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BRUXELLES BRUSSEL
The purpose of this note is to question the traditional attribution of the pre-reform coins of Charlemagne inscribed BONA to Bonn, and to suggest that it is very probable that they were struck in the Low Countries, and should be ascribed to Tiel.

The first and most positive reason for doubting the traditional attribution is its orthographical improbability. The name Bonn in the early middle ages was regularly written with a double n: Bonna, Castra Bonnensis, civis Bunnensis, and so on (1). In particular, at a date close to that of the coins signed BONA, the last continuator of Fredegarius writes of Pepin coming in 753 ad castro cuius nomen est Bonna (2). Thus the spellings suggest that the word was pronounced with a short o or u. BONA for Bonna on these coins on which the mint-name constitutes the reverse type is perhaps not impossible, but it is decidedly improbable. Early Carolingian Latin orthography remained in the classical tradition, and attempted to spell place-names — which of course are in Latin on the coins — with creditable Latinity. Examples of

(1) E. KEYSER (ed.), Rheinisches Städtebuch (Deutsches Städtcbuch, vol. III /3), 1956, s.v., and references cited there.

the doubling of consonants on coins of the period are numerous: we find, for example, BETERRIS, CARRAS, GADDO, MASSILIA, METTIS, METVLLO, SENNES, TVNNIS, T~VANNA, and VIENNA. Two examples where there are alternative spellings, AGINO — AGINNO and DVNO — DVNNOS perhaps reflect a degree of ambiguity or variability in the length of the vowel or the stress as the word was pronounced at the time.

Leblanc suggested in 1690 that the little o in CARoLVS was an omicron; and although the idea cannot usefully be pursued — the little o in BoNa may be intended merely as neat calligraphy — it can certainly be argued that at the end of the eighth century there was a convention by which a long or stressed o was written with a lozenge-shaped letter ◊. Thus on early Carolingian coins we find ANTRA◊N, CAMVRAC◊, and NOVINOM◊ in the ablative or locative case; NRB◊ for Narbona; and, of special interest, CH◊GIS (Huy) and R◊DOM or REMEI R◊DO (Rouen). But the convention was not invariably followed, even before the reform of ca. 790, as is shown by spellings such as LEODICO and TORNACO. On coins of Charles le Chauve and Eudes ◊ is used more erratically, and is favoured in particular districts (2). On English coins of the 770's and 780's, O and ◊ are interchangeable and the forms are evidently without orthographical significance. Whereas an ◊ in Bona would definitely have indicated a long o, the ordinary O does not indicate quantity at all surely. On the other hand, there is no reason to doubt that a single or double consonant does.

A second reason for doubting the traditional attribution to Bonn is that the mint-name does not persist among the coins of the ninth century. In the north-eastern parts of the Carolingian Empire the eighth-century mints of Dorestad, Maastricht, Aachen, Köln, and Trier re-appear, as do Huy, Namur, Dinant, Tournai — even Condé-sur-l'Escaut, after intervals of inactivity. Mainz is a mint of steadily growing importance in the ninth century. The advantageous site of Bonn beside the Rhine, its topographical history, and the discovery of no fewer than six Carolingian coins

there (4) would suggest that if these other mints were working again in the ninth century, that of Bonn would have resumed production too — if it had already been active in the eight century (5). But there is nothing from the ninth century that can be equated with the mint-signature BONA. Although negative evidence has its limitations — what may not have been lost at Biebrich? — the absence of any post-reform coins of the BONA mint from hoards such as Zelzate, Wagenbogen, and Glizy, which have a strong north-eastern flavour, must be taken into account (6). In short, the corpus of surviving Carolingian coins makes it difficult to read BONA as Bonn. Although ninth-century Bonn was a civitas of some prominence, there is no reason whatever to think that it possessed a mint. The Bonn hoard of 1890 points to a similar conclusion.

