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**THE CYRILLIC PENNY OF BOLESLAUS CHROBRY,
PRINCE OF POLAND – A NEW SOURCE,
A NEW INTERPRETATION**

ABSTRACT: In this article, a new interpretation of the so-called Cyrillic penny has been proposed. The coin in question was struck for Duke Boleslaus Chrobry ('the Brave') in Greater Poland, probably in the last months of 1018. The reason for the revision of earlier hypotheses is the bulla of a Kyivan prince, Iaroslav the Wise that was uncovered in Novgorod Velikiĭ and dated to c.1018. The bulla differs in its iconography from other tenth and eleventh century lead seals from the area of Rus'. The close similarity between the figure of Iaroslav on his bulla and the depiction of the Polish duke on his Cyrillic penny as well as the contemporaneity of the two objects, leads us to presume that the penny played some role in propaganda activities associated with the capture of Kyiv by Boleslaus in 1018.

Pennies of Boleslaus Chrobry ('the Brave') with an inscription in the Cyrillic alphabet are among the most frequently described coins of this Polish ruler, which does not mean that their interpretation does not raise any objections (Fig. 1).¹ Without going into a more detailed review of past research, we only wish to recall that pre-1920s publications was brought together and evaluated by Marian Gumowski,² after him – already during the post-war period – the mostly newer

¹ The present text was read, in a slightly modified form, at an encounter dedicated to numismatics and the heritage shared by Poland with her eastern neighbours (Polish name: *Forum Numizmatyczne: Polska – Wschód: Wspólne Dziedzictwo Dziejów*), held 4–7 September 2013 in Augustów, and at the meeting of the Commission for Numismatic Studies of the Polish National Historical Committee, Polish Academy of Sciences, held on 15 November 2013 at the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences. I am indebted to all of the participants for their valuable comments.

² Gumowski 1924, pp. 80–108.

publications were discussed by Ryszard Kiersnowski³ and Stanisław Suchodolski.⁴ A number of contributions not cited earlier, Russian ones in particular, were collected by Mikhail Sverdlov,⁵ and the status of post-1945 research was summarized in the most recent article on Cyrillic pennies by Wiesław Kopicki.⁶ Moreover, taking his cue from Ryszard Kiersnowski, he divided the interpretations of this peculiar coinage into three groups. According to earlier interpretations, Cyrillic pennies could be: 1) coins minted in Poland for the Rus'ian market (mainly, the feudal elite of Czerwień Province);⁷ 2) coins minted at Kyiv in 1018 by Boleslaus Chrobry for the purpose of prestige,⁸ and 3) coins associated with the centre of Slavic liturgy in Lesser Poland, or possibly, the consecration of a cathedral of this rite in Cracow.⁹ To these interpretations we can add two more: one, that the Cyrillic coinage was minted by Boleslaus in Poland for prestige (the recapture of the Czerwień Province) intended for the local elite¹⁰ and the other is that these pennies were not issued for any special purpose (their function was only commercial, or possibly, their purpose was also prestige, but only within the conventional message communicated by other coinage, and without any special additional content). Their peculiar form can be explained by having the die made by an engraver trained in the Eastern tradition who came to Poland with Boleslaus Chrobry from Rus'.¹¹ This last proposition recently gained the support of Jerzy Piniński, who has argued in his newest contribution that 'the purpose of minting a coin with a Cyrillic inscription was presumably economic as there were no other reasons to issue coins in Greater Poland with this sort of inscription'.¹² It is this line of rea-

³ Kiersnowski 1958.

⁴ Suchodolski 1967, pp. 118–122.

⁵ Swierdłow 1969.

⁶ Kopicki 2004.

⁷ The more notable advocates of this theory are Kazimierz Stronczyński (1884, p. 29) and Ryszard Kiersnowski (1958). The latter moderated his views in his later work (1962, p. 136), wavering between his earlier interpretation and a new line of reasoning according to which the die representations would be the result of the involvement of a die engraver from Rus' and have no special ideological content, but added also that 'we know too little about the times of Boleslaus, especially the final years of his reign, to attribute, with a clear conscience, the origin of such an eloquent "political poster" only to chance'.

⁸ This was particularly expressed by Zakrzewski 1954–1956 and Swierdłow 1969.

⁹ This interpretation was advanced by Marian Gumowski (1924). It was not accepted in research and practically went unnoticed.

¹⁰ Schmidt 1982.

¹¹ This last interpretation is supported by Stanisław Suchodolski (1967, pp. 119–120, 1981, pp. 10–11, 1982a, 1982b).

¹² Piniński 2012, p. 78.

soning, apparently now prevalent in the discussion, which persuades me to argue my case.



Fig. 1. The Cyrillic penny of Boleslaus Chrobry (from S. Suchodolski 1967).

