

## SUMMARY

### The Beginnings of the Interest in the Finds of Ancient Coins in Royal Prussia and Ducal Prussia

In the research on finds of ancient coinage, known from the older literature on the subject, it is indispensable to take into consideration the specific character of particular regions, resulting from their political situation and cultural traditions. Royal Prussia and the Duchy of Prussia (Ducal Prussia) are exactly such distinctive regions. Ancient coins had been found there for a very long time. Many of those finds are not reflected in any records or documentation. It is only since a certain specific period in history that any relevant mentions had begun to appear in literature. We can now only refer to and interpret them by means of the methods of critical source analysis elaborated by scholars involved in ancient and medieval studies.

In Prussia, the interest in the finds of Roman coins started in a relatively late period. The first work where we can encounter some information on the coins discovered in that area was the so-called “school syllabus” published by Georg Wendi-us (1635–1705) in 1698, entitled *Impp Romanorum nummos in memoriam victoriae De Sarmatis olim reportatae cusos*, where the author had attempted to analyze four types of coins that were to be minted in commemoration of the Roman victories over Sarmatians. A rapid surge of the interest in the ancient coins being found in Prussia had not really taken place until the publication of M. Matthäus Praetorius’ (1635–1704 or 1709) article entitled *Bericht von der Müntze in Preussen ex MSCto*. Praetorius presumed that the local population had made use of the Roman coins prior to their own coinage being issued. In his very valuable study *De numis Romanis in agro Prussico repertis*, Teofil Zygfryd Bayer (the title of the German edition: *Von denen in Preussen gefundenen Römischen Münzen*) notes that there are definitely more Roman coins of the Antoninian dynasty being found in Prussia and Poland than those issued by other Roman emperors. He links the phenomenon of an increased number of the coins of the Antoninian dynasty with the Marcomannic Wars. Bayer also notes some noteworthy finds from the territory of Prussia and mentions several individuals keenly interested in either gathering information on discoveries of ancient coins or collecting numismatic objects. He was the first one to have noticed that the importation of Roman coins into Barbarian possession may not have been motivated by economic reasons. Thus, he explains the presence of Commodus’ coinage in the *Barbaricum* with the then existing political situation,

when the Emperor had expended large amounts of money for the peace made after the Marcomannic Wars. The information provided by Bayer is essential, even ground-breaking for the research on the Roman coins found in the territories of the *Barbaricum*. It is only for the last dozen or so years that the phenomenon of the inflow of denarii into the territory inhabited by the culture of Przeworsk has been explained by the political situation in the Roman Empire after Commodus had ended the Marcomannic Wars.

There are only very few seventeenth- and eighteenth-century publications on coins found in the regions of Pomerania, Warmia, and Mazuria. In the more extensive works on history, there may be some minor passages referring to ancient times, occasionally also mentioning discoveries of Roman coins.

There is more information on the finds of Roman coins in the environs of Gdańsk from the close of the eighteenth century. We owe it to Carl Benjamin Lengnich (1743–1795). In one of his outstanding works, *Nachrichten zur Bücher- und Münzkunde* (1780), he described the find of a bronze medallion of Caracalla, struck at Perynthus, as well as a hoard of *follises* from the period of the Constantine dynasty, which was found in Gdańsk. Since the mid-eighteenth century, the interest in the antiquities had been rapidly growing at Elbląg. At that time, several figures in the city were active in the field of collecting numismatic objects, both discovered and purchased (e.g., Abraham Grübner).

To sum up, it is worth noting that the interest in numismatics in Prussia began in a relatively late period, as compared with the other regions of Poland, i.e., at the close of the seventeenth century. While in Silesia the numismatic preoccupations continue to develop, they are only a passing phase in Małopolska (Lesser Poland) and Prussia. The eighteenth century, especially the early decades, saw a peak of that interest, as reflected in the need to record numismatic finds and describe the people who had collected coins. The result is a substantial amount of brief mentions on discoveries appearing in a comparatively short period of time; in consequence, they are often fairly random or perfunctory. An appendix to this article is a tabular listing of hypotheses explaining the causes of the influx of Roman coins into the territories of Poland as well as a listing of the numismatic finds from there, as recorded in the relevant literature.

Translated by Marcin Fijak