Thirdly, there is the evidence of the francisque or battle-axe which figures on the BONA coins. It is essentially a local symbol, and is used on the many coins of Pepin from Frisia or the Low Countries, and on almost all those of Charlemagne struck at the major mint of Dorestad before the reform of ca. 790. Otherwise, the symbol occurs only on the scarce coins of three minor mints, named as BAB SCS, BONA, and CONDAT. On these it may be merely derivative or, more probably, it may have had some similar significance to that intended at Dorestad. The contrast in proportions deserves emphasis: Morrison and Grunthal list about 75 surviving specimens of the mint of Dorestad, but only one of BAB SCS, 3 of CONDAT, and 6 of BONA. Longpérier was the first to propose Condé-sur-l’Escaut as the attribution for CONDAT; he was influenced by the relative proximity of the place to Dorestad (7). The coin of BAB SCS was variously interpreted before Picqué, in the pages of this journal, argued persuasively that it


(5) Cf. the *Annales Fuldenses*, which record that in 881 the Normans burned Bonn: *Praeterea Agrippinam Coloniam et Bunnam civitates cum aecclesiis et aedificiis incenderunt. Qui autem... potuerunt... Mogontiacum fugerunt*.


should be given to the monastery of Saint-Bavon, Ghent. One may recall his comment on the shipping activity there: « Le voyage que Charlemagne fit à Gand pour y inspecter la flotte qu'il armait contre les Normands, nous montre l'importance que cette ville n'avait tardé à acquérir grâce à son heureuse situation dans une presqu'île entre deux fleuves » (8). The background to the equation of BONA with Bonn is the Frisian trade-route along the Rhine. Gariel comments briefly, « L'attribution de ces deux deniers à la ville de Bonn n'a jamais été contestée. Encore des deniers à la hache » (9). It would however seem surprising if the battle-axe symbol were copied as far to the south as Bonn, but not on coins of Köln. If one follows Hävernick in rejecting the pre-reform coins inscribed CLS from the Köln series (10), the mint there was inactive before ca. 790; and there is no historical reason that would lead one to expect a more active mint at Bonn than at Köln.

The crozier which is seen on two BONA coins, and also on a few of the DMAG.C.S coins that are traditionally attributed to Mainz has appeared to some students to offer corroborative evidence for the attribution to Bonn: its regional significance has been generalized by Suhle, who writes, « Ein gewissen Einfluss der Kirche scheint sich zuweilen noch durch das Erscheinen eines Krummstabes im Felde der Rückseite zu zeigen, bei Karl dem Grossen selbst in Bonn, Mainz und Maastricht, bei Ludwig dem Frommen in Strassburg » (11). So far as the reign of Charlemagne is concerned, the link with the middle Rhine is not a firm one. The few DMAG.C.S coins with a crozier (notably one from Jelsum and two from Krinkberg) stand late in the series. The drawing of the crozier is sketchy, and one's impression is that it is an eclectic addition to the design, very possibly derivative from the BONA issues — where also it is not part of the original type. The reading of DMAG.C.S as Mainz has in any case been questioned,

(9) E. Gariel, Les monnaies royales de France sous la race carolingienne, Strasbourg, 1883-4, p. 103. Gariel has just discussed the battle-axe on the preceding page in connexion with the coin of Saint-Bavon.
and an attribution to the Low Countries has been canvassed \(^{(12)}\). The crosier on the BONA coins would seem to have some ecclesiastical significance, but in the present state of the problem, one cannot tell what it is.

The battle-axe on the BONA coins, then, should lead one to look for a mint not too far from Dorestad, but no other firm conclusions can be drawn from it, as there is no obvious common factor in the location of mints at Dorestad, Condé, and Ghent.

The recorded provenances for BONA coins are the Domburg finds, the Schouwen finds, and the Gelderland Province hoard \(^{(13)}\). The Pembroke specimen, published in 1746 (see Fig. above) may be an English find, but this is conjectural. The distribution of the finds does not tell either way as between a Rhine or a Scheldt attribution, since the issues of most mints circulated freely over long distances. After all, the only provenance for the coins of Charlemagne of Condé is Bel-Air, in Switzerland! The Gelderland hoard is made up solidly of northern coins, of the mints of Dorestad, Huy, Dinant, Maastricht, BONA, and CLS, but again, it cannot show the precise location of BONA.

If Bona is not Bonn, what is it? It is doubtless a place-name, and as there is no titulus, the presumption is that no syllables have been omitted (cf. T˘VANNA, Thérouanne). It is not, however, recorded from the documentary sources \(^{(14)}\). The only interesting numismatic parallel that can be adduced is the coinage of Heinrich II (1002-24) inscribed x TIELE BONA \(^{(15)}\). Here bona has been interpreted as a Beiname or cognomen, and the formula Tiele bona has been considered analogous to Sancta Colonia, (?) Beata Treveris, Sancta Mettis, and in particular Bona Dauanria, which is found also on imperial coins of Heinrich II (1014-24) \(^{(16)}\). The coins do not, however, read Bona Tiele, but rather Tiele


\(^{(13)}\) Völckers, op. cit., p. 60f. and 150f.

