

Numismatica e Archeologia. Monete, stratigrafie e contesti. Dati a confronto

Workshop Internazionale di Numismatica

a cura di
Giacomo Pardini, Nicola Parise, Flavia Marani



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In copertina: sullo sfondo, ricostruzione dell'*atelier* metallurgico individuato nell'*Athenaeum* di Adriano (fig. 9, 400), a destra, in trasparenza, la sequenza stratigrafica periodizzata dell'*Esedra della Crypta Balbi* (fig. 1, 186), in basso, le monete del ripostiglio del teatro di *Elaiussa Sebaste* (fig. 12, 646)

Sotto l'Alto Patronato del Presidente della Repubblica Italiana Giorgio Napolitano



I Workshop Internazionale di Numismatica

Numismatica e archeologia. Monete, stratigrafie e contesti. Dati a confronto

Sapienza-Università di Roma

Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Antichità, Museo dell'Arte Classica

Roma, 28-30 settembre 2011



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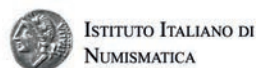
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COINAGE, CONTEXT AND SOCIAL SPACE. THE HIGH MEDIEVAL CITY OF EL TOLMO DE MINATEDA (HELLÍN, ALBACETE, SPAIN)

SONIA GUTIÉRREZ LLORET - CAROLINA DOMÉNECH BELDA

Archaeological works in El Tolmo de Minateda have unearthed an important number of coins ranging from the Pre-Roman era to the Islamic period. The coins come mainly from the High Medieval parts of the settlement, a Visigoth ciuitas mostly erected ex nouo in the beginning of the VII Century, and an Islamic phase representing the latest occupation of the settlement and shaping a wide urban layout that overlays the religious area, until it was finally abandoned in the middle of the IX Century.

The stratigraphic contextualization of the coins and its relation to the other archaeological materials is a powerful methodological tool that provides further insight into certain historical and economic aspects impossible to analyse in other ways. Such is the case of establishing the quantity and timeline of the existence of old currencies in high Medieval phases; use of currency and model of monetary circulation in the Visigoth city; the introduction of the Islamic currency, the arrival of the Carolingian, Oriental and African currencies, the fragmentation of the Islamic silver currency at an early stage, as well as dating ceramic contexts in the VIII Century.

Le ricerche archeologiche realizzate a El Tolmo de Minateda hanno riportato alla luce un importante registro numismatico che ricopre un arco cronologico che va dall'epoca pre-romana fino all'epoca islamica. Tale registro proviene essenzialmente dai livelli altomedievali dell'insediamento, una ciuitas visigota eretta praticamente ex nouo agli inizi del VII secolo e una fase islamica che rappresenta l'ultima occupazione dell'insediamento e che configura un'estesa trama urbana che va a sovrapporsi al complesso episcopale, fino al suo definitivo abbandono alla metà del secolo IX.

La contestualizzazione epigrafica dei reperti monetari e l'analisi delle relazioni esistenti con gli altri materiali archeologici si sono rivelate un utile strumento metodologico, consentendo un notevole avanzamento nella conoscenza di determinati aspetti storici ed economici che non sarebbe stato possibile ottenere utilizzando metodi differenti. È questo il caso della quantificazione e delimitazione temporale del fenomeno della sopravvivenza del numerario antico in fasi di vita riferibili ad epoca altomedievale; l'uso della moneta e il modello di circolazione monetaria nella città visigota; l'introduzione del numerario islamico; la comparsa del numerario carolingio, orientale e africano; la frammentazione della moneta d'argento islamica in momenti molto precoci, oltre che la datazione dei contesti ceramici di VIII secolo.

Introduction

The studies of the series of coins discovered by archaeology are usually missing the necessary connection between the coin itself and the archaeological fact that will provide the highest amount of historical information. The working procedure traditionally followed groups the coins from an archaeological site by mint date and distributes them for study according to type of metal and periods. But this procedure has some disadvantages due to the long time some denominations were in circulation, which can lead to serious misinterpretation. Against this, we propose a working method that establishes as a main analysis criterion the inclusion of the coin in the stratigraphic record. The creation of the archaeological repository, and especially the close connection between coin and ceramic, pro-

vides information about its use and circulation, clarifies residuality¹ and gives a more reliable point of view about monetary circulation in a certain place and a specific moment. It provides therefore information about its degree of monetization and the resulting economic activity.

The possibilities of study offered by the stratigraphic contextualization of coins have given a new value to the series of coins discovered by archaeological activity. Numismatic discipline has traditionally had little interest in

This article has been finished within the research project HAR2015-67111-P (The place of things: relationship between material culture and built spaces in the light of archaeology (6-14 centuries AD)) from the MINECO.

¹ Saguì, Rovelli 1998.

these groups of coins, since most of them are in poor condition and have low nominal values. They have been a mere chronological tool for Archaeology, useful to date strata and objects according to the mint date, which appears on the coin or can be deduced by looking at the issuing authority. This date has been used to date strata, objects and archaeological sites, regardless of the risks that arise if not taking also into account the archaeological contexts².

The scenario that has been defining for a long time the traditional relationship between Numismatic and Archaeology has begun to change. Some Numismatic sectors have dissociated from collecting and distanced from being merely taxonomic, which has led to analytical approaches where the coin's main value is reporting historical processes. From this point of view, coins unearthed during archaeological works have become a particularly relevant instrument. Within the last years it has been proved that the relationship between coin finds and its archaeological context is essential when studying certain historical processes. Thanks to this, it has been possible to make progresses in specific matters not easily tackled by other means, or unsolvable only by an isolated study of the coins³.

For some time now, we have been studying a way to integrate the coin in the analysis of the archaeological context within the project developed in El Tolmo de Minateda in the past two decades⁴.

The city of El Tolmo de Minateda

The archaeological site of El Tolmo de Minateda (Hellín, Albacete) is a settlement located in southeastern Spain, nowadays the province of Albacete (Figure 1). From its strategic vantage point it looks out over the natural route connecting the inland and the southeastern coast. First documented as a road⁵ with the placement of milestones in the Roman period⁶, this old corridor is still being used. The settlement overlooks the crossroad between this road and the one connecting Valencia with Upper Andalusia⁷.

