

EARLY OTTOMAN COINS (14TH – 15TH C.) FROM THE REGION OF VARNA, BULGARIA

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The following article will present 21 early-Ottoman coins from the collection of Mr. Alexander Rusev from Varna, Bulgaria¹. The whole collection comprises more than 300 coins, gathered over the last 20 years and covering the entire period of the Ottoman state (the 14th – 20th century). Despite the fact that those specimens were not acquired by archaeological excavations, they still reveal valuable information about the Ottoman monetary emissions that were circulating on the Varna market during the 14th – 15th century.

The Ottoman numismatics debate over the question of the earliest minted silver coins, based on a single specimen kept in the Archaeological museum of Istanbul, Turkey. The question “Who was the first Ottoman ruler to have minted his own silver coins – Osman or Orhan Gazi?” is still pending. For now the majority of the numismatists believe that the first “akche” was minted during the reign of Orhan Gazi in 727 AH/1326 (Srećković 2002, 17). S. Srećković believes that the same ruler also minted the first anonymous Ottoman copper coins at the beginning of the 14th century (Srećković 2002, 37). The above-mentioned is still a hypothesis and for now to Orhan Gazi are attributed only silver specimens. The Ottoman coinage began at the first capitals – Bursa and Edirne respectively. With the expansion of the Ottoman Empire mints were established all around the state (Srećković 2002, 37).

The earliest specimens in the collection of Mr. Aleksandar Rusev are two coins (№ 1, 2) from the time of Orhan Gazi (1324 – 1362). The ruler's coins are in general rarity for the territories of Medieval Bulgaria. So far they have been registered on few occasions. A coin hoard comprising 25 specimens from the time of the Sultan was registered from the region of Varna or Dobrich. Unfortunately, only 6 of them are documented, due to

¹ I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Mr. Alexander Rusev for the opportunity to examine and publish this part of his collection.

the alleged theft of the rest from the Dalgopol museum in 1977 (Лазаров 1999, 18-19, № 1-6). Coins of Orhan Gazi have been also found during the archaeological excavations of the medieval fortress near Mezek village, Haskovo region (Аладжов, Петров 1985, 62.). One specimen is from the area of *Dyado Angelova cheshma*, Komarevo, Provadia region (Лазаров 1999, 19, № 7)². Two other specimens are known from a coin hoard from Shumen region (Жекова 2008).

All those findings suggest that the coin emissions of Orhan Gazi were circulating in the Bulgarian lands during the 14th century. The main question here is when exactly did they infiltrate the Balkan Peninsula? Based on the fact that most of the emissions have been found close to the Black Sea coast, L. Lazarov proposed that the coins were brought by the Venetians by sea (Лазаров 1999, 14-15). Two are the most probable version about the appearance of the Ottoman coins here. The first and most logical answer is that those coins appeared on the local market after the Ottoman conquest of the Bulgarian lands at the end of the 14th century. A second option is that the distribution began few decades earlier – in 1352 when the Ottomans captured the fortress of Tzimpe, marking the beginning of their Balkan conquest. In other words, it is possible that coins of Orhan Gazi were in circulation in the Bulgarian lands prior to their conquest.

With the Ottomans permanently settling on the Balkans, their monetary emissions became more widely spread. Coins of Murad I (1362-1389), Orhan Gazi's successor, are frequently found in the Bulgarian lands. In Mr. Rusev's collection are present two akches (№ 3, 4) and one mangir (№ 5) from the time of the ruler. They represent a valuable addition to the already known examples from his reign. Murad I was the first Ottoman ruler to put his name on copper coins, while continuing to strike the old emissions without name or mint (Srećković 2002, 37). The next Ottoman ruler – Bayezid I (1389 – 1402) is also represented by two akches (№ 6, 7) and one mangir (№ 8). His coin emissions started to appear on the Bulgarian market shortly after the Ottoman conquest of the Bulgarian lands and they became widely spread. The coins of those two rulers are found in most of the fortresses of that time³, as well as in several coin hoards⁴.

