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THE BEGINNINGS OF POLISH COINAGE IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT RESEARCH

ABSTRACT: The author updates the state of knowledge about the origins of Polish coinage in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. This became possible due to new coin finds and the use of new research methods and, above all, revealing new die-links. The author concludes that it was not Mieszko I (c. 962–992), but his son Boleslaus the Brave (992–1025) who began Polish coinage. This early coinage was more intensely produced and more diverse than was previously thought. In one mint, correctly inscribed dies and corrupted imitations of foreign patterns were used simultaneously. Coins served the purpose of both propaganda and economic tools. They accounted for a small proportion of the prevailing foreign coins in circulation.

The beginnings of Polish coinage have been the subject of the lively interest of researchers since at least the nineteenth century. It was addressed by Kazimierz Stronczyński in his fundamental study on Polish coins of the Piast and the Jagiellonian dynasties (the tenth–sixteenth centuries).¹ The fullest list of types and variants of the earliest Polish coins, or coins regarded at the time as Polish, was given by Marian Gumowski.² A new perspective on coinage and commodity money in early medieval Poland (from the ninth to the eleventh centuries) was given by Ryszard Kiersnowski.³

I addressed the subject of the beginnings of Polish coinage on a number of occasions – most extensively, nearly half a century ago, in a monograph study on Polish coins from the turn of the tenth and the eleventh centuries.⁴ Studying the

¹ Stronczyński 1883–1885.

² Gumowski 1939.

³ Kiersnowski 1960.

⁴ Suchodolski 1967, pp. 65–194 (with a discussion of earlier literature); Suchodolski 1969, pp. 91–129; Suchodolski 1972, pp. 131–135.

complete corpus assembled at the time in collections, public as well as private, in and outside Poland (jointly 194 specimens), I concluded that the coinage of that age was underdeveloped and poorly organized. The first to mint coins was Mieszko I (c.960–992), at the end of his reign, his work continued by his son Boleslaus the Brave (992–1025). The scale of their coinage activity is best expressed by the number of coin types attributed to them at the time – three to Mieszko and fifteen to Boleslaus (see Table 2).

Sometime later, I revisited the above prospect on a number of occasions taking advantage both of the increase in evidence and advances in research.⁵ Two factors were of greatest significance in this respect – the recovery from the ground of new collective finds, so-called hoards and progress made in the identification of coin die-links. The hoards, next to several hundred tenth and eleventh century foreign coins, also contained a modest number of Polish coins. These included both specimens minted with dies that were already known to us and others minted with new variants. However, by far the most remarkable are coins of several entirely new types, previously unknown. In all these cases of utmost significance has been the context of foreign coins, much better studied and with reliable dating. They are of great help as we can use them to confirm the chronology currently accepted for the Polish coin types already known and that of the new types – the latter even more interesting than the former.

A separate question is the surfacing of finds featuring Polish coins in areas where hitherto they were unknown. Until recently, these finds had been recorded only in the territory of Poland and in Scandinavia. Currently, they are reported with an increasing frequency, in the territory of the former Rus'.⁶

⁵ Suchodolski 1998, pp. 5–20; Suchodolski 2000b, pp. 299–312; Suchodolski 2000d, pp. 351–360; Suchodolski 2009b, pp. 27–46.

⁶ These are the finds from this region that I have information on: Kipien' near St. Petersburg, *tpq* 1024, REX type; Andrushev raion, *tpq* 1023, REX type, complete penny and a half; Vasil'kov raion, *tpq* 1019, INCLITVS type, Such. XI, 19 and a new type with a church (*cf.* Fig. 11); Lutsk, *tpq* 1016, PRINCES penny, Such. IX, 14, sold in Poland (Niemczyk 2014, no. 12); Grodna, penny with the name of Mieszko, an uncertain type, reported as a stray find. I owe all of this data to the kindness of Mr. Oleg Trost'ianskij from Cheboksary. *Cf.* Michelson and Trost'ianskij, in press. See also Kolodezi, obl. Kaluga, *tpq* 1059, fragment of a penny type PRINCES, Such. IX, 15, see Beliaikov, Ianiina 1977 (while not listed in the cited publication this coin is now in the State Historical Museum in Moscow). The same museum has in its collections a dozen odd more coins of Boleslaus the Brave and Mieszko, without recorded provenance (perusal and photographs kindly provided by Dr Tatiana Stukalova from Moscow and by Mr. Jacek Magiera from Cracow). It is very likely that these coins belonged to hoards discovered in the territory of the former Soviet Union.

Not all these discoveries and revisions, however, have helped us expand our source database. On occasion, the situation is just the opposite as from the checklist of the earliest Polish coins we now need to remove some foreign or later coin types. A classic example in this respect are coins with the names of Boleslaus and St John – long attributed to Boleslaus the Brave and the Wrocław mint.⁷ That they originated in Wrocław, the city which has a cathedral dedicated to St John the Baptist, there can be no doubt. At the same time, the chronology of the finds in which these coins appeared clearly demonstrates that they are of a much later date. They were minted by a different Boleslaus – presumably, Boleslaus the Wrymouth,⁸ (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Boleslaus the Wrymouth, Wrocław mint (according to W. Nakielski).

If there is no need to explain how our material is corroborated by the study of the context of finds, the advantage from tracing the identity (or the sameness) of dies and die-links may not be entirely clear. During the period of interest two dies were needed to mint a coin – an upper and a bottom die – with the disc cut from a silver sheet placed between them. When the upper die was struck with a hammer, the pictorial designs and inscriptions engraved on both dies in intaglio became impressed on the coin blank. However, if several pairs of dies were used at the same time, or within a short space of time, it could occur that two dies were used as a pair different from the one originally planned. A different reason that upset the original scheme was when the upper die, directly exposed to the impact from the hammer, wore out sooner and had to be replaced and thus a duplicate was made.

