

# *New Thoughts on the Coinage of Prince Moses Székely*

LUX IVÁN

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## 1. Introduction

Moses Székely held the title of Voivode of Transylvania for just over 2 months, from May 8 to July 17, 1603. During this time, he certainly minted a type of ten ducat<sup>1</sup>. It was also known that Karl Wilhelm Becker made minting dies similar to Moses Székely's ten ducat in 1830<sup>2</sup>. The Resch catalogue<sup>3</sup> still contains the most data on coins related to Moses Székely. It is also known that five ducat, thalers, half thalers and medallions, which are very similar to the ten ducat, can be found in public and private collections<sup>4</sup>. However, opinions are divided in the literature about whether these are genuine, re-minted, copied or counterfeited<sup>5</sup>, and there is also an opinion that Moses Székely minted only the ten-fold gold forint<sup>6</sup>. Auction houses have generally stated that the pieces that have recently appeared at auctions (rather rarely) are Becker forgeries, but it is not known what they based this claim on.

This paper attempts to explore and, if possible, resolve the contradictions and uncertainties surrounding the coins associated with Mózes Székely.

In the introduction, we would like to note that in this paper the words coin and medal are often used synonymously.

## 2. Literature overview

Substantial and authentic knowledge about the minting of Mózes Székely can be obtained today from two sources, on the one hand from Resch's basic work<sup>7</sup>, and on the other hand from Lajos Huszár's Transylvania catalogue<sup>8</sup>. Both works mention his ten-fold gold forint minted in Kolozsvár (Resch 1, hereinafter R 1, Huszár 169), two copies of which can be found in the Coinage Collection of the Hungarian National Museum (*Figure 1*).



*Figure 1. Ten ducat in the collection of the Hungarian National Museum (photo: Csaba Gedai).*

Resch also publishes a drawing of the ten ducat (*Figure 2*).

<sup>1</sup> Huszár 1995.

<sup>2</sup> Hill 1924; Hill 1925.

<sup>3</sup> Resch 1901.

<sup>4</sup> Novák 2023; Prokisch et al. 1999; Schönvisner 1807; Velter 1994 továbbá Válogatott ritkaságok az MNB Bankjegy- és Éremgyűjteményéből 5. rész, <https://www.penzmuzeum.hu/aktualis/hirek/valogatott-ritkasagok-az-mnb-bankjegy-es-eremgyujtemenyebol-5-resz/> (letöltés dátuma: 2024.02.07.).

<sup>5</sup> Huszár 1995; Resch 1901.

<sup>6</sup> Gedai 1991, 166.

<sup>7</sup> Resch 1901.

<sup>8</sup> Huszár 1995.



Figure 2. Drawing of the ten ducat by Resch (Resch 1901).

Az 1. és 2. kép összehasonlítása alapján két megjegyzést tehetünk:

Based on the comparison of *Figures 1 and 2*, we can make two comments:

- M1:** In both figures, a minting error is visible at approximately 1 o'clock, and the same is also present on the other copy of the Hungarian National Museum.
- M2:** The drawing provided by Resch depicts the minted coin so accurately that it can be rightly assumed that it was not drawn freehand, but based on an intermediate copy made from the original coin by physical contact (e.g., graphite rubbing, foil embossing, or perhaps a plaster model).

It is worth mentioning here that the image of the ten ducat is included among the coin drawings left behind by József Weszerle<sup>9</sup>, on plate IV of the Transylvanian coins under number 13 (*Figure 3*).



Figure 3. Ten ducat on a drawing by Weszerle (Weszerle 1911).

Although this is not nearly as accurate a representation of the ten ducat as Resch's drawing, the identity is quite clear, as is well demonstrated by the similarities in the drawing, as well as by specific features of the circumscription such as the colon after SICVL and the two dividing dots at 10 o'clock on the reverse. The drawing also attempts to reproduce the die damage on the reverse.

The Resch Appendix also mentions a single thaler (R 2), which Huszár considers to be a Becker-style forgery<sup>10</sup>, and a half thaler (R 3), the authenticity of which Huszár also considers doubtful<sup>11</sup>.

The situation is somewhat complicated by the fact that, in addition to the R 2 thaler, which he considers genuine, Resch also mentions two counterfeits (Resch Falsifikate 9 and 10<sup>12</sup>, hereinafter RF 9 and RF 10), of which he writes that RF 9 is like the ten ducat and is the work of Karl Wilhelm Becker, while RF 10 is also like the ten ducat, but was not made by Becker. Resch also publishes drawings of these coins (*Figures 4a-b*).

<sup>9</sup> Weszerle 1911.

<sup>10</sup> Huszár 1995, 67.

<sup>11</sup> Huszár 1995, 67.

<sup>12</sup> Resch 1901, Nachtrag, 197.



Figure 4a. Drawings of the thalers that Resch considered to be counterfeit {a: RF 9, b:RF 10} (Resch 1901).

