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GOLD BARBARIAN IMITATIONS OF ROMAN COINS: THE ULÓW TYPE

Goldene barbarische Nachahmungen römischer Münzen vom Typ Ulów. Sieben goldene barbarische Nachahmungen, die hier als Ulów-Typ bezeichnet wurden, tragen den identischen Reversstempel, der im römischen Münzwesen keine direkte Parallele findet. Er stellt einen den Speer werfenden Reiter in Perlenumrahmung. Bei den ihn auf dem Avers begleitenden Darstellungen handelt es sich um die Porträts von Kaisern aus dem zweiten Viertel des 3. Jh. Diese durchlochten Nachbildungen wurden um die Mitte des 3. Jh. zu Prestigezwecken von einem aus dem Milieu der Černjachov-Kultur stammenden Krieger-Handwerker, wohl dem Mitglied einer an den Kämpfen in der Donauprovinz beteiligten Truppe angebracht. Es ist nicht ausgeschlossen, dass sie aus Goldstäbchen gefertigt wurden, die dem 251 bei Abritus geraubten Kaiserschatz entstammen. Die behandelte Gruppe von Münzen mag einen interessanten Beitrag zur Erforschung der Popularität von Speeren und Lanzen unter den germanischen, insbesondere gotischen Kriegern leisten; sie vermittelt wohl auch Erkenntnisse über die Abbildung dieser Art von Waffen zu Elitezwecken und über den Ursprung der Speer- und Lanzensymbolik als Bestandteil von Herrschaftsinsignien künftiger barbarischer Herrscher.

The subject of the present analysis are seven gold, barbarian imitations of Roman coins, datable to approximately mid-third century AD. Their common feature is their identical reverse (A), struck with the same die (figs. 1–7), one which lacks counterparts in Roman coinage and, in point of fact, in antique coinage in general. This reverse depiction is one of a horseman, wearing a conical hat, is galloping right, hurling a javelin with his upraised right hand¹. This representation is set wi-

¹ Weapons, including their shafted forms, are one of the

Złote, barbarzyńskie imitacje monet rzymskich: typ Ulów. Siedem złotych naśladownictw barbarzyńskich, które zostały w niniejszym tekście określone jako typ Ulów, nosi identyczny stempel rewersu, niemający bezpośredniego odpowiednika w mennictwie rzymskim. Ów typ przedstawia miotającego oszczepem jeźdźca umieszczonego w otoku perełkowym. Towarzyszące mu wyobrażenia na awersie stanowią imitacje portretów cesarzy drugiej ćwierci III wieku. Te posiadające otwory naśladownictwa zostały wybite w celach prestiżowych koło połowy III wieku ręką gockiego rzemieślnika-wojownika wywodzącego się ze społeczności kultury czerniachowskiej, zapewne przedstawiciela drużyny, uczestniczącej w walkach na terenach prowincji dolnodunajskich. Nie jest wykluczone, że zostały wykonane ze złotych sztabek, pochodzących z cesarskiego skarbcza zagrabionego w 251 r. pod Abritus. Opisywana grupa monet może być interesującym przyczynkiem do badań nad popularnością broni drzewcowej wśród germańskich, a w szczególności gockich wojowników i sposobu jej odwzorowywania na potrzeby elit, a zarazem źródła symboliki włóczy/oszczepu jako przynależnej do przyszłych regaliów barbarzyńskiego władcy.



thin a pearl border, and another, outer border of finer 'pearls', with between them, letters, or rather, marks meant to imitate the inscription.

main subjects of interest of Professor Piotr Kaczanowski, to whom the present volume is dedicated, cf. Kaczanowski 1992; Kaczanowski 1995; the publication is financed from the Ministry of Science and Higher Education programme in the framework of the National Programme for the Development of Humanities, 2012–2017, I am grateful to O. Anokhin, D. Hollard, H. W. Horsnæs, E. A. Kuvshinova, V. Matveyev, K. Myzgin, B. Niezabitowska, E. Paunov, M. Rudnicki and I. Varbanov for their consultation and substantial help.



