

The Salian Crown and its Representation on Coins: an Unknown *Hoftagsprägung* from Zurich

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Abstract

In 1956, a small coin hoard containing 20 high medieval denarii was found during an archaeological excavation at Alt-Regensberg Castle northwest of Zurich, Switzerland. The hoard was summarily published in the 1979 excavation publication, which stated that it was composed of 20 identical denarii from the Fraumünster Abbey in Zurich. During the recent digitisation of the hoard in the Swiss National Museum, it became clear that only 19 of these denarii correspond to the known Fraumünster type, while the remaining specimen can be attributed to another type. The reverse type is interpreted as a representation of the Salian crown, in a characteristic manner that also occurs on coins from several other mints. It is argued that it is the same crown that has repeatedly appeared on coins since Henry II and depicted in illuminated manuscripts since at least Otto II, and that the angular representation was merely a representational convention.

The Alt-Regensberg 1956 hoard

Alt-Regensberg castle lied south of the modern town of Regensdorf in the canton of Zurich, Switzerland (Fig. 1). It was the oldest known castle of the Regensberg dynasty, a noble family in the greater Zurich area that at times competed with the early Habsburg dynasty for influence in the region. The barons – and later counts – of Regensberg, known as the founders of abbeys (Fahr [1130], Rüti [1240/5]) and towns (Regensberg [1240/5], Glanzenberg [1240/5], Grüningen [1253], Kaiserstuhl [1254]), are descendants of baron Lütolf of Affoltern (attested 1044) who seems to have built Alt-Regensberg castle before the middle of the 11th century¹. The Alt-Regensberg 1956 hoard has been found as a compact corroded block during the excavations south of the keep in field F (see Fig. 2), directly above the oldest occupation layer².

After careful restoration the hoard has been published summarily in the monograph on the excavations at Alt-Regensberg in 1979 by Schneider³.

1 SCHNEIDER 1979: 11-12.

2 SCHNEIDER 1979: 92.

3 SCHNEIDER 1979: 92, 123, pl. 24, no. D1.

According to Schneider, the hoard of 20 coins and some fractions consisted exclusively of pennies (semi-bracteates) of a single coin type (Dbg. 1002)⁴: This well-known type with a stylised church on the obverse⁵ and an apple cross and annulets in each of the four angles on the reverse (Fig. 3) belongs to the early coinage of the Fraumünster Abbey of Zurich and can be dated to the second half of the 11th century, possibly with a longer minting period that reaches down to the first decades of the 12th century⁶. The legends on both sides are mostly illegible (pseudo legends) but may have been +MONETA on the obverse and TVRECVM on the reverse on early dies (not in the Alt-Regensberg hoard), as some specimens from the San Paolo Fuori le Mura 1843 hoard suggest (Figs 4-5)⁷.

This coin type is found in several hoards⁸, but the only chronological information that can be deduced from the hoard analysis is that Dbg. 1002 must be the predecessor of the type Dbg. 1004 (Fig. 6) and that – in absence of any specimen of Dbg. 1003 (Fig. 7) in later hoards, but also based on its rather heavy average weight – Dbg. 1002 has to follow Dbg. 1003. As Dbg. 1003 must have begun at about 1045 and rarely ever has been found together with following types from Zurich (which suggest a hiatus of several years), we therefore may conclude that Dbg. 1002 will not have been issued before 1060/70 and may probably be attributed to abess Hedwig von Wolhusen.

The additional fragments in this hoard do not seem to be the result of coin clipping, as we know it from silver hoards found in the Baltic, in Scandinavia and in the Orient, to adjust the actual weight of the coins to a theoretical weight standard: all the coins in this hoard have been fragmented, with tiny parts missing at their outer rim. So, the small fragments originally must be fragments of these coins and were collected separately as they cannot be attributed to the right coins anymore. Because of this fragmentation and the fact that the coins had to be separated from each other during conservation – which suggest additional weight loss due to corrosion –, their present weight does not represent their initial weight anymore. If we only rely on well preserved unfragmented specimens, the average weight of Dbg. 1002 is approximately 0.52 g⁹, the same weight standard as Dbg. 1003.

During the recent digitisation of the Alt-Regensberg hoard in the Swiss National Museum of Zurich, it became clear that only 19 of these *denarii*

4 DANNENBERG 1876: 375, no. 1002.

5 The definition of obverse and reverse for this type is not clear: here we follow the most common used definition with apple cross on the reverse.

