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NEW TYPES OF THE OLDEST POLISH COINS

ABSTRACT: This article presents discoveries of new types of coins that can be assigned to the oldest Polish coinage. In case of the PRINCES POLONIE die-chain, it was possible to identify one new die, in an extremely barbaric style, which once again shows that there is no uniform style to the oldest Polish coins and that there was chaos in Bolesław I the Brave's coinage. In the case of the second – .VIDV die-chain as many as seven new dies have been revealed. Detailed analysis shows that the coins produced with these dies were not necessarily produced at the same time, and that production could have lasted up to several years. The newly revealed dies do not solve the problem of the attribution of denarii with the .VIDV inscription, but their ascription to the coinage of Bolesław I the Brave or Mieszko II is very likely.

ABSTRAKT: Artykuł prezentuje odkrycia monet nowych typów, które można przypisać do najstarszego mennictwa polskiego. W przypadku łańcucha połączeń stempli PRINCES POLONIE udało się zidentyfikować jeden nowy stempel, w niezwykle zbarbaryzowanym stylu, co po raz kolejny ukazuje, że nie istnieje jednolity styl najdawniejszych monet polskich oraz, że w mennictwie Bolesława Chrobrego panował chaos. W przypadku drugiego łańcucha połączeń stempli – .VIDV ujawniono aż siedem nowych tłoków. Ich szczegółowa analiza wskazuje, że monety wybijane tymi stemplami nie musiały być produkowane w jednym czasie, lecz nawet przez kilkanaście lat. Nowo ujawnione stemple nie rozwiązały problemu atrybucji denarów z legendą .VIDV, lecz ich przynależność do mennictwa Bolesława Chrobrego lub Mieszka II jest bardzo prawdopodobna.

KEYWORDS: early medieval period, Polish coinage, imitations

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: wczesne średniowiecze, mennictwo polskie, naśladownictwa

Extending the catalogue of the oldest Polish coins through meticulous analyses of die-chains[1] is a tradition that spans more than one hundred years.[2] Recent years have brought a number of new discoveries.[3] They broaden our knowledge of the oldest Polish coinage, its size, production details, and organization, and emphasize some of its earliest characteristics.

PRINCES POLONIE DIE-CHAIN

At the 29th auction of Antykwariat Numizmatyczny Michał Niemczyk, two coins were offered for sale under the number 4429, described as "Fancy imitations of Otto and Adelaide".[4] This description is true in essence, but can be significantly expanded. The first of the coins is a Pomeranian imitation in the *Lupow* type, dated to the second half of the 11th century (Fig. 1).[5]

Fig. 1. Pomeranian imitation of the *Lupow* type. 1.15 mm; 0.55 g. Scale 1.5:1 (Antykwariat Numizmatyczny M. Niemczyk 29.4429)

Much more interesting is the second coin, which thanks to the analysis of die-chains can be identified as a denarius of Bolesław I the Brave (Fig. 2) from the PRINCES POLONIE die-chain.[6] While one of the dies has been previously identified in use at Bolesław I the Brave's mint,[7] the other was still undefined. Diameter 19 mm, weight 1.46 g.

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[1] About the method see Suchodolski 2012, pp. 69–88.

[2] Zakrzewski 1904, pp. 1–7; Zakrzewski 1922, pp. 45–56; Zakrzewski 1939, pp. 136–141; Zakrzewski 1948, pp. 370–377; Zakrzewski 1956, pp. pp. 211–237.

[3] Bogucki 2006, pp. 181–192; Bogucki 2008, pp. 77–89; Ilisch, Suchodolski 2003, pp. 97–104; Jonsson, Suchodolski 2009, pp. 29–40; Bogucki, Magiera 2015a, pp. 115–128; Suchodolski 2022.

[4] https://aukcjamonet.pl/product/42553/niemcy-saksonia-fantazyjne-nasladownictwo-otto-na-i-adelajdy-zestaw-2-sztuk.

[5] Cf. Bogucki, Magiera 2015b, pp. 119–128; FMP II.136:320.

