

NOTAE NUMISMATICAE

ZAPISKI NUMIZMATYCZNE



Tom XVII

MUZEUM NARODOWE W KRAKOWIE
SEKCJA NUMIZMATYCZNA
KOMISJI ARCHEOLOGICZNEJ PAN
ODDZIAŁ W KRAKOWIE

Kraków 2022

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Szanowni Państwo,

oddajemy w Państwa ręce tom XVII *Notae Numismaticae – Zapisków Numizmatycznych*. Zgodnie z przyjętymi przez nas zasadami wszystkie teksty publikujemy w językach kongresowych, z angielskimi i polskimi abstraktami. Zawartość całego obecnego tomu oraz tomy archiwalne są zamieszczone w formie plików PDF na stronie internetowej Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie (<https://mnk.pl/notae-numismaticae-zapiski-numizmatyczne-1>). Na stronie dostępne są ponadto wszelkie informacje ogólne o czasopiśmie oraz instrukcje dla autorów i recenzentów.

Rok 2022 był wyjątkowy dla całego środowiska numizmatyków w Polsce. Pierwszy raz w historii naszego kraju, a ujmując rzecz szerzej – w krajach Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej – odbył się XVI Międzynarodowy Kongres Numizmatyczny, najważniejsze spotkanie numizmatyków z całego świata, organizowane co sześć lat pod auspicjami International Numismatic Council. Wybór Polski, jako miejsca organizacji Kongresu traktujemy jako wielkie wyróżnienie. Głównym organizatorem tego wydarzenia był Uniwersytet Warszawski, a w przygotowaniach uczestniczyły również Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie, Zamek Królewski w Warszawie, Polskie Towarzystwo Numizmatyczne, Narodowy Bank Polski oraz Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie. W tym ostatnim przypadku szczególnie zaangażowani w prace nad XVI INC byli pracownicy Gabinetu Numizmatycznego. Całością działań kierował profesor Aleksander Bursche z Wydziału Archeologii Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, pomysłodawca organizacji Kongresu w Polsce, którego wspierał Komitet Organizacyjny reprezentujący wszystkie najważniejsze polskie ośrodki numizmatyczne. Obrady kongresowe — które zgromadziły ponad 600 uczestników, czy to na miejscu w Warszawie, czy też w mniej licznych przypadkach, dzięki transmisji na żywo, w miejscach ich zamieszkania — uzupełniały liczne wydarzenia towarzyszące: wystawy, koncerty i spotkania.

Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie przygotowało z tej okazji specjalną wystawę: „Medal prywatnie. Medale w I Rzeczypospolitej (od XVI do XVIII wieku)”, której kuratorem była Agnieszka Smołucha-Sładkowska. Jednocześnie we współpracy z Uniwersytetem Jagiellońskim, krakowskim oddziałem Polskiego Towarzystwa Numizmatycznego, Królewską Biblioteką w Brukseli i Królewskim Towarzystwem Numizmatycznym w Belgii zorganizowano poprzedzającą właściwe obrady Kongresu międzynarodową sesję „Joachim Lelewel and Numismatics in the Nineteenth Century”. W ramach kongresu tradycyjnie opracowany został również Survey of Numismatic Research za lata 2014–2020, w prace nad którym aktywnie zaangażowani byli pracownicy Gabinetu Numizmatycznego: Jarosław Bodzek, Dorota Malarczyk i Barbara Zając. Co więcej, Gabinet Numizmatyczny Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie był silnie reprezentowany w obradach Kongresu, w czasie których wymienione powyżej osoby wygłosiły referaty. Kongres zakończył się wielkim sukcesem i stanowił znakomitą wizytówkę polskiej numizmatyki.