The history of the links between dies, even their sequence, may be represented as a graphic form in what are known as ‘die-chains’. For a larger and a more complete corpus of coins (in Poland, only starting from the second half of the

⁷ See Gumowski 1939, p. 32ff., nos. 22 and 23; Kiersnowski 1960, p. 270ff.; Suchodolski 1967, p. 122ff., 179.

⁸ Suchodolski 1996, pp. 121–126; Nakielski 2012, pp. 147–184.

eleventh century), these die-chains can include several score of dies and illustrate the operation of a mint over a longer period.⁹

How did the application of the two methods of research affect the established ideas about the earliest Polish coinage? Firstly, it was revealed that coins with the name of Mieszko are found in hoards that were buried relatively late, only after 1017, a quarter of a century after the death of Mieszko I (Fig. 2). As this context was established both in the past and for newly discovered coins this cannot be an accident. Thus, we are led to conclude that these coins in fact are those of the grandson – Mieszko II (1025–1034). However, since they appear in finds dated earlier than 1025, that is, before Mieszko II became an independent ruler after the death of Boleslaus the Brave. Therefore, we have to assume that Mieszko, son of Boleslaus, minted coin even when heir to the throne, discharging important state functions at his father's side. Furthermore, based on the distribution pattern of these coin finds it may be established that they were not minted in Cracow, the province allotted to him by his father,¹⁰ but in Greater Poland. It is here, at the centre of the Piast realm, that the bulk of the coinage activity of Boleslaus the Brave was pursued also. Nevertheless, this took place at different locations, as we may conclude from stylistic differences between the dies of individual coin types and of the fact that there are no die-links between them. The coins of Boleslaus the Brave were presumably minted at the main centres like Gniezno, Poznań and Ostrów Lednicki, but also at smaller ones, such as Mogilno. The mint for the coins of Mieszko may have been at Giecz. We can speculate further that Mieszko started issuing his coinage from 1013 onwards when his prestige had increased following his marriage to Richeza, the granddaughter of Emperor Otto II.



Fig. 2. Mieszko, son of Boleslaus the Brave, penny with inscription MISICO, Giecz mint?

⁹ Suchodolski 2011, p. 69ff. With essential publications.

¹⁰ Thus, Labuda 1992, p. 41ff.

My argument, already presented in 1997,¹¹ that we need to revise the attribution of coins with the name Mieszko and by so doing delay the beginning of Polish coinage, was accepted, not without some resistance however, by other researchers and entered publications. Thus, if we wish to identify the earliest Polish coins we need to look to the issues of Boleslaus the Brave. When I wrote of this for the first time, I was still uncertain as to which coins of this ruler to put at the head of his coinage. I only named a group of types that I recognized as the earliest. They include coins with the name of St Wenceslas, Otto and Adelheid, and recently discovered coins with a pictorial design of an arrow in the Tree of Life. Of these, the first type I propose to link with the introduction into Poland of the cult of the holy Czech martyr – Wenceslas. Presumably, the one to initiate it was Boleslaus the Brave, who was closely related to Wenceslas through his mother, when before the start of the cult of St Adalbert in 997 he was looking for another patron for his state and dynasty¹² (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Boleslaus the Brave, penny with the name of St Wenceslas, Poznań mint?
Photo Národní muzeum, Prague.

The speculation on the early dating of the other coin types – imitative of Saxon pennies with the names of Emperor Otto III (983-1002) and his grandmother, Empress Adelheid, is based on the relatively early dating of hoards in which these coins were found (after 1002). This, however, does not settle the date of their origin (Fig. 4).

Another contender for the title of the earliest coin of Boleslaus the Brave used to be the much discussed penny type with the alleged portrait of this ruler and the legend GNEZDVN CIVITAS (Fig. 5). According to Andrzej Schmidt, the inscription is supposed to mean ‘the Gniezno State’ and corresponds to the expression *civitas Schinesghe* mentioned in the *Dagome iudex* document. In this manner, Boleslaus the Brave would have been manifesting in 992 his coming

¹¹ Suchodolski 2000c, pp. 978–982.

¹² Suchodolski 2000a, pp. 87–102.



Fig. 4. Boleslaus the Brave, penny modelled on coins of Otto and Adelheid (die-chain 1), Poznań mint? Photo Národní muzeum, Prague.

into his father's entire inheritance.¹³ This argument is difficult to defend since the name *civitas* appears at this time on many European coins, especially those from the Bavarian–Czech–Hungarian environment. In addition, in that environment it always means, in keeping with the Carolingian tradition, ‘city’ or ‘stronghold’, but never – ‘state’. It is another matter that, at the time of taking power in the country, Boleslaus the Brave indeed may have had the name of his capital placed on the coin. Nevertheless, there is no method to have this speculation confirmed by the cross dating of finds because the coin of interest is still the only one of its kind, found in a relatively late deposit buried only around the middle of the eleventh century. All reports on the discovery of further specimens of this type have proved untrue, and the coins themselves – fakes.¹⁴



Fig. 5. Boleslaus the Brave, penny with the legend GNEZDVN CIVITAS. Muzeum Narodowe, Cracow.

Therefore, of coin types aspiring to be the earliest issue of Boleslaus the Brave all that remains are coins with the Tree of Life and an arrow on one face and a

¹³ Schmidt 1990, pp. 237–245.

¹⁴ Suchodolski 1999, pp. 303–321.

cross of a Byzantine style — on the other (Fig. 6). The first such specimen had been recorded already during the first half of the nineteenth century, but looted by Russians after the defeat of the November Uprising of 1830 it has never been heard of again. Its vague drawing, taken together with the dubious reputation of its first owner, Tadeusz Wolański — indiscriminate Slavophile and enthusiast antiquarian — led me to disregard this specimen as a fraud. However, the authenticity of this coin type was corroborated by the discovery of another such specimen in a hoard from Kalisz–Rajsków. All coins in this assemblage were tenth century issues, the latest — not counting the penny of Boleslaus the Brave — minted in 985–995. It was this fact that persuaded me to include the said type among the earliest coins of Boleslaus the Brave.¹⁵



Fig. 6. Boleslaus the Brave, penny with the representation of an arrow, Poznań mint (according to J. Piniński).