Hill also writes about two forgeries in his monograph on Becker's work, one of which is Becker's, the other not<sup>13</sup>. Here too, it is worth making a remark:

**M3:** Hill quotes Resch on the forgeries, in such a way that he refers to the forgery made by Becker, according to Resch, as RF 9, referring to the textual description, and as RF 10, referring to the plate with the drawings. This contradiction is resolved in Resch's Appendix, by correcting the original text and calling it RF10, not RF 9, as Becker's work<sup>14</sup>.

Hill presents a plaster copy of the reverse, which is based on the Becker collection of dies in Berlin and can therefore be attributed to Becker (the corresponding reverse is missing)<sup>15</sup>. (Figure 5)



Figure 5. Reverse of the Becker counterfeit according to Hill (Hill 1925).

It is worth noting that this coin was one of Becker's last works, a record of the work on the coin was made a month before his death on April 11, 1830<sup>16</sup>. Hill considers it possible that the obverse was not even finished. We will see that it was probably finished after all.

**M4:** Hill, in addition to the specimen that he considers to be a true Becker forgery, also mentions a pair of dies that a certain Thomas Bliss allegedly presented to the British Museum in 1904 as a Becker forgery, and which Hill does not consider to be the work of Becker. No further information is available about this pair of dies.

Finally, Huszár describes a five ducat coin, the authenticity of which he considers doubtful<sup>17</sup>. This coin is in the collection of the Hungarian National Bank and recent research has reliably established that it

<sup>13</sup> Hill 1925, 28.

<sup>14</sup> Resch 1901, Nachtrag, 197.

<sup>15</sup> Hill 1925, XVIII. t. 341. sz.

<sup>16</sup> Hill 1925, 28.

<sup>17</sup> Huszár 1995, 67.



was part of a collection long before Becker, in the 18th century, and is therefore considered to be original<sup>18</sup>. (Figure 6)



Figure 6. Five ducat in the collection of the Hungarian National Bank (photo: Csaba Gedai).

Here, the half-thaler kept in the Déri Museum in Debrecen should be mentioned, which is the only known complete specimen, and which the museum also registers as a Becker forgery<sup>19</sup>. (Figure 7)



Figure 7. Half thaler in the collection of the Déri Museum, Debrecen (photo: Tihamér Lukács).

### 3. Analysis of the specimens available today

#### 3.1 Presentation of the existing coins

In addition to the ducats shown in Figures 1 and 5, which are considered to be originals, only a few (cast or minted) silver coins are known, all of which have been claimed by their owners or auctioneers, either definitely or with some uncertainty, to be Becker forgeries (Table 1). Since these specimens do not all have the same design, accepting Hill's claim that there can be at most one type of Becker forgery, it can be concluded without further analysis that not all of the known pieces can be Becker's. This issue, among others, will be addressed in the following sections.

Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the coins known to the author at least from images.

Table 1: Characteristics of known specimens

No.	Value	Location	ID	R	Note by the owner	t (mm)	d (mm)	w (g)
i.	½ t	Déri M	2388.	3	Becker forgery		39.0	14.78
ii.	1 t	Frühwald	149-109	2	Cast. Later mint from Becker?			28.62
iii.	1 t	MNM	Sz.II.21.2.	2	Forgery	2.8	39.2	26.10
iv.	1 t	Nudelman	18-66	2	Later mint from Becker		38.4	26.07
v.	1 t	Orghidan	112	2	„Originality questioned”		37.0	25.68
vi.	1 t	MNM	1912.B2.	2	Forgery	1.6	39.9	17.55
vii.	1 t	ANS	1939.48.11				40	16.84
viii.		MNM	1903.B3.457.		Trimmed	2	33.2	12.54

<sup>18</sup> Selected rarities in the banknote and coin collection of the Hungarian National Bank, part 5, <https://www.penzmuzeum.hu/aktualis/hirek/valogatott-ritkasagok-az-mnb-bankjegy-es-eremgyujtemenyebol-5-resz/> (downloaded: 2024.02.07.).

<sup>19</sup> Novák 2023, 90.

The abbreviations in the table header mean the following: No. – serial number; Value – face value; Location, Identifier – auction or museum identification; R – Resch number; t – thickness of the coin [mm]; d – diameter of the coin [mm]; w – weight of the coin [g].

For the sake of completeness, we also provide the dimensions of the ducats:

The diameter of the ten ducat is 39.2 mm,

The diameter of the five ducat is 35.7 mm.

The first half thaler coin in the table is shown in *Figure 7*, *Figures 8 through 12* show coins numbered *ii–vii* listed in *Table 1*.



*Figure 8. Frühwald 149-109. Figure 9. MNM ÉT B Sz.II.21.2., Schönvisner 1807 (photo: Iván Lux).*



*Figure 10. Nudelman 18-66*

*Figure 11. Orghidan 112 (Velter 1994).*



(a)

(b)

*Figure 12. MNM ÉT 1912.B2. (a); ANS 1939.48.11 (b)*

### 3.2 The similarity of existing coins to gold forints

A quick examination of the available coins suggests the following:

**M5:** The images in the first three rows of *Table 1* (*Figures 7–9*) bear a very strong resemblance to the ten ducat (*Figure 1*). Those in rows *iv* and *v* of the table (*Figures 10–11*) bear a very strong resemblance to the five ducat (*Figure 6*), while those in rows *vi* and *vii* (*Figure 12*) do not match any of the ducat images.

