

## OPENING OF THE CONFERENCE

TADEUSZ POKLEWSKI

On the behalf of the Board of Łódź Division of Polish Archaeological and Numismatic Society and as a host, I welcome all the gathered who accepted our invitation, these who will be willing to present their reports and these who will take part in the discussion. I would like to greet professors: Andrzej Nadolski, the representative of Presidium of Łódź Division of Polish Academy of Science, Ryszard Kiersnowski, the member of honour of our society and many years' chairman of Polish Archaeological and Numismatic Society and Stanisław Suchodolski, the President of Polish Archaeological and Numismatic Society. I am very glad that all of you, gentlemen, have come.

According to the order of the day printed on invitations, our debate will be held in three sessions. I dare suggest that the first session would be presided by the Professor Andrzej Nadolski, the second one by the Professor Stanisław Suchodolski and the third by the Head of Archaeological and Ethnographic Museum in Łódź, Assistant Professor Andrzej Mikołajczyk.

I would like to ask Professor Ryszard Kiersnowski for a short introduction and later for summing up our debates.

The Chairman of the session, Professor Andrzej Nadolski, greeted all the present on the behalf of Presidium of Łódź Division of Polish Academy of Science and on the behalf of its President, Professor Jan Michalski.

ANDRZEJ NADOLSKI

I am especially glad, he said, to fulfill this duty since the present meeting is the first scientific debate held in the new abode of Łódź Division of Polish Academy of Science. We think and hope that these premises which are used in this way for the first time, will be a significant centre of scientific activity in our town and, perhaps not only in the town. Being the archaeologist but not a numismatist, I am satisfied to claim that the

actual inauguration of this abode is closely connected with the Conference of Polish Archaeological and Numismatic Society.

Then, wishing all the gathered fruitful debates he asked Professor Ryszard Kiersnowski to present his introductory report.

RYSZARD KIERSNOWSKI

The present Conference is devoted to modern numismatics i.e. to the branch of science which I was dealing with to a very limited extent. Accepting the proposal of the organizers to present this report I understand that sometimes the point of view of someone who is not directly involved in the given subject may appear to be very useful.

Let me remind you that this is the fourth Conference devoted to the Polish numismatics. We have met several times at meetings devoted to scientific output and research perspectives of ancient numismatics in Poland, next early mediaeval and finally late mediaeval numismatics. The present Conference should not close the whole cycle. It comprises the old Polish period till the times of the partitions of Poland. The next Conference devoted to modern Polish numismatics of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries will be really the last one.

It may be inconvenient that our Conferences are held relatively seldom in every few years. It is not useful for comparing particular periods and the state of research, and such a comparison would be especially interesting from the methodical point of view as each of these periods has its own peculiarity which is historical one and at the same time the peculiarity as regards numismatic studies understood in a strict sense. Of course, some specializations are put together but they seem to be only the sub-branches of numismatics. The comparison of these investigations, their problems and their methodological basis could appear very useful.



For the time being, who of us remembers today what happened at the Conference devoted to ancient times and what the main methods were like and what conclusions especially as regards methods were drawn for that period which could be confronted with the present Conference.

