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EAST GERMANIC IMITATION OF AN AUREUS OF SEVERUS ALEXANDER WITH RUNIC LEGEND: THE NEWEST ACQUISITION TO THE COLLECTION OF ANCIENT COINS IN THE OSSOLINEUM

ABSTRACT: The Ossolineum bought the coin discussed in this article at the 58th auction of the Warsaw Numismatic Centre held on 8 November 2014. It was initially identified as a Gothic imitation of an aureus of Severus Alexander, most probably made in the Chernyakhiv culture. Only after close examination was it revealed that the coin had a runic inscription, which was part of the matrix and not carved on the coin. This means that it is the oldest known runic coin, as it should be dated to 271–332, whereas other runic coins or gold Scandinavian bracteates are dated no earlier than to the fifth century AD. The authenticity of the specimen has been confirmed by microscopic examination, comparative analysis of other imitations, numismatic objects produced in an analogical method or style and metal analyses. Attempts to trace the provenance of the specimen failed. The meaning of the inscription cannot be ascertained. The discovery of runic signs on the coin has serious implications for our knowledge of ancient East Germanic peoples. It means that we have to date the beginnings of Germanic coinage at least two centuries earlier than has been accepted until recently. We must also accept that the links between the Baltic and Black Sea regions were very close.

Runic artefacts are the most valuable historical source not only for numismatists, but also for runologists, archaeologists, historical linguists, etymologists, epigraphists and researchers of the culture of Germanic tribes.[1] These artefacts were made of bone, horn, wood, leather, stone and, most importantly, metal, and

[1] I wish to express my gratitude for the great support, fruitful discussions and the necessary bucket of cold water to Aleksander Bursche. This text is only a preliminary study of the subject of the barbarous imitations of Roman coins in the Ossolineum's collection in the wider context of Germanic imitative coinage.

inscribed in elder futhark or later forms of runic script.[2] Numismatic objects that fall into such a broad category are gold Scandinavian bracteates, runic imitations of solidi and the coins of the early Germanic kingdoms. According to our current knowledge, none of these groups of artefacts appeared before the fifth century AD.[3] The majority of elder futhark inscriptions are from northern Europe and the middle and lower Danubian region, namely the Scandinavian countries, Gotland, northern Germany, England, Hungary and Romania. Finds from the south-eastern Barbaricum, *i.e*. Poland, the Ukraine or Belarus are relatively rare and include, amongst others, gold bracteates and spearheads. All these finds should be connected to the presence of Germanic peoples. In the North, these were the Saxons, the Angles, and the Frisians. Ukrainian and Polish finds should be related to the East Germanic peoples, the representatives of either the Wielbark culture in the Volhynian Upland and in south-eastern Poland or the Chernyakhiv culture in the Podolian Upland.[4]

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[2] The name of the writing system is derived from its first letters: FuPark. There is a great number of variants of the basic forms of letters. Forms of runes, signs imitating runes and other symbols on gold bracteates have been collected by Nowak (2013). The discussion regarding the origin of runic script is by no means closed. The hypotheses can be divided into two main groups, pointing to different sources of inspiration for the development of runes: (1) scripts still in use in the first centuries AD, mainly Latin and Greek and (2) already extinct scripts, mainly old Italic and Etruscan. The former seems to be far more probable. The oldest known runic artefact is the comb of Vimose, dated to the mid-second century AD. Perhaps the best documented homogenous group of runic artefacts are the finds from Illerup Ådal, dated to *c*. 210 AD (Carnap-Bornheim 1993). Apart from Scandinavian runic stones, they belong perhaps to the best known runic artefacts among the public, due to their popularisation in publications (*e.g*. Ilkjær 2002). A recently published handbook of runes by Barnes (2012) has a separate chapter on the different materials the inscriptions were made in. A highly informative introduction to the subject of runic script was written by Page (1987), (Polish edition, 1998). A scholarly introduction to runology was written by Düwel (2008).

[3] The standard reference work for gold Scandinavian bracteates is commonly abbreviated as IK plus the catalogue number (see: IK in the reference section of this article); one can find an extensive listing of publications in the first volume of IK. The source material is restricted to *c*. 1,000 specimens known, out of which 182 are runic (Düwel 1992), but there is a huge number of interpretative studies, especially iconological ones. The study of Germanic imitative coinage was begun by Alföldi (1926/30); he considered these imitations, mainly from Hungarian collections, as Sarmatian products. Runic imitative solidi appear to be still awaiting a comprehensive study. Runic Frisian and Anglo-Saxon coins are very well recognised, systemised and described and examples of these coins can be found in relatively easy to access publications, *e.g*. Grierson and Blackburn 1986, p. 671, index, entry: 'runes on coins'.

