A SERIES CZ SCEAT WITH RUNIC LEGENDS ON BOTH OBVERSE AND REVERSE

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THE defining characteristic of Series CZ sceattas is the horizontal bar of the large cross on the reverse forming the lower line on the standard. Often, a tufa is present as well as 'horns' above the standard, as in Series A. The obverse, as with other Series C sceattas, shows a right facing crowned bust, with runes before: usually **æpa**.[1] Series CZ is the rarest of the Series C sceattas, with only eight listed in the EMC/SCBI database, two in the Portable Antiquities Scheme database, one in Anna Gannon's published catalogue of English and related continental coins of $c.600-760$ in the British Museum, two known from dealers' sales lists and auctions, and a few in private collections.[2] Twelve examples are listed in Table 1 below, with their visible characteristics. It is hoped that additional specimens will appear to increase our knowledge about Series CZ and Series C in general. On a very few of the Series CZ sceattas, and on at least one specimen of Series C1, inv. (with the tufa at the bottom of the standard on the reverse rather than at the top), runes are seen on the reverse, as well as on the obverse. The purpose of this note is to attempt to understand why this happened, and to discuss possible meanings of the reverse-side runes.

TABLE 1. Series CZ sceattas[3]

Obverse runes	Reverse: right	Reverse: top	References
æpa	**ioæga**	Tufa	'Beowulf' collection, Abramson 2008, 128, no. 9
æpa	Cross or Roman T	**s** (or inverted **p**) **oga**	*SCBI* 63, no. 136
_pa	Roman A	Not visible	CNG E-Sale 365, 16 Dec. 2015, lot 506
Not visible	Cross	Cross	PAS: IOW-6BA1BS
æpa	Cross	Tufa	PAS: NCL-B4EF14; Abramson CZ15
æpa	Not visible	Tufa	Private collection; Abramson CZ10
æpa	**_oæga**	Tufa	EMC 2007.0006; Abramson CZ20
æpa	Roman T	Not visible	Private collection; Abramson CZ25
æpa	Cross (?)	Not visible	EMC 2010.0012; Abramson CZ30
æpa	Not visible	Not visible	EMC 2009.0113; Abramson CZ35
æpa	Not visible	Tufa	EMC 2003.0216
æpa	Not visible	**a** (or **f**?) **gæ**	Private collection; Series C1, inv.

On the specimens in Table 1, as well as on a large number of others, the small size of the flan means that only part of the complete design is visible. This is typical for many groups of the early penny or sceat. The initial problem is to estimate how often runes appear on the reverse, and whether this characteristic is limited almost entirely to the CZ sceattas.

From an examination of 179 images of coins of the various subclasses of Series C sceattas in the EMC/SCBI database, no clear examples of reverse side runes are observed except on the three CZ coins and the single C1, inv. coin listed in Table 1. This last coin is the only specimen noted in this study that is not a Series CZ sceat. From Table 1, it is apparent that for the eight examples for which the right side of the coin's reverse is fully or partially visible, only two have runic inscriptions. Similarly, for the top-side type, only two out of a possible seven coins have runic inscriptions. Therefore, it would seem that no more than about 25 per cent of CZ sceattas have runes on the reverse. Additionally, it should be noted that the two examples of right-side runes appear to be die duplicates, as are Abramson CZ10 and CZ15. It is fortuitous that the shape and size of the flan of EMC 2007.0006 and the 'Beowulf' coin present a clearer picture

　　[1]　Lower case letters in bold type represent Anglo-Saxon futhorc runic characters (see Page, 1973, 49).
　　[2]　EMC/SCBI: <www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/coins/emc>; PAS: <www.finds.org.uk>; Gannon 2013.
　　[3]　In Table 1, CZ10 to CZ35 refer to images of six coins kindly provided by Tony Abramson.

of the left and right sides of the reverse. Figures 1 to 4 below show the four coins in Table 1 that have visible runes on the reverse.

Fig. 1. 'Beowulf' collection, Abramson 2008, 128, no. 9 (twice actual size)

Fig. 2. EMC 2007.0006; Abramson CZ20 (twice actual size)

Fig. 3. *SCBI* 63, no. 136 (twice actual size)

Fig. 4. Series C1, inv. (private collection; twice actual size)

Runes were used on Anglo-Saxon coins almost exclusively for personal names.[4] There was a tradition in Anglo-Saxon England of using runic letters for the name of the moneyer, the person responsible for the weight and metallic composition of the coins, that extended from before the PADA series, AD *c.*655, at least until some issues of Offa (757−96). Some examples of the king's name appeared also, either partially or fully in runes, for example: Beonna of East Anglia (**bEonna r**EX) of East Anglia, and (the much debated) Æthelræd I of Mercia (**æÞiliræd**).

