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THE COMMON PEOPLE AND
MATERIAL RELICS OF ANTIQUITY
THE AFTERLIFE OF ANCIENT COINS
IN THE TERRITORY OF PRESENT-DAY
POLAND IN THE MEDIEVAL
AND MODERN PERIODS

Abstract: Ancient coinage, almost exclusively Roman denarii from the 1st or 2nd century AD, constitutes a small percentage of hoards and other assemblages dated (with the latest coins present) to either the Middle Ages or to the modern period in the territory of present-day Poland. Such finds can be seen as strongly indicating that ancient coinage did function as means of payment at that time. This hypothesis is further supported by written sources. Moreover, ancient coins have also been recorded at other sites in medieval and modern period contexts e.g. in burial sites, which are less easy to interpret than hoards. Finds often include pierced coins and others showing suspension loops, which suggests they may have been used as amulets, jewellery or devotional medals. Other finds, such as Roman coins placed in alms boxes in modern period churches in Silesia, also point to a religious context. At the same time, written sources attest that at least since the Late Middle Ages, Roman denarii were known to common people as ‘St John’s pennies’. The name is associated with a Christian interpretation of the image of the emperor’s head on the coin, resembling that of John the Baptist on a silver platter.

Keywords: ancient coins; Roman coins; coin finds; coin hoards; medieval context; modern context; monetary circulation; non-monetary functions of coins

Coins were the sole element of the material culture of Antiquity which could actually reach, on a large scale, the common people of East-Central Europe in the Middle Ages and the modern period.¹ The region of East-Central Europe east of the Elbe and north of the Danube, including the territory of present-day Poland, was never, not even for a moment, a part of the Roman state. This means that all of the Roman coins found in this territory must be treated as imports. Roman coinage was brought to the territory of present-day Poland in vast amounts primarily during the Roman period (Bursche 1994, 471–475; Bursche 1996, 95–137; Dymowski and Myzgin 2014, 39–56; Dymowski 2016, 99–132). By contrast, Greek coins were imported in much smaller amounts during the pre-Roman and Roman periods (Mielczarek 1989, 38–112). Finally, Celtic coinage, in addition to arriving in the region by ways of import, was actually minted here during the final centuries BC (Rudnicki and Ziabka 2010, 19–20; Rudnicki 2012, 41–49). Specifically, this was the case in southern and central Poland. Ancient coins were, and still are, being found in abundance in the area of East-Central Europe (including present-day Poland). The finds are most commonly Roman denarii from the 1st or 2nd century AD, often recorded in hoards of several thousand pieces. However, other types of ancient coins are also represented in the finds from the area. Ancient coinage, almost exclusively Roman denarii, also constitutes a small percentage of hoards and other assemblages dated (with the latest coins present) to either the Middle Ages (from the 10th century) or to the modern period (to the 19th century). Such finds can be seen as strongly indicating that ancient coinage did function as means of payment within the period of our interest, especially since this hypothesis is further supported by written sources. Moreover, ancient coins have also been recorded at other sites in the medieval and modern period contexts, such as in burial sites, which are less easy to interpret than hoards. Finds sometimes include pierced coins, which suggests they may have been used as amulets, jewellery or devotional medals. Other finds, such as Roman coins placed in alms boxes in modern period churches in Silesia, also point to a religious context. Additionally, some silver vessels are known to have been decorated with ornaments fashioned from Roman coins.

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At the same time, written sources attest that at least from the Late Middle Ages, Roman denarii were known to common people as ‘St John’s pennies’ (*pieniążki św. Jana*) (Abramowicz 1981, 81–91; Szlapiński 1997, 72; Mielczarek 1999, 244–245; Mielczarek 2002, 468–469; Jaworski and Crişan 2012, 259–260; Siwiak 2014, *passim*; cf. Abramowicz 1983, *passim*; Abramowicz 1987, *passim*). The name is associated with a Christian interpretation of the image of the emperor’s head on the coin, resembling that of John the Baptist on a silver platter. The term, still in use in the 19th century in non-academic circles, evolved into several variants. Roman coins were also called *główki św. Jana* (‘St. John’s heads’), *denary św. Jana* (‘St. John’s denarii’), or *Iwankowe* (‘Little Ivan’s coins’) in the eastern reaches of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. German speakers called them *Johannesschüssel*. The earliest record mentioning ‘Saint John’s pennies’ in Poland is found in a mid-15th century source (Abramowicz 1981, 81–91; Mielczarek 1999, 244–245). It is believed that these coins were associated with local Saint John’s Eve celebrations, possibly in the sense that peasants were convinced that magical artefacts such as ‘Saint John’s pennies’ could be found more easily and in greater numbers precisely on Saint John’s Eve.

