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(11-14th c.)**

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Source: *Midlands Historical Review*, Vol. 2 (2018)

Published: 16/07/2018

URL: <http://www.midlandshistoricalreview.com/bullion-barter-and-borders-in-the-rus-coinless-period-11-14th-c/>

Bullion, Barter and Borders in the Rus' Coinless Period (11-14th c.)

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When historians and numismatists consider the approximately 350-year period in which no normative Russian coins were minted, the outline of the discussion is often framed in the context of Russian sovereignty and nationality. In a few words, the coins minted between the late-tenth and early-eleventh centuries by the earliest Christian Kievan princes (of the Rjurikid dynasty), Vladimir (the Great) and his sons, Svjatopolk (the Accursed) and Jaroslav (the Wise), are thought of as the beginning of “Russian national” coinage. Such coins are typically imagined as evocative of some sort of Russian statehood or nationality. There is ready precedence for this interpretation, given similar understandings of the coins of the dynasties of the Piasts, Árpáds and Asenids of the same era as belonging to the respective beginnings of the nations of Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria. However, this research seeks to offer a somewhat different interpretation of the so-called “Rus’ coinless period.”

In this paper, I will argue not that “Russian national” coinage disappeared, but that the definition of such coinage on a national basis may constitute a rather anachronistic assumption given our knowledge of the porousness of borders and the ambiguity of a given coin’s audience. In order to situate these claims, I will draw on evidence from recent single finds and coin hoard finds in Western Eurasia and the well-known presence of “Western European” silver coins (*deniers*) and ingots (*grivny*) circulating in Rus’ towns (ruled by Rjurikid princes) from the late-eleventh to fourteenth century. In other words, I will argue that what defines a given coin as “foreign” or “domestic” in a given place and time without clearly defined borders or populations is ultimately a modern convention projected backward. Instead, it may be more appropriate to think of the Russian coinless period not as Russian per se, but as two overlapping phenomena: the absence of so-called “Russian” coinage, defined as minted on behalf of a Rjurikid prince (ca. 1050s – 1380s) and the absence of all coinage whatsoever, including so-called “foreign” coins within the imagined borders of Rus’ (ca. 1140s – 1340s). Therefore, I have structured the paper in three broad sections: the first section addresses the first (Byzantine, Islamic and Rjurikid) coin finds in Rjurikid-ruled towns and their hinterlands, the second section addresses the concepts of bullion, barter and coin debasement in Rjurikid-ruled towns, and the third section addresses the anachronistic application of borders to the so-called “Rus’ coinless period.”

Elena Pavlova’s 1994 article, ‘The Coinless Period in the History of Northeastern Rus’: Historiography Study’, summarizes a variety of Russian numismatic arguments on the reasons for Rus’ coinlessness,¹ from Valentin Janin’s claim that there was no native minting tradition, to German Fjodorov-Davydov’s “metal theory,” which holds that imported coins were simply melted into silver ingots and used as currency in Russia in their own right.² Much of this scholarship recognizes the admixture of Islamic and Byzantine coins in coin hoards before and shortly after the baptism of Vladimir (debatable dating: 987 – 989 CE). Likewise, many numismatists have readily acknowledged the influx of coins from elsewhere in Christendom later in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, but rarely are notions of “foreignness” and “domesticity” regarding coinage seriously challenged.

¹ E. Pavlova, ‘The Coinless Period in the History of Northeastern Rus’: Historiography Study’, *Histoire Russe*, 21 (1994), pp. 375-92.

² G. A. Fjodorov-Davydov, *Монеты – свидетели прошлого* (Moscow, 1985), p. 124; V. Janin, ‘Деньги и денежные системы’ (Moscow, 1969), pp. 319-20.

