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**MANIFESTATION OR ECONOMY –  
WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF ISSUING  
THE OLDEST POLISH COINS?\***

**ABSTRACT:** The oldest Polish coins were issued for both demonstrative and economic purposes. Bolesław the Brave's (992–1025) unusual titles (*princeps*, *dux inclitus* and *rex* used already before the coronation) testify to its demonstrative nature, while the economic character is evidenced by denarii bearing on both sides exact patterns of foreign coins.

**ABSTRAKT:** Najdawniejsze monety polskie emitowane były zarówno w celach manifestacyjnych, jak i ekonomicznych. O manifestacji świadczy niezwykła tytulatura Bolesława Chrobrego (992–1025) (*princeps*, *dux inclitus*, *rex* jeszcze przed koronacją), o ekonomii natomiast emitowanie monet, które z obu stron wiernie kopują wzory obce.

**KEYWORDS:** Bolesław the Brave, manifestation, title, economy, imitating

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:** Bolesław Chrobry, manifestacja, tytulatura, ekonomia, kopiowanie

The oldest coins issued in Poland are still of great interest to researchers. An expression of this is the large number of publications, the authors of which are not only numismatists and researchers of the history of money – which is obvious – but also historians and archaeologists. The subject of scientific interest is primarily the various types features of these coins, i.e. their legends and designs. Here, it is first necessary to list the inscriptions containing the title of the ruler, the name of the country and its main center: *dux*, *princes Polonie*,

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\* This article was also published in Polish (Suchodolski 2021) and in Czech (Suchodolski 2023a).

*dux inclitus, rex, Gnezdun civitas*.<sup>1</sup> On this basis, conclusions were drawn not only about the titles that Bolesław the Brave used in changing circumstances over time, but also about his aspirations, his attitude towards the Empire, and his position in Europe at that time. The title *princeps* was supposed to be the “crowning” of the victory over his opponents and his becoming the ruler of Poland<sup>2</sup> (Fig. 1), or could reflect Bolesław the Brave’s promotion during the meeting with Otto III in Gniezno.<sup>3</sup> The title *dux inclitus*, which appears on three varieties of this type, was supposed to be an expression of further military successes against external enemies: first in the war with the Redarians and Obodrites in 995, then in various battles with Henry II, and finally “to crown the memory of the peace of Bautzen in 1018, which made Bolesław the Brave the ruler of Moravia and part of Lusatia”<sup>4</sup> (Fig. 2). Finally, despite the disastrous appearance of the coin, the previous research consensus held that the title *rex* manifested the majesty of royal power at the time of the coronation in 1025 (Fig. 3). The name Gniezno, in turn, inspired the thesis that it is a symbol of the famous Congress of Gniezno or that it is proof that the then Polish state was called the Gniezno state. The term *Gnezdun civitas* was supposed to be used by Bolesław the Brave at the beginning of his reign, when he became the sole ruler<sup>5</sup> (Fig. 4). But above all, it was rightly pointed out that the legend of *princes Polonie*, significantly repeated on the other side, contains the first, original record of the name of Poland.



Fig. 1. Bolesław the Brave’s denarius with PRINCES POLONIE legend (on both sides); diameter 19 mm. National Museum in Krakow

<sup>1</sup> More about these types of coins by Suchodolski 1967. See also Suchodolski 2015; Suchodolski 2019 and Suchodolski 2023c.

<sup>2</sup> Zakrzewski 1954–1956, p. 212; Zakrzewski 1957–1959, p. 452, no. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Kiersnowski 1960, p. 278ff.; Kiersnowski 1962, pp. 130–133.

<sup>4</sup> Zakrzewski 1954–1956, pp. 215–219.

<sup>5</sup> Schmidt 1990.



Fig. 2. Bolesław the Brave's denarius with BOLIZLAVS DVX / INCLITVS legend; diameter 17 mm. National Museum in Krakow



Fig. 3. Bolesław the Brave's denarius with REX BOLLZ... legend (uniface coin); diameter 20 mm. National Museum in Krakow, photo by A. Kleczkowski



Fig. 4. Bolesław the Brave's denarius with BOLIZLAVS / GNEZDVN CIVITAS legend; diameter 18 mm. National Museum in Krakow



Fig. 5. Bolesław the Brave's denarius with St. Wenceslaus' name; diameter 18 mm. National Museum in Prague, photo by M. Kouba

Zygmunt Zakrzewski, based on the content of the legends, distinguished a special category of “commemorative denarii related to church ceremonies.” He included three types of coins with the following legends: *Gnezdun civitas*, *Venciezliaus* (Fig. 5) and *Scs Johanes*. The first were to be struck to commemorate the founding of the metropolis in Gniezno, the second the consecration of the cathedral in Krakow, and the third the consecration of the cathedral in Wrocław.<sup>6</sup> Anticipating further comments, it must be immediately said that the latter coins, due to further research, were considered much later, as they were minted by Bolesław – albeit not by Bolesław the Brave (992–1025), but by Bolesław the Wrymouth (1102–1138).<sup>7</sup>

