Roman Gold and the Development of the Early Germanic Kingdoms

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Roman Gold Medallions as Power Symbols of the Germanic Élite

By *Aleksander Bursche*

Roman gold *multipla* were appreciated as masterpieces of antique art already in the Renaissance. They adorned magnificent collections (*cimelarchia, numophylacia, thesauri*) of European monarchs and cardinals, although they were not interested in their origin (Bursche 1998, pp. 21–8). Rising interest in the provenance and context of medallion finds, especially those originating from outside the Roman Empire, is linked with the discovery late in the eigthteenth century of a hoard at Szilágy Somlyó (at present Şimleu-Silvaniei, Fig. 1, find no. 22) in western Transylvania. Information on this find was first published a year after its discovery by J. H. Eckhel (Eckhel vol. I, 1792: LXVIII; vol. VIII, 1798, p. 352). He mentioned several other discoveries of medallions, for instance, the hoard from Velp in the Netherlands (find no. 29; Eckhel vol. VIII, 1798, p. 82, 172, 176) and the *multiplum* fished out of the River Danube at the Iron Gate (find no. 18; Eckhel vol. VIII, 1798, p. 154). From that time Roman gold medallions discovered on barbarian territory have continued to fascinate and puzzle antiquarians and scholars—in what circumstances had these *multipla* found their way beyond the *limes*, who were their owners and what was the significance for their bearers (Bursche 1988, pp. 28 – 46)?

Interest was fuelled further by successive finds of medallions in areas far removed from imperial borders as well as by the rediscovery of forgotten references to finds of magnificent deposits in earlier publications or archives—for instance Velp, near Arnhem in the Netherlands (find no. 29; Von Steinbüchel 1826, pp. 7–8; Chabouillet 1883; Pleyte 1889, pp. 32–7; van Kerkwijk 1910; cf. Bursche 1998 pp. 61–5) or Laskiv in Volhynia (find no. 10; De-Vitte 1900, pp. 86–101; Tikhanova 1960; Braichevs'kii 1953, pp. 47–8; cf. Bursche 1988, pp. 66–9). It was possible to reconstruct the latter with the help of seventeenth century Polish court records preserved in Kiev. The Laskiv hoard includes six medallions, two gold brooches set with precious stones, a silver vessel etc. It was almost as remarkable in composition and character as the celebrated Szilágy Somlyó deposit. However, it is largely unknown in West European literature—probably because it was published only in Russian and Ukrainian.

