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**IS THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN COIN DESIGNS  
FULLY RELIABLE?**

The question posed in the title seems to be rhetorical. For everyone knows that it is on the basis of data contained in coin designs — that is, their figures and legends — that coins are recognized, their issuers and the place and time of making are determined. These data are, after Ryszard Kiersnowski, described by the term ‘the certificate of a coin’, by analogy with people’s certificates, containing the most important information about them (K i e r s n o w s k i 1988, p. 111). On closer acquaintance, however, it appears that this matter is not so obvious as it seems to be. Examples from the recent history of Poland can show this. The first coins were put into circulation after World War II, in 1950. However, they bear the date 1949, with which they were struck in large numbers until as late as 1956 (T e r l e c k i 1970, pp. 211–214 and Tab. 22; K a m i ń s k i 1983, pp. 40–45) (Fig. 1). A change occurred only in 1957, when the actual date of minting began to be used.

A similar immobilization of coin designs took place in the so called General Government under German military occupation. In the years 1941–1944, minor coins with the date 1923, the Eagle, and inscription RZECZPOSPOLITA POLSKA (‘The Republic of Poland’) were struck there, imitating precisely Polish coins of the time. The only difference was in the metal — zinc was used instead of bronze (Fig. 2). Over 1943–1944, Germans also struck zinc five groszy coins, according to the old pattern with the date 1939, but with a smaller diameter and, in addition, with a hole in the middle (T e r l e c k i 1970, p. 200 and Tab. 18; K a m i ń s k i 1983, pp. 35f.). Thus in this case we are dealing not only with the retention of a coin design, but also with its certain modification (Fig. 3).

Freezing of the date, for as long as 25 years, took place in the Warsaw mint under Russian rule, beginning in 1840 with the billon five- and ten groszy coins. Until 1865, when the mint was closed, 67 million coins were struck, all with the same date (Fig. 4). Such an untypical procedure was applied after the issuing of



Fig. 1. Poland, Russian protectorate, 20 groszy 1949 [1950–1956].

Fig. 2. Poland, German occupation, 20 groszy 1923 [1941–1944], zinc.

Fig. 3. Poland, German occupation, 5 groszy 1939 [1943–1944], zinc.

Fig. 4. Poland, Russian annexation, 10 groszy, allegedly from 1840 [1842–65], the Warsaw mint.

the Russian Emperor's ukase of 21 January 1841, in which emissions of billon coins of the former system with Polish inscriptions were banned. However, due to the lower content of pure silver in the Polish coins than in Russian kopecks, minting them was far more profitable for the authorities of the so-called Kingdom of Poland (that is the part of Poland incorporated into Russia). For this reason they decided to evade the ban with the tacit approval of St. Petersburg (Terlecki 1970, pp. 148–150 and Tabs 12 and 14; Paszkiewicz 1989, pp. 362–364). The last author aptly points out that in 1840 coins with a denomination of 10 groszy were not struck at all; and placing this date on them after the resumption of production in 1842 actually implied that they belonged to the old system).

During the November Uprising in 1831 the Polish government decided to mint their ducats strictly according to the pattern of Dutch ducats for completely different reasons. Not only the types, but also the MO. AUR./REG. BELGII/AD LEGEM/IMPERII legends were retained. A small Polish eagle at the beginning of the inscription on the obverse was the only characteristic (Terlecki 1970, p. 120). The aim was to make Polish coinage similar to that internationally prestigious currency (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5. Poland, the November Uprising, a ducat, 1831.

After several examples regarding Poland, the most famous, international imitative coins of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries should be mentioned, namely thalers with the name and portrait of Maria Theresa. They were struck with the date 1780, *i.e.* the year of her death, in large numbers for North and East Africa and for Levantine trade until the second half of the last century (Fig. 6). Until recently, they still circulated in Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Oman. They were produced in numerous mints in Vienna, London, Paris, Brussels, Rome, and even in Bombay. It has been estimated that between 1741 and 1960 a total of 320 million thalers with the portrait of the Empress were struck, the vast majority after her death (Hlinka, Radoměrský 1975, pp. 241–243).



Fig. 6. Maria Theresa, a thaler allegedly from 1780 [1865–90]  
 (source: Allegro.pl).

What conclusion can be drawn from this regarding our subject? In the first place, one should bear in mind that in modern times, even today, not all data seen on the coins are veracious. Dates have been falsified most frequently, but issuers have been impersonated as well. The reasons for such actions were various — mostly economic, but also political, and probably also coincidental, resulting, for instance, from ignorance of the rules binding in coinage. Interestingly, this does not refer to some marginal issues, but on the contrary, to mass issues numbering many millions of coins. One might propose that a similar situation occurred in the Middle Ages. Since no written sources survive that could inform us about it the only thing we can do is to analyse and interpret the coins themselves. Let us take a look at another series of examples, concerning both oriental, and West-European and Polish numismatics.