Vivid disputes were also caused by the interpretation of the second name of the town next to Gniezno appearing on the coins of Bolesław the Brave: *Mogiln civitas* (Fig. 6). In the past, Mogilno was seen here in the Bohemia or in Lusatia, but it was later believed that it was Mogilno in Kuyavia (Poland). Recently, Paweł Stróżyk returned to the thesis of Marian Gumowski, advocating Lusatian Mogilno. At the same time, however, he modified his view. Gumowski believed that “like other coins of Bolesław the Brave, this Mogilno denarius was also a commemorative coin, minted perhaps in memory of the conquest of this stronghold and the country.” He had no doubt that the mint was located in Mogilno.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, Stróżyk, who agreed in principle with the same reason for minting the coin, did not believe that the name appearing on the coin indicated the place where it was minted. Hence the surprising conclusion that it could have been created in the Bohemia or in Greater Poland (but not in Mogilno!).<sup>9</sup>

The only Polish coins bearing legends written in Cyrillic have been vividly discussed in the literature from the discovery of the first specimen in 1847 up to the present day (Fig. 7). It is understandable that the uniqueness of their form, together

<sup>6</sup> Zakrzewski 1954–1956, pp. 219–226; Gumowski 1939, p. 33.

<sup>7</sup> Nakielski 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Gumowski 1939, p. 28.

<sup>9</sup> Stróżyk 2009, p. 54ff.

with the small number of known specimens, prompted researchers to make bold hypotheses about their manifestational rather than trade genesis. The addressees of this manifestation – led from Kyiv, Sandomierz, Krakow or the center of Greater Poland – were to be either the inhabitants of Rus', the Cherven Cities, followers of the Slavic rite in Lesser Poland, or finally members of Rus' teams seeking refuge in Poland. Z. Zakrzewski stated that “there is no doubt that denarii with Cyrillic inscriptions were minted in Rus' and were to demonstrate the power of the Polish sword to the local population.” He believed that the first two varieties of this type were struck to commemorate the conquering of Kyiv by Bolesław the Brave, and the third variety was struck to commemorate the reclamation of the Cherven Cities. At the same time, however, these coins were to be used for circulation.<sup>10</sup> Witold Garbaczewski has recently gone the furthest in his hypotheses. In his opinion, Bolesław the Brave suggested that he was not only a sovereign of Russia, but “the head of a united Slavic empire.”<sup>11</sup>



Fig. 6. Bolesław the Brave’s denarius with MOGILN CIVITAS legend; diameter 20 mm. National Museum in Prague, photo by L. Polanský



Fig. 7. Bolesław the Brave’s denarius with БОАССААВЪ legend on both sides; diameter 18 mm. National Museum in Copenhagen, photo by M. Bogucki

<sup>10</sup> Zakrzewski 1954–1956, pp. 229–231.

<sup>11</sup> Garbaczewski 2015. Cf. recently on this subject Suchodolski 2018.





Fig. 8. Bolesław the Brave's denarius with Otto III's name (ODDO); diameter 20 mm. National Museum in Prague, photo by M. Kouba

The coins called “adulterins” (hybrid, mule) gave a particularly large scope for wide-reaching hypotheses and even some fantastic conclusions. These are coins combining dies considered to be Polish with dies copying foreign coins – Saxon, Anglo-Saxon and Bohemian. In this way, the name of Bolesław appears on one coin with the names of Otto III or his grandmother Adelaide (Fig. 8), or the Anglo-Saxon king Aethelred II (Fig. 9), or finally the Bohemian duke Vladivoj. According to M. Gumowski, the first of these coins were minted in Germany. They constitute “an explicit documentation of the new relationship in which the Polish monarch, after the coronation of Gniezno in 1000, stood before the Empire and Otto III, a public confirmation from that emperor that Bolesław of Poland is now a co-ruler of the Roman state and has the right to appear next to the emperor on a state coin.”<sup>12</sup>



Fig. 9. Bolesław the Brave's hybrid with Aethelred II's design and name; diameter 18 mm. National Museum in Prague, photo by M. Kouba

<sup>12</sup> Gumowski 1925, p. 4; cf. also Gumowski 1939, p. 42, where Bolesław the Brave was called the regent of the empire.

The hybrid (on one side, Bolesław the Brave's die with the legend of PRINCES POLONIE, and on the other, the imitation of the die with the name of Duke Vladivoj), was recognized by Z. Zakrzewski as a Bohemian issue created in Prague. The ruler of Poland was to equip his governor with his own die to facilitate the commencement of mint production.<sup>13</sup>

Coins combining the names of Bolesław and Aethelred were not used even by the boldest authors to make assumptions about an alliance or cooperation between these rulers.



