

Numismatic relations between Denmark and Spain from the 18th to the 20th century

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In our century the Iberian peninsula stands as a sort of earthly paradise to the northern mind, and it would be difficult to come across a Dane who never visited Spain and enjoyed her sun, her wine and her lovable population.

But the Spanish influence is also felt in more sober fields; the rich wave of numismatic litterature which flows north from the Iberian peninsula –not least owing to Dr. Leandre Villaronga¹ is considered an essential source of information in our daily work. We shall, however, find quite a different attitude, if we go a few centuries backwards in time. In the early 18th century the Spanish culture occupied no central place in the Danish society. It is not, as if the Danes had no sense of southern Europe –many young sons of the upper classes went south on education tours but the lands they visited were normally France and Italy. Few people went as far as Spain.

1. His influence was especially felt during the preparations of our Spanish sylloge. *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum The Royal Collection of Coins and Medals Danish National Museum*, vol. 43, *Spain-Gaul*, ed. by G.K. Jenkins with the assistance of Anne Kromann, Copenhagen 1979.

THE COLLECTING OF COINS

The same attitude is reflected by the collections of antique coins which some of the travellers formed on such occasions. Thus the young count Christian Daneskiold-Samsøe (1702-28) had not one Spanish coin among his 250 Greek ones. One of the reasons was that Spanish issues at that time were not considered part of the Greek world. But when they had got a natural place in the geographical system of Joseph Eckhel (1737-98), most private collections came to include a few Spanish coins. Both the collection of the learned statesman Otto Thott (742 Greek coins, sold 1789) and that of the historian C.F. Suhm (198 Greek coins, sold 1800) contained about 20 coins from Spain.

In the Royal Coin Cabinet it appears that there were no Spanish issues at all among the 492 Greek coins listed in the handwritten catalogue from 1737. But in Christian Ramus' printed catalogue from 1816, the total amounts to 139.² Some of these may have been acquired from auctions in Denmark, but the main part was probably sent from Rome, where the Danish scholar Georg Zoëga (1755-1809) had undertaken to provide antique coins missing in the Royal Cabinet. His greatest acquisitions were two private collections belonging to the lawyer J.B. Bondacca (11.000 items) and the count Alessio di Recuperò (c. 1,800 items). There exists no list of the Alessio collection, but it appears that 47 Spanish coins were acquired from Bondacca. Even if the survey gives no individual description of the coins, it is possible to identify a few of them such as the Tiberius coins from Turiaso (Fig. 2, SNG 607) and Romula (SNG 423).

After the publication of Ramus' catalogue, the collection of Greek coins kept growing, and in 1851 it was united with the private collection of King Christian VIII, which included ca. 250 coins from Spain. In the *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum*, Copenhagen vol. 43 (1979) the total of Spanish coins amounts to 669, most of which came from a fairly small number of men, who had provided coins both for king Christian VIII and for the Royal Coin Cabinet.

One of them, Christian Tuxen Falbe (1791-1849), at one time the Danish general Consul in Tunis, who was in charge of the king's collection, supplied 60 Spanish coins. 100 were bought from the coin dealer Rollin in Paris (in the period ca. 1841-46), but as much as 233 originated from the Spanish collector Don Joaquin Rubio, the secretary of the Archaeological Academy of Cadiz. Rubio was a contact of Falbe, and they may have been acquainted through the good officers of the Spanish diplomate in Copenhagen, Juan Ximenes de Sandoval.³ Our knowled-

2. CHRISTIAN RAMUS, *Catalogus Nummorum Veterum Graecorum et Latinorum Musei Regis Daniae*, I-II, Hafniae 1816: the Spanish coins are dealt with in vol. I, pp. 1-13.

3. Cf. JÖRGEN STEEN JENSEN, The Danish Numismatist Chr. Jürgensen Thomsen and the formation of the ancient and medieval Iberian Collection of Coins in the Danish National Museum, *Problems of Medieval Coinage in the Iberian Area*, Santarem 1988, p. 572 note 7.

ge of Rubio is somewhat limited. We know that he was a highly esteemed citizen of Cadiz, and when the ayuntamiento of Cadiz in 1845 reprinted the *Historia de la ciudad de Cadiz* by Agustín de Horozco it had an appendix by Rubio *Medallas antiguas gaditanas...*⁴

In one of his letters⁵ to C.T. Falbe Rubio made the noble offer of donating part of his Spanish collection to the Danish king Christian VIII:

«It is my intention for the benefit of the King's cabinet and for its enlargement and splendor to donate the chosen part of my colonial collection...»

On second thought, however, Rubio fears that he has been too forward, and that the king will resent the obligation which such an unselfish present would put upon him, and thus he tactfully proposes another procedure, namely to exchange his coins with some of those from the king's collection after a taxation according to Mionnet's prices. The third possibility to sell his coins for current money, does not appeal to him for «In such cases where one cedes for money in order to buy for money again... the prices tend to be as high as those paid at public sales».

