

CLOSING OF THE CONFERENCE

RYSZARD KIERSNOWSKI

Ladies and gentlemen, it is hard to recapitulate the Conference as, although it was thematically and chronologically consistent, the variety of aspects presented by the disputants is so large that it is hardly possible to reduce them to a common denominator. We have listened to eight reports. Unfortunately, the reports on Stanisław August and on Silesia have been missing, yet the organizers cannot be blamed for it. It is a coincidence that the lecturers have not appeared. In spite of this, I consider the survey which has been presented here to be relatively complete.

Referring to my speech at the beginning of the Conference I must admit that the presented articles exceeded my expectations. I attempted somehow to compare studies on mediaeval period with research of modern times, suggesting, of course not obligatorily, that modern numismatics, in fact, begins where mediaeval numismatics ends, not in chronological but in methodical sense. I thought that mediaeval numismatics was concerned mostly with basic studies, with recognition of the object as such. Only having answered these basic questions, we may begin further interpretation of the source though we do not always do so. I thought that in modern numismatics this introductory stage almost did not exist since everything was so clear that having a coin in hand it was possible to begin its further interpretation. Reports show that this is not so and that even in modern numismatics, though perhaps to a smaller extent than in case of Middle Ages, it is necessary to conduct basic investigations of getting to learn the source itself before its interpretation. It concerns the reading of the coin die to smaller extent but it concerns to greater extent the recognition of metal value of the coin. The situation has appeared to be not at all better than in the Middle Ages. Sometimes it is even worse since it can be blurred by a great amount of written sources which exert an influence upon our images as to what the coin should be like and at the same time they do not answer the

question what the coin is really like. Confronting theory with practice seems to be one of the most significant research postulates which await realisation. Yet, on the basis of the discussion led yesterday, it seems that this problem sometimes can hardly be solved. We still do not know in what way a coin can be characterised as regards the metal value. Moreover, the characteristics should be reliable and not accidental so that we should be sure how much silver, copper or other elements the coin contains.

Apart from the leading problems, the discussion presented marginally some aspects which I had omitted in my introductory speech and which should be reminded in the recapitulation. It was noticed here, that from the point of view of history of art i.e. taking into account the aspect of medal engraving, the problem of medals was not presented in reports. I do not mean studies on medals but the recognition of minting dies from Baroque, Renaissance, or later periods and treating them as pieces of art very close to medal engraving. It is included in the range of our interest or at least it should be. However, we ought to co-operate with specialists of history of art or medalography. While speaking about this aspect it is worth adding that there is another aspect requiring very detailed studies, the aspect which was omitted in the talks during our Conference. Recently I have seen the successive volume of the catalogue of Mr. Kopicki who was gathering heraldic data on coins. This volume is still in manuscript but I hope it will be published soon. Reading this rich material I had an opportunity to convince myself about the variety of doubts and difficulties requiring the co-operation with professional heraldists. This is, of course, one of the elements of this introductory recognition, being of fundamental value for understanding what the coin die says, what is on this die, what conclusions can be drawn from this.

The material is very rich and really deserving to be fully comprehended. Difficulties which the author faced and had to overcome were enormous. He seemed to have completed his task successfully, yet having this

volume in front of my eyes I had an impression that it should not be treated as the final work.

Commemorative coins were mentioned in the last report. This is again a certain issue which was treated marginally. It was not presented as it should have been, though for the modern period it is a significant if not the central problem. I would like to refer to the discussion which took place yesterday. We discussed the number of the biggest gold specimens of forty- or hundred-ducats. The question arises if there is some critical, quantitative mass which determines the coin and the medal. The circulation of two, three or ten specimens does not fulfill one of the basic functions specific for a coin and necessary to call a specimen a coin.

The problem of defining the border between a coin-money, a coin-a piece of art and a coin-a technical test, is, for sure, the aspect which requires close analysis, not only theoretical one but also based on economics. It is necessary to establish when the given object *de facto* becomes a coin in terms of currency. Although this problem has some impact upon all the issues debated at the Conference, unfortunately it was not discussed here.

Let me refer to my first talk when I quoted one of the first sentences from the latest book of Assistant Professor Mikołajczyk writing about these hostile parties of numismatists and historian-economists working independently of each other. Mrs. Męclewska corrected this, calling them not two hostile parties but two parallel tracks. In our case we spoke about the other aspect, purely historical, but still treated it from a certain distance. We should have looked for colleagues-historians who also dealt with this aspect of the problem. Their point of view, not in terms of a coin but in terms of the written source, could have been presented and confronted with strictly numismatic aspect. If full integration of these two research trends is not a fact, they both will be deficient, they both will be rightly criticised by the opposing party.

All our reports were unanimously stressing the state of investigations and perspectives. Some lecturers treated this common denominator in an individual way since each report presented it differently. It was a happy coincidence since, due to this, we have a variety of opinions supplementing one another. Can we draw a common conclusion unconnected with the state of investigations which was presented and cannot be changed but connected with perspectives?

It was stated here, and nobody doubts it, that there is still a lot of work to do. The epoch we were talking

about is not a fully discussed epoch where nothing can be added, on the contrary there is still a great deal of possibilities for the research work. These possibilities are dependent, as it was underlined in almost each report, upon the enlarging of source basis, its elaborating, presenting, recording and publishing despite the fact that this basis is sometimes enormous.

The second stage consists of various aspects of interpretations of these sources which, however, should be more related to main trends of economic history and the social history of our country.

It would be my main conclusion, perhaps optimistic, since these problems are not solved today but they will be studied in the future. Whether this research would be realized and how depends on you, ladies and gentlemen, gathered in this room and also on other colleagues who deal with these problems.

Finally, I would like to thank the organizers of the Conference for enabling us to exchange our points of view. May positive effects for the branch of science represented by us result from this.

TADEUSZ POKLEWSKI

On the behalf of the organizers I would like to thank you all, ladies and gentlemen, for the trust in us and also for your reports, their delivery and for your taking part in this discussion.

Thank you on the behalf of the Presidium of the Department of Polish Academy of Science in Łódź, and the Department of the Polish Archaeological and Numismatic Society in Łódź.

STANISŁAW SUCHODOLSKI

I would like to look ahead to the future since we face the necessity of organizing the last conference of this cycle devoted to the Polish coins after the Partition i.e. from the 19th and 20th centuries.

On the behalf of the Main Board of Polish Archaeological and Numismatic Society I would like to thank the organizers of the Conference and all the present, ladies and gentlemen, for the participation in it. Let me encourage all the gathered to consider the possibilities of organizing this last fifth meeting which would complete the survey of the state and perspectives of investigations of the Polish coins and the coins in Poland. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

*Translated by
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