For now at our disposal there is a complete set of archaeological sources regarding our area of interest – a catalogue of all ancient coins (in fact only Roman issues) recovered in the territory of present-day Poland in medieval and modern contexts (approximately from the 7th century AD² until the turn of the 19th century), recorded by the end of 2017.³ Roman coins in early medieval contexts have been recorded by German and Polish researchers even at the beginning of the 20th century (Schuman 1902, 80, 83; Regling 1912, 231; Beltz 1927, 184–196; Łęga 1930, 343). An essential study of this phenomenon was completed in 1958 by Ryszard Kiersnowski (1958, 5–14) who analysed the occurrence of Roman coins in early medieval hoards

² In fact, there are no ancient coins found in Poland in contexts dated to earlier than 10th century.

³ Updated materials drawn from the source databases created (with great effort and considerable resources) as an outcome of two previous projects financed by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education (as part of the National Programme for the Development of Humanities): *Polish Early Medieval treasures - Inventory. Registration of Early Medieval coin hoards in Poland (from 6th to mid-12th centuries)* led by Mateusz Bogucki and *Finds of Roman coins from Poland and the Territories Historically Associated with Poland (FMRPL)* with Aleksander Bursche as its leader (database available online: <http://frcpl.uw.edu.pl/>).

from Poland. The same question was revisited in 2007 by Anna Zapolska (2007, 149–178) who extended the scope of analysis to ancient coin finds from burials in settlements, and noted that migration-period finds and early medieval finds may not be examined together. The former are evidence of extended circulation of imperial coins, the latter of discoveries made during the early medieval period. At the present stage of inquiry this interpretation remains valid.

Currently we have a record of 34 early medieval finds containing at least 58 ancient coins. Of these finds 28 are hoards dating to the 10th and 11th centuries, with 45 ancient coins among their contents. A further six Roman coins were found in five settlements. A truly exceptional site is the 11th-century cemetery at Dziekanowice in Greater Poland, with a record of seven Roman denarii found in graves (Suchodolski 2016, 176, 180; FMP I.32: 52, 67, 98, 118, 138, 140, 143). An important issue in the study of our subject is source criticism. If the presence of Roman coins in hoards and in early medieval burials does not raise any major doubts, we need to be cautious when it comes to finds from settlements and stray finds. This problem is illustrated well by the case of the settlement at Janów Pomorski identified with the early medieval trade emporium *Truso*. Investigated over many seasons of research, this site yielded one of the largest assemblages of single coin finds in Europe – more than 1,000 Islamic dirhams and several medieval European denarii (FMP V.A.18–19). The rare Roman denarii also present in this assemblage were included by A. Zapolska in her catalogue of ancient coins discovered in an early medieval context (Zapolska 2007: 152, 162, nos. 11–12). However, a later extensive archaeological investigation of this site revealed, under the early medieval stratigraphy identified with the emporium, and also outside it, the presence of a large Roman period settlement of the Wielbark culture people (Machajewski and Jurkiewicz 2012, 185–271) where Roman denarii were also recorded (Bogucki 2012, 41–42, nos. 1–4). Obviously, it is more than likely that the 9th- and 10th-century settlers discovered some Roman coins from the earlier settlement. We have no way of proving this, but it does seem that a vast majority of the Roman coins should be linked with the Wielbark culture rather than the early medieval settlement.

In finds from an early medieval (pre-13th century) context the Roman denarii account for only a fraction (0.24%) of the total silver. The largest number – 27 ancient coins – surfaced in 12 finds recorded in Greater Poland (Wielkopolska). In Pomerania (Pomorze) 20 Roman denarii were identified in 13 finds. From Mazovia and Podlachia (Mazowsze and Podlasie) we have

a record of six Roman denarii from four finds. In the five hoards known from Silesia (Śląsk) there were five ancient coins. Not a single Roman coin identified in an early medieval context is known from Lesser Poland (Małopolska). The distribution of individual find categories by region is shown in Table 1.

	Poland finds/coins	Greater Poland	Pomerania	Mazovia, Podlachia	Silesia
Hoard	28/45	10/19	12/19	1/2	5/5
Burial	1/7	1/7			
Settlement	5/6	1/1	1/1	3/4	
Total	34/58	12/27	13/20	4/6	5/5

Table 1. Ancient coin finds found in an early medieval context in Poland by find category and region

As may be seen from the above list, most of the ancient coins were recorded in Greater Poland and Pomerania, with only sporadic finds or none at all noted in other regions. Previously, the explanation offered for this distribution pattern was that in Greater Poland and Pomerania the number of early medieval finds is the largest, thus the frequency of Roman coins in them is statistically higher (Zapolska 2007, 153–154). Indeed, there are more of these finds in Greater Poland and Pomerania (respectively, 289 and 291) than in Mazovia and Podlachia (220). But it should be noted that Tum, the site of discovery of 3 denarii (FMP III.183–184), lies in the Łęczyca district of Mazovia, right by the border with Greater Poland, and the hoard from Kolczyn lies in north-western Mazovia at the same latitude as Włocławek. Thus, it turns out that the only coin recorded in an early medieval context in Mazovia ‘proper’ is the single find (and as such, unreliable) of a denarius from Kamianka Nadbużna (FMP I.35) (Pl. 1: 1). If we consider that in Mazovia there is a vast number of hoards from the Roman period and early medieval age, some of them large, such a disproportion is intriguing, and hard to explain at the present stage of research. Perhaps, this difference is the result of dissimilar topography of the settlement network. Consequently, we should investigate whether in each of these regions’ settlements occupied sites during the Roman period similar to those of Early Middle Ages. Perhaps, in Greater Poland and Pomerania settlements occupied roughly the same sites as in the Roman period, unlike those in Mazovia and Lesser Poland. However, this issue calls for separate studies based on archaeological data, which

