

AJN Second Series 5-6 (1993-94)
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COINS FROM THE EXCAVATIONS AT LA
ISABELA, D. R., THE FIRST EUROPEAN COLONY
IN THE NEW WORLD

(PLATES 22-25)

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La Isabela was a settlement founded by Christopher Columbus in 1493 on his second voyage and abandoned by the end of the decade.¹ The site, on the north coast of the Dominican Republic about 80 kilometers west of Puerto Plata, has been identified and investigated for at least a century. Systematic excavation and analysis of finds have been under way since 1987. As of March 1992, 78 coins contemporary with the settlement had been found and catalogued; they remain at the site with other artifacts pending possible future removal to a museum

¹ A map of the site indicating coin finds is on p. 207. A preliminary note on the site is Elpidio José Ortega, *La Isabela y la arqueología en la ruta de Colón* (San Pedro de Macoris, 1988). The first published report on the current excavations is Kathleen A. Deagan, "Europe's First Foothold in the New World: La Isabela," *National Geographic* 181 (1992), pp. 40-53. The research on which this is based has been funded in part by National Endowment for the Humanities Grants # RO-21831-89 and RK-20135-94, by the National Geographic Society, by the University of Florida, and by the Dirección de Parques Nacionales de la República Dominicana. We wish to thank the National Park Service of the Dominican Republic and Professor José M. Cruxent for permission to use the results of excavation at the National Park, "Solar de la Americas." I wish to thank Professor Deagan, William Phillips, Jr., Mercedes Rueda Sabater, and James Todesca for their assistance in preparing this report.

within the Dominican Republic.² These coins are all European issues of the late Middle Ages. They offer important documentation both for the chronology and use of the site and for the circulation of low denomination coinage within the Iberian peninsula at the end of the fifteenth century. In order to establish the context of these finds, it will be useful to review the historical and archaeological evidence of the settlement, before moving to numismatic considerations.

LIFE AND MONEY AT LA ISABELA

When Columbus sailed from Spain in September of 1492 he anticipated finding a new route to known kingdoms; the only settlement he could have anticipated creating was a trading outpost of the type Italians and other merchants had established in non-Christian lands.³ Near the end of this voyage, on Christmas day 1492, the Santa Maria foundered on the north coast of Hispaniola, in what is now Haiti. Columbus had a fortress built there of salvaged planks, which he named La Navidad in honor of the date, and left behind 39 men at this unintended settlement.⁴

The following spring, barely half a year after his original departure, Columbus had returned to Spain and was organizing a second voyage. Now, however, he made plans to establish an independent, self-sufficient colony in lands which, though still claimed to be part of the fabled Asian realms, he realized would offer little in the way of civilized ameni-

² Seventeen modern coins were also found in the excavations, ranging in date from 1904 to 1984 — they have been omitted from this catalogue. In addition, two pieces of the reign of Charles V from the mint of Santo Domingo are among the coins in the museum and have been erroneously reported as coming from the excavation — they were both brought to the site from the nearby village of El Dieguito.

³ For general information on Columbus's life and voyages, including the founding and supply of La Isabela, see Samuel Eliot Morison, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, 2 vols. (Boston, 1942); Carl Ortwin Sauer, *The Early Spanish Main* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1966); and William D. Phillips, Jr., and Carla Rahn Phillips, *The Worlds of Christopher Columbus* (Cambridge, 1992).

⁴ The site of La Navidad has recently been identified and excavated. The first published notice is Kathleen Deagan, "Columbus's Lost Colony," *National Geographic* 172 (1987), pp. 672–76. No coins were found at La Navidad.

ties for settlers. Though his major concern was to provide a mechanism for the exploitation of the rich gold resources he believed he had located on the island of Hispaniola, he also made provision for establishing three or four towns there which would be secure militarily and self-sufficient for food.⁵

When the new fleet arrived back at La Navidad, they discovered that the settlers had all died, victims of battles among themselves and with natives. As this site was clearly not propitious for permanent settlement and lands to the east were reputed to be rich in gold, the fleet continued along the coast. After almost a month of painfully slow sailing into the wind, they arrived at a promising bay and, on January 2, 1494, debarked on a promontory which Columbus named La Isabela in honor of his royal sponsor. According to his own account, Columbus immediately ordered built a watch tower, a storehouse for supplies and munitions, a church, a hospice, and a strong house for his own use.⁶ He divided the remaining land into plots and instructed each settler to construct his own thatch-roofed hut.

Little is known of the financial arrangements with the settlers at this new colony or the role of coinage in its economy. Morison assumed it to have been more-or-less a continuation of ship-board conditions, with more than 1,200 men receiving rations from the warehouse and having their salary accumulate at home: "Of course there would have been no sense in paying the men off in Hispaniola where there was nothing to spend money on; all of it would have fallen into the hands of the most skillful gamblers."⁷

Some documents from the period of La Isabela's occupation, however, indicate that coinage was indeed used at the site in the normal course of life. Just a month after founding the settlement, Columbus sent a letter back to Ferdinand and Isabella in which he asked for certain supplies to be sent.⁸ He noted that the expedition's physician,

⁵ Christopher Columbus, *Memorial for the Second Voyage*, ed. Cesare de Lollis, *Scritti di Cristoforo Colombo*, Raccolta di Documenti e Studi pubblicati dalla R. Commissione Colombiana, part 1, vol. 1 (Rome, 1892), pp. 136-38; the dating of this document to April 1493 is circumstantial.

⁶ See the version of his log preserved by his brother Ferdinand, in de Lollis (above, n. 5), pp. 161-62.

⁷ Morison (above n. 3), vol. 2, p. 57.

⁸ The Torres Memorandum, with royal responses of January 1495, is published in de Lollis (above, n. 5), pp. 270-83.

Dr. Chanca, was in need of his royal salary, and the monarchs authorized Columbus to pay it to him at La Isabela. For three sailors whom Columbus promoted in the course of the expedition (Mosén Pedro Margarit and men identified as Gaspar and Beltrán), the monarchs approved a new salary and specifically instructed him to pay with funds which he had with him in the New World. In the case of Pedro Fernando Coronel, appointed Constable ("Alguazil") of the Indies, Columbus asked for such funds to be shipped to him to cover the higher salary. The monarchs approved the new salary but added that they would pay it when they gave Coronel the rest of his pay, presumably on his return to Spain. In a later letter written from La Isabela, Columbus defended himself against charges leveled against him by the rebellious official Francisco Roldán.⁹ To a charge that he had taken eight pigs from settlers about to return to Castile, Columbus responded that he had paid for them at the appropriate rate of 60 maravedi apiece. It appears, then, that from the first, coinage was used and desired at La Isabela, though at least some of the pay of the settlers was held in Spain for their eventual return.