Below I will attempt to prove this conjecture. To do this, we will first take into account the differences in the design of the two types of gold forints. It should be noted that the outer circle of pearls and ears of corn on the five ducat is partially missing, but I do not consider this to be a design difference.

I have indicated the significantly different details with red outlines (*Figure 13*).





Figure 13. Major differences between the ten and five ducats (photo: Csaba Gedai) •

The most important differences can be summarized below:

On the obverse:

- a) The inner circle of the circumscription of the ten ducat is a double line, that of the five ducat is a pearl circle.
- b) On the ten ducat, the hilt of the sword ends in a pointed protrusion, on the five ducat it is spherical.
- c) On the ten ducat the right leg of the left lion has a more acute angle than on the five ducat.
- d) On the ten ducat, the crown has a pointed end, on the five ducat it is spherical.
- e) On the ten ducat the lions' claws are pointed, on the five ducat they are rounded.
- f) After SICVL, there is a colon on the ten ducat, on the five ducat there is none.

On the reverse

- g) The letter X in the circumscription SEXCENTESIMO of the five ducat is sunken.
- h) At 10 o'clock, the separator of the circumscription is ••, on the ten ducat, • on the five.
- i) The lower arabesque is lined on the ten ducat, and rounded on the five ducat.

In general, we can perhaps summarize that the five ducat is more rounded in details than the ten ducat. We will see further differences, but this is enough to decide which ducat the image of a coin resembles.

In *Table 1*, coins numbered *i.*, *ii.* and *iii.* therefore, correspond to the ten ducat in terms of the essential differences, coins *iv.* and *v.* to the five- ducat, which supports the assumptions of point M5.

However, more is true than this, as the more detailed examination below shows.

### 3.3 Further examination of the thaler-type coins

For the sake of simplicity, we call the coins marked with serial numbers *ii–vii* in *Table 1* as thaler-like because of their weight greater than half a thaler, even if their weight, with one exception, is more or less below the thaler weight.

*Figure 14* shows the identical details of the obverse of the ten ducat and the coins *ii* and *iii* in *Table 1*.

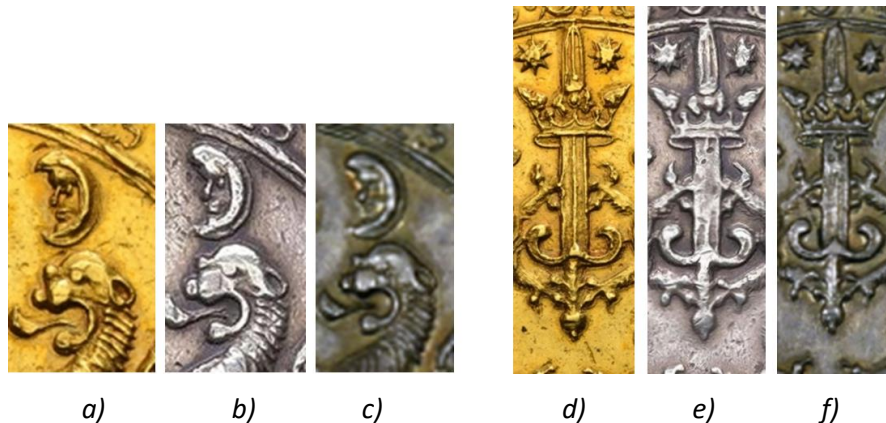


Figure 14. Identical details on the obverses of the 10 ducat (a, d) and of the silver coins *ii.* (b, e) and *iii.* (c, f) (Magnification of the pictures referred to in columns 3 and 4 in *Table 1*.)

Comparison of the reverses is seen in *Figure 15*.



*Figure 15. Identical details of the reverses of the 10 ducat (a) and the silver coins a ii.(b) and iii. (c) enlarged*

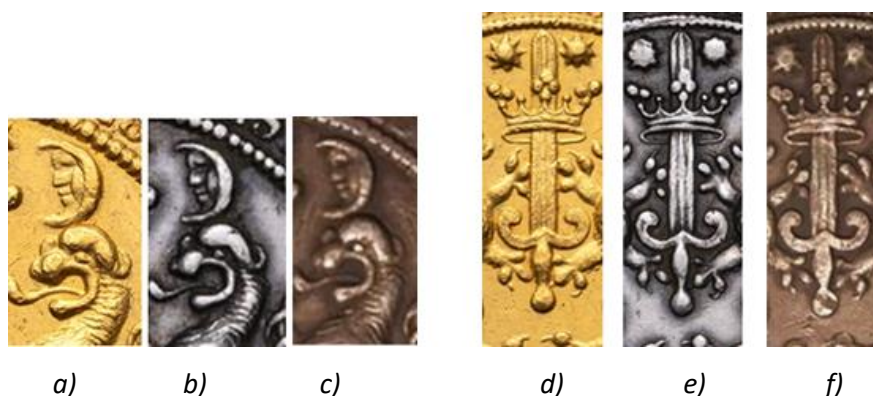
Based on *Figures 14* and *15*:

**M6:** The obverse and reverse images of the coins listed under serial numbers *ii.* and *iii.* in *Table 1* are identical to those of the ten ducat. On the reverses of coins numbered *ii.* and *iii.*, the subsequent repair on the second N of ANNO and on the right arm of the arabesque on the right side is clearly visible, in place of the die damage of the ten ducat.