² Examining the treasure from Malamir village, Yambol region, T. Gerasimov at first mentions some coins of Orhan Gazi (Герасимов 1938, 453). Later on, in more thorough research V. Penchev has established that the earliest Ottoman coins in the hoard are from the time of Murad I (Пенчев 2006).

³ Shumen (Жекова 2006, № 1487-1507), Ovech (Лазаров 2001, № 154-162; Митев 2014, 209-206), Ryahovets (Бъчваров 1994, 113), Kaliakra (Парушев 1990, 146). In the depository of the Burgas museum are preserved two coins of these rulers (Кръстев 2014, № 1-2). The largest number of Sultan Bayezid I's coins is registered in the Old Bulgarian capital Veliko Tarnovo (Дочев 1994, 271-280; Дочев 2004, 173; Рабовянов 2010, 118).

⁴ For the treasure from Troitsa village, Preslav region see (Герасимов 1955, 408); the treasure

Emir Süleyman (1402 – 1411) is Bayezid's eldest son and ruler of Rumelia. He is the main pretender to the throne after the death of his father. He was the first Ottoman ruler to place his "tughra" (personal sign/stamp) on akche coins in 805 H (Srećković 1999, 61). The presented here specimens are one akche and three mangirs struck in 806 H. In general the Süleyman's coin emissions are common for the Bulgarian market and they are represented in this collection by one akche (№ 9) and tree mangirs (№ 10-12)⁵.

Mehmed Celebi won the Civil war of 1402-1413 in the Ottoman state and became a sultan in 1413 under the name Mehmed I (1413 – 1421). Under his rule new types of akches and mangirs were minted. The presented collection contains one interesting finding of this ruler – an akche struck in the mint of Ayasluk in 822 H (№ 13). Mehmed I's coins are well known from the Bulgarian lands in general⁶. The published here coin is a rare and interesting example, complementing the already known Mehmed I's monetary emissions of akches in circulation in these lands.

In the reviewed collection, most numerous are the coins of sultan Murad II (1421 – 1451). From 8 pieces in total, 3 are akches – 2 from the mint of Edirne in 825 H and 834 H (№ 14, 15) and 1 from Serez (№ 16). 5 specimens are mangirs – 4 of which struck in Edirne (№ 17-20) and 1 in Bursa (№ 21). The large number of Murad II's coins in Rusev's collection is not something unusual. The coins of Murad II are one of the most numerous Ottoman specimens in the period from the 15th century, found in most of the Bulgarian fortresses (Лазаров 2001, № 167-175; Жекова 2006, № 1528-1572).⁷ This fact is due to the long reign of the sultan and the stability of the state during that time. The name of Murad II is also connected with the memorable battle of Varna on November 10th, 1444, where the Ottoman army defeated the Christian forces, led by the young Polish-Hungarian king Władysław III and the Transylvanian ruler Janos

from Rousse – (Герасимов 1957, 325; Димова 1962, 82), the treasure from Matsa vilage, Sevlievo region see (Герасимов 1964, 243). From the fortress of Cherven originates a coin hoard of 436 specimens of Murad I. For that treasure see (Димова 1985, 286). For all coin hoards from the Bulgarian territories till 1992 see (Лазаров 1992, 33-51). From the region of Nikopol originates a coin hoard of 261 silver medieval pieces, 11 of them being specimens of Murad I, and 14 – from the time of Bayezid I, see (Пенчев 2010, 158). Three coins of Murad and seven of Bayezid are part of the coin hoard with silver medieval coins (14 – 15th century) from village of Malamir, district of Yambol. (Пенчев 2006, № 52-54 and № 55-61). In one hoard from the region of Shumen are presented 21 specimens (Жекова 2008).

⁵ For the spread of these coins in the Bulgarian lands see: (Лазаров 1992, 33-51; Дочев 1994, 271-280; Лазаров 2001, № 163-166; Жекова 2006, № 1508-1518 and others). In a coin hoard from Laka vilage, Pomorie region 122 of the specimens are akches of Emir Süleyman, see: (Кръстев 2014 а, № 9-130). 86 specimens of the ruler were discovered as a part of the coin hoard from the vilage of Malamir, district of Yambol (Пенчев 2006, № 62-148). One coin hoard from Ildaz Tapiya, region of Shumen, comprises 14 specimens of the ruler (Жекова 2008).

