

A NEW LATE VIKING-AGE HOARD FROM POLAND: COINS AND GOLD JEWELLERY AS EVIDENCE FOR THE HISTORY OF CENTRAL EUROPE

PRELIMINARY PRESENTATION

Each newly discovered hoard, whether it comes from the Bronze Age or the Middle Ages, usually becomes a sensation discussed in the global media. Such a discovery, however, is above all an important scientific event. Hoards constitute collections of historical evidence of great importance and great variety, providing information on political structures, economy, trade contacts, metal products technologies, ideologies and art (Duczko 2018). Increasingly, the subject of research on the content of hoards are not mainly the coins, but also ornaments and other non-monetary forms of precious metal. The results of archaeological, stylistic and physicochemical analyses show how much new knowledge they can provide (e. g. Duczko 1985; 2018; Miśta-Jakubowska et al. 2019). This applies primarily to work with deposits from the Early Middle Ages, and especially with those from the Viking Age (700-1100 AD), because their numerous occurrence makes them an important source of information about the period of the formation of medieval Europe (Adamczyk 2014; Gruszczyński 2019).

THE HOARDS FROM SŁUSZKÓW

The recent discovery of a hoard in Poland is one of the cases enriching research on the Late Viking Age in Central Europe. The find was made in the autumn of 2020 in the village of Słuszków, located 25 km north-east of the city of Kalisz (both woj. wielkopolskie/PL) (**fig. 1**). The hoard was discovered while searching for traces of the original findspot of another deposit (»Słuszków 1«) found in the village. This had been discovered in 1935; however, the material from it was only disclosed in 1958, in a very incomplete condition, as the discoverers had divided it among themselves. The surviving objects from it then found their way to museum collections (Dąbrowski/Suchodolski 1958). Initially, it could have contained up to 20,000 coins and probably more silver ornaments than the number that survived from this find. It is estimated that the original deposit had weighed about 15 kg, so it would be the largest known hoard from the turn of the 11th and 12th centuries from Poland. The recovered part, now in the collections of the District Museum in Kalisz, weighs just over 10 kg. The content of this hoard (Szczurek et al. 2017, 657-687) consists of 13 061 items, among which coins dominate, especially cross deniers, dated from the 10th to the beginning of the 12th century. In addition, there are 33 whole and fragments of beads and 7 flat poured silver ingots (»*placki*«).

THE NEW HOARD

Unlike the one found earlier, the second hoard (»Słuszków 2«) was discovered and explored by archaeologists. It was found at the edge of a field in the village as a result of a renewed attempt to relocate the



Fig. 1 The location of Słuszków. – (Map D. Wyczółkowski).



Fig. 2 The field in Słuszków showing the reported findspot of hoard 1 and hoard 2. – (Photo M. Osiadacz).

exact findspot of the 1935 discovery (fig. 2). This had been said to have been made under a large stone found at the junction between two field boundaries about 120m east of the road currently running north-south through the village. No traces were found confirming this findspot during work here about a decade ago (Andrałojć et al. 2011, 104-105). People who had talked in the 1980s with the original discoverers (Kędziński 1998b, 91) report that the 1935 find had been made closer to the road before it had been widened in the 1950s. A metal detector survey covering a wider area than before and including the region



Fig. 3 The Słuszków 2 hoard during excavation in 2020. – (Photo A. Kędzierski).



Fig. 4 The container of the Słuszków 2 hoard. – (Photo A. Kędzierski). – Scale 1:3.

near the road was carried out by archaeologists Adam Kędzierski and Leszek Ziábka in the autumn of 2020. Again, no traces were found of the place where the first deposit had been found 85 years previously. A second hoard, however, was found, lying at a depth of 30-35 cm below today's ground level, near a power pole, in a place that has not been used for agriculture for about 50 years (fig. 3).

