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NOT ONLY OVERSTRIKES. RECYCLING OF THE OLDEST POLISH BRACTEATE DIES

ABSTRACT: This article concerns the discovery of traces on coins that demonstrate the recycling of dies used to strike Bolesław III Wrymouth's bracteates. They are the oldest Polish coins made using this technique. These allow us to establish the relative chronology of coins of both types and to provide evidence of a common mint origin, contributing to the wider discussion over the nature of the issue of bracteates. Thanks to this, it can be shown that as long as a coin with traces of an older design remains unique, it is equally possible to interpret it as either an overstrike or a secondary use of a die with newly engraved content.

ABSTRAKT: Tekst dotyczy odkrycia na monetach śladów dowodzących recyklingu stempli do wybijania brakteatów Bolesława Krzywoustego. Są one najstarszym polskim pieniądzem jednostronnym. Pozwoliło ono na ustalenie chronologii względnej monet obu typów oraz dostarczyło argumentów za ich powstaniem w tej samej mennicy. W konsekwencji wniosło wkład do dyskusji nad charakterem emisji brakteatów. Dzięki niemu wykazano również, że dopóki moneta ze śladami starszych przedstawień znana jest w jednym egzemplarzu, dopóty równie prawdopodobne jest uznanie jej za przebicie, jak i wtórne wykorzystanie stempla, ale z nowo wrytą treścią.

KEYWORDS: Poland, 12th century, Bolesław III Wrymouth, coin dies, secondary use, overstrikes, bracteates, oldest Polish bracteates

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Polska, XII w., Bolesław Krzywousty, stemple mennicze, recykling, przebicie, brakteaty, najstarsze polskie brakteaty

Some of the most easily recognizable coins of Bolesław III Wrymouth (1102–1138) are bracteates, which are the oldest Polish coins produced in this technique. Current understanding, in terms of the content of dies, divides these coins into two types (Fig. 1), examples of which were published for the first time in the 1840s.¹

¹ They were first mentioned in the lists of Tadeusz Wolański's collections (Wolański 1847, pp. 6–7) and Jakob Reichel (Reichel 1842, p. 100, nos 49–50).

These bracteates depict an image of two figures: a kneeling man on the left, and a clergyman standing before him on the right, the latter's right hand raised over the supplicant's head (Fig. 1:b). Both persons are identified in the inscriptions as St. Adalbert of Prague² (S ADALBERTVS) and Bolesław (BOLEZLAV). Another type related to this series was first described in the literature in an anonymous note from 1934 (Fig. 1:a).³ This type depicts a full-figure, frontal image of St. Adalbert of Prague in a liturgical robe, with the Gospel book in his left hand and the crosier in his right, all surrounded by the inscription SCS ADALBERTVS EPS & MA, i.e. *Sanctus Adalbertus episcopus et martyr*. This type is much rarer than the first one.⁴



Fig. 1. Bracteates of Bolesław III Wrymouth: a – type I; b – type II. Typology according to Kiersnowski 1959.

Source: a – National Museum in Warsaw (cyfrowe.mnw.art.pl, photo by Piotr Ligier), inv. no. 115856; b – aukcje.gndm.pl/pl/monety-boleslaw-iii-krzywousty-brakteat-protেকcyjny-ze-sloneczkiem/337574, access 21.03.2022; compiled by G. Śnieżko

The problems of the circumstances of emission, dating and iconography of bracteates have been discussed many times in the scholarly literature. Questions concerning the issuers and circumstances of emission were scarcely discussed in the 19th and early 20th centuries, when most scholars accepted Kaźmirz Stronczyński's theory linking the bracteates with Bolesław III Wrymouth's 1113 penance after blinding his older stepbrother Zbigniew during a struggle for power in Poland. The duke's atonement ended in Gniezno at the tomb of St. Adalbert of Prague.

² *Święty Wojciech Sławnikowic* in Polish and *svatý Vojtěch Slavnikovec* in Czech.

³ Nieznany brakteat 1934.

⁴ I noted 17 with one figure and 224 bracteates with duke and martyr (Śnieżko 2021a, p. 27). At the antiquarian auctions in recent years, there have been numerous additional pieces with St. Adalbert and the duke, and only one bracteate with the image of St. Adalbert of Prague alone (sold twice: on Antykwariat Numizmatyczny Michał Niemczyk's auction no. 30, item 37 and later on the Gabinet Numizmatyczny Damian Marciniak's auction no. 16). This even more clearly increases the disproportion between both types.

