The image of authority in Carolingian coinage: the image of a ruler and Roman imperial tradition

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This article examines the influence of Roman imperial symbols of authority on Carolingian coinage. During the brief period of a specific ‘renewal’ in Carolingian coinage in the 810s, there was an evident turn to the Roman tradition of demonstrating authority. As a result, the image of a peace-making emperor on Roman coins during the late third to early fourth century was employed on Carolingian coins for the purpose of legitimizing the new imperial authority of the Carolingians. This image, however, was not long-lived and gradually disappeared in the 820s to 830s.

The image of the monarch plays an important role in every historical epoch, society and state. However, there are different reasons for this in each specific period. In relation to the early Middle Ages in the west, and in particular to the Carolingian world, there were several principal reasons. First, the king (rex) was presented as the specific personification of the people (gens) possessing by tradition a personal relationship with the whole people.1 Second, he gradually became the sacred representative to the people, that is, king by the grace of God (gratia Dei rex). As a result, he assumed the role of intermediary between God and the people, transferring divine grace, help, and sanctification to every member of society. Finally, the imago of a ruler showed the symbolic image of authority, bearing, as a result, all evident and allegorical signs and symbols of this authority. This symbolic image looked back to the previous tradition, that is, the

1 In regard to the Carolingian kingdom, J.L. Nelson, ‘Kingship and Empire in the Carolingian World’, in R. McKitterick (ed.), Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 52–87 at p. 59, writes: ‘The Frankish realm can be classed in Weber’s sense as a patrimonial regime in which power legitimised as divinely ordained was exercised as the ruler’s personal authority like a father’s over his household’.

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Roman Empire, for signs of authority and legislation, or to the contemporary imperial power, the Byzantine Empire. It may be studied through various depictions of monarchs in early medieval western Europe.

Notwithstanding some recent studies of Carolingian royal images, this subject is still open to further discussion.\(^2\) The evidence of Carolingian coinage may perhaps shed new light on this debate, until now based primarily on the analysis of works of art. The present study has attempted to combine numismatic sources with the evidence of seals and bulls to trace the development of the image of the ruler in the period from the end of the eighth to the mid-ninth century.

This choice is not accidental. The symbolism of authority had various aspects in different kinds of sources. Carolingian charters expressed authority by such elements as titles, monograms and the use of seals and bulls. Carolingian miniatures showed authority through the image of a ruler. However, charters and miniatures had a limited diffusion in society in comparison with coins. Carolingians deniers, accessible to a wide spectrum of society, were not only a means of exchange, but presented the monarchical authority to every person, while disseminating it throughout the state.\(^3\) As a vehicle of authority they displayed no sign of value, but rather the name of a king, the personification of authority, warrant for their value and authenticity. Because of their small size, they could express authority only by the symbolical language of images and short legends.\(^4\)

### Images on Carolingian coins

Carolingian coinage does not incorporate the abundance of images found on Roman coinage. The reasons for such a simplification of coin design were, on the one hand, a lower artistic level of die-production

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\(^1\) D.A. Bullough, 'Imagines Regum [and their Significance in the Early Medieval West]', in *idem, Carolingian Renewal: Sources and Heritage* (Manchester, 1991), pp. 39–96, surveys royal imagery throughout the early medieval west, but unfortunately he did not analyse the royal image on Carolingian coins, nor did he continue his study beyond the 840s. R. McKitterick, 'Text and Image in the Carolingian World', in *idem, The Frankish Kings and Culture in the Early Middle Ages* (Aldershot, 1993), pp. 297–318, elucidates the hierarchy between the written word and the image in the Carolingian world.

\(^2\) On the role of coins as symbols of power in the early Middle Ages, see E.A. Arslan, ‘Emmissioni monetari e segni del potere’, *Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo*, 39: Committenti e produzione artistico-letteraria nell'alto medioevo occidentale (Spoleto, 1992), pp. 791–834.

\(^3\) This symbolism was underlined by Philip Grierson, who compares coins with charters and concludes: 'But the symbolical element in coins is much greater than that in charters or most other legal documents'; see 'Symbolism in Early Medieval Charters and Coins', *Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo*, 23: Simboli e simbologia nell'alto medioevo, (Spoleto, 1976), pp. 601–40 at p. 601.
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and, on the other, perhaps the desire to make images more understandable for the people and, therefore, more effective as a means of 'propaganda'. Another significant reason which can be added to interpret this scarcity of images in the coinage, is the supremacy of the written word over the image, characteristic of Carolingian culture. As a result, legends on coins played a much more important role than images, especially in the second half of the eighth century. There is, in fact, a limited number of main images on Carolingian coins, namely, the cross, temple and bust.

Cross

This type was usually an equal-armed cross [see figs. 6, 8, 10 and 11]. This image, usually accompanied by a monogram on the other side, was introduced on the coins of Charlemagne in 793/4 and remained in use with slight differences during the whole Carolingian period. This image had its origin in late Roman coinage, more precisely in that of the fifth century. The first time the depiction of the cross appeared, on the solidus of Theodosius II, was in 422. In 578 Tiberius II made this image the main one for gold coinage, where it prevailed until 692 and was revived after 711. However, it is necessary to point out that Byzantine coins bear the image of a cross potent, different in style from the Carolingian cross. At the same time, this image became popular in the coinage of the western Germanic kingdoms, particularly in Merovingian Francia.

The cross became the main type of the reverse in Merovingian coinage from the last quarter of the sixth century. This image devel-

5 Certainly, it is difficult to discern the propagandistic function of Carolingian coins during the reign of Pippin III. This function became more visible only in the reign of Charlemagne, at the end of the eighth century. In addition, technological and economic considerations could have been important as well. A simple geometric design could be cut into dies quickly, especially with the use of punches, and by diverse groups of people – we do not really know if die-engraving was centralized – thereby ultimately allowing easier standardization and less expense than the kind of custom engraving of images typical in the Roman world.

