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BEWARE, THE FRAUD! ON ALLEGED FINDS  
OF DENIERS WITH THE LEGEND *GNEZDVN*  
*CIVITAS* AND OTHER COINS FROM THE REIGN  
OF BOLESŁAW THE BRAVE

Finds of coins struck in the days of Bolesław the Brave (992–1025) are sufficiently rare that any report of a new discovery electrifies all those interested in the history of Polish coinage. The sensation is all the greater if the report concerns the coin type bearing the legend *GNEZDVN CIVITAS*, heretofore known – for all practical purposes – from a single specimen. This coin, as is generally known, once enhanced the collection of Count Emeryk Hutten-Czapski, along with which it made its way to the holdings of the National Museum in Cracow.<sup>1</sup>

Some readers may recall that the literature to date has mentioned

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<sup>1</sup> S. Suchodolski, „*Moneta polska w X/XI wieku*”, WN XI.2–3 (1967), pp. 112–114, 175–176; most recently, A. Schmidt, „*Nowa interpretacja denara GNEZDVN CIVITAS*”, in *Gniezno. Studia i materiały historyczne*, Vol. III (Warsaw–Poznań 1990), pp. 237–245. It would be difficult, however, to consider the matter resolved.

the existence of three specimens belonging to this type. The first of these, the best known, is none other than the Cracow specimen. It was purchased sometime prior to March of 1857 in Wolfenbüttel in Lower Saxony (and not in Bavaria, as the literature has previously unanimously stated, following Stronczyński) by Józef Bolesław Krasicki, the owner of the Karsewo estate near Gniezno. This particular denier came from a hoard discovered between Toruń and Grudziądz or Bydgoszcz, i.e. most likely in Rychnowo, in the former county of Wąbrzeźno. Before 1879 it was in Lubostroń, in the collection of Count Leon Skórczewski, who in 1890 donated it to Czapski (Fig. 1).<sup>2</sup>

The second specimen of a *Gnezdun civitas* denier is also supposed to have come from the Rychnowo hoard. It was published in 1862 by Bernhard Köhne, using an inprint *Abdruck* and information obtained from Friedrich Vossberg (Fig. 2). At that time the coin was said to have belonged to an otherwise unidentified "Bochenek" from Cracow<sup>3</sup>. What happened to this coin afterwards remains a total mystery, which is indeed quite odd, given the flourishing of coin collecting in Cracow during the latter half of the 19th century, and also the great interest shown in this coin by Cracow scholars.

A comparison of Köhne's drawing with a photograph of the original specimen from the National Museum reveals certain similarities, which had already led Marian Gumowski to the conclusion that both specimens were struck with the same pair of dies.<sup>4</sup> There are certain details, however (e.g. larger margin beyond the outer rim on the right side of the obverse and the reverse, obscured legibility at the beginning of the letter S on the obverse), which have suggested the idea that in reality we

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<sup>2</sup> Z. Zakrzewski, „*Kilka słów o denarze GNEZDUN CIVITAS*”, WN II (1957), 1–5. [Editor's note: E. H. Czapski noted the sum of 76 rubles on the page of the manuscript catalogue dealing with this denier.] Regarding J. B. Krasicki, who at the moment he purchased this coin was not quite 23 years old, cf. T. Żychliński, *Złota księga szlachty polskiej*, Rocznik XX (Poznań 1898), pp. 79–81.

<sup>3</sup> B. Köhne, „*Zur polnischen Münzkunde*”, Berliner Blätter für Münz-, Siegel- und Wapenkunde I (1863), p. 7, Taf. I.3. This Bochenek must be identified with the banker Jan Nepomucen, cf. A. Ryszard, *Album numizmatyków polskich* (manuscript in the National Museum in Cracow, MNK 934), p. 36; M. Gumowski *Corpus Nummorum Poloniae* I (Cracow 1939), p. 25 (hereinafter cited as *CNP*); cf. M. Friedberg and L. Strojek, in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny* II (Cracow 1936), pp. 169 f.

<sup>4</sup> M. Gumowski, l. c.; so already A. Ryszard, l. c.

are dealing with one and the same specimen. If this is indeed the case, one of two possibilities will have to be accepted: Bochenek either had the coin before Krasicki did, or after. The first alternative was advocated in 1974 by Tadeusz Kałkowski.<sup>5</sup> It is not clear on what basis he assumed that Bochenek sold his collection in Germany in the first half of the 19th century. There, in Wolfenbüttel, the coin in question is supposed to have been extracted from this collection by Krasicki, who in turn sold it to Skórzewski. There are two arguments against this solution: first, Köhne stated in 1862 that the owner of the coin was Bochenek; secondly, according to information provided by this same author it came from the Rychnowo hoard. Since this latter was not discovered until 1854, the coin could not have made its way across the border before that date. In order to salvage Kałkowski's conception, one would have to assume that Bochenek acquired a *Gnezdun civitas* denier in 1854 or 1855 and almost immediately exported it to Germany, since before March of 1857 (according to Stronczyński, ca. 1852) it had been purchased there by Krasicki. Vossberg's information may have already been out of date in 1862 when Köhne published it, unaware of its obsolescence.