Redakcja

Dear Readers,

It is with great pleasure that we present volume 17 of *Notae Numismaticae – Zapiski Numizmatyczne* to you. In accordance with the principles that we have adopted, our texts are published in the conference languages with English and Polish abstracts. The whole of the present volume can be found as PDF's on the website of the National Museum in Krakow (<https://mnk.pl/notae-numismaticae-zapiski-numizmatyczne-1>), as are previously published volumes of the journal. The website also contains general information about the journal as well as information for prospective authors and reviewers.

2022 was a special year for the entire numismatic community in Poland. It saw the XVI International Numismatic Congress being held in Warsaw, marking the first time that this most important meeting of numismatists from all over the world, organised every six years under the auspices of the International Numismatic Council, had been held in our country, or more generally in a country from Central and Eastern Europe. The choice of Poland as the venue for the Congress was a great honour. The main organiser of the event was the University of Warsaw, and also involved in its organisation were the National Museum in Warsaw, the Royal Castle in Warsaw, the Polish Numismatic Society, the National Bank of Poland, and the National Museum in Krakow. In this last case, the staff of the Museum's Numismatic Cabinet were particularly active in the work on the INC 2022. In charge of all activities was Professor Aleksander Bursche of the Faculty of Archaeology at the University of Warsaw, who was the driving force behind the organisation of the Congress in Poland, and who was supported in his role by the Organising Committee, representing all major Polish numismatic centres. The congress proceedings, which attracted more than 600 participants, either on-site in Warsaw or, in lesser numbers, thanks to live streaming, were complemented by a wide range of accompanying events, including exhibitions, concerts, and meetings.

The National Museum in Krakow organised a special exhibition for the occasion: "Private medal. Private medals in the 1st Republic of Poland (from the 16th to the 18th century)", curated by Agnieszka Smołucha-Sładkowska. At the same time, an international session on "Joachim Lelewel and Numismatics in the Nineteenth Century", preceding the Congress proper, was organised in cooperation with the Jagiellonian University, the Krakow Branch of the Polish Numismatic Society, the Royal Library of Brussels, and the Royal Numismatic Society of Belgium. As part of the Congress, the Survey of Numismatic Research for the years 2014–2020 was traditionally produced, with Jarosław Bodzek, Dorota Malarczyk and Barbara Zajac of the Numismatic Cabinet actively involved in its preparation. The Numismatic Cabinet of the National Museum in Krakow was also strongly represented in the proceedings of the Congress, where the abovementioned staff delivered papers. The congress was a great success and a real showcase for Poland.

The Editors

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A Solidus of Valentinian III Found near the Village of Roŭnaje Pole in Belarus: An Unusual Find from the Belarusian-Lithuanian Borderland¹

ABSTRACT: Finds of Roman gold coins of the 5th–6th centuries AD are virtually unknown from the areas occupied by the Baltic tribes during the Migration Period. Recently, information has been obtained about a solidus of Valentinian III, minted in AD 440–455 in Rome, found within the range of the East Lithuanian Barrow culture, in the vicinity of the present-day village of Roŭnaje Pole (Ašmiany Raion, Hrodna Voblast’ in the Republic of Belarus). The coin probably arrived in the right-bank part of the Neman River basin from one of the areas with a large number of finds of 5th-century solidi, i.e. from the southern coast of the Baltic Sea or from the Carpathian Basin.

KEY WORDS: Roman solidi, East Lithuanian Barrow culture, Migration Period

ABSTRAKT: *Solid Walentyniana III znaleziony w pobliżu wsi Roŭnaje Pole na Białorusi – niezwykłe znalezisko z białorusko-litewskiego pogranicza*

Znaleziska rzymskich złotych monet z okresu V–VI w. n.e. są praktycznie nieznanne na terenach zajmowanych przez plemiona bałtyckie w okresie wędrówek ludów. Niedawno uzyskano informację o solidzie Walentyniana III, wybitym w latach 440–455 w Rzymie, znalezionym w obrębie osadnictwa kultury kurhanów wschodniolitewskich, w okolicach dzisiejszej wsi Roŭnaje Pole (rejon oszmiański, obwód grodzieński na terytorium Republiki Białorusi). Moneta dotarła

¹ This text is based on a paper presented by the author at the international online conference “First Anokhin Readings” on 12 November 2021.

prawdopodobnie do prawobrzeżnej części dorzecza Niemna z jednego z obszarów występowania licznych znalezisk solidów z V wieku, tj. z południowego wybrzeża Bałtyku lub z Kotliny Karpackiej.

