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IMITATIONS OF GOLD CAROLINGIAN COINS IN THE COLLECTION OF THE HERMITAGE

Carolingian coinage and the reforms of Charlemagne (768–814) provided the grounds for the monetary systems of many Western European countries and influenced the weight standards and image of those coins¹. Russia was practically beyond the distribution zone of Carolingian coins. However, the half-bracteate finds of Hedeby and a large number of hoards containing western coins from the end of the 10th till the beginning of the 12th centuries must draw numismatists' attention to Carolingian coins.

The large collection of silver Carolingian coins in the Hermitage will be disregarded herein, whereas emphasis will be put on rare Carolingian gold coins, the imitations thereof in particular.

The epoch of the silver denarius began in most European countries at the turn of the 9th century, and lasted till the middle of the 13th century. Gold coins were used only in those parts of Europe which came under strong Byzantine or Moslem influence². This is why gold Carolingian coinage, as a specific and exceptional phenomenon, arouses particular interest. In these investigations not only finds of authentic coins are significant, but their imitations as well. They convey much information on their models thus making up a link between coinage and goldsmithing. Imitations in large part are provided with loops, holes meant to fasten them, or frames — they were therefore used as ornaments. Let me note

¹ P. Berghaus, *Wirtschaft, Handel und Verkehr der Karolingerzeit im Licht numismatischen Materials*, [in:] Berghaus 1999, p. 126–133; W. Hävernick, *Zur Münzgeschichte der Karolingerzeit und des 10/11 Jahrhunderts*, HBN Bd. V, Heft 15, 1961, p. 5–12; S. Suchodolski, *Les influences carolingiennes sur le monnayage européen aux X^e et XI^e siècles*, [in:] *Actes du 8^{ème} Congrès International de Numismatique*, New York–Washington, Septembre 1973. Texte, Paris–Bâle 1976, p. 477–485.

² MEC, Appendix I, *Gold Pennies of the Carolingian and Early Feudal Periods*, p. 326–331; S. Suchodolski, *Vom Gold zum Silber*, [in:] *Lagom, Festschrift für Peter Berghaus zum 60. Geburtstag*, Münster 1981, p. 97–104.

at once that the imitations discussed here do not bear the foregoing traits. It is also worth noting that in the Middle Ages there were no significant differences between coins and coin-shaped metal ornaments. Pierced coins are often to be found in hoards, bearing traces of a loop having been fastened, thus testifying their use as ornaments. Such coin-like ornaments occurring in hoards point out that they would perform certain functions of money (or that of a thesaurization means at least).

There are groups of coins, or even single ones, that arouse long-lasting discussions and arguments. This is the case of denarii by Otto and Adelaide in German numismatics, coins by Bolesław the Brave (992–1025) bearing a cyrillic legend and — last but not least — gold Carolingian coins and their imitations. Such well-known numismatists as K. F. Morrison, H. Grunthal, W. Hävernick, Ph. Grierson, P. Berghaus, J. Lafaurie, S. Suchodolski and many others³ have taken part in research and discussions, especially vivid in the 1950s and 1960s. S. Suchodolski was right to have noticed that a lack of data on those interesting numismatic relics made it difficult to solve the problem⁴. This is why this communiqué is chiefly of a publication character. Three out of four imitations presented here have not been known even to specialists.

One of those Carolingian imitations has been the subject of a vivid discussion⁵.

1. Obverse. Bust of the ruler in a laurel wreath to the right, inscription
XƷΓZEI, I~L •• OI L I I Π I F E

Reverse. Cross within a circle. Points in every corner of the cross.

+VICODVT∞TΛT

GE, inventory no. 142. Diameter 20.5 mm, weight 4.15 g., fineness 900.

Information on this Hermitage specimen was published by Ph. Grierson in 1965; S. Suchodolski also mentions the coin⁶.

Besides, there are two more specimens of a similar “solidus”. One is to be seen in the British Museum⁷ — the other in the Münzkabinett in Berlin⁸. Unlike the Berlin one and the Hermitage specimen, the “solidus” from the British Museum bears a bust to the right upon the obverse and a legible legend: +CARLVS REXETLANETR, which has been deciphered in different ways. Ph. Grierson thinks that the inscription should comprise Charlemagne’s titulare

³ Bibliography on the issue in MEC, p. 340–390, also in footnotes to article Suchodolski 1984.

⁴ Suchodolski 1984, p. 272–273.

⁵ MEC, p. 328.

⁶ Ph. Grierson, *Money and coinage under Charlemagne*, [in:] Karl der Grosse, Bd.I, Düsseldorf 1965, p. 533, no. 50; Suchodolski 1984, p. 261–265.

⁷ M. Dolley and K. Morrison, *The Carolingian coins in the British Museum*, London 1966, no. 98; K. F. Morrison, H. Grunthal, *Carolingian coinage*, New York 1967, no. 643.