The absolute precedence of the arrow type coins only gained solid support with the discovery made by Jerzy Piniński among the contents of the hoard from Garsk near Koszalin. This assemblage was buried shortly after 996, which makes it the second oldest of all the hoards containing the earliest Polish coins.¹⁶ As such, this coin type deserves closer examination. As was mentioned earlier, on the obverse is a representation of an arrow tipped with an arrowhead. The arrow issues from a bundle of irregular lines which we can identify as a heavily stylized Tree of Life. The arrow, ever moving towards its target, is presumably a symbol of the Word of God. A different interpretation, recently proposed by Jerzy Piniński, is less convincing. His view is that this is not an arrow only a spear, a symbol of St Adalbert as the instrument of his martyrdom.¹⁷ Certainly, a similar depiction of a spear is known from coins of that age, but then it is held by a man, not as a stand-alone motif. The Hungarian

¹⁵ Suchodolski 1997, pp. 265–273.

¹⁶ Piniński 2002, pp. 51–58.

¹⁷ Piniński 2010, p. 63ff.

spear of St Stephen, his coronation insignia, is an exception, but looks quite different.¹⁸

In the margin is a reversed, complete and fully legible inscription containing the name of the prince and his title: + BOLIZLAVO DVX. This form of his name ending in the letter *o* is not incorrect, and is known from the contemporary texts of St Bruno of Querfurt.¹⁹ We may suppose that it arose through imitation of the name of Mieszko (*Misico*). The ducal title is not an exception to the earliest Polish coins, but neither is it very common. It is not observed on other coins of the earliest group. Later, it appears sporadically – on the type of the Czech style, unexpectedly inscribed with MOGILN CIVITAS²⁰ (Fig. 7), or in an expanded form: DVX INCLITVS.



Fig. 7. Boleslaus the Brave, penny with the legend MOGILN CIVITAS, Mogilno mint (according to V. Katz).

The reverse of the same coin, is anepigraphic, with no analogy on other Polish coins of that age. Instead, the entire surface of the die is occupied by a large image of a cross crosslet or of four Latin crosses conjoined. At the end of each arm is an annulet and there are four more between the arms. A cross of this form is known as a Greek cross, from its appearance on Byzantine *miliaresia* starting from the middle of the tenth century. There is no doubt, however, that it found its way on to Polish coins via Danish ones. This design is observed in an identical form on the so-called Hedeby half-bracteates type *Kors* (= cross), actually minted in north Jutland in 980–990. It is also interesting that the reverse depiction has some analogy with Danish coins, although slightly later ones, as they are issues of Cnut the Great. On them is a similar representation of the Tree of Life, with the difference being that instead of an arrow a cross is shown issuing from it.

All of which suggests that the beginnings of Polish coinage have a connection with Denmark.²¹ It is difficult to say what these were. However, in all

¹⁸ Suchodolski 2005, pp. 63–71.

¹⁹ *Epistola Brunonis* 1973, p. 104ff.

²⁰ Ginter 1998, pp. 71–79. Originally this type was classified as a Czech coin. Recently, on this subject, Stróżyk 2009, pp. 41–55, made attempt to link these coins to Mogilno in Lusatia, but it lacks justification.

²¹ Suchodolski 2010, pp. 821–828.

likelihood, they were not limited to imitation of Danish coins, even if these are noted among Polish finds. Obviously, this possibility applies only to older Danish coins. The influence from the coins of Cnut, which are younger, is definitely out of the question. What is important is the introduction of similar symbols at approximately the same time, and in areas not too far apart. This suggests that some very personal connections were at play, of a sort that are actually documented in scarce written sources and in increasingly numerous archaeological evidence. It is enough to recollect that the sister of Boleslaus the Brave was first, the queen of the Swedish king Eric and, next (from approximately 995–996), of the Danish king Sweyn Forkbeard. Thus, she became the mother of the Swedish king Olaf Skötkonung and, later, of the Danish and Anglo-Saxon king Cnut the Great.²² We also know that Sweyn's father – Harald Bluetooth – after a failed clash with his opponents took shelter on the island of Wolin in Pomerania and died there of his wounds. A more extended presence of Danes in the Piast state is evidenced by, on the other hand, the presence of chamber graves in cemeteries of Greater Poland, at Sowinki, Dziekanowice on Lake Lednica, or at Bodzia and Kałdus.²³ The author of the die designs, especially their legend, would have been a clergyman associated with the duke's *capella*, or with the Bishop of Poznań. In both cases, the most likely place of origin of the first Polish coins would be Poznań.

In addition, what new knowledge about the earliest Polish coinage have we gained from the painstaking examination of coin dies and new die-links? The three already known chains have now been expanded (Fig. 8–10). Using them as a basis, it has been possible to demonstrate that the same mints, or perhaps, to be more circumspect – the same moneyer's workshops – produced two very different kinds of coin. Evident on some of these coins are local dies with the names and titles of Boleslaus the Brave and his son Mieszko, the later king, Mieszko II. Others imitate, for better or worse, the dies of foreign coins: Saxon, Bavarian, Czech and Anglo-Saxon. There is no doubt that coins of the latter group, one that we can describe as imitative, were issued only for economic reasons. They copied the most widespread foreign coins already domesticated on the Polish market. Since they contained no information about the actual issuer – Boleslaus and Mieszko – they could not, in any event, serve the purpose of status manifestation or propaganda. This particular end was served by coins stamped with actual data – names of Polish princes, their titles, symbolic images and, exceptionally, also the names of mints. As was noted earlier, the dies of both these types of coins have been found to link. Only due to this discovery were some of the imitative coins identified as being of Polish origin.

