

CONTEMPORARY COUNTERFEIT COINS OF THE CRUSADER STATES

The end of the XI century was the beginning of the Crusades which really became one of the largest and most exclusive pages in the history of the Middle Ages. Their exceptional nature is connected with the time frames, the amount of human and material resources, geographic extent as well as with prominent personalities of that time. As a result of the first Crusade, a number of Crusader states appeared, in particular, County of Edessa, Principality of Antioch, Kingdom of Jerusalem, the County of Tripoli, the Baronats of Beirut and Sidon, the Latin Empire, the Kingdom of Cyprus, the State of the Order of St John of Jerusalem (hospitallers) on Rhodes island, the State of the Teutonic Order in Prussia, as well as its divisions in Livonia and others. All these public entities had their own emission of coins. Collecting coins of the Crusader states is quite common in the world¹ and the Crusader coins are popular on the world's numismatic market.

Even in the ancient era the production of counterfeit coins was connected with the spread of collecting among the collectors but the forgery of collectible coins reached its prime the era of the Renaissance. Modern technical facilities enable modern counterfeiters developing their activities. Unfortunately, today's numismatic market is full of modern counterfeits of coins, which under the guise of the authentic coins malefactors try to sell to collectors and museums. Counterfeits of coins concern virtually all directions of numismatics including the coins of the Crusader states. In recent years, due to the spread of sales through the Internet², the production of counterfeit coins has become a kind of industry. Among modern counterfeit coins, in recent years there have appeared counterfeits of considerably high quality which are difficult to distinguish from original coins without special knowledge and special equipment. Modern counterfeiters produce quite common and quite rare coins, and sometimes there are absolutely fancy coins. Back in the middle of the nineteenth century a famous numismatist Alexandr Butkovskiy wrote for collectors about the counterfeit coins the following «there are two different kinds of counterfeit coins: the first forged on the exact model of the ancient coins, the other ones which do not exist and were invented by the forgeries themselves»³. Counterfeit coins are made of copper, alloys of metals of white or yellow colours, silver and gold. Let us consider most popular and interesting counterfeit coins.

It is difficult to imagine a complete collection of Crusader states coins without the legendary copper folles of Tankred, the actual ruler of the Principality of Antioch in 1101-1112. These coins were minted in large circulations and they are most commonly used at

1 Коцур В. П. *Актуальні напрямки та організаційні засади сучасних досліджень середньовічної нумізматики в Україні* / В. П. Коцур // *Збірник наукових статей «Наукові записки з української історії»*. – Вип. 33. – Переяслав-Хмельницький, 2013. – С. 4.

2 Орлик В. М. *Інформаційний потенціал WEB-ресурсів у нумізматичних дослідженнях (на прикладі монет держав Хрестоносців)* / В. М. Орлик // *Матеріали наукової конференції з міжнародною участю [«Архівознавчі та джерелознавчі галузі знань: проблеми взаємодії на сучасному етапі»]* (14 березня 2013 р., м. Київ). – Київ, 2013. – С. 129-133.

3 Бутковский А.П. (1861) *Нумизматика или история монет древних, средних и новых веков*. Москва, С. 106.

numismatic auctions. For example, the original Tankred's⁴ follis of the first type (Fig. 1) and its two counterfeits (Fig. 2-3).



Fig. 1

The first counterfeit coin was made by molding with further trimming of the edge with the signs of the molding gate (Fig. 2). The malefactors even did something like an edge with the right angle to the field of the coin.



Fig. 2

A rather qualitative is the counterfeit of the first type of Tancred's follis (Fig. 3) made in Crimea. The author of this masterpiece, in addition to "Tancred's folles", has also "Roman coins" (Fig. 4).

⁴ Crusader coins Antioch, Baldwin's Auctions Ltd, Auctions 52, lot 1151 // <https://www.acsearch.info/search.html?id=397779>



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

The forger, having a sculptor's profession, made his own stamps. He produced counterfeits of coins by compressing a blank with counterfeit stamps with the help of a press. This gave a counterfeit coin the similarity with minted coins. The work pieces of this forger were distributed among Ukrainian collectors under the guise of Crimean findings. They were also directed to Europe.

