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FALSE COIN OF EMPRESS LUCILLA FOUND IN SERDICA

ФАЛЬШИВА МОНЕТА ІМПЕРАТРИЦІ ЛУЦИЛЛИ, ЗНАЙДЕНА В СЕРДИЦІ

Summary

A false coin found in Serdica is described in this article. It is about the coin mixti from the time of empress Lucilla (164–168/ 169), which has the following description:

Obverse: *LVCILLAE AVG ANTONINI AVG F draped bust right.*

Reverse: *CONCORDIA Concordia seated left, holding a patera and resting her arm on a statue of Spes.*

Diameter: *17/18mm; Weight – 2.95g.*

The core is made of copper alloy, covered with thick gilding. At present the gilding on the relief parts of the images and letters is impaired and parts of the core are visible, which have rough surface as a result of pits in the metal. On the observe of the coin the impairment is bigger on the image of the empress and smaller on the letters of the inscription. On the reverse the cover of the letters and the inscription is impaired.

The images and the inscriptions on the coin are the same as on the denar, listed in RIC under No 758. The copper kernel is supposed to have been coated with silver foil and then stamped with the matrix for denars. However, for some reason the kernel was covered with gold, not with silver. It is difficult to estimate whether that was an accident or planned in advance, but as a final reckoning, the fraud is double – a kernel of common metal covered with a golden foil and stamped with the images of f silver coin. In any case it was presumed that the potential owners of that coin were not familiar with the images

on the silver and gold coins and this way the Specimen would be accepted without any problems.

Key words: *Serdica, empress Lucilla (164–182), coins, subaeratus, fourrées, mixte.*

Анотація

У цій статті описано фальшиву монету, знайдену в Сердиці. Йдеться про монету міксті часів імператриці Луцилли (164–168/169), яка має такий опис:

Аверс: *LVCILLAE AVG ANTONINI AVG F* драпірований бюст праворуч.

Реверс: *CONCORDIA* Конкордія сидить ліворуч, тримаючи патерицю і спираючись рукою на статую Спеса.

Діаметр: *17/18 мм; вага – 2,95 г.*

Сердечник виготовлений зі сплаву міді та вкритий густою позолотою. В даний час позолота на рельєфних частинах зображень і літер порушена, видно ділянки гурту, які мають шорстку поверхню внаслідок вибоїн у металі. При огляді монети пошкодження виявилися більшими на зображенні імператриці та меншими на літерах напису. На реверсі пошкоджено покриття літер та напису.

Зображення та написи на монеті такі ж, як і на денарі, занесеному до RIC під № 758. Припускають, що мідне ядро було покрите срібною фольгою а потім відкарбоване за матрицею для денарів. Однак з якихось причин ядро було покрите золотом, а не сріблом. Важко оцінити, чи було це випадковістю, чи сплановано заздалегідь, але висновок один – підробка подвійна – ядро зі звичайного металу, покрите золотою фольгою і відштамповане зображенням срібної монети. У будь-якому випадку передбачалося, що потенційні власники цієї монети не знайомі із зображеннями на срібних і золотих монетах, і таким чином, запропонований екземпляр буде прийнятий без будь-яких проблем.

Ключові слова: *Сердика, імператриця Луцилла (164–182), монети, субаерат, фурре, мікст.*

My interest in special-made coins, generally defined as subaeratus (copper inside), fourrées (filled), mixte (mixed), dates back more than two decades. During this time, my scientific interest in them intensified, thanks to the accumulated knowledge on the subject, as well as to the new empirical material¹.

¹Велков 2008, 276–278; Владимірова-Аладжова 1993, 213-218; Владимірова-Аладжова 2002, 200-203; Владимірова-Аладжова 2003, 125-128; Владимірова - Аладжова 2004-2005, 26-27; Владимірова- Аладжова 2012: 437-441; Владимірова-Аладжова 2000, 45-49; Георгиев 2012, 73–84; Димитров 2011, 371–386; Дочев 2014, 621-631; Жекова 2008, 331–337; Йорданов 1979, 8-16; Йорданова 2009, 65–70; Лазаренко 2017, 181-192; Пенчев 1997, 23-26; Прокопов 1982, 26-28; Haritonov 1991, 14-15)

During antiquity and the Middle Ages, it was a common practice to forge gold and silver coins. The forgeries that have reached us have gilded copper, bronze, tin or silver cores and have understated coin weights².