The runes would have meaning to the moneyer, but given a possibly low level of literacy in the general population, maybe only symbolically to many users of the coin. It should be noted also that for the die-cutter, the straight lines used in runes would be far easier than the curved lines of the Roman alphabet, although as noted above, there are examples of mixed Roman and Runic letters on coins.

The question to be examined here is why runic legends would be placed on the reverse of some Series CZ coins. It would seem very likely that the characters had significance to the people who made the coins, and that they were not just random letters. The Series A sceattas carried the letters TIC on the obverse, which was replaced by the moneyer's name **æpa** on the Series C sceattas. The name on the obverse might be carried over to later Series C issues, even if the circumstances had changed, and the moneyer's name on the obverse no longer had meaning.

The runes on the obverse of the Beowulf and EMC 2007.0006 specimens appear to be rather sloppy, suggesting that they may have been copied from an earlier piece. To indicate that the weight and purity of the coins was still good, perhaps it was easier to add a name on the reverse, keeping the previous moneyer's name on the obverse. The name might be that of a new moneyer, or perhaps some local magnate, or even a saint. It may be difficult, verging on impossible, to identify an individual, given that some of the runes may be missing, only partially on the flan, inverted, or retrograde.

From the table, it is observed that **æpa** is on the obverse of all of the coins listed. Do the Series CZ sceattas represent a transition from earlier Series C sceattas to Series R1 coins of the moneyer **epa**? This may be one possibility for the runes on the reverse of some of the Series CZ

[4] See Page 1973, Chapter 9.

and C1, inv. sceattas. It could also indicate that the piece is a contemporary forgery, although the weight of the Beowulf coin (1.22 g), is comparable to other Primary Phase sceattas, and there is no visible indication that it has a plated core.

The runes on the reverse of the Beowulf coin would appear to be: **ioæga.** Unfortunately, the '**i**' is partially off of the flan, and therefore could be another rune altogether. There is also space above the 'horn' for another character: probably a cross, but maybe another rune. It might be possible to take this one step further, by speculating that the **g** is a **n** inserted sideways on the flan.[5]

The runic legend on the reverse of *SCBI* 63, no. 136 (a Series CZ specimen in the British Museum) is in a different position, above the standard and in place of the tufa. The reading on this coin's reverse runes are given in Table 1 as **soga**. The first rune, interpreted as **s**, could also be a **p** similar to that on the obverse, but inserted retrograde. This can be supported by enlarging the image of the reverse, as in Fig. 6. As with the Beowulf example, the runic **g** also could be a runic **n**. With this coin too, there is ample space to the left of the first rune for one or more additional runes.

Fig. 5. Runes on the reverse of 'Beowulf' collection, Abramson 2008, 128, no. 9[6]

Fig. 6. Runes on the reverse of *SCBI* 63, no. 136[7]

Fig. 7. Runes on the reverse of Series C1, inv. specimen in Fig. 4

Figures 5 to 7 show the reverse runes on the Beowulf, *SCBI* 63, and Series C1, inv. coins, respectively. One should note that the runes **æ**, **g** and **a** are common for both the Beowulf and the *SCBI* 63 coins, as well as possibly the Series C1, inv. piece. This also suggests that the letters had some meaning to the people who made the coins, and were not simply random letters.

One can conclude that the runes on the reverse of the CZ sceattas are rare, occurring in no more than about 25 per cent of the cases, and for other sub-classes of Series C runic reverses are extremely rare. It would be very helpful to locate more examples of Series CZ sceattas to improve the statistics of occurrence of reverse runes, and perhaps to understand their significance.

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[5] It might be worth noting that on two of the eleven obverse dies listed by Archibald 1985 (Efe O5 and Efe O7) the runic **n** slants similarly to the runic **g** on the Beowulf and *SCBI* 63, no. 136 specimens.

[6] Note that the **i** is partially off the flan; also that the angle of the **g** is similar to that of the **n** on some obverse dies of the Beonna coinage. This legend could then read: **ioæna**.

[7] Note that the top of the first rune could be that of a **p**, rather than an **s**.