[4] The subject demands in-depth research. Gold Scandinavian bracteates were found on the territory of Poland: Karlino (runic), Suchań (two runic specimens), Wapno (four

The East Germanic imitation of an aureus of Severus Alexander was purchased for the collection of the Ossoliński National Institute at the 58th auction of the Warsaw Numismatic Centre (WCN) held on 8 November 2014 in Warsaw. To-date, it is the earliest known and described example of the use of runic script on a numismatic object. It will be referred to as the OSS/A6273 coin in this article.[5]

I considered the question of the authenticity of the OSS/A6273 coin as crucial from the moment I discovered the runic inscription. Therefore, I considered several pieces of evidence aimed at verifying the authenticity of the coin. They included its antiquarian history, the results of metal analysis, microscopic examination and analogies.

The runic imitative aureus arrived in Warsaw no later than on 25 March 2014. Warsaw antiquarians who were in the possession of the coin in the late spring, consulted specialists. One of the consultants linked the specimen unambiguously to the Gothic circle. Another consultant indicated an Indian imitation.[6] Although the antiquarians undertook surface metal analysis of the coin, they did not decide to place it for auction. Instead, it appeared on the WNC auction as one of two 'Indian imitations'. The other one, an imitation of a gold coin of Constantius I Chlorus or Diocletianus, struck with an identical pair of dies with one specimen found in the Ukraine, was also purchased by the Ossolineum. The antiquarians who possessed the OSS/A6273 coin in spring denied having any information about the latter imitation. The findings concerning the antiquarian history of the

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specimens, of which one is runic) and Zagórzyn (two non-runic specimens). A famous runic spearhead was found in Kovel, the Ukraine. Among the masterpieces connected with the Goths from the territory to the South, we should mention the necklace from Pietroassa with an inscription mentioning the Goths (*Gutani* – Page 1987). At the beginnings of the 21st century, the presence of the Goths on the territory of the Chernyakhiv culture was recognised in archaeological and historical literature across the states' boundaries, *e.g.* in the Ukraine, Russia, Poland, Austria and England (Magomedov 2001; Szczukin 2005; Kokowski 2007; Wolfram 2003; Heather 2010). We should, however, bear in mind that more peoples formed what we today call the Chernyakhiv culture among them other Germanic (eg. the Heruli, the Gepids), Sarmatian and Dacian peoples. There has been a great increase in the number of recorded imitations from the Ukraine, mainly thanks to Oleg Anokhin's internet site *Katalog Varvarskikh Podrazhanyyi Rimiskim Monetam* (http://barbarous-imitations.narod.ru/, accessed on 9.12.2014) where nearly a thousand gold, silver and bronze imitations of Roman coins from Ukrainian finds are described.

[5] The name of the coin includes the abbreviation of the Ossolineum (OSS) and the inventory number (A6273) of the collection of ancient coins kept in the Department of Coins, Medals and Seals in the Princes Lubomirski Museum.

[6] The second possibility has to be dismissed, since the Indian imitations had different weights and stylistics, and were usually pierced twice and punched on the obverse (compare, *e.g.* Horsnæs 2013, p. 120, note 4).

OSS/A6273 coin confirm its authenticity. Inventing such a unique piece would take an extremely skilful and learned forger. What goal, however, would they have, if they did not inform the public how unique the piece was? The coin was sold at the auction for less than its value. This all means that we can exclude the most common motive for forging gold coins which is gaining the highest possible profit. As we will see further on, to forge such a coin, one would have to be familiar with data unknown even to highly specialised numismatists and still unpublished.

Metal analyses were repeated in February 2015 in the Biological and Chemical Research Centre by Barbara Wagner, Ph.D. hab. from the Faculty of Chemistry at the University of Warsaw.[7] The mean values from three sampling points located near the piercing on the reverse side were as follows: Au – 75.64%, Ag – 22.75% and Cu – 1.54%. The comparative material is limited mainly to a dozen or so gold imitative coins connected with the Cherniakhov culture, which are kept in the collection of the National Museum of Copenhagen.[8] The measurements of the Copenhagen objects were carried out without using advanced equipment and the results are only of a relative value. The specific gravity of the majority of coins from the Copenhagen collection was 10 per cent lower on average than the specific gravity of coins made of almost pure gold, such as fifth century solidi. This means that we should generally expect of the Cherniakhov imitations to have been produced in gold of a reduced fineness. This also means that the relatively low specific gravity and gold content of the OSS/A6273 coin does not negate its authenticity.[9]

Microscopic examination carried out in the Ossolineum (magnification up to 40X) revealed that no destructive method of cleaning had been applied to the coin; there is still some naturally accumulated dirt in the letters' curves and the places of higher relief (Fig. 4). The whole surface of the coin is covered with micro-scratches, but there are also a few new, long scratches that seem to be very dark, almost black, and opalescent when viewed from a certain angle. On the reverse, below the hammered metal around the piercing, one can see semi-transpar-

[7] Metal analyses obtained by the Warsaw antiquarians indicated *c*. 74.14% Au, *c*. 24.70% Ag and *c*. 1.57% Cu. The specific gravity – 15.5 g/cm^3 – matched the expected value for gold that has a fineness of 750 (between 14.88 and 15.92 g/cm^3. The expected value of the specific gravity of pure gold is 19.32 g/cm^3. A non-destructive method was applied to the surface of the coin on the chick (obverse) and the heap (reverse).

