

# A denier of Besançon found in Noord-Brabant and its significance for the portrait coinage of Charlemagne (768-814)

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**Samenvatting** – De portretmunten van Karel de Grote gelden als het meest gerenommeerde Karolingische munttype. Toch zijn er maar weinig exemplaren van bekend: slechts 45 volgens de meest recente lijst. In dit artikel worden hieraan veertien nieuwe exemplaren toegevoegd, waaronder één uit een niet eerder bekende muntplaats, Besançon. Deze ontdekking roept verschillende vragen op. Wanneer en waarom werd dit type geïntroduceerd? Was het bedoeld om de enige muntsoort in het rijk te worden, of is het slechts een ceremoniële uitgifte? Waar werden de stempels gegraveerd en de munten geslagen? Het artikel concludeert dat het type een ceremoniële uitgifte is, die vanaf september 813 werd geslagen in Aken, op een zodanige schaal dat de munten wijd en zijd circuleerden. De munt van Besançon was waarschijnlijk geen officiële uitgifte.

**Summary** – The portrait coinage of Charlemagne is the most celebrated Carolingian coinage type, even though few specimens are known: just 45 in the last published list. Fourteen new coins are presented here, including one bearing a hitherto unrecorded mint-name, Besançon. This unexpected addition to the places named on the coinage raises numerous questions. When and why was the type introduced? Was it intended to become the new imperial currency, or just a ceremonial issue? Where were the dies engraved and the coins minted? The article concludes that it was a commemorative coinage minted in Aachen from September 813, but on a scale large enough for it to circulate widely. The coin of Besançon was probably not an official issue.

**I**N 2014 I PUBLISHED AN UPDATED LIST of all known portrait coins of Charlemagne (768-814) comprising 45 coins, though (as is explained in the catalogue below) among the listed coins there were two pairs which were mistakenly double-entered, meaning that just 43 coins were recorded (Coupland, 2014).<sup>1</sup> In the intervening years a further fourteen coins have come to light, all but one of them – with the reverse inscription *Christiana religio* around a church (usually described as a temple, despite the cross at the centre). The present article will review what new research has revealed about the portrait coinage since 2014, including the significance of the high proportion of coins found in the Netherlands. One recent find is of particular interest and merits closer examination: a detector find from Oss in Noord-Brabant, discovered in October 2022. It bears

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<sup>1</sup> One of the coins is possibly a cast copy (no. 3 in the catalogue), but as will be explained below, there must be an original in a private or public collection which provided the model for it.

on the obverse the regular inscription **KAROLVS IMP AVG**, for *Karolus imperator augustus* (although the rim is damaged, meaning that some letters must be reconstructed), but on the reverse the mint-name around a city gate is clear and undamaged: **+VESONCIONVM** (Fig. 1). This can only signify the eastern French town of Besançon, from which no portrait coin of Charlemagne, or indeed Louis the Pious, has ever been recorded before. The coin raises a number of questions. Besançon is not a mint we would expect to find named on this prestigious coinage, and the style of the coin is not that found on the overwhelming majority of Charlemagne's other portrait coins. There is no reason to believe that this is a modern forgery, as it turned up in detection in Noord-Brabant, so is it perhaps an unofficial issue from the ninth century? What are the implications for our understanding of the portrait issue in general? These are among the questions which will be considered in the discussion which follows.



*Fig. 1 – Catalogue no. 48. Portrait denier of Charlemagne (768-814), Besançon. 17 mm (shown 2.5×), 1.31 g. Single find, Oss (Noord-Brabant). Photograph Kevin Onstein.*

The portrait coins of Charlemagne are the most extensively discussed and most frequently reproduced of all Carolingian coinage types, and have been the subject of important studies by Philip Grierson (Grierson, 1965: 518-524; cf. Grierson & Blackburn, 1986: 209-210), Jean Lafaurie (Lafaurie, 1978) and Bernd Kluge (Kluge, 2002; also Kluge, 1999; 2014a: 38-40; 2014b). There are also significant recent articles by Martin Biddle, Jennifer Davis, myself, and Jens-Christian Moesgaard (Biddle, 2014; Davis, 2014; Moesgaard, 2017; Coupland, 2018a; 2018b).

One of the reasons for the considerable amount of attention that the coins have received is their symbolic significance, portraying Charlemagne in the style of his Roman imperial forebears (Davis, 2014). Another reason is that the very small number of known specimens raises important questions about this coinage which are not an issue with preceding or succeeding types, in particular: when and where were they minted, and was this intended to be the regular currency of the empire?

### Matters of style

One of the striking aspects of the portrait coins with the *Christiana religio* inscription is the consistency of style, and notably the consistently high standard of the engraving of the emperor, particularly compared with later Carolingian portrait issues. Matters of stylistic judgement are always subjective, but there is general agreement that one engraver was responsible for all the dies which struck the coins with the **HKARLVS IMP AVG** legend (nos. 21-34; Figs. 2-3, 8-9), with the possible exception of the Morienvall denier (no. 30). This is unfortunately only available for examination in old photographs as it has disappeared.



Fig. 2 – Catalogue no. 32. CGB bca\_486483, September 2018, 22.5 mm, 2.26 g. Gilded, traces of a mount. Photograph: CGB.



Fig. 3 – Catalogue no. 33. Centre Charlemagne, Aachen, 19 mm, 1.51 g. Single find from Saint-Éloi-de-Fourques (Eure, FR). Photograph: Holger Hermannsen, Centre Charlemagne, Aachen.

It also appears that a single craftsman cut all the dies for the *Christiana religio* coins reading **KAROLVS IMP AVG** (nos. 35-43; Figs. 4-5), which are of a particularly high quality. There are two possible exceptions: the coins with a **V** and **B** beneath the bust (nos. 39-40), but they are both in such poor condition that it is impossible to be certain.



Fig. 4 – Catalogue no. 36. Fritz Rudolf Künker GmbH Auction 339, 28 September 2020, lot 18, 20 mm, 1.55 g. Photograph: Künker ([www.kuenker.de](http://www.kuenker.de)).



*Fig. 5 – Catalogue no. 43. Maison Richard (Villefranche-sur-Saône),  
Auction, 15 December 2020, lot 2, 19.3 mm, 1.51 g.  
Photograph: Michel Creusy.*

Among coins with the long title, *D N KARLVS IMP AVG REX F ET L*, it is more difficult to make a judgement because of the damage on many of the coins, but there are perhaps two different styles of cloak (*paludamentum*), with one of the craftsmen more skilled than the other (responsible for at least nos. 1, 4, 9, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19: Figs. 7 and 17).