In the early Middle Ages, several newly formed Germanic states issued their coins with the names and portraits of Roman or Byzantine Emperors, contemporary or earlier. Thus, for instance, Suevian coins in the Iberian Peninsula copied the designs of *solidi* and *tremissi* of Honorius and Valentinian III. Thus we are dealing here with the phenomenon of imitating foreign, well known patterns, which was already signaled above. In this case, however, one conjectures that

the situation is much more complicated. For it can be assumed that at least some of Suevian coins bearing the name of Honorius (393–423) were made later than the coins with the name of Valentinian III (425–455). The famous siliqua of King Rechiar (448–455), bearing a wreath and the IVSSV RICHARI REGES [‘on the orders of King Rechiar’] legend on one face, and the bust and name of the long-dead Honorius (Fig. 7) on the other, can provide the grounds for such a guess. It is unlikely that all Suevian coins with the name of Valentinian (Fig. 8) were made only in the reign of Rechiar’s successors. Their typology and metrology indicate that at least part of them were made already in the first half of the fifth century during the reign of this Emperor. It seems likely that Rechiar himself made the change, replacing the representation of Valentinian who was contemporary with him and against whom he was waging war, with the portrait of Honorius, dead for a quarter of a century, who had been well disposed towards the Suevi. We deal with an analogical situation in the state of the Ostrogoths established in Italy. Here, coin types of Anastasius (491–518), Justin I (518–527) (Fig. 9) and Justinian I (527–565) were first imitated. However, during a deadly war against Byzantium, King Baduila (541–552) restored on his coins the name and portrait of Emperor Anastasius, who had a friendly attitude to the Ostrogoths. This policy was continued by the last Ostrogothic king — Theia (552–553) (Suchodolski 1982, pp. 87–93, 69 f.; Suchodolski 1989a; Suchodolski 1989b, pp. 152–156) (Fig. 10).

And what was the situation in the East? On oriental coins, as everybody knows, are many more certificate elements than on Western coins — that is, information about the issuer and the place and time of issue. Nevertheless, all



Fig. 7. Suevi, king Rechiar (448–456), a siliqua with the name of emperor Honorius, the Braga mint (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale).

Fig. 8. Suevi, an anonymous tremissis with the name of Emperor Valentinian III (Madrid, Museo Arqueológico Nacional).

Fig. 9. Ostrogoths, Athalaric (526–534), a quarter-siliqua with the name of Emperor Justin (Berlin, Staatliche Museen).

Fig. 10. Ostrogoths, Theia (552–553), a half-siliqua with the name of Emperor Anastasius (Berlin, Staatliche Museen).

these elements do not always match. Thus, for instance, on some coins of the Samanids, the name of Caliph al-Mustakfi (333–334 AH = 944–946 AD) appears also after his abdication, and even after his death in 338 (949/50). The reason for this was the Samanids' refusal to recognise the new Caliph — al-Muti (334–363 AH = 946–974 AD), who was placed on the throne by the competing dynasty of Buwayhids. Interestingly enough, this restriction did not apply commonly, since Samanid dirhams of the same time with the name of the then Caliph are known as well (Kmieć, Kubiak 1969, pp. 287–289). Consequently, the name of the Samanid Emir Nuh b. Nasr (331–343 AH = 942–954 AD) coexists with the names of two different Caliphs at the same time.

Numerous dirhams from the tenth century bear legends that are typical of Samanid dirhams of that time, but contain literal errors and, more interestingly, factual errors, much more serious than those mentioned above. Names of people who are not one another's contemporaries occur on them; and they occur along with dates which were wrong for the issue of the coins. Even more confusion arises if one compares legends on dies linked together in the same chains, therefore used in the same mint and at approximately the same time (on examining die-links cf.: Suchodolski 1968). The names of Samarqand, al-Shash, Balkh, Nisabur, Bulghar, Madinat as-Salam and the names of Samanid emirs and Bulgarian kings appear side by side (Fig. 11). Undoubtedly, here we are dealing with the coinage of the Volga Bulgarians imitating Arabic patterns (Rispling 1990; Rispling 2007, pp. 56 f.). The reason was their desire to obtain a larger amount of silver money for running the lucrative trade with Europe. Arabic dirhams were also imitated by the Khazars and, presumably, by other middlemen in trade between the East and the West (Rispling 2005).



Fig. 11. The Volga Bulgarians, King Mikail b. Jafar, a dirham with the legend: 'Samarqand 306' [=918/9 AD], c. 930–953, the Bulghar mint (source: Rispling 2007).

The phenomenon of imitation of Arabic money can be found also in Western Europe. For the most part, this refers to golden dinars which, besides Byzantine solidi, compensated for the lack of native gold coinage. Anonymous coins of the Abbasids, mostly bearing the Hegira date of 157 (773/4 AD), provided the pattern. On these grounds Lutz Ilisch claims that the imitations were made

in the last quarter of the eighth century. They are supposed to be minted by Charlemagne in the eastern part of his state and the gold is supposed to come from the spoils captured from the Avars (L. Hirsch 2004). More likely, however, the imitation lasted longer and the old pattern was imitated without using current Arabic coins.

Dirhams were copied as well, though very occasionally; this time, however, they originated from the Western Caliphate. Several silver coins are known bearing the name of Umayyad Caliph Hisham II with the name of the al-Andalus mint (Cordoba) and date 391 AH (= 1000/1 AD). The dies with which they were minted are linked with others imitating solidi of the Byzantine Emperor Theophilus (829–842) in silver, and also with the dies of pennies of Emperor Henry II (1014–1024). Unfortunately, these last do not bear the name of the mint, but on the basis of style they are attributed to a workshop active in the Rhineland (Fig. 12). It was there — and at the same time — that those exotic imitations must have been made which, to believe the inscriptions written on them, should be dated earlier and localized in Cordoba and in Constantinople.