[6] The current state of knowledge appears in Bogucki, Magiera 2015a, pp. 115–128; Suchodolski 2015, pp. 67–94; Suchodolski 2019, pp. 193–219.

[7] Bogucki 2006, pp. 181–192.

Av.:[8] in the center, a slender chapel topped with a cross, whose arms are finished with pellets. Vertical lines on its sides. Continuous ring, along the edge there is a blundered inscription
Rv.: in the center, a schematic chapel with two points in the middle, a ring with loosely scattered points, a blundered inscription in the edge HI//////VE//

Fig. 2. Bolesław I the Brave's denarius. 19 mm; 1.46 g. Scale 1.5:1
(Antykwariat Numizmatyczny M. Niemczyk 29.4429)

Assessment of the material collected and published in the *Frühmittelalterliche Münzfunde aus Polen* (FMP) series shows that the coin struck with a new type of die has hitherto occurred only once – in the hoard from Kujawy I (*tpq* 1027), published in 1921 by Wiktor Wittyg (Fig. 3). This 0.5 g coin, struck on one side, was originally attributed by Wittyg to Sweden,[9] but was described as an imitation of the *Otto and Adelaide* type by the authors of the latest inventories.[10] Though schematic, the figure published in W. Wittyg's publication leaves no doubt that the coins from the Kuyavian hoard and M. Niemczyk auction were both struck from the same reverse die. It is worth emphasizing here that hoard from Kujawy I also contained regular coins of Bolesław I the Brave and Mieszko II, as well as imitations with the inscription .VIDV and +JIVA.[11]

Fig. 3. Uniface denarius of Bolesław I the Brave from the hoard from Kujawy I. Scale 1.5:1
(Wittyg 1921; FMP III.215:502)

[8] In case of such coins, the terms obverse and reverse are just conventional.

[9] Wittyg 1921, p. 36, no. 109, Tabl. 2:XIX.

[10] FMP III.215:502.

[11] FMP III.215:481–486.

Recognition of two specimens adds new detail to the reconstruction of the newly disclosed die type (Fig. 4). It depicts a very schematic chapel with a mixed-up circumferential legend consisting of the letters HIE //// VEVU. At first glance, one can see the great clumsiness of the engraver of the die, who led the line of the chapel unevenly, correcting it in several places. The lines of the chapel, as well as the clumsily presented letters, either do not touch or are dragged out of their correct position. The most distinctive feature of the die in question is the inner circle, which is made of large, loosely scattered dots struck on the die with a triangular or half-round punch. Even their layout is not regular – some of the struck dots are chaotic (e.g. a point instead of a line to close the right wall of the chapel, or a single point on the left side under the chapel), without justification in the imitated pattern.

To sum up, the newly discovered die used in Bolesław I the Brave's coinage is a very loose interpretation of a motif popular in early medieval coinage, most notably in German coinage, featuring a chapel and a circumferential legend. Owing to the very low technical skills of the die engraver, it is not possible to more closely identify the design prototype. It was probably based on the most popular denarii of *Otto and Adelaide* type, but it could equally have been Bavarian, Franconian or even a cross denarius.

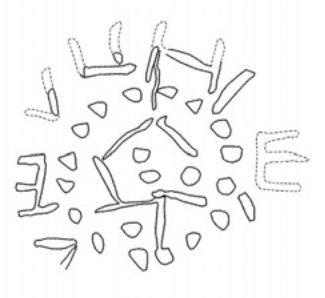

Fig. 4. Reconstruction of the newly discovered die of Bolesław I the Brave's coins (drawn by M. Bogucki)

The newly disclosed die is a part of a constantly expanding die-chain centred on the *PRINCES POLONIE* type, which is combined with a number of imitations of the *Otto and Adelaide* type, Saxon, Cologne, Bavarian denarii and, finally, with the imitation of the Vladivoj's denarius (Fig. 5).[12] This chain currently consists of 14 dies. However, considering that the dies were originally produced in pairs, it can be assumed that four further dies are waiting to be discovered. Above all, the Czech-type reverse is missing, which would be a pair for the die with the name

[12] Ilisch 2005, pp. 191–196; Bogucki 2006, pp. 181–192; Bogucki 2010, pp. 172–192; Bogucki 2011, pp. 1382–1391; Bogucki, Magiera 2015a, pp. 115–128.

of Vladivoj (no. 4), the reverse in the *Otto and Adelaide* type (no. 8), the Bavarian-type obverse (no. 16), and the other side of the die presented above (no. 18).