Fig. 10. Mieszko Bolesławowic's denarius (later known as Mieszko II) with the MISICO legend, former collection of Witold Korski, diameter 19 mm

So much for reflections on the manifestation functions of coins based on the analysis of the legends they carry. The designs that accompanied these inscriptions were studied much less frequently. In fact, only three of them aroused greater interest – the alleged crown or old Lechitic mitre on the denarius formerly attributed to Mieszko I<sup>14</sup> (Fig. 10), the alleged portrait of Bolesław the Brave along with the already discussed inscription *Gnezdun civitas*,<sup>15</sup> (Fig. 4) and the depiction of a bird accompanied by the no less famous inscription *princes Polonie* (Fig. 1). This crown is probably the top of the temple modeled on Saxon denarii. There is no need to say more about the portrait here, because at that time no portraits on coins were possible. The bird, on the other hand, has had a great career, not only in the scientific literature, but also in popular literature. He was considered an eagle, and, in conjunction with the inscription surrounding him, was promoted

<sup>13</sup> Zakrzewski 1954–1956, pp. 208–211. For the image, see Ryc. 2 (dies 1a – 3) in the article by S. Suchodolski and J. Szolc, in this volume.

<sup>14</sup> Stróżyk 2000. More recent studies have shown that this coin should be attributed to Mieszko Bolesławowic, see below, footnote 35.

<sup>15</sup> Zakrzewski 1954–1956, pp. 219–221.

to the role of the oldest national symbol – the White Eagle, crowned as well.<sup>16</sup> This concept was so attractive that its adoption by many historians and heraldists was not even hindered by its overt anachronism, which I have tried to demonstrate several times.

Let us try to summarize. It turns out that the opinion about the manifestation function of the oldest Polish coins, especially – but not only – in the older literature, is most prevalent. This opinion is largely based on earlier, already outdated findings, and to some extent also on the judgment of researchers, who are not prevented from making bold hypotheses by their lack of knowledge of numismatic methods.

Therefore, in the light of more recent research, what judgments should be considered outdated at present? First of all, all speculation resulting from the combination of Polish and allegedly foreign dies should be rejected. Today, there is no doubt, as Z. Zakrzewski and later Ryszard Kiersnowski suggested, that all these dies were made in Poland, and the names of foreign rulers appeared on them only as a consequence of copying very widespread foreign patterns from that time. Further combinations of completely different motifs took place because of the accidental mixing of mint dies. This is undoubtedly revealed by the increasingly longer and more complete chains of these connections<sup>17</sup> (Figs 11 and 12). Therefore, there is no basis, at least in numismatic sources, to draw conclusions about any alliances between Bolesław the Brave and Otto III, or Empress Adelaide or Vladivoj, not to mention Aethelred II.<sup>18</sup>

Further changes result from advances in the chronology of some types, based on the analysis of the chronology of the hoards in which they were included.<sup>19</sup> For example, the denarii with the legend of PRINCES POLONIE cannot be directly related to the Congress of Gniezno (1000), because their older variety was created only in the years approx. 1005–1010, and the younger one is even later. Similarly, denarii with the title of *rex* cannot commemorate the coronation in 1025, since they are found in hoards hidden in the ground as early as approx. 1020.<sup>20</sup>

Denarii with a Cyrillic legend could not be minted in Kyiv, because not a single copy has appeared in the hoards found in Rus' or the Cherven Cities. The distribution of finds, on the other hand, indicates that they were minted in the center of Greater Poland. The creator of their stamps was probably a Rus' clergyman (perhaps Anastas of Kherson?), who escaped with Bolesław the Brave from Kyiv

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<sup>16</sup> Kossowski 2007; Kossowski 2008; Kossowski 2010 and Suchodolski's 2009 polemics; Garbaczewski 2010. Cf. also earlier Panfil 2002.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Suchodolski 2012 and the latest article about this: S. Suchodolski, J. Szolc, *Odkrycie nowych połączeń stempli monet Bolesława Chrobrego i co z tego wynika. Nieznany skarb z Geiseltal pod Merseburgiem*, in this issue of *Wiadomości Numizmatyczne*.

<sup>18</sup> See in more detail Suchodolski 2015 and Suchodolski 2019 and Bogucki, Magiera 2015. Here also the justification of the opinions presented below.

<sup>19</sup> Finds of coins from Polish lands have recently been inventoried: Bogucki, Ilisch, Suchodolski (eds), vols I–V, 2013–2017.

<sup>20</sup> Kiersnowski 1959, p. 15.