\(^{(14)}\) E. Förstemann, Altdeutsches Namenbuch, revised edition by H. Jellinghaus, Bonn, 1913-16.


\(^{(16)}\) This view is put forward in H. Dannenberg, Die deutschen Münzen der sächsischen und fränkischen Kaiserzeit, Berlin, 1876-1905, p. 220, et al.
Bona. Alongside TIELE BONA should be set the inscription from the same period, TIELA VRBS REGALIS. Although the three-line arrangement BO / xTIELE / NA is obviously reminiscent of the issues of Köln (which dominated the currency) inscribed $ / COLONIA / A, the more immediate parallel suggests that Bona may be descriptive of Tiel in the same way as Urbs regalis is, that is to say, as a predicate rather than an adjective. The occurrence of Bona at two separate mints may be thought to exclude the possibility that it is in some sense a place-name. On the other hand, its meaning seems feeble or strained as a cognomen; and one should not attach equal weight to the occurrence of the word at the two places. Tiel and Deventer are both in Frisia, and (as will be demonstrated in a moment) the coin-type of Deventer borrows the formula BONA from the issues of Tiel, on which it has a prominent place in the design. Certainly, Bona is not used on coins of Bonn, which at this date are inscribed VIERONA. The only related usage is BONVS DENARIUS, which is found on deniers of Baudouin IV of Flanders (989-1036) (17).

In casting doubt on bona as a cognomen, the alternative suggestion is that on the Saxonian coins of Tiel it is archaizing in significance, reviving an earlier name which had come to light, perhaps, in a document preserved in some monastic or official archives (18), and which was understood to refer to Tiel. The meaning would thus be (Nunc) Tiele (olim) Bona — as on the seal of Bonn inscribed SIGILLVM ANTIQUE VERONE NUNC OPIDI BVN-NENSIS. As parallel instances of an archaizing tendency at this time one may cite the revived use of the XPSTIANA RELIGIO type at the adjacent mint of Utrecht. Similarly, Suhle has commented on the coins of Andernach, «Die Rückseite ... zeigt eine symbolische, auf die Antike zurückgehende Darstellung der Stadt durch eine Ringmauer. ... Sonst kommt hier in der curtis regia zuerst der Adler auf Münzen vor, der als ein von der Antike ent-

(17) I owe this observation to Dr. G. Hatz.

(18) While the early history of Tiel is obscure, its existence in Merovingian times is attested by the results of archaeological investigations. After the fall of Dorestad (863), Tiel inherited a good share of its trade, and thereafter grew in prosperity, especially in the late tenth and eleventh century. See Die Entwicklung Tiels, in Hatz, op. cit., p. 98-104, with extensive bibliographical references.
lehntes Symbol, ein rein weltliches Wahrzeichen der höchsten Macht, von Karl dem Grossen auf den Giebel der Pfalz gesetzt worden war» (19). Again, the BONVS DENARIVS type revives the rosace or interlace pattern which was used on early Carolingian coins at Maastricht.

For the Merovingian period, Lafaurie has tentatively proposed to attribute to Tiel a solidus and four trientes from the nearby Escharen hoard; he writes, « L'attribution de ces triens et solidus à Tiel est proposée par Mme Zadoks-Jitta. Des fouilles récentes en ce lieu démontrent l'importance de la ville à l'époque mérovingienne ... Aucun texte, aucune inscription ne vient corroborer cette hypothèse » (20). The information that Tiel was already a place of some importance in Merovingian times is welcome, making it easier to postulate a mint there during the reign of Charlemagne.

In the context of all that has been said so far, it only remains to point out that in the Old Frisian language, as in Anglo-Saxon, til has the meaning « good ». Bona is thus simply a Latin equivalent for « Tiela ».