SŁOWAKLUCZOWE: rzymskie solidy, kultura kurhanów wschodnioliteńskich, okres wędrówek ludów

Finds of Roman gold coins are extremely rare in modern Belarus. Until recently, only five sites with 16 coins were known, half of which (8 coins) were aurei and the other solidi. The latest of these coins was a solidus of Valens (364–378) found near the village of Viata.² Recently, I have learned about a find unique to Belarus, namely a solidus of Valentinian III, found by a treasure hunter in the Ašmiany district of the Hrodna Oblast (Ašmiany Raion, Hrodna Voblast’). Its uniqueness lies not only in the general rarity of discoveries of ancient gold coins in the northeast of Barbaricum, but also in the fact that finds of fifth-century coins have not previously been reported from Belarus at all.

The finds chronologically closest to the solidus from the Ašmiany district are, on one hand, several gold and copper coins from the second half of the 4th century (the latest one being a copper coin of Theodosius I, minted in 383–388, found in Hrodna)³ and, on the other hand, Byzantine coins from the 6th–7th centuries⁴ (the earliest of these is a follis of Justinian I minted in AD 539–540 from the village of Lyadec, Stolin district, Brest Oblast (Lyadec, Stolin Raion, Brest Voblast’).

The solidus from the Ašmiany area is quite well preserved. Unfortunately, I have not been able to determine the weight and diameter of the coin. However, based on the available photographs, it can be assumed that its diameter is about 21 mm:

Obv.: D N PLA VALENTI-NIANVS P F AVG, bust of Valentinian III, rosette-diademed, draped, cuirassed, right

Rev.: VICTORI-A AVGGG: Valentinian III, draped, cuirassed, standing front, holding long cross in right hand and Victory on globe in left hand; placing right foot on head of human-headed open-coiled serpent; Victory’s skirt “in parentheses” Rome, AD 440–455, RIC X Valentinian III 2014

The information about the discovery of the solidus of Valentinian III has come to me from several sources, which allows me to consider that it is relatively reliable. The first reports about the coin surfaced on one of the treasure hunters’ forums,

² SIDAROVICH 2019.

³ JODKOWSKI 1933: 126–127; SIDAROVICH 2008: 11.

⁴ SIDAROVICH et AL 2017: 30.

and then more detailed information reached me from archaeologists conducting research in north-western Belarus – Jaūhen Ūlasaviec and Pavel Kienka, to whom I offer my sincere thanks.

They managed to obtain photos and approximate data on the time and place of the discovery (the exact location could not be determined) from the finder, a local resident involved in metal detecting. According to the information received, the solidus was found near the village of Roŭnaje Polie in the Ašmiany district between autumn 2019 and spring 2020. One ‘expert’ writing on the treasure hunters’ forum described the coin as a solidus of Priscus Attalus and valued it at 40,000 euros (!). Obviously, such an assessment whetted the appetite of the finder, who resolved to sell the coin for a five-digit price. As a result, no one was ready to buy it for such money. From the information I have, the coin was still with the finder until recently. Unfortunately, the owner refused to even talk about donating the coin to a museum collection, and the current state of affairs regarding the protection of the historical and cultural heritage of the Republic of Belarus does not offer any hope that the Belarusian services will help acquire this unique find for its state collections.