definitely exceeds the framework adopted for the present review. Another possible explanation – also to be examined in the course of future research – may lie in different methods of tilling the soil used during the Early Middle Ages in particular regions. For it is obvious that in the 10th and 11th centuries the ancient coins were discovered nearly always by accident, most often during construction and agricultural work.

A closer analysis of early medieval hoards containing Roman coins shows that their finds differ not only in their territorial but also their chronological distribution (Pl. 1: 2). Although certainly the largest number of hoards had been placed in hiding during the first half of the 11th century, it is evident that the older deposits dating to the late 10th century prevail in Greater Poland and Silesia, whereas younger deposits dominate in Pomerania. And although the earliest hoard with a Roman denarius originates from Pomerania (Strzelce Dolne II, t.p.q. 949, FMP II.200), the earlier hoards dating to the 10th century definitely dominate in the south – this is demonstrated by six hoards found in Greater Poland and Silesia taken together, as compared to three hoards recorded in Pomerania. It is also relevant that the youngest hoard with an ancient coin known from Greater Poland was deposited in 1037, while in Pomerania for the period from the 1030s until the end of the 11th century we have a record of fewer than seven such finds. This territorial and chronological divergence is hard to explain at the present stage of research given that in Greater Poland and in Pomerania alike we find a large number of hoards datable to this same period. One possible explanation would be the differences mentioned earlier (and a different dynamic of change) in methods of cultivation, or which at present appears to be more likely, the consolidation of the state fiscal control in Silesia and Greater Poland in the first decades of the 11th century, and a lack of this control in Pomerania during the same period.

The preponderance of Roman coins noted in early medieval hoards occurred singly (complete), but some were found as fragments. That they were hacked suggests their use was like that of the early medieval coins – they served as a medium of exchange accepted by their weight (Bogucki 2011, 129–148). In only a few cases was the number of Roman coins in a find higher. Most of these finds were at the same time the largest of the early medieval hoards known from Poland in general. The hoard from Dobrzyca near Pleszew containing an unspecified number of obscure early medieval coins included three undetermined Roman denarii (FMP I.31). The hoard from Dzierżnica II in Greater Poland (t.p.q. 980/1–989/90), weighing over 15kg and containing more than 20,000 coins, included three

fragments of Roman coins: two denarii of Antoninus Pius and a denarius or an antoninianus dated to the 3rd century (FMP I.35; Gałęzowska 2016, 225). In the hoard from Lisówek (Leissower Mühle) near Rzepin (t.p.q. 1014), weighing over 10kg and containing around 5,000 coins, mostly German issues, anonymous cross-denarii, Bohemian and English denarii, there were also five Roman denarii: a Domitian, an Antoninus Pius, a Marcus Aurelius, a Lucius Verus and a Crispina (FMP I.134). In hoards from Pomerania the largest number, at least five ancient coins, were found in the hoard from Rybice (t.p.q. 983/5). Denarii of Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, Maximinus Thrax and folles of Diocletian and Constantinus I occurred mostly next to dirhams, but also with German coins, anonymous cross-denarii, and Bohemian, Danish and Italian denarii (FMP II.174). In the hoard from Słupsk I (t.p.q. 990), along with the typical dirhams or German coins, over 3,000 pieces in total, were four denarii: one each of Nero, Domitian, and Hadrian, and one undetermined (FMP II.185). As may be seen from the above list, the larger number of Roman denarii in a hoard nearly always goes hand in hand with its size.

On one occasion only ancient coins were recorded in the territory of Poland at an early medieval cemetery. At Dziekanowice near Ostrów Lednicki seven Roman denarii surfaced in five burials. It is interesting that four of them are denarii subaerati (Pl. 2: 1-7). Each was found in a different burial. Grave no. 14/98 held a subaeratus of Antoninus Pius; grave no. 72/99 – a complete denarius of Hadrian; grave 85/02 – a subaeratus of Hadrian; grave 11/04 – a denarius of Marcus Aurelius; grave 16/07 – a subaeratus of Trajan; grave 68/07 – a denarius of Septimius Severus, and finally, a subaeratus of Marcus Aurelius was a stray find but it definitely comes from a destroyed burial. We have no other record to confirm that Roman coins were used as Charon's obol during the Early Middle Ages. Stanisław Suchodolski has suggested that some assemblage of Roman coins had surfaced in the vicinity of Ostrów Lednicki in the 11th century: the coins spread through the local community and a part of them were placed in graves as offerings (Suchodolski 2016, 180). What is also noteworthy is that as many as four of the ancient coins from the Dziekanowice cemetery are subaerati. Perhaps they are part of a phenomenon observed during the 11th century of 'economy of the offerings', where an attempt to meet the obligations dictated by custom, ritual and beliefs went hand in hand with the wish to offer less valuable specimens, harder to sell on the market (Musiałowski 2010, 139–157; Książek 2010, 7–30; Suchodolski 2012, 88–89).