6 GEIGER 1976: 34-36.

7 MOREL-FATIO 1850: 16 and pl. XII, nos. 37, 39.

8 See e.g. the list of hoards in GEIGER 1976: 35.

9 Based on all the specimens in the collection of the Swiss National Museum, in addition to other, published specimens.

correspond to Dbg. 1002, while the remaining specimen – although very similar to Dbg. 1002 – should be identified as another type, that – although already published¹⁰ – has not yet been recognised as a completely different type.



Fig. 1. Landscape with ruins of the castle Alt-Regensberg. Johannes Meyer the older (1614-66), mid-17th century, Swiss National Museum, Zurich.

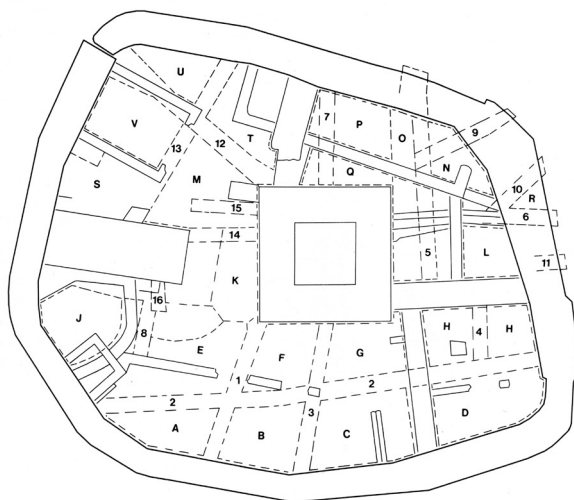


Fig. 2. Plan of the excavation sections of the castle Alt-Regensberg, as executed by Schneider during his excavations from 1555 to 1557, Swiss National Museum, Zurich.
The coin hoard has been found in field F south of the keep.

¹⁰ GEIGER 1984: 63, no. 2.



Fig. 3. Zurich, Fraumünster abbey, penny, c. 1060/70-1100, Dbg. 1002, Swiss National Museum, Zurich (inv. EA-5).

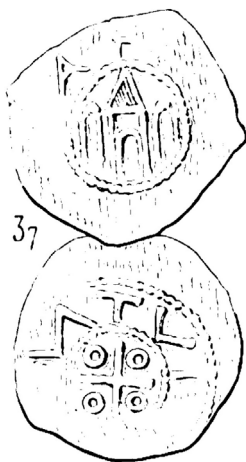


Fig. 4. Zurich, Fraumünster abbey, penny, c. 1060/70, Dbg. 1008, Rome, San Paolo fuori le mura 1843 hoard (MOREL-FATIO 1850: 16 and pl. XII, nos. 37).



Fig. 5. Zurich, Fraumünster abbey, penny, c. 1060/70, Dbg. 1008, Rome, San Paolo fuori le mura 1843 hoard (MOREL-FATIO 1850: 16 and pl. XII, nos. 39).



Fig. 6. Zurich, Fraumünster abbey, penny, c. 1120-40, Dbg. 1004, Swiss National Museum, Zurich (inv. AG.SLG-483).



Fig. 7. Zurich, Fraumünster abbey, penny, c. 1045-60, Dbg. 1003, Swiss National Museum, Zurich (inv. AG.SLG-479).

The new coin type

It comes as no surprise that this new coin type (Fig. 8) has been overlooked by Schneider and several following curators. Its fabric is the same as that of Dbg. 1002 and the reverse type with an apple cross and annulets in each of the four angles is identical too. Even the obverse – although it shows a different motif – is essentially modelled on the outline of the church building on the obverse of Dbg. 1002 with its ridge roof. The obverse motif of this new coin type must be identified as a stylised depiction of the Salian crown as will be attempted to be demonstrated below, supplemented by a star underneath. The depiction of this crown is not a first for the mint of Zurich (Fig. 9)¹¹, even though in form of another, angular iconography, probably inspired by depictions on coins from Constance (cfr. Fig. 29), has been adopted for this new issue to fit better to the obverse of Dbg. 1002.

This coin with its royal reverse type must be interpreted as a *Hoftagsprägung*, issued during the presence of the king or emperor at the *Pfalz* in Zurich. It has its counterpart in a *Hoftagsprägung* that imitates the later type Dbg. 1004,

¹¹ WEISS 2019: 129-133.

depicted by Hottinger (Fig. 10)¹². Because of the dating of Dbg. 1002, the new type must be attributed to Henry IV (1056-1105). Rudolphe von Rheinfelden is not a possibility, as the Counts of Lenzburg, who held the *Vogtei* of the Fraumünster, were clearly in favour of Henry IV and would certainly not have allowed Rudolf to issue royal coins in Zurich.