*Fig. 6 – Catalogue no. 15. Single find from Diss (Norfolk, UK), 2017,  
18.5 mm, 1.66 g. EMC 2017.0232. Photograph: EMC.*



*Fig. 7 – Catalogue no. 17. Single find from Lienden (Gelderland), 2017,  
19 mm, 1.13 g. Photograph: Guido Cornelissens.*

It is therefore apparent that an individual engraver could produce dies incorporating different details, such as the different letters beneath the portrait (or none). The same is also true on the reverse of the coins in relation to architectural detailing on the church. Martin Biddle drew attention to this in an article suggesting that the model for the building was the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (Biddle, 2014). Thus most of the coins with the *KARLVS* title, including all those illustrated here, have a single internal roof line, but not the coin in Berlin (no. 21) which has two lines. The reverse is true for the coins with the long title: most have double roof lines, a few only one (such as no. 17, from Lienden: compare Figs. 6 and 7). In both groups there are also varying numbers of small flame-like darts on the roof pediment (acroteria and perhaps urns?), with some coins having none (e.g. nos. 17, 34: Figs. 7 and 9) and others four, five or six (e.g. nos. 10, 31: Fig. 8).



Fig. 8 – Catalogue no. 31. Single find from between Utrecht and Hilversum (Noord-Holland), 2018, 20 mm, 1.55 g. NUMIS 1136621. Photograph: Alex Quelle.



Fig. 9 – Catalogue no. 34. Fritz Rudolf Künker GmbH Auction 394 (28 September 2023), lot 4534, 22 mm, 1.54 g. Photograph: [www.kuenker.de/en/auktionen/stueck/379718](http://www.kuenker.de/en/auktionen/stueck/379718) (17 August 2023).

As for those coins with a mint-name, it is evident that some dies were engraved by the same craftsman who cut *Christiana religio* coin dies. This is true of the dies for the well-known and oft-illustrated coins of Dorestad and Quentovic, for instance, which were manufactured by the die-cutter who used the **KAROLVS** title (nos. 49, 55), and very likely the comparable coins of Arles and Lyon (nos. 46, 51). It is not so clear in the case of the coin bearing the same title but the mint-name of Rouen, though it does have the same form of city gate on the reverse (no. 56), and it is definitely not the case at Trier, which has the same title but a different portrait and a different style of gate (no. 57). In the case of the mint-signed coins with a **KARLVVS** obverse, the Melle portrait appears to have been engraved by a different die-cutter (nos. 52-53; Fig. 12), while the Arles coin (no. 47) is in such bad condition that it is impossible to tell. As for the long title, the dies for at least one of the Arles coins (no. 44) and Melle (no. 54; Fig. 13) appear to have been engraved by the same highly skilled hand as the *Christiana religio* coins listed above; the second Arles coin (no. 45) is less well illustrated and more damaged, so uncertain.

This pattern of a single craftsman producing dies with several different mint-names runs counter to standard Carolingian practice. Certainly among the portrait coins of Louis the Pious it is clear that each individual mint used dies cut by different engravers, who were presumably based at the mint itself; indeed, at Melle there were apparently at least four die-cutters at work (Coupland, 2014c: 44).

There is also a gold portrait coin of Arles, described in 2014 as a “coin struck in gold from dies normally employed to strike silver pennies” (Coupland, 2014: 146; Martin, 1997). However, on that coin the portrait, the inscription and the town gate are significantly cruder than on other portrait coins of Charlemagne,

including the others from Arles, and of such a markedly inferior style that it is difficult to associate it with the regular portrait coinage. It is therefore hard to know what to make of this object, whose manufacture in gold makes it more prestigious than the silver coinage, but whose poor craftsmanship makes it less impressive. As it is clearly not part of the regular portrait coinage and would not have been intended for monetary circulation, it has been listed but not numbered in the catalogue. There are a number of gold deniers from different reigns, including a gold monogram denier from Melle from the reign of Charles the Bald (*MEC* 1, no. 965; Grierson & Blackburn, 1986: 326-331, 637; cf. Blackburn, 2007: 72-73). These gold deniers are a puzzling phenomenon; it has been assumed that they were essentially ceremonial, though there is as yet no satisfactory explanation of their purpose. Quite different are the two gold pieces minted in Charlemagne's name bearing the name of Dorestad: these were cast rather than struck, of inferior quality, and of different design from the portrait coinage. They have not been listed here as they are not part of the portrait coinage nor indeed coins at all, but should rather be seen as jewellery (so also Grierson, Kluge and Martin: Grierson, 1965: 532-533; Kluge, 2014a, no. 256: 158-159; Martin, 1997: 355).

Two other coins have poorly executed portraits, namely the second coin of Dorestad (no. 50; Fig. 10) and the newly discovered coin of Besançon (no. 48; Fig. 1). The portrait on the second coin of Dorestad (a fragment) is hard to make out, but does not look like the classical form on the denier in the Brussels collection, and the lettering around it is cruder and less regular. Having said that, the reverse is less degenerate. Is it a contemporary forgery rather than an official issue? Because of the fragmentary nature of the coin and the damage it is hard to be certain. As for the Besançon coin, it is immediately evident that neither the portrait nor the lettering of the inscriptions match the high quality of the other portrait coins, and it is in fact more like Louis's portrait deniers from Tours.<sup>2</sup> The significance of this will be discussed below.



*Fig. 10 – Catalogue no. 50. Single find from Wijk bij Duurstede (Utrecht), 16 mm (shown 1.5×), 0.91 g. Photograph: Guido Cornelissens.*

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<sup>2</sup> For example <https://id.smb.museum/object/2376313/karolinger-ludwig-der-fromme> (30 August 2023).

### When was the portrait coinage minted?

The imperial coronation of 800, the issuing of the capitulary of Thionville in 806, the recognition of Charlemagne's title by Byzantium in 812, the adoption of a new imperial title in summer 813, or even a posthumous coinage minted by Louis the Pious have all been suggested as possible occasions for the production of the type (Kluge, 1999: 87; 2002; Grierson, 1965: 518-527; Lafaurie, 1978: 164, 166-168; Garipzanov, 2005; Etterich, 2010 respectively). More recently, a consensus has begun to emerge that dates the start of minting to September 813, when Charlemagne crowned his son Louis co-emperor at Aachen (Kluge, 2014a: 40; 2014b; Davis, 2014; Coupland, 2014: 146; cf. Etterich, 2010: 107). Jens Christian Moesgaard preferred not to opt for a specific date, noting simply that the coinage was minted during the last two years of the reign (Moesgaard, 2017: 117). Rory Naismith has recently suggested that the coinage may have been commissioned as part of the execution of Charlemagne's will, distributing alms even before the emperor's death (Naismith, 2023: 295-297). This thesis does have the merit of Besançon being named among the 21 archbishoprics which were to receive these donations, and of being based upon a reliable contemporary account. The emperor's biographer Einhard recorded that "three years before he died he made a division of his treasures and his money", the valuables being placed in strong-boxes (Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, c. 33; Holder-Egger, 1911: 39; translation from Nelson, 2019: 469). Its weakness lies in the lack of correlation between the 21 archbishoprics listed in the will and the places named on the coins. In particular, it does not account for the very small proportion of coins bearing a mint-name, the lack of named Italian mints (a point we shall return to below), and the fact that three of the named locations were not mentioned in the will, even if they were, as Naismith notes, centres of trade and production where alms could be distributed.