The second possibility is that Bochenek purchased this valuable exhibit from Krasicki prior to 1862, and then sold it to Skórzewski.

As can be seen, both variants are plausible, even though there are counter-arguments to both. The basic objection to the first variant is the short period of time within which the two transactions are thought to have taken place; the second variant runs up against the lack of information about Bochenek's mediation in transferring the specimen from Krasicki to Skórzewski. These are not, however, definitive objections. Some resolution may be derived from an analysis of the documentation surrounding this coin. As mentioned earlier, Vossberg knew that Bochenek's specimen came from Rychnowo. Krasicki, on the other hand, had no such information. To be sure, he had been informed of the find between Toruń and Bydgoszcz (Grudziądz), but this hoard was not identified with the Rychnowo hoard until Ryszard Kiersnowski did so in 1957.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> T. Kałkowski, *Tysiąc lat monety polskiej*, 2nd ed. (Cracow 1974), pp. 38 ff. It is unclear why this author – contrary to Köhne's report – denies that the coin came from Rychnowo. On the other hand, he associates the denier CNP 46 with this ensemble (and with Bochenek's collection).

<sup>6</sup> Zakrzewski, *op. cit.* p. 1; T. and R. Kiersnowski, *Wczesnośredniowieczne skarby srebrne z Pomorza. Materiały* (Warsaw–Wrocław 1959), pp. 92 f., no. 143 (= PSW II).

Krasicki could not possibly have conveyed to Bochenek or Vossberg any information about the provenience of the coin that was more precise than the information he himself had. In that case, how did Vossberg find out about Rychnowo? He may have learned this, of course, from the owner, i.e. from Bochenek. It seems likely, however, that the actual sequence of events was reversed, and it was Vossberg in Berlin, born in Strzelno, Kuiavia, who was nearer the find made in West Prussia. It remains an open question, of course, how these people came into contact in the first place. Could it be that the Galician banker had some business matters to attend to in the Berlin bank where Vossberg had been a clerk since 1826?

The coins from the Rychnowo hoard were previously known from two sources. About 300 specimens (from among ca. 1300) were identified (and selected?) by Heinrich Cappe, who wrote that the deposit had been discovered near Toruń. The further history of these coins is unknown, but they were probably taken to Germany. Several dozen of the more carefully described specimens were most likely incorporated by Cappe into his collection, which was subsequently sold off, primarily to Russia. Another batch was in the possession of Karol Beyer (Warsaw), who sent the German, Czech, and Anglo-Saxon coins to Hermann Grote, enclosing with them the information that they came from Rychnowo.<sup>7</sup> It seems clear that Bochenek's (Vossberg's) specimen did not belong to either of these batches. Cappe was probably unaware of the precise provenience of the hoard, while Beyer would not have parted with a unique denier of Bolesław the Brave for any amount of money. The conclusion that emerges from all this is that Vossberg had some sort of third source of access to coins from Rychnowo. It may perhaps also be supposed that Vossberg's supplier was indeed Cappe, who knew precisely where the coins were found, but in print used the name of the larger city.

One way or another, Bochenek did not acquire his specimen from Beyer, but rather by a roundabout path that led through Berlin. If this

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<sup>7</sup> H. P. Cappe, *Die Münzen der deutschen Kaiser und Könige des Mittelalters* III (Dresden 1857), pp. 47–54, 61, 67–69, Taf. I.8,9; I.27; VI.80; P. Berghaus, *Beiträge zur deutschen Münzkunde des 11. Jahrhunderts*, vol. 4: *Polnische Funde des 11. Jahrhunderts aus dem Nachlaß Hermann Grotes*, Hamb. Beitr. z Num., Heft 8 (1954), pp. 219 ff.; PSW II, no. 143; B. Kluge, *Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles* 36, *State Museum Berlin Coin Cabinet* (London 1987), p. 25 f, no. 30; E. Triller, *Wykopalska monet Karola Beyera*, WN XXXV (1991), pp. 55 f., no. 60.

specimen is indeed identical with the one purchased in Wolfenbüttel, then Bochenek was its owner before Krasicki was, since information, as noted previously, tends to decay over time, and not expand. An additional argument to the effect that the coin went directly from Krasicki to Skórzewski is provided by Lelewel's letter to the former, given to Czapski along with the specimen itself by Skórzewski.<sup>8</sup> It would appear, then, that Bochenek indeed sold his collection in Germany shortly after he had acquired the unique denier of Bolesław the Brave, i.e. between 1854 and 1857, perhaps ca. 1856.

To sum up our reflections to this point, let us attempt to reconstruct the modern history of this coin. It was discovered in 1854 in Rychnowo. By unknown routes – through Cappe or directly – it made its way to Berlin, to Vossberg, who sold it to Bochenek, who then brought it to Cracow. Bochenek incorporated it into his collection, and then, prior to March of 1857, took it to Germany along with the rest of his collection. In Wolfenbüttel it was purchased by Krasicki, and then sold to Skórzewski. Its further history is well documented from that point on. In 1890 the new owner donated the denier, along with Lelewel's letter about it, to Emeryk Hutten-Czapski for his collection in Stańków. Along with that collection the coin returned to Cracow and entered the holdings of the National Museum.