Fig. 1. Ulów, Tomaszów Lubelski distr., barbarian imitation aureus, Janusz Peter Regional Museum in Tomaszów Lubelski, inv. no. MT/5207/N, photographed by M. Bogacki (scale 1:1)

Fig. 2. Findspot unknown, Département des Monnaies, Médailles et Antiques, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, No. 2841 A (scale 1:1)

Fig. 3. Findspot unknown, Département des Monnaies, Médailles et Antiques, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, No. 2841 (scale 1:1)

Fig. 4. Ternopil distr., Ukraine, barbarian gold imitation from an unprovenanced find, present location and photographer unknown, after O. Anokhin (scale 1:1)

Fig. 5. Vinnytsia distr., Ukraine, barbarian gold imitation from an unprovenanced find, present location and photographer unknown, after O. Anokhin (scale 1:1)

Fig. 6. Zhytomyr distr. Ukraine, barbarian gold imitation from an unprovenanced find, present location and photographer unknown, after O. Anokhin (scale 1:1)

Fig. 7. Ukraine?, barbarian gold imitation from an unprovenanced find, the collections of A. Y. Sergeev, State Historical Museum, Moscow, photographed by A. Y. Sergeev (scale 1:1)

Fig. 8. Khmelnytskyi distr., Ukraine, barbarian gold imitation from an unprovenanced find, present location and photographer unknown, after O. Anokhin (scale 1:1)

Fig. 9. Findspot unknown, © The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, photographed by Natalia Antonova, Inna Regentova, Darya Bobrova, inv. no ON-A-Az-1163 (scale 1:1)

Fig. 10. Khmelnytskyi distr., Ukraine, barbarian gold imitation from an unprovenanced find, present location and photographer unknown, after O. Anokhin (scale 1:1)

Fig. 11. Novograd Volynskiy, Zhytomyr distr., Ukraine, barbarian gold imitation from an unprovenanced find, present location and photographer unknown, after O. Anokhin (scale 1:1)



Fig. 12. Gródek, Hrubieszów distr., casting mould for coin blanks, clay, regional museum in Zamość (Muzeum Zamojskie), photographed by J. Kuśnierz (scale 1:1)

Fig. 13. Bronze autonomic coin of Gordian III struck at Adrianople, Thrace, present location and photographer unknown (scale unknown)

Fig. 14. Zhytomyr distr., Ukraine. Gold barbarian imitation, private collection, photographed by M. Bogacki (scale 1:1)

Fig. 15. Gold barbarian imitation from an unprovenanced find, auction catalogue CNG 90, Lot 1982 (scale 1:1)

Fig. 16. Ulów, Tomaszów Lubelski distr. (PL), site 7, grave 19, aureus of Trajan Decius for Herennia Etruscilla, Museum in Tomaszów Lubelski, photographed by M. Bogacki (scale 1:1)

These coins have one of three obverse images (x, y, z), two imitating a laureate imperial bust right (x, y) the third imitating a laureate beardless imperial bust left (z). Moreover, two of these obverses have been identified in five other gold imitations which have a different reverse type (B, C, D). Judging by the style of the obverse portraits, which resemble the heads of the military emperors, they were modelled on coins from the first half of the third century. An additional feature shared by the seven specimens under discussion is that all of them are pierced from the obverse face, above the emperor's bust, but this admittedly is a feature of nearly all of the gold and gold-plated barbarian imitations from the period of interest. The diameter of Ulów imitations is between 19 and 20 mm.

Regrettably, none of these coins was discovered during regular archaeological fieldwork and five lack closer provenance. One specimen surfaced in a Wielbark culture grave-field at Ulów in SE Poland, and three others — from Ukraine. For this reason we propose to define this unique category of barbarian imitations as 'Ulów type'.

Below we present a description of individual specimens:

1. The coin from Ulów, Tomaszów Lubelski distr., was discovered in 2008 by a member of the metal detector community, presumably in the area of archaeological trenches in site no. 7, i.e., the grave-field from the Late Roman Period and the Migration Period. The substantially melted condition of this specimen suggests it had been in a cremation pyre and belongs to a now destroyed grave, although this is not fully certain².

