

# Dates of hoards in Sweden and the coinage of Stephen I, King of Hungary

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In the research of the earliest phase of Hungarian coinage the analysis of the Scandinavian – primarily Swedish – hoards has a special importance, as this area had a decisive role in the foreign trade interests of the Hungarians about the turn of the millennium. We have no data on the beginning of Hungarian-Viking trade; we can, however, assume that it already existed as a peripheral area of the Arabian-Viking trade as early as the period previous to the territorial settlement of the Hungarians. It is a fact that in the 10th century Arabian dirhems occur in Hungary. At that time, however, they were not part of a money circula-

tion but were used as jewels. Their presence in Hungary was certainly a result of trade. From as early as the second half of the 10th century we have direct – written – sources concerning Hungarian trade to the North. In 965 Ibrahim ibn Jákub mentions Hungarian merchants in Prague, i.e. along a route towards the North (1). At the end of the 10th century two-edged swords, lances, war hammers (2) – Viking imports – were widespread in the army of the Hunga-

*Fig. 1. Coin of the type CNH I. 1. (obv. and rev. from different specimens). 1:1, and enlarged.*





*Fig. 2. Coin of the type Dbg. 1706/a, now considered to be Hungarian. 1:1, and enlarged.*

rian princes. As a countervalue the Hungarians might have given skins, honey, wax, and primarily slaves; moreover, we also have to assume a significant export of Hungarian silver. The reason is that the first Hungarian coins appear in Scandinavian hoards; this means a qualitative change: the unminted silver was replaced by silver minted into coins.

The Hungarian-Viking trade connections are investigated at the earliest period of Hungarian coinage for the reason that the use of Hungarian coins in foreign trade started in parallel with the internal

money circulation, may be even preceding it a little. The beginning of internal money circulation is to be connected with Type CHN. I. 1 (3). This is corroborated by our 11th century grave finds (4). The general diffusion is in all probability connected with the introduction of the hearth-tax about 1020, verified by György Györffy (5); To this time or possibly a couple of years earlier, the minting of CHN I.1. (fig. 1) can be fixed. In our previous study we have proven the Hungarian origin (6) of the coin Dbg. 1706a (fig. 2) (7), considered by Peter Berghaus to be a German coin (8); more precisely, this coin was made immediately after the coronation of King Stephen, as the first Hungarian coin. It is known only in a few copies: From Hungary it came to light from a hoard (9) and from a grave (10). The relation in time of foreign trade, mentioned above, and the beginning of Hungarian money circulation is proved by the fact that this first Hungarian coin appears already in Northern European hoards; we even know imitations of it.

Imitations are, even if in a small percent, ordinary components of Scandinavian hoards. Their role has a rich literature. All coins circulating on Scandinavian territory were copied there, the Hungarian ones amongst others (11). The study of imitations or coins thought to be imitations can enrich the monetary history of a country to a very large extent. Scandinavian finds have added many new data to Hungarian monetary history but their source value is still not exploited in its entirety.

North European hoards help to determine the chronological order of Hungarian coins. On the basis of logical, historical and archaeological arguments (i.a. analysis of cemetery maps) (12) the minting of CNH. I.1. can be fixed to the years before 1020 and the denar





Fig. 3. Coin of the type CNH I. 7. 1:1, and enlarged.

Dbg. 1706/a to about 1001. The coins occurring in the majority of 10th-11th century hoards embrace, however, about a century so that the dating of a coin type on ground of the *terminus post quem* of a hoard cannot be accepted as certain, but we have to add them to the arguments. To add them in spite of the fact that – especially in the case of old hoards, found in the 19th century – we have to be suspicious as for the completeness of the hoard in many cases.

Going through the Scandinavian hoards (13) we see that in hoards closing in the 10th century no Hungarian coins occur. The first hoard, which also contains a Hungarian coin is that of Karlberg, where the last coin is the Veronese denar of Henry II (1013-1034). In this hoard one Dbg. 1706/a type denar occurs. The following one is that of Bosarve, in which the issuer of the latest coin is Conrad II (1027-1039) with a denar of Huy. The Bergues-St. Vinnoc coin of Rionold (1052-1068) is the latest one in the Djuped find, containing a CNH. I. 7. (fig. 3). Altogether 45 hoards in Sweden contain Hungarian coins, both originals and imitations. Besides these we find Hungarian coins, both originals and imitations, in 58 Polish, 16 Soviet, 15 Danish, 2 Norwegian and 3 Finnish hoards. These data can maybe give some indications for the place of issue of the imitations. On the other hand, among the Polish hoards also the one containing a denar Type Dbg. 1706/a is the first one chronologically, namely the Zakrew hoard, the latest coins of which were issued by Boleslaw Chrobry (992-1025). The hoards seem therefore to corroborate the chronology determined by other arguments.

The relatively early appearance of imitations is a remarkable feature in Scandinavian hoards. It is a regrettable fact that the imitation of Dbg. 1706/a (15), found in Sweden, is in the systematic collection of the Royal Cabinet of Coins in Stockholm with no indication and provenance. We therefore do not know from which hoard it originates, and consequently it has no value for the dating. We do not wish to deal this time with the imitation of the Bosarve hoard, only to point to the difference of opinions connected with the specimen published first by Vera Hatz (16), Hlinka (17), Turnwald (18) and Suchodolski (19) consider it as an original Hungarian coin, in fact the first Hungarian

coin minted in Pozsony (Bratislava). This opinion was taken over – without the necessary criticism – also by Wolfgang Hahn (20). For numismatical and historical reasons Hungarian research considers it an imitation made in Northern Europe (21).

