Reading Medieval European Coins

second edition

by

Ralph S. Walker

additional bibliography
by
Allen G. Berman

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PREFACE

This little book is an attempt to make it easier for collectors of medieval European coins to interpret the legends on their coins. I make no pretense of having written a treatise on medieval numismatic epigraphy. Instead, I have tried to recall the most frequent questions concerning inscriptions for which I had to seek answers when I began to collect and study medieval coins, and to put the answers to these questions in a form which will help others.

The fascinating and very complex field of medieval coins is just now beginning to achieve the kind of widespread popularity that it deserves. In the past, would-be collectors have been scared off by the prolixity of mints, the maze of governments involved, the crudeness of many of the coins, the shortage of useful references and the difficulty in reading the inscriptions. Numismatic publishers have gone far toward remedying the lack of references, and this book, I hope, will make the reading easier.

The manuscript was read in draft by Alex G. Malloy, prominent dealer in medieval coins, and by members of his staff who are expert in this field. Corrections and clarifications which they suggested have been made. They are not, of course, responsible for any remaining errors or omissions.

Ralph Walker, January, 1978

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NOTE ON TYPE FACES USED TO REPRODUCE COIN LEGENDS

A great diversity of styles of lettering was used on medieval European coins during the 1000 years of their issuance, ranging from simple Roman to ornate Gothic, and including a massive alphabet found only on coins. The styles of letters are often different on different dies of the same coin type, sometimes even between the obverse and reverse of the same coin. Because of this, it is impossible to reproduce closely in a book legends used in a variety of coin types. Numismatic publishers have handled this problem in numerous ways, often having special type fonts manufactured. In this book two faces are used in the text to reproduce the legends: one a basic Roman style without serifs, the other a basic Roman style with serifs, but with a number of special letters modeled on Gothic letters used most often on European medieval coins.

Where the legend on a specific coin is quoted, the style of lettering is imitated to the extent that the type fonts permit; where legends or words are used on different coins in different centuries or different areas, the more ordinary Roman capitals are used, without the special letters. Letters without serifs are used for some legends from the earlier medieval centuries. Often it has been found necessary to illustrate letters or words with special drawings.

The letters used in the text for printed reproduction of legends are illustrated below:

Λ A A A Λ Ā Ḥ

C ɑ C C

E E Є Ɇ

G G Ɠ G

Ⱨ H ɦ ɦ H

M M M ₥

N И Ⴖ N N

Z Z Ʒ

The letter U was not used on ancient or medieval coins. V did double duty for the modern consonant V and vowel U.

I. INTRODUCTION

Definition of Medieval European Coins

The middle ages are generally considered to have lasted from the fall of Rome to the invention of printing or to Columbus' voyage to America. Strictly speaking, the term refers only to European, Byzantine, and Crusader history. But general usage in several fields, including numismatics, has caused the adjective "mediaeval" or "medieval" (the usual American spelling) to be applied to the Islamic and Indian civilizations, the former from the Hegira in 622 A.D. to about 1500, the latter from about 500 A.D. to about 1500.

In other words, the word "medieval" is often applied to political entities, events, and cultures which existed in the Old World between 500 A.D. and about 1500 A.D. It is rarely used for the Far East, despite the connection between the Mongol invasion of China and the Mongol invasion of Europe and the Near East. It is often used for Armenian and Georgian history and coinage. With Persian coinage there is a problem of chronology, since the Sassanian rule of Persia began in 226 A.D. and ended with the Moslem conquest in 637 A.D. Sassanian coins are sometimes classified as ancient coins and sometimes as medieval. A somewhat analogous problem exists with the coinage of Axum in Africa, which began about 227 A.D. and lasted until the tenth century.

It is easy to establish a beginning of the European middle ages, historically and numismatically, because of the dramatic impact of the fall of Rome. It is difficult to establish an ending; the middle ages simply evolved through the renaissance into modern times. Russian scholars consider, correctly, that their medieval period lasted well into the 17th century, when Russia began to catch up with the rest of Europe. Limits placed in this book follow generally accepted chronology to the extent feasible and, except for Russia, stop with coins issued during the last quarter of the 15th century.

Only medieval European coins, including crusader, runic, and Russian coins, are covered. Most of these have, at least until the florin, gros, thaler, and other forerunners of modern coinage make their appearance, common characteristics: thin planchets, low relief, crude figures — the unfinished look of numismatic primitives. Yet they often have the charm of good primitive art. The portraits on Merovingian coins and their Anglo-Saxon contemporaries remind one at first of the drawings of small children, but this is no bar to enjoying them. The handicaps presented by the legends offer more of a challenge, which can add to the interest.

In general, medieval coin inscriptions are harder to decipher than the carefully engraved letters of classical coins (not their barbarous imitations), because of the shapes of the letters and the profusion of erratic abbreviations, retrograde inscriptions, barbarizations, and non-standard spellings. On some of the earlier coins the letters show a distorted angularity, as time progresses they show baffling juxtapositions of fattish rectangles, and in the later centuries of the middle ages the ornate complexity of Gothic lettering makes its appearance on coins. All of the problems of reading medieval European coins, except those with the early massive and later Gothic letter forms, appear on ancient coins minted outside the main coin-issuing entities. The crucial difference is that books transcribing the ancient legends are easier to find, while more searching is necessary for medieval coins.

Once the methodology of reading and interpreting the coins has been learned, however, the fascinating world of the middle ages, with its knights and ladies, turbulence and adventure, spectacle and grandeur contrasting with dirt, poverty, and cruelty — a world in comparison with which the ordered, organized Roman world seems prosaic — comes closer to the collector.

Reasons for Omitting Byzantine, Islamic, Indian, Georgian, and Armenian Coins

The author is not a purist who insists on the use of the word "medieval" to refer to European coins only. But coins of the Byzantine Empire, Islamic lands, India, Armenia, and Georgia were struck under different conditions, under different social and economic systems, and each has a set of characteristics so different from that of the usual European medieval coins that it would be impossible to discuss them intelligently in the space available.

Crusader coins, although some were struck under Byzantine and Moslem influence, are for the most part extensions of European coin technology and styling, and have the European patterns of inscriptions. They are included.

II. STYLES OF LATIN LETTERS IN THE MIDDLE AGES

The bulk of the coins covered have inscriptions in Latin words or in latinized forms of names of rulers and places, written in the Latin alphabet. Often, however, the letters have shapes which are quite different from the Latin alphabet used on ancient Roman coins and the coins of today. The shapes of the letters also vary greatly because of the influences of technology and fashion.

Technology of Minting and its Effect on Artistry and Style

Coins in the ancient world had ranged from rough blobs of metal to exquisite sculptures in high relief. In the Classical Period of Greece, the Hellenistic kingdoms, and the Roman Republic and Empire, the coins were usually well-lettered, the designs competently drafted, and the coins well-struck on even, round flans. By the last half of the 4th century, however, the art of coinage had deteriorated greatly, and when the Eastern Roman Empire assumed the burden of coinage, its coins looked crude and amateurish compared with those of 700 years before.

In western Europe the situation was worse. The art of coinage was lost during the barbarian invasions. When it was undertaken again, in Anglo-Saxon England, Visigothic Spain, Lombard Italy, and Merovingian France and Germany (essentially agrarian economies which at first had little need of money), there were no skilled engravers, no competent sculptors, no persons who knew how to carve heads or figures realistically, and apparently no mintmasters who knew how the ancient coin-makers had used hot planchets at exactly the right temperature for sharp, deep strikes. So they struck their coins from thin, cold strips. Comparing a flat 8th century Anglo-Saxon sceat or even a 15th century Venetian grosso with an exquisite Syracusan coin of the 4th century B.C. will show the difference at once. The medieval coins did have one advantage, important for the merchant if not for the artist — they could be stacked.

Dies were made from cast and forged cylinders of iron from six to ten inches in length. The lower die, reserved for the obverse of the coin, usually ended in a spike point which could be anchored in wood. The working end of each cylinder was filed and rubbed smooth for the engraving of the image and legends. In these smooth ends the engraver worked punch and gouge. Sometimes the punches represented whole letters, but more often, at least until the later middle ages, they represented elements from which letters, images, and symbols could be composed. For example, let us take three punches: Ⲧ , Ɔ , and ▽ . All three could be used to make Ⲗ . One of them used twice with a thin line cut from corner to corner would make Ⲛ . The same punch used twice with a thin line cut across would make Ⲏ. Or, if you preferred, you could make the same letter with only the two punches Ⲏ. The same two with a simple triangular cut would make Ⲙ. They would also make Ⲱ.

Sometimes a curved punch, in addition to being useful for making a king's eyebrow, hair curl, or mouth, was used to make the letter ℂ. The elegance and correctness of the letters depended on the engraver's artistic eye, the steadiness of his hand, and his literacy.

In the early middle ages only a few punches were used. The design itself, including the ruler's head, was constructed with a pointed punch for dots, a short straight punch for lines such as that of the nose, a short curved punch, as mentioned in the paragraph above, a cutter for widening punched marks, and a gouge. The straight-line punch and the curved punch could also be used for forming sansserif letters, and if serifs were desired, they could be added with the cutter. The straight-line punch was often overworked, giving the letters an angular style similar to runes (see Chapter IX). But this skimpy tool kit was increased as decades and centuries passed. Undoubtedly ingenious engravers cast punches of their own design.

<div align="center">

+ANFONS COMES   Count Alfonso

+TOLOSA CIVI   City of Toulouse

RAMVNDS as engraved by a fanciful engraver.

SAN'TI AINAINO (Saint-Aignan) by an engraver with only four punches and a graving tool.

</div>

By the 13th century a few engravers were achieving artistic results with their punches much like those achieved by bookbinders using punches on leather. In England by the time of the Norman Conquest (1066 A.D.) a dozen different punches were in general use by die engravers. About a hundred years later a special short line punch for adding serifs to letters was being used.

Because of these methods, designing of coins seemed to have little connection with the art of sculpture as practiced by renaissance artists. In Italy, the contrast between the handsome sculptured figures of the public squares and gardens and the crude, flat designs on coins of the 13th and 14th centuries is striking. By 1200 A.D. some English coin designs were so graceless that they must have evoked some derision even then.

Examining a series of medieval coins may show differences and irregularities in the shapes of the letters. A certain letter may exhibit different shapes and sizes on the same coin, e.g. Ɦ Ɦ for H and ꞣ ꞣ for A. The engraver did not always position his punches at the same angle or the same distance apart. Also, after the engraver had hammered the punch into the die, he could widen or lengthen the resulting impression or otherwise finish it off with a graver. Sometimes the force and manner of striking would affect the shapes of the letters. But the most likely reason for differences in letters on the same coin was that the engraver's whim guided his hand.

Often flaws in punches would be repeated in numerous dies, and consequently in thousands of coins. Usually these flaws involved pieces chipped off the lines or corners of the punches. Sometimes the engraver would punch the same letter or part of the same letter over because he did not think the first impression had been deep enough; if he was careless in resetting the punch, double lines could result. Examples might be Ḛ for E and Ṟ for R.

Like the 3rd grade pupil who always prints the letters Ν , Ƨ and ƻ backwards, some engravers had trouble with individual letters which show up backwards on coins. When we remember that most of the engravers had less education than that of the third grade pupil, we can understand this better. Sometimes whole legends are retrograde, or backwards. On runic coins this was acceptable, but on others it was because the engravers had not grasped the mechanics of the die-making process.

The engraver always had the option, within the limits of the style prescribed by his overlord or mintmaster, to carve out portions of the letters, or whole letters, instead of punching them into the dies. He might, for example, mark out a C Ꞓ or a G Ꞡ or an O Ꞩ with a compass, then use the graver's tool to cut the lines deeper and wider. When a tiny pellet is found in the center of these letters such a process can be suspected. The pellet is where the point of the compass was placed.

As letters on coins imitated more and more the Gothic minuscule in which manuscripts were written, the number of punches had to increase, as did punches specially made for the more elaborate designs in the centers of the coins. The reader can judge for himself how much of the dies used for the coin illustrated below (14th century, Low Countries) was made by standard punches and how much was the result of special engraving.

It might be interesting to try to count the punches used for this coin. Assuming that the line drawing above follows the original faithfully, one can assume that a punch was used whenever a pattern was repeated exactly. Note particularly the different forms of the letter E on the obverse (Ꞓ) and reverse (Ꝺ), indicating that the dies were probably engraved by two different men, perhaps independently of each other. The obverse die usually outlasted several reverse dies, which took the brunt of the blows from the workmen's hammers, and new reverse dies were frequently engraved to be used with the same obverse die. It may even have been that the fashion changed during the life of the obverse die. The engraver of the reverse probably used two punches to make his letter Ꝺ : Ꞓ and ꞁ .