The coin weighs 5.34 g, the dies are at 3 o'clock (fig. 1). The relatively low weight as compared to the rest of the type Ulów specimens is due to the presence of a large hole and the coin's poor condition, which is badly damaged. The coin now misses a fragment near the hole, presumably due to the melting of the rim. This hole, placed above the head, was pierced from the obverse side. Moreover, behind the neck of the portrait is a second, smaller

² For more details on the circumstances of discovery and reconstruction of this coin cf Bursche, Niezabitowska 2013. The coin is at present in the Janusz Peter Regional Museum in Tomaszów Lubelski (inv. no. MT/5207/N); mentioned for the first time in Horsnæs 2013, 113 no. 56.

hole, presumably the result of heavy melting in this area. Much of the coin, on both its sides, is coated with a fine layer of silver which liquefied and flowed to the surface where it solidified forming irregular bumps largely obscuring the inscriptions and the images³.

Identifiable on the obverse is an imitation laureate beardless imperial bust left (die z). Most of the marks meant to imitate the inscription are cannot be seen at present, except for those reminiscent of ON, behind the emperor's head.

The image on the reverse is partly obscured but definitely the same as the one described in the opening paragraph as the distinguishing mark of Ulów type imitations (die A). The inscription is largely illegible, at the top there are marks reminiscent of the letters 'IIIOZ', at bottom, a mark resembling the letter 'U'.

The coin is in gold of very high quality, of which it contains approximately 98.6%, and as such corresponds to the quality of gold used in making original *aurei*⁴.

2. A gold coin struck with an identical pair of dies as the specimen from Ulów (z, A), now held by the Département des Monnaies, Médailles et Antiques, Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris (fig. 2), was published by J.-P. Callu. Unfortunately unprovenanced, it entered into the collection in Paris in 1880⁵.

³ I owe this information to B. Niezabitowska, PhD. Similar evidence of melting was observed on five original mid-3rd century coins allegedly discovered in the vicinity of Shchuchyn in Hrodna distr., Belarus (Bursche 2013); cf also on an *aureus* of Trajan Decius published in the auction catalogue Hirsch no. 240, auction of 2 May 2005, no. 689.

⁴ Analyses were made with a FISCHER XAN-150 (ED XRF) spectrometer using Gold Global software, applied in testing modern jewellery, at the Regional Assay Office in Warsaw, thanks to the kindness of Wiesław Żołek. A fragment of an *aureus* of Trajan Decius, also discovered in the grave-field at Ulów, analyzed in the same laboratory with the same method, contains 99.6% gold whereas an imitation discovered in Ukraine in Zhytomyr distr. (discussion below, fig. 8) — 96.3% AU (the rest is *de facto* silver). Fuller results of these analyses will be published separately. Cf. also Morisson et al. 1985, 83: 99, 38% gold for Trajan Decius *aureus* (BN 1305) and 97,73% AV for Trebonianus Gallus piece (BN 1320).

⁵ Inv. no. 2841 A; Callu 1991, 106 no. 5, 117 and pl. 10,5; Callu 1993, 462, fig. 3; coin purchased in 1880 from G. Petit; cf or. Horsnæs 2013, 113 no. 54.

This specimen weighs 5.94 g, the dies are at 3 o'clock, similarly as in no. 1 (the *aureus* from Ulów). However, the coin from Paris has a much smaller perforation. It is much better preserved, with legible images and inscriptions on both faces. The inscriptions have the form of a row of marks, clumsy imitations of Latin letters, some of them even rendered as mirror images. The obverse image (die z) is reminiscent of the portrait of Gordian III, whose reign we may consequently regard as *terminus post quem* of the manufacture of both imitations.

3. The same coin department in Paris has in its keeping another Ulów type coin which may have passed into the collection together with no. 2 described earlier, possibly originating from the same find⁶. With a weight of 6.70 g, and dies at 9 o'clock, this specimen was pierced from the obverse side, above the head of the emperor (fig. 3). The reverse was struck with the same die (A) as nos. 1 and 2. On the other hand, its obverse 'inscription' is quite different, as it has an imitation of a laureate bust of an emperor with a stubbly beard facing right (die y). It brings to mind the portrait of Maximus, son of Maximinus Thrax, although it may have been modelled on a different bust from the second quarter of the third century.