We may consider the mixed Byzantine and Islamic coin hoards found in what is normally considered southern “Rus’ territory”, which are usually dated to the tenth and eleventh centuries. Thomas Noonan and Elena Stoljarik have shown that despite the low numbers of Byzantine silver coins (*miliarēsia*) circulating in Pontic-Caspian Eurasia compared to Islamic silver coins (*dirhams*), used primarily for trade,³ Basil II’s *miliarēsia* numbers actually peaked in mixed hoards throughout this area dating to shortly after Vladimir’s baptism and into the early-eleventh century.⁴ In fact, a grand total of 703 Byzantine coins have been found in modern Sweden (up to 1989), mostly on the island of Gotland, 9.67% of which are imitations and 32.57% of which belong exclusively to the reign of Basil II (during the period 977 – 989 CE). By 1988, 24 Byzantine coins had been found in modern Latvia,⁵ 15.79% of which are *miliarēsia* dating to the reign of Constantine IX Monomachos (1042 – 1055 CE). These examples clearly attest to the importance of the period of the late-tenth and eleventh centuries, as one of peak flow of Byzantine coins northward shortly after Vladimir’s conversion.⁶ Most hoards contain silver coins, intermixed with a few gold ones, and were found in the forest-steppe zone between the Prut’ and the Dniepr. That uncovered hoards including Islamic and Byzantine coins, (numbering 172⁷ even during the Soviet period⁸), have been distinctively mixed, attests to the coins’ indistinct

³ T. S. Noonan, ‘The Circulation of Byzantine Coins in Kievan Rus’’, *Études Byzantines*, 7 (1980) pp. 172-73:

‘Byzantine miliarēsia found in Kievan Rus’, unlike the Islamic dirhams and West European deniers, were not related to or the result of commerce. Thousands of dirhams and deniers were sent to Rus’ to pay for such Rus’ exports as slaves and furs. Byzantium evidently paid for such Rus’ exports with silks and other non-monetary goods. The question we must ask is why Byzantium did not use its miliarēsia more extensively in the trade with Rus. [...] In short, we should like to know why so few Byzantine coins reached Rus’ at a time of very active Rus’-Byzantine trade. [...] Finally, we should like to discover what happened in the period from ca. 1025-ca. 1050 that put an abrupt end to the flow of miliarēsia into Rus’. [...] In brief, what conditions brought an end to the export of Byzantine coins to Kievan Rus’ after 1025?’

⁴ Noonan, ‘Byzantine Coins in Kievan Rus’’, p. 144:

‘The existence of these mixed coin hoards is our best numismatic evidence that some Byzantine coins did circulate within Kievan Rus’. These Byzantine coins did not proceed directly to their find-spot. At some point in Rus’ they were mixed with other coins which had also been imported’.

E. S. Stoljarik, *Essays on Monetary Circulation in the North-Western Black Sea Region in the Late Roman and Byzantine Periods* (Odessa, 1992), pp. 93-96, makes the same claim.

⁵ V. N. Sedykh, ‘On the Function of Coins in Graves in Early Medieval Rus’’, *Russian History*, 32 (2005), p. 473. As for the *miliarēsia* imitations, due to their debasement, it would not be unreasonable to imagine them as struck in Tmutarakan’, which as J. Shepard, ‘Closer Encounters with the Byzantine World: The Rus at the Straits of Kerch’, in Reyerson, et al. (eds.), *Pre-Modern Russia and its World: Essay in Honor of Thomas S. Noonan* (Wiesbaden, 2006), p. 33 has pointed out, “would scarcely have had imperial blessing.”

⁶ B. Malmer, ‘Some Observations on the Importation of Byzantine Coins to Scandinavia in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries and the Scandinavian Response’, *Russian History*, 28 (2001), pp. 295-96. The poorly engraved inscriptions on the imitative coinage suggests that the legends were not meant to be read closely, (p. 298). Additionally, it should be noted that as of 1989, the number of notionally Byzantine coins is split, where 68 are imitations.

⁷ M. Thompson, ‘Byzantine Coins in Russia’, *Medieval Archaeology*, 10 (1966), p. 145. This is in contrast with the far more abundant finds of imperial coinage throughout the lower Danube during this period. See for example P. de Frankopan, ‘The Numismatic Evidence from the Danube Region 971-1092’, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 21 (1997), pp. 30-39.

⁸ For the most comprehensive collection of Soviet studies on hoards containing Byzantine coins, see V. V. Kropotkin, ‘Клады византийских монет на территории СССР’, *Археология СССР. Свод*

usage, in contrast to assumptions made about foreignness and domesticity.⁹ This also contrasts with significant evidence of such coins' Christian symbolic usage both within and outside Rjurikid-ruled towns, including finds in modern Sweden as well.¹⁰ Sweden is not typically thought of as part of Kievan Rus' but, numismatically, its territory fits within the same context. This goes to show that such assumptions of borders are anachronistic to apply to so-called "national coinage" which were, if anything, redolent of ecumenical, rather than "national" authority.