The letters used on Roman coins had been carefully engraved on the dies, with a minimum of punching, and for the most part appear simple, chaste, clear-cut and legible, at times even elegant. There was little change in their shapes for several centuries. The letters deteriorated only slightly when the Roman Empire began to crumble, although in the 4th century they became more ornate, with more serifs, and in the 5th century coins were often engraved with letters of varying size.

But the square Roman capitals went out of fashion for manuscripts sometime in the 6th century. By this time serifs on letters were much used, and the letters were

boldly shaded by the pen. In the 7th century the uncial style developed, with a great deal of rounding of letters, the use of large capitals at the beginning of paragraphs, and a tendency toward extending strokes above and below the lines for ornament.

From the 8th to the 11th centuries the curved forms turned into a beautiful minuscule, or lower case script, progressively harder to read as the monks who wrote or copied most of the manuscripts turned to abbreviations, elisions, combinations of letters, and flourishes, and began to develop the crabbed Gothic style. The Gothic black letter alphabet, with elaborate capitals, lasted beyond the invention of printing in England and northern Europe, and a simplified variety of it lasted in Germany until World War II. The Gothic style, hard to read and unattractive to classicists, was not universally popular, and was never fully adopted in Italy. When Venice became a center of early printing about 1460, several beautiful type styles were developed there, none of them Gothic.

ABCDEFGH
IKLMNOPQ
RSTUVWXYZ

Gothic uncials of the Middle Ages

That the changes in the letter styles of manuscripts would affect the styles of lettering on coins was inevitable. Many coin-issuing rulers were archbishops or bishops, and lay rulers often had churchmen running their mints. Education of laymen, whether in schools or tutorial, was in the hands of monks, who taught the styles of writing that were fashionable.

But elaborate ornate letters cannot be engraved on coins easily, particularly when punches are used. In the later middle ages, hand engraving, without punches, of coin legends and designs began to make its reappearance, and whole letters were cast on the working ends of the punches. A natural result is that some 15th century coins show greater regularity in their lettering than earlier coins. However, the usual practice in preparing a die apparently was to use a combination of punches and hand engraving.

But it was difficult to use the traditional simple punches for ornate Gothic letters on coins. It required more expensive and intricate punches, and a great deal more skill in engraving. The Gothic alphabet on coins was, for this reason, greatly modified in the interests of simplicity.

In trying to decipher a medieval coin legend it is sometimes essential to understand the process of engraving and the changes in style. If the punches used to make a difficult letter can be identified, the letter can probably be read. One must understand also that uniformity in lettering was often not a goal of the medieval engraver.

As mentioned above, barely literate engravers sometimes turned letters backward or on their sides. Sometimes these mistakes, and even more serious ones, were made deliberately by royal die-makers. It was a device to trick counterfeiters, who were plentiful. That it would also trick coin collectors of future centuries was probably not a matter of great concern to the royal moneyers.

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Letters from legends on Carolingian coins
(9th and 10th centuries)

Letters from legends on coins of the 12th century

Letters from legends on coins of the 13th century

Gothic letters from coins of the 14th century

Gothic letters from coins of the 15th century

Geographic Variations in Styles of Letters

Each group of coin-issuing governments seemed to develop letters with a particular shape or look. The evolution from the angular and simple to the curved and ornate was general throughout Europe (except in parts of Italy), but fashion, or whim, or isolation, caused variations. Early in the middle ages there were substantial alphabetical differences. (Compare the Anglo-Saxon, Merovingian, and Visigothic letters shown in the illustrations). There were differences between kingdoms, duchies, and even between mints only a few miles apart. In Merovingian France there were hundreds of little *ateliers* or workshops, often mere corners of rooms, which produced coins. As a result, thirty-nine different forms of the letter G have been charted from Merovingian coins. (See illustration).
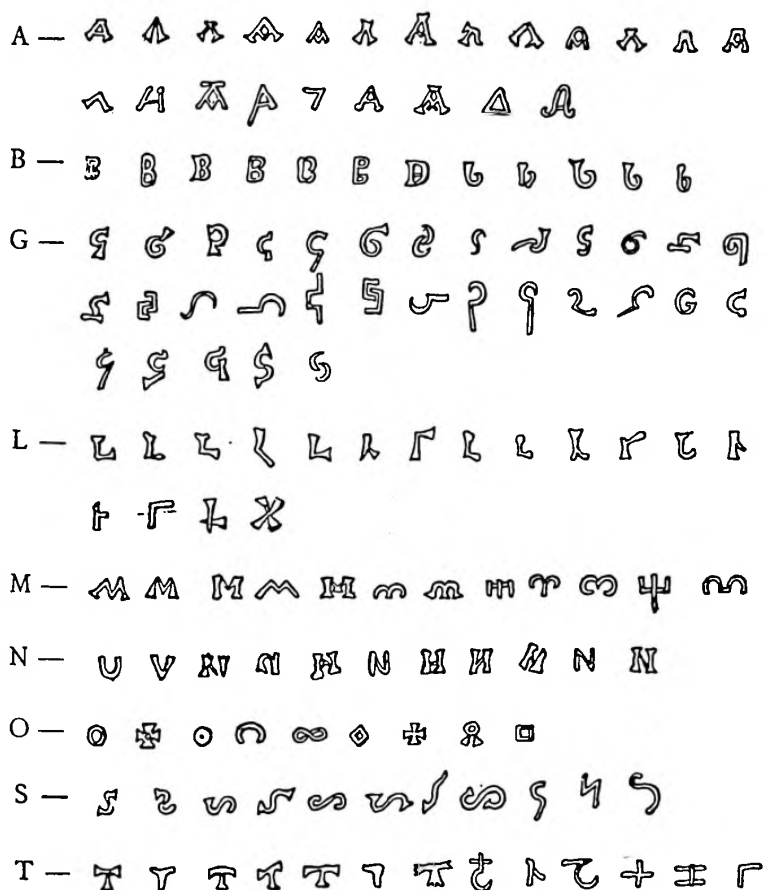
Forms of some letters on Merovingian coins

The Anglo-Saxons, contemporaries of the Merovingians, at times used alphabetic forms which are as strange to the uninitiated as Russian. The accompanying illustration of the Anglo-Saxon alphabet used on coins shows most of these varieties, not including the runic inscriptions, which are discussed in a later section.

Note that some of the Anglo-Saxon letter forms are reminiscent of the Merovingian; in fact Merovingian coins had a sizable circulation in Anglo-Saxon England, as did English coins on the continent. But note the similarity between a form of the letter TH and one of W, between one standing for V and one for H, between a frequently truncated E and F, etc. These odd forms in the past have led to many incorrect transcriptions. Fortunately, today not many unpublished Anglo-Saxon coin types are likely to come into the hands of collectors, partly because of the vast quantities found in Viking hoards in Scandinavia and studied.

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But the general medieval coin collector who wants to read the legends on his sceat or early English penny may need to reserve judgment on certain letters until a similar legend is found in a reference book.

A	ᚫ	ᚫ	ᚿ	Λ	ᚫ	ᚾ	ᚠ	Ꝟ	[Ⴤ]		
B	ß										
C	Ⴚ	ɑ									
D	ᚱ	ᚩ	ᚦ	O							
E	Ɛ	F		ᚠ	[Æ]						
F	Ϝ										
G	Ⴚ	G	ς	ᚦ	Ʊ	ᚦ	J	ᚳ	ᚴ	ᚱ	Γ	X
H	N	h	ᚺ								
I				IE	[Æ]						
L	Γ	ℓ	ℓ	ᚱ							
M	Ϯ	ᛗ	ᚹᚾ	HH	ᚱᚺ	ᚾᚾ	ᚿᚾ	ᛗ	ᛁᚩᛁ	ᚺ	VV	ᚹ
N	H	ᚾ	ᚹ	ᚻ	X						
O	◊	ᚦ	ᚩ	ϕ	ᚦ	□					
P											
Q	ᚩ	ᚩ									
R	ᚱ	ᚱ									
S	ᚄ	Z	M	Γ							
T	ᚦ	ᚦ	ᚦ	ᚦ							
V	ᚹ	ᚢ	ᚹ	ᚺ	ᚢ	U	ᚢ	[Ꝟ]			
W	VV	ᚠ	ᚦ	D	ᚦ	ᚦ					
X											
Y	ᚠ	[Ⴤ-1 ?]									
Z											
th or dh	ᚦ	ᚦ	ᚦ	ᚦ	ᚦ	ᚦ					

Letters from legends on Anglo-Saxon coins

The coins of the Lombards, Burgundians, and Visigoths, the other Germanic tribes which overwhelmed Europe, showed a similar variety of forms in those early centuries when they were trying to absorb what was left of Roman civilization. A characteristic of their coins of the 6th to the 8th centuries is the lack of uniformity in the size of the letters on the same coins. The name of Cordoba, for example, on a coin of the Visigothic kings of Spain, might come out looking somewhat like:

G⊙RD⊙B~

With the increase of commerce and the spread of learning, the letters gradually became more standardized, and local variations were fewer. Coin lettering changed because manuscript lettering changed. Whether these changes should be considered frequent or seldom depends on one's historical perspective. In England, where the central mint at London furnished the dies for the moneyers throughout the country, the patterns of the punches had to be changed ten times between the Norman invasion in 1066 A.D. and the reign of Edward I, who became king in 1274. This averaged once per generation.

Faced with a great variety of alphabetic forms, which may themselves be garbled in words spelled in various ways, misspelled, or abbreviated (see the following chapters), the collector of early medieval coins sometimes has a task not unlike that of the decipherer of unknown scripts. If the catalogs do not reproduce the pattern of letters on his coins, he may find it advantageous to guess what the words should be, if spelled and written in the common way, and try to check out his guess.

III. ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations are the bane of persons trying to read coin legends of ancient, medieval, and modern times. There is really little difference in spirit and clarity among the: IMP   T   CAES   VESP   AVG   P   M   TR   PPP   COS   VIII of the Emperor Titus, the

CVRRAD ' ·   D · G · EPI · M of "Conrad by the Grace of God Bishop of Meissen" (13th century) and the:

GEORGIUS   VI   D:G:BR:OMN:REX   F:D:IND: IMP on Australian coins of the 1930's. All three are Latin legends abbreviated to the point of unintelligibility unless one has the key. The extra dimensions of the problem in reading medieval coins are:

a. the keys, i.e., comprehensive catalogs with transcriptions and completions of the abbreviated words, are harder to find;

b. the political picture in the middle ages was often so confused and complex that relating the abbreviations to the right persons and places is on the whole much harder;

c. medieval engravers used combinations of two or three letters joined together, or symbols or flourishes over and under the lines or worked into the letters themselves to stand for syllables, consonantal combinations, endings, and short words;

d. if space was lacking for a full word, medieval engravers might simply omit as many letters as necessary in the middle of a word and denote the missing letters by a line or symbol. This device was invented by manuscript copiers in the middle ages and much used by them.

Shortened words, joined letters, omissions of letters from the middle of words, and single letters standing for whole words (logograms) are rather common on medieval coins, particularly in names and titles. The use of flourishes, additions to letters, and symbols to replace syllables, consonantal combinations, or endings is less common, and can be found in appreciable quantities only in the last three centuries of the middle ages.

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Possibly the most common symbols for words and syllables used on coins were:

ℤ ℨ ℨ ℤ   for ET (predecessors of the modern &)
    𝔇 𝔇   for the beginning syllables COM - or CON -
      ✢ or the final syllables - VS or - VM

The last sign can be baffling. If the engraver ran short of space, he would use it not only for COM - and CON -, but for the next syllable or two after that. Or else he might use it for the last three syllables, so long as the word ended in -VS or -VM. In manuscripts this sign was usually written slightly above the line, like an apostrophe, as in

HENR⁹ or HENRIC⁹ for HENRICVS

On coins it is usually found on the same plane as the other letters in the legend and often looks like the figure 9 or a carelessly reversed C

Without a key or an expert knowledge of the Knights Hospitaler it might be impossible to read 𝔇 ⅋ in the reverse legend of a 14th century coin of Rhodes:

✠FR:ELIOn .D ·VILA OVꞀ·D I·GRꞀ.ꟁR
✠OSPTꞀL .S .IOhISIRLꞀI·9T RODI

Filled out, it is

          FRATER ELION DE VILANOVA DEI GRATIA MAGISTER
✠HOSPITALIS   SANCTI IOHANNIS IEROSLYMITANI
          CONVENTUS RODI

It means Brother Helion of Vilanova by the Grace of God Master of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem Convent of Rhodes and 𝔇⅋ stands for CONVENTUS.

