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Numismatics in the Research and Activity of Feliks Kopera

ABSTRACT: *Numismatics in the Research and Activity of Feliks Kopera*

Feliks Kopera (1871–1952) is a very important figure in the history of the National Museum in Krakow, of which he was the director for nearly 50 years. He was an eminent art and culture historian, one of the forerunners of modern museology, a conservator, an educator, the author of numerous academic studies as well as works for the general public. The present article describes the role of numismatics in his life and academic activity. His interest in this field of study can already be seen in his early academic works, written during his university years, and in his very active involvement with the numismatic circles in Krakow. For more than half a century, he was an active member of the Numismatic Society in Krakow, and he served as an editor of the journal *Numismatic and Archaeological News*, published by the society in the years 1900–1908. Later on, he was not as active in the field of numismatic studies, but nonetheless it would continue to be present in his life. It was also thanks to his efforts that the National Museum in Krakow acquired the priceless collection of Emeryk Hutten-Czapski (1828–1896). In turn, his collaboration with the Numismatic Society resulted in several initiatives, of which the most spectacular was the Polish-Belgian project of mutually organized exhibitions: of contemporary Polish medal-making in Belgium (1933), followed by an exhibition of contemporary Belgian medal-makers in Krakow (1935). Protecting the museum collections was the principal motive behind Kopera's actions in the face of the threats of the First and Second World Wars, which in the case of the numismatic collection were regarded – at the very least – as controversial and caused the closing of the exhibition for

many years, as well as the loss of the provenance details for some of the items. Feliks Kopera's tenure as director was a period of continual improvement and restoration. This is also true of his involvement with numismatics; one of his last endeavours was the inauguration in June 1949 of the permanent exhibition of coins and medals at the National Museum, in continuation of the original exposition of 1905.

KEY WORDS: Feliks Kopera, Numismatic Society in Krakow, National Museum in Krakow, Emeryk Hutten-Czapski Museum

ABSTRAKT: Feliks Kopera (1871–1952) jest postacią niezwykle ważną dla historii Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie, którym zarządzał przez niemal 50 lat. Był wybitnym historykiem sztuki i kultury, jednym z prekursorów współczesnej muzeologii, konserwatorem, dydaktykiem, autorem licznych prac naukowych i popularyzatorem wiedzy. Niniejszy artykuł dotyczy roli numizmatyki w jego życiu i działalności. Zainteresowanie tą dziedziną nauki widoczne jest już w pierwszych pracach naukowych Kopery, pisanych podczas studiów uniwersyteckich, oraz w bardzo silnym zaangażowaniu w krakowski ruch numizmatyczny. Przez ponad pół wieku był on aktywnym członkiem Towarzystwa Numizmatycznego w Krakowie, a w latach 1900–1908 redaktorem wydawanych przez nie *Wiadomości Numizmatyczno-Archeologicznych*. W późniejszym okresie nie zajmował się już badaniami nad numizmatyką tak aktywnie, niemniej była ona stale obecna w jego życiu. To między innymi dzięki jego staraniom zbiory Muzeum powiększyły się o bezcenną kolekcję Emeryka Hutten-Czapskiego (1828–1896). Z kolei współpraca z Towarzystwem Numizmatycznym zaowocowała kilkoma przedsięwzięciami, z których najbardziej spektakularnym był polsko-belgijski projekt polegający na wystawach wzajemnych – polskiego medalierstwa współczesnego w Belgii (1933) i współczesnych medalierów belgijskich w Krakowie (1935). Bezwzględna ochrona kolekcji była motywem działań Kopery podjętych w związku z zagrożeniem pierwszą i drugą wojną światową, które w wypadku kolekcji numizmatycznej ocenione zostały jako co najmniej kontrowersyjne i spowodowały wieloletnie zamknięcie ekspozycji oraz utratę proveniencji części obiektów. Okres zarządzania Muzeum przez Koperę to ciągle naprawianie i odbudowywanie. Nie inaczej było w wypadku numizmatyki – jednym z ostatnich jego przedsięwzięć okazało się otwarcie w czerwcu 1949 r. stałej wystawy monet i medali, będącej kontynuacją pierwszej ekspozycji z 1905 r.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Feliks Kopera, Towarzystwo Numizmatyczne w Krakowie, Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie, Muzeum im. Emeryka Hutten-Czapskiego

Wölfflin¹ was actually surprised that I became interested in so many things in Paris. Even though he saw me closely analyzing and taking notes on the numismatic collections there, he could not understand how an art historian could even take a look at numismatics.²

Feliks Jan Kopera (Fig. 1) was the head of an institution of great national significance. He was also an expert in the fields of museology and museum management in Poland and abroad, a medieval arts historian, a numismatist, an author, a propagator of the sciences, and an editor of academic journals devoted to diverse aspects of culture and the conservation of historic monuments. He was an educator, a social activist, and, finally, a citizen of Kraków, who was dedicated to his native city and its historic heritage.

Kopera was born on 12 May 1871 in Kraków. In 1891, he completed his secondary education at St. Anna Gymnasium and began his studies in the Faculty of Philosophy at the Jagiellonian University in the academic year 1891/92. He received his doctor's degree on 25 April 1896, after which he studied abroad in Switzerland, France, Germany, Great Britain, and, finally, Russia. Following his return to Kraków, he was hired by Elżbieta Hutten-Czapska (1833–1916) to help prepare the opening of a museum that would house the collection of her husband, Emeryk Hutten-Czapski (1828–1896), who had recently died. On 9 May 1900, Kopera obtained *veniam legendi*, a private readership post, at the Jagiellonian University. There he taught the history of culture in Poland and Eastern Europe. On 22 April 1901, he was appointed director of the National Museum in Kraków (further: the Museum) and served in that office until the end of 1949. He was thus in charge of the institution in peacetime (during the period of the Partitions of Poland), during the interwar period (1918–1939) and the People's Republic of Poland, but also during the First and the Second World Wars. He died on 27 March 1952 in Kraków.³

The present article is concerned with numismatics, one of Kopera's main fields of interests.

¹ Henryk Wölfflin (1864–1945) – Swiss art historian, lecturer at the University of Basel, as based on <http://www.biografie-niemieckie.pl/osoba/Heinrich/W%C3%B6lfflin/2701> (accessed on 31.08.2016).

² AUJ, sign. 98/4, Legacy archive of M. Sokołowski, Kopera to Sokołowski, Basel, 25 January 1897.

³ For biographical articles on Kopera, see ŁOZA 1938: 360; BUCZKOWSKI 1952: 95–98; BOCHNAK 1968: 636–638 (with further bibliography); STANISŁAWSKA-ADAMCZEWSKA and ADAMCZEWSKI 2000: 115; SKORUPSKA-SZARLEJ 2004: 29–30; BŁOŃSKA 2012: 313–331 (the bibliography). See also AUJ, sign. WF II 504, Kopera Feliks – doctoral degree file; *Ibidem*, sign. WF II 121, Kopera Feliks – habilitation file; *Ibidem*, sign. S II 619, Kopera Feliks – employee's file; *Ibidem*, sign. 98/4, Legacy archive of M. Sokołowski, incoming correspondence (Kopera Feliks); MNK, DzVIIIa, sign. 505/54, doctoral degree certificate of 25 April 1896; Arch. MNK, sign. TO 15, Feliks Kopera – employee's file.

* * *

Kopera became interested in numismatics as early as his university years. At that time, he would visit the numismatic work-room of Władysław Bartynowski (1832–1918), located in that numismatist's private apartment at 12 Pędzichów St., Kraków. The collection of Andrzej Potocki (1861–1908) was inventoried and catalogued there and, as a representative and continuator of the best numismatic school, Bartynowski – whose mentor was Karol Beyer (1818–1877) – ensured that the young trainee in numismatics could receive excellent foundations. It can be assumed, with much likelihood, that this is exactly where Kopera's fascination with numismatics came from. In the next few years, the work that he did with those who not only were experts but who had a genuine passion for this field of study would contribute to keeping his interest alive.

