

The Currency of Hungarian Coin in Moldavia During the 15th Century

Issued at the ending of the 14th century, the Moldavian coins were able to cover only a part of the Moldavian market. Because of this lack, many foreign coins circulated on the Moldavian territory, especially emissions of the neighbourhood countries. The numismatic discoveries, which were made in the last decades, allow some conclusions about the economic life in Moldavia and the local currency.

We have various monetary discoveries, which were published by the Romanian researches, but only a few of them had been the object of a comprehensive paper. It is very important to study the connection between the presence of certain coins and the activity of the mints in the same epoch. My research plan has followed the way which certain Hungarian coins were in use on the Moldavian market and the liaison with the fiscal condition of the Hungarian Kingdom in the 15th century. The monetary reforms, the emission of a new coin in Hungaria were directly intercepting in Moldavia because of the surroundings but also because of the strong economical and political relations between them.

During the first half of the 14th century, Hungarian royalty exerted a real authority over the East Carpathian zone. From the year 1456, we have a document, which speaks about a place called Urmezeu, in the North of Moldavia. The term has a Hungarian origin, Örmözö, and is translated as Sentinel Plain. This territory had, probably, a role in the guard of the frontier zone used by the Hungarian Kingdom and, after that, by the Moldavian state. This authority cannot be easily perceptible through the monetary discoveries.

This situation would be changed during the reign of Sigismund of Luxemburg (1387-1437). From the numismatic point of view, his long rule represented an important increase. This monetary activity, very intense, must be explained by the need of the royalty to have the financial resources to support the war against the Ottoman Empire. In fact, Sigismund of Luxemburg remained a long period in Transylvania and during this time, he organized two new mints in region: Segesvár and Brassó. From here, the Hungarian coin had the possibility to penetrate in large quantities across the Carpathians, in Moldavia and Walachia. Findings with issues of Sigismund Ist, especially in the last part of his rule, were discovered throughout the Moldavian country: Suceava, Baia (Suceava County), Bacău, Târgu Trotuș (Bacău County), Roman (Neamț County). Mostly there are change coins, quartings and obols, but there are also presented gold coins, ducats. Almost 20 years ago, a hoard with gold coins issued during the Sigismund Ist reign was unearthed at Schinetea (Vaslui County). This hoard comprises besides Hungarian coins, Venetian ducats, Ottoman silver coins and silver jewellery. It is easy to observe that the Hungarian coins were often used in economic transactions in Moldavia during the reign of Alexandru cel Bun (1400-1432).

The archaeological researches in Suceava are very important for a better understanding of the life in a Moldavian town. The numismatic discoveries from the Princely Court are very interesting for our research. We can observe that the Hungarian coins are the most frequent

foreign coins. This situation proves the closer relations between Moldavia and Hungaria, but also the intense activity of the Transylvanian mints. During the researches at the Princely Court was unearthed a hoard with Moldavian and Hungarian coins, 324 pieces. The most part of the coins are quartings (1/4 denar) issued by Sigismund of Luxemburg (1387-1437), the king of Hungary, between 1430 and 1437. The coins bear the following mint names: Pressburg, Schässburg-Segesvár, Buda, Lippa, Nagybánya, Pécs, Kremnitz, Kashau and Székesfehérvár. Judging by the written sources, the imitations of the quartings are numerous. It is reasonable to suppose that some pieces from our hoard are forgeries or inexperienced engravers produced them in the official mints. Many coins are irregular shapes and effaced flans.

All of the Moldavian coins (six pieces of 1/2 copper groat) from the hoard are common. The description is:

-obverse: auroch head with a star between horns, in the right field rosette, in the left field crescent;

-reverse: shield vertically divided in two parts, three fascias on the left and seven lilies to the right.

Three among the Moldavian coins have in the right of the shield on the reverse the letter Я. Because the quartering was issued only between 1430 and 1437, we suppose that 1/2 Moldavian groats from the hoard belonging to the same epoch. They were stricken during the last two years of Alexandru's reign or by his successors, Iliáš and Ștefan II. The hiding of this hoard must be connected with the troubled times after the Alexandru's death.

After the reign of Sigismund Ist, we can observe that the penetration of the Hungarian coins was in reduction. The death of Sigismund (+1437) and the death of Alexandru (+1432) were the beginning of the internal wars between the pretenders to the princely dignity. During the reign of Matyas Corvin (1458-1490) we can observe a new increase from the monetary point of view. The most important cause of this phenomenon is represented by the monetary reform of Matyas Corvin who rose the title of the silver in his coins. It has been ascertained that this kind of coins are presented in the hoards belonging to the 17th century:

The rule of his successor, Wladislaw II (1490-1516), offered an increasing value of the numismatic discoveries. The explanation of this fact is a new situation in the Moldavian market. In the 16th century, Moldavian rulers ceased to issue the own coins, after that the Hungarian silver coin became a common piece in the commercial transactions.

By means of the DOMUS HUNGARICA SCIENTIARUM ET ARTIUM scholarship, I had study several numismatic collections (the Maghiar Nemzeti Muzeum and the Maghiar Nemzeti Bank) and I had the possibility to examine a lot of the Hungarian and Moldavian coins. The National Museum of History holds an impressive collection, almost 500 Moldavian coins some of them are unique. In a future research, it will be very useful to follow the penetration of Moldavian coins in Hungarian Kingdom and to elaborate a catalogue of these coins.

The existence of an important works about the monetary strategy of Hungarian kings and the collections of the royal decrees, offers the possibility to place the discoveries of the Hungarian coins in Moldavia among other discoveries belonging to the Hungarian numismatics. During the DOMUS scholarship, I consulted the most part of these writings in following libraries: The Eötvös Loránd University, The National Museum of History (especially the publications belonging to the Coin Room), and the Archaeological Institute. With this occasion, I received the support of dr. Gyóngyóssy Márton, The Archaeological Institute of The Eötvös Loránd University, Tóth Csaba, the Coin Room of the National Museum of History, dr. Bálint Csanád, The Archaeological Institute, and dr. Garami Erika, the National Bank Museum. My gratitude of their kind help.

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