However, let us first return to the article of Wiesław Kopicki in which he tried to find a compromise between the interpretations described earlier and prove that Cyrillic pennies, while minted in Poland, were also a prestige coinage, meant to raise the status of Boleslaus Chrobry vis-à-vis the Kyivan Prince Sviatopolk and his retinue, when – exiled by Iaroslav after the defeat in the Battle of Liubech – the Rus’ian prince stayed in Poland from 1017 until mid-1018. I am not fully convinced by this line of reasoning since the outer manifestation (in contrast to the inner – directed at one’s subjects) was always directed at a ruler whose standing was higher than that of the coin’s issuer and never at one who was weaker, which seems natural enough as there was a need to affirm one’s power mainly with those who were stronger, meaning, those on whom much could depend in a specific situation. The Kyivan prince was certainly not one of them, as he was more likely to be the one to seek prestige with Boleslaus. Consequently, the argument that the main recipient of the message was Sviatopolk, a much weaker ruler, one fully dependent at the time on Boleslaus, does not seem correct. The Polish prince simply had no interest in aiming such a message at the recently defeated Rus’ians. This so thoroughly original manifestation, one that breaks outright with the iconographic canon appropriate for a prince from the Latin cultural environment, if not the work of chance (and it is hard in my view to accept this perspective), must have been occasioned by some event or idea of a much higher rank.

At this point we need to examine the Congress of Gniezno which seems to have cast its shadow over the entire reign of Boleslaus and the idea of suzerainty of the Polish prince over the territory known as *Sclavina*, its personification – next to that of Roma, Germania and Gallia – known to us from the extensively and variously interpreted miniatures found in two German codices: the Reichenau Gospels, written somewhere between 998 and 1001 (now in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich) and the Bamberg Apocalypse from around

1000 (now in the Staatsbibliothek in Bamberg).¹³ What we need to ask is if it is possible that the Cyrillic penny was meant to portray Boleslaus as the ruler of the Eastern Slavs, a part of the Slav empire he was trying to create. This line of reasoning is not new in publications. The view that ‘the Kyivan expedition was the putting into effect by Boleslaus Chrobry of the idea of uniting all Slavs under his suzerainty’ appeared in the work of Roman Jakimowicz in 1934 and, initially, in the study of the Russian researcher, Vladimir Koroliuk.¹⁴ According to Mikhail Sverdlov, this interpretation ‘misrepresents the nature of the international relations of that period’,¹⁵ although the same researcher conceded nevertheless that the actions of Boleslaus at Kyiv show clearly that he sought to become a sovereign ruler of Rus’, ‘whereas Sviatopolk was to take the role of a puppet on the grand-princely throne’.¹⁶ Moreover, a detailed analysis of the symbolic gestures made by Boleslaus on his way to Kyiv and after entering this city (*adventus regis*, seating himself on the throne at Kyiv, and the episode with Peredslava) led Jacek Banaszkiwicz to conclude that the Polish prince genuinely considered himself as the ruler of Kyivan Rus’.¹⁷ And, although Jerzy Strzelczyk has contended that this hypothesis was too far-reaching,¹⁸ there is much to suggest that the eminent Warsaw medievalist was right after all.

¹³ The Reichenau Gospels, fol. 23v–24r, illustration: http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otto_III._%28HRR%29#mediaviewer/File:Meister_der_Reichenauer_Schule_004.jpg (accessed on 3 November 2014)

The Bamberg Apocalypse, fol. 59v, illustration: http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bamberger_Apokalypse#mediaviewer/File:BambergApokalypse03CoronationOfEmperor.JPG (accessed on 3 November 2014).

The definition of *Sclavinia*, the meaning it had for the people in the entourage of Otto III around AD 1000 in particular, is still under discussion. I intend to address this matter at more length elsewhere (in my study ‘Jakiej *Sclavinii* władcą chciał być Bolesław Chrobry? Kilka spostrzeżeń numizmatycznych’ — ‘Of what *Sclavinia* did Boleslaus Chrobry wish to be the ruler? A few numismatic observations’, prepared within a larger publication dedicated to the iconography of early medieval Polish coins). This is also where I intend to discuss the publication in which analysis is made of the actions of Boleslaus in the context of arguments on his ‘imperial’ ambitions.

¹⁴ The works in question are: R. Jakimowicz, Szlak wyprawy kijowskiej Bolesława Chrobrego w świetle archeologii, *Rocznik Wołyński*, vol. III (1934), p. 92, and: V. D. Koroliuk, *Drevnepol'skoe gosudarstvo* (Moscow, 1957), pp. 161–162 (the reference following: Swierdłow 1969, p. 179, note 31, who notes that Koroliuk subsequently departed from this line of reasoning).

¹⁵ Swierdłow 1969, p. 179, note 31.

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 179.

¹⁷ Banaszkiwicz 1990; incidentally, this scholar did not formulate his opinion about these imperial ‘aspirations’ explicitly.

¹⁸ Strzelczyk 2003, p. 180.