It is worth pausing here for a moment. According to the Hungarian National Register, coin number *iii* comes from the Széchenyi collection (it was named after Ferenc Széchenyi, and not after his son, István Széchenyi – lect.). In the Latin description of the collection, the description of this coin follows the ten ducat and states that it is “another similar, cheaper metal, with a small amount of silver mixed in, black in color, probably not the original, but only a copy.”<sup>20</sup> Examining the coin, it appears to be good silver<sup>21</sup>, but its weight (26.1 g, see *Table 1*) is smaller than that of a thaler. Since Schönvisner’s volume was published in 1807<sup>22</sup> and it is also known that the Széchenyi collection was received by the Hungarian National Museum in 1810<sup>23</sup>, this coin is certainly earlier than the Becker forgeries (see the notes after *Figure 5*). Therefore, the following comment is made:

**M7:** The coin No. *iii* in *Table 1.* in all likelihood is fake (this also follows from the description by Schönvisner<sup>24</sup> and from the fact that the die damage was attempted to be corrected), yet it is certainly not from Becker.

Detailed comparison of the coins No.s *iv* and *v* to the five ducat is contained in *Figures 16* and *17*.



*Figure 16. Comparison of obverses of 5 ducat (a, d) and of the silver coins iv (b, e) and v (c, f)*

<sup>20</sup> Aliud simile, vilioris metalli, modico argento admixto, nigri coloris, verisimiliter non originale, sed ectypum tantum” Schönvisner 1807, 21.

<sup>21</sup> Nudelman László, personal communication (November 2023.).

<sup>22</sup> Schönvisner 1807.

<sup>23</sup> Gárdonyi 1903, 90.

<sup>24</sup> Schönvisner 1807, 21.



Figure 17. Comparison of reverses of 5 ducat (a, d) and of the silver coins iv (b, e) and v (c, f)

Figures 16 and 17 provide strong arguments for a similar conclusion to the previous ones:

**M8:** The obverse and reverse images of the coins listed under serial numbers *iv* and *v* in *Table 1* are with a high degree of certainty identical to those of the five ducat.

However, the objection may arise here that while the diameter of the thalers is over 37 mm, that of the five ducat is only 35.7 mm (cf. *Table 1*), which may mean that the two coin images cannot be brought into line. *Figure 18* provides an answer to this objection.



Figure 18. Relative dimensions of the five ducat and the thaler (photo: Csaba Gedai and Nudelman *Numismatica*)

The figure clearly shows that if the inner bead circle of the two coins is the same size (between the red lines), their outer dimensions are indeed different (between the blue lines), meaning that the two coin images can be identical despite the size difference. The size difference is created by the fact that a circle of ears of corn runs around the circle of the thaler, which is missing from the obverse of the five ducat. It is worth noting that the reverse of the five-fold forint was struck slightly eccentrically (see *Figures 6* and *13*) and therefore the circle of ears of corn is visible on the left side, as a result of which part of the circle on the right side did not fit on the insert.

### 3.4 Analysis of the half thaler and a surprise

The half-thaler kept in the Déri Museum in Debrecen is shown in *Figure 7*. As can be read in the note M5, this coin shows a strong resemblance to the ten ducat. Here I will attempt to show that more than this is true, the two coins were most likely struck with the same dies on both sides.

This coin is worth dealing with separately because, to my knowledge, it is the only known piece, and no similar one has been offered at auction, so it may be interesting to examine its relationship to the original ten ducat. (*Figure 19*)

**M9:** *Figure 19* clearly demonstrates that the two coin images are identical, including the almost complete identity of the die damage on the reverse (see more below).





a)

b)

Figure 19. Enlarged images of the obverses and reverses of the ten ducat (a) and half thaler (b) coins (photo: Csaba Gedai and Tihamér Lukács).

Here comes an apparent digression. Among the 1932 additions to the Coin Cabinet of the Hungarian National Museum<sup>25</sup> is a trimmed copy of the Moses Székely thaler. This copy is listed in row viii of Table 1. It is striking that its weight is only 12.54 g, so even if we take into account that it cannot be a trimmed copy, contrary to the text of the publication. Therefore, the assumption is made that this may also be a copy of the half thaler. The weight loss resulting from the difference in size corresponds exactly to the weight of the trimmed copy. (Figure 20)



Figure 20. The trimmed coin of the National Museum and the half thaler in Debrecen (photo: Iván Lux and Tihamér Lukács).

The strong suggestion in Figure 20 is that the trimmed specimen is of the same type as the Debrecen half-thaler, i.e. it is indeed a second specimen of the half thaler (this was hinted at by the promise of surprise in the title).

In the case of the examined half thalers, the suspicion may also arise that they were struck with the same die as the ten ducat. (Figure 21)



Figure 21. comparison of the reverse die damages on the ten ducat and the half (enlarged details of the coins in Figures 19. and 20).