The hoard had been buried in a clay pot of a form typical for the late 11th and 12th centuries, preserved up to $\frac{3}{4}$ of its height (fig. 4). Despite the destruction of the pot's rim, it appears that the deposit of objects inside it is fully preserved. After extraction, the vessel was X-rayed using a tomograph and the contents were explored in layers. Based on the analysis of the tomographic images and the observations made during the exploration of the inside of the vessel, it was found that the items in it were packed in at least three cloth bags, arranged in a basket made of bark(?), the largest fragments of which remained at the bottom of the vessel. The Słuszków 2 hoard contained 6,500 items. Most of them are coins, mainly Saxon and Polish cross



Fig. 5 Słuszków 2: coins and non-monetary silver. – (Photo A. Kędzierski).



Fig. 6 Słuszków 2: exploration of the contents of the container: gold finger-rings (red arrow) and fragments of baskets. – (Photo A. Kędzierski).

deniers, and several dozen different European coins, as well as flat silver ingots, pieces of lead and four gold rings (figs 5-6).

Two large groups of cross deniers (type CNP 813 and CNP 867, 868 according to Gumowski 1939) found in this deposit were previously known almost exclusively from the Słuszków 1 hoard. They were produced at the turn of the 11th and 12th centuries, probably in the mint in Kalisz or in its area (Kędzierski 2013). Their issue is hypothetically attributed to the Polish ruler Zbigniew († 1111 [?]). Also noteworthy is a fragment of an official coin of Duke Władysław Herman († 1102), showing his name and image, minted in Cracow (woj. małopolskie/PL) after 1080. Another notable find are examples of the very rare large deniers issued by the Count Palatine Sieciech († around 1110) – Gumowski's (1939) type CNP 1480. These coins are the



Fig. 7 Słuszków 2: the latest foreign coin in the hoard – King Ladislaus I the Saint of Hungary. – (Photo A. Kędzierski). – Scale 4:1.

first private issues of bullion coins in Poland by a known and recognized magnate. Among the several dozen foreign coins, it seems that the youngest is a denier of King Ladislaus I the Saint of Hungary († 1095), minted at the earliest in the 1080s (Huszár 1979, no. 24; fig. 7).

GOLD FROM POLISH FINDS

An unusual feature of the Słuszków 2 hoard was the presence of four golden items, two simple hooped finger-rings and two finger-rings with bezels. Gold is only very exceptionally found in the composition of early medieval hoards from the area of present-day Poland. The situation had changed from that in the Migration Period (late 4th to mid-6th century), when collections of items consisting of Scandinavian gold (Danish bracteates and necklaces), and Byzantine coins (solidi) were deposited in the ground (Duczko 1997; Bursche/Hines/Zapolska 2020). This Scandinavian custom disappeared in the first decade of the 6th century. Hoards of precious metal, this time consisting of silver, reappeared in this region at the end of the 9th century and were deposited until the 12th century. They usually have the character of *hacksilver*, i.e. they contain chopped ornaments, almost always of Bohemian (Czech) origin, and other forms of non-monetary silver, such as bars and flat poured silver ingots (the latter produced only in Poland). Hoards with complete silver ornaments also come from Eastern Europe (Duczko 2018). The only hoard from Poland containing complete golden ornaments was found in Borucin (woj. kujawsko-pomorskie/PL). It consisted of beads of Rus' origin dated to the mid-10th century (Rauhut 1955). Gold objects are also found in several early medieval graves and in settlement contexts within the central domain of the early Piasts (woj. wielkopolskie/PL) – in Ostrów Lednicki, in nearby Dziekanowice, Poznań and Giecz (Kóčka-Krenz 2006; 2012, 42-44; Suchodolski/Zawadzki 2010, nos 60-61. 63; Duczko 2016).

THE FINGER-RINGS FROM THE HOARD

The four rings included in the Słuszków 2 hoard (fig. 8) seem to represent products coming from areas with two cultural affiliations, Rus' and German. In origin, however, both, in turn, derive from a common formal and technical style, namely Roman.



Fig. 8 Słuszków 2: four gold finger-rings. – (Photo A. Kędzierski). – No scale.



Fig. 9 Słuszków 2: Cyrillic inscription on the finger-ring; ★ shows the place of joining. – (Photo A. Kędzierski). – No scale.

One of the hoops is of the polygonal type and has 14 undecorated sides. It belongs to a type of ornament the origins of which go back to the Roman tradition and the slightly younger Byzantine and local rings, which were popular religious and magical objects, often with inscriptions and various motifs (Anderson 1979).

