN 1991/68/2	Cf. Kurt 2020, 338f, pl. III (33) > all aspects**	Cf. ibid. > all aspects**, esp. P-I-V-S (sideways).
"	Toletó	MAN 2008/115/46	Cf. Kurt 2020, 338f, pl. III (33) > all aspects**, esp. X and + (incl. tilt).	As above, no. 2
"	Senabria	MAN 2008/115/48	Cf. MAN 2008/115/29 (Reccared-Senabria), comparing both sides > Bust*, face*, letter forms, esp. R, E, D/P, S (backwards as on rev. of no. 29 of Reccared at Senabria). <i>Both coins are possibly from 'Toletó engraver', or show clear influence.</i> Spelling at both mints is 'Wittiricus'; busts bear close resemblance in form but not in minutia. Cf. MAN 2008/115/28 (Reccared-Toletó) rev. > E, A-B-R, A-R (back leaning). Cf. MAN 2008/115/46 (Witteric-Toletó) > Letter forms*, although letter size of no. 48 is larger.	Cf. MAN 2008/115/29 > most letter forms*, esp. E, A-B-R-I-A. Cf. MAN 2008/115/28 > esp. P-I-V-S. Cf. MAN 2008/115/46 (Witteric-Toletó) > Letter forms*, esp. slanted final S.

Gundemar	Elvora	Ensaios, pl. IV.61	Cf. Ensaios, pl. III. 59 (Gundemar-Toleto) > Bust**, +*; letters**, esp. S and backward lean of M-A-R.	
"	Mentesa	(Cores, private coll.) = Pliego 2009, 222d.1	Epigraphy by 'Tol.' engraver, but not face and bust? Cf. IVDJ 3554 above (Reccared-Mentesa, = Pliego 2009, 95b.1) > letter forms and spacing * or **. Face and bust seem to be by 'isp.' hand: cf. many examples in Pliego 2009, pp. 154-55.	
"	Toleto	Ensaios, pl. III.59		
"	Toleto	M. 167 / ANS 2015.48.90 = HSA 16089 (pl. VIII.9)	Cf. ANS 2015.48.83 (Witteric-Elvora) > Bust*, +*; letters V, R, E **.	Cf. ANS 2015.48.77 (Witteric- Toleto) > All aspects**, esp. epigraphy. Cf. ANS 2015.48.83 (Witteric-Elvora) > All aspects **; see T, E, L, S.
"	Toleto	MAN 2008/115/63		
Sisebut	Bracara	Leu photos, no. 320	Possibly 'Toleto engraver' (almost certainly the same engraver as the coin of Nandolas); cf. Leu photos, no. 113 (Sisebut-Toleto). Another Bracara triens (= Pliego 2009, 299.1) is possibly also a 'Tol.' coin: cf. ibid., 267f.13 > face *; bust; B, R, P-I-V.	
"	Calapa	MAN 2008/115/138	Cf. MAN 2008/115/137 et al. (Sisebut-Toleto) > Face; +*; letter forms** esp. S-I-S, S-R-E. The attribution to the same hand at work at Toleto can be made confidently. Cf. MAN 2008/115/143 (Sisebut-Emerita) > Head*, though cuirass is not of same type; letters* esp. S-R-E.	Cf. no. 137 > similar on the whole, esp. L, P like a D. Cf. no. 144 (Emerita) > Head*, rest of bust. +*; letters esp. *P-I-V-S, with P like a D.
"	Egitania	Leu photos, no. 229	Probably 'Toleto engraver'; appearance is closer to Emerita and Bracara than Toleto. Cf. Leu photos, no. 285 (Sisebut-Emerita) > All aspects **.	Cf. Leu photos, no. 285 > Reverse of no. 229 appears to have been made hastily, thus the comparison shows less similarity.
			Cf. Leu photos, no. 320 (Sisebut-Bracara) > +*; epigraphy *.	

"	Egitania	BNF 39 (= Pliego 2009, 281d.1)	Probably 'Toleto engraver' > face *, but not bust; letter forms * or **. Cf. Pliego 2009, 267a.42 and 267a.5 (Sisebut-Toleto), face *, but not bust. Ibid. 267e.1 (Sisebut-Toleto) is very similar to ibid., 281b.1 (Sisebut-Egitania).	
"	Elvora	M. 191(a) / ANS 2015.48.124 = HSA 16107 (pl. IX.17)	Cf. ANS 2015.48.83 (Witteric-Elvora) > Bust*; +**, all letters **. Cf. ANS 2015.48.90 (Gundemar-Toleto) > Bust*; +**, letter size and most forms**, esp. R, E.	Same as obverse.
"	Elvora	M. 191(a) / ANS 2015.48.126 = HSA 16372 (pl. X.I)		
"	Elvora	MAN 2008/115/142	Cf. MAN 2008/115/131, 132, 137 (Sisebut-Toleto) > Bust **; letters * esp. S-I-S-E. Final X of REX included on some Toleto coins as at Elvora. Note compass mark as seen on many Toleto coins. Cf. MAN 2008/115/135 & 136 (Toleto) > also close similarities Cf. MAN 2008/115/141 (Sisebut-Senabria) > Bust; letter forms * and most positions, esp. S, E, T (top slightly below line).	Cf. MAN 2008/115/135 & 136 > Bust*; +*; letters * (formed by large wedges), esp. T, S*, L, E, P/R* like a D; O (neat).
"	Emerita	Ensaios, pl. V.90-96	Possibly by 'Tol.' hand. Cf. Ensaios, pl. V.71 (Sisebut-Toleto) – compare both sides > All letters *, except X; S- I-S similar (angle and form in V.90-93 of Emerita **).	
"	Emerita	SB 42, no. 2596	Possibly by 'Tol.' hand. Cf. SB 42, no. 2615 (Toleto) > +**; epigraphy**.	Cf. SB 42, no. 2615 > epigraphy**, esp. E, T, P-I-V-S.
"	Emerita	MAN 2008/115/143-155	Possibly by 'Tol.' hand. Cf. MAN 2008/115/134-137 (Sisebut-Toleto) > Head similar, but cuirass of different type. Letter forms* or ** esp. S-I-S, R.	Compare no. 143 (Emer.) with no. 137 (Tol.) > most letter forms *.

"			Compare no. 143 (Emer.) with no. 137 (Tol.) > Letters** esp. S-I-S, S-R-E. Compare no. 143 with no. 142 (Elvora) – possibly by the same hand > Head*; +*; most letter forms * esp. S extending below the line of letters.	Compare rev. of no. 144 (Emer.) and no. 142 (Elvora) > similar, e.g. P like a D, though perhaps not same hand.
"	Eminio	Ensaios, pl. V.97	Possibly by 'Tol.' hand; at least probably same hand as at Emerita. Cf. Ensaios, pl. V.96 (Sisebut-Emerita) > Face?; +*; most letters**, esp. S-I-S-E-B, T (but V, R not very similar).	For a very similar cuirass on the reverse of an Emerita coin see Ensaios, pl. V.95.
"	Eminio	SB 42, no. 2602	Possibly by 'Tol.' hand; at least probably same hand as at Emerita. Cf. SB 42, no. 2614 & 2615 (both Sisebut-Toleto) > Face; +*; letters similar, with very slight differences.	Cf. SB 42, no. 2614 & 2615 > see esp. P-1-V-S** (esp. the distinctive S).
"	Georres	MAN 2008/115/139	Possibly 'Toleto engraver' but more likely copied elements. Cf. MAN 2008/115/133, 134, 135 (Sisebut-Toleto) > S-I-S, B, T (top is below line), R, E are all similar (note: R has variation on the two sides), and bust type is similar. But subtle distinctions prevent firm attribution. Cf. no. 140 (Sisebut-Semure) > Bust differs. *S-I-S, T.	Cf. nos. 133-135 > Bust is not similar. R, E, S bear similarity and differentiation; S (two) not quite sideways as the norm as Toleto. Cf. no. 140 > similarities, though not exact.
"	Mentesa	Ensaios, pl. IV.69	Possibly 'Toleto engraver'; cf. Ensaios, pl. IV.70 (Sisebut-Toleto) > +*; epigraphy * (except R, and Mentesa letters are larger). Cf. Ensaios, pl. V.85 (Sisebut-Elvora) > +*; letters similar, esp. A, V, T, E, X.	
"	Nandolas	Leu photos, no. 321	Probably 'Toleto engraver'; cf. Leu photos, no. 113 (Sisebut-Toleto) > Bust*; +*; epigraphy*. Cf. Leu photos, no. 232 (Sisebut-Elvora) > Bust*; +*; epigraphy**. Cf. Pliego 314.1 (Sisebut-Nandolas) and Ibid., 267a.43 (Sisebut-Toleto) > obv. face*; bust; letter forms; rev. similar letter forms, esp. L.	Cf. Leu photos, no. 113 > same as obverse. Cf. Leu photos, no. 232 > same as obverse, but epigraphy*.

"	Senabria	MAN 2008/115/141	A/V (but S on Toletó coins are usually sideways). Same engraver at Senabria, Recaredo to Sisebut. Cf. MAN 2008/115/29 (Recarred-Senabria) > Bust; letters esp. S** (thin, misshapen, extends below line), R. The same tendencies esp. of S as in Elvora and Toletó coins. Cf. MAN 2008/115/48 (Witteric-Senabria) > Bust**; wide T, S** (thin, here backwards), R. Possibly 'Toletó engraver'. Cf. MAN 2008/115/142 (Sisebut-Elvora) > Face*; same S, B, wide E, uneven letters, V-T-V incl. position of T below top line. Cf. MAN 2008/115/135 & 136 (Sisebut-Toletó) > Bust*; similar letters. Cf. MAN 2008/115/133 & 134 (Sisebut-Toletó) > Bust; +**, S-E** (S below line), B*, T*-V-S, R. No. 141 rev. compared to these two obverses > Bust; S-E**, B**, R*. In the various coins listed here: E is sometimes wide, sometimes not, and often has a longer top cross-stem. Toletó coins' S is only backwards in rev. final S, seemingly for reasons of spacing of letters.	Cf. nos. 29 & 48 > Bust – similar, but differentiated; face*. Letter forms and positions*. Cf. MAN 2008/115/142 > Bust*; +* (wide as in no. 142 obv.); S extends below line, R like a D. Cf. MAN 2008/115/135 & 136 > Bust*; P* like a D.
"	Semure	MAN 2008/115/140	Possibly 'Toletó engraver'. Cf. MAN 2008/115/134 & 135 (Sisebut-Toletó) > Bust differs, but face*; *S-I-S, B, R, final E (cf. no. 135). Cf. 141 (Sisebut-Senabria) – same hand? > Head similar, but cuirass differs greatly; letter forms and positions*.	Cf. no. 134 obv. > Face; S*-E (vertical stem bends backwards), R, I, P like a D as in 'Tol.' group – see no. 134 rev. But spacing and bust differ. See Ensaios, pl. V.82-85.
"	Toletó	Ensaios, pl. V.70, 71		See Ensaios, pl. V.82-85.

"	Toledo	SB 42, no. 2614		See SB 42, no. 2594 (Sisebut-Elvora).	
"	Toledo	SB 42, no. 2615		See Leu photos, no. 321 (Sisebut-Nandolas).	
"	Toledo	Leu photos, no. 113		Probably not from 'Tol.' hand, but same engraver as at Emerita and Eminio. Cf. Ensaios, pl. V.96 (Sisebut-Emerita) > Bust**;	Cf. Ensaios, pl. V.96 > see esp. E, P.1-V-S (S**).
"	Veseo	Ensaios, pl. V.98		+*; epigraphy*, esp. E-B, S-R-E. Cf. Ensaios, pl. V.97 (Sisebut-Eminio) > Bust?; +**;	
				epigraphy*, esp. E and S (irregular, sometimes backwards).	
Suinthila	Elvora	Ensaios, pl. VI.119		Cf. Ensaios, pl. VI.104, 105 (Suinthila-Toleto) > All aspects *; cf. the S after the +, E, L, R **;	
				and the thin horizontal line of H (unlike coins of Emerita at that time).	
"	Elvora	SB 42, no. 2635		Cf. SB 42, no. 2649 (Suinthila-Toleto) > All aspects *; position and form of +S-V **.	
				N.B.: both coins have a distinctive faint circle in the field.	
"	Georres	MAN 2008/115.217		Cf. MAN 2008/115/139 (Sisebut-Georres) > similar letter forms, more so on rev.; clearly both dies were from the same engraver, but letters in Suinthila's coins are larger and the bust type diverges.	Cf. no. 139 > Similar letter forms, esp. ** G, S, E, T.
				Possibly by 'Toleto' engraver. Cf. no. 216 rev. (Suinthila-Toleto, mislabeled in MAN Tray 9 as Mentesa) > E* (wide), I, V*, T.	Cf. no. 216 > Similar E, P.
				Cf. MAN 100427 (Toleto) > Completely different bust type; **;	Cf. MAN 100427 > Bust incl. head differs; smaller
				incl. S-V, T (bent vertical stem), A-R-E, but spelling differs (SVINJILA at Georres, TH at Toleto).	O the same, likeness in epigraphy.
"	Toledo	M. 223(a) / ANS 2015.48.159 = HSA 16271 (pl. XI.13)		Bust**;	Same as obverse.
				letters T, L, E (curved stem), final S (slanted), R **.	
				Obverse linked to ANS 2015.48.157.	

"	Toledo	M. 223(a) / ANS 2015.48.155 = HSA 16286		
Sisenand	Toledo	Ensaïos, pl. VII.137, 138	Cf. ANS 2015.48.159 (Suinthila-Toledo) > All aspects **.	
"	Toledo	SB 42, no. 2661	"Toledo engraver"? > Most aspects*. The style of Toledo coins seems to undergo change in this reign, perhaps due to a new engraver; cf. SB 42, no. 2662 > bust and several letters, esp. R, T, O, are different. Cf. also no. 2669 (Chintila-Toledo) > its fabric differs substantially from no. 2661, and is closer to no. 2662. So also M. 285(d) / ANS 2015.48.337 / pl. XXII.14 (Chintila-Toledo), M. 304(a, b) / 2016.29.126, 2015.48.338 / pl. XXIII.11, 12 (Tulga-Toledo), and Chindasvinth-Toledo coins in Miles > these differ from 'Toledo engraver' in the bust, incl. cuirass; in their thicker decorative rim; in letters N, S, O, and possibly P.	
Chintila	Toledo	M. 285(d) / ANS 2015.48.337 = HSA 16470 (pl. XXII.14)	Cf. 2015.48.275 & 2015.48.276 (Sisenand-Toledo) > Bust*; +*; see A and most letters on reverse.	

'EMERITA ENGRAVER(S)' ('Emer.')

King	Mint	Coin	Reasons for attribution of obverse	Additional comments about style of reverse
Reccared	Emerita (‘Victor’ on rev.)	MAN 2008/115/30	Nos. 30-34 here share similar R (short stem), E (tall, thin, arching back slightly on top). Cf. Kurt 2020, 338f, pl. III (36,37) (Liuva II-Emerita) > Bust*; R, E. Cf. Kurt 2020, 334f, pl. I (e) (Leovigild-Emerita) > +*, bust; A & V forms, R (like a D with small punch added). Cf. Kurt 2020, 338f, pl. III (31,32) (Reccared-Eminio, -Portocale) > Bust and letters of both sides do not fully resemble nos. 30-34 from MAN, esp. obv. S (oversized) and rev. M of pl. III (31). <i>Possibly by Toletto hand, but probably ‘Emer.’ and certainly sharing influence.</i> Compare nos. 30-34 of Emerita here to nos. 26-28 above of Toletto > Bust is different, but face and hair*; +** ; letters** (esp. details of R, D), except usually taller and with more serifs at Emerita, E stem does not bend, S is thin.	Nos. 30-34 here: T* (very short). Cf. Kurt 2020, 338f, pl. III (36,37) > Bust*; letter forms** esp. E, M, R, P, sideways S. Cf. Kurt 2020, 334f, pl. I (f) (Leovigild-Emerita) ‘Victor’ > +** (tall; horizontal line placed very high). T-O-R (O placed very high); cf. esp. rev. R and obv. R of pl. I (f). Cf. nos. 30-34 and 26-28 of Toletto > Letters*, esp. P (detached loop), S (some are sideways as in ‘Tol.’ coins).
"	Emerita	MAN 2008/115/31		Bust*; E-M-E-R.
"	Emerita	MAN 2008/115/32	Prototype. Cf. Kurt 2020, 338f, pl. III (36) (Liuva II-Emerita) > Bust*. All punches here have very wide serifs. Also cf. Kurt 2020, 342f, pl. V (1327) (Reccared-Emerita), esp. obv.*	Cf. Kurt 2020, 338f, pl. III (36) > +*, bust* incl. left lean. Almost all letter forms*.
"	Emerita	MAN 2008/115/33	Cf. no. 32 above > Bust* incl. hair slightly longer on right. Letter forms*, although here taller. Both coins heavily employ serifs. Also cf. Kurt 2020, 338f, pl. III (37) (Liuva II-Emerita) > Bust** incl. hair slightly longer on right. Cf. nos. 32 & 33 above > similar but not so highly serifed letter punches. Cf. nos. 30 & 31 above > all aspects**.	All aspects** . N.b.: ‘S’ is on its side. Lacks huge serifs of obv.
"	Emerita	MAN 2008/115/34		All aspects** as others here in this series.

Liuva II	Emerita	MAN 2008/115/37	Cf. MAN 2008/115/36 & 105298 (Liuva II-Tol. by 'Tol.') > letters more forward-leaning than at Toledo, N formed differently, E is thinner.	Cf. idem > taller letters, P more detached than at Toledo.
"	Emerita	MAN 2008/115/38	Same characteristics as no. 37.	
Witteric	Emerita	MAN 2008/115/49-54 N.b.: Nos. 49 and 51 are spelled Wittericus, the rest Wittiricus. <i>Possibly by 'Tol.' engraver, but more likely influenced by that style.</i>	Cf. MAN 2008/115/64 & ...65 (Gundemar-Emerita) > While slight variations occur in the bust and letter sizes and some forms (e.g., R), these occur even in coins of the same reign or on the two sides of the same coin, and the same thin, awkward S and left lean of letters occur throughout. Cf. MAN 2008/115/46 (Wittericus-Toleto) > Face* and similar hairline, but different type. +, epigraphy*, but letters are generally larger than at Toledo. The wide serifs esp. of no. 49 are common at Emerita.	Cf. nos. 64 & 65 > The same comments as obv. apply; M**, final S sometimes sideways during both reigns. Cf. no. 46 > Obvious similarities with execution of Toledo legends, but not exactly the same. Cf. no. 52 (Emerita) and no. 63 above (Gundemar-Toleto) > Face*; T**, P-I-V-S*.
Gundemar	Emerita	MAN 2008/115/64	Cf. nos. 52 & 53 above (Witteric) > Bust**; letters**, etched in between wedges, vary in size even on same inscription. R and S (thin, awkward)** Cf. MAN 2008/115/63 (Toleto) > Despite definite likeness in epigraphy, subtle differences in letter forms (e.g., G, R) and separate bust type suggest <i>not the work of the same hand but probable stylistic influence between Emerita and Toledo.</i>	Cf. no. 63 (Toleto) > Similar size of letters; E**, P-I-V*.
"	Emerita	MAN 2008/115/65	Same characteristics as no. 64, although cuirass is fully rounded, not with a straight or bent line at the top as in other coins from Emerita.	Cf. no. 63 (Toleto) > P-I-V-S (sideways S, as in no. 53 above, Witteric-Emerita).
Sisebut	Emerita	MAN 2008/115/143-55	<i>Possibly by 'Toleto' engraver. Cf. also 'Emer.' coins.</i> Cf. MAN 2008/115/134-37 above (Sisebut-Toleto) > Head similar but cuirass of different type. Letter forms* or **, esp. S-I-S, R. Compare nos. 143 and 137 > Letters **, esp. S-I-S, S-R-E. Cf. nos. 143 and 142 (Sisebut-Elvora) above	Cf. nos. 143 and 137 > Most letter forms*. Cf. 144 and 142 (Elvora) > Similar style, though perhaps not by the same hand. P is like a D at both mints.

Suinthila	Emerita			by 'Tol.' hand – possibly same engraver for both > Head*; +*; most letter forms*, esp. S (extends below other letters).	
"	"	MAN 1971/71/11			
"	"	MAN 1972/75/20		Cf. MAN 1971/71/11 > Bust **, esp. face; longer initial S; L-A, R-E	Bust **, esp. face & hair; E – tall, long horizontal line; wide M; A-P incl. slanted bottom wedges of A; P & R (loop not closed); P & S – taller, descends below line
"	"	MAN 100426		Same as above; cf. No. 11 above > R-E-x	Same as above
"	"	NAC 25, 761 = Pliego 2009, 393a.76 See many examples in <i>Pliego</i> , v. 2, 260-66		Same as above	
"	"	Pliego (14-12-2004) 251 = Pliego 2009, 393a.77		Same as above	
"	Egitania	CNV 325.1 = Pliego 2009, 391b.1 See many examples in <i>Pliego</i> , v. 2, 259f		Cf. NAC 25, 761 > Bust incl. face & uneven hair **; long initial S, L-A **, R-E-x **	Cf. NAC 25, 761 > + (off center); all other details**
"	Egitania	M. 233 (4/4) = Pliego 2009, 391c.4		Cf. Pliego (14-12-2004) 251 > same as above	Same as above
"	Egitania	ANS 2015.48.237 = HSA 16210		Cf. MAN 1971/71/11 > Bust **, all letter forms**	Same as on obverse

'BARCINONA ENGRAVER' ('Barc.')

King	Mint	Coin	Reasons for attribution of obverse	Additional comments about style of reverse
Reccared	Barcinona	M. 51(a) / ANS 2016.29.19 = HSA 10620 (pl. IV.3)	Prototype.	
"	Barcinona	M. 51(d) / ANS 2016.29.20 = HSA 16067 (pl. IV.4)		
"	Barcinona	M. 51(g) (pl. IV.5)	All aspects *; same wide E, narrow C, backwards S.	
"	Barcinona	M. 51(d) / ANS 2016.29.21 = HSA 16582 (pl. IV.6)	Probably by the same engraver > Cf. pl. IV.5: Bust and most letters **; S not backwards.	
"	Rodas	M. 63(a) (pl. IV.13)	All aspects **, esp. left lean of letters; see distinctive A (left stem at 90°, right stem at ca. 45°, wide thin wedge on top), R, backwards S.	
"	Tarracona	M. 72. I / see Heiss, no. 35 (pl. IV.20)	All aspects ** except cuirass and cross in center of reverse. The nose and eyes are formed in the same way.	
Witteric	Barcinona	M. 128(a) / ANS 2016.29.39 = HSA 16080 (pl. VII.5)	All aspects * or **.	See esp. letters B, A, R.

'NARBONA ENGRAVER' ('Narb.')

King	Mint	Coin	Reasons for attribution of obverse	Additional comments about style of reverse
Leovigild	Narbona	M. 11(a) / ANS 2016.29.2 = HSA 15989 (pl. II.2)	Bust* (face & hair**); most letters *, esp. L, E, D, R, S (thin, slightly larger than surrounding letters, slanting to right).	Same as obv.; see esp. P-I-V- <u>5</u> .
"	Narbona	M. 12 (pl. II.3)	Prototype.	
"	Rodas	M. 19(a) / ANS 2016.29.4 = HSA 16007 (pl. II.7)		
"	Rodas	GNC, pl. III.27		
Reccared	Narbona	M. 48(b) / ANS 2015.48.21 = HSA 16043 (pl. IV.I)		
"	Narbona	M. 49(a) / ANS 2015.48.22 = HSA 16044 (pl. IV.2)		

'CESARAGUSTA ENGRAVER' ('Ces.')

King	Mint	Coin	Reasons for attribution of obverse	Additional comments about style of reverse
Leovigild	Cesaraugusta	M. 16(e) (= pl. II.4)	All aspects **; cf. SB 2553 ** (Reccared-Cesaraugusta).	
Reccared	Cesaraugusta	M. 55(a) / ANS 2016.29.22 = HSA 16015 (= pl. IV.7) M. 55(c) / ANS 2016.29.23 = HSA 16016 (= pl. IV.8) M. 55(e) / ANS 2015.48.23 = HSA 16018 (= pl. IV.9) M. 55(h) / see Heiss, no. 6 (pl. IV.10) M. 56 / ANS 2015.48.25 = HSA 16069 (= pl. IV.11)	ANS 2016.29.22 is prototype . Note in this hand the peculiar engraving of the face, with a 'I' in the center: letters are mostly engraved by hand, with small wedge punches at the ends; R's diagonal stem goes all the way to the vertical stem; D's loop is often not closed, is often backwards; S is thin and tall. Pl. nos. 8-12: All aspects **, incl. abbreviation (:) and thin decorative rim.	
"	Cestavi	M. 57(b) / ANS 2016.29.24 = HSA 16017 (= pl. IV.12)		
"	Tirasona	MAN 1973/67/1. = Pliego 2009, 93(a)1 (p. 91)	Bust (face, hair slightly longer on left, dot at mouth); +. Cf. Kurt 2020, 338f, pl. III (39) (Witteric-Cesaraugusta) and s.n. (Witteric-Tarracona) > R (= slanted A with a ½ loop added), E (long horizontal bars, leans leftward, is larger than C), dots substituting letters.	
"	Cesaraugusta	M. 55(i) / ANS 57.542	Prototype	
"	Cesaraugusta	SB 42, no. 2553	All aspects **.	
"	Tarracona	M. 65(a) / ANS 2016.29.25 = HSA 16050 (= pl. IV.14) M. 66 / ANS 2015.48.26 = HSA 16046 (= pl. IV.15) M. 67(a) (pl. IV.16) M. 68(c) / ANS 2015.48.27 = HSA 16047 (pl. IV.17)	ANS 2016.29.25 is prototype . ANS 2015.48.26: Bust ** (esp. face); +* (lines are engraved between wedges but the wedge ends are very wide); all letters **, incl. size and spacing*; several dots in legend.	Overall style is very similar to that of obverse.

"		M. 70(6) / ANS 2016.29.27 = HSA 16056 (pl. IV.18) M. 70(c) / ANS 2016.29.28 = HSA 16048 (pl. IV.19)			
"	Tirasona	M. 74(d) / ANS 2016.29.29 = HSA 16072 (= pl. V.1)	Bust**; +**; all letters**, esp. T (slanted stem), R, D, S.	Bust**; all letters**, esp. T, R.	
Liuvia II	Tarracona	M. 118(a) / ANS 2016.29.38 = 16074 (=pl. VII.1)	Bust* (extremely similar to ANS 2015.48.26 [Reccared-Tarracona], as are letters D, A, R); +*; letter forms*, esp. R, E, A.	All aspects **, incl. style of +, dots in legend, and esp. letter T.	
"	Cesaraugusta	SB 42, no. 2563	All aspects and control marks*.		
Witteric	Cesaraugusta	SB 42, no. 2568	Bust **: letters *, L**.		
"	Cesaraugusta	SB 42, no. 2573	Uncertain: most aspects similar; E and R*.		
"	Cesaraugusta	M. 129(d) / ANS 2016.29.41 = HSA 16090 (pl. VII.7)	Bust**; +**; A, R,, S, E (with uneven stems) **: decorative rim (very close to edge)**.		
"	Cesaraugusta	M. 129(f)bis / ANS 57.555	Same as previous coin; even more similar to prototype.		
"	Cesaraugusta	Ensaïos, pl. II.39 (= Pliego 2009, 174c.3); in Kurt 2020, 338f, pl. III (39)			
"	Tarraco	SB 42, #2572 (= Pliego 2009, 179a.1); in Kurt 2020, 338f, pl. III (s.n.)			
"	Tirasona	M. 134 / ANS 2016.29.43 = HSA 16093 (pl. VII.9)	All aspects**, except this coin is slightly larger, as are the letters of its legend. Cf. also ANS 57.555 ** (Witteric-Cesaraugusta).		
Gundemar	Cesaraugusta	M.162(b) / ANS 2016.29.47 = HSA 16098 (= pl. VIII.5)	Later prototype. Cf. ANS 57.542 reverse (Reccared-Cesaraugusta) > Bust**; +**; letters E, R, A, V, O, C/G**.	All aspects **, esp. letters and inclusion of dots in legend.	
"	Cesaraugusta	MAN 2008/115/67			

"	Sagunto	GNC pl. V.57	Cf. other Gundemar coins here > most aspects*, esp. letters (and: in place of S). Most similar to ANS 2015.48.89 (Gundemar-Tarracona) > module, light decorative rim.	
"	Tarracona	M. 164(a) / ANS 2015.48.89 = HSA 16759 (= pl. VIII.6)	All aspects*. Cf. ANS 2016.29.47 (Gundemar-Cesaraugusta) > all aspects** (except M), but size of coin and letters is smaller.	
"	Tirasona	M. 165(a) / see Heiss, no. 4 (= pl. VIII.7)	All aspects*. Cf. ANS 2016.29.47 (Gundemar-Cesaraugusta) > all aspects**.	
Sisebut	Cesaraugusta	M. 174(a) / ANS 2015.48.93 = HSA 16102 (= pl. VIII.12)	All aspects*. Cf. ANS 2016.29.47 (Gundemar-Cesaraugusta) > esp. Bust, +, S, E, R **.	Cf. ANS 2016.29.47 > All aspects**, esp. letters (incl. size and spacing).
"	Cesaraugusta	M. 174(a) / ANS 2015.48.91 = HSA 16100		
"	Tarracona	M. 177(a) / ANS 2016.29.49 = HSA 16128 (= pl. VIII.14)	All aspects*. Cf. ANS 2015.48.91 (Sisebut-Cesaraugusta) > Bust**, +**;	All aspects*. Cf. ANS 2015.48.91 > All aspects**.
"	Tarracona	M. 177(e)2 / ANS 57.560	Same as above	Same as above
Suinthila	Calagorre	M. 212 / ANS 59.129.1	Cf. esp. ANS 2015.48.132 > Bust**;	Bust**;
"	Cesaraugusta	M. 213(e) / ANS 2015.48.132 = HSA 16149 (= pl. X.15)	All letters*, but larger on this coin.	+*; see letters C, E, A, O, I, V (all**) and same dots in legend.
"	Cesaraugusta	M. 213(e) / ANS 2015.48.132 = HSA 16149 (= pl. X.15)	All aspects*. Cf. ANS 2016.29.47 (Gundemar-Cesaraugusta) and ANS 2015.48.91 (Sisebut-Cesaraugusta) > Bust**;	Cf. esp. ANS 2016.29.47 and ANS 2015.48.91 > Bust*, all letters* (except larger on this coin).
"	Tarracona	M. 215(f) / ANS 2015.48.136 = HSA 16265 (= pl. XI.1)	S, R-E (-X on ANS 2015.48.91), T, N **.	Same as obv.
"	Tarracona	M. 215(f) / ANS 2015.48.136 = HSA 16265 (= pl. XI.1)	All aspects*. Cf. ANS 2015.48.89 (Gundemar-Tarracona) > Bust**;	
"	Tarracona	M. 215(f) / ANS 2015.48.136 = HSA 16265 (= pl. XI.1)	letters** (esp. R-E), but larger here and the die has deteriorated.	

