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THE COINLESS PERIOD IN THE HISTORY OF NORTHEASTERN RUS': HISTORIOGRAPHY STUDY

The so-called coinless period in the history of currency circulation in medieval Rus' seems to be the most disputable issue in Russian numismatics. Its time limits, why it came, and the meaning of the period's money units have not yet been clearly defined.

Most scholars apply the term "coinless" to the period when there was apparently no influx of foreign coins into Rus'. The latest known West European deniers were found in hoards which belong to the first four decades of the twelfth century. These contain a few twelfth-century deniers, along with hundreds of coins of the tenth and eleventh centuries. Therefore, the fourth decade of the twelfth century is regarded as the time when the influx of foreign coins ceased. Western coins reappeared only in the middle of the fourteenth century. These coins were Bohemian pragergroshens, whereas coins from Cologne, among other West European ones, were those most frequently found in the hoards of the eleventh and beginning of the twelfth centuries. At about the same time, the Golden Horde's dirhams reached northeastern Rus'; thus, the "coinless" times came to an end no later than the middle of the fourteenth century.

Some scholars, such as I. G. Spasskii, argue that the term "coinless" should simply apply to the period when the Rus' principalities did not mint coins. The oldest Rus' coins (zlotniki and serebrianiki), which circulated on the territory of the northeastern principalities, were minted in the period between 989 and 1018. The Kievian princes Vladimir Sviatoslavich and

1. V. M. Potin, Drevniaia Rus' i evropeiskie gosudarstva Evropy v 10-13 vekakh (Leningrad: Sovetskii khudoznik, 1968), 73.
2. A. A. Sivers, Topografiia kladov z prazhskimi groshami (Petrograd: Rossiiskaia Akademia istorii material'noi kul'tury, 1922).
3. Potin, Drevniaia Rus', 77.
Sviatopolk Vladimirovich minted these coins.\textsuperscript{6} Iaroslav the Wise, who succeeded Sviatopolk on the Kievan throne, did not continue minting.\textsuperscript{7} Only in the 1380s did Dmitrii Donskoï recommence coin minting. A few years later, the princes of Dmitrov, Serpukhov, Mozhaisk, and Zvenigorod followed the Muscovite prince's action.\textsuperscript{8}

There is still no definite answer also why the more than 350-year break happened. Some scholars, such as B. A. Romanov, hold that the undeveloped Russian market itself had no demand for coins. Thus, the great amount of foreign coins found in the Russian market of the ninth-eleventh centuries is regarded as the result of nothing but the temporary location of Rus' along international trade routes.\textsuperscript{9} Therefore, the decline in the circulation of coins merely followed the shift in international trade routes. In contrast to this opinion, others argue that during the period of the eleventh-first decades of the thirteenth century Rus' internal trade was constantly increasing, and consequently so was the Rus' market's need for coins. This point of view is supported, for instance, by V. M. Potin, who bases his conclusion on study of the coin hoards. This study shows that the amount of hidden silver (coins, ingots, and goods) greatly increased during this period.\textsuperscript{10} The discussion of the state of Rus' trade lies beyond this review's topic. What can be noted, however, is that after the eleventh century, the stock of silver in the country was sufficient to supply the mintage of coins: in the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries Mongols minted coins with Rus' silver, which came from Rus' as tribute.\textsuperscript{11} (Much of this silver was obtained originally from Western Europe via Novgorod's trade.)

V. L. Ianin considers the absence of a united state in Rus', and, therefore, the silver stock's dispersal among the numerous princes' treasures, as the main reason for the nonexistence of coinage.\textsuperscript{12} This view is not shared by others (e.g., G. A. Fiodorov-Davydov), who refer to the situation in Western Europe at the time, where the random distribution of


\textsuperscript{7} Very few coins of his Novgorodian (i.e., before 1015) mintage are known. Ibid.; D. Prozorovskii, "Polnyi katalog russkim medaliam i monetam, khraniamia v musee Imperatorskogo Russkogo Arkheologicheskogo Obshestva," \textit{Izvestia IRAO} 6 (1868): 112.

\textsuperscript{8} G. F. Fiodorov-Davydov, \textit{Money Moskovskoi Rusi} (Moscow: Moskovskii Gosudarstvennyi Universitet [hereafter MGU], 1981), 82-84.


\textsuperscript{10} Potin, \textit{Drevniaia Rus'}, 87.


\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.