This version, if accepted, clarifies the question of the number of *Gnezdun civitas* deniers in the Rychnowo hoard, and explains why Bochenek's specimen seems to have disappeared from view. The matter requires further inquiry, of course, especially in Germany, and perhaps in Cracow as well. It may prove possible to explain how information about the Rychnowo hoard (presumably along with the coin itself, and perhaps others from this hoard as well) made their way to Vossberg, and how Bochenek's collection ended up in Wolfenbüttel.

The only person to mention a third specimen of the *Gnezdun civitas* type is Marian Gumowski.<sup>9</sup> This report, given in a very uncertain manner to begin with, has never been confirmed, either from the Polish side or the Czech. My own efforts in this respect, undertaken in Prague and

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<sup>8</sup> Zakrzewski, *op. cit.*; E. Hutten-Czapski, *Catalogue de la collection des médailles et monnaies polonaises IV* (Cracow 1891), pp. 299 ff., no. 9051.

<sup>9</sup> Gumowski, *Corpus*, p. 25.

Brno, produced no results. No information was obtained by Zygmunt Zakrzewski, either, despite his well-known good contacts with Czech scholars. In my view, the whole matter has arisen from a misunderstanding, though of course it cannot be precluded that such a specimen may someday emerge.

From what we have seen so far it seems clear enough that coin no. Cz. 9051 is probably a unique specimen. There is, however, a certain amount of apparent evidence to the contrary, including information published in a regional annual (about a find near Lvov) and in the daily press (about a coin preserved in Głucha Puszcza), and found in archival materials (about a discovery in Ciechanów), and finally certain actual specimens presented as authentic (in the “hoard” allegedly discovered between Lublin and Warsaw). We shall examine these in turn, beginning with the most recent matter, which is also perhaps the most shocking: the report of a find in the village of Pidberizci.

Unofficial reports about a sensational new find made in the Lvov area had already been making their way to Poland by various routes for several years. It is also known that in 1995 the National Museum in Cracow was approached with an offer to sell a new specimen of the *Gnezdun civitas* coin.<sup>10</sup> The seller remained anonymous. It was known, however, that he came from the Ukraine, and that he was acting through intermediaries, including the late Prof. Igor Swieshnikov, in whose good intentions there can be no doubt. Ultimately, however, the specimen was never presented in Cracow. In the meantime, the National Museum's interest in the coin dwindled. This happened when a xerographic reproduction was sent which aroused serious doubts regarding the coin's authenticity.

The key to the entire matter is a brief publication by Lvov archaeologists Vladimir Petehyrych and Alexander Ovchinnikov, entitled “*The Coin of Bolesław the Brave from the Vicinity of Lvov*”, published in the *Rocznik Przemyski*, vol. 32 (1996).<sup>11</sup> This article contained photographs (corresponding to the photocopies previously sent to the National Museum in Cracow) and sketches of the coin from the Lvov vicinity (and comparisons to the Cracow specimen, cf. Fig. 3 below), as well as information about the dis-

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<sup>10</sup> I am grateful for this information to Bogumiła Haczewska, Keeper of the Numismatic Department of the National Museum in Cracow.

<sup>11</sup> Z. 3, *Archeologia*, pp. 69–74.

covery. We may quote the most important fragments: *“In 1995 Lvov archaeologists discovered [emphasis added] yet another coin belonging to a rare and extraordinarily valuable coin type struck by Bolesław the Brave (Fig. 1). It is found in the private collection of a Lvov resident, J. Agafonov. According to him, the coin was found by accident when the foundation was being dug under a building in the village of Pidberizci in the Pustomyty region, in the oblast of Lvov. This village is located 15 km southeast of Lvov, on the right side of the Lvov–Tarnopol road. At a distance of 1.5 km to the west of this village, near the forest, there is a settlement from the Duchy period, occupying the southern and southwest slopes of the Pidluzhe range. Here an inhabited dugout from the 12th and 13th centuries was discovered... Without additional exploration and a precise analysis of the place where the coin was discovered, it is difficult to state whether or not the find is connected with precisely this settlement”* (p. 69).

The further text is unclear and hard to understand. One should expect a description of the new specimen. The reading of the text, however, and the references to the illustrations suggest that we are dealing with the heretofore unique specimen from Cracow. Yet the metrological data provided (diameter 1.8–1.9 cm, weight 1.8 g) do not correspond to the data for the Cracow denier (1.8 cm and 1.67 g). One is thus led to suppose that the data refer to the Lvov coin, as does in fact the entire description.

Later this specimen is compared to the Cracow coin – which, incidentally, is presented quite inaccurately. As previously pointed out, this coin was not first published by Bernard Köhne in 1863 and is not the “second preserved specimen.” It cannot be regarded as a distinctive feature that it has an “additional dot” between the letters B and O in the name Boleslaus (marked in the sketches), since we are dealing with a punch of Czapski’s collection. Finally, the denier belongs to the National Museum in Cracow, not to the Archeological Museum.