It is clear from the brief presentation of our material given above that coin finds recorded in an early medieval context in Poland are exceedingly rare, and mostly appeared in monetary circulation one might say by accident. Ancient coins have been discovered during the Middle Ages as they are today. Until recently, the discovery of early coins, e.g. making up a hoard, was always a random occurrence, during all manner of earthwork – whether associated with construction or farm work. Before the introduction of electronic detecting devices, the only way to obtain antiquities methodically and deliberately was by robbery of easily identified burials – grave mounds. In the landscape of the Odra and Vistula river basins prehistoric grave mounds are widespread. Still, thanks to long years of archaeological fieldwork we know that Roman coins are found in them extremely rarely. On the other hand, throughout Poland we have a record of hoards of Roman coins and their stray finds from settlements. Discovered by accident, they would have furnished the small series of Roman denarii and folles which were then reintroduced into circulation during the 10th and 11th centuries. The study of this phenomenon is only in its early stages but even now it is evident that they are bringing in more information about the early medieval period than about the ancient coins themselves.

As for ancient coin finds dating to the period of the later Middle Ages and the modern period (13th to 19th centuries), they fall into a number of categories. There are hoards and single finds which include grave goods and foundation sacrifices. Yet another form of reusing ancient coins during a period much removed from the time of their issue would be, as mentioned earlier, by having them set into metal vessels, using them as jewellery or offering them in a church as alms. This is illustrated below using a number of selected examples.

At the present stage of research, we have a record of eleven hoards dating to the Late Middle Ages (not earlier than the 14th century) and later, as late as the end of the 19th century which had ancient coins among their contents, all of them – let us add – Roman issues. Compared to the 28 hoards assigned to the early medieval period, this number is more than 60% lower. Of four deposits dated to the Late Middle Ages, three were recorded in Silesia⁴ and one in Greater Poland.⁵ The time of deposition of three of them was

⁴ Dolna, comm. Leśnica (Oelsner 1866, 360–361; Ciołek 2008, 58, no. 73); Strzelce Opolskie, administrative seat of a county (Ciołek 2008, 236–237, no. 353); Zakrzów, comm. Gogolin (Ciołek 2008, 307, no. 465).

⁵ Locality Sady, comm. Tarnowo Podgórne (Kubiak 1998, 448, no. 675).

established as the 14th century, while for the hoard from the Dolna locality the chronological range was extended to the 16th century (Oelsner 1866, 360–361; Ciołek 2008, 58, no. 73). At the same time, we have to note that information about these hoards is very scanty. The Roman coins recorded in them were issues from 1st–3rd centuries AD.

Modern hoards containing ancient coins are known to date to every century between the 16th and the 19th centuries (Pl. 3: 1), the latter marking the upper limit of the chronological span adopted in the present text.⁶ Most of the modern deposits featured Roman silver coins, dated first of all to the 2nd century AD. The largest number of hoards has been documented for the 17th century. One of them, moreover, may be of heightened interest considering of the identity of the owner of the hidden goods. This treasure was described by Jarosław Dutkowski (2010, 98–114), who analysed the coins and using this input established the date of deposition of the hoard to the period after 1630. It was discovered in Lower Silesia at Grzmiąca. Along with the coins it included jewellery, cutlery, medals, and a princely sceptre and orb. The two latter bore an inscription which helped Dutkowski to identify their owner as Prince Zdenek Adalbert Lobkowitz and speculate that the valuables in the hoard come from a robbery of the prince's estate in Bohemia during the Thirty Years' War. Of more relevance for the purpose of this study are coins recorded in this hoard, mostly gold and silver specimens issued in the 16th and 17th centuries. Along with them were two ancient gold coins – an aureus of Hadrian and a solidus of Valentinian I. The hoard from Grzmiąca is the only case known from Poland of a medieval or a modern hoard containing ancient gold coins.