The studies on the Cyrillic penny of Boleslaus Chrobry at present may be moved a step forward, now that most probably we have succeeded in identifying the direct prototype of the prince's portrait and, on this basis, can identify the purpose of the issue of interest. Thus far, looking for its iconographic model, researchers have mostly focused on coins. This reference material lead them to the conclusion that the direction of influence, rather than Rus'ian,¹⁹ was more likely to be a Byzantine one, given that the half-figure of Boleslaus on the obverse fits within the Byzantine canon of portraiture on coinage and that the cross on the reverse of the penny was adopted from the coins of the *basileis*.²⁰ An opportunity to revise these speculations came after 1994 with a new source, one with the potential to add significantly to our understanding of the subject. This source demonstrated that it is critical in our study to consider sigillographic material.²¹

The source in question is a bulla of a previously unknown type issued by Prince Iaroslav the Wise (1016–1054), discovered at Novgorod Velikii in a layer dated to the first quarter of the eleventh century, and currently known from a single specimen now in the Novgorod Museum (Novgorodskii gosudarstvennyi ob'edinennyi muzei-zapovednik), (Fig. 2).²² On its obverse is the image of the prince, in half-figure, facing, bearded, wearing a pointed helmet and a cloak fastened at his right shoulder, with, on both sides, an inscription, which rendered in a modern lettering is: О/ІАР/СЛА/(В) К../НЯ... /РОУС../С..., *O Iaroslav knia[з'] Rus[i]* ('Iaroslav, the prince of Rus'),²³ the reverse image is that of St George, also in half-figure, with a spear and shield, flanked by inscriptions: о/ге/ω/р – гн/ω/с. The bulla, dated to around 1018,²⁴ has dimensions of 32 × 36 mm.

¹⁹ Some degree of similarity between the penny of Boleslaus Chrobry and coinage attributed to Sviatopolk from around 1018, evident in the details of the reverse composition, was noted by Stanisław Suchodolski (1971, p. 146, note 20).

²⁰ Kazimierz Szuda (1959, p. 63) invokes as parallels the coins of Constantine X and Romanos II (948–959), Stanisław Suchodolski (1982b, p. 44) — the coins of Basil II (976–1025).

²¹ Let us note that in one of his newer publications Borys Paszkiewicz (2012, p. 8) has observed that the name of Boleslaus written in Cyrillic 'agrees with the style design of the coin which combines models taken from seals of Rus'ian princes and those seen on Byzantine coins'. As it transpired during my conversation with B. Paszkiewicz before the meeting in Warsaw mentioned in note 1, this researcher was referring to the same source as the one examined later on in the present text.

²² Inventory no. КП 40529/1, СФ 776.

²³ This reading of the poorly legible obverse legend is given in the Internet catalogue of the *Sviataia Rus'* exhibition (http://www.svyatayarus.ru/data/archeology/pechat_yaroslav/index.php, accessed: 27 October 2014).

²⁴ Thus, in the Internet catalogue of the museum in Novgorod (accessed: 20 August 2013; at the time of writing — October 2014 — I did not succeed in finding Iaroslav's bulla in the Internet resources of the same museum). In publications, one also finds the dating

Among the lead seals of this prince, and among tenth and eleventh century Rus' seals, this specimen is an iconographic curiosity.²⁵ Moreover, this sort of style is not seen either on coins or on any other artwork in the territory of Rus'.²⁶ The representation of the ruler on Rus' seals of the so-called archaic tradition (chronologically close to the bulla of interest) adapts models from the territory of the Eastern Roman Empire, bringing them closer to the images known from early Rus'ian coins. At the same time, according to K. Mikhailov, the Iaroslav bulla from Novgorod displays evident iconographic links with Viking Age Scandinavia, although the same researcher also notes that some elements could have been borrowed from the Byzantine Empire.²⁷ The fact of such an evident departure from Byzantine models could have prompted Boleslaus Chrobry to transplant the representation from the bulla to the coin die of his penny. This style was heavy on the representation feature, standing in some measure on the border line between eastern and western influence, or rather, brought together on one small die elements characteristic for both cultural environments.



Fig. 2. The bulla of Iaroslav the Wise, c.1018 (drawing by W. Garbaczewski based on the illustration in the Internet catalogue of the *Sviataia Rus'* exhibition).

of c.AD 1019 (Alfërov 2010, p. 19). In the catalogue of the *Sviataia Rus'* exhibition this bulla is dated broadly to the period around 1010–1054, similarly as in the publication of Ianin and Gaïdukov 1998.

²⁵ Rus'ian seals from this period (also the bulla of interest to us here) are discussed, e.g. by Ianin and Gaïdukov 1998 and by Beletskii 2001.

²⁶ Mikhailov 1996, p. 93. For helping me to access this article I am indebted to Mr. Vital' Sidarovich of the Belarusian State University in Minsk.

²⁷ Mikhailov 1996, pp. 93–94. This author cites as Scandinavian analogies, e.g. the coins of Canute the Great and the figurines of Norse deities. With regard to the eastern direction he writes that 'the helmet with its characteristic ball terminal finds analogy in Byzantine miniatures, and in 1994 representations of similar helmets were discovered on twelfth-century frescoes in the church of St George at Staraia Ladoga'. The Scandinavian provenance of the portrait of the prince on the Novgorod bulla is accepted also by S. V. Beletskii (2001, p. 57).