4. From Ukraine, in the Ternopil district, an area with documented Chernyakhiv culture settlement, comes the next gold coin, presumably discovered by a treasure hunter, struck with the same reverse die (A) but with a different obverse die of the third type (x). Its weight is 6.89 g, the dies are at 2 o'clock, there is a hole made above the image of the ruler's head and the coin is in excellent condition (fig. 4)⁷. The obverse image is of a bearded emperor from around the mid-third century, laureate, right (die x).

5. A coin struck with the same pair of dies (x, A) discovered, presumably in similar circumstances, in Ukraine, in Vinnytsia district, also an area of Chernyakhiv culture settlement (fig. 5). It is somewhat

⁶ Inv. no. 2841; Callu 1991, 106 no. 4, 117 and pl. 10,4; Callu 1993, 462, fig. 2; no closer details on the provenance of this coin; cf. Horsnæs 2013, 113 no. 55.

⁷ Cf. website run by O. Anokhin: http://barbarous-imitations.narod2.ru/podrazhaniya_iz_zolota/ no. 83 and http://barbarous-imitations.narod2.ru/podrazhaniya_iz_zolota/183/nr1, accessed 14 March 2013; I am grateful to O. Anokhin for sending me the photograph of this piece.

less well preserved than no. 4, with a weight of 6.31 g and dies at 2 o'clock⁸.

6. Another coin struck with the same pair of dies (x, A) has also been found by a treasure hunter in Zhytomyr district (Ukraine), as well on an area of Chernyakhiv culture settlement (fig. 6). It is better preserved than no. 5, with a weight of 6.4 g and dies at 3 o'clock⁹.

7. The collection of A. Y. Sergeev offered to the State Historical Museum in Moscow (GIM) includes a third coin struck with the same pair of dies (x, A) as nos. 4 and 5 (fig. 7—Sergeev 2012, p. 76 no. 220). Unprovenanced according to the information contained in the catalogue, despite being pierced this coin has an extraordinary weight of up to 7.40 g. Similarly as nos. 4 and 5, this specimen has dies at 2 o'clock.

The reverses of the six Ulów type specimens described here differ slightly from each other, probably the result of deterioration of the die over time. This is evidenced best by the appearance of the javelin held by the horseman. The shape of the shafted weapon is reproduced with the greatest precise and realism on the reverse of coin no. 4 from the Ternopil district, suggesting that this specimen is the earliest of the group. Opposite the spear-head, the shaft ends in a small ring, possibly meant to represent the butt of the javelin. Imitations nos. 2, 3, 5 and 7 must have been struck later, with a steadily deteriorating die, marred by cracks and random denting. In all four of these coins, the end of the javelin is forked.

Next to these seven specimens, we know of five further imitations which have an obverse struck using the same dies as Ulów, but a different reverse (dies B, C, D)¹⁰.

One of these is a gold-plated subaeratus discovered in Ukraine, in Khmelnytskyi district, area settled during the Late Roman Period by the Chernyakhiv culture. Its obverse is the same as in specimens nos. 3–7 (die x), but the reverse image is of a small female figure facing left, holding a rudder in her right and

⁸ Cf. http://barbarous-imitations.narod2.ru/podrazhaniya_iz_zolota/183/ no. 2, accessed 14 March 2013.

⁹ Cf. http://barbarous-imitations.narod2.ru/podrazhaniya_iz_zolota/183/ no. 4, accessed 18 September 2013.

¹⁰ H. Horsnæs classified them to one group, no. 8 (Horsnæs 2013, 113).