As already mentioned, the find of a solidus of Valentinian III is unique in the territory of Belarus. In most other regions of Barbaricum, gold coins from the 5th century AD are also relatively rare finds, although they are not unusual.⁵ A particularly large number of such coins have been recorded in areas close to the Roman limes (especially in the Carpathian Basin), where the inflow of gold coins increased significantly in the first half of the 5th century AD.⁶

Regarding territories more distant from the limes, yet closer to where the coin in question was found, materials from Ukraine and Poland should first be recalled. Single finds of 5th century AD solidi in Ukraine (from the Ivano-Frankivsk, Kyiv, Poltava and Kharkiv regions) are listed in V. Kropotkin’s inventory.⁷ The most significant find included there is a hoard of solidi from the village of Rublovka in the Poltava region, containing over 200 coins minted between the reigns of Valentinian II and Valentinian III (with an overwhelming majority of those issued under Theodosius II).⁸ M. Kazanski and I. Gavritukhin link this find, along with isolated discoveries of fifth-century solidi on the left bank of the Dnieper, to the post-Cherniakhiv Germanic population living in that area.⁹

⁵ FISCHER 2021: Map 1; BURSCHE and ZAPOLSKA 2021: Map 2.

⁶ See e.g.: IVANIŠEVIĆ 2021: Fig. 3, pp. 523–527; KOLNÍKOVÁ and PIETA 2009; MILITKÝ 2015: 56–61, Tab. 3; PROHÁSZKA 2009; SOMOGYI 2021.

⁷ KROPOTKIN 1961: nos. 472, 810, 871, 872, 1079 = KROPOTKIN 2005: nos. 472, 810, 871, 872, 1079.

⁸ KROPOTKIN 1961: no. 813; MYZGIN 2019: 11–12.

⁹ KAZANSKII 1997: 24–26; GAVRITUKHIN 2005: 237.

Despite the huge increase in Roman coin finds that has occurred as a result of the widespread use of metal detectors, gold coins from the 5th century AD are still recorded very rarely in Ukraine. For example, the *Roman Gold Coins from Barbaricum* database contains no such coins.¹⁰ Nevertheless, K. Myzgin argues that gold issues from the 5th century AD sometimes occur among the finds of Ukrainian treasure hunters.¹¹ According to the chronology of the inflow of gold coins into south-eastern Barbaricum proposed by this researcher in 2017, coins minted from the reign of Theodosius I to that of Zeno (379–491) represent a negligible part of the total number of gold coins recorded in this region. They arrived here as a result of trade relations at the last (seventh) stage, which corresponds to the end of the Chernyakhiv culture and the beginning of the Hunnic period.¹² Slightly earlier, addressing the inflow of Roman coins into the area of the Chernyakhiv culture, Myzgin identified a group of coins from the last quarter of the 4th–5th centuries AD (from Arcadius to Zeno) and noted their small proportion in the total number of coin finds.¹³

Much more often than in Ukraine, finds of 5th century AD gold coins have been recorded in Poland, mostly its northern part. In south-eastern Poland these coins are not numerous¹⁴ – most of them are isolated finds, and only occasionally do they occur in hoards, one example being the deposit from Witów in Lesser Poland, which contained solidi of Theodosius II and Valentinian III.¹⁵ In the south of Poland, finds of gold coins from the 5th century AD, the most recent of which are a solidus of Marcianus from Sławęcín and an imitation of a solidus of Theodosius II from Tarnów,¹⁶ come primarily from the upper Vistula basin in the Carpathians, i.e. from an area occupied in the Late Roman period by the Przeworsk culture. These finds are most likely part of a larger concentration of Theodosius II and Valentinian III solidi, recorded in central Bohemia, Moravia, and the adjacent areas of the Carpathians.¹⁷ This concentration is associated with the Hunnic supremacy in the region, namely with the Huns receiving huge quantities of gold from the Romans as war booty, contributions, etc.¹⁸

In most of Poland, gold coins of the 5th–6th centuries AD are extremely rare (as in central Poland and Silesia), or they are not found at all (as in Podlasie in the

¹⁰ <http://rgcb.lach.edu.pl>

¹¹ I would like to thank Dr K. Myzgin for his help in preparing this paper.