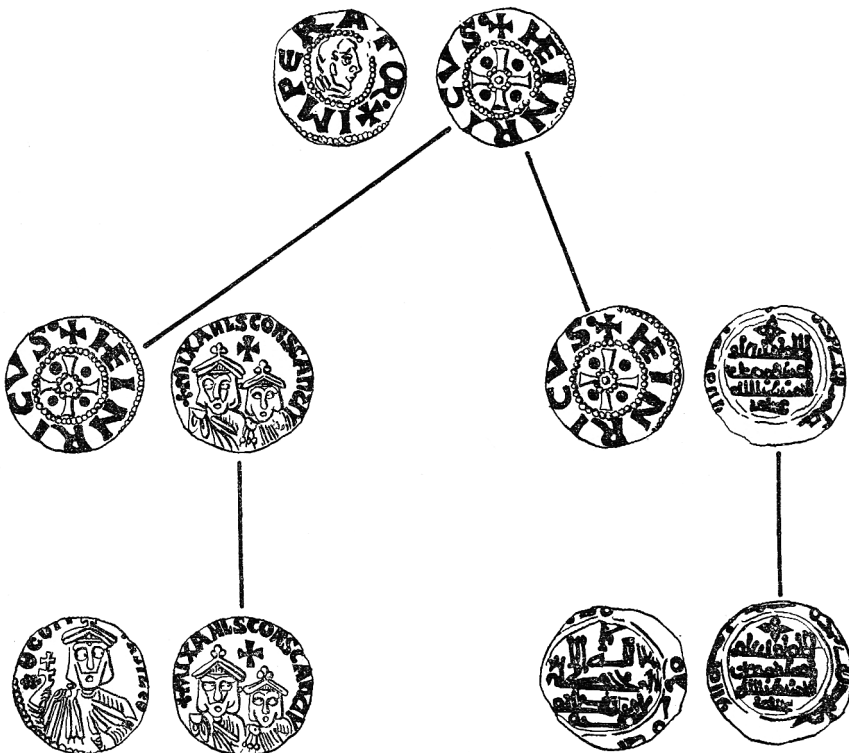


Fig. 12. Germany, Emperor Henry II (1014–1024), imitations of Byzantine and Arabian coins (Rhineland) (source: Hatz, Linder Welin 1968).

We do not know the reason for issuing these peculiar coins. Attempts to explain this by political (receiving envoys) or economic (slave trade) reasons are equally unconvincing (V. Hatz, U.S. Linder Welin 1968).

Anglo-Saxon coins, especially those of King Æthelred II (978–1016), had far more influence on the iconography of European coins (Fig. 13). This is most clearly visible in Scandinavian countries which were eager to pattern themselves after them, when organizing their own coinage. However both coins of Anglo-Saxon type, bearing names of the kings of Denmark, Sweden and Norway, and coins imitating Anglo-Saxon pennies on both faces were struck in these countries at the same time (cf.: Suchodolski 1971, pp. 157–182). The issues which hold our interest were far more common in Scandinavia than the official issues of the rulers. From chains of die-links we find that the former and the latter were produced simultaneously in the same mints — for Sweden, mostly in Sigtuna, while for Denmark, mainly in Lund. Thus it appears that coins bearing the representation of Æthelred II, the names of his mints, and names of moneyers working there might have been struck in one of those centres (Malmer 1989, pp. 47 f. and *passim*; Malmer 1997). However, it is not always possible to settle precisely, which are the mints in question, since they used to lend their dies to one another (Malmer 2007, pp. 38–41) (Fig. 14). Such a phenomenon was also found in England and Bavaria, and it was already known at the times of the Merovingians and Carolingians (cf.: Dolley 1961; Lafaurie 1969; Suchodolski 1982, pp. 131, 185–187). In all the cases the mints maintaining contact were either neighbouring or at least situated not very far from each



Fig. 13. England. Æthelred II, penny, York mint (997–1003), moneyer Oban (source: T. Talvio 1985).

Fig. 14. Sweden, Swedish-Danish imitations of Anglo-Saxon pennies of Æthelred II (before 1025), and the lead impression of the imitative obverse die, found in Sigtuna (source: B. Malmer 2007).

other. Again, thanks to die-links we learn that die transfers might have been made at longer distances. For it appeared that not only were the coin designs of Æthelred's pennies imitated — for better or for worse — in Sigtuna, but original Anglo-Saxon dies were also used. They were brought by Anglo-Saxon moneyers who came to Sweden in search of work, sometimes bringing their tools with them (Blackburn 1985; Malmer 1989, p. 17; Malmer 1997, p. 15) (Figs. 15 and 16). For this reason, distinguishing Scandinavian imitations from the Anglo-Saxon originals is no easy task. And one should also bear in mind that those Anglo-Saxon craftsmen also might have made dies after their arrival in the new country. Thus for the correct recognition of the origin of a coin, it is not enough to read its certificate correctly or even to analyse the so called fabric of a die, *i.e.* the style and technique of its making. It is also necessary to examine what place the dies serving to struck this coin take in a longer chain of die-links.