In the opinion of these authors, the “Lvov coin” is very similar to the “Cracow coin” in terms of the images and the legends. The difference consists in the fact that the “type of the ‘Cracow’ coin is more massive. On the ‘Lvov’ coin one can see that the letters are indented and simplified, which may indicate the later development of Latin writing” (p. 73). This leads the authors to certain less than pellucid conclusions: “Obviously the coins were struck using different dies. This enables us to refine the traditional point of view, that coins with the legend *Gnezdun*

*civitas* are associated with the formalities of a convocation, and have an exclusively display character.”

This would be the first instance of the discovery of a Polish coin from the 10th/11th centuries this far east, in Ruthenia, and what is more, as a single find.<sup>12</sup> On this basis some Polish archeologists – in private conversations, only – were inclined to draw far-reaching conclusions on the functioning of the route that joined Polish territory with Kiev.

On the surface it all looked marvelous. We are told not only when and where the discovery was made, but also that it was made by archeologists. Information is given about the nearby archeological context, in the form of traces of early Medieval settlement (cf. p. 69 and the foreign language summaries on p. 73 f.). The parameters supplement the report about where the specimen was preserved. A careful reading of the text, however, and in particular an analysis of the included photographs, gives grounds for pessimism. It turns out that the archeologists discovered the coin not in the field, but in a private collection, and all the information they obtained came from the owner.

On the photographs (p. 70), despite their poor quality, one can clearly see that the style in which the dies are made is quite different from the style of early Medieval coins. The relief is flatter, and is brought out not with a small punch, but exclusively using a burin with an oval profile. As a result, the letters and borders are thinner, and their profile is semicircular. Sometimes serifs are also lacking (L and I on the obverse). No concave contours are visible around the letters, which are legible on the original specimen. Thus the specimen could not have been made in the reign of Bolesław the Brave.

While there can be no doubt that the coin is not authentic, one may well wonder about the date, place, and purpose of its fabrication, as well as the identity of its maker. The coin was most likely made in the post-Second World War period, no earlier than the 1960s, and perhaps even much later. The *terminus post quem* is marked by generally available publications of legible photographs of the Cracow specimen.<sup>13</sup> Earlier, imprecise drawings could not have served as models. On the Lvov coin, as on the

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<sup>12</sup> Suchodolski, *Moneta polska*, pp. 129–139.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. T. Kałkowski, *Tysiąc lat monety polskiej*, 1st edition (Cracow 1963); Suchodolski, *op. cit.*, Plate VIIIc.



original, there is a visible bend on the inner linear circle of the obverse where it meets the letter S. Two emendations have also been made: the initial letter in the name Bolesław, which in the original has the form of the letter R, corrected to B. Likewise the illegible character between the arms of the cross on the reverse has been replaced with a fourth pellet.

It would appear most likely that the imitation was done *in situ*, in Lvov. This assertion is supported by the information obtained from Prof. N. F. Kotlar of Kiev, that there was also an offer sent from Lvov to sell a counterfeit Ruthenian silver coin from the 10th/11th centuries to the Hermitage in St. Petersburg. This may be an indication of the commercial genesis of the recently published specimen. This does not resolve the question as to who made the coin – everything indicates that the Lvov archeologists fell victim to their own naiveté and lack of competence in the field of numismatics.

Revelations about the discovery of another, unknown specimen of the *Gnezdun civitas* denier had already appeared in the Polish press, in the early 1970s. The coin was supposed to have been in the private collection of engineer Stanisław Pijanowski, preserved in the forest warden's residence in Głucha Puszcza near Strzelno (voivodeship of Bydgoszcz).<sup>14</sup> I had the opportunity to see this specimen in 1973, thanks to the kindness of Prof. Zdzisław Rajewski, then Director of the State Archeological Museum in Warsaw, and was even able to have it photographed (Fig. 4). Even at first glance it can be seen that this is an imitation, made on the basis of a none-too-faithful drawing in the work of Kazimierz Stronczyński, *Dawne monety polskie*, subsequently accepted in Gumowski's handbook.<sup>15</sup> The diameter is greater than the original, coming to 20–21 mm; neither the weight, nor the metal, nor the manufacturing technique are known. Nor do we know how the coin made its way to Głucha Puszcza, who designed it, or why. At any event it does not look like a forgery, but rather a copy to replace an irrecoverable original.

A yet more sensational discovery of a *Gnezdun civitas* denier is said to have taken place in Ciechanów, at Parish Church, in the first quarter of the 20th century. Information about this is to be found in the copy of

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<sup>14</sup> S. Lorenz, *Przewodnik po muzeach i zbiorach w Polsce*, 2nd edition (Warsaw 1982), p. 106.