⁶ For the distribution of Mehmed I's coins see: Дочев 1994; Жекова 2006; Пенчев 2006; Митев 2014 и др.

⁷ In the city of Veliko Tarnovo 151 coins of Murad II had been found in total till 1994. Only in that fortress the coins of Murad II were exceeded by those of Bayezid I (Дочев 1994, 271-280).

Hunyadi.⁸ Władysław lost his life in that battle and the Ottoman victory definitely solidified their rule over the Balkans.

K. Dochev has established that after the conquest of Tarnovo by the Ottomans during the 90 years of the 14th century, the old coins of the Christian rulers and the new Ottoman emissions were used simultaneously as exchange money in the city (Дочев 1994, 71-73). From all the Ottoman early emissions found in the Bulgarian lands the coins of Orhan are still the least known. The quantity of the Muslim coins increasingly grew up during the reigns of Murad I and Bayezid I. After the death of Bayezid, the Ottoman emissions diminished, due to the civil war in the country between 1402 and 1413. From this episode of the Ottoman history, the most numerous coins were the ones of the ruler of Rumelia – Emir Süleyman. Mehmed I and his successor Murad II managed to stabilize the country and its economic condition, which reflected on the coinage as well. During the reign of Murad II were struck a huge amount of coins. The ratio in the collection of A. Rusev between silver and copper coins is 11 akches to 10 mangirs. Of course, this fact cannot be a general ascertainment about the early Ottoman coins in the Bulgarian lands. In special research, the author of this study has established that the copper Ottoman mangir was the main value on the Bulgarian market during the 15th century (Митев 2014 а, 515-526).

The collection of Mr. Alexander Rusev is one of great interest to the specialists of Ottoman numismatics. Amongst the reviewed early Ottoman coins are present some rarely found specimens for the Bulgarian lands (№ 1, 2, 13). The published numismatic material complements both the quality and quantity of the already known Ottoman coin specimens from the 14th – 15th centuries, circulating in the Bulgarian lands, particularly in the Varna region.

CATALOGUE:

Orhan Gazi
(1324 – 1362/724 – 763H.)

akche
Bursa

Obv. Lâilâhe illallâh
Muhammad
resûlullâh

Rev. Essultanül a'zam
Orhan bin Osman
halledallahü mülkehü (Srećković 1999, № 36).

1. AR; well centered imprint and once in a good state of preservation. D. 16-17 mm, w. 1,1g (Pl. XLVII 1).

2. AR; well centered imprint and once in a good state of preservation. D. 15,5-16 mm, w. 1,1 g (Pl. XLVII 2).

⁸ About the crusades of Władysław III Warneńczyk and Janos Hunyadi from 1443 – 1444 see Halecki 1943; Цветкова 1979; Imber 2006; Jefferson 2012, and others.

Murad I
(1362 – 1389/763 – 791H.)

akche

Obv. Murad bin Orhan

Rev. Hullide mülkehü (Srećković 1999, 33-36, № 7-26).

3. AR; well preserved specimen but part of the coin is missing. D.13-14 mm, w. 0,75 g (**Pl. XLVII 3**).

4. AR; specimen in a good state of preservation. D. 13-14mm, w. 1,25g (**Pl. XLVII 4**).

mangir

Obv. Murād b.

Orkhān

Rev. Murād b.

Orkhān (Kabaklarli 1998, Type III, 68-70).

5. AE; specimen in a poor state of preservation D. 14-16 mm, w. 1,6 g (**Pl. XLVII 5**).

Bayezid I
(1389 – 1402/791/805H.)

akche

Obv. Bayezid

bin Murad

Rev. Hullide mülkehü

792 (Srećković 1999, 43, № 5).

