

Royal Coin for Bjarki and Gabrielle, Æthelmearc Reign 53.

Rus' 10<sup>th</sup> c.

“The Coinless Period”

**“They pay to each other using old squirrel pelts with no fur. They string them with a strong thread, every 18 to a bundle, and attach a piece of black lead with the seal of their king. Nobody can refuse them; they buy and sell with it.”**

Abu Hamid al-Gharnati, Arabic Traveler to Kiev, 1150

### I. The Coinless Period

Rus culture solidified in the 10<sup>th</sup> century in three main centers: Kiev, Novgorod, and Polotsk. Prior to the formation of the Rus kingdoms, the most commonly-used coins in these regions were of Arabic issue, including the Kufic Dirham.



Kufic Dirham, 8<sup>th</sup> c. Typical of Arabic coins from this period, there are no images, only script.  
Note the puncture hole for use in Viking jewelry

Limited coinage was struck by the Rus kingdoms in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, mostly copies of Arabic coins. But by the mid-11<sup>th</sup> century, coinage (both foreign and domestic) had disappeared from the Rus kingdoms. For the next 300 years, the Rus traded with furs or silver ingots. These ingots (called “grivna”) were a form of hard currency, worth their weight in bullion. They were replaced by rods of silver called “irzoy”, “som”, or “rouble”, which eventually received stamps of authenticity from local rulers.

In 1245, the Kingdom of Russia was established and was immediately conquered by the Great Horde. No coins were struck that century. It was not until 1349, when Lvov became part of the Kingdom of Poland, that Russian coins were struck under the auspices of the Polish king, Casimir the Great.

## II. Pre-Coinless Coins

Coins survive mostly from the Kievan Ruthenia (kingdom of Kiev), from mints in Kiev and Tmutarakan. The earliest of these is an imitation of an Arabic coin but with a falcon and cross. The images serve to distinguish the Rus coin from its Arabic precursors, which had only script on obverse and reverse.



Rus coin (falcon and cross), 10<sup>th</sup> c., imitating Kufic Dirham  
This coin has been punctured for hanging twice – once with a rivet and once with just a hole.

Later issues were similar in style to Byzantine coins, but with Keivan symbology on the reverse.



Yaroslav the Wise (1010-1016) silver coin with Byzantine-style obverse.  
The trident on the reverse is the symbol of the Rurikids, the Kievan monarchy.



Two 11<sup>th</sup> c. Byzantine-style coins from Vladimir the Great showing inscriptions. The obverse on such coins would have inscriptions such as “ВЛАДИМИРЪ НА СТОЛЪ” (Vladimir on the Throne) or “ВЛАДИМИРЪ А СЕ ЕГО ЗЛАТО” (Vladimir and his Gold). Alternatively, the coin might be inscribed “This is Vladimir on the Throne” (obverse) “And This is his Silver” (reverse). Note the elaborate trident on the reverse of the silver coin.

### III. SCA Modifications

For the obverse of the Æthelmarc coin, we have chosen to reproduce the first known Rus coin, from the 10<sup>th</sup> c. The falcon and cross are iconic to this coin. We have substituted Cyrillic instead of Arabic for the inscription, and taken inspiration from later Rus coins for the inscription: “Bjarki on the Throne”. For the reverse, we have recreated the Kievan trident from the 11<sup>th</sup> c. We wish to have our Queen’s name on the coins, but still use medieval examples, so the reverse reads “Gabrielle and her Gold”.



### IV. Bibliography

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