

Coin Attribution Assistance

4 Maravedís Santo Domingo



This coin appeared on Jim Martin's website "Moneta Gallery Coin Museum" and then Jim posted an inquiry on the Numismatics International page in Yahoo! Groups seeking to attribute the coin which came with the following description.

Spain 4 Maravedís - 1519. Struck for use in Santo Domingo and subsequently counter-struck with ANCHOR symbol for use in Jamaica. Supposedly the, or one of, the first coins struck exclusively for use in the New World. Seville Spain mint. Las Monedas Españolas Del 411... # 2834; Cayón. Weight: 2.12 g; about 27 mm. Metal: copper.

NI member Jorge Proctor is an expert in Santo Domingo coinage and offered the following information.

The coin's description does not match that from *Las Monedas Españolas, Del Tremis a Euro, Del 411 a Nuestros Dias*, by Adolfo, Clemente and Juan Cayon #2834. Coin #2834 of that book can be found on Vol. 1, page 440 and this is a 4 Reales of Toledo from the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella. The Cayón attribution appears as:

REYES CATOLICOS: 4 REALES (Plata): 2834 N.D. TOLEDO
M y estrella en rev. 19 690

Now, the correct attribution of this coin is that it is a 4 Maravedís minted in Santo Domingo, circa 1544. Notice the year that I indicate. These coins actually started being minted in 1542 and were continuously minted until 1555, when the design was changed. The attribution as circa 1544 comes from the study of the legend on the coins, which shows the use of a good number of gothic letters, which indicates an early mintage. Now, as for the countermark of the anchor, yes, this countermark is believed to coincide with an order given in July of 1611 in Jamaica, where the 4 Maravedís coins from Santo Domingo were being countermarked there to revalue them on the island from 1/51 to 1/11 of a Real.

There was a previous countermark of a letter S on these coins which is also from Jamaica. But this other countermark was placed in the 4 Maravedís coins between 1581-82 to revalue them on this island, from 1/25 to 1/11 of a silver real. The countermark S has been reported in four forms: Ordinary S, Long S, Seriffed S and Retrograde S.

Now, notice that the information above, is as researched and written by Mr. Robert Barker (*The Numismatic Circular*, June 1978). But there is one big correction. Mr. Baker actually believed that the anchor was the countermark placed in 1581-82, and the S was the one used in 1611. But the sequence had to be readjusted thanks to recent finds from Nombre de Dios, Panama, which have demonstrated that the countermark S (Ordinary and in Retrograde), was in use prior to 1596; date when this city was destroyed and abandoned after Sir Francis Drake's attack (the settlement was relocated to Portobello in 1597). As is expected, not a single coin showing the countermark of the anchor has been found on this early settlement, which has helped to identify the correct sequence of these countermarks, which should then be: the S for the 1581-82 period, and the anchor for 1611 (correction which I have already made above).

Now, one comment that I can make is that this is a nice coin. Not necessarily because it has not been cleaned. But because of the almost complete Gothic legend. The early Dominican coins with complete or almost complete Gothic legends (with or without countermark) are really hard to find and can command a premium to a knowledgeable collector.

Hope this helps.

Jorge