Nevertheless, the frequency of imperial coins found in Rjurikid-ruled towns, either in mixed hoards or as single finds, drops off in the mid-eleventh, although single finds turn up occasionally in outlying areas until the 1130s.¹¹ Given the Rjurikids' gradual entrance into Christendom (the Byzantine *oikouménē*), it is unsurprising to find other Christian coins circulating alongside imperial coins,¹² and gradually replacing Islamic coins. Still, the bullion value of the Islamic *dirhams* obviated their transit further north as their circulation dried up, necessitating alternative sources of silver, such as the Western Christian silver coins (*deniers*).¹³ For example, Valentin Janin has observed that between 980 – 1100 CE, Western coins slowly displaced Islamic *dirhams*, especially in Novgorod, as the flow of the latter dried up during the tenth century.¹⁴ The decrease of *dirhams* and increase of *deniers* has led to some creative explanations.¹⁵

It is well-known (although debateable¹⁶) that the first three Christian princes of Kiev began a tradition of minting exclusively in gold and silver and, had it not been for these coins, there would have been no "Russian coinless period" at all. Maria Sotnikova and Ivan Spasski have interpreted these coins as more for ornamentation than exchange.¹⁷

археологических источников, (1962), pp. 1-89; and idem, 'Новые находки византийских монет на территории СССР', *Византийский временник*, № 51 (1965), pp. 166-89.

⁹ See for example such assumptions made by R. Zguta, 'Kievan Coinage', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 53 (1975), p. 488, who refers to tenth-eleventh century. Kievan "national coinage."

¹⁰ See for example Sedykh, 'Function of Coins in Graves in Rus', p. 475; and Malmer, 'Importation of Byzantine Coins to Scandinavia', pp. 295-302.

¹¹ S. Franklin and J. Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus: 750-1200* (London, 1996), pp. 284-85.

¹² I. Spassky, *The Russian Monetary System*, (Moscow, 1967), pp. 50-51.

¹³ J. Martin, 'Coins, Commerce, and the Conceptualization of Kievan Rus', in Reyerson, K. L., Th. G. Stavrou and J. G. Tracy (eds.), *Pre-Modern Russia and its World: Essay in Honor of Thomas S. Noonan*, (Wiesbaden, 2006), p. 169.

¹⁴ V. Janin, *Денежно-весовые системы домонгольской Руси и очерки истории денежной системы средневекового Новгорода*, (Moscow, 1956), p. 153.

¹⁵ Georges Duby, *The Early Growth of the European Economy* (Ithaca, 1978), pp. 126-27, has even advanced the notion that the increase of Western European *deniers* found in Rjurikid-ruled towns is a marker in increasing Western European influence. For Christian Raffensperger *Reimagining Europe: Kievan Rus' in the Medieval World* (Cambridge, 2012), p. 135, such interpretations of numismatic evidence supplement his overall argument that the Rjurikids were as much a part of the Orthodox *oikouménē* as they were part and parcel of "the larger European world." It is also worth pointing out that in Raffensperger's reference to work of Brita Malmer, 'Importation of Byzantine Coins to Scandinavia', regarding Byzantine coin finds in modern Sweden (pp. 245-46 n35), he mentions 635 known Byzantine coins found in Sweden, but neglects the 68 finds of Byzantine coins in Sweden which have been determined as imitations.

¹⁶ Omeljan Pritsak, *The Origins of the Old Rus' Weights and Monetary Systems* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 71-117, contended that Rus' princely coins bearing the names of Vladimir and Svjatopolk could be extended into the twelfth century due to later princes bearing those names based on contemporaneous iconographic trends on imperial coins. While his arguments are convincing at first glance, they may not be ultimately provable one way or another. It is not my intention to dispute Pritsak's argument, although notably Thomas Noonan, 'Review: The Origins of the Old Rus' Weights and Monetary Systems by O. Pritsak', *The Russian Review*, 58 (1999), pp. 319-20, was highly critical of it.