The excavation began in 1988 as a systematic project

² The use of the coin as a mere dating element can be seen in many different archaeological publications, where coin finds are shortly referred to and not even described. Some authors have tried to solve the coin detection and other problems, such as M.A. Cebrián, 1999 y A. Fernández, 1999.

³ Canto García 2011. Along similar lines, it is important to highlight the *XIII Congreso Nacional de Numismática. Moneda y Arqueología*, Cádiz, España, 22-24 octubre 2007 (Doménech, 2009), or the *I Workshop Internazionale di Numismatica. Numismatica e archeologia. Monete, stratigrafie e contesti. Dati a confronto* (Roma 2011) where this work was first published.

⁴ Doménech, Gutiérrez 2005; *Idem* 2006.

⁵ The Via Complutum (Alcalá de Henares in Madrid) to Carthago Nova (Cartagena in Murcia).

⁶ Sillières 1982; *Idem* 1990.

⁷ Abad, Gutiérrez, Sanz 1998.

approved and financed by the Directorate-General for Education, Science and Culture in Castile-La Mancha. The University of Alicante and the Museum of Albacete take active part in this project, which has been declared Archaeological Park in the province of Albacete in 2012⁸.

The morphology and location of this plateau on a hill has favoured the settlement of different people over time, and some significant vestiges confirm a long occupation together with some periods of abandonment from the late Bronze Age into our time. It was an important center in the Ibero-Roman period, turned into a municipality in the early Roman Empire⁹. This municipality was abandoned in the II Century BC and, once reoccupied by Visigoths during the Greco-Gothic period, was inhabited until the IX Century AC¹⁰.

It has been accepted nowadays the proposal made by the research team, identifying El Tolmo de Minateda with *Madīnat Iyyuh*, one of the cities referred to in the Treaty of Tudmir, signed in the year 713. This city was probably a faithful copy of the new Episcopal See in *Eio/Elo*, built by the Visigothic monarchy together with *Begastri* in the early VII Century BC as a means to integrate the territories dependent on the Bishopric of *Ilici* and *Carthago Spartaria* (*Cartagena, Spain*), which were still under Byzantine rule¹¹. The Visigothic city was still inhabited during the Arab-Berber invasion in the year 711. The Arabic name of *Madīnat Iyyuh*, which has been kept in the place name of Minateda, appears in the famous subordination Treaty signed in the year 713 by 'Abd al-'Azīz Ibn Musa and the Doge Tudmir (*Theudimer*). This subordination Treaty, the only one known in detail in all Al-Andalus, established the submission of a wide area in southeastern Hispania, referred to as Cora of Tudmīr (province of Tudmir) by Arabic sources from that moment on.

According to the chronology seen in the cave paintings in Minateda, including some Levantine style paintings, the long occupation of El Tolmo de Minateda begins at least in the Neolithic Age. This was not a continued occupation, since there are clear breaks in the timeline. There is evidence of a Bronze Age settlement during the third millennium BC and a Pre-Roman period with an Iberian *oppidum*, which was later transformed into a Roman *municipium* in the era of Augustus. The city began to decline until it was almost abandoned between the II and VI Centuries. However, almost all discovered coins belong to this period.

Its vantage point in the main crossroad connecting *Toletum* (Toledo), Visigothic Royal Seat, and the Byzantine capital *Carthago Spartaria* (Cartagena), led to its transfor-

⁸ Abad *et alii* 2012. The decree 81/2012 from 26 th April 2012 declares the Archeological Park of El Tolmo de Minateda in Hellín (Albacete, Spain) [2012/5677].

⁹ Abad 1996.

¹⁰ Gutiérrez Lloret 2011a.

¹¹ Gutiérrez 2000a; Gutiérrez *et alii* 2005.

mation into a religious complex in charge of the territories belonging to the diocese of *Ilici*, which were slowly incorporated during the advance of Visigothic troops towards the southeastern coast of the *Carthaginensis* province. Archaeological evidence proves that when the Visigoths arrived in the beginning of the VII Century, their urban development project was almost *ex nouo*. The main access to the city is then walled again, keeping inside the decrepit Iberian and Roman fortifications. They built all over the hill and created a religious area in the highest part of the city, surrounded by an *ad sanctos* cemetery¹². The Visigothic settlement lived through the early Islamic period without any topographical or stratigraphic break in the excavated areas, where there was always a public building, a household or even a funeral area until the very moment when it was finally abandoned¹³ (Figure 2).

The religious and administrative complex was used until the beginning of the VIII Century, when its original purpose was lost and certain areas were plundered and transformed into households. By the end of the VIII Century, or the beginning of the next one, this area underwent an important and planned urban renewal that affected Visigothic buildings. An Islamic neighbourhood was built over the religious area. This neighbourhood suffered a densification process where households became more and more complex¹⁴. The settlement was finally abandoned before the Caliphate of Córdoba in the year 929. The Caliphate introduced important transformations that never reached this early Islamic city, whose fossilization turns this site into an exceptional enclave for the study of the High Middle Ages. El Tolmo de Minateda is also the perfect place to analyze the changes produced in a Visigothic religious *ciuitas* after the Arab-Berber conquest of the Iberian Peninsula, as well as the following Islamization process. Our study focuses on that specific High Medieval occupation of the settlement (VII to IX Centuries).

The series of coins

Archaeological works in the site have recovered 282 coins from different periods. It is important to highlight that all of them were scattered all over the site and accidentally lost, perhaps with the exception of four Visigothic *tremisses*¹⁵ found within the same stratum, but not intentionally hidden anyway. These coins were therefore being used when deposited, so they are a good example of the monetary circulation in the Visigothic and Islamic city¹⁶.

¹² Gutiérrez, Cánovas 2009; Gutiérrez, Sarabia 2013.

¹³ There is an extensive bibliography on the High Medieval settlement of El Tolmo de Minateda, such as the texts from Gutiérrez Lloret, 2011 and Abad *et alii* 2012.

¹⁴ Gutiérrez 2008; Gutiérrez, Cañavate 2010.

¹⁵ The *tremis* is a golden coin with one-third of the solidus value, and the only coinage minted by Visigoths.

¹⁶ It is important to note a possible distortion in the series of coins recovered due to specific conditions in the site and the fact that coins found in archaeological sites are usually those of less value, as explained

The coins recovered in the site range from the II Century AC to our time. Not taking into account the coins that have yet to be dated (23%), most of them are old (61%) and only 11% belong to the High Middle Ages (Figure 3). All the rest were found on the surface and derive from visits in later periods (5%). The classification (Figure 4) shows that Roman coins are the most common ones in the site, 58.5% of all recovered coins. But there are important differences among them according to the Centuries they belong to, since most of these coins were struck between the III and V Centuries AC, and especially within the IV Century (Figure 5).