"	Tarracona	SB 42, no. 2648	All aspects *. Cf. SB 42, no. 2654 (Suintila-Valentia) > Bust, esp. face *, + **, letters *.	
"	Valentia	SB 42, no. 2654	Bust, +, letters. See previous coin. However, Valentia coins have reversed S's.	
Sisenand	Tarracona	M. 256(d) / ANS 2016.29.63 = HSA 16441 (= pl. XVII.2)	Cf. esp. ANS 2015.48.136 (Suintila-Tarracona) > Style of bust *, but small differences begin to appear; + **; most letters similar, but S, N, R differ slightly.	Cf. ANS 2015.48.136 > Bust *, + **; letters *, with possible exception of R.

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KINGS, MINTS AND PACTS: COINS AND POLITICAL ALLIANCES IN THE VISIGOTHIC REALM

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I. Introduction¹

The beginning of Visigothic coinage seems to have taken place in the early decades of the 5th century in the newly conquered territory of Septimania, although it was not until the reign of Liuvigild that the tremissis became an essential symbol of representation and power in the Visigothic kingdom.² Coins allow for a multifocal analysis: on the one hand, designs and legends show us the direct messages that the issuer wants to convey to the potential users of the coins; on the other hand, the material documentation, the preserved coin repertoire itself, provides insight into their circulation and distribution across the territory. This basic methodological principle, however, must be taken with caution. It must be taken into account that the survival of coins in general depends on chance, and the presence of large hoards, particularly those from the south, has a significant influence on the corpus and undoubtedly distorts our perception of reality; additionally, in the relatively small corpus of documented Visigothic coins, isolated finds scarcely amount to 2% of the known repertoire.³

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¹ This paper is based on research conducted over the past five years, either commissioned by publications or funded through projects aimed at disseminating monographs with reputable publishers. Due to circumstances beyond the author’s control, these publications have experienced significant delays. As a result, a substantial portion of these works reflected in the bibliography awaits publication.

² Ruth Pliego, “*Figura et potentia: Coin and Power in the Visigothic Kingdom*,” in *The Visigothic Kingdom: the Negotiation of Power in Post-Roman Iberia*, ed. Sabine Panzram (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020), 235-255.

³ Ruth Pliego, “Visigothic Currency: Recent developments and data for its study,” in *Framing Power in Visigothic Society: Discourses, Devices, and Artifacts*, ed. Eleonora

Despite this relative material limitation, and without dismissing the data provided by the number of documented examples,⁴ we have the valuable information offered by the mints present on the tremisses. The inclusion of the mint on Visigothic coins towards the end of Liuvigild's reign was not completely innovative in the context of post-Roman coinage.⁵ However, although the Merovingians and even the Suevi had previously included place names on their coins, none of these kingdoms made such extensive use of this feature, nor was it probably given such profound significance.

Historians have generally put forward different interpretations of the role that the coinage may have played in the Visigothic Kingdom, often when attempting to explain the administration of the territory or the power relations between the king and the elites. The coinage has therefore been treated more or less tangentially, based on those two aforementioned assumptions: the repertoire of known mints and their location, and/or the number of recorded examples. Based on these criteria, it is possible to identify the aspects on which the various proposals focus. For example, authors such as Miquel Barceló⁶ (also with Félix Retamero)⁷ and Luis A. García Moreno⁸ have defended a fiscal

Dell'Elicine and Cécile Martin (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020), 195; Ead., "*Patria et regem: The Role of Mints in the Visigothic Administration*," in *How to Govern in Long Late Antiquity? Strategies of Administration on the Iberian Peninsula and in North Africa*, ed. Sabine Panzram (Leiden: Brill, 2025), 287-319.

⁴ The last update (2021) recorded 7,722 examples. Although new additions have been made since then, the changes are minimal due to the dynamic nature of this repertoire and, in general, do not alter the conclusions (Pliego, "*Patria*").

⁵ The inclusion of the name of the issuing city represents a striking change from the late Roman period, when few mints were active throughout the imperial territory. Phillip Grierson, *Byzantine Coinage* (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, 1999), 5.

⁶ Miquel Barceló, "A statistical approach to multiple mint issues of royal coinage, the case of the Visigoths in Hispania (585-711)", in *Statistics and Numismatics = Statistique et Numismatique...*, ed. Charlotte Carcassonne and Tony Hackens (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly = Conseil de l'Europe Assemblée Parlementaire, 1981), 152 ff.

⁷ Miquel Barceló and Félix Retamero, "From Crops to Coin. Which way back?", *Gaceta Numismática* 122 (1996), 55-63. See also Félix Retamero, "As Coins Go Home. Towns, Bishops, Kings and Merchants in Visigothic Hispania", in *The Visigoths. From the Migration Period to the Seventh Century*, ed. P. Heather (San Marino: Boydell & Brewer Press, 1999), 271-320.

⁸ Luis A. García Moreno "El estado protofeudal visigodo: precedente y modelo para la Europa carolingia", in *L'Europe héritière de l'Espagne wisigothique*, dir. Jacques Fontaine and Christine Pellistrand (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 1992), 17-43. See also Luis A. García Moreno, "Imposición y política fiscal en la España visigoda," in *Historia de la*

use for coins, albeit from different perspectives.⁹ They have considered an important relationship with the army, especially with regard to the abundant mints in the northwestern part of the peninsula.¹⁰ More recently, Andrew Kurt argues that the primary function of much of the coin should be considered in a military context, not only in the north, but also in the southern mints bordering the Byzantine province of Spania.¹¹ Many years earlier, Octavio Gil Farrés had rejected the military hypothesis based precisely on the abundance of mints located in insignificant centers in *Gallaecia* and northern *Lusitania*.¹² Based on the scarce material record, Iñaki Martín Viso also suggested that gold coins played an essential role in the collection and management of taxes, reflecting the reality of peripheral local powers.¹³ In contrast, the mercantile or economic thesis, promoted mainly by Luis García de Valdeavellano,¹⁴ Xavier Barral¹⁵ and David M. Metcalf,¹⁶ considers that Visigothic coinage was essentially commercial in nature.

While it is possible that coins played a role in all these areas, and perhaps some others, to a greater or lesser extent, neither the surviving numismatic evidence nor the sources corroborate this, particularly with regard to the

Hacienda española, Homenaje a García de Valdeavellano (Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Fiscales, 1982), 263-300.

⁹ García Moreno ("El estado protofeudal") from a proto-feudal perspective.

¹⁰ García Moreno, "El estado protofeudal", 337, 340. Miquel Barceló, "La cuestión del 'Limes Hispanus', los datos numismáticos", *Acta Numismática* 5 (1975), 33.

¹¹ Andrew Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy in the Visigothic Kingdom: From Settlement in Aquitaine through the First Decade of the Muslim Conquest of Spain* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020), chapter 4.

¹² Octavio Gil Farrés, "Algunos aspectos de la numismática visigoda. Consideraciones acerca del 'tipo tercero' de Leovigildo", *Numisma* 17 (1955), 25-61. For this author, the existence of different mints and the variety in the manufacture of coins seems to be the result of a specific type of coinage involving what he calls 'traveling dies', which were made at the mine site for economic, administrative and territorial organisational reasons rather than military ones.

¹³ Iñaki Martín Viso, "Tremises y portentes en el nordeste de Lusitania (siglos VI-VII)", *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez* 38-1 (2008), 175-200.

¹⁴ Luis García de Valdeavellano, "La moneda y la economía de cambio en la Península Ibérica desde el siglo VI hasta mediados del siglo XI", in *Moneta e scambi nell'alto medioevo* (*Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo* VIII) (Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull'alto Medioevo, 1961), 203-230.

¹⁵ Xavier Barral i Altet, *La circulations des monnaies suèves et visigotiques, contribution à l'histoire économique du royaume visigot* (Zurich-München: Artemis, 1976).

¹⁶ David M. Metcalf, "Many Mint-places, Few Coins. Visigothic Coinage in Gallaecia and Northern Lusitania", *Homenagem a Mário Gomes Marques* (Sintra: Instituto de Sintra, 2000), 175-194.

number of documented examples. One of the most prominent theses in recent years is that put forward by José Carlos Sánchez Pardo.¹⁷ He suggests that in the northwest of the peninsula, there was a supra-local economic system controlled by local elites, ecclesiastical authorities and the monarchy. This system was related to mining and trade with Byzantium and was highly centralized in the hands of the main elites. Setting aside the interesting economic aspects pointed out by the author, it should be emphasized that the author's view is that mints did not directly reflect or cause mining activity. Rather, they "reflect a pact, an articulation between local and monarchical power."¹⁸

The direct reference to cities alongside the king's name on coins is, in my opinion, related to the monarchy's territorial expansion as it extended its power over the Iberian Peninsula.¹⁹ This would support our view that the use of coin in the kingdom plays an important role as an element of social cohesion, in line with the ideas of the so-called gift economy.²⁰ In this perspective, the materiality and prestige of the coin contribute to legitimizing the king's authority and strengthening the relationship with the aristocracy: the coin would symbolize the establishment of personal pacts between the king and the nobles, and the mints would reveal the extent of their allegiance to the monarch.²¹ The location, activity, and dispersion of them offer valuable insights into the consolidation of monarchical power and the territorial integration throughout the period.

This approach does not conflict with the use of currency in other environments, but it limits its widespread and extensive application in each of them. The very characteristics of the tremissis as a gold coin suggest that its role as a medium of exchange in commercial transactions, both external and internal, must have been rather modest. However, as has been pointed

¹⁷ José Carlos Sánchez Pardo, "Sobre las bases económicas de las aristocracias en la Gallaecia suevo-visigoda (ca. 530-650 d.C.). Comercio, minería y articulación fiscal", *Anuario de estudios medievales* 44 (2014), 983-1023.

¹⁸ Sánchez Pardo, "Sobre las bases económicas", 1007. Ruth Pliego, "Gobernantes, cecas y pactos: evidencias numismáticas del final del reino visigodo y la conquista omeya", in *Covadonga 722-2022: las huellas y los relatos* (Oviedo: Consejería de Cultura, Política Lingüística y Turismo del Principado de Asturias, 2022), 107-116.

¹⁹ Ruth Pliego, *La moneda visigoda*. 2 vol. (Sevilla: Secretariado de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Sevilla, 2009), 193.

²⁰ Pliego, *Moneda visigoda*, I, 221-222. On this subject, see Phillip Grierson, "Commerce in the Dark Ages: A Critique of the Evidence", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 9 (1959), 130 ff. García Moreno refers to a close economic circuit of 'natural economy' in "El estado protofeudal", 267, note 9.

²¹ Pliego, "Gobernantes, cecas y pactos" and "*Patria*".

out elsewhere, these coins must have reached commercial circuits on more than a few occasions, and it could be that, in the later stages of the Visigothic period, the lower concentration of gold in the coins seems to have made them more versatile.²² On the other hand, the mere 2% this coinage coming from isolated finds does not support a strong connection between the coins and the fiscal sphere, particularly in *Gallaecia* and Lusitania.

While acknowledging that coins may have played multiple functions in different contexts, this paper first examines the role attributed to coins by contemporary sources and considers whether they refer to military, fiscal, or commercial uses. To achieve this, an analysis of a document rich in references to coins that also offers contextual insights into their potential functions will be conducted. This document is the *Liber Iudiciorum*, some of whose provisions are discussed in the following sections.

Attention will also be given to how territorial allegiances to the monarchy could have been established based on the location and activity of mints throughout the period. Analyzing the location of the mints and determining whether their activity was continuous, intermittent or sporadic throughout the period provides us with valuable information. Considering some sources from the period, this information allows us to better understand the network of relations between the monarchy and the elites, as well as the policies of loyalty and territorial allegiance. The paradigmatic case of the multiplicity of mints in *Gallaecia*, where almost half of the 98 known Visigothic mints are concentrated, most of them sporadic in nature, is undoubtedly an appropriate starting point for this analysis. However, as will be shown, the Galician mints are better understood when the focus is placed on the sporadic mints of the other Visigothic provinces.

Finally, typological changes provide a key insight into the messages that the monarchical authority wanted to communicate to the coins' potential users. In this sense, the administrative changes that took place during the regnum coincide with certain typological transformations. Thus, the territorial analysis we propose will be enriched by commentary on the evolution of coin types throughout the period.

II. Units of weight, counting coins, and cash coins in the Visigothic Kingdom

The Visigoths began to mint their first coins after settling in southern France, probably during the reign of Theodoric I (418-451). These first coinages

²² Pliego, "*Patria*".

imitated the official Roman coinage, copying not only the legend on these coins, including the name and title of the emperor, but also their types.²³ In this first phase (c. 420-c. 568), not only solidi but also silver coins were minted and, following the trend that had been developing in the Empire since the beginning of the 5th century, the Visigoths also minted thirds of solidi or tremisses. No Visigothic imitation solidi seem to have been identified to date in the name of Emperor Justin II (r. 565-578), so the minting of this denomination was probably abandoned before Liuvigild came to the throne alone (c. 572). The tremissis thus became the only denomination produced from the reign of this monarch onwards.

The abundant coinage that began under Liuvigild contrasts sharply with the rare references to currency in literary sources. As previously mentioned, the *Liber Iudiciorum* (hereafter referred to as the *LI*) contains numerous references to payments in gold in various denominations.²⁴ These include standard units such as the *libra auri*,²⁵ and its divisors, the *uncias*,²⁶ as well as accounting units like the *siliquae*,²⁷ and coins themselves, such as the *solidus* and *tremissis*. As will be seen below, unlike the solidus, which is found in numerous provisions throughout the *Liber Iudiciorum*, it is striking how rarely the tremissis appears, as it was the only coin minted by the Visigoths during the period in question. This fact suggests that the solidus remained as a unit of account, anchored in its traditional weight standard and its equivalence

²³ Wilhelm Reinhart, "Die Münzen des tolosanischen Reiches der Westgoten," *Deutsches Jahrbuch für Numismatik* I (1938): 107–135.

²⁴ See Javier de Santiago Fernández, "Legislación y moneda en la Hispania visigoda 2011", *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez* 41-2 (2011), 55-74, and Ruth Pliego, "Trade and Money in Visigothic Iberia", in *Brill Companion to Visigothic Iberia*, ed. Molly Lester, Jamie Wood and Javier Martínez (Leiden-Boston: Brill, forthcoming).

²⁵ References concentrated in books II, III, VI y XII.

²⁶ LI 2.1.26; 3.3.12; 7.6.1.

²⁷ There are only two references to the *siliqua*, both of which relate to payments of less than one tremissis, which clarifies the use of this gold weight as a divisor of the latter (LI 5.5.8 and 8.5.7). The name of *siliqua* refers to the carob tree (*ceratonia siliquae*). Originally it was a fraction of the Roman pound (1/1728) weighing 0.19 g (see Peter Spufford, *Money and its Use in Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Spanish transl. *Dinero y moneda en la Europa Medieval* (Barcelona: Editorial Crítica, 1991), 397), and in the Visigothic period it was equivalent to 1/24 of the solid: "*Siliqua vigésima quarta pars solidi est, ab arboris mine vocabulum tenens*" (Isid., *Etym.* 16.25.9). It is in this sense that this term is best understood in the document from the time of Reccared I, *De Fisco Barcinonensis*, rather than as a denomination of silver, as has sometimes been interpreted, including by the present author.

with the *tremissis*,²⁸ even though payments were probably made by counting coins. In fact, Isidore presents the practice of weighing money as characteristic of an earlier phase of monetary exchange.²⁹ It is also notable that there are no references to bronze denominations in the *Liber*, particularly since Isidore mentions the *folles* (*Etym.* 16.18.11) and there is documentation showing its probable use throughout the entire period.³⁰ As we will see, although bronze coins were evidently in use, there must not have been an equivalence between bronze, gold and silver.³¹

The denominations expressed in the *LI* clearly reflect the reality of the period, when the same denominations could be applied not only to coins and quantities of precious metals but also to abstract values used for calculating credits and accounts. They could even be applied to goods themselves or serve as substitutes for minted money, that is, as payments in kind. It would be worth investigating the contexts in which these terms appear throughout the legislative corpus.

III. The Visigothic *tremissis*: a coin for trade?

As previously mentioned, some theories advocate the widespread use of Visigothic gold coins in commerce. The laws relating to trade are contained in Book V *De Transactionibus*, and the scarcity of references to coins in this book compared to other books is outstanding. Specifically, Title IV, which covers

²⁸ The redundant use of the *solidi auri* in some cases would support this idea (see *LI* 2.2.2; 5.4.11; 6.5.4; 8.1.4).

²⁹ Isid. *Etym.* 10.67, writes about the *dispensator*, “*quia prius qui dabant pecuniam, non numerabant, sed appendebant.*” About the *stipendium* (Isid. *Etym.* 16.18.6): “*Stipendium a stipependenda nominatum. Antiqui enim appendere pecuniam soli tierant magis quam annumerare.*”

³⁰ Miquel Crusafont i Sabater, *El sistema monetario visigodo: cobre y oro* (Barcelona: Asociación Numismática Española, 1994); Ruth Pliego, “Rethinking the *minimi* of the Iberian Peninsula and Balearic Islands in late antiquity,” *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 12(2) (2020): 125-154.

³¹ Although the existence of Visigothic silver coins has recently been proposed (Miquel Crusafont, Jaume Benages i Olivé, and Jaume Noguera Guillén, “Silver Visigothic Coinage,” *The Numismatic Chronicle* 176 (2016): 241-263), this attribution has been contested (see Vincent Geneviève, “Le dépôt funéraire de fractions d’argent du Vie siècle découvert à Bénazet (Molandier, Aude): monnayage franc ou visigothique?”, in *Contextes et contextualisation de trouvailles monétaires. Actes du sixième colloque international du Groupe suisse pour l’étude des trouvailles monétaires* (Genève, 5-7 mars 2010), ed. Suzanne Frey-Kupper, Clive Stannard, and Nathalie Wolfe-Jacot (Lausanne: Éditions du Zèbre, 2019), 127-149.

trade laws (*comercium et transaction*), only includes one transaction linked to currency payments, and it refers precisely to the price of the *Liber Iudiciorum*, which was estimated at six solidi during the reign of Recceswinth and doubled during those of Erwig (LI 5.4.22). As we see in other books, the rest of the references to the solidi occur in the context of compensation payments,³² penances,³³ interest³⁴ or donations and gifts. In this latter sense, two of the seven titles that make up Book V are devoted to donations.³⁵ The *tremissis*, however, is not mentioned here. The few references to it are concentrated in Books VII, VIII and IX, which deal with theft, fraud, violence, injury, fugitives and refugees, and refer to fines or compensation.³⁶

Nevertheless, it is surprising that the rest of the titles in Book V contain numerous provisions regulating a wide range of exchanges, even though, despite the extensive circulation of goods, these do not operate within a commercial sphere, and their agents cannot be classified as merchants. It could be argued that only transactions involving foreign goods and merchants, in addition to the activities of Jews partially related to these, would fall under the category of trade in the *Liber Iudiciorum*. In fact, while in these the term *negotium* is quite broad, with trade being only one of its meanings (Isid., *Etym.* 18.15.3), the mention of *negotiator* refers only to a participant in maritime trade (LI 11.3.1-4). In this sense, although under the Visigothic kingdom long-distance trade is attested by various written and archaeological sources,³⁷ these do not appear in Book V on transactions but are concentrated in a separate title in Book XI devoted to exceptional matters.³⁸ Only the third of the three titles in this book, *De transmarinis negotiatoribus*, contains some provisions on this subject, which, due to their *ancient* nature, i.e., prior to Reccared I (586-602), could refer to a situation before the period in question. These provisions make no mention of the use of currency, which

³² LI 5.4.11.

³³ LI 5.1.6. Regarding the conduct of bishops and abuse of authority, valued in solidi and required to be paid on days of penance.

³⁴ This is one of only two references to the *siliqua* in the corpus. In LI 5.5.8, to prevent usury, "Where anyone loans money at interest, he shall not have a right to demand more than three *siliquae* per annum, for every solidus"; the other is in Book VIII (LI 8.5.7) and refers to compensation: "Where the owner of a horse, or any other animal, finds him safe and sound, he shall pay for each of said animals, four *siliquae*, to him who has cared for it".

³⁵ LI 5, II: *De donationibus generalibus* and III: *De patronorum donationibus*.

³⁶ LI 7.2.11; 7.4.4; 8.3.7; 8.3.10; 8.3.12; 8.3.15; 8.4.11; 8.4.26; 8.4.31; 9.1.8; 9.1.14). The provision in LI 7.6.5 stipulates the mandatory circulation of gold denominations, presumably to prevent rejection due to a lack of confidence on the part of the recipient.

³⁷ Sánchez Pardo, "Sobre las bases económicas", 986-988.

³⁸ LI 11: *De egrotis et mortuis adque transmarinis negotiatoribus*.

would be confirmed by the virtual absence of Visigothic coins outside their territory.³⁹

By contrast, there is no equivalent role to the *negotiator* for domestic trade, nor is there a group dedicated exclusively to it. Nor were there likely to have been many Spanish merchants engaged in overseas trade.⁴⁰ It is significant in this regard that among the taxes related to the transactions mentioned in the sources, the *solutio auraria*,⁴¹ was applied to all those involved in remunerated activities rather than to a group of merchants.⁴² These taxes would have been imposed not only on large estates, including monastic ones, but also on artisans, shopkeepers, moneylenders, and even clergy,⁴³ in a variety of transactions that could even include prostitution.⁴⁴

These exchanges would explain the survival of certain local, rural and urban commercial infrastructure during the Visigothic period. In cities or towns of some importance, appropriate spaces were set aside for the conduct of transactions. Seasonal fairs probably continued to be held, as can be inferred from a quote by Isidore of Seville.⁴⁵ The Sevillian also refers to the *mercatum* as a place for buying and selling or as “an assembly of many people

³⁹ Unlike what happens, for example, in Merovingian Gaul: see Rory Naismith, “Gold coinage and its use in the Post-Roman West,” *Speculum* 89-2 (2014): 294-295.

⁴⁰ In general, there were few ships that made the reverse journey from west to east; see Thomas MacMaster, “Slavery and the Seventh Century Caesura,” in *People and Goods on the Move: Merchants, Networks and Communication Routes in the Medieval and Early Modern Mediterranean*, ed. Ö. Çaykent and L. Zavagno (Fisciano, Italy: ICSR Mediterranean Knowledge, 2016), 15.

⁴¹ This was the name given at that time to the ancient *collatio lustralis*, as can be seen in the *Breviary of Alaric* (13.1.1). Isid. *Etym.* 16.18.6. Luis A. García Moreno, “Algunos aspectos fiscales de la Península Ibérica durante el s. VI,” *Hispania antiqua*, 1 (1971): 240-243; Id. “Estudios sobre la organización administrativa del reino visigodo de Toledo,” *Anuario de historia del derecho español* 44 (1974): 21 ff.

⁴² Arcadio Del Castillo, “La *collatio lustralis* en el régimen fiscal del reino visigodo,” *Antigüedad y Cristianismo*, 8 (1991): 60; Arnold Hugh Martin Jones and Antony Spawforth, “*Collatio lustralis*,” in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford: OUP, 1999), 361-362.

⁴³ Luis A. García Moreno, *Historia de España visigoda* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1989): 279. An earlier document, the Council of Elvira in its canon 19, mentions the participation of bishops, priests and deacons in the markets, although it prohibits them from frequenting *nundinae quaeestuosas* (opulent markets) that were not recommended for ecclesiastical decorum (see Javier Arce, “Campos, tierras y villae en Hispania (siglos IV-VI),” in *Visigodos y omeyas: el territorio*, coord. Luis Caballero Zoreda, Pedro Mateos Cruz, Tomás Cordero Ruiz (Mérida: CSIC, 2012), 24.

⁴⁴ Jones and Spawforth, “*Collatio lustralis*”.

⁴⁵ Isid. *Etym.* 5.33.14: “The Nones were so called from *nundinae*, which are days of public assemblies or markets”. On the *nundinae*, see Arce, “Campos, tierra y villae,” 24-25.

who are accustomed to sell and buy goods" (Isid., *Etym.* 5.25.35; 15.2.45; 43) and to the *tabernae* or small retail shops (Isid., *Etym.* 15.2.45; 43). There is documentation suggesting a certain administrative control of prices when mentioning the *publicum pretium*⁴⁶ also in Book V.⁴⁷ Isidore says that the *pretium* "is so called because we give 'it first' (*prius eum*), so that in return for it we may rightfully take possession of the property we are seeking." However, the only mention by Isidore about the relationship between *pretium* and currency refers to the 30 coins that Judas accepted for handing over Christ (Isid., *Etym.* 7.9.18).

This trade could have developed without the need for gold coins, hence their scarcity in the sources. The high value of the real coin, the tremissis, would not have been practical for small exchanges, and neither the material evidence, the large hoards, nor the few isolated finds of Visigothic coins allow us to confirm their widespread use in domestic trade.⁴⁸ It has already been mentioned that the laws show numerous payments in kind and in services,⁴⁹ something that also seems to be shown by the Visigothic slates. Some of these mention the *solidus*, but also in the context of agreements and prices rather than commercial transactions.⁵⁰

Domestic trade would undoubtedly continue to require small change for smaller commercial transactions. There are an increasing number of late archaeological contexts in which this is the case. The use of Roman coinage, generally *nummi* from the 4th and 5th centuries that would have circulated alongside *minimi* from other authorities, mainly Vandal and Byzantine,⁵¹ has

⁴⁶ LI 12.2.18. See Liubov Chernina, "*Quod fidei plenitudine fines semper Spaniae floruerunt...* Egica y los judíos," *Sefarad* 69,1 (2009): 18; LI 11.3.1.

⁴⁷ The nature of sales transactions as reflected in Visigothic law includes numerous provisions on price in general, fair price (LI 8.4.28; 12.2.14) and the importance of respecting the *datum pretium* (LI 5.5.4). This is also very present in Book IV on the nature of lineage and therefore contains numerous references to inheritance.

⁴⁸ Considering that isolated finds account for only slightly more than 2% of known Visigothic coins, in my opinion, their use to propose or refute any thesis is rather dubious (see Pliego, "Visigothic currency").

⁴⁹ Enrique García Vargas, "Aspectos socioeconómicos de la antigüedad tardía en la Bética (siglos IV-VII)," in *La arqueología romana de la provincia de Sevilla. Actualidad y perspectivas*, coord. José Beltrán Fortes and Sandra Rodríguez Guzmán Sánchez (Sevilla: Editorial Universidad de Sevilla, 2012), 239.