²² Jasiński [1992], pp. 94–100.

²³ Stanisławski 2013; *Scandinavian Culture* 2013.

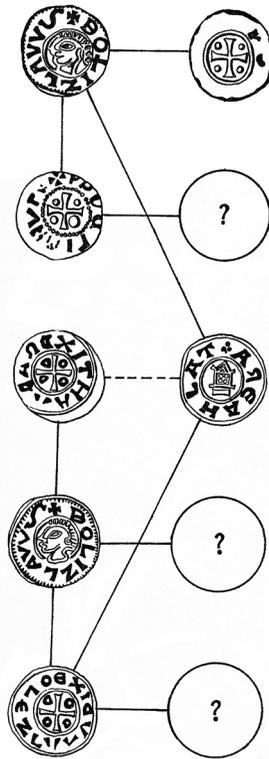


Fig. 8. Die-chain 1, Poznań?

It is not fully clear, however, when and how these links happened. There are two possible ways to explain the phenomenon. It either took place at a mint that employed staff of very uneven skills, or outside the mint altogether. In other words, the correct dies must have been stolen or robbed and next used together with replaced, often much more inferior dies.²⁴ It is hard to image this happening during the reign of a strong ruler such as Boleslaus the Brave. Much more likely is the period following the murder of Mieszko II in 1034, the ensuing chaos in the kingdom, the popular revolt and the fall of the first Piast monarchy. Nevertheless, an analysis of the chronology of the hybrids, or coins struck with incorrectly paired dies drawing on the dating of their hoard context, shows that such a late dating is improbable. Moreover, we have evidence from early Swedish coinage that local and imitative dies could be used concurrently in the same mint.²⁵

²⁴ Similar cases are known for the Migration Period. Also in early medieval Scandinavian coinage there is evidence of the use of original Anglo-Saxon dies, see Blackburn 1985, pp. 101–124; Bogucki 2006, p. 190.

²⁵ Malmer 1989; Malmer 1997.

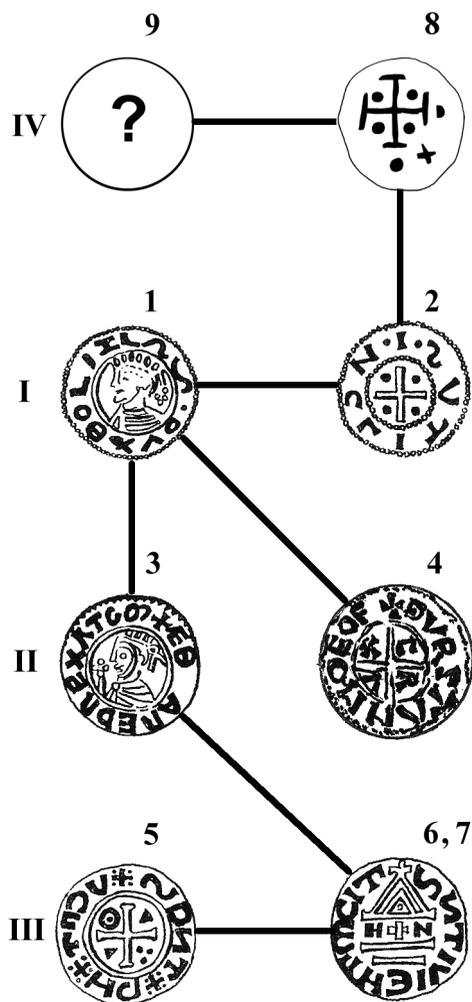


Fig. 10. Die-chain 3, Poznań?

Nonetheless, how did it happen that these disparate dies were linked in the Polish mints? There are two possibilities: either, at first, coins with the names of Polish princes and imitative coins were minted separately and only later were the two groups of dies used in combination or alternately, they were used in combination from the very first. The latter option could have been supported by the fact that not all the pairs of imitative dies were known; and so, the obverse of a penny of the Anglo-Saxon king, Æthelred II was paired with a die of coins inscribed DVX INCLITVS, and with a die of Bavarian type (Fig. 10, nos. 3, 1, 6 and 7). What we did not have were coins with the Anglo-Saxon reverse type and with the Bavarian obverse type. The latter was discovered some time ago,

in a hoard from Cracow VIII–Nowa Huta²⁶ (Fig. 11). We owe the discovery, a few years ago, also of two coins with the sought imitative reverse of a penny of Æthelred II to international cooperation (Fig. 10, nos. 4, Fig. 12).²⁷ This tips the scales in favour of the argument that originally all the imitations were struck with pairs of dies appropriate for them. Thus, what we still need to discover is the reverse die of a coin with the name of the Czech prince, Vladioj. To-date, only the imitation of the obverse of this coin is known, linked with the dies of coins of Boleslaus the Brave with the legend PRINCES POLONIE (die-chain 3, Fig. 9).



Fig. 11. Boleslaus the Brave, imitative penny of the Bavarian type (die-chain no. 3).



Fig. 12. Boleslaus the Brave, imitative penny of the Anglo-Saxon type (die-chain no. 3, according to K. Jonsson and S. Suchodolski).

No less significant is the discovery made by Mateusz Bogucki. This researcher determined that the dies of the PRINCES POLONIE type not only link with the well-made imitative dies but also with heavily barbarized dies, featuring pseudo-legends (Fig. 9, B1 and 2, Figs. 13 and 14). This observation revealed new possibilities for the interpretation of the earliest Polish coinage. It appears that different types with heavily distorted dies, previously attributed to clandestine, semi-legal shops, actually may have issued from the same workshops which manufactured the most prestigious pennies of Boleslaus the Brave.²⁸ Thus, the scale of coinage

²⁶ Suchodolski 1967, p. 101, 173; Reyman-Walczak 2013, p. 73, nos. 46, 494–496.