<sup>15</sup> Parts I–III, Atlas (Piotrków Trybunalski 1883–1885), Plate II.79 (a different and more faithful version is to be found in Part II, p. 24); M. Gumowski, *Podręcznik numizmatyki polskiej* (Cracow 1914), p. 22, Fig. 10, Plate I, no. 5.

a typescript made available to Ewa Suchodolska by Rev. Tadeusz Żebrowski of Płock ca. 1980. Rev. Remigiusz Jankowski, Provost and Dean of Ciechanów, is indicated as the author of this text, written in Ciechanów on April 15, 1921. This was supposed to be a "Letter to Dr. Roman Jakimowicz, the archeological conservator (copy of part of a letter forwarded by the addressee in 1950 to Prof. Zdzisław Rajewski at the Direction of research on the origins of the Polish state." After information on various earlier archeological discoveries at the parish church, there is a description of a sensational find made during the construction of a new sacristy: *"At that point human remains were found, while around and under these remains, in very dark soil, there was a great deal of ash and burned beams, providing in one place the image of a wall destroyed by fire at the foundations of the church. A halt was ordered in the digging in order for someone competent in archeological matters to examine the discovery. At that point Mr. Erazm Majewski arrived from Warsaw, as a delegate, and determined that the revealed traces were the remains of a wooden, burned structure, although badly damaged, probably when the parish church was built or graves were dug. Underneath was gray earth and strongly compacted sand, under which in the lower part was observed the peculiar placement of some large stones. The trench was then deepened and widened on one side, in order to uncover the whole structure to the bottom. The stones were arranged in a curve, its tips turned towards the foundations of the parish church, and made of boulders, between which small stones and clay were stuffed. This curve had an expansion up to 12 elbows, thickness 1", and height 2 elbows, though strongly dented. All around there were many scattered stones and a great deal of trampled ash, and in the center there was paved ground with small field stones set in clay. Majewski determined that these were the remains of a round stone building intersected by the foundations of the parish church. In the rubble two small silver coins were found: one with the sign of a cross and the surrounding inscription Civitas Gnezdun, while the reverse shows a human head and the name 'Bolizlaus.' This coin he recognized as a denier of Boleslaw the Brave. On the second there was also a rendering of a human head and the inscription 'Zobeslaus,' but the reverse was completely effaced, and Majewski recognized this as being of a type unknown to him. Both coins were sent to the Society to Care for the Monuments of the Past, Warsaw, 32 Old City, telephone 99-88."*

This description suggests that there were two phases of settlement older than the Gothic church and cemetery functioning there. These were thought to be the remains of a burnt wood structure, and underneath

that, a stone rotunda. The date of the foundation of this last was specified using the two coins. Their identification posed no problem. The first is of course a denier of Boleslaw the Brave of the type here under discussion, while the second is a Czech denier of Sobeslav son of Slavnic, Duke of Libice, where it was struck sometime before 995. The original, however, has the name on the obverse in the form ZOBEZLAV, not ZOBEZLAVS. On the reverse these coins bear the image of a chapel and the inscription LIVBVZ. They are very rare, since they have occurred in only three finds, for a total of six specimens, in Ostroměř and in Poděbrady in Bohemia, and in Miastko in Pomerania.<sup>16</sup>

The whole description presented here, in both archeological and numismatic terms, looks highly suspicious. In principal, discoveries of this type are not impossible, as indicated by reports of finds signalized in Cracow, Płock, Wiślica, Łekno, and several other places. Yet nowhere else have the relics been so well preserved and so precisely dated, and in addition on the basis of coins of the highest rarity. Other discoveries alleged to have made in the vicinity of the church are reporting as being no less sensational. It is suggested that there existed here some sort of sacrificial fires, and even a stone altar, along with the well preserved remains of residences and a defense wall. Nothing of the sort was discovered, however, on Farska Góra during excavation probes in 1969.<sup>17</sup> What is even more important, there is no mention of the Ciechanów revelations in the extensive memoirs of Erazm Majewski, which fortunately have been preserved (regrettably with some slight gaps) in the archives of the State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw, nor in the files of the Society for the Protection of the Monuments of the Past.<sup>18</sup> There are still other doubts. How did a copy of a letter

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<sup>16</sup> F. Cach, *Nejstarší české mince I* (Prague 1970), p. 31, no. 162, pp. 55 f., 70.

<sup>17</sup> I. Górska et al., *Grodziska Mazowsze i Podlasia* (Wrocław 1976), pp. 31–34; I. Galicka and H. Sygietyńska, *Katalog zabytków sztuki w Polsce*, vol. X: *former voivodeship of Warsaw*, part I: *Ciechanów and vicinity* (Warsaw 1977), pp. 2–6, 60–63 (with earlier literature).

<sup>18</sup> I owe this information to Dr. Halina Modrzewska and Dr. Borys Paszkiewicz, who examined Majewski's manuscript from this angle; cf. also H. Modrzewska, „Erazm Majewski badacz starożytności i twórca Muzeum Archeologicznego w Warszawie w świetle swego Notatnika”, *Wiadomości Archeologiczne* XLVIII (1983 [1987]), part 2, pp. 163–189. Towards the end of his life Majewski was quite ill, partially paralyzed, and it is hard to imagine that he could have traveled around Poland to familiarize himself with archaeological discoveries. The documentation of the “Society for the Protection of the Monuments of the Past” on Ciechanów is kept in the Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw (file 37).

allegedly sent from Ciechanów to Warsaw in 1921, and forwarded in 1950 (from the archives of the State Archeological Museum?) by Roman Jakimowicz to the Directory of research on the origins of the Polish state, end up in Płock? Why did neither the addressee, or any later scholars (e.g. Prof. Rajewski) ever make use of information of such revelations?