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Fig. 15. Sweden, Olof Skotkonung. A die of Æthelred II from York (in the middle, 21 mm in diam.) and Swedish imitations, the Sigtuna mint (c. 995–1005) — obverses (source: B. Malmer 1989).

Fig. 16. Sweden, Olof Skotkonung. A die of Æthelred II from Ipswich (on the left, 20 mm in diam.) and Swedish imitations, the Sigtuna mint (c. 995–1005) — reverses (source: B. Malmer 1989).

Coins with the name of Cnut the Great, the king of England and Denmark (1016–1035), bearing the title of the king of the Suevi, *i.e.* the Swedes, and minted in Sigtuna by the moneyer called Thormoth: CNVT REX SP — ÐORMOÐ ON SIHT (Fig. 17), pose a particular problem. The rule of Cnut in Sweden is not known from any written source. Nevertheless, most researchers, trusting the integrity of coin designs, have accepted this as a historical fact. Actually, such a conclusion is hasty. As a chain of die-links indicates again, the coin was struck by Anund Jakob, the king of Sweden. How to explain, however, this unusual title?



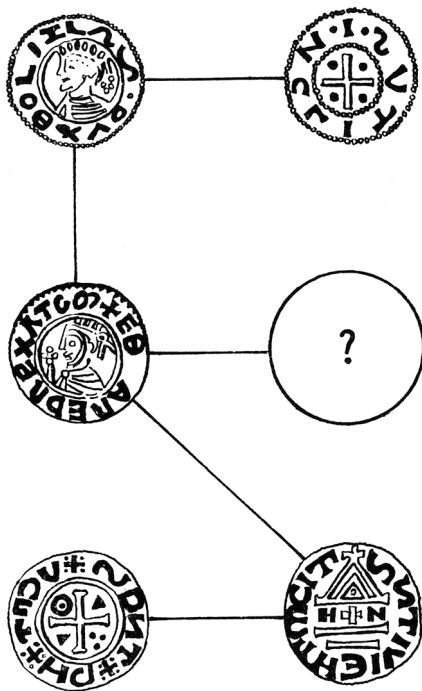


Fig. 17. Sweden, Anund Jakob (1022–1050), penny with the name of Cnut as the king of the Swedes, Sigtuna mint, moneyer Thormoth.

For the mere fact of imitating Cnut's coins in Sweden comes as no surprise — we do know more such imitations. They simply continue former issues with the name of Æthelred (Malmer 1997, pp. 17, 32, 140–143, 241–250, 261–272, 384–386, 436, 444–454 and *passim*). Changing English or Danish titles into Swedish ones might have occurred by mistake. This was made by a die sinker, influenced by the legend of others of Anund's coins, bearing his name and the title of the King of Suevi. They too were struck by the moneyer Thormoth — the one who issued those allegedly Swedish coins of Cnut. Thus either this very moneyer, or some of his workers might be to blame for the whole confusion (Suchodolski 1971, p. 167; also recently: Jonsson 2007).

The name of King Æthelred also appears on coins found on the south coast of the Baltic sea, and even farther south, in Bohemia. In the case of the former it is sometimes difficult to decide whether we are dealing with local imitations, or with imports from Scandinavia. One may conclude that their origin was Polish on the grounds of Æthelred die-links with the dies of Boleslav the Brave (Figs. 18–21). This is, as a matter of fact, the best way to attribute yet other coins bearing names of foreign rulers such as Otto III, Empress Adelheid, the Bavarian duke Henry IV, Bohemian dukes Boleslav III and Vladivoi, to the same ruler and the same mint (Suchodolski 1967, pp. 95–108). Formerly, dies serving to strike these coins were considered as authentic German or Czech ones and far fetched conclusions of an historical nature were drawn on these grounds. Thus, for example, Marian Gumowski came to the completely fantastic conclusion that Boleslav the Brave was a co-ruler of the Empire and was designated as the successor of Otto III (Gumowski 1925). Zygmunt Zakrzewski, in turn, thought that the Polish ruler, supporting Vladivoi, brought him his own die to Prague. This scholar also admitted the possibility that Boleslav took a die with the name of Vladivoi from the Prague mint during his retreat from Bohemia (Zakrzewski 1939). Even the boldest of researchers have not claimed a joint reign of the Polish ruler with King Æthelred. Yet instead of explaining the presence of foreign rulers' names on Polish coins by political considerations, it is better to justify it with economic reasons — namely, with the rulers' craving for producing their own coinage, and part of it similar to a well known and more prestigious foreign currency.

These reasons, however, cannot account for the presence of Æthelred's name, the names of Anglo-Saxon mints and names of moneyers working in them



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Fig. 18. Poland, Boleslav the Brave (992–1025), an imitation of the Anglo-Bavarian type (Berlin, Staatliche Museen).

Fig. 19. Poland, Boleslav the Brave, the INCLITVS type (Cracow, National Museum).

Fig. 20. Poland, a mule with the names of Æthelred and Boleslav the Brave (Prague, Národní muzeum).

Fig. 21. Poland, die-links of coins of Boleslav the Brave.