The only other known specimen of this type – the one published by Geiger who erroneously interpreted the crown as a church building – is part of the collection of the Coin Cabinet Winterthur (Fig. 11). This better preserved, unfragmented specimen weights 0.57 g and lies within the weight range of well-preserved coins of Dbg. 1002 (0.50-0.58 g).

Both obverse and reverse come from different dies than the Alt-Regensberg coin so there must have been at least two pair of dies for this type, which – considering that this must be a *Hoftagsprägung* – hints to a larger scale minting in a short amount of time.



Fig. 8. Zurich, *Hoftagsprägung*, Henry IV (1054-1105), penny, c. 1060/70–1100, Swiss National Museum, Zurich (inv. AZ-6496).



Fig. 9. Zurich, royal mint, Conrad II (1024–39), penny, c. 1030-34, Dbg. 1263, Swiss National Museum, Zurich (inv. M-4233).

12 HOTTINGER 1702: no. 1a. Meyer (MEYER 1840: 46-47), followed by Dannenberg (DANNEBERG 1876: 376 with note 1), discredited the drawing and description by Hottinger as a misread Dbg. 1004, because Hottinger identified the throning king on the obverse as Charlemagne and compared it with the sculpture at the *Grossmünster* in Zurich, depicted on later gold coins. But as all the other drawings by Hottinger are highly accurate, a *Hoftagsprägung* from the time of Dbg. 1004 seems more likely.



Fig. 10. Zurich, *Hoftagsprägung*, Lothair III (1125-37) or Conrad III (1125-37)?, penny, c. 1120-40 (HOTTINGER 1702: no. 1a).



Fig. 11. Zurich, *Hoftagsprägung*, Henry IV (1054-1105), penny, c. 1060/70-1100, Münzkabinett Winterthur (inv. S 7233, 0.574 g, 24.3 mm; acquired before 1871).

The Salian crown and its depiction on coins

When referring to the “Salian crown”, there has to be a distinction between several crowns known from this era. While the burial crowns of Conrad II, Gisela, Henry III and Henry IV (Figs 12-15) were simplified crowns¹³, made out of sheet bronze or copper, that were produced for the burial ceremony only and were not used during the reigns of these rulers, there is one prominent specimen, commonly called “Imperial crown” (*Reichskrone*) (Fig. 16) – now in the Hofburg’s Imperial Treasury in Vienna, affiliated with the Kunsthistorisches Museum of Wien. This crown is often cited as “the Salian crown”, and Schulze-Dörlamm has rightly pointed out why it probably dates to Salian times¹⁴, but it has in fact never been depicted in contemporary sources before the 13th century¹⁵.

13 HEEG *et alii* 2011: 38 (Conrad II), 40-41 (Gisela), 42 (Henry III), 44-45 (Henry IV).

14 SCHULZE-DÖRLAMM 1991.

15 Kunsthistorisches Museum, Wien, Schatzkammer, inv. WS XIII 1. One of the earliest – if not the earliest – depiction of this crown seems to be on the imperial seal of Frederick II

Instead, a much simpler crown – that does not seem to have survived into our time – is shown in many illuminated miniatures from the end of the 10th century onwards that resembles the Ottonian-Salian crown depicted on the coins: the Master of the *Registrum Gregorii* depicts the deceased emperor Otto II with this crown in the same angular way (Fig. 17) as it is depicted on the new coin type; even the four surrounding personifications of *Germania*, *Francia*, *Italia*, *Alemannia* wear a similar crown¹⁶. The same depiction of this crown is also shown in the Gospels of Otto III (Fig. 18), a work of the *Reichenauer Schule*, to be dated only about a decade later, during the reign of Otto III (983-1002) or the beginning of the reign of Henry II (1002-24)¹⁷. Again, The same angular depiction is also shown in the Gospels of St. Emmeram (Fig. 19), dated to c. 1100, now in the Library of the Cracow Cathedral Chapter¹⁸. Another identical depiction of the crown can be found in the *Codex Eberhardi*, dating c. 1150-56 (Fig. 20)¹⁹. The appearance of this type of crown does not start much later on coins than in illuminated manuscripts or on seals. They begin with Henry II (1002-24) and reach down to at least Henry IV (1054-1105), with examples from all over the empire: Dinant, Utrecht, Maastricht, un undefined Maasland mint and Lübeck in the north (Figs 21-25), Mainz, Regensburg and Speyer in central Germany (Figs 26-28) and Constance in the south (Fig. 29).