The discovery of a new die does not affect the established chronology of the entire die-chain, which should be placed in the first and second decades of the 11th century, reflecting results from the analysis of the dies and their images as well as from finds evidence: the coins included in this die-chain were discovered in the early hoards from Tarnowo Pałuckie (*tpq* 1005),[13] Ulejno (*tpq* 1006),[14] Przyborów (*tpq* 1010),[15] Lisówek (*tpq* 1014).[16] Of course, not all dies need to be in simultaneous use, because the PRINCES POLONIE chain is linear, i.e. different fragments of this die-chain could be created in different workshops, at different times and only at some stage of production the dies could have been mixed. Undoubtedly, the oldest is its left side, where the primary PRINCES POLONIE dies (ca. 1005) were combined with the die with the name of Vladivoj as well as technically well-made dies in the *Otto and Adelaide*, Cologne and Bavarian types (numbers 1a, 2a, 9–15). The right side of the die-chain, consisting of the repaired PRINCES POLONIE dies and the barbaric imitations of the Otto and Adelaide's denarii (numbers 1b, 2b, 5–7, 17), is younger, and probably dates to the second decade of the 11th century.[17]

VIDV die-chain

Denarii with the legend .VIDV and their twin denarii with the legend +JIVA are the subject of an extensive literature.[18] Here we will concentrate on coins with the inscription .VIDV. At present, there are about 50 known specimens of this type, 26 of which come from 22 finds, including 20 coins from 16 Polish finds (from ca. 1010), one denarius in a Ukrainian hoard (after 1024), three coins in three Scandinavian hoards (after 1035), two coins in two Czech finds (after 1050)[19] and about 25 further coins without provenance in public and private collections.

So far, three dies from this chain have been published (nos 1–3), which will not be discussed in detail below. However, studies conducted on imitation coinage in Poland have led to the disclosure of a number of further coins, which significantly expand this die-chain and put issues related to their origin in a whole new perspective.

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[13] FMP I.252:565.

[14] FMP I.260:495.

[15] FMP I.204:508–509.

[16] FMP I.134:4070–4074.

[17] Bogucki, Magiera 2015a, pp. 116–120.

[18] Ilisch 1994, pp. 65–70; Bogucki 2012a, pp. 114–117; Bogucki 2012b, pp. 95–98; Lukas 2020, pp. 231–243.

[19] For the current list of finds, see Lukas 2020, pp. 236–239.