One of the letters most frequently modified with a line to replace one or more syllables was R. ꝶ usually meant -RVM, as in FRANCOꝶ (FRANCORVM). FRANCORVM could also be engraved FR9, FRA9, FRACO, FRAnO, etc.

There are other recognized manuscript abbreviating symbols or combinations of letters and symbols which medieval engravers tried to use in legends. But no catalog exists of all that were used on published coins. In any case, there were at least 5000 of them in use on manuscripts in the later middle ages, usually consisting of a letter or letters from the abbreviated word plus a strategically placed curved line of some sort, often a rather involved line.

Because of the profusion of abbreviations, reading a typical book manuscript of the 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries is a task for experts. For example, ꝓ might stand for PRO and ꝑ for PARIENSIS ("of Paris" "Parisian"). The moneyers had to simplify and straighten the extra lines, if they used them at all. Thus ꝓ would appear on a coin as ꝑ and the complex sign for PARIENSIS might be

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written in several ways. HENRICVS, in addition to HENR⟋ might appear on a coin as HEN, H̄R̄C̄, HINRIC, HN̄VS, HEN9, or two dozen other ways. The necessities of space and the ideas which were often apparently the whims of the engravers governed, subject only to review by the central mintmasters or moneyers, if they were different from the engravers. A book could be written on the different ways in which REX, the most common Latin word on medieval coins, was engraved or monogrammed. The simplest ways were R, R̄, RE, R̄X̄, or X. The last abbreviation usually does not offer confusion with the abbreviation for CHRISTVS (see next paragraph), since whatever abbreviation for REX was used would almost always follow a personal name.

The abbreviation ✖ or ✖̄ for CHRISTVS, Christ, was known to illiterate peasant and clerical scholar alike. It is the Greek letter standing for the KH (German CH) sound, and survives in our XMAS for CHRISTMAS. On coins it was often used alone, but oftener in combinations such as: XC, XP, X̄P̄C̄, XPE, XR, and XS.

Any of these could have the bars indicating abbreviations engraved overhead or in the word, as: XPC or XP⌐C.

The first four abbreviations above are the Greek letters for CHS, CHR, CHRS, and CHRE, while the last two are combinations of Greek and Latin. The name of Christ appears nearly always in religious mottoes or invocations. Often IESVS is added, usually in abbreviated form with Greek letters as IHS (IES) or IHC.

One of the most impressive medieval uses of the Greek letter abbreviation of CHRISTVS is in a motto which appears in dozens of European medieval coin types of various lands, sometimes shortened. A golden crown of St. Louis of France minted in 1266 gives the motto thus:

✠ XPC · VINCIT · XPC · REGNAT · XPC · IMPERAT
Christ conquers, Christ reigns, Christ commands.

This motto stayed on royal French coins until the French Revolution. However, the Greek letters were replaced by Latin in the 16th century.

The difficulties of interpreting abbreviations are well illustrated by the legend on certain gold and silver coins issued in Italy:

P : A : G : Z XII : CAPI POPVLI : IAN

Knowing that IANVA means Genoa, one might assume that IAN is an abbreviation for IANVA and attempt to find the coin an appropriate catalog of Genoese coins. If such a reference is unavailable, one might try reading some Genoese history, and find that in 1478 one Prospero Adorno ruled as Governor with 12 counselors. Knowing that a Ƶ often meant ET, and looking in a Medieval Latin Dictionary for all words beginning with CAPI, one would find CAPITANEVS ("foremost, chief, warden, etc.") which could roughly be translated "Captain." The word will not ordinarily be found in general or classical Latin dictionaries. If no medieval Latin dictionary is available, there is an alternative: assume that CAPI

means "Captain," then check that word out in a large English language dictionary which lists the etymological roots of words. There CAPITANEVS will be found, given as the medieval Latin origin of "Captain." With a little elementary knowledge of Latin declensions, the legend can now be reconstructed:

PROSPERO ADORNO GVBERNATOR ET XII CAPITANEI POPVLI IANVAE
Governor Prospero Adorno and the 12 Captains of the People of Genoa.

Whether the name should be written as Prosperus Adornus (Latin) or Prospero Adorno (Italian) is a matter of choice.

The achievement of reconstructing and translating is all the more satisfying because the chances are good that none of the available catalogs listing or illustrating a coin with this legend will have spelled it out in full or given a translation.

V. MONOGRAMS

Monograms are carefully contrived or designed combinations of all the letters or the principal letters of a word or words. On seals and as a form of abbreviated signature they have been in use for 5000 years. They were a feature of Byzantine coins. During the European middle ages, they were used on coins in the early centuries much more frequently than later, but to some extent they were used throughout the period. They often represent the names of cities on early medieval coins, which can easily be confused with names of moneyers or rulers. Sometimes the names of persons and places were combined in monograms, which can add a factor of complexity. Early popes, archbishops and bishops liked to see their names represented on coins by monograms, and occasionally a coin would appear which was all monogram — obverse and reverse.

The designer of monograms on coins was limited to what he could do with his tools, but a great deal of ingenuity was lavished on these monograms, more so, it often appears, than on the legends. Sometimes monograms occupied the center of the reverse design, occasionally the obverse; sometimes they were in the field, and sometimes in the exergue. The last was often reserved for monograms of moneyers, and often for city names. Often both the monogram and the name it represented would appear on a coin.

Without a guide, the collector who wants to interpret a monogram can only try to identify the letters and then compare them with a name. The following monograms of Theodoric the Great are among the easiest to read:
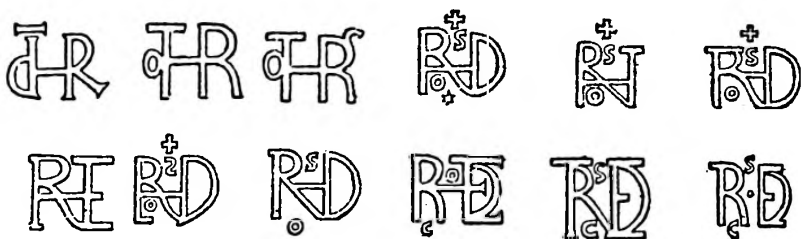
Faced with the task of reproducing monograms, cataloguers either have to have them drawn individually, try to reproduce them with type fonts, or simply state that a monogram appears on a coin. Sometimes the reproductions are good; sometimes they are poor. Here are some examples of easily reproduced monograms for TOLETVM (Toledo) from Heiss' *Monnaies des Rois Wisigothes d'Espagne* (1872):
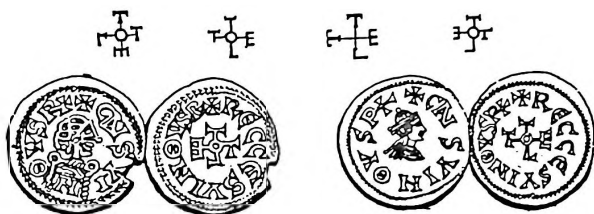
Toletum (Toledo)

Morrison and Grunthal, in their important *Carolingian Coinage* (New York 1967) made no attempt to reproduce or represent the numerous diverse monograms on that coinage. In descriptions of coins issued by the various rulers named Charles the term "Karolus Monogram" appears many times. This most famous of all coin monograms has one essential format, which did not keep engravers from playing around with it a bit, as the following examples of Charlemagne's coinage show:
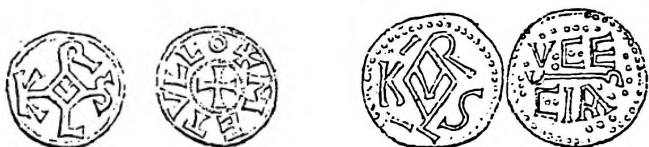
Some other forms of this monogram can be seen in these coins of Charles the B. (Emperor 875-877):

After the 10th century monograms were more elaborately contrived, but were used less often.

| Gui I | Gervais | Manasses II | Renaud I |

| Raoul | Samson | Henri I | Guillaume I | Gui I |
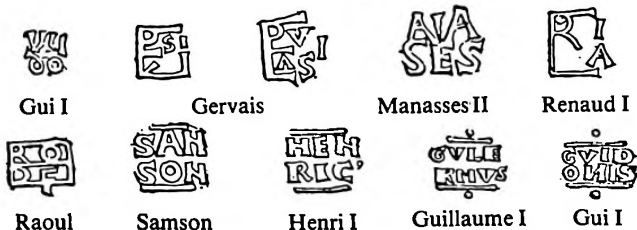
Monograms on coins of the Archbishops of Reims. Nearly all of these could have been constructed with four simple punches.

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Identification of the monogram on a medieval coin may be the key to identifying the coin itself, particularly if the other legends are partially or wholly unreadable. References are generally inadequate and incomplete, and often some cryptographic work is necessary. First, the letters are identified. That isn't always simple, as the above examples show (Does one of them read DESI?). Next, try to relate the letters to the other legends or to known facts about the provenance of the coin, its area of issuance, etc.

V. WORD SEPARATORS

More often than not, the principal legends on medieval European coins are circular and run clockwise in the fashion of modern coins. In preparing dies for the earlier medieval coins, however, engravers rather frequently engraved the legend on the dies as it would be read. Then when the planchet was struck, the legend came out backwards, or retrograde. In either case the beginning of the legend is usually noted by a natural division such as an extension of a figure to the edge or by a cross ✤. When the legend runs across the field, it can be arranged around a cross, in the form of a cross, in boustrophedonic style (i.e., lines running in alternate directions), or in other ways. Usually the direction of the legend is readily apparent. The division between words, however, may not be so apparent.

On ancient Roman coins, words had sometimes been separated by dots, sometimes by spacing, sometimes by placement, and sometimes not at all. In medieval manuscripts words were usually separated by spacing, as today. But in medieval coin engraving words often were not separated. A person reading the inscription on such a coin—during four-fifths of the middle ages not many people besides the clergy and a few aristocrats could read anyway—was expected to know the words so well that he (occasionally she) would know where they stopped and where they started. Unseparated words on coins may have resulted as much from a desire to save space as from deliberate custom. There are indications that engravers separated words when they could and when they were literate enough to know how.

For example, a coin of Otto I and his wife Adelaide has this inscription in a crowded outer ring around the portrait of the emperor:

OTTOREXADELhEID

The reverse, uncrowded by a portrait, has ODDO in the inner circle in the four corners of a cross and:

✚REX + D⟍ILR⟍A

REX DEI GRATIA   King by the Grace of God

This coin illustrates the use of the cross as a separator of words as well as marking the beginning of a legend. The cross, made with one punch:

I   or ' , ✚ or ✤

was the most common word separator on medieval coins.

The above coin also illustrates the use of a slanted line to signify letters omitted in an abbreviated word, and the unblushing failure of the engraver to separate words

when space did not permit. The manuscript abbreviation of DEI GRATIA, by the way, in Otto's time, was often DI G̅R̅A̅. The engraver of this coin, who did not have space for writing it that way with his punches, slanted the overhead line and put it in the middle of the shortened words. One might ask why he simply did not spell out DEI instead of coming up with D𝗜/I, which uses the same amout of space. After a thousand years, he cannot tell us. But coin engraving in those days much more free-spirited than it is today. There was room for decision making on the spot, with hammer held over punch.

The short staight line (⌑ , ⬙ or ⬗) was used as a word separator also, and care must be taken to interpret it correctly.

The explanation for the spelling OTTO on the obverse and ODDO on the reverse can only be guessed at. Both were common spelling of the same rather common name. Our whimsical moneyer may have wanted variety, or—more likely—the reverse die may have been prepared by a different engraver.

Engravers in the later middle ages, with large kits of different kinds of punches for making ornaments and portraits, could be inventive with their word separators. Some coins of Flanders have a sign separating words which looks like a tiny fleur-de-lis. On some coins of Flanders, Germany, and Bohemia, two small circles put together to resemble the figure 8 serve as separators. On 15th century coins of Baer in the Netherlands we find stars (✩) and a device like ✱.

Besides the crosses, the most frequently used separators were dots:

The single dot (·), sometimes in the middle of the line, sometimes at the base;

The double dot (:), very common;

Three dots arranged in various ways (⋮, ∴ , °°° , ⦂°); and

Four dots (⸭), used as an apparent substitute for a cross.