¹⁷ M. Sotnikova and I. Spasski, *Russian Coins of the X-XI Centuries A.D.: Recent Research and a Corpus in Commemoration of the Millenary of the Earliest Russian Coinage* (Oxford, 1982), p. 141.

Vladimir's coins are the rarest: only a handful of his *zlotniki* (gold coins) and *srebreniki* (silver coins) survive.¹⁸ Svjatopolk's coins are the most problematic from a "Russian national" perspective, since his coins were minted in alliance with his father-in-law, the normatively "Polish" king Bolesław, (comparable to the metrology and iconography of Bolesław's coinage) when he occupied Kiev briefly in 1018. Bolesław Szczesniak, in a rather polemic article, argues that all of Rus' was in fact, via Svjatopolk, subsumed by king Bolesław, posthumously imagined as Polish by nationality, who was seeking to build a so-called great "Slavic Empire" as a precursor to Kievan Rus' being incorporated into the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.¹⁹ I will refrain from delving into the modern nationalist interpretations of these events. But we ought to recognize that some scholars have sought to minimize such coins. Rather, the coins of Svjatopolk's brother, Jaroslav the Wise, are often seen as the archetype of "Russian national" coinage even though they too are quite rare.²⁰ According to Pritsak, the total number of surviving Rus' coins from before the Mongol invasion amounts to about 308 specimens.²¹ It would also be important to note that of all the nominally Rjurikid *srebreniki* minted during this period, most of them were barely even silver at all, reflecting a severe silver shortage on the part of the princes' moneyers.²² For precisely this reason, numismatists have typically pointed to sheer silver bullion as the main conveyor of value, regardless of mintage.

Bullion, deniers and debasement

In 1949, the Russian economic historian Peter Lyashchenko, in his authoritative monograph on the Russian "national" economy, posited that foreign, presumably "non-Russian" minted coins entered the borders of Russia during the reign of Vladimir albeit without value, while gold and silver coins only acquired "domestic" monetary worth during the Mongol era.²³ Although I do not dispute the qualitative analysis of "value" he ascribes to the coins for their

¹⁸ A. M. Feldman, 'The Historiographical and Archaeological Evidence of Autonomy and Rebellion in Chersōn: a Defense of the Revisionist Analysis of Vladimir's Baptism (987-989)', (unpublished master's thesis, University of Birmingham, 2013), p. 75 n263-n64; and V. A. Smolij, G. V. Borjak and O. Šeremet'jev, et al. (eds.), *1000 Years of Ukrainian Seal* (Kiev, 2013) pp. 90-93.

¹⁹ B. B. Szczesniak, 'The Dependency of Kievan Rus on King Bolesław the Great: Numismatic Evidence', *The Polish Review*, 18 (1973), pp. 31-43, does provide, however, a useful critique of essentialist Kievan "statehood," when he writes (p. 37):

'The Kievan state of the X-XI century, the time of Vladimir I and his successors, did not constitute a representation of all Russia as for example D. S. Likhachev and other Russian historians assert in various writings. It was the Kievan state only, not even Novgorod. [...] Different centers of the growth of territorial authority in different ethnic conditions kept the 'all' Rus separated. A true territorial or sovereign unity in Kievan Rus principalities was never established. The growth of the Rurik family princes necessitated the territorial foundations of new principalities, new states in reality; these states were united only by the common ecclesiastical organization of the Byzantine Church, which, like the Roman Church, was universal in its ecumenical character. The Kievan State was in reality the Kievan Principality which could be termed Kievan Ruthenia. Kievan Rus is only a name which the Russian historians extend to all Russian principalities, but which is not based on reality'.

See also M. Hleboniek, 'Herb Ziemi Kijowskiej na pieczęciach władów Rzeczypospolitej', *Сфрагістичний Щорічник*, 2 (2012), pp. 82-98. This citation is based on my reading of the author's abstract in English.

²⁰ See for example P. G. Gajdukov and V. A. Kalinin, 'Древнейшие русские монеты', in *Русь в IX-X веках. Археологическая панорама* (Moscow, 2012), pp. 402-35; and Pavlova, 'The Coinless Period in the History of Northeastern Rus' ', p. 376.

²¹ Pritsak, *The Origins of the Old Rus' Weights and Monetary Systems*, p. 69.