Next, the hoard unearthed at Korzkiew in Little Poland in the 18th century consisted exclusively of Roman coins and was definitely deposited before the medieval period. However, it is relevant to our discussion because it demonstrates yet another use ancient coins had in the modern period, namely their reuse as a decorative element. Some of the coins were melted down for their metal, as did the Krakow Goldsmith Józef Ceypler in 1739–1745 in casting a tankard commissioned by Adam Jordan, and setting

⁶ This not mean that we do not know of 20th century group finds of modern coins containing antique issues –e.g. the hoard from Popkowice, comm. Urzędów, Lublin voiv., deposited after 1914 (Męclewska and Mikołajczyk 1991, 258–259, no. 1859). It is likely to be a case of a cached numismatic collection, this is suggested by the variety of the coins both in terms of the country of their provenance and chronology. The earliest specimens are a follis of Constantine I and a half follis of Crispus. All the other coins are 16th–early 20th century issues.

into it 188 ancient coins, presumably the better-preserved specimens. Most of them were minted before the reign of Antoninus Pius. The tankard is now in the National Museum in Poznań,⁷ and has been published repeatedly complete with photographs of the coins and their determinations (cf. Szuda 1963; Kunisz 1985, 89–93, no. 110; Sobczak-Jaskulska 1997). Roman coins discovered in hoards were used in a similar manner also in the 20th century; this is shown by two objects decorated with them.⁸

Another form of reuse of ancient coins in the modern period is offering them as alms in church during offertory. All the cases known to us at present happened in Silesia.⁹ This can hardly be evidence of a special predilection of the inhabitants of this region for ancient coins, but neither can it be explained by their finds being more common in Silesia. As to the intention behind offering them, one plausible interpretation would be the one invoked above when discussing Roman coins discovered in early medieval burials. With no better use for the coins discovered, the finders could have offered them as alms, fulfilling in this way the religious duty without loss to their domestic budget.¹⁰ This interpretation is confirmed by a written reference to seven Roman coins from Jelcz-Laskowice, where according to reports many Roman coins had been found by the local people, of which some

⁷ Inv. No. MNP Rm 146.

⁸ Before 1900 a hoard of Roman coins came to light at Laskowa, comm. *loco*, Little Poland voiv. Five specimens passed to the parish priest at Limanowa and were used in 1901 in decorating the *nodus* of a chalice (Bodzek and Madyda-Legutko 1997). Another deposit surfaced between 1931 and 1933 at Jezioro, comm. Przykona, Great Poland voiv. Of this great hoard 11 Roman denarii survived and were linked to make a bracelet. After the Second World War this piece of jewellery was submitted to the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography in Łódź where it remains at present (inv. no. MAEŁ-N-A 2241–2251). About the hoard – cf. Gupieniec 1954, 41–42, no. 11 and Mikołajczyk 1981, 30, no. 115 and plate III with a photograph of the bracelet.

⁹ Ancient coins used as alms were recorded in the following localities in the Lower Silesian voiv.: Jelcz-Laskowice, comm. *loco* (Ciolek 2008, 91–92, no. 137), Łagiewniki, comm. *loco* (Ciolek 2008, 138–139, no. 216.1), Witoszyce, comm. Góra (Ciolek 2008, 277–278, no. 424), Opole voiv.: Błotnica Strzelecka, comm. Strzelce Opolskie (Ciolek 2008, 26–27, no. 15.1) and Silesian voiv.: Krzyżowice, comm. Olszanka (Ciolek 2008, 125–126, no. 191). Things were no different also in the 20th century – cf. references to Roman coins discovered in church collection boxes at e.g. Sulisławice, comm. Ząbkowice Śląskie, Lower Silesian voiv. (Ciolek 2008, 242, no. 362), and Tarnowskie Góry, administrative seat of a county, Silesian voiv. (Ciolek 2008, 258–259, no. 391).

¹⁰ According to the research literature Roman coins turned up in church collection boxes; this presumably gave the givers of these offerings a feeling of impunity as the risk of being caught in the act was minimal.

were given to children to play with and others were offered in church as alms (Ciołek 2008, 91–92, no. 137, with previous literature and a list of archival sources).

An interesting category of finds are foundation sacrifices. Three can be named as possibly belonging to this category, although it needs stressing that in none of these cases is this interpretation conclusive, for lack of more detailed data. One of these finds came to light in Łódź in Kasztelańska Street during work. Inside a shattered brick a denarius of Antoninus Pius was found. Describing this find Stanisława Kubiak concluded that the coin had found its way into the brick by accident, with the clay (Kubiak 1979, 58, no. VII; cf. also Mikołajczyk 1981, 41, no. 170 and plate V: 2). However, an alternate explanation is not out of the question, namely that it had been placed deliberately inside the brick as it was being moulded.

