

CATALOGUE
OF THE LATE ROMAN,
BYZANTINE
AND BARBARIC COINS
in the Charles University Collection
(364–1092 A. D.)

by Federico Gambacorta



Catalogue of the Late Roman, Byzantine and Barbaric Coins
in the Charles University Collection (364–1092 A.D.)

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Ai miei genitori

FOREWORD

The collection of the ancient coins in the Charles University in its present state has existed since 1945, when the former German University in Prague was dissolved following the events of World War II. The coins which were in its possession were then transferred by the State Authority to Charles University. Greek, Roman and other ancient coins were entrusted to the care of the Seminar for Ancient History (now known as the department of the Institute of Greek and Latin Studies, Faculty of Arts) and put together as one collection along with the antique coins of the original collection of the Czech University held by the Seminar. The present collection formed in this way contains about 4,000 pieces, mostly in silver and bronze.

It is clear that neither collection was ever put together with the intention of forming a great and proportionally systematic representation of all fields of ancient coinage. The interested professors rather wished to provide the instructive numismatic material of some quality for teaching purposes in the ancient history and classical archeology; numismatics was not (and is not) a special subject of study. The concerned institutes never had sufficient financial means for any systematic seeking out of coins. The professors were most likely forced to rely on chance purchases abroad or on donors. The collection is therefore relatively small and its proportionality is not optimal, nevertheless it has considerable value. The collection houses well preserved pieces and many immensely interesting and indeed rare specimens of unrecorded data in the standard catalogues and synopsis.

The collection as a whole has not been catalogued up till now. A very small part of it was published – in 1985 I had published a catalogue of the Roman Republican coins (with a commentary) from the vast collection. Following that the catalogue work continued on various grounds but very slowly and no coins were published. Only within the last few years it was possible to enliven the work leading to publishing of other catalogue parts, especially by connecting the catalogue arrangement to research projects undertaken in the postgraduate studies. Under preparation are the catalogues of the coinage of the “Soldatenkaiser”, of Roman Tetrarchy and of Constantine the Great. On the other hand this volume offers to the public a complete catalogue of the “youngest” coins available in the vast collection.

This publication is the research efforts of one of my Italian Ph.D. students (the Subject of study: Classical Archeology) Federico Gambacorta, a highly talented and promising figure in Late Roman coinage. His catalogue, which contains 243 coins (chronologically from Valentinian I, the minting of Western – and Eastern Roman Empires and some Byzantine coins), stems from his scholarly competent, deliberate and prudently researched work with individual coin pieces. The author has been very thorough and exacting in his efforts by taking pictures of all the coins which is a very useful, even indispensable apparatus of the volume. I really appreciate this effort on part of my young colleague, who has contributed to the bringing out of the University collection to the broader scientific public. I was pleased to help him a little with the “technicalities” and in the consultation of the arrangement of catalogue.

We would like to sincerely thank the editorial staff of the publishing house Karolinum for the careful production of this technically by no means simple volume. Perhaps we can rely on them for a favorable approach and cooperation in the future, too in publishing other parts of the vast University collection catalogue.

doc. PhDr. Václav Marek, CSc.

INTRODUCTION

In 1985 doc. PhDr. Václav Marek, CSc., who is currently the keeper of the Charles University Coin Collection, published a volume entitled: *Roman Republican Coins in the Collection of Charles University*. This was the first step taken to introduce to the wider public the small but interesting Coin Collection of Charles University, a collection that has gone through many ups and downs since the second half of the 18th century¹.

After more than 25 years, doctoral research in numismatic studies² has provided the opportunity of resuming the project of cataloguing and publishing the coins kept in the Charles University Collection³. This is done with the awareness of the importance of researching coin collections both for the preservation of the coins themselves and for the diffusion of data among the scientific community; a policy that, unfortunately, is yet lacking in several Eastern Countries.

Initially this catalogue was meant to deal only with Late Roman Coins, from Valentinianus I to Romulus Augustus in the Western Empire, and to Zeno in the Eastern part. Given the small number of specimens belonging to this particular period however, together with the idea of reaching the bottom of the collection from the chronological point of view, a decision was taken to include in the catalogue the Byzantine and Barbaric coins also.

A total of 243 coins are here grouped together: 202 Late Roman coins, 35 Byzantine coins and 1 Arab-Byzantine coin, as well as 3 Barbaric specimens. 15 are golden denominations, 1 is a silver siliqua, and the remainder are bronze coins (227).

They largely present a good preservation, with only a few pieces that are barely readable. There are also several interesting pieces recorded in this catalogue. Some of them, for example, show varieties of mint-marks that have not been recorded by the main published catalogues (cat. nn. 28, 83, 120, 129); others are to be considered really rare, such as issues like n. 179; still others are currently objects of scientific discussion (cat. nn. 185, 188).

While the amount of these coins in this collection is relatively small, the importance of publishing research on such coin-collections remains undiminished: despite their size, investigation into such collections may reveal surprising and unexpected data which is fundamental to the development of science and knowledge.

¹ For the history of the Coin Collection see Marek 1985, pp. 7–9.

² The PhD research project is entitled *Late Roman Silver Coinage from Arcadius and Honorius to the Accession of Anastasius (395–491 A.D.)*; it is registered as no. 869/10 and, together with this catalogue, is supported by the Grant Agency of the Charles University (Prague).

³ It has been possible to identify 40 specimens that belonged to the recreated Czech University Coin Collection: see in this very catalogue the index per Inventory Number (nn. from 18 to 836).