6 For details concerning the interrelation between text and images in Carolingian books, see McKitterick, 'Text and Image in the Carolingian World', pp. 297–318.

7 The portrait image will be discussed later.


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1. Merovingian triens (VI century).
2. Byzantine solidus (VI century).
   The portrait deniers of Louis the Pious (814–18). They all bear the obverse legend.
   HLVDOVVICVS IMP[erator] AVG[ustus].
3. Orleans (AVRELIANIS), gateway.
4. Melle (METALLVM), coining implements.
5. Quentovic (QVENTOVVICVS), ship.
6. the XPISTIANA RELIGIO denier of Louis the Pious (822–40) with the image of a
   temple on the reverse.
7. The denier of Pippin I of Aquitaine (817).
8. The denier of Pippin II of Aquitaine (839–65).
9. The denier of Louis II and Angilberga (855–75).
10. The denier of Charles the Bald (864–75).
11. The denier of Louis the Pious (818–22) struck in Tours.

oped there in the seventh and the first half of the eighth century. For instance, the gold coinage of Tours had first the cross potent or cross pattée. Later, in the first half of the seventh century, the main types of the reverse were the cross ancrée and the Latin cross on a
step or globe. Finally, one of the last silver issues of the moneyer Unicter, struck in the 720s–730s, used on the reverse the image of an equal-armed cross similar to the Carolingian one. Thus, by the restoration of this image, Charlemagne was not following the Roman Christian tradition directly, but rather indirectly, through the preceding Frankish tradition. Considering that Charlemagne used the title et defensor sanctae Doi ecclesiae in correspondence related to ecclesiastical issues, it is not surprising that he put the venerable symbol of the Church on his coins. Moreover, the image of the cross turned a coin into a sacred object, the forging of which could bring a person conviction not only as a counterfeiter, but also as a blasphemer.

As for the monogram, usually accompanying the cross, it can be considered as a peculiar mixture of an inscription and an image, as it uses letters to make a graphic image. This is why a monogram, like other images, is placed at the centre of a coin. In fact, a Carolingian cruciform monogram can be seen as a peculiar kind of symbolic image of a Christian king. The first monogram was introduced on coins by Charlemagne after 793/4. On the one hand, this innovation followed the practice of late Roman and early Byzantine coinage, on which a monogram was introduced in the first half of the fifth century. Afterwards, a monogram was used by some Germanic kings. Thus, the introduction of this practice followed the previous tradition of expressing symbols of power in coinage. On the other hand, the first Carolingian monogram was copied from earlier diplomas of Charlemagne. This means that the influence of official written documents of the Carolingian chancellery on the design of coins, which had been

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10 For the example of the cross potent on the coin of moneyer Chadomarus, see M. Prou, Les monnaies mérovingiennes (Paris, 1892), no. 310. For the cross pattée on the coin of moneyer Maurus, see the auction catalogue Platt, 30 April 1970, no. 61. For the cross ancrée and the Latin cross on the series bearing the legend Racio basilici, see Prou, Les monnaies mérovingiennes, nos. 316 and 2683.
13 The first monogram was introduced on the coinage of Theodosius II. For details, see A. Engel and R. Serrure, Traité de numismatique du Moyen Âge, 1 (Paris, 1894), p. 11.
14 Arslan, 'Emissioni monetarie e segni del potere', pp. 841–2.
15 Grierson and Blackburn, Medieval European Coinage, p. 199.
visible in the coinage of Pippin III,\textsuperscript{16} was still recognizable until the beginning of the ninth century. The use of the monogram of Charlemagne, therefore, could be interpreted as an element in the Frankish tradition of authority.

In 812, when new imperial coinage was introduced, the monogram disappeared from Carolingian coins. This was due to the fact that from that time Carolingian coins used elements from Roman imperial tradition of the third and fourth centuries. Only in the 840s, with the emergence of other medieval elements of authority, did a monogram appear again on coins. At that time, Charles the Bald began to employ a monogram on his coins, copying that of Charlemagne. Similarly, Pippin II of Aquitaine [fig. 8], Louis the German,\textsuperscript{17} and Louis II [fig. 9]\textsuperscript{18} sometimes used monograms on their coins. After 877, the monogram became a constant element of Carolingian coinage.\textsuperscript{19}

The Carolingian monogram is connected very closely to the image of the cross; they are often parallel types for the obverse and reverse of coins. In addition, the letters creating a monogram are usually distributed in such a way as to constitute the image of a Latin cross. This impression of a cross is especially strong in the monogram of Charlemagne. Furthermore, the link between a monogram and a cross is particularly interesting in the form used by Louis the German, in which a cross is put at the centre of the monogram. Thus, a monogram was not only a symbol of authority confirming the value of a coin, but also a specific Carolingian form of propaganda, underlining the connection between Christianity, expressed by a cross, and a Christian Frankish monarch, symbolized by the cruciform monogram.

\textsuperscript{16} If we look at the first legends on the coins of Pippin the Short, Carloman, and Charlemagne, we can easily recognize the influence of written documents on the coin inscription, namely, the use of ligatures and contractions characteristic of contemporary writing practice. The usual abbreviation of Pippin the Short's name on the obverse are R F or Rx F (Rex Francorum) and R P or Rx P (Rex Pippinus), where Rx is created by the ligature of the letters R and x. These abbreviations are usually surmounted by the sign of a contraction as in a written text. A similar use of a ligature and contraction was followed on Carloman's coins. After 771, there was a slight change: the name legend on the obverse of the earliest coins of Charlemagne does not use the contraction because his name is not abbreviated here, but it still uses a ligature, namely that of the letters A and R. Both of these ligatures are common in Latin palaeography.

\textsuperscript{17} See G. Depeyrot, Le numéraire carolingien. [Corpus des monnaies] (Paris, 1993), nos. 583, 999 and 1008.

\textsuperscript{18} Louis II used the monogram based on his title Augustus. For example, see Morrison and Grunthal, Carolingian Coinage, no. 1179.