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	Khmelnys. District	Hermitage	Odessa	Khmelnys. district	Novograd Volynskyi
Obv. die	Z	Z	Y	X	X	X	X	X	Z	Z	Z	Z
Rev. die	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	B	B	C	C	D

Table 1. The die-links of obverse and reverse dies of the analyzed coins

a cornucopia in her left (die **B**). This would be an imitation of Fortuna, a personification commonly seen on coinage from the second century and the first half of the third century. On the border is a row of marks presumably meant to imitate Latin letters. This coin also was pierced from the obverse side, above the head of the emperor. Its unimpressive weight of a mere 4.46 g presumably would be the result of its originally having a copper core (fig. 8). The dies are at 6 o'clock¹¹.

The second gold coin struck with the same reverse die (**B**) has the same obverse die as Ulów coins, nos. 1.–2., namely, the imitation portrait of an emperor, laureate beardless bust facing left (die **z**). Pierced above the head of the emperor, it weighs 6.24 g and has dies at 12 o'clock (fig. 9). This specimen is in the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg¹², unfortunately its provenance is unknown.

The third gold coin struck with the identical obverse die as the specimen discussed above and as Ulów specimens nos. 1.–2. (**z**) has on its reverse a figure facing, the head to the right, right hand resting on an oval shield, the left extended forward, the palm crescent-shaped (die **C**). This presumably was an imitation of depictions of Virtus or, even more likely, Mars, widespread in Roman imperial coinage until the third century¹³. On the border is a series of obscure marks meant to imitate letters.

¹¹ Cf. http://barbarous-imitations.narod2.ru/podrazhaniya_iz_zolota/183/ no. 3, accessed 14 March 2013, I am grateful to O. Anokhin for sending me the photograph of this coin.

¹² Inv. no. OH-A-Az-1163; cf. Kazamanova, Kropotkin 1964, 144 (wrong inventory number), Plate III, 5; Kropotkin 1976, 19 no. 28; Horsnæs 2013, 113 no. 53; I am grateful to E. A. Kuvshinova and V. Matveyev for the photograph of this piece and the permission for its publication.

¹³ H. Horsnæs 2013, 95 identified this as an image of a female “resting r. hand on shield and holding out dress with l.

Similarly as in all the other coins discussed here the perforation is above the head of the emperor. This specimen is in the State Archaeological Museum in Odessa¹⁴, weighs 6.71 g, and has dies at 6 o'clock. Its provenance could not be determined.

Yet another imitation, from the Khmelnyskyi district, was apparently struck with same dies (**z**, **C**) as the specimen just discussed; it has the perforation in the same position (fig. 10). Its weight is unknown, the dies are at 6 o'clock¹⁵.

Finally, from Novograd Volynskyi, Zhytomyr district, comes a sixth coin struck with the same obverse die (**z**), but with a different reverse die (**D**), on which there is a female(?) figure wearing a flat headdress, seated right¹⁶, right hand lowered, left extended forward, the palm crescent-shaped. Behind her is an irregular row of a pearl ornament. The coin weighs 6.11 g, has dies at 6 o'clock and a perforation made from the obverse, positioned above the head of the emperor (fig. 11)¹⁷.

If we compare the obverse of the specimens struck with die **z** more closely, we can observe some interesting differences. On the coin from Khmelnyskyi district (fig. 10), presumably produced earlier, below the bust of the emperor is an empty field. On other specimens, as far as can be judged from hand¹⁸, but it seems that what she assumed was a female coiffure is actually an imitation of a helmet.

¹⁴ No. inv. H-52327; cf. Kropotkin 1961, fig. 35, 21; Kazamanova, Kropotkin 1964, 144, Pl. III, 11; Kropotkin 1976, 19 no. 27; Horsnæs 2013, 113 no. 52.

¹⁵ Cf. http://barbarous-imitations.narod2.ru/podrazhaniya_iz_zolota/no.42, accessed 14 March 2013, I am grateful to O. Anokhin for sending me the photograph of this coin.

¹⁶ Figures of seated women represented on coins from the first half of the third century are turned to the left.

¹⁷ Cf. http://barbarous-imitations.narod2.ru/podrazhaniya_iz_zolota/no.40, accessed 14 March 2013, I am grateful to O. Anokhin for sending me the photograph of this piece.

photographs, under the imitation of the bust is a representation resembling Thor's hammer (fig. 11). Apparently the die was modified in the same way as the obverse die A used in Ulów type imitations. If these observations are correct, detailed analyses of modifications of individual dies may be expected to help us establish the relative chronology of the whole group of imitations under discussion. However, for that purpose we have to study original pieces instead of illustrations.