<sup>25</sup> NN 1933–1934, 96.

**M10:** *Figure 21* shows the die damage on the reverse of the three coins, and it is clear that the defect on the ten ducat under the N and O and passing through the N is larger than the defect on the half thaler on the left and smaller than the defect on the trimmed half thaler on the right. This could also be explained by the fact that all three were struck with the same die, but the Debrecen one earlier, the trimmed one later than the ten ducat, while the die damage was constantly increasing. At the same time, it is also possible that one, the other, or both half thalers are copies of ten ducats struck at different times (and therefore different) (although the latter is unlikely). A third possible explanation is that the differences in the traces of die damage developed during copying, although the process of this is also difficult to imagine.

The investigations so far demonstrate that six of the seven known coins show an identical image in detail to a coin considered to be original, so, contrary to the claims of some of their owners (see *Table 1*), none of them are certainly Becker forgeries.

### 3.5 So which one is the Becker forgery?

Summarizing everything that is stated about the Becker forgery in Section 2, according to Hill<sup>26</sup>, the reverse of Becker's coin is shown in *Figure 5*, according to Resch<sup>27</sup>, the two coins shown in *Figure 4* are forgeries, one of which is Becker's and the other is not. Resch calls RF 9 a Becker forgery, while Hill, according to Note M3, indicates that the image of the piece called RF 9 in the text is marked RF 10 on the table of images, and this is confirmed by Resch's Appendix.

The answer to the question posed in the title will be provided by the examination of the coins not yet presented, marked *vi* and *vii* in *Table 1*.

For this, a small digression is necessary. If we place the Becker reverse imprint shown in *Figure 5* and the reverse of the Resch drawing in *Figure 4b* side by side, as was done in *Figure 22*, we can see that the drawing shows every detail of the reverse imprint with great accuracy.



*Figure 22. Comparison of the reverse by Becker (Hill 1925) and the Resch F10 drawing.*

It should be noted that while in the case of the ten-fold and five-fold ducats the dividing mark after TERTIO is at 10 o'clock (see *Figure 13* and point h) of the subsequent paragraph), here the dividing point is only slightly higher than 9 o'clock. Other differences can be discovered between the reverses of *Figure 22* and the ducats, but this one difference is enough to state that the Becker reverse is different from the ducats and thus from all the coins examined so far. In other words

**M11:** Contrary to the assumption of the coin owners, none of the known versions examined in this paper are the work of Karl Wilhelm Becker.

Based on *Figure 22*, it is also likely that Hill's statement quoted in note M3 and Resch's correction to the Appendix, according to which the image of the Becker forgery referred to in Resch's text as RF 9 appears as RF 10, are correct. The only question left unanswered in this area is whether Becker forgeries still exist today.

<sup>26</sup> Hill 1925, XVIII. t. 341. sz

<sup>27</sup> Resch 1901



To examine this, let us assume that the drawing of RF 10 in *Figure 4b* is, on both sides, a faithful representation of the Becker version. Since we believe this to be true for the reverse of the drawing based on *Figure 22*, the same can be assumed for the obverse. In other words, we accept Resch's claim that he really showed Becker's forgery in the drawing.

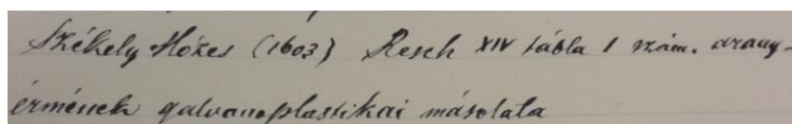
The attentive and patient reader has probably guessed by now that the coin, which has not yet been examined and is marked with the serial number *vi* in *Table 1*, will be the solution. The coin is shown in *Figure 12*, and Resch's drawing of RF 10 is attached to *Figure 23* below.



*Figure 23. Drawing of the Becker forgery and a coin from the collection of the Hungarian National Museum.*

Based on this image, the details are similar between coin number *vi* and the drawing of RF 10, i.e. this piece may correspond to the Becker forgery. The similarity of the details is confirmed if we examine the aspects a) – i) describing the differences between the five-fold and ten-fold ducat presented in *Figure 13* for the coins shown in *Figure 23*. The comparison shows that both the drawing and the coin shown in *Figure 23* show similarities with the ten ducat in aspects a) and g), i.e. the inner circle is also a double line here, and the letter X is not sunken in the word SEXCENTESIMO, and in all other examined aspects both images resemble the five ducat. The difference of the Becker forgery shown in *Figure 23* from the two types of ducats is convincingly proven by what was said after *Figure 22*, on the one hand, and by the marked difference in the drawing of the lions' tails from those on both ducats.

However, there is a disturbing fact here, because, as can be seen in *Figure 24*, which shows part of the inventory of the National Museum, this coin is an electroplating copy.



*Figure 24. Inventory of the Hungarian National Museum on the coin No. vi.*

And here comes the help of the collection of the American Numismatic Society, which contains the coin marked *vii* in *Table 1* and shown in *Figure 12*.<sup>28</sup> This coin is identical to the Becker counterfeits shown in *Figure 23* in both its appearance (see *Figure 12*) and weight (see *Table 1*), and judging by the quality of the mintage, it may even be genuine.