[8] I wish to express my gratitude for sharing this information to Helle Horsnæs as well as for many other pieces of information, comments and support during the writing of this article.

[9] I wish to express my gratitude for sharing this information to Aleksander Bursche and Barbara Wagner. Professor Barbara Wagner (Department of Chemistry, Warsaw University) conducted the analyses both in Summer 2014 and Winter 2015.

ent whitish crystals. The part of coin between the piercing edge and the border of the coin is more heavily worn than the rest. On the reverse, the hammered metal is evenly worn along its whole circuit and has a silvery shine. One can also observe that the piercing is worn more on the inside where it comes closest to the edge of the coin, whereas naturally accumulated dirt can still be seen on the opposite side. All these traseological traits prove that the coin was worn as a pendant for a long time and that the obverse side was the one to be exposed. Microscopic examination strongly confirms the authenticity of the coin.

The identification of the prototype was possible through the recognition of the portrait that only shows weak barbarian influences and quite an obvious reading of 'IOVI...' on the reverse. The type of the reverse design is not common on Roman coinage. It shows a naked Jupiter wearing a cloak over his shoulders, holding thunderbolts over the small figure of the emperor and long sceptre. Severus Alexander struck coins in a type of a prototype of the OSS/A6273 coin – IOVI CONSERVATORI, RIC 199 – only once during his reign: aurei and denarii are known in two similar variants of this type dated to the years AD 228 to 231. This particular type is rarely found in numismatic auctions around the world; there is only one illustrated example (Fig. 1).[10]

The weight of the coin is 6.342 g. Its diameter is 22.3 mm. The piercing was made from the obverse to the reverse. It is regular and cylindrical, as if made by drilling that could result in a slight deformation in the shape of the coin. The obverse and reverse image types and legends (Fig. 2) will now be described in relation to a prototype, which will enable the runic inscription to be thoroughly analysed for use in our further argumentation.

Obverse. The bust of the emperor wearing a laurel wreath, to the left, is clearly barbarised. It was executed with care and the overall impression of a barbarised image is created by the details, such as the shape of the eye, two folds on the neck and the erroneous representation of the ribbon. To the right, behind the bust, there is a partial legend copied from a prototype: XAN[DA]VG; the top serifs are pointed to the edge of the coin and the letters are read counter-clockwise. Runic inscription and an additional symbol in front of the face of the emperor are discussed below. All are in a border of pearls.

Reverse. There are two barbarised figures. The bigger one is naked Jupiter standing front, facing to right, with a cloak over his shoulders and the smaller

[10] Despite the fact that there is an enormous number of ancient coins for auction on the Internet, I managed to find only one offer with a picture of this type, from the 25/26th Auction of Numismatica Ars Classica AG that took place on 25–27 June 2003 in Zurich; lot no. 534 with the final price of 4,500 Swiss francs (http://www.acsearch.info/search.html?id=139549). I wish to express my gratitude to the NAC for permission to use the image of the coin.

one is Severus Alexander. The god holds thunderbolts in his left hand and a long sceptre in the right. The proportions of the god's image were not accurately captured. He is too tall and his head is too large which results in a space that is too small for imitating the whole legend. Thunderbolts and the folds of the cloak are erroneously executed. The emperor is slightly disproportionate and his arm is too large and coarse. There is a readable partial legend copied from a prototype: IOVICON. The top serifs are pointed to the edge of the coin and the letters are read counter-clockwise on the latter coin. The letter 'C' is erroneous, the letter 'N' is mirrored horizontally and instead of the letter 'S' there is a sign that looks like 'C' rotated 90 degrees clockwise. To left, there are signs resembling the Latin 'I' and 'R' capital letters. There was also a third sign at the site of the piercing. All in a border of pearls.

The comparison between the OSS/A6273 coin and the coin from the NAC auction allowed for further interesting observations to be made (Figs. 1 and 2). Firstly, it can be seen at a glance that the images and the readable parts of the legends (on both the obverse and the reverse) are mirrored. On the coin from the NAC auction, the portrait is to the right, Jupiter turns head left, holds thunderbolts in the right hand and a sceptre in the left hand, and the emperor stands to his left; the part of the legend of the reverse reading IOVICON is on the left side. One has to notice that the part of the legend of the obverse reading XANDAVG is howerer on the right side on coins both from the NAC auction and the Ossolineum, but it reads, counter-clockwise on the latter coin. The best way to understand this paradox is to visualise what the matrix must have looked like.[11]

Table 1. Possible methods of production of the OSS/A6273 coin.

Method of production	**Model (wood, etc.)**	**Clay mould**	**Metal die or mould**	**Coin**	**Mirrored?**
I. Model – mould – die	Concave, not mirrored	Convex, mirrored	Concave, not mirrored	Convex, **mirrored**	yes
II. Casting		Concave, not mirrored		Convex, **mirrored**	yes

I: Model pressed into a clay mould, then metal die cast from the clay mould and coin struck from the metal die. II: Clay mould as a ready mould for casting the coin.

