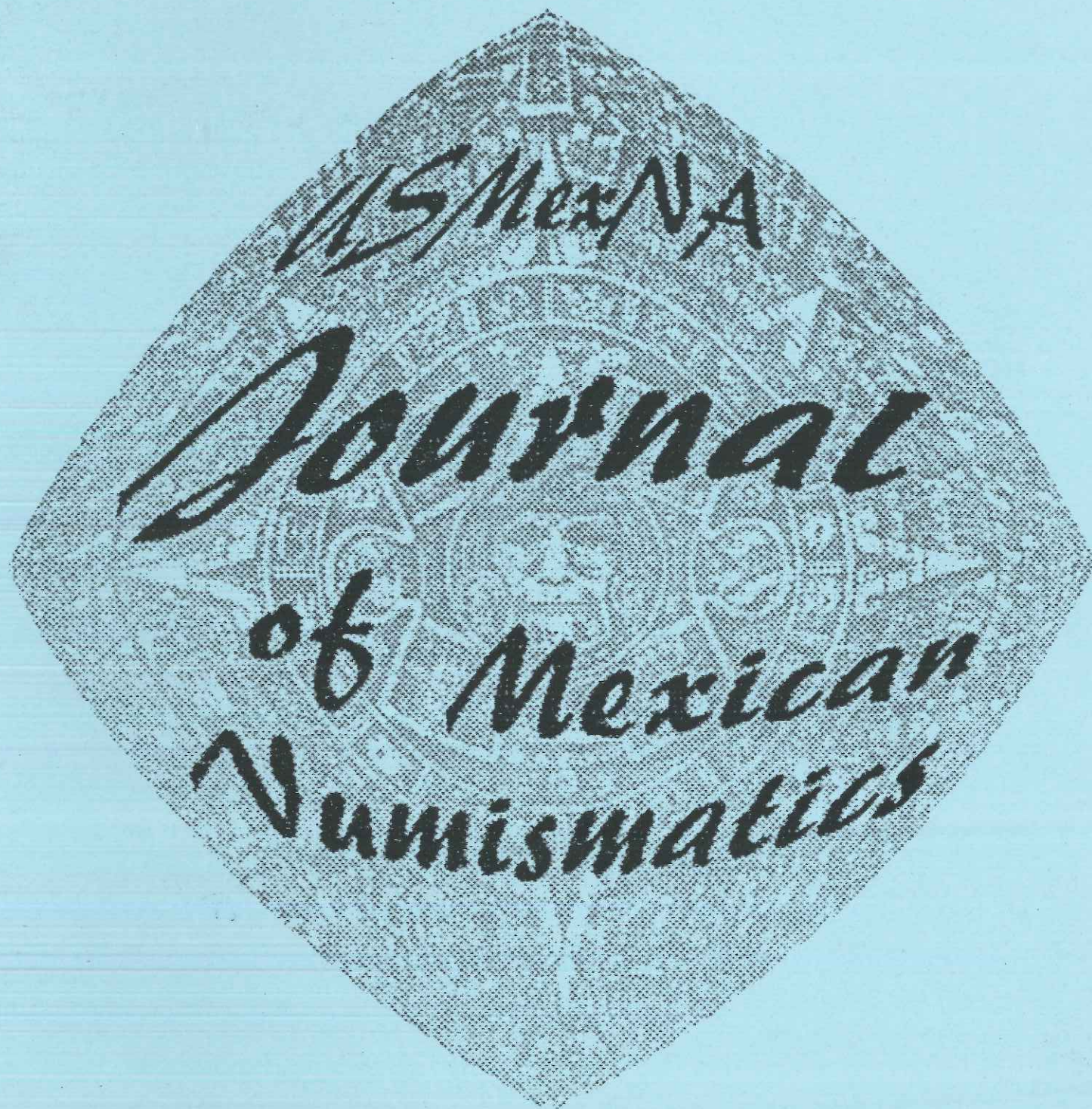


VOL. XIV

SEPTEMBER 2009

NO. III



U.S. MEXICAN NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION

Don Bailey, Editor

250 D So. Lyon Ave. #139

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ARTICLES WANTED !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

The Association is in need of articles for the Journal. The article can be on any aspect of Mexico from any era. It can be on coins, medals, currency, tokens, historical documents books etc.

If you have any questions as to format, length or other questions feel free to contact us and we will help in anyway we can

VIVA LA REVOLUCION

By Joe Flores C-2

20 PESO OAXACA

This great Revolution rarity was sold to me several years ago at a Guadalajara numismatic convention. This coin is the first one I have ever seen, and I did not know at that time that the coin even existed. As in most Oaxaca gold coins, the five, ten and twenty pesos have a reeded edge. I only know of one other corded edge coin and it is very rare.

This coin is the same as the known one except it never was gold plated. At first came the thought of someone had removed the gold plating. After studying the coin I am happy to say that did not happen. This coin could well be a trial strike.

My good friend, the late Mr. (Woody) Woodworth and I knew of the one known corded edge and it is listed this in our book "La Ventana" as Oax. 128.

This new find (photo 2) can be identified by a defect on the obverse in front of Juarez's fore head which passes through to the reverse side below the "P" in pesos.

Joe Flores
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**PHOTO #1, GOLD PLATED**



PHOTO #2, NEW FIND

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GENERAL FRANCISCO "PANCHO" VILLA SITTING IN THE PRESIDENTIAL CHAIR IN MEXICO CITY, CIRCA 1914

**UPDATE ON 5 PESO COMMEMORATIVE SERIES FOR THE CENTENNIAL
OF THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION AND THE BICENTENNIAL OF THE
INDEPENDENCE**

There have been three coins issued since the last report, and three more will be issued in 2009.