Museum storage rooms, archives and old prints hold much more informa-

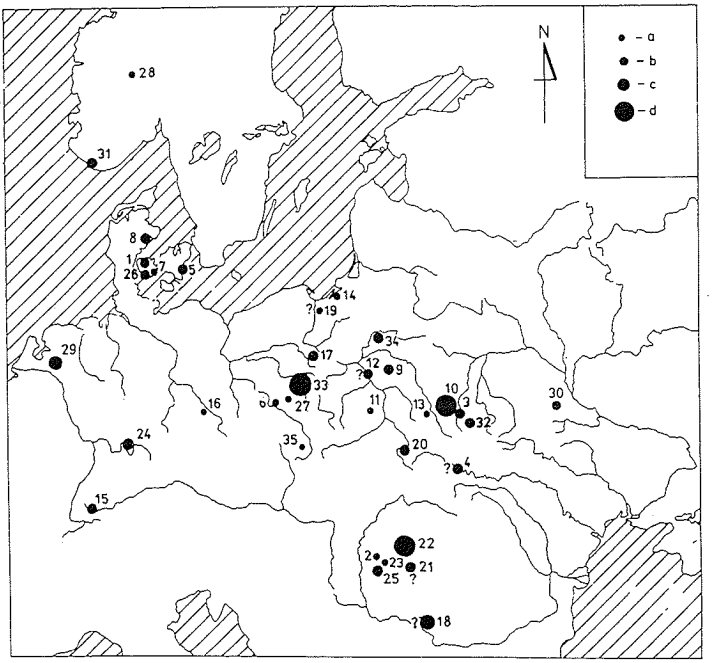

Fig. 1. Finds of Roman gold medallions in Barbaricum indicating their weight: (*a*) up to 15 g; (*b*) up to 50 g; (*c*) up to 200 g; (*d*) above 200 g. — List of finds: 1. Allesø, Odense amt, 2. Arad vicinity, 3. Borochiche (Boroczyce), obl. Volin, 4. Khotin, obl. Chernivec vicinity, 5. Fakse (Faxe), Præstø amt, 6. Godzięcin (Thiergarthen), woj. dolnośląskie, 7. Gudme, Fyns amt, 8. Hjortshøj, Randers amt, 9. Kurów, woj. lubelskie, 10. Laskiv (Łasków), obl. Volin, 11. Małopolska (north of Cracow), 12. Mazowsze (Mazovia, south of Warsaw), 13. Metelin, woj. lubelskie, 14. Młoteczno (Hammersdorf), woj. warmińsko-mazurskie, 15. Münchhöf, Landkr. Sockach, 16. Ockritz, Kr. Oschatz, 17. Opoczki, woj. kujawsko-pomorskie, 18. Porţile de Fier (Eisene Tor = Iron Gate), 19. Prussia (Provinz Preußen), 20. Przemyśl, 21. Transylvania (Siebenbürgen), 22. Şimleu-Silvaniei (Szilágy Somlyó), jud. Sălaj, 23. Starčova, jud. Timişoara, 24. Thüngersheim, Landkr. Würzburg, 25. Timişoara (Temesvar) vicinity, 26. Trunderup, Svenborg amt, 27. Trzebicko (Strebitzko), woj. dolnośląskie, 28. Veien, Ringerike kom., 29. Velp, Gelderland, 30. Verkhivnia, obl. Zhitomir, 31. Vestre Hauge, Farsund kom., 32. Volin (Volhynia), 33. Zagórzyn, woj. wielkopolskie, 34. Zbójna, woj. podlaskie, 35. Żabczyce (Sabschütz), woj. opolskie.

tion on medallion finds unused to this day. As a result of several years efforts I was able almost to double the number of discoveries noted in the past (Fig. 1). Occasionally my job was virtually that of a detective. This is because frequently all traces concerning the provenance of these exceptional finds were deliberately concealed, for commercial reasons. This is best illustrated by the fate of the finds (including six medallions and two gold bracteats) from

the Zagórzyn hoard (near Kalisz, central Poland, find no. 33). Discovered late in 1926, they ultimately found their way into at least five museums outside Poland. (Alföldi 1933 pp. 11–7; Petersen 1930, 1933; Bursche 1995, pp. 25–6; 1996, p. 43; 1998, pp. 51 – 61. A monograph on this hoard is in preparation.) When I succeeded in unearthing some piece of gripping information from stacks of old, dust-covered archival records or museum stores, I occasionally felt like Sherlock Holmes, a Scotland Yard agent and the Soviet Intelligence in one. Here are three examples of my findings:

1. An early 19th century handwritten catalogue of antique coins of the Volhynia Lycee *Catalogus Numorum Veterum Lycei Volhyn.*, vol. II, *Numi imperatorum occid. et orient.*, MS in Kiev (after Korshenko 1948 p. 317), on page 592 refers to a unique Licinius I *multiplum* (Fig. 2) minted in A.D. 317 in Nicomedia, noting as follows:

Nummus repertus in agro pagi ... ad domum Tyrocinil [sic!] Soc. Jesu Cracoviensis Spectantis anno 1757. Rector cui hic nummus redditus fuit, ut integrum posteritati servaret, imagini Dei parae in sacello eiusdem domus privato affixit. Sublata Societate inter alia cimelia advectus Varsaviam ad Nummophilacium Regium transiit.

(English translation: Coin found in the year 1757 in a field of the village ... belonging to the Seminary of Jesuits in Cracow. The rector to whom this coin was handed over, in order to keep it safe for posterity, attached it to the image of the Mother of God in the private chapel of the same seminary. When the Society was closed down among other heirlooms it [the coin] was brought to Warsaw and passed to the Royal Coin Collection.)

The medallion was discovered in one of the villages north of Kraków (find no. 11), the property of the Jesuit novitiate of the same city. The rector suspended the *multiplum* as a votive offering next to the image of the Holy Mary (*Deipara*). After the Jesuit order was dissolved the medallion found its way into the largest Polish coin collection belonging to King Stanisław August. After his death the *multiplum* shared the troubled fortune of the entire collection. Finally it turned up in Kiev where it is found to this day (Korshenko 1948; Bursche 1998, pp. 85–91; 1999).

2. On the reverse of a plaster cast of the Constantius II medallion minted in Antioch preserved in Berlin (Fig. 3), I found the following note in three lines: *AV Leo Hgb / 1927 / aus pol. Fund.* This means that the piece had been presented for sale to Münzkabinett in 1927 by the numismatic dealer Leo Hamburger and originated from a Polish find—without doubt, the splendid Zagórzyn hoard (find no. 33) discovered late in 1926. Unfortunately, I was unable to establish the present location of the original of this piece.

3. In another manuscript—*Ausführlicheres Verzeichnis meiner Goldmünzen*, (Winter 1875 in Verveg), written by the famous German collector A. von Rauch, at present in Coin Cabinet in Berlin (without signature)—I found a statement next to the description of a Gallienus *binio* minted in A.D. 263

Fig. 2. Quaternio of Licinius I (find no 11), National Museum of Ukrainian History, Kiev (after Korshenko 1948, pp. 317).