[11] I use the term 'matrix' to denote an item used in making the OSS/A6273 coin. It could have been either a pair of dies or a mould used to produce the final object. Wicker reconstructed the hypothetical process of the making of a matrix, namely a die to strike one-sided gold bracteates and explained the phenomenon of the mirrored representations on them (Wicker 2006, pp. 416–417, 426).

Either a pair of dies or a mould could have served as the matrix of the OSS/A6273 coin (Fig. 3). If model was used might have been executed in a soft material, such as wood, since there are no sharp details and some of the letters give the impression of being modelled in a soft material. The lack of the striking flows and the presence of tiny shallow holes on the surface of the OSS/A6273 coin suggest casting but at the same time the signs of double-strike on the obverse point to striking. These features can be connected with different phases of production of the imitative coin. Possible methods of production of the OSS/A6273 coin are presented in Table 1. Only one of them seems plausible: (I) model – mould – die. Similar technique was used in the production of mirrored Scandinavian bracteates. Method II should leave casting files on the join of two parts of a mould. Lost-wax casting is one of the most common methods of production of metal objects in the Barbaricum. Wax model has the same features as the expected final product, which makes the usage of this technique unlikely. Hence, a technique close to the one that served to make Scandinavian bracteates seems to have been the most probable (method I). Perhaps molten metal was poured into a shallow mould (with reverse side representations) and then, after some cooling, pressed with a die (with obverse side representations).[12]

Fig. 1. Coin sold at the 25/26th Auction of Numismatica Ars Classica AG that was held on 25–27 June 2003 in Zurich, lot No. 534 (by the permission of the Numismatica Ars Classica). RIC 199 type (IOVI CONSERVATORI).

The study of the matrix's appearance allows us to understand how the XAN[DA]VG partial legend could have been copied from a prototype, since it is identical to the XANDAVG partial legend on the coin from the NAC auction rotated 180 degrees. This suggests that runic inscriptions was executed first and only then was the XANDAVG partial legend transposed.

[12] I wish to express my gratitude to Professor Aleksander Bursche for pointing out the problem of a wax-final product in relation to mirrored images and to Kirill Myzgin, Ph.D. for noticing the slight trace of double strike on the obverse (in the nose part of the portrait). In addition, the runic letters seems to be double struck as well as other parts of the obverse (compare Figs. 4 and 5).

Fig. 2. The OSS/A6273 coin.

Fig. 3. Visualisation of the matrix of the OSS/A6273 coin made by using a *horizontal flip* function in a simple graphics program.

The first step towards the discovery of the runic inscription was the identification of the letter 't', so characteristic of many ancient scripts (Fig. 4). My first reading was *irlstis*. Thereafter, I consulted with runologists about the discovery.[13] They could only see the high-resolution photograph of the coin under the weblink to the WNC auction, so the readings should be treated as working hypotheses since none of these scholars saw the original. Only a careful study of runic inscriptions on the original can be conclusive. They confirmed that there are runes on the coin and suggested possible readings:

[13] I wish to express my gratitude to Lisbeth Imer, Alexandra Pesch, Klaus Düwel and Robert Nedoma for answering my questions and for their opinions and comments. I would like to thank Alexandra Pesch for her invaluable help in the accurate recording and interpretation of the runological analyses.

Table 3. Possible readings of the runic legend.
Imer's () means uncertain read, – means unreadable sign.

A	B	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
x	x	i	i	r s+i?	u/l	s	t	i	s	Düwel
		i	i	r	k/l/u	s	t	i	s	Nedoma
(-)	-	-	(l)	r	(k)	s	t	i	s	Imer
		i?	i	r	k/l	s	t	i	s	Pesch

Table compiled by Alexandra Pesch and revised by Adam Degler

Table 4. Two alternative readings of the inscription after microscopic examination.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
?	i?	r	k/l/u	s	t	i	s	Degler (a)
?	i?	l+k	u	s	t	i	s	Degler (b)

The runic inscription is located in front of the portrait, on the left side of the coin, but on the right side of the matrix. The upper parts of the letters are pointing to the inside of the coin. The letters are mirrored and read from right to left on the OSS/A6273 coin. On the contrary, the letters are not mirrored and read from left to right on the matrix (Fig. 5). It is evident that the reading of the four last characters must be *stis*, the maximum number of characters is ten and the maximum number of letters is eleven with (5) as a possible ligature (Table 3). No one, however, proposed any reading for A and B. Character (4) was to be the most controversial one. There are three possible readings: *l*, *k* or *u*. A possible reading of character (3) as *r* is commonly accepted, but Düwel suggested an alternative reading as ligatured two letters *si*. Character (2) is read, if insecurely, as *i*. Only two runologists read character (1) as *i*. Pesch was unsure if it could be read as *i* while Imer regarded it as an unreadable sign.