⁸ Berghaus 1959, p. 95, 6b, fig. 20.

REX FRANCORVM ET LANGOBARDORVM, while J. Lafaurie — REX LANGOBARDORVM ET ROMANORVM⁹. What is important to us is not the meaning of the inscription, but the word REX — king, which points out that the “solidus” from the British Museum, or its prototype, had been struck before Charlemagne assumed the imperial title (800), or before silver coins with such a title began to be struck, or even before Charlemagne’s imperial title was acknowledged by Byzantium¹⁰.

Specimens from the Hermitage and Berlin were most probably made still later. The issue of the time and cause it was made is a controversial one — some regard the solidus (or “mancus”) in question as a 9th century relic, others as a later product. The object having been made at a goldsmith’s shop as an ornament is also regarded as possible. Most researchers suppose, chiefly due to the name of an important Frisian port Dorestad upon the imitation’s reverse, that it was made in Frisia¹¹. The said imitation (of a coin or coins unknown to us) seems to be directly or indirectly connected with the Carolingian epoch, this is why it deserves particular attention.

Gold coinage of Louis the Pious (814–840) is known better. In 1976 Ph. Grierson wrote on at least 12 known specimens of solidi by that ruler and 60 imitations.

Upon the obverse of Louis the Pious’ solidi there is the ruler’s bust to the right in an antique attire and laurel wreath.

Legend: DHHLVDOVICVS IMPAVG, i.e. *Dominus Noster Lodovicus Imperator Augustus*. On the reverse there is a wreathed cross and the legend: MVNVS DIVIHVM, weight 4.3–4.5 g¹². There is a single specimen of a weight of 7.04 g (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale) which sometimes is referred to as one and half of a solidus (J. Lafaurie)¹³. The inscription *Manus Divinum* has been interpreted in two ways: Ph. Grierson perceives it as “God’s gift” and links the wreath (Latin *corona*, hence *coronatio*) with Louis’ coronation by Pope Stephen V in Reims in 816, while K. Morrison, treating the cross as the main image of the reverse, assumes that the solidus was struck in connection with the Council of Paris in 825¹⁴.

Anyway, researchers agree that the foregoing limited issue (four pairs of dies are known) was of a ceremonial and ostentatious character.

Although the precise striking place of the solidi is unknown (it might have

⁹ Ph. Grierson, *Zum Ursprung der Karolingischer Goldprägung in Nordwest-Europa*, HBN Bd. II, Heft 8, 1954, p. 200; J. Lafaurie, *Numismatique. Des Carolingiens aux Capétiens*, Cahiers de civilisation médiévale, XIII, 2, 1970, p. 123; Suchodolski 1984, p. 262.

¹⁰ MEC, p. 328; Ph. Grierson, *Münzen des Mittelalters*, München–Fribourg 1976, p. 58–59.

¹¹ Berghaus 1959, p. 94–95; Suchodolski 1984, p. 261–265; MEC, p. 328.

¹² Ph. Grierson, *Münzen des Mittelalters...*, Figs no. 84–85; Suchodolski 1984, p. 266–267.

¹³ Lafaurie, *o.c.*, p. 130; Suchodolski 1984, p. 265–266.

¹⁴ Suchodolski 1984, p. 265–266; MEC, p. 329.

been Aachen, Dorestad or Utrecht), imitations, most of them at least, are generally regarded as having come from Frisia¹⁵.

In the Hermitage there are three such imitations of Louis the Pious' coins. One of them is closest to the solidi both in respect of the image and the completely understood legend.

2. Obverse. Bust of the ruler to the right, analogous to images upon solidi.
 ДИИИВВDOV2NH
 Reverse. Cross within a rim.
 ГИМВНИВИДСВНVM,I (to be read backwards)
 GE inv. 9512. Diameter 21.0 mm, weight 4.50 g, fineness 958; Grierson Ia
3. Obverse. Bust to the left.
 ДИHLVDOIII
 Reverse. Cross within a circle.
 Illegible inscription: VIIIUIIIVINIOVII
 GE inv. No. A-z 2220. Diameter 22.0 mm. Weight 4.33 g. Fineness 750;
 Obverse Grierson XVIIIa, reverse Grierson XVIIIf.
4. Obverse. Bust to the right.
 ИVИИVOИИVИIV
 Reverse. Cross within a circle.
 ИVИИИДИИИIO
 GE inventory no. 2219. Diameter 21.5 mm. Weight 4.42 g. Fineness 500; cf. Grierson XIX.



1



2



3



4



¹⁵ MEC, p. 329; P. Berghaus, *Wirtschaft, Handel und Verkehr...*, [in:] Berghaus 1999, p.127.