²⁷ Jonsson and Suchodolski 2009, pp. 29–40.

²⁸ Bogucki 2006, pp. 181–194.

of the early Piast princes may have been larger than previously thought and, at the same time, the level of execution of ducal coins lower than universally accepted.



Fig. 13. Boleslaus the Brave, hybrid type PRINCES and new type with a church (die-chain no. 2, according to M. Bogucki).

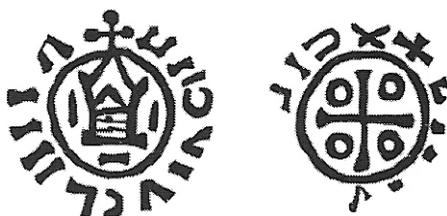


Fig. 14. Boleslaus the Brave, imitative penny, new type with a church (die-chain no. 2, according to M. Bogucki).

The Polish origin of various kinds of coins imitating Bavarian, Saxon coins and ones minted at Cologne had been suggested in the past by Peter Ilisch who also presented die-chains of these imitations.²⁹ Recently, Mateusz Bogucki and Jacek Magiera were able to confirm this surmise due to the discovery of a link between one of these chains with chain no. 3 of the dies of Boleslaus the Brave.³⁰

While the discoveries of new dies prove beyond any doubt that the scale of Polish coinage in the tenth and eleventh centuries was larger than previously thought, there is also some evidence to argue just the opposite. The elimination of later types was mentioned earlier in this discussion. According to the results of the most recent studies of Mateusz Bogucki, we also need to reduce the estimated

²⁹ Ilisch 1994, pp. 65–70; Ilisch 2005, pp. 191–196.

³⁰ Ilisch 2005, p. 192, No. 3b and Boleslaus the Brave, reverse type PRINCES POLONIE (barbarized). The authors have yet to publish their discovery presented on 23 May 2014 in Warsaw at the meeting of the Commission for Numismatic Studies of the Polish National Historical Committee, Polish Academy of Sciences (Bogucki and Magiera 2014). See their article in the current volume.

number of the earliest coin dies. This has disproved the existence of two die variants of the well-known penny with the legend PRINCES POLONIE – correct and barbarized. In reality, there was only a single pair of dies, which after partial damage, possibly as a result of corrosion, were repaired, rather awkwardly. The repairs were made by an illiterate person, one not only unable to reconstruct the letters but also to understand the meaning of the pictorial design. As a result, after the ‘repairs’, the bird gained an additional, third leg (Fig. 15). According to Mateusz Bogucki, similar repairs which involved the filing of the worn die and carving the outlines of the letters and pictorial designs deeper, were made also to the pair of dies with the name of Mieszko (Fig. 1). Thus, there were never two variants: one with the legend MISICO and another with MIDICO, but only one which was repaired with only a minor error.³¹ We may have to allow for similar treatment meant to prolong the life of the minting dies also in the case of other coin types of Boleslaus the Brave, *e.g.* those with the legends: BOLIZLAVS, DVX INCLITVS, or БОΛΕЦЛАВЪ.³²

The above observations afford some insight into how the work of the moneyers of the time was organized. Apparently, manufacturing new dies was something of a challenge to them. For sometimes they used old dies for as long as possible and did their utmost to extend their life span. The same is suggested by something that is not seen outside our study area during the same age, namely, that a pair of dies was broken up and the anvil and pile were used separately. The result of this practice was uniface coins, with only the obverse or only the reverse. This made it possible to double the output of the mint using the same tools. Finally, also symptomatic is the use in the official ducal minting workshop of quite simplified dies. Apparently, with more skilled engravers in short supply if need be some random individuals with mediocre qualifications would be employed. At the same time, it is interesting that this was done only during the production of certain coin types; firstly, the coin type with the legend PRINCES POLONIE, already known from the discussion of the inexperienced repair of dies and links with barbarized dies (Fig. 15). This heavy exploitation of dies gave rise to the largest number of coin specimens that have survived to our times. Over twenty years ago, I succeeded in counting 86 of them. At present, their number presumably approaches one hundred. Much less frequent, on the other hand, are coins of two other types represented both by uniface and

³¹ Bogucki 2010, pp. 172–192.

³² *E.g.* what is remarkable is the great similarity of the reverse dies in types IV,4 and IV,5, 6, 8 (Figs. 4 and 7) and both dies in types XI,18 and 19; XIII,21 and 22. It is difficult to resolve at present whether this is the result of the repairing of the dies, or only of the use of the same patterns or of the copying of worn dies.



Fig. 15. An impression of original (Fig. 1) and modified dies (Fig. 2). Reconstruction of die corrections for the PRINCES POLONIE pennies of Boleslaus the Brave (Fig. 3). Black – authentic fragments from the original version, grey – corrected and deepened elements, white – quite new elements. Fig. M. Bogucki.

bifacial specimens, namely, those with the name of St Wenceslas (Fig. 3) and the title REX.³³

As we have seen, over recent years our knowledge of the earliest Polish coins has been significantly enriched. Naturally, this does not mean that we know everything that is to be known about them. Nevertheless, it will be easier to find answers to the persistent questions concerning the operation of the coinage, its time frame and geographical scope, and even more importantly, how things worked in practice. As we already know, the same workshops were using very different dies – with names of local and foreign rulers, moreover, some of them were correct,

³³ Suchodolski 2002b, pp. 285–295.

others seriously simplified. It might seem that the earliest would be the former, minted with up-to-date, well made dies, to which were added imitative dies, with time, of increasingly inferior quality. A closer chronological analysis shows that things may have been different.

