

R E V I E W

STANISŁAW SUCHODOLSKI with the collaboration of MATEUSZ BOGUCKI (editors), *Money Circulation in Antiquity, the Middle Ages and Modern Times. Time, Range, Intensity*. International Symposium of the 50th Anniversary of *Wiadomości Numizmatyczne*, Warsaw–Cracow 2007, 224 pages, illustrated.

To celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of *Wiadomości Numizmatyczne*, an international symposium was held in Warsaw, October 13th–14th 2006. The subject was *Money Circulation in Antiquity, the Middle Ages and Modern Times. Time, Range, Intensity*. Only one year later, the proceedings have been published in a nice, small, hardbound red volume of 224 pages. Most of the contributions are in English, three are in German, all with summaries in Polish.

The volume begins with an obituary of Professor Ryszard Kiersnowski (1925–2006), the main character among the founders of the *WN*, who sadly died only a few months before the symposium (pp. 11–16). Then follows a brief history of the first 50 years of the *WN* (pp. 17–22). These two texts are due to Professor Stanisław Suchodolski.

The rest of the book is devoted to the papers read at the conference. The twelve papers cover the period from early Celtic coinage (third-second centuries BC) until early Modern Times (16th–17th centuries AD). No less than seven papers deal with the Viking-Age (9th–11th centuries), three with the post-Viking Middle Ages (12th–15th centuries), whereas the Celtic and early Modern periods are covered by only one paper each. As for the

geographical scope, the book covers Poland and its neighbours by land borders or around the Baltic Sea. Three papers deal with the Czech Republic, two with Poland, one each for Denmark, Finland, Germany and Lithuania/Belarus/Ukraine, whereas three, more general, draw on material from Sweden and Estonia.

All twelve papers deal to various degrees with the main theme of the conference: monetary circulation, but in very different ways.

Three papers can be said to be methodological. Brita Malmer writes about monetary circulation in Viking-Age Scandinavia (pp. 35–49). She is mainly focusing on the Scandinavian coinages and what can be made of the detailed die- and weight studies, but she also treats the mixed currency of Scandinavian and foreign coins as well as jewellery and hack-silver. The study of secondary treatment, such as pecking and bending can provide information on circulation patterns, routes and intensity. Her main idea is that detailed study (into dies, weights, pecks, etc.) is needed to understand coinage, currency and circulation.

Gert Rispling provides a survey of the circulation of Islamic dirhams (pp. 51–64) focussing on the achievements made by applying the study of dies, but he also discusses secondary treatment, average circulation time, etc. In the long-standing debate on whether dirhams came directly from the Caliphate (Middle East and Central Asia) to the Baltic region or whether they also circulated in between in present day Russia, he favours the latter explanation. A key argument is the existence of imitations struck by the Khazars and Volga-Bulgars. If they struck coins, they also used them. Our knowledge of these imitations has

largely increased thanks to die studies, many of which have been undertaken by Rispling himself.

Ivar Leimus deals with a very practical problem (pp. 65–78). As a starting point, he states that it is very difficult to date fragments of Islamic dirhams when the part with the year inscribed is missing (on methods of identification of fragments, see Gert Rispling in *Birka Studies* 6, Stockholm 2004, pp. 26–60). A shortcut to a more or less precise dating and mint-attribution may be the presence of specific marks — one or more letters or ornaments. As these marks only appear on coins of certain mints for certain years, their presence on a small otherwise unattributed fragment would be a guideline to a more or less precise identification. Leimus provides a preliminary list of marks, based on the dirhams from Estonian finds. He also discusses the possible reasons for marking the coins.

Six papers are surveys of coins and currency from particular areas over a range of time. Kenneth Jonsson surveys coin circulation in Viking Age Germany (pp. 109–126). Analysing a selection of representative hoards, he demonstrates how relatively homogeneous, the currency was: it consisted predominantly of recent, local coins. This is a major difference with the very mixed Scandinavian hoards. He then presents a selection of coin issues, showing how different the organisation of coinage could be. The imperial coinage of Mainz, Speyer, Worms etc. and the Otto-Adelheid with an unchanged type for decades on one side, and the regular *renovatio monetarum* by e.g. the bishops of Metz on the other side. The attempts to make a national coinage failed, and the country was divided into several monetary zones.

In a most stimulating paper, Luboš Polanský deals with the Bohemian coinage in the 10th century (pp. 127–152). First he states that the hoards show that Bohemia had a national managed currency during the last decades of the 10th century. This must be regarded as quite an achievement for this newly Christianized and reorganised duchy, as it requires a strong government able to make people accept only national coins. It reminds the reviewer of his current research on the similarly managed currency in another likewise

newly Christianized country: the Denmark of Harold Bluetooth (c. 958–c. 986).