Upon analysis of the entire text, we arrive at the conclusion that its author was attempting to elevate the prestige of Ciechanów, counterfeiting a splendid pedigree for his city using archaeological sources. Here one can see a close analogy to similar actions on the basis of written sources. In Ciechanów there appeared not long ago an alleged Medieval local annual. It was fabricated by a local patriot, Jerzy Gaczyński, so well that it was immediately received positively by some medievalists, and it took some time before it was unmasked by Henryk Rutkowski.<sup>19</sup> Likewise the archaeological report quoted above is done so carefully that it initially inspired my confidence. Its author, probably also Jerzy Gaczyński,<sup>20</sup> assumed the very effective principle of not identifying his revelations straight out, but rather suggesting them to the reader, better yet by citing tried and tested authorities (E. Majewski, L. Krzywicki). In the case of the coins, he chose types of good reputation, without, however, particularly emphasizing this fact. The Sobieslav denier is supposedly not recognized at all. It was described precisely enough, however, that the reader could do so himself. Giving the exact place where the coin is kept, including the telephone number, is a masterpiece in psychology, giving the discovery maximum credibility. As in Lvov, thus in the case of Ciechanów, we are dealing with a fraud. The difference, however, consists in the fact that the latter stopped on the verbal layer, without any effort to produce the artifacts themselves.

At this point we may recall another fraud that progressed yet farther, since it involved not single coins, but an entire set, in the form of a hoard. In 1992, there appeared almost simultaneously in the numismatic trade in Warsaw and Lublin, in relatively large quantities, coins that rather

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<sup>19</sup> H. Rutkowski, *Rocznik Ciechanowski jako mistyfikacja*, Kwart. Hist. XCVIII (1991), part 4, pp. 75–82.

<sup>20</sup> Another argument for the identity of the author of both texts is the common theme occurring in both of them: pagan relics in Ciechanów (cf. Rutkowski, *op. cit.* p. 80). It is also significant that one of the distributors of these texts, doubtless in good faith, was the same person, Rev. Tadeusz Żebrowski, who was in contact with Gaczyński (*ibid.*, p. 76).

ineptly imitated particular deniers with the name of Mieszko, bearing the image of a chapel without arches (Fig. 5), and a PRINCES POLONIE denier of Bolesław the Brave. These were accompanied by single examples of other, difficult to identify types (*Gnezdun civitas?* CNP 46?), and two authentic Sachsenpfennige, more or less from the 2nd or 3rd quarter of the 11th century. The hoard was supposed to have also contained silver ornaments and two fragments of a clay vessel. The whole was allegedly discovered ca. 1980 somewhere in the vicinity of Lublin, or between Lublin and Warsaw. The coins were struck with dies, which were handled none too skillfully using a burin. Apart from the whole deniers, there were also broken halves and obols. Some bore traces of wear, or even perforation. Thanks to the kindness of several people I was able to examine 34 specimens, in the original or in photos. They were struck using 17 obverse dies and perhaps 27 reverse dies. Originally there must have been much more, both coins and dies.<sup>21</sup>

The models used by the author of the dies were very limited. They may have come from some non-professional publication, e.g. a school textbook or a history of Poland, perhaps a general audience museum brochure. This would account for the primitive execution of these models. The idea of creating a fictional hoard and including within it authentic (though later) coins did require a certain amount of numismatic expertise.<sup>22</sup>

In conclusion I would like to recall a particular fraud that was perpetrated unconsciously, doubtless against the intentions of its authors. In 1994, *Gazeta Wyborcza* published a short article by Leszek Talko, entitled "A Denier from Grodzisko". The essence of the matter is given by the brief introduction: "An early Medieval denier, probably struck by Bolesław the Brave, has been found by archaeologists from the University of Warsaw, in Grodzisko near Liw (voivodeship of Siedlce)". After a description of the remains of the stronghold and the result of excavations, the author returns to the main theme: "The silver denier found in August is struck on only one side. All that can be seen on this coin, which is still covered with a patina, is the outline of a cross and the letters P and O". This provided the foundation for the argument that this

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<sup>21</sup> I would like to thank Marta Męcłewska, Zbigniew Nestorowicz, Jan Węclawski, and Henryk Wojtulewicz for making the coins, information, and photographs available to me.

<sup>22</sup> I owe a debt of gratitude to Lech Kokociński for the information that about 100 such coins are in his collection, and that they were produced by a University of Warsaw archaeology student from Lublin.

is either a Czech Sobieslav denier or a Polish denier of Bolesław the Brave with the legend PRINCES POLONIE. We shall pass over in discrete silence what was said about this "coin" and the importance of its discovery by the project archaeologist and his advisor, "a numismatics expert". An inspection of the find enabled the discovery to be made that in essence this is a heavily corroded metal button from the 19th or early 20th century, on the bottom side of which the traces of letters can indeed be seen. It later turned out that in the vicinity of this object some sort of modern coin also occurred. Both items landed here together due to a hole in the ground dug into the early Medieval layer at a later period. The matter seem completely clear, and cannot be explained away by even the most ingenious (and persistent) verbal acrobatics of the press.