Kopera made contact with Bartynowski and the circle of numismatists associated with him probably through his acquaintance with Marian Sokołowski (1839–1911). This eminent art historian, conservator of historic monuments, and museologist became an academic mentor to Feliks Kopera and would go on to play a significant role in his life, starting with the advice that he gave to Kopera on subject matter relating to his university courses.⁴

Kopera attended the Latin classes of Prof. Kazimierz Morawski (1852–1925), a historian and classical philologist renowned in scholarly circles, and Prof. Adam Miodoński (1861–1913). He studied Latin epigraphy with Prof. Piotr Bieńkowski (1865–1925), an archaeologist and the creator of the “Polish school of archaeology.” He also attended the classes of Prof. Leon Sternbach (1864–1940), a classical philologist and Byzantinist and the initiator of Byzantine studies in Poland. The other group of subjects that Kopera took was connected with the study of the Old Church Slavonic language, which he studied with Prof. Lucjan Malinowski (1839–1898), a linguist and the co-founder of the Slavonic Philology Seminar of the Jagiellonian University. He also attended a course on the affinity among the Slavonic languages, this course being conducted by Prof. Jan Niecisław Baudouin de Courtenay (1845–1929), another distinguished scholar and an expert in this field. Furthermore, he Kopera completed a one-semester practical course of Sanskrit held by the Indologist Dr Leon Mańkowski (1853–1909) and attended practical classes in paleography and medieval sigillography (sphragistics) with Dr Stanisław Krzyżanowski (1865–1917), a medievalist and a specialist in the auxiliary sciences of history.⁵

⁴ GUMOWSKI 1965: 19. On M. Sokołowski, see KALINOWSKI 1997: 175–183; IDEM 2000–2001: 161–165 (bibliography); KUNIŃSKA 2012.

⁵ AUJ, sign. S II 485B, k. 25; S II 486B, k. 22; S II 487B, k. 33; S II 488B, k. 36; S II 489B, k. 35; S II 490B, k. 27; S II 491B, k. 38; S II 492B, k. 35; S II 493B, k. 41; S II 494B, k. 38; WF II 504 – Feliks Kopera, doctoral degree file; The course of my life and studies [1895].

Theoretical knowledge acquired in the university courses had to be confronted with practice, and Kopera's contacts with Kraków-based numismatists from the Numismatic Society in Kraków (further: TNK), established in 1889, would become closer and closer. In 1893, the name Kopera appeared for the first time in the *Numismatic and Archaeological News* (further: *WNA*), the official journal of the TNK. In the first issue of that year, he contributed a brief note (three sentences long) about the Czech periodical *Časopis Společnosti přátel Starožitností*, published in Prague by the Friends of Antiquities Society.⁶ Careful readers of the next *WNA* yearly could find a text of Kopera's in a reprinted report from the sessions of the Commission on Art History of the Academy of Learning in Kraków (further: AU) from one of its meetings which discussed Kopera's dissertation, titled "The Tomb of King John I Albert in the Cathedral on the Wawel Hill and the First Works in Renaissance Style in the Royal Castle", which constituted the basis for the doctoral degree he obtained in 1896.⁷ closer relations with the numismatists' circles could also be seen in the report on the activities of the TNK for the years 1892–1895, where he was mentioned as an ordinary department member serving as secretary.⁸

It is difficult to say when Kopera joined the TNK, but it is a fair guess that he did so during the final years of his studies, as hinted to by a note in the above-named report which reads, "as we are writing this [1895], the Society engaged Dr Feliks Kopera as secretary", and the fact that as of November 1896, Kopera was already in the process of pursuing his studies in Basel.⁹

Kopera's involvement, at this point, in the activities of the TNK probably came about as a result of the problems that this organization was having in regards to the illness of the secretary at that time, Dr Waław Bartynowski (1868–1923), who used his sickness to explain his resignation in 1895, after less than three years in this post. However, Kopera's accession to the TNK, coupled with his assumption of the secretarial duties, should not be viewed in terms of a promotion or special acknowledgement, expressed by the numismatic circles, of his knowledge. It is possible that the members of the TNK were influenced by Sokołowski, who wanted the organization to act in an active and dynamic manner.

⁶ KOPERA 1893a: 32. This note is not signed by Kopera, but he is featured as the author in the "List of Items" appended to this *WNA* yearly.

⁷ KOPERA 1893b: 334; IDEM 1898a and, in an extended version, IDEM 1904a; AUJ, sign. WF II 504 – Feliks Kopera, doctoral degree file.

⁸ ANONYM 1896: 1.

⁹ In the report for the year 1895 (ANONYM 1896: 1, citing the report), Kopera is already mentioned as a doctor, though he would not have obtained this degree until 1896, i.e., in the year of the report's publication: AUJ, sign. WF II 121 – Kopera Feliks, habilitation file, Curriculum vitae [1900]; *Ibidem*, sign. WF II 96, a copy of the land marshal's letter, from the Office of the Land Department, of 11 November 1896.

Appointing a young scholar to the office of secretary (F. Kopera was about 24 years old at that time) did not violate the preferred practice, as Wacław Bartynowski was of the same age when he took over his duties in the same capacity. Although the decision to offer Kopera this position might rather have been due to an approach, on the part of the senior members of the organization, that was more pragmatic than anything else, the aspiring young man must have recognized this opportunity as a chance to “prove” his skills and abilities. The remaining gentlemen, who were definitely of an older age (the next “junior” member of the TNK, Leonard Lepszy (1856–1937), was fifteen years older than Kopera), had apparently not planned on becoming actively involved in the administrative matters of the society. This is confirmed by Kopera’s letter to Sokołowski, sent from Paris in early 1897, addressing their concern about the future of the TNK and the numismatic journal:

I’ve had a feeling it would come to this with the [*Numismatic and Archaeological*] *News*. Mr [Adam] Chmiel, though a very good man, has an enormously limited perspective and no idea in regards to historical or cultural, skilful or even just decent research into art; he is no numismatist either, being only slightly familiar with sphragistics and guilds. Besides, he has got a lot of *weltschmerz* [existential pain], probably because of the past and his blocked career, which has greatly affected him and which has surely caused a bile and disorder effect in him. Mr [Piotr] Umiński = 0 where a head is needed, and he sometimes takes care of things [to our advantage]. Mr [Leonard] Lepszy prefers to stand aloof at times and spends very little time on the *News*. P. [Władysław] Bartynowski is a noble and hard-working man but lacking in intensity, resolve, and verve. How can things go well? But the Society is very useful and should do a lot and will do a lot when its solid base is eventually stable [...]. I wanted it to follow a chartered path, sure and clear and simple as the truth, and perhaps it could be followed with your help, Professor, in spite of some popularly biased “reports,” if not my departure.. But perhaps the helm and the engine will one day come under our control.¹⁰

These descriptions, which are not very favourable, refer to the figures who were crucial in running the affairs of the society at the time: Umiński (1830–1906) was the first president of the TNK and held that office until 1900, Wł. Bartynowski was the editor of the *WNA*, Lepszy was one of the founding members of the TNK, and Chmiel (1865–1934) was a long-standing member of the executive board.

The idea to make the numismatic community of Kraków act in a more dynamic manner, even if implemented efficiently, would soon have proved to be unfeasible in that formula. Kopera’s tenure as secretary became a matter of pure formality, as already during the second half of 1896, thanks to the scholarships he had received, he went on to pursue his studies abroad and would not have been present in Kraków until as late as nearly the end of 1899.¹¹ However,

¹⁰ AUJ, sign. 98/4, Legacy archive of M. Sokołowski; Kopera to Sokołowski, Paris, dated 30 December 1896 to 5 January 1897.

¹¹ AUJ, sign. WF II 121, Kopera Feliks – habilitation file, Curriculum vitae, [1900]; IDEM, sign. WF II 96,

to members of the TNK, his departure was not a sufficient enough reason to remove him either from the board of the society or from his office as secretary. It was not until 1899 that he ceded this function with all its duties to Mr Chmiel, remaining in the executive of the TNK as a member of the Department, and he continued to be a member, without any further statutory function, each year until 1913. In turn, his resignation from the office of secretary was connected to his assumption of the editorship of the *WNA* in 1900, following Władysław Bartynowski, who then became vice-chairman of the TNK.