Iaroslav the Wise is depicted here nearly in the same manner as Boleslaus Chrobry is on his Cyrillic penny. In the description of the seal available to me I have not found any information that Iaroslav is depicted with his arm extended forward, hand open, very likely, because simply it was not expected to be there (additionally, this fragment is not very legible). Nevertheless, in my view, there can be no doubt that the hand, in exactly the same position as on Boleslaus's penny, is there on that bulla.²⁸ This proves that the latter may be recognized as the prototype, impressed in lead, of the representation of Boleslaus Chrobry on his Cyrillic penny. The composition of the legend is also identical, although on the coin the title was not included; presumably as it was too restricted for the aspirations of the Polish prince (see discussion below).

On the reverse of Iaroslav's seal is a half-figure of a saint – an element characteristic for Rus'ian seals of that period – in this case, of St George. Thus, there is a clearly marked separation between the sacred and the profane. On Boleslaus's penny this rule was retained – on the reverse is an ornate Greek cross (very similar to the one seen on the reverse of the penny type 'with arrow', most likely, struck back in the 990s, something that has been taken note of),²⁹ although we find no reference to the saint – in this case, Adalbert, who already had risen to the status of the heavenly protector of the state and the ruling house. This may suggest, on the one hand, that during this early period there was still no established tradition of placing images associated with a martyr saint on the coin dies (although the name of another saint, Wenceslas is seen in the legend on pennies of Boleslaus Chrobry already in the closing years of the tenth century),³⁰ which, in turn, undermines the line of reasoning that assumes the presence of symbols associated with the saint martyred by the Prussians on penny types 'with arrow' and 'with peacock', definitely older than the Cyrillic type. Still, possibly in its case, the decision was taken to use a more universally Christian symbol and without more local accents, which appears to be closer to the truth. It is worth noting, moreover, that the name of the Polish prince is repeated and appears on the coin's obverse and reverse. Thus, on our penny the place of the saint is taken

²⁸ This is confirmed by the inspection of the fine reproduction published on the Internet page of the *Sviataia Rus'* exhibition (see note 19). In the drawing provided in the work of Ianin and Gařdukov, widely used in later publications, this element is not included.

²⁹ Piniński 2012, p. 78, where we find the view that 'the convergence of the reverse of this coin [*i.e.* of the Cyrillic penny] with the penny type 'with spear' [*i.e.* 'with arrow' – WG] is accidental as, very likely; these pennies are approximately 20 years apart'. We can accept this view at present. Whereas in the case of the Cyrillic penny, we have to do with a direct Byzantine inspiration, the cross seen on the penny type 'with arrow' presumably was adopted from the Hedeby semi-bracteates – see Suchodolski 1997, p. 270.

³⁰ Suchodolski 2012, pp. 393–396.

by that of the prince. Possibly, in this way, through repetition, the importance of a given piece of information was given additional emphasis (see the inscription PRINCES POLONIE on the penny ‘with peacock’), and the name of Boleslaus was what had the utmost importance on the penny. Perhaps, the prince did not wish to leave any doubt as to who had issued the coin and this — given its unique appearance — should not surprise.

In answering the question as to why the name of Boleslaus was written in the Cyrillic alphabet we may conclude, therefore, that this is most likely because the same alphabet had been used on the seal of Iaroslav, and the main concern was keeping to the model as closely as possible. The seal of the Rus’ian prince had come into the possession of the Polish prince presumably during his stay in Kyiv, after he had captured this city on 14 August 1018. However, he did not have the penny of interest minted there. This took place — as evidenced by the finds — only in Greater Poland, when Boleslaus, having left Sviatopolk in Kyiv, returned to his country.³¹ In this case, presumably, the minting hammer was put into operation relatively soon. It seems, therefore, that the coinage activity started shortly after the arrival in Poland, perhaps even in November 1018, and the event which may be recognized as the one that put an end to this activity was the loss of power by Sviatopolk to Iaroslav, in the summer (probably in August) of the following year. The Cyrillic pennies known to us at present were minted with three obverse and four reverse dies,³² suggesting that this was not a short-lived coinage activity.³³

The fact that these coins were not minted at Kyiv, supplying them to the embassies sent to the Byzantine and the German emperor (at least, there is no indication whatsoever of this) appears to prove that at this time, the coins were not part — or at least, not always — of a group of objects used as outer manifestations of prestige (presumably, this end was served by other, more impressive media). Thus, the message was aimed at the immediate entourage of the prince

³¹ Gallus Anonymus (I, 7) recorded that the Polish prince quitted Kyiv after ten months of exercising authority in that capital city. This period is definitely too long, as was noted on many occasions, comparing Thietmar’s reports and the date of his death (see Swierdłow 1969, pp. 179–180; Banaszkiewicz 1990, pp. 28–29). In reality, it is likely that Boleslaus stayed in Kyiv for a little over two months.