¹² MYZGIN 2017: 38–39.

¹³ IDEM 2013: 229–230.

¹⁴ PIOTROWSKI and DĄBROWSKI 2009; BODZEK and POHORSKA-KLEJA 2011; BODZEK, FEDYK and KOTOWICZ 2019.

¹⁵ BODZEK 2009: 164; BODZEK and POHORSKA-KLEJA 2011: 157.

¹⁶ BODZEK 2009: 166; IDEM 2016.

¹⁷ KOLNÍKOVÁ and PIETA 2009: 122, Tab. 6–7; PROHÁSZKA 2009: 87–90, Abb. 3–4, 10.

¹⁸ BODZEK 2009: 176.

east). However, a considerable number of such coins (including issues of 408–457), both single finds and in hoards, have been found in northern Poland, especially in the areas adjacent to the Bay of Gdańsk.¹⁹ In the Late Roman period this region was occupied by the Goths (in the broad sense of this ethnonym) and the fifth-century coins found in the lower Vistula basin are most likely associated with them,²⁰ or more precisely, with the period of the decline of the Wielbark culture in Pomerania and the emergence of new ethnocultural entities there.

The beginning of the mass inflow of solidi to Pomerania dates to the late AD 450s and is marked by two hoards from Trąbki Małe in Warmia, where the latest coins are solidi of Valentinian III, minted in AD 430–440s.²¹ These hoards, as well as numerous single finds of solidi from the first half to mid-5th century AD, were found in the eastern part of Pomerania (between the Nogat and Pasłęka rivers), where coins minted after AD 455 are virtually absent (except for finds from the vicinity of Elbląg).²² The absence of later gold issues, which are typical for a greater part of Polish Pomerania, is attributed to the migration of the West Baltic population to the territories between the Pasłęka and Vistula rivers, where the Wielbark sites gradually ceased to exist.²³ According to some researchers, the inflow of solidi to this area dates to the mid-5th century AD, i.e. late phase D – early phase E.²⁴ Thus, by the time when hoards containing later coins of Theodosius II and Valentinian III were deposited, the Wielbark culture settlement had already ceased to develop there. In the first half of the 5th century AD, groups of West Baltic population moved to this area, as possibly also did small groups of a Germanic population (not autochthonous), who coexisted with the earlier Baltic settlers. This is evidenced by finds such as the solidus from Nałaby.²⁵ Actually, the finds of gold solidi seem to mark the border between the East Germanic and the West Baltic populations, as these coins are not characteristic of the latter.²⁶ To the west of this border area, numerous hoards and single finds of solidi have been recorded, and the youngest coins in the hoards are usually issues from the second half of the 5th century and the early 6th century AD.²⁷

Some time ago, K. Godłowski suggested that the inflow of gold coins to Pomerania was a result of direct contacts between the northern tribes and members of the Hunnic elite. In this view, the “state” established by Attila was the main

¹⁹ CIOŁEK 2009: 219–223; BODZEK 2009: Fig. 3; BURSCHE and ZAPOLSKA 2021: 351, Map 1.

²⁰ BURSCHE and ZAPOLSKA 2017: 114–115.

²¹ CIOŁEK 2003: 172; EADEM 2009: 223; DAHMEN 2015; IDEM 2017; ZAPOLSKA 2020: 551.

²² CIOŁEK 2003: 171; ZAPOLSKA 2020: 551.

²³ CIOŁEK 2003: 171; CIEŚLIŃSKI 2010: 160.

²⁴ GODŁOWSKI 1981: 100; CIOŁEK 2003; CIEŚLIŃSKI 2010: 167; ZAPOLSKA 2014: 105.

²⁵ CIEŚLIŃSKI 2010: 168.

²⁶ ZAPOLSKA 2014: 105; BURSCHE and ZAPOLSKA 2017: 114.