The attempt to fake a second type follis strikes by its awkwardness. We may compare the original coin (Fig. 5)⁵ and the counterfeit coin (рис. 6).



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

5 Crusader coins Antioch, Baldwin's Auctions Ltd, Auctions 52, lot 1153 // <https://www.acsearch.info/search.html?id=397780>

The counterfeits of the third type also do not differ by the diligence of counterfeiters. For the comparison, there is the original coin⁶ (Fig. 7) and the fake (Fig. 8).

Fig. 7



Fig. 8

Counterfeit coins of the second and third types are actively sold through the EBay auction. As for the counterfeits of other rulers of the Principality of Antioch, the Bellon denier of Bohemond III is leading. For example, a batch of several hundreds of counterfeit deniers was brought to Ukraine from a Middle Eastern country. All of them were one-stamped, made of white metal. Some of them were covered with dark matter. These

6 Classical Numismatic Group, CRUSADERS, Antioch. Tancred. Regent, 1101-1112. *Æ* Follis // <https://www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=125851>

counterfeit coins were successfully sold through the Ukrainian Internet Forum Violyty. For the comparison, the original coin⁷ (Fig. 9) and the above-mentioned counterfeits (Fig. 10).

Fig. 9



Fig. 10

⁷ Classical Numismatic Group, CRUSADERS, Antioch. Bohémond III. 1163-1201. BI Denier // <https://www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=253121>

However, the most curious fake of denier of Bohemond III was noticed by us on EBay (Fig. 11). The malefactors, using the form with a stamp of the original billon denier made of low-grade gold coin weighing 3.85 grams which was a fantasy of a golden ducat of the Antiochian Principality.



Fig. 11

There are many counterfeits of grosso of the County of Tripoli in the modern numismatic market, in particular the grosso of Bohemond VI (1251-1275) and Bohemond VII (1275-1287). The counterfeits were made by molding from the original coin. Some researchers and collectors consider the original coins of the indicated face value to be the most beautiful coins of the Crusader States. For the comparison, the original coin of Bohemond VI⁸ (Fig. 12) and its counterfeit (Fig. 13); the original grosso of Bohemond VII (Fig. 14) and its counterfeit (Fig. 15).



Fig. 12



Fig. 13

⁸ Tripoli - Bohémond VI – Gros // <https://www.acsearch.info/search.html?id=3844553>



Fig. 14



Fig. 15

In the last decades the coins, similar in the style of coinage and iconography to the Byzantine Tetarterons and Half-Tetarterons with the Latin letters «R» «C» «X» on the reverse appeared on the global numismatic market (Fig. 16)⁹.



Fig. 16

Marcus Phillips and David Michael Metcalf assume that these coins may be ceremonial issue of the coins of the Byzantine emperor Manuel I and the king of Jerusalem, Baldwin III, stamped at the in the mint of Antioch in 1156. Simon Bendall and Ingrid and Wolfgang Schulze believe that these coins were stamped on Cyprus by the English king Richard the Lionheart during the Third Crusade. It is clear that the counterfeiters could not leave without attention the high degree of rarity of this coin and its price at the world auctions. They made their version of the coin with the Latin letters «R» «C» «X» (Fig. 17).

9 Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. 2005 "CRUSADERS. Cyprus. Richard I, King of England. 1189-1199. Æ Tetarteron" <https://www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=70975>



Fig. 17

Modern forgeries of the golden hyperpyrons of John III Doukas (1222-1254) are also quite common, including a three-point type on the coin field to the right of Jesus, which according to the Florentine Francesco Balducci Pegolotti's classification, are the subject of the issue of the Crusaders, in particular the last Latin Emperor Baldwin II de Courtenay in Constantinople. For comparison, the original coin (Fig. 18) and the above-mentioned counterfeit (Fig. 19). The counterfeits of these coins are predominantly of Bulgarian origin.