\textsuperscript{19} See, for instance, the monogram of Odo (887–98).
Temple

This basilica-type temple is drawn by means of two horizontal lines on the ground, four pillars above, and a triangular gable, with a cross at the top, which surmounts the rectangle of the building. There is another cross in the middle of the rectangle (fig. 6). This type of image was introduced in the imperial coinage of Charlemagne (812–14)\(^{20}\) and became, together with the cross, the longest-lasting feature of Carolingian coins. As a rule, this image was connected with the legend *Christiana religio*,\(^{21}\) though later it could be associated with other inscriptions, such as the name of the mint.

There are various interpretations of this image,\(^{22}\) the majority of which agree that it was the representation of a church from Gaul or Italy. At the same time, a quite different interpretation of the image was proposed by Elbern, who pointed out the similarity between it and the depiction of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, that appeared ‘already about the year 600 on many ampullae, which came from Palestine and from Jerusalem to the European countries’.\(^{23}\) This hypothesis was developed by Renate Schumacher-Wolfgarten, who argued that the image was the depiction of the Holy Sepulchre copied from those

\(^{20}\) In ‘Money and Coinage under Charlemagne’, in W. Braunfels (ed.), *Karl der Grosse. Lebenswerk und Nachleben*, 1 (Düsseldorf, 1967), pp. 501–36, Grierson had proposed 806 as the year of transition from royal to imperial coinage, but in the recent work (Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage*, pp. 208–9), he has proposed that the new imperial type was not struck until the official recognition of Charlemagne’s imperial title by Byzantium in 812. This argument was proposed by Jean Lafaurie. However, it is not entirely persuasive, as Charlemagne used the imperial title in his diplomas from 801 in spite of the absence of official recognition from the Byzantine side. J. Lafaurie, ‘Les monnaies impériales de Charlemagne’, *Comptes-rendus de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres* 1 (1978), pp. 154–76 at pp. 162–4, added the second, and more important, argument, that the statistical comparison between the previous royal coinage of Charlemagne and the imperial one argued that the imperial coins of Charlemagne must have been struck during the years 812–14. This argument is more plausible, and for this reason the later date, 812, is preferable.

\(^{21}\) For details about the appearance of this legend and all references, see I.H. Garipzanov, ‘Pojavlenie monetnogo tipa XRICTIANA RELIGIO i vzaimootnoshenija Karolingskogo gosudarstva s Kordovskim emiratom v konze VIII-nachale IX vv. (The appearance of the XRICTIANA RELIGION monetary type and the interrelations between the Carolingian state and the emirate of Cordova at the end of the eighth and at the beginning of the ninth centuries)’, in V.D. Zhigunin and E.A. Chiglintsev (eds.), *Antichnost’: politika i kultura* (Kazan, 1998), pp. 84–91.

\(^{22}\) M. Prou, *Catalogue des monnaies francaises de la Bibliothèque Nationale. Les monnaies carolingiennes*, 2nd edn (Graz, 1969), p. IX, proposed that the prototype for the temple was found in the façade of St Peter’s in Rome. H.S. Fallon, ‘Imperial Symbolism on Two Carolingian Coins’, *American Numismatic Society Museum Notes* 8 (1958), pp. 119–31 at p. 127, argued that it was the symbol of the whole Christian Church, Grierson, ‘Symbolism in Early Medieval Charters and Coins’, pp. 628–9, proposed that it represented the entrance to the atrium of the Aachen Chapel. For other interpretations see Morrison and Grunthal, *Carolingian Coinage*, pp. 25–6.

ampullae. It must be pointed out, however, that the temple image on
the coin and that of the Holy Sepulchre on the ampullae display
rather more differences than similarities. Despite the similar outer
form, the two images have a different distribution of the inner space
and a different type of gable. In addition, the temple has two horizontal
lines below the pillars, indicating the steps of the entrance, which are
not present in the image of the Holy Sepulchre.

The other argument proposed by Schumacher-Wolfgarten in favour
of this ‘Holy Sepulchre’ interpretation is the Greek influence seen in
the legend XPICTIANA RELIGIO accompanying this image: the
Greek letters X, P and C in the word Christiana. As a result, she
argues that this legend was created under Byzantine influence and —
 — together with the so-called image of the Holy Sepulchre — propagated
an imperial idea, the idea of peace. However, the use of these three
letters is not necessarily the consequence of specific Greek influence. In
the Middle Ages, the name of Christ belonged to the nomina sacra,
which were always abbreviated. The name Christus was abbreviated in
the Latin tradition as XPC or XPS. Thus, it is not surprising to find
these letters in the adjective derived from the name. The latter form
of the nomen sacrum later influenced the legend on the coins of Louis
the Pious, resulting in the new form: XPISTIANA RELIGIO.

The most likely interpretation is that, just as other coin images
indicate the status of a mint, the temple was originally the sign of the
palatina moneta and may have symbolized the whole Christian
Church. Jean Lafaurie points to a gold coin of Diocletian with the
image of a temple on the reverse as a possible prototype for this
palatina moneta. In addition, he mentions gold coins of Constantius
Chlorus, struck in 305, and denarii of Maxentius bearing the image of a
temple, which disappeared from Roman coins after 312.

However, the above-mentioned coin of Diocletian has the image of a
hexastyle temple, which was the frequent type depicted on Roman
imperial coins. The image of a tetrastyle temple similar to the Carolin-
gian one is more rare in Roman coinage. However, even this type can often be found on coins struck throughout the Roman Empire up to the fourth century. As a rule, the tetrastyle temple was used instead of the hexastyle one in order to create sufficient space inside to show a group of divine personage.