Fig. 22. Bohemia, Boleslaus II (972–999). An imitation of the pennies of Æthelred II from Derby (source: Hlinka, Radoměský 1975).

Fig. 23. Bohemia. Jaromir (1003–1012), a penny with the name of Æthelred II, the Prague mint (source: J. Smolík).

Fig. 24. Bohemia, Jaromir, a penny with the name of the moneyer Aelfsige of Winchester (source: J. Smolík).

on Bohemian coins. For Anglo-Saxon coins did not reach Bohemia at all; at least they are missing from the local finds. Thus what was the reason for placing — beside the name of Æthelred — the name of a moneyer from Derby on the pennies of Boleslav II (Fig. 22) and the name of a moneyer from Winchester on the pennies of Jaromír (Figs. 23 and 24)? The former case was earlier explained by the marriage of the Bohemian duke Boleslav II with the Anglo-Saxon princess Ælfgifu-Adiva-Emma and with an inflow of Anglo-Saxon moneyers to Bohemia on that occasion. However, since the historians have indicated the groundlessness of this concept, another solution must be looked for. I suppose that designs of Anglo-Saxon coins were brought by Iro-Scottish monks, who might have had a share in the work of the Prague mint (Suchodolski 1985). One might speculate that for these people — and all the more for those who used the coins — the contents of inscriptions and types placed on coins did not always have a rational meaning. This also seems to result from a review of other Bohemian, Polish, Scandinavian or even German coin designs. It is enough to mention the pennies of Boleslav the Brave with legends written in Cyrillic or bracteates of Mieszko III bearing Hebrew inscriptions. However, we also know imperial coins, for instance those from Mainz or Konstanz, with barbarized inscriptions, with little weight attached to their correctness. It appears that the main objective was simply to place a legend in a coin design. Its comprehensibility, sense or correctness were of lesser importance. As regards Anglo-Saxon legends placed on the Bohemian coins in question, they presumably were supposed to testify to the coins' good quality. The fact that only persons who had come from the British

Isles, and not the coin users, were convinced of the reputation of Anglo-Saxon designs, was of no importance in that case.

So far, we have been discussing the imitation, occasionally accompanied by modification, of some coin designs or their elements by other issuers. This involved the outdated of certificate data contained there. A similar process, as we already know on the basis of a review of modern or even the most recent coins, could take place as a result of the immobilisation of coin designs. This phenomenon has been commonly known since ancient times. We can also find it in Carolingian times. Designs introduced as early as by Charlemagne and Louis the Pious were continued with certain changes by their sons and then also their heirs. Two types had the greatest success. The former bore the bust of Louis and a temple with the *XPISTIANA RELIGIO* legend. Its minting was continued in Swabia even into the twelfth century (Martin 1985). The latter, with a Carolingian monogram and the *GRATIA D-I REX* legend, was put into circulation by Charles the Bald (840–877) by the edict of Pîtres in 864. This type remained almost unchanged till the second half of the tenth century. This is confirmed by a large number of coins in his name in the hoard of Fécamp in Normandy, perfectly published, which was hidden about 980–985 (Dumas 1971, p. 21 and *passim*). These and similar imitations were exported to the Baltic region, where they found their way into a relatively large number of finds. It has been assumed in the literature that these are original Carolingian coins from the ninth century. And despite the fact that the majority of them were to come relatively late, that is, only in the tenth and eleventh centuries, some of them were taken to be the earliest Western coins discovered on Slavic lands (Kiersnowska 1961). Later studies — unfortunately conducted only on the basis of the literature, since the originals had not been preserved — did not support the presence of any original Carolingian coins from the ninth century on Poland's territory (Suchodolski 1990, pp. 317 f.; Horoszkó 1998; cf. however the new finds of western coins of the eighth and ninth centuries from Prussian territory: Bogucki 2006).

A slightly later example of classic immobilized issues are the so-called Otto-Adelheid pfennigs. They bear the names of King Otto III (983–1002) and his grandmother, Empress Adelheid (†999) (Fig. 25). They were struck in quantity in a number of mints located at the edge of the Harz Mountains in Saxony from 983. The manufacture of these coins lasted for more than half a century, until approximately the middle of the eleventh century, still a long time after the death of both persons whose names appear on them (recently: P. Ilisch 2005). The great popularity of these coins and their spread justified the adoption of their designs on Polish coinage, as was mentioned above.

Another example of coins which were highly reputable at the time, and which were subject to both imitation and immobilization, are coins struck in Cologne. According to Peter Ilisch, they were imitated mostly within the Empire's borders, mainly in Westphalia (Soest, Dortmund), but also in Lower Lotharingia



Fig. 25. Saxony, pennies of Otto III (†1002) and Adelheid (†999) (983–c.1050),  
 (source: K. Jonsson 2007).

(Lorraine) and Frisia. Later imitations, more primitive and remote from originals, are attributed to Lower Saxony, Polabia and Scandinavia. Interestingly, the oldest imitations, originating as early as the tenth century, were struck at the same time as the originals in Cologne (P. Ilisch 1983–84, pp. 123–144; P. Ilisch 1989; P. Ilisch 1997/8, pp. 87–99, 105–120, 124–127; P. Ilisch 2007). Unsurprisingly, they are hardly distinguishable from one another and in many publications of finds they all have been referred to as Cologne coins.