Considering the importance of Kopera's personal contacts, it should be stressed that his awakening interest in research on coins and medals was related to the opportunity to work closely from the very beginning with very good collections, such as those of Hutten-Czapski, Potocki, Bartynowski, the TNK, and the Jagiellonian University. It was this awakened passion which would come to be reflected in the particular attention he gave to numismatic collections practically in all the museums he visited during his academic journey from Paris to St. Petersburg. He described all of it extensively in his letters to Sokołowski, letters which were sent almost on a daily basis, with an abundance of information, with descriptions of many unknown and accidentally discovered artefacts, and including, at times, some interpretations on provenance or dating details. The amount of commentary would indicate the essential role that numismatics played in Kopera's interests at the time. The following excerpt from one of his letters attests to this fascination:

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The museums closed. Preparations for obtaining entry to the mint. Seeing the entire collection of Polish medals and coins of the National Library, with a small collection of coins, and a fairly neat but unextraordinary medals collection – formerly owned by [Count Edward] Raczyński, therefore already published. One medal, in honour of Catherine of Mantova(?), if Polish, unknown(?). Finally, I got to see Dr [Hipolit] Obrycki's collection, which is rather small but quite nice. Still, despite its small size, it took me three hours to view the whole thing. I shall go there a couple of times yet. Dr Obrycki has a nice, as I've said, collection of coins and medals and apparently some other antiquities which I have not seen yet. He welcomed me very kindly and warmly, with a truly cordial politeness. He is well acquainted with numismatics, though he wanted to persuade me, quite sincerely, that he doesn't know much about it and that he is an amateur and an ignoramus. From what I've seen so far, his collection is nicer and larger than that of the National Library. Good old Obrycki, he put an Italian medal by Pisano, with a bust of Niccolo Picino, among the Polish medals. On this medal, Picinus is wearing a cap very much like our Confederate cap. This is why Obrycki placed it among the Polish medals in a box where you can't see the inscription. Of all our experts, every one of them would have fallen for it, being deceived by that cap, thinking that the medal is an original – late and rare – Polish medal, so Obrycki said. I didn't fall for it, of course. At first sight, without taking the piece in hand, I said that it was an Italian medal, probably by Pisano. It impressed

the old man so much and he was so content with me that he gave me the medal as a souvenir. We could hardly part on that day. I am going to visit him tomorrow. I've been overwhelmed by his politeness and kind-heartedness. I shall bequeath the collection to Raperswil, because in Cracow it is too close to Russia, they could grab it and take it to the Hermitage! I didn't even feel like explaining to the dear old man that it would be better to place it with us, he was so convinced in regards to what he said. A friend of [Henryk] Bukowski. More about him tomorrow.¹²

Kopera's articles published in the *WNA*, written during his foreign studies or based on materials he had gathered previously or while abroad, deal with a wide variety of subjects; they are not limited to one particular period but encompass the whole history of ancient, medieval, and modern coinage, as well as the history of medallic art.

Kopera's first significant work which combines the fields of medallic art and numismatics was published in 1896. It was titled "Medalik czy moneta Jana Kazimierza z r. 1668" (A Religious Pendant or a Coin of John II Casimir from the Year 1668).¹³ He wrote it on the basis of a photograph sent to the editors of the *WNA* by Hutten-Czapski "to be used" and, as Kopera notes, "to which fact this interesting piece owes its description and drawing." Nonetheless, the article did not offer any conclusion, and it was only Marian Gumowski (1881–1974) who, in 1912, would throw more light on the specimen under consideration.¹⁴

Another article, titled "Monety znalezione we wsi Mniszkach pod Łęczycą" (The Coins Found at the Village Mniszki, Near Łęczycza) documents a hoard of early medieval coins donated to the Archaeology Room of the Jagiellonian University in 1895.¹⁵ This is also the first article, as published in the *WNA*, which describes in detail an early medieval coin find. In a brief preface to the featured catalogue, Kopera explains his reasons for taking up this subject, stressing the importance of the whole theme, despite the absence of any Polish coins in the hoard. At the same time, he emphasized the need to publish finds of "inflow" coins as evidence of "foreign cultural influence on our land," noting that "several dozen thoroughly described excavated finds from that era could most certainly give grounds for historically significant observations." He reiterated this point later in the article, stressing the need to "describe foreign finds [in our land] from this era,

¹² AUJ, sign. 98/4, Legacy archive of M. Sokołowski, Kopera to Sokołowski, Paris, 30 December 1896 to 5 January 1897.

¹³ KOPERA 1896a: 59–62. Czapski saw this numismatic "specimen" in 1895 in the collection of Michał Loewy, a banker from Inowrocław. Another silver piece could once be found in the collection of Adam Wolański, in Volhynia. The current ownership and location of these two pieces are unknown. In 2010, another gold piece was posted on the auction website Allegro, at: <http://www.allegromat.pl/aukcja66364#gallery> (accessed 10 August 2016).

¹⁴ GUMOWSKI 1912: 17–18.

¹⁵ KOPERA 1896b: 145–150; part 2, IDEM 1897a: 194–200.

where just about the only solid evidence is an excavated find.”¹⁶ These “calls for action” and memoranda would also appear in subsequent texts authored by Kopera. They bear testimony to his awareness of the weight and value of the numismatic sources and demonstrate his increasing tendency to assume the role of museologist and educator.

Obviously, Kopera’s reviews of Julius Menadier’s *Die Otto-Adelheidepfennige* and Emil Bahrfeldt’s *Der Hacksilberfund Gralow*, published in the *Historical Quarterly*, were written in the aftermath of his initial interest in medieval coinage.¹⁷ The readers of this periodical also learned about his enthusiastic comments in regards to the article “Błędne drogi w zbieraniu numizmatów polskich” (False Paths in the Collecting of Polish Coinage) by Walery Kostrzębski (1828-1899), published in the *WNA* (and as a separate copy print).¹⁸

The subject of finds was continued in a brief note on coins from burials in Ruthenia¹⁹ as well as in a cycle of information on Roman coins in Poland from the collection of the Academy of Learning, given in deposit to the Archaeology Room of the Jagiellonian University.²⁰ There, just as in the above-mentioned article on the Mniszki hoard, the significance of numismatic evidence was emphasized once again. As Kopera puts it:

[...] among artefacts, a coin definitely has the most educative contents, as it bears an inscription and frequently a precise date, which, combined with the location of the find, may lead a historian of culture to draw numerous conclusions.²¹

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The educational aspect that he incorporated into the study should also be emphasized here. He paid particular attention to the need to properly describe the location of a find after a coin has been included in a collection but also to the later concern that such information be preserved in case the numismatic piece is relocated.

Also of interest are his attempts, not always successful, to encourage other scholars to continue or even expand on the subject matter of his articles as well as to exchange research information. The second article in the cycle devoted to the finds of Roman coinage ends with a complaint: “following my publication of a minor part in 1897, no one [in Poland] has contributed any new details thereon.”²²

¹⁶ *Ibidem*: 200.

¹⁷ IDEM 1897b: 806–11.

¹⁸ IDEM 1897g: 805 (item not included in the bibliography in GUMOWSKI 1967).

¹⁹ KOPERA 1896c: 133.

²⁰ IDEM 1897c: 305–309; continued in IDEM 1897d: 351–35; IDEM 1900a: 194–198; and IDEM 1904b: 189–196.

²¹ IDEM 1897c: 305.

²² IDEM 1900a: 195.