As to the period from the end of the third to the beginning of the fourth century, there are in fact many Roman coins bearing the image of a temple comparable with the Carolingian one. First, there is a very interesting antonianus thought to be a contemporary imitation and attributed to Gaul. This coin has the image of a temple closest to the Carolingian type. Second, there is a copper Roman coin minted in Lyon in 307–c. 309/10. It has on the reverse the image of a tetrastyle temple accompanied by the depiction of two eagles, one of them inside the temple and the other on top. Third, there is a nummis of Maxentius, struck in Aquileia in 307, with a temple similar in type to the Carolingian one. Finally, Constantine the Great revived the temple type, both hexastyle and tetrastyle, on his coins after the defeat of Maxentius in 312. Thus, this survey allows us to conclude that the tetrastyle temple used on Carolingian coins was not a direct copy of any specific Roman coin or the depiction of any contemporary building in the Carolingian Empire, but rather an abstract image of a temple based on the device of Roman imperial coins, and with, however, the substitution of a cross for the pagan deity inside the temple. Roman coins from Gaul and Northern Italy were most likely used for this purpose because they were more readily accessible to Carolingian die-makers than were others (coins of the eastern or African provinces of the Roman Empire).

For examples, see H. Mattingly, *Roman Coins [from the Earliest Times to the Fall of the Western Empire]*, 2nd edn (London, 1987), pl. XLVII, 1, XLVII, 5, 6; M.G. Abramzon, *Monety kak sredstvo propagandy [ofitsial'noj politiki Rimskoj imperii]* (Coins as a means of propaganda for official Roman imperial policy) (Moscow, 1995), p. 537, pl. 96.


Gateway

Other images, that is, a gateway, a ship, coining implements and a wreath, were less significant in Carolingian coinage than the previously mentioned ones. The gateway occurs on the last coin type of Charlemagne (after 812) at the mints situated in the old cities of Gaul (Trier, Rouen, Lyon and Arles). Three of these cities were mint centres in Roman times: Lyon was the central mint of Gaul from the first century A.D.; later Trier became the main Roman mint in that region, though the mints of Lyon and Arles remained important for Gaul during the whole Roman period. However, even Rouen had a mint for a brief period at the end of the third century while this city was in the possession of the usurper Carausius. The Carolingian image was that of a city gate with a tower on each side (fig. 3). This type seems to have symbolized the right to mint granted by Charlemagne to certain towns with Roman roots in order to distinguish these coins from the palace coinage bearing the temple image. Later, after 814, the gateway was used on the coins of some other cities of Frankish Gaul, regardless of their origin, and was continued in a few mints until the middle of the ninth century.

Ship

The image of the ship [fig. 3] was introduced at two very important northern Carolingian ports. Quentovic and Dorestad, at the same time as the gateway and the temple elsewhere, and continued there in the first coinage of Louis the Pious. As Grierson mentions, the prototype for this image can be seen on the Roman coins of Carausius and Allectus minted in the same region. This image underlined the importance of these two ports for the Carolingian Empire because they connected it to the whole northern world and, through the Baltic Sea and by the river route to the Caspian Sea, to the Abbasid Empire.

There are quinarii of Allectus, who was a navy commander (praefectus classis) in Britain and northern Gaul, struck between 293 and 296 after his proclamation as emperor in that region. The common
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Scholarly opinion holds that these were struck in Britain, though the exact place of the mint is unknown. Camulodunum (Colchester) and less often Glevum (Gloucester) are usually proposed as places of issue of these coins. They have the image of a ship on the reverse. There are the letters QC below the ship in place of the mint name. This Roman depiction of the ship is very similar to the Carolingian one on the coins produced by Quentovic during the reigns of Charlemagne and Louis the Pious. There is a definite simplification of the image on the Carolingian coin. However, it has the same typological features of the ship as the Roman analogue. Finally, the Carolingian coins have the mint name QVENTOVVIVICVS around the ship, which corresponds to two letters on the Roman coin. Thus, I would propose that a die-cutter in Carolingian Quentovic used the Roman coin, struck at the end of the third century, as a model for a reverse-die. The likely reason for such an imitation would be that these Roman coins were minted in the same region five centuries earlier. Alternatively, the die-cutter may have supposed that the Roman coins were minted in Quentovic due to the presence of the similar mint legend QC.

**Coining implements and wreath**

As for coining implements, they included coin-dies and hammers and occurred on the coins of Charlemagne and Louis the Pious minted at the silver mine of Melle in Poitou. These implements served similarly as indicators of mint status, just as the previous two. The image of the wreath enclosed a cross on the reverse of Louis the Pious' gold coin medallion, struck in 816, and was copied from late Roman coins.

**The portrait image on coins, seals and bulls**

The portrait image on coins has an especially important role in the study of imperial tradition in the Carolingian period. Because the coins were symbols of Carolingian power, the portrait image on them...
became the image of authority. As a result, this image had not only a rational, but also a spiritual significance, and became the specific type of a talisman which defended a person from dangers and threats. Therefore, the portrait image had to carry the symbols and signs of authority so as to enable a coin to make a certain impression on its holder. Carolingian coins did not display such an image during the first five decades of the dynasty. The imperial coronation of Charlemagne changed this situation. Why did the creation of new empire influence the introduction of portrait images? What were the sources of inspiration for their appearance? To answer these questions, it is necessary to analyse the main features of the portrait image on Carolingian coins.

The first use of the portrait image in Carolingian coinage was on imperial coins of Charlemagne from 812. These coins were struck at twelve Carolingian mints. The obverse contains a monarch’s bust in profile facing right, with a laurel wreath, and dressed in an imperial Roman military cloak, the paludamentum [figs. 3-5]. These coins are made of silver, though a unique gold coin struck in Arles with the same design is now known. After the death of Charlemagne this model

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45 H. Maguire, 'Magic and Money in the Early Middle Ages', Speculum 72 (1997), pp. 1037-54, underlined the talismanic aspect of the portrait of a monarch in the Middle Ages, especially in Byzantium and the early medieval west.

46 Grierson mentioned the only coin of Charlemagne struck at Lucca having a bust en face, which was attributed to an earlier date, as having ‘doubtful authenticity’: Grierson and Blackburn, Medieval European Coinage, p. 200.