For this reason, K. Stronczyński called these coins *penitential* bracteates, a term that was adopted by subsequent generations of the researchers.⁵ During this period, discussion focused instead on the character of bracteates. Initially bracteates were not considered to be coins in the sense of a means of payment, but rather as non-monetary amulets, devotional objects, dress ornaments⁶ or *commemorative metal plates*.⁷ Only from the end of the 19th century were they regarded as coins: initially commemorative,⁸ and later currency⁹ issued for non-economic reasons.¹⁰

The years after World War II saw a renewed focus on the bracteate question. In his article on the bracteate with the image of St. Adalbert *en face*, Zbigniew Wdowiszewski expressed the opinion that the coins were struck after finding the martyr's head in Gniezno in 1127.¹¹ This article generated a response from Ryszard Kiersnowski, who proposed a completely new interpretation of the chronology and issuing circumstances of bracteates. Believing that the German bracteates must be older, Kiersnowski concluded that Polish bracteates must have been minted after them, in the 1130s. In his view, the earliest issues were of the type depicting St. Adalbert of Prague alone (type I), while the later issues were of the type with the duke and the martyr (type II). He sought the circumstances of their issue in political events around the activity of archbishop of Magdeburg, Norbert of Xanten, following the 1133 subordination of the Polish ecclesiastical province by a bull of Pope Innocent II. Bracteates were supposed to be a Polish propaganda response, depicting St. Adalbert of Prague as a patron of the Polish state and church. The bracteates with duke and martyr expressed particular affinities for this saint, a concept that earned them the name of *protectives*.¹²

⁵ Wolański 1847, p. 7, footnote 1 with K. Stronczyński's comment on the bracteates' description by Tadeusz Wolański; see also Stronczyński 1884, pp. 69–70. And after him: Lelewel 1851, pp. 340–341; Hutten-Czapski 1871, p. 1, no. 4; Dannenberg 1898, p. 111; Zakrzewski 1905; Gumowski 1914, p. 25; Gumowski 1924, p. 62; Gumowski 1956, pp. 17–19, 22–23; Wdowiszewski 1959. M. Gumowski was even convinced that the bracteates were thrown around in Gniezno during the duke's public penance.

⁶ Wolański 1847, p. 7, footnote 1 with K. Stronczyński's remarks; Lelewel 1851, pp. 340–341.

⁷ Stronczyński 1884, pp. 69–70.

⁸ Dannenberg 1898, p. 111; Gumowski 1914.

⁹ Piwocka 1933a, p. V; Piwocka 1933b, p. 60, no. 14; Wdowiszewski 1959, p. 52; Rozenkranz 1975, p. 586; Garbaczewski 2018.

¹⁰ Kiersnowski 1959; Suchodolski 1973, pp. 109–110, 122, 135; Suchodolski 1976 and supplement to the reprint of this article – Suchodolski 2017a; Nakielski 2015a, pp. 51–52.

¹¹ Wdowiszewski 1959.

¹² Kiersnowski 1959.

While R. Kiersnowski's general conclusions strongly influenced later research agendas,¹³ problems concerning issuer identities, relative chronology, place of production or their role in circulation were recurrent points of discussion for many years. Important questions also surrounded the ecclesiastical nature of these issue (see below), as well as the reasons for their issue: Witold Garbaczewski, for example, regarded bracteates as a result of monetary reform connected with periodic recoinage.¹⁴ Another question of importance is the dating of each type and their chronological order. Some scholars still consider these coins to be the oldest European bracteates.¹⁵

In this paper I will investigate and discuss these bracteate-series and provide evidence for traces of designs present on coins with two figures that are not related to the original dies used to strike them. This, I will argue, has methodological implications that are of broader interest in the context of die-studies and interpretations.¹⁶

The findings relate to “duke and martyr” bracteates (type II) struck from three dies.¹⁷ On the first example (Fig. 2:a) there is a clear trace of the curved upper end of a crosier, with a nodus and a ball at the end of the crook, above the right hand of St. Adalbert. In addition, between the saint and the duke there is a fragment of a robe. In part of the legend with the name of Sławnikowic, between the letters L and E there is a fragment of a letter V, or possibly the lower part of an inverted A. On the second example there is a remnant of the curvature of the crosier above the right hand of the bishop, and two sharply finished and outwards-spreading wedge-shaped details are preserved in the lower part of the legend, above the letter D inside the beaded border (Fig. 2:c). On the third example, just under the duke's palms, there is a trace that resembles a sphere, which has two lines spreading out from it and running diagonally downwards (Fig. 2:f).