³² Piniński 2012, p. 78.

³³ Although — as was demonstrated by Stanisław Suchodolski (1959, p. 38) — we cannot discount also a relatively brief minting period as the die could have become worn out even over two days. The question that we are left with is where the Cyrillic pennies were minted. A very attractive hypothesis is that this was on the island of Ostrów Lednicki, where artefacts of eastern provenience have surfaced that we can link chronologically with the period of Chrobry’s reign (this problem is discussed briefly, complete with a list of references by J. Strzelczyk 2003, pp. 184–186). Unfortunately, as yet we have not succeeded in finding the said penny there — *cf.* Tabaka and Wyrwa 2013.

in the first place, therefore, in this case he cared only to reinforce his own position in the eyes of the lords and the clergy. Naturally, this did not rule out that a Cyrillic penny passed occasionally outside the western border of the Piast realm. For individuals educated at a Latin court (such as the imperial court in Germany), this message presumably was easy to read thus, to me, the views that stress that the die had something to communicate only in the Rus'ian environment, lack foundation. I find it also hard to agree in this case that the inscription is accidental. Indeed, it did not play a significant role in the case of coins with a purely commercial function, provided with conventional, often imitative, dies. When it comes to coinage meant to manifest prestige, the situation changed however, as the message was aimed in the first place at a politically active group of people (there are even some coins where the function of display is served primarily by the inscription).³⁴ For the clergy and the lay lords in the immediate entourage of the prince (and also, for the recipients outside the borders of his realm), the fact that the inscription was in Cyrillic may have had a major significance as a manifestation of prestige, especially during the period of the Early Middle Ages, an age during which coinage still continued to be – at least in the territory of the so-called ‘Younger’ Europe³⁵ – a novelty of sorts. Having a coin minted in the type of interest was made so much easier by the fact that the die indeed could have been made by someone well versed in the eastern tradition as, for example – something suggested already by Stanisław Suchodolski³⁶ – by Anastasios the Greek, a native of Korsun’, a high ranking Kyivan priest, who arrived from Kyiv to Poland in the train of Boleslaus. In addition, in any event, this could have been Anastasios’s idea, especially that the art of ingratiating himself with Boleslaus had been mastered by him to perfection.³⁷

The question arises as to the purpose of minting the Cyrillic penny. The already mentioned close iconographic conformity of the seal and the coin – and it is hard to accept that this is just a coincidence³⁸ – seems to leave no doubt that we have here a specimen of special purpose prestige coinage. Boleslaus was ‘enter-

³⁴ This surmise, setting aside the attendant discussion, may be made, in my view, both for Polish pennies (*e.g.* the pennies of Boleslaus Chrobry: *MOGILN CIVITAS, DVX INCLITVS* or *REX*, presumably, also *GNEZDVN CIVITAS*), and Czech pennies (*e.g.* the penny of Vojtěch-Adalbert the Slavnikid, with the inscription *HIC DENARIVS EST EPIS[copi]* or the penny of Udalric with the inscription *REGNET IN PRAGA s[an]CTA*). From a slightly later period we can cite the bracteate of Boleslaus III with the image of St Adalbert and the title of the Archbishop of Gniezno in the legend.

³⁵ See Samsonowicz 2002.

³⁶ Suchodolski 1967, p. 120, note 162; Suchodolski 1982b, p. 45.

³⁷ Strzelczyk 2003, p. 182.

³⁸ This view was expressed also by Borys Paszkiewicz during the discussion after my presentation in Warsaw, see note 1.

ing into' the position occupied by Iaroslav, removing him from an object meant to authenticate his will, thus, depriving him symbolically of legally authorized decision prerogative, and *ipso facto*, power. At the same time, Boleslaus did not have this representation copied without any thought; he introduced small modifications as well. Whereas on the bulla of Iaroslav, in a place now somewhat worn, it was possible to make out a conical helmet,³⁹ on his coin Boleslaus probably appears without any headgear,⁴⁰ although a conclusive definition is at present difficult. In any case, the calpac, recognized here by some researchers,⁴¹ would have no iconographic parallels whatsoever (no fur border at bottom, division into fine vertical bands and not encountered anywhere else), therefore, would not correspond to the princely headgear, whether in Rus',⁴² or in Poland or any neighbouring country.⁴³ Presumably neither the military helmet nor the Rus'ian calpac was in correspondence with the status achieved by Boleslaus after the Kyivan expedition so he decided to introduce a minor correction relative to Iaroslav's bulla and had himself portrayed without headgear (presumably, this is also the reason for the omission of the title in the legend). This style of portraiture had its counterparts (and ideological roots) in the prestige portraiture of the western princes, starting with the period of the Roman Empire.⁴⁴ Presumably this is

³⁹ Alf'orov 2013, p. 35.