It seems, nevertheless, that the king and Falbe preferred this third solution, and Falbe settles the matter as follows in a letter to the king:

«.. Now that I have gone through the 435 antique Spanish coins which the secretary of the Archeological society of Cadiz don J. Rubio has sent and put to the gracious disposal of your Majesty, and after having consulted the director of the Coin Cabinet and chosen the coins that were best and most suitable for the Cabinet, I have reached the following conclusions: 95 have turned out to be doublets, which are sent back together with 59 items which are in fact missing in the Cabinet, but which are not so well preserved as to be included in the collections. The remaining part, 281 items, is divided in such a way that your Majesty's archeological cabinet will keep c. 171 coins estimated at the (fixed) price of 780 franc, whereas the Royal Coin and Medal Cabinet will get c. 110 coins for about 650 franc. The total is 1313 franc or 520 Rigsbankdaler».⁶

Hence the noble intention of Rubio was never fulfilled. Still Falbe suggested to the king that Rubio be rewarded with the medal «Ingenio et Arti». Christian VIII seemed willing enough, but on further consideration he preferred to do Rubio a still greater honour and made him a knight of the Dannebrog⁷ instead.

4. This appendix had 15 pages and 7 double engraved plates.

5. We know this letter Cadiz of April 15 th 1847 from a translation by Falbe. It belongs to the Royal resolution of November 10 th 1847 about the medal «Ingenio et Arti». We thank the Historian of the Royal Orders Professor Tage Kaarsted for drawing our attention to the papers, which are among the non recorded letters of the secretary to the privy council of Christian VIII. J.G. Adler.

6. Falbe to the king November 4 th 1847, vide supra ref. 5.

7. Tage Kaarsted *For Videnskab og Kunst. Medaljen Ingenio et Arti 1841-91*, Odense 1991, p. 15. The order of Dannebrog was at that time apparently in higher esteem than the «Ingenio et Arti».

Nota omitida en la introducción del

Apéndice

La colección de las medallas de Cádiz, que ofrecemos en este Apéndice, lleva el dictado de completa, por que lo es en realidad. No solo se ha enriquecido de todas las novedades, cuyo descubrimiento, habiendo sido posterior de reconocion Dominicos, Morey, Velázquez y Bayas, sino que se ha espurgado de las atribuciones apócrifas o incompetentes, que adoptaron los dos primeros, y otros doctos anticuarios. Estos otros anticuarios, cuyos nombres se omiten, son ciertamente doctos y respetables sin duda, de erudicion y critica por todos reconocida; pero que no vieron los monumentos originales, y pagaron el tributo, que su fe les imponia, al respeto de la autoridad agena.

El estudio que hemos hecho, la diligencia que hemos empleado, el suelo originario en que vivimos, la vista, la presencia de los monumentos incontrovertibles, to-

Fig. 1

THE SCHOLARS

It appears that Christian Ramus was the first Danish scholar to write about Spanish coins. In 1801, after he was appointed leader of the Royal Coin Cabinet, he also applied for and got a post as «public teacher of Numismatics at the Cabinet». The idea of giving numismatic lectures for «students and other learned people» came from Eckhel and the lectures given by Ramus were also inspired by Eckhel. Thus the 21 pages he wrote about Spain –at a very early stage of his career– are little more than a translation of Eckhel's work.⁸

After their publication in 1816 Ramus' two catalogues of antique coins⁹ were reviewed by the learned bishop J.C. Münter, who appears to have been very well informed of the things that went on in Spanish numismatics in his own time:

.. The Cabinet has no abundance of coins with Phoenician writing, for of the town of Gades is mentioned. It may, however, be possible to find some of the coins from Kanaka among those attributed to Gades, since only the name of 𐤎𐤏𐤏 keeps them apart from one another, which Perez Baier¹⁰ was the first to observe..»¹¹

Münter himself had a special preference for Phoenician letters; in 1824 he published a Carthaginian grave inscription, which C.T. Falbe had copied and sent him from Tunis. Still, it was not Münter who solved the riddle of Kanaka, but his co-operator J.C. Lindberg (1797-1857).¹² Lindberg, a Danish theologian and orientalist,¹³ was working on a book of Phoenician inscriptions; and it was while going through the material that he found the solution of this problem which had occupied many contemporary scholars.