More on the use of coinage in the colony can be learned from the preparations Columbus made for the third voyage after his return to Spain in 1496. Though he had already become disillusioned with the site of La Isabela and had instructed his brother Bartholomew to move the capital to the south shore of the island during his absence, the provisions he worked out with the King and Queen in 1497 no doubt reflect the conditions he had left behind at La Isabela.¹⁰ Three hundred men of specified professions were to be taken to the colony with royal salary, as well as 30 women and an unspecified number of unsalaried freed convicts. These new settlers were to take with them enough grain to make bread for themselves and to sell the surplus to the Christians who were in Hispaniola already. In addition they were to be given two

⁹ Ed. de Lollis (above, n. 5), part 1, vol. 2 (Rome, 1894), p. 57.

¹⁰ Versions of these plans can be found in: *Il codice dei privilegi di Cristoforo Colombo*, ed. L. T. Belgrano and M. Staglieno, Raccolta (above, n. 5), part 2, vol. 2 (Rome, 1894), pp. 36-41; Martín Fernández de Navarrete, ed., *Collección de los viages y descubrimientos que hicieron por mar los Españoles*, vol. 2 (Madrid, 1825), pp. 182-85; Bartolomé de las Casas, *Historia de las Indias*, ed. Agustín Millares Carlo, vol. 1 (Mexico, 1951), pp. 435-38.

maravedi per day to buy other food, presumably the crops which were being grown there by the earlier settlers. Moreover, they were to be given sums of money in Spain to buy provisions which they could sell when they got to Hispaniola, with prices set at 15 maravedi per "azumbre" of wine, 8 maravedi per pound of bacon, and prices for other commodities to be fixed by Columbus. The money thus gained in the colony was to be turned over to the royal treasurer in the Indies as recompense for the original grant.

Most remarkably, these provisions of 1497 called for the establishment of a mint in the New World and for the use there of special lead tokens to record tribute payments. The monarchs ordered that mint workers, dies, and equipment travel to the Indies so that gold found there could be coined on the spot into excellentes "de Granada" according to the new standards promulgated at the same court session at Medina del Campo. Twenty workers of gold were to be enlisted for the voyage, and payment was authorized for each for six months at the rate of 30 maravedi per day for salary and 12 maravedi per day expenses. The lead tokens or badges ("pieza o señal de moneda de latón o de plomo") were to be worn by Indians as a sign of having paid the required tributes.

Most of the ships which left Spain as a result of these provisions never made it to La Isabela. By the time the fleet arrived at Hispaniola in mid-1498, Santo Domingo was established as the capital of the Indies, and the new workers must have been settled there. There is no indication that either the minting of gold coins or the issue of lead badges was actually carried out. The first coinage produced in the New World followed an authorization of 1535 to establish mints in Mexico and Santo Domingo.¹¹ Nevertheless, it is clear from these provisions that circulating coinage was considered a normal part of colonial life during the period of the occupation of La Isabela.

In November 1498, according to Bartolomé de las Casas, Columbus left his new capital of Santo Domingo to visit the old settlement of La Isabela. We are not told what he found there.¹² By the time las Casas

¹¹ J. T. Medina, *Las monedas coloniales hispano-americanas* (Santiago de Chile, 1919), pp. 13-14, 54-57, and 115-19.

¹² Las Casas (above n. 10), vol. 2, p. 93 and Morison (above, n. 3), vol. 2, p. 176. Columbus apparently nurtured hopes of reviving La Isabela as late as 1499; cf. Sauer (above, n. 3), p. 101.

was writing in the mid-sixteenth century, the site was considered haunted, and stones had been taken from the abandoned buildings for the new settlement of Puerto Plata, 80 kilometers to the east. Between its founding in 1494 and Columbus's last visit in 1498, La Isabela is known to have been visited by fleets in June of 1494 (Bartholomew Columbus's arrival), the fall of 1494 (the provision fleet under Torres), and July of 1496 (three ships bearing orders to transfer the capital to Santo Domingo).¹³ The coins found in the excavations at the site must have arrived on these occasions and must have been removed from circulation in Spain in the period 1493 to 1498.

THE CONTEXT OF THE NUMISMATIC FINDS AT LA ISABELA

The excavations at La Isabela have been carried out over the past five years under the direction of José F. María Cruxent of the Universidad Francisco de Miranda of Venezuela and Kathleen A. Deagan of the University of Florida. Two areas have been excavated: the Plaza area, long known to have been the site of the main buildings, and the Las Coles site, several kilometers across the bay, interpreted as an agricultural out-settlement and where the remains of the first European pottery kiln in the New World have been found. All of the coins were found in the Plaza area.

The Plaza area itself is, and apparently always has been, divided into two sections: the area of official stone buildings known as the "Solar de las Americas," now under the protection of the Dominican National Park Service, and the "Pueblo," originally the site of the thatched-roof huts of the colonists and now occupied by the similar homes of the residents of the village of El Castillo. The Solar area has been fully excavated, while the Pueblo area has been the subject of a systematic survey and full excavation of sample test holes. Within the Solar, the foundations of the watch-tower, the storehouse (Alhóndiga), the church, and Columbus's house (the Castillo) have been identified and partially restored. The context and stratigraphy of this area, however, were disturbed in the middle of the present century when bulldozers were used

¹³ Morison (above, n. 3), vol. 2, pp. 164, 167, and 294.

to level the area in anticipation of a visit from the dictator Trujillo. Much of the occupation level, as well as the overburden, was shoveled over the cliff into the sea, leaving only a small stratum of soil in place, and some of that disturbed.

From the excavations, more than 500,000 artifacts of European and native manufacture have been catalogued and identified, among which are 78 coins of late medieval Europe. Inferences from the site distributions of these finds need to be considered in terms of the disruption of much of the Solar area discussed above and the fact that the concentrations of other artifact finds have not yet been mapped. Nine of the coins were found to the north of the Solar site, where they may have been moved by the bulldozer (see map). While 38 of the remaining coins are from the public Solar area, a significant 31 pieces come from the Pueblo area, the site of the simple huts of the settlers. Of the four fine silver coins, the largest, a real of Henry IV (1), was found in the Pueblo, while two others (the half real of Ferdinand and Isabella [64] and a half real of Henry IV [3]) were found in the Solar just north of the Castillo and east of the church. The fourth silver coin, a broken half-real of Henry IV (2), was found in the area to the north of the Solar and may have been moved there by the bulldozers.