²⁷ CIOŁEK 2003: 168–171; BURSCHE 2003; ZAPOLSKA 2020; TYBULEWICZ 2011.

distributor of gold at that time. The military and political situation in the Danube basin attracted both individuals and groups to the south, which may have resulted in an inflow of solidi to the territory of Pomerania.²⁸

It is now more widely held that this phenomenon may be connected with the Ostrogoths and Gepids (?), who accumulated a considerable quantity of Roman gold coins, which they obtained both as “allies” (or subjects) of the Huns (for example after the large gold payments to the Huns in the AD 430–440s, and during the successful campaigns of Attila), and during the “War of Hunnic Succession”, after the battle of Nedao in AD 454. In any case, such an abundant flow of Roman coin gold to the southern Baltic coast was more the result of internal relations among Barbarians (intra-Germanic?) than between Rome and Germanic tribes. We can even say that these contacts were of a narrower nature: they took place in the “Gothic-Gepidic world” (among the cultures of the Gothic circle). The inflow of 5th- and early 6th-century solidi to northern Poland was probably closely connected with the events taking place in the south, in the Ostrogothic (and Gepidic?) milieu.²⁹ In any case, both these tribes had close kinship ties with the “Gothic” population of the lower Vistula basin. Were the solidi from Pomerania a result of trade and other contacts of local communities with their relatives in the Danube region and Northern Italy, or can we speak about significant groups of “repatriates” from the southern regions of Europe, including veterans of numerous wars?³⁰ Most likely, both these explanations of the arrival of coins are correct, although it is worth noting that the second one gained increasingly in importance after the fall of the Hunnic “empire”.

It seems quite likely that it was precisely from Polish Pomerania that gold coins were further distributed to other Baltic regions. The main areas of distribution of Late Roman and Early Byzantine solidi were primarily the islands of Öland, Gotland, and Bornholm, and they in turn served as “staging posts” on the coins’ route to the more western parts of Sweden and Denmark. Among Danish finds of solidi from the 5th – early 6th centuries AD, solidi from Bornholm clearly predominate, and this island is the region most saturated with Roman coins in the whole of Denmark.³¹ Solidi of Valentinian III are also known there, for example in the hoard of *Sorte Muld*.³² Interestingly, the proportion of coins from the first half of the 5th century AD

²⁸ GODŁOWSKI 1981: 100–102.

²⁹ BURSCHE and ZAPOLSKA 2017: 115; CIOLEK 2003: 176–177; ZAPOLSKA 2014: 103.

³⁰ FISCHER 2017.

³¹ HORSNÆS 2009: 232, 238.

³² EADEM 2002: 134–137.

is much higher on Bornholm than in western Denmark (Denmark proper), and the coins were less frequently made into pendants.³³

A similar pattern was recorded in Sweden: the proportion of solidi from the first half of the 5th century AD is much higher on Åland than in the rest of Sweden. For example, the *Stora Brunneby* hoard contains solidi from AD 394–451 (including those of Valentinian III), which makes it similar to the Trąbki Małe hoard.³⁴ Until about the last quarter of the 5th century AD, Åland was the main distributor of coins to other regions in the western Baltic basin, but later this role was taken over by Bornholm, Gotland, and Helgö.³⁵ Coins from Bornholm may have reached not only mainland Denmark but also more distant regions, for example northern Germany (where the nature of the finds is similar to that in western Denmark³⁶), and possibly even further, to the former north-western borderlands of the Roman Empire and adjacent regions.³⁷

For this study it is very important to note that gold coins from Polish Pomerania were not only distributed towards Denmark and Sweden but also, albeit in incomparably smaller numbers, to the eastern Baltic regions. Ten solidi minted between the reigns of Theodosius (408–450) and Phocas (602–610)³⁸ are known from Finland, and two gold coins have been found in Estonia: one of Theodosius II (on the small island Vilsandi, west of Saaremaa) and the other of Valentinian III (near Paju, on the southern coast of Saaremaa).³⁹ It is worth noting that the Estonian finds come from islands rather than the mainland, which makes them closer to the solidi from the Western Baltic islands.