The presence of a dot or several dots does not automatically mean, however, they are word separators. The dot punch was a handy one to have, and engrave. often used dots as decorations, sometimes even in the middle of words.

VI. THE GRAMMAR OF MEDIEVAL NUMISMATIC LATIN

Just how much Latin does a collector of medieval European coins need to know in order to understand the inscriptions? Since most words on coins have their endings chopped off, it might be argued that only a knowledge of basic forms of the most common personal and place names and a very limited vocabulary is needed.

It is certainly not necessary to become a proficient Latin scholar. But the decipherment of abbreviated forms often demands considerable knowledge, and the reconstruction of legends and mottoes in their numismatic and historical contexts requires more.

Medieval Latin in some ways is much simpler than classical Latin. Few of the churchmen who spoke and wrote Latin as the universal language of educated men were experts. What they used most of the time was basic Latin, or broken Latin, mixed with colloquial adaptations. A simplified form of this complicated language was needed for oral communication and letters.

Those who used it were also faced with the task of keeping the language current with the changing world and spreading geography. The people in France, Italy and Spain developed their own versions, with a great deal of what we would call slang, such as CAPITANEVS, from CAPVT, "head." These local words, written in classical forms, became part of the medieval Latin vocabularies used by monks and clerks.

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The words used in medieval Latin fill expensive dictionaries of several volumes. Fortunately, the legends on medieval coins do not include a large number of words. If the abbreviations in the identifying legends (rulers' names, places, titles) offer problems, the grammar in these basic legends is simple. The grammar of the mottoes is much more complex, but their number is manageable, since the same mottoes are used on many coin types. The mottoes are usually taken from the Latin Vulgate Bible (itself composed in uncomplicated Latin) or have been written especially for the rulers issuing the coins; they are not generally as difficult as mottoes taken from classical authors.

The tools needed for completing abbreviated words and translating the inscriptions include the numismatic references appropriate to the coins, a Latin grammar, and a Latin-English, English-Latin dictionary. A medieval Latin dictionary is useful, if one can be obtained or if the local library has one which can be used when needed. Caution is necessary in using a dictionary of classical Latin, since the meanings of the words in medieval Latin are sometimes different. For work on the mottoes, it might be necessary at times to consult a book on Latin verbs.

The first thing to remember is that Latin has no required word order. DEI GRATIA and GRATIA DEI mean exactly the same thing—"By the Grace of God." On coins this often becomes D G, but it might just as well be GD. The cases of the two words (genitive of DEVS and ablative of GRATIA) make the meaning clear no matter which comes first.

MONETA NOVA COMITIS FLANDRIAE ("New Coin, or gros, of the Count of Flanders") could just as well be FLANDRIAE COMITIS MONETA NOVA or even FLANDRIAE NOVA MONETA COMITIS. Usually the adjective follows the noun, although medieval Latin was sliding into the word order most prevalent in the developing vernacular languages—subject + verb + complement or object. But occasionally a legend was used with a complex word order. On a 1356 coin of Ulm this legend appears:

FACTA EST MONETA NOVA ISTA VLME

This (ISTA) groschen (MONETA NOVA) was made (FACTA EST) at Ulm (VLME)

could just as well have been:

MONETA NOVA ISTA VLME FACTA EST

or something else.

Most Latin nouns are classified as masculine, feminine, or neuter, and there is a kind of standard declension related to these genders, although the deviations are voluminous. -VS is usually, not always, a masculine ending in the *nominative singular case* (i.e., when the word is being used as a subject). Examples are LVDOVICVS (Louis) and GROSSVS (gros, grosso, groat, or groschen). -A is a feminine ending, as in MARIA and MONETA (coin), and -VM is a neuter ending, as in OPIDVM or OPPIDVM (town) and SIGNVM (seal). Unfortunately, a great many of the most common words on medieval coins do not have these three most common gender endings. Examples are CIVITAS (city), feminine; DVX (duke, leader, doge) and COMES (count), both of which are masculine on coins but can be feminine when used elsewhere; CRVX (cross), feminine; and REX (king), masculine.

In classical Latin nouns have six cases: nominative (subject), vocative (used in addressing), genitive or possessive (on coins usually meaning "of—"), dative (indirect object), accusative (direct object), and ablative. The last case, the bane of students of Latin for 2500 years, very roughly means "with, by, at, or from——."

Of these cases, the collector of medieval coins usually needs to be concerned with the nominative, genitive, and ablative, although the others appear, especially in mottoes. The first declensions the student learns in the typical Latin class are the most common ones, and follow the gender endings listed above. Here are some simplified paradigms from the First and Second Declensions:

	M	F	N
		Singular	
Nom.	GROSSVS	MONETA	OPPIDVM
Gen.	GROSSI	MONETAE	OPPIDI
Abl.	GROSSO	MONETA	OPPIDO
		Plural	
Nom.	GROSSI	MONETAE	OPPIDA
Gen.	GROSSORVM	MONETARVM	OPPIDORVM
Abl.	GROSSIS	MONETIS	OPPIDIS

In other declensions, the following forms are the most frequently found on medieval coins:

Nom. Singular: CIVITAS, DVX, PRINCEPS, COMES, REX

Gen. Singular: -IS, e.g. CIVITATIS, DVCIS, PRINCIPIS, COMIT, REGIS

Abl. Singular: -E, e.g., CIVITATE, DVCE, PRINCIPE, COMITE, REGE

Gen. Plural: -VM, e.g., CIVITATVM, DVCVM, PRINCIPVM, COMITVM, REGVM

The above represent the most common, but not by any means. all. of the forms of nouns found in the basic identifying legends. In the mottoes the forms are more complex, and the assistance of a grammar or of a Latin scholar is frequently needed for translation.

Another case ending often appears on the names of towns on medieval coins—the *locative singular*, ending in -I or -E. The locative in classical Latin was used only for the names of certain towns, and the distinction between it and the ablative is often obscure. VLME, "at Ulm," in the example given above, would be considered locative by some scholars.

The -E ending can give other kinds of trouble. In addition to denoting the ablative of many words, and the locative of some place names, it was often engraved on medieval coins instead of the genitive singular or nominative plural ending -AE, which may have been pronounced like e in "bet" by medieval Latin speakers, SABAVDIE, for example, may be written instead of SABAVDIAE, and may mean, depending on the context, "by Savoy" or "at Savoy."

The genitive plurals -ORVM, -ARVM, -IVM, and -VM are most often found on coins when the legends refer to a people instead of a country, as in:

BRITANNORVM	"of the Britons"
FRANCORVM	"of the Franks," "of the French"
ZVEVORVM	"of the Swevi (Swedes)"
VENECIARVM	"of the Venetians"

Since Latin uses few prepositions, the basic coin legends consist mostly of nouns and adjectives. Adjectives are declined much like nouns. For example:

Nom. Sing.	MONETA NOVA
Gen. Sing.	MONETAE NOVAE, or sometimes MONETE NOVE
Gen. Plu.	MONETARVM NOVARVM

Latin adverbs are very scarce on medieval coins, even in mottoes, and need not concern us here. Verbs are another matter. The Latin verb system is quite complicated for English speakers without a foundation of general grammatical theory. Unless the numismatist wants to undertake the study of Latin verbs, the best method is to buy one of the inexpensive books which gives paradigms of typical verbs and use it. Practice and search will still be necessary, but the number of mottoes and exhortations containing verb-forms is not formidable. Some of the difficult ones appear quite often over the years of the middle ages, so that abbreviations are spelled out on some coins and occasional translations can be found in catalogs. For example, the following sentence, which appears on a 14th century coin of Flanders, also appears with varying degrees of abbreviation on hundreds of other European coin types:

BENEDICTV. SIT ‑ NOME ፧ DNI ፧ NRI ፧ IHV ፧ XPI

BENEDICTVM SIT NOMEN DOMINI NOSTRI DEI IESV CHRISTI
Blessed be the name of the Lord our God Jesus Christ.

The verb SIT (3rd person singular present subjunctive of SVM, "to be."), is difficult if one does not know it, but after deciphering the rest of the words one can easily guess the meaning of SIT. The guess can then be confirmed by reference to a grammar.

It isn't all so easy, of course. Numismatic Latin in abbreviated medieval form can sometimes baffle the experts. But it is easy enough to encourage collectors who know little Latin to undertake to read the inscriptions on their coins with the increased understanding that comes from complete, instead of partial, knowledge.

VII. NAMES OF PERSONS AND PLACES

Our concept of nationhood hardly existed during most of the middle ages. Only toward the end of the period, in the 15th century, as the feudal system was breaking down, did the modern concept of a country or nation start taking hold. Noblemen and commoners alike owed allegiance to their overlords (earls, dukes, bishops,

kings, princes) rather than to countries. The larger cities were often virtually independent or under high-ranking churchmen. Even in the land with the most consistently unified government, England, the people were part French and part English, and the French kings of England claimed much of what is now France. For these reasons, the key to identifying most medieval coins when an appropriate plate or precise description cannot be found is the identification of both rulers and places.

Turning the Germanic, Slavic, and Celtic names of the rulers of medieval Europe into Latin was not easy; in fact it was often impossible. But the moneyers, and their ecclesiastical mentors, tried to do so. The result was a profusion of diverse spellings, which makes the use of word "misspelling" rather inappropriate. It is not helpful when the same coin for the same ruler is engraved by different men who ask different priests how to spell their lord's name in Latin and receive different answers. Thus the good German name VLRIC might and did become VLRICVS, ODALRICVS and VODALRICVS with all possible abbreviations and vagrant spellings.

Some place names are spelled in standardized ways, with the Latin names for the cities dating to the days of Roman administration. But in the earlier centuries, on the continent at least, there was great uncertainty whether to use O or V (vowel) in a name, probably because the two vowels were pronounced much alike. Thus we have

> TORONVS and TVRONVS for Tours
> TOLOSA and TVLVSA for Toulouse

Reference lists are essential because of the profusion of mints and prevalence of abbreviations. Often the local name of a place was written without any attempt at latinization, while another type from the same place would use a latinized form, or something which the moneyer thought was a Latin form. Wuerzburg, for example appeared at various times as:

> WIR3IBVRC, WIRCEBVRG, WIRᴧIBVRG (misspelled),
> WIRCEBVRCH, and WIRCEBVRGENSIS

The letter W was usually written VV in this and similar words.

Latinized place names on medieval coins often appear in the genitive case ᴄ adjectival forms. This is not a difficult matter, since the Latin genitive singular ᴜ most place names will usually be -AE (E) or -IS, and the adjectival ending is usually -ENSIS or -IENSIS, meaning "-ian" or "of —," as in PARIENSIS, "Parisian," or "of Paris".

In any case, most are abbreviated and the endings have to be surmised. To make it easier, medieval coin engravers often added the word CIVITAS, "city," or an abbreviation, or the variant CIVIS. The city of Orleans might be

> AVRELIANVS, AVRELIANIS CIVITAS, AVR CIV or AVREL CIV

But AVR CIV might also stand for AVRIACAE CIVITAS, "City of Orange." REMENSIS NVMMVS means "Coin of Rheims," while REMIS CIVITATIS means "City of Rheims." The city of Sneek, in the Low Countries, which had a name about as un-Latin as possible, used the legend MONETA NOVA SNEKENSIS, which might be translated "Sneekian shilling," or "gros of Sneek."

The ease of identification where both place and ruler are clear on a coin, provided, of course, that an adequate reference is available, is illustrated by the following 10th century coin:

The legends are:

VODALRICVSEPS/ • AVG CIVITAS

which stand for:

VLRICVS EPISCOPVS /   AVGVSTAE CIVITAS
Bishop Ulric / City of Augsburg

This means that the collector looks in a reference book for city-names which begin with AVG- in their latinized forms, and for one which had a bishop named Ulric. If such a city had three bishops named Ulric, the task becomes more complicated, and the collector has to find a specific description or a picture of his coin type.

In the temple on the reverse of the same coin the collector sees AZO. That is probably the name of AZO, a moneyer, with the Z backwards, a common error. Care must be taken not to confuse this name with the name of the city or the ruler. Also, one has to be careful in reading these early medieval coins not to confuse the places of minting with the kings, dukedoms or other political entities whose rulers authorized the coins.   The further back one goes in the Merovingian and Anglo-Saxon time, the oftener this problem appears. On a coin of Childebert II (575-595 A.D.), King of the Franks, the obverse reads   CHILDEBERTI ("Of Childebert") while the reverse reads TORONI ANTIMI M (TORONIS ANTIMI MONETARII, "Of Antimus, Moneyer of Tours").

