

NOTAE NUMISMATICAE

ZAPISKI NUMIZMATYCZNE



Tom XVI

MUZEUM NARODOWE W KRAKOWIE
SEKCJA NUMIZMATYCZNA
KOMISJI ARCHEOLOGICZNEJ PAN
ODDZIAŁ W KRAKOWIE

Kraków 2021

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MATEUSZ BOGUCKI, ARKADIUSZ DYMOWSKI,
GRZEGORZ ŚNIEŻKO (eds.)

Slivers of Antiquity. The Use of Ancient Coins in Central, Eastern and Northern Europe in the Medieval and Modern Periods / Okruchy starożytności. Użytkowanie monet antycznych w Europie Środkowej, Wschodniej i Północnej w średniowieczu i okresie nowożytnym, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 2020, 444 pages, 1 map; ISBN 978-83-235-4697-9; DOI: 10.31338/uw.9788323547051

The above publication is the result of the project *Use of ancient coins in East-Central Europe in the medieval and modern periods* realized between 2017–2020, carried out by Dr Hab. Arkadiusz Dymowski from the Institute of Archaeology of the University of Warsaw. In this collection of 13 chapters the coin finds from Poland, the Baltic States, western Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, eastern Germany, and Scandinavia are analysed. Aspects such as the use and influx of ancient coins to the *Barbaricum* area during the pre-Roman, Roman and Migration periods, the collecting of ancient coins in Poland before the partitions in 1772–1795 and other artefacts discovered in East-Central Europe in medieval and modern contexts are discussed. The book is supplemented by a catalogue of the ancient coin finds from the contexts of the medieval and modern period (7th–18th centuries) from the territory of present-day Poland. The publication is bilingual, in Polish and English.

The chapters are preceded by an editorial introduction (pp. 7–15), in which the main issues of the publication are discussed. The authors emphasize the phenomenon of the presence of ancient coins in early medieval hoards of the 9th–12th centuries from the Baltic region. There were 50 such hoards, which included a total of 150 ancient coins, mostly Roman denarii. Perhaps they had similar function to other coins or silver objects in this period. The authors emphasize certain areas of concentration of this type of finds, such as Gotland, Öland, Bornholm, and in Poland in Greater Poland and Silesia, and they then try to interpret the origin of the ancient coins, pointing to four possibilities. Other finds from early medieval contexts are coins from settlements discovered frequently in the Western Slav territory, as well as from graves in Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia. This issue on coins from Poland was previously the subject

of research by inter alia Kiersnowski, then Zapolska,¹ in turn, in the publication is discussed in more detail in Bogucki's chapter (pp. 43–64). Far fewer ancient coins are recorded in the late-medieval and modern period contexts, for example, with only three late-medieval hoards with ancient coins known from territory of Poland, and six from the modern period, compared to 26 early-medieval hoards of this type. In these contexts we only have coins from the Roman Empire. In the modern period, Roman coins were also called *nummus Sancti Johannis* because they reminded people of the severed head of John the Baptist.² They were used inter alia as a money offerings in churches, a pendants or a bullion sources. This issue is discussed in more detail by Śnieżko (pp. 65–87). However, despite various discoveries, it should be emphasized that ancient coins in medieval and modern periods contexts are only a small part of all coin finds from these periods.

The chapters in the publication are arranged in thematic, territorial and chronological order. The first is a text about the influx and uses of ancient coins in Central, Eastern and Northern Europe before the Middle Ages (pp. 17–42). Dymowski describes various categories of coins, such as Greek, Celtic and Roman coins, and their inflow into this territory. Despite the breadth of the subject, the author has prepared a good general synthesis of all the most important information related to the production, distribution and use of this type of coins.