The first die-chain grouping the coins imitative of Saxon patterns is the oldest (Figs. 4 and 8). It includes pennies with the name of Boleslaus and a schematic representation of his head – only inspired by the pennies of Otto III and Adelheid that were very popular in finds, and their almost exact copies. Based on the typology of these coins and the dating of hoards in which they appeared, this chain can be dated to the very end of the tenth century or the first years of the next.³⁴

In the second die-chain coins with the legend PRINCES POLONIE are now later than originally thought. Rather than having been issued around 1000 in connection with the arrival of Emperor Otto III in Gniezno, as is still often maintained, their dating is only 1005–1015. Apparently older than they are pennies that imitate the Czech type of prince Vladivoj (1002–1003), and also – as indicated by the chronology of hoards – the most distorted coins. The youngest in the chain are uniface pennies struck with ‘repaired’ dies³⁵ (Figs. 9 and 15).

Also in the third die-chain (Fig. 10), the dating of pennies with the legend DVX INCLITVS and with the legend imitative of the pennies of Æthelred II has been delayed. Their Anglo-Saxon models were struck only around 1013/14. Older, on the other hand, are imitations of the Bavarian type – pennies of King Henry II (1002–1009).³⁶ Recently, Mateusz Bogucki succeeded in adding to this chain one more die, linked directly to the reverse of a penny with the inscription INCLITVS. This new die imitates the reverse of the penny attributed by us to Mieszko, son of Boleslaus the Brave (type II.3),³⁷ (Figs. 2 and 16).

Now that we have here three separate die-chains, we may surmise that they correspond to the activity either of separate mints or of the same mint only during different periods. If the conjecture that the author of the model of the dies with the PRINCES POLONIE and the representation of a peacock was Archbishop Radim Gaudentius is true, then chain 2 in which we find dies of these coins would have to be linked to Gniezno.³⁸ Consequently, the nearly contemporary or only

³⁴ Re-examining the hoard from Ulejno at Münster (where this hoard is at present) Peter Ilisch identified a new variant of a coin of Boleslaus the Brave and added new die-links to this chain, see Ilisch and Suchodolski 2003, pp. 97–104.

³⁵ Bogucki 2006, p. 189.

³⁶ Jonsson and Suchodolski 2009, p. 36ff. (*cf.* note 27).

³⁷ WCN 2012, no. 105; WCN 2014, no. 112, both coins struck with the same pair of dies, reportedly from a hoard discovered in the environs of Grodzisk Wielkopolski, *tpq* 1018 (?).

³⁸ Suchodolski 2002a, pp. 153–169, here 164–167.



Fig. 16. Boleslaus the Brave, hybrid of INCLITVS type and the imitation of the coin of Mieszko (according to WCN 56: 112).

slightly later dies grouped in the Polish-Anglo-Saxon-Bavarian chain no. 3 (*e.g.* DVX INCLITVS, ‘Æthelred’) would have to have originated elsewhere, possibly in Poznań. Here also we would have to place the earliest production of coinage based on Saxon patterns, illustrated by chain no. 1, although also in chain no. 2 we find distorted dies with the pictorial designs (Fig. 9, B2). We have already attributed to Poznań the earliest type with the representation of an arrow, opening official Polish coinage. This also would be the most appropriate place for the type which advanced the cult of St Wenceslas. For their part, coins with the legend GNEZDVN CIVITAS are best attributed to Gniezno, and those with the legend MOGILN CIVITAS – to Mogilno. Earlier we noted that the pennies of Mieszko, son of Boleslaus the Brave, could have been minted at Giecz. Evidence is lacking to identify the mint for the coins with the name of Boleslaus and a representation of his head facing, and for the latest coins of the first monarchy – with the self-promoting title of king and with the legend in Cyrillic. Presumably, they both were made only around 1020. Only hypothetically could the former be attributed to Gniezno, due to their uniface strike, and the fact that this is where the king was crowned at a later date. A trial attribution of the coin types to individual mints is shown in Table 1.

Proceeding to matters related to coinage, viewed from both a narrower and broader perspective, another subject also addressed in recent years in publications has been the iconography of the earliest Polish coins. As mentioned earlier, an unconvincing bid was made to interpret the representation on the earliest coins of Boleslaus the Brave, one that I recognize as an arrow, as a spear – symbol of the martyrdom of St Adalbert (Fig. 6).³⁹

A more heated debate has centred on the identification and interpretation of the bird depicted on coins with the legend PRINCES POLONIE (Fig. 15). My view, that this is a peacock, symbol of eternal life – implicitly, the life of the recently martyred St Adalbert – was challenged, first by Tomasz Panfil, and subsequently, by M.D. Kossowski. Their claim was that this is the White Eagle,

³⁹ See note 17.

Table 1. Coin types and mints – tentative attribution

Years	Mints				
	Poznań	Gniezno	Mogilno	Giecz	?
992–1000	with arrow, VENCIEZLAVS				
995–1005	Chain 1 a) BOLIZLAVS b) Otto and Adelheid				
1000		GNEZDVN			
1000–1010	Chain 3 a) Bavarian type	Chain 2 a) VLADIVOI b) with church c) PRINCES	MOGILN		bust facing
1010–1020	b) INCLITVS c) ‘Æthelred’	d) PRINCES repaired		Mieszko	
1015–1020	d) ‘Mieszko’	REX			БОЛЕСЛАВЪ

what is more, wearing a crown, the symbol of sovereignty of the Polish state.⁴⁰ This completely anachronistic argument has already met with sharp criticism.⁴¹ The controversy between the proponents of the eagle and the proponents of the peacock appears to consist in the fact that the former embarked on the interpretation of numismatic sources with a solution made earlier, and their purpose was only to substantiate their claim. For the latter, on the other hand, coins have been a point of departure in research in which, naturally, in due course, other sources were also to be made use of.