### The portrait coinages compared

Certainly a late dating for the coinage is consistent with the programmatic influence of Louis the Pious on the portrait coinage (Davis, 2014) and explains the extremely small number of surviving specimens. Table 1 compares these with the extant examples of Louis's portrait type, itself minted for only two years, between 814 and 816 (Coupland, 2018c).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Figures correct as of 10 August 2023, updating Coupland, 2018c.

The portrait coins of Charlemagne (768-814)

Mint	Charlemagne	Louis the Pious (deniers/oboles)
Arles	4	17/10
Besançon	1	–
Dorestad	2	96/–
Lyon	1	–
Melle	3	73/47
Milan	–	22/–
Orléans	–	10/–
Pavia	–	19/–
Quentovic	1	7/–
Rouen	1	–
Sens	–	7/1
Strasbourg	–	8/–
Toulouse	–	8/2
Tours	–	26/2
Treviso	–	3/–
Trier	1	–
VISTA FEDCII	–	–/2
<i>Christiana religio</i> (Aachen)	43	43/3
Total	57	339/67

Table 1 – Number of surviving specimens of the portrait coinages of Charlemagne and Louis the Pious.

The table brings out several significant differences between the two types, demonstrating that they must have been successive rather than concurrent (so also Moesgaard, 2017: 120; *contra* Etterich, 2010). The first distinction is between the places named on the coinages: only three names occur in both columns, Arles, Dorestad and Quentovic, while Melle is also in both if **METALL GERMAN** on Charlemagne's coinage is interpreted as 'genuine' or 'true metal' (signifying pure silver) and the coins with this inscription are attributed to Melle (Coupland, 2018b: 223-224). A second difference is the lack of oboles among Charlemagne's portrait coins, compared with 67 surviving specimens among Louis's portrait type, produced at seven different mints.<sup>4</sup> This development under Louis is consistent with the increased production of these half-deniers during the course of Charlemagne's reign (Coupland, forthcoming) and the absence of any oboles from the portrait type would be surprising if it were the regular currency of the empire. A third significant difference is the proportion of coins with the *Christiana religio* inscription, which were undoubtedly produced at Aachen under Louis, and which I have also attributed to the same location under his father (Coupland, 2018a: 428-429; 2018b: 222-225). In the first column no fewer than 75 per cent of Charlemagne's portrait coins bear this inscription, while under Louis the same number of deniers (43) represents just thirteen per cent of the overall total, or if oboles are included, only eleven per cent of known coins. The fourth very obvious distinction between the two columns is the total number of surviving specimens, with over seven times as many coins of Louis the Pious. The implications of these differences will be explored below.

### Where did minting take place?

It was long assumed that coins bearing the long title, **D N KARLVS IMP AVG REX F ET L**, for **D[omnus] N[oster] KARLVS IMP[erator] AVG[ustus] REX F[ran]corum] ET L[angobardorum]** ("Our lord Charles, emperor augustus, king of the Franks and of the Lombards") must have been minted in Italy given the reference to Lombardy (e.g. Grierson, 1965: 523-524, 527; Coupland, 2005: 226). However, Charlemagne's typical imperial title in written documents throughout the empire was *Karolus serenissimus augustus a deo coronatus magnus pacificus imperator Romanorum gubernans imperium, qui et per misericordiam dei rex Francorum et Langobardorum*,<sup>5</sup> and portrait coins bearing the names of Arles and Melle have long been known with the supposedly 'Italianate' title. There is therefore no reason to regard similar coins with the *Christiana religio* inscription as produced in Italy (Coupland, 2018b: 222-223, *contra* Kluge, 2014a: 40).

<sup>4</sup> On the misidentification of a coin of Charlemagne as an obole (no. 47 in the list below) see Coupland, 2018c: 48.

<sup>5</sup> "Charles, the most serene augustus, crowned by God, the great and peaceful Emperor, governing the Roman empire, who is also by the mercy of God king of the Franks and Lombards": Davis, 2014: 21.



Fig. 11 – Portrait coin of Louis the Pious, Milan, 19 mm, 1.68 g.  
LWL-Museum für Kunst und Kultur, Münster (Stefan Wittenbrink collection).  
Photograph: Stefan Wittenbrink.

This does highlight the surprising fact that none of the 57 known coins of Charlemagne bears the name of an Italian mint, in marked contrast to the 44 portrait coins of Louis the Pious from Milan, Pavia and Treviso (Table 1 and Fig. 11). There are no recorded finds of portrait coins of either ruler from Italy, but also none of Charlemagne in Italian public collections, compared with at least fourteen of Louis the Pious, though admittedly these could have been bought at auction from other countries.<sup>6</sup> This lack of definite Italian portrait coins of Charlemagne is surprising, particularly given the monetary importance of Italy at the time: Milan and Pavia were among the most productive of Charlemagne's monogram mints (Coupland, 2018a: 447-448).<sup>7</sup> There is, however, a political explanation which would account for this lacuna while offering further support to the notion that the introduction of the type marked the coronation of Louis in September 813. For on that occasion Italy was explicitly excluded from Louis's territory and the emperor's grandson Bernard named its king (Nelson, 2019: 476). If the portrait coinage was indeed minted to celebrate Louis's partnership in the imperial title, it is understandable that the coins would have celebrated Charlemagne's reign over that part of the empire which he was now sharing with his son.

In the case of Louis the Pious there is little doubt that while his *Christiana religio* portrait coins would have been minted in Aachen, the others were struck at the places named on them. This is evident from the find distribution, so that, for instance, 29 of 33 single finds of Louis's Dorestad portrait coins have turned up in the Netherlands,<sup>8</sup> compared to five out of nineteen portrait coins of Melle.<sup>9</sup> In the same way, ten of the nineteen single finds of the latter mint have been

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<sup>6</sup> See for example Gianazza, 2013: 41-42. I am grateful to Luca Gianazza for information about other coins in Italian public collections.

<sup>7</sup> Although Naismith has resurrected the idea that the letters on certain coins could represent Italian mints (Naismith, 2023: 297, n. 162), this is unlikely: see below.

<sup>8</sup> In addition to those listed in Coupland, 2018c: 59-60, finds are reported from Beuningen (Gelderland); Elst (Gelderland); Est (Gelderland); 's-Hertogenbosch (Noord-Brabant); Kerk-Avezaath (Gelderland) and Tzummarum (Friesland: an additional find).