The main part of Polanský's paper is dedicated to the reinterpretations of 10th century Bohemian coins that have come about through a new scrutiny of the hoard evidence. Several coin-types have been redated and reattributed. The result is frankly impressive. However, the reviewer does not fully understand why the precise reading of an allegedly blundered Anglo-Saxon legend — that may or may not be true — should be that important in accepting or rejecting Anglo-Saxon influence on the coinage. Indeed, the hand type on Bohemian coins is clearly a close imitation of Æthelred II's first hand type, struck c. 979–c. 985, so the Anglo-Saxon influence is beyond doubt (pp. 141f). Moreover, Polanský's attempt to dismiss Anglo-Saxon influence leads him into error when he feels the need of explaining the Greek letters alpha and omega on a variety of the hand type struck in Vyšehrad (p. 146): these two letters are simply copied directly from the Anglo-Saxon prototype and thus need no specific explanation.

Jørgen Steen Jensen surveys coin circulation in Denmark during the Middle Ages (pp. 167–177). He is mainly focussing on aspects that have been subject to research and discussion during the last couple of decades. Many of the ideas surveyed by Jensen have been published only in Danish until now. The paper thus offers a useful overview in English, making the results accessible to a wider audience.

Even though aspects of it has been dealt with previously, Tuukka Talvio's survey of monetary circulation in Finland during the Middle Ages is the first comprehensive one of its kind (pp. 179–190). His documentary basis is the coin hoards. He concludes that Swedish coins dominated the currency, which is logical, because Finland was then part of Sweden. This tendency is very clear to the west, close to Sweden, whereas some hoards in central and eastern Finland from the 15th century show a higher percentage of Livonian coins. In Karelia, now a part of Russia, but Finnish from 1617 till WW II, the hoards are very different and clearly demonstrate that in monetary terms this region was not part of Finland in the Middle Ages.

Borys Paszkiewicz gives a fine outline of the monetary situation of Lithuania (including today's Belarus and Ukraine) in the late 14th and early 15th centuries (pp. 191–214). He explains the differences in legal status and circulation of the various local or national coinages. He also points out the role in circulation of foreign coinages such as Tatarian coins, Prague groats and Livonian schillings. This is important in order to get a full view of the currency. A reader unfamiliar with this part of Europe — like the reviewer — would however have liked to learn more about the circulation of Tatarian coins in the area of present day Ukraine before the introduction of the Lithuanian coinage, in order to know to which extent the coinage came out of nothing or was a well-established habit beforehand.

Eduard Šimek lines up the achievements of the study of coin circulation in Bohemia of the 16th and 17th centuries and points out the problems still open (pp. 215–224). He draws on coin finds on one hand and written sources on the other, and stresses the differences between them. He is — rightly — very aware of social differences in coin circulation. Among other things, he draws attention to the fact that there are more finds in the countryside than in the city. He interprets this as differing behaviour towards coins in urban and rural contexts (p. 218). This may well be so, but for what it is worth, a couple of years ago, the reviewer compared the number of hoards in the French region of Upper-Normandy and Denmark, and found that there were comparatively more hoards in the cities in France than in Denmark. Could that be explained by the fact that many more medieval city houses — and thus the hoards concealed in their walls — survive in France than in Denmark? (*Nordisk Numismatisk Unions Medlemsblad* 2005, pp. 146–152). A comparison with other regions — like Bohemia — may provide new material to get a better understanding of these questions.

Šimek also includes single finds in his analysis (pp. 220f). He does not, however, high-light their potential as an independent source of information for everyday coin use, since they are predominantly the result of accidental loss — the very kind of information, that he quotes Alois Míka for wanting

(pp. 216f). Maybe there are not yet enough single finds recorded in Bohemia to make them the statistically reliable source to circulation that they have proved to be in Denmark and England since the explosion in the number of finds following the introduction of the metal detector (*Nordisk Numismatisk Årsskrift* 2000–2002, pp. 228–275)? There are, however, limits to the use of the evidence of single finds, accidental losses from everyday coin use. Indeed, petty coins dominate this category of finds, and larger denominations are rare.

Finally three papers analyse the finds of one single find spot. Eva Kolníková gives a short presentation of the Celtic coins from Němčice, Moravia (pp. 23–34).