Both imitation and immobilization are — so to say — passive means of depriving coin designs of their update, and in consequence, also their reliability. However, active means also existed, *i.e.* the creation of new data in coin designs, not adopted either from the outside or from the past, and at the same time being at variance with the truth. Polish coins from the close of the twelfth century and the beginning of the thirteenth when the regional coinage began to arise, can serve as a good example. More and more juniors, beginning their rule in the increasing number of duchies, initially did not possess the right of minting. However, as it yielded a profit, they attempted to usurp it. Thus they used to start striking their own coins, not in their own names, but under the names of their already deceased fathers who had earlier possessed this right. Interestingly enough, the old types were not imitated faithfully, but only some of their elements were adopted, completed with entirely new motifs, which were adapted for the new circumstances. This process was earliest observed in Silesia, where

the sons of the long dead Ladislav II (†1159) — Boleslav the Tall (1163–1201) and Mieszko the Tanglelegs (1163–1211) — began to issue their own pennies on regaining their patrimony. The coins bear a scene of a fight against a lion adopted from their father's coins on one face, and his figure on horseback, surrounded by the legend VLADIZLAVS DVX, on the other. On one of the later types appears a symbolic scene of handing over a spear — and thus, the power in the duchy — by one figure to the other, most likely by father to one of sons. The name LODIZLAVS on the reverse identifies the person of the dead senior, not the actual issuer. Previous conjectures that this legend refers to later Ladislaves — Spindleshanks (1202–1229) or the son of Odo (1207–1238) — have turned out to be groundless (Suchodolski 1992; Suchodolski 1993) (Fig. 26).

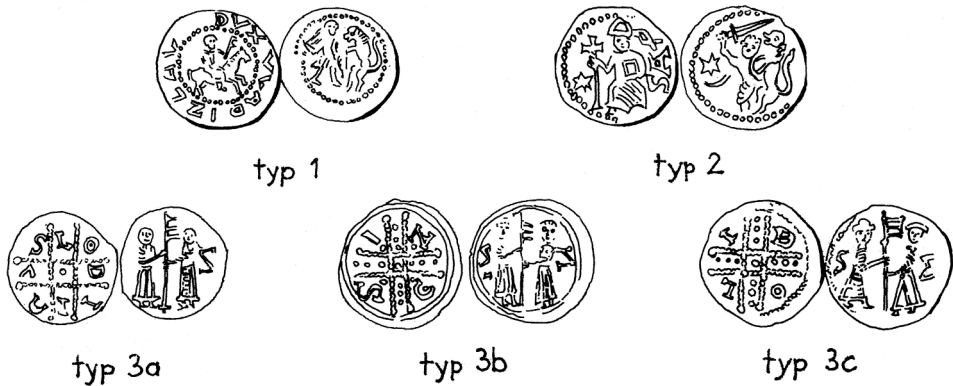


Fig. 26. Silesia, pennies of Boleslav the Tall and Mieszko the Tanglelegs (4. quarter of the twelfth century).

Recognition of these facts has broken a certain psychological barrier. It appeared that names and figures placed on other coins as well do not have to mean issuers, but their fathers, and even distant ancestors, or other already deceased personages. Thanks to Borys Paszkiewicz we have come to understand the earliest regional coins in Mazovia. Although they bear the representations and names of Boleslav the Curly (1146–1173) and his wife Anastasia-Wierzchosława, they were struck by their son Leszek (†1185) (Fig. 27). On another type of the duke's bracteates, the representation of the father is accompanied by the figure of the late venerable Bishop Werner (Paszkiewicz 2001; Paszkiewicz 2004) (Fig. 28). To sons of Casimir the Just (†1194) are attributed coins with the name of Casimir (Suchodolski 2000); and to the sons of Ladislav the son of Odo coins with the name of Ladislav (Paszkiewicz 2005, p. 298). Other bracteates bearing the name of Boleslav, despite some suggested hypotheses, still cannot be certainly attributed, and therefore, following Kazimierz Stronczyński, they are numbered among the group of so called uncertain Boleslavs (Stronczyński 1884, pp. 120–133, types 60–81) (Figs. 29 and 30).



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Fig. 27. Mazovia, Boleslav the Curly (†1173) and Anastasia on a bracteate of their son Leszek (1173–1185) (Cracow, National Museum).

Fig. 28. Mazovia, Boleslav the Curly and Bishop Werner on the coin of Leszek (†1185) (Cracow, National Museum).

Fig. 29. Poland, a bracteate with the name of Boleslav (4. quarter of the twelfth century) (Cracow, National Museum).

Fig. 30. Poland, a bracteate with the name of Boleslav (4. quarter of the twelfth century) (Cracow, National Museum).