²² M. P. Sotnikova and I. Spasski, *Russian Coins of the X-XI Centuries A.D.*, p. 139.

²³ P. Lyashchenko, 1949, *History of the National Economy of Russia to the 1917 Revolution*, Herman, L. M. (trans.) (New York, 1949), p. 165.

metallic worth specifically, my aim is to reconceive our notion of the “foreignness” and the “domesticity” of precious metals in the coinless period.

By acknowledging that eleventh to fourteenth century Rus’ “state territory” can be an anachronistic abstraction, and by recognizing that Rus’ townships of the same period are better characterized as those ruled by a Rjurikid prince, the present discussion seeks to comment on the usage of any precious metals within contemporaneous Rus’ townships, whatever their provenance. In other words, whatever forms of commodity were used to pay tribute or in monetary exchange after nominally “Russian” coins ceased being minted in the mid-eleventh century, their attribution is what is under consideration. As we have previously discussed, silver *deniers* attributed to Western Europe have been found in Rus’ townships in significant quantities, about 40,000 total *deniers* by Noonan’s estimation, particularly in regions adjacent to the Baltic such as Novgorod.²⁴

After the death of Jaroslav in 1054, these coins became the primary means of monetary exchange in towns ruled by Rjurikid princes, most especially Novgorod, whose financial status improved due to the influx of Western *deniers*.²⁵ But their use as replacements for Islamic dirhams declined by the mid-twelfth century. Instead, by the late-twelfth century, simple silver ingots replaced the *deniers*,²⁶ mostly in Kiev, suggesting that the coins were valued for their silver content, rather than the provenance of their mintage. This point is supported by Fjodorov-Davydov who, as previously mentioned, argued that Western *deniers* circulated between the mid-eleventh and mid-twelfth centuries Rus’ primarily for the value of their metal content. He also adds that the silver content was meant to be melted into bullion and recast as ingots, hence the “metal theory.”²⁷ The crucial information is that while most Western European *deniers* were hoarded in Novgorod well after the supply of Islamic *dirhams* dried up, they too quickly disappeared: only about 1000 *grivny* are known today.²⁸ Noonan also suggests that by the time the deposition of *deniers* dries up in the late-twelfth century, many had been recast into silver ingots, or what are commonly referred to as *grivny*, which constituted blank silver flans of tangible wealth valued primarily for their varying silver content.²⁹

Vsevolod Potin agrees that the *deniers*’ silver metal content, not their national attribution, was where their value lay. But he disagrees with both Fjodorov-Davydov and Noonan, arguing that there is no unquestionable evidence for Western coins being melted and recast into Russian currency at this time.³⁰ This point remains persuasive. However, neither Fjodorov-Davydov nor Potin seriously questions the notion of eleventh and twelfth century Russian statehood and mintage in the first place. In other words, would the silver ingots (*grivny*) have constituted Russian “national” currency?

Knowing that *grivny* were simply silver ingots which carried tangible wealth regardless of where they were circulated, the question insinuates that silver was valued differently within

²⁴ T. S. Noonan, 1987, ‘The Monetary History of Kiev in the Pre-Mongol Period,’ *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 11/3-4 (1987), p. 399.

²⁵ Martin, ‘Coins, Commerce, and the Conceptualization of Kievan Rus’’, p. 168.

²⁶ It should be noted that according to Vjacheslav Kuleshov, the earliest of such ingots (*grivny*) circulated well before Vladimir’s baptism in the late-10th century (personal communication, 26 January, 2018).

²⁷ Fjodorov-Davydov, *Монеты – свидетели прошлого*, 124: Janin, ‘Деньги и денежные системы’, 319-20.

²⁸ S. Franklin, *Writing, Society and Culture in Early Rus, c.950–1300*, (Cambridge, 2002), p. 77.

²⁹ Franklin and Shepard, *Emergence of Rus*, pp. 284-85. See also N. F. Kotljarskiy, ‘Севернорусские («черниговские») монетные гривны,’ *Древнейшие государства Восточной Европы. 1994 г. Новое в нумизматике* (Moscow, 1996), p. 87.