⁵⁰ Isabel Velázquez, *Documentos de época visigoda escritos en pizarra: Siglos VI–VIII*. 2 vols. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000).

⁵¹ Cécile Morrisson, "The re-use of obsolete coins: the case of Roman Imperial bronzes revived in the late fifth century," in *Studies in Numismatic Methods, Presented to Philip Grierson*, ed. C. N. L. Brooke et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 95-

also been documented on the Iberian Peninsula. In this case, the material recovered also includes peninsular issues minted in both the Visigothic and Byzantine periods.⁵² The sites where these bronzes have been identified are precisely places with ports and active trade, as reflected in many cases by the arrival of imports in the 7th century, which speaks to the need for currency for small purchases and services.⁵³ It is curious to note how, unlike gold coins, these bronze coins crossed our borders and, circulating alongside other *minimi*, have been found in various parts of the Mediterranean. The main circulation of bronze coins separate from the circulation of gold may explain the lack of an established ratio between gold and bronze and, therefore, their use as tokens whose monetary value had to be guaranteed.⁵⁴ The lack of equivalence between metals, alongside the insignificance of this coinage, would explain its absence from the sources.

Some references to gold payments, some of which were also counted in coins, remain to be mentioned. These were collected by other sources in the context of diplomatic relations with other powers, such as the 30,000 solidi that Liuvigild gave to the Byzantines to withdraw their support for the rebel Hermenegild (Greg. Tur., *Hist. Franc.* 5.38) – some 137 kilos of gold – or the 200,000 solidi received by the Frank Dagobert in exchange for help in dethroning Suintila. Note that, although the solidus is mentioned in both cases, it may actually have been the tremissis that was used. The second amount, equivalent to 2,700 pounds, was intended to replace the *missorium*

108; Sam Moorhead “Ever Decreasing Circles. The Nummus Economy at Butrint (Albania) and Beyond,” in *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference Numismatic History and Economy in Epirus During Antiquity* (Univeristy of Ioannina, October 3rd-7th 2007), ed. Katerini Liampi, Cleopatra Papaevangelou-Genakos, Konstantinos Zachos, Angelika Dousougli, Athena Iakovidou (Athēna, 2013), 601-616.

⁵² Crusafont, *El sistema monetario*; Pliego, “Rethinking the *minimi*”.

⁵³ Ruth Pliego “The circulation of copper coins in the Iberian Peninsula during the Visigothic Period: New approaches,” *The Journal of Archaeological Numismatics*, 5 (2015-2016): 263–299.

⁵⁴ John Philip Cozens Kent, *Roman Imperial Coinage*, Vol. X, *The Divided Empire and the Fall of the Western Parts*, 395–491 (Spink: London, 1994): lxxxv. The presence on these *minimi* of Christian symbols, mainly the cross, together with monograms, may be indicative of this. Tawfiq Ibrahim refers to the forced circulation of fals in the eastern part of the Umayyad Empire, indicated by the term *djaza*, also present on some conquest seals (Tawfiq Ibrahim “Additions to the lead seals of the Umayyad conquest of the Iberian Peninsula,” in *Monnaies du haut Moyen Âge: histoire et archéologie (péninsule Ibérique, Maghreb VIIe–XIe siècle* (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Midi, 2015): 130-131; see Philippe Sénac and Tawfiq Ibrahim, *Los precintos de la conquista omeya y la formación de al-Andalus (711-756)* (Granada: Editorial Universidad de Granada, 2017).

auri from the Visigoths' treasure that had initially been promised (500 pounds) (Fredeg., *Chron.*, 4.73). Therefore, the alternative was clearly greater, unless the currency in circulation was involved, i.e., the tremissis, which weighed around 1.40g (.049 oz.) at that time, with a gold content of less than 65%.⁵⁵ Given the evidence of these foreign cases, it is worth asking in what context such agreements (donations, gifts, compensation, etc.) would have taken place in the internal politics of the Visigothic kingdom.

In short, although the Visigothic tremissis was a state-guaranteed ingot⁵⁶ that occasionally, or even regularly, entered commercial circuits, it seems clear that altogether in the exchanges that took place in the Visigothic world the extra-commercial activities played a fundamental role as a factor of social cohesion in the framework of the gift economy.⁵⁷ As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, one context in which the role of coinage in the relationship between the king and territorial powers would be evident is in adherence to the Visigothic cause. In this sense, coins would function as symbols that reflected the establishment of personal pacts between the king and the nobles. Therefore, references to mints in the monetary message would reveal the map of allegiances to the king. In this regard, Frank Reiss states that "a king might rule a *regnum*, but this tended to express itself in military and fiscal control of a city."⁵⁸ The reign of Liuvigild marked a turning point in the expansion of Visigothic power in the Iberian Peninsula, where the king's policy appeared to be guided by agreements with the nobility. This situation persisted until these personal agreements were replaced by the consolidation of institutions, which, as will be discussed in the next section, took place in the second half of the 7th century.

IV. Mints that speak: the evolution of Visigothic territorial power

Literary references to coin minting, as well as evidence concerning the use of coinage from various sources, are inherently connected to the different

⁵⁵ Pliego, *Moneda visigoda*, I, 198. This supports the idea that the continued use of the solidus in texts probably indicates its equivalence with the tremissis.

⁵⁶ Perhaps the repeated references to payments in weight are referring to ingots. In this sense, we do not have hackgold accumulations on the peninsula as must have existed in Gaul (Greg. Tur. *Hist.* 2.40; 5.18; 6.32).

⁵⁷ Pliego, *Moneda visigoda*, I, 225-226; Paulo Pachá, "Comércio na Alta Idade Média: uma crítica da teoria," in *O pré-capitalismo em perspectiva. Estudos em Homenagem ao Prof. Ciro F. S. Cardoso* (Rio de Janeiro: Itaca, 2014), 321-345.

⁵⁸ Frank Reiss, *Narbonne and its Territory in Late Antiquity. From the Visigoths to the Arabs* (Farnham-Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2013): 164

political phases of the Visigothic kingdom throughout the period. This evolution is, to some degree, reflected in the coins themselves, especially in their design and the network of minting locations indicated in the reverse legends. The reign of Liuvigild marks a turning point in the expansion of Visigothic power in the Iberian Peninsula, so it is worth focusing on this period.

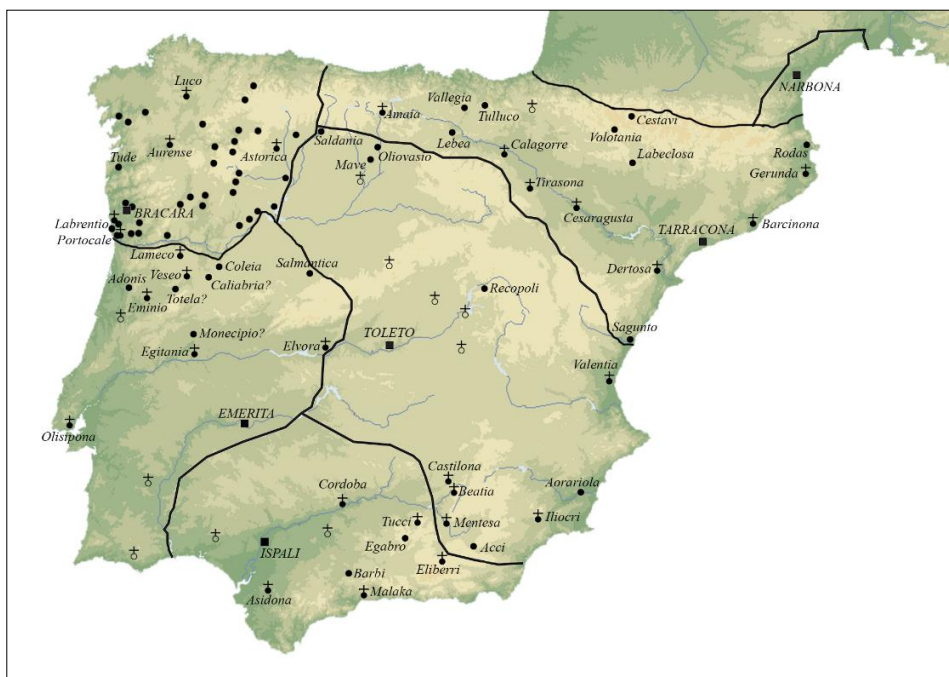


Fig. 1. Map of the Visigothic Mints and the episcopal sees

It has been mentioned previously that it was during the reign of Liuvigild that the decisive step was taken in the monarchical formation of the coin. Not only was the monarchy the only institution that possessed the royal prerogative of minting coins, the *ius monetae*, but the name of the king appeared alongside the title *Rex* on absolutely all gold coins minted from the time of Liuvigild onwards.⁵⁹ At almost the same time, the name of the issuing city, the mint, was also included in the monetary message, which meant that

⁵⁹ Visigothic coins bear the title *Rex*, but there is no reference to a *gens gothorum* or *visigothorum*, in contrast to coins issued by other nations. See Sebastian Steinbach, *Imitation, Innovation und Imperialisierung: Geldwesen und Münzprägung als wirtschaftshistorische Quellen zur ethnischen Identität und Herrschaftsorganisation des spanischen Westgotenreiches (ca. 572-714)* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2017): 109.

within a few years almost a hundred cities in the Visigothic territory included their name on their coins (Fig. 1). The designs of the coins that began at that time narrate the evolution of the Visigothic kingdom, while the proliferation of mints, especially from the reign of Reccared I onwards, reflected the adhesion of the different territories to the monarchy.⁶⁰ Considering both aspects, designs and mints in operation, it is possible to distinguish five clearly differentiated stages: the reign of Liuvigild, from Reccared to Chindaswinth, from the joint reign of Chindaswinth & Recceswinth to Wamba, from Erwig to Wittiza, and the epigone of the Visigothic kingdom that occurred after the death of Wittiza.

V. The first steps of the Visigothic monarchy: Liuvigild and Hermenegild

Although Liuvigild's initial issues were part of the pseudo-imitative series of official Roman coins, the tremissis underwent a dual evolution during his reign. This must be understood in the context of the civil war (579–584) with his eldest son, Hermenegild, and developed simultaneously in the various areas occupied by each side.⁶¹ It was not until the last years of Liuvigild's reign, probably after the recovery of Córdoba c. 584 in the context of the aforementioned conflict, that the Visigothic coinage was systematically standardized at all levels in what research has called Liuvigild's third monetary reform: metrologically, as the new typology brought with it the adaptation to the official Roman-Byzantine weight of 1.516g (.0535 oz.); typologically, with the 'front bust' of the monarch on both the obverse and reverse; epigraphically, with legends centered on its vertical axis and a clear message: the name of the monarch and the title *Rex* on the obverse, the royal epithet and the mint name on the reverse.

This direct reference to the issuing cities has proved to be fundamental information for the study of the organization of the Visigothic territory since, as already mentioned, in our opinion the introduction of the mint name on Visigothic coins was linked to the territorial allegiances that the monarchy acquired as it extended its power over the Iberian Peninsula.⁶²

⁶⁰ Ruth Pliego, "Being a Visigoth: Tracing the political identity of the Visigoths through their coinage," *Habis* 56 (2025); Pliego, "*Patria et regem*."

⁶¹ Ruth Pliego, "*Elissa: ceca visigoda en el Aljarafe sevillano*," in *Arqueología y numismática: estudios en homenaje a la profesora Francisca Chaves Tristán* (Sevilla: Editorial Universidad de Sevilla, 2021), 349-364.

⁶² Pliego, *Moneda visigoda*, 193.

At first, the monarchy undoubtedly needed to gather support among members of the territorial nobility as part of its efforts to pacify and/or conquer the territory. This policy must have involved establishing some kind of agreement with the different communities on the peninsula. Sources tell us about cities being taken by force or under peace treaties. It is in this context that we understand the activity of the mints in the early days of the Visigothic kingdom of Spain.

There are 21 mints known to have been named during Liuvigild's rule, and these include not only the provincial capitals – Narbonne, Tarragona, Toledo, Ispali, Emerita and Bracara – but also important cities in each of these provinces, such as Cesaragusta, Barcinona, Gerunda, Recopolis, Cordoba, Elvora and Luco, among others. However, following the methodology established above, it is interesting to focus our attention on the sporadic mints that were active during his reign and which we find in various areas of the peninsula. In this sense, the support that Liuvigild obtained in the south in the context of Hermenegild's rebellion is probably not comparable (or perhaps it is) with the conflictive areas of the north. With regard to the former, this monarch's coin issues in the provinces of *Lusitania* and *Baetica* bearing the name of the mint were produced in the context of this rebellion, although it was not until two years after Hermenegild's self-proclamation as king and conversion to Catholicism in Seville that his father "gathered an army to fight his rebellious son" (Iohann. Bicl., *Chron.* 579).

Between 582 and 584, several cities that issued coins and the hoard of Mérida seem to trace the first section of the route taken by Liuvigild to Seville: from Reccopolis or Toledo, passing through Elvora, he would reach the Lusitanian capital, whose legend, *Emerita Victoria*, would show its support until that time for the rebel cause that now was beginning to suffer defeat.⁶³ All of these cities were significant during all the *regnum*, very different from what we find in the second section of that route before reaching the equally important Baetican capital, Ispali, around 584 (Iohann. Bicl. *Chron.*, 584). This route would be marked by sporadic coinage in Roda, Elissa and Italica. Of these mints, we only know of examples from the time of Liuvigild and we have only five coins in total.⁶⁴ All are of the type with a 'cross on steps' on the reverse and, unlike the coins of the same type from Carthaginensis and

⁶³ Pedro Mateos, Antonio Pizzo and Ruth Pliego, "Un tesoro de tremises visigodos hallado en el llamado 'Foro Provincial' de Augusta Emerita," *Archivo español de arqueología* 78 (2005): 251-270.

⁶⁴ 1 of *Elissa*, 2 of *Roda* and 2 of *Italica*.

Tarraconensis, the legends on these contain commemorative messages. The survival of these examples is fundamental to our analysis.

The issues from Italica are not surprising in the context of the rebellion, since John of Biclar (*Chron.*, 584.1) mentions that the walls of this city were restored during the siege of Seville.⁶⁵ However, the location of the other mints has been more complex. Ana M. Balaguer rightly considered that the *Roda* on this coin could not be referring to the Catalan *Rodas*⁶⁶ and that the location of Elissa in present-day Lisbon, as suggested by P. B. Reis, was equally unlikely.⁶⁷ In my opinion, in both cases these cities would be located on the route between Emerita and Ispali, and in a recent proposal I have identified Elissa with the town of Castilleja de la Cuesta, in the Aljarafe region of Seville. We do not know the location of *Rodas*, although it could be situated in the vicinity of the current Seville town of Guillena, a *mansio* on the same route to *Emerita*.⁶⁸ As for their reason for existence, as we shall see with regard to the sporadic mints in the north, those in the south were also involved in military actions in which Liuvigild may have needed to seal agreements with local powers as he approached hostile territory, as Ispali must have been at that time. Unlike those, in this case we have no literary evidence to support them, probably due to a deliberate act on the part of the Visigothic kingdom to forget Hermenegild's rebellion.

It is precisely the involvement of the Suevic kingdom in this rebellion that brings us to Gallaecia, another of the flashpoints during the reign of Liuvigild. This province stands out because, as mentioned above, it accounts for almost half of the documented mints between Liuvigild and Chindaswinth. The military actions led by this king ended with the absorption of the Suevic kingdom and the conversion of its territory into "*a province of the Goths*" (Ioann. Biclar, *Chron.*, a. 585.2).⁶⁹ Although according to Biclar's account there is no doubt that Gallaecia was taken by force, he tells us nothing about the next step, that is, how peace was established. However, in the same year, Biclar tells us of an expedition to Gaul by Liuvigild's other son, Reccared, to

⁶⁵ Although no material evidence of these walls has been found.

⁶⁶ Ana M^a Balaguer, "El problema de la localización de la Roda visigoda," *Acta Numismàtica* 13 (1983): 109-118. The location in La Roda de Andalucía, despite having been accepted years ago, does not convince me today.

⁶⁷ Pedro Batalha Reis, "*Elissabona Felicitas Ivliā*. Nova Oficina Monetária dos Visigodos," *Nummus* 19 (1959): 131-141.

⁶⁸ Perhaps in the so-called "Finca de Rodas" (see Pliego, "Elissa," 360, note 30).

⁶⁹ Translation: Pablo C. Díaz. On the use of the term province: *Ibid.*, "El esquema provincial en el contexto administrativo de la monarquía visigoda de Toledo," *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez* 49(2) (2019): 77-108.

suppress an incursion by the Franks, of which the author specifies that “Of two camps with a large number of men, he took one peacefully and the other by force,” without specifying the conditions under which peace was established. We would have to wait until the post-Chindaswinth period to get closer to this issue.

In this context, we can probably understand the existence of sporadic coin minting in the name of Liuvigild at Lebea, Amaia,⁷⁰ and Saldania in the border areas north of the Meseta. All three are located in the context of Liuvigild’s actions against the Cantabrians and Basques. According to John of Biclar, in 573 Liuvigild, “after entering Cantabria, killed the usurpers of the province, occupied Amaya, took its riches and restored the province to his power.” The way in which the king restored the province “to his power” is key to understanding the location of these mints. The territorial expansion achieved by Liuvigild, including the incorporation of Gallaecia following the absorption of the Suevic kingdom, shows attempts at political and administrative control that coincided with increased monetary activity. Visigothic regal coin production, which began under this monarch, would be marked by the reform mentioned above. The standardized monetary style imposed at that time became a characteristic feature of the Visigothic kingdom, very different from the coinage of other peoples. In this sense, it is clear that one of the features that the Visigoths wanted to reflect in their coins was precisely their *Romanitas*, an aspect that can even be traced in the choice of types for the coinage of the Tolosan period. In fact, Liuvigild not only temporarily adopted Tiberius II’s ‘cross on a steps’ for the reverse of one of his first series, but in his final reform, the bust of the monarch was topped with the *stemma* or closed crown, also introduced by the emperor himself. However, although it is true that the Visigoths adopted Roman types for their coinage, the technical simplification of these is so marked that it results in a distinctive style of their own, which is extremely simple, direct and sparse. Despite this, its elements remain recognizable, showing a remarkable sense of proportion in which each element occupies its place.⁷¹

⁷⁰ This specimen from the old Bartlett collection has recently been re-examined. Bearing in mind that these sporadic mints have numerous errors in the layout of the legends, we can distinguish the first letters, which can be interpreted as AMAIA. On the other hand, it is possible to identify the royal epithet *Iustus*, incorrectly written and disordered as IVTVIS, and consider the other letters, IO, as if they were a reminiscence of the exergue CONOB, as found in Rhodes and Saldania (see Pliego, “Patria”).

⁷¹ Wallace J. Tomasini, *The Barbaric Tremissis in Spain and Southern France, Anastasius to Leovigild*, The American Numismatic Society Numismatic Notes and Monographs 152 (New York: The American Numismatic Society, 1964).

VI. The consolidation of Visigothic power: from Reccared I to Chindaswinth

The standardized coinage imposed during the reign of Liuvigild developed with virtually no changes until the reign of Chindaswinth (642-649). With the latter's reign as the limit, this first phase is characterized by its relative homogeneity, in which the basic 'front bust' typology continued to be inspired by Roman iconography. However, at the same time as the Roman types were adopted, they cannot be denied a tremendously creative sense. Despite the homogeneity imposed by the 'front bust', an attempt to give the coinage a regional personality can be observed. Some symbols that would form part of the iconographic repertoire of the following period also began to appear timidly, such as the fleur-de-lis (e.g., cat.⁷² 482b), and we can perhaps see an incipient representation of Christ in some issues, especially from the mint of Cordoba (cat. 488), which seem to anticipate those of the time of Erwig (see *infra* Fig. 5).⁷³

This long period is also characterized by the proliferation of mints throughout the peninsula. In addition to the provincial capitals, it is worth noting the occasional or sporadic mints. As far as Tarraconensis is concerned, these are located in the same northern area of the Meseta seen above, now in Mave and Oliovasio. The Pyrenean foothills were also taken into account by Liuvigild's successors, with mints in Calagorre, Tulluco and Valegia in the westernmost area showing activity during this period, in addition to those in the easternmost areas of Cestavi,⁷⁴ Volotania,⁷⁵ and Labeclosa/Labitolosa.⁷⁶

Towards Visigothic Gaul, Narbonne, despite being the provincial capital, did not have a constant coinage during this period, with no examples recorded from the reigns of Liuva II (601-603), Gundemar (609-612) and

⁷² The catalogue references (cat.) for the Visigoth coins mentioned here refer to Pliego, *Moneda visigoda*, vol. II.

⁷³ Pliego, "Being a Visigoth".

⁷⁴ For our part, we follow the location in Gistau or Gistaín (Huesca) proposed by Pío Beltrán Villagrasa ("Nueva ceca goda en el Pirineo aragonés. Reducción de la ciudad de Cestavi al pueblo oscense de Gistau," *Caesaraugusta* 5 (1954)) with good reason, despite his not mentioning the document of Deacon Vicente, which includes '*in locum gestaui*'; the town's relation to Gistaín is shown by Enrique Ariño and Pablo C. Díaz ("Poblamiento y organización del espacio: la Tarraconense pirenaica en el siglo VI," *Antiquité tardive* 11 (2004): 230), although no mention is made of the coin from Cestavi.

⁷⁵ It appears in non-numismatic forms as *Boletum/Boleta*, and while it is much more varied in medieval times, it includes the forms *Boltania/Voletania* (see Ariño and Díaz, "Poblamiento," 230).

⁷⁶ See this in Laurent Brassous and Françoise Didierjean, "De Narbonne à León, les singularités d'un trajet de l'Itinéraire d'Antonin," *Pallas* 82 (2010): 345-370.

Chintila (636-639). These absences can be explained by various reasons: on the one hand, it is very likely that the coin production in Narbonne, like that of many other Visigothic mints, was not very abundant, which, combined with the highly probable removal and remelting of currency by the new monarchs,⁷⁷ would have made it difficult for coins that had not been hidden or hoarded to survive. The chances of survival are reduced in shorter reigns, which could explain the absence of coins bearing the names of the aforementioned monarchs. Obviously, this is not a hard and fast rule, since despite the short reign of Witteric (r. 603-609), we have five examples of Narbonne documented in his name; although some coins come from finds recorded in the area, most of them must have been part of the great Sevillian hoards. In this sense, the only documented pieces from Sisebut of Narbonne come from the huge Fuentes de Andalucía hoard (Seville), which is why they have only been known in recent decades.

It is in Lusitania and Gallaecia where this allegiance of local powers to the monarchy is most clear during this period. Regarding the latter, the 44 mints recorded, many of them sporadic in production, would, in my opinion, reflect a policy of agreements probably intended to keep in check a province that had been ruled by the Suevi. The multiplicity of mints does indeed seem to correspond to the previous Suevic territorial organization, as already suggested by Pablo C. Díaz,⁷⁸ but it is undoubtedly a reflection of the multitude of Galician populations involved (see *supra* Fig. 1). It should be noted that of the 12 episcopal sees in Gallaecia, only six minted coins, while 32 mints of that province not only were not episcopal sees, but some of them must have been located in small towns whose exact location is still unknown today in many cases. The mint-bishopric pairing is not only an uncertain formula but, as will be seen, in some areas the existence of one seems to be a substitute for the other.

As already mentioned, there is no information on how peace was established in this province. However, there is a later text that we could extrapolate to this case. We refer to Julian of Toledo's description of Wamba's response to Paul's rebellion in Narbonne. Although this text will be analyzed in more detail later, we are interested in the last part, in which the author recounts that after establishing peace in that city, he undertook "other measures,"⁷⁹ among which was that of giving "the cities more compassionate

⁷⁷ Pliego, *Moneda visigoda*, I, 191.

⁷⁸ Pablo C. Díaz, "Acuñaación monetaria y organización administrativa en la Gallaecia tardoantigua," *Zephyrus* 57 (2004): 367-375.

⁷⁹ "Dissolve the designated garrisons, eliminate all roots of rebellion, drive away the Jews."

governors through whom the injury of such a crime [...] may be brought back into favor.”⁸⁰

This description could perhaps be transferred to post-Suevic Gallaecia, where it would probably have been necessary to establish bastions of trust between the king and local powers. It could be interpreted that the Visigoths negotiated peace with these Galician cities, as will be seen later with those in the northeast, with whom they established tributes and gave them new governors who, if not “more compassionate,” were at least more sympathetic to the king. Therefore, the idea provided by the coins is that the multiplicity of Galician mints was a sign of loyalty and fidelity to the king: personal pacts between the king and the nobles as local authorities seem to be supported by literary evidence. The few coins preserved from the mints of this province are better explained than those from other mints in the context of the “gift economy” as objects that in some way “sealed” these relationships.⁸¹ The very configuration of the Galician territory and the multitude of centers of power that we know about thanks to ecclesiastical sources, among others, would, in my opinion, explain the multiplicity of mints in that province.

In relation to Lusitania, north of Emerita, there were mints in Elvora and Egitania, as well as a relatively large number of sporadic workshops, including Eminio, Veseo, Lameco and Salmantica, among others.⁸² However, no mints have been documented to the south of the Lusitanian capital, with the exception of a specimen from Olisipona (cat. 124). This monetary void extended south and east to Ispali, an area where the bishoprics of Pace (Pax Iulia), Ossonoba (Faro) and Ilipla (Niebla, Huelva) are located, which appear regularly in the councils.

There were also sporadic mints in Carthaginiensis and Baetica. In the former, there were sporadic mints located in the easternmost part of the province, Iliocroca and Aurariola, both from the time of Sisebut and probably related to the expulsion of the Byzantines. On the other hand, the Jaén mints of Castilona and Beatia could perhaps be seen in the context of the monarchy’s links to the city of Córdoba from the time of Sisenand,⁸³ which is also shown

⁸⁰ Julian, *Hist. Wambae*, 28 (Trans. Joaquín Martínez Pizarro 2005).

⁸¹ Pliego, “Gobernantes, cecas y pactos”. See this idea also in Sánchez Pardo, “Sobre las bases económicas”, 1007.

⁸² If we include the coin of *Olisipona*, there would have been thirteen mints in Lusitania during this period.

⁸³ Luis A. García Moreno, “Transformaciones de la Bética durante la Tardoantigüedad,” *Mainake* 29 (2007): 433-471.

in some finds,⁸⁴ and the support he was able to secure in that area. This is the same explanation we find for the sporadic issuance of the Baetica mint Egabro in the time of Chintila, while the other occasional mint in this province during this period, Malaka, would have to be explained by the situation of the Byzantine province after the departure of the imperial forces. As mentioned in the case of Lusitania, there also seem to be areas of absence in Baetica, since no mints have been documented in towns such as Astigi (Écija, Seville), despite their obvious importance in this period as episcopal sees.

VII. Attempts at centralization: Chindaswinth, Recceswinth and Wamba

It has been commented on numerous occasions that the drastic decrease in the number of mints that occurred from the joint reign of Chindaswinth and Recceswinth in the mid-7th century, which reduced coinage activity to the main cities of each province, was intended to organize monetary production. The sporadic appearance and subsequent disappearance of mints, particularly in regions such as Baetica during the reign of Liuvigild and later in Gallaecia and Lusitania under Chindaswinth, illustrate the evolution of the organization. Initially founded on personal relationships between the king and various centers of power, it seems to have transitioned towards a more territorially consolidated institutional structure. This is evident in the reign of Recceswinth and especially of Wamba (672-680), when the total number of documented active mints was reduced to 12: the capitals of provinces and additionally Cesaragusta, Gerunda, Cordoba, Egítania and Luco.

If we turn our attention back to the northern Meseta and the Pyrenean area, the monetary vacuum that seems to have occurred during the reign of Wamba is striking, despite the fact that this was the main area of conflict during his reign, as recorded in the work of Julian of Toledo. The most notable absence from this period is that of Narbonne, and although we should probably attribute this to chance,⁸⁵ the aforementioned monetary vacuum in the area where Wamba advanced in his counteroffensive against the Duke of Narbonne, Paul, is perhaps the greatest evidence of the change in function that the coinage was undergoing. In this sense, the preserved repertoire of Wamba could be interpreted as meaning that this king no longer used coinage to seal agreements with local powers in rebel areas, as would have been

⁸⁴ Ruth Pliego, "A Visigothic Hoard from the Reign of Tulga (639-42)," *The Numismatic Chronicle* 178 (2018): 315-321.

⁸⁵ As a provincial capital, its absence is not even understandable within the policy of concentration of mints undertaken by Chindaswinth and Recceswinth.

expected of previous kings. Such personal territorial allegiances would have ceased to make sense in the newly implemented administrative model, which assumed (whether real or not) effective control of the territory. Support would have been institutionalized, perhaps with the establishment of provincial duchies in these conflictive areas (*dux cantabrorum*, *dux narbonensis*, etc.) where, we reiterate, no coins seem to have been minted.