They were minted in official mints with the consent of the authorities and were used to pay mercenaries, for taxes to other countries, as well as for trade with tribes who had little knowledge of the original coins or did not check their quality. Over time, the gold/silver coating wears away and their inferiority is revealed, and they gradually exit the circulation stream. Many of these specimens were secondarily used as ornaments, as evidenced by their pierced cores.

The the examined coin present a new specimen of a "fake" coin of Empress Lucilla (164-168/169) discovered in Serdica³. Site "Metrostation 8-II", north of building A5, room A 10, at the side entrance, under a layer of stones, at a depth of 539.18 m. (Fig. 1) It has the following description:

Obverse: LVCILLAE AVG ANTONINI AVG F Draped bust of empress right.

Reverse: CONCORDIA Concordia seated left, holding patera in right hand, leaning on statue of Spes with left.

Diameter - 17/18 mm; Weight - 2.95g.



Fig. 1. Coin of empress Lucilla (164-168/ 169)⁴

² The most common metal used for the cores of this type of coin is copper and bronze, but iron cores are also found.

³ Иванов 2011, 316-319; Иванов, Горянова 2011, 55-59.

⁴ Photo – D. Vladimirova-Aladzhova

The core of the coin is made of copper alloy, covered with a thick layer of gold foil⁵. Currently, on the relief parts of the images and letters, the gilding is disturbed and parts of the core are found, which has an uneven surface due to minor ulcers of the metal. On the obverse side of the coin, the violation of the gold coating affected to a greater extent the image of the empress and to a lesser extent the letters of the inscription. Both the image and the letters are damaged on the reverse.

The images and inscriptions on the coin as a type are characteristic of the denarii described in the literature⁶. This fact logically suggests that the copper core should have been stamped with denarius dies of the type described, but when printed the core was "wrapped" in gold rather than silver foil. It's hard to say whether this is accidental or premeditated, but it ends up being a double fraud – the base metal core is covered with gold foil and stamped with the images of a silver coin⁷. In any case, it was probably counted on that the potential users of the money were not well acquainted with the inscriptions surrounding the images on the silver and gold pieces, and so it would be accepted without difficulty.

From the furetta coins published so far in Bulgaria, and from my observations of as yet unpublished specimens, this is the first case of a coin with a "special" made with the name of an empress from the 2nd century. The explanations can be varied, but one should not miss the fact that this empress was related to four emperors - she was the granddaughter of Antoninus Pius (138-161), daughter of Marcus Aurelius (139-161; 161-180), wife of Lucius Verus (161-169) and sister of Commodus (172-179; 179-192).

The described coin of Lucilla found at Serdica is interesting in that it is associated with the early stage of the urban coinage of Serdica, which was initiated by her father, the emperor Marcus Aurelius. Outside of the given chronological and dynastic markers, not much is known about Ania Lucilla's life⁸. Born in 150 AD, at the age of 14 she married Lucius Verus, who was co-emperor with her father. After his death, she remarried. During the military expeditions of her father and her second husband, Lucilla followed them. When Marcus Aurelius died, Emperor Commodus took the imperial throne. His rule did not coincide with Lucilla's interests and understanding, and she planned a plot in which she involved her daughter and her relatives, with the intention of her becoming empress, but in the end the plan remained unfulfilled.

⁵ Alföldi 1978; Alföldi 1982

⁶ RIC III, 1962, № 758

⁷ It should be noted that the image on the reverse of the seated Concordia on the left and the inscription CONCORDIA are very close. The difference is in the inscription on the face.

⁸ E. D'Ambra 2006.

In addition to Lucilla's fure discussed above, more of her denarii, single specimens and others were found in Serdika, part of the collective coin find discovered in 2015⁹.

Although these counterfeit coins differ from regular issues, they are essentially official currency and a product of government policy, minted at official mints, circulated like regular issues, etc. The decision to produce this type of coins, which are special in their design, was dictated by a number of internal and external political circumstances, economic difficulties, commercial dynamics, etc.

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⁹ Vladimirova-Aladzhova 2021, 214-234.

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