The billon coins tend to be concentrated in three locations, but this may be a result of the disruptions of context in the Solar area and the sampling nature of the excavations in the Pueblo. Seventeen of the billon pieces from the Solar are from a relatively limited area about half way between the Alhóndiga and the church. Among these is a set of five coins from one find spot, a set of three from another find spot, and two sets of two. The nature of the site makes it impossible to determine if these were single losses or group deposits. The function of this area is not known, and it would be a logical spot for a market for the kinds of supplies such as fresh vegetables and meat which would have been purchased as supplements to the provisions issued from the Alhóndiga nearby. It may be significant that four of the six Portuguese coins (67, 68, 69, and 70) and one of the two Italian pieces (74) were found in this area. The finds of billon coins in the Pueblo form two clusters, with no coins found together and no apparent pattern of distribution.

THE COINS FOUND AT LA ISABELA

Four of the 78 coins found at La Isabela were large silver coins of high denomination, known as "white money" in the later Middle Ages. The rest were of an alloy containing a small amount of silver and the rest mainly copper, what we call billon today and what was then known as "black money." No gold coins were found. This overwhelming predominance of petty currency is typical of medieval habitation sites, where excavated coins are usually the result of unretrieved loss, much more likely for a dark piece of little worth than for a large, bright, highly valued silver or gold coin.

The four silver coins are all of the kingdom of Castile and Leon, three of Henry IV (1454-74) and one of Ferdinand and Isabella from the period before they unified the coinage of their merged kingdoms. The earliest silver coin (2) is a broken half real of the early part of Henry's reign. There is no doubt that this is of Henry IV and not his grandfather, because the titulature reads "Enricus Quartus Dei Gracia."¹⁴ That this is an early issue is demonstrated by the lack of the legend "Christus Vincit, Christus Regnat, Christus Imperat," called for on all coins of silver and billon in the Segovia ordinance of 1471.¹⁵ The other two silver coins (1 and 3) of this reign do have the required reverse legend, so must be seen as having been minted in the period 1471-74.¹⁶ At the rate of 67 reales to the mark specified in the 1471 ordinance, the real should weigh about 3.43 grams; the 3.2 observed for the relatively unworn and uncorroded coin 1 is in line with this standard.

Coin 64, a silver half real, is the only excavated coin in the names of Ferdinand and Isabella, who had ruled Spain for almost two decades

¹⁴ Cf. Aloiss Heiss, *Descripción general de las monedas hispano-cristianas*, 3 vols. (1865-69, rpt. Saragossa, 1962), vol. 1, pl. 15, 21.

¹⁵ *Cortes de los antiguos reinos de León y de Castilla*, ed. Real Academia de la Historia, vol. 3 (Madrid, 1866), no. 26, pp. 812-34. For a discussion of the discrepancy between the reading "Ihesus" in the document and "XPS" on the coins, cf. Pío Beltrán, "El vellón castellano desde 1474 a 1566," *Numisma* 3, 7 (April 1953), pp. 12-13.

¹⁶ This real issue was attributed correctly by Heiss (above, n. 14), pl. 15, 20; but the half real was assigned by him to Henry III because of its lack of "Quartus" in the legend, pl. 10, 14; as we shall see, the billon blancas, which are clearly of Henry IV, also lack the ordinal, so this criterion is invalid.

when La Isabela was founded. The explanation for the paucity of their coins in the excavation, and presumably in Spain at the time of the fleets' departures, is the rulers' conservatism in monetary innovation. Their first monetary decree, in 1475, was to fix the value of the coinage minted by Henry IV, devaluing the pieces in respect to the unit of account, the maravedi, but authorizing their circulation.¹⁷ Soon, they instructed their mints to issue gold and silver coins of the same alloys and weight as those of their predecessor, but with the names and images changed to identify themselves.¹⁸ They made no response to an entreaty by their procurators in February 1480 that they mint low denomination coinage ("moneda menuda") to meet the needs of their subjects.¹⁹ In May 1480, the Catholic Kings specifically noted that, though they wished ultimately to join the coinage of the merged kingdoms, for the present they intended no innovations.²⁰

The half real of Ferdinand and Isabella found at the site follows the basic appearance of the later issue of Henry IV. The obverse is a monogram of both monarchs, with an appropriate religious quotation, "Quos Deus Conjungit...." The reverse bears the arms of Castile and Leon only, an indication that Aragon had not yet been included in the monetary system. At a weight of 1.6 g it is at the appropriate standard. At the famous court session at Medina del Campo in June 1497, the monarchs instituted a major reform of the coinage, which standardized the issues for the realm, now including Granada and, of course, the New World.²¹ They prescribed completely new types and standards for the gold and silver denominations and authorized the first minting of base

¹⁷ Tomás Dasi, *Estudio de los reales de a ocho*, vol. 1 (Valencia, 1950), no. 3, pp. iii-iv (Segovia, 20 Feb. 1475).

¹⁸ Dasi (above, n. 17), no. 10, pp. vi-viii (Cordoba, 23 May 1475).

¹⁹ Dasi (above, n. 17), no. 55, p. xxiv (Toledo, 6 February 1480). This document makes it clear that the mention of billon coins in the 1475 ordinance was merely to retariff the existing pieces, rather than to authorize the minting of new ones. This was recognized by Pio Beltrán (above, n. 15), p. 13, but the early minting of billon by Ferdinand and Isabella has been argued by Octavio Gil Farres in his *Historia de la moneda española*, 2nd ed. (Madrid, 1976), pp. 376-77, and more recently in his "Los españoles en las indias occidentales," *NAC* 12 (1983), pp. 314-17. The lack of any such billon at La Isabela would seem to confirm Beltrán's interpretation.

²⁰ *Cortes* (above, n. 15), vol. 4 (Madrid, 1882), no. 2, p. 185, c. 111.

²¹ Dasi (above, n. 17), no. 76, pp. lv-lxxix.

billon coinage in their own names. It was at this same sitting that they authorized Columbus to take the workmen necessary to set up a mint in the Indies. If any of the new coins authorized at this court were ready by the time the fleet left Spain less than a year later, they would probably have been borne to the new capital of Santo Domingo; none have been found at La Isabela.