According to the given data, it may seem that we deal with a Roman settlement inhabited during the decline of the Roman Empire. This overall picture emerges from the actual date written on the coins, which would be accepted should the study of the series of coins be independent of all other materials and its own archaeological context. A decontextualized study of these coins would suggest that El Tolmo de Minateda had a lot of activity and development in the later Roman Empire, which is far away from reality.

On the contrary, there are just a few High Medieval coins struck between the VI and VII Centuries: a Byzantine copper coin and six Visigothic *tremisses*. The Byzantine coin (Figure 6-7) has the value of four *nummi* and shows a cross on one of its sides, and the Greek letter *delta* on the other, which has been interpreted as a number or a value mark¹⁷. Even though there is no reference to an issuing authority and a place of minting, it has been included in the *Carthago Spartaria* (Cartagena, España) mint because it is in this city where most of the known coins have been found. It has been considered a local issue dating from the second half of the VI Century and the beginning of the VII Century AC. Since it was found in the foundation phase of a Byzantine district and is associated to some ARS types, it seems it is an early issue¹⁸.

Six Visigothic golden *tremisses* have been recovered within the religious area (Figure 6, 1-6). All of them were struck in the last two decades of the VII Century and the first decade of the VIII Century AC. They date therefore from the later moments of the Visigothic Kingdom. More accurately, they were struck within the three decades previous to the Arab-Berber conquest of the Iberian Peninsula. The chronology of the *tremisses* is in line with the other archaeological material discovered, especially with the ceramic. The oldest one has the name of king Erwig on it, dates from the 680-687 AC and appeared in the cladding of the yard between the basilica and the palace, done by the end of the VII Century or the beginning of the VIII Century. A second *tremis*, struck during the joint government of Egica and Wittiza (694/5-702 AC), was located nearby, outside the baptistery of the basilica. The other

by Blackburn 1989 and Clua 2006.

¹⁷ Lechuga 2000, 338.

¹⁸ Lechuga, 2000, 340.

four *tremisses*, of low-grade metal, were struck during the government of Wittiza (700-710 AC)¹⁹ and discovered in the same stratum. With the exception of the Erwig *tremis*, which was found in the reconstructed part of the religious area, the Egica-Wittiza coin and the other four ones struck by the latter appeared in the abandoned and destroyed areas of the same religious complex -the first coin in the outer side of the baptistery and the other four in the yard between the basilica and the palace-, in stratigraphic contexts clearly belonging to the VIII Century. They were struck in different mints: *Caesaragusta*, *Toledo*, *Córdoba*, *Ispali* and *Tucci*. Some of these mints are among the most productive of the period and can be considered the nearest ones to El Tolmo, since there were no mints in the middle of the *Carthaginiense* province.

Some Islamic coins struck within the VII and IX Centuries have been found, coming both from Andalusia and other Islamic regions. The 24 Islamic coins discovered divide into 10 silver *dirhams*²⁰ and 14 copper *fulus*²¹. Since there were no golden coins available, the *dirham* was the most valuable coin in the Emirate of Al-Andalus monetary system, and was therefore the coin used for paying taxes. Its high market value did condition its circulation and is the reason why they were cut to get fractional coins. Most of the *dirhams* found in El Tolmo de Minateda were cut *ex profeso*. The most common pieces correspond approximately to a quarter of the coin (*Figure 6, 9-11*). There are only two complete *dirhams*, one of them an *'abbāsīd* issue under the name of the Caliph Hārūn al-Rašīd, struck between the years 795 and 802 AC (*Figure 6, 8*).

Most of these *dirhams* were issued in Al-Andalus within the first half of the IX Century BC. There is one coin struck under the name of Al-Hakam I in the year 812-3 AC (*Figure 6, 10*) and some others from the same Century, being the latest one a piece of a coin struck between the years 844 and 853 AC, which could belong to the government of Muḥammad I (*Figure 6, 11*).

There are 14 *fulus*, the copper coin with the lowest value in the Islamic monetary system. Contrary to the common practice in Islamic issues, these copper coins do not have any reference to the mint and date, but only religious lettering. This is the reason why they have been generally dated according to their metrological and formal characters, something very complex due to the wide differences they show. It is only in the past decades that Numismatic research has studied these coins²².

Part of the Numismatic society has recently approached Archaeology, a fact that has provided a chronology for certain series of *fulus* according to their stratigraphic context. Such is the case of the archaeological works in *Sagunda*, a district in Cordoba city, whose violent destruction in the year 818 AC provides all coins found there with a very precise limit *ante quem*²³. The fact that the coins found in El Tolmo de Minateda have a context has helped to solve certain interesting matters (*Figure 6, 13-18*). Some *fulus* associated to the conquest have been recovered and dated in the first half of the VIII Century AC. One of them has a star on one side and the mint name Al-Andalus centered on the other side (*Figure 6, 17*). Another one shows the iconographic representation of a fish, mostly seen as a sturgeon or a tuna from the Strait of Gibraltar, with crescent moons and a star underneath (*Figure 6, 16*). There is no consensus about its origin, which could have been Al-Andalus or North Africa²⁴. Its metrologic characters and the appearance of an iconographic element give these *fulus* a place among the oldest ones in the Eastern Mediterranean, dating from the early decades of the VIII Century. There is a third coin that belongs to the few ones that have a written date, the Hegira year 108, which corresponds to the 726-727 AC. The position of these *fulus* within the stratigraphic sequence of the settlement provides very valuable historical information.

Among the coins discovered in the city and belonging to the VIII and IX Centuries, there was a fragment of a Carolingian denier. This piece shows the cross-like monogram *KAROLVS* and was struck in the Roda mint, in the Marca Hispanica between the years 785-814 AC. This coin should have been in circulation together with *dirhams* and was fragmented just like them, creating in this case a half coin that became a common fraction easy to recognize. Within the past years, A. Canto has suggested that the Carolingian coinage arrived to the Iberian Peninsula in the second half of the IX Century AC²⁵. The stratigraphic context of the Carolingian denier unearthed in El Tolmo de Minateda suggests that it had been used in an earlier period, being therefore one of the earliest examples of Carolingian coin circulation in the Iberian Peninsula.