On the other hand, thanks to Julian of Toledo's description in the *Historia Wambae* of the king's response to this conflict, we know the terms under which peace was established with the Basques located on his route to Narbonne. In response to the "ravaging and carnage" committed by the king's troops, Julian says that the Basques, "putting aside the ferocity of their spirits, gave hostages and begged, less by entreaties than by means of gifts, to be granted life and offered peace" (Julian, *Hist. Wambae*, 10). The author goes on to say that "once hostages had been given and tributes paid", peace was negotiated.⁸⁶ Interestingly, the text expressly mentions the payment of taxes, despite the fact that, as mentioned, no monetary activity has been documented in Narbonne at this time and there are no hoards or findings that suggest payment in coins.

Another reference to the establishment of a peace treaty is also described in relation to a "consumed and devastated" Narbonne, where Wamba entered "as a victor" (Julian, *Hist. Wambae*, 10). The author recounts that concerning "the ravaging and plunder of our armies, he remedies them by decree, provides for them with good counsel, and adjusts the political situation to an admirable peace."⁸⁷ After that, as we have seen above, the cities were given rulers more suitable for healing the wounds of the rebellion.

Something like what was observed in that area could have happened in cities such as Barcinona or Gerunda, the first to fall among those that rose up in the rebellion of the duke of Narbonne (Julian, *Hist. Wambae*, 7). There is no doubt that part of Tarraconensis had joined Paul's revolt, and yet the result is to be expected under the new monetary model imposed after Chindaswinth and Recceswinth, as only coinage from the provincial capital, Tarracona, and Cesaragusta,⁸⁸ together the most important cities in the province, is known.

⁸⁶ "Unde, acceptis obsidibus tributisque solutis, pace composita."

⁸⁷ "Statum quoque rerum mira pace componit."

⁸⁸ The evident importance of Cesaragusta has been confirmed by a new interpretation of an ancient coin from the joint reign of Chindaswinth and Recceswinth. Very few coins from this period are known to exist, and they are all from major mints. (see Pliego, "Patria", 309-311).



Fig. 2. Cross on steps and Fleur-de-lis on the reverse of a tremissis of Chindaswinth and Recceswinth, mint of *Toledo*, cat. 566 (Museo de Cáceres)

On the other hand, this period saw many typological transformations, and it was also when the level of schematization of types reached extraordinary heights. The attempts to strengthen the monarchical institution, which have been seen in the analysis of the territorial organization of the mints, can also be found in coin production. These transformations took place during the joint reign of Chindaswinth and Recceswinth and then that of Recceswinth alone, marked by a return to the classical models of the Liuvigild period, including the short-lived 'cross on steps', which would remain on the reverse until the end of the period (Fig. 2). From then onwards the symbols of royalty were displayed more prominently on the coins especially during Wamba's reign. This symbolism took on its full meaning in the context of events such as the royal anointing of this king in Toledo in 672 or 673, or his military victory over Paul in 673.



Fig. 3. Wamba, mint of *Toledo* (Private Collection)

During this period, the Empire was once again looked to and the new official Byzantine models in force were adopted. The closed crown, the *stemma*, introduced in the time of Liuvigild, became more detailed, sometimes topped with small spheres or a cross. However, other symbols also appear profusely, such as the scepter – or processional cross (cat. 618) – and the branch and fleur-de-lis, both in the legends and in the typology, which is full of symbolism related to Jesus Christ and therefore to biblical royalty (cat. 613; 622). It is no coincidence that it was also from Wamba onwards that the formula *In Domine Nomine* – abbreviated in various ways and separated in most cases by dots – was adopted as the opening formula for the legends on the obverse (Fig. 3).

VIII. The beginning of the end of the Visigothic kingdom: Erwig, Egica and Wittiza

From what we have seen so far concerning monetary messages, there is a clear move towards typological creation, which is particularly evident in the last Visigothic kings, especially from Wamba onwards. Attempts to reinforce Toledo's role until the end of the period are highlighted by the introduction, during Witiza's reign, of a peculiar reverse featuring a cross surrounded by what appear to be chain links, which warrants further analysis (*infra* Fig. 4). However, in an effort to show the sacred nature of the monarchy, one of the most important typological innovations was added to the Visigothic coinage repertoire during the reign of Erwig (r. 680-687): the representation of Christ in majesty and in mandylion (*infra* Fig. 5) (cat. 488, 657 and 649).⁸⁹



Fig. 4. Witiza, mint of *Toledo* (found in Alva, Castro Daire).

Photo courtesy of Mario Barroca.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Ruth Pliego, "El origen de la representación de Cristo en la moneda del rey visigodo Erwig (680-687)," *Numismatica e Antichità Classiche. Quaderni Ticinesi* 42 (2013): 251-264.

⁹⁰ Mario Barroca, "Um triente de Witiza procedente de Alva (Castro Daire)," *Nummus* (2^a serie) 27 (2004), 201-206.



Fig. 5. Cruciform body on reverse of tremissis of Chintila, mint of *Cordoba*, cat. 488 (Cordova Hoard, n° 30); Christ in majesty: Erwig, mint of *Emerita* (obv.), cat. 657; and Christ in mandylion: Erwig, mint of *Ispali* (obv.), cat. 649 (Private Collections)

The strict scheme outlined above was relaxed somewhat during Erwig's reign, with an increase in coinage activity and a greater number of issuing cities. Up to 25 documented mints operated during the period extending to the reign of Wittiza. This increase in the number of active mints could be interpreted as the king's understanding of the need for certain local powers in specific areas of the territory.

Gallaecia is the only province where, according to the data available, the reform scheme of Chindaswinth and Recceswinth continues, since only examples from Bracara, Tude and Luco are known. In Lusitania, the mint of Elvora was reopened, while the sporadic revival of Salmantica was probably due to the recovery of its diocese and was in line with Erwig's new policy.



Fig. 6. Erwig, mint of *Karmona*, cat. 652 (De la Oliva Collection)

In *Baetica*, apart from the main mints of Ispali and Cordoba, which had a long history of coinage, centers such as Asidona resumed minting.⁹¹ However, we also observe a concentration of mints on the eastern borders of Baetica with Cartaginense, Eliberri, Tucci, Mentesa and Acci, with the Baetican mints of Egabro and, above all, Karmona being particularly surprising (cat. 652) (Fig. 6). This is the only case in the Visigothic monetary map of coinage at this stage of a previously unregistered mint, which indicates not only that Erwig rejected the reform, but also that we may be witnessing the establishment of a county.

Regarding Narbonne, not only is there evidence of activity and relatively abundant production in this city during the reign of Erwig, but this continued until the end of the *regnum*, with coins even being minted in the name of Achila II. Under Erwig's reign, coins were also minted again in cities that were supposed to be key supporters of the monarchy and whose activity had ceased some time before. Perhaps the most striking case to add to the monetary production of Narbonne is that of Tarraconensis. Erwig may have understood that the two provinces together posed a threat to the stability of the kingdom. It was not until the reign of Wittiza that mints such as Gerunda and Barcinona began to mint coins again, and we even know of coins from Rodas from the reigns of Egica and Wittiza.⁹² From a historical perspective, we know that these attempts were as laudable as they were fruitless, since after the interregnum that followed the death of Wittiza, the only area of the peninsula that seems to show any stability, at least in terms of coin production, is none other than Tarraconensis and Narbonensis.

IX. The Visigothic epigones: Sunifred, Roderic and Achila II

The internal division that must have occurred upon the death of Wittiza (710) led to the disintegration of the Visigothic kingdom. The known coinage of the last monarchs speaks of this division, which was not only political but also territorial. If García Moreno's thesis is correct, and the numismatic evidence is faithful to the reality of the time, only the almost unknown King Sunifred would have managed to mint coins in the capital (cat. 712), while Roderic

⁹¹ Its place on the road that Musa followed to Mérida via Seville is suggestive (Pedro Chalmeta, *Invasión e islamización. La sumisión de Hispania y la formación de al-Andalus* (Jaén: Universidad de Jaén, 2003): 246. See also Pedro Chalmeta, *La conquista de Alandalús* (Almería: Fundación Ibn Tufayl de Estudios Árabes, 2025).

⁹² The last coin known of Rodas to have been minted prior to the joint reign is an unattractive specimen from the time of Witerico (Cat. 177).

would probably have been supported by Baetica, according to the testimony collected in the Chronicle of 754, and Lusitania, based on the coins minted in Egítania, the only known mint for this monarch,⁹³ in which the monarch appears wearing an original bicorn crown (cat. 794).⁹⁴ The absence of coinage in Baetica is not surprising since, even if coins had been minted, the conquerors would have had to undertake an intensive collection of circulating currency in order to mint their own.⁹⁵

On the other hand, the situation of political chaos must have favored the perhaps latent attempts at independence in the north-east of the peninsula since the time of Paul. The coinage of Achila II in the mints of Tarracona, Cesaragusta and Gerunda, as well as in Narbonne, currently constitutes the most abundant repertoire of this final period.⁹⁶ Although the first two seem to have remained on the sidelines of Paul's rebellion, they now formed part of the territorial base of the last Visigothic king.

In addition to the numismatic evidence, Achila is mentioned in several versions of the *Laterculum Regum Visigothorum*, specifically the *Codex Parisinus Lat. 4667*.⁹⁷ These versions offer an alternative account of the end of the Visigothic kingdom compared to that presented in the 754 Chronicle. According to this, Witiza was first succeeded by Achila, who ruled for three years, followed by Ardo, for whom no coins have been found. Ardo's seven-

⁹³ Attribution beyond doubt, since one of the few known examples was recovered during the excavation of Conimbriga (see Cat. 794a). Another find has been recorded further north, in Monção (Viana do Castelo) (see Xavier Barral i Altet, *La circulation des monnaies suèves et visigothiques. Contribution à l'histoire économique du royaume visigot* (München/Zürich, 1976): n° 166.

⁹⁴ Elsewhere, we have already linked this headdress to an almost contemporary representation of Roderic in a fresco decorating the Umayyad baths of Qusayr 'Amra, in the Jordanian desert, dated between 720 and 724, during the reign of Yazid ibn Abdal Malik. In this fresco, Roderic appears alongside important figures such as the Byzantine emperor himself, the Negus of Abyssinia and Cosroes, king of the Sassanids. In another slightly later testimony, several Visigothic monarchs are depicted wearing headdresses very similar to the one worn by Roderic on his coins. This is the *Codex Vigiliano* or *Albeldense*, preserved in the Library of El Escorial and dated to around the 10th century, which, with the exception of the coins, includes the oldest representation of the Visigothic kings.

⁹⁵ This is reflected in the indiction dinars, as already noted by Ana M^a Balaguer, *Las emisiones transicionales árabe-musulmanas de Hispania* (Barcelona: ANE, 1976).

⁹⁶ Three new examples of this monarch have recently been found in the south of France, bringing the total to 16.

⁹⁷ *Laterculus Regum Visigothorum, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi XIII, Chronica Minora III*, ed. Theodore Mommsen (Berlin, 1898), 469.

year reign, based on the document, lasted until almost a decade after the Umayyads entered the peninsula in 711.

The mentioned typological innovation in coinage during this latter phase is reflected in some of the coin types from Achila II, which are also surprising. Although the coinage of the Tarraconensis mints shows continuity with the types used in the previous coinage after Chindaswinth, this is not the case with the Narbonne mint.⁹⁸ We have already pointed out elsewhere that these seem to depict an eagle (cat. 795) and, if our perception is correct, this would not only be a type unprecedented in Visigothic coinage, but the very conception of the type would show that the coinage of the period preceding the end of the Visigothic kingdom was beginning to take a direction very different from the imperial models.

X. An interpretation of the process

As shown, mints provide invaluable information, particularly from the activity they display throughout the entire period. The establishment of mints in the different provinces could be related to the way in which the monarchy exercised its authority over the territory, a relationship that clearly evolved over time. Despite the limitations imposed by the surviving material, it is evident that the provincial capitals and the principal cities of each province maintained continuous coin production throughout the period, with the possible exception of *Narbonne*. However, the policy of territorial annexations is evident, in our opinion, from the occasional or sporadic mints. The support that Liuvigild must have needed from members of the local nobility at the beginning of his reign seems to have set in motion a policy of annexations with particular characteristics depending on the territory in question. These agreements may have been based on pacts similar to those known for the following period, that of the Umayyad conquest.

Except for the particularities of the Gallic and north-eastern Spanish areas, the monetary map of the end of the Visigothic kingdom is a window onto what the Umayyads found in 711 and partly explains their movements across the peninsula and their policy of pacts. It is very illustrative how the Arab chronicles are supported (or corrected)⁹⁹ by the material evidence of lead seals and how, as we see in the Visigothic period, although now in greater detail,

⁹⁸ Ruth Pliego, “L’atelier monétaire de Narbonne : un témoin numismatique précieux du pouvoir wisigothique royal en Gaule,” *Bulletin de la Société Française de Numismatique* 80(7) (2025): 281-87.

⁹⁹ Sénac and Ibrahim, *Precintos*.

some cities are taken by peace and others by force.¹⁰⁰ It has been commented that the establishment of provincial duchies did not automatically imply coinage, nor is there a direct relationship between episcopal sees and mints, although the two categories often coincide. One might wonder, however, about the relationship between the counties and the mints that were reactivated in the time of Erwig, especially in the south of the peninsula.

The south was obviously a very active area during the Umayyad conquest: we have coins from the period between Erwig and Wittiza that coincide with Umayyad lead seals showing peace treaties. This is the case of Asiduna/Šidūna, Eliberri/Ilbīra and the region of Ġayyān (Jaén), which would correspond to the territory of the Jaén mints of Tucci and Mentesa.¹⁰¹ To the north of this area, Wittiza's coinage in Toledo became one of the last coins of the capital of the Visigothic kingdom, since it is not unlikely that the final stage was fought on three fronts and that we should include Sunifred's coinage in Toledo in this period.¹⁰²

We have already seen in previous pages that the map of these allegiances contrasts sharply with the large gaps in other areas of the peninsula. The south-western quadrant of the peninsula is particularly striking, stretching from Lisbon in the west to the mints of Emerita in the north and Ispali in the east. In this area there are two Lusitanian bishoprics, Pace (Pax Iulia) and Ossonoba (Faro), which appear regularly in the councils. Chronologically speaking, this would suggest that these cities must have been among the strongholds of the Visigothic kingdom, as they showed some resistance to the conqueror and had their own seals of peace from the time of the conquest.¹⁰³ The same map of the conquest would confirm the conqueror's lack of interest in the area north of Emerita,¹⁰⁴ and especially in the province of Gallaecia. Perhaps this would explain why the only known mint in the name of Roderic is Egitania, not so much because this area could have been his main territorial

¹⁰⁰ Sénac and Ibrahim, *Precintos*.

¹⁰¹ See Ruth Pliego and Tawfiq Ibrahim, "La Ciudad a través de las emisiones monetarias y sigilográficas de la Península Ibérica: de la Antigüedad Tardía a la conquista omeya," in *Entre civitas y madīna. El mundo de las ciudades en la Península Ibérica y en el norte de África (siglos IV-IX)*, ed. Sabine Panzram and Laurent Callegarin (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2018): 135-151. See all these seals in Sénac and Ibrahim, *Precintos*.

¹⁰² Luis A. García Moreno, *España 702-709: la Conquista musulmana* (Sevilla: Editorial Universidad de Sevilla, 2013): 155-174.

¹⁰³ *Ukšūniya* (Sénac and Ibrahim, *Precintos*, n° 40-41) and *Bāḡa* (n° 28).

¹⁰⁴ Sénac and Ibrahim, *Precintos*, 55, note 24.

support,¹⁰⁵ but above all, as noted, because if there had been coinage in other mints, these would have been swept away by the Arabs to issue their own coins.¹⁰⁶

Also noteworthy is the Carthaginian area stretching between Toledo and Cabo de San Antonio and Cartagena, forming the vertices of a triangle within which eleven episcopal dioceses are located.¹⁰⁷ As we have seen, we only know of issues from Castilona-Beatia, apart from the sporadic Iliocroca and Aurariola, which was not an episcopal see despite its prominence during the conquest.¹⁰⁸ It is possible to argue that the monarchy did not need to establish tacit agreements with the local powers in a peaceful area such as the south-east of the peninsula. However, it is surprising that while the Cantabrians and Basques appear to be surrounded by mints, which we interpret as local powers watching over this rebellious area, the cities near the Byzantine province only seem to have begun minting coins at the time of the expulsion, that is, during the reigns of Sisebut and Suinthila. This probably reflects the loyalty of the area, based on the bishoprics. Among the last mints was the unexpected one of Reccopolis under the reign of Wittiza, a town through which Arab forces would pass a few years later to reach *Cesaragusta*, certainly the southernmost city of Achila II, which would be conquered in 714 by Musa.¹⁰⁹

The end of the Visigothic kingdom is generally viewed from the perspective of its central region, and the beginning of Achila's reign is dated to 711 because of the revolt of Roderic, as recorded in the Chronicle of 754. However, the northeastern part of the kingdom probably experienced less "turbulence" than the rest, and Achila may have come to power in 710, the year of Witiza's death. This date aligns with the *Annals of Aniane*, which state

¹⁰⁵ It cannot be ruled out that Baetica and Lusitania constituted the territory loyal to Roderic.

¹⁰⁶ Balaguer, *Emisiones transicionales*, 151.

¹⁰⁷ *Segobriga*, *Valeria*, *Saetabis*, on the upper side of the triangle, on the lower side *Oretum*, *Castilona*, *Beatia*, and *Bigastri*, and closing off the coast *Dianium*, *Elo*, *Ilici* and *Carthago Spartaria*.

¹⁰⁸ Robert Pocklington, "El pacto de Teodomiro y las siete ciudades," in *Regnum Murciae. Génesis y configuración del reino de Murcia*, ed. Jorge Alejandro Eiroa Rodríguez, Alfonso Robles Fernández, and Indalecio Pozo Martínez (Murcia: Dirección General de Bellas Artes y Bienes Culturales, 2008): 73-84.

¹⁰⁹ María Jesús Viguera, "Sarakusta," in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, IX (Leiden: Brill, 1997): 36-38. Philippe Sénac, "Au nord d'al-Andalus: la conquête de la Narbonnaise et de la Tarraconaise (VIIIe siècle)," in *Lo que vino de Oriente: horizontes, praxis y dimensión material de los sistemas de dominación fiscal en Al-Andalus* (ss. VII-IX), dir. Xavier Ballestín Navarro and Ernesto Pastor Díaz de Garayo (Barcelona, 2013): 122-132.

that Narbonne was captured by Arabs nine years after their entry into the peninsula, that is, in 720.¹¹⁰

By then the only Visigoth capital still standing must have been *Narbonne*.¹¹¹ According to the *Chronicle of 754*, the Umayyad governor al-Samh, who reigned from April 719 to 721, finally conquered Narbonensis. The resistance of the last Visigoth stronghold must have been as fierce as the Umayyad repression, since the seals of Narbonne/Arbūna recovered in Ruscino inscribed with the legend “*magnūm ṭayīb / qusima bi-Arbūna*,” meaning “lawful booty distributed in Narbonne,” leave no doubt about this.¹¹²

XI. Conclusions

The first part of this work has shown that the *tremissis*, the only denomination minted during the *regnum*, is hardly mentioned in the Visigothic legislative corpus and is strikingly absent from Book V (*De Transactionibus*) dedicated to various transactions. The presence of the *solidus*, which appears profusely in other books, hardly appears in Book V linked to payments in gold, as it does in others, but in different contexts, which we could call economic, but not commercial, such as donations, compensatory payments, and similar transactions. Notably, it is through other contemporary sources that the existence of compensatory payments is documented, although these consistently refer to external settings beyond the Visigothic kingdom. It is therefore highly probable that Visigothic coinage also played a role in analogous practices—such as compensation, donations, and dowries—within the kingdom itself. As a state-guaranteed ingot, gold currency would certainly have reached the markets, which we saw were maintained during this period, although exchanges with small bronze coins would have been more widespread in these scenarios. However, it is in the context of extra-commercial exchanges that the Visigothic *tremissis* should be viewed, especially in the relationship between the monarchical authority and the elites, largely the powerful landowners. It is mainly in this context that we understand the minting of Visigothic coins.

The existence and distribution of mints in the Visigothic kingdom reflected the strategy of territorial and political consolidation. The multiplicity of mints in different regions, especially in border areas and territories that required support and pacts, evidence a process of allegiances and alliances between the

¹¹⁰ Reiss, *Narbona*, 227. See also Chalmeta, *Conquista*, 288-289.

¹¹¹ Pliego, “L’atelier monétaire de Narbonne”.

¹¹² Sénac and Ibrahim, *Precintos*.

monarchy and local elites, who were able to use coinage as a symbol of loyalty and fidelity to the king. In this vein, Visigothic coinage was closely linked to expansionist and military policy, particularly in regions conquered by force, such as Gallaecia, where the presence of mints reflects the formal incorporation of these territories into the Visigothic kingdom. However, this would change in the mid-7th century when, after the joint reign of Chindaswinth and Recceswinth, the number of mints was drastically reduced to just over a dozen. This reduction, which arose from tighter control of the territory, must have involved the institutionalization of monetary establishments far removed from the quasi-personal agreements between the parties. The texts tell us directly of peace agreements in territories that do not seem to have produced coinage, such as the northern part of the Meseta and the foothills of the Pyrenees.

This strengthening of the royal institution is also seen in the typological transformations that took place from then on. In terms of political significance, these iconographic innovations reflect a consolidation of monarchical authority and an attempt to express its sacred character. The inclusion of religious symbols, such as the image of Christ, points to a strategy of legitimization based on linking the monarchy with the divine, as well as strengthening the Christian identity of the kingdom. The adoption of imperial models also points to an opening up of cultural and political references, in a context where the monarchy was seeking to consolidate its internal leadership.

In the period beginning in the reign of Erwig, the failure of the policy of centralizing the mints in the main cities of each province is evident, probably because the monarch seemed to recognize the importance of having certain local support in different areas of the territory. The pattern of distribution and monetary activity reveals the power relations and the extent of political and economic contacts on the peninsula before the Arab arrival in 711. The presence of mints in strategic areas and the variety in their operation indicate a kingdom that was still fragmented and with different degrees of local autonomy, aspects that the Arabs encountered at the time of their conquest. The material evidence of the mints, together with the peace treaties and the seals of conquest, provides a better understanding of the territorial organization, resistance and alliances that existed when the Umayyads landed on the peninsula.

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VISIGOTHIC CIRCULATION: *STATUS QUAESTIONIS*

Jane Sancinito*

To position coinage accurately within the greater economic system of the Visigothic kingdom, there must first be some consensus, or at least agreement around the remaining points of disagreement, concerning how coins moved within the Iberian Peninsula and outside the kingdom's borders. In pursuit of this, scholars of Visigothic numismatics will quickly find themselves faced with a plethora of studies, most restricted by period, region, or denomination, and each demonstrating mastery over some facet of the question of circulation. Over the last century and a half, relatively few scholars have attempted to produce a more comprehensive statement about where coins moved, or tried to answer the even more elusive questions of how and why. In part, this has been due to the relatively slow and recent publication of archaeological material and the small number of coins that can be securely connected with such information. These may be juxtaposed with larger, but largely unprovenanced, museum collections, which have provided information on series and minting, but cannot be used to explicate circulation patterns. Early efforts to identify types and produce corpora gradually led to the first efforts to describe patterns of circulation, even with limited evidence.¹ Recently, more comprehensive discussions have been possible, and have placed those patterns into a growing consensus around the balance between

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¹ George Carpenter Miles, *The Coinage of the Visigoths of Spain: Leovigild to Achila II* (New York: American Numismatic Society, 1952) and Xavier Barral i Altet, *La circulation des monnaies suèves et visigotiques. Contribution à l'histoire économique du royaume visigot* (Munich: Artemis, 1976).

the workings of the kingdom's fiscal machinery and the practices of commercial agents.²

Despite this progress, circulation *qua* circulation has always occupied a subordinate position to questions of minting and typology overall. These topics have, understandably, taken priority as our number of known coins has grown and as older corpora grew dated, but there has also been a reticence to consider circulation, given the small number of Visigothic coins overall and the imbalance in our data between hoards and isolated finds.³ Fortunately, many new finds, whether hoards or individual coins, come from well-excavated contexts, which makes it increasingly possible to speak with some certainty, as well as with some continued hesitation, about a number of different circulation patterns throughout the period and the peninsula, and to place recent findings into the context of earlier work on the subject.⁴

In discussing circulation, we are, of course, examining coins that come to us with at least some archaeological provenance. Coin finds, whether singly or as part of hoards, that come to us with geographical information can, at a minimum, provide us with insight into the distance coins moved from their place of origin.⁵ Often, it is desirable, but difficult, if not impossible, to discern

² Ruth Pliego, "Visigothic Currency: Recent Developments and Data for Its Study," in *Framing Power in Visigothic Society. Discourses, Devices, and Artefacts*, ed. Eleonora Dell'Elicine and Céline Martin (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020), 181–215, and Andrew Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy in the Visigothic Kingdom* (Amsterdam University Press, 2020).

³ Pliego, "Visigothic Currency," 204–09, states that the small sample-size of Visigothic coins makes it impossible to undertake any analysis of circulation deeper than the general patterns visible in a rough mapping. She has stressed that the disparities between isolated finds and hoards require different and irreconcilable methodologies, and that any attempt to generate a detailed study of Visigothic circulation will inevitably be flawed by the comparison of apples and oranges. As we will see, this does not mean that it has not been attempted, nor that those efforts have been wholly wasted.

⁴ For example, Lauro Olmo Enciso and Manuel Castro Priego. "Coins, Cities and Archaeological Contexts in the Centre of the Iberian Peninsula between the 6th and 8th Centuries AD: Reccopolis and Toledo," in *Numismatica e Archeologia. Monete, stratigrafie e contesti. Dati a confronto*, ed. Giacomo Pardini, Nicola Parise and Flavia Marani (Rome: Edizioni Quasar, 2018), 557–71.

⁵ There has been, rightly, some question as to whether the mint site identified on a coin is actually the site at which it was both created and dispersed. Andrew Kurt, "Visigothic Currency in its Making and Movement: A Varying State of Circumstances," *Visigothic Symposium 3* (2018): 165–97, at 175, reports that nearly half of individual coins are within 200 km of their mint of origin. The numbers appear to be more evenly distributed when coins from hoards are considered, see David M. Metcalf, "Some Geographical Aspects of Early Medieval Monetary Circulation in the Iberian Peninsula," in *Problems of Medieval*

the speed of that travel. Coins from hoards can be given a terminus post quem, and some tentative inferences may be drawn from patterns of wear, but often scholars are wholly in the dark about the hand-to-hand motion of individual coins. Hoards that preserve coins from over a long period of time do not necessarily clarify matters, as they may represent savings, and show us coins that were quickly pulled from circulation, rather than kept in active use for many years. The Visigothic situation is complicated by the common understanding that older coins, especially late Roman bronzes, continued to circulate throughout the fifth and sixth centuries.⁶ The date of a coin's striking is therefore not a reliable indicator of the date of deposit, nor does it illuminate much about the paths a coin may have taken before that moment. These blind spots leave scholars with many unanswered, though tantalizing, questions, and it is imperative that we push our available evidence to its limit to ascertain what may be plausibly claimed about the monetary habits of the Visigoths and what must be left unknown.

In the following, I will proceed by considering circulation, both in terms of the historiography of the issue and the patterns of coin movement, in so far as they are currently understood.⁷ I will discuss circulation first by metal type and then by region. In accordance with the level of attention paid by the field and the volume of coinage overall, I will begin with the circulation of the gold denominations, the solidus and, more commonly, its fraction the tremissis. It will become apparent that while the proliferation of mint locations has led to questions about the purpose of coinage in the Visigothic kingdom, circulation followed a handful of patterns across the peninsula that do not neatly align with the location or density of mint sites. The available evidence suggests a high level of coin production in the south, especially in the seventh century, that spread, generally, northward. Coins produced in the northeast seem to have had a more limited circulation, with a surge in production in the early eighth century. The northwest has uncovered more isolated finds than hoards, and the center of the peninsula, while it has been relatively under-represented

Coinage in the Iberian Area, ed. Mario Marques and David M. Metcalf (Santarém: Instituto Politécnico de Santarém, 1988), 307–24, at 313–14, esp. fig. 3.

⁶ Bartolome Mora Serrano, "The Circulation of Bronze Currency in Málaga during the Sixth Century AD: new findings," *The Numismatic Chronicle* 169 (2020): 424–30. Foreign bronze, Barral i Altet, *La circulation des monnaies suèves et visigotiques*, 45, 65, 143–44. See also the findings of FLAME (Framing the Late Antique and Early Medieval Economy).