47 This coin was found recently, during the excavation of a Carolingian palace at Ingelheim, in 1996. It has the weight of 4.18g, 91% content of gold and a diameter of 19.5mm. Its reverse has the image of a gateway and the inscription ARELATO. As P.H. Martin, 'Eine Goldmünze Karls des Grossen', Numismatisches Nachrichtenblatt 8 (1997), pp. 351-5, mentions, it was struck by the same punch (reverse-die) as the imperial deniers from Arles. This explains why this coin has the same diameter as a contemporary silver denier. As for the obverse, it has the imperial title of Charlemagne Dominus Noster KARLYS IMPerator AVGustus REX Francorum ET Langobardorum and an imperial profile bust. The same legend occurred on one type of silver coin from Arles. The single unusual aspect is that the obverse with the portrait is obviously rough in comparison with the reverse. It is evident that this coin was struck in the period 812-14, but what was the reason for its minting? Its weight can provide a possible interpretation. Its weight (4.18g) differs from the weight of a late Roman and Byzantine solidus, but at the same time, it corresponds to the weight of a so-called mancus, which imitated a contemporary Muslim dinar with a weight of 4.25g; see J. Duplessy, 'La circulation des monnaies arabes en Europe Occidentale du VII au XIIe siècle', Reuie Numismatique 18 (1916), pp. 108-14. Therefore, the coin with the high gold content from Arles, the southern Carolingian port, could actually have been restruck from a Muslim dinar or it could have been struck in a centre for trade with Muslim Spain or North Africa. The year 812 marked the end of a long war between the Carolingian Empire and Muslim Spain. Therefore, trade with Muslims in the western Mediterranean could have been restored at that time. As a result, the availability of gold and the necessity of gold coins for this trade could have emerged.
was inherited on coins of Class I (814–18) of Louis the Pious, which adopted the main features of the portrait image of the previous coinage. However, besides deniers, obols with a similar profile bust were introduced. In addition, gold medallions bearing an analogous portrait image were struck at the same time in celebration of Louis the Pious’ imperial coronation in 816. Parallel to the contemporary portrait coinage of Louis the Pious, in 817 there was a small commemorative issue of coins of Pippin I in Aquitaine on which appears a portrait of poor quality, unlike portrait coins minted in the Palace [fig. 7].

After 818, portrait coins almost disappeared from Carolingian coinage and were minted only occasionally. The first such case was in 822–3, when a portrait coinage for Lothar I was minted at the Palace. This issue commemorated his acquisition of control over Italy and subsequent coronation as emperor of Italy on East day, 823. The next occurrence of the portrait image was inspired by the events of 833–4, the rebellion of Lothar against his father. A unique gold medallion was struck by Lothar I, which followed on the obverse the model of the gold medallion of Louis the Pious, with the bust facing left. It was, in fact, the last gold coin minted in the Carolingian period. The third

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48 For details about this coin type, see S. Coupland, ‘Money and Coinage under Louis the Pious’, *Francia* 17 (1990), pp. 23–54 at pp. 24–7. See also Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage*, p. 213. However, they, along with Depeyrot, date this type to 814–19. The arguments of Coupland for 818 as the last year of this type seem to be more persuasive. A date of 818 can be reconstructed on the basis of the imperial edict from the winter 818/19 with the capitulum. *De nova moneta*. See S. Coupland, ‘La chronologie des émissions monétaires de Louis le Pieux (814–840)’, *Bulletin de la Société Française de Numismatique* 43 (1988), pp. 431–3.


51 Lothar I was crowned as the emperor of Italy in the spring of 823. Therefore, the attribution of these coins, probably relating to his event, to 822–3 by Coupland seems to be plausible: ‘Money and Coinage under Louis the Pious’, pp. 45–8.

52 The obverse of this medallion followed the type of Louis the Pious; commemorative issue, but the reverse has the image of standing warrior, holding a spear and shield, with the legend VITA ET VICTORIA. It is similar to coins of Louis the Pious struck in 814–18, but a title used here, Dominus Noster LOTARIVS IMPERator AVGustus, indicates that it was struck later, possibly during the period of Lothar’s rebellion in 833–4, and celebrated his temporary victory over his father. Morrison proposes that the medallions with the legends MVNVS DIVINVM and VITA ET VICTORIA were produced in 825 after the Synod of Paris; K. F. Morrison, ‘The Gold Medallions of Louis the Pious and Lothaire I and the Synod of Paris (825)’, *Speculum* 36 (1961), pp. 592–9 at p. 599. See the critique of this point of view by P. Grierson, ‘La date des monnaies d’or de Louis le Pieux’, *Le Moyen Age* 69 (1963), pp. 67–74. This medallion has the image of a warrior very similar to the ones on triumphal issues of Roman emperors. In addition, there is a left portrait bust on the obverse, that is, in the opposite direction to the usual portrait image on coins of Louis the Pious. This change could be a visual symbol of the political confrontation between Lothar I and Louis the Pious. The same situation
case was related to the coinage of Aquitaine in the middle of the ninth century. After the capture of Bourges in early 848, Pippin II of Aquitaine struck coins with the traditional Carolingian portrait image facing right and the title legend PIPINUS REX on the obverse. This coinage was only produced for a short period because of the reconquest of the city by Charles the Bald at the end of the 840s or in the 850s. However, coins of Charles the Bald minted in Bourges in the 850s had a portrait bust on them as well. The coin model of Pippin II was no doubt used in this case, but the bust on the obverse faced left. Such a model was not repeated in the other mints of Charles the Bald during his reign.