On the reverse of the coins of the Anglo-Saxon King of Northumbria, EANRED (807-841) the names of numerous moneyers are engraved. One of these was named EANRED, like the king. The British Museum Catalogue of Anglo-Saxon coins lists a coin (No. 117) with the king's name garbled on the obverse to:

•EΛИЯEDE   (EANRED REX)

On the reverse of the coin the humble moneyer's name is spelled perfectly — •EANRED. Was this deliberate? Probably not. The reverse dies, the upper dies, were worn out much oftener than the obverse, or lower dies, and had to be re-engraved. Somebody engraved a new die with the name spelled correctly. But it would have been too expensive to throw away and re-engrave the older barbarized die.

Use of TVRONIS CIVIS

The appearance of the legend TVRONIS CIVIS (City of Tours) or the stylized castle which accompanies it or both on coins of several lands of western Europe in

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the middle ages may be confusing. The *gros tournois*, or Gros of Tours, a silver coin originally worth 12 deniers, was first minted at Tours, in the Abbey of St. Martin. It was so useful a coin, and became so popular throughout Europe, that it was imitated at several places and the castle became a sort of symbol of authenticity to put on silver coins. Some reproduced the whole device, legend TVRONIS CIVIS, and castle, to show people it was a good coin, even though the ruler who authorized the coin might have no connection with Tours.

Denier of Philip Augustus of France, 1180-1223, minted at Tours

Total Barbarization of Legends

The collector may well encounter coins of the early medieval centuries whose legends appear to make no sense at all. They don't. The marks are meaningless, because an engraver who could neither read nor write simply put down a series of signs which looked like letters to him, in imitation of a coin he was copying, which coin may have been barbarized itself. Here are some examples from Anglo-Saxon sceattas:

+ ᴄVΛℼONVΛ +
OTΛVℼVΛHVΛIIO
VᴎᴑΛVℼ VΛᴎVOO

Many of these barbarized coins are catalogued and illustrated. Many are not.

Lists in Appendix

In the Appendix are lists of names of persons and places on medieval European coins, as they were spelled and abbreviated. The lists are only introductory. However, an attempt has been made to include the most common personal names, and enough place names to show representative patterns.

VIII. THE GENERAL LATIN VOCABULARY OF MEDIEVAL COINS

Besides personal and place names, the words and legends on medieval European coins can be classified as functional terms such as titles and words for different kinds of political divisions; qualifiers to names and titles; short religious phrases; longer religious sayings, quotations, or mottoes; and words or sentences relating directly to the coins, their types or manufacture. Because of the 1000-year history of medieval coinage and the diversity in educational backgrounds of the coin-makers, there is considerable variety in the forms of the words, including abbreviations and divergent spellings, although the vocabulary is not large, and is manageable.

The most common title, of course, is REX, and the least common may be ABBATISSA (Abbess). The most common word for a political entity is CIVITAS (city), while the least common could be VICVS (unwalled town). A qualifier reminiscent of ancient Roman coins is this uncommon use of AVGVSTVS: OTTO IMPERATOR AVGVSTVS ("Otto the Emperor the Augustus" or "Emperor Otto the August").

It helps that a good majority of medieval coin inscriptions are short, although they lengthened noticeably in the last three centuries of the middle ages, as coin fashions began to approach the wordy legends of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries.

In the later medieval centuries Latin sayings, mottoes, religious expressions, and quotations from the Vulgate Bible began to be used on the larger coins, such as a gold noble of Edward III of England, which has this legend on the reverse:

IhCꞏΛVTEⰯTRΛⰯꞆIEꞄS P MEꝹIVM ILLORVM IBΛI

IESVS AVTEM TRANSIENS PER MEDIVM ILLORVM IBAT
But Jesus, passing through the midst of them, went his way

The most common short religious phrase is DEI GRATIA or GRATIA DEI; a close follower is XPISTIANA RELIGIO ("For the Christian faith"). AVE MARIA GRA PL [GRATIA PLENA] ("Hail Mary, Full of Grace") appears on a coin of Vienne, in Feudal France. The same city has:
BENEDICTA SIT SANTA TRINITAS
Blessed be the Holy Trinity

Numerals

The Latin cardinal numerals only occasionally are used, but the standard ordinal numbers PRIMVS, SECVNDVS, TERTIVS, QVARTVS, QVINTVS, SEXTVS, SEPTIMVS, OCTAVVS, NONVS, and DECIMVS, particularly the first five, are rather frequent. They are usually in the masculine (i.e., -VS instead of -A or -VM) because they refer to male rulers like LVDOVVICVS SECVNDVS or BELA QVARTVS. They are often abbreviated (e.g., T, TER, TERTS for TERTIVS). Occasionally Roman numerals are used after the names of rulers.

The freedom of the Latin word order is demonstrated on a coin of Simon Boccanegra of Genoa (1356-1363):

DVX ꞼANVENSIVM PRIMVS
First Duke of the Genoese

ates

During the 14th century yearly dates,which had been a feature of moslem coins from their beginnings, occasionally appeared on European coins; in the 15th century they became more frequent. On a gros of Aix-la-Chapelle the date ꞏANꞏDNIꞏMCCC LXXII ("Year of Our Lord 1372") is engraved. A century later, the same city has 1Ꝝ89 (1489) on a demi-gros and 1Ꝝ 9l (1491) on a double gros.

The first use of "Arabic" numerals in Christian Europe was on a coin of St. Gall in Switzerland: 1Ꝝ2Ꝝ (1424). The shapes of the numerals, like the shapes of letters, vary on the coins that displayed them. But the numerals most commonly used looked something like:

1   2   3   Ꝛ   7   6   V   8   9   0

The use of Ꝛ or Ᵹ for 4, 7 or 7 for 5, and V for 7 raises some possibility of confusion with the word separator   , the sign used for ET (7), and the letter L. The abbreviation for CON-, and -VS (9), as has already been pointed out, looks like the numeral 9. However, since the medieval numerals usually were used on coins only for writing four-digit dates, problems in reading are likely to arise only when the dates are partially obliterated.

IX. OTHER LANGUAGES AND SCRIPTS

Slavonic

Specimens of the first purely Russian coinage, that of the Princes of Kiev in the 10th and 11th centuries, are hard to find today. They were modeled on Byzantine coins, and from the beginning used the script invented in the ninth century by Sts. Cyril and Methodius, known today as Cyrillic. The script on these coins, except for a few letters, is essentially the same as modern Russian.

The Mongol conquest and rule from the middle of the 13th century meant a long hiatus in Russian coin-making. During the Mongol period, Islamic, Byzantine, and western European coins were used in those parts of Russia where better money was needed than skins and cut, unstamped silver. When Russian coinage was resumed in the 14th century, the small irregular "wire coins" and larger irregular pieces made their debuts. Wire kopeks were struck from silver wire which had simply been inserted in hinged dies before the dies were struck. The natural result was a coin of irregular and uncertain shape, usually with fragmentary legends. The letters on these coins are as legible as Latin letters on medieval coins, despite a tendency to combine letters.

Russian wire money

The language used on these coins is Russian, and once the differences between the old alphabetic forms and the modern ones are mastered, a modern Russian dictionary will translate most of the words.

Russian coinmakers were not as fond of abbreviations as their western counterparts, although they used them when necessary. Two important words appear over and over on these coins, usually just before the ruler's name:

KNAZ -	BEΛIK -		
Knyaz—	Velik—	Great Prince	(Grand Duke)
Prince	Great		

These words will have various endings, depending on the case used and the perception of spelling Slavonic held by the engravers, who were often Greek, German, or Polish. As time went on, spelling changed, as it did in the west, and abbreviations became more common. The Russian engravers usually designed reverses with lines of inscriptions, Byzantine style, but there is no correspondence between the end of a word and the end of a line.

Cyrillic letters were also used on medieval Serbian and Bulgarian coins. The Serbians alternated between Cyrillic and Latin letters, occasionally using Greek. In one Serbian hoard 17 coins bore the inscription КРѢΛЬ (*Kral'* means "king") and 11 coins read STEFAN REX. Both legends refer to King Stefan Dushan (1331-1355), the first Serbian emperor. An abbreviated legend on some Serbian coins is СѲЬ-ZР (*Stefan Zar,* "Tsar Stephen"). The name George appears frequently on medieval Serbian coins, taking such forms as ГЮРЬГ in Cyrillic and GVRG in Latin letters.

Serbian Coin with Cyrillic legend

A few Slavic words appear in Latin script. Some 12th century coins of Koepnick use CNE and KES (abbreviations of Old Prussian KNAES) for "Prince;" GOSPODI (lord), CRAGL (for KRAL') and BAN (latinized to BANVS) for "Duke" appear on coins of Bosnia; and WAIWODE (sometimes abbreviated to W D), meaning "Governor," is on some coins of Wallachia.

Arabic

While Europeans north of the Mediterranean were struggling painfully back from the economic and cultural stagnation of the Dark Ages, the Moslems in Spain, North Africa, and the Near and Middle East were creating a brilliant civilization sweetened by lucrative trade between their own cities and those of the Christians. They had standardized gold, silver and copper coins in abundance while the Europeans were squeezing their only circulating coins, crude silver pennies.

The crusaders recognized the economic advantages of trading with the Moslems by striking gold and silver coins with imitations of Arabic legends, sometimes readable, more often not; Alfonso VIII of Castille (1158-1214) issued gold dinars for his moslem trade with a strictly Christian inscription in Arabic script, probably trying to do a bit of proselyting with the coins; the Norman kings of Sicily and South Italy issued bilingual Arabic and Latin coins; and here and there other European moneyers were busied with strange Arabic letters. The forerunner of all these Arabic imitations, and in many ways the strangest, was a gold dinar minted by King Offa of Mercia (757-796), apparently for trade in the Mediterranean. Unlike many of the later Christian imitations, this coin was well-engraved and struck, and it bore the orthodox moslem legends, including "Mohammed is the Prophet of God."

Gold dinar of Offa of Mercia (England)

Gold dinar of Alfonso VIII of Castille

Crusader imitations of Arabic coins

Without including the moslem coins of Spain, a rather large collection could be made of medieval European coins with Arabic inscriptions. However, the Arabic alphabet is complex, at least in the beginning of study, the Kufic letters used generally on medieval coins are hard to read without extensive explanation and practice, and often the Christian engravers barbarized the legends to the point of illegibility. There is not space here to treat the subject, but the standard references on reading Arabic numismatic inscriptions will be helpful in deciphering those inscriptions which are engraved with reasonable correctness.

Greek

Since the Greek alphabet, after a slow start, was used on Byzantine coins, one would have expected that the crusader kings, princes, and dukes of the Orient, whose Christian subjects were Greek-speaking, would use Greek legends on their coins. But they were trying to transplant the rude civilization of feudal Europe to the Levant, and for the most part the legends on their coins are in Latin letters in the hard-to-read massive style made by broad wedges and heavy punches. Exceptions are the early coins of the Princes of Antioch and the coinage of the Counts of Edessa and the Latin "Emperors" of Constantinople.

On these coins variant spellings such as:

BAΓΔOINOC, BAVΔOINOC, and BAVΔOVINOC

for Baldwin or Baudouin, coupled with the normal medieval variety in abbreviations, cause some difficulty. Sometimes Latin and Greek word-forms and letters are mixed, as in

BAVΔOVINOC KOMEC   (*Baudovinos Comes*, "Count Baldwin")

The use of exhortatory slogans in Greek may send the numismatist to a Greek grammar or dictionary, since catalogs rarely translate them. An example is:

KYPIE BOIIΘEI TANKPIΔI
Kurie bonthei Tankridi
"God help Tancred"

often abbreviated to K̄EBO TANKP or worse.

Coins of crusader Antioch with Greek legends

The use of Greek letters for the name of Christ on western European coins has already been discussed. Occasionally a coin of southern Italy (Naples, Amalfi, and others) appears on the market which has a Greek legend. This is because Byzantine influence was strong in those areas until the Normans became dominant in the 12th century.

Neapolis in Greek letters on a Neapolitan coin of the 9th century

The following table lists capital letters in the Greek alphabet (later numismatic style) which are different from Latin capitals. It must be remembered that the Cyrillic alphabet was derived directly from Greek, and at times Cyrillic coin inscriptions look like Greek.