She has already presented the finds in several articles in Slovak, but this is apparently the first time the material has been made available for a foreign audience. According to the bibliography, a detailed publication is being prepared by the author. This assembly of coins is very early, from the 3rd–2nd centuries, hence its utmost importance. 897 coins have been available for study, but several more are kept by private collectors, unwilling to show them (p. 24). The reviewer has been confronted with the same kind of problems. At the Celtic sanctuary of Fesques (Seine-Maritime, France), 297 Celtic coins were found during excavation, but the diplomatic gifts of the excavator allowed us to add another 1000 coins from a private collection (E. Mantel, *Le Sanctuaire de Fesques*, Berck-sur-Mer, 1997). And in England and Denmark, archaeologists and numismatists have good relations with private detectorists, thus securing thousands of coins and other artefacts for research (see *Les nouvelles de l'archéologie* 79, 2000, pp. 57–61).

Peter Ilisch presents the Polish hoard of Ulejno (Wielkopolskie voivodship), dated to the early 11th century (pp. 153–166). It was found in 1890, and by the accidents of history it has ended up at the Westfälische Landesmuseum in Münster, thus being saved from dispersion and still available for study. Renewed research can detect imitations and separate them from the prototype. In this way, the geographical composition of the hoard may change completely, and so do the conclusions on circulation patterns. This is extremely important for the contribution of numismat-

ics to the general economic history. Ilisch's analysis also includes comparison with other, now dispersed hoards, known only from 19th-century find reports for which the possibility of renewed study is lost forever. At the end of the article, there is a summary list of the content of the hoard of Ulejno. The various groups are commented on in the text — except the 15 fragments of the Danish coinage of Harold Bluetooth which illustrate the contacts between Denmark and Poland.

In the longest article of the book, Mateusz Bogucki surveys the highly important finds of the Viking Age emporium of Truso near Elbląg east of Gdańsk (pp. 79–108). The site was not identified until 1982, and since then no less than 900 coins have been found, above all thanks to systematic use of metal detectors. The coins are single finds apart from a small hoard of 16 pieces. This makes Truso the site with the highest number of singly found coins in the Viking/Baltic world. Moreover, the assembly is extremely early. Of the c. 360 Islamic coins identified until now, none is later than c. 850 and the few European coins are very early as well.

Bogucki makes an attempt to explain this very unusual assembly of coins. First of all, he underlines that Truso was founded by Scandinavians at the end of the 8th century. It remained Scandinavian until the third quarter of the 9th century when it became Prussian. The period of intensive coin use is thus linked to the Scandinavian presence. As a matter of fact, Scandinavians did use Islamic dirhams at a very extensive scale during the Viking-Age. Contrarily the Prussians rejected the use of silver from ancient times until well into the Middle Ages.

This interpretation is, however, problematical. During the first half of the 9th century, the Scandinavian use of Islamic dirhams had barely begun (see Gert Rispling in *Magister Monetæ*, Copenhagen 2007, pp. 101–109). Truso thus rather pretends to the role of the

hen than to that of the egg! The reviewer also has problems with the idea of unhistorical and unchangeable ethnic characteristics of a particular people, such as the alleged reluctance of the Prussians to use silver. Such habits surviving unchanged for centuries without being influenced by neighbouring peoples is to my view highly improbable. The Arab proverb that you are more like your brothers than your fathers has something true in it.

These remarks do not solve the problem pin-pointed by Bogucki. But one should be aware of the fact that rapid change in coin use and strong differences between neighbouring areas are not that rare. Talvio's doctoral dissertation brilliantly demonstrates this feature (T. Talvio, *Coins and coin finds in Finland, AD 800–1200*, Helsinki, 2002).

The title of the symposium was *Money circulation in Antiquity, the Middle Ages and Modern Times, Time, Range, Intensity*. After having read the proceedings, one knows the nature of monetary circulation better. Circulation is distribution of a specific coin type from one area to another, implying contact of political, social or economic character. Circulation is also the assembly of coins within a region, submitted to political, social and economic constraints. The circulation time of a coin may be long or short. And one should never forget to keep in mind that circulation may differ a lot according to the social status of a coin user. To study the phenomena, one should use a wide range of sources: written sources, when available, coin hoards, single finds, their archaeological context. Several papers in the book also underline the need of refining our knowledge of the coins themselves before analysing their circulation. Indeed, the circulation of a penny of Cologne is not the same as the circulation of its Frisian imitation (see Peter Ilisch in *Magister Monetæ*, Copenhagen 2007, pp. 147–157). There is still a lot of work to do!

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