The most common coin found in the excavations (60 of the 74 identified issues) is a piece about 20 mm in diameter, weighing about 1 g, apparently mostly of copper. One side bears the name *Enricus* and titles around a castle within a rhombus and a letter or symbol below. The other side has an abbreviated (and often blundered) version of the "Christus Vincit..." legend around a rhombus containing a rampant crowned lion. Heiss attributed this coin to Henry III (apparently because of the lack of "Quartus" in the legend).²² The issue, however, exactly fits the description of the new *blanca* promulgated by Henry IV in 1471.²³ These were to be of a billon alloy of 0 pennyweight 10 grains fineness, that is 10/24 of 1/12 of pure silver, or about 3.5% silver, the rest copper. They were to be cut at 205 to the mark (of 230 g), so should weigh about 1.12 g each. One side was to bear the king's name around a castle within a squared border ("orla cuadrada") with an initial or symbol under the castle to indicate the mint city; the other side was to bear the "Christus Vincit" legend around a lion within a squared border. Each *blanca* was to be worth half a *maravedi* in the system of account. In 1475, Ferdinand and Isabella retariffed the *blancas* of Henry IV, making each one worth one third of a *maravedi*.²⁴

The *blanca* of Henry IV of 1471 was a major attempt at a restoration of the petty currency. At the beginning of his reign, in 1455, there had been complaints that the *blancas* minted at various mints were of unequal value and that some were refused by the populace.²⁵ The king

²² Heiss (above, n. 14), vol. 1, pl. 10, 25.

²³ Cortes (above, n. 15), vol. 3, p. 815, c. 4. The reference in the text to the coins with "orlas cuadradas" as *medias* is clearly a scribal error as the *medias* prescribed further on were to have no such square borders. The weight of 205 to the mark for *blancas* and 410 for *medias* makes it clear that the coins found at La Isabela, weighing about one gram are indeed the *blancas* and not *medias* of the ordinance.

²⁴ Dasi (above, n. 17), no. 3, pp. iii-iv.

²⁵ Cortes (above, n. 15), vol. 3, no. 22, p. 693, c. 19.

agreed to try to remedy the situation. However, things appear to have gotten worse. In 1469, the procurators complained that the number of mints had grown from the traditional six cities of Burgos, Toledo, Seville, Cuenca, Coruña, and Segovia as a result of recent royal minting grants.²⁶ In the Toledo ordinance of 1471, Henry admitted having allowed minting in other cities to the detriment of the populace; he revoked all such charters and restricted the minting back to the six traditional mints.²⁷ His success in establishing the new coin and driving all of the earlier issues from circulation is illustrated by the predominance of the issue at La Isabela. The blanca of this 1471 issue appears to have been the only low denomination Castilian coin in common circulation 20 years later.²⁸

Blancas of the six traditional mints are all represented in the finds from La Isabela. Seville, mint mark **S**, predominates with 16 examples (30–45); this is to be expected from its proximity to the departure points of the fleets. The nine coins of Toledo, **T** (46–54), five of Segovia, aqueduct symbol (25–29), five of Cuenca, cup (18–22), two of Coruña, **C** (23–24), and one of Burgos, **B** (17) are about what one would anticipate from the geography and monetary importance of these mints.

The 13 coins with mint mark **A** (4–16) are harder to understand; no such mint is admitted in the ordinance of 1471, which not only names the mints but specifies their marks. The explanation is to be found in a document recently discovered and published by Anna M. Balaguer.²⁹ In

²⁶ Cortes (above, n. 15), vol. 3, no. 25, pp. 805–6, c. 24.

²⁷ Cortes (above, n. 15), vol. 3, no. 26, pp. 830–31, c. 59. A later chronicle claimed (probably with exaggeration) that the number of mints had risen to 150: quoted in Manuel Gil y Flores, "Marcas de taller ó zeca de las monedas hispano-cristianas," *Revista de Archivos, Bibliotecas y Museos* 1 (1897), pp. 382–83.

²⁸ Few excavations in Spain have published finds of coins of the period for comparison. In the excavations of the medieval graves at Tiermes (Soria), eleventh to fifteenth century, the reform blanca accounts for two of the nine billon specimens from the reign of Henry IV: Carlos de la Casa Martínez, "Moneda medieval hispano-cristiana en Tiermes," *Gaceta Numismática* 74–75 (1984), pp. 187–89. A hoard of the issue found in Osma had about 100 blancas of Henry IV of this issue (assigned to Henry III following Heiss's attribution), mostly of Burgos, but containing also four coins of Segovia and three of Avila: Felipe Mateu y Llopis, "Hallazgos monetarios (V)," *Ampurias* 9–10 (1947–48), no. 316, p. 83.

²⁹ Anna M. Balaguer, "Carta de concesión de los derechos de la casa de moneda de Avila a la princesa Isabel (1468)," *Numisma* 28 (1978), pp. 519–29.

1468, Henry IV granted his sister Isabella the right to the mint of Avila, authorizing her to make coins of gold, silver, and billon there. He specified that should he in the future revoke the grants of privileges to other mints, the mint of Avila would be exempt from such revocation and could operate whenever the mints of Burgos, Toledo, and Seville did. This exception to the revocation of minting rights for Avila seems to have been honored only in the case of the reform blancas, which appear to have been made in significant numbers.³⁰ It is possible that the mint continued to coin billon in the name of Henry after his death and the accession of Isabella to the Castilian throne.

The importance of the blanca as the basic low denomination coin of the era of Columbus is reinforced by the finding of an example at the Long Bay site on San Salvador Island, Bahamas, in a context which included other European artifacts.³¹ Other sites have been identified with the San Salvador of Columbus's first land fall in 1492, but the discovery of this coin, of the predominant issue found at La Isabela, strengthens the claim of the Bahamas site as the location of the first encounter between Columbus and natives of the New World. The blanca found at San Salvador was analyzed by electron microprobe analysis and found to have 3.97% silver; a control analysis of ten other specimens of the issue yielded results ranging from 2.51% to 4.71% silver, in line with the 3.5% prescribed in the 1471 ordinance.

The other coin issue found in significant quantities at La Isabela is the Portuguese ceutil, of which five examples are from the reign of Alfonso V, 1432–81 (67–71) and one of John II, 1481–95 (72). Their presence may relate to the origins of some of the settlers or may simply be a result of their common use in the Iberian peninsula. The predominance of the earlier issue over the one more contemporary with Columbus's era echoes the relative commonness of the ceutils of Alfonso V

³⁰ Anna M. Balaguer, "La disgregación del monedaje en las crisis castellana del siglo xv. Enrique IV y la ceca de Avila según los documentos del Archivo de Simancas," *Acta Numismatica* 9 (1979), pp. 171–72. On none of the coins from La Isabela can one make out an uncrowned P to the left of the castle which appears on some coins with the A below the castle described by Balaguer.