To sum up our remarks, we arrive at the conclusion that there are no new specimens of the *Gnezdun civitas* denier struck by Bolesław the Brave. All the announced specimens – from near Lvov, from Ciechanów, or from the Lublin vicinity – have proven to be forgeries, or never to have existed at all. The coin from Głucha Puszcza is likewise not authentic. What is more, there are powerful arguments that the famous Cracow denier never had a rival, and from the moment of its discovery in the mid-19th century it has remained a unique specimen.

The second conclusion follows from the first: the localities of Pidberizci near Lvov and Grodzisko near Liw should be stricken from the list of finds of the oldest Polish coins. Nor can this list be supplemented with the alleged finds, probably heretofore not mentioned in print, from Ciechanów or from the Lublin area or Mazovia. Apart from this last, all the others were supposed to be single finds, which in and of itself should incline us to caution, since the oldest Polish coins to date have occurred exclusively in hoards. There emerges from all this the obvious cautionary note, that no reports – and especially those appearing in non-specialized publications – are to be trusted without a prior critique of their credibility.

As can be seen even from the present paper, the *Gnezdun civitas* denier is not the only one from among the oldest Polish coins that has been counterfeited or imitated in recent times. It is not a matter of coincidence, however, that this coin in particular has most frequently been the victim of this procedure. The reason for this is its fame, resulting both from its uniqueness and from the contents of its types. It is not

without reason that this coin – along with the floren of Władysław the Short (1306–1333) – is regarded as the most valuable numismatic artifact of the Polish Middle Ages, and perhaps of the whole history of coinage on Polish soil. Both specimens, as is generally known, ended up in the same collection, protected for a century in the same museum.

#### Post Scriptum

After the preceding article had already been sent to press, some very sensational news regarding the GNEZDVN CIVITAS type was published. During the 6<sup>th</sup> All-Russian Numismatics Conference in St. Petersburg (20–25 April 1998), G. V. Sarkisian from Erevan read a paper entitled *Zolotaya moneta pol'skogo pravitela Boleslava Chrabrogo*, which provided the information that in the late 1980s a golden coin of Bolesław the Brave had been discovered in western Ukraine, showing the legends ROLIZAVZ and GNEZDIN (sic) CIVITAS, with a weight of 1,7 g and a diameter of 18 mm (Gosudarstvennyi Ermitage, Shestaia Vserossiyskaia numizmaticheskaia konferenciya, Tezisy dokladov i soobshcheniy, Sankt Peterburg 1998, pp. 99–101). The description, and especially the photograph, suggest that we are dealing with the same type of coin as described in the preceding article. No further information is given regarding the place and circumstances of the discovery. In Sarkisian's opinion, however, "the credibility of the information on the region in which the coin was found gives no grounds for doubts". Nor does the author have any doubts regarding the authenticity of the specimen, of which he is apparently the present owner. The editors, on the other hand, reveal a certain skepticism, as witness the footnote on the title.

In Sarkisian's opinion, the gold specimens of Bolesław the Brave were struck with dies originally intended for silver, a supposition he supports by referring to analogies from 13<sup>th</sup>-century Armenian coinage. He argues, however, probably on the basis of the photographs in the work of T. Kałkowski, which he cites, that the gold coins' dies differ from the dies of the Cracow specimen. The author concludes his rather superficial discussion of the state and coinage of Bolesław the Brave with some remarks on the significance of the new find for research on trade in the area between the Baltic and the Middle East.

This discovery is, unfortunately, too good to be true. Disbelief is stimulated first of all by the atypical metal and place of the alleged find. The analogy concerning the find in the village of Pidberizci is suggestive

enough to require no further comment. The suspicions prove to be fully justified when the photograph of the gold coin is analyzed. Its dies are not made in a style typical of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. And though they are not identical with the dies the silver specimen allegedly found near Lvov, they betray the same hand. It can be seen that the counterfeit workshop in this city or the surrounding countryside is thriving. Given the difficulties in selling the silver specimen in Poland, a diagonal was struck and a gold specimen was made, which, it would appear, was successfully placed in Armenia.\* It will be interesting to see what the next initiative will be: an entire hoard of gold "Gnezduns", or piedforts, or perhaps something else?

Recently, I have been informed of another non-authentic GNEZDVN CIVITAS-type denier. It is made of copper (?) and has a hole near its margin. It was apparently used as a pendant. It has been reportedly found near Miechów in 1971. The information came from Mr Mirosław Krużyński through Mrs Bogumiła Haczewska, M.A. My sincere thanks go to both of them.