⁷ Space has not permitted me to be exhaustive in my coverage of recent work, rather this chapter seeks to summarize current trends and highlight some of the important scholarship on this topic.

in terms of numismatic production, seems to display similar patterns of hoard and single finds as the peninsula on the whole.

After this, I will examine the differences, in so far as they are currently known, between the circulation of foreign coins within the Iberian Peninsula and the movement of Visigothic coins outside the borders of the Kingdom. Current understanding of the former is based on the discovery of a higher concentration of these coins in Lusitania, possibly as a result of foreign trade, and a general tendency for Byzantine coins found in the peninsula to have originated at the mints of Milan and Ravenna, while the latter demonstrates that despite connections between Visigothic Spain and the rest of the Mediterranean, there was little acceptance of Visigothic gold outside the peninsula. The extant finds suggest that there was a riverine trade through Merovingian Gaul to Frisia and Britain, where a number of tremisses have been found, but that Visigothic coins were less welcome in other regions of the Mediterranean world.

Finally, I will turn to Visigothic silver and bronze coins, which have only recently been proven to be true and authorized currency of the Visigothic kingdom. Though both are restricted within limited regional bounds and periods of time, the discovery of these coins opens up numerous questions and possibilities for future study. The bronze, in particular, which circulated in conjunction with older, Roman *nummi* and bronze from elsewhere in the late-antique Mediterranean, is strongly indicative of a circulation that was independent of the exchange of gold, and it is to be hoped that this material will encourage future work on Visigothic trade and on the greater numismatic system of the Visigothic kingdom.

I. Gold Circulation: The Solidus and Its Fractions

Most considerations of Visigothic coinage of the last two centuries have begun and ended with gold coinage. Indeed, until the 1980s, it was widely believed that the Visigoths had struck exclusively gold coins, the solidus and, especially, the tremissis, first as pseudo-imperial coinage, which imitated Byzantine issues, and then as royal issues in the names of Visigothic kings, beginning around 580 CE and continuing until the early eighth century and the end of Visigothic rule.⁸ Certainly, these coins are still the most numerous known today and represent the vast majority of coins that circulated from the

⁸ Miles, *The Coinage of the Visigoths of Spain*. Now supplanted by Ruth Pliego, *La moneda visigoda*, vols. 1 & 2 (Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 2009).

5th to the 8th centuries, though we now know that there also existed options for small change.

The quantity and insecure mint attribution of the pseudo-imperial issues has precluded any meaningful study of their circulation patterns.⁹ There is general consensus that the earliest Visigothic issues were struck in southern Gaul, prior to the advance into Spain, and there is some reason to accept Narbonne as an early mint site, perhaps by 460 CE.¹⁰ The Seville I hoard, which contained a number of pseudo-imperial issues, confirms that there was a southern mint in the mid-sixth century, after which we generally gain more certainty.¹¹ Wallace Tomasini made substantial efforts in 1964 to identify mints and engravers on stylistic grounds.¹² Unfortunately, his interpretations are largely impossible to corroborate and there are still many coins in this pseudo-imperial category that are variously identified as Visigothic, Merovingian or Burgundian. As a result, little regarding circulation can be said until there is greater consensus about which coins in southern Gaul in this period belong to which kingdom and in what contexts they are found.

Both pseudo-imperial and regal coins have been discovered in hoards and stray finds all over the Iberian peninsula and, though some recording of Visigothic material began in the late nineteenth century, much of our information regarding circulation of the regal coinage is due to the publication efforts of scholars of the mid-twentieth century.¹³ Foremost among these were Felipe Mateu y Llopis, who serially published finds from the 1940s through the 1970s, and Pio Beltrán Villagrasa, who worked as both a numismatist and

⁹ While some scholars have attempted to codify the distinction between “imitation” and “pseudo-imperial” coinage, this paper will adopt the latter as a catch-all term, as the differences are not necessarily relevant for circulation, at least with our current, limited information about these coins. Pliego, *La Moneda Visigoda*, 72–79, offers one set of definitions, though Kurt, *Minting, State and Economy in the Visigothic Kingdom*, 35, n. 54 still follows the majority in using the terms somewhat interchangeably.

¹⁰ Kurt, *Minting, State and Economy*, 44.

¹¹ Kurt, *Minting, State and Economy*, 65–66. The deposit of the hoard is dated to 548–554, with the first royal issues being struck shortly after either by Liuvigild or Hermenegild.

¹² Wallace J. Tomasini, *The Barbaric Tremissis in Spain and Southern France, Anastasius to Leovigild*, Numismatic Notes and Monographs 152 (New York: American Numismatic Society, 1964), 30, discussed in Kurt, *Minting, State and Economy*, 54–55.

¹³ Nineteenth-century interest in Visigothic numismatics was sparked by the discovery of several major hoards in this century, including La Grassa in 1817 and La Capilla in 1891. These led to a handful of early works in Spain, Portugal and France concerning Visigothic numismatics, including Aloïss Heiss, *Description générale des monnaies des rois wisigoths d’Espagne* (Paris: L’Imprimerie Nationale, 1867), which remained the standard work until the publication of Miles in 1952.

field archaeologist in Spain.¹⁴ Through their work, it was increasingly possible to see the extent of coin finds throughout Spain and to consider, for the first time, what the topography of the peninsula had meant for the movement of Visigothic money.

Accordingly, the same mid-century moment that saw early efforts to record finds systematically also saw some of the first discussions that raised the issue of circulation. Pierre Le Gentilhomme was in the vanguard here, organizing a series of conferences on the subject, but he was severely hampered by the availability of even a confirmed series of types produced during the period of Byzantine imitation as well as many of the reigns of the Visigothic kings.¹⁵ These uncertainties, combined with limited archaeological evidence, led to few conclusions about circulation patterns. In an attempt to circumvent these challenges, Tomasini attempted to use museum collections as a proxy for finds with confirmed archaeological or even regional context, but his findings were widely disputed and the matter was largely shelved.¹⁶

It was not until 1976 that the first and most comprehensive work dedicated to the circulation of Visigothic coins was produced when Xavier Barral i Altet published his monumental study of Visigothic and Suevic circulation.¹⁷ This work was the first, and still remains the most influential, source for understanding patterns of distribution, owing to its dedication to balancing a holistic view of the entire period along with smaller snapshots of several decades at a time. Thus, it was finally possible to identify regions with

¹⁴ Published as part of his *Hallazgos Monetarios* series, first with *Ampurias*, then with *Numario hispánico*, and finally with *Numisma*. A full record of this prolific scholar's work was published as *Titula de Felipe Mateu y Llopis* in 1984. Pío Beltrán Villagrasa, *Obra completa: I, antigüedad* (Zaragoza: Universidad de Zaragoza, Departamento de Prehistoria y Arqueología, 1972).

¹⁵ Pierre Le Gentilhomme, "Le monnayage et la circulation monétaire dans les royaumes barbares en Occident (Ve–VIIIe siècle)," *Revue numismatique* 7 (1943): 46–112 and "Le monnayage et la circulation monétaire dans les royaumes barbares en Occident (Ve–VIIIe siècle)," *Revue numismatique* 8 (1944–45): 13–59. His main sources were Heiss and some of the earliest updates of Mateu y Llopis.

¹⁶ As in Tomasini, *The Barbaric Tremissis in Spain and Southern France*. Despite its good intentions, Tomasini's work was recognized at the time as being methodologically unsound, on which, see Jean Lafaurie, "Review of Tomasini, *The Barbaric Tremissis in Spain and Southern France: Anastasius to Leovigild*," *Revue numismatique* 6 (1966): 336–38.

¹⁷ Barral i Altet, *La circulation des monnaies suèves et visigotiques*. The issue of the relationship between Visigothic and Suevic coinage is not covered in this work, but a useful discussion of the challenges, and some of the possible remedies, of studying this material can be found in J. M. Peixoto Cabral and David M. Metcalf, *A moeda sueva—Suevic Coinage* (Porto: Sociedade Portuguesa de Numismática, 1997).

plentiful single finds or to visualize patterns of hoarding in the reigns of particular kings.¹⁸ More than this, Barral i Altet determined that it was possible to identify three main zones of circulation: Narbonensis, along with the northeastern section of Tarraconensis, central Iberia, including most of Carthaginensis, and Baetica together with southern Lusitania. While central Iberia was found to be largely without numismatic activity, a position which has been subsequently revised, the north-south divide has remained apparent in our evidence, though not precisely along the lines that Barral i Altet proposed.¹⁹

The decades following this publication were full of assessments and reassessments of the patterns Barral i Altet had identified, as well as debate about the meaning behind those patterns. The 1980s, in particular, found Michael Metcalf making several responses to the work, including push back against some of Barral i Altet's assumptions about single coin finds.²⁰ While Barral i Altet had presented data based upon the idea that stray coins were typically lost within the reign in which they had been struck, Metcalf noted that this need not be the case and that there was rarely sufficient corroborating data to make that claim.²¹ Moreover, Metcalf's aim in these years seems to have been focused upon the "why" of circulation, as he took into consideration the alignment of fiscal, commercial, and ecclesiastical motivations with the evidence.²² This issue remained of central interest in the late 1980s and 1990s as debate grew about the scale of coin production that

¹⁸ Recognizing, of course, that finds were, and still are, the result of biases in our search methodology as much as a consequence of ancient use.

¹⁹ Pliego, "Visigothic Currency," 205 refutes "the central void," though there was already push back by Metcalf, "Some Geographical Aspects," showing the distances traveled for coins in hoards.

²⁰ David M. Metcalf, "Many Mint-Places, Few Coins: Visigothic Coinage in Gallaecia and northern Lusitania," in *Homenagem a Mario Gomes Marques: Separata*, edited by Mario Castro Hipoólto, David M. Metcalf, J. M. Peixoto Cabral and Miquel Crusafont i Sabater (Sintra: Instituto de Sintra, 2000), 175–94; David M. Metcalf, "Some Geographical Aspects"; and, David M. Metcalf, "For what Purposes were Suevic and Visigothic Tremisses used? The Contribution of Topographical Analysis, illustrated by some Comments on Single Finds from the Alentejo, and on the Mint of Elvora," in *Problems of Medieval Coinage in the Iberian Area 3*, ed. Mario Marques and David M. Metcalf (Santarém: Instituto Politécnico de Santarém, 1988), 15–34.

²¹ Metcalf, "Some Geographical Aspects," 314–17.

²² Metcalf, "For what Purposes were Suevic and Visigothic Tremisses used?" Metcalf has argued consistently for a commercial motivation behind circulation, an argument that more or less directly contradicted the position of Grierson, which has been highly influential.

might have supported one or the other of the possible explanations.²³ Furthermore, archaeological efforts increased in these years, leaving the field to wait until the new finds were integrated with these earlier analyses or demonstrated some flaw in earlier arguments.²⁴

The first few decades of the twenty-first century accordingly brought a series of small, regional- or period-based evaluations of circulation based on this new, and newly published, data.²⁵ Iñaki Martín Viso has published on the circulation of tremisses in northeastern Lusitania, and has demonstrated that the area had a high level of integration with other regions in the peninsula.²⁶ His findings demonstrate that a full two-thirds of coins found in Lusitania come from outside the province, with the largest proportions coming from Baetica and Tarraconensis. Similarly, Manuel Castro Priego has taken a close look at Carthaginensis, but primarily through the lens of a limited number of finds, and exclusively considering the 7th and 8th centuries.²⁷ This analysis concluded, in agreement with Barral i Altet, that the region was largely unmonetized, and that the crisis of the late-seventh and early eighth centuries limited numismatic production to the extreme south and northeast. Ruth Pliego has recently pushed back against this argument and demonstrated that the finds remain more or less even across the peninsula, and that our data, with its bias in favor of large southern hoards, has led to this misinterpretation.²⁸

Overall, the work that has taken place thus far on Visigothic gold circulation has demonstrated the effects of the topography of the Iberian Peninsula as well as the dominance of a handful of large hoards on our

²³ Félix Retamero, "La moneda del regnum gothorum (ca. 575-714). Una revisión del registro numismático," in *Between Taxation and Rent: Fiscal Problems from Late Antiquity to Early Middle Ages*, edited by Pablo C. Díaz and Iñaki Martín Viso, 189–220 (Bari: Edipuglia, 2011), and Mário Gomes Marques, J. M. Peixoto Cabral and J. Rodrigues Marinho, *Ensaio sobre história monetária da monarquia visigoda* (Porto: Sociedade Portuguesa de Numismática, 1995).

²⁴ For example, Jaime Vizcaino Sánchez, *La presencia bizantina en Hispania, siglos VI-VII: la documentación arqueológica* (Murcia: Universidad de Murcia, 2009).

²⁵ The corpus of Pliego, *La Moneda Visigoda*.

²⁶ Iñaki Martín Viso, "Tremisses y potentes en el nordeste de Lusitania (siglos vi-vii)," *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez* 38, no. 1 (2008): 175–200.

²⁷ A point made in both Manuel Castro Priego, "La circulación monetaria de los siglos VII-VIII en la península ibérica: un modelo en crisis," *Zona arqueológica* 15, no. 2 (2011): 225–44, and Manuel Castro Priego, "Absent Coinage: Archaeological Contexts and Tremisses in the Central Iberian Peninsula in the 7th and 8th Centuries AD," *Medieval Archaeology* 60 (2016): 27–56.

²⁸ Pliego, "Visigothic Currency," 204–06.

understanding. Though it is difficult to speak of the typicality of such collections of coins, it is increasingly possible to make some general statements about how and where coins moved, and Andrew Kurt and Pliego have both recently taken up the task of providing some general assessments.²⁹ While debate persists about the meaning of mint locations in relation to circulation, current evidence demonstrates that though coins moved fairly freely around the peninsula, there were nevertheless geographic differences. Southern Iberia seems to have been the most monetized region overall, or at least the most numismatically productive. The mints of Emerita, Hispalis, and Cordoba were all especially active across the entire period, and there is a greater mingling of Visigothic and Byzantine coinage in the south, an issue to which we will return shortly. The high production of Baetica, especially, has been noted and likely explains the high preponderance of these coins found in hoards outside of its borders.³⁰ The striking of at least some of the large numbers of coins has been associated, not implausibly, with military activity in the mid-seventh century.³¹ The La Capilla hoard also attests that this period saw relatively strong connections between Baetica and Lusitania to the west.³² Carthaginensis, by contrast, seems to have produced, out of Toletum, coins that were somewhat more likely to remain in local circulation, with only some slight movement northward into Tarraconensis.³³ Despite the narrative of a “central void,” a number of hoards and isolated finds have been found in Carthaginensis, especially along and around the Tajo River.³⁴

Lusitania and the west and northwest in general, other than being characterized by a preponderance of isolated finds, has been noted as a likely hub for trade with Britain.³⁵ The uprising under Reccared in the late sixth century has been noted in conjunction with an uptick in both production and

²⁹ Pliego, “Visigothic Currency.” Kurt, “Visigothic Currency in its Making and Movement,” and Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy*.

³⁰ Pliego, “Visigothic Currency,” 207, fig. 6. Also covered in Álvaro Rodríguez Peinado, “La circulación monetaria en el reino visigodo de Toledo,” M.A. Thesis, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2018, p. 99.

³¹ Pliego, “Visigothic Currency,” 204, notes that the high percentage of coins from this era can also be explained by the size of the major hoards in Baetica.

³² Rodríguez Peinado, “La circulación monetaria en el reino visigodo de Toledo,” 100.

³³ Rodríguez Peinado, “La circulación monetaria en el reino visigodo de Toledo,” 101.

³⁴ Barral i Altet, *La circulation des monnaies suèves et visigotiques*, 153, fig. 22.

³⁵ Pliego, “Visigothic Currency,” 206, fig. 5. For Britain, see Barral i Altet, *La circulation des monnaies suèves et visigotiques*, 147, fig. 20. On the seemingly distinct circulation of Suevic coinage in this region, see David M. Metcalf, J. M. P. Cabral and L. C. Alves, “Sixth-Century Visigothic Metrology, Some Evidence from Portugal,” *American Journal of Numismatics* 3, no. 4 (1992): 65–90, at 77.

finds in southern Gallaecia and northern Lusitania, and there is a strong concentration of coins of Liuvigild in the southwest, which has also been associated with campaigning. Recently, it has been noted that coins of Chintila seem to have spread more abundantly from Lusitania than from Baetica and Carthaginensis.³⁶

Northeastern Iberia presents a different picture, one with limited, but enticing possibilities. Though coins of Tarraconensis often remained local, it is slightly over-represented in major hoards in the south, especially for the reigns of Egica and Wittiza.³⁷ Both Narbonensis and Tarraconensis seem to have become more productive, numismatically, from the second half of the seventh century on. After this point, the coins of these provinces not only become more plentiful, but they also begin to appear more often in hoards elsewhere in the peninsula until the final defeat of the Visigothic kingdom. As yet, no argument has been made for the impetus behind this change, nor for what the intensification of coin production and circulation might have done to change the region's economic and political importance.

Beyond the regional, our evidence strongly suggests that money circulated throughout both urban and rural settings. Kurt, in his recent book, argues that this reflects a level of monetization that surpasses simple fiscal needs and supports his position with literary and legal texts that are explicit about the presence of physical money, both *solidi* and *tremisses*, in the daily lives of Visigothic people.³⁸ While the evidence is perhaps, as yet, too limited to be more than suggestive, it is plausible that the church played a role in monetization. Some coins found in ecclesiastical contexts, as well as references to coins in religious literature, indicate that the Church was involved in fiscal activity and, as with other regions in late antiquity, it is worth considering what impact the Church had on economic behavior in the Visigothic kingdom.³⁹

In terms of change over time, a cluster of hoards late in the seventh and early in the eighth century has suggested a moment of crisis to Castro Priego.⁴⁰ Barral i Altet's study does not necessarily corroborate this point, though it is clear from his work that the eighth century was a time of extreme contraction in coin deposits, limited exclusively to one small pocket in the extreme

³⁶ Rodríguez Peinado, "La Circulación Monetaria en el Reino Visigodo de Toledo," 72.

³⁷ Pliego, "Visigothic Currency," 208.

³⁸ Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy*, 261–70, esp. 269.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 266–67.

⁴⁰ Both Castro Priego, "La circulación monetaria de los siglos VII-VIII en la Península Ibérica" and Castro Priego, "Absent Coinage" address this period, specifically.

northeast of Tarraconensis, southern Narbonensis, and some scattered finds in Lusitania. Earlier, however, both Barral i Altet and Pliego have found a largely even distribution, with only a few peaks in the reigns of Sisebut and Suinthila, which may be attributed to several, large southern hoards.⁴¹ As visually represented by Barral i Altet, central Iberia, especially, appears to be relatively sparsely populated with finds throughout the 7th century, but the overall distribution is not unlike other regions. The low total number of coins means that these conclusions must remain preliminary, as another large hoard or new excavation might radically shift our perception, but the overall stability, thus far, of Barral i Altet's assessments suggests that we may proceed with wary confidence in these interpretations.

II. Within and Without the Kingdom

This historiography and overview of the circulation of the gold has shown how scholars have thus far approached the movement of coinage within the Visigothic territory. Their conclusions indicate a shift over the course of the seventh century and some regional patterns that have withstood several decades of newly discovered evidence. Yet, how coinage traveled into and out of the area of Visigothic control must still be considered. From the time of Barral i Altet, it has been possible to discuss the latter from the available evidence. Outside the peninsula, Visigothic coins have been discovered along riverine routes through southern France into Belgium and even across the Channel in southeastern Britain.⁴² While the number of such coins is not high, they are also found alongside Byzantine and other far-flung currencies, which is suggestive of economic activity that was not numismatically discriminating.⁴³ In any case, this trade seems to have suffered a setback at some point in the late sixth century, leading to a decline in Visigothic coins in Merovingian territory.⁴⁴

Overall, the number of Visigothic coins abroad is small, fewer even than might have been expected, especially in the Mediterranean. Pliego has suggested plausibly that Visigothic tremisses were not accepted as currency everywhere, especially in areas of Byzantine control.⁴⁵ While the gold coins

⁴¹ Pliego, "Visigothic Currency," 205, fig 4. Barral i Altet, 154-157, figs. 23-26.

⁴² Barral i Altet, *La circulation des monnaies suèves et visigotiques*, 147, fig. 20.

⁴³ Rodríguez Peinado, "La Circulación Monetaria en el Reino Visigodo de Toledo," 89-90, 93-94, arguing for a trade route through Merovingian France to Frisia.

⁴⁴ Barral I Altet, *La circulation des monnaies suèves et visigotiques*, 151.

⁴⁵ Pliego, "El tremis de los últimos años," 40. Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy*, 270-71.

need not have been the only ones leaving Iberia, their greater intrinsic value makes it likely that they were preferred for long-distance travel and that they were melted and re-struck as local currency upon their arrival in a new region.

While the outflow of Visigothic currency has been the topic of some consideration, less attention has been paid to foreign currencies entering the kingdom, despite readily available evidence. As might be expected, a large number of the foreign coins found in Iberia are Byzantine in origin. Among these, the bronze are overwhelmingly found in Carthaginensis and Baetica, and can probably be associated with commercial activity.⁴⁶ Svante Fischer and Fernando López Sánchez have published on Byzantine solidi in the post-Roman west.⁴⁷ Iberia forms only a small portion of their total analysis, but they are able to note a clear pattern of solidi struck at Milan and, to a lesser extent, Ravenna, being the most common to appear in Visigothic territory. Unlike the bronze, the gold primarily appears in central Iberia and coastal Lusitania, a pattern that was also noted by Barral i Altet.⁴⁸

This data, both within and outside of Iberia, must be put into a wider Mediterranean context if it is to be understood and subjected to proper methodological approaches. Though efforts have been made to refine our understanding of the late-antique and early medieval economies as a whole, the work undertaken thus far has not prioritized the role of coinage.⁴⁹ A numismatic history of the period requires mastery of a huge geographic extent, ideally including numerous territories outside the Mediterranean as well as all those within it, a remarkable variety of coin types, and hundreds of thousands of finds and millions of individual coins. Such expertise, while highly desirable, is unlikely to be found in an individual scholar, which has sparked a recent effort to pool information and create a collaborative, digital project focusing on the minting and circulation of coinage throughout the late-antique and early medieval world. The Framing the Late Antique and Early Medieval Economy project (FLAME) was founded by Alan Stahl in the summer of 2013 and has grown into an international effort to catalogue all

⁴⁶ FLAME database, accessed September 2020. These are mostly small bronzes.

⁴⁷ Svante Fischer and Fernando López Sánchez, "Subsidies for the Roman West? The Flow of Constantinopolitan Solidi to the Western Empire and Barbaricum," *Opuscula* 9 (2016): 249–69.

⁴⁸ Fischer and López Sánchez, "Subsidies for the Roman West?," 164, fig. 2. Barral i Altet, *La circulation des monnaies suèves et visigotiques*, 64–66.

⁴⁹ See Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean 400–800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), and Jarius Banaji, *Exploring the Economy of Late Antiquity: Selected Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). For further comments, see Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy*, 257–59.

known coin finds in the greater Mediterranean world between the early fourth and the mid-eighth centuries, including those of Visigothic Spain.⁵⁰ It is to be hoped that this project will continue to grow in the coming years and provide a publicly available dataset that can throw light on these issues.

III. Silver and Bronze Circulation

A. The Silver

The next-most valuable denomination of Visigothic coinage holds the distinction of being the most recently discovered and the smallest known sample. Though siliquae of unknown provenance had been recorded with possible ties to Iberia as early as 1994, it was not until 2015 that a preliminary report was made that asserted the existence of silver coins that could be unequivocally connected to the Visigothic kingdom.⁵¹ In 2016, Miquel Crusafont i Sabater, Jaume Benages and Jaume Noguera released further details and presented a hoard of coins, including six tiny silver fragments that could not be connected with any known standard or denomination.⁵²

These coins were discovered during an archaeological survey at Les Tres Cales, a site on the Mediterranean coast south of Barcelona, as part of a hoard within a small vessel that also included gold tremisses of Justinian. Crusafont i Sabater, et al. have argued that the silver coins were likely struck in Barcelona, when the city briefly became the Visigothic capital, and have explained their apparently short life in circulation as a reflection of a late stage in the practice of copying siliquae and their fractions that took place slightly before Visigothic copper coinage was struck.⁵³ Both copper and silver seem to have been the result of closer monetary relationships with the Byzantine East, and were therefore not widely used in the western parts of the Iberian Peninsula, but silver coins, whether these fractions or copies of siliquae, are nevertheless likely to have only been used between 418 and 549 CE.

⁵⁰ FLAME project available at coinage.princeton.edu.

⁵¹ John P. C. Kent, *The Roman Imperial Coinage. Volume 10. The Divided Empire and the Fall of the Western Parts* (London: Spink Books, 1994), and Miquel Crusafont i Sabater, Jaume Benages I Olivé, Jaume Noguera Guillén, Eduardo Ble Gimeno, Pau Valdés Matías, Tomi Cartes, Xavier Sicart Chevarria and Joan Enric Vila, "La sèrie de plata de la monarquia visigoda," *Acta numismàtica* 45 (2015): 71–80.

⁵² Miquel Crusafont i Sabater, Jaume Benages and Jaume Noguera Guillén, "Silver Visigothic Coinage," *Numismatic Chronicle* 176 (2016): 241–60.

⁵³ Crusafont i Sabater, et al., "Silver Visigothic Coinage," 255–57.

This small sample of coins, as well as their small physical dimensions, has thus far restricted further elaboration on the role of silver in the economic system of the Visigoths and there has not yet been a large scholarly reaction to the find to signal either its acceptance or rejection. Nevertheless, the discovery of these coins as part of a hoard of gold coins goes some way to disproving a mere token purpose. The general decline in the use of silver across the western Mediterranean in this era must mark this coinage as a somewhat experimental effort, especially as the weight of these coins seems to indicate that they were not neatly integrated with any contemporary monetary system, either within the Visigothic kingdom or outside its borders.⁵⁴

B. The Bronze

Like the silver, bronze coins were relatively late additions to the known Visigothic corpus. They were first reported by Crusafont i Sabater, and he subsequently published the corpus, as known to him, of around 200 examples of these small bronze and copper pieces.⁵⁵ Though the coins had been known, even from excavation contexts, for several decades prior to Crusafont i Sabater's publication, they had not been identified as Visigothic coins and had been largely ignored because of their poor quality, small size, and limited numbers. Upon closer examination, the coins aligned with Byzantine nummi denominations up to the pentanummus and shared iconography with known Visigothic gold issues.

When a typology was established, it was determined that most of the coins could be associated with the major cities in central and especially southern Iberia: Hispalis, Emerita, Toledo, and Cordoba. Circulation, more generally, was determined to be southern in focus, and likely in response to the Byzantine occupation of the peninsula.⁵⁶ Early objections to the identification of the coins as Visigothic hinged on the discovery of some of these coins in Byzantine-controlled territory and the inability of Crusafont i Sabater to attribute all the coins to a recognizable minting location.⁵⁷ Pliego's recent

⁵⁴ Crusafont i Sabater, et al., "Silver Visigothic Coinage," 254–55.

⁵⁵ Miquel Crusafont i Sabater, "Un Numerario Visigodo de Cobre?" *Gaceta numismática* 74–75 (1984): 131–41, and Miquel Crusafont I Sabater, "The Copper Coinage of the Visigoths of Spain," in *Problems of Medieval Coinage in the Iberian Area*, ed. Mário Gomes Marques (Santarém: Instituto Politécnico de Santarém, 1988), 35–70.

⁵⁶ Crusafont i Sabater, "The Copper Coinage of the Visigoths of Spain," 38.

⁵⁷ Teresa Marot, "La península ibérica en los siglos V-Vi: consideraciones sobre provisión, circulación y usos monetarios," *Pyrenae* 31–32 (2000–2001): 133–60, and Teresa Marot and

reevaluation of the bronze has placed these objections largely to the side and firmly established a place for the bronze within the Visigothic monetary system.⁵⁸

Recent excavations and the reevaluation of previously excavated materials have now clarified that the Visigothic bronze coins circulated throughout the southern part of the peninsula, and that they did so in conjunction with Byzantine bronze coins as well as older Roman pieces from the 4th and 5th centuries.⁵⁹ A particular density of finds has been found around Hispalis leading to its identification as the primary source of these issues.⁶⁰ These have been mostly dated to the very late sixth and seventh centuries and have been studied in a handful of recent publications.⁶¹

Worthy of note is the work of Bartolomé Mora Serrano, who has offered a careful study of the circulation of bronze coinage in Malaga.⁶² His article focuses primarily on the continued circulation of pre-Visigothic bronze in the region, drawing on excavations to show that the sixth century was a time of mixed use in terms of bronze currency, with Visigothic bronze circulating along with Byzantine coins from Carthage and a few remaining pieces from Byzantine rule in Spain itself. This approach to currency has been read by Kurt as an inherently pragmatic, and likely commercial, system, where bronze was maintained to support small-scale exchanges. Thus, older coins continued to have utility within the region and could be supplemented with local issues as Roman and Byzantine nummi became less readily available.