These Numismatic materials have been mainly discovered in specific contexts of use, rebuilding, abandonment and destruction of the High Medieval phases of the settlement. They provide therefore key information to understand the use and currency dynamics within this settlement in the High Middle Ages.

¹⁹ We follow the *Corpus Nummorum Visigothorum* chronological reference; Doménech 2014.

²⁰ The *dirham* is the Islamic silver coin and the denomination of highest value minted in Al-Andalus once the golden issues were interrupted after the conquest of the Iberian Peninsula.

²¹ The copper *fulus* is the lowest value coin in the Islamic monetary system. It was very popular during the Emirate but its minting stopped with the Caliphate of Cordoba.

²² Doménech 1994; Frochoso 1996; *Idem* 2001.

²³ Casal, Martín, Canto 2009.

²⁴ According to por F. Codera (1879, II-9). For G.C. Miles (1950, 21) it might possibly have been struck in Spain, while J. Navascués (1958) claimed it might have been in Tangier and related it to Tarik's conquest of the Iberian Peninsula. From that moment its origin has been established both in Al-Andalus and North Africa, depending on each author. A. Canto has recently supported Al-Andalus as point of origin according to its features, inscription style and iconography (Canto 2011, 166).

²⁵ Canto 2012, 72; Doménech 2013.

The coinage over time: from the Visigothic Episcopal See to the Islamic neighbourhood

For the study we have chosen the series of coins discovered in the highest area of the city, the Visigothic religious complex that later turned into an Islamic neighbourhood. The Visigothic complex, built and used within the VII Century, was still being used in the first years of the VIII Century before it was abandoned in that same Century. This abandonment doesn't seem to have a direct relation to the Arab-Berber conquest, since *Madīnat Iyyuh* did appear in the list of cities included in the Treaty signed by the Visigothic Doge Theudimer and the conquerors in the year 713. The Doge Theudimer kept his taxation powers over a wide area in the southeastern part of the Peninsula, which was named after his arabized name (Tudmīr). The subordination Treaty guaranteed religious, personal and property freedom in exchange of a tax payment, reason why the church did not turn into a mosque²⁶. There was an Egyptian *jund* military settlement in Tudmīr by the year 743-4 a.C, an alliance signed with the Visigothic aristocracy with the marriage of Tudmir's daughter with an Egyptian soldier, and an important involvement in the tax collection. All of this highlights the continued existence of a *statu quo* that would definitely break within the second half of the VII Century due to 'Abd al-Rahmān's military campaign against Tudmīr and the devastation of Valencia in the year 778²⁷.

Once the religious complex lost its specific use in the second half of the VIII Century, some of its rooms turned into households or were looted. Such is the case of the southern room next to the baptistery, its northern nave, and the southern room next to the sanctuary, which seems to be the *sacrarium*. The outer side of the baptistery had a similar fate. The stratigraphic contexts documented in all these places confirm that the religious complex was abandoned before the Islamic neighbourhood was built over it. The stratigraphic sequence of the settlement and the materials discovered in these contexts point to the second half of the VIII Century²⁸.

By the end of the VIII Century, an Islamic neighbourhood would be built over the *palatium* and the Visigothic basilica, no longer of religious use. The construction had been previously planned and involved levelling and terracing of the area, which devastated the northern part of the complex. Archaeological works in the Islamic neighbourhood have identified a first construction phase in some specific parts of the site. Later phases producing complex households show a tendency to densify areas²⁹. This neighbourhood would be inhabited during the IX Century and abandoned within its last years.

This stratigraphic sequence, simplified in the *Figure 7*, provides material contexts that relate roughly to the second half of the VII Century and the beginning of the VIII (Phase I), to the middle and second part of the VIII Century (Phase II), and to the IX Century (Phase III), where ceramic contexts and coins are included.

Coinage and context

At this point, it is important to establish a context for the series of coins. Within the Phase I, when the Visigothic complex had a religious use, 69% of all coins recovered are Roman. These copper coins, mostly from the later Roman Empire, were found in the strata that relates to the years when this complex was used and renovated. Most of the coins are Roman, only 3.4% are Visigothic, and the rest are either difficult to determine or are being restored and will probably end up being also Roman (*Figure 8*). This information points out that the monetary circulation in the Visigothic city was mostly Roman. The high amount and dispersal suggests that it was the common currency in that period, not just residual coins accidentally mixed with the Visigothic currency. It is also important to take into account that the Visigothic city was built *ex nouo* over a settlement that had been abandoned for centuries, reason why all the coins discovered in the High Medieval strata must have been introduced in that very moment. The high amount of coins belonging to the III and IV Centuries AC does not relate to an occupation of the settlement in the later Roman Empire. On the contrary, archaeological strata corresponding to those centuries has yet to be found.

Phase II includes the functional transformation of the religious complex and it is marked by the domestic use of the old Visigothic religious buildings. Both the basilica and the *palatium* had already lost its original use and were transformed into households, proved by the hearths and rooms that have been discovered. In this phase, ceramic contexts are heirs to Visigothic tradition, but the first Islamic copper coins also appear: *fulus* belonging to the VIII Century. These *fulus* coexist with some Visigothic *tremisses*, but the old Roman copper coin still dominates monetary circulation in this phase of the settlement, even though its presence had been reduced to a 62% (*Figure 9*).

Phase III includes the strata of use, renovation and abandonment of the Islamic neighbourhood that had been built in the IX Century over the old Visigothic religious complex. The series of coins found in this neighbourhood talk about a more heterogeneous and varied monetary system. Even though the old Roman copper coins lost ground against the new Islamic currency, they were still being used in a pretty high percentage, over 60% of all coins recovered (*Figure 10*). Some old Iberian coins can be residually found among them, a Byzantine copper coin with the value of 4 *nummi*, the half of a Carolingian denier, and a *dirham* belonging to the Caliph Hārūn al-Rašīd of the Oriental 'abbāsīd dynasty. This coinage was part of the Islamic currency used in the neighbourhood, together with the

²⁶ Gutiérrez, Gamo, Amorós 2003, 140; Amorós *et alii* 2012.

²⁷ Gutiérrez 1998, 147-151.

²⁸ Gutiérrez, Gamo, Amorós 2003, 140.