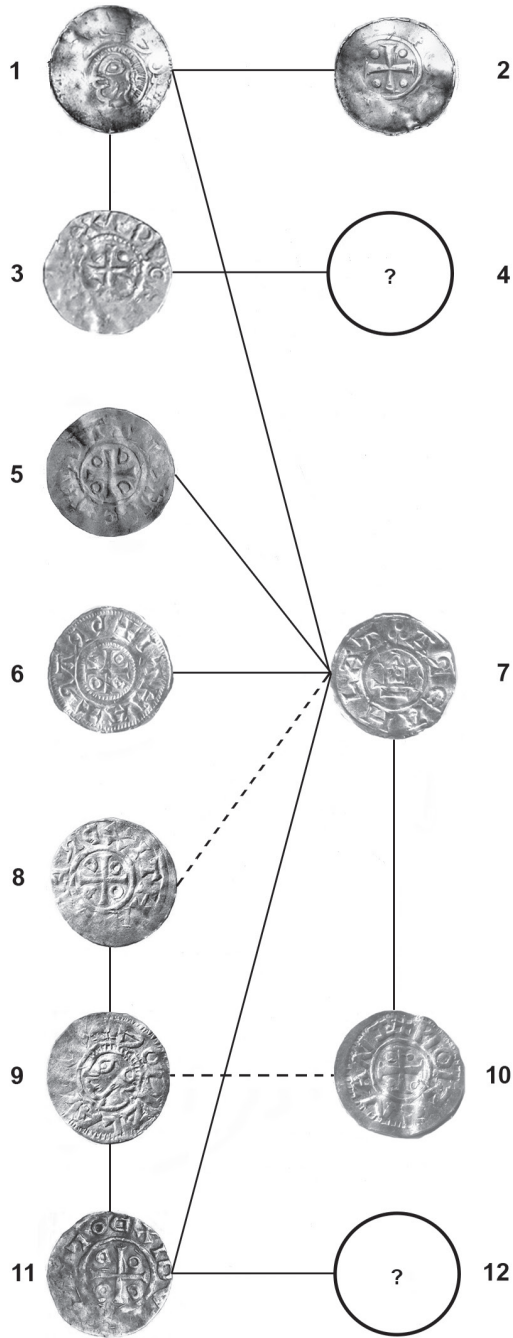


Fig. 11. Chain no. 1 of die links of Boleslaw the Brave's denarii (imitations of Saxon coins – nos 5–8, 11)

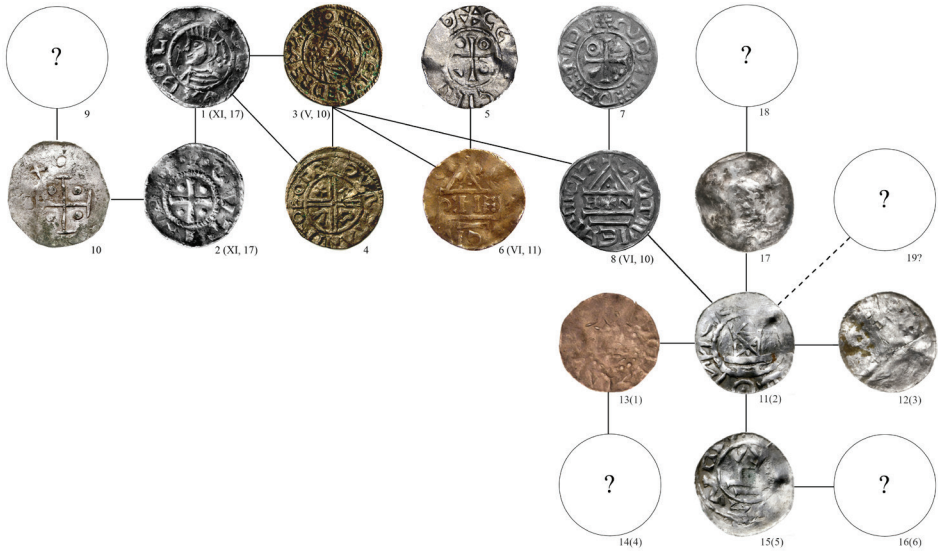


Fig. 12. Chain no. 3 of die links (DVX INCLITVS) with additions (Suchodolski, Szolc 2024). Numbering according to Bogucki, Magiera 2015 (1–10), with added dies nos 11–18. Former numbering of the dies from chain no. 4 (after Suchodolski 2022), given in the brackets (1, 3, 4 – imitations of Anglosaxon coins; 5–8 – imitations of Bavarian coins; 11–17 – imitations of Saxon coins)

in 1018. At that time there were no grounds to manifest their sovereign power over Rus’ or to suggest their sovereignty over the “Slavic empire.”<sup>21</sup>

There are no grounds to assume the existence of commemorative coins related to church ceremonies. Denarii bearing a slightly barbarized name of St. Wencelas, as the distribution of finds indicates, were created in Greater Poland, and – apart from the name of the saint – have nothing to do with the Krakow cathedral.<sup>22</sup> Denarii with the legend of *Gnezdun civitas*, apart from the conventional cross, do not bear any symbols that could be associated with the erection of the Gniezno metropolis. And denarii bearing the name of St. John are a hundred years later than the consecration of the Wrocław cathedral.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, the denarii with the legend of *Mogiln civitas* were certainly not created in Lusatia, because Bolesław the Brave did not mint coins outside Greater Poland. Nor can they commemorate the conquering of this stronghold, because such a practice was not known either then or later.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Suchodolski 2018.

<sup>22</sup> Suchodolski 2000.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. above footnote 7 and related text.

<sup>24</sup> Recently about this type of coins: Polanský 2017; Suchodolski 2022a; Suchodolski 2023b and Suchodolski – submitted for printing c.

As can be seen, more recent research on the oldest Polish coins has eliminated a number of older, attractive views, which were however not based on facts, but rather resulted from the researchers' intuition. Let us repeat that among them there were also representatives of other related historical sciences who did not have sufficient knowledge of the research methods used in numismatics.