³¹ Robert H. Brill et al., "Laboratory Studies of Some European Artifacts Excavated on San Salvador Island," *First San Salvador Conference: Columbus and His World*, ed. Donald T. Gerace (San Salvador, Bahamas, 1986), pp. 255–57.

and rarity of those of his successor.³² The finding of a few examples of other issues illustrates the heterogeneous monetary circulation of medieval Europe. The bent and broken anonymous billon coin of Castile (65) is now assigned to the reign of Alfonso X, 1252–84.³³ The survival of a coin in circulation for two centuries is not an unusual phenomenon for this period.³⁴ The coin of Navarre (66) and the two of Italian mints (73 and 74) are representative of the common “black money” of the fifteenth century which circulated widely in the Mediterranean.

The coins found at La Isabela offer a picture of the low denomination coinage in Castile-Leon in the last decade of the fifteenth century, a narrowly focused image which is without parallel in Spain itself. The numismatic finds confirm the identity of the site with that known from documentary sources and support the conclusion that it was virtually abandoned by the end of the decade. In a complementary fashion, the lack of billon coins in the name of Ferdinand and Isabella on this site confirms the inference that such coins were not issued until the reforms of 1497. Later sites from the New World were dominated by the reformed coinage, which was to stand as the basis for many modern monetary developments, including the American dollar. The coin finds at La Isabela represent a brief episode of medieval European coinage in the New World.

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³² The numbers of specimens in the Lisbon Casa de Moeda collection of each issue is indicative of their relative rarity: 170 of Alfonso V against 14 of John II: C. M. Almeida do Amaral, *Catálogo descritivo das moedas Portuguesas, Museu Numismático Português*, vol. 1 (Lisbon, 1977), pp. 339–58 and 392–94; see also the rarity ratings and collector values given in Pedro Batalha Reis, *Preçário das moedas portuguesas de 1140 a 1640* (Lisbon, 1956).

³³ James J. Todesca, “The Monetary History of Castile-Leon (ca. 1100–1300) in Light of the Bourgey Hoard,” *ANSMN* 33 (1988), p. 198.

³⁴ For example, the three thirteenth-century coins in the Chalkis hoard, buried after 1462: Alan M. Stahl, *The Venetian Tornesello, a Medieval Colonial Coinage*, *ANSNM* 163 (1985), pp. 79–80.

CC Juan R. Cayón and C. Castán, *Monedas Españolas* (Madrid, 1991).

CNI *Corpus Nummorum Italicorum*, 20 vols. (Rome, 1910–70).

Heiss Aloiss Heiss, *Descripción general de las monedas hispano-cristianas*, 3 vols. (1865–69, rpt. Saragossa, 1962).

Each individual entry contains the weight in grams, followed by the die axis in hours, the field specimen number, and any particular observations.

SPAIN

Castile and Leon

HENRY IV, 1454–74

Silver real, 1471–74: Heiss 20; CC 1526

Burgos

1. 3.2, 10, 1996

Silver half real, 1454–71: CC 1541

Cuenca

2. 1.5, 11, 198, broken

Silver half real, 1471–74: Heiss 21, CC 1537–39

Uncertain mint

3. 1.1, 1, 782, fragment

Billon blanca, 1471–74: CC 1620–29

Avila

4. 1.0, 1, 201
5. 1.0, 1, 1749
6. 1.0, 9, 2105
7. 0.9, 3, 450
8. 0.8, 10, 173
9. 0.7, 9, "found east of Columbus's house"
10. 0.7, 7, 792
11. 0.6, 4, 32
12. 0.6, 1, 235
13. 0.4, 1, 173

Avila ?

- 14. 0.8, 2, 173
- 15. 0.8, 7, 3541
- 16. 0.4, ?, 155

Burgos

- 17. 0.3, 3, 2821

Cuenca

- 18. 1.0, 11, 530
- 19. 1.0, 12, 155
- 20. 0.6, 12, 40
- 21. 0.6, 5, 198
- 22. 0.5, ?, 663

Coruña

- 23. 1.0, 2?, 41
- 24. 0.8, 3, 117

Segovia

- 25. 1.1, 12, 3126
- 26. 1.0, 4, 5189
- 27. 0.9, 9, 155, obv. triangular counterstamp; rev. two small holes
- 28. 0.8, 6, 528
- 29. 0.7, 6, 3126, rev. four triangular counterstamps

Seville

- 30. 1.1, 6, 3596
- 31. 1.0, 11, 2277
- 32. 0.9, 1, 155
- 33. 0.8, 10, 3338
- 34. 0.8, 7, 197
- 35. 0.8, 12, 1923
- 36. 0.7, 1, 2420, bent
- 37. 0.7, 12, 202
- 38. 0.7, 12, 173
- 39. 0.6, 3, 1991
- 40. 0.6, 11, 2335
- 41. 0.6, 2, 1978
- 42. 0.6, ?, 620
- 43. 0.5, 3, 2351
- 44. 0.5, 5, 3597

Seville?

45. 0.6, 2, 2952

Toledo

46. 1.3, 9, 1970

47. 1.2, 12, 202

48. 1.0, 6, 2130

49. 0.9, 10, 235

50. 0.9, ?, 5240

51. 0.8, 2, 5376

52. 0.6, 2, 1980

53. 0.7, 10, 3245

54. 0.5, 6, 528

Uncertain mint

55. 0.9, 6, 32

56. 0.9, ?, 1939

57. 0.7, ?, 39, in two pieces before cleaning, three pieces after

58. 0.7, 7, 112, broken in cleaning

59. 0.6, ?, 1958, rotated double-strike

60. 0.6, ?, 256

61. 0.5, 4, 783

62. 0.4, 4, 5240

63. 0.2, ?, 1761

FERDINAND AND ISABELLA, 1474–1504

Silver half real, 1475–97, Heiss 11, CC 2505

Toledo

64. 1.6, 4, 3502

ANONYMOUS

Billon seisén, late thirteenth century, Heiss, pl. 6, 4–10; CC 1165–74.

Uncertain mint

65. 0.3, ?, 1044

Navarre

CATHERINE I AND JOHN II D'ALBRET, 1483–1512

Billon half blanca, Heiss 8, CC 2122

66. 0.8 ?, 2778

PORTUGAL

ALFONSO V, 1432-81

Billon ceutil, Amaral 1041-1211

- 67. 2.1, 3, 173
- 68. 1.9, 3, 117
- 69. 1.7, 9, 530
- 70. 1.6, 11, 530
- 71. 1.4, 7, "found in El Poblado"

JOHN II, 1481-95

Billon ceutil, Amaral 1297-1311

- 72. 1.9, 3, 778

ITALY

Aquileia

LOUIS II OF TECK, 1412-37

Soldo, *CNI* VI.III.28

- 73. 0.3, 8, 2091

Genoa

UNCERTAIN FIFTEENTH CENTURY DOGE

Minuto, cf. *CNI* III.V.7 and VII.10

- 74. 0.4, ?, 3324

UNIDENTIFIED

- 75. 0.1, 2613, fragment, possible inscriptions: **ANA** and **REX**
- 76. 0.5, 1970
- 77. 0.4, 2498
- 78. 0.2, 1753

TABLE OF COINS FOUND AT LA ISABELA, S.D.