<sup>9</sup> In addition to the finds listed in Coupland, 2018c: 60-61: Buurmalsen (Gelderland: an obole).

recorded in western France, but no coins of Dorestad.<sup>10</sup> The find distribution of Charlemagne's portrait coins is quite different, although the very small number of provenanced finds admittedly makes this a less reliable data set. It is deeply frustrating, as Moesgaard commented, that there are no hoards from the period 813-816 which might shed further light on the period (Moesgaard, 2017: 119). As a result, absence of evidence may not be evidence of absence. Even so, it is striking that every provenanced find of a denier bearing a mint-name has occurred in the Netherlands, including those bearing the names of Arles, Lyon (not at Wijk bij Duurstede but in the later Achlum hoard), Melle and now Besançon (in Noord-Brabant).

This is one of the factors which led me to conclude that all Charlemagne's portrait coins were produced at Aachen, whatever the place-name on the reverse. Moesgaard suggested that the large number of Dutch finds are due to the prolific site of Wijk bij Duurstede and the liberal view towards metal detecting in the Netherlands (Moesgaard, 2017: 124-125). This may indeed play some part in the greater number of northern finds, but does not wholly explain it. If we compare the portrait coins bearing the mint name of Arles, for instance, unfortunately only one of the four known specimens of Charlemagne's coinage has a recorded find-spot, Wijk bij Duurstede (Völckers, 1965: 145, no. III·87), while five of Louis's coins have been found in France (three single finds and two in hoards) compared with four from the Netherlands (two of them at Wijk bij Duurstede).<sup>11</sup>

The portrait coins of Melle are another suggestive example (Figs. 12-13). As was noted a moment ago, from the reign of Louis the Pious the single find distribution reflects the coins' origin in the Melle mint. A 'savings hoard' from near Melle, which consisted almost exclusively of coins minted in Melle, included six portrait coins of Louis, all from different dies (Coupland, 2018d), but no portrait deniers of Charlemagne. Two of the three known examples of the latter were found at Wijk bij Duurstede and none in or near Melle (Figs. 12-13), despite the fact that western France where Melle is situated has been the subject of a detailed survey of single finds (Jeanne-Rose, 1996) and until the recent change in French law had excellent networks of detectorists who recorded numerous single finds. These included several portrait coins of Louis the Pious, but none of Charlemagne (Coupland, 2018c: 60-61). In addition to this, the choice of **METALL GERMAN** as the 'mint-name', which led earlier scholars to reject any association with Melle (Grierson, 1965: 521), is more consistent with production of the coins at a location other than Melle, potentially Aachen.

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<sup>10</sup> In addition to the finds listed in Coupland, 2018c: 60-61: Charente-Maritime (obole); Crouy-sur-Cosson (Loir-et-Cher); Pons (Charente-Maritime: obole); Saint-Jean-de-Sauves (Vienne: obole).

<sup>11</sup> In addition to the finds listed in Coupland, 2018c: 58-59, a single find from North Tarn (FR: an obole).



Fig. 12 – Catalogue no. 53. National Numismatic Collection, De Nederlandsche Bank, Amsterdam HNM 03120, 20 mm, 1.4 g. Single find from Wijk bij Duurstede (Utrecht). Photograph: NNC.



Fig. 13 – Catalogue no. 54. Leiden, Rijksmuseum van Oudheden WD 7335, 20 mm, 1.05 g. Single find from Wijk bij Duurstede (Utrecht). Photograph: RMO.

The three factors listed above – the choice of mints, the lack of oboles, and the preponderance of *Christiana religio* coins – are to my mind all further indications that the portrait coinage was entirely manufactured at Aachen (Coupland, 2018a: 427-429; 2018b: 219-227). With regard to the *Christiana religio* coins, Moesgaard accepted that there was “probably some kind of central palatial mint(s), e.g. Aachen”, but did not discuss the issue in any detail (Moesgaard, 2017: 122). The lack of oboles he put down to the introductory nature of the coinage (Moesgaard, 2017: 123-124), but it is the choice of places named on the coins which is of greatest relevance to the new denier of Besançon.

A number of portrait coins have a letter beneath the bust, and in the past these have been taken to represent the first letter of a mint-name. In the nineteenth century they were assumed to be Italian cities (Florence, Milan, Venice and Mantua, *Cenomanicum*) but Grierson dismissed this as “untenable” and instead suggested cities in Germany (Frankfurt, Koblenz, Mainz and Worms: Grierson, 1965: 522-523). Neither theory is now generally accepted, despite Naismith’s recent re-adoption of it (Naismith, 2023: 297, n. 162). A particular difficulty is that several of the cities identified on this basis were not otherwise known to have minted at this time. Kluge rejected the idea as “extremely problematic” and argued that because all were clearly the product of the same die-cutter they should all be ascribed to Charlemagne’s capital: Aachen (Kluge, 2014a: 39; cf. 2014b). Etterich suggested that the letters may have represented the emperor’s titles: Caesar, Felix, Maximus and Victor, though this has little to support it in the form of Carolingian parallels (Etterich, 2010: 107). On the one known monogram coin incorporating a single letter in the design, the letter P was clearly not an abbreviation of the mint-name, since this surrounded it: **MOGONTIA**, for Mainz (Kluge, 2014a: no. 213). Philip Grierson suggested that the P perhaps

stood for *prima*, but this was purely speculative (Grierson & Blackburn, 1986: 208).<sup>12</sup> As long as it remains unclear what the letters signified, it is unwise to develop any theory which relies on a specific interpretation.

The named mints are thus Arles, Dorestad, Lyon, Melle, Quentovic, Rouen, Trier, and now Besançon. As has already been emphasised, these do not correspond to the mints which struck Louis's portrait coinage, nor do they match the list of Charlemagne's most productive monogram mints. That would be topped by Melle and Dorestad, as well as Pavia and Milan, as has already been mentioned. Middle-ranking mints included Aachen and Arles, but also Mainz, Narbonne and Toulouse (Coupland, 2018a: 447). By contrast, Lyon, Quentovic, Rouen and Trier were all minor monogram mints, with just thirteen single finds between them.<sup>13</sup> Besançon is not known to have struck monogram coinage at all. It is therefore hard to see how it could ever have been imagined that these particular mints could between them have provided sufficient coinage for the whole of the empire – a point we shall return to in the next section. It is less difficult to see why these mints might have been chosen for their symbolic significance, although again it is Besançon which does not fit into this pattern.

It was Ildar Garipzanov who came up with a possible reason for this particular selection of mints, for which the clue lies in their reverse designs. Thus ships were portrayed on coins of the emporia of Quentovic and Dorestad, coin dies and hammers on coins of Melle, a city gate on coins of Arles, Lyon, Rouen and Trier, which, he said, were the Roman mints of Gaul, and the Christian church at Aachen (Garipzanov, 1999: 206; Garipzanov, 2005: 140). This would explain why the relatively unimportant mints of Lyon, Rouen and Trier were chosen by the emperor. Besançon does not fit into this scheme, as it was not a Roman mint. The weakness in Garipzanov's argument, however, is that several other Roman cities are also known to have struck coinage. What is more, the symbol chosen for Arles, Lyon, Rouen and Trier was not minting equipment, as at Melle, but a city gate. This implies that the design reflected their urban status, and Besançon was certainly an important *oppidum* in Roman times. Yet there were many other Roman cities: does this mean that numerous other portrait coins await discovery with further mint-names on them? This seems unlikely. It is another way – along with its less impressive style – in which the new coin from Besançon raises more questions than it answers.