Imitations of Hungarian coins can be separated from the originals without any difficulty. On original issues the legend is never confused but, on every coin, clear, lucid, unambiguously intact; the design is, together with the legend, carefully composed (22). The legend of the imitations is, on the other hand, usually unintelligible; only from one or two letters or from letter elements can the prototype be inferred.

In his *Corpus* László Réthy describes the imitations of Stephen's coins under Nr. CNH. I. 1-6. Under a separate number – CNH. I. 7. – he mentions the coin, usually said to have a double weight, which he knew only in one specimen at the time of preparing the *Corpus*. He describes it here as an imitation of proof coin. In the course of his study-tour he later had the opportunity of investigating the CNH. I. 7. kept in the Hermitage. As the two CNH. I. 7. coins were not struck with the same die, Réthy threw out the suggestion of the originality of this type. "... In the times of King Stephen it must have been necessary to strike – beyond the ordinary half denar – also whole denars in a larger number..." (23) Réthy's hypothesis was rejected by Bálint Hóman (24) on the ground that – besides the two known denars – obuli existed by the thousand, consequently ... "these coins of an exceptional weight were contemporary foreign imitations...". Lajos Huszár took the same position (25). Vera Hatz enumerates already six specimens (26); besides the Budapest, Debrecen and Leningrad exemplars those found in Djuped, Stora Sojdeby and Gotland. In our opinion thist last one is from the Tomsarve hoard. A

CNH. I. 7. occurs also in the Läröverk collection of the Visby Museum (27), others are in the Majkov (28) and Nylarsker (29) hoards. We know by now nine exemplars altogether; all have clear and intact legends, and the design is constructed according to CNH. I. 1.

All specialists accept as a fact that our early coins, or rather their dies have been produced by means of punches; in our opinion the same is the case of the dies of CNH. I. 7.

Let us look over the weight data of CNH. I. 7.:

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|---|--------|
| 1) Copy of the Hungarian National Museum:   | 1,12 g |
| 2) Copy of the Déri Museum, Debrecen:   | 1,13 g |
| 3) Copy of the Hermitage, Leningrad:  | 1,39 g |
| 4) Copy of the Visby Museum:  | 1,20 g |
| 5) From the Stora Sojdeby hoard, Stockholm:   | 1,30 g |
| 6) From the Djuped hoard, Stockholm:  | 1,12 g |
| 7) From the Tomsarve hoard, Stockholm:  | 1,22 g |
| 8) From the Nylarsker hoard, Copenhagen:  | 1,39 g |
| 9) The CNH. I. 7. coins of the Majkov hoard lacks the weight data in the publication. |        |

The weights of the eight specimens do not show a larger dispersion than usual among Early Medieval coins; the difference between those having the greatest and smallest weight is not more than 0,27 g., the average weight being 1,23 g. The type Dbg. 1706/a, identified as the first Hungarian denar, has the average weight of 1,26 g. A deviation of 0,03 g. is – in view of the medieval minting technique – negligible, thus Dbg. 1706/a and CNH. I. 7. were made, in our opinion, according to the same standard of coinage.

CNH. I. 7. is thus, with the same standard of coinage as Dbg. 1706/a and the same design as CNH. I. 1., an original Hungarian coin, struck by King

Stephen; its date of minting has to be placed between these two, i.e. c. 1000-c. 1020.

In the introduction we have referred to the Hungarian-Viking commercial connections at the turn of the millenium; to the fact that exporting of Hungarian silver in the 10th centry was replaced – at least partly – by paying with coined money as soon as the Hungarian coins appeared. The abundance of precious metals in Hungary could always ensure – in the form of coined money – the balance of foreign trade, until modern times. Internal money circulation began about the start of this process, but a mass coining was not needed until about twenty years later (presumably for internal commerce but also and primarily for taxes). This interval of two decades and the continuity of foreign trade from the 10th century onwards (and its subject, primarily the export of silver) was the cause of the fact that the first Hungarian coins are more common in foreign countries, at the scene of our foreign trade than in Hungary, (inasmuch as we can call a few copies common). The type CNH. I. 7. did not come to light in the Carpathian basin so far; Dbg. 1706/a was also unknown till 1968.

The first Hungarian coin was, accordingly, Dbg. 1706/a about 1001; this was followed in the same weight but with a different design by CNH. I. 7., and a mass coining was carried out before 1020 with CNH. I. 1. having the identical legend and design as CNH. I. 7. In both respects (legends and design) these coins have the most common of the forms current in the Middle Ages: a text relating to the ruler who issued the coin or the place of the mint; the design a simple cross. The standard of coinage was, however, reduced in relation to the former types, as this might have suited the demands of mass use.

All branches of science keep developing: recent

sources may modify our former knowledge. As long as only one piece of CNH. I. 7. was known, the supposition of an imitation was reasonable. Further exemplars coming to light must convince us that the beginning of Hungarian coinage was richer and more varied than was previously supposed.

#### Notes

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#### Abbreviations

HBN *Hamburger Beiträge zur Numismatik*

NK *Numizmatikai Közöny*