Hess, in a distinguished contribution to Carolingian monetary history, has shown how widely coins were used in the middle Rhinelands in the early middle ages. His map of find-spots of Merovingian trientes shows a distribution-pattern that is virtually identical with that for documentary mentions of the use of coinage in the (later) Carolingian period (21). It might seem natural to assume that what was true of the seventh century and of the ninth century would apply also to the eighth. There is however good reason to think that the middle decades of the eighth century witnessed a severe contraction in the circulation of coinage in England (22), and it seems that throughout the eighth century the

(19) SUHLE, op. cit., p. 53f.
(22) This is argued most fully in D. M. METCALF, J. M. MERRICK, and L. K. HAMBLIN, Studies in the Composition of Early Medieval Coins (Minerva Numismatic Handbooks, no. 3), Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1968, p. 8f. and 37-39.
monetary economies of even the leading regions were still governed by the stimulus of inter-regional trade. Lafaurie has distinguished the dual role of coinage in north-western Europe in the early middle ages: « une circulation monétaire locale associée à une fonction économique plus étendue » (23); and one can readily imagine how the relative importance of the two functions might fluctuate.

The reduced number of Charlemagne's mints after the reform (which is, as a general proposition, well attested by the composition of the Dorestad finds and what is known of the Biebrich hoard) should probably be seen in the same light: it was the outcome of a recession in the monetary economy which had left many small mints without sufficient work to keep them open. The demand for new coins generated by the merchants engaged in international trade was met, to an even greater extent than before 790, at the main centres through which they entered the country — Pavia, Milan, Treviso, Ravenna; Arles and Narbonne; Toulouse; Dorestad. These eight mints accounted for a good half of the output of Charlemagne's reformed deniers. Hess has characterized them as « Fernmärkte in Grenznähe, wo sicherlich fremdes Silber in stärkerem Masse umgeprägt wurde » (24). Counterfeiting seems to have become a serious problem by the beginning of the ninth century. In these circumstances Charlemagne took the opportunity to close as many mints as possible. Note however that he did not do so until twelve or fifteen years after the reform of the coinage. Following an administrative enquiry ordered in 803, the Capitulary of Thionville in 805 restricted minting to the Palace, « nisi forte iterum a nobis aliter fuerit ordi­natum », and the decision was reaffirmed in 808 (25). Since many of the pre-reform mints were either not working at all or were

For the dating of the earliest English pennies, see also D. M. Metcalf, Artistic borrowing, imitation, and forgery in the eighth century, in Hamburger Beiträge zur Numismatik, 20, 1966, p. 379-392, at p. 383.


(24) Hess, op. cit.

working on only a very limited scale in the years ca. 790-805, their closure cannot be explained simply in administrative terms. The date of the recession is subject to margins of uncertainty because of the rather small total number of reformed coins that has survived (26) and also the difficulties of attribution between Charlemagne and Charles le Chauve, but as there are, overall, so few mints represented by only one or two surviving coins (cf. the corpus of pre-reform coins) (27), it may have taken place mainly in the 780's.

Mainz was another major mint after 790, and SENNES which is to be associated with it was also of some importance, whereas Strasbourg, the ODALRICVS mint, Verdun, Liège, and Dinant, which were active before 790, all disappear from the list. The sharp contrast suggests a remarkable shift in the currents of trade; a return to the more easterly Rhine route, and more easterly trans-alpine routes, was perhaps made advantageous by the stabilization of Bavaria, Saxony, Frisia, and the Avars in the 790's. Lafaurie's conclusions about the Merovingian period seem to apply again to the early Carolingian: « C'est la chronologie des émissions qui montre les aires successives de circulation et par suite de courants commerciaux » (28). In the last quarter of the sixth century it had been the Lombard invasion of north Italy which hindered traffic across the Brenner Pass and down the Rhine; in the second half of the eighth century the growing power of the Frankish state and the sharpened conflict between Christianity and paganism helped to divert trade to westerly routes.

At the northern end of the Rhine route, too, the careers of the Merovingian moneyers Rimoaldus and Madelinus illustrate the shifts in the location of mints, or the opening of new mints, which took place in response to changed political or economic circumstances. The interpretation of the mint of Bona as Tiel can be seen within a similar general framework of a currency expanding to serve the needs of Carolingian trade to the north in the 770's.

(26) Perhaps about 350-400.
(27) Note the issues of Rouen and Saint-Denis.
(28) LAFAURIE, op. cit., p. 269-270.
CATALOGUE

N. B. — E. A. Wuerst, *Die Münzen und Medaillen Bonn's*, Bonn, 1869 (reprinted from F. Ritter and others, *Bonn, Beiträge zu seiner Geschichte und seinen Denkmälern*, Bonn, 1868), includes a little corpus of the coins.