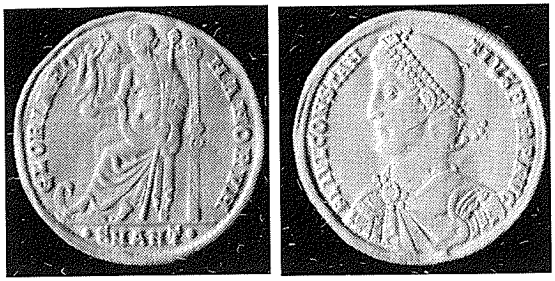

Fig. 3. Plaster cast of 4½-solidi of Constantius II, Münzkabinett Berlin © (original piece—find no. 33, lost).

Fig. 4. Binio of Gallienus (find no. 34), Münzkabinett Berlin ©.

(Fig. 4) that it had been "gefunden bei Kowno in Pohlen" and purchased by Rauch in 1868 for 18 thaler at Meier's antique shop in Berlin (cf. MS: [von] Rauch, [A.]: Ankäufe römischer Münzen & Kurzes Verzeichn. der röm. Goldmünzen, Signature No. A 7439). Critical analysis of this reference indicates that the *multiplum* originates from a large hoard discovered in 1839 in Zbójna near Kolno (eastern Poland—find no. 34) which contained denarii and other medallions (Bursche 1996c, pp. 91–94, 1998, pp. 72–3).

Using similar methods I was able to establish the provenance of numerous medallions currently found in state and private collections. *Nota bene*, many of them originate from finds made within the territory of the Roman Empire. Custodians of the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore probably are not aware of the fact that a famous fragment of a girdle containing a Constantius II medallion stored in their collection (No. 57.527—Toynbee 1986, p. 119, Pl. XXI; Pirzio Biroli Stefanelli 1992, p. 220, Fig. 283; Bruhn 1993, pp. 43–4) most likely originates from the grave of Empress Verine, spouse of Leo I and sister of Basiliscus, who died in a.d. 484 (Gadant 1910, p. 358; cf. Bursche 1998, pp. 171–2). Three pendants set with precious stones (*pendilia*) attached to the frame of the *multiplum*, and traces of the catch-plate on its reverse indicate

that originally it was used as an imperial brooch (*Kaiserfibel*), which additionally increases the great significance of this discovery (this piece has been missed by Schmauder 1998).

Several years of research helped me to establish the provenance of 100 medallions as being from barbarian finds. Speaking of medallions found in Barbaricum, I have in mind gold *multipla*. To date no silver or bronze *multipla* have been found in practice in Barbaricum (apart from Greek imperials—cf. Bursche 1983). The term Barbaricum is used here in the same sense as it was used by late ancient authors, namely, to designate areas lying north of the Danube and east of the Rhine (Sarnowski 1991, pp. 137–44). In contemporary Western European literature this territory is frequently referred to as *Freie Germanien*, Free Germany or *Germania libera*. However, the latter term is a modern-day neologism—the ancients were not familiar with it (R. Alföldi 1997, pp. 45–52; Neumaier 1997, pp. 53–67).

Beyond the *limes* gold *multipla* are registered only within the territory of Barbaricum. It is also interesting that in this area their range is practically limited to regions settled by East Germanic societies (Fig. 1). Not a single gold medallion is known from Baltic territory. They are also unlikely to have reached areas inhabited by Sarmatians. Very few have been discovered in territories settled by West Germanic tribes. They are concentrated in a zone between eastern Banat and western Transylvania, Volhynia and south-western Scandinavia—that is, in territory settled by Goths, Gepids, Vandals and northern Germans of Jutland and Fyn. In this territory, stretching from the lower Danube to south-western Scandinavia J. Werner distinguished a group of prestige or symbolic ornaments dated to phase C3, i.e., the fourth century A.D. He defined them as the so-called Dancheny-Brangstrup horizon (Werner 1988). They testify to far-reaching contacts maintained by members of the East Germanic power élite over a distance of more than 3,000 km.

Chronologically, medallions from Barbaricum fit between the early third century and A.D. 426 (Fig. 5). However, out of the total number of 100, no less than 85 *multipla* were issued under the imperial houses of Constantine and Valentinian, a further seven under Gallienus (Bursche 1998, pp. 107–28).

As regards their archaeological context, two specimens originate from graves discovered in Norway: Veien in Buskerud (find no. 28; Brøgger 1921, pp. 47, 53, Pl. I: 1; Bursche 1998, pp. 75–6) and Vestre Hauge, Lista in Vest-Agder (find no. 31; Aubert 1868; Grieg 1938 pp. 101–7, Figs. 82, 83); two others are probably bog deposits: Hjortshøj in Jutland (find no. 8; Breitenstein 1943; Bursche 1998 p. 76) and Młoteczno in East Pomorania (find no. 14; Ebert 1923; Bursche 1998, pp. 76–9). To date only a single specimen was recovered at a settlement in Gudme (Denmark), a central power and sacral place on the island of Fyn, in function between the fourth and the sixth centuries A.D. (Kromann 1990, pp. 81– 84, Pl. 31, 30). Most other *multipla* ori-