The modern period which we are to deal with is in my opinion very distinct, even more clearly pronounced than other periods, apart from the ancient epoch. The difference between numismatics of modern times and the preceding periods of Late Middle Ages or the Middle Ages in general is definitely more distinct than that which divides the late mediaeval period from early mediaeval epoch. What this difference depends on I am not going to explain. These are problems which are well-known to everybody. I can only remind you that modern times as compared to the Middle Ages deliver us a great number, that is to say, a profusion of relics in comparison to the amount of relics we possess in case of earlier ages, especially in case of early Middle Ages. The amount of numismatic sources similarly to written sources, increases rapidly which, of course, changes the way of using them. The method of studies on them requires other research instruments and another way of thinking than in case of the Middle Ages. The number of written sources treating about minting and monetary emissions increases. These are the issues which constitute the second parallel field of our work supporting the recognition of numismatic problems to a very great extent. In consequence, the literature accumulates but the literature which differs significantly from papers dealing with the mediaeval period, namely, the amount of descriptive literature recording the known source material quickly enlarges. However, there is much less analytic material devoted to recognition of particular types of coins connected with different levels of their interpretation. The very difference in literature clearly characterizes the differentiation of these two epochs in Poland. The proportions are totally different for Western Europe, for France or England. There this abundance of written and numismatic sources appears earlier and introducing this type of comparisons of Middle Ages with modern times would not be convenient. However, in mid-Europe the situation is very much alike to our country. This profusion of descriptive literature typical for modern numismatics, to a great extent, is connected with the need of collecting which is just based on modern material of relics. One should also remember the historical-economic literature increasing rapidly at the beginnings of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This rise is connected with a large number of written sources either in form of minting proclamations or treatises devoted to coins, or bills or proposals of monetary reforms. In short, the material for historians-economists is very rich and

resulting in a large number of papers which do not always fulfill our expectations, as it was manifested expressively but very accurately by Assistant Professor Mikołajczyk in his latest book devoted to the beginnings and genesis of modern coin in Poland.

These two types of elaborations, strictly numismatic and strictly economic look at each other without any understanding and without any mutual contact. These are two almost independent trends, of course with loss for both parties. It seems to be fairly obvious and does not need to be explained any longer. Only research works based on full comprehension of competent evaluation of material and written sources from this period ensure the proper progress of knowledge. In another case we will be doomed to failure. We researchers-numismatists think that historians-economists who draw their conclusions from written sources exclusively make mistakes because they do not know real numismatic material but probably the situation is also reversed. Various generalizations which are formed by numismatists from the whole numismatic material without knowing the complex of adequate written sources not only those which treat directly about minting production, may be either mistaken or at least uncomplete thus imperfect. We sometimes are confronted with the opinion that numismatic research from modern times as compared to Middle Ages and ancient times is easier. It is easier because everything is known, all is written, there are no doubts as to the period, place of striking and producing coins and even as to the ruler. One can dispute small details but in general the numismatic relics of this period are to smaller extent than previously a subject of direct recognition, analysis, interpretation. It is, first of all, one of many illustrations of well-known facts evaluated on the basis of other sources. And thus, numismatic studies on modern materials are limited to identification of specimens, to their segregation, classification and description.

In this aspect, it is an easier period but at the same time it creates many new difficulties, that is to say, of methodical character which are not met by researchers of earlier periods or met only marginally. First of all, we deal here with massive material. Statistical research is also led for earlier epochs but it often is, I would say, a conventional statistics. It brings about quite satisfactory results especially in case of metrological studies or evaluation of fineness but fundamental criteria necessary for application of statistical methods are, in fact, for Middle Ages not fulfilled. Segregation of material into adequate groups, chronological classes which would be investigated and compared, is not done. These possibilities exist for the later periods. Examined coins can be arranged horizontally and vertically in long series consisting of hundreds, thousands of speci-



mens which allows to eliminate mistakes which are sometimes made in statistical studies of mediaeval period. Shortly speaking, we face here all advantages and disadvantages which are caused by the abundance of material. What is more, the material is various, contrary to appearances, more differentiated than in Middle Ages especially in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century. We possess a great variety of iconographic images, kinds of specimens and types etc. yet, we do not have multifariousness which appears in modern times. In this case, we have first of all three metals. There is a participation of silver, gold and copper in various mutual relations. The ratio of one metal to another is the key to understand how the given money and given monetary economy functioned in the given period. Many papers were, of course, devoted to this issue but still there is a lot of work to be done. Among others, one should study more completely not only written sources which are fairly well used but also the numismatic material.