In this case, it would not be long before he received some positive feedback. In the joint 3–4 issue of the *WNA* (1900), in the column called “Wzajemne informacje naukowe” (Response to Scientific Information), Michał Greim (1828–1911) responded to Kopera’s articles, providing the “information [which Kopera required] on the finds of Roman and modern coins on our soil, that is, Podolia.”²³

In 1900, Kopera published a text titled “O potrzebie krytycznego wydania średniowiecznych monet polskich z uwzględnieniem historii sztuki i kultury” (On the Need of a Critical Publication of Polish Medieval Coins, Including the History of Art and Culture), which was a written version of the paper that he presented at the 3rd General Convention of Polish Historians in Kraków, on 4–6 June 1900.²⁴ Kopera’s presentation and the subsequent article were, in a way, a follow-up to the paper by Wiktor Wittyg (1857–1921) on the needs of Polish numismatics, which paper was given at the 2nd General Convention of Polish Historians, which took place in Lvov on 17–18 July 1890.²⁵

Kopera’s articles on medallic art, especially medallic art of the Renaissance period, form a separate category within his academic oeuvre. These articles deal with pieces that were “completely unknown to date”, pieces which are described on the basis of photographs he owned or which he may have seen during his journeys across Europe,²⁶ with such noteworthy titles as “Nieznany medal z napoleońskich czasów” (An Unknown Medal from the Napoleonic Period),²⁷ “Medal z popiersiem Zygmunta Augusta z roku 1552 ze zbioru Siemaszki w Paryżu” (A Medal with the Bust of Sigismund Augustus Dated 1552 from the Collection of Siemaszko in Paris),²⁸ or “Polskie medale Padovana w zbiorach Esteńskich w Modenie” (Polish Medals by Padovano in the Estense Collection in Modena).²⁹ Kopera’s article on the medal from the Siemaszko collection would bring with it another appeal, this one arguing that more attention should be paid to Polish medallic art.

²³ GREIM 1900: 266.

²⁴ KOPERA 1900b: 1–3. Worthy of note here is the still valid argument, stated marginally in the paper, that more attention be given to the quality of the illustrations featured in numismatic publications.

²⁵ WITTYG 1890: 1–5.

²⁶ KOPERA 1897e. This article features depictions of fourteen zinc prints with five medals and portraits of Sigismund I “of which nos 1, 5, and 11 have been completely unknown to date.”

²⁷ IDEM 1897f: 309–311.

²⁸ IDEM 1898b: 453–456.

²⁹ IDEM 1899: 117. In view of his inability to obtain a photograph or cast during his visit to Modena, Kopera posted, after his return to Kraków, “private and official letters” to the administration of the museum in that city, but no positive results were forthcoming. In the above-named article, he appealed to his readers: “perhaps someone present in Modena could visit the director of the museum and secure a copy.” A cast copy was obtained in 1907 by Gumowski (1907: 575), who published it as “an illustration to the description as given by Dr Kopera [...], to whom we owe a debt of gratitude for first providing information about this medal.”

If, as is the case right now, we do not publish our metals, even on a casual and unsystematic basis, in order that one could have a more precise idea about them, it will not be possible to strictly and competently work out the history of medallion art in Poland.³⁰

The awareness of the contributory nature of this article and the incentive to publish more information referring to unknown medals are in turn expressed in the final sentence:

We finish these loose comments, without attaching much importance to them, and conclude this message expressing our silent hope that a greater number of medals will be published as research material for medallion art historians.³¹

We should also take note of one more article almost certainly written by Kopera though not included in the bibliography by Gumowski.³² Titled “Medal ks. Konstantego Wasyla Ostrogi” (The Medal of Duke Konstanty Wasyl Ostrogski), it was published in 1900 as an anonymous work.³³ Considering the fact that Kopera had attended a convention of archaeologists in Kiev (1899), where he presided over the art history section and presented a paper,³⁴ and considering that he also presented, at a session of the Academy of Learning’s Commission on Art History in the following year, a photograph of the tomb of Konstanty Ostrogski and a medal of Ostrogski’s found at the Lavra Pecherskaya monastery,³⁵ there can be virtually no doubt that it is Kopera who should be credited with authorship of this article.

The completion of his foreign journeys and his return to Kraków made it possible for him to get involved in the life of the city and marked the beginning of the period where his organization skills would come to the fore.

In 1899, Kopera assumed the position of manager for scientific matters at the Emeryk-Hutten Czapski Museum (further: the Czapski Museum). Thus, he was put in charge of the comprehensive organization of the institution, which included making the collection available to the public. In entrusting him with this assignment, Elżbieta Hutten-Czapska was guided by the excellent opinions he enjoyed, in particular among eminent scholars such as Wł. Bartynowski.³⁶ The endeavour proved to be a great success, and the mansion at Wolska St.

³⁰ KOPERA 1898b: 453.

³¹ *Ibidem*: 456.

³² GUMOWSKI 1967.

³³ KOPERA 1900c: 153–154.

³⁴ UKRAINEC 1899: 130.

³⁵ ANONYM 1900: 158; *Rocznik Akademii Umiejętności w Krakowie*, Year 1899/900, Kraków 1900, p. 71.

³⁶ AUJ, sign. S II 619, Kopera Feliks – employee’s file, curriculum vitae [c. 1923]; SZUKIEWICZ, 1909: 54–55; KOCÓJOWA 2006: 27; SKORUPSKA 2006: 33.

(presently, Piłsudski St.) became the centre of the numismatic movement in Kraków.³⁷

Kopera's increasing involvement in the activities of the TNK and the *WNA*, whose editorial duties he took over beginning with the second issue, in 1900, or the third issue, in 1901, is also clearly evident. This involvement is reflected in the introduction of some brand-new, though minor, elements in the journal's layout, which improved the journal's "readability". Meanwhile, his appointment to the post of director of the Museum in 1901 resulted almost instantly in the transfer of the *WNA* editorial office to the Cloth Hall (previously, all correspondence had been sent to the private address of Wł. Bartyński). Another change of address, to the Czapski Museum, took place in 1903.

The period of Kopera's tenure as editor-in-chief of the *WNA* was particularly difficult for the TNK. The habitual non-payment of member fees by the members plus the TNK's inability to secure sufficient funding for its activity resulted in a failure to meet the publication dates of successive issues of the periodical; it also resulted in some deterioration in the periodical's quality. Articles on numismatics were featured rarely, with art, archaeology, and sphragistics becoming the dominant themes.

The internal problems and the difficult situation of the organization are confirmed in the rudimentary documentation from that period, which unfortunately does not make it possible to grasp the directions of the activities undertaken or even the effects of the general meetings. Particularly "unfortunate" were the years 1902 and 1903, when the shortage of proper funding, changes in the editorial staff, and the vacancy in the post of secretary nearly imperilled the existence of the journal. In 1903, a formally double issue was published, but it was actually only 18 pages long.

Kopera attempted to cope with this situation by resorting to the possibilities offered by his directorship at the Museum. He upheld the decision to provide subsidies to the TNK, a situation which had already been in effect during the tenure of the Museum's first director, Władysław Łuszczkiewicz (1828–1900); Kopera also took it upon himself to cover all the correspondence costs of the TNK, including the distribution of the *WNA*.³⁸ The personnel situation had also improved, for in 1904 the vacant post of editorial secretary of the *WNA* was filled by Gumowski, who had been actively involved in the activities of the periodical as of its second issue. That it was Gumowski who took over the post can most

³⁷ KOPERA 1904c: 19–20; SKORUPSKA 2006: 33–37.

³⁸ The Numismatic Society also received subsidies from the National Museum during Władysław Łuszczkiewicz's tenure, in the years 1896–1898; see ANONYM 1899: 3.

likely be attributed to the fact that he had already been an employee of Kopera's at that time. In exchange for the aid offered at such a difficult time, the TNK collection, comprising coins, medals, books, and prints, was incorporated into the Museum's holdings as a deposit.³⁹

New opportunities for Kopera's numismatic undertakings also turned up at about the same time in the Museum. The Czapski family's donation in 1903 made it possible to arrange for the organization of a new department where the priceless holdings would be exhibited. With a view to making them available to the public to the greatest extent possible, work was almost immediately commenced on re-adapting the building for exhibition purposes. The permanent numismatic exhibition was opened for the public in 1905. Kopera, who co-designed it along with Gumowski, attached particular importance to its educational aspect in an effort to make use of the numismatic collection in order to "tell the tale" of the history of Poland.