The second ring is narrower, it has 20 recesses in which there are letters of the Cyrillic alphabet, most probably made of enamel. There can be no doubt that this had come from the territory of Rus'. According to a reading by Dr Adrian Jusupowić, professor at the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, they constitute a prayer invoking the aid of God (fig. 9):

[Господ]и помъзи р(?)а(?)бе свое[и] Марии
 »Lord, help your handmaid Maria«

Inscriptions of this type are known from numerous epigraphic finds from the territory of the Rus'. The present example can be dated palaeographically to the 11th century. In the rich collection of rings from finds from Eastern Europe (e.g. Sedova 1981 and auction catalogues), there is no analogy to this ring.

The other two rings both have hoops made of thick, beaded wire, to which a bezel made of gold sheet

and decorated with gold granulation has been soldered. They both contain polished cabochons of semi-precious stone (fig. 10).



Fig. 10 Słuszków 2: two finger-rings with beaded hoops. – (Photo A. Kędzierski). – Scale 2:1.



Fig. 11 Gold finger-ring, unknown origin. – (<https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-5004769> [21.1.2022]). – No scale.

The use of beaded wire is part of the filigree art that has its roots in the Early Middle East. From Roman workshops, this technique reached the Germans, Scandinavians, Irish, Anglo-Saxons and the Holy Roman Empire in the Early Middle Ages (Duczko 1985, 17-21; 1994). The most characteristic element of the two rings from the Słuszków 2 hoard – the beaded hoop – has been found on twelve specimens. Most of them are objects that surfaced on the antiquities trade and their provenance is not certain or seems to have been invented. Roman rings from the beginning of our era and the end of the 4th century can be placed in a specific cultural context. One of them, having a hoop consisting of three beaded wires, was found in Egypt, in a sunken ship on the island of Antirhodos near Alexandria (gouv. al-Iskandariyya/ET) (Sandrin/Belov/Fabre 2013, 47 fig. 4a), and two others in England, among the 22 gold rings in the Thetford hoard (Norfolk/GB) (Johns/Potter 1983¹). The remaining specimens, appearing in auctions, are identified as Roman or Byzantine, sometimes early medieval.

A ring of exceptional class with an enamel decoration and carefully crafted beadwork wires, described as Byzantine from the 10th century, was put up for auction at Christie's in 2007 as Lot 489 (fig. 11)². It may well have been a product of goldsmiths working in the Holy Roman Empire during the reign of the Ottonians or the Salians. It was then that influences from Byzantium appeared in German art. There are no such rings in the well-known catalogue from the exhibition at the museum in Mainz (Das Reich 1992) which is very accurate in the presentation of the products of goldsmiths, which might prompt caution in considering such beaded rings to be part of the traditions of Salian art. However, since such rings with beaded hoops have not been found in the rich and well-known Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian art, their Ottonian-Salic origin must be considered at the moment the only possible hypothesis.

THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE DEPOSITION OF THE HOARD

At this stage of the research on the Słuszków 2 hoard, only a preliminary hypothesis may be offered concerning the circumstances in which this hoard may have been hidden in the ground in the place where it remained until its discovery.

The first quarter of the 11th century was a period in the history of the Polish state and of the whole of Central Europe that was full of internal and external conflicts. We know of the events in Poland largely from the work *Cronica et gesta ducum sive principum Polonorum* of the writer known as Gallus Anonymus written in the years around 1112-1114/1116 (Maleczyński 1952; more broadly, Rosik 2013).

After the death of Duke Władysław Herman in 1102, there was a dispute over power between his two sons Zbigniew and his younger brother Bolesław († 1138). The vicinity of the city in Kalisz witnessed important events from that time. By attacking Kalisz at the end of 1106, Bolesław began a direct armed struggle with his rival. According to Gallus, it was here that Bolesław found that he was being resisted by people faithful to his brother, and thus within a few days he took the town. Zbigniew withdrew his troops across the Vistula, to Mazovia, and then he personally went to Rus'. It is tempting to hypothesise a possible relation between the hiding of the Słuszków 2 hoard with these events.