Moreover, in case of modern times we are confronted with very well constructed monetary systems. Systems which were multistage and changeable. The scheme of particular levels of these systems is not accidental but results from definite economic situations. New phenomena appear as for example that of credit which functioned to a very small extent in Polish Middle Ages. The problem of metal surplus as compared to requirements of market which in consequence led to temporary closing of mints should be interpreted. This economic operation was almost unknown in Middle Ages and even if it had been put into practice it was interpreted totally differently. As regards Middle Ages we are accustomed to treating the problem in the uniplanar way. If there is a mint striking coins it means the money is necessary and at the same time it also gives evidence for the development of the given region. The more money the better, the less money the worse which indicates the regress. Diminishing the amount of money on monetary market done on purpose has not been known yet, perhaps exceptionally.

Whereas, in modern times this operation was introduced many times and is of positive character. It is the action conducted on purpose and in full consciousness in order to improve economic conditions. We must remember that in modern epoch both the coin which was struck and that which was not struck constitutes also the source of our knowledge. We also meet wider, closer and better known connections with foreign markets. These connections are seen in mediaeval numismatic material as well but they are rather simplified. Appearance of coins from the West and the East, from the South and the North in our numismatic material is treated as the trace of trade relations. Such thinking is justified because of the lack

of other sources. Facing the scarcity of written sources and insufficiency of complete documents, we are forced to interpret the phenomena using our common sense. Whereas, in modern times it often appears that common sense is not enough, there are mechanisms which sometimes seem to be unreasonable yet they are true and they still function. Among others, I mean here the various relations with foreign markets which conditioned the import of one or other metal. The whole economic mechanism is reflected, to some extent, in numismatic material and not only in the coin as such but also in monetary finds. The recognition of this relation is, for sure, a great achievement of recent years, perhaps in the last decade, when attention was paid to the value of numismatic finds from the modern epoch treated not as the stock of coins used for collections but, first of all, as the very significant supplementing source verifying sometimes the information gained from written sources, especially due to the analysis of the structure of these finds. Last works of assistant professor Andrzej Mikołajczyk proved it very suggestively.

Written sources treating about economic opinions about coins constitute the last phase of research dealing with the Polish Middle Ages though they are more concerned with foreign Middle Ages. In old Polish literature there are a lot of more or less scientific treatises devoted to Copernicus. We know them due to a specification by Z. Sadowski and recently due to research works led by A. Popiół-Szymańska. We possess a large informational material treating about factual state, proposals of reforms and improvement of the whole monetary economy which becomes the object of more and more vivid interest. This interest spreads among more or less professional economists becoming the common property. It is sufficient to read old Polish literature to see the variety of serious and facetious, more or less scientific remarks dealing with monetary relations. This is a mine of information about monetary systems and it would be very much useful if someone elaborated not scientific treatises but this common opinion about coins presented so widely in old Polish literature.

In my opinion, investigations of modern times could be arranged more or less in the followingscheme. At first, we face a certain amount of studies, I would call them analytic, consisting of recognition, identification, recording of given coins, their classification etc. and also of recording finds, establishing their structure and further interpretations. Later, these studies and their results properly summed up are presented in form of elaborations known from bibliographies devoted to the history of particular types of coins, the history of monetary reforms in that period. A little differently created fragments of this sum create the basis for



studies on regional coins. In the programme of our Conference there are regions which are treated with special interest.

Studies on the history of particular mints may be the object of separate interest. This is the phenomenon typical for modern epoch. Attempts to elaborate it are also an important step in reaching total synthesis, in gathering all phenomena in one.

To end off my speech, let me name three works which, according to me, lead to such a general synthesis. I mean here the above mentioned work of assistant professor Andrzej Mikołajczyk *Geneza i rozwój nowożytnej monety polskiej*. It constitutes a fragment of more complete editorial project which may be realized in Cracow. I also think about the work

prepared by professor Z. Żabiński *O systemach pieniężnych na ziemiach polskich* which is concerned first of all, with modern period. As the third one I would name the work of A. Popiół-Szymańska *O poglądach monetarnych w Polsce od XV do XVII wieku*.

I think that the above three works indicate the research perspectives which are mentioned in the title of each report presented at our Conference. Achieving such a total synthesis is undoubtedly a matter of time but we may hope that it is available somewhere at the end of investigations which are just beginning.

Translated by  
Elżbieta Lubińska