²⁹ Gutiérrez, Cañavate 2010.

usual copper *fulus* and some Islamic silver coins from the IX Century, mostly from Al-Andalus but also including a few foreign coins. Most of these Islamic silver coins are quartered³⁰.

These three High Medieval Phases described have provided very important material and architectural remnants. The series of coins found show a monetary dynamic defined by an overwhelming presence of Roman coins, mostly from the III and IV Centuries AC. The currency belonging to those Centuries dominates the monetary circulation both in the Visigothic *ciuitas* and the Islamic *madina*. This presence will gradually decrease from the VIII Century onwards, while the Islamic currency will gain importance.

The Islamic currency shows a different stratigraphic behaviour according to the metal they are made of. Copper and silver appear in similar quantities but their stratigraphic distribution is very different. *Fulus* can already be found in the oldest Islamic phases and keep their importance all over the period. On the other hand, the *dirhams*, which are more than 40% of the Islamic coins found in the site, are concentrated in the strata belonging to the IX Century. This proves the gradual introduction of Islamic currency in the monetary circulation of the city, starting with copper coins and not introducing silver significantly until the following Century.

Coinage and stratigraphic sequence

The integration of the coins in the stratigraphic sequence has provided outstanding information about certain historical and economic matters. The survival of old currencies in High Medieval phases, for example, is proved by a *tremis* struck under the name of Erwig (680-687 AC), found in the renovation of the monumental portico that served as an entrance to the Visigoth episcopal complex. The discovery of certain Roman coins found in stratigraphic units subsequent to those renovations and related to ceramics from the VIII and IX Centuries, such as two *nummus* of the IV Century, prove the survival of Roman currency in the monetary circulation during the Islamic period³¹.

Stratigraphy is also the best tool to establish the exact time of use of certain coins. The Visigothic *tremisses*, dating from a late period between the years 680 and 710, should have therefore been in circulation during the Arab-Berber conquest and the Treaty of Tudmir in the VIII Century, but before the Islamic neighbourhood was built over the Visigothic religious complex. The stratigraphic sequence also proves that the *tremisses* could have co-existed with the earlier *fulus* found in the transformation of certain religious buildings into households, and in the levelling of the Islamic neighbourhood³². This means they

should have been deposited within the VIII Century, and that the construction of the Islamic neighbourhood over it should have taken place in the latest part of that Century. The strata belonging to the periods of use and abandonment of the neighbourhood have an important amount of copper and silver Islamic coins struck in the IX Century. If we associate these coins to the ceramics discovered, we can establish that the city was finally abandoned in an undefined point of the second half of the IX Century, probably by the end, but before the Caliphate.

Thanks to study of the coins in their stratigraphic context, the VIII Century can be recognized archaeologically and its ceramic defined. Key to this is the strata ranging from the building of the Visigothic complex in the VII Century and the building of the Islamic neighbourhood by the end of the VIII Century or the beginning of the IX. These strata, mostly claddings done in orange clay, prove the desecration of the religious buildings and how their rooms turned into households. The ceramics unearthed in those strata did not shed any light in the beginning, because they were Visigothic and could either date from the VII Century or the VIII³³. The discovery of a *fals* (Figure 6, 15), possibly struck in North Africa at an early date, in one of the claddings of the religious complex, was key to determine the Islamic chronology of the renovation and to date the ceramic according to its use and abandonment in the VIII Century AC. In this very case, the contextualization of the coins has helped dating certain ceramics and has highlighted a typological continuity in ceramic refurbishings during the first half of the VIII Century, even after the Islamic conquest³⁴.

Stratified coins have also been very important to establish a precise chronology for the construction and renovation of the Islamic neighbourhood built over the basilica. The early chronology of these constructions are confirmed by the discovery of some *fulus*, struck in the first half of the VIII Century, within the strata belonging to the construction of the first Islamic houses near the baptistery and to the movement in one of the streets between the houses³⁵.

It is possible to follow in a similar way the chronology of certain renovations in the Islamic neighbourhood. One of them could be dated after the year 812-813 thanks to a coin belonging to the emir Al-Hakam I (Figure 6, 10). This coin was unearthed in a part of the Islamic neighbourhood where materials previous to the ultimate abandonment of the settlement were found, inside a stratum located in the middle two phases of Islamic construction. Its mint date provides a reliable limit *post quem* to this renovation of the Islamic neighbourhood, abandoned after the IX Century. Another interesting point arisen by the stratigraphic location of this fragment of a *dirham* is the early fragmentation so it could be used as a fractional monetary unit, which

³⁰ Doménech, Gutiérrez 2006.

³¹ Doménech, Mellado, Cañavate 2016.

³² Doménech, Gutiérrez 2006.

³³ Cañavate, Mellado, Sarabia 2009, 10.

³⁴ Gutiérrez 2012.

³⁵ Doménech, Gutiérrez 2006, 353-355.

happened soon after it was struck. The same happened with another fragment, also the quarter of a *dirham*, dated between the years 844 and 853 AC under the rule of ‘Abd Al-Raḥmān or Muḥammad I (Figure 6, 11). This fragment provides an important chronological fact related to the use and ultimate abandonment of the neighbourhood, thanks to the house where it was found. Both the coin and the ceramics found in the rooms suggest that it was abandoned in the second half of the IX Century³⁶.

This is a very significant fact, since written sources suggest that the emir ‘Abd Al-Raḥmān II ordered the destruction of the city of *Iyyuh* in a letter written on the 27th February of the year 826³⁷. If we believe this written reference, the abandonment would have taken place at an earlier time, which does not correspond with the numismatic evidence and the contextualized ceramics. The local ceramic production discovered in the strata of use and abandonment of the Islamic neighbourhood includes pieces of glazed ceramic, manufactured in the middle of the IX Century in urban workshops located in southern Al-Andalus. The arrival of these ceramic imports to *Madinat Iyyuh* supports the stratigraphic statements and refutes the written reference. According to the numismatic and ceramic evidence, the city should have been abandoned somewhere in the second half of the IX Century and not in the year 826. Words and things do not always use the same language.