³⁰ V. Potin, *Древняя Русь и европейские государства Европы в X-XIII веках*, (Leningrad, 1968), p. 91.

imagined Russian borders. But if silver was an inelastic commodity regardless of nationality, then the question is rendered purely rhetorical: by inverting the question, we may arrive at a helpful insight. If silver was a universal commodity between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries, what constituted “national” currencies at all?

As Janin has made clear, since there was a scarce supply of silver mines in the hinterlands of towns ruled by Rjurikid princes,³¹ silver bullion was primarily obtained by either trading or raiding. If non-Rjurikid minted coins were circulated for their silver content, this would then explain the use of *grivny* in Rjurikid-ruled townships such as Novgorod or Kiev: it did not necessarily matter where the coins were from as long as the silver content was pure. As Sotnikova and Spasski have noted, ‘the higher the silver content and the better execution of the coins, the farther they would wander from the place where they were struck’.³² Thus, Mstislav Vladimirovich (r. 1125–1132) attempted to forestall the export of bullion in any form beyond the purview of his dominions.³³ Whether or not coins or ingots were nominally Russian “national currency,” that they were referred to as *grivny* attests to their semi-standardization.³⁴ However, by the mid-fourteenth century in Novgorod and elsewhere, these *grivny* became notoriously alloyed, or debased, according to the work of Sotnikova.³⁵ In fact, as early as the 1220s, the Smolensk Treaty stipulated that a newer, purer silver *grivna* equalled four of the old *grivny*.³⁶

Therefore, we arrive not only at the Novgorodian debasement of silver *grivny* in the fourteenth century, but debasement generally. Because silver bullion was always an inelastic commodity, and since the silver content of a given coin indicated the true value of it, regardless of its provenance, rulers who had access to silver bullion were constantly tempted to debase such coins or *grivny* in order to stretch their short-term buying power. Hence, rulers, such as the Rjurikids or from any other dynasty, were constantly competing for limited precious metal resources, and newly conquered towns and territories were sure sources for such wealth. Emperors themselves had frequent recourse to debase their coinage, as Byzantine numismatists have pointed out, for the same reasons of the inelastic supply of precious metals.³⁷ This was why the era has been termed coinless: because the inelasticity (and resultant hoarding) of silver bullion precluded its use for minor business interactions and restricted it to the few who hoarded it in their increasingly elite transactions.³⁸ All other exchange or tribute payment would therefore have been conducted in kind, or in other words, via barter, regardless of imagined “borders.”³⁹

Imagined borders

Many texts attest to the ambiguity of borders and the universal use of scarce commodities such as silver. In the fifteenth century Novgorod First Chronicle, of many famines detailing

³¹ Janin, ‘Деньги и денежные системы’.

³² Sotnikova and Spasski, *Russian Coins of the X-XI Centuries A.D.*, p. 65.

³³ A. I. Pashkov, *A History of Russian Economic Thought: Ninth through Eighteenth Centuries*, (Berkeley, 1964), p. 35.

³⁴ Sotnikova and Spasski, *Russian Coins of the X-XI Centuries A.D.*, p. 328; and Franklin and Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus*, pp. 284-85.

³⁵ M. P. Sotnikova, ‘Снова о новгородском серебряном рубле-слитке XIII-XV веков’, *Труды государственного Эрмитажа*, 21 (1981), pp. 90-96.

³⁶ S. Jushkova (ed.), *Памятники русского права*, vol. II, (Moscow, 1953), 58.1. Cited in D. H. Kaiser, ‘Reconsidering Crime and Punishment in Kievan Rus’ , *Russian History*, 7 (1980b), p. 292 n56.

³⁷ C. Kaplanis, ‘The Debasement of the Dollar of the Middle Ages’, *The Journal of Economic History*, 63 (2003), pp. 768-801; C. Morrisson, ‘Byzantine Money: Its Production and Circulation’, in Laiou, A. (ed.), *The Economic History of Byzantium vol. III*, (Washington: D. C., 2002), pp. 944-46.

³⁸ Noonan, ‘The Monetary History of Kiev in the Pre-Mongol Period’, p. 404.