Fig. 12. Burial crown of Conrad II (1024-39) Speyer, Historical Museum of the Palatinate, Cathedral and Diocesan Museum collection (inv. D 4).

(1212-50): POSSE 1909: 29, no. 1.

16 Musée Condé, Chantilly, France, inv. PE 102 (402 I) = Ms. 14bis.

17 Bavarian State Library, Clm 4453, fol. 24r.

18 *Cracow Cathedral Chapter*, Cod. 208, fol. 1r.

19 Hessian State Archives, Marburg, *Codex Eberhardi*, K 425, fol. 129r.



Fig. 13. Burial crown of queen consort Gisela (†1043), Speyer, Historical Museum of the Palatinate, Cathedral and Diocesan Museum collection (inv. D 5).



Fig. 14. Burial crown of Henry III (1039-56), Speyer, Historical Museum of the Palatinate, Cathedral and Diocesan Museum collection (inv. D 509).



Fig. 15. Burial crown of Henry IV (1056-1105), Speyer, Historical Museum of the Palatinate, Cathedral and Diocesan Museum collection (inv. D 7).



Fig. 16. Imperial Crown of the Holy Roman Empire, Imperial Treasury, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Wien, (inv. Schatzkammer, WS XIII 1).



Fig. 17. Otto II, surrounded by the personifications of *Germania, Francia, Italia, Alemannia*. *Registrum Gregorii*, Musée Condé, Chantilly, France (inv. PE 102 (402 I) = Ms. 14bis).



Fig. 18. Otto III surrounded by two military men and two clergy, dedication miniature. *Gospels of Otto III*, Bavarian State Library (Cm 4453, fol. 24r.).



Fig. 19. Henry V, Gospels of St. Emmeram, Library of the Cracow Cathedral Chapter (Cod. 208, fol. 1r.).



Fig. 20. Lothair III, *Codex Eberhardi*, Hessian State Archives, Marburg (K 425, fol. 129r.).



Fig. 21. Dinant, Henry II (1002/14-24), penny (Jean Elsen, auction 143, 2019, lot 1062).



Fig. 22. Utrecht, Henry II (1002/14-24), penny (Warszawskie Centrum Numizmatyczne, auction 63, 2016, lot 79).



Fig. 23. Maastricht, Henry III (1039-56), penny (ILISCH 2014: 329–330, no. 40.23; Künker, eLive auction 72, 2022, lot 530).



Fig. 24. Unidentified Maasland mint, penny c. 1100-20 (ILISCH 2014: 268–269, no. 35.20).



Fig. 25. Lübeck, Frederick I (1152-90), penny (Münzzentrum Rheinland, auction 167, 2013, lot 3345).



Fig. 26. Mainz, Henry III (1039-56), penny (Busso Peus, auction 398, 2009, lot 1843).



Fig. 27. Regensburg, Henry IV (1056-1105), penny (Künker, auction 165, 2010, lot 2409).



Fig. 28. Speyer, Henry III (1039-56), penny (Künker, auction 266, 2015, lot 1632).



Fig. 29. Constance, Henry II (1002/14-24), penny (Meister & Sonntag, auction 14, 2012, lot 1450).

While all these mentioned depictions of that crown do not show a clear frontal centre bar or hinge – the front centre seems to be the place of a gemstone instead –, there exists a variant with a clear central bar, often without indication of any gemstones at all. Such a segmented variant of the angular form is already shown on a seal type of Conrad II (1027-39) (Fig. 30) and appears in parallel to the one without central bar throughout the Ottonian, Salian and Staufen times, covering again the whole empire from north to south (Figs 31-35). In rare cases, there even exist both variants within the same coin type (Figs 25, 33). It therefore seems clear that both angular depictions – with or without central bar – are meant to show the same crown, as they seem to be interchangeable in time and space.

But there is – as we have seen – another iconography for the crown of the Holy Roman Empire: the crown on the royal issue of Conrad II from Zurich (Fig. 9). This crown – also characterised by a thin band with one centre line of dots (gemstones or pearls) – does not end in an angle at the front but has an even circlet. Most of the illustrations of this type show the same variants of upper decoration as the angular crown, sometimes simplified by simple lines ending in dots like the Conrad issue from Zurich, sometimes more detailed, allowing to identify them as a cross in the front and probably lilies on the other sides (Fig. 36)²⁰. In some depictions – also similar to the angular type – the crown is shown with added *pendilia* (Fig. 37). Without the cross, the lilies and the *pendilia* (Fig. 38)²¹, it resembles somewhat the iron or Lombard crown, but this cannot be the intended crown as the coins and the illuminated manuscripts do not refer to the *Regnum Italicum* but to the Holy Roman Empire. In the early and high Middle Ages, most crown fittings such as lilies and crosses were later additions and often removable²². The same is valid for the *pendilia* – they sometimes were even attached to a separate leather or woollen cap that was worn under the crown.