**M12:** According to the currently known data, the Becker forgery exists or existed, a copy is known, and there is a good chance that a picture of a genuine piece is also available.

It is also worth noting here that on the RF 10 image, as well as on the five ducat, there is no punctuation mark after the word SICVL in the description of the circumscription, while on the ten ducat there is a colon.

As I have already mentioned in connection with image 23, it is generally true that although several small differences can be identified between the obverses of the five-fold forint and the Becker forgery

<sup>28</sup> <http://numismatics.org/search/results?q=moises+szekely>



(the most striking being the difference in the inner circles), their similarity is clear. Therefore, it is likely that Becker's model was the five-fold forint (and not the ten-fold forint). (Figure 25)



Figure 25. Comparison of the obverses of the five ducat and the Becker (photo: Csaba Gedai; Iván Lux; ANS).

#### 4. Variants not available today but described

##### 4.1 On the existence of the thaler

The princes who preceded Mózes Székely always minted thalers with the same design as the half-thalers they minted<sup>29</sup>. Consequently, if any of the half thalers in Debrecen and in the Coin Cabinet are original, it is logical to assume that there must have been a thaler with the same design, i.e. minted with the ten ducat dies. So far, I have not come across such a coin, but Resch's Appendix firmly states its existence with the R 2 marking.

The existence of the thaler is also referred to in a collection description from 1868. Figure 26 shows the front cover of Theodor Mayer's collection catalogue, the section in the description about Moses Székely's coins, and its Google translation into Hungarian.

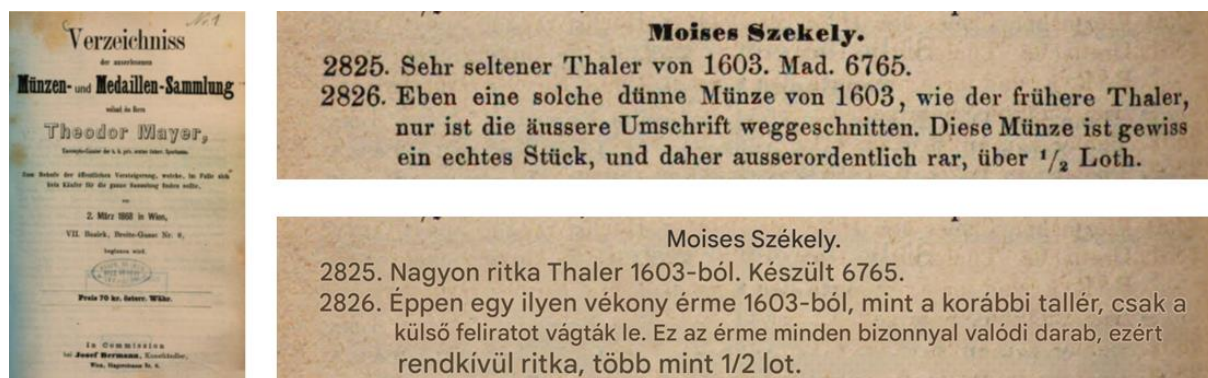


Figure 26. Theodor Mayer gyűjteményi katalógusa és abban Székely Mózes pénzei

Item 2825 mentions a very rare thaler from 1603. The reference (Mad. 6765) refers to the 1774 catalogue of David Samuel von Madai<sup>30</sup>. In it, item 6765 describes<sup>31</sup> a coin with a design identical to the ten ducat and describes it as "a rare thaler-shaped piece of Moses Székely".

If these catalogues are correct, then the Székely Mózes thaler existed (at least in 1868), confirming our assumption.

<sup>29</sup> Many examples of this can be found in the following catalogues: Resch 1901; Lux–Tóth 2024; Lux–Nudelman–Tóth 2024

<sup>30</sup> Madai 1774.

<sup>31</sup> Madai 1774, 268.

Interestingly, the Madai catalogue, which lists thalers and thaler-like coins, does not call this coin a thaler, but a thaler-shaped piece. Similarly, the 1869 auction catalogue of the Jacob Ritter von Frank collection, also citing Madai's lot 6765, calls it a medal (medallion) among several descriptions of thalers<sup>32</sup>. Nevertheless, I consider the following to be correct:

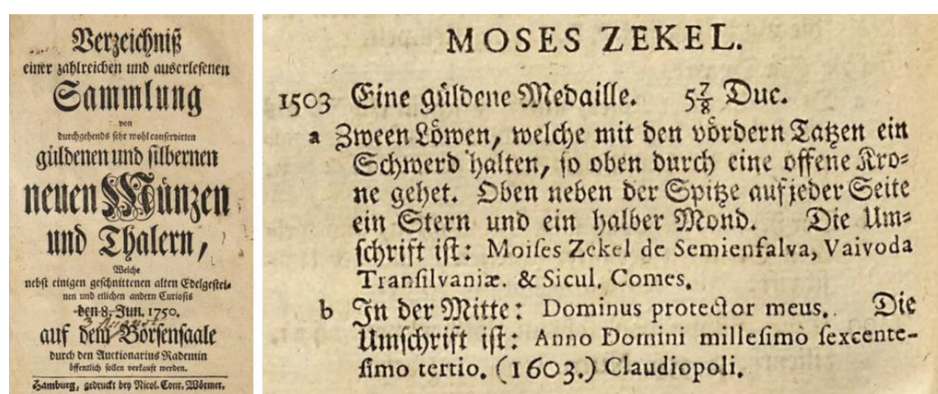
**M13:** Moses Székely certainly minted a single thaler with the same dies as the ten ducat and the half thaler, although neither a picture nor a copy of this is known today.