In summary, then, a bust as the main obverse image existed on Carolingian coins between 812 and 818. Thereafter, it was used only rarely until the middle of the ninth century, when it ceased altogether. During the whole of that period, the portrait image had practically the same design, the monarch's profile facing right dressed in a paludamentum and surmounted by a laurel wreath. The bust facing left was a rare case and an exception to the rule until Charles the Bald. Such a design was not found on contemporary Byzantine coins. The features of the clothing are rather characteristic of the military costume of an emperor on Roman coins of the period from Constantine the Great to the death of Justin II (the beginning of the fourth century to 578). A Roman emperor wearing this costume appeared as imperator militans and salvator mundi.

There were three types of imperial costume on late Roman coins: the above-mentioned costume; the imperial state costume, a chlamys with a tunic underneath; and the consular costume characterized by trabea.

occurred with the coinage of Bourges in the middle of the ninth century. When Charles the Bald conquered this city, he struck a coin issue imitating the previous coin type of Pippin II of Aquitaine at this mint, with a single exception: a right profile bust was replaced with a left profile one without any change of iconographic features.


As Coupland mentions, this coin model was replaced by the monogram type in the 850s: ibid., pp. 128–9.

G.P. Galavaris, 'The Symbolism on the Imperial Costume [as Displayed on Byzantine Coins]', American Numismatic Society Museum Notes 8 (1958), pp. 99–117 at p. 101, interprets this costume: 'He is militans in the sense that he fights in the name of Christ to win the world for Christ and salvator in the sense that he brings to the world salvation from the tyranny of paganism.' Galavaris emphasizes that imperator militans was, in fact, an exclusively Roman conception: ibid., 104. The use of the paludamentum and the laurel wreath has been analysed by P. Bastien, Le buste monétaire [des empereurs romains], 1 (Wetteren, 1992), pp. 61–80 and 235–57.

The imperial state costume had already appeared on some gold coins of Constantine the Great; see ibid., 3, pl. 168.
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triumphalis. The latter costume became the most popular on Byzantine coinage after 578; however, the Roman trabea on this coinage was transformed into the Byzantine loros. Starting in the ninth century, there was a transition to the imperial state costume, although a chlamys sometimes occurred on Byzantine coins of the previous centuries. Therefore, the dress on Carolingian coins is different from that of Byzantine ones and can imitate only Roman analogues.

The next important difference between the Carolingian portrait image and a Byzantine one pertains to the bust. From the end of the sixth century, Byzantine solidi contained a bust en face, while all Carolingian busts were in profile, according to Roman tradition. Furthermore, in iconographic difference between the Carolingian and Byzantine portrait images may be noted. Byzantine portraiture represents rather a schematic ideal image, a portrait symbol, of an emperor, unrelated to any real person. By contrast, the Carolingian portraits on coins struck at the Palace mint, and especially on coin medallions, are realistic three-dimensional representations of living monarchs. There is, for example, a similarity between the main features of the face of Lothar I (the form of nose, eyes and moustache) on his gold medallion of 833–4 and those on the miniature from the Gospels of Lothar (849–51). Because it is rather unlikely that an artist of the Gospels of Lothar copied the coin medallion struck two decades earlier, and because it is impossible that these two masterpieces could have had the same model, there can be only one conclusion, that is, that the medallion as well as the miniature were attempts at the reproduction of the features of Lothar I. The same portrait realism was still visible on Roman coins until the middle of the fourth century. Afterwards a process of the gradual depersonalization of the imperial portrait turned the image into the symbolic depiction of the bearer of imperial power.

Thus it seems that the portrait image on Carolingian coins imitated antique Roman exemplars. Grierson proposed that the model for the first such imitation during the reign of Charlemagne was a Roman coin of Constantine I, because the laurel wreath on the head of an emperor

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58 Small fractions of Byzantine gold coins, trienses, struck in western mints such as Syracuse, had a profile bust up to the end of the seventh century, but this is of a different type than the Carolingian image and has such an element as the cap of lion's skin, which is quite rare.
59 The problem of the realism of Carolingian portraiture is still debated. For different points of view and references, see G. Kornbluth, 'The Seal of Lothar II: Model and Copy', Francia 17.1 (1990), pp. 55–68 at p. 62, n. 26.
60 Abramzon, Money kak sredstvo propagandy, p. 441.

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on coins later than Constantine I was replaced by a diadem, while earlier portrait images contained only the head and neck, but not the shoulders. However, an earlier date can be proposed for there are some Roman coins of the third century with a full bust; for example, the bronze sestertius of Gordianus III. Jean Lafaurie proposes that a coin of Diocletian was the prototype for the imitation, though, at the same time, a die maker tried to depict the realistic portrait features of Charlemagne. There are other choices for the prototype. The most relevant one is the coin of Constantine I, struck for Constantine II in Arles in 322/3. It should be remembered that the portrait image on the obverse of the imperial coinage of Charlemagne is accompanied by images of the temple, gateway and ship, which may have been copied from Roman coins struck in Gaul or northern Italy at the end of the third and at the beginning of the fourth centuries. The same may have been true for the bust. Thus, prototypes for the first portrait images on Carolingian coins should be sought on Roman coins minted during the third and fourth centuries.

In addition, it is possible that the choice of the laurel wreath on the head of the bust was not accidental. In Rome, it was the symbol of the goddess of peace, Pax, and was given to victorious generals who brought peace to the Romans. Therefore, the laurel wreath together with the paludamentum symbolized a peacemaking emperor and corresponded to one of the elements of Charlemagne's imperial title: pacificus imperator.

Thus, this imitation did not occur by chance. On the contrary, it was the conscious copying of a Roman exemplar rather than Byzantine

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62 The diadem was adopted by Constantine the Great c. 325, and afterwards it became a constant imperial symbol on Roman coins. For details and references, see R.R.R. Smith, 'The Public Image of Licinius I: Portrait Sculpture and Imperial Ideology in the Early Fourth Century', The Journal of Roman Studies 87 (1997), pp. 170-202 at pp. 177-8.