It seems that the Słuszków 1 hoard might have been deposited at a similar time. It is dominated by cross deniers dated to the end of the 11th and beginning of the 12th century (Kędzierski 1998a). The latest well-dated coin is a denier of the Hungarian King Koloman the Learned (ruled 1095-1114/1116), but the position of this type of coin (Huszár 1979, no. 37) in the middle of the chronological classification of this ruler's coin issues would date it to the first years of the 12th century (Huszár 1979, 36-37; Kędzierski 1998b, 93 note 4). If the dating is correct, we have a *terminus post quem* for hiding the hoard. This of course refers only to the surviving part, rather than the entire original hoard. It is also worth paying attention to the silver ornaments in this hoard. They were products of Rus' workshops from the second half of the 10th century and their appearance in a hoard of a date so late is puzzling (Miśta-Jakubowska et al. 2019).

Zbigniew and Bolesław, fighting with each other, entered into various alliances with the rulers of the neighbouring countries. The former was supported by the Czechs, while the Hungarians and Rus' troops allied themselves with the cause of Bolesław, whose wife was a Rus' princess (Zbysława, † 1114 [?]). In 1109, however, there was a war between King (later Emperor) Henry V and Bolesław and the Czechs also participated in it. Soon afterwards, Bolesław personally travelled to Hungary, and in the first half of 1115, he married Salomea, daughter of Henry II, Count of Berg. All this was conducive to the movement of objects. The concealment of both these hoards in the village of Słuszków does not seem to be accidental, as it was on a trade route leading north towards the Baltic Sea (Wąsowiczówna 1960). Kalisz itself became an important communication junction in the middle of the 10th century, both on the north-south route and on the route leading from Western Europe through Poznań towards Rus' (Wyczółkowski/Kędzierski 2016, 124).

CONCLUSIONS

The Słuszków 2 hoard requires further research and specialist analyses that will lead to more precise findings. The coins from both hoards require a series of physicochemical and technological analyses, without which it is impossible to understand their production, which is part of the study of the monetisation process of the economy not only of Poland but of the entire area of Central Europe. Both deposits from Słuszków are an exceptionally interesting source of information for the never-ending discussion on the reasons for hiding hoards. In the case of these two examples, hiding such a large amount of precious metal can prob-

ably be associated with some violent event. It was then that their owners were forced to hide their riches, which they could not then dig up for some unknown reason.

The presence of gold ornaments in the second hoard is particularly striking. The rings from Rus' and the Holy Roman Empire draw our attention to the relations of the highest Polish elites with the local rulers, as well as the Hungarian and Czech kings. It is also possible that the three rings, if they were German products, did not have to be in Polish possession brought directly from the Reich. An in-depth analysis of objects from both hoards will help to solve numerous questions about the elites in the Polish state and their relations with the elites of neighbouring political and cultural powers, and thus will enrich knowledge about the early 12th-century history of Central Europe.

Translation: P. Barford

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Notes

- 1) Cf. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thetford_Hoard (21.1.2021). 2) <https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-5004769> (21.1.2021).

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Zusammenfassung / Summary / Résumé

Ein neuer spätwikingzeitlicher Hort aus Polen: Münzen und Goldschmuck als Quellen für die Geschichte Mitteleuropas. Eine vorläufige Präsentation