The table below presents the die-links of reverse (A, B, C, D) and the obverse dies (x, y, z) identified on the eleven barbarian imitations under discussion.

The design of the details which appear on the seven dies described earlier (3 obverses and 4 reverses), e.g., the crescent-shaped palm, show that all these coins are the work of one and the same craftsman.

The depictions of the emperors' busts reproduced in all three dies of interest are quite close to their prototypes, namely, the portraits of the military emperors of the second quarter of the third century; the differences are in the details of garments and of the laurel wreath. The inscriptions placed on the obverse and the reverse appear as random sequences of marks only partly reminiscent of Latin letters, not infrequently in mirror image, forming no logical semantic sequence.

Moreover, the design of the reverse seen on coins defined here as type Ulów is altogether different from images known from Roman and, in fact, antique coinage at large. The galloping horseman wearing a conical hat and wielding a javelin finds no direct counterpart in Roman gold coins and, more generally, in Roman iconography. Moreover, the manner in which the inscription is placed between two beaded borders is almost unseen in all antique coinage. It seems that much of what we see here is the work of the fancy of a barbarian die engraver. Interestingly enough, the same reverse die had been used in striking coins with at least three different obverses featuring the imitation portraits of three different emperors (Table 1).

It is hard to determine more closely the place where the described category of gold imitations were made. Definitely, they originated in the Gothic environment in the wider sense, presumably in the area settled by the people of Chernyakhiv culture,

between the Middle Dnieper and the Dniester, as suggested by the number of barbarian imitations of gold second and third century Roman coins which have an at least approximate provenance, published by L. N. Kazamanova and, especially, by V. V. Kropotkin (Kropotkin 1961, 16–17; Kazamanova, Kropotkin 1964; Kropotkin 1966; 1976; 2000) and B. B. Garbuz (1998), more recently, H. W. Horsnæs (2002, 2011, 2013, 91–93 map 2), M. G. Abramzon, N. A. Frolova (2006), P. G. Loboda (2006), K. V. Myzgin (2009) and O. Anokhin (2012), and, above all, specimens published on the web-site run by O. Anokhin¹⁸. This is indicated also by the fact that five of the described coins definitely come from Ukrainian finds and three others were passed into Russian or Ukrainian collections. At the same time, we cannot fully rule out the Wielbark culture territory as the source area, as suggested by the find from Ulów. This possibility is apparently confirmed by the discovery within the settlement site of Wielbark culture at Gródek, Hrubieszów distr., of a casting mould, presumably used in making coin blanks (fig. 12 — Kokowski 1995, 62 fig. 38, 137 no. 1583; Bursche 2011, 22–23, fig. 22). All the same, we have to stress that the area of discovery for Ulów type coins does not have to be the same as the area in which they were produced, something we discuss below.

It is equally challenging to narrow down the timeframe for the striking of Ulów type imitations. The earliest Roman coins used as prototypes of the gold barbarian imitation coins are issues of the Antonine dynasty, mostly the later emperors, beginning with Marcus Aurelius (Horsnæs 2013, 93–97). At the same time let us recall that the original *aurei* remained in circulation for a relatively long time, or better to say, continued in use within the Empire more often as not hoarded over a longer period in treasuries and deposits. This is because gold coinage were less affected by devaluation processes, responsible starting from the onset of the third century in the rapid withdrawal of silver coinage

¹⁸ Cf. <http://barbarous-imitations.narod2.ru/>; for this category of barbarian imitations we must totally reject the hypothesis of A. Alföldi (1928–29) that they were produced on Sarmatian territory, something that J.-P. Callu took into account (1993) and at the same time fully disregarded Russian language literature.