Coinage, stratigraphy and context. A needed dialogue

We strongly believe that the dialogue between the coins, the stratigraphy and the context is necessary and profitable. It is needed because, if avoided, it could lead into misinterpretations arisen mostly by the loss of the real chronological meaning of the coins. The context and stratigraphic position are crucial to establish the mint date written on the coin, in cases where its real chronological value is conditioned by the period when it was in use and when it deposited. Archaeology has proved that the period when a coin was in use during the High Middle Ages can differ greatly from its mint date. This can be seen especially in the series of coins from the later Roman Empire, which were still in use many Centuries after they were struck. If the stratigraphic context where the Roman coins were discovered and its relation to the other archaeological material unearthed had not been taken into account, it could have been thought that El Tolmo de Minateda was a very lively settlement during the III and IV Centuries AC, which is totally false according to the archaeological facts we already know.

Besides being very necessary, this dialogue is also very profitable. In the specific case of El Tolmo de Minateda, the context has provided chronological limits to the circulation of old currencies, and has allowed us to

quantify this phenomenon. This can be seen in other parts of the Iberian peninsula and its importance in the currency dynamics of the High Middle Ages is seen more clearly³⁸. In our site, the chronological limits broaden up to the IX Century AC. The bronze coins from the late Roman Empire were the main currency in the Visigothic settlement of the VII Century, as were during the Islamic period of the city in the VIII and IX Centuries AC.

The study of the series of coins unearthed in the Islamic phases discovered Byzantine, ‘abbāsī and Carolingian coins, which meant that the monetary circulation in the VIII and IX Centuries included foreign currencies. It has also been possible to analyze the Islamization process of the currency: an early start with the arrival of the Islamic copper coin in the VIII Century, the coexistence with the old Roman bronzes from the later Roman Empire, and the appearance of silver coins, mostly in the strata belonging to the IX Century. These silver coins were fragmented *ex profeso* to be used as a fraction³⁹. The stratigraphic context where these coins have been found proves that these fragmentations took place near the mint date.

The fragmentation of the *dirhams* raise a question about the linguistic Arabization and Islamization degree of the people living in El Tolmo de Minateda during the IX Century AC. It has been proved that all quartered coins were cut parallel to the writing lines in the first area, the *sahada* or profession of Islamic faith. There is only one coin where the cut was done over the lines in the second area, the sura 112 of the Quran. The intriguing coincidence of the direction of the cuts according to the epigraphical inscriptions, seen in the silver fragments found in El Tolmo and sometimes in the fragmented *dirhams* found in other sites⁴⁰, can suggest an early literacy. Could these coins have been read and understood, or at least recognized, by the same people that cut them in the IX Century? These questions are difficult deal with, especially out of specific material such as series of coins, since they deal with the Arabization and literacy of people in general. But the recurring coincidence points out that the text professing the faith was at least visually recognized on the coins. In this regard, the *graffiti* on local Islamic ceramic discovered in the same site, one of them an inscription in Arabic script on a bottle of Visigothic type dated in first half of the eighth century AD, suggests that, besides an early significant literacy degree, the inhabitants of El Tolmo were already linguistically Arabized in the IX Century, regardless of their origin⁴¹.

³⁶ Gutiérrez, Cañavate 2010.

³⁷ Ibn Ḥayyān: *Kitāb al-muqtabis fī tā’rīj riḡā’ al-Andalus*. J. Vallvé, *Muqtabis II* y M.A. Makkī and F. Corriente *Crónica de los emires*, 284.

³⁸ T. Marot established that the coins used in the IV Century a.C. did not only survive and were still in use, but did predominate in the VI Century a.C. (Marot 1997, *Idem* 2002; Marot *et alii* 2000). The chronological limits of this fact have been broadening ever since. See Castro 2005 y 2008 for the specific case of Toledo.

³⁹ Canto 1988, 443-448; *Idem* 1995, 37; *Idem* 1999, 79.

⁴⁰ As seen in the series of coins found in Puebla de Cazalla (Ibrahim, Canto 1991) and Iznájar (A. Canto and M. Marsal 1988)

⁴¹ Gutiérrez 2006; Martínez, Gutiérrez, Amorós 2016.

The coins discovered have established *post quem* limits to stratigraphic actions and/or phases. They have also provided new information key to solve archaeological issues raised in the site, such as the material recognition of the VIII Century, and the qualification of written sources, apparently precise, that date the devastation and abandonment of the city in the year 826 AC. This date has been proved to be improbable due to the connection between the fragment of the *dirham* minted in the middle of the VIII Century, and the ceramics found in the site, which were manufactured in the second half of the IX Century. The series of coins and ceramics, together with the stratigraphic records, prove that the city was still inhabited in the second half of the IX Century and that it was not abandoned before that time, contrary to what written sources state.

As seen by the results, the dialogue among coins, stratigraphy and archaeological context are a very powerful methodological tool that sheds light on certain historical questions that may not be addressed in any other way. This is proved by the archaeological contextualization of coin finds.

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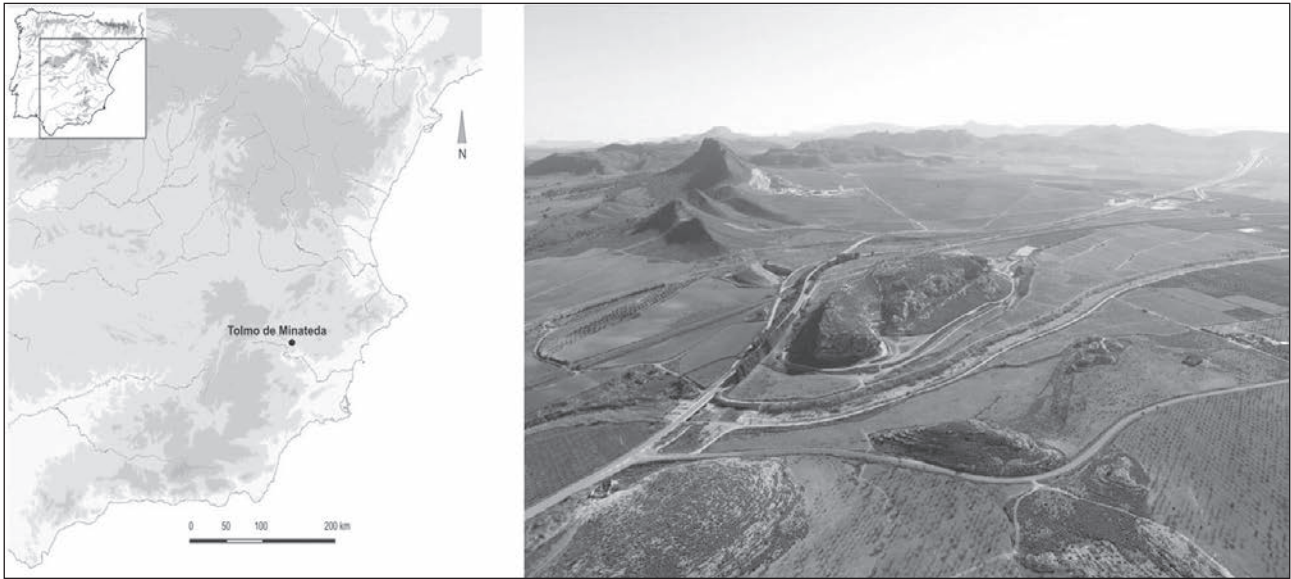


Figure 1. View and location of El Tolmo de Minateda.