INDEPENDENCE COINS:



#21 Nicolás Bravo (1776 – 1854) was born in Chilpancingo, Guerrero and was one of the Insurgent leaders serving along with José Maria Morelos, and became Morelos's military successor, upon Morelos death. He was named by Antonio López de Santa Anna as Interim President and only served nine days (July 10, 1839 – July 19, 1839) as Anastasio Bustamante returned from exile and resumed power. Bustamante served until October 22, 1841. Bravo served another term, having been appointed again by Santa Anna as Substitute President and served from October 26, 1842 – March 5, 1843. He resigned as he was opposed on all fronts and Santa Anna kept interfering with his operations as President.

He was appointed again as interim president and served a third term when President Mariano Paredes left Mexico City (from July 28 – August 4, 1846). The political situation in Mexico went from bad to worse within these few days and Bravo was ousted by José Mariano Salas. Bravo stayed with the military and was the commander of the Mexican forces when the U.S. forces took Chapultepec Castle. When this conflict was over he retired to Chilpancingo, where he died in 1854.



#23 Servando Teresa de Mier (1765-1827) was born in Monterrey, October 18, 1865. He was a friar and Dominican Priest. He wrote several treatises on political philosophy in the context of Independence of Mexico.

On December 12, 1794 at the celebration of the 263th anniversary of the Marianna manifestation of the Virgin of Guadalupe, he gave a sermon with several high ranking church officials present questioning the justification that the Spanish used in their conquest of the continent. He was sentenced to ten years in exile by archbishop Nuñez de Haro. He was imprisoned several other times. He escaped for the sixth time and took refuge in Philadelphia until the Independence of Mexico.

Upon his return to Mexico in February 1822 he was against the formation of a Mexican empire under Agustín de Iturbide and was again imprisoned. He escaped for the last time January 1, 1823. He wrote several articles and books, mostly in support of Mexican independence, and was never afraid to express his opinions. He was elected to the second Constitutional Congress. He died in 1827.

REVOLUTIONARY COINS:



#22 Eulalio Gutiérrez (1881 - 1939) was born February 2, 1891 at Ramos Arizpe, Coahuila. As a young man he worked in the Concepción del Oro mine where he was in charge of the explosives. That knowledge was put to good use in the many battles that he fought in during the revolution. He was a moderate liberal and a strong anti-reelectionist. He was elected Municipal President of Concepción del Oro on August 31, 1911. On February 20, 1913 as a Lieutenant Colonel he initiated military operations against the usurping government and took part in actions at Agua Dulce, Zacatecas and the combat on March 24-25 at Concepción del Oro, Zacatecas. When the Plan de Guadalupe was adopted, March 26, 1913 he had achieved the rank of Brigadier General. On January 21, 1914. He was appointed to be the Governor and Military Commandant of the State of San Luis Potosí. On August 6, 1914 Venustiano Carranza, the First Head of the Constitutionalist Army, designated General Eulalio Gutiérrez the Head of the Constitutional Army's Division of the Center.

Gutiérrez was elected as Provisional President, at the Aguascalientes Convention and served from November 3, 1914 to January 6, 1915. At that time a coalition of the three main factions lead by Venustiano Carranza, Francisco "Pancho" Villa and Emiliano Zapata accepted him as a compromise. Even though his cabinet had representatives from each faction there was no strong support and he broke with the leaders of these factions and was forced out of office and exiled to the United States.

Gutiérrez returned to Mexico in 1920 after the death of Carranza to support Alvaro Obregón. He served as a state senator and governor of the State of Coahuila. He had a

falling out with Oberegón and attempted to start a rebellion, which failed and he fled the country again, this time to San Antonio, Texas. He was granted amnesty in 1935 and returned to Mexico where he died four years later at Saltillo.

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COMMENTS TO JUNE 09 JOURNAL AND REMINISCENCE OF COLIN BRUCE II.

In the last Journal you went down memory lane. You mentioned the dealers of the heyday and filling Dansco 20th century type collections but left out Neil Utberg The grand daddy of promotions and author of our first Mexican coins commercial catalogs. He lived in Brownsville, Texas if memory serves me correctly. (Ed. Note: The references to dealers of the day was meant to cover the current advertisers in the *PLUS ULTRA*. of that period).

I was stationed at Fort Bliss, Texas in 1962-63 and was entertained by the army in the Nike missile systems electronic program. This was back in the days of vacuum tubes as transistors were just being introduced. This left a lot of time for being a self appointed ambassador of good will in Ciudad Juarez and searching for Mexican coin deals. Choice condition late date Liberty Cap 8 reales and pesos were rather common along with uncirculated Chihuahua 5 and 10 centavo pieces from the revolution. I picked up a copy of Coins Magazine by Krause Publications that had a feature article on coins of the revolution and the seeds were planted.

The most interesting dealer I ran into was an "importer" of modern silver 0.720 coinage. I spent many hours at his house separating the better dates along with choice condition pieces that I was able to purchase at various premiums. The bulk was then shipped to a mine smelter located in Nevada. These came in large steel drums. I had already been dealing in Chinese coins so adding a huge inventory of modern Mexican silver seemed like a good idea. The silver 5 and 10 peso commemoratives were available at a premium in small stalls along the tourist shops and along with these the modern gold also at the bancos. Of course it was illegal to import gold coins but they could be shipped in plain registered packets from a very small sub station in Juarez to Canada or Europe with no problem and I recall the Western song "these (cowboy) boots were made for walking" and you were never asked to remove them when going through US Customs as they were more interested in what veggies or the amount of tequila and whatever else you were bringing across the border.

Little did I know that a decade later I was to be hired by Chet Krause and Cliff Mishler as the coordinating editor of the Standard Catalog of World Coins and that career ended last year, 34 1/2 years later. The sections on Mexican coinages were always my favorites. I had been in contact with most of the dealers mentioned in the last journal and had developed some great friendships, which a few thankfully are still in place.

Colin R. Bruce II
Scandinavia, WI

“The Coinage of Mexico Struck During the Reign of Charles and Johanna”

(revised 6/09)

By: Kent M. Ponterio, R-376

Early Series (without waterlines)

The decree to establish a mint in Mexico City was written on May 11, 1535, however officials from Spain did not arrive in Mexico until November 14, 1535, and the first coins were not minted until April of 1536.