It is true that the notion that the entire portrait coinage was produced at Aachen runs counter to the normal assumption that coins which bear a mint-name on them were struck at the place in question, even if the dies could have been

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<sup>12</sup> The case is weakened by the fact that Grierson stated that the letter P was also found on coins of Sens, which is not the case.

<sup>13</sup> Lyon: three; Quentovic: five; Rouen: two; Trier: three. Figures correct as of 31 August 2023.

produced somewhere else. This is Moesgaard's position: the dies were produced centrally by skilled engravers and distributed to the various mints named on them (Moesgaard, 2017: 121). Subsequently local die-cutters would have taken over, and although Moesgaard does not develop this argument, this could explain the second obverse die at Melle, which is not of such high quality, and the individually produced dies bearing the names of Rouen, Trier and now Besançon. These dies would have been engraved locally in a second phase of minting. This could theoretically also account for the crudeness of the second coin from Dorestad (no. 50), though it could also be a contemporary forgery, as was concluded earlier.

### **Ceremonial issue or imperial currency?**

At this point it is helpful to reiterate the reasons for concluding that this was a ceremonial issue which was produced at Aachen for circulation alongside the existing monogram type, in contrast to Jens Christian Moesgaard's belief that this was the launch of a new currency to replace the existing one, albeit at an introductory stage (Moesgaard, 2017). The arguments have been set out at various points above:

- the self-evidently prestigious nature of the type, “the birth of a new image of rulership”, in the words of Jennifer Davis (Davis, 2014: 24);
- the very limited number of die-cutters;
- the lack of continuity between the list of mints striking the preceding and succeeding types;
- the absence of oboles;
- the overwhelming predominance of *Christiana religio* coins;
- the lack of minting in Italy;
- the find distribution.

In effect there is little disagreement between Moesgaard and myself over many aspects of the coinage because of his emphasis on the difference between the inaugural phase of a currency and its more developed version. The principal points of difference between us concern whether the monogram and portrait types were struck concurrently or consecutively, and whether all the coins were manufactured at Aachen or only the dies. In both cases, I believe the former, Moesgaard the latter.

Almost all the points listed above have already been considered, but before addressing the question of the find distribution, it is important to highlight a point which is easily overlooked by all those, including myself, who draw attention to the small number of surviving coins, namely that these 57 coins were struck from a significant number of dies. The 43 *Christiana religio* coins were minted from 33 obverse dies and 32 reverse dies. The coins bearing a mint-name are

naturally all from different reverse dies except the three coins of Melle, which were all struck from the same reverse die despite the different obverse inscriptions (Figs. 12 and 13). No mint-signed coin shares an obverse die with a *Christiana religio* denier. This large number of dies implies a more sizeable level of minting than the small number of coins might suggest. If these were all minted at Aachen during the last months of Charlemagne's life it would have required frequent or even continuous rather than occasional minting, using a sizeable silver stock. The employment of at least four die-cutters implies the same thing: this matches the number of craftsmen active at the Melle mint in the first two years of the reign of Louis the Pious (Coupland, 2018c: 44). It was clearly not a symbolic or token coinage like the gold *solidi* struck by Louis the Pious a few years later, of which it is now believed that only three genuine specimens survive (Sarah, 2014).

In this context it is helpful to recall that during the reigns of Charlemagne and Louis the Pious other coinage types were minted which did not become the empire-wide currency of the day. Indeed, the fact that one of them dates from the very end of Louis's reign makes it a particularly relevant point of comparison. The first type with which it can be compared is the coinage which was very likely struck in the name of the young Louis the Pious when he became subking of Aquitaine in 781 (Fig. 14; Coupland, 2018a: 441-442; Moesgaard, 2017: 117). This was long judged to be "no more than a token or commemorative issue" (Coupland, 1990: 24-25), but this impression was overturned in 1998 with the publication of a hoard of 20 coins from Larino in Italy, nineteen of them in Louis's name (de Benedittis & Lafaurie, 1998). The one die-link among the nineteen coins showed that it must have been a considerably larger coinage than had previously been thought, and must have formed part of the everyday currency over several years, albeit only in Aquitaine. Having said that, the number of single finds is vanishingly small compared with those of Charlemagne's portrait type (just two compared to 23), so that it is clear that the portrait type was produced on a much more significant scale. Nonetheless, it demonstrates that the portrait coinage could have been a commemorative issue to celebrate the start of Louis's imperial rule in consort with his father (Nelson, 2019: 476), and that it could have entered general circulation without having been minted all across the empire.



Fig. 14 – Pre-reform denier, Limoges, in the name of Louis the Pious, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Münzkabinett 18245050, 19 mm, 1.22 g.  
Photograph: Lutz-Jürgen Lübke (Lübke und Wiedemann).



Fig. 15 – *Denier of Louis the Pious, Aachen. Single find, Bakkum-Doornduijn (Noord-Holland). Huis van Hilde 5281-0096, 22 mm, 1.47 g. Photograph: Kees Zwaan, Provincie Noord-Holland.*

At the other end of Louis's life, a small number of mints struck a temple coinage bearing a mint-name instead of the *Christiana religio* inscription (Fig. 15). The first such coin, in the name of Dorestad, only came to light in 1965 (van Gelder, 1965, no. 2) but now four further mints are known: Aachen, Cologne, Maastricht and Verdun (Coupland, IJssennagger & Peek, 2021). There is no reason to believe that this was a symbolic or commemorative coinage, so it may well have represented the introduction of what was intended to become a new empire-wide type but was initially introduced in the area around the palace at Aachen. Certainly it is apparent that immediately after Louis's death mints in other regions began striking mint-signed temple coinage, as coins of Lothar from Bordeaux reveal, for instance (Coupland, 2001: 168). It might be thought that this supports Moesgaard's theory by showing that a coinage type could be introduced in one region before the death of an emperor disrupted its rollout across the empire. However, it is evident that after 840 mint-signed coinage did not replace the *Christiana religio* type; rather, the two types were struck side by side for several years in the kingdoms of Charles the Bald and Lothar I (Coupland, 1991; 2001). It is therefore perfectly plausible that both monogram and portrait types were minted at the same time in the closing months of Charlemagne's reign.