In this situation, when it seemed that the field had cleared and that it was possible to proceed to a further stage of research, the work of an outstanding archaeologist – Przemysław Urbańczyk – devoted to Bolesław the Brave, appeared recently. The author uses all kinds of written and material sources, including numismatic ones. He also knows the literature on the subject, which, however, does not limit him much. He tries to extract a maximum of previously unnoticed information from the sources, not avoiding very bold or even harebrained hypotheses. They are concentrated mainly in the sphere of manifestation, which results from the author's belief that “the early Piast issues were mainly of a political nature, serving royal propaganda and ostentation, and not building a market that had to be supplied with state-guaranteed denominations.”<sup>25</sup> As a result, we have a return to the old, already rejected, but seemingly still attractive views about the deliberate placement of the names of Otto III and Adelaide on the coins of Bolesław the Brave, which is supposed to be a demonstration of the alliance with the emperor.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, Scandinavian, Bohemian and Saxon influences on the dies of Polish coins, resulting from the imitation of money that was popular on the market, are to “reflect the broad geopolitical perspectives” of Bolesław, which referred to the strategy already set by Mieszko I.<sup>27</sup> The imitative coin with the name of Vladivoj is again to be the result of some political actions and confirm “the plans [of Bolesław the Brave – S.S.] associated with him.”<sup>28</sup> Denarii with Cyrillic inscriptions, on the other hand, were again assigned to Kyiv, with the modification that after minting they were transported to Poland and only there were used.<sup>29</sup> However, such a possibility, suggested by Mikhail B. Sverdlov in the past, is completely improbable and has already been rejected.<sup>30</sup> Finally, coins with the name of St. Wenceslaus, formerly associated with the consecration of the Krakow cathedral, may, according to the author, “indicate the existence of a plan to join at least part of northern Bohemia to the Piast state at that time.”<sup>31</sup> Unfortunately, this guess has no rational basis, and the presence of the name of St. Wenceslaus should rather be associated with the intention of making this saint – of course, even before the

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<sup>25</sup> Urbańczyk 2017, p. 279.

<sup>26</sup> Urbańczyk 2017, pp. 104ff., 154.

<sup>27</sup> Urbańczyk 2017, p. 105.

<sup>28</sup> Urbańczyk 2017, p. 174.

<sup>29</sup> Urbańczyk 2017, p. 278.

<sup>30</sup> Swierdłow 1969; Suchodolski 2018.

<sup>31</sup> Urbańczyk 2017, p. 100; Suchodolski 2000.

death of St. Adalbert of Prague (*Wojciech*) – the patron saint of the dynasty and the state.<sup>32</sup> However, there is also the possibility that the coin is indeed slightly later, and was minted only at the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century during the competition with Bohemians for the benefits of the patronage of St. Wenceslaus.<sup>33</sup>

However, the pinnacle of Przemysław Urbańczyk's inventiveness is the thesis that the recently discovered, oldest Polish coins, whose dies show Danish influence, were minted in Denmark by Sweyn Forkbeard (Fig. 13). His legation was to bring these coins to Poland as a gift to Bolesław the Brave. He became the brother-in-law of the Danish king, who married Bolesław the Brave's sister Sygryda.<sup>34</sup> However, gifts of this kind have no analogies in the history of Poland or other countries, and are completely improbable. It seems that the author associated these coins with modern medals and donative coins. There is no doubt that these coins were minted by Bolesław the Brave himself, probably in Poznań, at the beginning of the reign. With this issue, he initiated his minting, and at the same time began Polish minting. It turned out that the coins formerly attributed to Mieszko I (ca. 960–992) appeared in the finds hidden in the ground only a quarter of a century after his death. So they were minted only by his grandson of the same name – Mieszko Bolesławowic, later Mieszko II (1025–1034). He probably issued in the years 1013–1020, when he was the heir to the throne alongside his father – Bolesław the Brave.<sup>35</sup>

Above, a number of critical remarks about older and newer hypotheses regarding the manifestation functions of the oldest Polish coins were presented. This does not mean that I would deny the existence of such functions. On the contrary, I believe that the need for manifestation was one of the main reasons, and at the beginning perhaps even the most important motive, for the commencement of minting in Poland. However, it should be realized that this minting was not centralized or well-organized, nor was it carried out continuously with the help of permanent, well-trained staff. Mint workshops were organized *ad hoc* in case of any need, with the help of people who could manage to be gathered. It is understandable that in such a situation the appearance and content of the dies depended not so much on the ruler as on some clergyman from his surroundings.

The subject of the manifestation was not sovereignty, but above all the belonging of Bolesław the Brave and his son Mieszko (II) to the group of rulers of Christian Europe. And one of their attributes was having their own coinage.<sup>36</sup> It is therefore understandable that the symbols of the Christian faith, above all the various forms of the cross and the chapel, are so strongly emphasized on the oldest Polish coins. It is significant that, on the oldest Polish coin, sacral contents were placed

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<sup>32</sup> Suchodolski 2000.

<sup>33</sup> Suchodolski, in preparation.

<sup>34</sup> Urbańczyk 2017, pp. 86–88.