The presence of traces of older images on coins is usually taken as evidence for the overstriking of older pieces with new dies. However, in the cases described above, we are instead dealing with the recycling of Bolesław's III bracteate dies. In the three cases described above, the traces of older images are repeated on different coins struck from the same dies (examples in Fig. 2:b, d, e); it is evident, therefore,

¹³ Detailed overview of the current state of the research – Garbaczewski 2018, *passim*; Śnieżko 2021a, pp. 18–21.

¹⁴ Garbaczewski 2018.

¹⁵ Recently – Nakielski 2015, p. 52.

¹⁶ I have already presented them in print (Śnieżko 2021a, pp. 135–143). This article is a modified, shortened and updated English version of the main conclusions on this problem.

¹⁷ In terms of typological division, these are the bracteates of the variants: A.XXI.01, A.XXII.01 and B.I.01 – see Śnieżko 2021b, *Wykaz typów, podtypów, odmian i wariantów stemplowych*.

that these details were not associated with planchets, but were present on the dies themselves.¹⁸



Fig. 2. Bracteates of type II with traces of older images: a–b – die variant A.XXI.01;
c–d – die variant A.XXII.01; e–f – die variant B.I.01.

Source: a (Warszawskie Centrum Numizmatyczne – hereinafter WCN 68/121, wcn.pl);
b (WCN 142870, wcn.pl); c (WCN 69/148, wcn.pl); d (MNK VII -P-1502, in the collections of
the National Museum in Kraków, photo by Paweł Czernicki); e (WCN 149508, wcn.pl);
f (WCN 73/57, wcn.pl); compiled by G. Śnieżko

¹⁸ Variant A.XXI.01 is represented by a total of 10 coins. Among them, seven were sold at the Warszawskie Centrum Numizmatyczne (hereinafter WCN): stationary auction no. 68, item 121 (68/121), the remaining ones at online auctions – items no. 101808, 130116, 130117, 142870, 168541 and 190520). Another two were offered by the Antykwariat Numizmatyczny Michał Niemczyk (hereinafter referred to as ANN): auction no. 12, item 22 and auction no. 16, session I, item 35 (specimen previously sold by the Gabinet Numizmatyczny Damian Marciniak – item no. 6172753462). The last example of this variant is stored in the Historical and Archaeological

Of course, there is a possibility that we are dealing with the mistakes of engravers, who, realizing that they had planned the surface of the matrices incorrectly, ground the dies with a file and engraved the images in a correct way. Such an error, however, would have to be repeated with great accuracy, covering a similar location of the same detail – curvature of a crosier – in relation to a newer, fully legible representation. It is hard to accept.

Therefore, I believe that the traces discussed above confirm the secondary use of older coin dies of another type in the issue of bracteates of type II.¹⁹ This is the first such discovery in the history of Polish early medieval coinage.²⁰

Inaccurate grinding of older images on two of the three registered dies permits their unequivocal identification with bracteates bearing a full-figure image of St. Adalbert of Prague.

However, the traces on the coins of variant B.I.01 are the least visible (Fig. 2:e, f). Their arrangement in the coin field suggests that they may form the right edge of the lower part of the liturgical robe of the saint, perhaps with the remnant of his right shoe. However, this example remains uncertain, because other elements of the older image have not remained on the die. More traces remain on the die of variant A.XXII.01, which clearly include the curved upper terminal of a crosier. The downwards extension of its staff terminates at one of the wedge-shaped details mentioned above (Fig. 3:e, f). The location of these wedges in relation to the crosier and each other identifies them as the tips of St. Adalbert's shoes from type I bracteates. On all six currently known dies of these coins, the lower part of the crosier is located just next to the martyr's left shoe.

