

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 *follis* (*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 numerabanteam, 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* (University 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.

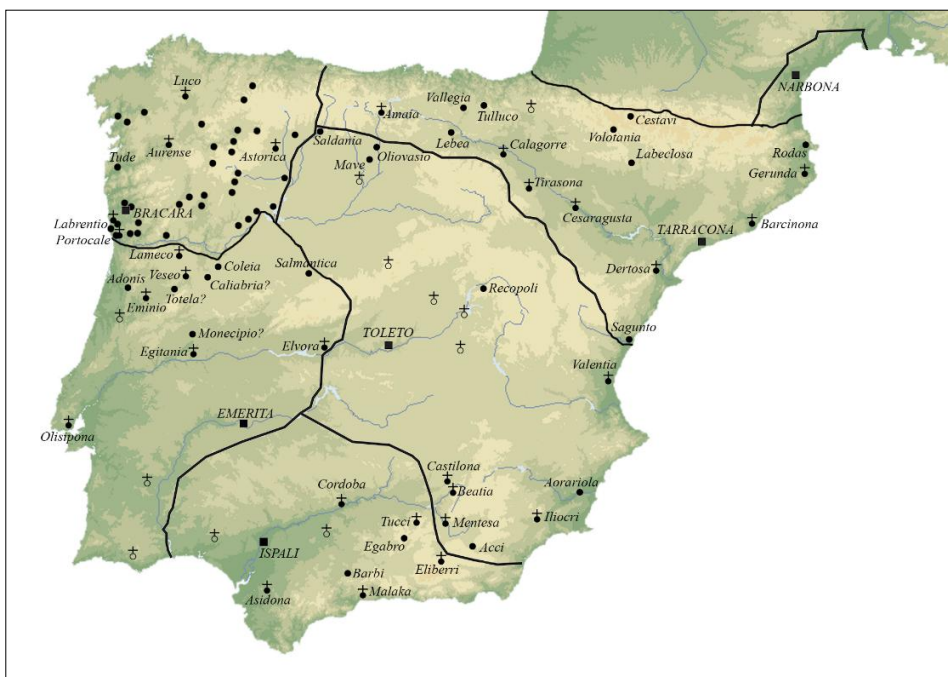


Fig. 1. Map of the Visigothic Mints and the episcopal sees

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, nº 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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