Microscope examination proved that A and B are neither letters, nor parts of the design of the matrix. Thus, the maximum number of characters is eight, and letters – nine. A closer look at sign (1) reveals that it differs in shape from (2) and (7), especially in that it is steep-pointed. It could have stood for another letter than *i*. If (3) is a ligature, I think it can be read alternatively as *lk* (Table 4). However, it could be also alternatively explained as two separate letters that were not joined on the matrix, but look like they are joined due to minor damage to the coin.

There are three possible hypotheses, regarding the meaning of the inscription. The first one is that the legend has no certain meaning. This would mean that the runic signs had been used to imitate runic legend, as is the case on many runic Scandinavian bracteates. Another possible explanation is that it was a personal

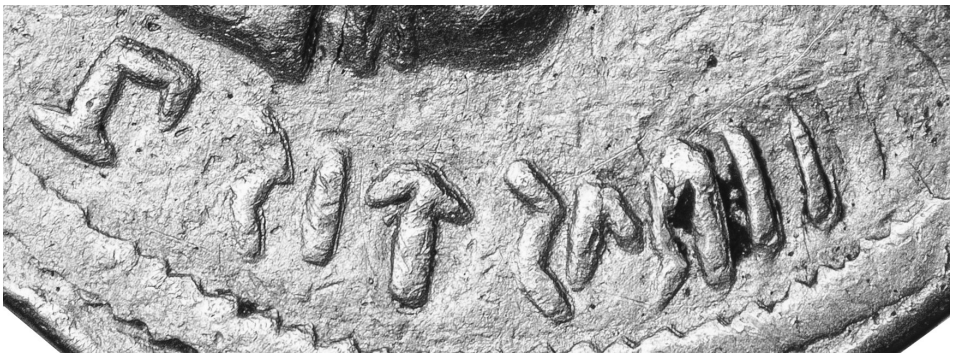

Fig. 4. Runic inscription on coin. It would read like that for an observer if the coin was hanging loosely as a pendant.

name. This hypothesis may be supported by the fact that there are instances of names in the genitive ending with *-is* in Wulfila's Bible.[14] Had it been a name, it could have been written in genitive to inform people as to whom the coin belonged and the name itself might have ended with *-ust* or *-lst*. The third possible explanation is that it was an ethnic name related to the Heruli. This hypothesis is based on the similarity between the part of the legend which can read *irl* and previously recorded legends *irilaR*, *erilaR* (Imer 2015, v. 1, pp. 114–118). The Heruli settled in the latter part of the 3rd century AD in today's Eastern Ukraine, on the nothern coast of the Sea of Azov. There is one more sign just in front of the emperor's eye. It resembles a bent finger.[15]

The *terminus post quem* for the creation of the OSS/A6273 coin is the latest dating of a prototype, *i.e*. AD 231. It is necessary to discuss the phases of the inflow of Roman gold coins into the territory of the south-eastern Barbaricum before attempting to date the coin more closely. I think that the inflow of gold coins into the territory of the Cherniakhov culture was closely related to the history of

[14] Some examples of the names in Genetive in Wulfila's Gothic Bible ending with -is: Daweidis (Matthew 9:27), Iohannis (Mathew 11:12), Iakobis, Iosezis (Mathew 27:56), Iosefis (John 6:42), Seimonis (John 6:71), Abrahamis (John 8:37), Salaumonis (John 10:23), Iesuis (John 13:23), Faunelis (Luke 2:36). There are numerous examples in Luke's passages on Jesus's genealogy, *e.g*. Heleis (Luke 3:23), MatÞatis, Laiwweis, Malkeis (Luke 3:24), MattaÞiwis, Aizleimis, Naumis, Naggais (Luke 3:25), MahaÞis, Saimaieinis (Luke 3:26), Iohannins, Zauraubabilis, SalaÞielis (Luke 3:27) and many more (compare Luke 3:28–38).

[15] Although a similar symbol appeared on one of the bracteates, it does not mean that those symbols should be linked. Various symbols and signs accompanied runic inscriptions on bracteates. The presence of this symbol is one more element confirming the authenticity of the coin.

Fig. 5. Runic inscription on the matrix.

contacts between the Goths and other East Germanic peoples and the Romans in the third and the fourth centuries AD. Thus, four main periods that should be discussed are the turning points connected with the main political events: (1) from 238 to 251; (2) from 251 to 271; (3) from 271 to 332; (4) from 332 to 378. In 238, the Goths made their first raids into the territory of the Roman Empire by invading the region close to the Danube's delta (today's Dobruja in Romania) and destroying the rich city of Histria. In 251, they killed Emperor Trajan Decius in a battle near Abritus and, according to Bursche, captured the imperial treasury. During the Gothic Wars that started in 256 and lasted until 270 the Goths and the Heruli were the most active enemies of Rome. In 270, the Goths were defeated by Aurelian, but in 271, the Romans evacuated their citizens from the province of Dacia, abandoning it to the Goths. Most probably, the division into Ostrogoths and Visigoths took place between 271 and 332. In 332, the western Goths were defeated by Constantine the Great and, after establishing peace, they became paid by the emperors as auxiliaries in the Roman army. In 376, even greater numbers of Goths, who were fleeing from the Huns appeared in the Danubian region and asked to be allowed to settle in the Roman Empire. In 378, they won the Battle of Adrianople, in which Emperor Valens died. This was a true dividing line, since from that time on we can speak of the Goths' presence within the Roman Empire. In a sense, the Goths became an integral part of the Roman world after 378. In terms of the strength of the inflow of gold Roman coins into the territory of the south-eastern Barbaricum, the periods could be described as follows: (1) medium; (2) extremely strong; (3) weak or medium; (4) strong.[16]