This would have to have been the case if only a small number of symbolically chosen mints struck the portrait coinage, and even more so if Aachen was the only active mint. We have already seen that it is extremely unlikely that any portrait coins were produced in Italy, particularly if the coinage was minted in September 813 to celebrate Louis's coronation, as several scholars now believe. Yet Milan and Pavia were among Charles's most prolific mints, so presumably they went on striking the monogram coinage. There are also no known mints from the Rhine valley or southwestern France to supply the coinage needs there. Aachen was evidently the only place striking large amounts of coin, and it is inconceivable that it alone could have supplied the coin stock necessary to replace the monogram coinage across the empire. Yet this would have been required if the type had been introduced by a recoinage, as Moesgaard proposed (Moesgaard, 2017: 124). In short, it appears highly improbable that there could have been a recoinage, meaning that this was a ceremonial type, produced on a large scale, but not intended to meet all the realm's coinage needs.

As for the matter of surviving specimens and in particular finds, Moesgaard's central argument is that the number of single finds, although at first sight small, is entirely consistent with that of a regular coinage type which was minted for only a few months (Moesgaard, 2017: 124-126). This would incidentally not be true if the type were introduced any earlier than September 813, even though he does not commit himself to accepting that date. Moesgaard does note, however, that there is an unusually high proportion of coins which have been converted into jewellery, and which are not therefore the "stray finds" which single finds are generally judged to be (Moesgaard, 2017: 125-126). Moesgaard listed six coins which had been treated in this way, but with more recent finds that number has risen to fifteen or sixteen coins which are looped, pierced, gilded, and/or fitted with a mount (nos. 2, 5, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 24, 27?, 28, 30, 32, 44, 49, 57: Figs. 2, 6, 16, 17, 18, 19). Six of these are Continental single finds (nos. 13, 14, 18, 19, 28, 49), and they unquestionably increase the number of finds in a way which would not be the case for other coin types.



*Fig. 16 – Catalogue no. 13. Jean Elsen et ses fils, Auction 129, 11 June 2016, lot 332, 19 mm, 1.59 g. Photograph: Elsen.*



*Fig. 17 – Catalogue no. 19. Single find from Elfershausen-Langendorf (Lkr. Bad Kissingen, Unterfranken, Bavaria), 2020. M-2020-736-2, 20 mm. Photograph © Bayerisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege 2022.*

A second phenomenon has also disproportionately increased the number of single finds, namely the fascination with this coinage. These portrait coins have been more comprehensively studied and consequently more doggedly tracked down than any other Carolingian coinage type. As a result we undoubtedly have a fuller record of them, including a more complete find list, than for any other Carolingian coinage. This means that plotting the average number of finds over time is not as reliable an indicator of the rise and fall of circulation as Moesgaard would like to believe, even though it is my own research he cites (Moesgaard, 2017: 124). What is more, if the coins were struck on a particularly large scale, as I have argued here, even if it was at only one mint, this would also result in a disproportionate number of surviving specimens and recorded finds.

### Known knowns and unknown unknowns

In 2002 US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was widely ridiculed for declaring: “As we know, there are known knowns. There are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns. That is to say, we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns, the ones we don’t know we don’t know.”<sup>14</sup> In the case of Charlemagne’s portrait coinage this is actually a helpful statement, for while a few things are certain, there are many things which remain unclear and some theories which might be overturned completely if a new hoard were to come to light. This was the case with the Larino hoard of pre-reform coins of Louis the Pious, for instance, mentioned a little earlier (de Benedittis & Lafaurie, 1998), and even more dramatically demonstrated by the Damhus hoard from Denmark, which revealed in 2018 that an early Danish coinage centred on Ribe was very much larger than anyone had previously imagined (Feveile, 2020). Because of the very limited number of specimens known, it is possible that the discovery of even a single hoard containing a large number of Charlemagne’s portrait coins might transform our understanding and refute many of our current theories.

A particular reason for believing this is, as has been highlighted, the several strange and anomalous features of the type. This includes the high proportion of *Christiana religio* coins struck from a surprisingly large number of dies engraved by a small pool of die-cutters who also added letters whose interpretation is uncertain and an odd range of mint-names which do not match the principal mints of the period. Jens Christian Moesgaard believes that these unusual factors can be explained by regarding this as an initial phase of production which would subsequently have been expanded; by contrast the find distribution, the choice of mints and the lack of any evidence for a recoinage at this time, which Moesgaard recognises as essential to his argument (Moesgaard, 2017: 124), all tend to run counter to his theory.

The new find from Besançon does not easily fit into this already disconcertingly enigmatic picture. As has been mentioned, it does not match the style of the other coins. Besançon is moreover not a location that sits well with the other recorded mints, and again as has already been noted, it does not align with Garipzanov’s theory of Roman mint-places, even it was a significant Roman city. Nor was it an important mint under Charlemagne. It struck coins under Pippin III (751-768) and during the first half of Charlemagne’s reign, between 768 and 793 (Kluge, 2014a: nos. 7 and 84), but both on a very small scale.<sup>15</sup> It is not known to have minted after the reform of 793, unlike Arles, Lyon, Rouen, Trier – and indeed Dorestad, Melle and Quentovic. What then are we to make of this coin?

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<sup>14</sup> Department of Defense news briefing 12 February 2002.

<sup>15</sup> There is only one find of Pippin’s coinage, from Imphy (Völckers, 1965: 122, no. 1-9) and none of Charlemagne.

If Moesgaard's theory is correct, it represents an example of a second phase of minting, when dies were produced locally rather than centrally. Alternatively, was it perhaps produced unofficially by a local count who knew that the portrait coinage was being introduced and wanted a share in the profits of minting? It is hard to see why anyone outside Besançon would have chosen to put its name on a coin to give it monetary credibility, thus ruling out the notion that it represents a contemporary forgery (which was my own initial hypothesis).

In sum, it raises more questions than it answers in what is already a profoundly confusing coinage type. As such it is a valuable addition to the corpus of ninth-century coinage, especially the very limited corpus of Charlemagne's portrait coins.

### Catalogue

In the following list the coins are renumbered, with the number in my 2014 article included in square brackets. This will help to give a clear picture of how many coins of each type are known, get round the clumsy use of a combination of numbers and letters ('12b', etc.), and also avoid possible confusion over the two coins which were double-entered in 2014. Fuller descriptions of the coins listed in 2014 can be found there – here weights will be given if they are known, which can help identify a particular coin, as well as any known find provenance, die-links, and any additional information or references since 2014. In the case of finds from France, where coins have perhaps turned up in unlicensed detection, certain information should be regarded as provisional and uncertain, as it has reached me second or even third hand and sometimes after a considerable delay. The appropriate lack of certainty is noted in the relevant entries.<sup>16</sup>



*Fig. 18 – Catalogue no. 14. Possible single find from Guainville (Eure-et-Loir, FR), no weight. Photograph courtesy of Philippe Schiesser.*

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<sup>16</sup> As an illustration of this point, I was sent pictures of no. 14 in the catalogue by a helpful informant with the comment that it had reportedly been found in 'Neustria', a large region in northern France. Some time later I was sent the same images with the supposed find spot 'Gainville en Champagne'. I have been unable to track down any such location, however, so that the best guess is Guainville (Eure-et-Loir), which is in Neustria rather than Champagne. No further details as to when or how the coin was found and no date on its weight and diameter, etc. were or are available.