³⁹ Franklin and Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus*, pp. 284-85.

the steep price of grain in *grivny*, one famine is recorded for the year 1188 in which the price of a barrel of rye at six *grivny* reflected the scarcity of food. According to the source, during or immediately following the famine, Varangians from Gotland and other Germans (*nemcy*) raided the town and presumably carried off whatever commodities they could, such as *grivny*, fur, grain and anything else.⁴⁰ While the source unfortunately does not make clear if the raid was a direct cause of the famine, or if the plundering included *grivny* specifically, I believe it is fair to assume that silver, in whatever form, was a commodity as much as furs, grain or any other scarce resource. Additionally, Novgorod's position not far from the Baltic coastal frontier rendered it in a more precarious, albeit economically accessible, location than other Rjurikid-ruled towns. By the late-twelfth and thirteenth centuries, individual, nominally Rjurikid-ruled towns such as Novgorod and Smolensk signed commercial treaties with non-Rjurikid-ruled towns like Riga or those on the island of Gotland.⁴¹

Similarly, the thirteenth century Galician-Volynian Chronicle mentions southwestern towns such as Berezovichi, which was exchanged in 1287 with *grivny* supplemented with scarlet cloth, plate armor and furs by prince Vladimir Vasil'kovich. The prince stipulated that the townspeople would continue paying tribute to the Mongols, to whom the prince was still subjected.⁴² Additionally, by the mid-thirteenth century, other regions of Galicia-Volynia were incorporated under the jurisdiction of the *ius theutonicum Magdeburgense*, regulating taxes and rents in coin or kind.⁴³

Perhaps the most overt textual example of the ambiguity of borders and the universal value of *grivny* is demonstrated in the case of David Igorevich as early as the late-eleventh century. In 1097, prince David Igorevich purchased the Piasts' aid in his wars against another Rjurikid prince Vasil'ko for fifty gold *grivny*.⁴⁴ Later, at the "Liubech Congress,"⁴⁵ the ownership of towns such as Peremyshl, Buzh'sk, Duben, Chertoryysk, Dorogobuzh and Vladimir-in-Volynia, were traded between the brothers supplemented by *grivny*,⁴⁶ resembling how coins supplemented other commodities in Byzantine transactions.⁴⁷

Since precious metals were obtained primarily by war or mining, such boundaries can hardly be geographically fixed. A given ruler therefore had a limited supply of bullion with which to mint coins, reflecting an inelastic amount of bullion available.⁴⁸ Ultimately, I am arguing that this explains the lack of "Russian national" coins in circulation in Rus' during much of the eleventh-fourteenth centuries. The circulation of coinage specifically, as opposed to bullion ingots (*grivny*), at least at the peripheries of Christendom, at this time was

⁴⁰ *The Chronicle of Novgorod, 1016-1471*, R. Michell and N. Forbes (trans.) (London, 1914), pp. 33-34.

⁴¹ Jushkova, *Памятники русского права*, vol. II, pp. 57-75, 124-31.

⁴² G. A. Perfecky (trans.), *The Galician-Volynian Chronicle*, (Munich, 1973), p. 102.

⁴³ O. Kozubska-Andrusiv, 'German Law in Medieval Galician Rus', *Rechtsgeschichte*, 13 (2008), pp. 32-33.

⁴⁴ S. H. Cross and O. P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor (ed. and trans.), *PVL (Russian Primary Chronicle)*, (Cambridge, 1953), p. 195.

⁴⁵ P. B. Golden, 'Aspects of the Nomadic Factor in the Economic Development of Kievan Rus', in Koropec'kyj, I. S. (ed.), *Ukrainian Economic History: Interpretive Essays*, (Cambridge, 1991), p. 67.

⁴⁶ Cross and Sherbowitz-Wetzor, *PVL*, pp. 198-99.

⁴⁷ H. Saradi, 'Evidence of Barter Economy in the Documents of Private Transactions', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 88 (1995), p. 412-18; J. Day, 'Monetary Mechanisms, East and West', in Laiou, A. (ed.), *The Economic History of Byzantium vol. III*, (Washington D. C., 2002), p. 968; and Morrisson, 'Byzantine Money', p. 909.

