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False Coins of the Teutonic Order State in Prussia in the currency of South-Rus Lands of the Lithuanian Grand Duchy

The issue of the history of currency on the territory of modern Ukraine in the period of late middle ages is not new for the historical science. But taking into consideration the fact that specific gravity of coins of the Teutonic Order was not considerable comparably with the local emissions and the Lithuanian, Polish, Czech and Ordynsky emissions, the scientists sometimes do not pay appropriate attention to them. At the same time these coins were spread on the territory of Ukraine in XIV-XV centuries, especially in Volyn and Podol – South-Rus Lands of the Lithuanian Grand Duchy. That was conditioned by traditional trade relations of these regions with the Teutonic Order State in Prussia. Most spread coins of the Teutonic Order State in Prussia on the territory of modern Ukraine were shillings and farthings of grandmaster Johan von Tiffin. To our mind that was conditioned not only by the trade relations but also by long-term (July-October 1497) sojourn of the Teutonic knights (400 people) headed by the grandmaster Johan von Tiffin as a part of the crusaders troops organised by the Polish king Jan Olbracht in 1497 against Moldavian Duchy. They stayed in neighbouring with Volyn Western Ukrainian lands and had to have contacts with the local people including payments for goods and services. In August 1497, according to the order of the grandmaster, some additional money was brought from Prussia to Lviv for the maintenance of the German crusaders. We know four middle-aged false coins among different coins of different face-values of the Teutonic Order State in Prussia that were found on the territory of modern Ukraine. The problem of false coins of the Teutonic Order during their currency period has been not studied enough by modern historiography. There are some records in the works of F.-A.Voßberg [1], M.Męclewska [2-3], S. Kubiak [4], O. Volckart [5], D. Miehle [6] and others.

Falsification of coins and their usage in the late middle-age period and early new time was (as states Vladimir Potin) not only social and legal phenomenon, “but economic as well, leading to economical difficulties on considerable territories” [7, 133]. According to M. Męclewska, those were exactly the difficulties that the Teutonic Order State in Prussia faced in its tragic 1410. At that time the state officially spoiled the quality of coins through decreasing the rate of

hryvna coin to the hryvna of pure silver on the one hand, and on the other hand there was a problem of simultaneous circulation of coins of different emissions and growing number of false coins [3, 19]. One of the solutions to this complex economic and political problem was monetary reform of Master Michael Kuchmeister von Sternberg. It positively influenced the improvement of monetary circulation in the Teutonic Order State in Prussia, but was unable to eliminate counterfeiting of money. During after-reforming period the quality of false coins grew considerably, especially it concerned their iconography.

Let us make a more detailed analysis of the above-mentioned 5 middle-aged false coins of the Teutonic Order State in Prussia that were found on the territory of modern Ukraine. Three of them belong to the first part of the XV century, in particular, the false coins shillings of the grandmaster Michael Kuchmeister von Sternberg (picture 1-2) and Paul von Rusdorf (picture 3). The fourth might be the imitation of the grosz of Johan von Tiffin (picture 4). The fifth one might be the primitive imitation of grosz of Johan von Tiffin (picture 5). False shilling of Michael Kuchmeister von Sternberg (picture 1) imitates the type of coins which were made in the period of 1414-1416 at the mints of Gdansk and Torun (German: Thorn). There is the following legend on it:

Av.:*MAGST·MICHAEL:PRI:

Rv.:*MO[.]-[....]-ORVM-P[...]-

Prototype: Miehle №438.

Next false coin imitates the type of shillings of Michael Kuchmeister von Sternberg (picture 2) which, according to the classification of D. Miehle, were coined in the period of 1416-1422 at the mint of Torun.

There is the following legend on it:

Av.:MAGS-TMIC-HAEL-PRIM-

Rv.:MO[.]-[....]-ORVM-P[...]-

Prototype: Miehle №489-493.

The false shilling of Paul von Rusdorf (picture 3) imitates the type of coins which, according to the classification of F.-A.Voßberg, were coined in the period of 1422-1441 at the mint of Gdansk. The false coin was bent practically in half which might indicate the revelation of the imitation and withdrawal from circulation. There is the following legend on it:

Av.: **MAGS-T:PA-[....]-[...]**S-

Rv.: **[...]E-TADN-ORVM-PRVS-**

Prototype: Miehle №525-530.