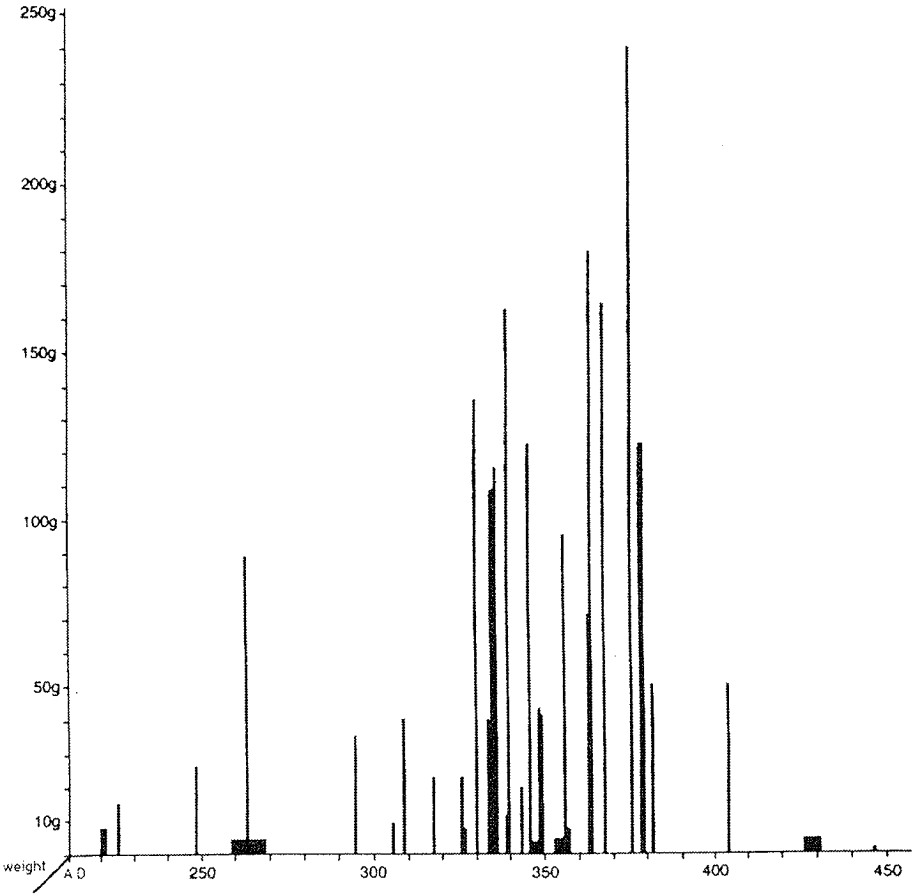

Fig. 5. Weight of medallions from Barbaricum according to their period of issue.

ginate from hoards. Some of these are large and rich deposits, accumulated over a long period e.g. Szilágy Somlyó, Velp, Zagórzyn, Laski or Borochiche (Boroczyce) (find no. 3; Tikhanova 1956; Bursche 1996*b*, pp. 38–40 Figs. 6, 7; 1998, pp. 69–72). Usually they contain coins (second century denarii or fourth–fifth century solidi), Roman silver or native gold vessels, gold or gilded brooches set with precious stones—native or Roman (*Kaiserfibeln, Zwiebelknopffibeln*), belt accessories (belt buckles etc.), native gold rings—bracelets (*Kolben* armrings, *Handgelenkring*), neckrings or fingerrings (Bursche 1998, pp. 185–189).

Unfortunately, there are no direct references in written sources to circumstances in which third–fifth century *multipla* were presented to barbarians.

Gregory of Tours (Hist. Franc. VI, 2) confirms only that in the sixth century (in A.D. 581) emperors still used gold medallions as gifts to Germanic rulers. We may imagine that such situations also occured earlier in the fourth century.

Medallions were probably presented as imperial gifts soon after minting, through *comes sacrarum largitionum*, usually as *donativa* or other imperial gifts, on the occasion of accession, imperial *vota*, victories, etc. It is not impossible that *comes sacrarum largitionum* insignia represented in the *Notitia Dignitatum* feature medallions along with coins, gold and silver vessels, belt-buckles and fibulae (Berger 1981). Occasionally, based on the legend and representation on the medallion, it is possible to establish the connection between the reason for their issue and circumstances in which they were presented to barbarian rulers (Bursche 1991; 1998, pp. 107–28).

Almost all medallions discovered beyond the *limes* are fitted with suspension loop, occasionally also an elaborately ornamented frame—both made in Germanic style. Out of several gold coins and medallions with frames and suspension loops registered within the Roman Empire not a single specimen is executed in a style resembling the ornamentation of *multipla* originating from Barbaricum. Conversely, not one suspension loop or frame seen on a *multiplum* discovered beyond the limes is executed in a style known from Imperial finds i.e. *opus interrasile* (Brenot & Metzger 1992; Bruhn 1993).