Im Spätherbst 2020 unternahm eine Gruppe von Archäologen aus der Stadt Kalisz in Polen Untersuchungen im Dorf Słuszków (woj. wielkopolskie/PL). In dieser Ortschaft ist 1935 einer der größten, an den Anfang des 12. Jahrhunderts datierenden Horte entdeckt worden (»Słuszków 1«). Das Ziel der Expedition war nur, den Fundort dieses Horts zu bestimmen, aber im Laufe einer Metalldetektoruntersuchung geschah etwas Unerwartetes – ein neuer Hort (»Słuszków 2«) wurde gefunden. Der erste Hort, der unter der Dorfbevölkerung aufgeteilt worden war, war ursprünglich umfangreich. Er könnte bis zu 20000 Münzen enthalten haben und wahrscheinlich mehr Silberschmuck, als von diesem Fund erhalten geblieben ist. Es wird geschätzt, dass der ursprüngliche Fund 15kg wog und somit der größte bekannte Hort von der Wende des 11. zum 12. Jahrhundert in Polen wäre. Der zweite Hort aus Słuszków enthält 6500 Objekte, die meisten davon Münzen, hauptsächlich sog. sächsische und polnische Kreuzdenare und mehrere Dutzend verschiedene europäische Münzen, sowie flache Silberbarren, Bleistücke und vier goldene Fingerringe. Letztere sind die ersten Funde dieser Art in polnischen Horten aus der Wikingerzeit. Einer dieser Ringe ist mit einer kyrillischen Inschrift verziert, was seine Herkunft aus dem Fürstentum Kiew nahelegt. Die drei anderen Ringe wurden möglicherweise nach byzantinisch-karolingischer Tradition in Deutschland in der Ottonen- oder Salierzeit hergestellt. Zwei große Gruppen von »Kreuzdenaren«, die in dem Hort entdeckt wurden, waren bisher fast ausschließlich aus dem Hort Słuszków 1 bekannt. Sie wurden um die Wende vom 11. zum 12. Jahrhundert geprägt, wahrscheinlich in der Münzstätte in Kalisz oder in der Umgebung dieser Stadt. Ihre Emission kann hypothetisch dem polnischen Herrscher Zbigniew († 1111?) zugeschrieben werden. Bemerkenswert ist auch ein Fragment einer offiziellen Münze des Herzogs Władysław Herman († 1102), die seinen Namen und sein Bild zeigt und in Krakau nach 1080 geprägt wurde. Andere bedeutende Funde sind Exemplare von sehr seltenen großen Denaren, die vom Pfalzgraf Sieciech († um 1110) ausgegeben wurden. Diese Münzen sind die ersten Privatemissionen von Anlagemünzen in Polen von einem bekannten und anerkannten Magnaten. Unter den mehreren Dutzend ausländischer Münzen scheint ein Denar des ungarischen Königs Ladislaus I. dem Heiligen († 1095) am jüngsten zu sein. Diese Münze wurde frühestens in den 1080er Jahren geprägt. Was die zwei Horte aus Słuszków betrifft, kann das Verbergen einer so großen Anzahl von Edelmetallgegenständen wahrscheinlich mit einem gewalttätigen Ereignis, wie etwa dem Krieg zwischen zwei Brüdern aus der Herrscherfamilie, Zbigniew und Bolesław, in Verbindung gebracht werden. Dieser Aufsatz bietet eine vorläufige Präsentation dieses neuen Horts und seines Inhalts.

A New Late Viking-age Hoard from Poland: Coins and Gold Jewellery as Evidence for the History of Central Europe. Preliminary Presentation

In the late autumn of 2020, a group of archaeologists from the city of Kalisz, Poland, undertook some research in the village of Słuszków (woj. wielkopolskie/PL). It was here in 1935 that one of the greatest hoards dating back to the beginning of the 12th century («Słuszków 1») had been discovered. The aim of the expedition was only to establish the position of this find, but in the course of a metal detector survey, something unexpected happened – the discovery of another hoard («Słuszków 2»). The first hoard, which had been divided among people in the village, was initially large. It could have contained up to 20,000 coins and probably more silver ornaments than the number that have survived from this find. It is estimated that the original deposit weighed 15 kg, so it would be the largest known hoard from the turn of the 11th and 12th centuries from Poland. The second deposit from Słuszków consists of 6,500 items, most of them coins, mainly Saxon and Polish cross deniers, and several dozen different European coins, as well as flat silver ingots, pieces of lead and four gold finger-rings. The latter items are the first finds of this type in Viking-age Polish hoards. On one finger-ring there is a Cyrillic inscription suggesting the origin of the ring from the Kiev Principality. The three other rings were possibly produced according to Byzantine-Carolingian tradition in Germany in the Ottonian or Salian Periods. Two large groups of cross deniers found in this deposit were previously known almost exclusively from the Słuszków 1 hoard. They were minted at the turn of the 11th and 12th centuries, probably in the mint in Kalisz or in its vicinity. Their issue is hypothetically attributed to the Polish ruler Zbigniew († 1111?). Also noteworthy is a fragment of an official coin of Duke Władysław Herman († 1102), showing his name and image, minted in Cracow after 1080. Other notable finds are examples of very rare large deniers issued by Palatine Sieciech († ca. 1110). These coins are the first private issues of bullion coins in Poland by a known and recognized magnate. Among the several dozen foreign coins, it seems that the most recent one is a denier of King Ladislaus I the Saint of Hungary († 1095), minted at the earliest in the 1080s. In the case of the two hoards from Słuszków, the concealment of such a large amount of precious metal items can probably be associated with some violent event, such as the war between two royal brothers, Zbigniew and Bolesław. The paper is a preliminary presentation of this new hoard and its contents.