Similar to the Early Middle Ages, during the later period ancient coins recorded in a funeral context make up the rarest category. We have no record on ancient coins found in a grave from the Late Middle Ages. From the modern period just one such find is known, as yet unpublished, but within a certain archaeological context.¹¹ This coin came to light in Inowrocław in Kujawy.¹² During archaeological work on a Franciscan church and monastery led in 2010 by Marcin Woźniak, twenty medieval and modern graves were unearthed in the nave. Found resting on the breastbone of a 30–35-year-old woman, a burial dated by the author of the research to the 17th century, was a denarius of Trajan with a hole 1mm in diameter (Pl. 3: 2). Its reverse was quite worn, which coupled with the hole made above the head of the emperor suggesting, according to W. Siwiak, a deliberate act meant to erase the coin's nature as a medium of payment and lend it the function of a devotional object (Siwak 2014). This was also the only burial with grave goods which (besides the coin) included a bead of rock crystal, found by the woman's pelvis (Woźniak 2010). For form's sake we must note also a coin find from Śniatycze, Lublin voiv. reportedly discovered in a modern grave. However, with details about this find as scarce as they are it must remain in the 'unreliable'

¹¹ In 2014, during the XI International Numismatic Conference in Augustów it was presented in his paper by Wojciech Siwiak (2014).

¹² For giving us information about this find and permission to publish we are indebted to Mr. Marcin Woźniak of Jan Kasprowicz Museum Department of Archaeology in Inowrocław.

category.¹³ Even if we did take this specimen into account at the present level of recording of ancient coin finds from later contexts, this category of grave offering is still the smallest of them all.

There is also a group of finds which do not lend themselves easily to interpretation: ancient coins found in late medieval and modern cultural layers resulting from, e.g. levelling. One such find is a denarius of Antoninus Pius found in Sandomierz during archaeological fieldwork in Forteczna Street. Kamil Kaptur, who published this coin, speculated that either it entered the deposit as a result of medieval earthmoving activity together with earth and rubble or was dropped at the time (Kaptur 2010, 53, 57, 59, no. 48 and phot. 5). Two other coins come from archaeological fieldwork carried out in Kielce in Najświętszej Marii Panny Square. The fill of a storage pit hewn in the rock, dated provisionally to the 12th-14th centuries, yielded two 4th-century AD bronzes: a follis of Constans I and a cententionalis of Constantius II (Pl. 3: 3-4). The authors of the excavation report noted the absence of traces of Roman period settlement in the excavated site, leading them to recognize the two coins as 'St John's pennies' (Gliński and Glińska 2012, 26-27). As well, five Roman coins are known from archaeological fieldwork carried out in different areas of Gdańsk (cf. Paszkiewicz 2013, 212). However, these finds need further study, first of all to establish the chronology of the cultural layers from which they were excavated. Another stray find worth mentioning is a Marcus Aurelius bronze found at Chełmża before 1901 (Ciołek 2001, 33, no. 29/2). At the time of discovery this coin had a loop attached to its reverse in a way suggesting that it could have been used in the 19th century, possibly earlier, as a clothes button.

¹³ Recovered in 1838 and described in the Warsaw journal *Biblioteka Warszawska*: 'A copper coin larger than a *trojak* of Emperor Philip, deceased AD 249, found in a grave' (*Biblioteka Warszawska* 1842, 680). In later literature it was suggested that the coin had come to light 'when laying in 1838 the foundations for a new [Greek Catholic – authors] church built by squire Antoni Załuski' (Triller 1991, 61, no. 72). Recently, Ł. Miechowicz proposed to interpret this coin tentatively as a devotional object, adding also that the grave may have been of modern date (Miechowicz 2011, 342). However, we have to note that with no closer details known about the grave (inhumation? cremation?), its dating included, this conclusion must remain in the sphere of conjecture. It is possible that the burial dated to Antiquity, belonging to the people of the Wielbark Culture known to have lived in this region (cf. Sadowski 2007, *passim*; Kokowski 2007, 175). These communities practiced both cremation and inhumation. Yet another possibility is that the grave was indeed of modern date but the coin was not part of its inventory and had found its way into the fill of the grave pit by accident, and had nothing to do with the burial ritual.

We propose to end this section of our study discussing ancient coin finds recorded in late medieval and modern contexts with some statistics. Out of 1,003 finds from the period 1146-1500 recorded in the catalogue developed by S. Kubiak in cooperation with B. Paszkiewicz, only three were identified as Roman coins, or 0.29% of that assemblage. A similar percentage was found in hoards containing Roman coins deposited in the period 1500-1944. In an assemblage of 1,890 group finds listed in the catalogue of M. Męclewska and A. Mikołajczyk, Roman coins were recorded in five cases, or 0.26%. We deliberately decided to use the numerical data related to finds listed in the catalogues, because if we included finds containing Roman coins not mentioned in them, to keep the ratio we would have to include all the other finds, e.g. those from the most recent discoveries. In any case, even with the figures given here it is obvious that ancient coins make up a very minor fraction of late medieval and modern finds.