So-called posthumous coins, that is, coins in the names of rulers already deceased, minted by their successors in commemoration of them, constitute a special type of the coins discussed above. They are well known from the coinage of the Roman Empire. In the opinion of Hans-Dieter Dannenberg, they were produced also in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in Brandenburg. The grounds for this hypothesis were the belief that pennies with the names of some margraves appear in hoards hidden only after their death (D a n n e n b e r g 1997, pp. 58–61; D a n n e n b e r g 2006, pp. 40 f.). This belief, however, seems to have arisen from a misunderstanding. It resulted both from the wrong identification of names included in coin designs, and from a mistakenly late dating of the hoards and the long circulation of the coins (S z c z u r e k 2007, pp. 62 f., 181–183). Also, H.-D. Dannenberg's modified view regarding Brandenburg pennies with the legend WOLDEMAR has little chance of approval. The author still thinks that they were struck after the reign of Margrave Woldemar (1308–1319), not in order to commemorate him, but on the orders of a pretender impersonating him nearly 30 years later (D a n n e n b e r g 2006, pp. 41 f.). A compromise solution is likely to be closest to the truth — the majority of the coins were made in the years 1308–1319, but their issue was continued after Woldemar's death in the interregnum period (1319–1323).<sup>1</sup> Thus the latter could illustrate a classic example of coins struck with an immobilized design, while posthumous coins from the Middle Ages are still unknown.

Finally, a few more words about another danger awaiting scholars studying medieval coins. This time, however, it is not about the traps which the authors of coin designs set for us, but about the results of our inability to read these designs. It is commonly assumed that types and legends which surround them make a whole; in other words, that the inscriptions explains the contents

<sup>1</sup> Dannenberg himself also previously admitted a possibility of minting during interregnum (D a n n e n b e r g 1999), but this was to apply to all the coins with this inscription.

included in the field. A closer analysis shows that such a rule was binding only in the Roman Empire. During the Middle Ages it was obviously also known, but by no means common. The image and the word were treated as two autonomic elements, which could, but did not have to match (Suchodolski 2007). This can be seen perfectly well on the example of coins of the Queen of Mercia, Cynethryth, the wife of King Offa (†796). Her name, along with the royal title: +CYNEDRYÐ REGINA M[erciorum] is written on one face of the coin. On the other, her portrait is represented, accompanied by the name of the moneyer: EOBA (Fig. 31).



Fig. 31. Mercia, Cynethryth, Queen of Offa (†796) (source: C.E. Blunt 1961).

Bearing this in mind, one can correctly interpret the long discussed coin designs of Soběslav, son of Slavnik (981–995), a regional ruler in East Bohemia. The facing crowned head shown on them does not represent Soběslav, as was believed formerly on the grounds of his name inscribed below, but King Otto III (983–996) or rather St. Wenceslas in a martyr's crown (Fig. 32). Thus all sorts of speculation over the ostentation of the symbol of power, or even Slavnikid's provocation towards the Premislids, which was to justify the massacre in Libice in 995 committed by them and the elimination of the state of the Slavnikids, are out of the question (Suchodolski 2006). The new interpretation of Soběslav's coin is fully supported by the analysis of the contemporary pennies of Boleslav II (972–999). His name is accompanied by the representation of Christ's head (Fig. 33) or the Right Hand of God (Fig. 34). Moreover, in the latter case, the



Fig. 32. Bohemia, Soběslav Slavnikid, Libice (c. 985–995)  
(source: E. Nohejlová-Prátová 1955).

Fig. 33. Bohemia, Boleslav II (972–999), a penny with Christ's head, Prague mint  
(source: J. Hásková 1975).

Fig. 34. Bohemia, Boleslav II (†999), the Æthelred type, Prague mint  
(Cach 1970, no. 123).



representation of the duke was placed on the reverse, and it is surrounded by the moneyer's name and the name of Prague. Thus it can be most clearly that types and inscriptions were not correlated with each other.

The realization of this truth is essential for the interpretation of earlier Polish coins as well. On the famous coin of Boleslav the Brave (992–1025), the *PRINCES POLONIE* legend surrounds the representation of a bird (Fig. 35). For this reason this bird is considered by some authors as the earliest emblem of the state of Poland, namely as the White Eagle (furthermore it is allegedly crowned). However, it seems likely that also in this case, the duke's title was placed in the margin and a sacred motif in the field. The bird represented a peacock and symbolized eternal life. This might have been an allusion to the Saint Martyr Adalbert-Vojtěch, who was deprived of his earthly life not much earlier (in 997) (Suchodolski 2005).



Fig. 35. Poland, Boleslav the Brave, *PRINCES POLONIE* penny (c. 1005–1010) (Cracow, National Museum).

Let us return again to the question of the interpretation of legends. The examples given above concerned the names given on coins which — for different reasons — were not the names of the actual issuers. There are also cases, however, when in spite of the appearance of names of current rulers, the interpretation of coin legends can be open to doubts. This applies to titles that accompany these names. The matter is of vital importance, as it is the rulers' titles that serve to specify the chronology on West-European coins of the time which were not provided with years of minting. The commonly known pennies of Boleslav the Brave (992–1025) with the slightly deformed *BOLIZLAVVS REX* legend can serve as a good example here. They were formerly related to the coronation of this ruler in 1024 or 1025 and confidently dated to the last months of his life. Ryszard Kiersnowski indicated, however, that coins with such a legend are earlier, since they appeared in finds which were already hidden about 1020. However, this is not a question of usurpation, but of the terminology of titles, which is not fully determined yet. Also, the examples of slightly later coins of the Duke Mieszko III (1173–1202) and Boguslaus I, Duke of Pomerania (1156–1187) argue for this. They also bear the royal title, although these rulers did not display royal aspirations (Kiersnowski 1960, pp. 281–283; Suchodolski 2002, pp. 285–295).