Γ	G	Ξ Ƶ X	X	Φ	PH, F
Δ	D	Π	P	X	CH, KH, C
H	E	P	R	Ψ	PS
Θ	TH	Ϛ ΣCS	S	Ωω	O
Λ	L	ΥV	V, U	Ȣ	OU

Hebrew

It may seem strange to read about Hebrew inscriptions in connection with medieval European coins. But in Poland in the 12th and 13th centuries, during the first Piast monarchy, much of the kingdom's monetary business was in the hands of Jews, including the minting of coins, and Jewish minters felt secure enough to put mottoes and their names on Polish coins in Hebrew letters. The collector who acquires such a coin unattributed may believe it is a strange form of ancient Jewish coin, instead of a medieval European one.

Hebrew inscriptions on Polish bracteates (one-sided coins)

There are still differences of opinion about these coins—were they minted for general circulation or for use principally in the Jewish settlements? Some call them tokens instead of coins. The weight of scholarly numismatic opinion, however, favors the idea that they were genuine coins, struck at one mint (Gnesno) under royal approval. Some say they were the only legal tender in Poland at their time. Several hundred of these coins have been found and studied.

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Runic

The runic alphabet used by the Germanic tribes apparently developed from old North Italian alphabets and was in use, at least partially, at the time of the Roman historian Tacitus (d. 120 A.D.), who records the use of runes on sticks in magic divinations. Originally all the letters were angular, without curves, so that they could more easily be carved on wood, bark, or stone. Later a few curved letters crept in.

Runes were used on coins in four countries, if we want to count a rare type or two issued by a Swedish jarl. On Anglo-Saxon sceats of the 7th, 8th, and 9th centuries, they were sometimes used on coins for the names of monarchs, and sometimes for the names of moneyers. In Denmark, between 1065 and 1075 A.D., a king with strong antiquarian leanings, Sven Estridsen or Sweyn II, had runes put on Danish coins. Occasionally the runes would spell the king's name in Latin, but more often they would give the name of the moneyer and the mint city in Old Norse form. But by this time most people had forgotten how to write Old Norse in runic letters, and misspellings and blundered inscriptions on these coins are quite plentiful.

Several runic alphabets, or *futharks* (a word made from the sounds of the first five letters) were developed at different places at different times. The Anglo-Saxon *futhark* had 33 letters. In Scandinavia the number was eventually reduced to 16, but these were not enough, and dots were put on the lines of some of the letters to indicate additional sounds. The Danish coin inscriptions in runes use these dotted symbols, which must have posed difficulties to the engravers and added to their problems in spelling.

Perhaps under the influence of King Sweyn's coins, a contemporary Norwegian king, Olaf Kyrres (1067-93), issued some pennies with the runic legend *Olafr Kunukr* (Olaf the King). Strangely, the runic legends were put on the reverses of the coins, while many of the obverse legends are such badly blundered imitations of Latin that they cannot be read. Were the moneyers literate in runic Old Norse but not in Latin? The explanation is probably that the obverses and reverse were engraved by different persons. Perhaps the dies with correctly spelled runic legends came from a central source, encouraged by the king, although the names of several moneyers ʼ these coins are also written in runes.

Runic alphabet

Runic legends on coins are often retrograde. Writing runes backwards was perfectly acceptable.

It is often hard to identify a runic letter on a coin as such, and a runic legend may look to the uninitiated like a baffling or blundered Latin legend. The plentiful runic legends on Anglo-Saxon coins were not firmly identified as such until the 19th century. The problem is compounded on those Anglo-Saxon coins which mix Latin and runic letters. However, catalogs which transcribe the inscriptions and identify runic letters on Anglo-Saxon coins are easy to find.

Other Vernacular Languages

So far in this book mention has been made of legends with words from Latin, Greek, Russian, Serbian, Arabic, Hebrew, and Old Norse. To complete the story on

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Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse, it should be mentioned that the Anglo-Saxon names of moneyers and their cities are usually in native English form, not latinized. The Norse word CVNVNG ("king") appears on some coins of Northumberland. Also, many non-runic identifications of moneyers on Scandinavian coins are in Old Norse form, occasionally with phrases like ASKELS MO[T] — "Askell's die."

Perhaps 99 percent of medieval coin legends are in Latin form. But some legends in French, German, Italian and Dutch can be found on medieval coins.

French inscriptions are found, curiously, on the coins of King William of Scotland (1165-1124), who used French moneyers, on coins of a few barons of France, Lorraine and the Low Countries (12-14th centuries), on some crusader coins, and coins of King Charles VIII minted in the Italian city of Aquila about 1495. They are the most numerous of the western vernacular legends on medieval coins. The longest French legend is on a crusader coin:

> PIERE PA LA GRACE D DIE ROI DE IERUZALEM E D' ChIPRE
> PIERRE PAR LA GRACE DE DIEU ROI DE IERUZALEM ET DE CHIPRE
> Peter by the Grace of God King of Jerusalem and of Cyprus

The warmest is TOVL NO CITEI—*Toul notre cité,* "Toul our city"—of 14th century Toul.

Possibly the oldest coin inscription in German is the word GOT on some early Bohemian coins, which is believed to mean "God" because it occupies the same place on the coins as the Latin DEVS and the Slavic BOZE on other coins of the me period. Other German legends include:

> HIR STEIT DE BISCOP ("Here stands the Bishop")—Magdeburg
> HERZOG BERNHART ("Count Bernhart")—Carinthia
> CUNECH OTTACAR ("King Ottacar")—Steir, or Styria
> SCHILT VON STEIR ("Shield of Styria")—Hungary
> STAT WESELEN—City of Wesel

Dutch or Low German legends, often hard to distinguish from German, include such examples as:

> MARGRETA VROVVE VAN DEN BERG ("Margaret Lady of Berg")
> DIT IS DER ARMEN PEN ˙ ("This is the penny of the poor")
> HER GODERTE ER VAN HENB ("Sir Godfrey, Lord of Heinsberg")
> MVNT DE. STAT VAN VTR. HER GEFT ONS VRED ("Coin of the City of Utrecht. Lord give us peace")

No Italian legends were put on medieval coins minted in Italy. But the Serbian princes who ruled Split, across the Adriatic, used Italian forms of the city's name on their coins (SPALATINO, SPALATO, and SPALETO). The Italian word for "Count" (CONTE) was also used on some of the trans-Adriatic coins. The Knights Hospitaler used GRAMMASTRO ("Grand Master") on some coins of Rhodes.

The pickings for the vernacular languages were slim. Latin was king.

X. CONCLUSION

If anyone reading this little book has gained the impression that the author believes that by and large, classical coins are easier to read than medieval coins, it is a correct impression. For classical coins, as well as the coins of the hundreds of coin-issuing entities known collectively as "The Greek World," there are inexpensive

general guides in print. The world of medieval European coins is far too complex for that kind of book. The closest thing to it on the current market is the three-volume treatise of Engel and Serrure (See *Notes on Books,* in the Appendix), but this is in the nature of a general history and description, not a catalog.

However, someone with an elementary knowledge of Latin, or willing to spend a few hours studying a beginning Latin grammar, can soon find the door opening. The biggest hurdle may not be the language, but the shapes of the letters. Recognizing them, if they are reasonably well struck, simply requires some practice.

The next biggest hurdle, without a doubt, is the abbreviations. There are books which help somewhat with this problem. (See *Notes on Books*). But no one, not even a medieval numismatic expert, can escape bafflement in trying to decipher and interpret some legends which cannot easily be found in the references.

The challenge of identifying and reading medieval European coins adds tremendously to the interest they arouse. It will never be possible, even with computers, to compile reference books which will take away that challenge. The assiduous collector will always be finding letters with divergent shapes, names spelled or abbreviated in different ways, and mistakes which the reference books do not list.

The middle ages is a romantic, fascinating period for some, and a cruel, ignorant, dirty period for others. Both views are correct, of course. In the contradictions and contrasts lie much of the attraction of the period. Medieval European coins take on the mystery of the age. They become easier to read in the 15th century, but by that time the shape of modern coinage can be perceived, and much of the mystery is gone.

Some Place Names on Medieval European Coins
—Selected as representatives out of thousands

Name on coins	Usual English name	Some variants, abbreviations, and grammatical forms on coins
ACCAIA	Achaia	ACH9 ACCAIE ACH ACHI ACHΛIE
ALGARBVS	Algarve	ALGARBI ΛLG ÆL ALGA
ANDEGAVIA	Anjou	ANDECAVIS ANDEGAVIE A DE VE SIS
AQVISGRANI	Aix-la-Chapelle	AQVIS AQVENSIS
ARAGONVM	Aragon	ARAG ARAGONE
ARELATVM	Arles	AR ARELA ARLEA ARELATO
AROCII	Aarhus	ARVSIA
ATENES	Athens	ATHEN ATH ACTENAR
AVRELIANVS	Orleans	AVRILIANIS AVRELIENSIS
BARCINONA	Barcelona	BARCINO BARQVINO
BAVWARIE	Bavaria (Gen.)	
BETOREGAS	Bourges	BEOREGAS BETORGAS BETOREX
BOEMIA	Bohemia	BOEMIE BO
BOSNA	Bosnia	BOSꞰ BΛ BOSꞰ Є
BRITANIA	Brittany	BRITANIE BRITAN
BRVNESVICVS	Brunswick	BRV BRVSWIKC BRVNESVICENSIS
BVRDEGALA	Bordeaux	BVRDEG BVRDIGLIA BORDIGALA
CAENTWARA	Canterbury	CENTW CANTI CON
CASTELLA	Castile	CASTELLE CASTE
CIPRI	Cyprus (Gen.)	ChIPR CIPI CYPR CI·PRO
CLARENTIA	Clarence, Chiarenza	CLARENCA CLARENCIA
COLONIA	Cologne	COLVNIA COLONNE COLONIEN CLN
CRACOV	Cracow	CRACOVIENSES
DOFERA	Dover	DOFRAN DOFRA DOVER
EPERWIC	York	EOFORWIC EOFRO EBORACVM
FLANDRIA	Flanders	FLADRIE FLAÆO FLA FÆDIE FLANDRES (Fr.)
GRANTB	Cambridge (from GRANTABRICGE)	GRANT GAN RAT
HASSIA	Hesse	HASSIE
HIBERNIA	Ireland	HIBN HYBERIAE
IANVA	Genoa	IANVE IAN IANVENSIVM
IERVSALEM	Jerusalem	IERL ꞌ M IERH ꞌ M IERLM IRLNI
LEGIONVS	Leon	LEGIONIS LLEGIONIS L

LEMOVICAS	Limoges	LEMOVECAS LEMOVEX LEMO LIMOVIX LIMODICAS
LOTORIGIA	Lorraine	LOT LOTHO⁹ LOTHORINGIE LVTVREGIE
LVBICENS	Abbreviation of LVBICENSIS Of the people of Lubeck	LVBICE LVBIC
LVCENBVRG	Luxemburg	LVCĒBVRGĒSIS LVCE⁹ LVCEꝆBVRGEꝆ LVCEB
LVGDVNVM	Lyons, Laon	LV LVG LVGDVNO LVGDVNV LVGDVNI
LVNDIN	London	LVNDONI LVNDENEI LVND LV
MASSILIA	Marseilles	MASILIA MISILIE MAS MA
METTIS	Metz	METENSIS MES MET METN-S MEDIOMATRICVM
MEDIOLANVM	Milan	MEDIOL MEDIOLANI
MONTE	Berg (Literal translation)	MOTE BERG⁹
NAVARRA	Navarre	NAVARRE NAR NAV
OV-DENꝆAR	Odense	OÐN OÐE
OCSENE	Oxford	OXSEN OCEN COXE
PARISIVS	Paris	PARIS PA PARIVS PARISI
PECTAVIS	Poitiers	PECTAVOS PECTAV PECT
POLONIA	Poland	POLO
PORTVGALIA	Portugal	PORTV PORTVGL PO PORTVGALL
PRAGA	Prague	PRAG
PRVSSIE	Prussia (Gen.)	PRVSI PRVS
RASIE	(Gen. of RASCIA) Rashka, a Serbian Province	R RAS
RAGVSIVM	Ragusa, Dubrovnik	RAGVSII RAGS RAG∽I
REMVS	Rheims	RIMVS REMENSIS REꝏSIS
RODIS	Rhodes	RODI ROD R RHODI
RODOMAGVS	Rouen	ROTOMO ROTOOM PTOTOM RODOMAGI
SABAVDIA	Savoy	SABAVD SABAVDIE
SCLAVONIA	Slavonia	SꝲLAVONIE SꝲLNOꝆIA SLAOꝆIA
SICILIA	Sicily	SICIL SICILIE
SPALATVS	Split	SPꝲLATINVS SPALATINO SPALETI SPꝲLATENSIS
TIRE	Tyre	TIRENSIS
TRECAS	Troyes	TRICAS
TREVERIS	Treves, Trier	TR
TVLVSA	Toulouse	TVLLO TOLOSA THOLOSA TOLVSA TOLO
TVRONVS	Tours	TVRONIS TORONIS