[16] There are several finds of gold Roman coins from the territory of the Wielbark culture, but they are not in the scope of our interest. In dating the periods, I generally followed the dates in: Strzelczyk 1984; Magomedov 2005; Heather 2010. About the capture of Trajan Decius' treasury, see Bursche 2013. Three chronological groups proposed by Kirill Myzgin did not take into account the years between 253 and 337, but

The OSS/A6273 coin must have been made in one of these four periods. Piercing was generally characteristic of the third century, whereas the majority of the coins dated to the fourth century are looped and sometimes framed. Piercings made in similar way and with similar traces of wear can be found on many Roman coins dated to the late 3rd century. Thus, we can securely narrow the dating of the OSS/A6273 coin to the (1) to (3) periods. There are two more factors we should consider when discussing the dating of the imitations of Roman coins from the territory of the Chernyakhiv culture. Firstly, we should bear in mind that gold imitative coins were by no means part of any monetary system. Instead, they probably served as ornaments from the very beginning. If so, they were subject to fashion. We should perceive them more like fibulae than coins. According to the archaeological evidence from the best preserved and well researched Germanic sites, the changes in fashion appeared at least once in a generation, *i.e.* at least every twenty five years. I consider twenty five years as a reasonable guess as to how long one individual artisan making imitative coins could have been active. There could have been, however, some exceptions to that rule. Secondly, we should ask ourselves what was the attitude of a maker of an imitation and how skilled was he. As far as the material collected by Oleg Anokhin is concerned, it seems that generally the imitations of the prototypes dated to the latter part of the third century are more carelessly executed than the ones dated to the former part of that century. Most probably, an imitation executed in a better style should be dated earlier than the poorer ones. In the future, we need to combine the stylistic and metal analyses to achieve any conclusive results. Lastly, I think that the majority of the imitations were produced in period (3), when the inflow of Roman gold coins into East Germanic territories was at a relatively low level. Taking all these considerations into account, I opt for dating the OSS/A6273 coin to period (3), (AD 271 to 332).

The exact place of the origin of the OSS/A6273 coin cannot be ascertained. We do not know whether the imitations were produced by settled or mobile artisans. There could have been specialised centres or, at least, workshops, as well as travelling artisans, similar to the unofficial moneyers in the provinces of the Roman Empire. Attempts to determine the find spot have failed. The comparative material indicates the Ukraine, Poland or Moldova, out of which the central Ukraine is the most probable guess.

The function of gold coins in the Barbaricum was closely related to the social-economical model of Germanic societies. Money did not play such an important role in these societies as in the Roman Empire, not to mention modern times.

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the increase of material and the emergence of several new types from the Chernyakhiv culture, imitating the coins struck by the barrack emperors of the third century, shed new light on this period (Myzgin 2009, p. 93). For general remarks on the inflow of Roman coinage into the Chernyakhiv culture, see Magomedov 2005.

Roman coins were valued for their content of precious metal and their ideological message. Silver coins, mainly denarii from the first to the second century must have been valued for their intrinsic value, as many finds of hoards of the fifth century contained heavily worn pre-Severan denarii. Gold coins were certainly valued for their intrinsic value, but their ideological message was equally important. They were also more subject to fashion. Only some silver and bronze Roman coins were pierced, whereas the great majority of gold coins and medallions were turned into pendants. Wearing such ornaments was a manifestation of prestige, power or heroic deeds of their owners as well as their high status as members of the elite. Finally, they could have been believed to possess magic powers and used as amulets. We can surmise that many of these personal treasures had been buried together with their owners, as in the case of Childeric's grave.[17]

The OSS/A6273 coin differs, however, from the majority of Roman and imitative gold coins in one aspect: the piercing was done behind the head of the emperor, which means that the portrait was turned downwards. If we examine the coin with the piercing situated on the 12h, we can see that the emperor's eye is turned toward the 'bent finger' symbol which, in turn, directs our attention to the runic inscription. An observer standing in front of the person wearing the coin as a pendant on their neck would have read the writing from right to left, though the artisan's intention could have been the opposite. One would have needed to take a closer look to read the inscription. This all means that the runic inscription, being exposed, was the most important element of the coin.[18] This, again, supports the hypothesis that this was a meaningful inscription. Had it been a personal name, it would have played an informative role (this coin belongs to a person with such a name) and, possibly, a magical one (the person of this name is protected by the majesty of the emperor). Had it been an ethnic name, it would have played the role of a badge of identity and descent. At the same time, the coin could have been the manifestation of the social-economic status, prestige or power of its owner.