The die of variant A.XXI.01 was ground most carelessly, thanks to which most traces from the original matrix were preserved. These include not only the elements of the image from the coin field, but also a fragment of the letter in the right part of the inscription along the edge. The large number of original details surviving on this die admits direct comparison with the six known dies of type I bracteates with martyr *en face*. An exact match was found with an isolated variant of a type I

Museum in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski under inv. no. 403/B/24. Variant A.XXII.01 consists of eight bracteates: five from the WCN auction (items 69/148, 72/100, 73/58, 74/21 and 168542), one sold via Allegro (auction no. 5080471090), one from the collections of the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography in Łódź (inv. no. MAEŁ-N-A 10988) and another one from the National Museum in Kraków (inv. no. MNK VII-P-1502). Variant B.I.01 consists of 10 coins: nine from the WCN auction: 50/5, 73/57, 130121, 149508, 181879, 181881, 181883, 181886 and 190513 and one from ANN (no. 20–I/24).

¹⁹ For the consultation and discussions on this subject, I would like to thank prof. Stanisław Suchodolski, prof. Mateusz Bogucki and MA Michał Zawadzki.

²⁰ M. Bogucki's discovery regarding denarii of Bolesław I the Brave of *PRINCES POLONIE* type and Mieszko II of II, 2 and II, 3 types is of a different nature, as it involves the improvement of the coin dies of the same type (Bogucki 2010).

bracteate (Fig. 3:a, d).²¹ Superimposing these bracteates reveals traces of not only the crozier, episcopal robe, and the inverted letter A, but also the lower part of the initial cross in the legend, a fragment of a letter C that was recut into an L, and the lines of the inner and outer borders, which are exactly the same on the older and younger bracteates. Therefore, it can be said with utmost certainty that bracteates with the duke and martyr of variant A.XXI.01 were struck with a die that had been previously used to produce bracteates of type I, variant II.²²

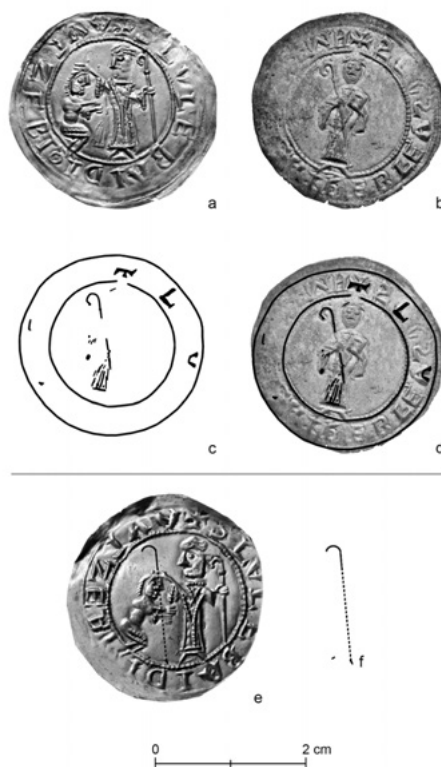


Fig. 3. Outline of traces of older images from bracteates of type II: a – bracteate of type II, variant A.XXI.01; b – bracteate of type I, variant II.01; e–f – bracteate of type II, variant A.XXII.01; c, d, f – outline of older details on dies. Source: a (WCN 68/121, wcn.pl); b, d (ANN 28/2111, niemczyk.pl); e (WCN 69/148, wcn.pl), c, f – drawing by G. Śnieżko; compiled by G. Śnieżko

²¹ Variety no. II consisting of three pieces – see Śnieżko 2021b, *Wykaz typów, podtypów...*, typological table 231.

²² In relation to the image from bracteates of type II, it was deflected by about 10 degrees to the right, which is why I arranged its picture like this in Fig. 3.