from circulation as its precious metal content steadily declined. The *aurei* continued to be made of possibly the highest quality gold and, as the third century progressed, they may be seen to gradually decline in weight which often varies substantially in individual specimens. In this situation, in hoards datable to the third quarter of the third century we may find *aurei* minted during the first century (e.g., of Nero), and especially, the second century (Callu 1969, 430–445). *Aurei* are also noted in late contexts within Barbaricum, e.g., in graves attributed to the Zakrzów (Sacrau) horizon from the second half of the third century, e.g., in the burial at Gommern (an aureus of Trajan — Laser, Stribny 2003, 40 no. 1003; Bemmann 2005, 43, no. 114), or in grave no. 8 at Haßleben (one Hadrian and two Antoninus Pius with an aureus of Gallienus — Laser, Stribny 2003, 201–202 no. 1033; Bemmann 2005, 34 fig. 20, 43–44 no. 129; Prohászka 2006, 65 fig. 56).

Moreover, there is much to suggest that the gold and, especially, gold-plated imitations of House of Antonine coins need not have been modelled on *aurei* but on second-century *denarii*, occurring en masse in Barbaricum until the Migration Period (Horsnæs 2013, 99).

Whereas, as the case of Illerup Ådal has demonstrated, we can date the production of the first barbarian imitation *denarii* to the early third century (Bursche 2011, 19–23), imitations of gold coins presumably started to be minted only around the middle of the third century. This is confirmed by the dating of the earliest archaeological assemblages in which these imitations are noted, namely, phase C2¹⁹. What is also notable is that almost all of the barbarian imitations of gold coins, both solid gold and gold-plated specimens, are pierced above the emperor's head, whereas during the fourth century they tend to be fitted with a suspension loop. This fact suggests that the principal reason for their minting was prestige, as confirmed by the presence of these coins in elite graves of the Leuna-Haßleben-Zakrzów horizon²⁰. This interpretation is supported by the unexpectedly high weight of Ulów coins,

at an average 6.65 g (except for the partially melted and damaged aureus from Ulów). Let us note also that all these coins were pierced and most show evidence of wear. Thus, their original weight must have been over 7 g, well above the average weight of a third-century *aureus*²¹. Finally, as revealed by the metallographic analysis of the imitation from Ulów, it contained over 98% gold²², the group of imitations under discussion were made of gold of very high quality, the same as was used during that period in minting the original *aurei*²³.

It is quite likely that after the victorious battle at Abritus of 251 the Gothic warriors plundered the imperial treasury containing aurei and gold bars (Bursche 2013). The captured aurei they pierced and subsequently used as prestige objects, possibly as marks of troop membership. Using a part of the bars from the imperial treasury the goldsmiths working for the troop (Bursche 2011, 59–62) could have produced some imitations which they subsequently pierced. This would explain, on the one hand, the high quality of the gold — the same as in the original aurei and, on the other, why the average weight of the imitations was higher than in the original *aurei*, a weight nobody controlled — what mattered was for the owner of the imitation to look smart and full of prestige.

During their extended stay in Moesia and Thracia, particularly in 250–251, the Gothic troops must have repeatedly come into contact with the images of the emperor on horseback, wielding a spear or a javelin, a motif which was relatively widespread e.g., in autonomous bronze coinage of these provinces, especially from the time of the Severan dynasty and military emperors. All Ulów imitations are the work of the same individual presumably a skilled warrior-goldsmith, who in engraving the die of the reverse, one without a counterpart in Roman central coinage, may have used a representation of the mounted emperor thrusting a spear or hurling the javelin he had seen on the reverse of autonomous

²¹ The substantial weight of some of the gold imitations is confirmed by earlier findings, recently H. W. Horsnæs (2013, 89–90).

²² Cf. footnote 4.

²³ The fragment of an aureus of Trajan Decius for Herennia Etruscilla tested with the same method (Bursche, Niezabitowska 2013), the gold content was at 99.6%.

¹⁹ E.g., Choszczno, in Choszczno district, Pomerania, Poland (Ciołek 2007, 30 nr 36), Heligenhafen, Kr. Oldenburg in Schleswig-Holstein (Komnick 1994, 85–86 Nr 1048) or Brøndsager on Fyn (Bursche 2009; Horsnæs 2013, 99–101).