The coin purchased by the Ossolineum is, for now, the oldest known coin with an inscription in elder futhark. It also belongs to the group of the oldest preserved runic inscriptions dated to 150–400 AD. It is one of just a dozen or so runic artefacts from Central-Eastern Europe. Runic legend treated as an integral part of a

[17] For the latest discussion and theories on the function of Roman coins and imitations of Roman coins in Barbaricum, see especially Bursche 2005; Peter 2005. The research conducted by Helle Horsnæs is extremely important for the subject of the imitations of Roman gold coins in the south-eastern Barbaricum (Horsnæs 2013).

[18] It should, however, be stated that there are examples of Roman gold coins pierced in the same way. An alternative explanation is thus possible: these piercings had diameters that were too large to fit between the emperor's head and the edge of the coin, so they must have been made in other parts of the coins.

matrix has no analogies among coins from the third century. The earliest known examples are Scandinavian gold bracteates and runic imitative solidi dated to the fifth century. The secure dating of the coin is AD 238–332. Nevertheless, it seems plausible that the coin was made in the period between AD 271 and 332. Creating a more precise chronology for the production of Gothic imitative coinage is not possible unless the results of the analyses of metal alloy are combined with the results of the study of style, original-prototype relations and the technology of piercing. Some traits of the OSS/A6273 coin, *e.g.* the mirrored image, have analogies in artefacts from different times and regions and can serve as valuable comparative material for runologists. We cannot be sure what function the coin had in the context of the living culture, but it certainly was an important personal item of some ideological value, perhaps an amulet.

The importance of the OSS/A6273 coin lies not only in its contribution to runological studies, but also in its high scientific and cognitive value. When studied in a wider perspective, it offers better insights into at least a few problems: the beginnings of the Germanic peoples' coinage in the third century, the existence of runic literacy among Eastern Germanic peoples as early as in the 3rd century,[19] the dating and typology of imitations of Roman coins and the relations between Scandinavia and the Black Sea region, with regard to their phases, directions and character.

Abbreviations

BMCRE VI – Carson R. A. G., *Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum*, Vol. VI: Severus Alexander to Balbinus and Pupienus, London 1962 (reprint 2005).

IK – *Die Goldbrakteaten der Völkerwanderungszeit: Ikonographischer Katalog*, ed. Karl Hauck, Morten Axboe, Urs Clavadetscher, Klaus Düwel, Lutz von Padberg, Ulrike Smyra, Cajus Wypior, and Herbert Lange. 3 Parts (7 vols): 1.1: *Einleitung*; 1.2, 2.1, 3.1: *Text*; 1.3, 2.2, 3.2: *Tafeln*, Münstersche Mittelalter–Schriften 24.1.1–24.3.2, München 1985–1989.

RIC IV/2 – Mattingly H., Sydenham E. A., Sutherland C. H. V., *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, Vol. 4, Part 2: *Macrinus to Pupienus*, London 1938 (reprinted in 1968).

[19] These problems are touched upon in the two latest contributions: the article of Bursche and Myzgin to be published in a volume prepared for the XV International Numismatic Congress in Taormina in 2015 – *Gold coins, Alexandria Troas and Goths: Three mysterious gold coins*, in which one section is entitled 'Gothic gold coinage' and a lecture entitled *Die Wurzeln des germanischen Münzwesens* given in February, 2015 by Aleksander Bursche in Berlin, in which the necessity of dating the beginnings of the Germanic coinage to the 3rd century AD is straightforwardly expressed in the first paragraphs. I wish to express my gratitude to Professor Aleksander Bursche for sharing the manuscripts of these contributions with me.

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II: *Nachahmungen von Goldmünzen aus diokletianisch-constantinischer Zeit*, Numizmatikai Kőzlőny, 26–27, 1927–1928, pp. 59–71.
III: *Nachahmungen römischen Goldmedaillons als germanischer Halsschmuck*, Numizmatikai Kőzlőny, 28–29, 1929–1930, pp. 10–25.

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WSCHODNIOGERMAŃSKIE NAŚLADOWNICTWO MONETY ALEKSANDRA SEWERA Z LEGENDĄ RUNICZNĄ: NAJNOWSZY NABYTEK DO ZBIORÓW OSSOLINEUM

(Streszczenie)

Zabytki runiczne, na których znajdują się inskrypcje w najstarszym alfabecie germańskim, futharku starszym, wykonane z różnych materiałów – kości, rogu, drewna, skóry, kamienia i metalu – należą do najcenniejszych źródeł historycznych. Większość pochodzi ze Skandynawii, Niemiec, Anglii, Węgier i Rumunii, znaleziska z Polski i Ukrainy są znacznie rzadsze. Te pierwsze są wiązane z Saksonami, Anglami i Fryzami, te drugie ze wschodnimi Germanami. Inskrypcje w futharku starszym spotykamy na obiektach numizmatycznych, naśladownictwach solidów, monetach anglosaskich i fryzyjskich oraz złotych brakteatach germańskich, jednak nie wcześniej, niż od V w. po Chr. Do grupy najrzadszych i najcenniejszych zabytków runicznych dołączyła moneta naśladująca aureus

Aleksandra Sewera, zakupiona na 58. Aukcji Warszawskiego Centrum Numizmatycznego w dniu 8 listopada 2014 r., określana dalej jako A 6273. Moneta ta trafiła do rąk warszawskich antykwariuszy nie później niż w marcu 2014 r. Nic nie wiadomo na temat wcześniejszych losów monety, czy też miejsca jej znalezienia.