Castile and Leon

Henry IV, 1454-74

| | | |
|----------------|----|----|
| Real | | 1 |
| Half real | | 2 |
| Blanca | | 60 |
| Avila | 13 | |
| Burgos | 1 | |
| Cuenca | 5 | |
| Coruña | 2 | |
| Segovia | 5 | |
| Seville | 16 | |
| Toledo | 9 | |
| Uncertain mint | 9 | |

Ferdinand and Isabella, 1474-1505

| | | |
|-----------|--|---|
| Half real | | 1 |
|-----------|--|---|

Anonymous Late XIII Century

| | | |
|--------|--|---|
| Seisén | | 1 |
|--------|--|---|

Navarre

Catherine I and John II d'Albret

| | | |
|-------------|--|---|
| Half blanca | | 1 |
|-------------|--|---|

Portugal

Alfonso V, 1432-81

| | | |
|--------|--|---|
| Ceutil | | 5 |
|--------|--|---|

John II, 1481-95

| | | |
|--------|--|---|
| Ceutil | | 1 |
|--------|--|---|

Aquileia

Louis II of Teck, 1412-37

Soldo 1

Genoa

Fifteenth Century

Minuto 1

Unidentified

4

Total 78

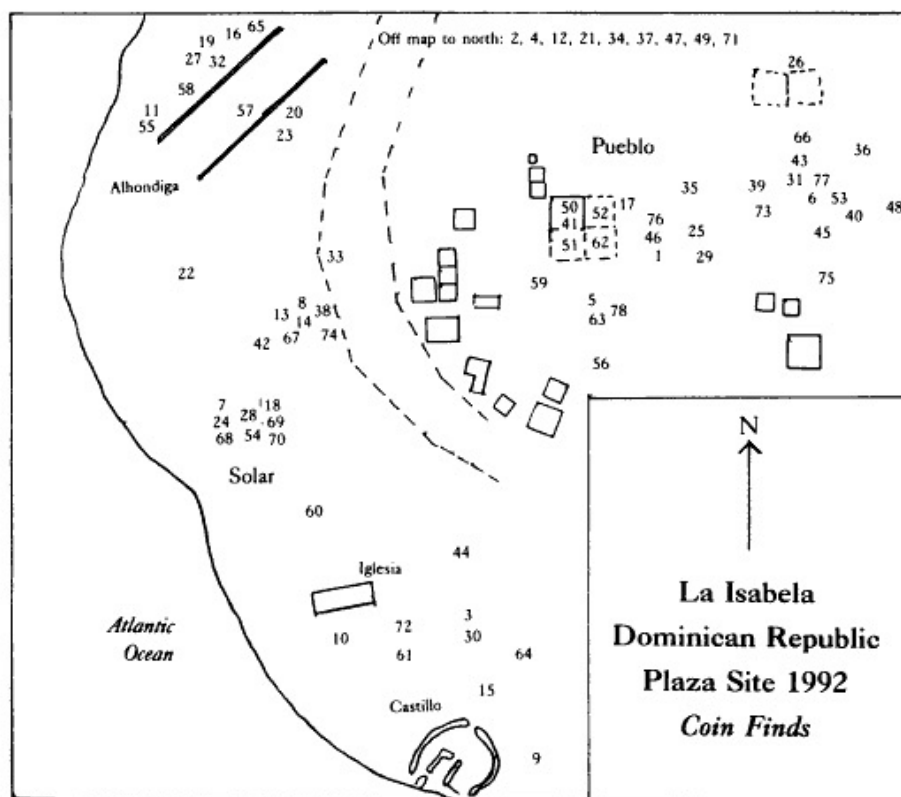
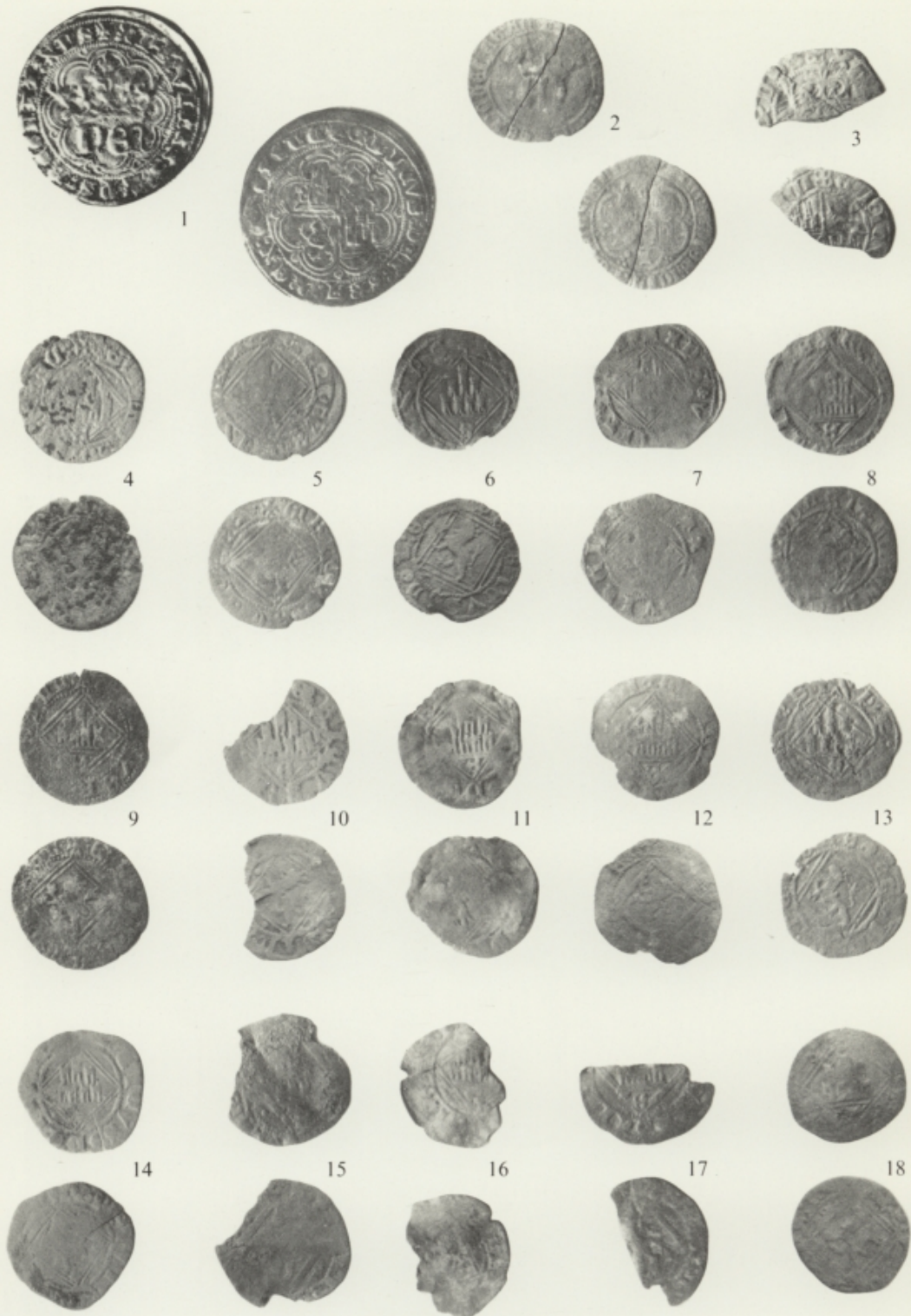
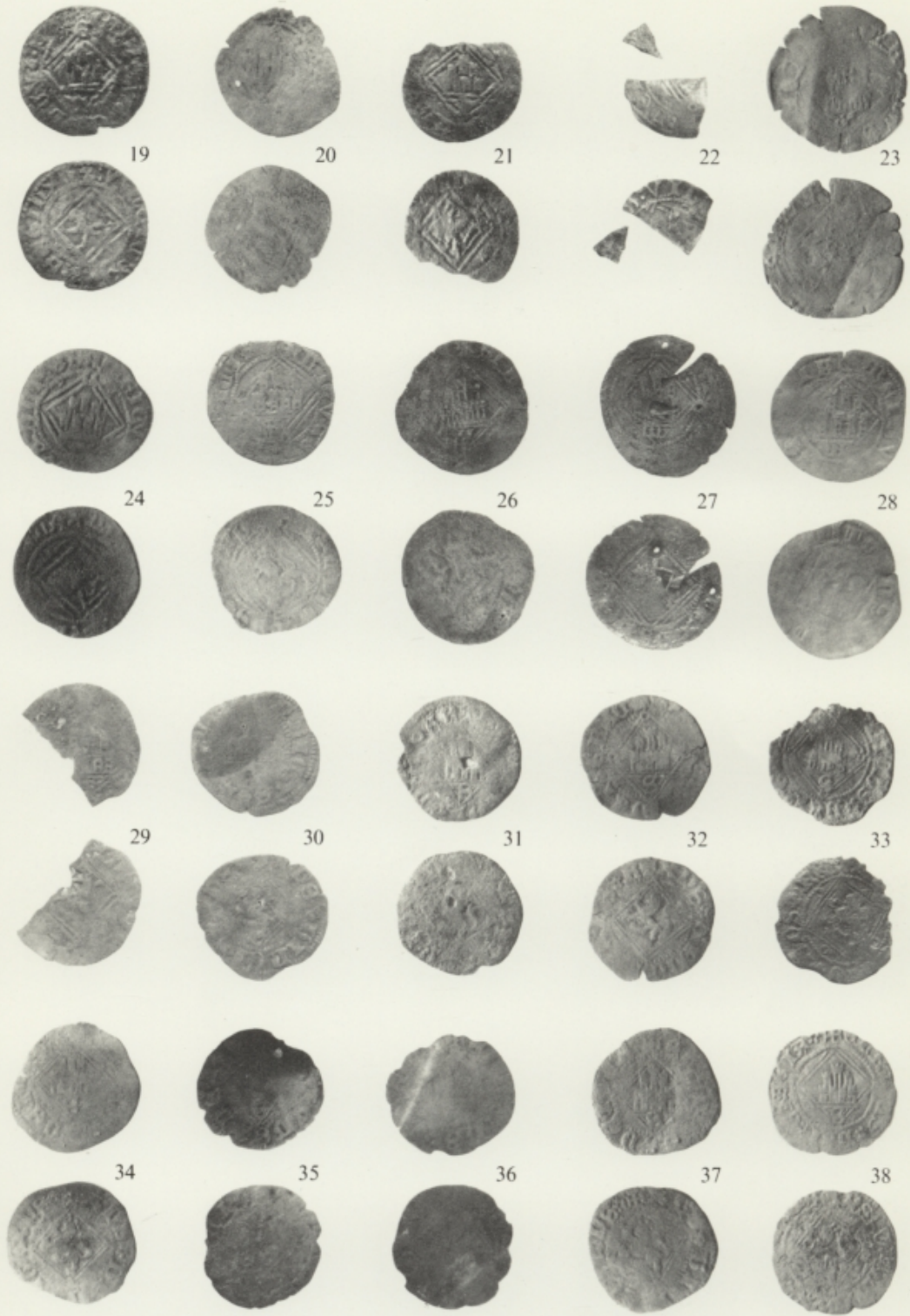