<sup>35</sup> Suchodolski 2015, p. 70; Suchodolski 2019, p. 196.

<sup>36</sup> Similarly, Kiersnowski 1960, p. 264ff.; Kiersnowski 1962, p. 124ff.

on both sides, as a result of which there was no room left for the symbolism connected with the ruler. So we see there an arrow interpreted as a symbol of the word of God. It probably emerges from the branches of the Tree of Life. On the reverse side, on the other hand, there is a double cross taken over – through Danish mediation – from Byzantine coins. The only element representing the ruler is the circular legend on the obverse: +BOLIZLAVO DVX (Fig. 13).<sup>37</sup>



Fig. 13. Bolesław the Brave's denarius with the design of an arrow – the oldest Polish coin; diameter 19 mm. Museum of the Middle Pomerania in Słupsk

It is also interesting that, on the coin with the double-sided legend +PRINCES POLONIE mentioned here many times, there are only sacral symbols. These are an Anglo-Saxon type cross and a bird, formerly interpreted as an eagle. However, a deeper analysis shows that it is – as on Bohemian coins – a peacock, which symbolized eternal life. Perhaps it was an allusion to the patron saint of the newly established metropolis, i.e. St. Adalbert of Prague, who admittedly lost his life on earth, but gained life in heaven.<sup>38</sup>

Other coins of Bolesław the Brave show – in accordance with the Carolingian tradition – a balance of iconographic sacral and secular elements. The latter appear in the form of symbolic designs of the head or bust of the ruler. Legends, on the other hand, are exclusively secular and contain, apart from the name of Bolesław, sometimes also his more or less extensive title or the name of the town. Therefore, it seems that the very name of the ruler, as on the oldest Bohemian coins, was a sufficient factor that determined the nature of the issue, without the need to specify his title or the state he ruled. It was common knowledge. However, there are a few

<sup>37</sup> Suchodolski 1997; Suchodolski 2015, pp. 72–74; Suchodolski 2019, pp. 199–201. Jerzy Piniński interprets the image on the obverse differently. He sees there symbolism commemorating the martyrdom of St. Adalbert of Prague – a spear among palm branches. According to him, the most likely time of minting the coin is 999–1000 (Piniński 2010, pp. 62–64).

<sup>38</sup> Suchodolski 2002.



exceptions. These include the first issue, on which, as we have seen, the conventional title *dux* appears, and three further issues. The first one features the truly unusual title of *prince[ps]*, taken from Beneventan coins, but adapted to the situation existing in Poland. And although it was not used directly during the Congress of Gniezno, it is probably related to its aftermath.<sup>39</sup> In a similar way, one can explain the appearance of an even more honorable title, the royal – *rex*, even a few years before the coronation.<sup>40</sup>

The legend of BOLIZLAVS DVX / INCLITVS is remarkable not only for its content, but also for its form. It is the only one in Poland at that time that passes from one side of the coin to the other, so it was deliberately planned. The title *inclitus* (famous, exquisite, dignified) had not appeared on coins since Merovingian times, but was nevertheless used in literature. Thietmar bestowed it on both Mieszko I, Jaromír or Hodo, as well as on kings Henry I and Otto III.<sup>41</sup> It was certainly a flattering distinction on the coins of Bolesław the Brave, but it did not have to specify the legal status. Since this type, known in three varieties, is dated to approx. 1013–1020, it is likely that, according to Z. Zakrzewski, one of these varieties must be associated with the successes of the Polish ruler in his battles with Henry II, and most likely with the peace treaty in Bautzen.<sup>42</sup> According to the concept of R. Kiersnowski, the title *inclitus* was used mainly for dukes dependent on the Empire, and that therefore the coin must be combined with the homage paid to Henry II in Merseburg in 1013.<sup>43</sup> More recent research has shown that the three varieties, despite their identical legends, had a different chronology, and could indeed be associated with both homages. These, however, did not mean the humiliation of Bolesław the Brave, but rather were an expression of the increase in his prestige within the Empire after making a mutually beneficial peace.<sup>44</sup>

As a result of our considerations, we come to the conclusion that we should agree with the prevailing opinion about the manifestation nature of the oldest Polish coins. At the same time, however, we pointed out that this manifestation was not only about political issues – the prestige and importance of Bolesław the Brave. It was also supposed to convince the national opinion and, to an even greater extent, the foreign opinion that he was a Christian ruler, equal to other European rulers.

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<sup>39</sup> Kiersnowski 1959, pp. 16–19; Kiersnowski 1988, p. 174. A different concept was recently presented by J. Piniński. In his opinion, these coins were minted simultaneously with Mieszko's coins and were associated “with Bolesław the Brave's admission of his son to power” with the simultaneous indication of sovereignty over him (Piniński 2010, pp. 66–69).

<sup>40</sup> Kiersnowski 1959, p. 15ff.; Kiersnowski 1988, p. 173.

<sup>41</sup> *Thietmari chronicon*, pp. 219, 395, 499, 229, 355, 33, 143, 305, 247.