Un nouveau trésor de l'âge viking tardif en Pologne: Pièces de monnaie et bijoux en or comme témoins de l'histoire de l'Europe centrale. Présentation préliminaire

À la fin de l'automne 2020, un groupe d'archéologues de la ville de Kalisz, en Pologne, a entrepris des recherches dans le village de Słuszków (woj. wielkopolskie/PL). C'est là qu'avait été découvert en 1935 l'un des plus grands trésors datant du début du 12^e siècle («Słuszków 1»). Le but de l'expédition était seulement d'établir la position de cette trouvaille, mais au cours d'un sondage avec détecteur de métaux, quelque chose d'inattendu s'est produit: la découverte d'un autre trésor («Słuszków 2»). Le premier trésor, qui avait été réparti entre les habitants du village, était initialement important, il aurait pu contenir jusqu'à 20 000 pièces de monnaie et probablement plus d'ornements en argent que le nombre qui a survécu à cette découverte. On estime que le dépôt initial pesait 15 kg et qu'il s'agirait donc du plus grand trésor connu de Pologne datant du tournant du 12^e siècle. Le second dépôt de Słuszków comprend 6500 objets, pour la plupart des pièces de monnaie, principalement des deniers à croix, saxons et polonais, et plusieurs dizaines de pièces européennes différentes, ainsi que des lingots d'argent plats, des morceaux de plomb et quatre anneaux de doigts en or. Ces derniers objets sont une première dans les trésors polonais de l'époque viking. Un anneau porte une inscription en cyrillique indiquant qu'il provenait de la principauté de Kiev. Les trois autres anneaux furent probablement fabriqués en Allemagne, à l'époque ottonienne ou salienne, selon les traditions byzantine et carolingienne. Deux grands groupes de deniers à croix trouvés dans ce dépôt étaient auparavant connus presque exclusivement par le trésor de Słuszków 1. Ils ont été produits au tournant du 12^e siècle, probablement dans l'atelier monétaire de Kalisz ou de ses environs. Leur émission est hypothétiquement attribuée au souverain polonais Zbigniew († 1111?). Il convient également de noter le fragment d'une pièce officielle du duc Władysław Herman († 1102), portant son nom et son image, frappée à Cracovie après 1080. D'autres pièces ont été découvertes, notamment des exemples de grands deniers très rares émis par le palatin Sieciech († vers 1110). Ces pièces sont les premières émissions privées de monnaies de théaurisation en Pologne par un magnat connu et considéré. Parmi les quelques dizaines de pièces étrangères, il semble que la plus récente soit un denier du roi Ladislas I^{er}, saint patron de la Hongrie († 1095), frappé au plus tôt dans les années 1080. Dans le cas des deux trésors de Słuszków, la cache d'une telle quantité d'objets en métal précieux peut probablement être associée à un événement violent, comme la guerre entre deux frères royaux, Zbigniew et Bolesław. Cet article est une présentation préliminaire de ce nouveau trésor et de son contenu.

Schlüsselwörter / Keywords / Mots-clés

Polen / Mitteleuropa / späte Wikingerzeit / Hort / Silbermünzen / goldene Fingerringe / Geschichte

Poland / Central Europe / Late Viking Age / hoard / silver coins / gold finger-rings / history

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