Fig. 19 – Catalogue no. 16. Single find from Bregninge (Vestsjælland, DK), 2017. 18 mm, no weight recorded. Photograph: Museum Vestsjælland.

### ***Christiana religio***

#### ***Obv. D N KARLVS IMP AVG REX F ET L***

1. [1] Berlin, Staatliche Museen, 18202746, 1.68 g. Kluge, 2014a: no. 253. *Same Obv. die as nos. 4, 9 and 13.*
2. [2] Single find from the Römerbrücke in Trier (Rheinland-Pfalz, DE) c. 1963. Quite possibly now Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Stefan collection, 1.64 g, gilded, although this may be a cast copy of the original (see the discussion of the next coin). The Berlin coin was not included in Kluge, 2014a, which did not include any of the coins in the Stefan collection because of well-founded doubts about their authenticity (see the next coin). However, if it is a cast copy, it must have been taken from a genuine original whose present whereabouts are unknown. *Same Obv. die as no. 6, die pair with no. 15.*
3. [3] Münzen und Medaillen Deutschland, Auction 8, Stuttgart, 10 May 2001, lot 538, and Auction 19, 16 May 2006, lot 1424, 1.52 g, previously sold by Münzen und Medaillen AG Basel in Auction 7, December 1948, lot 158, and very likely from the Rousseau collection. From careful examination of the identical coin in the Stefan collection in the Staatliche Museen in Berlin (see the discussion of coin no. 3 in Coupland, 2014: 147), it is now apparent that the coin in the Stefan collection is a cast copy, and that the coin sold at auction was the original, whose present whereabouts are unknown. *Same Rev. die as nos. 7, 12.*
4. [4] Berlin, Staatliche Museen, 1.24 g, chipped; single find from Wijk bij Duurstede before 1866. *Same Obv. die as no. 1, die triplet with nos. 9 and 13.*
5. [5] Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, CAR-1558,<sup>17</sup> 1.42 g, broken. Traces of a mount on the reverse.
6. [6] Paris, Banque de France, no weight recorded. *Same Obv. die as nos. 2 and 15.*
7. [7] Rouen, Bibliothèque Municipale, no weight recorded. *Die pair with no. 12; same Rev. die as no. 3.*
8. [8] Trondheim, Vitenskapsmuseet, 1.69 g. Grave find from Moksnes, Norway, 1838.

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<sup>17</sup> <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10413819k> <18 August 2023>.

9. [9 and 11] Harare, University of Zimbabwe, Courtauld collection. Ex Naylor collection, purchased Cahn auction 59, 1928, lot 145. No weight recorded. Comparison of the photographs and the correspondence of the sale/purchase dates indicate that this is the same coin that was previously listed as no. 11. *Same Obv. die as no. 1, die triplet with nos. 4 and 13.*
10. [10] Single find from Tiel (Gelderland) 1995, 1.60 g.
11. [12] Jean Elsen et ses fils, Auction 60, 11 December 1999, lot 1045, 1.37 g.
12. [12b] Amay, Archéologie Hutoise. Found during excavations in Huy, Belgium, 1991 (Coupland, 2014: 154-155). No weight recorded. *Die pair with no. 7; same Rev. die as no. 3.*
13. [-] Jean Elsen et ses fils, Auction 129, 11 June 2016, lot 332, 1.59 g (Fig. 16). Gilded, traces of a mount. Very likely a single find reportedly made at Bourg-et-Comin (Aisne, FR) which passed through several hands before ending up at auction. *Same Obv. die as no. 1; die triplet with nos. 4 and 9.*
14. [-] Possibly found at Guainville (Eure-et-Loir, FR) (Fig. 18: see note 16 above). Traces of a mount on the reverse. No diameter or weight recorded.
15. Single find from Diss (Norfolk, UK), 12 August 2017, 1.66 g. EMC 2017.0232 (Fig. 6).<sup>18</sup> Gilded obverse, traces of a mount on reverse. *Die pair with no. 2, same Obv. die as no. 6.*
16. [-] Single find from Bregninge (Vestsjælland, DK), 3 September 2017 (Fig. 19). No weight recorded, pierced. *In very poor condition, impossible to compare obverse die.*
17. [-] Single find from Lienden (Gelderland), 2017, 1.13 g (Fig. 7).
18. [-] Reportedly found at Blois (Loir-et-Cher, FR), 2019, 1.65 g (not illustrated). Gilded.
19. [-] Single find from Elfershausen-Langendorf (Lkr. Bad Kissingen, Unterfranken, Bavaria, DE), 2020 (Fig. 17). M-2020-736-2. Gilded, traces of a mount. I am grateful to Ralf Obst for information about the coin.
20. [-] Paris, said to be part of an old collection. Reported to me in 2020 (not illustrated).

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<sup>18</sup> <https://emc.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/full-record/20170232?&o=20170232> <9 August 2023>.

**Obv. KARLVS IMP AVG<sup>19</sup>**

21. [13] Berlin, Staatliche Museen, 18238797, 1.37 g. Kluge, 2014a: no. 249.
22. [14] Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, CAR-1559,<sup>20</sup> 1.71 g.
23. [15] Brussels, Bibliothèque royale de Belgique, 1.56 g, damaged. Wijk bij Duurstede I hoard 1845/46.
24. [16] Stockholm, Kungliga Myntakabinettet, 1.98 g. Gilded, mount still attached. Grave find from Birka (Ekerö, SE). *Die pair with no. 31.*
25. [17] Münzen und Medaillen Basel, Auction 9, 21-22 June 1951, lot 368.
26. [18] Amsterdam, De Nederlandsche Bank, National Numismatic Collection, HNM 03121, 1.45 g. Probably single find from Wijk bij Duurstede.
27. [19] Single find from Dodewaard (Gelderland), 1.66 g. Traces of a mount?
28. [20] Single find from France c. 2010, 2.2 g. Gilded, mount still attached.
29. [21] Künker, Auction 205, 12-13 March 2012, lot 1405, 1.53 g.
30. [22] Formerly mounted in a book cover in Morienvall Abbey. Gilded.
31. [-] Single find from between Utrecht and Hilversum (Noord-Holland), 2018, 1.55 g (Fig. 8). NUMIS 1136621. *Die pair with no. 24.*
32. [-] CGB bca\_486483, September 2018,<sup>21</sup> 2.26 g (Fig. 2). Gilded, traces of a mount. *Die pair with no. 34.*
33. [-] Aachen, Centre Charlemagne, 1.51 g (Fig. 3). Single find from Saint-Éloi-de-Fourques (Eure, FR).
34. [-] Künker, Auction 394, 28 September 2023, lot 4534, 1.54 g (Fig. 9).<sup>22</sup> *Die pair with no. 32.*

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<sup>19</sup> A portrait coin of Charlemagne with this title was offered for sale by Emporium Hamburg in Auction 102, 8-11 May 2023, lot 1714, and was also prominently featured by Coins Weekly in a blog entitled ‘*The Contemporary Portraits of Charlemagne*’. The coin was a modern forgery and was withdrawn from sale; the blog post has been taken down. Proof that the coin was indeed a modern imitation was provided by a gold memorial piece (*Gedenkprägung*) which was struck using the same portrait die: <https://www.muenz-kurier.de/p/karl-der-grosse-gold-gedenkpraegung-ausgabe-zur-deutschen-2-euro-serie-2023> <31 August 2023>.