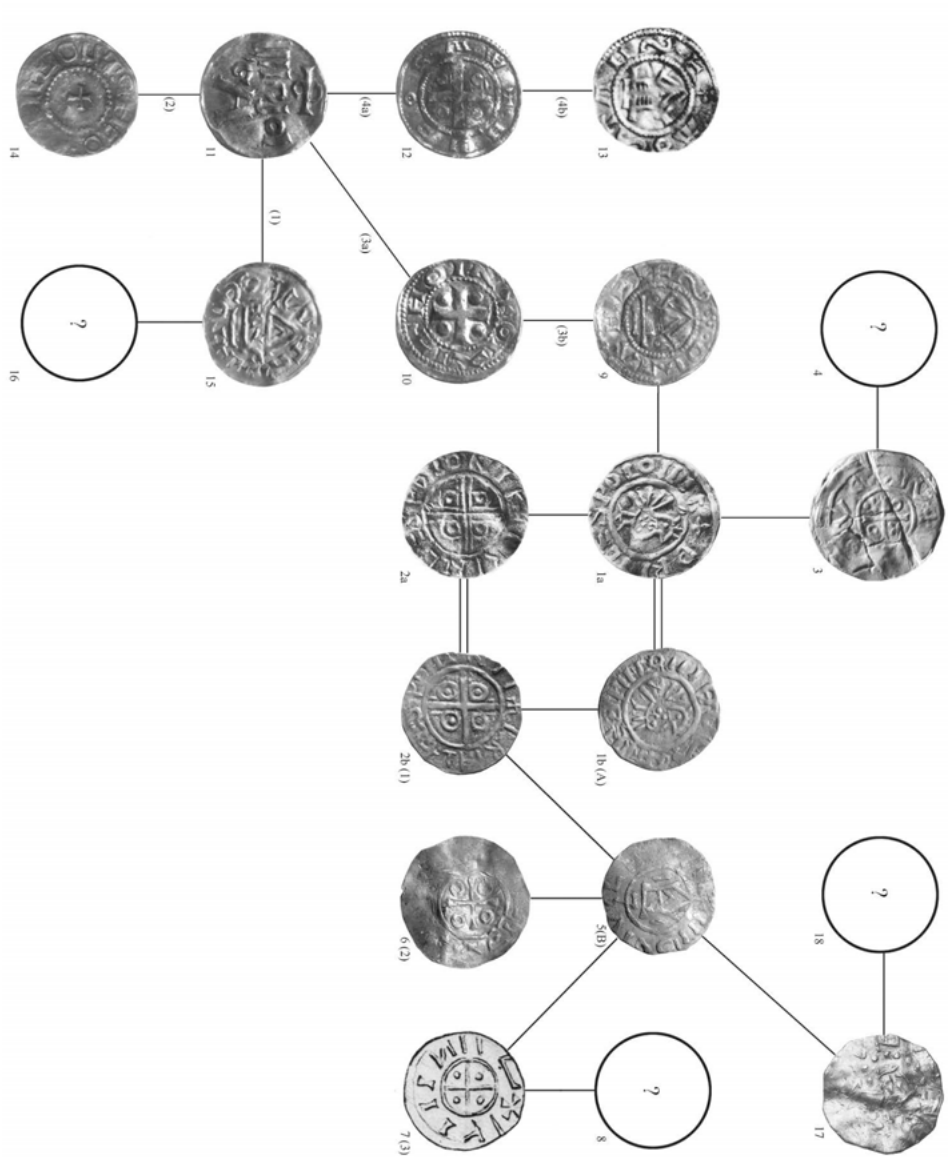

Fig. 5. Die-chain of Bolesław I the Brave's coins with the *PRINCES POLONIE* type (drawn by M. Bogucki)

The key coins for the extension of the die-chain turned out to be two denarii, offered for sale in various years by the Warszawskie Centrum Numizmatyczne (hereinafter WCN), which on one side have a chapel in a Bavarian type with an inscription .VIDV under the roof, and on the other side a cross with the letters D, O and three points between the cross-arms:

1.4 – WCN 60.114 (0.7 g);[20] WCN 173913 (1.34 g)[21]

1. Av.: chapel in Bavarian type with inscription .VIDV under the roof; along the edge the blundered legend ⊐IV o SD ovo US

4. Rv.: in the center, a cross with extended ends of arms, between its arms O / three points / D / three points, beaded inner circle; along the edge the blundered inscription SS/HOCIXΛIVI X

Fig. 6.a–b .*VIDV*/Cach 74 type denarii. Scale 1.5:1 (photo WCN)

The reverse of this coin has been known in numismatic literature since the middle of the 19th century, where it has been combined with an obverse with a Bavarian-type chapel. Until now, this type was attributed to the Czech Bolesław I (Cach 74, Šmerda 12l). It should be noted, however, that J. Smolik initially believed that this was the denarius of Bolesław I the Brave,[22] before both F. Cach and J. Smerda re-attributed this coin to the Czech Bolesław I. The design of this die is formally similar to reverse no. 3, with a cross and three letters D and three points between the arms. However, these are undoubtedly two different dies. Type 4.5 is currently known from four complete specimens. Interestingly, most of them seem to come from Polish finds, although the only certain example is known from a single find from Wiślica. Attention is drawn to the relatively high weight of Hanka's and Wiślica's copies.