The interpretation of 𐤎𐤏𐤏 as Canaca or Concanæ was never quite satisfactory. For whereas the other identified Spanish mints were well known towns situated at the south coast of the Peninsula, Canaca and Concanæ were small villages lying in the inland or on the north coast respectively –as expressed by a contemporary scholar: «They were so small that no one bothered to write about them». The suggestion of Lindberg is surprising but at the same time convincing. The town of *Seks* or rather *Seksi* was situated on the south coast between Malaga and Almeria

8. Manuscript in the Royal Collection of Coins and Medals, Danish National Museum, Copenhagen.

9. Cf. ref. 2.

10. Cf. FRANC. Perez Bayer, *Del alphabeto y lengua de los Fenices y de sus colonias, Madrid, 1772.*

11. Cf. Münter, Review of the catalogue of Ramus, *Danske Litteraturtidende* for 1817 p. 34.

12. MÜNTER published the Phoenician grave inscription in the *Scriptures of the Royal Society of Science and Letters* in 1824, in the preface he mentions the assistance of J.C. Lindberg.

13. Cf. ANNE KROMANN & JÖRGEN STEEN JENSEN, JACOB CHRISTIAN LINDBERG og numismatikken, *Nationalmuseets Arbejdsmark* 1983, pp. 175-186.

14. J. C. LINDBERG, *Commentatio de numis Punicis Sextorum, olim Canaca et Cocanae tribuitis, Hauniae* 1824.

–in fact it is the present Almunecar. And the coins are in style and types closely related to other issues from this area.¹⁴ It may well astonish a modern observer that the scholars of past days were so much in the darkness as to mistake Canaca for Seksi. But since Phoenician like other Semitic languages is written without vowels, and since it is easy to confuse the letters C, S and N, it is not so difficult to reach a very wrong result, when you are trying to read a name with only three letters.

Lindberg's booklet about the issues of Seksi was internationally recognized in his own time and the results are still valid. The author's merits lie first and foremost in the fact that instead of studying each legend separately he used all the known legends as frame of reference in his research.

In the 19. century other important Spanish acquisitions were made. They are dealt with more detailed in other places:¹⁵ 55 medieval Spanish coins were bought from Rubio, a third of the present holdings of Arabic-Spanish coins (93 out of 284) were bought at the José Garcia de la Torre sale in Madrid 1852, and 24 Spanish-Arabic coins were bought from the Joseph Gaillard collection 1854. Important parts of the famous Lorichs collection are in Copenhagen, too, i.a. 50 Roman gold coins from the Constantine hoard.¹⁶

Returning to our own century we also change the subject to a more recent branch of numismatics. As far as we know it happened only once that a Danish numismatist took part in a discussion about a Spanish *medieval* question. Some forty years ago Dr. Rudi Thomsen, at that time assistant keeper at the Royal Collection of Coins and Medals, got the idea that it was possible to use some stylistic elements in a Danish coin issued about 1030-40 in a discussion on the date of some Spanish coins, presumably emitted by Garcia III. With his usual energy Rudi Thomsen acquired sufficient knowledge of Spanish to present a paper about his ideas, sketching the development in the 11th and early 12th century of the oldest denars and half-denars from Navarra and Aragon at a meeting in the, Sociedad Ibero-americana de Estudios Numismaticos' at The Mint in Madrid during the spring of 1956. The paper was soon published under the title »Suggestion for systematization of coins from Navarra and Aragon of the 11. and 12. centuries. Preliminary study».¹⁷

15. Cf. ref. 3 and ANNE KROMANN & JÖRGEN STEEN JENSEN, The Monetary Collection of Gustaf Daniel Lorichs in Stockholm and Copenhagen. *Florilegium Numismaticum. Studia in honorem U. Westermark edita. Numismatiska Meddelanden*, vol. 38. Stockholm 1992, pp. 203-217.

16. We thank DR. TERENCE VOLK, Cambridge, for drawing our attention to the fact that in the opinion of Spanish numismatists the Constantine hoard (1817), which is the provenance of most of these gold coins, is not from Algeria (which we believed), but from a homonymous place, Constantina, in the Northwest of the Seville province. The references are F. MATEU Y LIOPIS, *Numario Hispanico* I, 1952, p. 248, hoard no. 558 and J.-P. BOST, MARTA CAMPO, & J.M. GURT, communication at the 5th national numismatic congress, Sevilla 1982. *NVMISMA* 180-185, 1983, p. 153, hoard no. 59. The *Inventario de Tesoros Monetarios* will have the following code for this hoard: 1'A1'ESP'01'41'033'00001 (personal communication from T.V.).

17. RUDI THOMSEN, Ensayo de sistematización de las monedas navarras y aragonesas de los siglos XI y XII. Estudio preliminar. *NVMISMA*, VI (20), Madrid 1956, pp. 43-77.