However, just the opposite phenomenon can also be observed on coins — sometimes rulers bear titles which are not higher, but lower than expected.

And so, for example, on Bavarian and Swabian pennies, Henry II (1002–1024) still used the king's title, also after he was crowned emperor in 1014 (Hahn 1976, pp. 83 f., 93 f., 102 f.).

To summarize, the definite answer to the question asked in the title of this article is that the information contained in coin designs is in the vast majority of cases true and reliable. However, this does not apply to all coins. There are also those which have more or less falsified certificates. This phenomenon is more common than is usually thought and is mostly related to large issues. It is not limited in respect either of time or of territory. The reasons which were the driving force of action were, as in modern times, mostly economic and, less frequently, political. Chance played a certain role as well (as it probably was with the Vladivoi type in Poland and Anglo-Saxon types in Bohemia).

It may be concluded, that setting about the interpretation of a coin as a historical source should be preceded by its thorough critical analysis. Thus we should state whether the object of our studies does not belong to the very group of coins, relatively narrow, but still existing, with falsified or not very reliable certificates of coin designs. As we could see, the examination of die-links is of great importance in these actions. This enables the studied specimen to be located in the chain of links, and thus, in the broader context of other coins. This, in turn, makes it possible to verify both the time and place of minting. Finally, we must not forget that sometimes errors are not the fault of the die authors, but they result from our inability to guess their intention and the rules they followed.

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## CZY INFORMACJE ZAWARTE W STEMLACH MONET SĄ W PEŁNI WIAROGODNE?

(Streszczenie)

Panuje powszechne przekonanie, że dane zawarte w stemplach monet są w pełni wiarogodne. W rzeczywistości jednak dane metrykalne, czyli informacje dotyczące emitenta, miejsca i czasu emisji, nie zawsze są zgodne z prawdą. Widać to już na monetach nowożytnych i nam niemal współczesnych. W czasach PRL, okupacji niemieckiej i zaboru rosyjskiego daty czasem nie były uaktualniane (ryc. 1–4). Swoisty rekord stanowią talary z wyobrażeniem i imieniem cesarzowej Marii Teresy (zm. 1780) bite w wielkich ilościach w różnych krajach przez dwieście lat nie zmienianymi stemplami (ryc. 6).

Podobna sytuacja mogła panować we wczesnym średniowieczu, brak jednak źródeł pisanych dla jej zbadania. Jedynym źródłem są same monety. Do zafalszowania metryki monety dochodziło najczęściej z dwóch powodów — kiedy naśladowano stemple monet obcych i kiedy nie zmieniano stempla własnego, przez co ulegał on utrwaleniu, czyli immobilizacji. W pierwszym przypadku za wzór przyjmowano monety o najlepszej reputacji — rzymskie (ryc. 7–8), bizantyjskie (ryc. 9–10, 12), potem anglosaskie (ryc. 13–24) i kolońskie, ale również złote dinary arabskie. Spośród monet zimmobilizowanych najbardziej znane są denary karolińskie oraz saskie denary z imionami cesarza Ottona III i cesarzowej Adelajdy (ryc. 25). Te ostatnie były bite w dużych ilościach przez pół wieku. Z tego też powodu naśladowano je zarówno w Saksonii, jak i w Polsce. Tu kopowano również inne wzory: anglosaskie, bawarskie i czeskie (ryc. 18–21). Najlepszym sposobem rozpoznania prawdziwego emitenta, miejsca i czasu emisji różnych naśladownictw jest badanie powiązań ich stempli ze stemplami monet o pewnej metryce (ryc. 21).

Istnieją jednak również monety o fałszywej metryce, które zawierają w stemplach informacje nowe, a więc nie przejęte ani z zewnątrz, ani z przeszłości, a jednocześnie niezgodne z prawdą. Dobrym przykładem służą emisje z XII/XIII w. licznych książąt dzielnicowych w Polsce, którzy nie dysponowali prawem menniczym. Bili więc monety z imionami i wyobrażeniami swoich, dawno już zmarłych ojców, a może nawet i starszych przodków (ryc. 26–30).

Błędy przy rozpoznawaniu monet mogą jednak powstawać nie tylko na skutek zawierzenia fałszywym metrykom, ale też na skutek nieumiejętnego odczytywania stempli. Zakłada się na przykład, że legendy objaśniają wyobrażenia umieszczone w polu. W rzeczywistości słowo i obraz stanowiły osobne elementy, które mogły, ale wcale nie musiały być związane ze sobą (ryc. 31–35).

Falszowanie legend nie było, co prawda, praktyką powszechną, ale występowało częściej niż można się było spodziewać. Zjawisko to nie jest ograniczone ani pod względem czasu, ani terytorium. Motorem działania były przede wszystkim względy gospodarcze, a rzadziej również

polityczne. Pewną rolę odgrywał też przypadek. Wynika z tego, że przed interpretacją monety jako źródła historycznego trzeba ją wpierw poddać wnikliwym badaniom.

Nieco rozszerzony tekst polski ukaże się w materiałach konferencji *Pieniądz i banki w Wielkopolsce*, która odbyła się w Poznaniu w dniach 20–21 listopada 2008.

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