4.5 – Cach 74, Šmerda 12l (1.91 g);[23] Wiślica I (2.25 g?);[24] PDA e-Auction 17, no. 23 (1.36 g); Historical Museum in Moscow[25]

Av.: as no. 4

[20] Warszawskie Centrum Numizmatyczne, Auction 60 (24.04.2015), no. 114 (https://wcn.pl/auctions/60/114).

[21] Warszawskie Centrum Numizmatyczne, internet Auction: https://wcn.pl/archive/173913 (28.03.2019).

[22] Smolik 1899, p. 113.

[23] Hanka 1855, p. 329, no. 18, tab. III.18; Smolik 1899, no. 515, tabl. VII–166; Cach 1970, no. 74; Šmerda 1996, no. 12l.

[24] FMP IV.B.106:2.

[25] Jacek Magiera's documentation.

5. Rv.: in the center, a chapel with VV under the top, peak beams with crossbars, in a ring the blundered inscription +SCVƆVIOU

Another coin expanding the .VIDV die-chain is a denarius, which may have been found "near" the Warta River in the vicinity of Gorzów Wielkopolski. Unfortunately, the coin is only known from poor-quality photographs.[26] However, there is no doubt that in addition to the Bavarian-type reverse described above, a strongly stylized chapel inspired by the *Otto and Adelaide* type was struck on the obverse. It is worth noting that this chapel imitates slightly younger variants, where the roof is disproportionately large in relation to the structure itself, while the internal beaming comes out of the roof structure. This coin is also characterized by its high weight.

Fig. 7. Cach 74 type denarii. Scale ca. 1.5:1: a – Cach 74; b – Wiślica; c – PDA 17, no. 23; d – Historical Museum in Moscow (fot. J. Magiera)

5.6 – Gorzów Wielkopolski – near Warta? (2.28 g)

6. Av.: chapel with widened roof, point in the center and ΔΔ on the sides, linear inner circle, along the edge ///EOᗡ///

Rv.: as no. 5

The Bavarian-type reverse is combined with another imitation of the *Otto and Adelaide* type, this time the obverse with a cross and the ODOD between the arms.

[26] I obtained information about this coin from prof. Borys Paszkiewicz, who I would like to thank.

Fig. 8. *Otto-Adelaide*/Cach 74 denier. Gorzów Wielkopolski – vicinity. Scale 1.5:1

The die was made by an unskilled engraver – the letters are unevenly scattered, and the inner circle is made with little precision using many simple cuts. There are a number of missed burin strokes and scratches on the die's surface. Like the previous specimens, this coin is characterised by its high weight.

5.7 – WCN 178660 (2.07 g)[27]

Av.: as no. 5

7. Rv.: equal armed cross with wedge-expanding arms, between them the letters ODOD, dashed inner circle. The letters of the inscription are barely visible along the edge

Fig. 9. *Otto-Adelaide*/Cach 74 denier. Scale 1.5:1 (photo WCN)

The no. 4 die, with the cross and the letters D, O and three dots between the arms, is connected to another die. This time it is the reverse of the Anglo-Saxon Æthelred II *Helmet* type. This coin comes from the Łupawa hoard, and has been published in the SCBI series as part of the collection of the Berlin Coin Cabinet. The prototype is dated to the years 1003–1009.

4.8 – Łupawa – FMP II.136:769; SCBI 36:1122[28] (1.31 g)

Av.: as no. 4

8. Rv.: Long Cross with arms ended with three semicircles. Under the cross, there is a square box with chequering, on the corners three dots were placed. The inscription along the edge is separated by the ends of the cross NIO – A// – //+ – GIE

[27] https://wcn.pl/archive/178660 (25.04.2019).

[28] SCBI 36:1122.