1) **The first assayer at the Mexico City Mint was assayer “R” (Francisco del Rincón), who struck coins between the years of 1536 and 1538. The office of assayer at this time was only a two-year lease.**

- a. Dating the coins of Rincón is much easier than that of most assayers in this series. When the Mexico City Mint began production of coinage in April of 1536, it was only authorized to strike coins in denominations of 1/4, 1/2, 1, 2 and 3 Reales. On November 18, 1537 a decree was issued authorizing the minting of 4 and 8 Reales, while at the same time calling for the minting of 3 Reales to cease.
- b. Although the decree authorizing the mintage of 4 and 8 Reales was issued on November 18, 1537, it would have taken several months for this information to reach the Mint in Mexico City, and most certainly these issues were not struck until the following year. In studying the punches used to produce dies and the die styles themselves, one can conclude that the production of 4 Reales began some time before that of the 8 Reales. This is seen in the use of older gothic punches present in the legends and assayer’s mark of the earliest 4 Reales. The 8 Reales contain a rhomboid banner across the pillars, a characteristic found only on the latest 4 Reales of Rincón. Dies with the rhomboid banner were used only for a brief period of time near the end of Rincón’s term in office and were then carried over by the next assayer.
- c. Denominations for this assayer: 1/4, 1/2, 1, 2, 3, 4 and 8 Reales.





2) The second assayer to produce coins in the early series was assayer "P". Both the name of this assayer and the exact dates of when the coins were struck are at this point unknown. The possibilities include Pedro de Espina or Pedro de la Membrilla, whose names appear on several contemporary documents pertaining to this subject.

- a. It is known for fact through die linking that "P" is the second assayer in this series. The first emission of assayer "P's" coinage are all produced from reworked dies of the previous assayer. They all appear with assayer "P's" initial re-punched over that of assayer "R" (photo above). When Francisco del Rincón's lease on the office of assayer expired, he naturally requested to have it reinstated for another term, at which point the owner refused to reinstate it for reasons of favoritism. The dies for coining were kept in a locked box; there were two separate locks with two separate keys. The assayer had access to one key while a different official at the mint kept the other. At the time when Francisco del Rincón left the mint, he would have been able to take the punches used to make dies with him but would not be allowed to take the already prepared dies. This would explain why old dies were available and re-used for a brief period of time until new dies could be produced. With the exception of a few random remaining punches, the new dies were produced with an entirely new set of punches.
- b. Dating the coins of assayer "P" is somewhat more complicated than that of the previous assayer. Assayer "P" began striking coins sometime in 1538. It is uncertain as to exactly when his responsibilities as assayer ceased. It is, however, certain that he did hold this position for some period of time. Evidence would suggest at least a full two-year term likely longer. Out of the four assayers in the early series, this assayer is by far the most frequently encountered. There are more known dies for this assayer than that of the other three early series assayers combined, this suggesting a rather long term in office.
- c. Denominations for this assayer: $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$, 1, 2 and 4 Reales.

3) The third assayer in the early series used the initial "F". Both the name of this assayer and the exact dates of when the coins were struck are at this point unknown. The possibilities include Francisco de Loaysa or Esteban Franco, whose names appear on several contemporary documents pertaining to this subject.

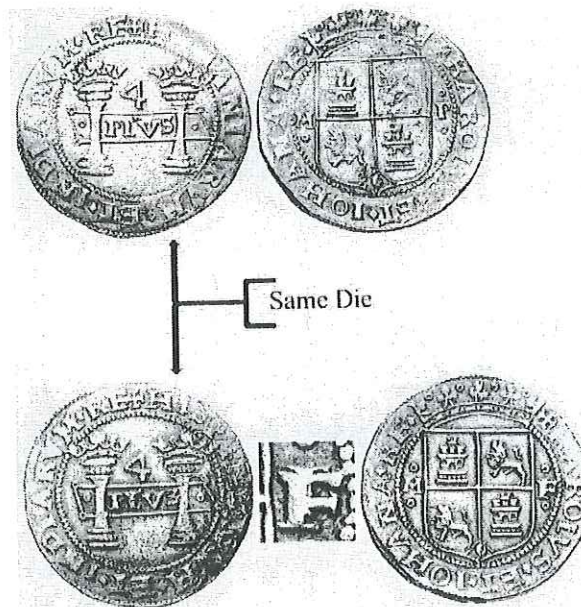
- a. There is very little known about this assayer. Coins of this assayer are anywhere from extremely rare to unique. A limited number of dies were used to strike coins during "F's" term as assayer, this suggesting a very short time period of which he was in office. It is likely that this individual took over the job of assayer as either a temporary replacement until the position could be permanently filled, or perhaps for some reason had his term cut short. Data points towards coins being struck some time in 1540 or 1541.
- b. Very few new dies were prepared during the office of this assayer, with most being re-worked dies from the previous assayer.

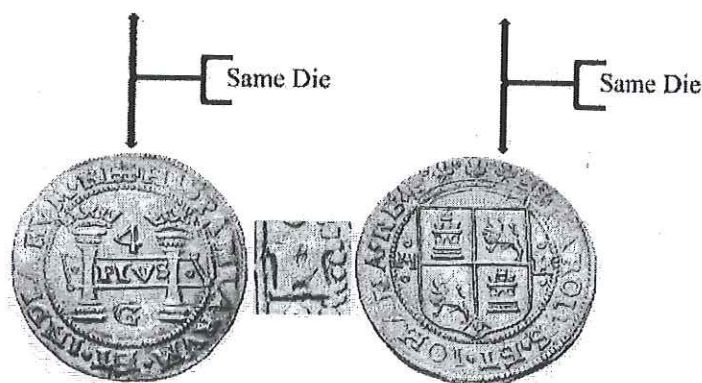
c. One outside possibility as to the identity of this assayer (although no evidence can be linked to this) would be Francisco Rodriguez, the individual who was assayer for the mint in Santo Domingo.

d. Denominations for this assayer: $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$, 1, 2 and 4 Reales.