This strongly suggests a relative chronology for these types. The secondary use of reworked type I dies in the production of type II bracteates makes it reasonable to conclude that coins with a full-figure image of St. Adalbert of Prague predate the double figure coins. At the same time, it is also important evidence of their origin from the same mint, which calls into question any attempts to assign these coins to a mint other than the ducal. While the concept of episcopal (mainly Jakub of Žnin, archbishop of Gniezno is pointed) or ecclesiastical participation in the issuance of bracteates has been discussed for years,²³ there are currently no solid arguments for such an attribution. It is symptomatic that the argument for the ecclesiastical nature of this type of money concerns mainly bracteates depicting only the saint, while those with the image and name of Bolesław are either overlooked²⁴ or considered to be a ducal issue.²⁵ Setting aside the purely speculative and currently unevidenced proposals surrounding an ecclesiastical mint in Poland at the beginning of the 12th century,²⁶ it is intrinsically difficult to accept the idea that a completely innovative bracteate technique was simultaneously introduced to Poland in the production of coinages of two different issuers, who also happened to mint coins with striking stylistic similarities.²⁷ This would also contradict the evidence for the centralisation of minting during the reign of Bolesław III Wrymouth.²⁸ In addition, the continuation of coin production in the bracteate technique, most likely by Władysław II (1138–1146), seems to be confirmed by fragment of a unique coin from the early medieval cemetery in Brzeg, Poddębice county, Łódzkie Voivodeship.²⁹ It bears the image of an enthroned ruler and a partially preserved legend – DENA[RIVS ...]ZLAV. The issuer's name can be reconstructed in two ways:³⁰ as [BOLE]ZLAV with Bolesław III Wrymouth as the most likely candidate³¹ or [VLODI]ZLAV, i.e. Władysław II.³²

²³ Gumowski 1956, pp. 23–24; Rozenkranz 1975, pp. 595–596; Schmidt 1995, p. 187.

²⁴ They are not mentioned by Marcin R. Pauk (2010, pp. 550–552), who pays attention only to bracteates with martyr alone.

²⁵ Wdowiszewski 1959, p. 56; Rozenkranz 1975, p. 594; Schmidt 1995, p. 184.

²⁶ R. Grodecki took an unequivocal position against the possibility of existence of ecclesiastical issuers in Poland until at least 1138. Already at that time he emphasized that these theories are based solely on iconographic argumentation (Grodecki 2009, pp. 8–10). The first indisputably ecclesiastical coins appear in Poland at the earliest at the end of the 12th century (Suchodolski 1987, p. 67).

²⁷ M. Gumowski (1956, p. 24) considered the bracteates of both types "as half-ducal and half-bishop coins, allowing", that Bolesław III Wrymouth partially "restored" minting rights to the Church.

²⁸ Śnieżko 2021a, pp. 98, 145, 186–187, 218–219, 228, 232–233, 261–262, 267, 276.

²⁹ FMP III, p. 53, no. 11: 2*; see Śnieżko 2021a, pp. 20–21, 52–53.

³⁰ It was pointed out by S. Suchodolski (2017a, p. 69, footnote 17).

³¹ Mikołajczyk 1985; Nakielski 2015, pp. 33–34.

³² Such attribution – Paszkiewicz 2012, p. 16 (Suchodolski 2017a, p. 72 agrees with him); Garbaczewski 2018, pp. 128–131.

I think that attribution to the Władysław II is more probable. Detailed analysis of the die manufacturing supports this conclusion, since the punching of entire letters in sans-serif forms were characteristic features of Władysław's coinage. However, for unknown reasons the production of bracteates was ceased for several decades.

In any case, the most important argument for the ecclesiastical nature of bracteate production, according to previous researchers, is the presence of the image of St. Adalbert on the dies.³³ However, a review of coins issued by monarchs and other secular issuers shows that the images and names of various saints were common on the dies of German,³⁴ Danish,³⁵ or Bohemian and Moravian royal coins.³⁶ As far as ecclesiastical coins are concerned, from around the middle of the 11th century the image or name of the church issuer became a more diagnostic mark of such ecclesiastical mintage. These elements can be seen on coins issued by clergy in the Holy Roman Empire,³⁷ in Bohemia and Moravia³⁸ as well as in Denmark.³⁹

In case of Polish bracteates with St. Adalbert of Prague *en face*, the situation is different, as these coins do not contain any elements identifying the secular issuer. At the same time, there are also no criteria that allow us to recognize them as coins from an ecclesiastical issuer. This possibility is excluded not only by the above-mentioned examples of foreign coins with images of saints, but above all by examples from the monetary and sigillographic iconography of Bolesław III Wry-

³³ The most recent researcher to allow for the possibility of an ecclesiastical attribution for type I bracteates is M.R. Pauk (2010, pp. 551–552), who emphasizes interpretative problems surrounding the affiliation of these coins.