Fig. 10. Cach 74/*Long Cross* denier. Łupawa hoard. Scale 1.5:1 (SCBI 36:1122)

Another connection is represented by a coin of unknown origin, offered for sale by the Warszawskie Centrum Numizmatyczne. This time, the coin imitates the reverses of the Anglo-Saxon Æthelred II *Helmet* type from the years 1003–1009. A characteristic feature of the new *Helmet* type die is the use of square punches to strike dots on the corners of the chequered field.

8.9 – WCN 172648 (1.34 g)[29]

Av.: as no. 8

9. Rv.: Long Cross with arms ended with three semicircles. Under the cross, there is a square box with chequering, on the corners three dots were placed. The lower fragments of the inscription are poorly visible in the ring

Fig. 11. *Long Cross / Long Cross* denier. Scale 1.5:1 (photo WCN)

The last die recognized so far from the discussed die-chain is a denarius offered by the Warszawskie Centrum Numizmatyczne, which is based on *Pointed Helmet* type coins of Cnut (1023–1029), or rather on Danish coins of the same ruler combining the features of the *Pointed Helmet* and *Short Cross* types (1030–1035/6) – e.g. in the mint in Lund, Roskilde, Viborg (e.g. Hauberg 10–11; 25–26, 50).[30] The appearance of this die is particularly important, as it shows that at least some of the coins included in the die-chain were created in the 20s of the 11th century, rather at the end of this decade or even at the beginning of the next one.

8.10 – WCN 184806[31]

Av.: as no. 8

[29] https://wcn.pl/archive/172648 (24.01.2019).

[30] Hauberg 1965.

[31] https://wcn.pl/archive/184806 (22.08.2019).

10. Rv.: Short Cross with a point in the center, in the linear circle. In the two fields between the arms, one dot, in the next field, two dots, in the last one three dots. Along the edge, the blundered inscription + UΛƆOEIΩ//ƆO

Fig. 12. *Long Cross / Short Cross* denier. Scale 1.5:1 (photo WCN)

The die-chain can be divided into three separate groups, for which the central connecting point is die no. 4. The first group consists of dies nos 1–3, i.e. *.VIDV* type with reverses in two variants. The second group consists of dies nos 5–7, where, as in the first group, Saxon and Bavarian type patterns are concentrated. What distinguishes it from the first group, however, is metrology – the coins from the second group are much heavier. While *.VIDV* type group is dominated by coins in the range of 1–1.5 g, the weight of denarii from the second group oscillates around 2 grams. However, the third group with dies nos 8–10, which are based on Anglo-Saxon or rather Danish types, is completely different.

Differences between individual groups are also visible in the context of their chronology. The first – *.VIDV* group is well dated by finds, many of which date back to before 1020: Ulejno, Środa Wielkopolska county, *tpq* 1006;[32] Poland – unknown location, *tpq* 1012 – National Museum in Warsaw;[33] Goszczynno/Sierpów II/Łęczyca II, *tpq* 1016;[34] Poznań XXI – surroundings, *tpq* 1017.[35] However, the third group is much later, and is based on Cnut's coins from 1023–1029 and possibly even later ones.

The observed differences in the metrology and chronology of individual groups of coins and the linear nature of the die-chain suggest that either the workshop striking these coins operated for a relatively long time, for about 15–20 years, or that there was a temporary suspension of production and its subsequent reactivation (however, there were no traces of corrosion and repairs on the available copies, as in the case of PRINCES POLONIE or AREAHLAT dies), or that there was a movement of dies (probably no. 4) between an older workshop to a younger

[32] FMP I.260.496.

[33] Ilisch 1994, p. 65; Bogucki 2012a, p. 115.

[34] FMP III.38.45–46.