	Deposition/frequentionation	III b	PHASE III	c. 850
	Occupation and abandonment			
	Occupation and rebuilding	III a		
	Levelling and building of the Islamic quarter	II c	PHASE II	c. 800
	Ancient looting and abandonment	II b		
	Domestic uses	II a		
	Transformation of uses	I		
	Occupation and rebuilding		PHASE I	c. 725
	Building of Episcopal complex			
				c. 600

Figure 2. Simplified stratigraphic sequencey.

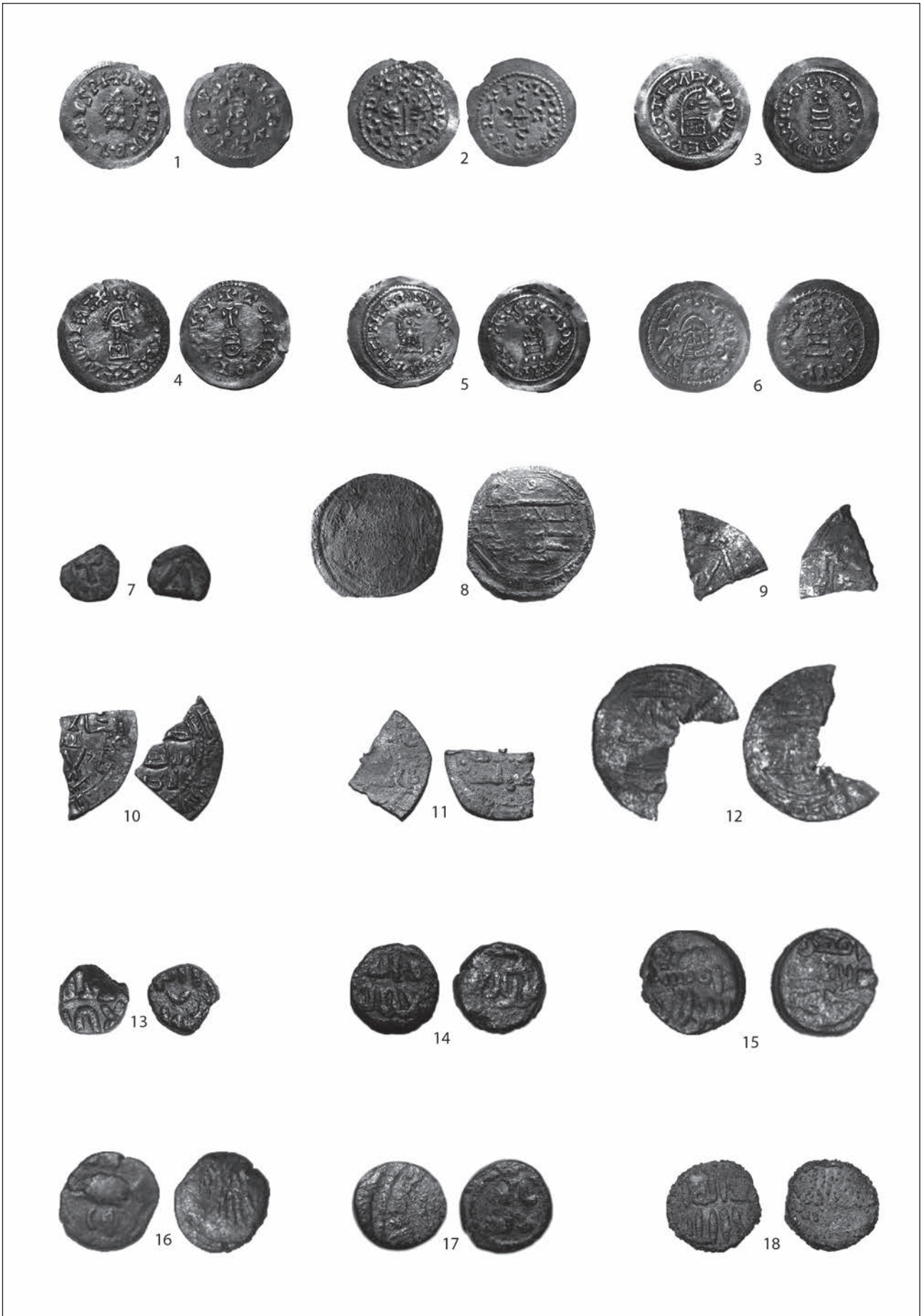


Figure 6. High Medieval coins found in El Tolmo de Minateda (scale 1:1).