Equally unsuccessful has been the interpretation of the domed pattern on the pennies of Mieszko, son of Boleslaus the Brave (Fig. 2). The common view is that this is an architectural motif – the gable of a temple modelled on tenth century Saxon coins. According to Paweł Stróżyk, this would be a power symbol – an old Lechitic mitre.⁴² Presented in an attractive manner this view unfortunately lacks a rational justification. Nevertheless, there is no denying that we may have to return to the discussion of the interpretation of this motif. It will be so if, in the

⁴⁰ Suchodolski 2002a; Panfil 2002, pp. 163–200 (with a report on the earlier discussion); Kossowski 2007, pp. 161–184 (a similar version: Kossowski 2008, pp. 3–25).

⁴¹ Suchodolski 2009a, pp. 365–373; Garbaczewski 2010, pp. 141–149.

⁴² Stróżyk 2000, pp. 121–134.

light of new finds or the revision of older ones; we find that the coins with the name Mieszko In reality date to after 1025.

New evidence to help in determining the chronology of coins of Anglo-Saxon type – both those with the name of Æthelred and of Boleslaus – came from the analysis of the typology and chronology of the original pennies of Æthelred II, their prototype. It seems that they belong among the latest issues of this ruler and show close analogy to the earliest issues of Cnut. On this basis, English researchers have dated these, for us prototype coins, to 1013/14. Needless to say, the Polish imitations cannot be older than they can. As such, they belong among the youngest coins of Boleslaus the Brave.⁴³

How does the earliest Polish coinage appear to us now, with insight from new sources and recent research? How is this new outlook different from the one we had in 1967? There is an undeniable increase in evidence, see Table 2.

Table 2. Finds and coins recorded up to 1967 and 2011

Coins and finds	up to 1967		up to 2011	
	types	pieces	types	pieces
Coins of Boleslaus the Brave	15	140	17	>185
Coins with the name Mieszko	3	54	3	> 75
Finds with Polish coins	57		> 90	

The most outstanding development is that the beginnings of this coinage have been delayed. Again, however, we have to note that this applies only to – as it were – official coins, namely, the ones with the name of the local ruler or the name of a foreign ruler, but only in cases when there is a die-link between the two. Nevertheless, it is possible that some imitative coins were already minted by Mieszko I, but if so, certainly they were not the specimens attributed to him until recently.

The overall assessment of this early coinage has not changed considerably. We still think that it was seriously limited in volume. This view has not been altered by the discovery of at least three new types and the possibility that a larger number of primitive imitations may in fact be ducal coinage. Moreover, we can surmise that some dies were used rather sparingly. This is evidenced by the very small number of coins struck with these dies that survived to our day, some of them as a one of a kind specimen. Thus, presumably they were minted in only a small number of specimens. It is also significant that most often the dies were

⁴³ Jonsson and Suchodolski 2009.

used only in pairs. We know, however, that the most rational system was to use sets of three dies since the upper die became worn twice as quickly as the bottom die. Consequently, the striking of coins of certain types was stopped prior to the occurrence of this damage or at the latest, when this happened.

Also unchanged is our view on the lack of a rational organization of the coinage activity and its decentralization. It was undertaken several times from scratch, by different individuals, using different models and at different locations. There is no evidence of the regular control by the clergy of the correctness of execution of the legends, the result being that some of them are blundered or distorted outright into pseudo-legends.

The low assessment of the technical aspect of our coinage not only has been upheld but has even been reinforced. It seems that sometimes the making of new dies was a serious problem. This impression is supported not only by the issue of uniface coins, but also by the occasional lengthening of the life of very heavily used dies. No less eloquent is the striking of coins with completely distorted dies, something we discussed earlier on.

The described model of coinage has no close analogy in any of the neighbouring countries which started striking their own coin at an approximately the same time. Both Bohemia and Hungary had much more developed and better organized coinage, with a single central mint and moreover, uniform models.⁴⁴

The system of coinage closest to the Polish one was in Sweden, where we also see correctly inscribed coins that link with fully imitative and strongly barbarized ones. However, in Sweden this at least took place at a single mint, in the capital, and moreover, the selection of coin types is almost uniform. In addition, the scale of this coinage activity was larger than in Poland.⁴⁵

Finally, we come to the question of the purpose served by this rather crude and laboriously performed coin production. Let us recall, moreover, that it was short-lived, interrupted in the early 1020s after a quarter century of existence – still before the fall of the first monarchy. In this case also we have no new arguments to challenge my earlier argument that the purpose was equally to satisfy the economic needs of the rulers and to manifest their status. That the first function came into play is evidenced by coins made as faithful copies of foreign models, complete with the names and titles of rulers. The role of manifestation is supported by the names and titles of the Polish princes and symbols of the Christian religion with which they co-occur. For the object of the propaganda contained in the dies was the status of Boleslaus the Brave and his son Mieszko, not as sovereign rulers but as Christian rulers, the circle to which they too wished to join.

⁴⁴ Suchodolski 1971.

⁴⁵ Suchodolski 1971, pp. 157–182, and recently, Malmer 2010 (with references to earlier, analytical works by the same author published in English). See also note 25.

The question that I asked a few years ago is still current: could it be that this rather special model of coinage reflects the structure of organization of the country and some difficulties of adaptation of other novelties borrowed from the West parallel to Christianisation?