This interpretation also explains the occasional appearance of Visigothic bronzes outside of the peninsula. Examples have been discovered as far away as Greece, and a handful of examples have also been noted in Merovingian France.⁶³ Unlike gold coins, which would have been melted and re-struck once

Maria del Mar Lloréns, "La circulación monetaria en el siglo VI d. C. en la costa mediterránea: la Punta de l'Illa de Cullera (Valencia)," *Revista d'Arqueologia de Ponent* 6 (1996): 151–80.

⁵⁸ Ruth Pliego, "The Circulation of Copper Coins in the Iberian Peninsula during the Visigothic Period: New Approaches," *Journal of Archaeological Numismatics* 5, no. 6 (2015/2016): 125–60.

⁵⁹ Mora Serrano, "The Circulation of Bronze Currency in Málaga."

⁶⁰ Pliego, "The Circulation of Copper Coins," 136–37

⁶¹ Castro Priego, "Absent Coinage," 48–49; Mora Serrano, "The Circulation of Bronze Currency in Málaga"; and, Pliego, "The Circulation of Copper Coins," 138–40, who has argued forcefully that these coins are an exclusively seventh-century phenomenon.

⁶² Mora Serrano, "The Circulation of Bronze Currency in Málaga."

⁶³ Marot, "La península ibérica en los siglos V-VI," 144, drawn from Howard L. Adelson and George L. Kustas, "A Sixth-Century Hoard of Minimi from the Western

outside the Visigothic kingdom, the few bronzes that were carried away from the region were kept and hoarded with whatever other currency was to hand. As more unknown coins are re-examined and identified as part of this series, it will be especially interesting to see whether Visigothic bronzes follow the pattern of other local bronze coins, by remaining largely local in terms of their circulation, or whether more examples will be found elsewhere in the Mediterranean world, offering evidence for greater commercial integration between Iberia and its neighbors.

IV. Conclusion

The possibility of a Visigothic bi- or trimetallic system of currency, even if it was limited to the regions and periods currently supported by the available evidence, is, by itself, an invitation to reconsider what purpose or purposes coined money may have served in the Iberian Peninsula. The traditional view of an exclusively gold coinage serving fundamentally fiscal needs may yet hold, but now needs to be reconsidered alongside the relatively robust copper use in the south of the peninsula. Whether this bronze coinage must be considered as a remnant of Byzantine control of the region and a habit that lingered on after the Visigothic reconquest or as a reflection of some real and measurable difference in the economic practices of the region, the coexistence of gold and bronze coinage is a strong indicator that a purely fiscal model cannot be used as an explanation for the whole peninsula across the entire period.

The patterns of circulation that have been noted and refined over the last fifty years suggest that there were continuities across the peninsula, but equally demonstrate that there were real differences in coin use. As new excavations are published and more coins are found, it is to be hoped that we will gain more clarity about where and when coins were in use. In particular, the involvement of the Church and rural communities in the economy is deserving of greater attention, as is the scale and extent of monetization. There remain questions, too, about the integration of the Visigothic economy with Northern Europe in both directions: how and why did foreign coins enter Visigothic Spain and under what circumstances were Visigothic coins used outside of the kingdom? The explosion of evidence both inside and outside of Iberia since the time of Barral i Altet indicates that it is time for a revaluation of this evidence. The ongoing work of the FLAME project suggests that new

Peloponnese," *Museum Notes* 11 (1964): 159–204, where its monogram was not interpreted as Toletum. See Pliego, "The Circulation of Copper Coins," 137, fig. 6.

insights may well come from collaborative, digital projects, and the chapters of this volume prove that there remain numerous dedicated and innovative scholars who are prepared to take up these and other pressing questions about the Visigothic economy and its coinage.

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KINGS AND ARISTOCRATS: POWER, COMPETITION AND GIFT EXCHANGE IN THE VISIGOTHIC KINGDOM OF TOLEDO

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The Visigothic kings of Toledo connected to the aristocracy through an oath of fidelity which exceeded the limits of formalism. Those who pledged loyalty to the king built a special sacred tie: its breach was considered an act of perfidy to God and was not taken lightly.

Historiography has highlighted the value of the oath of fidelity as a cohesive element in the sociopolitical network of the kingdom.¹ Pablo Díaz Martínez and Pablo Poveda claim that in a context of competition among aristocratic factions for the throne, the oath of fidelity was a way to “protect the figure of the monarch” (“blindar la figura del monarca”) and regulated

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¹ Dietrich Claude, “The Oath of Allegiance and the Oath of the King in the Visigothic Kingdom,” *Folia* 30 (1976): 3–26; Abilio Barbero and Marcelo Vigil, *La formación del feudalismo en la Península Ibérica* (Barcelona: Crítica, 1978), 126–54; Paul D. King, *Derecho y sociedad en el reino visigodo* (Madrid: Alianza, 1981), 81; Luis A. García Moreno, *Historia de la España visigoda* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1989), 253; Pablo Díaz Martínez, “Visigothic political institutions,” in *The Visigoths from the Migration Period to the Seventh Century: An Ethnographic Perspective*, ed. Peter J. Heather (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1999), 321–56; María del Rosario Valverde Castro, *Ideología, simbolismo y ejercicio del poder real en la monarquía visigoda* (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 2000), 222–23; Renan Frighetto, “Incauto et inevitabili conditionum sacramento: juramento de fidelidad y limitación del poder regio en la Hispania visigoda en el reinado de Egica (688),” *Intus Legere Historia* 1, nos. 1–2 (2007): 67–79, at 70; and, Bruno Dumézil, “Le crime de parjure dans l’Espagne wisigothique du VIIe siècle,” in *Oralité et lien social au Moyen Âge (Occident, Byzance, Islam)*, ed. Marie-France Auzépy and Guillaume Saint-Guillain (Paris: Collège de France-CNRS, 2008), 27–38.

the relationship between the king and the aristocracy.² The oath of fidelity united the aristocracy around the kings, but this does not mean that it was a consistently successful mechanism.

The ties of fidelity implied a committed personal relationship and created tensions awakening many kinds of competition. In addition, the pledge of fidelity was not unconditional; on the contrary, it created a contractual relationship that could be analyzed under the logic of reciprocity. The purpose of this contribution is to analyze the existing ties of fidelity between the aristocracy and the kings from that point of view. I claim that the aristocracy was working with the monarchy for benefits and legitimization, while kings expected political support. To fully explicate this entanglement, I will firstly demonstrate the characteristics of the members of the aristocracy who swore fidelity to the king and then, secondly, examine the delivery of gifts from the king to the aristocracy due to the sworn fidelity. Throughout my analysis, I will highlight that these reciprocal relationships marked the dynamics of the political relationships in the Visigothic kingdom.

I. Oath of Fidelity and Pledge of Loyalty

The first mention of the oath of fidelity (and the consequences of its violation) was at the Fourth Council of Toledo in 633, where it was decreed that breaking the promise made to the king would involve prevarication against God and its punishment could be no less than excommunication. Reading the terms used to formulate the canon, it is evident that the promise of fidelity was an established custom,³ as proven by Sánchez Albornoz.⁴

² Pablo Díaz Martínez and Pablo Poveda, “*Qui patrie excidium intulerunt*. Hispania 711: explicaciones desesperadas para un colapso inesperado,” *Reti Medievali* 17, no. 2 (2016): 191–218, at 7.

³ *La colección canónica Hispana, V, Concilios hispanos: Segunda parte*, ed. Gonzalo Martínez Díez and Félix Rodríguez (Madrid: El Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas [CSIC], 1992), Toledo IV, 248.

⁴ Claudio Sánchez Albornoz, *En torno a los orígenes del feudalismo visigodo, (primera parte): Fideles y Gardingos en la monarquía visigoda* (Mendoza, 1942), 47 and 48. Regarding the oath of fidelity, see Abilio Barbero and Marcelo Vigil, *La formación del feudalismo en la Península Ibérica*, 126–54, who analyze the oaths of fidelity of all inhabitants of the kingdom as well as the personal ones in feudal ties. See also del Rosario Valverde Castro, *Ideología, simbolismo y ejercicio del poder real en la monarquía visigoda*, 222 and 223; García Moreno, *Historia de la España visigoda*; King, *Derecho y sociedad en el reino visigodo*, 81; Frighetto, “*Incauto et inevitabili conditionum sacramento*,” 70; and, Pablo Díaz Martínez and Pablo Poveda, “*Qui patrie excidium intulerunt*,” 7.

The content of the oath – expanded in other councils⁵ as the century went by – can be specifically summarized as follows: people promised to respect the figure of the king, not causing injury or putting him to death, or taking for themselves the dignity of the kingdom. Similarly, vows were made to protect the royal family, the homeland and the Gothic people. Two social sectors can be distinguished here in this fealty to the king: the common people of the realm and the aristocracy. The clergy, treated as a separate social segment, was also impelled to swear fidelity to the king, as indicated by the first canon of the Seventh Council of Toledo in 646 and the second canon of the Tenth Council of Toledo in 656.⁶ The main aim of the kings was essentially to guarantee the fidelity of the *maiores* of the kingdom. The focus here is on the latter, as their ties with the kings marked the pace of the political evolution of the kingdom.

Under Chintila, in the thirteenth canon of the Sixth Council of Toledo in 638, the youth and the *minores* men were asked to honor those who within the palace were highly regarded by their merit or dignity, in reverence to the king or requested by him;⁷ the following canon is titled *De remuneratione collata fidelibus regum*. These two canons can be understood as tandem: the first reveals the possible means to become part of the intimate circle of the king, while the second reveals the obligations of the people toward the king and vice versa, added to the due punishment in case of failing to fulfil their obligation. Different sources mention the term *fidelis regis*: Who were the *fideles regis*? What were their roles and obligations toward the king? Why were they key elements in the political dynamics of the kingdom?

Documentary evidence allows scholars to outline quite accurately who the *fideles regis* were, although documents contain partial information. Amancio Isla Frez points out that members of the *officium palatinum* or *aula regia* – the group surrounding the kings which managed with them the kingdom – were

⁵ *Concilios hispanos V*, ed. Martínez Díez and Rodríguez, Toledo V, 281–86; Toledo VI, 325–27; Toledo VII, 338; Toledo X, 521–22; José Vives, *Concilios visigóticos e hispano-romanos* (Madrid: El Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas [CSIC], 1963), Toledo XVI, 509.

⁶ *Concilios hispanos V*, ed. Martínez Díez and Rodríguez, Toledo VII, 338; Toledo X, 521–22. It is not surprising that the kings had demanded the oath of clerics since they participated actively in the politics of the kingdom in planning revolts and occupying key roles the *sedes regia*, as mentioned in the reconstructions of the revolts against Reccared and Wamba. As Frighetto points out, this norm is interesting because it contradicts all the dispositions contained in the late imperial legislation and would constitute a legal novelty. Frighetto, “Incauto et inevitabili conditionum sacramento,” 70.

⁷ *Concilios hispanos V*, ed. Martínez Díez and Rodríguez, Toledo VI, 319.

by antonomasia the *fideles* of the king.⁸ They provided advice and help for the king and co-governed by administering the circumscription of the kingdom and participated in government affairs. The palatines possessed the positions of *dux*, *comes*, and *gardingus*, which in turn formed a hierarchy which created inequalities within the bosom of the aristocracy. Céline Martin demonstrated that the dignity of *procer* fell into disuse toward the mid-seventh century, and the honor of *dux* was the highest of the dignities. Likewise, the title of *gardingus* was used only at the end of the kingdom and was bestowed on young people.⁹ The readings of the councils suggest that the group accompanying the king was formed by great magnates, yet were all of them *fideles regis*?

The governmental structure of the Visigothic kings did not have a particularly dense network, although it was intended to send commands from Toledo to all the regions that they expected to rule.¹⁰ The kings were obligated to consult a network of members of the palace so that their commands were obeyed within a kingdom which was ruled heterogeneously.¹¹ The different duties carried out by the *fideles* of the king collaborated with the functioning of the regal government.

In the Third Council of Toledo in 589, each member of the group called *seniores Gothorum* signed the condemnation of the Arian heresy under the title of *vir inluster*.¹² In 633, Sisenand was accompanied by a group of *nobiles* men to the Council, who reunited in the church of Saint Leocadia.¹³ The strong presence of the *fideles regis* together with the king in the councils took place under Chintila as well. The minutes of the Fifth Council of Toledo in 636 mention that he entered the church with nobles in order to commend all to prayer, and he obligated their *fideles* to do the same with a holy exhortation.¹⁴

⁸ Amancio Isla Frez, "El *Officium palatinum* visigodo," *Hispania* 62 (2002): 823–47, at 827.

⁹ On this term, see Claudio Sánchez Albornoz, *En torno a los orígenes del feudalismo*, 77–106; Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 242; Edward A. Thompson, *The Goths in Spain* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), 335; and, Céline Martin, "Hiérarchie et service dans le monde wisigothique: la militia des laïcs," in *Hiérarchie et stratification sociale dans l'Occident médiéval (400-1100)*, ed. François Bougard, F., Dominique Iogna-Prat, and Régine Le Jan (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 325–41, at 332.

¹⁰ For the treatment of the organization of governmental structures, see mainly Claudio Sánchez Albornoz, "El Aula Regia y las asambleas políticas de los godos," *Cuadernos de Historia de España* 5 (1945): 6–110.

¹¹ Iñaki Martín Viso, "Colapso político y sociedades locales: el Noroeste de la península ibérica (siglos VIII-IX)," *Reti Medievali Rivista* 17, no. 2 (2016): 335–69.

¹² *Concilios hispanos V*, ed. Martínez Díez and Rodríguez, Toledo III, 98.

¹³ *Concilios hispanos V*, ed. Martínez Díez and Rodríguez, Toledo IV, 179–80.

¹⁴ *Concilios hispanos V*, ed. Martínez Díez and Rodríguez, Toledo V, 277.

Every time the *Mozarabic Chronicle of 754* registers the regal summon of a council, it records the participation of the king and the *maiores palatii*.¹⁵

During the reign of Chindaswinth (r. 642-653), a promulgated law provides that amnesty to criminals who had committed *gens* and *patria* crimes could only be granted if the king had the approval of the bishops and the *maiores* of the palace.¹⁶ The king's son and successor, Recceswinth, referred to a group of illustrious men in these terms: "leaders of the people, those whom I embrace as energetic allies in government, faithful in adversity and vigorous in prosperity."¹⁷ Wamba, in the role of *vir inlustris*, presented the will of Martin of Braga before the council assembly reunited in Toledo in 656 in order to be submitted for discussion by those present.¹⁸ They were also recognized as agents of justice: in 673, in the jury against Paulus and fifty-three local chiefs (all of them of noteworthy lineage who had participated in a conspiracy against the central authority), king Wamba in person presided over the trial accompanied by magnates of the palace.¹⁹ The second canon of the Thirteenth Council of Toledo, summoned by king Erwig in 683, decreed that those accused of any crime would not be brutally deprived of prerogatives, but they would be interrogated fairly in a public deliberation of priests, nobles and *gardingi*, and if found guilty they would suffer sentences imposed by law or they would be deemed not guilty by the judgement of everyone.²⁰ On the

¹⁵ *Chronica muzarabica anni 754*, in *Crónica mozárabe de 754. Edición crítica y traducción*, ed. José Eduardo López Pereira (Zaragoza: Anubar Ediciones, 1980), 34.

¹⁶ *Liber Iudiciorum*, in *MGH Leges Nationum Germanicarum I: Leges Visigothorum*, ed. Karl Zeumer (Hanover: Hahn, 1902 [2005]), 6.1.7, p. 256. "[...] Quod si divina miseratio tam sceleratis personis cor principis misereri compulerit, cum adsensum sacerdotum maiorumque palatii licentiam miserandi libenter habebit." For the context of this law see Céline Martin, "Des fins de règne incertaines: répression et amnistie des groupes aristocratiques dans le royaume de Tolède (deuxième moitié du VIIe s.)," in *Les élites au haut Moyen Âge. Crises et renouvellements*, ed. François Bougard, Laurent Feller and Régine Le Jan (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 207–23, at 210.

¹⁷ *Concilios hispanos V*, ed. Martínez Díez and Rodríguez, Toledo VIII, 378: "plebium rectores exegit, quos in regimine socios, in aduersitate fidos et in prosperis amplector strenuous."

¹⁸ *Concilios hispanos V*, ed. Martínez Díez and Rodríguez, Toledo X, 545.

¹⁹ Wilhelm Levison, Jocelyn N. Hillgarth and Bernhard Bischoff, eds., *Julian of Toledo. "Historia Wambae regis,"* Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 115 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1976), 254: "Hic igitur sceleratissimus Paulus, dum, couocatis adunatisque omnibus nobis, id est senioribus cunctis palatii, gardingis omnibus omnique palatino officio [...]."

²⁰ *La colección canónica Hispana, VI, Concilios hispánicos: Tercera parte*, ed. Gonzalo Martínez Díez and Félix Rodríguez (Madrid: El Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas [CSIC], 2002), Toledo XIII, 221–22.

promulgation of a law concerning Jews, Sisebut announced that he did it "with all the palatine office."²¹

The mobilization of military troops represented the main aim of the *fideles* of the king. Although it is worth mentioning that when the king assumed the investiture, he became the chief of the army in charge of the security of the kingdom,²² his aim was to provide warriors ready to fight for the king, as well as to command his troops if necessary. This task relied on the *duces* (generals of the army) who, according to Céline Martin, occupied such a position only for the duration of the campaign.²³ Claudius, a duke during the reign of Reccared I (r. 586-601), battled the Franks on behalf of his king,²⁴ and Paulus commanded the quest of repressing rebels (before becoming their leader) under the orders of Wamba.²⁵ Isidore attributes to Witteric the military triumph of capturing imperial soldiers in Sagontia (~10 miles from Medina Sidonia, in the baths of Giconza²⁶) carried out by his dukes.²⁷ Rechila fought against the Astures and Suinthila defeated the Ruccones and took over some spaces occupied by the Byzantines; both of them did so while being dukes of Sisebut.²⁸

The role of the aristocracy in the organization of the army was central. Firstly, the recruitment of warriors who were prepared to fight under the regal standard was not an easy task, as each group of warriors responded to the aristocratic chief who had recruited them. According to data provided by

²¹ *LI* 12.2.14, ed. Zeumer, 420: "omni cum palatino officio."

²² Pablo Díaz Martínez and María del Rosario Valverde, "The theoretical strength and practical weakness of the Visigothic monarchy of Toledo," in *Rituals of Power: From Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Frans Theuvs and Janet L. Nelson (Boston and Leiden: Brill, 2000), 59–93.

²³ Céline Martin, "Hiérarchie et service dans le monde wisigothique," 329. See also a similar opinion from Pablo Díaz Martínez, "El esquema provincial en el contexto administrativo de la monarquía visigoda de Toledo," *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez* 49, no. 2 (2019): 77–108.

²⁴ Antonio Maya Sánchez, ed., *Vitas Sanctorum Patrum Emeretensium*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 116, Turnhout: Brepols, 1992.

²⁵ Julian of Toledo, *Historia Wambae*, ed. Levison, et al., 224.

²⁶ Jaime Vizcaino Sánchez, *La presencia bizantina en Hispania, siglos VI-VII: la documentación arqueológica* (Murcia: Editum, 2009), 147, and Margarita Vallejo Girvés, *Bizancio y la España tardoantigua* (ss. V- VIII): *Un capítulo de historia mediterránea* (Alcalá de Henares: Universidad de Alcalá, 1992). Margarita Vallejo Girvés, *Hispania y Bizancio: Una relación desconocida* (Madrid: Akal, 2012).

²⁷ Isidore of Seville, *Historiae Gothorum, Vandalorum et Suevorum*, in *Las Historias de los godos, vándalos y suevos de Isidoro de Sevilla*, ed. Cristóbal Rodríguez Alonso (León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación "San Isidoro," 1975), 268.

²⁸ Isidore of Seville, *Historiae Gothorum*, ed. Rodríguez Alonso, 272 and 274.

various sources about the character of the troops and the difficulties in their recruitment, it follows that during war or an aristocratic riot, regal power was greatly tied to the success of the summon and the support of the *grandees* of the palace and their supporters.²⁹

The political support and strength of alliances were materialized in troops prepared for warfare, all in the service of the king. Decreeing laws, imparting justice and commanding the army were not the only tasks that the *grandees* carried out together with the king and on his behalf. Governing the cities and their surrounding land was under the order of the *comites ciuitatis*, and provinces were under the command of *duces* or *rectores*,³⁰ members of the aristocracy designated by the king for such roles.³¹

Isla Frez, following Sánchez Albornoz,³² highlights that the offices of different aristocrats present in the signatures of the minutes of the Visigothic councils as *comes cubiculi*, *comes patrimonii*, *comes notarii*, and *comes thesauri*, were honorary offices, which was not an impediment for these counts to have carried out a specific function. In addition, he points out that this honorary character did not hinder the course of honors inside the organ of the government, as shown in the case of Teodemund, who was promoted from *spatarius*³³ to *procer*.³⁴ Céline Martin claims, in turn, that the existence of a career is unprovable according to the available documentation. However, we consider that besides the functions and possible promotions, the aristocracy

²⁹ Díaz Martínez and del Rosario Valverde, "The theoretical strength and practical weakness of the Visigothic monarchy of Toledo."

³⁰ Isla Frez, "El *Officium palatinum* visigodo," 838.

³¹ Regarding the problem of the administration of the kingdom, see Luis. A. García Moreno, "Estudios sobre la organización administrativa del reino visigodo de Toledo," *Anuario de historia del derecho español* 44 (1974): 5–156; Céline Martin, *La Géographie du pouvoir dans l'espace visigothique* (France: Presses Universitaires Septentrion, 2003), 167–76; and, Pablo Díaz Martínez, "El esquema provincial en el contexto administrativo de la monarquía visigoda de Toledo," *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez* 49, 2 (2019): 77–108.

³² Claudio Sánchez Albornoz, "El Aula Regia y las asambleas políticas de los godos," 36.

³³ Regarding this office, Isla Frez says: "[...] Podrían ser meros guardianes, pero su relevante posición como *comites*, (...) y su número en el XIII concilio nos hacen pensar que son los jefes de la guardia palatina." [They could be mere guardians, but its relevant position as *comites*, [...] and their number in the Thirteenth Council makes us think that they are the chiefs of the palatine guard]. The Spartarians were members of the high aristocracy; in addition, this author, following the data obtained from the Chronicle of Alfonso II on the condition of *spatarius* of Pelayo, suggests that the youth of high lineage commenced their services to the king as *spatarii*. Isla Frez, "El *Officium palatinum* visigodo," 836.

³⁴ *Concilios visigóticos*, ed. Vives, Toledo XVI.

did not form cadres of governmental specialists; in fact, in the seventh century, members of the royal household called *seniores palatii*³⁵ gained their positions as rewards for offering the king their political support or for providing him assistance and advice as faithful servants of the king. Paul D. King believes that the *comites* gained their position due to the special relationship which tied them with the king, as no one better than their “partners” would perform the duties that the given positions entailed.³⁶ Céline Martin herself posits that the king had the authority to choose whom to assign a position within the Palatine Office; however, he would have to respect the merit of the candidate: his distinguished origin and his moral qualities (*origo et uirtus*). Therefore, the king would decide those who benefited with the office among the members of the *gens Gothorum*.³⁷ Such imposition of criterion limited the options the king had with a specific group. In addition, it allowed this group to ensure privileged positions in central government affairs, obstructing the entrance of outsiders of the dominant class.

The *fideles regis* formed an elite within the aristocratic class. Strictly speaking, not all members of the aristocracy were *fideles regis*; although theoretically they owed the fidelity demanded by the ideological precepts supporting royal power, in practice, many important figures demonstrated their opposition to the reigning king. Chindaswinth distinguished the *primates* from the *seniores* in *Liber Iudiciorum* 3.1.5, which governs the disposition of assets constituting a dowry.³⁸ Council canons show that this elite owed loyalty and sincere service to the will and orders of the prince, and they provided vigilance and guarded his life with all their strength. This description coincides with the services that scholars attribute to the counts, with specific

³⁵ “[...] *seniores palatii*, [...] aristócratas godos que pertenecían al palatium establecido en Toledo, acabarán siendo consejeros reales, en particular, en cuestiones de índole legislativa y judicial”. [Gothic aristocrats who belonged to the palatium established in Toledo will end up being real advisors, in particular, on legislative and judicial issues]. Esteban Moreno Resano, “El título de senior en la Antigüedad tardía: un estudio de terminología institucional,” *Salduie* 13–14 (2013–2014): 141–50, at 149.

³⁶ Paul D. King, *Derecho y sociedad en el reino visigodo*, 74.

³⁷ Martin, “Hiérarchie et service dans le monde wisigothique,” 332. For the issue of ethnic identity of the dominant class, see Céline Martin, “La notion de gens dans la péninsule Ibérique des VI-VIIe s. quelques interprétations,” in *Identité et ethnicité: concepts, débats historiographiques, exemples (IIIe-XIIe siècle)*, ed. Véronique Gazeau, Pierre Baudin and Yves Modéran (Caen: Publications du CRAHM, 2008), 75–89.

³⁸ *LI*, ed. Zeumer, 127.

responsibilities mentioned above. Likewise, this elite participated with the king in the government of the kingdom.³⁹

Nevertheless, not all the *fideles regis* received the highest privilege. In the interior of the intimate circle of the king there was a hierarchy which created wealth and power inequalities within it, which caused a strong competition for the honors which brought greater rewards.

The composition of the group of the *fideles regis* had been dynamic; permanence inside of the intimate circle of the chief of the kingdom depended on the development of political relationships established between the king and his *fideles* or groups of *fideles*. The delivery of rewards and preservation of the *fidelitas* were two key aspects of the link.

What happened with the aristocracy which for political reasons – and not for lack of merit or origin – did not belong to the current ruling elite? Differing sources suggest that political climates, circumstantial alliances and military confrontation resulted in aristocratic groups external to the central government who, while being marginalized, suffered a reduction of their towering social class. However, although their political capital and capacity for building alliances decreased, they did not disappear fully. Years later, the same characters, family members or allies appeared disputing positions in the central government or in the regal power. The Visigothic aristocracy permanently sought, through political disputes, to become part of the intimate circle of the king and enjoy regal favoritism.⁴⁰

II. Gift Exchange and Political Power

Historians have long observed the social importance of wealth. Gurevich considers it a weapon which allowed the aristocracy to maintain their social influence and confirm their honor. Greed, the opposite behavior, caused contempt among powerful people and farmers, and the largesse of the aristocracy was a respected and expected attribute. Chiefs built their political

³⁹ Martin, “Hiérarchie et service dans le monde wisigothique,” 5.

⁴⁰ Martín Viso claims that while the kings could not govern without the support of the aristocracy, the aristocracy could not maintain power without the regal political structure. As a result, a linkage of political relationships was built and it generated a permanent state of tension among the different aristocratic factions. See Iñaki Martín Viso, “Hispania en el periodo postromano (siglos V-VIII),” in *Historia de la España Medieval*, ed. José María Monsalvo Antón (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2014), 27–50, at 34.

and power relationships through their generosity.⁴¹ Régine Le Jan suggests that riches were a key point for elites in the domination process, as they legitimated their power positions.⁴² The Visigothic aristocracy was also ruled by these principles.

The aristocrats gathered around the king, expecting to be benefited with offices, honors, and material goods. This relationship increased their social position within local communities and their wealth, and, in turn, the exercise of political power boosted the benefits brought by the relationship with the king.⁴³ Therefore, occupying strategic positions was a highly ambitious aim. The members of the aristocracy who received the most rewards and benefits from the king were, undoubtedly, the *fideles regis*, who played a crucial role in the political dynamics of the kingdom. By supporting the king and participating in the government, their role was so important that numerous council canons were destined to preserve the gifts received due to their merits and faithfulness.

The extensive decree of Recceswinth on the destiny of goods confiscated by his father describes, in different parts, the patrimony of the affected as farms, properties of “the living and the non-living, of immovable things as well as those capable of movement, by body or appearance, form or kind.”⁴⁴

⁴¹ Aaron Gurevich, “Représentations et attitudes à l’égard de la propriété pendant le Haut Moyen Âge,” *Annales. Histoire, sciences sociales* 27 (1972): 523–47. Many of the ideas mentioned in this article were expanded in Aaron Gurevich, *Las categorías de la cultura medieval*, (Madrid: Taurus, 1990). Le Jan corroborates that the kings in the High Middle Ages were gift givers within an asymmetrical exchange system; sometimes the distribution of prestigious assets (many times of a high symbolic value) among the members of high circles allowed them to maintain each of their social positions within the political order. Régine Le Jan, “Prendre, accumuler, détruire les richesses dans les sociétés du haut Moyen Âge,” in *Les élites et la richesse au Haut Moyen Âge*, ed. Jean-Pierre Devroey, Laurent Feller and Régine Le Jan (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010): 365–82. Devroey highlighted the importance of gifts in medieval societies and signaled the role that early medieval banquets played in the resolution of conflicts, questioning the agonistic function of outspending. Jean-Pierre Devroey, *Économie rurale et société dans l’Europe franque (Vie-Xe siècles), fondements matériels, échanges et lien social* (Paris: Belin, 2003), 175–93.