Also worth mentioning is item 2826 of the Mayer collection, cited in *Figure 26*, which is a piece with a thaler design that has lost its circumscription and weighs more than half a lat (8.75 g). This could have been another half-thaler that was even more trimmed than the one cited in Section 3.4. According to the text, the circumscription was missing, which, as can be easily calculated, means a loss of about 5.2 g, so the intact specimen weighed more than 13.95 g. Since the description certainly indicated that it was genuine, it is likely that it was a half-thaler. No further information is available about this piece.

#### 4.2 On the existence of a six-fold ducat

I have already mentioned in Chapter 2 and in Sections 3.2 and 3.3 the unique five ducat coin kept in the Hungarian National Bank (*Figure 6*). According to the coin description<sup>33</sup>, its weight is 17 g, and half a gram of material has broken out of it, so this coin really weighs exactly five ducats. This is significant because 6 and 5 7/8-ducat coins of Moses Székely appear repeatedly in the 18th- and 19th-century literature. The first mention comes from 1717, when Sámuel Köleséri writes<sup>34</sup> about Moses Székely's "gold denarius", which is later referred to by several people, such as Schmeizel, who cites it<sup>35</sup> as "gold groschen", as the one minted by Moses Székely and depicting his family's coat of arms.

*Figure 27* shows the front cover of an auction catalog from 1750 and a description of the coin..<sup>36</sup>



*Figure 27. A 5 7/8 ducat coin of Moses Székely at a 1750 auction.*

Accordingly, this multiple ducat also has a coin design similar to the ten-fold or five-fold ducats.

The foreword to the auction catalogue introduces Mózes Székely over five pages and also talks about this gold coin, so the coin was one of the outstanding pieces of the auction and it is unlikely that its weight was incorrectly stated. At the same time, it would also be quite strange if two coins of such similar weight (5 and 5 7/8 ducats) were deliberately minted.

<sup>32</sup> Senoner 1839, 150.

<sup>33</sup> Selected rarities in the banknote and coin collection of the Hungarian National Bank, part 5, <https://www.penzmuzeum.hu/aktualis/hirek/valogatott-ritkasagok-az-mnb-bankjegy-es-eremgyujtemenyebol-5-resz/> (downloaded: 2024.02.07.).

<sup>34</sup> Köleséri 1717, 138.

<sup>35</sup> Schmeizel 1748, 44

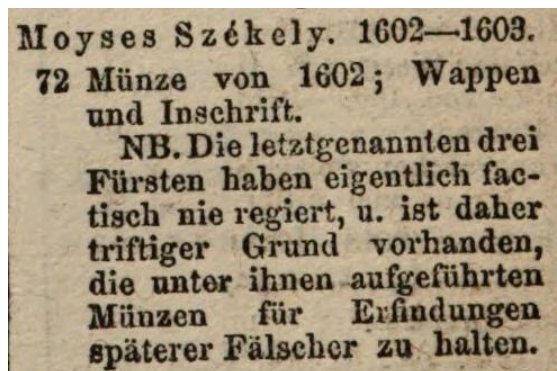
<sup>36</sup> Finke 1750, 294.

Köhler refers to the same auction catalogue in his catalogue<sup>37</sup> published in 1760, when he describes the six-ducat coin of Moses Székely. Mentioning all the previous authors, Schwarz also speaks<sup>38</sup> of the 5 7/8 ducat coin of Moses Székely. In summary, it can be stated,

**M14:** that on the one hand, the five ducat of Moses Székely exists today, which the Hungarian National Bank considers to be original, and on the other hand, there are multiple and quite convincing references to the earlier existence of an approximately six-fold ducat.

#### 4.3 On the existence of a copper coin

At the 1873 Vienna World Exhibition, a coin exhibition was also organized with a relatively large number and variety of coins. A total of 134 gold, 168 silver, 64 copper and 9 tin coins were exhibited<sup>39</sup>, including a copper coin of Moses Székely supposedly made in 1602. The text of the catalogue can be seen in *Figure 28*.



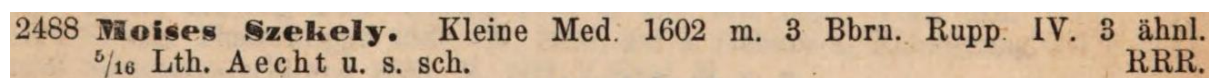
*Figure 28. Copper coin attributed to Moses Székely at the 1873 Vienna World Exhibition*

According to this, the coin contains a coat of arms and an inscription. According to the added note, the last three princes – meaning András Báthori, the voivode of Wallachia (Mihály Vitéz) who ruled in 1600, and Moses Székely – *never actually ruled, and therefore we have good reason to consider the coins listed under their names as later forgeries*. Regarding the copper coin of Moses Székely, the exhibition organizers unintentionally confirmed this opinion with their cited errors.