4) The fourth and final assayer in the early series: Assayer "G" (Juan Gutierrez).

- a. This individual held multiple terms as assayer, producing coins in both the early and late series. Previously thought to be the second assayer in the early series, recent evidence of die linking (photo below) as well as other documentation has clearly proven otherwise.
- b. The exact date Gutierrez began minting coins is at this point unknown. He renewed his two-year lease in 1543, which points to the date of his original lease being some time in 1541.
- c. It is during the office of this assayer that the transition from early series to late series clearly took place. Evidence would suggest this transition probably took place in 1542, at which point new punches to prepare dies arrived from Spain.
- d. It is during the office of Gutierrez that copper Maravedis were introduced for the first time in 1542, produced for a period of about a year until the dies were replaced by those of the new late series style. All early series coppers should be considered rare.
- e. Denominations for this assayer: 2 and 4 Maravedis, $\frac{1}{2}$, 1, 2 and 4 Reales. (early series $\frac{1}{4}$ Reales of this assayer are currently unknown. One should not rule out the possibility they were struck, as there are three known examples produced during his term in the late series.)

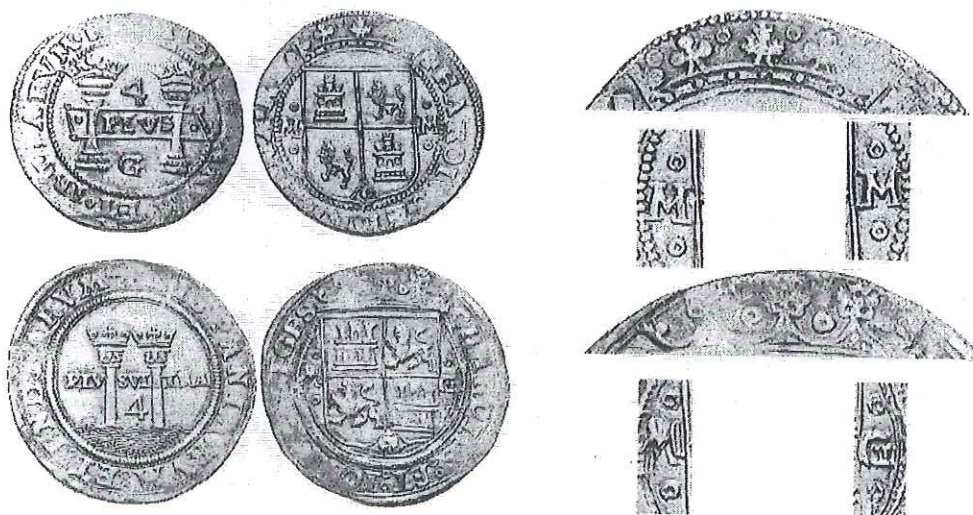




Late Series (with waterlines)

1) The first assayer in the late series: Assayer "G" (Juan Gutierrez).

- a. The arrival of new punches from Spain in 1542 is an important place marker, as it clearly pinpoints where the early series ends and the late series begins. Note that none of the old punches are mixed with the new punches from early to late series. The first issues of Gutierrez in the late series bear the king's name spelled with a "CH", and bear a small "o" above and below both the mintmark and assayer's letter, a characteristic of early series coinage. This emission is considered somewhat of a transitional type from the early series to the late series. Assayer "G" is the only assayer in the late series to have this characteristic. An interesting fact to note on some late series issues of assayer "G" is the feature of the "Mo" (Mexico City mintmark), which appears for the first time in the manner that it is still used to this day.
- b. The first emissions of assayer "G" are on smaller planchets or modules, similar to the planchet diameters of the early series coinage.



- c. On January 17th 1543, Juan Gutierrez signed his second two-year lease for the office of assayer. There was, however, a brief interruption in this lease. On March 21st 1543, Francisco del Rincón (first assayer in the early series) swindled his way into purchasing the position of assayer for 550 Pesos of Gold De Minas from Pedro de la Membrilla, the rightful owner of the position and controller of its lease. This allowed Rincón a very brief period for minting coins in the late series which ended in a lawsuit. After de la Membrilla realized the office had been purchased for a fraction of its actual value, he re-signed a lease with Gutierrez on August 1st 1543 and filed a lawsuit against Rincón on September 29th 1543. The eventual outcome was that de la Membrilla

leased the office back to Gutierrez on April 22nd 1544 for 1500 Pesos of Gold De Minas. It should be noted that although rare, there are a few examples of coins with the assayers mark "G" punched over an "R".

- d. This assayer marked the peak of quality for the series. The finest style and execution of coins were struck under this assayer. Many of the coins of this assayer are struck on full round planchets with full legends and nice deep strikes. The coins of this quality may be attributed to the year 1545. In that year the "Tello de Sandoval Investigation" was conducted. This was a full mint investigation that spanned several months and is one of the most important documents pertaining to this period of Mexican numismatics. All of the workers at the mint were being closely monitored and interviewed. What better reason to make sure that the coins came out perfect than not only your job being on the line but possibly your life? It is interesting to note that during the investigation coins were selected at random for assay and analysis. It was concluded that not only were the coins of correct weight and fineness, but that many contained a slightly higher silver content than ordered by official decree.
- e. Denominations for this assayer: 2 and 4 Maravedis, $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$, 1, 2 and 4 Reales.
- f.