A. Coins with cross and annulet or dot above the inscription, and axe below.

The specimens on which the letters N A are not ligated would seem to be the earlier, so far as one can judge from the style of lettering of CARO/LVS.

1. PROU 84. 1.04 gm. (broken). From the Rousseau collection (LONGPÉRIER 229). Illustrated by FOUJÈRES and COMBROUSE (427), by GARIÈL (plate V, 23), and by PROU. Paris, BN.


5. Pembroke collection, 1.03 gm. (15 9/10 grains). Published in 1746 in *Numisma antiqua in tres partes divisa*, from which the line-drawing has been reproduced here p. 141. The coin was sold at Sotheby’s on 31 July 1848, and its present whereabouts are not known.

6. GOETZ, plate IV, 4 (Deutschlands Kaisermünzen des Mittelalters, Dresden, 1827). Goetz’s drawing is rather “improved,” but the coin does not obviously correspond with any of the foregoing. Present whereabouts not known.

B. Coins with axe above and crozier below inscription; N A ligate.

27. GARIÈL plate V, 22. 1.10 gm. (1.125 gm.) From the Gariel collection (598). Illustrated by VÖLCKERS (zu XXII, 1) and by MORRISON and GRUNTHAL (IV, 108). Berlin, Staatliche Museen.
8. Völckers XXII, 1. 1.20 gm. From the De Coster collection, ex Gelderland hoard. Illustrated by De Coster, RBN, 1859, plate VIII, 16, but see Cerexhe, plate I, 5. Brussels, Bibliothèque royale.

Contemporary Counterfeits


10. Morrison and Grunthal 245. 1.02 gm. Bola. Stated to be in the Berlin Museum, but this is denied by Berlin.

Modern Forgery

11. Fougeres and Combrouse 29. This piece, formerly in the Cartier collection, shares the same obverse die (optimistically!) as other forgeries of Béziers, Dorestad, Limoges, Strasbourg, and Sco civin. The reverse is perhaps based on no. 6 above.


RÉSUMÉ

Un atelier carolingien dans les Pays-Bas antérieur à la réforme monétaire de Charlemagne: BONA = Tiel

Les monnaies de Charlemagne frappées avant 790 environ et portant la légende BONA ont été attribuées traditionnellement à Bonn. L’équation BONA = Bonn est philologiquement improbable. Il est de même peu probable qu’aucune monnaie du ixᵉ siècle de Bonn n’aurait survécu, s’il y avait eu là un atelier au viiiᵉ siècle. La francisque sur les monnaies l’associe aux Pays-Bas. La légende BONA ne se rencontre par ailleurs que sur les monnaies du xiᵉ siècle de Tiel, où on l’a interprétée comme une épithète (cf. « Sancta Colonia »). Ceci est improbable. Son usage reflète un usage archaïsant en Basse-Lotharingie et Bonn est de toute évidence un ancien nom de Tiel. Pourquoi le nom Bonn ne se rencontre-t-il dès lors pas dans les anciens documents? La solution du problème devient claire quand on considère que til, en ancien frison, signifie « bon ». BONA est donc la version latine de « Tiela ». Si Bonn et sans doute aussi DMAG.C.S = Mayence doivent être rayés de la liste des Monnaies carolingiennes antérieures à 790 (n’oublions pas la pièce unique inscrite MOGONTIA), l’idée que nous nous formons de l’histoire monétaire des pays rhénans à la fin du viiiᵉ siècle et au
début du IXe doit être révisée. Il y a très peu d'indices de l'éventualité d'une économie monétaire très vivante dans les pays rhénans autour du cours moyen du fleuve durant la première partie du règne de Charlemagne. Il y eut toutefois des courants commerciaux en direction orientale pendant les années 790 à 800, vraisemblablement à la suite de la stabilisation de la Bavière, de la Saxe, de la Frise et des Avars due aux interventions militaires et diplomatiques de Charlemagne pendant cette décennie. L'ouverture d'une Monnaie à Tiel dans les années 770-780 doit être considérée, de manière analogue, comme un écho à des changements dans les conditions politiques et économiques dans les pays du cours inférieur du Rhin. Comme à Dorestad, il y eut un besoin croissant de numéraire, pour servir au commerce carolingien avec le Nord.