Plate 22

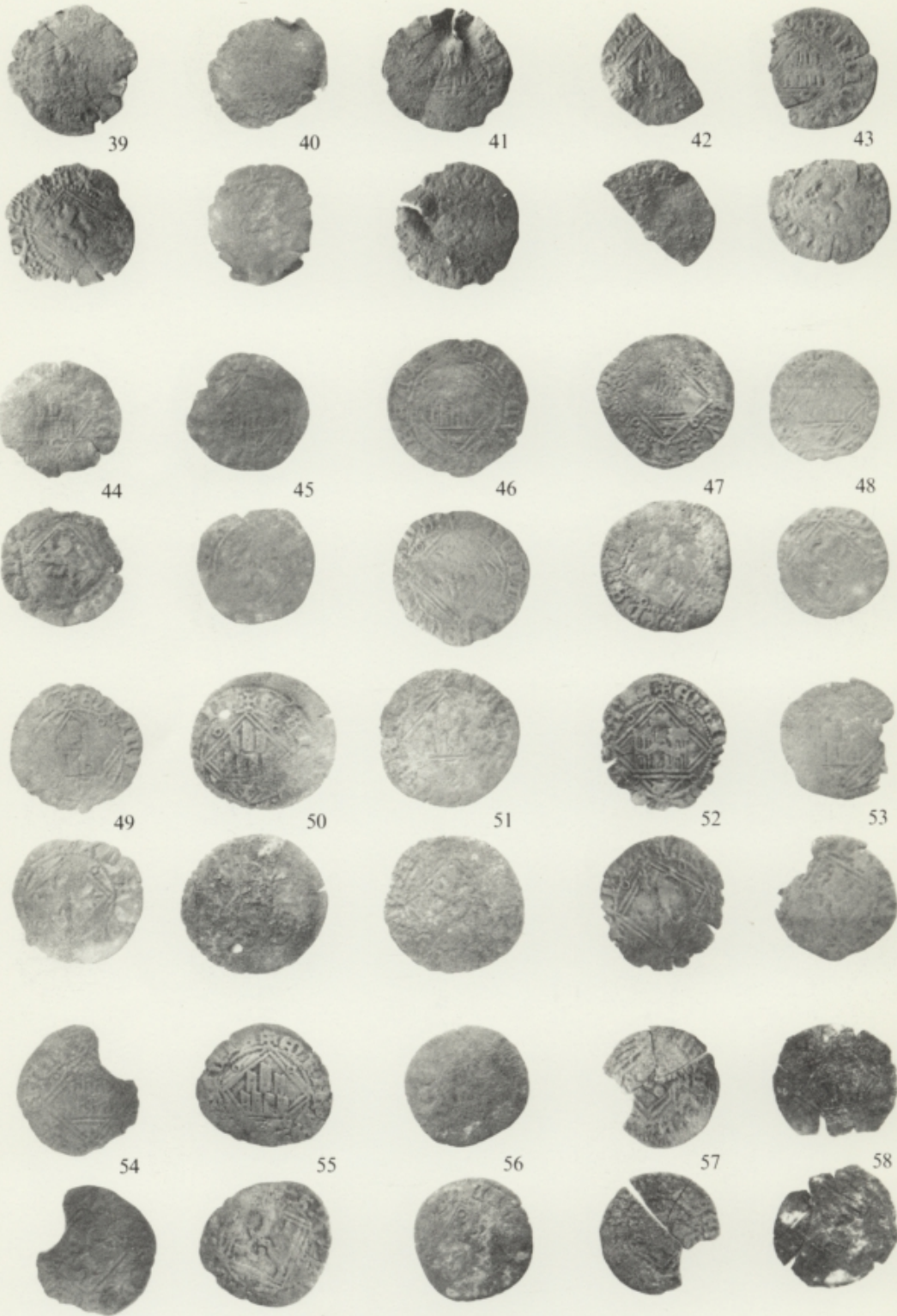


La Isabela Excavation Coins

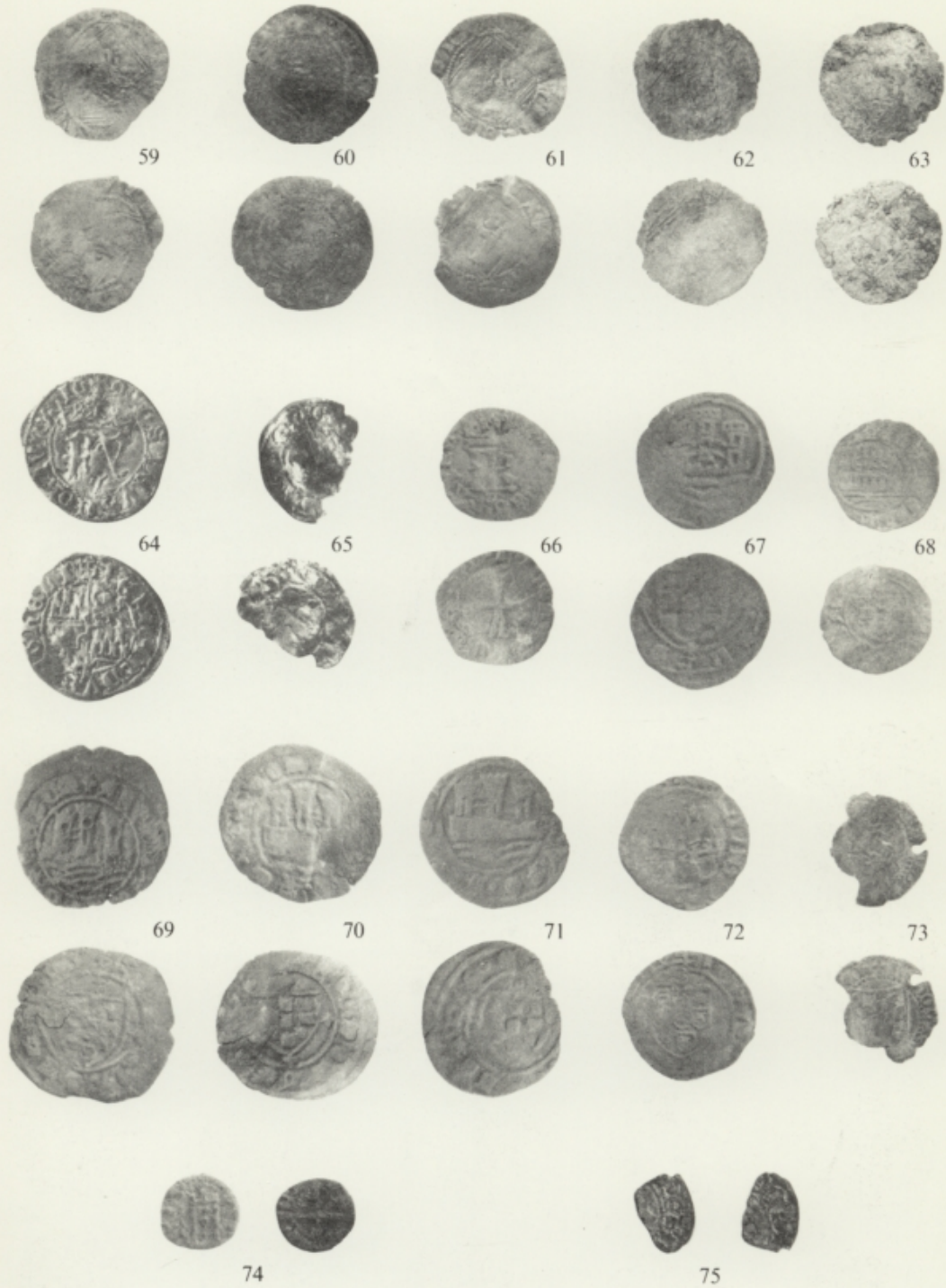


La Isabela Excavation Coins

Plate 24



La Isabela Excavation Coins



La Isabela Excavation Coins