Unfortunately, we do not know more about the exhibited coin.

#### 4.4 And another confused coin

On July 19, 1869, the auction of the medal and coin collection of Count Franz von Klebelsberg was held in Vienna. According to the auction catalogue, nearly four thousand items went under the hammer, among them the Moses Székely medal shown in *Figure 29*.



*Figure 29. Medal of Moses Székely at the Klebelsberg auction in 1869*

According to the description, the coin weighs nearly 5.5 grams, is original and extremely rare. It is confusing that this coin is also dated 1602 and the description refers to Rupp's catalog. Rupp catalogued the Hungarian coins of the Árpád dynasty<sup>40</sup> and the mixed dynasty<sup>41</sup> in two volumes, in these volumes of course Moses Székely is not included and a coin corresponding to the description certainly did not exist. According to the auction catalogue, the starting price of the coin was 9 forints 99 kreuzers, unfortunately I do not know more about its appearance and fate than this.

<sup>37</sup> Köhler 1760, 708.

<sup>38</sup> Schwarz 1764, 29

<sup>39</sup> NN 1873

<sup>40</sup> Rupp 1841

<sup>41</sup> Rupp 1846



## 5. Conclusions, open issues

From the facts, findings and comments established so far, many conclusions can be drawn and many more questions require further investigation. In closing this article, I will try to summarize all of this in points.

- K1:** It is generally accepted that the ten ducat of Moses Székely (*Figure 1*) is an original coin.
- K2:** According to the latest research, the unique five ducat kept in the Hungarian National Bank already existed in the 18th century (as part of the Viczay-Khuen Héderváry coin collection), so it is certainly not the result of the classic forgeries of the 19th–20th centuries and is therefore considered to be an original coin. However, further research is needed to confirm this opinion beyond all doubt. Some doubt may arise from the fact that there are few examples of five-fold and ten-fold ducats with very similar, yet different coin designs. Further relevant facts are described in conclusion K9 below.
- K3:** With the exception of those mentioned separately below, all of the thaler-like coins known today (see section 3.3) are exact copies of one of the multiple ducats in their coin designs. Some were struck with a coin made from a copy, others were cast<sup>42</sup>. The narrowed and dull design characteristic of the production is clearly visible in *Figures 14–17*.
- K4:** Given that most of these copied coins are made of silver, but their weight is noticeably, in some cases significantly less than the thaler (cf. *Table 1*), it would be interesting to explore the time and purpose of their production.
- K5:** The half thaler kept in the Déri Museum in Debrecen and the trimmed coin in the Coin Cabinet of the Hungarian National Museum have the same design as the ten ducat and these are the only known thaler-type coins associated with Moses Székely, which may even be originals. The history of the Debrecen coin can be traced back through the Frigyes Déri collection to the Windischgrätz collection<sup>43</sup>. The M10 note on minting errors supports the authenticity of the coins, but further research is needed to fully prove this. At the end of section 4.1, in connection with *Figure 26*, what was written about the former trimmed but considered genuine coin also suggests the existence of a half thaler at some point.
- K6:** Contrary to the accompanying texts of the coins put up for auction, none of the pieces with the same design as the ten ducat were made by Karl Wilhelm Becker. A coin with the same design as the coin attributed to Becker is kept in the coin collection of the Hungarian National Museum (*Figure 12*), but it is certainly not genuine. A presumably “genuine” Becker forgery can be found in the collection of the American Numismatic Society. The significantly lower than usual frequency of Becker forgeries may also be explained by Becker’s rapid death after the coin was made.
- K7:** It can be assumed that Becker's model was the five ducat coin.
- K8:** The collection thalers cited in *Figure 26* and the following text and the catalogue referred to there suggest that a single thaler was also minted. This direction would also deserve further research.
- K9:** Convincing literary references point to the earlier existence of a coin worth 5 7/8 ducat. Its authenticity can only be judged after further research. Its relationship to the five-fold ducat known today also needs to be explored.

In conclusion, I must say that this paper obviously cannot rely on knowledge of all existing coins that can be associated with the minting of Moses Székely, and therefore it is very easy to imagine that some of the comments and conclusions described here will need to be revised in the future as a result of new evidence that may become known.

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<sup>42</sup> Nudelman László, személyes közlés, 2023. november

<sup>43</sup> Zoltai 1926, 202.

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### **Abstract**

The present publication reviews the literary background of the coins minted by the Transylvanian prince Mózes Székely, the existing original coins and the copies made based on them that can be found in collections or appeared at recent auctions. It shows the connections between the copied thaler-like coins and the real multiple ducats, makes the existence of genuine half thalers and thalers likely and demonstrates that, contrary to popular belief, the copies are mostly not the work of Karl Wilhelm Becker, the latter being a rarity in the case of Mózes Székely coins. Based on 18th-19th century catalogs and coin descriptions, it concludes that further types actually not known existed in the past.