<sup>42</sup> Suchodolski 1967, p. 114ff. New and later, DVX INCLITVS dating (var. Such. XI, 17) results from the fact that the die manufacturer used the design of Anglo-Saxon coins of Aethelred II from 1013–1017, cf. Jonsson, Suchodolski 2009, p. 34. Formerly also Zakrzewski 1954–1956, p. 219 (but in relation to a different type).

<sup>43</sup> Kiersnowski 1959, p. 14ff.; Kiersnowski 1988, p. 178.

<sup>44</sup> Suchodolski, submitted for printing a and b.

However, this was not the only reason for starting minting. What manifestation goals could Bolesław the Brave achieve by issuing the above-mentioned coins with the names of Otto III, Empress Adelaide, Vladivoj or especially Aethelred II? And there were also further issues of this kind, which imitated the dies of Bavarian coins of first the prince and then King Henry II or Bohemian of Boleslav II, as well as the Cologne coins of one of the Ottonians and Saxon dukes from Lüneburg. Finally, let us mention the coins minted with barbarized dies, completely illegible.<sup>45</sup> At the same time, it must be clearly stated that all these coins were not created in any illicit workshops, but in the same mints of Bolesław the Brave, in which the previously mentioned coins of the Polish ruler were issued at the same time. This is evidenced by the aforementioned die chains combining both types – with the name and titles of Bolesław the Brave and those that copy, sometimes better, sometimes worse, foreign patterns on both sides. It turns out that the practice of impersonating foreign issuers was not an occasional phenomenon, but undertaken on a large scale. As a result, coins with imitation dies are more numerous than those that we consider official and legal with the names of Bolesław and his son Mieszko. In addition, the number of the former is constantly increasing. However, this does not change the fact that, in general, the total number of all undoubtedly Polish coins that have survived to our times is relatively small, and has to be estimated at several hundred copies. So far, 341 coins have been inventoried in 127 domestic and foreign finds.<sup>46</sup> This represents less than one percent of the total number of all coins discovered in Poland from that period of time.

One more thing needs to be clarified. In the past, as we have seen, there was a belief that hybrids minted with two types of dies were created intentionally, and that this was due to the desire to make a manifestation. The second theory was that the aim was to familiarize people with the new, native coin by combining it with a foreign coin, already well established on the market. More recent research has shown that the reality was different. Originally, the same coin was copied better or worse from both sides. However, since the dies were not related to each other, and the upper die wore out earlier than the lower one, over time, in minting practice, there were completely surprising combinations of both types of dies. However, these connections are secondary and completely accidental.<sup>47</sup>

So what was the reason for copying foreign patterns in Polish mints? To answer this question, it is necessary to look at these patterns again. The most numerous of them are the so-called Otto and Adelaide denarii. These Saxon coins were massively issued starting from 983 for several decades from the newly discovered silver deposits in the Harz Mountains. As a result, they absolutely dominate in Polish hoards from the 10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century. Bavarian, Cologne, Bohemian

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. e.g. Bogucki 2006; Bogucki 2012; Bogucki 2022; Bogucki, Magiera 2015; Suchodolski 2022b.

<sup>46</sup> Suchodolski, in preparation.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Suchodolski 2012; Suchodolski 2015; Suchodolski 2019; Bogucki, Magiera 2015.

and Anglo-Saxon denarii are also present in these groups quite often, although not so massively.<sup>48</sup> Thus, it can be seen that the most popular coins on the market were copied, to which people in Poland were already accustomed and which they trusted. By impersonating them, Bolesław the Brave rightly believed that his coins would be equally well received. Therefore, they were purely economic in nature, and could not be used for any manifestation.

We come to the conclusion that, at that time, three types of silver coins were used in Poland:

1. Foreign money in the form of increasingly divided Western European coins and broken ornaments; it was undoubtedly the most numerous type of money, which was used for payments and various commercial transactions.
2. Native money, princely, of two types:
  - a) faithfully copying the coins mentioned above and circulating with them; it was used for payments and for entering into various transactions;
  - b) with original dies, containing current metric data and manifestation elements; it served the ruler and his officers for payments and ostentations of various kinds.

Let us now consider whether the presented situation was then completely unique in Europe, or whether it could also be found in other countries that started their minting at about the same time? Well, the closest analogies can be found in Scandinavia, and they are best documented in Sweden. Here, among the overwhelming mass of mainly Anglo-Saxon and German foreign money, much rarer (but still much more numerous than in Poland) native denarii appear. They bear both the name of the Swedish king Olaf Skötkonung and the Anglo-Saxon king Aethelred II, as well as the Byzantine emperor Basil II. As demonstrated by the evidence of die chains, some of them were struck in the same mint operating in the capital Sigtuna.<sup>49</sup>

The question posed in the title can be answered conciliatively, as the reasons for starting minting in Poland were twofold – both manifestational and economic. This thesis, formulated by myself in the main outline as early as 1967,<sup>50</sup> was mostly adopted by later researchers. At the same time, however, they tried to make some modifications. Andrzej Schmidt pointed out that, when assessing the type and purpose of coin issuance, the analysis of not only their die, i.e. the design and legend, but also metrology should be decisive. According to this researcher, “the denarii with the largest manifestation and propaganda charge were given a greater weight than other Bolesław the Brave’s coins (...) So the greater mass of these coins is a consciously used auxiliary element of the manifestation they carried.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. the old, but irreplaceable, pioneering work of R. Kiersnowski (1960).