TVRECVM	Zurich	TVREGVM TVR THVRICENSIS
VENECIA	Venice	VENETENSIS VNCE VENECIAS
VIENNA	Vienne (France)	VIGENIANA VIEN
ZIHTVN	Sigtuna	ZITVN ZIT ZIN

Illustrative List of Personal Names on Medieval Coins

Name in most complete form found on medieval coins	*A common modern form*	*Some variants, grammatical forms and abbreviations on coins*
ALBERTVS	Albert	
ALFONSVS	Alfonso	ANFONS ALFONS AFOSV
AMALRICVS	Amaury, Amalric	AMAL
ARALD	Harold	HARALD AR ARA
BAVDOVINVS	Baldwin	BAVDOVINOS BALDVINVS
BOAMVNDVS	Bohemund	BOEMVNDVS
BOLEZLAVS	Boleslav	BOLIZLAVS BOIZLIAS BO
CAROLVS	Charles	KAROLVS CARLVS
CORADVS	Conrad	CHONRADVS CONRAVS CONRAD
EDVARDVS	Edward	EDVARDV
ELIONVS DE VILANOVA	Helion de Villeneuve	ELION D⁹ VILANOVE
FRIDRICVS	Frederick	FRID? FRIDIKVS FRIDERICVS
FERNANDVS	Ferdinand	FERRANDVS
GALTERIVS	Walter	WALTER GVALTERIVS
GVIDO	Guy	GVIOT GV G
ENRICVS	Henry	HEINRICVS HAINRICVS HINRICVS HIRI hENRI h
ERMANNVS	Herman	HERRIMANNVS HRMANN
LOTHARIVS	Lothair	LOTARIVS
HODO	Odo, Eudes	ODO
HVGO	Hugues	HVGVO
IACOBVS	Jacob, James	IACOBV IAC
IOHANNES	John	IOh⁹ ES IOh⁹ IOhS IOANES IHNS
IVDITA	Judith	
KANVTVS	Knut, Canute	CNVT CNVD
KAZIMIRVS	Casimir	KASIMIRI CAZIMIR
LVDOVICVS	Louis	LVDWIC LODOVIC LODOICVS HLVDOVVICVS
MAHNVS	Magnus	MAH
PETRVS	Peter	PIER PIERE (Fr.)
PIPINVS	Pepin, Pippin	PIPI ΠPIPI
PHILIPPVS	Philip	PhS Ph⁹
RAIMVNDVS	Raymond	RAMVNDVS RAMVNDS
ROBERTVS	Robert	R ROBT
RODVLFVS	Ralph, Rodolphus	RADVLFVS RADHVLFO
STEhANVS	Stephen	STEFA TEPAN

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SIFRIDVS	Siegfried	
VLRICVS	Ulric	OALRICVS VODALRICVS VLRICH
WILIELMVS	William	WILLAME WILAM GVILELMVS GV G
WLADIZILAVS	Vladislav	WLADISZILAVS WLADISLAVI

Titles on Medieval European Coins

Full form	*Translation*	*Grammatical forms, variants and abbreviations*
ABBAS	Abbot	
ABBATISSA	Abbess	
ARCิ ıl- EPISCOPVS	Archbishop	ẨPICO AREPVS AREPS
BISCOF (German)	Bishop	BISC
BANVS (Latinized Slavic)	Duke, Governor	BAN BANI
CAPITANEI (Pl.)	Captains, principal men	CAPI
COMES	Count	COMITIS COℳES COOO COS CŌ C
CRAGL (Slavic)	*kralj*, King	CRA
DESPOTVS	Despot	DCVPOTVS DESPO DESPOTI
DOMINVS	Lord	DOMNVS DOMINI DOMINIS DℳORVM D-I D
DVCISSA	Duchess	
DVX	Duke, doge	D
EPISCOPVS	Bishop	EPISSCO EP⁹ EP EPS
FRATER	Brother	F FR F̄R̄
GRAMMASTRO (Italian)	Grand Master (See MAGNVS)	GRAMAGST GRAM GRAN
GRAVE (German)	Count, *Graf*	GROF GREVE
IMPERATOR	Emperor	IMPERA IMP I̅M̅P̅R̅ IMPE INPERATR INPR
KES (Slavic)	Abbr. for KNAES, Prince	CNE
LANGRAVIVS	Landgrave, a Count with land	LANGRAV⁹ LANG LAN
MAGISTER	Master	M̅A̅G̅S̅T̅ M RI MAGISTRI MASTO MAR M
MAGNVS MAGISTER	Grand Master	MAG M
PRINCEPS	Prince	PRINC PRPS PR
RECTOR	Rector	RETOR RETO RET
REGINA	Queen	RNA R
REX	King	REGIS (Gen.) REI RIX RE X R E R
WAIWODE (Slav.)	Vaivode, Governor	W D

Some Useful Words Found on Medieval Coins

Words	*Meaning*	*Variants, abbreviations, etc.*
ANNO DOMINI	Year of our Lord	ANNO DOM ANNO DNI
		ANO DM AN DI
APOSTOLVS	Apostle	APOSTOLS
AVGVSTVS	The August One	
AVREA	Golden	
BASILICI	Of the Cathedral	BASELICI
BEATVS	Blessed, holy	BEATA (Fem.)
CASTRO	*Castrum,* fortified town	CASTRA CASTRV CAS' C CAS
CAPVT	Head	CAP
CIVITAS	City	CIVITATE CIVIATE CIVITAT
		CIVIS CIVI CIV CI C
CLIPEVS	Noble family	
COMVNITAS	Community, people	COMVN
DINARIVS	Denarius, denier	DINARIOS DINAR
ECCE	Behold, here is	
ECLESI	*Ecclesia,* Church	ECLESI ECLES
ET	And	E E ED Z Ƶ
FACTA	Made (Past part.)	FTA
FECIT	He made	FESET FIT FEC
FILIVS	Son	FILI
GROSSVS	Groschen, grosso	GROSSE GROSSENC
MATER	Mother	MATRI
MEDIVS	Half	
MEVS	My	
MONETA	Coin	MON M HONETA
MONETA NOVA	"New Coin," groschen, gros, shilling	MON NOVA M N
MONETARIVS	Moneyer	MVNITARIVS MVN M MONET MON
MVNAXTESIVS	Monastery	MVNAXTISII
MVNDI	Of the world	
NVMMVS	Coin, money	
OBRIVS	Purified gold	OBRIV
OSPITALIS	Of the Hospital	HOSPITALIS OSPITLIS
PATRONVS	Patron	PATRONA (Fem.) PAT PA
PAPA	Pope	PAPE
RACIO	*Ratio,* administration	RAC
RACIO FISCI	Fiscal administration	
RACIO DOMINI	The lord's administration	
SANCTVS	Saint	SANCTA (Fem.) SANTA SCI SCO S
SIG	*Sigillum,* Seal	SI

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SEDE	*Sedes* (Abl.) At the seat	
SOCII	(Pl. of SOCIVS) Allies	SOC
VEXILLIFER	Standard-bearer	
VICVS	Unwalled town	VICO
VILLA	Town	VLIL VLLA
VRBS	City	

Sample Religious Legends on Medieval Coins

AGNVS DEI QVI TOLLIT PECATA MVNDI MISERERE NOBIS   O Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. This sentence was abbreviated in all sorts of ways. Typical is: AGN·DEI·QVI·TOLIS· PECCA·MVD·MISE·NO.

AVXILIVM MEVM A DOMINO QVI FECIT CAELVM E TERRAM   [I will get] my help from the Lord, who made the heavens and earth.   Typical abbreviated form is: AVXILIVM MEVM A D⁹ NO QVI·F-Є ꞆЄLVℼ·Є· TERA̅N

BEATVS PETRVS   Blessed Peter

BENEDICTVS QVI VENIT IN NOMINE DOMINI   Blessed [is he] who comes in the name of the Lord

DEI GRATIA   By the Grace of God. Abbreviated typically to D-I, GR, DG, or DEIGRA

GLORIA TIBI DEVS SPES NOSTRA   Glory to Thee, God our Hope.

MARIA MATER DOMINI X̅P̅I̅   Mary Mother of Christ the Lord

MISERICORDIA D-I [DOMINI] REX

PER CRVCEM TVAM SALVA NOS XPE REDEMPTOR   By Thy Cross save us, O Christ the Redeemer

SIT TIBI CHRISTE DICATVS REGIVS ISTE DVCATVS   May this royal ducat be dedicated to Thee, O Christ. Typical abbreviation: SIT·T·XPE· DATV·REGIS ISTE DVCA

VITA XPISTIANA   The Christian life

XPISTIANA RELIGIO   For the Christian faith

XPE RESVRESIT   Christ arose

The medieval coin field is so large and many-faceted that the student has to seek out specialized books on the coins of the times and areas in which he is interested. Some of these books transcribe the legends, a few translate them, and many do neither. In any case, because of the varieties of coins and the erratic spellings, blunderings, and variations of the legends, most of the catalogs and reference books can only be used as approximate guides.

Dozens of books on medieval European coins are in print and available. But books treating medieval coin inscriptions are not plentiful. Grammars and dictionaries (Latin, Greek, Arabic, Russian, Old Norse, etc.) are helpful, of course. Below are other selected publications which may be useful as aids to reading and understanding the legends on the coins.

Craig, William D. *Germanic Coinages*. Mountain View (California) 1954.

An indispensable handbook which includes sketches of the main heraldic devices which appear on Germanic coins, listings of all minting entities with chronologies of rulers and office-holders, definitions of numismatic terms, and identification of names as they appear on coins.

Engel, Arthur, and Serrure, Raymond. *Traité de numismatique du moyen âge* [Treatise on Numismatics of the Middle Ages]. 3 volumes. First published Paris 1891-1905. Reprinted Bologna 1964.

In French. This work is the most complete overview of medieval European coinage in print today. It gives a general chronological and geographical treatment of medieval coins. The work is singularly useful and logically planned, although slightly out-of-date at places. The most common inscriptions are given, usually without translations. Illustrations are clear line drawings.

Grierson, Philip. "Numismatics " in *Medieval Studies,* ed. James M. Powell. Syracuse (New York) 1976, pp. 103-150.

A brief introduction to the state of scholarly research on medieval numismatics followed by a selective bibliography. A more complete bibliography can be found in Grierson's *Bibliographie numismatique*, Brussels 1966.

Hazlitt, W. Carew. *The Coinage of the European Continent; Middle Ages - 20th Century*. 1893; rpt. Chicago 1974.

A descriptive summary by country of the history of coinage in Europe from the Middle Ages through modern times. The modern reprint has additional bibliography and a 200 page supplement of Hazlitt's *Numismatic Notes* on various mints.

Lapa, Frank A. *Russian Wire Money*. Published by the Author, 1967.

16-page pamphlet. Although this introduction begins with the coins of Ivan IV (1533-1547), it will help those who want to read earlier Russian coin legends. The booklet is intended for persons who do not know Russian.

Mosher, Stuart. *Coin Mottoes and their Translations*. Reprinted from *The Numismatist*, 1948.

This 38-page pamphlet is one of the most valuable tools available to the collector of medieval coins, although the mottoes listed and translated cover all periods. The author does not claim either completeness or absolute accuracy in all translations. But errors are obviously few, and a very large number of medieval mottoes are included.

Plant, Richard J. *Arabic Coins and How to Read Them.* B.A. Seaby Ltd. London 1973.

A rather thorough treatment of medieval and modern numismatic Arabic, without emphasis on pronunciation or the spoken language. Contains a respectable amount of historical information to aid in understanding the legends. Recommended highly for non-Arabists studying Christian or Moslem coins with Arabic legends.

Rentzmann, Wilhelm. *Numismatisches Legenden-Lexicon des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit.* [Lexicon of Numismatic Legends of the Middle Ages and Modern Times]. Two parts in one volume. First printed Berlin 1865-1866. Reprinted Osnabruck 1969.