The following chapters are the above mentioned analyses by Bogucki and Śnieżko. The next presents the functions of ancient coins in medieval and modern written sources from Polish lands (pp. 89–111). From the medieval period we have only a few written sources relating to them, perhaps because ancient coins did not arouse much interest. The oldest mention known from this time comes from 1445. The author, Maćkowski, raises a very important issue regarding the recognition of this type of coins, as well as the need for such a distinction. After all, their material and weight were important. The author briefly describes the monetary situation in particular periods. The text quotes works by Maciej of Miechów, Stanisław Grzępski, Stanisław Sarnicki, Georg Wende, as well as probate inventories, testamentary bequests or archaeological reports in modern literature and journalism, which are a valuable source of information on this topic. In the modern period, ancient coins could have both decorative and religious functions. An interesting titbit of information is the attachment of plaques with the head of St. John's to hats to prevent headaches. The same situation may also have been true of coins. The author also mentions the collecting of ancient coins, which is also the subject of one of the chapters in this publication.

¹ KIERSNOWSKI 1958; ZAPOLSKA 2007.

² SIWIAK 2018.

In the chapters which follow, ancient coins in medieval and modern contexts from different regions are discussed. Myzgin describes this type of phenomenon in relation to Eastern Europe (pp. 113–158). This is an interesting analysis due to the novelty of the research problem for this area. Thus far, there are four finds dated for the Kievan Rus' period (9th–13th centuries), 13 in the late medieval period, and eight in the modern period. The Roman coins are the most numerous category of ancient coins. The author discusses the various contexts of coins and their functions. He also emphasizes the problem of the reliability of some finds. There is also a catalogue of finds at the end of the chapter, including information about the reliability, context, find circumstances, some description and bibliography.

Another issue is use and reuse of Roman coins in Viking, medieval and modern period Sweden, as analysed by Audy (pp. 159–176). In this territory, four main phases are distinguished: early Viking Age (phase I: c. 750–990), late Viking Age (phase II: c. 990–1150), Medieval period (phase III: c. 1150–1500) and Modern period (c. 1500–1800). According to this division, the individual finds, their numbers, inflow and use were also discussed. In the first phase, silver coins were often used as ornaments, especially in Gotland. So far, 96 Roman coins are known from the second phase, mainly denarii dating from the 1st–2nd century. Probably during this period the function of ancient coins changed from symbolic to economic. From the third phase only one bronze Roman coin is known from a well-dated context and typically interpreted as a souvenir brought from Rome. During the fourth phase, ancient coins were popularly collected, mainly by the elite, including the royal family.

Horsnæs analysed ancient coin finds from the Viking to modern period in Denmark (pp. 177–199). There are three hoards from the Viking period with single denarii of Trajan, Hadrian, and a posthumous drachma of Alexander the Great. In the case of finds made using a metal detector, it is uncertain whether they were used until the Viking period. The unique find is denarius punched with a typical Viking Age decoration from Bornholm (pp. 182–183). Separately discussed Roman bronze coin finds from Denmark from Viking period and later. The author cited examples of finds from Gudme, Ribe, Okholm and Havsmarken. Some of them could have served as amulets. In the modern period, ancient coins were collected and to date several modern deposits with ancient coins have been discovered in Copenhagen, Øster Herborg and Kongelunden. The author also emphasizes new finds, including gold Roman coins from the hoard from Fæsted, Jutland, from the Viking period and a sestertius from Nørholm, Jutland, also from that period, that could have been converted into a brooch.

The functions of ancient coins in medieval and early modern ages from Eastern and parts of Northern Germany are analysed by Biermann (pp. 201–220). The Roman coins from these areas were a small part of the hoards dating to the 11th century.

These types of hoards are known from Gardelegen, Gellenthin-Voßberg, Malkendorf, Quilitz, Thurow and Ragow. The author analyses individual finds, also from areas of settlements or those discovered using a metal detector. Many finds of dubious reliability are known from the late medieval period. A unique find of a special importance is the golden ring with the aureus of Septimius Severus discovered in Bönitz, however, its exact chronology cannot be determined. Numerous Roman coins have been discovered in buildings dating from the 16th/17th century, and perhaps some even from the medieval period. Thus, they could be interpreted as a foundation offering. In addition, some of the coins could have been used as talismans, jewellery or magical objects.