³⁴ See examples in B. Kluge (1991). Royal and imperial coins of Henry III (1039–1056): pp. 164 and 168 (St. Simon and Jude), p. 166 (St. Stephen), pp. 170 and 172 (Holy Trinity and Mother of God); Henry IV (1056–1106): p. 186 (St. Simon and Jude), pp. 188 and 190 (Mother of God), p. 190 (St. Boniface); Henry V (1106–1125): p. 192 (St. Simon and Jude). Coins of secular issuers: Count of Berg, Adolf II (died before 1093): p. 220 (St. Peter); Count of Friesland, Egbert II (1068–1090): p. 222 (St. Simon and Jude); Count of Katlenburg, Dietrich III: p. 226 (St. Simon and Jude).

³⁵ Hauberg 1900, e.g. Sweyn Estridsson: p. 216 and table VIII, no. 17 (Lamb of God), p. 216 and table IX (Virgin Mary with Child), p. 217 and table IX, no. 25 (Jesus Christ), p. 217 and table IX, nos 26–30 (Jesus Christ); Eric the Good: p. 229 and table XII, no. 3 (Lamb of God).

³⁶ On the denarii of Bohemian dukes from the 11th and 12th centuries, the image of St. Wenceslaus was particularly popular, later also St. Adalbert (Sejbal 1997, pp. 80, 83). On the other hand, on the coins of the duchies of Olomouc and Brno initially there was a reference to St. Peter, who, in the half of the 11th century, was replaced by St. Wenceslaus. On the coins of the duchy of Znojmo, however, we find the name of St. Nicholas – Sejbal 1997, pp. 83, 88–90, 95.

³⁷ Kluge 1991, pp. 68–70; Steinbach 2015, pp. 195–196.

³⁸ Sejbal 1997, pp. 92, 96–97; Videman, Paukert 2009, p. 337, no. 213 (issue with duke Wenceslaus Henry of Olomouc?) and pp. 338–339, no. 214 (Henry Zdík); Videman 2017.

³⁹ Moesgaard 2018, pp. 229–230.

mouth, where the image of St. Adalbert had already been used.⁴⁰ The image and name of this martyr, which was not previously a conventional Piast motif, therefore appears as an individual expression of Bolesław III Wrymouth.⁴¹ We might speculate that the decision to place Adalbert's image on coin and seal dies during the reign of Bolesław III Wrymouth was dictated by contemporary needs, which do not preclude the duke's utmost reverence for this saint.⁴²

Finally, the argument that type I bracteates were produced under ecclesiastical authority implies that type I and II bracteates were created in two different mints, a situation that is difficult to accept. The evidence for die recycling and stylistic similarities, combined with the scattered distribution of finds and unlikely coincidence of a completely innovative production technique, argue against this. Only one piece of a bracteate (and it is a two-figure one) is known from Greater Poland,⁴³ in comparison to several hundred from southern Poland.⁴⁴

Despite this, we cannot completely reject the possibility that an ecclesiastical mint existed in Poland in the first half of the 12th century, examples of which are known in several neighbouring countries at the same time. However, there is no evidence that an ecclesiastical mint produced any of the bracteate types described here, or indeed any of the currently-known coin types dating to this period.

It is still necessary to address the question about the motives for the reuse of dies. Given the disclosure of three cases of die reuse, it seems most likely that this process was intended to save raw material, time, and work when compared to the preparation of matrices completely from scratch.⁴⁵ This, in turn, supports the thesis that die production constituted a "bottleneck" of minting, which could significantly affect its efficiency.⁴⁶

In addition, the importance for numismatic research of the discovery of traces of die recycling should also be mentioned. With this interpretative possibility in mind, it is necessary to take a great deal of caution in considering a unique coin with traces of older images as a simple overstrike. Until further specimens struck with the same die are recorded, these traces can be associated with both the plan-

⁴⁰ Coins – see Suchodolski 2012, pp. 397–402; seals – Suchodolski 2009; Hlebionek 2009, while this author attributed the bulls to Bolesław IV the Curly (p. 80), which, however, was questioned by S. Suchodolski (2017b, pp. 525–526).

⁴¹ The division into typical and individual content was discussed by Z. Piech (1993, pp. 13–14).

⁴² For example Piech 2001, pp. 16–17.

