

CITY OF KOTOR ISSUE UNDER SERBIAN NEMANJIC FAMILY RULE (1186-1369)

COULD THIS COIN BE MINTED DURING THE RULE OF GRAND PRINCE STEFAN NEMANJA?



ZELJKO KNEZEVIC

Copper half follaro "cross" type. 16mm, 0.600g.

Obverse: Large cross in the middle. Latin description: + CATARENSIS • (KOTOR) around.

Reverse: Bust of Saint Trifon in the middle. Latin description: Θ • SANTVS TRIPHON (SAINT TRIFON) around.

Reference: Jov 25 4.2, Dobrinic 1.2.3.1-26



Comment: Extremely rare and hard to find Kotor copper half follaro. In very good condition with a lot of details and most letters visible.

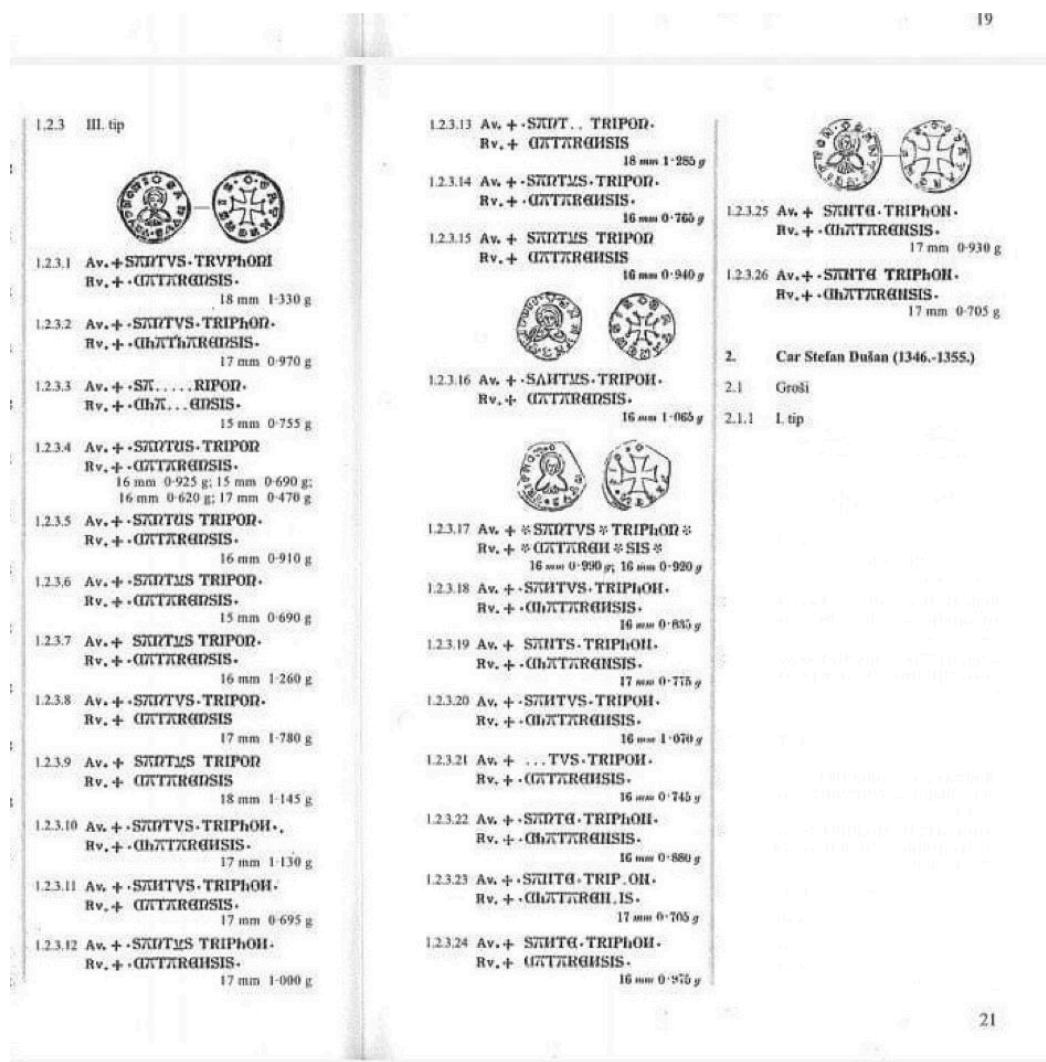
All known examples have a small plus or cross above bust of saint to mark a beginning of description, this is only known example with a different mark, it looks like a Greek letter Θ (Theta).