⁴² Le Jan, “Prendre, accumuler, détruire les richesses dans les sociétés du haut Moyen Âge,” 366.

⁴³ On the relationship and integration between central and local power, see Paulo Pachá, “To name and control. Space and power in the integration process of the Visigothic Kingdom of Toledo,” *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez* 49, no. 2 (2019): 109–31.

⁴⁴ *Concilios hispanos V*, ed. Martínez Díez and Rodríguez, Toledo VIII, 455: “viventium ac non viventium, immobilium quoque et moveri valentium corpore vel specie, forma vel genere.”

This information reveals the nature of the rewards received by the *fideles* of the king. In 638, defrauding them of their rewards was considered unfair, as they were considered *res* of human or divine nature. The future kings were also ordered not to deprive those who “through faithful obedience and sincere service have been open to the will or commands of the prince and with their whole intent have maintained watchfulness and care for his safety” of their offices without cause. These words show that offices and dignities were also rewards. In addition, it was decreed that heirs to the throne would treat each of the *fideles regis* in accordance with the *utilitas* of each of them and would foretell if they were necessary for the homeland. Finally, it was guaranteed that all the things obtained fairly would be put at the disposal of their will and could be donated to those they chose. This canon complemented the Fifth Council of Toledo promulgated three years earlier, whose words determined that the kings would respect the goods acquired by *fideles* of past kings, so that fidelity would be encouraged when noting that nobody was deprived of their gifts.⁴⁵

The regal attribution of distributing gifts can be observed in the sixth century in the actions of Reccared;⁴⁶ it is also reflected in the words of the Fourth Council of Toledo when referring to the mercy of Sisenand and later repeated in the Eighth Council of Toledo, as noted. In 653, the council assembly ordered that the goods appropriated by the predecessor of Recceswinth had to be recorded as patrimony of the crown and distributed among the chosen ones,⁴⁷ as those who were gathered had not received any benefits; they had not served the treasury nor had been offered as a convenient help to the palatine officers.

Not only did the kings own the attribution of giving goods to their *fideles* and promised to take care of them, but they also had the capacity to confiscate them. As regards regal confiscations, Céline Martin posits that confiscation of assets and the subsequent repression toward the enemy aristocracy which took place in the coregencies of Chindaswinth/Recceswinth and Egica/Witiza were behaviors considered normal events.⁴⁸ In the same line, Castellanos claims that the regal confiscating law had been a legal weapon to punish those who had expressed any sort of irreverence for the highest authority, which

⁴⁵ *Concilios hispanos V*, ed. Martínez Díez and Rodríguez, Toledo V, 284–85: “fidei obsequio et sincero servitio voluntatibus vel iussis patuerint principis totaque intentione salutis eius custodiam vigilantiam habuerint.”

⁴⁶ Santiago Castellanos, *Los godos y la cruz: y la unidad de Spania* (Madrid: Alianza, 2007), ch. 7.

⁴⁷ *Concilios hispanos V*, ed. Martínez Díez and Rodríguez, Toledo VIII, 455.

⁴⁸ Martin, “Des fins de règne incertaines,” 221.

was fairly common among the aristocrats.⁴⁹ Díaz Martínez also claims that the appropriation of assets from political enemies and its subsequent distribution among the *fideles* was a typical mechanism of the political dynamics of the Visigothic kingdom which caused tensions.⁵⁰

I understand confiscations as normal practices of the Visigothic kings, which fit into the logic of taking goods from their enemies to then offer them to their allies in order to gain political support. On many occasions, intra-aristocratic competition for goods and privileges provoked struggles for the power of the kingdom. A result of such gift exchange was that goods which entered the regal circle would circulate among the hands of royalty temporarily. In this sense, the patrimonial accumulation of the kings was obstructed. In fact, the aristocracy harshly criticized those kings who did not distribute riches.

Chintila presented the explicit petition for not stealing gifts granted to any faithful survivor of the king because if that occurred, nobody would desire to serve the kings promptly and faithfully.⁵¹ In turn, *Liber Iudiciorum* 5.3.4 prohibited confiscation of the goods of servants of past kings.⁵² However, it also ordered the appropriation of all the goods of the *fideles* acquired as gifts in case of an eventual act of perfidy or in case somebody did not fulfil what had been entrusted. Similarly, if after the death of the king it was discovered that a *fidelis* had conspired against his security, everything acquired from the liberality of the king would be confiscated and distributed among the loyal ones.⁵³ Furthermore, in *Liber Iudiciorum* 5.2.2, Chindaswinth rules that royal donations would be confiscated only because of infidelity.⁵⁴ In the Seventh Council of Toledo in 646, Chindaswinth promulgated that any member of the

⁴⁹ Santiago Castellanos, "The political nature of taxation in Visigothic Spain," *Early Medieval Europe* 12, no. 3 (2003): 227–28.

⁵⁰ Pablo Díaz Martínez, "Confiscations in the Visigothic Reign of Toledo. A Political Instrument," in *Expropriations et confiscations dans les royaumes barbares. Une approche régionale*, ed. Pierfrancesco Porena and Yann Rivière (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2012): 93–112. Following this line of thought, Pablo Poveda Arias, "Relectura de la supuesta crisis del fin del reino visigodo de Toledo: una aproximación al reinado de Egica a través de sus fuentes legales," *Anuario de historia del derecho español* 85 (2015): 13–46.

⁵¹ *Concilios hispanos V*, ed. Martínez Díez and Rodríguez, Toledo V, 284: "Ut regum fideles a successoribus regni a rerum iure non fraudulentur pro servitutis mercede."

⁵² Claudio Sánchez Albornoz, *El "Stipendium" hispano-godo y los orígenes del beneficio prefeudal* (Buenos Aires: Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas. Departamento de Historia de España, 1947).

⁵³ *Concilios hispanos V*, ed. Martínez Díez and Rodríguez, Toledo VI, 319–320.

⁵⁴ For an interpretation of this law, see Abilio Barbero and Marcelo Vigil, *La formación del feudalismo en la Península Ibérica*, 111.

Church who participated in an attempt against the king or against “the Gothic people and country”⁵⁵ would be removed from their position and could only recover one-twentieth of the goods suggested by the king.⁵⁶ Toward the end of the seventh century, Egica proclaimed that traitors would be excluded from the palatine service and would eternally serve the treasury, being subjected to paying tributes and separated from the goods that the king would distribute at his will.⁵⁷ On several occasions, these warnings were materialized: confiscation was a tradition in the Visigothic kingdom.

The first royal confiscation ever recorded was the one carried out by Liuvigild (r. 569-586). When Isidore of Seville wrote about Reccared, he pointed out that one of his qualities was the restitution of the confiscated riches associated with the treasury by his father to their legitimate owners.⁵⁸ In 633, the Council assembled in Toledo under the command of Sisenand punished Suinthila, his wife and children for their offenses, which, according to the report of the assembled, consisted of the appropriation of goods. The discharged king and his family were excommunicated, deprived of their dignities and confiscated goods, except for the part that Sisenand wanted to leave him out of mercy. Geila, Suinthila’s brother, was sentenced to lose his properties and suffered excommunication due to his infidelity.⁵⁹ Chindaswinth implemented the charges stipulated by his law, as is evident in Recceswinth’s rectifying the policy in the Eighth Council of Toledo.⁶⁰

In 683, Erwig forgave those implicated in the rebellion of Paulus, whom Wamba had sentenced as traitors. The assembly gathered in Toledo ordered the restitution of their right to testify, urged to forgive the trace of treason to their lineage and determined that they had to be assisted in the distribution of goods in the following way: they would be given their possessions back if they had not been delivered by donation or stipend to a third party.⁶¹

Erwig later used confiscations as a political weapon. In the Fifteenth Council of Toledo, in 688, Egica repudiated the attitude of Erwig of depriving a group of aristocrats who had been reduced to serfdom and subdued to violent judgement of their goods and honors.⁶² Egica also acted like all his

⁵⁵ *Concilios hispanos V*, ed. Martínez Díez and Rodríguez, Toledo VII, 341: “contra gentem Gotorum vel patriam.”

⁵⁶ *Concilios hispanos V*, ed. Martínez Díez and Rodríguez, Toledo VII, 341.

⁵⁷ *Concilios visigóticos*, ed. Vives, Toledo XVI, 487.

⁵⁸ Isidore of Seville, *Historiae Gothorum*, ed. Rodríguez Alonso, 264.

⁵⁹ *Concilios hispanos V*, ed. Martínez Díez and Rodríguez, Toledo IV, 257–58.

⁶⁰ *Concilios hispanos V*, ed. Martínez Díez and Rodríguez, Toledo VIII, 453–54.

⁶¹ *Concilios hispanos VI*, ed. Martínez Díez and Rodríguez, Toledo XIII, 246.

⁶² *Concilios hispanos VI*, ed. Martínez Díez and Rodríguez, Toledo XV, 295.

predecessors: the Mozarabic Chronicle of 754 recalls that Wittiza returned the lands that his father and predecessor to the throne had confiscated.⁶³ A concrete report of the use of confiscations as mechanisms to eliminate political enemies can be found in the Sixteenth Council of Toledo in 693. That year, Egica sentenced Sisbert, the bishop of the See of Toledo, to exile for attempting to assassinate him and his family, and he was subsequently stripped of all his honors and possessions.⁶⁴ Lastly, information about confiscations is found in the writing of Valerius of Bierzo, who narrates the destiny of a farm called Ebronato which had belonged to the illustrious Reccimirus. The property had been devastated and destroyed by the rage of the king, and its heirs were sentenced to exile.⁶⁵

The royal practice of confiscation did not grant the kings an exhaustive control of the riches which fell under their control. The aristocracy waited for the distribution of such goods as part of royal politics. In the Eighth Council of Toledo in 653, it was warned that the kings may not combine their private and official royal patrimony, per the request of aristocrats to keep these funds independent of each other.⁶⁶ Their objective was to establish that fiscal patrimony had to be used for the honor and glory of the kingdom, that is to say, to meet the needs of the treasury or help the palatines.⁶⁷ Likewise, in a speech with an incriminating tone, the aristocracy complained that the kings had appropriated the goods that they had received for occupying their position.⁶⁸ Grandees of the kingdom considered that the king had to rule for the benefit of all; and in turn questioned harshly the appropriation of goods⁶⁹ and acted accordingly, obstructing such practice.⁷⁰ On the other hand, they venerated, and hoped, that the kings were generous with their *fideles*.

In most of the Visigothic councils where the defense of the gifts given by the king to his *fideles regis* was treated, canons about the protection of the royal

⁶³ *Chronica muzarabica anni 754*, ed. López Pereira, 63.

⁶⁴ *Concilios visigóticos*, ed. Vives, Toledo XVI, 509.

⁶⁵ Valerius of Bierzo, *Ordo querimonie prefati discriminis*, in Valerio del Bierzo. *Su persona. Su obra*, ed. Manuel C. Díaz y Díaz (León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación "San Isidoro," 2006): 267.

⁶⁶ *Concilios hispanos V*, ed. Martínez Díez and Rodríguez, Toledo VIII, 462

⁶⁷ *Concilios hispanos V*, ed. Martínez Díez and Rodríguez, Toledo VIII, 451: "[...] illud grauius innectentes quod ea quae uidentur acquirere non regni deputant honori uel gloriae [...]"

⁶⁸ *Concilios hispanos V*, ed. Martínez Díez and Rodríguez, Toledo VIII, 451.

⁶⁹ *Concilios hispanos V*, ed. Martínez Díez and Rodríguez, Toledo VIII, 452.

⁷⁰ Pablo Díaz Martínez, "El reino visigodo en vísperas del 711: sistema político y administración," *Zona arqueológica* 15 (2011): 31–42, at 34.

figure and his family were stipulated as well and, interestingly, canons about the restriction in one way or another of the power of the king. The following table clearly illustrates the relationships among the referenced canons.

Council of Toledo	Participation of the <i>fideles regis</i>	Canons about gifts or confiscations	Canons limiting regal power	Canons of regal protection
IV	Opening Act	Closing Act	Closing Act	Canon LXXV
V	Opening Act	Canon VI	-	Canons III, IV and V
VI	-	Canon XIV	-	Canons XVI, XVII and XVIII
VIII	Signatures of the Minutes	Decree on confiscations	Canon X Decree on confiscations	-
XIII	Signatures of the Minutes	Canon I	Canon II	Canons IV and V
XV	Signatures of the Minutes	Regal Volume	Nullity of the oath that Egica swore to Erwig was not granted	-
XVI	Signatures of the Minutes	Canons IX and X	-	Canon VIII

This unifying thread among the canons about material goods, the protection of the kings and their families and the limitation of royal power reveals that the relationship between the monarchy and the aristocracy was not characterized by an absolute linearity nor by a complete subordination. The existing reciprocity between these dominant groups is evidenced in the fact that the delivery and defense of the corresponding gifts for sworn fidelity had as a counter-gift the promise of royal protection. This promise granted the kings and their family a privileged position and an immunity which restricted the acting capacity of magnates in front of a king proven to be inefficient. Therefore, the aristocracy counteracted the given power, limiting royal authority through canons. The dominant class experienced a fragile stability, as political hegemony was constantly disputed by the different aristocratic factions who used spaces of public socialization to permanently build their political power.

In addition, the confiscated goods of traitors were mainly the rewards delivered by the generosity of the king and they were not destined to increase the patrimony of the royal circle but to be distributed among those who had

remained faithful. Gifts were not transmuted into private or hereditary properties, as the favored ones had to persevere in the *fidelitas* or avoid failing in the mission entrusted to preserve them.

The practice of confiscating the properties of political enemies was carried out by almost every king, because while annulling competition, it also granted them acquiring properties that would later be distributed to guarantee loyalties. The delivery of gifts was the key element in the construction of political relationships. Kings had to deliver dowries to strengthen governmental and political ties. To do so, they expropriated the goods of their enemies and offered them to their allies, their *fideles regis*. By delivering confiscated properties, the kings got rid of obtained riches and destroyed part of them in an agonist act, in a ceremony densely crowded by the aristocracy, like the councils.⁷¹ Through the distribution of rewards (material goods, honors, and offices), the kings were legitimated before an aristocratic faction and strengthened their position, winning loyalties intended to be guaranteed by the oath of fidelity, regulated through legal means.

The kings committed to deliver to the aristocracy riches that would turn into benefits conditioned by their loyalty as well as to grant them a position within the central power, a position in the royal court, prestige, privileges, and prerogatives. In exchange, the aristocracy who had sworn fidelity to the kings owed them political support and military services. The oath of fidelity was not made of empty words; it emerged as a crucial element of the political fabric.

The delivery of gifts carried out by the kings was a defining element in their relationship with the aristocracy. However, this logic also entailed risks. The redistribution of goods fostered an intra-aristocratic competition which often created conflicts. The delivery of rewards to one aristocratic faction generated a negative reciprocity with another faction, and while the former amalgamated around royal power, the latter became potentially disruptive. At times, the king could control them, but not always. Constant attacks against royal figures were not always successful, but disputes for power were always latent, and hostilities among the different aristocratic factions were real: political conflict was an endemic feature of the Visigothic kingdom of Toledo.

⁷¹ This logic was not exclusively confined to the councils: trials held against perpetrators of crimes against the kings, or the enactment of laws provide additional examples of spaces where power negotiations occurred.

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"YOU HAVE THE TWO KINGS HERE:" COINAGE, THE ROYAL IMAGE, AND THE NATURE OF KINGSHIP IN THE VISIGOTHIC KINGDOM OF TOLEDO AND BEYOND

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I. *"You Have Two Kings Here:" The Story of Sopatrus and the Ceylonese King*

According to the sixth-century monk and chronicler Cosmas Indicopleustes, sometime earlier in that century a Greek man by the name of Sopatrus traveled to the island of Ceylon (modern Sri Lanka) where he met with one of the kings of the island; at that meeting, he was joined by Persian traders who had arrived on the island at the same time.¹ The Ceylonese king asked Sopatrus and the Persians which of their kings was more powerful, to which one of the Persian men immediately responded "[o]ur king is both more powerful and the greater and richer, and indeed is King of Kings [...]," using the traditional appellation of Persian royalty.² When the Ceylonese king asked Sopatrus to respond to this assertion, Sopatrus did so by saying "[...] if you

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¹ Stefan Faller, "The World According to Cosmas Indicopleustes: Concepts and Illustrations of an Alexandrian Merchant and Monk," *Transcultural Studies* 1 (2011): 193–232; Horst Schneider, *Kosmas Indikopleustes, Christliche Topographie: Textkritische Analysen. Übersetzung. Kommentar* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011); Maja Kominko, *The World of Kosmas: Illustrated Byzantine Codices of the Christian Topography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Wanda Wolska-Conus, "La 'Topographie Chrétienne' de Cosmas Indicopleustes: hypothèses sur quelque thèmes de son illustration," *Revue des études byzantines* 48 (1990): 155–91.

² Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Topography of Cosmas, an Egyptian Monk*, ed. and trans. John Watson McCrindle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 368.

wish to learn the truth you have the two kings here. Examine each and you will see which of them is the grander and the more powerful."³

Taken aback by this wild claim, the Ceylonese king asked Sopatrus to explain himself, which the Greek did by producing two coins, one a gold Byzantine *aureus* and the other a silver Sasanian *drachm*. After examining the coins, the Ceylonese king proclaimed that the Byzantine emperor must indeed be the superior of the two because of the quality of the *aureus*. Cosmas does not tell us whether the quality that swayed the Ceylonese ruler pertained to the images or to the weight and purity of the gold, but based on Sopatrus' emphasis on the imagery it seems as though the king considered both aspects before rendering his verdict.

This short story contains a wealth of information about how coinage traveled and how they were related to the concept of royal power during Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. The fact that this story was set on the island of Sri Lanka hints at the expansiveness of trade networks in the sixth century, and the presence of both Persian merchants and Greeks like Sopatrus at the Ceylonese court is just one instance of the political and cultural connections fostered by international trade. Additionally, by stating that "you have two kings here," Sopatrus (or, perhaps more accurately, Cosmas) is indicating that the image of the king found on a coin functioned as an index of the king himself, an itinerant version of the real corporeal king that could assert royal dominance over his rivals even from thousands of miles away through the imprint of his image. Cosmas's tale hints at one way in which royal visualities and ideologies traveled during the Early Middle Ages, through the use of numismatic portraiture and the shifting meanings those royal portraits were believed to carry with them.

Coins are perhaps the ultimate mobile art object, designed to be passed hand-to-hand across any range of distance. While their monetary value and their use as economic tools fluctuated throughout history, coins have always been essentially and purposefully nomadic in nature. Visigothic coins, with their various versions of numismatic portraiture, were no exception, although the evidence for their movement outside of the Iberian Peninsula is spotty and incomplete.⁴ Given the almost total lack of contemporary images of any

³ Cos. Indic., *Topography*, 369; Peter Brown, "'Charismatic' Goods," in *Empires and Exchanges in Eurasian Late Antiquity: Rome, China, Iran, and the Steppe, ca. 250-750*, ed. Nicola di Cosmo and Michael Maas (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018), 105–06.

⁴ There are multiple proposed causes for this lacuna in the numismatic map of the early medieval world, including the restriction of foreign coinage within particular kingdoms (including the Kingdom of Toledo) and the melting and reminting of foreign coinage into domestic issues. See Andrew Kurt, *Money, the State and Economy in the Visigothic Kingdom*:

Visigothic king, the royal portraits on Visigothic coins offer a tantalizing, if physically small, window into the ways in which Visigothic kingship was visually conceived. This chapter discusses these portraits and their connection to Visigothic rulership practices to build a more holistic view of Visigothic kingship and its relationship to the wider world.⁵

II. Making Meaning Through Royal Numismatic Portraiture in the Visigothic Kingdom of Toledo and Beyond

As illustrated by the story of Sopatrus and the Ceylonese king, during Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, numismatic portraits were an important way for rulers to circulate their own self-fashioned image of authority and connect that authority to economic circulation. As Andrew Kurt contends, with regard to Visigothic coins, royally produced coinage bearing the image of the sovereign created “tangible proof of the reach of a central authority capable of extracting productive resources in [the] kingdom.”⁶ Visigothic coins, the majority of which were gold *tremissis*, were physical evidence of the authority of any given Visigothic king whose name and portrait appeared on the coin matrix. As Ruth Pliego notes, Visigothic coins function as a “concise symbolic manifestation of the Visigothic monarchy.”⁷ They proved that the king was wealthy, organized, and powerful enough to mine precious metals, move those materials to a central location, and use skilled labor to create coinage through the process of minting, all of which required large resources and a well-maintained infrastructure. These coins were, in essence, Visigothic kingship made manifest in metal.

Visigothic coinage is a particularly interesting instance of this nexus of practical and symbolic meaning because of the almost complete lack of any other contemporary images of Visigothic kings. Aside from one ring from the late fifth century which likely depicts the early Visigothic king Alaric II (r. 484–507), there are to my knowledge no extant images of the body or face of any Visigothic king outside of numismatic portraiture from the sixth through

From Settlement in Aquitaine through the First Decade of the Muslim Conquest of Spain (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020), 84–85.

⁵ For more on the connection between Visigothic coinage and conceptions of royal power, see Ruth Pliego, “*Figura et potentia*: Coinage and Power in the Visigothic Kingdom,” in *The Visigothic Kingdom: The Negotiation of Power in Post-Roman Iberia*, ed. Sabine Panzram and Paulo Pacha (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020), 235–55.

⁶ Andrew Kurt, “Visigothic Currency in its Making and Movement: A Varying State of Circumstances,” *Visigothic Symposia* 3 (2018–19): 174.

⁷ Pliego, “*Figura et Potentia*,” 236.

early eighth centuries.⁸ The earliest full-body portrait of a Visigothic sovereign outside of coinage comes from the *Codex Vigilanus*, made in the ninth or tenth century in northern Spain, well after the early eighth-century collapse of the Kingdom of Toledo.⁹ This manuscript, which contains texts from the Councils of Toledo and the *Liber Iudiciorum* among others, is illuminated with a multitude of images, one of which includes portraits of the Visigothic kings Chindaswinth (r. 642-653), Recceswinth (r. 649/653-672), and Egica (r. 687-701/703).

These royal portraits, made at least a century after the death of the last Visigothic king, are quite formulaic in their rendering of the royal bodies. This is particularly noticeable in the heads of the figures, which are quite similar to royal numismatic portraits from the Visigothic era and may have been based on those formerly ubiquitous images of Visigothic kings. This hypothesis becomes even more likely when one considers the dearth of other contemporary images of Visigothic kings outside of coinage. Because of the essentially aniconic nature of Visigothic kingship, numismatic portraits give us a rare, if murky, vision of how Visigothic kings saw themselves and, more importantly, how they wished to be seen by people within and without their domain. Indeed, as Rory Naismith astutely notes, "coins [...] reflect acceptance of the authority behind them, emblemized by the more or less carefully engraved name, image, or symbol of the ruler."¹⁰

As Naismith states, there is a direct connection between coins, numismatic portraiture, and the actual and perceived power of Visigothic sovereigns. Because Visigothic kings were (mostly) elected rather than being born into the role, having a physical manifestation of authority could mean the difference between life and death for a Visigothic sovereign.¹¹ The Visigoths were famously fond of removing kings from power through violence, so much so

⁸ For a thorough exploration of this ring's attribution, see Genevra Kornbluth, "The Seal of Alaric, *rex Gothorum*," *Early Medieval Europe* 16, no. 3 (2008), 299–332.

⁹ For more information on this manuscript, see Jacques Guilman, "Interlace Decoration and the Influence of the North on Mozarabic Illumination," *The Art Bulletin* 42, no. 3 (1960): 211–18.

¹⁰ Rory Naismith, *Making Money in the Early Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023), 12.

¹¹ The traditional view of the Visigothic kingdom as a purely elective monarchy has been challenged in recent years, most successfully by Luis A. García Moreno in his article "Prosopography, Nomenclature, and Royal Succession in the Visigothic Kingdom of Toledo," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 1, no. 1 (2008): 142–56.

that regicide came to be known as the *morbus Gothicus* or “Gothic disease”.¹² It was, therefore, incumbent upon any newly elected Visigothic king to produce proof of his power and authority, and minting coinage was one important vector for this process of legitimation. In the pre-regal period, roughly 450-560s CE, this was accomplished through the use of Byzantine imagery, particularly numismatic portraits of the Byzantine Emperor adapted or copied from contemporary Byzantine coinage.¹³ The linking of Visigothic sovereignty with the relative stability of Byzantine rulership and Byzantine coinage was a tangible, quantifiable, and easily visible manifestation of legitimacy for Visigothic kings before Liuvigild (r. 569-586).¹⁴

From the 490s to the 570s, Visigothic numismatic portraits on *tremissis* specifically were presented in profile like contemporary Byzantine coins. These pre-regal coins were issued in purposeful imitation of Byzantine coins – although with gradual stylistic departures – and often featured the name of the contemporary Byzantine emperor, hence the appellation “pseudo-imperial coinage” sometimes found in scholarship.¹⁵ Simultaneously, Byzantine imperial issues were being minted on the Iberian Peninsula from the southern colony of *Spania*, therefore providing the Visigoths with readily available Byzantine comparanda. Another common aspect of Visigothic pre-regal *tremissis* was the use of a winged victory figure holding a crown on the reverse, an image borrowed from both contemporary Byzantine and older late-Roman imperial coinage.¹⁶

Many aspects of kingship changed with the reign of Liuvigild, who ushered in a period of alteration and development in many areas of Visigothic elite culture and practices, not the least of which was a change in numismatic portraiture. Beginning in the 570s, the Byzantine imperial name and portrait gradually faded from use on Visigothic coinage. The process of adaptation from pseudo-imperial to regal coinage took several years, and there were

¹² John M Wallace-Hadrill, trans., *The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar with its Continuations* 82 (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1960), 70: “Cumque omnem regnum Spaniae suae dicione firmasset, cognatus morbum Gotorum quem de regibus degradandum habebant [...]”

¹³ The term “pre-regal” here refers specifically to coinage, and is used to designate Visigothic coinage minted perhaps between c. 420-c. 570 before the changes that occurred during the reign of Liuvigild (discussed below).

¹⁴ Pliego, “*Figura et Potentia*,” 237.

¹⁵ Ruth Pliego Vázquez, *La Moneda Visigoda*, vol. 1: *Historia Monetaria del Reino Visigodo de Toledo* (c. 569-711) (Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 2009), 75–79.

¹⁶ Philip Grierson and Mark Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage*, Vol. 1: *The Early Middle Ages (5th-10th Centuries)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 42–43.

coins minted during Liuvigild's reign with portraits and legends of Justin II, but by the mid-580s Visigothic issues feature facing busts that merely resemble older Byzantine portraits. However, as explained below, these post-580 issues may have been conceived as portraits of Liuvigild himself, surrounded by the name of the Visigothic sovereign in place of the emperor's name.¹⁷

Liuvigild's coins were also the first to name their mint location on the coin matrix, thus locating the production of these coins within the geographic boundaries of Liuvigild's dominion.¹⁸ Simultaneously, Liuvigild forbade the use of any money aside from his royally sanctioned coinage; as such an edict would have effectively restricted the circulation of foreign coinage within kingdom, this may partially explain the relative lack of non-Visigothic coinage in the archaeological record within the Iberian Peninsula.¹⁹ This lacuna may also be partially explained by the supposition, supported by evidence according to Xaxier Barral i Altet, that foreign coins were sometimes melted down for their metal content and remade as Visigothic issues at minting sites across the kingdom.²⁰

This lack of non-Visigothic coinage does not, however, necessarily indicate that inter-kingdom trade and numismatic exchange was not occurring during the sixth through eighth centuries. There are instances of Visigothic coins traveling hundreds of miles from one side of the peninsula to the other, so we

¹⁷ It must be noted that Liuvigild's were possibly not the first coins to feature the name of a Visigothic sovereign. It is possible that the first Visigothic king to include his name on royal issues was his eldest son Hermenegild, who issued a small number of coins during his rebellion. Andrew Kurt has convincingly argued that Liuvigild was the first Visigothic sovereign to incorporate his name on coin matrices, but this is still a debated conclusion. See Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy*, 81-108. Additionally, the reasons for Liuvigild's changes to numismatic portraiture and the mint network are still debated, with the most likely answers being either a) they were an attempt to strengthen the position of the Visigothic king within and without the Peninsula or b) they began in response to his son Hermenegild's rebellion from 580-584. See Pliego Vázquez, *La Moneda Visigoda*, vol. 1, 81-95, particularly 91 fig. 19 for a tremissis featuring the names of both Liuvigild and Justin II; for more on contemporary developments in scholarship around Liuvigild's coinage, see Pliego, "Visigothic Currency: Recent Developments and Data for Its Study," in *Framing Power in Visigothic Society: Discourses, Devices, and Artefacts*, ed. Eleanora Dell'Elicine and Celine Martin, 183-87 (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020).