⁴³ From the early medieval cemetery in Dziekanowice, Gniezno county, Wielkopolskie Voivodeship – FMP I, p. 99, no. 33: 102*–103*. See also Śnieżko 2021a, pp. 247 and 250, no. 40 and Śnieżko 2021b, *Katalog znalezisk monet Bolesława III Krzywoustego...*, no. 40.

⁴⁴ I discuss this issue in detail in another publication – Śnieżko 2021a, pp. 135–143.

⁴⁵ Also M. Bogucki (2010, p. 182) believes that "Labour saving was undoubtedly a direct reason for" correcting the coin dies of Bolesław I the Brave and Mieszko II.

⁴⁶ Kiersnowski 1964, p. 165; similarly also Šmerda 1996, p. 15.

chet and the die with equal probability. Since the discovery of the recycling of bracteate dies is not the first example of the secondary use of dies in the Polish coinage of the early Middle Ages, it seems likely that similar examples will appear in the following years. In this respect, known coins with traces of older images or letters that have been previously considered to be overstrikes may have significant research potential.

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NIE TYLKO PRZEBICIA. RECYKLING NAJSTARSZYCH POLSKICH STEMPLI BRAKTEATOWYCH

(Streszczenie)

Brakteaty Bolesława Krzywoustego to najstarsze polskie monety jednostronne. Obecnie znane dzielą się na dwa typy. Na jednym z nich przedstawiono frontalny, całopostaciowy wizerunek św. Wojciecha w szatach pontyfikalnych, z księgą Ewangelii i pastorałem (Fig. 1:a). Na drugim natomiast księżę klęczy przed św. Wojciechem (Fig. 1:b). Mimo wieloletnich badań i licznych prac różnych autorów, do niedawna nie udało się jednoznacznie rozstrzygnąć problematyki chronologii względnej monet obu typów czy charakteru ich emisji. Od lat w dyskusjach podnoszona jest bowiem możliwość kościelnego udziału czy wręcz jednoznacznie kościelnego charakteru produkcji brakteatów (wymieniany jest tu głównie abp gnieźnieński Jakub ze Żnina). Uwagi te dotyczą jednak monet jednopostaciowych. Odpowiedź na niektóre ze stawianych pytań, okazała się kryć na powierzchni monet. Otóż na okazach brakteatów dwupostaciowych wybitych trzema stemplami, ujawniłem ślady starszych przedstawień (Fig. 2). Wobec tego, że monety wszystkich wariantów stemplowych reprezentowane są przez więcej, niż jedną sztukę, a dostrzeżone detale pojawiają się na wszystkich w dokładnie tych samych miejscach, nie powstały one w rezultacie przebiccia, ale są śladami świadczącymi o wtórnym wykorzystaniu stempli. W dwóch z trzech przypadków widoczne detale udało się zidentyfikować z przedstawieniami z brakteatów jednopostaciowych, a w jednym nawet dokładnie wskazać monety jednopostaciowe wybite stemplem poddanym następnie recyklingowi (Fig. 3).

Odkrycie umożliwiło jednoznaczne rozstrzygnięcie chronologii względnej monet obu typów – starsze są brakteaty z frontálním przedstawieniem św. Wojciecha, a młodsze dwupostaciowe. Monety obu typów musiały powstać w tej samej mennicy, co wraz z argumentami ikonograficznymi wykorzystano do wskazania księżęcego charakteru ich emisji. Trzy ujawnione przypadki wskazują, że wtórne wykorzystanie stempli, na które po zeszlifowaniu nanoszono nowe przedstawienia, musiało pozwalać na zaoszczędzenie surowca, czasu i pracy względem przygotowania tłoka zupełnie od nowa.

Poza wkładem w dyskusję dotyczącą mennictwa Bolesława Krzywoustego, zaakcentować trzeba, że odkrycie to każe zachować dużą ostrożność w jednoznacznym interpretowaniu pojedynczych monet ze śladami starszych przedstawień jako przebić. Do czasu ujawnienia kolejnych egzemplarzy z tych samych stempli, równie prawdopodobne jest, że powstały one w rezultacie wtórnego wykorzystania starszego stempla, zaopatrzonego w nową treść. Z pewnością warto również zweryfikować pod tym kątem monety ze starszymi śladami, dotychczas uważane za przebite. Nie można wykluczyć, że niektóre z nich przyniosą nowe, zaskakujące, ale potrzebne i interesujące odkrycia.

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