It began with the Polish coins and medals, as the principal part of the collection. They were assigned to a large hall on the ground floor of the [Czapski] Museum and, overall, nearly 3,000 pieces (1/4 of the entire collection) were displayed on four large tables and in one rectangular showcase. This exhibition was arranged in such a manner that the development of coinage in Poland from the time of Mieszko I up to the Uprising of 1864, i.e., over a period of nine centuries, could be illustrated with the original material being displayed. Separately exhibited were the medals of kings and other people of distinction in Poland, from the beginning of the Renaissance to the medals of the most recent period, so as to demonstrate the development of this branch of art in our country and recall the important historical events, often of special significance, as reflected on medals.⁴⁰

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The activities undertaken at the Czapski Museum were a staple item in the yearly *Reports of the Management* [...]. The branch had been drawing more and more people interested in numismatics, highly qualified experts and amateurs alike. Kopera noticed the latter group's interest in the museum's collections and noted that the increasingly popular exposition is "making an impression [...] on the general public and the students, as shown in the ever more frequent questions, requests for defining coins, arranging collections."⁴¹ There is no question that this newfound popularity was also the result of Gumowski's involvement and participation in the branch's activity, for Gumowski was an outstanding specialist in his field. In an attempt to address the needs of these audiences, a guide was issued in 1908. Numbering over one-hundred pages, it was called *Przewodnik po muzeum im. hr. Emeryka Hutten-Czapskiego w Krakowie* (A Guide to the Emeryk

³⁹ ANONYM 1904: 1.

⁴⁰ KOPERA 1905b: 11–12.

⁴¹ IDEM 1908: 4 (citation).

Hutten-Czapski Museum in Krakow).⁴² Then, in 1910, the numismatic exposition was redesigned. Aside from separating the Polish coins from all the foreign artefacts, one of the showcases was dedicated to exhibiting pieces unearthed during excavation works.

At the same time, the Management wanted to allow the public to see the coin finds just as they are in their entirety, and as they were at the time when they were unearthed, that is, with all the urns, pottery, silver jewellery, and pieces of raw metal.⁴³

The setting for the exhibition of 1910 was basically the last one in which Kopera was in charge of programme-related matters. The authors of the successive expositions were staff members of the Museum: Gumowski and, later on, Maria Fredro-Boniecka (1891–1958).

The extent of Kopera's activity at the Museum and the support he provided as director would also help to improve the situation at the TNK. The years 1904 to 1906 were marked by a noticeable improvement in the organization's activities and, consequently, also of the *WNA*, including an increasing number of texts on numismatics. Cooperation was proceeding so well that in 1908, in exchange for assurance that the TNK would have a permanent venue for holding meetings and that the *WNA* would have appropriate editorial and publishing conditions, coupled with the obligation that "the members of the Society should have access to the collections facilitated to the maximum extent possible," it was decided that the aforementioned deposit of the TNK would become the property of the Museum.⁴⁴

Unfortunately, the improvement turned out to be rather short-lived and sometime during the years 1907 and 1908, the *WNA* faced another series of problems, leading to a hiatus in the publication of the periodical. Because of his inability to reconcile an enormous amount of various duties, or perhaps because he had already been acting as editor-in-chief on just a strictly formal basis for some time, Kopera resigned from his editorial duties at the *WNA* in 1907, as of the fourth issue of the journal, and Gumowski took over as editor-in-chief.

Kopera's diminishing participation in the editorial duties of the periodical came as a result of the increasing number of challenges that he faced in the management of the Museum as well as the increasing number of challenges at the TNK. He undertook efforts to secure solid administrative and financial foundations in the belief that this would eventually help to produce results

⁴² ANONYM 1908.

⁴³ KOPERA 1911b: 7.

⁴⁴ ANONYM 1907: 630.

in the form of an ambitious and extensive publishing policy. However, this increase in Kopera's organizational, administrative, and educational duties caused a kind of a breakdown in his scientific activity. A single review,⁴⁵ the above-mentioned note on the most recent finds of Roman coins from the territory of Poland, and "Słowo o medalu Padovana z popiersiem Izabelli Jagiellonki z r. 1532 w Modenie" (A Word on Padovan's Medal with the Bust of Izabella Jagiellonka, from the Year 1532 in Modena),⁴⁶ where he resolved the question of the decipherment of the medal's inscription, seem to sum up the extent of Kopera's writing activity in the numismatic field during this period. To this category, we could also add the article "O napisach na mieczu koronacyjnym królów polskich" (The Inscriptions on the Coronation Sword of the Polish Kings),⁴⁷ which was only published in 1916 but which had probably been written before this date, as indicated by some of the references to the sphragistic and numismatic sources, but also because the article was most likely a result of his previous discussions with Gumowski, discussions the likes of which would have been impossible after the events at the turn of 1914 and 1915. This particular work, though well thought out, was only a distant echo of his former interests and his awareness of the significance of numismatic sources and of the possibility of using these sources in the area of art history.

By limiting his work for the TNK and the *WNA* and by putting aside his academic research, Kopera was able to shift the weight of his activities more towards efforts concentrated on procuring a stable foundation for the Museum's numismatic collection. The support given by Kopera towards increasing the size of the collection in the initial period of his tenure as director of the Museum, which consisted in filling in some of the considerable gaps therein, was no doubt due to his awareness of the collection's weaknesses. The incompleteness of these original holdings was particularly evident as compared with the excellent collection of Hutten-Czapski's, which was well known to him. After the acquisition of the latter, the task of making the museum collection "complete" was given more prominence. This was also the reason, besides the active policy of obtaining new donations, for Kopera's equally active "duplicates" policy, which consisted in exchanging multiple copies of the same coin type for other coins not in the Museum's possession and in removing some specimens of a lesser value, which would leave the Museum either by way of exchange or sale.

⁴⁵ KOPERA 1903a: 62.

⁴⁶ IDEM 1911a: 65–66.

⁴⁷ IDEM 1916a: 257.

New acquisitions coming in through private donations and purchases were communicated to the public in the yearly reports issued by the institution. The well-planned and consistent policy of extending the collection would soon bring positive results. Already in the *Report of the Management [...]* for the year 1909, Kopera called it “the greatest numismatics collection in Poland,” describing the holdings and pointing to the most interesting or the most precious pieces.⁴⁸

There is no question that the growth of the collection should primarily be attributed to donations, for it was the coins received as donations that would have the greatest effect – both in terms of their proportion and value – on the state of the numismatic holdings. Nonetheless, a certain part of the collections was obtained by way of various purchases, such as the early medieval hoard from Grobla, near Bochnia: “In recognition of the importance of this sort of a find, the Management of the Museum has purchased it [...] in its entirety and exhibited it in the Medieval Artefacts Hall.”⁴⁹

As Gumowski notes:

The collection was not expanding very rapidly; it was only Dr Kopera’s acceptance of the director’s position that stirred things up in that area [...]. In a short time, we received more than 2,000 coins from the Żytyński collection, a deposit of the Numismatic Society (several hundred coins and medals), the bequest of the collection owned by the late Mr Podlewski from Częstochowa, and several thousand coins donated by various individuals.⁵⁰

The policy of selling “duplicates”, so efficiently pursued, enabled the Museum to take part in numismatic auctions such as those organized by the German auction houses. A report written by Gumowski, whom Kopera had delegated in 1911 to the auction sale of the Zschiesche & Köder collection from Leipzig, held at Otto Helbing’s auction house, is a testimony to the personal trust that Kopera placed in him. It is also an example of the now unusual liberty that used to be given to museum staff members sent to acquire artefacts at auction. At this auction, but also elsewhere, off auction, at the “antiquarians’ shops there,” Gumowski purchased as many as forty-five coins and medals, including seven ducats.⁵¹

⁴⁸ IDEM 1910: 33–34 (citation). Cf. also KOCÓJOWA 1978: 334–335; HACZEWSKA 2006: 41.