[35] FMP I.201.23.

one. As we know, the transport of dies between mints was not something unusual in the early Middle Ages.[36]

Regardless of the interpretation adopted, the example discussed here clearly shows that in the case of die chains, it is not possible to automatically assume "unity of place, time and action", but that it is necessary to consider each case separately. However, there is no great doubt that we are dealing with coins produced at the territory of the first Piasts's state. Which ruler these coins were minted for remains an open question. So far, I have been in favour of assigning denarii of type *.VIDV* (and their twin ones *+JIVA*) to Bolesław I the Brave's coinage. The discovery of a relatively late die from the 20s, and perhaps even the 30s of the 11th century, also requires us to consider the candidacy of Mieszko II, and the early production of type *.VIDV* put next to the coins with the name of Mieszko minted for him as the heir to the throne while Bolesław I the Brave was still alive. In this context, however, it should be noted that so far coins in Mieszko's name have never been combined with the denarii attributed to the Bolesław I the Brave. Only in the DVX INCLITUS die-chain does a die resembling the type 2 denarii of Mieszko II appear.[37] The lack of connections between the coins with names of Bolesław and Mieszko is a clear indication that the heir to the throne had a separate mint workshop. Stanisław Suchodolski located it in Giecz.[38]

Therefore, to whom we should attribute coins from the *.VIDV* die-chain, and where were they struck? Taking into account the imitative nature of this coinage, its broad chronology overlapping the reign of both the father and the son, copying commonly recognized patterns, and the general chaos prevailing in the oldest Polish coinage, it is easy to assume that the change of ruler did not significantly affect what coins were produced by mints operating on ad-hoc basis. It can therefore be assumed that denarii with a .VIDV inscription were produced both for Bolesław I the Brave and Mieszko II or only for the latter, initially as coins of the heir to the throne, later for an independent ruler. Whether they were minted at Giecz (it is worth recalling that one specimen of *.VIDV* type coin was found in the grave no. 13/07 at the local cemetery[39]) or another center cannot presently be determined, although, as the latest finds show, everything is possible, and new findings and disclosed coins can help in determining this issue.

We should also not rule out the possibility that denarii with the .VIDV inscription, as well as similar coins with the +JIVA inscription, were not produced in

[36] Becker 1985, pp. 175–178; Blackburn 1985, pp. 101–124; Bogucki, Magiera 2015b, pp. 121–128.

[37] Bogucki, Magiera 2015a, pp. 120–123.

[38] Suchodolski 2015, pp. 83–85.

[39] FMP I.43.39.

the mint of the supreme ruler, but were instead a product made at the request of one of the magnates. However, it would have to be a man from the very top of the elite, because the scale of denarii production with a *.VIDV* and *+JIVA* types is very similar to the scale of production of coins attributed to Bolesław I the Brave and Mieszko II.

