

A New Visigothic Mint: Carmona

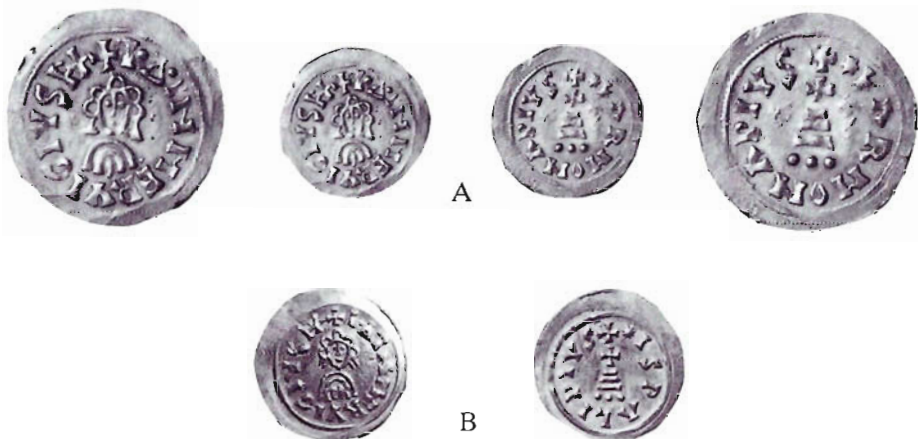
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The following coin of the Visigothic king Erwig (680-7) appears to be unpublished:

Obv. +I·Δ·INMERVIGIVSRX (the RX ligatured) Bust facing.

Rev. +*KARMONAPIVS Cross on three steps, with 3 pellets beneath.

Base Av. S.G. 13.98 = 54% gold. 20 mm. 1.41 g. Die-axis 9 o'clock. Fig. a



The coin has recently been acquired by the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. It was offered for sale by the London firm of A.H. Baldwin & Sons in a list entitled *The Successor States to Rome* (September 1993), no. 45, but attributed to Narbonne. This is impossible, for quite apart from the legend being KARMONA, not NARBONA, the mint of Narbonne at this period used profile and not facing busts. The facing bust is of the Seville type (Miles type 11n), and the use of a Greek *della* instead of a Latin D in the formula IDINM (for *In Dei nomine*) is limited to Seville. Coins of Seville also have the reverse legend often preceded by a star, and one variety (Miles no. 410) has the unusual feature of three pellets beneath the steps of the cross. A specimen of this in the Fitzwilliam Museum (Miles (a) 4 = MEC 1.269) is illustrated here as Fig. b. The resemblance between it and the *Karmona* coin is so close that one can scarcely avoid the conclusion that both are the work of the same die-sinker.

Carmona, some 30 km north-east of Seville, is the obvious mint for the new coin. It had been an important city in Republican times and under the early Empire, as it was to be again under the Arabs and the kings of Castile. In the Visigothic period nothing is known of its history –*in westgotischen Zeit nie genannt* according to the *Kleine Pauly*– but since the name was preserved it must have had a continuous existence even if overshadowed by neighbouring Seville. Presumably, for reasons that we do not know, the mint was moved there briefly from Seville at some moment in Erwig's reign. The place is spelled *Carmo* or *Karmo* in antiquity –it is *Karmonia* in Ptolemy– so there is nothing irregular in finding *Karmona* on the coin. The curious form of the K, made with two strokes, one forked, instead of with three as one would expect, is noteworthy; it is varied from a form of L having the horizontal stroke half-way up the vertical, instead of at its base, that sometimes occurs.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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MEC = GRIERSON, P. and BLACKBURN, M. *Medieval European Coinage*, vol. 1, *The Early Middle Ages (5th-10th centuries)* Cambridge. 1986.