In the next chapter, Militký describes Celtic, Greek, and Roman coins discovered in contexts dated between 8th and 17th centuries in the Czech Republic and Slovakia (pp. 221–262). The text is divided into several parts, discussing each category of coins separately. The author analysed Roman coins in the 7th and 8th century contexts in Slovakia, Celtic coins in early medieval graves in Bohemia and Moravia, Roman coins in late 8th–12th century contexts in Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia, Roman coins from early Hungarian graves in Slovakia in the 10th century and ancient coins in high medieval and early modern contexts. They are also accompanied by a list of finds from individual localities and a description of the possible archaeological context or the find circumstances. A large group of ancient coins are late Roman issues discovered in Avar graves from the 7th and 8th century. As the author emphasizes, this is an interesting example of a second life of ancient currency, that requires more detailed research in the future. The assemblage of Roman coins found in one of the graves in Streda nad Bodrogom, which so far has not paid much attention, was also thoroughly analyzed. The text is an interesting overview of ancient coins from Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia.

The Roman coins in early medieval hoards from the Baltic states are discussed by Zapolska (pp. 263–281). The author discusses the Eastern and Western zone inhabited by the Baltic population. A characteristic feature, especially for the western zone, are finds of sestertii, inflow from the second half of the 2nd century until the 260s. Much less denarii from the Roman period are registered (c. 7.5% of all coins found there). Among of the certain finds are two early medieval deposits with Roman coins from present-day Latvia, exactly from Navessala and Eversmuiža. Both places belong to the eastern zone of Baltic settlement. Uncertain finds are also cited, such as the hoard from Karelia and near Tallinn.

Zawadzki discusses topic related to collecting of ancient coins in Poland and the neighbouring countries in the pre-partition period (pp. 283–300). The collecting of ancient coins in Poland became of great interest in the Renaissance period, and one of the first known collectors was from Krakow. The author presents characters

such as Maciej of Miechów (c. 1457–1523) and Stanisław Grzępski (1524–1570), both professors of the Krakow Academy, Waclaw Koler (died 1546) and Stanisław Różanka (c. 1520–1572), a physician, and Stanisław Krasieński (1534–1598), an administrator of the Diocese of Krakow. Coin collections in Silesia, Gdańsk, Western Pomerania, as well as collections gathered by magnates and royal collections are also discussed. The ancient coins in the collections were either finds, or they were brought from abroad.

In addition, the publication also includes a chapter relating to other ancient and prehistoric non-monetary finds in East-Central Europe from medieval and modern contexts (pp. 301–366). Kurasiński and Skórka discuss particular categories of items, using the term *archaica*, taken from Mehling's monograph on ancient artefacts from Merovingian graves.³ This term was also used later to refer to materials from Slavic lands. Among the categories distinguished are stone artefacts, ornaments, dress parts, pottery and armament parts, found both in graves and in settlements. Their interpretation is not unequivocal since they could have had both practical and symbolic functions. This chapter also covers *archaica* acquisition, their circulation and reuse (recycling).

At the end of publication is a catalogue of ancient coins from the medieval and modern contexts from the territory of present-day Poland (pp. 367–439). As part of the project, a detailed examination of finds from contexts dating from the 7th century to the turn of the 18th century, recorded by the end of 2017, was carried out. The catalogue contains descriptions of the coins, their context, find circumstances, category, as well as some additional information.

The publication is an interesting analysis of the above emphasized aspects, particularly the origin and use of ancient coins in the medieval and modern periods. A very important and valuable aspect is the detailed discussion of finds from various areas, which not only organize this issue, but will also be used for further research in the future. The use of ancient coins depending on the period and region. Also, an important issue concerning the reliability of individual finds is emphasized in many chapters and thus this is a factor which should be approached with caution. In modern times, the collecting of ancient coins was very popular and had an important role, a fact emphasized by many authors in their texts. The publication is a very valuable and needed, addressing a clear and certain gap in the field. It should be emphasized that to date this type of problem, especially for the late-medieval and modern period, has not been elaborated on in sufficient detail.

³ MEHLING 1998.

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