6. AR; well centered imprint and once in a good state of preservation. D. 12-13 mm, w. 1,00 g (**Pl. XLVII 6**).

7. AR; well centered imprint and once in a good state of preservation D. 13-14 mm, w. 1,2 g (Srećković 1999, 47, № 36) (**Pl. XLVII 7**).

mangir

Obv. Bayezid

bin Murad

Rev. Hullide mülkehü (Kabaklarli 1998, 79).

8. AE; incomplete imprint band, poor state of preservation. D. 15-17 mm, w. 1,2 g (**Pl. XLVII 8**).

Emir Süleyman
(1402 – 1411/805 – 813H.)

akche

Obv. Tughra (Emir Süleyman bin Bayezid)

Rev. Khaleefehs' names

Hullide mülkehü

806 (Srećković 1999, 69, № 2-3).

9. AR; well centered imprint and once in a superb state of preservation. D. 13-15 mm, w. 1,2 g (**Pl. XLVII 9**).

mangir

Obv. Tughrā (Āmir Sulaymān b. Bāyazid)

Rev. Khaleefehs' names

Hullide mülkehü

806 (Kabaklarli 1998, 87-88).

10. AE; incomplete imprint and poor state of preservation. D. 13-17 mm, w. 2,7 g (**Pl. XLVII 10**).

Obv. As no. 10

Rev. As no. 10

11. AE; well preserved specimen. D. 15-16 mm, w. 1,8 g (**Pl. XLVII 11**).

Obv. As no. 10

Rev. As no. 10

12. AE; D. 13-14 mm, w. 0,8 g (**Pl. XLVII 12**).

Mehmed I
(1413 – 1421/816 – 824H.)

akche
Ayasluk

Obv. Mehmed bin Bayazid

Han azza nasruhu

Rev. Hullide mülkehü

duribe Ayasluk

822 (Srećković 1999, 130, № 53).

13. AR; well centered imprint and once in a good state of preservation. D. 11-14 mm, w. 1,0 g (**Pl. XLVII 13**).

Murad II
I reign: 1421 – 1444 (824 – 848H.)
II reign: 1446 – 1451 (850 – 855H.)

akche
Edirne

Obv. 825

Murad bin Mehmed han

Rev. Hullide mülkehü

duribe Edirne (Srećković 1999, 170)

14. AR; well imprint but in a poor state of preservation. D. 14-15 mm, w. 1,1 g (**Pl. XLVII 14**).

Serez?

Obv. 825

Murad bin Mehmed han

Rev. Hullide mülkehü

duribe Serez? (Srećković 1999, 172)

15. AR; incomplete imprint and poor state of preservation. D. 12,5-13 mm, w. 0,8 g (**Pl. XLVII 15**).

Edirne

Obv. Above: Murad bin

bellow: Mehmed han

left: 83, right: 4

Rev. Hullide mülkehü

duribe Edirne (Srećković 1999, 174).

16. AR; well centered imprint and once in a superb state of preservation. D. 14,5-15 mm, w. 1,1 g (**Pl. XLVII 16**).

mangir
Edirne

Obv. Murād b.

Muhammad Khān

Azza Nasruhu

Rev. Duriba Ad.....

Hullide mülkehü (Kabaklarli 1998, 105, type 1).

17. AE; poor state of preservation. D. 17-20 mm, w. 1,8 g (**Pl. XLVII 17**).

Obv.

Rev. Duriba Ad
irna 828H.
Hullide mülkehü

18. AE; poor state of preservation. D. 15,5-18 mm, w. 2,2 g (**Pl. XLVII 18**).

Obv. Duriba Adirna

Rev. Orn.

19. AE; well preserved specimen. D. 15-16 mm, w. 2,7 g. (Kabaklarli 1998, 109-110, Type 5) (**Pl. XLVII 19**).

Obv. Tughra

Rev. Hullide...

Duriba Adirna (Kabaklarli 1998, 108-109, Type IV).

20. AE; poor state of preservation. D. 15 mm, w. 1,9 g (**Pl. XLVII 20**).

Bursa

Obv. Murad b.

Muhammad Khan

Rev. Hullide mülkehü
836H.