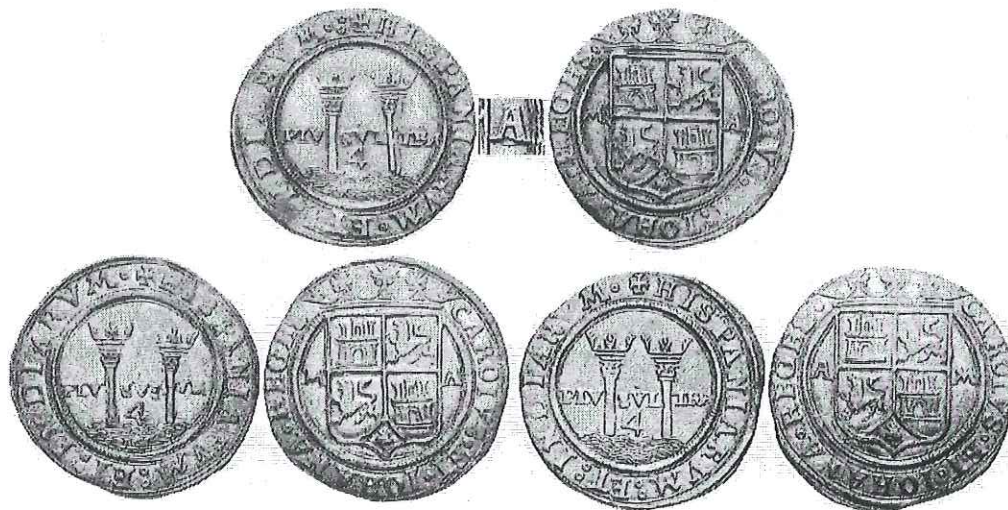
2) The second assayer in the late series: Assayer "R" (Francisco del Rincón).

- a. This assayer struck coins for only a very brief period of time. Judging from the date he purchased his lease and the date where he was brought to court, he could have only struck coins some time between 1543 and 1544. The longest period of time he could have held the position of assayer is approximately 13 months. It is, however, unlikely that he minted coins for the entire 13 months, since he had to return to Spain to defend himself in a lawsuit brought forth by Pedro de la Membrilla. Please see subparagraph "b" of the previous assayer).
- b. It is possible that some of the late series copper Maravedis were struck under this assayer. However this is impossible to confirm considering they bear no assayer's mark.
- c. None of this assayer's coins bear the mintmark with a small "o" above it.
- d. Denominations for this assayer: 1, 2 and 4 Reales. (currently $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ Reales for this assayer are unknown.)



3) The third assayer in the late series: Assayer "A" (Alonso del Villaseca).

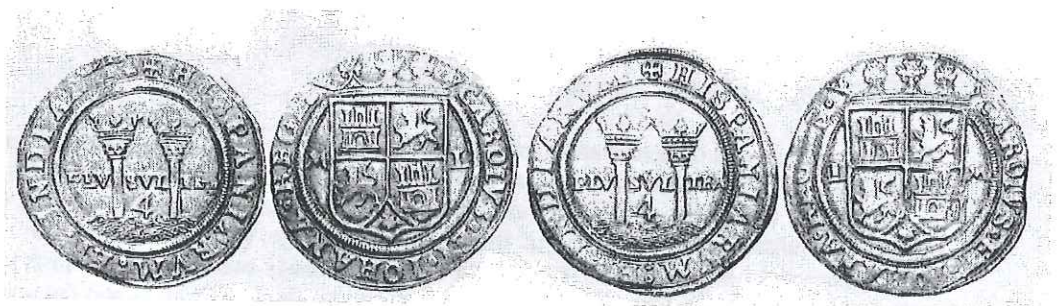
- a. Evidence of Alonso Del Villaseca can be found documented in a lease agreement dated 1543 between Juan Gutierrez and Pedro de la Membrilla. At this point Gutierrez signed a lease for the office where it states a time of two full years as principal trustee. This document notes Alonso Del Villaseca as trustee to Gutierrez. It also states Villaseca is to lease the office, however it does not disclose a date as to when this would take effect. This document was renewed and re-signed after a deposit was made on the office in 1544, following a string of interfering events by Francisco Del Rincon (see subparagraph b. under Gutierrez.) Judging by the fact that Gutierrez was still assayer during the Sandoval Investigation in 1545 and that his two-year lease would have expired in 1546 points towards Villaseca minting coins either in 1546 or 1547.
- b. It is uncertain as to how long Villaseca held his term as assayer. Several facts point toward it being a very brief period of time, the first being the rarity of the coins. When Robert Nesmith wrote ANS monograph No. 131 "The Coinage of the First Mint of the Americas At Mexico City" in 1955, he noted only 16 coins produced by assayer "A". This out of the over 2400 late series coins examined. Since then, more examples have appeared on the market, either from hoards, shipwreck finds or collections that were unavailable at the time of his analysis. Regardless, one can conclude this assayer struck coins for a much shorter term than the majority of the others in the late series.
- c. Several of the coins examined bear the initial "A" over the initial "G" of Juan Gutierrez. When this assayer took office, dies from the previous assayer were re-used and re-punched rather than preparing new dies. A limited number of new dies were prepared during the office of assayer "A" suggesting a limited term in office.
- d. Denominations for this assayer: $\frac{1}{2}$, 1, 2 and 4 Reales. (currently $\frac{1}{4}$ Reales for this assayer are unknown.)



4) The fourth assayer in the late series: Assayer "L".