⁴⁹ KOPERA 1907: 6; GUMOWSKI 1905: 327. On the expansion of the collection and the activity of the Czapski Museum, see KOPERA 1903b: 23, 28; IDEM 1904c: 19–22, 32, 37; IDEM 1905a: 16, 28–29; IDEM 1905b: 11, 25–26; IDEM 1907: 6–8, 14–15; IDEM 1908: 3–4, 15–16; IDEM 1909: 6–7, 17–19; IDEM 1910: 33–35, 46–48; IDEM 1911b: 6–7, 19; IDEM 1912: 9–10, 17–18; IDEM 1913: 10–11, 25–26; IDEM 1915: 7–8, 17.

⁵⁰ GUMOWSKI 1902: 488–491. Gumowski described this portion of the donations in fairly direct language: “a quarter of them are duplicates or they are in a condition suitable only to be disposed of [...]”; “a conglomeration of coins of diverse types, levels of rarity or preservation.”

⁵¹ KOPERA 1912: 9; Arch. MNK, sign. TO 74, Marian Gumowski – employee’s file, Gumowski’s report on his attendance at the auction of 12 May 1911; Auktionskatalog. Enthaltend die Münzen- und Medaillen-Bestände der aufgelösten Firma Zschiesche & Köder, Leipzig. I. Abteilung: 1. Neuere deutsche Münzen nach Schwalbach I und II, deutsche Gedenktaler und Reichsmünzen. 2. Gold-Münzen und Gold-Medaillen aller Länder. 3. Münzen und

With regard to medallic art, two types of activity conducted by Kopera as director of the Museum should be taken note of. The first activity type was his participation in a so-called medals company – co-founded with Gumowski and the Warsaw-based numismatist Wittyg – the purpose of which was to support the development of Polish medallic art but also, equally important, to use the company as a means of obtaining some extra revenue for the benefit of the TNK. The company ceased to exist when it was formally dissolved in 1911. The profits earned, totalling 1,176.7 *Kronen*, were distributed among its members, who subsequently transferred their shares to the Museum (Kopera and Wittyg) and to the TNK (Gumowski).⁵²

The other activity type was his involvement in the work of various occasional committees formed with a view to honouring the memory of figures of distinction through the issue of commemorative medals, such as the medal in honour of Franciszek Piekosiński (1844–1906). One could even surmise that it is Kopera who should be credited with the efforts to “receive a subsidy so as to enable the striking of one gold medal for the collection of the National Museum in Kraków, of which the late Professor was a great advocate and friend.”⁵³

Kopera's dedication to numismatics was appreciated by the TNK in 1914. During the First Convention of Polish Numismatists in Kraków, held on 28–29 June 1914, a general assembly of the TNK⁵⁴ awarded him with the “highest distinction that the Society could give” to any member, i.e., honorary membership. In the justification note, the society mentioned his merits as editor-in-chief of the *WNA* at a time when the TNK “receiving the least amount of support from the related institutions and from the members themselves.”⁵⁵ Certainly, the decision to award Kopera with this title owed much to his performance and attitude as director of the Museum, which supported the TNK in terms of funding, headquarters, and personnel contributions, despite having its own share of problems to cope with.

Paradoxically, the honorary membership that the TNK awarded to Kopera closed the most active period of his activity in the area of numismatics, both publicly and at the Museum itself. This was very much the result of the outbreak of the First World War and the situation at the front in the autumn of 1914. It did not seem as though the approaching Russian “steam roller” would be stopped by the retreating troops of Austria-Hungary. The Kraków Citadel was being prepared

Medaillen aus Silber und unedlen Metallen der Kaiser- und Königreiche. Auktion 27. März 1911 und folgende Tage. Helbing, Otto Nachf. (Hg.), München, 1911.

⁵² ANONYM 1911: 195.

⁵³ GUMOWSKI, KOPERA and WITTYG 1906. “Appeal” appended to the *WNA* Vol. V, no. 4.

⁵⁴ ANONYM 1914: 118.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.

for defence, which made it difficult for the Museum to remain in operation, in large part because a number of staff members were conscripted into the military and given frontline assignments, which meant that the museum holdings could not be properly protected.

The decisions taken in connection with protecting the numismatic collections in 1914 turned out to be among the most controversial during Kopera's tenure as director. The steps taken in mid-1914 were intended to provide a safe place for hiding away the most precious artefacts, including the numismatic collection. As a result, all of the objects had to be removed from the exposition at the Czapski Museum and the branch was closed, thus bringing to an end the TNK exhibition that had been inaugurated only a few weeks before. The packing of the pieces, which lasted as long as "a couple of months," was done by wrapping each coin in crêpe paper, after which the entire collection was placed in tar-insulated barrels. Kopera was proud of the exceptional effect of this storage method, as "moisture would not even touch the gloss of the coins that had never been in circulation before." Unfortunately, the rescue efforts were focused mainly on protecting each individual artefact, neglecting the preservation of the previously elaborated arrangement and resulting in "many years of work, of the ordering and arrangement of the coins and medals, going to waste."⁵⁶

To a certain extent, Kopera's decision may be explained in the light of a letter, from October 1914, by Kraków president Juliusz Leo (1861–1918), in which the following was written:

[...] the most valuable objects of the National Museum, especially the collection of coins and medals of E[meryk] Count Czapski are to be packed up (as) for a long journey. When at the right time the van vehicles shall come to pick up the collections, you will hand them over to the authorized officer.⁵⁷

This document may indicate that the packing was performed under extreme time pressure in order to accommodate the plan of the evacuation of all the artefacts. For reasons unknown, this plan was called off and the barrels were buried in two-metre-deep pits under the floors of the rooms at the Czapski Museum in such a way that in order to take them back out, the walls needed to be propped up, with six hired labourers working for five days.⁵⁸

Gumowski was made aware of the secret plan to conceal the collections, but for some reason he was not informed that the whole undertaking had been called

⁵⁶ Arch. MNK, Office of F. Kopera, dp. 7327, cost estimate dated 17 May 1915; KOPERA 1916b: 8–12 (citation); KOCÓJOWA 1978: 331–333; NOWAK 2013: 166–167; BŁOŃSKA 2016.

⁵⁷ Arch. MNK, Office of F. Kopera, dp. 7237, letter of 8 October 1914, as quoted in BŁOŃSKA 2016.

⁵⁸ Arch. MNK, Office of F. Kopera, dp. 7327, cost estimate dated 17 May 1915; KOPERA 1916b: 8–11 (citation).

off, as is intimated in the following excerpt from his *Memoirs* [...]:

The First World War, which at that time was in full swing, did not affect either me or the Czapski Museum. [...] When, in 1915, the threat of a siege of Kraków was looming, we were all concerned about the collections, especially the numismatic collection. Then, without telling anyone, the director, Kopera, and the janitor named Szkaradek took an empty barrel and simply put inside of it all the coins and medals stored in the large safe, and afterwards they buried that barrel in the cellar under the [Czapski] palace. I was not acquainted with the matter, but they told me that the coins had been evacuated to Vienna for the duration of the war. If Kraków fell into the hands of the enemy and the occupation authorities came here, this was the only answer I was to give them.

