

A Rare Rune Combination on R8 Sceatta.

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The Runic R Series Sceatta have many different combinations of runes before the bust on the obverse of the coin. Below are images of two coins from my collection, a further coin registered as both EMC 1991.5020 and EMC 1997.0169, can be seen on the EMC database. The bottom image (of CT85) has a rather angry look to the face as does the coin on the EMC database mentioned above. The runes can be seen in front of the bust, all of the symbols and artwork appear somewhat eroded by its thousand plus years underground. Much of the artwork on coins of the R series could be termed as crudely designed and not very precisely struck, however, both of these coins have a fairly central strike on the flan which allows nearly all of the runes to be visible. Page⁽¹⁾ comments that *"Of course the dies were hand-cut, and so no two dies would be identical. Hence Anglo-Saxon coinage has little of the mechanical uniformity of appearance of modern currency."*



EMC 2015.0164



CT85

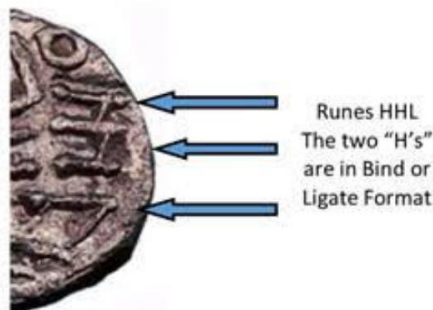
Many different combination of runes were used on the obverse flans of the R series⁽²⁾, EPA, GEPA, EA, EP, ER, RHY and SPI were the most common, ES is quite unusual as is the combination of EAP. The later Wigraed (R 10) and Tilberht (R11) coins had their names in runes.

Although I have described the runes on the coins above, in a little detail below, I consider the iconography of the runes to be of paramount importance rather than the epigraphic content in recognising different classes or types of R8 coins. Whether the depiction of the “H” (9) rune on the coin indicates an element of a name or has the meaning of OE “Hægl” (hail) is less relevant than the fact that the artwork is quite different in shape from other R8 types and therefore another class within the R8 continuum. The same applies to the “L” (21) rune OE “Lagu” (lake).

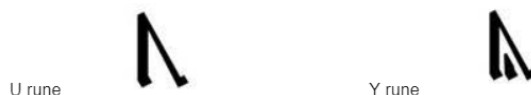
The coins appear to have the combination of HHL which would appear as below if *not* in ligate form.

HHL

The shape of runes in the Anglo-Saxon *futhorc* did evolve during the first half of the eighth century, it also appears that the shape of the runes cut into the dies became quite stylised and some were cut in bind/ligate format. All of the coins appear to have two “H’s” in bind/ligate form. Page uses the Dickins-Page system of transliteration in his book and shows a chart of English epigraphical runes with roman equivalents. The “H” rune (number 9) is the only character with a vertical line on each side with two forward facing and downward sloping lines connecting the vertical lines. The rune glyphs do not have two inter-connecting sloping lines but one. Some Sceatta with the rune combination of RHY do have double angled lines between the two uprights of the “H”.



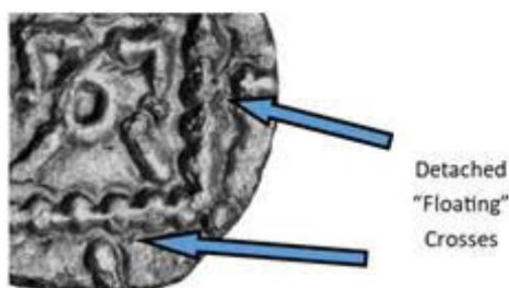
Page mentions that “Some runic glyphs are so elementary that accidental scratches or cuts may resemble them, as in the cases of ...” he lists a number of runes, the last being L. Having enlarged the image above on the computer to 1200 dpi and studied it in detail I am of the opinion that the L, the last runic character of the three, is an intentional L and not a scratch. I think that confusion with the rune u (2) can be discounted as the 45° angled downward sloping line, on the coin pictured above, does not extend to the bottom of the vertical line. The only other rune that it is similar is the y (27) rune but again at 1200 dpi no middle element is visible and the angled line on the coin does not extend down far enough.



The head/bust on the obverse of my two coins are clearly not the same as each other. If the runes are HHL then this would indicate that at least two distinct issues/strikes were made using this rune combination. If coin EMC 1991.5020 & EMC 1997.0169 is not a die match with CT85 does this multiply to three? See below.

Although the top of the head is very near the flan edge 2015.0164 does not appear to have a crown but may have a crown line, CT85 definitely has what looks like a three-point pyramidal crown. There

is no clearly visible ear on 2015.0164 but it does have two obvious lip lines, CT85 seems to have what is often an ear on the R8 coins, a crescent pommée, where its mouth should be. The three annulets, chevron and beaded exergual lines are as one would expect to see on an R8 obverse.



The reverse of the coin, 2015.0164 has a style of cross pommée midpoint on each external side of the standard that is quite usual in R8 types. The midpoint crosses outside of the standard on the reverse of coin CT85 are very unusual, they appear to be detached from the standard, “floating”. Other aspects of the iconography on the reverse of both coins are common in R8 coins. Some of the early R series coins, the R3, have unbarred crosses outside of the standard, however, the upright line of the cross is attached to the standard so they do not appear to be “floating”.

EMC 2015.0164 has a weight of 0.91g and has a die axis of 180°, CT85 is slightly heavier weighing 1.08g and has a die axis of 0°. Both coins have a diameter of approximately 12mm. Earlier types of the R series coins often have much more obvious crowns and are often slightly heavier. The style of the EMC registered coin’s head/bust is similar to that of the later varieties of the R continuum.

There is a coin, very similar in many aspects to CT85, that is registered on the EMC as EMC 1991.5020/1997.8169, this weighs 1.23g. The reverse is very offset, but this does allow easier examination of the “floating” crosses on one side. This is only the second “angry face” coin I have seen and the third with an HHL combination of runes.

I refer to coins by their registered EMC numbers if they have one. CT85 does not have a find spot therefore cannot be registered, I have identified it in this blog by adding the Type number R8 type 85 I have allocated to it on my website⁽³⁾. If other examples of this runic style/combination exist I would be pleased to know about them.

References

1. Page, R.I. 2006 *An Introduction to English Runes* 2nd Ed. Ch9 ‘Runic Coins’ p119 The Boydell Press
2. Timms, C. http://www.r8sceattatypes.website/r8_and_r8r_type_identification_images.html
3. Timms, C. http://www.r8sceattatypes.website/hhl_type_80_to_89.html

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