<sup>20</sup> <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10413820z> <18 August 2023>.

<sup>21</sup> [https://www.cgbfr.com/charles-ier-dit-charlemagne-denier-tb,bca\\_486483,a.html](https://www.cgbfr.com/charles-ier-dit-charlemagne-denier-tb,bca_486483,a.html) <9 August 2023>.

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.kuenker.de/en/auktionen/stueck/379718> <17 August 2023>.

**Obv. KAROLVS IMP AVG**

*With C under bust:*

35. [23] Berlin, Staatliche Museen, 18202749, 1.55 g. Kluge, 2014a: no. 246. *Die pair with no. 36.*

36. [24] Künker Auction 339, 28 September 2020, lot 18 = CNG Triton Auction xxiii, 14-15 January 2020, lot 1028 = Bank Leu list 17, January 1978, no. 17, 1.55 g. *Die pair with no. 35: it is possible to establish this due to the higher quality images now available thanks to the coin appearing at auction.*<sup>23</sup>

*With F under bust:*

37. [25] Berlin, Staatliche Museen, 18202748, 1.71 g. Kluge, 2014a: no. 247.

*With M under bust:*

38. [26] Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, CAR-1557,<sup>24</sup> 1.60 g, chipped.

*With V under bust:*

39. [27 and 28] Berlin, Staatliche Museen, 1.18 g, damaged. Kluge, 2014a: no. 248. *Single find from Wijk bij Duurstede. I now believe that this is in fact the same coin as my former no. 28, illustrated by van der Chijs in 1866. Although the weight was listed there as 1.35 g, the fact that the coin in Berlin is more damaged than the image published by van der Chijs would explain the discrepancy.*

*With B under bust, or no letter.*

40. [29] Amsterdam, De Nederlandsche Bank, National Numismatic Collection, 1995-1005, 1.39 g. Single find from Minnertsga (Friesland) 1991.

*With no recognisable letter under bust.*

41. [30] Single find from Oosterbierum (Friesland) 1998, 1.37 g.

42. [31] Single find from Market Weighton (East Yorkshire, UK). No weight recorded. *Same Rev. die as no. 43.*

43. [-] Maison Richard (Villefranche-sur-Saône, FR), Auction of 15 December 2020, lot 2, 1.51 g (Fig. 5).<sup>25</sup> Ex collection Beynier (Bron). *Same Rev. die as no. 42.*

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.numisbids.com/n.php?p=lot&sid=4072&lot=18> <18 August 2023>.

<sup>24</sup> <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b104138184> <18 August 2023>.

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.richardmdv.com/en/lot/109617/13788096-charlemagne-denier-au-buste-frsearch=&> <9 August 2023>.

The portrait coins of Charlemagne (768-814)

**With mint-name**

Arles

*Obv. D N KARLVS IMP AVG REX F ET L.*

44. [32] Berlin, Staatliche Museen 18202750, 1.65 g. Gilded, traces of a mount. Kluge 2014a, no. 250.

45. [33] Lyon, Musée des Beaux-Arts, 1.75 g. Probably single find from Wijk bij Duurstede.

In gold: Ingelheim, 4.18 g. Single find, Ingelheim (Rheinland-Pfalz).<sup>26</sup>

*Obv. KAROLVS IMP AVG.*

46. [34] Lyon, Musée des Beaux-Arts, 1.50 g. The fact that this coin, like no. 45, came from the collection of Louis de Coster means that it might possibly be a single find from Wijk bij Duurstede, but there is no hint of this in his writings.

*Obv. CARLVS IMP AVG.*

47. [35] Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, *MEC* 1, no. 748, 0.84 g.

Besançon

*Obv. KAROLVS IMP AVG.*

48. [-] Single find, Oss (Noord-Brabant), 1.31 g (Fig. 1).

Dorestad

*Obv. KAROLVS IMP AVG.*

49. [36] Brussels, Bibliothèque royale de Belgique, 1.48 g. Pierced. Single find from Wijk bij Duurstede before 1866.

50. [37] Single find from Wijk bij Duurstede 2013, 0.91 g, damaged and badly corroded (Fig. 10).

Lyon

*Obv. KAROLVS IMP AVG.*

51. [38] Berlin, Staatliche Museen, 18202759, 1.91 g. Achlum hoard 1852. Kluge, 2014a: no. 251.

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<sup>26</sup> <https://karolinger-route.de/station1/> <7 September 2023>.

Melle

*Obv. KARLVS IMP AVG.*

52. [39] Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, CAR-1540,<sup>27</sup> 1.53 g. *Die pair with no. 53, same Rev. die as no. 54.*

53. [40] Amsterdam, De Nederlandsche Bank, National Numismatic Collection, HNM 03120, 1.4 g (Fig. 12). Single find from Wijk bij Duurstede before 1855. *Die pair with no. 52, same Rev. die as no. 54.*

*Obv. D N KARLVS IMP AVG REX F E T L*

54. [41] Leiden, Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, 1.05 g (Fig. 13). Single find from Wijk bij Duurstede 1969. *Same Rev. die as nos. 52-53.*

Quentovic

*Obv. KAROLVS IMP AVG.*

55. [42] Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MEC 1, no. 749, 1.65 g.

Rouen

*Obv. KAROLVS IMP AVG.*

56. [43] Rouen, Bibliothèque municipale, 1.60 g.

Trier

*Obv. KAROLVS I ... VG.*

57. [44] Berlin, Staatliche Museen, 18202757, 1.76 g. Gilded, traces of a mount. Kluge, 2014a: no. 252.

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<sup>27</sup> <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10413801k.r=Melle%20Melle?rk=343349;2>  
August 2023}.

**Handling editor:** Patrick Breternitz.

### **Biographical note**

Simon Coupland has written extensively about Carolingian coinage over the past thirty-five years. He is a Church of England vicar in Ham (south-west London), an Affiliated Researcher at the Fryske Akademy (Leeuwarden) and an Affiliated Scholar at the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research (University of Cambridge).

### **Endnote**

I am very grateful to Rory Naismith for stimulating and fruitful conversations about Charlemagne's portrait coinage; the views expressed here are of course my own. I am also indebted to those who have provided me with images of the coins and allowed me to reproduce them; it was unfortunately not possible to obtain such permission in the case of catalogue nos. 18 and 20.

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