Fortunately, no siege or occupation of Kraków occurred, and there was no need for me to spread the fable which I had seen through from the very beginning. The frontline moved farther to the east, there was no longer any immediate threat to Kraków, and when I got to know the truth, I could only wring my hands, because by pouring the coins into the barrel, the entire arrangement of the collection was demolished, and it would take years and years of work now to restore the original setting and order in the compartments.⁵⁹

This incident would have a negative impact on the relation between Kopera and Gumowski. The lack of trust exhibited by Kopera rise to feelings of resentment and bitterness on the part of Gumowski. It may be that in this particular case Kopera acted in a somewhat overzealous manner, considering the fact that the paper did not specify the date of the potential evacuation and that, therefore, there may not have been any reason to act in such a hurry. It is also possible that Gumowski argued against proceeding in haste, taking a more distanced view of the approaching danger. The measures undertaken by Kopera were no doubt dictated by his solicitude for the collections; nonetheless, as a result of his decision and the ensuing action, all the inventory works that Gumowski had conducted during the course of over fifteen years had to be performed as if from the beginning.⁶⁰

After the wartime threat passed, Kopera did not want to point to Leo's instructions – perhaps he could not even do so – as the reason for the museum holdings having been packed in such an unprofessional manner, and he would continue to regard the rescue and recovery action as a complete success. At the same time, it must be stressed that he never belittled the problem of the disruption of the arrangement of the numismatic pieces. The resulting confusion meant that it would be many years before the items in question could again be made available to the public, and the reopening of the Czapski Museum was postponed

⁵⁹ GUMOWSKI 1965: 45.

⁶⁰ Information regarding the relocation of the numismatic collection was withheld by Kopera until the danger passed. As Kopera wrote in his report of 31 December 1914 (Arch. MNK, Office of F. Kopera, dp. 7248), "I am permitted to state here that the most precious part of the collection (the Czapski Collection) has been saved. The gold and silver coins have been evacuated abroad and concealed in a place known to the Pres[ident] of the City." For more on this topic, see also KOCÓJOWA 1978: 333; NOWAK 2013: 166–167; BŁOŃSKA 2016.

several times. "The entire affair was so depressing to me," Gumowski noted, "that in 1919 I yielded to persuasion and left the Czapski Museum."⁶¹

Gumowski resigned, leaving a number of matters unsettled. One of these was the contest for a bookplate to be used by the Numismatic Library of the Museum, which was announced by the TNK at Gumowski's initiative in 1918.⁶² A much more important problem was the collection's state of disorder as a result of the turmoil of war. In spite of the pressure that was exerted upon him, Gumowski did not want to agree to open the collection to the public again, and it was not until his departure in 1921 that the reopening of the exposition finally took place. The loss of such an outstanding specialist made it necessary, in 1920, to establish a "permanent experts committee for numismatic matters," with Kopera, Lepszy, and Adam Wolański (1852–1933) as its members.⁶³ It was not until 1927 that the duties of managing director of the Czapski Museum and the custody of the numismatic collection were taken over by Fredro-Boniecka. The arrangement that had been disrupted was also restored with the aid of Wolański, the honorary curator of the Czapski Museum mentioned above.⁶⁴

There is no denying the relation between the departure of Gumowski and the decline in Kopera's numismatic activity. The 1930s brought the publication of his study on Renaissance-era medallion art, titled "Giovanni Maria Padovano i jego działalność w Polsce" (Giovanni Maria Padovano and His Activity in Poland),⁶⁵ as well as the publication of two biographical notes, one on Caraglio⁶⁶ and the other on Emeryk Hutten-Czapski,⁶⁷ for the Polish Biographical Dictionary. This situation could possibly be accounted for by his involvement in other fields of activity, including his work for the restitution of Polish historic artefacts in connection with the Treaty of Riga and, in successive years, his efforts to procure a new building for the Museum.

The 1920s also marked a loosening in the relations between the Museum and the TNK and a considerable decline in the Czapski Museum's activity. The combined occurrence of some unfavourable circumstances, including the death, in 1918, of Wł. Bartynowski (with whom Kopera remained close

⁶¹ Arch. MNK, Office of Kopera, dp. 8696, letter of 4 March 1919, on the postponement of the opening of the Czapski Museum; KOPERA 1916b: 8–11; GUMOWSKI 1965: 45–46; KOCÓJOWA 1978: 333–334.

⁶² The winning project was by Rudolf Mękicky (1887–1942), though it never actually became a bookplate. See LASKOWSKA and PODNIESIŃSKA 2015: 261–283.

⁶³ Arch. MNK, Office of Kopera, dp. 9318, Minutes of the meetings of the Department of the National Museum Committee, the minutes of 23 October 1920 (citation).

⁶⁴ HACZEWSKA 2006: 42 (citation).

⁶⁵ KOPERA 1935: 131–132.

⁶⁶ IDEM 1937: 203–204.

⁶⁷ CZAPSKA and KOPERA 1937: 181–182.

up until the end), followed a particularly difficult period in the functioning of both the Museum and the TNK, which in turn led to a decrease in – and then the eventual termination of – their cooperation together. In 1931, 12 Wolska St. ceased to be the correspondence address of the TNK, this address being transferred to the Classical Archaeology Unit of the Jagiellonian University. Also, it was here – and no longer in the Office of the Museum – that the reporting meetings would be held on a regular basis. With the death of Wolański in 1933, the editorship of the *WNA* was passed, after 20 years, from the Museum into the hands of Jagiellonian University-based scholars.⁶⁸

Simultaneously, certain questions in regards to the transferring of the TNK collection to the Museum began to surface. Some of the members, including the painter Jan Hopliński (whose real name was Jan Burdziński, 1887–1974) – at the time also the librarian and curator of the Academy of Fine Arts – even raised the possibility of the collection's restitution.⁶⁹ Fortunately, these requests were repealed, thus illustrating the continuing loyalty of the TNK's board towards the Museum, which was also reflected in the reports of this organization.⁷⁰

A renewal in the relations between the Museum and the TNK came about in the 1930s thanks to the efforts of Fredro-Boniecka. One of the effects of their collaboration was an exposition – inaugurated at the Cloth Hall in 1935 – of works by contemporary Belgian medal-makers. This exhibition, prepared by the Royal Society of the Belgian Friends of Medalllic Art, was a response to the 1933 exposition, in Belgium, of works by contemporary Polish medal-makers. The exhibited works visited the cities of Poznań, Kraków, Lvov, and Warsaw.⁷¹ The dedication shown by Fredro-Boniecka had a very positive impact on the numismatic community, evidence of which, in the form of acknowledgments, could even be found in the minutes of the general assembly of the members in 1935.⁷²

Once the Second World War was underway, Kopera's attention was once again drawn to securing the numismatic collection. Preceding the war's outbreak, it was the Czapski Museum that had done the best job out of all the departments in terms of making preparations to protect its collection. For instance, it was equipped with a staircase made of stone, not wood, and specially designed, "built-in" safes for "storing numismatic objects" which would be able to protect against

⁶⁸ ANONYM 1988: 91. The subsequent editors-in-chief of the *WNA* were Roman Grodecki (1922–1924), Zygmunt Zakrzewski (1924–1927), Ludwik Piotrowicz and Władysław Semkowicz (1927–1939), and Ludwik Piotrowicz (1949).

⁶⁹ SKAZA and WOLAŃSKI 1927: 69.

⁷⁰ *WNA* 1933 (report of the General Assembly of the Numismatic Society in Kraków), 135.

⁷¹ Arch. MNK, Office of Kopera, dp. 15790; *Ibidem* dp. 252/37.

⁷² BULAS and PIOTROWICZ 1935: 138.

fire and other damage, as opposed to glass showcases, which offered no security at all.⁷³ As before, it was decided once again to conceal the most valuable gold and silver pieces in tar-insulated barrels that were then buried in the ground.⁷⁴ The remainder of the collection was left inside the building. Also, some additional security measures were taken. For example, iron doors were added to safeguard the entrances to the attic and, to counter the effects of an air-raid, access was provided to sand, spades, barrels of water, and buckets. The personnel who remained to guard the museum's holdings had gas-masks and electric torches at their disposal; to carry out the task of safeguarding and packing the coins, they could make use of two wooden chests, four (smaller) chests, two tobacco cases, black paper and wood shavings to be used for filler, and also a pair of pincers, a hammer, and an axe. Fortunately, as it turned out, none of these objects and tools had to be used.⁷⁵

We know very little about the fortunes of the collection during the German occupation of Poland:

In the Czapski department, the Germans seized the entire numismatic collection, removing it from the control of the Museum personnel, taking out the books and, as it turned out later, the original numismatic pieces as well, leaving the rest in an "excavation"-like state. At that time, some of the collection with the seals of Polish cities disappeared from the Czapski Museum. Moreover, the Germans had taken over a wide range of objects on receipt, which was preserved in the files. A certain portion of the requisitioned and "borrowed" pieces was recovered by restitution procedures.⁷⁶

The Museum's situation after the Second World War put very heavy demands on Kopera, compelling him to devote all his time and efforts to repairing and renovating the demolished buildings, recreating the exhibitions, putting the collections in order. It was only towards the end of the 1940s that a certain level of stability would ensue. This was connected to the formal subordination of the Museum to the Ministry of Culture and Art and Kopera's decision to retire as of 1950. It was at this time that he also returned to doing work in the field of numismatics, though this work was really only of symbolic significance and was almost certainly attributable to the sense of duty that honorary membership in the TNK entailed. The hardships of the post-war reality, the destruction of the financial basis, the human losses affecting the membership rolls, the lack

⁷³ BŁOŃSKA 2016.