Autentyczność monety A 6273 była bardzo uważnie sprawdzana. W ciągu trwających ponad trzy miesiące drobiazgowych i wnikliwych badań nad zabytkiem nie pojawił się ani jeden poważny argument, który podałby w wątpliwość jego autentyczność. Znaki runiczne odkryto dopiero po zakupie monety, co przemawia za jej autentycznością, gdyż jako najwcześniejsza znana na świecie moneta runiczna byłaby ona wyceniona wielokrotnie wyżej, a przecież złote monety są fałszowane dla zysku. Wyniki badań metaloznawczych również świadczą za autentycznością monety, ponieważ analogiczne egzemplarze ze zbiorów kopenhaskich mają, tak jak A 6273, niższy ciężar właściwy, niż np. złote monety rzymskie. Cechy traseologiczne, zwłaszcza wytarcie wewnątrz otworu, brzegu monety przy otworze i otoku otworu na rewersie świadczą o wieloletnim użytkowaniu monety jako ozdoby. Sam otwór i sposób jego wykonania również przemawiają jednoznacznie za autentycznością zabytku, a dodatkowo umożliwiają jego datowanie na III–początek IV w. po Chr. Monetę należy prawdopodobnie datować na lata 271–332, kiedy napływ złotych monet do kręgu gockiego osłabł po natężeniu z lat 251–270. Typ pierwowzoru, RIC 199 (legenda IOVI CONSERVATORI), datowany jest natomiast na lata 228–231.

Stopień zbarbaryzowania nie jest bardzo duży. Barbaryzacja objawia się przede wszystkim w szczegółach wizerunków: kształcie oka, szyi, a zwłaszcza kształcie wstążek wieńca laurowego na awersie; proporcjach postaci Jowisza, błędnym odwzorowaniu wiązki błyskawic, fałd płaszcza i ramienia małego cesarza oraz w legendzie rewersu, w której rozpoznawalna wyraźnie część „IOVI…" ułatwiła identyfikację typu pierwowzoru, natomiast dalsza część znacznie mniej udanie naśladuje znaki alfabetu łacińskiego. Większość elementów A 6273, zarówno legend, jak i wyobrażeń, jest w lustrzanym odbiciu wobec typu pierwowzoru. Dwa wyjątki to częściowa legenda XAN[DA]VG oraz napis runiczny i znajdujący się obok niego znak przypominający zgięty palec. W pierwszym przypadku twórca matrycy – stempli do wybicia monety lub formy i stempla – najprawdopodobniej obrócił pierwowzór o 180 stopni. W drugim, zastąpił legendę łacińską legendą runiczną. Analiza różnych możliwych technik wykonania A 6273 wskazuje, że mogła ona zostać wykonana techniką zbliżoną do tej, w jakiej wykonywano brakteaty germańskie, z wykorzystaniem modelu z miękkiego materiału w pierwszym etapie produkcji.

Runolodzy, którzy wypowiedzieli się na temat napisu runicznego na podstawie zdjęcia zamieszczonego w opisie aukcji WCN, potwierdzili, że są to znaki runiczne, a różne możliwości ich odczytania prezentują tabele 3 i 4. Możliwa jest też inna interpretacja oparta na podobieństwie części legendy *irl* do występujących na innych zabytkach legendy runicznej *irilaR*, *erilaR* w świetle której byłaby to nazwa plemienna odnosząca się do Herulów. Fakt wykonania takiego napisu, sam w sobie wyjątkowy, a dodatkowo umieszczenia go na stronie eksponowanej podczas noszenia monety jako ozdoby, może przemawiać za tym, że było to imię. Wiązałoby się to także ściśle z jej funkcją: niewątpli-

wie przedmiotu osobistego o dużym znaczeniu dla swojego posiadacza, być może oznaki prestiżu, bogactwa, władzy, niewykluczone, że amuletu.

A 6273 jest najstarszą znaną monetą runiczną. Jej ogromna wartość naukowa polega na tym, że przesuwa ona początki mennictwa germańskiego o dwa wieki wstecz i wiąże je najściślej z Germanami z południowo-wschodniego Barbaricum. Dalsze badania nad monetą i technologią jej wykonania pozwolą zapewne lepiej zrozumieć związki między Skandynawią, a obszarem nadczarnomorskim w III–IV w.

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