²⁰ Cf. previous footnote.

coins for a model (fig. 13), simplifying some of the details, modifying and adapting them²⁴. Shafted weapons were the most widespread item of weaponry among the Germanic warriors, including Goths (Kaczanowski, Zaborowski 1988; Kaczanowski 1995). Depictions of figures holding a shafted weapon, including in particular the depictions of Mars with a spear, are among those most readily reproduced, presumably for a good reason, on the barbarian imitations of gold, gold-plated and silver coins (figs. 14 and 15).

If we accept the assumption presented above regarding the coins defined here as Ulów type the most plausible explanation is that they were produced in the South, on the Lower Danube, still around mid-third century (in 251?), and later passed into Barbaricum with the troops when they went back home. This argument would be supported by the fact that the specimen from Ulów surfaced in a grave-field which also yielded a chopped aureus of Trajan Decius for Herennia Etruscilla (fig. 16), the two possibly brought to the North together (Bursche 2013; Bursche, Niezabitowska 2013). During their extended stay in the South, where they captured loot and took thousands of Roman captives, the Germanic troops must have acquired important elements of Roman know-how.

The argument presented here is also supported by the fact that among the military equipment deposited as sacred war booty in the lakes of Scandinavia and northern Germany we find sophisticated high class jeweller's tools (Dobat 2008). They prove that some of the men belonging to the Germanic war bands were specialised metalworkers, including also goldsmiths, not only able to repair and decorate items of the war outfit but also to make high class

²⁴ All the same, let us note that while the depiction of a horseman armed with a spear, spear-head point down, was quite widespread in Thracia and Moesia thanks to the cult of the Thracian horseman, mainly thanks to coinage issued during first half of the 3rd century at Hadrianopolis (cf. Moushmov 1912, no 2720), Nicopolis ad Istrum (cf. Moushmov 1912, no 1489 or 1492, Varbanov 2005, no 3288), Deultum (cf. Draganov 2005, for Gordian III, no 98–1007) or Serdica (Moushmov 1912, no 4863), the representation of a horseman wielding a javelin held horizontally or with its point directed upward was relatively rare (cf. Dyczek et alii 2010, 101–109; Varbanov 2007, no 1147); I am grateful to Dr. Evgeni Paunov and Ivan Varbanov for their consultation.

gold objects. At Illerup in Jutland the contents of one of the pouches included next to original denarii four heavily barbarized and rather unskilled imitations of the same, struck with an identical pair of dies (Bursche 2011, 19–23). This context and the set of jeweller's tools discovered at Illerup site suggests they were made by a warrior-craftsman whose gear later passed into the lake at Illerup. In this situation, the making half a century later of stylistically and technically sophisticated gold barbarian imitations of aurei by a jeweller-warrior who could have stayed in the Danubian provinces for a few years is quite likely.

What is also remarkable is that the gold imitations struck with the same pair of dies each time have the same position of the reverse die in relation to the reverse, with the perforation placed in the same position²⁵ which is confirmed by the wider study of H. Horsnæs (2013, 97–99). This indicates a high level of specialization in goldworking and minting: the production of coins from the same pair of dies and the making of perforations, very likely, at the same time, by one and the same individual.

The arguments presented above regarding the possible circumstances and time of manufacture of the gold imitations need verification, most notably, from new finds of barbarian gold coins available from reliably dated archaeological contexts.

Barbarian Ulów type coins can vastly improve our understanding of the genealogy of emergence of gold imitations in the Gothic environment during the Late Roman Period and also the spread of technological expertise by the home-bound troops, including skilled craftsmen, to the northern regions. Moreover, they can be an interesting contribution to the study of the popularity of shafted weapons among Germanic warriors and the ways they were depicted by barbarian jewellers. Perhaps it is among the depictions described here that we shall find the iconological origin of the symbolism of the spear — *hasta*, which in a later period entered the canon of representations of Germanic regalia.

²⁵ Coins nos. 1 and 2, than nos. 4, 5 and 6, imitations from the National Archaeological Museum in Odessa and found in Khmelnytskyi district, struck with z and C dies.

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