¹⁸ Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy*, 84-85.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 85.

²⁰ Xavier Barral i Altet, *La circulation des monnaies suèves et visigotiques. Contribution à l'histoire économique du royaume visigothique* (Munich: Artemis Verlag, 1976), 64-66.

can be certain that these coins were used either in intra-kingdom trade or other types of exchange, such as payment for military service or taxes.²¹ It was also not just coins that traveled: based on stylistic comparisons, it is asserted that Visigothic die cutters were itinerant craftsmen, often traveling huge distances across the Peninsula to work at mints from Galicia to Toledo to Seville.²² Additionally, while Visigothic coins found outside of Iberia are rare, several early Visigothic coins have been found in southern England and central France alongside coins from Constantinople, Egypt, Italy, and the Levant, indicating that Visigothic money, and quite possibly Visigothic trade, was occasionally taken beyond the borders of the kingdom.²³

In contrast to the rarity of Visigothic coins, coinage from other contemporary kingdoms to which the Visigoths were deeply politically and economically linked have been found across a wide geographic area, indicating a robust system of numismatic circulation within the early medieval Mediterranean. For example, Ostrogothic coins from the reigns of Theodoric (r. 471-526), Theodahad (r. 534-536), Witigis (r. 536-540) and Totila (r. 541-552 CE) have been found on the Peloponnesus, generally along the coast or near rivers indicating that these deposits were the result of maritime trade between the Ostrogoths and their Greek neighbors to the east.²⁴ Ostrogothic coins from the sixth century have also been discovered in the southeastern Spanish city of Valencia, indicating trade or at the very least by-proxy economic links between the Visigoths and their Gothic cousins across the Tyrrhenian Sea.²⁵

Similarly, several Byzantine coins have been found from the Visigothic period in Spain, most of which are concentrated along the southern and eastern coasts of the peninsula and within the boundaries of the royal city of

²¹ Kurt, "Visigothic Currency," 176; Felix Retamero, "As Coins Go Home: Towns, Merchants, Bishops and Kings in Visigothic Hispania," in *The Visigoths from the Migration Period to the Seventh Century: An Ethnographic Perspective*, ed. Peter Heather (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1999), 293.

²² See Andrew Kurt, "Clues from Coins: Stylistic Comparisons of Visigothic Die Engraving as Evidence for Mint Administration" in this volume for more on the itinerant nature of Visigothic die cutters and their impact of Visigothic issues and their iconography. See also the contribution in this volume by Jane Sancinito.

²³ Barral i Altet, *La circulation des monnaies*, 64-66; Michael McCormick, *Origin of the Early Medieval Economy: Communications and Commerce 300-900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 645.

²⁴ C. Morrisson, V. Popović, V. Ivanišević, *Les Trésors monétaires byzantins des Balkans et d'Asie Mineure (491-713)* (Paris: Lethielleux Editions, 2006).

²⁵ Framing the Late Antique and Early Medieval Economy (Princeton University), circulation map, <http://cs1a100w.princeton.edu:82/>.

Reccopolis, where they appear alongside Merovingian coins.²⁶ This is likely due to the presence of a Byzantine colony of *Spania* along the southern Iberian coast from 552 to 624, and Andrew Kurt has suggested that the increase in mint activity in southern Iberia during the early seventh century was related to the military conflict between the Visigoths and the Byzantines.²⁷

Because the Byzantine Empire was one of the major economic powerhouses of this period, it is not overly surprising to find Byzantine currency in the southern Mediterranean. More surprising, however, are the multiple Sasanian coins which have been discovered during the course of archaeological excavations in the U.K. and Germany.²⁸ The presence of these Persian coins in England and the European subcontinent suggests that the web of trade routes connecting Europe to Western Asia was strong and flexible enough to move small objects like coins across vast distances. This is further bolstered by the distribution of Byzantine numismatic finds across Europe, Africa, and Asia, with Byzantine coins being found as far afield as Tanzania, Sri Lanka, China, and northern Scandinavia.²⁹ As our friend Sopatrus noted, the Byzantine emperor and his coinage traveled far and wide, reaching the farthest corners of the known world.

These numismatic finds not only indicate that monetary or in-kind trade was occurring across large geographic and cultural spheres during Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, but also that, across the interconnected world of the early medieval Mediterranean, peoples well beyond the borders of the court or region in which a given coin was minted were exposed to its

²⁶ David M. Metcalf, "Visigothic Monetary History: The Facts, What Facts?," in *The Visigoths: Studies in Culture and Society*, ed. Alberto Ferreiro (Boston and Leiden: Brill, 1999), 203; Pliego Vázquez, *La Moneda Visigoda*, vol. 1, 83.

²⁷ Kurt, *Visigothic Currency*, 171–72; on the archaeology of this region as it relates to Visigothic-Byzantine exchange, see Jamie Wood, "Agents and Mechanics of Connectivity: The Mediterranean World and the Cities of the Guadiana Valley in the Sixth Century," in *Rome and Byzantium in the Visigothic Kingdom: Beyond Imitatio Imperii*, ed. Damián Fernández, Molly Lester, and Jamie Wood (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2023), 317–44.

²⁸ Caitlin R. Green, "Sasanian finds in early medieval Britain and beyond: another global distribution from Late Antiquity?" accessed January 25th, 2024 from <https://www.caitlin-green.org/2017/07/sasanian-finds-in-early-medieval-britain.html>; Wayne Homren, "Arabic Coins of the Middle Ages Found in Germany," *The E-sylum* 13.37 (September 2010), accessed February 15th, 2024 from https://www.coinbooks.org/esylum_v13n37a18.html.

²⁹ Caitlin Green, "A very long way from home: early Byzantine finds at the far ends of the world," accessed January 25th, 2024 from <https://www.caitlingreen.org/2017/03/a-very-long-way-from-home.html>.

royal or imperial imagery. While the nuance of these royal images may not have been legible outside of their original context (and almost certainly their textual legends were not), the fact that the image of a king could travel so far meant that royal visual propaganda could also travel, bringing many different groups of people into contact with that particular expression of authority. Like the Persian King of Kings and Byzantine emperor in the story of Sopatrus, the numismatic portraits of these sovereigns functioned as a kind of physical manifestation of rulership, linking the image of the king to his ability to fiscally provide for his kingdom and the material substance of the coin itself. While Visigothic coins are less represented in this global archaeological record, it is reasonable to assume that coins bearing the images of Visigothic kings were similarly imbricated within this system of socio-economic circulation.

As Erika Manders notes in her book on Roman imperial coinage in the third century, “Coins were [...] originally minted and brought into circulation because of economic needs. Yet, this need not mean that coins’ ideological importance should be undervalued; the repeated introduction of new types gives evidence of coins’ significance in the distribution of messages.”³⁰ Change and adaptation in coinage often reflected changes in the nature and purpose of royal or imperial propaganda, and was as true for the Visigothic kings of the sixth and seventh centuries as it was for third-century Roman emperors. In the following section, I explore the kinds of images Visigothic kings elected to use for their numismatic portraits, and how the changes across time seen in numismatic portraiture reflect the changing nature of Visigothic kingship.

III. Invisible Kings: Visigothic Coins and Visigothic Rulership

Visigothic rulers, particularly during and after the reign of Liuvigild, created their own visual language of power through a myriad of legal, political, and material means, one of which was the production of coins and the creation and adaptation of numismatic portraiture. This visibility of authority was developed over the course of two centuries into a set of images, ideas, and symbols that would have been recognizable to people both within and beyond the borders of the Kingdom of Toledo.

³⁰ Erika Manders, *Coining Images of Power: Patterns in the Representation of Roman Emperors on Imperial Coinage, A.D. 193-284* (Boston and Leiden: Brill, 2012), 29; see also Sven Betjes, *The Mind of the Mint: Continuity and Change in Roman Imperial Coin Design from Augustus to Zeno (31 BCE – 491 CE)* (Enschede: Ipskamp Printing, 2022).

Regal coinage, as the post-570 issues are known, developed alongside other novel artistic expressions of royal authority, many of which were adapted versions of similar expressions from elsewhere in the greater Mediterranean. The use of imperial purple clothing in royal ceremonies, the adoption of a royal crown and scepter, and the creation *ex novo* of the royal city of Reccopolis, all of which began during the reign of Liuvigild, established a set of visual and architectural markers of power within the Visigothic sphere that echoed, but did not exactly copy, Byzantine and Ostrogothic visualities of royal or imperial power.³¹ While physically smaller and visually less striking than an entire city or the famous hanging crowns from Guarrazar, royal numismatic portraits were integral participants in the creation of this specifically Visigothic royal identity.³²

It is most instructive to look at three examples of Visigothic numismatic portraiture from three separate kings to trace the development and instantiation of this identity within the context of coinage. The first example, a *tremissis* from the latter half of the reign of Liuvigild (fig. 1), contains elements on obverse that remained on regal Visigothic coins after a period of transition in the late sixth century: a roughly rendered portrait of a sovereign, in this case in profile, wearing what appears to be a ceremonial cloak (possibly a *paludamentum*, the purple-dyed imperial ceremonial garb of the Byzantine emperor that was adopted by Liuvigild) that features an even-armed cross and two shoulder clasps. The ruler's long hair is bound behind his head by two vertical bands, likely some version of a royal crown or headband. All these elements are rooted in or copied from late Roman and contemporary Byzantine numismatic iconography. The only major alteration to this common formula made by the Visigoths before the early 580s is the use of the royal title "rex" in the coin legend, in place of the titles "princeps," "imperator," or "basileus" found on Byzantine coins. The reverse names the mint at which the coin was struck, in this case the royal city of Toledo, along with a cross on top

³¹ For more on the adoption of imperial regalia in the Visigothic kingdom see Michael McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 302–14. For more on Reccopolis, see Joachim Henning, Michael McCormick, Lauro Olmo Enciso, Knut Rassmann, and Firkit Eyub, "Reccopolis Revealed: the first geomagnetic mapping of the early medieval Visigothic royal town," *Antiquity* 93 (2019): 735–51.

³² For more on the Treasure of Guarrazar, see Alicia Perea, ed. *El tesoro visigodo de Guarrazar* (Madrid: Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, 2001) and Liz Wells, "Regii Honoris Signum: Visigothic Spain and the Transcultural Visuality of Power in the Global Late Antique and Early Medieval World" (PhD diss., University of California, Irvine, 2024), 115–92.

of a set of steps or stairs, which Pliego refers to by the traditional name of the “cruz sobre gradas” (cross on steps) type.³³

While this image is small, simple, and highly stylized, it can still provide important information about how Liuvigild seems to have envisioned himself as a ruler. He seems to have been taking over the previous, adaptive version of the emperor’s image that adorned the Visigothic tremissis for many decades. He is dressed in the standard contemporary accoutrements of rulership, the cloak and crown, denoting his sovereignty and status as king in a manner that would be recognizable to anyone within the pan-Mediterranean milieu. His name is emblazoned directly next to his portrait alongside his royal title, announcing his authority both visually and linguistically to any semi-literate observer. In doing so, he is not only directly associating himself with the commonly accepted visual markers of rulership to a potentially wide and multi-cultural audience; he is also connecting a Visigothic vision of kingship, couched within the Byzantine numismatic milieu, to the coin’s monetary value for the first time in the kingdom’s history. As Rory Naimsmith notes, “[c]oined money reified the means of exchange and cast the participants into a scheme of values closely and clearly dependent on authority, power, and social relations: they needed to be able to believe that the next person to whom they offered the coins would accept them at the same value.”³⁴

This belief now partially rested on the image of the king each coin carried, which verified the coin’s value and authenticity, thus linking the image of the king to the coin’s use as an economic tool. In this way, Liuvigild’s numismatic portraits functioned as both a visual expression of his sovereignty and a statement of authority, wherein the king takes responsibility for the monetary value of the coin through the application of his image during the minting process. Liuvigild took control of the minting process in a firmer and more holistic manner than previous Visigothic kings, and this more direct royal involvement in the creation of coinage reflects an overall increase in Visigothic royal power during Liuvigild’s reign.³⁵

Liuvigild’s youngest son, Reccared (r. 586-601), continued many of his father’s royal projects, including the further development of numismatic portraiture. As seen on a tremissis from Toledo (fig. 2), the portraits on both sides of the coin on Reccared’s issues are the facing bust or front bust type

³³ Pliego Vázquez, *La Moneda Visigoda*, vol. 2, 67 fig. 42 a.1

³⁴ Naimsmith, *Making Money*, 12. Pliego takes the emissions of this stage as royal portraits, while others assume these are immobilized portraits of the Byzantine emperor. See Pliego Vázquez, *La Moneda Visigoda*, vol. 1 90-91, 156.

³⁵ See Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy*, 81–105.

rather than a profile bust, which can be more reliably identified as portraits of the Visigothic ruler, although it shares many iconographic elements with both Liuvigild's late issues and earlier Byzantine coinage.³⁶ This dual facing bust type was introduced at the end of Liuvigild's reign in 584, and it would become standard for Visigothic coinage for the next century starting in 586 with the accession of Reccared.³⁷ The majority of extant issues from his father Liuvigild's reign feature profile busts in combination with either a Winged Victory or "cruz sobre gradas" on the reverse. However, a significant minority of Liuvigild's coins from the last two to three years of his reign use a dual facing bust, which has been interpreted as representing the reigning king and his heir apparent, Reccared, although this interpretation is not universally agreed upon.³⁸ The use of the dual facing bust type was unique to Visigothic issues: it is not seen in any other contemporary "national" coinage, thus further instantiating a specifically Visigothic vision of royal authority.

The facing bust portraits of Reccared are smaller than their profile bust counterparts from earlier sovereigns, and are completely encircled by the coin legend, which reduces their size and therefore their level of detail. In the example cited above of the common facing bust sub-type, Reccared's image is highly stylized, with a single curved ribbed line indicating the king's hair and a triangular cross-hatched vestment in place of the comparatively elaborate cloaks seen in his father's issues. The king's name and royal title are still present, as is the name of the mint from which the coin was issued.

The reduction in the details of the portrait could be due to a number of factors, from the difference in minting location to a diminution in surface size, although not overall coin weight. Because of their nature as economic tools, coins cannot tell us everything about a polity, nor should they be read as detailed treatises on any kingdom's essential nature. However, changes over

³⁶ Christian Cuello, "Visigothic Coins in the Gale of the Australian Center for Ancient Numismatic Studies," *Journal of the Numismatic Association of Australia* 28 (2017), 28; George C. Miles, *The Coinage of The Visigoths of Spain Leovigild to Achila II* (New York: The American Numismatic Society, 1952), 46–48.

³⁷ Pliego Vázquez, *La Moneda Visigoda*, vol. 1, 156.

³⁸ See Pliego Vázquez, *La Moneda Visigoda*, vol. 1, 156–66 for an in-depth discussion of this period of transition. See also *ibid.*, *La Moneda Visigoda*, vol. 2, 55–76 for a catalog of coins issued during Liuvigild's reign. Miles suggests that the dual facing bust coins from Liuvigild's reign may be intended to represent Liuvigild and Reccared (as heir apparent), but qualifies this suggestion by stating that the continued use of dual facing bust coins in later Visigothic history was almost certainly meant to represent the current ruler on both sides due to the discomfort around hereditary rulership in the later Visigothic period. See Miles, *The Coinage of the Visigoths*, 46.

time in numismatic imagery were not accidents, and often coincided with changes in rulership practices or circumstances. At the risk of proverbially making a numismatic mountain out of a mole hill, it is interesting to note that after the conclusion of Liuvigild's vicissitudinous and often chaotic reign, numismatic portraits are reduced in size and lack a certain amount of refinement and detail in their execution. It is plausible that this change reflected an alteration in Reccared's situation as ruler, as the work of consolidating power done by his father and his own conversion to Catholicism in 587 put an end to many of the conflicts that had afflicted the kingdom in previous decades.³⁹ Reccared therefore may not have needed to visually instantiate his royal image through highly detailed depictions of traditional markers of power like the king's cloak or headgear to the same extent his father did, although a few of Reccared's issues feature a more elaborate garment with a *fibula* or shoulder clasp similar to numismatic portraits of his father and contemporary Byzantine imperial coinage.⁴⁰

Several decades later, in the middle of the seventh century, another Visigothic king may have looked to Liuvigild's coinage as inspiration for his own. Recceswinth ruled for four years alongside his father Chindaswinth until his father's death in 653, after which he ruled alone until his death in 672 CE. During Recceswinth's sole reign, the number of minting sites on the peninsula was reduced, with smaller mints closing in favor of the larger, more centralized mints of Toledo, Caesaraugusta (Zaragoza), Córdoba, Emerita (Mérida), and Ispali (Seville).⁴¹ Concomitantly, the weight and fineness of gold *tremissis* increased during Recceswinth's sole reign, leading to the "highest [average coin weight] during the entire period of Visigothic regal coinage."⁴² These coins, with their high gold content backed by an enlarged royal treasury, also featured a return to an older portrait type, the profile bust,

³⁹ This period in Visigothic history has been much discussed and hotly debated for decades. For more information on Hermenegild's rebellion and Reccared's conversion, see Roger Collins, *Visigothic Spain 409-711* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 56-61; for an alternate view of this turning point in Visigothic history see Isabel Velázquez and Gisela Ripoll, "Recopolis: *Vrbs Relicta*? An Historico-Archaeological Debate," in *Vrbes Extinctae: Archaeologies of Abandoned Classical Towns*, ed. Neil Christie and Andrea Augenti (London: Routledge, 2012), 341-50.

⁴⁰ Pliego Vázquez notes that, during this period, the garment seen on Visigothic numismatic portraiture is very similar, and likely related to, the Byzantine imperial garb featured on contemporary coins and other imperial images. See Pliego Vázquez, *La Moneda Visigoda*, vol. 1, 158; See Pliego Vázquez, *La Moneda Visigoda*, vol. 2, 91 fig. 93 d.1 and 95 fig. 100 a.1 for examples of Reccared's issues with more elaborate clothing.

⁴¹ Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy*, 154.

⁴² *Ibid.* 163.

which had not been widely used since the reign of Liuvigild in the previous century.⁴³ Recceswinth did issue a very small number of facing-bust coins, but seems to have strongly preferred the profile-bust type, along with reinstituting the "cruz sobre gradas" imagery on the reverse of his profile-bust coins, which had similarly fallen out of favor after 586 (fig. 3).⁴⁴ Kurt proposes that these changes were made as a purposeful reference to Liuvigild as a reflection of Chindaswinth and Recceswinth's "desire to recapture past greatness after a period of decline."⁴⁵

This retrograde design, which ceased to be used after Recceswinth's death in 672, aligns with other aspects of Recceswinth's reign. The most famous extant object from Recceswinth's time as king of the Visigoths, the large hanging crown that bears his name from Guarrazar, is another instance of the king's use of the past to propagate his authority in the present. Not only were hanging crowns used by at least one previous Visigothic king, Suinthila (r. 621-631), they were also a centuries-old marker of sovereignty and spiritual power by the mid-seventh century.⁴⁶ Constantine the Great donated "a golden crown before/in front of the body [of St. Peter], which is a hanging lamp"⁴⁷ to the basilica of St. Peter's in the early fourth century, where it hung for at least 200 years, as evidenced by the image of the interior of St. Peter's on the early sixth-century Pula Casket which shows the *ciborium* of the basilica with a suspended circlet at its apex.⁴⁸ Later in the sixth century, images of hanging

⁴³ Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy*, 106.

⁴⁴ Pliego Vázquez, *La Moneda Visigoda*, vol. 1, 167–68; see idem, *La Moneda Visigoda*, vol. 2, 350 fig. 578.2 and 354 figs. 583 a.1, 583 b.8, and 584.1 for some of the few examples of facing bust coins from Recceswinth's reign.

⁴⁵ Kurt, *Minting, State, and Economy*, 106. This proposition is backed by Pliego Vázquez, who labels this group as "las tipologías neo-leovigildianas." See Pliego Vázquez, *La Moneda Visigoda*, vol. 1, 167.

⁴⁶ A hanging crown similar to Recceswinth's bearing an inscription that included Suinthila's name was found alongside Recceswinth's crown in the Guarrazar hoard. Unfortunately, Suinthila's crown and accompanying pendant cross were stolen from the Palacio Real in Madrid in 1921 and never recovered. Photographic records of Suinthila's crown have facilitated the creation of several copies. For more on Suinthila's crown and its theft see Christoph Eger, "Krone und Kreuz König Svintilas. Westgotische Hofkunst und 'Plate-inlaying' im 6. und 7. Jahrhundert," *Madridrer Mitteilungen* 45 (2004): 449–506.

⁴⁷ "coronam auream ante corpus, qui est farus cantharus," *Liber Pontificalis* XXXIV, 17. Latin text from The Latin Library online, English translation by author. See also Laskarina Bouras and Maria G. Parani, *Lighting in Early Byzantium* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press and Dumbarton Oaks, 2008), 13.

⁴⁸ For more on the history and interpretation of the Pula Casket (also known as the Pola or Samagher Casket), see Jaś Elsner, "Closure and Penetration: Reflections on the Pola Casket," *Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia* 12, no. 26 (2013): 183–227.

crowns were used to mark sacred space and holy people in the Ostrogothic-era mosaics of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo and the Byzantine-era mosaics of Sant'Apollinare in Classe in Ravenna.⁴⁹ Recceswinth's hanging crown is, therefore, part of a long historical lineage, of which the king must have been at least partially aware. Thus, his use of a historical form of numismatic portraiture may have been a part of Recceswinth's attempts to adopt and adapt older imageries and transcultural symbols to suit his contemporary needs.⁵⁰

These three kings, Liuvigild, Reccared, and Recceswinth, all made alterations to their royal numismatic portraits according to the circumstances of their respective reigns. This type of change is not uncommon, even today, when power shifts from one set of hands to another. What is unusual about Visigothic numismatic portraits is their status as the surviving singular bearers of Visigothic royal faces. As noted above, no contemporary images of a Visigothic king are known outside of coinage, and therefore these portraits must be considered as both practical identifiers of a coin's authenticity and important instances of the physical being of the king made manifest through imagery. While this lack of royal images from the Visigothic period may partially be the result of the destructive nature of the passage of time, it does seem that Visigothic kings were much less interested in creating monumental, permanent depictions of themselves than they were in creating aniconic representations of their sovereignty such as Recceswinth's hanging crown. The only exception to this aniconicity is numismatic portraiture, which perforce included portraits based on centuries of Roman and early Byzantine tradition. Understanding these portraits, therefore, is essential to fully

⁴⁹ For more on the images of hanging crowns in Ravenna and their relationship to the Visigothic examples, see Wells, *Regii Honoris Signum*, 176–78.

⁵⁰ Despite decades of scholarly assertions to the contrary, there is very little evidence of the use of the hanging crown within the early Byzantine Empire. While the Byzantines did use circular lighting devices that were visually similar to the Guarrazar crowns, no evidence of their use as markers of sacred space or people exists within the Byzantine context before the twelfth century. There are a few examples of hanging crowns depicted in consular diptychs from the sixth century, which tell us that the Byzantines were aware of this object type, but hanging crowns do not appear in any text related to early Byzantine court ceremonies and there is no material or textual evidence that suggests the hanging crown originated in Byzantium. For more on Byzantine consular diptychs, see Alan Cameron, "The Origin, Context, and Function of Consular Diptychs," *Journal of Roman Studies* 103 (2013): 174–207. For more on the nature of the hanging crown as a typological object and its relationship (or lack thereof) to the early Byzantine Empire, see Wells, *Regii Honoris Signum*, 181–86.

understanding Visigothic kingship, its material expressions, and how ideology and imagery related to rulership functioned across time and space.

IV. Conclusion

If we return to the beginning, to Sopatrus and the Ceylonese king, we are left wondering: if a royal or imperial image on a coin served as an index for the ruler himself, how effective was the numismatic manifestation of Visigothic kingship, with all its complexities and changes? If indeed the king was present wherever there was a coin that bore his likeness and (from the mid-570s) his name, how did Visigothic sovereigns present themselves to their subjects and to the world through their numismatic portraits? Because they are the only record of this royal self-representation, what can Visigothic coins tell us about the nature of Visigothic kingship and the connections between the Visigoths and the broader Mediterranean world?

Coins are, ultimately, practical objects, made to facilitate commerce, the collection of taxes, and the performance of important state fiscal duties like military payments. They are also, however, important and ubiquitous carriers of meaning beyond their economic value. As Henry Maguire notes, coins "pass[ed] through the permeable membrane that separated unofficial from official practices."⁵¹ In the context of our discussion of the nature of Visigothic royal portraiture, these "official practices" involved the promulgation of an idea of kingship, albeit on a physically small and often overlooked matrix (i.e., a coin face). Based on the evidence presented above, it is clear that Visigothic kings, particularly Liuvigild, Reccared, and Recceswinth, had both individual preferences and collective necessities to consider. From Liuvigild's adaptation of the Byzantine emperor's numismatic portraiture to Recceswinth's historically-minded portrait type, these men issued coins that reflected their personal desires as king as well as the contemporary situation of their kingdom. All three sovereigns took local circumstances and broader geopolitical trends into account when issuing coinage, the Byzantines looming large in their worlds as either ally or adversary, and occasionally as both.⁵²

⁵¹ Henry Maguire, "Magic and Money in the Early Middle Ages," *Speculum* 72, no. 4 (1997): 1039.

⁵² For more on the Visigothic-Byzantine relationship, see Jamie Wood, "Defending Byzantine Spain: frontiers and diplomacy," *Early Medieval Europe* 18, no. 3 (2010): 292-319 and Margarita Vallejo Girvés, *Hispania y Bizancio: Una relación desconocida* (Madrid: Akal, 2012).

Our Visigothic rulers did not, however, solely define themselves in relation to Byzantium, either positively or negatively. Through a multitude of means, including the minting of coins and the promulgation of royal numismatic portraiture, these men set about materially and iconographically defining kingship for themselves. While it is known that justice and mercy were the two primary traits that defined a good king according to Isidore of Seville, Liuvigild, Reccared, and Recceswinth visually defined their kingship through their numismatic portraits among other things.⁵³ In these portraits, we see three kings in royal vestments, borrowed from Rome and Byzantium but altered through their context within the Visigothic milieu. We see long hair, something associated with the Goths since the Imperial Roman period, and we see the use of the title “rex,” notably not “imperator” or “princeps.” Through the expansion and contraction of mint networks, we see kings exercising control over where, how, and how many coins were produced bearing their likeness.

It is not revolutionary nor novel to suggest that the Visigothic Kingdom of Toledo was a complicated, changeful, and contradictory place. That fact is evident to anyone with even a cursory knowledge of the kingdom’s history and ultimate demise. It is also not entirely groundbreaking to implicate the Visigoths within a system of material and ideological exchange that encompassed the contemporary Mediterranean world and beyond.⁵⁴ However, the place of coinage within both the local and “global” expressions of Visigothic royal identity remains understudied, and this chapter is intended to be a spur to further study in this realm. Because we lack other images of Visigothic kings from their own time, royal numismatic portraiture is an essential vector for understanding how Visigothic kingly authority was conceived, enacted, and manifested through objects. Further study of these miniature manifestations of sovereignty, including their production, use, and circulation both within and without the shifting borders of the kingdom, must

⁵³ “Reges a regendo vocati. Sicut enim sacerdos a sacrificando, ita et rex a regendo. Non autem regit, qui non corrigit. Recte igitur faciendo regis nomen tenetur, peccando amittitur. Vnde et apud veteres tale erat proverbium: ‘Rex eris, si recte facias: si non facias, non eris.’ Regiae virtutes praecipuae duae: **iustitia et pietas**. Plus autem in regibus laudatur pietas; nam iustitia per se severa est.” Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies* 9.3.4-5 in *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, ed. and trans., Stephen A. Barney et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 200.

⁵⁴ Chris Wickham’s seminal work *Framing the Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean 400-800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) is perhaps the best modern example of this turn in the study of cross-cultural exchange during this period.

occur if we wish to understand the Visigoths as completely as our extant sources allow.

FIGURES



Fig. 1. Gold *tremissis* of Liuvigild, Toledo, 575-586 CE. American Numismatic Society 2015.48.6. Image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society database.



Fig. 2. Gold *tremissis* of Reccared, Toledo, 586-601 CE. American Numismatic Society 2015.48.39. Image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society database.



Fig. 3. Gold *tremissis* of Recceswinth, Emerita (Merida), 649-672 CE. American Numismatic Society 1937.56.6. Image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society database.

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