On the other hand, no gold coins of the 5th century AD have been found in areas otherwise saturated with Roman coins, such as on the southeast coast of the Baltic Sea in Latvia, western Lithuania, and Kaliningrad Oblast (i.e. the areas inhabited by the Balts during the Migration period). The absence of late Roman solidi is, in principle, typical for all Baltic regions.⁴⁰ Their rare finds on the western fringes of the “Baltic world” (in Warmia) testify, as mentioned above, to the presence of some groups of a Germanic population there.

That is why the discovery of a solidus of Valentinian III deep into Baltic territory seems very unusual and interesting. The village of RoŹnaje Pole lies on a small

³³ EADEM 2009: 238.

³⁴ FISCHER, LÓPEZ SÁNCHEZ and VICTOR 2011.

³⁵ FISCHER and LÓPEZ SÁNCHEZ 2016: 169; ZAPOLSKA 2020: 554.

³⁶ HORSNÆS 2009: 239.

³⁷ ROYMANS and HEEREN 2017; WHITE et AL 1999.

³⁸ TALVIO 1982: 50–52.

³⁹ KROPOTKIN 1961: nos. 1507, 1514.

⁴⁰ ZAPOLSKA 2014: 105.

river called Zagorniki. The Zagorniki flows into the Ašmianka, which in its turn flows into the Vilija River, a right tributary of the Neman. Roūnaje Pole is also not far from the source of the Merkys River, another right tributary of the Neman. In the 5th century this area was within the range of the East Lithuanian Barrow culture, a cultural unit formed under strong West Baltic influence (including the probable migration of significant groups of the Sudovians and other cultures).⁴¹ A remarkable feature of the East Lithuanian Barrow culture is the “sudden” emergence in the 5th century AD of very rich burials, like the “princely graves” from Taurapolis and other places, which testify to a clearly distinguishable social elite.⁴² The furnishings of these burials contain a huge number of objects originating from the Middle Danube basin, along with such having direct analogies in Scandinavia.⁴³

It is very tempting to think that processes similar to those recorded in Polish Pomerania, i.e. the return of some groups (primarily warriors) from the Danube region, took place in the 5th century AD in eastern Lithuania as well. However, Audronė Bliujiene and Florin Curta argue against this idea, emphasising insufficient archaeological evidence.⁴⁴ They note a very short chronological span of Danubian imports into the area of the East Lithuanian Barrow culture, which covered merely a few decades in the second half of the 5th century AD, and believe that these objects could have reached the Balts as gifts from the Gepids, Rugii, or Heruli, who sought allies in northern Europe.⁴⁵ Bliujiene and Curta’s position is indirectly supported by the almost complete absence of coins from the 5th–6th centuries AD in the East Lithuanian Barrow culture, while such coins are very numerous on the southern coast of the Baltic Sea (where the arrival of the repatriates is confirmed). The arrival of any significant group of migrants from the Carpathian region in eastern Lithuania would lead to the diffusion of the coins, something we do not see in the Neman basin. At the same time, the interpretation of the solidus of Valentinian III from the Ašmiany district of the Hrodna Oblast as part of the “Germanic gifts” discussed above must remain a very cautious hypothesis, as I do not know any gold coins of that time found on the sites of the East Lithuanian Barrow culture. If such gifts did take place, they clearly did not include Roman gold in the form of coins.

Thus, two versions can be put forward regarding the appearance of the solidus of Valentinian III in the basin of the Vilija River, quite far from the lands occupied by the Germanic cultures. The first one suggests that the coin came from Warmia, a region of active Baltic-Germanic contacts. This version is supported by the relative

⁴¹ MEDVEDEV 2010: 60–61.

⁴² BLIUJIENĖ and STEPONAITIS 2008; BLIUJIENĖ 2016.