63 Grierson, 'Money and Coinage under Charlemagne', pp. 518-27. This point of view was followed by Bullough, 'Imagines Regum', p. 64. However, ten years later, he was less certain: 'Symbolism in Early Medieval Charters and Coins', pp. 633-4. He said at the conference in Spoleto: 'I am at the moment somewhat sceptical of the possibility of the portrait of Charlemagne having been inspired by one of Constantine. The differences are very striking, and much more evident than the resemblances. The most characteristic coin-portraits of Constantine are those which show him looking upwards and with his head cut short at the neck, with no cloak covering shoulders and bust. Further, on the main series of his portrait coins Charlemagne wears a laurel wreath and not a diadem, while Constantine tends to be either bare-headed or helmeted'.

64 Abramzon, Money kak sredstvo propagandy, pl. 25.

65 Schmidt-Dick, Die römischen Münzen, no. 16807. Cf. two coins of Constantine II, Bastien, Le buste monétaire, 1, pl. 186, nos. 6-7.

66 Abramzon, Money kak sredstvo propagandy, p. 364. The laurel wreath was used as an element of a portrait on Roman coins from the late first century B.C. until 340. Some mints, for instance, Lyon, used this element up to 349. See, for details, Bastien, Le buste monétaire, 1, pp. 62-3 and 68.
monetary tradition. Carolingian emperors claimed direct continuity with Roman imperial tradition, linking them to the Roman Christian emperors, beginning with Constantine the Great. This imitation was a logical step at the time of the Carolingian renewal and is testimony of this ‘renaissance’ influencing various spheres, such as coinage. The minting of portrait coins was one of the means used to represent the imperial legitimacy of the Carolingian dynasty at the beginning of the ninth century. After 818, small issues of portrait coin medallions had a commemorative character and were one of the elements in the process of the creation of the image of authority for a new Carolingian monarch.

The imitation of a Roman exemplar could be based on ‘irrational’ reasons as well. The older a coin was, the more efficacious a talisman it was for its holder. For instance, coins with the portrait of Constantine, the first Christian emperor, were held in especially great respect in Byzantium. Therefore, coins bearing portraits which imitate earlier Roman models might have been considered as more valuable spiritually because of their similarity to these earlier coins. This perception of the spiritual power of coins with portrait images is suggested by the appearance of coins and their imitations in sacred metalwork and in the decoration of Carolingian manuscripts.

The codices of the Tours school, produced between 844 and 851, were replete with imitations of old coins. These imitations contain profile heads characteristic of Roman coins of the first and second centuries. There are also imitations with Christograms borrowed from Roman coins of the mid-fourth century. Thus, Roman coins were used in this case as symbols of prestige and authority. Moreover, this imitation of different types of Roman coins demonstrates their availability for die-cutters in that period. It explains the process of coin imitation: the die-cutters or their patrons had Roman coins of different periods at their disposal. Therefore, the portrait image used by Carolingian imperial coinage was not an accidental imitation. It was rather a conscious copy of a definite image of power that suited the demands of the period. This image on the imperial Carolingian coins was selected because it was the image of a victorious Christian Roman emperor, bringing Christianity to pagans, and perceived as the ancient predecessor of Charlemagne and Louis the Pious.

It is interesting to compare the use of portrait images on coins with that on Carolingian seals and bulls, because these images had the same

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69 For examples, see ibid., p. 1044.
70 Ibid., pp. 1051–4.

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role: as images of authority. The first fact that comes to our attention is the use of Roman gems with profile busts as seals. The first seals had the image of Bacchus (Pippin's seal) or Libera (Carloman's seal). The seal of Charlemagne included a Roman gem of the second century with the profile of an emperor or philosopher, facing right. The Roman image was also used by Louis the Pious, Lothar I, Lothar II, Louis II and Charles the Bald. This conservatism in the seal image was due to the legal importance of the seal as a sign of the continuity of power. Each succeeding ruler tried to maintain its design with as little change as possible in order that the seal would remain recognisable.

The image on bulls was less conservative than the one on seals. The first royal bull of Charlemagne bears a right-facing bust of an unidentified monarch with a diadem. His imperial bull introduced a clear Roman image derived from a silver medallion of Constantine the Great. This image was repeated on the bulls of Louis the Pious.

71 Schramm, Die deutschen Kaiser, pp. 34-5 and 148-9, mentioned that it could be the representation of Emperor Commodus or Antoninus Pius.
72 An antique gem with the representation of Antoninus Pius, Victorinus or Commodus: see ibid., p. 45 and 157.
73 An antique gem with profile portrait of Alexander Severus, Gordianus III or Caracalla: ibid., p. 160.
74 Kornbluth, 'The Seal of Lothar II', pp. 58-9, analysed the images on the seals of Lothar I and Lothar II and showed that they represented a Roman imperial military bust wearing a cuirass and paludamentum. Such a type of bust appeared, for instance, on gems of Commodus and coins of Trajan, Caracalla, and Elagabalus. However, the Roman laurel wreath on the seal of Lothar I was transformed into something resembling a Carolingian royal crown: ibid., p. 62. Therefore, the first element pointing to a new Carolingian sign of authority was introduced in the seal image only in the middle of the 8os.
75 Schramm, Die deutschen Kaiser,. pp. 49-51.
76 This adherence to the previous tradition cannot be explained by the low level of Carolingian art. Kornbluth, 'The Seal of Lothar II', pp. 60-2, showed that a Carolingian artist could not only imitate composition and general iconography of a model, but also could introduce 'substantive iconographic changes'.
Schramm, Die deutschen Kaiser, pp. 39 and 149. On the obverse is the crowned bust of an emperor with a lance and shield in three-quarter profile together with the title legend Dominus Noster KARolus IMPerator Pius Felix PerPETuus AVGustus, the normal title of Roman emperors in the fourth and fifth centuries. This obverse imitated a silver medallion of Constantine the Great struck in 315. Thus, the obverse uses the representation of the late Roman imperial image of authority for the visual legitimization of the new imperial power of Charlemagne. The reverse of the bull bears the image of a gateway surmounted by a cross with the legend ROMA below, accompanied by the circular inscription RENOVATIA ROMAN[ii or orum] IMPerii. Therefore, the reverse expresses the concept of the revival of the Roman Empire based on the legitimacy gained from its ancient capital, Rome. However, this legitimacy was based not on early pagan Rome, but on new Christian Rome. Such an interpretation of imperial legitimacy was based on the existence of a so-called 'Donation of Constantine', written in the papal chancery in the second half of the eighth century. This document claimed to prove the right of a pope, given by Constantine the Great, to create a new emperor.
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...and Charles the Bald. Therefore, all bulls presented the military image of a monarch. However, there was one very important novelty: the helmet of an emperor on the bull of Charlemagne was replaced on the bulls of his son and grandson by a crown.