The paper of Rudi Thomsen was a rather critical response to some suggestions by the well-known Spanish numismatist Gil Farres. As no one in Copenhagen since then has studied Spanish medieval coins so intensely as Rudi Thomsen did at the time, we turned to Spanish colleagues to hear about the fate of the attributions by our colleague. And it appeared they were no longer the final word, but only steps towards greater numismatic knowledge.¹⁸ As to the relevance of the iconography of the Danish coin in the discussion, we should add that a more thorough discussion is needed before a perhaps superficial resemblance in the motives of the Danish coin and the coins of the Spanish series is used as a conclusive element for Danish imitation of Spanish coins.¹⁹ Nevertheless it is not without importance that the Danish numismatist managed to collect illustrations from Spanish sources, the quality of which still impresses the specialist.

DANISH FINDS OF SPANISH COINS

It should be noted that very few Spanish coins are actually found in Denmark. From the medieval period we have a couple of Spanish Omayyads,²⁰ but to our knowledge there was never found any coins from the Christian parts of Spain.

In the 16. and 17. century Spanish silver and gold played an enormous role in the world economy, but most of the metal arrived not as Spanish coins, but re-struck as thalers from the Netherlands. Thus among hundreds of hoards from the 17. century found in Denmark we can point out only one, which includes original Spanish coins –the hoard of Bredebro found 1985 in South Western Slesving. It was deposited during the Swedish war 1644-45 and contained 328 thaler-coins, 10 of which are Spanish (–American).²¹ The composition is quite atypical, and normally never found in Denmark, it probably belonged to persons who were directly active in sea-borne trade to South-Western Europe.²²

The find material includes five gold coins, all *excellentes*. With the portraits of «Ferdinand and Isabella».²³

18. We thank DR. M. CRUSAFONT I SABATER for drawing our attention to the study by Pio Beltran Villagrasa. *Notas sobre monedas aragonesas* in his *Obra Completa*. II. Zaragoza 1972. pp. 519-520 and p. 527 as well as the study by himself and Anna M. BALAGUER. *La Numismática Navarro-Aragonesa alto medieval. Nuevas hipótesis*. *Gaceta Numismática* 19. 1986 (no. 82), p. 36.

19. A more thorough treatment of the problem was promised, *op. cit.*, p. 76 ref. 1. but it never appeared.

20. See ANNE KROMANN. *Finds of Iberian Islamic Coins in the Northern Lands*. *Problems* (cf. ref. 3). pp. 243-253.

21. There were eight 8 pesos, one from Sevilla, two from Potosi, four from Mexico, while the mint of one cannot be identified: finally there were two 2 pesos, both from Potosi.

22. The hoard is not yet published.

23. Four double *excellentes* were found as stray finds in the period 1869-1923. cf. Anne Jacobsen & Otto Mörholm. *Danske guldmøntfund fra Middelalderen*. *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og*

As for the copper coins we can only point out a single case, an 8 maravedisse from Filip IV, Madrid 1622 with later countermarks. It may have been lost by a sailor –probably near to the time of its origin, since it is surprisingly well preserved.²⁴

Two medals depicting «El Gran Capitan», Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba y Aguilar (1453-1515), winning a battle in Italy, were found in Greenland. When the medals were published, it was suggested that the surname of Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba «El Gran Capitan» made the pieces interesting to Dutch and other sailors of the following centuries. So they were copied and sold –perhaps as some sorts of amulets– and by way of exchange they came into native hands in Greenland. The most recently acquired was found by accident by a Danish geologist at an Eskimo settlement at the remote island of Disko!²⁵

These stray-finds underline the importance of personal connections between the numismatists of our two countries. Here Dr. Villaronga is of great inspiration.



ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1 Handwritten notes, probably in the hand of J. Rubio, to the Introduction to «Medallas antiguas Gaditanas», 4 pages, in the appendix to the reedition of Agustín de Horozco, «Historia de la Ciudad de Cadiz». Cadiz 1845 (Library of the Royal Collection of Coins and Medals, National Museum, Copenhagen, sign. V a 95).

Fig. 2 Bronze coin, probably from Bondacca's collection. Turiaso. Obv. Tiberius 14-37 AD. Rev. Bull. SNG 607.

Fig. 3 Bronze coin from Rubios collection. Ilipa. Obv. Fish. Rev. Corn ear. SNG, 149.

Historie, 1966, p. 93 seq. The fifth one is probably late 16. century, type «Serooskerke VII». Obverse as Vidal y Quadro 6504. Found in Southern Sjælland c. 1940 and came to the National Museum 1982. Illustrated in the report for this year. *Nordisk Numismatisk Aarskrift* 1983-84, p. 177.

24. Found at the small island of Sejro in Kattegat c. 1945; Register of Finds of the Royal Collection of Coins and Medals, National Museum, FP 4335.

25. JÖRGEN STEEN JENSEN, La Medalla de «El Gran Capitan» en Groenlandia, translated from Danish by Anne Steen Jensen, *Gaceta Numismática* no. 38, 1975, pp. 59-64.