All barbarian suspension loops of gold coins and medallions are attached above the imperial portrait (Pl. III: 2–3); all frames are ornamented only on the obverse, that is, the side showing the image of the emperor. This suggests that the representation of the Roman ruler was very important to the goldsmith or, even more so, to his employer. Some loops were repaired or replaced after they broke off (Fig. 6, Pl. III: 4). Always the same point was chosen—above the head of the emperor. In all medallions the reverse shows more signs of wear than the obverse. Some medallions, with both sides heavily worn, feature traces of so-called *Nachgravierung* i.e. renewed engraving. Again, only the imperial portrait received this treatment (Fig. 7). This further proves the point that the emperor's image was of great importance to the user of the medallion and probably played a special symbolic role.

The key to interpretation is provided by the well-known barbarian imitation of Valens and Valentinianus I *multiplum* from the Zagórzyn hoard (find no. 33) in Greater Poland (Pl. III:1) now in the Coin Room in Berlin (No. 5/1928; Regling 1928; Alföldi 1933 pp. 12–17; Dressel 1973, pp. 400–402 no. 265, Pl. XXVIII: 1). On its obverse, besides a barbarized portrait of both emperors, we find an extremely interesting legend: REGIS ROMANORVM. As Andreas Alföldi has already noted, the expression "REX" was never used by the Romans as a title or cognomen for the emperor. The only feasible explanation is that the legend was engraved later by a barbarian goldsmith working

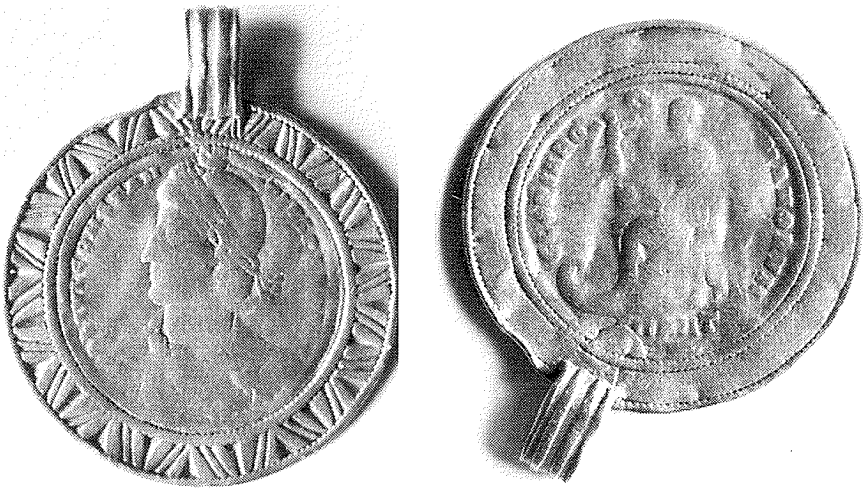

Fig. 6. 4½-solidi of Constantius II (find no. 22), Münzkabinett, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna ©.

Fig. 7. 4½-solidi of Gratianus (find no. 22), Münzkabinett, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna ©.

on commission. As such it may be seen as an *interpretatio Germanica* of the power of Roman emperors. This *interpretatio* is carried a step further in Scandinavian imitations of *multipla* and Nordic gold bracteates, where most images were transformed imitations of the imperial portrait, some of the legends are cognomens and titles of the emperor written in runes (Vierck