⁴⁸ S. B. Soročan, 'Случайность или система? Раннесредневековый византийский меркантилизм', *Древности-1995. Харьковский историко-археологический ежегодник* (1995), pp. 122-32; M. V. Ledeneva and T. A. Plaksunova, 'Богатство в древней руси: суть, структура, формы реализации и защиты', *Вестник Волгоградского Государственного Университета*, 37 (2016), pp. 18-29.

therefore not meant as its sole function,⁴⁹ but just as conspicuously, if not more so, coins were minted for propaganda purposes: to exhibit a ruler's wealth, power and legitimacy to those he ruled. When the bullion supply ran out altogether, including of so-called "foreign" *deniers*, the relative absence of coinage between ca. the 1140s-1340s, this suggests that tax or tribute was still collected in kind⁵⁰ (the *pojjud'e*⁵¹).

I would suggest that while some scholars have taken Rus' "statehood" for granted based on the Vladimir's and Jaroslav's coinage,⁵² the very notion may be challenged quite simply by the disappearance of so-called "national" coinage during the eleventh-fourteenth centuries.⁵³ Scholars such as Aleksander Gieysztor, who have contended that Russia did not possess her own mints during the period in question and was instead saturated with "foreign" money, dramatically oversimplify anachronistic notions of Rus' statehood.⁵⁴ Silver was never valued exclusively in Russia, but was rather a universal container of tangible and inelastic wealth: there was no "foreignness" or "domesticity" with regard to silver.

In a few words, traditional assumptions of "Rus' state territory" evoke the "national" coinage attributed to Vladimir and Jaroslav while ignoring the admittedly complicated nature of Jaropolk's coinage as well as the deliberately ambiguous and universal use of *grivny*. But most anachronistically, the coinless period is rarely understood as subverting these traditional notions. If we view the Rjurikid princes not as a "national" dynasty, which is already frequently conceded as an anachronistic concept, but as an ecumenical dynasty ruling at the peripheries of the *oikouménē* alongside the Piasts and Árpáds, then the foreignness and domesticity of coinage is cast into doubt. Since historical borders can hardly be thoroughly fixed, and as we know, frontiers were constantly in flux, the Rus' coinless period needs not to be thought of in terms of foreign versus domestic, but rather in terms of bullion and barter.

⁴⁹ Additionally, Sedykh, 'Function of Coins in Graves in Rus' ', pp. 471-78, has argued, and rather convincingly, that such Christian coinage was frequently used symbolically in a burial context in late-10–early-11th-c. Rus', as opposed to traditional assumptions of monolithic usage in circulation.

⁵⁰ See Pavlova, 'The Coinless Period in the History of Northeastern Rus' ', pp. 375-92; and Zguta, 'Kievan Coinage', p. 484. However, Thompson, 'Byzantine Coins in Russia', p. 146, insinuates that the 'coinless period' begins 'from the 13th c. onward'.

⁵¹ Concerning taxation, which began as a tribute 'circuit', S. Franklin, 'On Meanings, Functions and Paradigms of Law in Early Rus' ', *Russian History*, 34 (2007), pp. 79-80, collected by a prince from his tax-collection district (*rogost*), we may note that this "circuit" has been described by Ju. M.

Kobiščankov, *Полюдь: Явление отечественной и всемирной истории цивилизации* (Moscow, 1999), pp. 220-23, as the 'round-making' of the early Rus' tribute-collecting "*pojjud'e*" – a prince's *druzhiniks* who rode around his domain collecting resources from the inhabitants of his domain (see for example V. Ja. Petrukhin, 'Феодализм перед судом русской историографии', *Одиссей: Человек в истории*, № 1 (2006), p. 164).

⁵² Pashkov, *History of Russian Economic Thought*, p. 34.

⁵³ Nevertheless, as Pavlova has made clear, the appearance of Western European coinage in 12-14th-c. "Russia" has been noted in Russian historiography as "foreign coinage." See for example V. S. Kulešov, 'Средиземноморье, балканы и восточная европа: памятники монетного обращения еврейских общин (VIII–XIII века)', *Белградский сборник: К XXIII Международному конгрессу византинистов. Белград, Сербия, 22–27 августа 2016 года*, (2016), p. 94 n49-50.

⁵⁴ A. Gieysztor, 'Trade and Industry in Eastern Europe before 1200', in Postan, M. M., E. Miller and C. Postan (eds.), *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe II*, 2nd ed., (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 506-08. See also E. Hurwitz, 1978, 'Kievan Rus' and Medieval Myopia', *Russian History*, 5 (1978), pp. 176-87.

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