⁴⁰ This was the conclusion reached quite some time ago by M. Gumowski (1924, p. 80), and one at present accepted by Stanisław Suchodolski (1967, p. 120) who cited parallels from Byzantine seals and coins.

⁴¹ E.g. Paweł Stróżyk (2000, pp. 129–130) who notes that the elongated shape of Boleslaus's head proves the presence of some item of head gear, which this researcher recognizes positively as a calpac, citing Ryszard Kiersnowski (1964, p. 95) in whose publication there is mention of 'a helmet, or some sort of a calpac'. R. Kiersnowski was evidently in favour of the calpac in his earlier publications (1960, p. 288; 1962, p. 136) but did not take up this concept in his later work (1988, on headgear pp. 188–200), which suggests that he had retreated from this interpretation. The head is described as covered with 'a tall hat with lengthwise hatching' also by Zygmunt Zakrzewski (1954–1956, pp. 226–228), whereas there is information about 'an item of headgear similar to a mitre or a helmet', in Kazimierz Szuda (1959, p. 62).

⁴² Nadezhda Soboleva (1994, p. 176) writes that in the Rus'ian chronicles the word used to describe the headgear of the Kyivan prince is 'klobuk', adding that 'presumably this was the name of the hat worn by the prince, known from many depictions, starting from the eleventh century, a hemispherical toque of brightly coloured stuff with a fur (sable) border'.

⁴³ Stróżyk 2000, pp. 127–130. This researcher's claim as to the possibility that the calpac depicted on Chrobry's coin is a distinctively Polish form cannot be confirmed at present.

⁴⁴ Of the early medieval German coins approximately contemporary to the Cyrillic coinage of Chrobry we can mention here the imperial pennies of Henry II (1014–1024)

also the context in which it is best to perceive the reverse of the Cyrillic penny. The concept advanced by Mikhail Sverdlov that the ornate Greek cross ‘would symbolize the protection extended by Boleslaus over the Byzantine rite of the Rus’ian Church’⁴⁵ is not entirely convincing given that a very similar cross as was noted earlier, is featured on one of Boleslaus’s coin types (‘with arrow’) of nearly twenty years earlier. Possibly, the decision to leave out the image of the saint and introduce instead a universal symbol was intended to emphasize the broader aspect of Boleslaus’s rule who, from the time of entering Kyiv, was not only the sovereign of Rus’, but also regarded himself as the supreme ruler of a united Slav empire. Because of this, taking over the image from the seal of Iaroslav, the prince had removed from it all the elements unrelated to his ‘imperial’ authority.

If we reject the presence of the calpac, the only attribute of authority would be the cloak, which also was a means of communicating important ideological content.⁴⁶ It is enumerated among symbols of princely authority in Rus’ by Nadezhda Soboleva (as a *kots*),⁴⁷ the outer wear also of military saints in Byzantine art (at times, in a more elaborate form, with a brooch, taken over from the iconography of the Roman Empire), and was also an element of the official attire of the *basileis* in the Eastern Roman Empire.⁴⁸

From the seal of Iaroslav Boleslaus Chrobry also took the gesture, therefore, its role in the coin’s programme must have been of the utmost importance (Fig. 3).⁴⁹ We can describe it as an imperious gesture, signifying omnipotence and sovereignty, also indicating a close connection with the sacred.⁵⁰ We find this gesture on Roman imperial coinage of the third century AD, whereupon it spread both in the Eastern and the Western world becoming an element of iconography associated with authority at large, usually of the highest rank (imperial), although in a

from Deventer (Dbg 564 – although in this type the head is in profile). See also Suchodolski 1967, p. 120.

⁴⁵ Swierdłow 1969, p. 179.

⁴⁶ R. Kiersnowski (1988, p. 187), not finding any good analogies for the cloak depicted on Boleslaus’s penny in Rus’ian and Byzantine coins, notes that – as attested by the written sources – stately cloaks ‘woven with gold were worn in Rus’ by the leaders of Varangian troops summoned there (...)’. However, this researcher did not go as far as to answer the question whether cloaks of this description had inspired the maker of the coin die or whether this was actually the attire of the Polish prince.

⁴⁷ Sobolewa 1994, p. 179.

⁴⁸ Grotowski 2011, pp. 306–317.

⁴⁹ Analogies and a list of references are given already by S. Suchodolski (1967, p. 120). It is worth noting that this gesture is very rarely taken into account in publications the result being that it is omitted from the discussions of this penny type.

⁵⁰ On the subject of the prehistory of this motif, see I’Orange 1953.

later age (in Poland, since the early twelfth century),⁵¹ this gesture was adopted also by rulers of a lower rank.⁵²



Fig. 3. A fragment of the obverse of the Cyrillic penny of Boleslaus Chrobry with the clearly visible gesture of the prince (from the Archive of the Warsaw Numismatic Centre, www.wcn.pl).