⁷⁴ IDEM 2014: 108.

⁷⁵ IDEM 2016.

⁷⁶ Arch. MNK, sign. rkps 10, The act by the Ministry of Culture and Art in regards to taking over the management and use of the National Museum in Kraków, formerly the property of the Municipality of Kraków, dated 19 December 1949, c. 9-11; quoted from BŁOŃSKA 2014: 88–89.

of support from the state and, to top it all off, the overall difficulties of daily life – all of this resulted in a situation in which the very existence of the TNK was jeopardized, demanding, as never before, a great amount of support from respected figures. In consequence, after more than 30 years, Kopera rejoined the executive board of the TNK, with Fredro-Boniecka among its members,⁷⁷ and the first post-war issue of the *WNA* opened with Kopera's article "Artystyczna wartość piastowskich monet" (The Artistic Value of the Coins of the Piast Dynasty).⁷⁸

Also in 1949, an exhibition showing 1,200 coins and medals was inaugurated in the ground-floor hall of the Czapski Museum. Conceived as the continuation of the first numismatic exposition of 1905, it had the same theme: a representation of the history of Poland as reflected in the history of coinage from Mieszko I⁷⁹ up to the time following the Partitions of Poland. Unfortunately, the exhibition was cancelled on the orders of the Ministry commission in March 1951, for it was decided that the hall would serve the purpose of exhibiting the inventory works.⁸⁰

Feliks Kopera died in 1952. That same year, the last general assembly of the members of the Polish Numismatic Society in Kraków (the name was changed in 1946) was held. It was only attended by thirteen people. The following year, as a result of the transformation, the organization was dissolved.⁸¹

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In the present article, the authors have tried to address two key questions.

First of all, what was numismatics to F. Kopera? There is no doubt that various numismatic themes continued to be present throughout all the years of his academic career. His initially intense activity in this scientific field, evident until around the year 1900, was greatly reduced in favour of his involvement in organizational and administrative work for the TNK, where he remained active until about 1918. Kopera dealt with his responsibilities with great dedication, doing his best to make the most of all the possible opportunities. None the less, all these actions and initiatives should not be associated exclusively with his passion for artefacts such as coins and medals. What he did, beginning with his student years and continuing all the way until his death, he did for, or because he was inspired by, the people

⁷⁷ BULAS and SEMKOWICZ 1949: 151.

⁷⁸ KOPERA 1949: 1–10.

⁷⁹ Of course, we must take into consideration the current state of our knowledge in regards to the beginnings of Polish coinage; SUCHODOLSKI 2015: 67ff.

⁸⁰ Arch. MNK, Office of Kopera, dp. 691/48; 213/49; 228/49; DOBROWOLSKI 1952: 42.

⁸¹ WOŹNIAK 2016: 31. In 1953, the Polish Archaeological Society was established at a convention in Kraków, Nowa Huta, thus uniting into one organization the Polish numismatic societies in Kraków and Wrocław, the Warsaw Numismatic Society, and the Polish Prehistoric Society in Poznań.

who were important to him, whom he admired and deeply respected. One such influential figure was M. Sokołowski, who introduced him to the numismatic circles in Kraków and motivated him to do further scientific work. Due to their estrangement in the early years of the 20th century, Kopera would withdraw from the area of activity propagated by Sokołowski. Another significant figure was Wł. Bartynowski, who introduced Kopera to the fascinating world of numismatics, placing his trust in him from the very beginning, allowing him to work with the most precious artefacts, and subsequently entrusting him with the custody of the numismatic collections of Hutten-Czapski and the TNK. Likewise, Kopera's close co-operation and dedication to the TNK would almost come to an end with Bartynowski's death of in 1918. Another notable person was M. Gumowski, who on many occasions would offer his genuine support and help to Kopera, and who was a distinguished specialist in his field, respected for his knowledge and deeply trusted as a staff member. Their quarrel and Gumowski's eventual departure from the Museum would prove to be a loss that Kopera never managed to compensate for via such figures as Wolański or Fredro-Boniecka. Among the people that Kopera lost at this time, those who played a part in the beginnings of his interest in numismatics, we should also mention Elżbieta Hutten-Czapska (who left Kraków in 1914 and died in 1916), who placed an almost limitless trust in him and for whom he would strive to create a museum to match the best European examples he had seen. The intensity of his interest in numismatics and his dedication to the TNK would gradually decline over the years, which was also the effect of the enormous amount of work connected with the management of the Museum. However, Kopera's return to numismatic research towards the end of his lifetime is a testimony to the fact that he had not become indifferent to the research or affairs of the society.

The other question, "Who was Kopera to numismatics?," appears to be easier to answer. As noted in the introduction to the study *Ikonoграфия monet piastowskich* (The Iconography of the Coins of the Piast Dynasty), in the context of questions related to describing the iconography of coin dies:

One could have the impression that numismatists would like to arouse an interest in such questions among, first of all, art history specialists, but unfortunately the latter do not show due concern in this regard.⁸²

According to the opinion of this author, this is connected to, among other things, "low assessment of mintage products as evidence of artistic activity."⁸³

⁸² GARBACZEWSKI 2007: 9.

⁸³ *Ibidem*.

This suggestion, still valid today, is identical to the proposition put forth by Lepszy nearly 130 years ago, at the Second Meeting of the Polish Historians in Lvov in 1890, about “making use of numismatics primarily to serve the history of art,”⁸⁴ where the following significant sentence can be found: “In order to treat art history seriously, a knowledge of numismatics is one of the prerequisites.” This suggestion is also identical to Kopera’s own propositions (see above). And so, it is Kopera that can be recognized as one of the very few art historians who was concerned, to some surprise among his fellow scholars, with numismatics and who examined historic artefacts from this perspective. An active member of the TNK, whose activity required it to “reach beyond indoor-type scholarly methods,” Kopera was also a museologist who made efforts to use numismatic resources for educational purposes as well.

SOURCES

Archive of the Jagiellonian University (AUJ): sign. 98, Legacy Archive of M. Sokołowski; Acts of the Academic Senate II, Student catalogues: S II 485B, S II 486B, S II 487B, S II 488B, S II 489B, S II 490B, S II 491B, S II 492B, S II 493B, S II 494B; sign. S II 619, Kopera Feliks – employee’s file; sign. WF II 121, Kopera Feliks – habilitation file; sign. WF II 504, Kopera Feliks – doctoral degree file

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Archive of the National Museum in Kraków (Arch. MNK): sign. TO 15, Kopera Feliks – employee’s file; TO 74, Marian Gumowski – employee’s file; Office of Kopera

National Museum in Kraków, Old Prints, Manuscripts, and Cartography Department (MNK, DzVIIIa): sign. 505/54

ABBREVIATIONS

PSB – Polish Biographical Dictionary (Polski Słownik Biograficzny)

WNA – Numismatic and Archaeological News (Wiadomości Numizmatyczno-Archeologiczne)

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Fig. 1. Feliks Kopera (1871–1952), Kraków. ca 1900, Photo. Józef Sebald (1853–1931). Family's Archive