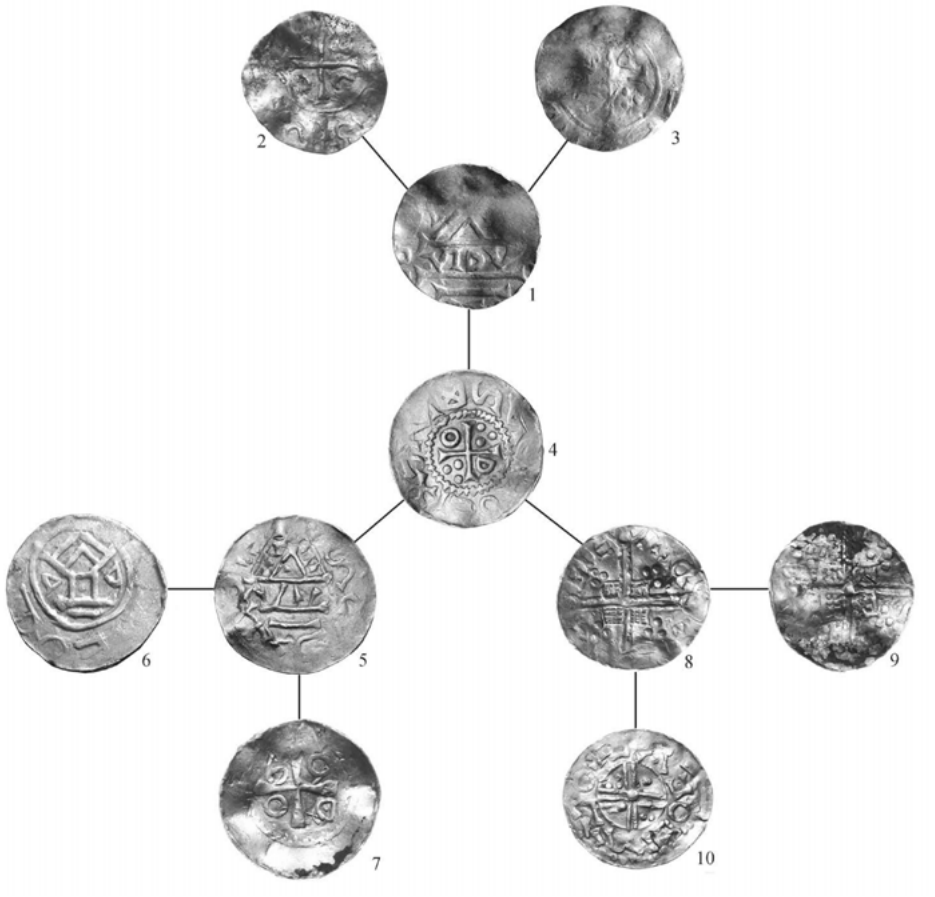

Fig. 13. Die-chain of *.VIDV* type (drawn by M. Bogucki)

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NOWE TYPY NAJSTARSZYCH MONET POLSKICH

(Streszczenie)

W artykule zaprezentowano odkrycia monet nowych typów, które można przypisać do najstarszego mennictwa polskiego. Wchodzą one w skład dwóch różnych łańcuchów połączeń stempli. W przypadku łańcucha połączeń stempli PRINCES POLONIE udało się zidentyfikować jeden nowy stempel, w niezwykle zbarbaryzowanym stylu, przedstawiający zdeformowaną kapliczkę. Moneta wybita tym samym stemplem została wcześniej odnaleziona w skarbie z Kujaw, ukrytym po 1027 r. Odkrycie nowego stempla nie wpływa znacząco na ustaloną dotychczas chronologię monet z tego łańcucha – aktualne pozostaje datowanie monet na lata około 1005–1015. Natomiast duża różnorodność stylistyczna stempli z tego łańcucha – od precyzyjnie wykonanych po zupełnie barbarzyńskie, po raz kolejny ukazuje, że nie istnieje jednolity styl najdawniejszych monet polskich oraz, że w mennictwie Bolesława Chrobrego panował chaos.

W przypadku drugiego łańcucha połączeń stempli – .VIDV ujawniono aż siedem nowych stempli. Znajdują się tam tłoki wzorowane na monetach czeskich, bawarskich, saskich, anglosaskich i duńskich. Ich szczegółowa analiza wskazuje, że monety produkowane tymi stemplami nie musiały być produkowane w jednym czasie, lecz że produkcja mogła trwać nawet kilkanaście lat. Monety z tego łańcucha można podzielić na trzy osobne grupy, dla których punktem centralnym, łączącym je wszystkie jest stempel nr 4. Grupa pierwsza to stemple 1–3, czyli typ *.VIDV* z rewersami w dwóch odmianach. Grupa druga to stemple 5–7, gdzie skupiają się wzory w typie saskim i bawarskim, jednak od grupy pierwszej różnią się metrologią – są o wiele cięższe. Grupa trzecia to stemple nr 8–10, które wzorowane są na typach anglosaskich bądź raczej duńskich. Wyraźne są też różnice chronologiczne. O ile grupa pierwsza – .VIDV, jest dobrze datowana znaleziskami, z których szereg pochodzi z lat 1006–1017, to druga grupa pochodzi już z lat 20. XI w., wzorowana jest bowiem na monetach Knuta z lat 1023–1029, a być może i późniejszych.

Nowo ujawnione stemple nie rozwiązały problemu atrybucji denarów z legendą .VIDV, lecz ich przynależność do mennictwa Bolesława Chrobrego lub Mieszka II jest bardzo prawdopodobna.

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