⁴³ BLIUJIENĖ and CURTA 2011: 36–42.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*: 43–45.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*: 56–57.

geographical proximity of Warmia and the Neman River basin, and also by the Western Baltic influences which are clearly evident in the East Lithuanian Barrow culture. However, the practically complete absence of finds of the solidi from the 5th–6th centuries within the range of the Western Baltic cultures makes this version hardly reliable. The second possibility is that the solidus of Valentinian III came to the Vilija River basin directly from the Carpathian basin (as a gift from Germanic tribes living there). Yet this assumption is not supported by similar finds in the area of the East Lithuanian Barrow culture, nor in the lands between that area and the Carpathians. Geographically closest in this direction are the finds from south-eastern Poland, primarily the solidi of Arcadius and Theodosius II from the vicinity of Metelin in the upper reaches of the Bug River,⁴⁶ but this is quite far from the Neman basin.

In any case, this unusual find from the Belarusian-Lithuanian borderland is very important because, to some extent, it challenges the opinion that the solidi of the 5th century AD did not reach the Balts. At the same time, it can be argued that the arrival of gold coins was rather accidental and they must have been seen by the Balts as extremely rare and exotic artefacts.

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⁴⁶ BODZEK 2009: Cat. 16.

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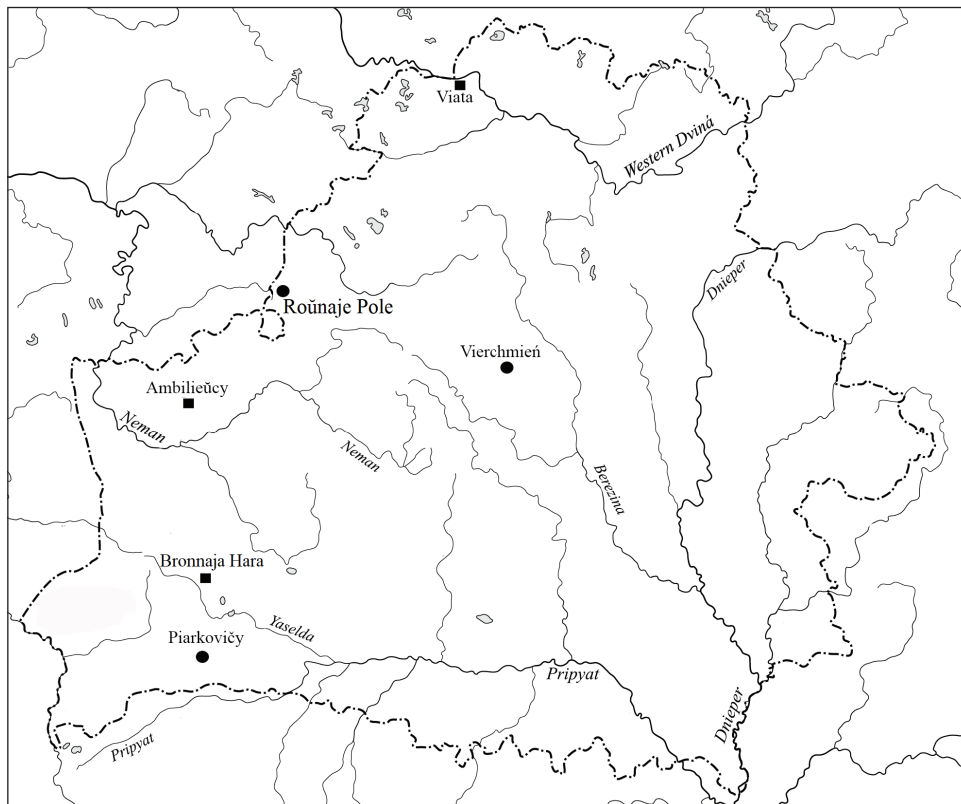
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Map. 1. Finds of Roman gold coins in the territory of Belarus, by Vital' Sidarovich



Fig. 1. Solidus of Valentinian III found near Roūnaje Pole. Vital' Sidarovich archive