The mere fact that this non-angular representation is used for the same rulers and in the same geographical areas as the angular representation indicates that it must be just a different iconography for the same crown. Especially when we look at the images in profile view (Fig. 39), where no differences are recognisable.

But how should we explain the different iconographical traditions that seem to have existed in parallel for quite some time? Maybe the central frontal bar or hinge of many of the angular depictions of that crown could give us an idea. If it was in fact a hinge – and this is most likely the case, as this was rather the norm than the exception for early crowns²³ – then this would allow the crown to be worn more in the form of an ellipse resulting in the characteristic angle on the front if the crown were worn slightly rising from the back to the front, as the profile views show. This flexibility of the crown would have allowed to adapt to different head sizes, especially important for adolescent kings.

20 For the combination of a frontal cross with lilies at the sides and in the back on Salian crowns, see the burial crowns from Speyer, figures 12-15.

21 The abdication of Henry IV in favour of Henry V, *Chronica Ekehardi Urungensis*, State Library of Berlin, Cod. lat. 295, fol. 99r.

22 See e. g. the frontal cross and the hoop of the Imperial crown of the Holy Roman Empire.

23 Both the Lombard Iron crown and the Imperial crown of the Holy Roman Empire are made from several parts, joined by hinges. It was only later that the circlets were fixated with an additional inner ring.



Fig. 30. Seal of Conrad II (1024-39). Facsimile cast by Hermann Eitzen, Reutlingen.



Fig. 31. Tiel, Henry II (1002/14-24), penny (Antykwariat Michal Niemczyk, auction 38, 2003, lot 2898).



Fig. 32. Dinant, Henry II (1002/14-24), penny (ILSCH 2014: 178-179, no. 30.4).



Fig. 33. Lübeck, Frederick I (1152-90), penny (Künker, auction 349, 2021, lot 5060).



Fig. 34. Duisburg, Frederick I (1152-90), penny (Münzzentrum Rheinland, auction 183, 2018, lot 3469).



Fig. 35. Strasbourg, Henry II (1002/14-24), penny (Künker, eLive auction 76, 2023, lot 7241).



Fig. 36. Constance, Henry III (1039-56), penny (Meister & Sonntag, auction 3, 2005, lot 1796; from the Ludwiszcze hoard).



Fig. 37. Celles, Henry III (1039-56), penny (Künker, auction 37, 2018, lot 318).



Fig. 39. Duchy of Bavaria, Conrad II (1024-39), penny (Künker, auction 292, 2017, lot 6614).

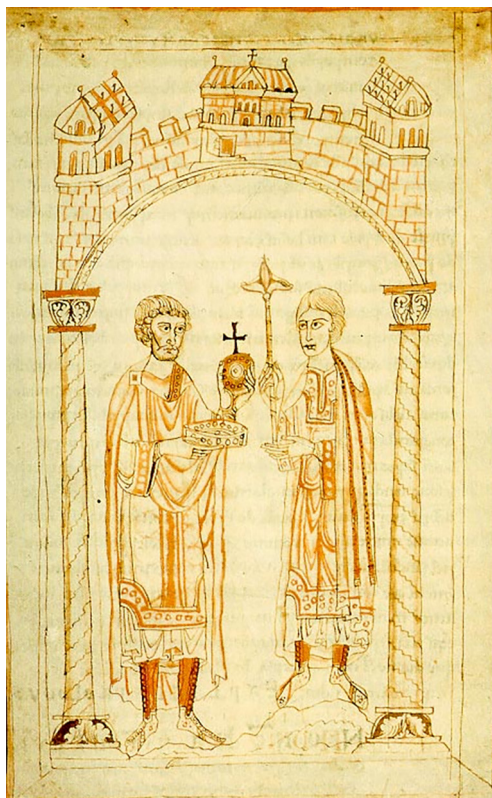


Fig. 38. Henry IV (1056-1105) hands over the crown, globus cruciger and sceptre to his son and successor Henry V (1099–1125). Chronicle of Ekkehard of Aura, State Library Berlin, Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz (Cod. Lat. 295, fol. 99r).

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