ABBREVIATIONS

WN – Wiadomości Numizmatyczne

CNS, NS – Commentationes de nummis saeculorum IX–XI in Suecia repertis. Nova series

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POCZĄTKI POLSKIEGO MENNICTWA W ŚWIETLE NOWYCH BADAŃ

(Streszczenie)

Przed blisko półwiekiem przedstawiłem swoją wizję początków polskiego mennictwa (Suchodolski 1967). Badając cały, dostępny wówczas materiał zgromadzony w krajowych i zagranicznych kolekcjach, zarówno publicznych, jak i prywatnych (łącznie 194 egz.), doszedłem do przekonania, że ówczesne mennictwo było słabo rozwinięte i źle zorganizowane. Miał je zapoczątkować już Mieszko I (ok. 960–992) pod koniec swoich rządów (ryc. 2) a kontynuować jego syn Bolesław Chrobry (992–1025). Później kilkakrotnie modyfikowałem powyższy obraz, wykorzystując zarówno przyrost materiału (do ponad 260 egz., por. tab. 1), jak i postęp badań (Suchodolski 1971, 1998, 2000b, 2009, 2011). Największe znaczenie miały tu dwa czynniki – odkrycia w ziemi nowych depozytów gromadnych, tzw. skarbów, oraz dalsze odkrycia połączeń stempli monetarnych. Wyjątkowo następowała też redukcja materiału – monety z głową św. Jana bite we Wrocławiu zostały uznane za późniejsze, emitowane przez Bolesława Śmiałego (Suchodolski 1996) lub raczej Bolesława Krzywoustego (Nakielski 2012) (ryc. 1). Nieoczekiwanie ograniczeniu uległa również liczba znanych stempli. Stało się to dzięki odkryciu przez M. Boguckiego, że niektóre odmiany stempli powstały nie na skutek użycia nowych narzędzi, ale w wyniku przerabiania i reperowania starych (Bogucki 2010).

W wyniku nowych badań okazało się, że monety z imieniem Mieszka, dotychczas kojarzone z Mieszkiem I, pojawiły się w znaleziskach co najmniej ćwierć wieku po jego

śmierci. Zostały więc wybite przez Mieszka II, ale jeszcze przed jego wstąpieniem na tron w 1025 r. Emitował je zatem nie jako samodzielny władca, lecz jako następcę tronu. Jak wskazuje rozrzut znalezisk, miało to miejsce w Wielkopolsce, być może w Gieczu (Suchodolski 2000c, 2009). Również w Wielkopolsce powstały wszystkie monety Bolesława Chrobrego. Nie potwierdziły się bowiem wcześniejsze domysły o jego działalności menniczej we Wrocławiu, w Krakowie, Kijowie czy na Łużycach. Inicjatorem polskiego mennictwa był zatem Bolesław Chrobry. Rozpoczął je już na początku swoich rządów, nie później niż od 995 r. Jak wskazuje chronologia znalezisk, na czele znanych dziś co najmniej 17 typów trzeba postawić typ z wyobrażeniem strzały w Drzewie Życia na awersie oraz krzyża typu bizantyjskiego na rewersie (ryc. 6). Krzyż ten został jednak przejęty za pośrednictwem duńskim, co każe domyślać się jakiegoś udziału Duńczyków w wyborze wyobrażeń najstarszej monety polskiej (Suchodolski 2010).

Efektom odkrycia nowych połączeń stempli było znaczne wzbogacenie trzech dotychczas znanych łańcuchów takich połączeń (Ilisch, Suchodolski 2003, Jonsson, Suchodolski 2009, Bogucki 2006, Bogucki, Magiera 2014, WCN 2012, 2014). w konsekwencji okazało się, że z mennic Bolesława Chrobrego wyszły również monety nie tylko nowych odmian, ale też nowych typów. Były one, co prawda, znane już wcześniej, ale ze względu na pomyłone napisy lub wręcz pseudolegendy nie można było określić ich pochodzenia (Bogucki 2006, Bogucki, Magiera 2014). Najstarszy z tych łańcuchów, oznaczony nr I, łączy monety z imieniem Bolesława z monetami naśladowającymi monety saskie z imionami Ottona III i jego babki Adelajdy (ryc. 4, 8).

Łańcuch II jest obecnie najobszerniejszy. Skupia on monety Bolesława Chrobrego z legendą PRINCES POLONIE oraz naśladownictwa monet czeskich księcia Władysława, a także różnego rodzaju naśladownictwa monet niemieckich, niektóre bardzo prymitywne (ryc. 9, 13, 14). Łańcuch ten został ostatnio bardzo poszerzony, a to dzięki odkryciu połączenia z innym łańcuchem, zawierającym monety naśladowcze nieznanego dotąd pochodzenia (Bogucki, Magiera 2014).

Niemal równoczesny z poprzednim jest łańcuch III, który łączy stemple monet Bolesława z jego imieniem i tytułem DVX INCLITVS oraz naśladownictwa monet bawarskich księcia Henryka IV a także pensów anglosaskich króla Etelreda II (ryc. 10, 11, 12, 15).

Można się domyślać, że mennictwo zostało zainicjowane w pierwszej siedzibie biskupiej w Polsce, czyli w Poznaniu. Tu powstały najstarsze monety z wyobrażeniem strzały i krzyża typu bizantyjskiego. Domyślamy się, że tu też wybito monety przy użyciu stempli skupionych w łańcuchach I i III. Łańcuch II natomiast łączy się zapewne z Gnieznem. W tab. I podana została propozycja przydziału większości typów monet do poszczególnych mennic lub może raczej warsztatów menniczych. Tam też ramowa chronologia tych monet.

Mimo znacznego zwiększenia podstawy źródłowej ogólny obraz polskiego mennictwa nie uległ zasadniczym zmianom. Nadal rysuje się nam ono jako niezbyt rozwinięte i efemeryczne a w dodatku przedstawiające niski poziom rozwoju technicznego. Widać, że nie było jednego ośrodka produkcji, który by działał stale pod kontrolą duchownych zgodnie z ustalonym planem. Była to raczej produkcja doraźna, przedsięwzięta wielokrotnie od nowa w różnych miejscach, zgodnie z potrzebami władcy.

Nie zmienił się też nasz pogląd na cele tego mennictwa. Jak świadczą monety z dobrze wykonanymi wyobrażeniami i poprawnie zapisanym imieniem Bolesława Chrobrego, a także jego tytułaturą, mennictwo miało propagować rolę księcia jako silnego władcy, przynależnego do rodziny władców chrześcijańskich. Natomiast monety kopiujące mniej lub bardziej poprawnie wzory obce mogły być emitowane jedynie w celach ekonomicznych.

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