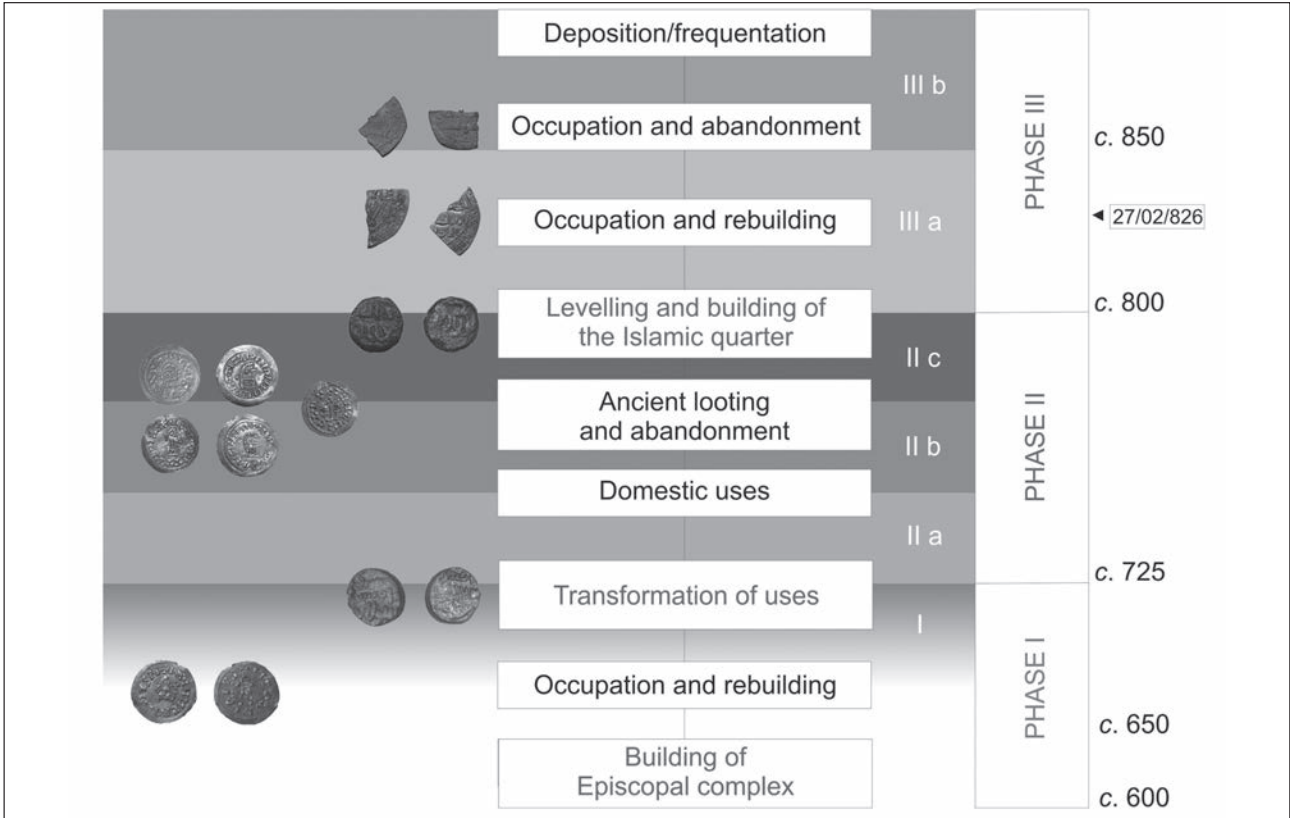


Figure 7. Coins and stratigraphic sequence.

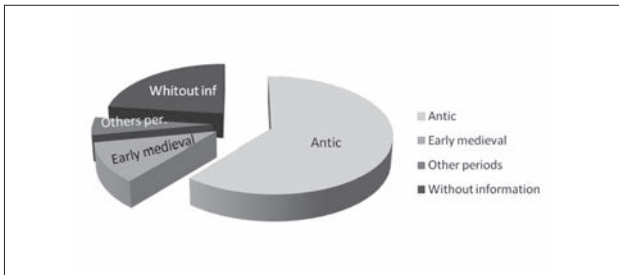


Figure 3. Coins divided by historical period.

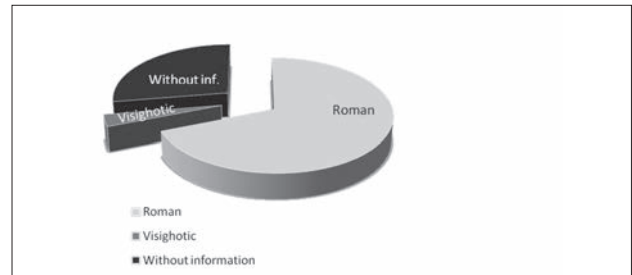


Figure 8. Coin finds Phase I.

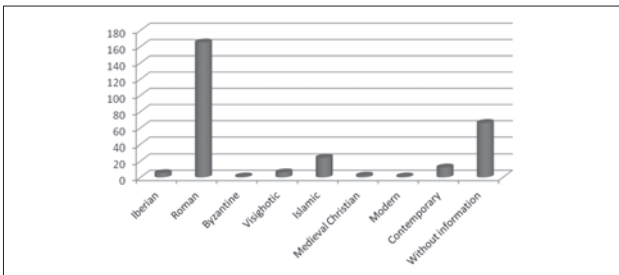


Figure 4. Coins divided by series.

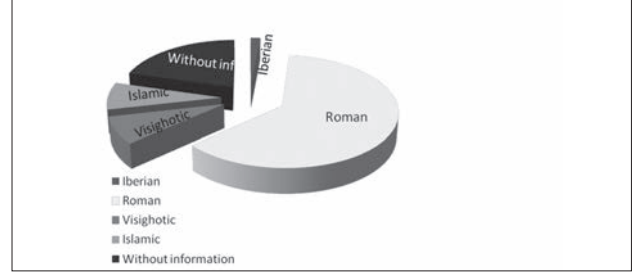


Figure 9. Coin finds Phase II.

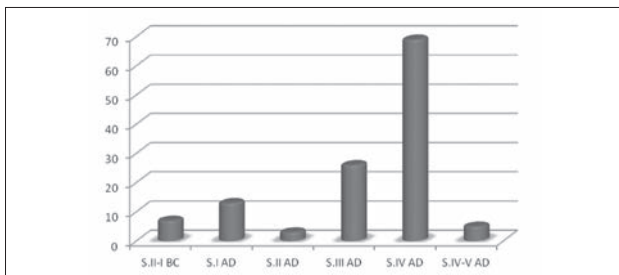


Figure 5. Roman coins divided by centuries.

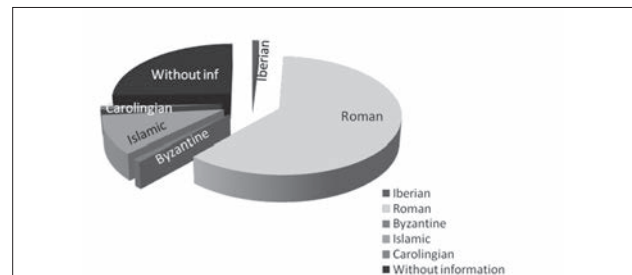


Figure 10. Coin finds Phase III.

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