So at the moment one thing is certain: in general, finds of ancient coins in medieval and modern contexts in present-day Poland are rare, making them difficult to interpret. Nevertheless, two aspects of the outlined research problem will need to be considered in the immediate future.¹⁴ First of all, one must examine the sources of ancient coins used in Poland and neighbouring areas throughout the Middle Ages and the modern period. At present, three hypotheses might be proposed: (1) an influx of ancient coins from other territories, which seems plausible considering the Viking activity in the Early Middle Ages and taking into account ancient coinage recorded in Viking-context sites in Scandinavia (Zapolska 2007, 158–160); (2) continuous and unbroken circulation of ancient coinage imported into the region in antiquity, which in turn seems rather unlikely, given what research in this area has revealed so far (Gumowski 1956, 106; Zapolska 2007, 158–160); (3) secondary use of ancient coinage recovered in the Middle Ages and the modern period, either discovered accidentally or deliberately looted from graves (Gumowski 1956, 106; Kiersnowski 1958, 5–14; Kunisz 1969, 9; Mikołajczyk 1975, 82; Zapolska 2007, 159–160). The third hypothesis is particularly well-documented in written sources dated to the Late Middle Ages and later periods (Abramowicz 1981, 81–91; Szlapiński 1997, 72; Mielczarek 1999, 244–245; Mielczarek 2002, 468–469; Jaworski and Crişan 2012, 259–260; Siwiak 2014, *passim*; cf. Abramowicz 1983, *passim*; Abramowicz 1987, *passim*).

¹⁴ As regards research tasks planned within the *Use of ancient coins in East-Central Europe in the medieval and modern periods* project mentioned in footnote 1.

Secondly, the forthcoming research will focus on establishing the functions of ancient coinage in Poland during the times between 10th and 18th/19th centuries. To this aim, the analysis will be informed with two main categories of sources: the rich store of information available in both medieval and early modern texts, as well as the archaeological contexts of both medieval and modern sites where ancient coins were recovered. In their present state, studies seem to suggest that ancient coins were used as means of payment in later times and constituted a small proportion of the currency used in the Middle Ages and the modern period. What remains to be established however, is to what extent ancient coinage functioned as money and how often its use was more limited, e.g. to providing a source of precious metals. Furthermore, ancient coins could also have been used not as money, but as Charon's obols or worn as amulets, or jewellery.

The following processes and phenomena will be considered as the background for the above-mentioned research problems: (1) the influx and use of ancient coins in the European *Barbaricum* in the pre-Roman and Roman periods and during the Migration Period; (2) collecting of ancient coins in Poland and neighbouring territories the 18th/19th centuries) and (3) prehistoric and antique artefacts (excluding ancient coins, both imported from the Mediterranean region and produced locally) recovered in medieval and modern period contexts in East-Central Europe. The analysis of the phenomena in the context of present-day Poland will be further complemented by a comparative analysis of the same phenomena in neighbouring territories of East-Central and Northern Europe: in present-day East Germany (east of the Elbe); in Rus' (present-day Belarus and Ukraine); on the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea (the present-day Baltic States and Kaliningrad Oblast); in Bohemia, Moravia (present-day Czech Republic) and Slovakia; as well as in Denmark (including Bornholm) and Sweden (including Gotland and Öland).

Through an analysis of such a long-lasting and multifaceted phenomenon, the planned research has the potential to answer many questions about the history of money in medieval and modern East-Central Europe. The results are expected to shed light on the problem of how such coinage functioned as currency, despite being unregulated in local markets. Furthermore, they could have the potential to answer some of the questions concerning the legal and economic systems of countries of East-Central Europe within the studied timeframe. Moreover, the project is expected to provide new data sets useful in understanding the religious or magical

beliefs and customs of the East-Central European population in the Middle Ages and the modern period. It is important to stress that the data will primarily concern the common population, not belonging to cultural or social elites, and should prove very interesting for studies of both pre-Christian and Christian beliefs associated with Saint John's Eve. Furthermore, the planned research will explore questions related to the reception of Classical Antiquity and ancient history in general by the common population of East-Central Europe, and also is expected to produce strong data which would in turn allow for a better understanding of how the 'antiquities' functioned within the medieval and modern societies, particularly among people from outside the social and cultural elites.

