

LOCATION OF MINTS IN PORTUGAL

Location of Mints in Portugal: from 12th century to 17th century

Minting coins, administering justice and leading the army were the attributions of kings.

D. Afonso Henriques, the first king of Portugal, is supposed to have ordered the minting of coins between 1128 and 1140.

The first coins were:

- The *dinheiro*
- The *mealha*

These coins are precious rarities and are not documented. They are involved in hypothesis more or less based in historic facts, being unknown the place where they've been mint.

It is very difficult to identify the places where the Mints operated because only at the time of D. Fernando (1367 a 1383) the coins started showing letters that allowed the identification of the places where coins were minted.

We believe that the location of Mints is connected with the conquest of the territory by the moors and that caused a successive dislocation to north, to the centre and later on to the south.

Guimarães:

The first Mint might have operated between 1128 and 1140 and must have existed in the North, probably in Guimarães. This was the political and economic centre of the monarchy.

Coimbra:

Minting in Coimbra is only documented around 1260 / 61. This was the most important city in the central region.

This was the probable place where D. Sancho I (1185-1211) and D. Afonso II (1211 -1223) ordered to mint coins. The first and largest golden coin – the morabitino - dates back from the realm of D. Sancho.

Lisbon:

Proceeding southwards, the first reference to Lisbon as Mint dates from 1247 or 1248. It is also funny to see that the main dislocation axis in the realm was located along the coast, corresponding to the road Oporto / Lisbon. This was where the king and the court were settled. Consequently it was from here, that the inner territory was ruled. Therefore the location of the Mints is directly related with the urban poles, economically stronger and is located in the same place of the royal power: we can see that, first in Guimarães, then in Coimbra and finally in Lisbon. As from the 13th century the most active Mint is the Mint of Lisbon and it would go on for the following hundred years.

The Mint of Oporto – 1st Phase (1369 to 1590):

Between 1369 and 1371 king D Fernando has been involved in wars with Castille. To face war expenses many coins have been minted, both in Oporto, and Miranda do Douro, as well as Zamora, Corunha, Tui, Quiroga and Valencia. As it was mentioned before it is possible to identify for the first time the coining places because the coins show different letters. Coins mint in Oporto show a P.

As the minting was directly connected with the need to make war payments, when the conflict finished so the mints finished, only going on in a continuous basis in Oporto.

King D. Fernando granted a letter of privilege to the officers and coiners of the Mint of Oporto, in 1370. This was later confirmed by King D. João I (1386).

Porto – 2nd Phase (1688 to 1721):

The Mint of Porto was busy again in a second phase, from 1688 to 1721. This is shown by the quantity of coins issued and also by the fact that there was a basis of continuity, for a long time. Its official extinction is included in a decree signed by Filipe III (Filipe II from Spain), in 1607. This means that the minting of coins in Oporto started in 1369 (when D. Fernando was the king -14th century), until the end of the 16th century. This activity only ceased because Spain and Portugal have merged in 1580 into a unique kingdom.

We know many things about this Mint:

- its location: near the river, in the lower part of the city, by the Customs;
- the names and jobs of a large number of officers, some coming from the most important families in the city.

During the kingdom of the three Spanish Filipes, until 1640, Lisbon is the only Mint minting coins.

If we observe the location of Mints in Portugal we may conclude that there were only three locations where Mints produced coins in a basis of continuity: Porto, Lisbon and Évora. The other Mints only issued coins in times of crisis and to pay war expenses. After 1640, in consequence of the Restoration, Porto, Évora and Lisbon started minting coins again. This time was the independence of Portugal that brought the need to make some fiduciary changes. The Mint of Évora only last until 1654. From that time on only the Mints of Porto and Lisbon would operate. In the realm of D. João IV (between 1642 and 1668) several minting houses spread throughout the territory, that stamped the existing coins, with the objective of increasing their value – the same happened with the silver and gold coins.