Availing himself deliberately of the iconographic convention in which eastern and western elements were combined and using the Cyrillic alphabet in the legend, in a direct reference to the seal of his predecessor, Boleslaus demonstrated in a perfectly coherent, blunt and communicative way his suzerainty over the territory of Rus'. This, in turn, suggests that the Polish prince attached special meaning to the taking of Kyiv. This is proved also by other actions taken by him, seating himself on the throne of the Kyivan princes. No less notable is the sending of embassies to the emperor of the East and of the West, which clearly confirms the 'imperial' dimension of Boleslaus's policy. The embassy to Henry II, in which Boleslaus assured the emperor first and foremost of his friendship,⁵³ could have been treated as an attempt to return to the former (from the time of the Congress of Gniezno) good relations between the Polish and the German princes, to their close cooperation, and was also presumably a reminder of plans made in AD 1000, which now – in spite of all the obstacles and almost twenty years later – had been enacted.⁵⁴ In turn, the embassy to the Byzantine emperor informed that

⁵¹ In Poland for the first time this gesture, somewhat modified (hand raised), appears on a penny of Boleslaus III, which marks the beginning, as is generally accepted, of this prince's independent rule over the realm after the defeat of his brother Zbigniew (Suchodolski 1973, p. 110).

⁵² This matter is examined at more length by Przemysław Mrozowski (1994). See also Garbaczewski 2007, pp. 324-328.

⁵³ Thietmar, VIII, 33.

⁵⁴ Jacek Banaszkiewicz (1990, p. 27) recognizes the aim of this embassy thus: 'I (*i.e.* Boleslaus) have taken possession of Kyiv and by so doing have brought my new lands into the sphere of the immediate interest of your (*i.e.* Emperor Henry's) authority'.

ruler about Boleslaus's desire to maintain peace, but at the same time, the latter was daring enough to make threats if the emperor did not wish to keep the peace. Independent of the analysis of the actual political situation which could have occasioned this embassy,⁵⁵ it needs stressing that this was, first of all, a demonstration powerful in its ideological significance – for here the ruler of a Slav empire was communicating with the emperors of the East and of the West as their equal.

This interpretation may find support from the analysis of the written sources. Przemysław Wiszewski has noted that, in describing the meeting at the grave of St Adalbert in AD 1000, Gallus Anonymus paints Boleslaus as a prince almost equal in status to Otto (P. Wiszewski even uses the designation 'emperor of the Slavs'), working together with the emperor, but also one who, with no constraints, can perform his royal duties.⁵⁶ The description of Boleslaus's Kyivan expedition – which in Gallus follows directly the description of the Congress of Gniezno – is, according to P. Wiszewski, meant to highlight the new royal status that the Polish prince had obtained from Otto III. The conquest of Rus' appears here as the final stage in the pains taken by Boleslaus to forge an empire of his own 'a country surrounded by subjugated and dependent neighbours'.⁵⁷ The Cyrillic penny, if we accept its interpretation proposed here, becomes an important argument in favour of the authenticity of this line of reasoning, all the more important as it is a direct piece of evidence on the developments of interest, created as it was at the court of that prince.

The interpretation of the Cyrillic penny of Boleslaus Chrobry proposed here leads us to the recognition of the argument that already during the reign of this ruler coins were used completely deliberately as a means of communicating a more-than-standard content which, in turn, is not without consequences for the interpretation of other pennies from the early Piast period. The capture of Kyiv in 1018 was for the Polish prince definitely a time of spectacular display, described more than on one occasion, and variously interpreted in modern literature. I believe that the Cyrillic coinage fits well into the sequence of these unique acts, representing its final link, and presumably being at once a reminder of the idea associated with the Congress of Gniezno of domination over a Slav realm, one that Boleslaus Chrobry did not abandon until his death.

⁵⁵ See Banaszekiewicz 1990, p. 28; Salamon 1993; Strzelczyk 2003, pp. 186–191.

⁵⁶ Wiszewski 2008, p. 212.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 213–215.

ABBREVIATIONS

BN – Biuletyn Numizmatyczny

Dbg – H. Dannenberg, *Die deutschen Münzen der sächsischen und fränkischen Kaiserzeit*, t. I–IV, Berlin 1876–1905

MPH – Monumenta Poloniae Historica

WN – Wiadomości Numizmatyczne

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DENAR „RUSKI” BOLESŁAWA CHROBREGO – NOWE ŹRÓDŁO, NOWA INTERPRETACJA

(Streszczenie)

Denary Bolesława Chrobrego z napisem cyrylicznym (tzw. „ruskie”) są jedną z najczęściej opisywanych monet tego władcy. Wśród dotychczasowych – krótko w tekście omówionych – hipotez, próbujących ustalić miejsce i wyjaśnić cel wybita denarów cyrylicznych, dominować zaczyna obecnie opinia minimalizująca ich specjalne cele manifestacyjne, a oryginalny wygląd stempli tłumacząca zatrudnieniem przy produkcji rytow-

nika obeznanego z tradycją wschodnią, który mógł przybyć do Polski wraz z księciem po wyprawie kijowskiej.