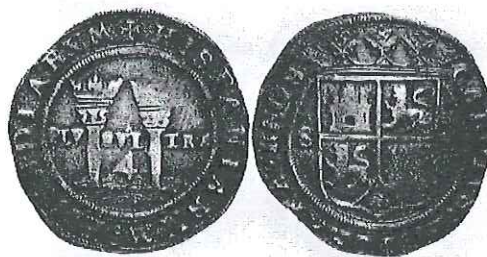
- a. This assayer has been documented in several publications as being Luis Rodriguez. However, this attribution is highly unlikely and appears to originate from a letter to Spain dated 1570 informing the Council of the Indies of this individual's death. Several factors conflict with this theory and suggest otherwise. Large quantities of this assayer's coinage were present on the 1554 Padre Islands shipwrecks suggesting the time period of minting nearly two decades before the previously suggested date. In 1556, Charles I abdicated the throne to his son Philip II and the mint in Lima, Peru began striking coinage in the name of the new King two years prior to the previously suggested date of 1570. It is doubtful this individual was still striking coins in the name of "Charles & Johanna" 14 years into the reign of a new king. Historically posthumous issues extended a year, maybe two into the reign of the new king, usually only long enough for the news to reach the New World and the time it took to make new dies. Pellicer suggests this assayer as "Luis Gutierrez". This may be a possibility but I have yet to see any supporting documentation.
- b. It is important to note that the coins of assayer "L" recovered from the Padre Islands shipwrecks all bear the mintmark as a plain "M", of good style and on round planchets. Coins of assayer "L" struck on smaller compact planchets and often not completely round for the most part bear the mintmark "Mo" and come later in the series. It is worthy of note that this latter type of "L" was not present on the 1554 Padre Islands wrecks, nor were they present in a more recent hoard discovered in the early 1990s. The "Mo" mintmark and deterioration of style take place shortly after the brief intervention of assayer "S" directly following these coins.
- c. The first coins minted under this assayer are struck from dies of the previous assayer. The "L" assayer mark can be found punched clearly over an "A". A few examples have been recorded where the assayer letter is punched over a much older reverse die of assayer "R".
- d. This assayer put out a very large emission of coinage. Dating the coins at this point is virtually impossible. Not enough documentation has come to light as of yet to narrow down any closer than some time before 1553.
- e. Denominations for this assayer: ½, 1, 2 and 4 Reales. (currently ¼ Reales for this assayer are unknown.)





5) The fifth assayer in the late series: Assayer "S".

- a. Much like the previous assayer, very little is known of this individual. Most of what we can gather comes from hoard and shipwreck evidence. Published in "Glosario De Maestros De Ceca Y Ensayadores" as being Gomez de Santillan, however, more recent evidence would suggest otherwise. Hoard evidence recovered from the 1554 Padre Islands shipwrecks would suggest a date of 1554 or slightly earlier.
- b. This assayer's coins come with both the M and Mo mintmarks. The first coins struck by this assayer bear the mintmark as M. The remainder of this issue bears the mintmark as Mo. Examples have been cited struck from re-cut dies of the previous assayer S over L.
- c. This individual obviously held the office for a very brief period of time due to the rarity of coins and the minimal amount of documented dies. When Robert Nesmith wrote ANS monograph No. 131 "The Coinage of the First Mint of the Americas at Mexico City" in 1955, he noted only 12 examples of this assayer out of the over 2,400 late series coins examined. One must take into account that this book was written before the discovery of the 1554 Padre Islands shipwrecks. Most of the heavily corroded examples which appear occasionally originated from this source.
- d. Denominations for this assayer: $\frac{1}{4}$, 1, 2 and 4 Reales. (currently the $\frac{1}{4}$ Real is unique, and the $\frac{1}{2}$ Reales for this assayer are unknown.)



6) The sixth assayer in the late series: Assayer "L".

- a. Possibly and quite probably the same individual as the fourth assayer in this series. Interrupted with a brief intervention by the previous assayer "S" for reasons as yet unknown.
- b. Examples have been noted struck from re-cut dies of the previous assayer where the "L" assayer letter is clearly punched over an "S".
- c. Examples are frequently encountered struck from re-cut dies of the following assayer where the "L" assayer letter is clearly punched over an "O".
- d. Most of this issue bears the mintmark as "Mo", and are of much cruder style than that of earlier coins bearing this initial. The planchets are of inferior manufacture, often uneven, thicker and out of round.

- e. One very important and sometimes confusing point about this assayer is the fact that many of the coins are re-cut from dies of assayer "O". Assayer "O" obviously is the last assayer in this series continuing coining through the first portion of the reign of Philip II. On a similar note, many of the coins of assayer "O" are struck from re-cut dies of assayer "L". Over assayers "L/O" and "O/L" exist back and forth for the last two assayers in this series. The most likely explanation for this is that assayer "O" was either working as an apprentice or working side by side with assayer "L" at the same time. It was not uncommon for the mint to have multiple assayers in office at the same time. For example the "MF" assayers mark which is present on pillar coinage during the reign of Philip V was, Manuel de la Peña and Francisco de la Peña y Flores.
- f. By this time, production at the mint had increased enormously, focusing efforts primarily on quantity of production rather than quality. This is evident when examining the quality and style of the coins.
- g. Denominations for this assayer: ½, 1, 2 and 4 Reales. (currently ¼ Reales for this assayer are unknown.)



7) The seventh and final assayer in the late series: Assayer "O".

- a. This is the final assayer of the late series and first assayer for the following king Philip II. In the past, it has been published that this assayer struck coinage in the name of "Charles & Johanna" up until the year 1572. However this theory is very unlikely. Posthumous issues typically only extended one or two years into the reign of the new ruler. Philip II ascended the throne in 1556 and like all Spanish monarchs, would have wanted his name as new king in the public's eye as much as possible. Another fact that points against posthumous issues being struck in Mexico this late would be that the mint in Lima, Peru was already striking coins under the name of Philip II. It is possible that assayer "O" struck coins up until 1572, however later issues were in the name of Philip II.
- b. The last coins struck in the name of Charles and Johanna were most likely struck in 1557. It is doubtful they would extend much beyond this date. Once word of the new king reached Mexico City, the assayer would have had new dies prepared.
- c. This individual probably apprenticed under or held office at the same time as assayer "L" (see subparagraph "e" under the previous assayer).

- d. The quality of coinage produced at this point is by far the poorest quality. Many examples are of uneven strike, uneven planchets, display planchet cracks, double strikes and are of poor quality. Planchets tend to resemble those used on the later cob coinage. It is quite apparent that at this point the mint's primary focus was mass production.
- e. Denominations for this assayer: $\frac{1}{2}$, 1, 2 and 4 Reales. (currently $\frac{1}{4}$ Reales for this assayer are unknown.)