Jovanovic in his catalogue from 2012 published 2 examples claiming he has registered and recorded 5: 17mm, 1.93g; 16mm, 1.12g; 17mm, 0.93g; 16mm, 0.78g and 17mm, 0.75g. One is with smaller cross and other one is with larger cross in the middle. Differences in weight are probably indicating that here we have follaro and half follaro.



Jovanovic catalogue from 2012 with pictures of two examples.

Dobrinic in his catalogue from 2003 has a list of 26 examples and unfortunately only images of 4 drawings.



Dobrinic catalogue from 2003 with drawings of four examples.

I have only seen 4, 3 in 2 private collections and one sold on Italian auction Alberto Varesi E-Live Auction 7 Part II 6th February 2022, Lot 392.



Example from Alberto Varesi E-Live Auction 7, Part II, Lot 392.

It could have been minted at any time between 1186 and 1369, from the rule of Serbian grand prince Stefan Nemanja (1166-1196) until the rule of Serbian second emperor Uros (1355-1371)!

Large cross in the middle on the obverse is very similar to an Insignia of the Knights Hospitaller and Knights Templar, the Maltese cross, and it's very common on crusaders coins like Italian, Spanish and German coins.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

On April 24, 1147 It was Pope Eugene III on the occasion of the departure of the army for Second Crusade (1147-1149), who allowed the Knights Templar to wear the cross on their clothes. It is reasonable to assume that after 1147 large cross started appearing on the coins.

Roger II king of Sicily from 1130 and king of Africa from 1148 until 1154, in Messina minted a crusaders follaro type with a large cross in the middle.



Crusaders Messina mint, follaro of Roger II King of Sicily and Africa.

After the Third Norman invasion of the Balkans and territories under Byzantine empire (1185–1186), Serbian grand prince Stefan Nemanja took control of the city of Kotor.

Capturing Jerusalem following year in 1187, Ayyubid sultan Salah al-Dīn triggered The Third Crusade that lasted from 11th May 1189 until 2nd September 1192.

On the way to Jerusalem, a large crusader army led by Holy Roman emperor Frederick Barbarossa marched in 1189 from Buda through Belgrade and Niš to Adrianople and Constantinople. In Niš, in the new capital of grand prince Stefan Nemanja, the German emperor Barbarossa and the Serbian grand prince Stefan Nemanja met at the end of July 1189, forming a new friendship.



The 1189 Meeting of Stefan Nemanja and Frederick Barbarossa (19th century work by Kosta Mandrović). Notice Nemanja flag behind him.

Frederick Barbarossa drowned attempting to cross the Saleph river, a year later, in 1190 and in response the Byzantines attacked Serbia, following year, in 1191, raiding at the South Morava river. Nemanja had a tactical advantage and began to respond by raiding the Byzantine armies. Isaac II Angelos summoned a peace treaty and the marriage of Nemanja's son Stefan Nemanjic to princess Eudokia Angelina, the niece of Isaac II, was arranged. Stefan Nemanjić also received the Byzantine title of sebastokrator.

The Fourth Crusade followed 1202-1204 during which Constantinople was sacked and Latin Empire established. Serbia had very close relationship with Venice, crusaders and the Roman church resulting in Stefan Nemanjic getting crown from the pope Honorius III (1216 - 1227) in 1217 and establishing Serbian Kingdom.

COULD THIS COIN BE MINTED AND ISSUED DURING THE THIRD CRUSADE?

If it is, then it is the earliest Nemanjic coin predating Serbian flag or banner matapan silver type on which same Maltese cross appears. All Serbian matapan silver grosso coins minted throughout 13th century up to the rule of king Stefan Uros II Milutin 1282-1321, have the Maltese cross on the flag or banner held by both the king and the saint Stefan with the exception of few having saint Andrew's cross mostly at the time of king Dragutin 1276-1282.



Matapan type of Serbian kings Stefan The First Crowned 1217-1228, Uros The Great 1243-1276, Stefan Dragutin 1276-1282 and Stefan Uros II Milutin 1282-1321 with Maltese cross on the flag.