In German in Roman letters, easy to read. Contains lists of rulers with different spellings and abbreviations of their names, descriptions of representations of saints on coins, a section on coin legends and their abbreviated forms, a list of the Latin names of lands and cities, and a list of moneyers with variant spellings of their names. It is not complete, of course, but in its 500 pages a lot of information is crowded in fine print.

Schlickeysen, F.W.A. *Erklärung der Abkürzungen auf Münzen des Altertums, des Mittelalters und der Neueren Zeit* [Explanation of the Abbreviations on Coins of Antiquity, the Middle Ages and Modern Times]. Third improved and expanded edition revised by Prof. Dr. Reinhold Pallmann. First printed Berlin and Stuttgart 1896. Reprinted Graz 1961.

441 pages of legends and their abbreviations, plus brief lists of Greek and Roman legends and abbreviations, Russian moneyers and mint cities. Of moderate value to the student of medieval coinage. In German in Roman script.

Thomsen Collection. *Catalogue de la collection de monnaies de feu Christian Jürgensen Thomsen.* Part 2, *Les monnaies du moyen-âge.* 3 volumes. Copenhagen 1866-76.

The most comprehensive collection of medieval coins ever assembled and catalogued. Includes accurate transcriptions of legends and descriptions (in French) of types. A new edition, in English, of this catalogue is currently being published by Attic Books, Ltd. New York.

Wilber, Max. *Regenten-Tabellen.* [Lists of Sovereigns]. First printed Frankfurt and Oder 1906. Reprinted Graz 1961.

344 pages of tables in fine print (German black letter type) listing rulers from earliest known antiquity to the end of the 19th century, including classical and Egyptian rulers. Includes some from further Asia and America, but is particularly valuable for its meticulous listing of names and dates of rulers of dukedoms, counties, kingdoms and city states in Europe. The book is more useful to medieval coin collectors than to collectors specializing in any other period. The book does not, however, give the spellings and abbreviations of the names of rulers as they appear on coins.

In addition, the numismatist may find the following books useful although they are intended as an aid to the reader of medieval manuscripts.

Chassant, L.-Alph. *Dictionnaire des abbréviations latines et françaises ... du moyen âge* [Dictionary of Latin and French Abbreviations of the Middle Ages]. Paris 1884. Reprinted New York 1973.

In French. A valuable compendium. 170 pages of abbreviations in double columns, including the most common forms of letters and signs which indicate abbreviations, preceded by a 44-page essay on medieval abbreviations. Only a small percentage of the abbreviations are given in Roman capitals. Most are in a standardized printed version of the late medieval Gothic script, and are in minuscule. However, the small-letter lists can easily be used by numismatists. Thus ƀ and ƀƀ are manuscript abbreviations for *beato*. On coins they would probably be engraved as B̄Ō and B̄T̄Ō.

Thompson, Edward Maunde. *An Introduction to Greek and Latin Palaeography*. 1912; rpt. New York 1973.

The standard guide to the handwriting of the Middle Ages; includes illustrative plates and dated alphabets.

BASIC MEDIEVAL REFERENCES

by
Allen G. Berman

Many excellent and useful books have appeared since the publication of the first edition of this little book in 1979. The following is only a brief list of the most useful or most readily obtainable one or two references for each country. Hundreds of others await the collector or scholar seeking further knowledge in this field. Many books go out of print very quickly, including some listed below. This does not always present a problem, as many specialized coin dealers have become adept at tracking down these works for their customers, and many of the out of print books have remained common.

Do not be intimidated by the fact that many of the standard references are in foreign languages. Most such books are surprising easy to use, even if one does not know the language. Illustrations, proper names and legend transcriptions vary little from language to language, and the vocabulary used to describe most coins contains perhaps a few dozen easily learned words.

Those books marked by an asterisk (*) are described in Walker's original bibliography on pages 38 and 39.

Ahlström, Brekke, and Hemmingsson, *Norges Mynter - The Coinage of Norway* Stockholm, 1976. Profusely illustrated, with valuations.

Berman, Allen G., *Papal Coins*. South Salem, NY, 1991. A complete catalogue of the coins of the Popes from the Middle Ages to John Paul II. Includes transcription of the legends for every coin. Illustrated, with 77 plates, tables of heraldry, cross references and valuations.

Berman, Allen G., *Papal Numismatic History: The Emancipation of the Papal State*. South Salem, NY, 1991.
Not really basic, but an enjoyable explanation as to how the Pope came to have his own country and issue coins.

Berman, Allen G., *Warman's Coins and Paper Money*. Iola, Wisc., 1999. While not exclusively about medieval, the section on this period has proven very useful to may getting acquainted with this fields. It contains brief numismatic backgrounds for each country. It is also probably the least expensive book to provide a general price guide to medieval coins. Illustrated.

Bendixen, Kirsten, *Denmark's Money*. Copenhagen, 1967. A brief history of the coinage in English.

Biaggi, Elio, *Monete e Zecche Medievali Italiane*. Torino, 1992. A virtually comprehensive listing of all medieval Italian coins. Extensively illustrated with photographs often lacking in clarity. Contains valuations. In Italian.

Cayón, Adolfo, Clemente, and Juan, *Las Monedas Españolas Del tremis al euro*. Madrid, (1999). A thick one volume work with thousands of illustrations, as well as market values. Lacks transcriptions of legends. In Spanish.

Craig, William D., *Germanic Coinages*.* (See page 38)

Davenport, John, *East Baltic Regional Coinage*. Dallas, 1996. Virtually complete listings for the Livonian Order, independent Riga, Dorpat, Teutonic Order, and more. Provides transcriptions, illustrations and cross references.

De Mey, J. *Les Monnaies des Comtes de Flandre 1244-1384*; *Les Monnaies des Comtes de Flandre 1384-1556*; *Les Monnaies des Comtes de Louvain et Ducs de Brabant 1015-1467*; *Les Monnaies de Ducs de Brabant 1467-1598*; *Les Monnaies des Souverains Luxembourgeois*. Brussels and Paris, various dates mostly 1970s. Parts of the *Numismatic Pocket* series of small card cover books covering these and other facets of Low Countries coinage, and more. Most are well illustrated with transcriptions and valuations. In French.

Duplessy, Jean, *Les Monnaies Francaises Royales*, 2 vols. Paris and Maastricht. An excellent and scholarly catalogue. Easy to use, profusely illustrated, with full transcriptions. Has a separate paper bound price guide. In French.

Erslev, Kristian, *Medieval Coins in the Christian J. Thomsen Collection*, vol. I. South Salem, NY, 1992. Covers Portugal, Spain, France, Italy and the Low Countries more thoroughly than any other catalogue which has ever attempted to cover so many countries. Most coins are transcribed. Contains an addendum by Allen G. Berman and Alan Stahl updating the original 19th century attributions. This English language edition also has added 22 photographic plates to the original 4 of line drawings. Has a separate card bound price guide.

Grierson, Philip, *Coins of Medieval Europe*. London, 1991. Absolutely the best single text book for the field of medieval coinage. With a large format and hundreds of enlarged black and white and color illustrations, it could just as easily qualify for "coffee table book." An excellent source for understanding the evolution of coinage through the Middle Ages. Highly recommended.

Grierson, Philip, and Blackburn, Mark, *Medieval European Coinage: 1. The Early Middle Ages (5th-10th centuries)*. Cambridge, 1986. Important updated scholarship for both the Dark Ages and the Carolingian era. Provides excellent history, sharp photography and a section on dangerous counterfeits of the series covered.

Gumowski, M. *Handbuch des Polnischen Numismatik*. Graz, 1960. Covers both Poland and Lithuania. Not the must up-to-date scholarship, but easy to use, and in North America certainly the most widely available. In German.

Hauberg, P., *Danmarks Mønter indtil 1241*. Reprint Frederiksberg, 1974. In Danish.

Huszar, Lajos, *Münzkatalog Ungarn*. Munich, 1979. Excellent and easy to use. Comprehensive listings, each coin transcribed and illustrated. In German.

Jovanovic, Miroslav. *Srpski Srednjevekovni Novac*. Belgrade, 1984. A basic and useful catalogue of most medieval Serbian, Montenegrin and Bosnian coins. Most coins are illustrated and are transcribed, however in a much more modern type than appears on the coins. It usually comes with a separate one page valuation guide. In Serbo-Croatian using Latin (Western) alphabet.

Lapa, Frank. *Russian Wire Money*.* (See page 38).

Lagerqvist, Lars, *Svenska Mynt*. Stockholm, 1970. Virtually complete with most coins transcribed and clearly photographed. In Swedish.

Malloy, Alex G., Preston, Irene F., and Seltman, A. J., Allen G. Berman, editor, *Coins of the Crusader States*. South Salem, NY, 1994. Complete listing of all major types of Crusader coins struck both in the Levant and in Greece. Contains extensive historical background, hundreds of line drawings, transcriptions, and 11 photographic plates. Has a separate card bound price guide.

Mansfeld-Büllner, H.V., *Danske Mønter fra Tidsrummet 1241-1377*. Reprint Copenhagen, 1954. Has minimal text but hundreds of very easy to use line drawings and an index based on types.

Mayhew, Nicholas, *Coinage in France From the Dark Ages to Napoleon*. London, 1988. The clearest English language explanation of French Feudal coins available, and while not a catalogue, its extensive illustrations of the most common types permit its us as one. The evolution of royal coinage is also covered.

Metcalf, D.M., *Coinage of South Germany in the Thirteenth Century*. London, 1961. An analysis of the flow of coinage in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Slovenia, it is accompanied by hundreds of simple drawings of the main coins of the period.

Metcalf, D.M., *Coinage in South-Eastern Europe 820-1396*. London, 1979. Not a catalogue, but a scholarly history, it provides the best coverage in English. Its plates of select coins permit the attribution of many Yugoslav, Romanian and Bulgarian coins.

Nercessian, Y.T., *Armenian Coins and their Values*. Los Angeles. 1995. Historical introductions and complete listings for all basic types of medieval (and ancient) Armenia. All coins are transcribed and many are illustrated, although clarity varies. Also contains rarity and valuation guides.

Reichmann & Co., *Die Mittelalterlichen Munzen des Hessischen Landesmuseums in Kassel* South Salem, NY, 1977. Good source for the attribution of bracteates of bracteates and other medieval German. While the the illustrations are not always crisp, the 41 plates will still prove useful. Perhaps most important, and not just for German coinage, is its glossary of numismatic terms arranged as a table which translates German, English, French, Italian and Spanish.

Rengjeo, Ivan, *Corpus der Mittelalterlichen Münzen von Kroatien, Slavenien, Dalmatien und Bosnien*. Graz, 1959. Contains detailed listings and transcriptions. Representative illustrations are clear line drawings, except for Ragusa which is represented by photographs which are less than sharp. In German.

Roberts, James N., *Silver Coins of Medieval France (476-1610 AD)*. South Salem, NY, 1996. This massive book covers not only silver but also billon. Organized by types, it is the easiest reference to use for identifying French Feudal. Also covers Royal and Merovingian coinage.

Saurma-Jeltsch, Hugo, Freiherr von, *Die Saurmasche Münzsamlung deutscher, schweitzerischer und polnischer*. Unmarked reprint of Berlin and Frankfurt 1892 original. Few transcriptions or descriptions, but listings accompanied by 104 usually clear and very useful plates. Also includes a basic listing of Bohemian coins.

Seaby, H.A. and P.J., et al., *Coins of England and the United Kingdom*. London, annual editions. Complete listings of all English coins, with standard reference numbers and extensive and sharp illustrations. Contains values updated annually.

Seaby, P. and P. Frank Purvey, *Coins of Scotland, Ireland, and the Islands*. London, 1984. Complete listings of all Scottish and Irish coins, with standard reference numbers and extensive and sharp illustrations. Contains values.

Spassky, I.G. *Russian Monetary System*. Amsterdam, 1967. Not only an excellent history, its extensive illustrations can aid in attribution.

Spufford, Peter. *Money and its use in Medieval Europe*. Cambridge, 1989. No other book places coinage in the context of its role in medieval society like this one. While not necessary to collecting, it is unique and fascinating.

Szego, Alfred, *Coinage of Medieval Austria, 1156-1521*. Oakdale, NY, 1970. An easy to use attribution guide to this common series. Contains hundreds of line drawings far more clear than the coins themselves.

Vaz, J. *Book of the Coins of Portugal*. Lisbon, various editions. Contains representative line drawings and transcriptions, as well as valuations.