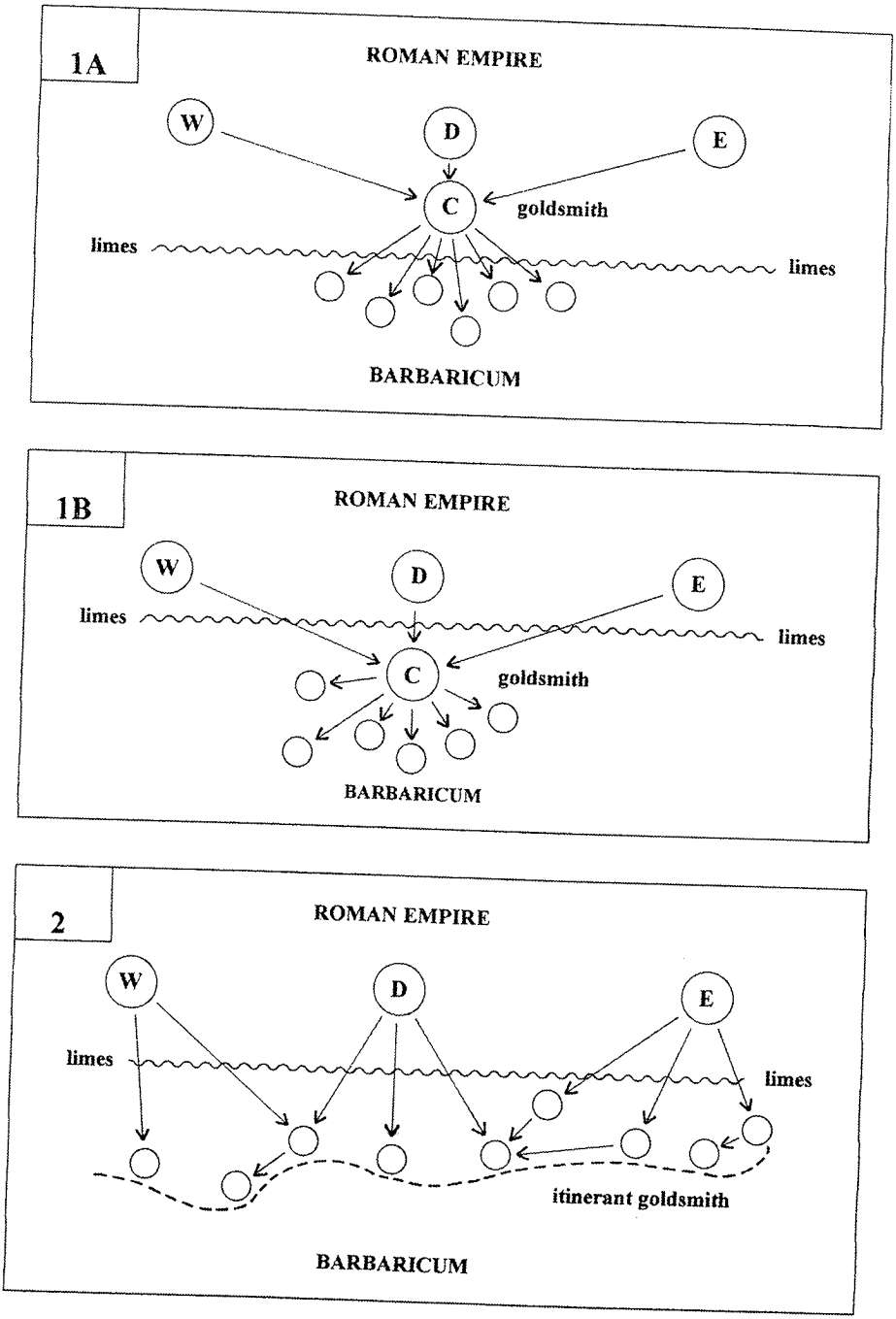

Fig. 8. Models of distribution or redistribution of Roman gold medallions inside Barbaricum. W: West Empire, E: East Empire, D: Danubian provinces.

Fig. 9. 9-solidi of Constantius II (find no. 14), lost. (Bildarchiv, Fundmünzen der Antike, Frankfurt/Main ©).

1981; Andrén 1991; Seebold 1992). The idea of Nordic gold bracteates was most probably born on the lower Danube; together with counterfeit gold coins and early imitations of medallions it spread along the so-called Dancheny-Brangstrup horizon to Scandinavia.

Here we come to a number of significant questions about the mechanism of such transmission of ideas. How did Roman gold coins and medallions spread across Barbaricum, who added the stylistically Germanic loops and mountings and where? Some of the loops and frames are so strikingly similar that they are almost certain to have been produced by the same goldsmith (Figs. 9, 10). Finds of identically ornamented medallions are distributed over the entire

Fig. 10. 9-solidi of Constantine I (find no. 32), State Hermitage, St. Petersburg (Bildarchiv, Fundmünzen der Antike, Frankfurt/Main ©).

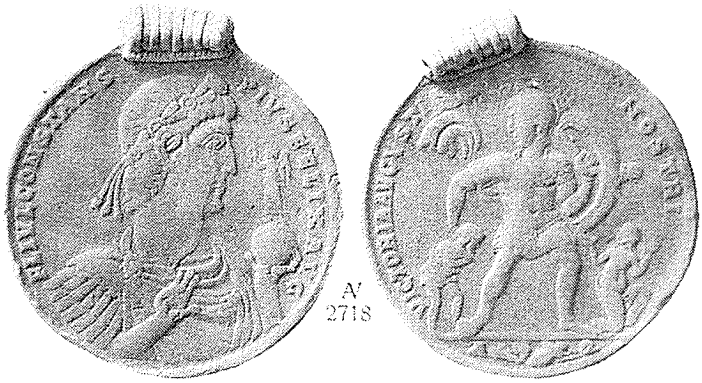

Fig. 11. 9-solidi of Constans (find no. 10), private collection? (after J. Schulman [sales catalogue, 5 III 1923], Amsterdam, Pl. LX, 2718).

Fig. 12. 9-solidi of Constans (find no. 17), Münzkabinett Berlin ©.

territory between the lower Danube and south-western Scandinavia. So, how did this happen? Two general models are possible, (1) central place and redistribution, and (2) "itinerant craftsmen" travelling from place to place, between Banat, Transylvania and Volhynia in the south-east and Fyn, Jutland and southern Norway in the north (Fig. 8).