Duriba Bursa (Kabaklarli 1998, 119, Type II).

21. AE; well centered imprint and once in a superb state of preservation. D. 15,5-17,5 mm, w. 1,9 g (**Pl. XLVII 21**).

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TEXT TO THE ILLUSTRATIONS:

- Pl. XLVII 1.** An akche of Orhan Gazi (1324 – 1362/724 – 763H.).
- Pl. XLVII 2.** An akche of Orhan Gazi (1324 – 1362/724 – 763H.).
- Pl. XLVII 3.** An akche of Murad I (1362 – 1389/763 – 791H.).
- Pl. XLVII 4.** An akche of Murad I (1362 – 1389/763 – 791H.).
- Pl. XLVII 5.** A mangir of Murad I (1362 – 1389/763 – 791H.).
- Pl. XLVII 6.** An akche of Bayezid I (1389 – 1402/791/805H.).

- Pl. XLVII 7.** An akche of Bayezid I (1389 – 1402/791/805H.).
- Pl. XLVII 8.** A mangir of Bayezid I (1389 – 1402/791/805H.).
- Pl. XLVII 9.** An akche of Emir Süleyman (1402 – 1411/805 – 813H.).
- Pl. XLVII 10.** A mangir of Emir Süleyman (1402 – 1411/805 – 813H.).
- Pl. XLVII 11.** A mangir of Emir Süleyman (1402 – 1411/805 – 813H.).
- Pl. XLVII 12.** A mangir of Emir Süleyman (1402 – 1411/805 – 813H.).
- Pl. XLVII 13.** An akche of Mehmed I (1413 – 1421/816 – 824H.).
- Pl. XLVII 14.** An akche of Murad II – I reign: 1421 – 1444 (824 – 848H.); II reign: 1446 – 1451 (850 – 855H.).
- Pl. XLVII 15.** An akche of Murad II – I reign: 1421 – 1444 (824 – 848H.); II reign: 1446 – 1451 (850 – 855H.).
- Pl. XLVII 16.** An akche of Murad II – I reign: 1421 – 1444 (824 – 848H.); II reign: 1446 – 1451 (850 – 855H.).
- Pl. XLVII 17.** A mangir of Murad II – I reign: 1421 – 1444 (824 – 848H.); II reign: 1446 – 1451 (850 – 855H.).
- Pl. XLVII 18.** A mangir of Murad II – I reign: 1421 – 1444 (824 – 848H.); II reign: 1446 – 1451 (850 – 855H.).
- Pl. XLVII 19.** A mangir of Murad II – I reign: 1421 – 1444 (824 – 848H.); II reign: 1446 – 1451 (850 – 855H.).
- Pl. XLVII 20.** A mangir of Murad II – I reign: 1421 – 1444 (824 – 848H.); II reign: 1446 – 1451 (850 – 855H.).
- Pl. XLVII 21.** A mangir of Murad II – I reign: 1421 – 1444 (824 – 848H.); II reign: 1446 – 1451 (850 – 855H.).

EARLY OTTOMAN COINS (14TH – 15TH C.) FROM VARNA REGION

Nevyan Mitev

(Summary)

The goal of the work here presented is to release 21 early Ottoman coins from the collection of Mr. Alexander Russev from Varna. The collection contains more than 300 pieces. It has been compiled in the course of more than 20 years and covers the whole span of the Ottoman Age (14th – 20th c.). The coins here discussed are distributed as follows: Orhan Gaasi (1324 – 1362) – 2 akçes; Murad I (1362 – 1389) – 2 akçes and a mangir; Bayezid I (1389 – 1402) – 2 akçes and a mangir; Emir Suleiman (1402 – 1411) – an akçe and 3 mangirs; Mehmed I (1413 – 1421) – an akçe; Murad II (1421 – 1451) – 3 akçes and 5 mangirs.

Unfortunately, the coins have not been found during regular archaeological research and we cannot relate them to the development of a certain settlement. However, the emissions from the collection add to the quantity and quality of the well-known early Ottoman coins circulating over the Bulgarian lands.