4 Reales with no Assayer or Mintmark

- a. Die style would indicate being struck during the office of assayer R ca. 1543 or 1544. An extremely rare and interesting piece, struck without mint mark or assayer's letter punched into the reverse die. Currently four specimens are known with unconfirmed reports of a fifth. There are two known obverse die combination for this type, all sharing the same reverse die.



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The Castles and Lions on Cross¹

By John Fies – Azteca # C-60

Republished from "PLUS ULTRA Vol. II Number 22, July 23, 1965

Blazonry (the ages-old use by man of distinctive signs or symbols to identify himself, his group, or his nation in war and peace) is one of our oldest practical art forms.

On coins, blazonry began with the earliest of those stampings on metal now recognized as coins. Consider the symbols of power of Croesus – a bull and lion facing – on the coins of Lydia 2500 years ago; and the ancient coins displaying the sea-turtles of Aegina, the Pegasus of Corinth and the owls of Athens. All are predecessors of symbolic figures on present day coinage.

Herein we are concerned only with the blazons of: the Cross, evidence of Christian faith; the crowned Lion rampant of the ancient Kingdom of Leon; the three turreted Castle of the Kingdom of Castile; and the Castles and Lions cantoned in the angles of a cross – the heraldic device of the Kingdom of the combined Castile and Leon.

How did these blazons come into being?

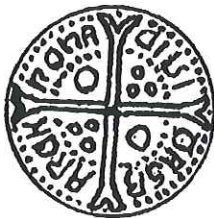


Fig. 1

One must recognize that many divergent forces can contribute to an end result. Accordingly, it may not be precisely said just how each did happen. A start must be made somewhere and the following is offered for your consideration.

Space and time require that the story of the Cross be confined within a narrow channel of events leading to its appearance on coins of Spain. (See Figure 1. The Reverse of a silver croat of Ferdinand II, the Catholic, of Aragon (V of Spain) A.D. 1479-1516.)

The Cross has been used both as a religious symbol and as an amuletic sign from the dawn of civilization. Objects dating long before the Christian era have been bound marked with crosses of many designs. These have been found in almost every part of the world. The discovery of the cross upon religious monuments within the New World so astounded the earliest of the Spanish explorers as to precipitate extravagant theories to account for its so unexpected appearance.²

¹ This article is for those of you who now have, or who may hope to someday have, "Pieces of Eight" such as rode in the treasure coffers of the early New World Galleons of Spain.

² "The Aztec goddess of rains, Chalchihuitlicue, bore a cross on her hand, as most of the principal deities of Egyptian mythology carry a cognate symbol, the ankh or 'key of life.'" *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*. Edited by James Hastings. V

The crucifixion of Christ conferred a new significance to the symbol of the Cross. In time it became an acknowledged symbol of Christian faith; first perhaps as a sign used by Christians for marking oneself; and later in pictorial form, as on coinage.

To tell how the Cross arrived upon the coins of early Spain is to tell how Christianity reached the Hispanic peninsula. Such is a prodigious task for one who aspires only to be a numismatist, not a historian nor a theologian.

The very first messages about Christianity may well have reached Spain by the same route by which, a thousand years earlier, the Phoenicians began the bringing of the civilization and the commerce of the Eastern Mediterranean basin to the Iberian Peninsula.

It may have been in such a manner that the Apostle Paul learned of Spain, as in his Epistle to the Romans he speaks thus: "Whosoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you."

A tradition of the old Roman city of Caesaragusta, now Zaragoza, Spain, is that its peoples were converted to Christianity by the Apostle Saint James the Greater, who - now known as Santiago - is the Patron Saint of Spain. His shrine at Santiago de Compostela has been the focal point of pilgrimages since the 10th century A.D.

The greatest period of Roman building on the Hispanic peninsula was in the first and second centuries of our era. With the decline of orderly Roman life in that peninsula during the third century (coupled with disturbances caused by the encroachments of the Franks) the peoples became disenchanted with their distant Roman ruler, who demanded tributes and worship and gave little in return. Such discontent could well have caused the people to look for new concepts of life and toward the new religion available to them.

There were Christians in Spain early in our era as evidenced by records of their persecution by the Emperor Diocletian (A.D. 284-305) and by the attendance at Constantine the Great's Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325 (as representative of the Hispanic Catholic Church) of Hosius, Bishop of Cordova. Further, various Church Councils were held in Spain such as those of Elvire (A.D. 300), Saragossa (A.D. 380) and the First Council of Toledo (A.D. 400).

Then arrived the barbaric tribes of the Alani, the Vandals, and the Suevi. These were followed soon (A.D. 414) by the Visigoths, who were the most civilized of the Germanic tribes who invaded Roman Hispania. As the fifth century closed, the Visigoths had put an end to the last remnant of Roman power in Spain. The Visigoths (when converted to Christianity) had accepted the Arian belief. They were of consequence often at odds with the orthodox Catholics. Although the Visigothic King Leovigild (A.D. 568-586) established political unity within the peninsula, there still remained much religious

discord. His son, Reccared, in A.D 587 declared his conversion to Catholicism, and by the Third Council of Toledo (A.D. 589) religious unity in Visigoth Spain was obtained.

A century later (A.D. 711) there occurred the Arabic invasion of Spain. In some fundamental tenets the Mohammedan religion was similar to the Christian. There were, however, insurmountable differences. Thus those Christians who remained among the Moors – called Mozarabes – experienced times of leniency and of persecution.

Early in the 8th century, a Christian leader, D. Pelayo, successfully resisted the Muslem advance into the mountains of the North of Spain. Later his daughter married Alfonso I, giving rise to the royal line of the Asturias (ultimately of Leon). The campaigns of Alfonso I against the Moors can be said to be the beginning of the Christian "Reconquest" of Spain which lasted seven centuries.

We have heard that "The Gods of the Romans were not jealous Gods." The Romans could be quite tolerant of other religions provided those religions were tolerant of the Roman Gods, which generally included the Emperor. Here it is well to recall the words of the New Testament (St. Matthew 22): "Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?" and the reply; "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." Accordingly, there was little probability of the acceptance of the Emperor as a God by the Christians, nor of the appearance of obvious Christian symbols on the coins of a pagan Emperor.