If it is it would also be the only Serbian coin known to be minted during the life and rule of the founder of the medieval Serbian state of All Serbian Lands and Maritime, grand prince Stefan Nemanja (1166-1196, died 1199). It would make it the only known Nemanja coin and therefore of extreme historical importance!

So could this be the first appearance of the Maltese cross on Serbian medieval coins predating silver matapan type? Question remains open!

COULD THIS COIN BE MINTED AND ISSUED DURING THE FOURTH CRUSADE?

It could also be issued during The Fourth Crusade 1202-1204 which happened during the rule of grand prince Stefan Nemanjic (grand prince 1196-1217, king Stefan The First Crowned 1217-1228). If that's the case then this is the only known coin minted by Stefan Nemanjic as a grand prince! It would predate his silver issues by around 15 years!

Grand prince Stefan Nemanja and his son Stefan had a red flag with a white Maltese cross in the middle. TV series "Nemanjic - The Birth of the Kingdom" also heavily used this flag throughout. Could this flag have found its way on this follaro type coin? We don't know for sure.



Scene of the wedding of grand prince Stefan Nemanjic and princess Eudokia Angelina in 1191 from the TV series "Nemanjic - The Birth of the Kingdom". Red flag with the white Maltese cross is hanging on the wall behind.



Scene of the king Stefan The First Crowned with the army from the TV series "Nemanjic - The Birth of the Kingdom". Red flag with the white Maltese cross is behind him.

Today same cross could be found carved on the architrave of the St Mary's Collegiate Church in Kotor. Built in 1221 on the site of a 6th-century basilica.



Maltese cross carved on the architrave of the St Mary's Collegiate Church in Kotor. Built in 1221 on the site of a 6th-century basilica.



Maltese cross carved on the architrave of the St Mary's Collegiate Church in Kotor. Built in 1221 on the site of a 6th-century basilica.

COULD THIS COIN BE MINTED AND ISSUED LATER DURING THE 13TH CENTURY?

It could have been minted during the 13th century but it's less likely that it was minted during the 14th century because Maltese cross on the flag started to be replaced with a double cross during the rule of Serbian kings Dragutin 1276-1282 and Milutin 1282-1321.

Another interesting point is that on the obverse description is CATARENSIS or Kotor there is no Latin for the city, CIVITAS! That means that coin is issued before Kotor has a city status! According to one reference that status was given in 1301 during the rule of Serbian king Milutin. With this information we can conclude that Kotor follaro types can therefore be dated 1186-1301 if CIVITAS is missing and 1301-1369 if CIVITAS is present.

What is crusaders relationship with Serbian kings Radoslav, Vladislav, Uros The Great, Dragutin and Milutin?

The Fifth Crusade (1217–1221) was a campaign that ended up in failure by Hungary, Austria, Portugal and France.

The Sixth Crusade (1228–1229), also known as the Crusade of Frederick II, involved very little actual fighting it was mainly a diplomatic manoeuvring to regain Jerusalem.

The Seventh Crusade (1248–1254) was the first of the two Crusades led by Louis IX of France. Also known as the Crusade of Louis IX to the Holy Land.

The Eighth Crusade (18 Jul 1270 – 30 Oct 1270) was the second Crusade launched by Louis IX of France, against the Hafsids in Tunisia. The Crusade did not see any significant fighting as King Louis died of dysentery shortly after arriving in Tunisia.

The Ninth Crusade (1271–1272) was King Edward's crusade, a military expedition to the Holy Land under the command of Edward, Duke of Gascony (future King Edward I of England). It was an extension of the Eighth Crusade and was the last of the Crusades to reach the Holy Land before the fall of Acre in 1291.

Serbia nor the city of Kotor had no relation nor involvement in these crusades!

Still like most follaro coins from Kotor and Ulcinj medieval coastal cities, this issue is thought to be minted during the second Serbian emperor Uroš rule between 1355 and 1369. What is unlikely. In 1369 city of Kotor fell under Venetian rule.

In any case it is very interesting, wonderful and mysterious coin full of history having a great potential.

If you have this coin my advice is to hang on to it, in time it could turn out to be of extreme historical importance.

This example is part of my personal collection and it's not for sale.