Thus, Carolingian seals and bulls reflect the same idea of the renewal of Roman imperial tradition as the coinage. At first, the Carolingian use Roman gems bearing some unidentified images as royal seals. After the imperial coronation in 800, the Roman military image of an emperor is introduced as the image of authority and remains the main one until the 850s. At the same time, and unlike the coins, the bulls, and later, the seals demonstrate the appearance of a new sign of authority, the crown. This symbolized the gradual substitution of the image of pacificus imperator, created after 800, with a new image of authority, one that turns to late Roman and early Byzantine symbolism created in the fourth and fifth centuries.

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The revival of Roman imperial tradition in Carolingian coinage did not occur in isolation from the trends in other media representing the royal authority. On the contrary, it seems that there was a general correlation among the coinage, miniatures and written sources. The best known example supporting this idea is the biography of Charlemagne written by Einhard in the reign of Louis the Pious. It is common knowledge that Einhard’s The Life of Charlemagne was strongly influenced by Suetonius’ The Life of Augustus. The structure of Einhard’s work and his description of Charlemagne’s deeds and character both follow the classical model of the biography of the Roman emperor. Thus, Charlemagne was ranked with Roman rulers.

Furthermore, Einhard gives us an excellent description of Charlemagne’s dress. According to his account, Charlemagne had three...
main costumes. The first one, including in particular a tunic and a *sagum venetum* (blue short military or hunting cloak), comprised his everyday clothes. It is important to mention that the *sagum venetum* is similar in form to the *paludamentum*. On holiday occasions, Charles-magne dressed in gilded clothes and wore the *sagum venetum* with a gold fibula and a gold crown with gems. The third costume, including a long tunic and a chlamys, similar to the Roman imperial state costume, was used exclusively in Rome.

If one compares Charlemagne’s costumes to those of Louis the Pious, described by Thegan, a slight difference can be discovered. The first costume seemed to be still in use, as, according to Thegan, Louis the Pious was modest in his everyday attire. However, elements of the second and third costumes of Charlemagne were combined into one consisting of gilded clothes, a golen chlamys, a gold crown, and a gold sceptre. Therefore, this official state costume, used on holidays, united Frankish and Byzantine traditions. A similar imperial costume was mentioned with regard to Charles the Bald in the *Annales Fuldenses* by 876. Charles the Bald began to dress in this costume after his imperial coronation in Rome.

Albeit that the official state costume of a ruler, including Frankish and Byzantine elements, was created in the reign of Louis the Pious, it was not shown on the unique extant contemporary miniature with the image of Louis the Pious, namely a miniature illustrating the poem of Hrabanus Maurus, *De laudibus sanctae crucis*. The miniature presents...
the emperor wearing a tunic and a short blue cloak. The latter resembles the *sagum venetum* used by Charlemagne and the *paludamentum* used by Roman emperors. It was only in the 840s that the image of *pacificus imperator* was replaced in the Carolingian miniature by a new one borrowing the official state costume. The image of Lothar I in the Gospels of Lothar, produced by the Tours School between 849 and 851, is the clearest demonstration of this.85

Thus, the *paludamentum* on the Carolingian coins struck from 810 to the 820s, the *sagum venetum* mentioned by Einhard in the years just before 820 or in the 820s, and a short blue cloak in the depiction of Louis the Pious by 835, all seem to be the same symbolic elements of the image of a peace-making emperor. Furthermore, Florentine Mütherich has shown that the activity of the Court School of Louis the Pious was directed not toward the production of the gospels as it was in the reign of Charlemagne, but to copying classical Roman texts.86 Therefore, one can conclude that the renovation of Roman motifs and images in Carolingian coinage and book production took place at approximately the same time and was stimulated by the same source, namely the royal court. It was the court which determined where the main types of Carolingian coins were designed in that period. It was the court which defined the activity of the Court School, unlike the Rheims School, which produced primarily liturgical manuscripts in that period.87

In summary, the analysis of coin images suggests that the revival of Roman imperial tradition started at the beginning of the ninth century and developed through the copying of certain images such as the bust, ship, wreath, and temple from Roman coins of Gaul or northern Italy struck at the end of the third and beginning of the fourth centuries. This renewal flourished until just before 820, when the opposite process started. During the brief period of the Carolingian 'renaissance', the image *pacificus imperator* – turning back to late Roman imperial symbols and signs of authority from the end of the third to fourth centuries, was recreated. The emergence of this image may have reflected the stage of Frankish military expansion and the coercive Christianization of pagans. At the same time, from the late eighth century, the Carolingians gradually developed their own image of

85 For references and more detailed analysis, see Schramm, *Die deutschen Kaiser*, p. 48 and 161.
86 See F. Mütherich, 'Book Illumination at the Court of Louis the Pious', in Godman and Collins (Eds.), *Charlemagne's Heir*, pp. 593–601. Mütherich wrote: 'It is only the antiquarian world of classical texts and classical imagery which provides us with a picture of the activities of book illuminators at Louis's court': *ibid.*, p. 603.
authority, one that looked back to the previous Frankish and Byzantine traditions. The supremacy of this mainly Frankish image of authority was revived in Carolingian coinage in the 820s to 830s.88

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