Punktem wyjścia do ponownego podjęcia rozważań nad interpretacją wyobrażeń na stemplach „ruskich” denarów Bolesława Chrobrego stała się odnaleziona w 1994 r. w Nowogrodzie Wielkim bulla wielkiego księcia kijowskiego Jarosława Mądrego (1016–1054), datowana na ok. 1018 r., dotąd nie wyzyskana jako źródło do badań numizmatycznych. Nawiązuje ona zarówno do wzorów wschodnich (bizantyńskich), jak i zachodnich (skandynawskich) co sprawia, że zajmuje ona wśród ołowianych pieczęci ruskich X i XI w. szczególne miejsce. Jarosław ukazany tutaj został niemal dokładnie w taki sam sposób, jak Bolesław Chrobry na denarze „ruskim”, zbieżny jest także układ legendy (na monecie pominięto jednak tytuł). Szczególną uwagę zwrócić tu trzeba na szczegół dotychczas nie zaobserwowany, a mianowicie gest, jaki Jarosław wykonuje swoją prawą ręką, tożsamy z gestem wykonywanym przez Chrobrego na denarze cyrylicznym. Zinterpretować go można jako gest władczy, oznaczający omnipotencję i suwerenność, wskazujący również na bliski związek z *sacrum*. Zdaje się zatem nie ulegać wątpliwości, że pieczęć Jarosława stała się wzorem dla monety Chrobrego.

W posiadanie tej pieczęci książę polski wszedł zapewne podczas pobytu w Kijowie, już po opanowaniu miasta 14 sierpnia 1018 r. Denara cyrylicznego nie wybił jednak na Rusi. Miało to miejsce – jak świadczą o tym dotychczasowe znaleziska – już na terenie Wielkopolski, kiedy Chrobry, zostawiwszy w Kijowie Świętopełka, powrócił do kraju. Wydaje się więc, że zainicjowanie bicia miało miejsce krótko po przybyciu do Polski (być może jeszcze w listopadzie 1018 r.) a za wydarzenie kończące tę emisję należy utratę władzy przez Świętopełka na rzecz Jarosława, co nastąpiło latem (najprawdopodobniej w sierpniu) roku następnego.

Podjętą próbę interpretacji wyobrażeń na stemplach, zadać sobie należy pytanie, czy możliwe jest, aby denar z napisem cyrylicznym miał przedstawiać Bolesława jako władcę Słowiańszczyzny wschodniej, będącej częścią słowiańskiego imperium, które starał się stworzyć, realizując postanowienia Zjazdu Gnieźnieńskiego. Tak ścisła zgodność ikonograficzna pomiędzy awersami pieczęci i monety – a trudno przyjąć, że był to tylko zbieg okoliczności – zdaje się nie pozostawiać wątpliwości, że chodzi tutaj o emisję manifestacyjną specjalnego znaczenia. Chrobry „wchodził” w pozycję Jarosława, usuwał go z przedmiotu uwierzytelniającego jego wolę, symbolicznie zatem pozbawiał go prawnie umocowanych zdolności decyzyjnych, a tym samym władzy. Nie skopiował jednak tego wyobrażenia bezrefleksyjnie, ale wprowadził doń niewielkie zmiany (brak nakrycia głowy i tytułu w legendzie). Podobnie w przypadku rewersu – zastąpienie obecnego na bulli wyobrażenia św. Jerzego symbolem bardziej uniwersalnym – krzyżem przejętym z monet bizantyńskich – mogło mieć za zadanie podkreślenie szerszego aspektu władzy Bolesława, który od momentu wkroczenia do Kijowa był nie tylko suwerenem Rusi, ale uważał się za zwierzchnika zjednoczonego słowiańskiego imperium. Stosując świadomie łączącą wschodnie i zachodnie elementy konwencję przedstawieniową oraz cyrylicę w legendzie, nawiązując bezpośrednio do pieczęci swojego przeciwnika, Bolesław w sposób doskonale zwarty, dosadny i komunikatywny manifestował zwierzchnictwo nad obszarem Rusi. To z kolei sugeruje, że ze zdobyciem Kijowa wiązał książę polski szczególne treści. Świadczą o tym także inne działania, które podjął, zasiadając na tro-

nie książąt kijowskich. Szczególnie podkreślić tu należy wysłanie poselstw do cesarzy Wschodu i Zachodu, co wyraźnie poświadcza „imperialny” wymiar polityki Chrobrego. Nie jest zatem wykluczone, że Bolesław mógł po zdobyciu Kijowa uważać się za „cesarza Słowian”, dając temu m.in. wyraz na monecie, co wspiera niektóre, wyrażane ostatnio przez historyków hipotezy. Przedstawiona propozycja interpretacji denara „ruskiego” uprawdopodobnia pogląd, że już w okresie panowania Bolesława Chrobrego świadomie wykorzystywano monety jako środek do manifestacji ponadstandardowych, ważnych z punktu widzenia władcy treści, co z kolei rzutuje na interpretacje innych denarów okresu wczesnopiastowskiego.

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