The Edict of Milan in A.D 313 by Constantine I and the pagan Augustus Licinius established a truce between Christianity and the former Roman religion. It paved the way for a rapid growth of Christianity, but it was yet too early for a free use of Christian symbols on Roman coinage. Admittedly there is disagreement as to just when and where, after the Vision of Constantine, Christian symbols first appeared on coinage.



Fig. 2

A large coin (See Figure 2. The Reverse of a bronze follies of the usurper Emperor Magnentius of Rome (West) A.D 350-353) was, with the monogram of Christ flanked by the letters Alpha and Omega, a coin of unequivocal Christian type.

Beginning about A.D 400, Christian crosses and symbols began to appear with increasing rapidity upon Roman coinage as Christian art broke away from the old fears within the Empire.

Turning our attention toward the West, and particularly toward Spain, we find the barbarians creating their own coin types. Such coins were essentially imitations of the Roman gold coins known as tremisses (1/3 solidus). Those of the Suevi were of the "cross in wreath" type. The earlier coinage of the Visigoths had the pagan goddess "Victoria Augusta" on the reverse, while on the obverse a pectoral cross was added upon the chest of the obverse portraits of the coins. (See Figure 3. An enlarged and



Fig. 3

emphasized sketch of the obverse of a gold tremissis of Spain – 6th century A.D.)

There seemed to be some uncertainty as to why, and by whom, this pectoral cross was added to the Victoria tremisses. Was it first used by the Merovingians after the acceptance of Christianity by the barbaric Clovis in A.D 496, was the cross added by the Visigoths as a concession by the Arian kings to their orthodox subjects, or was it only a descriptive observation of the royal regalia of the time?

By the time of Leovigild the cross motifs in the fields of Visigoth coins were of the cross-on-steps (sometimes called the Cross Triumphant) and cross-monogram types. Crosses were also used in coin legends.

The Arabic invasion brought not only a new coinage but a new alphabet to Spain. The Christian cross seems to have had no place on the Moorish coinage. Since the Arabs did not penetrate far into the territory of the Franks, the Cross forms were preserved there. We find it on the deniers of the Carolingian Charlemagne (A.D. 781-814). Crosses like those of Charlemagne (crowned Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire A.D. 800) may be found on coins of many of the Christian nations of Europe into the time of the Crusades. One may not pass lightly the importance of the Moors in Spain. Although they set back Christianity there, the Arabs did bring to Spain, and left there, a culture that contributed immensely to the greatness of the nation which was to represent itself with the heraldic "Castles and Lions on Cross."

Many centers of Mohammedan culture were located in Spain. Cordova was the Bagdad of the West. Seville became a center of luxury and Toledo a famous seat of learning.

The Arabs were patrons of medicine and the sciences, such as astronomy, chemistry, and physics. They contributed to invention and discovery and became renowned architects. They probably brought back to the light long hidden information of the classical scholars needed to stimulate Columbus to persist and discover the New World.

As the true Christian Kingdoms – of what was to become Spain – began to emerge from the Arabic domination, they probably had no coinage of their own. Some of the older Roman and Visigothic coins may have been available to them. There certainly were Arabic coins and probably coinage of the Franks. Possibly even other coins had come their way.



We begin with the coinage of Alfonso VI of Leon and Castile (A.D. 1073-1109) (See Figure 4. The obverse of a billon Dinero, Toledo mint, no date, of Alfonso VI – the King of the romantic story of "El Cid") This coinage has a simple equilateral or Greek Cross in its obverse field like the coinage of other Christian Kingdoms in Europe at the time.

Fig. 4

Of great importance at this time to Spain, as well as all of Christian Europe, were the following circumstances. Such

were important not only to the peoples themselves but to the preservation of their Christian ways of life.

In the 10th century A.D. the Berbers from Africa under leaders such as Almanzor took over Spain from the more pacific Arabs. They proceeded to devastate Christian frontiers at will. However, following Almanzor's death in A.D. 1002, Moorish unity fell apart providing opportunities for a renewal of the Christian Reconquest. In fact, Alfonso VI took advantage of the situation to conquer Toledo (A.D. 1085), the first great Muslim city to fall into Christian hands, and "El Cid" took possession of Valencia until his death in A.D. 1099.

In the 11th century A.D. the Seljuk Turks from central Asia drove the more tolerant Moslems from the Holy Land and Christians returning from pilgrimages began to recount tales of increasing hardships, insults and dangers experienced.

It was in this setting that in A.D. 1095 Pope Urban II preached the First Crusade. This Crusade began and it restored Jerusalem into Christian hands (A.D. 1099) during the life of Alfonso VI. By it and for the first time practically all the peoples of Christendom were united into a common enterprise and under one banner 0 the Cross. The Cross was used on cloaks of Crusaders and, of course, upon the coins which are commonly called "coins of the Crusades."

The Church found it easier to consecrate the fighting instinct of man through the Crusades than to curb it. The institution of Chivalry represents such a consecration for noble purposes. Heraldry – the Science of Blazonry – received its initial impetus from the Crusades (intended to attack what was wrong) and Chivalry (intended to protect what was right). Heraldry and Chivalry were important to Spain and important because of Spain.

Notwithstanding the Crusades for the recovery of the Holy Land (lasting about two centuries) Spain, for Western Europe, was the nearest battlefield in the great strife for the preservation and reestablishment of Christian lands. Actions to regain areas of Spain to Christian control were in a general sense, and in certain instances specifically proclaimed by the Pope as "Crusades."

For 1000 years, from the 7th to the 17th century, the peril of a Mohammedan conquest of Europe was almost continually present. It is little wonder that the Cross was so much used on the coins of the Christian Sovereigns.

The shapes and styles of the Crosses used on the coins of Spain, its empire, and its colonies have varied much. They have been large and small, plain and fancy, and at times mere cross-like designs.

To be continued in the December 2009 Journal.

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