Translated by BRUCE MAC QUEEN

## STANISŁAW SUCHODOLSKI

### Uwaga, Falszerstwo! O rzekomych znaleziskach denarów z legendą GNEZDVN CIVITAS i innych monet Bolesława Chrobrego

W literaturze były dotychczas notowane 3 egzemplarze denara Bolesława Chrobrego z legendą GNEZDVN CIVITAS. Pierwszy przed 1857 r. kupił w Wolfenbüttel J. Krasicki. Poprzez L. Skórzewskiego trafił do zbioru E. Czapskiego i jest obecnie przechowywany w Muzeum Narodowym w Krakowie (ryc. 1). Drugi miał być w posiadaniu bankiera krakowskiego J. Bochenka (ryc. 2). O trzecim wspomina M. Gumowski jakoby był przechowywany w Czechach. Wiadomość ta nie została nigdy potwierdzona i zapewne polega na nieporozumieniu.

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\* According to the information very graciously provided by Ms Bogumiła Haczewska, MA, an analogous gold coin was also offered to the collection of the National Museum in Cracow.



Autor dowodzi, że w istocie okaz Czapskiego jest tożsamy z okazem Bochenka. Bochenek uzyskał monetę zapewne od F. Vossberga, który ją miał ze skarbu odkrytego w Rychnowie. Można się domyślać, że okaz ten – wraz z kolekcją Bochenka – został sprzedany do Niemiec. Tu właśnie kupił go Krasicki.

Wynika z tego, że moneta przechowywana obecnie w Muzeum Narodowym w Krakowie jest unikatem. Konstatacji tej nie zmieniają różne informacje o rewelacyjnych odkryciach, publikowane lub zawarte w archiwaliach, albo wreszcie same okazy ujawniane w handlu numizmatycznym lub w posiadaniu kolekcjonerów. Autor kolejno omawia te rzekome odkrycia, demaskując fałszerstwa lub wyjaśniając zaistniałe nieporozumienia.

Opublikowana w 1996 r. rewelacja o odkryciu rzekomo przez archeologów w miejscowości Pidbierz pod Lwowem nowego egzemplarza okazało się mistyfikacją. Moneta została sfałszowana zapewne we Lwowie w celach komercyjnych (ryc. 3). W podobnym stylu, i może w tym samym warsztacie fałszerskim, jakoby znalezioną na Zachodniej Ukrainie, wykonano monetę złotą, prezentowaną w 1999 r. w St. Petersburgu na 6. ogólnorosyjskiej konferencji numizmatycznej. Natomiast okaz przechowywany w małym prywatnym muzeum w Głuchej Puszczy pod Strzelnem jest raczej dawną kopią kolekcjonerską. Również rodzajem kopii jest też chyba miedziana (?) moneta z otworem, podobno znaleziona w 1971 r. koło Miechowa.

Innego typu mistyfikacji dopuścił się J. Gaczyński, fabrykując relację o odkryciach archeologicznych dokonanych przed 1921 r. przy kościele parafialnym w Ciechanowie. Miano tu znaleźć m.in. denar typu GNEZDVN CIVITAS. Celem tego fałszerstwa było podniesienie prestiżu rodzinnego miasta.

Już nie pojedyncze monety, ale cały skarb najdawniejszych monet polskich z X/XI w. (ryc. 5), rzekomo odkryty między Lublinem a Warszawą, sfabrykował jeden ze studentów archeologii Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego.

Nieprawdziwa też okazała się wiadomość podana w 1994 r. w prasie o odkryciu w czasie badań archeologicznych w Grodzisku pod Liwem monety Bolesława Chrobrego typu PRINCES POLONIE. W rzeczywistości był to skorodowany guzik napisowy z XIX/XX w.

Z powyższych faktów wypływa wniosek, że trzeba bardzo krytycznie podchodzić do różnych informacji, zwłaszcza zamieszczanych w publikacjach niefachowych, o sensacyjnych odkryciach bardzo rzadkich lub wręcz unikatowych monet. Fakt, że obiektem fałszerstwa lub mistyfikacji, czasem zresztą niezamierzonej, był najczęściej denar typu GNEZDVN CIVITAS, nie jest przypadkowy. Powodem jest zasłużona renoma tej ciągle unikatowej monety, będącej jednym z najcenniejszych zabytków polskiego mennictwa.



1



2



4



5

1. Denier of the *Gnezdun civitas* type, from the collection of the National Museum in Cracow (Cz. 9051).
2. Denier of the *Gnezdun civitas* type, from Bochenek's collection (acc. to B. Köhne).
4. Copy of the *Gnezdun civitas* denier from S. Pijanowski's collection in Glucha Puszcza (photo by S. Biniewski).
5. Counterfeit coin of Mieszko I, allegedly found in the Lublin area (from Z. Nestorowicz's collection, dia. 20–21 mm, weight 1.40 g).



a



b



c



d

a ○ B ○ L I Z A V S

c ○ B ○ L I Z A V S

b : G N E T D V N C T I T I S

d : G N E T D V N C T I T I S

3. Comparison of the "Cracow specimen" and the "Lvov specimen"  
 (acc. to Vladimir Petehyrych and Alexander Ovchinikov).