At the end a few words on the origin of the coins published here. Coins inventory no. 142 (Fig. 1) and no. 2220 (Fig. 3) were in the Hermitage's collection already before 1917. Solidus inventory no. 2219 (Fig. 4) comes from J. Reichel's collection¹⁶. Reichel specified its weight as 15/19 of a *zlotnik*, i.e. 4.48 g, while in the inventory book its weight amounts to 4.42 g. A difference of 0.06 g may be fully accounted for by the accuracy of a 19th century balance.

Solidus inventory no. 9512 (Fig. 2) found its way to the Hermitage in December 1927 together with a large group of coins conveyed from the Gokhrana [Gosudarstvennoye Khranilishche — State Treasury — translator's remark] and Bank of Issue through the State Historical Museum in Moscow¹⁷. It is quite possible that coins from confiscated private numismatic collections were kept at the Gokhrana and Bank of Issue, yet — for the time being, it is not possible to accurately specify the origin of the relic.

*Translated by Robert Skarżyński
(on the basis of the Polish translation of Janusz Sztetyllo)*

ABBREVIATIONS

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| GE | — Gosudarstvennyi Ermitage |
| Berghaus 1959 | — P. Berghaus, <i>Ein karolingischer Münzring von Herbrum</i> , Die Kunde, Neue Folge 10, Heft 1–2, Jahrgang 1959, p. 90–97. |
| Berghaus 1999 | — P. Berghaus, <i>Denar Sterling Goldgulden, Ausgewählte Schriften zur Numismatik</i> , Osnabrück 1999. |
| Grierson | — Ph. Grierson, <i>The gold solidus of Louis the Pious and its imitations</i> , Jaarboek voor Munt- en Penningkunde, XXXVIII, 1951, p. 1–41 (= Ph. Grierson, <i>Dark Age Numismatics</i> , London 1979, XXII) |
| HBN | — Hamburger Beiträge zur Numismatik. |
| MEC | — Ph. Grierson and M. Blackburn, <i>Medieval European Coinage</i> , vol. I, <i>The Early Middle Ages (5th–10th centuries)</i> , Cambridge 1986. |
| Suchodolski 1984 | — S. Suchodolski, <i>Remarques sur la monnaie d'or dans le monnayage carolingien</i> , Quaderni ticinesi. Numismatica e antichità classiche, vol. XIII, Lugano 1984, p. 261–273. |

¹⁶ *Die Reichelsche Sammlung in St.Petersburg. Siebenter Theil*, [St.Petersburg] 1842, manuscriptal completion of page 11, no. 87 B.

¹⁷ Book of accession of the Numismatic Section of GE 44a, record no. 665 dated December 23, 1927, chart 105.

NAŚLADOWNICTWA ZŁOTYCH MONET KAROLIŃSKICH
W ZBIORACH ERMITAŻU

(Streszczenie)

Złote monety karolińskie oraz ich naśladownictwa są niezwykle rzadkie, a wokół ich chronologii i atrybucji toczą się ożywione dyskusje. Dlatego na opublikowanie zasługują 4 takie okazy przechowywane od dawna w przebogatych zbiorach Ermitażu w St. Petersburgu. Monety te nie stanowią jednego zespołu — trafiły do zbiorów różnymi drogami w różnym czasie, a miejsce ich znalezienia niestety nie jest znane.

Tylko pierwszy okaz (nr 1) był dotychczas publikowany⁶. Jest to naśladownictwo solida Karola Wielkiego emitowanego w Dorestad we Fryzji zapewne przed koronacją cesarską w 800 r. (waga 4,15 g, próba 900). Znanie są jedynie 2 podobne egzemplarze: przechowywane w British Museum w Londynie (z poprawniejszą legendą)⁷ i w Staatliche Museen w Berlinie⁸.

Pozostałe 3 okazy (nr 2–4) stanowią naśladownictwo solidów Ludwika Pobożnego (814–840). Imitacje takie notowane są w ok. 40 egzemplarzach, a za miejsce ich powstania przyjmuje się Fryzję¹⁵. Na awersie noszą one popiersie cesarza, a na rewersie krzyż w wieńcu i zniekształcony napis: MVNVS DIVINVM. Wąż od 4,33 do 4,50 g, przy próbie wahającej się od 500 do 958/1000. Redakcji udało się zidentyfikować stemple okazów nr 2 i 3 w katalogu P. Griersona, *The gold solidus of Louis the Pious and its imitations*, 1951 jako zgodne z odm. Ia i XVIII f. Okaz nr 4 przypomina odm. XIX, ale został wybity innymi stemplami.

Monety opisane tu pod nr 1 i 3 znajdowały się w zbiorach Ermitażu już przed 1917 r. Moneta nr 4 pochodzi z kolekcji J. Reichla¹⁶, a moneta nr 2 została przekazana w 1927 za pośrednictwem Muzeum Historycznego w Moskwie przez Gosudarstvennoje Chranilišče i Bank Emisyjny. Pochodzi zapewne z niezidentyfikowanej, skonfiskowanej kolekcji prywatnej.

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