<sup>49</sup> Malmer 1989; Malmer 1997; Malmer 2010.

<sup>50</sup> Suchodolski 1967, pp. 161–164.

<sup>51</sup> Schmidt 1987, p. 247.

J. Piniński, in turn, expressed the opinion that, for economic reasons, not only coins copying foreign designs could be issued, but also some coins with original dies, with current metric data. This should include coins with the name of St. Wenceslaus, with legends: DVX INCLITVS, KOTIZLAVS, REX and БОΛΕΣΛΑΒЪ, as well as with broken dies in PRINCES POLONIE type.<sup>52</sup> However, this thesis is difficult to agree with in its entirety, and only in the case of coins belonging to the last group – especially one-sided and lighter ones – it does not raise any doubts.

In the course of this discussion, another important problem arose. It turned out that the boundary between coins that can be called manifestative and economic is not quite clear. Some denarii theoretically included in the first group could be issued for economic reasons. And the final conclusion – this boundary, apart from extreme cases (both-sided imitation of foreign coins), is not clear due to the fact that coins belonging to the same types could perform both these functions at the same time. However, to a greater or lesser extent, it is clear that the coin with even the most manifestative program did not lose its economic value – it was made of good metal and had a good weight. However, there is no doubt that the Polish coins of the second group (2b) were issued primarily for manifestation reasons.

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<sup>52</sup> Piniński 2012, pp. 72, 75–78, 83.

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# MANIFESTACJA CZY EKONOMIA, CZYLI JAKI BYŁ CEL EMITOWANIA NAJDAWNIEJSZYCH MONET W POLSCE?

(Streszczenie)

Od dawna panuje przekonanie, że najdawniejsze monety w Polsce były emitowane w celach manifestacyjnych. Miały one sławić polskiego władcę, upamiętniać jego czyny i przywoływać jego aliansy polityczne. Podstawą służyły legendy widniejące na tych monetach: PRINCES POLONIE (Fig. 1), BOLIZLAVS DVX INCLITVS (Fig. 2), REX (Fig. 3). Natomiast monety łączące imiona Bolesława i Ottona III (Fig. 8) oraz cesarzowej-regentki Adelajdy posłużyły Marianowi Gumowskiemu za podstawę śmiałego, ale zupełnie nierealnego domysłu, że Chrobry był współrządcą Cesarstwa. Te połączenia powstały jednak w sposób zupełnie przypadkowy, poprzez omyłkowe pomieszenie różnych par stempli.

Nie mniej śmiało i równie nierealne były interpretacje wyobrażeń na najstarszych monetach polskich. Szczyt świątyni na denarach Mieszka II został uznany za koronę królewską (Fig. 10), a paw na denarze z legendą PRINCES POLONIE za najdawniejszy symbol Polski – Orła Białego, w dodatku ukoronowanego.

Nowsze badania wykazały bezpodstawność tych sądów i ich anachroniczność. Tym niemniej przytoczone legendy wskazują, że istotnie zawierają one treści manifestacyjne. Należy się więc zgodzić z przekonaniem o manifestacyjnych funkcjach najdawniejszych monet polskich. Manifestacja ta nie była jednak wyłącznie polityczna. Poprzez symbole sakralne (krzyż, kaplica, paw, strzała w Drzewie Życia, Fig. 13) miała ona przekonywać, że władcy Polski należą do europejskiej rodziny władców chrześcijańskich.

Funkcje manifestacyjne nie były jednak jedynymi, jakie pełniły najdawniejsze monety polskie. Były one bowiem emitowane również w celach ekonomicznych. Żadnych wątpliwości co do tego nie ma w przypadku takich monet, które wiernie kopiują z obu stron najpopularniejsze w obiegu monety obce. Należą do nich masowo bite w Saksonii denary z imionami Ottona i Adelajdy, denary bawarskie, czeskie, a nawet anglosaskie z imieniem króla Ethelreda II (Fig. 9). O tym, że te kopie wyszły z polskich mennic świadczą tzw. „adulteryń” (hybrydy), czyli monety wybite przez pomyłkę nieprawidłowo połączonymi stemplami (Figs 11 i 12). Do takich pomyłek mogło dojść tylko wtedy, kiedy w jednym miejscu i w jednym czasie używano większej liczby stempli.

Dochodzimy do wniosku, że w Polsce w X/XI w. były w obiegu trzy rodzaje monet:

1. Bardzo liczne monety obce.
2. Znacznie rzadsze monety polskie dwóch rodzajów:
  - a) kopiujące wspomniane monety obce;
  - b) o stemplach oryginalnych.

Zrozumiałe jest, że monety polskie pierwszego rodzaju (2a) mogły być bite tylko z powodów ekonomicznych, drugiego rodzaju natomiast (2b) – w celach manifestacji.

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