Translation: Anna Kinecka

Abbreviations

FMP = Bogucki M., Ilisch P. and Suchodolski S. (eds.). 2013-2017.
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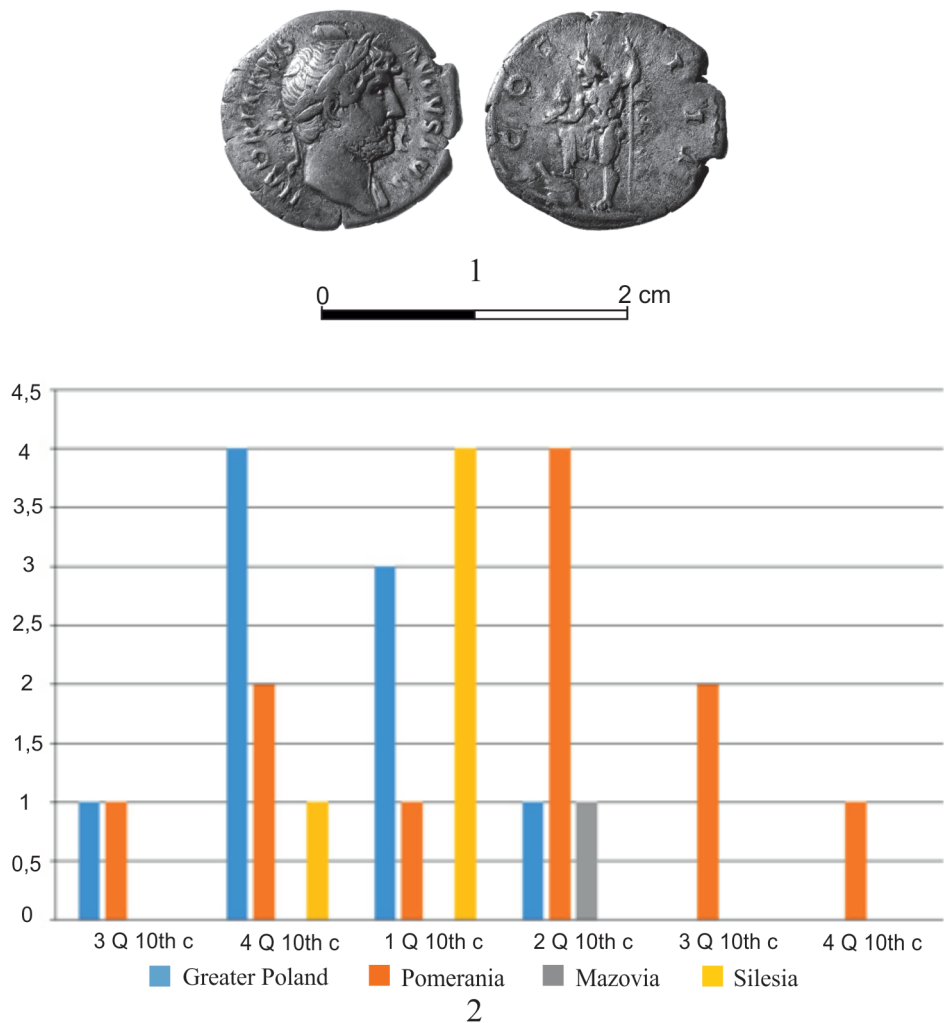
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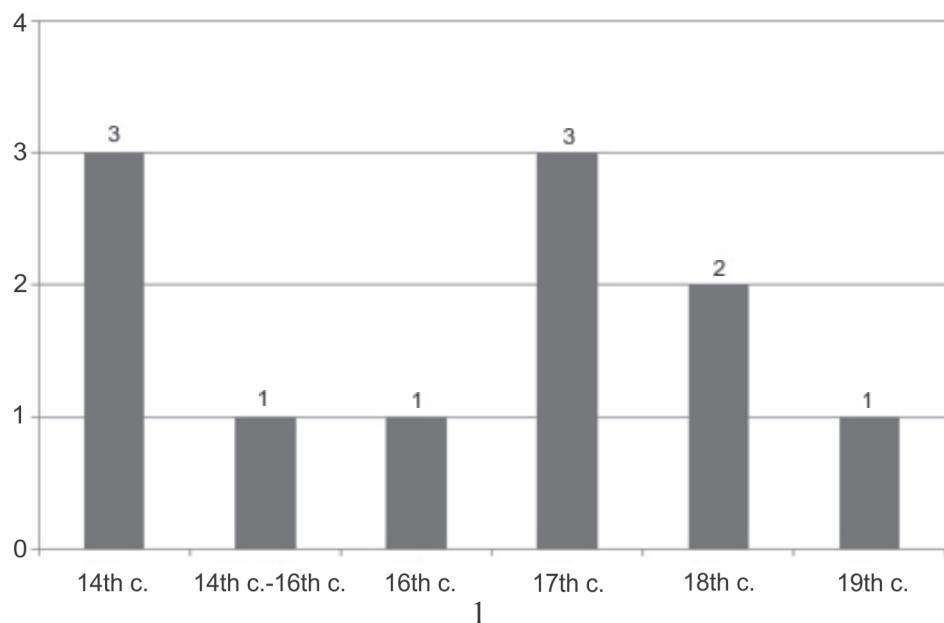
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Pl. 2: 1-7 – Roman denarii from 11th century burials at Dziekanowice, source: FMP I.32



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- Pl. 3: 1 – Late medieval and modern hoards with ancient coins by century of their deposition
 Pl. 3: 2 – Denarius of Trajan, struck AD 98–111, Rome mint. Photograph by courtesy of the Jan Kasproicz Museum in Inowrocław, edited by G. Śnieżko
 Pl. 3: 3 – Follis of Constans from NMP Square in Kielce, source: Gliński and Glińska 2012, 27
 Pl. 3: 4 – Cententionalis of Constantius II from NMP Square in Kielce, source: Gliński and Glińska 2012, 27