The fourth coin under investigation is the imitation of grosz of Johan von Tiffin, which were coined in the period of 1490-97 in Königsberg (Picture 4).

There is the following legend on it:

Av.: **[..]AGS-TIOhn-[..]DET-I[..]EnI-**

Rv.: **MOhE-[.]AOh-ORVM-[..]VS-**

Prototype: Miehle #714-716.

The fifth imitation, as it was mentioned above, might also be the imitation of grosz of Johan von Tiffin (Picture 5), taking into account the presence of letters **TIO** in the legend, but it is more primitive and rough.

The elementary analysis of the metal content of the first four false coins of the Teutonic Order State in Prussia show the presence of copper (76-89,9%), which was used to make the basis of the imitation and also mercury and silver in small amounts (Table 1). The second, third and fourth samples have admixtures of zinc (13,2; 5,6; 6,3%) and lead (5,9; 3,3; 10,6%), which improved castability of the metal. The first sample has tin (5,8%), as an admixture for copper as the last was considerably expensive.

To make the analysis we used precisional express-analyser of the stuff content *Expert 3L W108U*. The method of non-destructive energy-dispersive x-ray fluorescent analysis of the metal was used. The presence of mercury and silver in the content of the false shillings under research shows that the technique of covering with mercury amalgam on the basis of the coin was used. While covering the blank coin with silver and mercury, the last evaporates and the thin layer of silver is remained, which makes it difficult to expose the false coin. The elementary analysis of the false coins of the Teutonic Order State in Prussia made by us shows the bad safety of the silver layer because of weak resistance to aggressive environment of soil.

Metric characteristics and metal content of the false coins:

Table 1

Picture No.	Size (mm.)	Weight (g.)	Share of element in alloy content (%)												
			Cu	Zn	As	Ag	Hg	Pb	Ca	Fe	Ni	Sn	Cr	Sb	Bi
1	20/22	0,96	86	0,1	0,3	0,3	0,1	0,5	6,3	-	0,1	5,8	0,1	0,3	0,1
2	20/21	1,12	76	13,2	0,3	0,7	0,5	5,9	2,4	0,6	0,1	0,2	-	-	-
3	21	1,01	89,9	5,6	0,2	0,46	0,51	3,3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	20	1,28	78.6	6.3	0.5	1.1	0.7	10.6	1.7	0.4	0.1				
5	18,5	2,03	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

First four false coins of the shillings of Teutonic Order State in Prussia of the first half of the XV century were made on a blank. The level of work of the four imitations is considerably high and very close to the original coins according to iconography and coins' weight. Unfortunately we had no possibility to make elementary analysis of the metal content of the fourth imitation as the owner presented only photo, metric data and the place find. Taking into consideration exterior of the imitation and the given metric data we may come to conclusion that the imitation was made on thick plate or cast sample, as with the diameter of 18,5mm it weighs 2,03, which considerably differs from the metric data of the first three imitations. And it does not resemble the original coin for sure. Taking into consideration the quality of making of the first four samples, especially second, third and fourth, it is possible to assume that they were made in the region of their mass circulation, where their mass emissions were made. Those were mostly the territory of Teutonic Order State in Prussia or its bordering territories.

All investigated imitations of the Teutonic Order State in Prussia were found on the territory of modern Ukraine, particularly in Volyn region (Picture 1, 3-5) and Rovenska region (Picture 2), the lands which in XV century were part of the Lithuanian Grand Duchy. This historic region of Ukraine – South-East Volyn had traditional trade relations with the Teutonic Order State in Prussia. More than half of discoveries of the coins and the known to us imitations of the Teutonic Order [8]

were found in this region. So, we may state that among South-Rus lands of the Lithuanian Grand Duchy, especially South-Eastern Volyn, the coins of the Teutonic Order in Prussia were circulated and were familiar to the local people as well as their imitations.

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(Picture 1)



(Picture 2)



(Picture 3)



(Picture 4)



(Picture 5)