According to the first model, the medallions were fitted with loops and mountings at a single centre and redistributed further afield to the Germanic élite. Two variants are possible in this model (Fig. 8: 1*a*, 1*b*): the centre of redistribution could have been either in the Roman Empire or in Barbaricum. In the case of the former it would have been found somewhere on the lower

Danube (e.g. Viminacium or Novae). Its craftsmen would have been proficient in barbarian techniques and styles, perhaps even Germanic goldsmiths working to Roman orders. A similar situation is known to have existed in the fourth century B.C. in the north Pontic region with the so-called Scythian toreutic. Gold, silver and electron vessels depicting realistic scenes from Scythian life discovered in the so-called royal burials originated from workshops located in the Greek towns of Olbia and Pantikapaion (Ilinskaia & Terenozhkin 1983; Rolle 1989; Busch 1993, pp. 96–124).

Alternatively, the centre of goldworking and redistribution was situated in barbarian territory (Fig. 8:1*b*). In this case medallions from the Empire would have been forwarded to this centre in lots. Once there they were reworked by native "court" craftsmen and subsequently redistributed to smaller power centres scattered over the vast region between the lower Danube, Volhynia and south-western Scandinavia. In the second model (Fig. 8: 2) of the "itinerant craftsman", medallions found their way beyond the *limes* and spread over Barbaricum in various ways; once there, they were fitted with loops and mountings by goldsmiths travelling from one place to the next.

To decide which of the suggested models is the most likely, we should look to the medallions themselves and other archaeological finds for help. Stylistic elements identical to ones found on medallion loops and frames have been noted on other ornaments definitely of barbarian origin—rings, pendants, brooches (Bursche 1998, pp. 143–59). Occasionally they are registered in hoards also containing *multipla*. Several fibulae and medallion frames from Szilágy Somlyó were almost certainly produced by the same craftsman (Alföldi 1933; Fettich 1932). Moreover, identical loops have been seen on Roman originals and barbarian imitations. This suggests that we should scrap the "Pontic" variant of model 1 under which a goldsmith would have been working for the Romans producing medallions ornamented in Germanic style. In a situation where Roman originals and barbarian imitations have identical loops, it is highly unlikely that the latter were distributed from the Empire. What is more, Pontic toreutic reflects classical Greek style without Scythian zoomorphic influences—the situation is quite opposite to Germanic ornamentation on Roman medallions.

Some of the *multipla* discovered in Barbaricum were struck with the same die. Interestingly enough, most of these pieces, minted within the Roman Empire with one die, in one *officina* and at the same time, tend to feature identical barbarous loops or mountings (Figs. 11, 12). Contrary to expectation, finds of such specimens quite often have a substantially scattered distribution. Consequently, we may discard the second model—that of the itinerant goldsmiths.

This leaves us with the other variant of the first model (Fig. 8: 1*b*). Sets of medallions were probably dispatched from the Empire to a single large power

centre in Barbaricum. There they were reworked by a court goldsmith according to the current fashion and taste of the élite. Subsequently the medallions were redistributed to smaller, regional centres of power over a distance of more than 2,000 km (from the lower Danube to south-western Scandinavia). There they entered a network system of local gift-exchange. The advantage of this model is that it sheds more light on a number of other similarities observed in prestige or symbolic ornaments of the Dancheny-Brangstrup horizon and explains the mechanism of their distribution.

This transfer of prestige goods suggests not only the existence of far-reaching contacts between members of the Germanic élite but also of an advanced social system, a hierarchy within the élite of a tribal federation. It brings to mind the so-called state of Hermanaric mentioned by Jordanes (*Getica*, 116–20), which existed around the mid-fourth century, and the extensive power of this Gothic king (Mikkola 1922; Brady 1943; Łowmiański 1963, pp. 396–401; Korkannen 1975; Strzelczyk 1984, pp. 67–81; Wolfram 1990, pp. 95–98; Heather 1989, pp. 110–115; 1996, pp. 53–7). The fourth century saw a substantial change in political relations between Romans and Barbarians. Cliental treaties were replaced by the *foedus*. The A.D. 332 *foedus* between Goths and Constantine I is among the most important and best-known examples (Stallknecht 1969, pp. 17–43; Chrysos 1973, pp. 52–64; Demougeot 1974; Brockmeier 1987; Demandt 1989, pp. 78, 269–70; Wolfram 1990, pp. 70–85; Burns 1994, pp. 1–42; Bursche 1996*a*, pp. 117–119, 129–132; Heather 1996, pp. 57–138; 1997). It lasted largely uninterrupted until A.D. 367. It should be recalled that almost 90 per cent of Roman gold *multipla* from central and northern Europe are late house of Constantine and Valentinian issues. This is exactly the period of the *foedus* with the Goths and the state of Hermanaric.

Roman *multipla* in Barbaricum played at least the role of political media as status symbols if not real insignia of power. The gold Roman medallion, a political medium chosen by emperors as a symbol of imperial power among barbarians, changed function within the Germanic élite starting to live a life of its own. The image of the Roman emperor must have been especially important as giving and sanctifying the power of the medallion owner (cf. Johansen 1994, on the function of imperial portraits on other categories of finds). Perhaps the offering by an emperor of his portrait was seen as a legitimization of the power of the recipient, confirming his acquisition of the charisma of power. It is possible to find these ideas in the first native representations of Germanic rulers (Figs. 13, 14).