Fig. 18



Fig. 19

The coins of the Crusaders of Cyprus were no exceptions too. In particular, at the end of 2015 beginning of 2016 one of the vendors sold 13 counterfeit grosso of the king of Cyprus Hugh IV (1324-1358) on the EBay. These silver counterfeits are made by molding from the mold form made from one coin (Fig. 20).



Fig. 20

The seller of these fakes sold counterfeit coins of various historical periods and is listed in the notorious FAKE SELLERS LIST (NFSL) of the International Numismatic Forum Forumancientcoins (USA)¹⁰. However, as of October 2017, similar counterfeits of coins are sold on the EBay (Fig. 21).



Fig. 21

There are also a great deal of modern counterfeit coins of the Order States. Some of them were described by the Polish numismatist A. Kuźmin¹¹. According to our observations, it is quite popular among the modern “coin masters” to manufacture large denominations of silver coins of the Livonian Order, in particular ferdings and ½ marks which are sold, including online market. For comparison, the original ½ mark of the Master Heinrich Galen (1551-1557) issued in 1556¹² (Fig. 22) and one of the modern counterfeits (Fig. 23).



Fig. 22



Fig. 23

10 FORVM's NOTORIOUS FAKE SELLERS LIST (NFSL) <http://www.forumancientcoins.com/board/index.php?topic=18502.0>

11 Aleksander M. Kuźmin (2011) Prymitywne fałszerstwa brakteatów krzyżackich, Gdańskie Zeszyty Numizmatyczne nr 99/2011

12 1/2 Марки // <https://www.antik-war.lv/viewtopic.php?f=109&t=551280>

As we see, modern counterfeiters of ancient coins actively work on counterfeiting for collectors and museums of coins of the Crusader states. The counterfeiters use casting technology in most cases, although there are stamped falsifications. We shall not list in details all the signs of the counterfeit coins of the Crusaders, since the works of numismatists are used by counterfeiters to improve their “professional level”. Let us recall only the essential textbook advice for a collector, which is contained in the specialized literature for several centuries. If you hold the coin of the Crusaders or received its photo, you should pay attention to the edge of the coin. If “the surface of the edge is completely smooth or depleted then it is a sign of a counterfeit coin. The pores sometimes noticeable on the surface of the coin prove that it was molded”¹³. Thus, collectors for the assurance of their collection, at least from primitive forgery, examples of which we have presented, need to use the above two simple tips and must study the original coins, or at least their quality images from the catalogues of museums and reputable auction houses.

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13 Бутковский А.П. *Нумизматика или история монет древних, средних и новых веков*. Москва, 1861. С.106.

Сучасні підробки монет держав хрестоносців

Абстракт

У результаті першого хрестового походу виникає ряд держав хрестоносців, зокрема Едеське графство, Антіохійське князівство, Ієрусалимське королівство, графство Тріполі, баронати Бейруту та Сідону, Латинська імперія, Кіпрське королівство, держава ордену св. Іоана Ієрусалимського (госпітальєри) на о. Родос, держава Тевтонського ордену в Пруссії, а також її відділення в Лівонії та ін. Усі ці державні утворення мали власні емісії монет. Колекціонування монет держав хрестоносців є досить поширеним у світі, а монети хрестоносців є популярними на світовому нумізматичному ринку. Ще в античну епоху виробництво підробних монет для колекціонерів було пов'язано із поширенням колекціонування, проте розквіту підробка колекційних монет досягла в епоху Ренесансу. Технічні можливості сьогодення дають простір сучасним фальшивомонетникам для розвитку своєї діяльності. Сьогоднішній нумізматичний ринок, на жаль, насичений сучасними фальсифікатами монет, які під виглядом автентичних монет зловмисники намагаються продати колекціонерам та музеям. Сучасні фальсифікатори давніх монет активно працюють над підробками для колекціонерів та музеїв монет держав хрестоносців. У свої виробничих процесах фальсифікатори використовують переважно технологію лиття, хоча зустрічаються й карбовані фальсифікати. Стаття присвячена аналізу сучасних підробок монет держав хрестоносців.