The largest hoards of gold medallions containing other imported or indigenous attributes of power and prestige (such as *Kaiserfibeln*, silver or gold vessels, rings, bracelets, etc.), e.g. from Szilágy Somlyó in Transylvania, Zagórzyn in Greater Poland, Boroczyce or Laski in Volhynia, represent treasures

Fig. 13

Fig. 14

Fig. 13. 3-solidi of Theodoricus I adopted as disc-brooch found in Sinigallia, near Ancona, Museo Nazionale Romano, Rome ©.

Fig. 14. Signet-ring with the bust of Childericus from Tournai, copy at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (phot. Ashmolean Museum ©).

(*thesauri*) accumulated by three or more generations in a space of perhaps over a hundred years (e.g. Kiss 1991*a*, 1991*b*; Capelle 1994, pp. 96–98; Bursche 1998, pp. 185–189; Hardt 1998; Schmauder 1998). During this entire period Germanic rulers drew their charisma from the strongest and most powerful foreign leader-god, namely, the Roman emperor.

A parallel, if not nearly identical situation to that seen in the fourth and the early fifth century Europe in the territory under discussion may be noted in North America during the late seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As early as in the seventeenth century French, English and, later, American governments distributed specially minted medals to Indian chiefs. The obverse of the so-called colonial Indian Peace Medals usually bears the image of a French, English or American ruler (monarch or president). Their reverse frequently shows a peace symbol such as a handshake, a peace pipe or tomahawk, or peace-treaty scenes (Fig. 15).

Almost all these medals, according to numerous portraits from the National Museum of American Art at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, painted at the beginning of the nineteenth century by Charles Birds King, Karl Bodmer and, particularly, by Georg Catlin (Catlin 1841, 1844; Powell 1979, p. 909; Hassrick 1984, pp. 12–28; Native 1991, p. 230) were worn around the neck by Indian chiefs. Peace medals were part of the native gift exchange. Europeans very soon entered into this indigenous network of gift exchange. By 1602 an explorer in Massachusetts described Indians wearing European origin copper necklaces. In a later period Indian chiefs wore Indian Peace Medals minted by European rulers (Zay 1889; Stahl 1990, 1992; Stahl & Scully 1992).

Fig. 15. Indian peace medal of George III reengraved over Luis XV, Honos and Virtus type (after Stahl & Scully, 1992, pp. 217, 228 no. 4).

The earliest known documented instance of the presentation of medals and similar objects to Indians is a 1661 decree from Virginia, the purpose of which was to help identify friendly Indians within colonial settlements: "badges, silver plates and copper plates, with the names of towns graven upon them, be given to all adjacent kings within our protection" (Stahl 1992, p. 161). Sometime before 1670 a Canadian Iroquois was brought by Jesuits to the court of Louis XIV at Versailles, where he was baptized as the godson of the monarch and received a silver medal, which he always proudly wore after his return to Canada. In 1710, when the Governor of New York sought to convince the chief of the Five Iroquois Nations of the superiority of English rule

Fig. 16. Indian peace medal of Anne II minted for Marlborough's Victories (after Stahl & Scully, 1992, pp. 217, 228 no. 5).

over that of the French, he gave him medals for each tribe commemorating a recent victory of Queen Anne (Fig. 16), together with 20 silver coins pierced or mounted for wear. George I kept up the practice initiated by Queen Anne; in 1721 he had a gold coronation medal sent to the governor of Pennsylvania to be delivered to the great chief of the Five Nations. In 1753 the governor of New York, among his presents for the chief of the then Six Indian Nations, brought thirty silver medals with the image of George II on the obverse. One such medal is reported to have been found on the body of an Indian chief of New York.

The above facts lend weight to the model of a centre of power and redistribution of Roman medallions. Indian Peace Medals, a political medium chosen as the primary symbol of European culture and civilization, changed their function among Indian tribes in the New World. They became a symbol of power and prestige, personified on the obverse. As in the case of the fourth and fifth century Germans, for the North American Indians ideological source of power and power charisma was an external one. Power was derived from a stronger, little known and as such, "sacred" European ruler. This idea, a *sui generis* "interpretatio Indiana" travelled together with the redistributed European goods in the same way as Roman gold medallions spread among the Germanic élite. Later the idea itself acquired a life of its own. Sometimes its material form underwent a substantial change, as happened with Germanic bracteates.

Finds of Late Roman gold coins and medallions are proof of political contacts maintained during the fourth and fifth centuries between the Germanic élite and the Roman Empire. It is very likely that along with prestige goods which were redistributed from barbarian power centers, some important ideas of Roman origin also spread and took root among the Germanic élite around the west Baltic. The best example of a further development and transformation in the North of the idea of power symbols are medallion imitations and native gold bracteates.

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