

## **HISTOIRE DES COLLECTIONS NUMISMATIQUES ET DES INSTITUTIONS VOUÉES À LA NUMISMATIQUE**

### **The State Hermitage Museum – Numismatic Department St Petersburg**

The State Hermitage Museum has the best and oldest numismatic collections in Russia comprising approximately 1.5 million items.

Founded together with the picture-gallery and the collection of antiquities, the Hermitage numismatic collection was first formed of occasional acquisitions, while later on it would replenish with entire collections bought by Catherine the Great both in Russia and abroad. The Hermitage Coin Cabinet, starting from the second half of the 17th century and being the court numismatic collection, got the primary right to be supplemented with coins and medals from private collections, individual finds and archaeological excavations undertaken in Russia.

The base of the Hermitage collection started with the Coin Cabinet of M. Bremzen in 1775, the heritage of medallist L. Natter in 1771, coins and gems from Livorno, Cabinets of Natural History by P. Pallas and I. Brein. Coins from excavations and hoards regularly were added to the Hermitage collection: Roman coins from Herculaneum, a large hoard from Kievo-Pecherskaya Lavra (European ducats and talers mainly), a hoard of 12-13th centuries bracteates from Khotin (wrongly called Akkerman Hoard), 13,500 English, German, Italian, Hungarian, Czech, Danish, Swedish and Norwegian denarii of the 10-11th centuries from Northern Russia (river Pasha).

In 1804 the “Registration List of Acquisitions” appeared in the Münzkabinett, which is today the most precious document for studies in the earlier period of the collection.

The first curators of the Hermitage Coin Cabinet were well known Russian numismatists and scholars such as librarian A. Luzkov, who worked on Russian coins in 1773-1779, academician Carl Koehler (1765-1837) [fig. 1], senior keepers F. Krug (1764-1844) and B.C. Koehne (1817-1886). In 1845-1850. F. Jyle (1801-1865), was head of the first Department of the Imperial Hermitage in 1840-1863. He was especially active in the Coin Cabinet and initiated the foundation of the Hermitage collection of orders and decorations. The academician M. Brosset (1812-1880) worked in the Hermitage from 1847 as curator of Oriental coins and as keeper of the Münzkabinett in 1851-1879. He was one of the authors of the fundamental catalogues of the Hermitage oriental coin collection. From 1814 professor of classics F. Grefe (1780-1851) worked on West European coins from the Hermitage Coin Cabinet. He became a senior curator in 1840. In 1817 the academician Chr. D. Fraehn (1782-1851) [fig. 2] was invited to catalogue the Hermitage oriental coins, and among them were 445 gold and silver coins of extra-large denominations, acquired



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

in 1828 as a gift from Iran to Russia in the Turkmanchai state agreement. In 1846 B. Koehne, F. Jyle and J. Reichel founded the Archaeological and Numismatic Society in St Petersburg (Imperial Russian Archaeological Society). B. Koehne [fig. 3] was known by his many publications, especially on the coins of Chersonesos (1848) and on finds of European coins of the 10th-11th centuries in Russia (1852). G. Iversen (1823-1900) took part in the preparation of the catalogue of Baltic coins in the Hermitage starting in 1855 and he became the curator of the numismatic department in 1884, and senior curator in 1886. His research on medals of the time of Peter the Great was published in 1873, and the one on medals of the time of Alexander II in 1880. His inventory of medallists, based on the archives of the St Petersburg Mint, appeared in 1874. A. Kunik (1814-1899) became curator of Russian coins in 1859 and senior curator in 1886. He finished his catalogue of Russian coins in 1861, which laid the foundation for future investigations. By permission of Czar Alexander II the duplicates of Polish coins from the Hermitage were sold in 1859 and purchased by E. Hutten-Czapski (1828-1896). They are now part of the coin collection of the National Museum of Krakow. He prepared four volumes of the Catalogue of all Polish coins from Hermitage published in 1871-1916. These first curators and researchers of the Hermitage Münzkabinett turned it into a Russian centre of numismatic studies and all parts of the collection were catalogued in manuscript form in many volumes.

The grand-scale reconstruction of the Winter Palace approved by Nicholas I and undertaken after the fire of 1837, helped the quick conversion of the Hermitage from a court collection of art works into a public art museum. From 1851 the Coin Cabinet was under the authority of the chief of the 1st Department of the Imperial Hermitage, which had only three curators, of antiquities and Roman coins, of Oriental coins and of the Modern department. Under a new reorganization of the Hermitage museum, it became an independent Department of Coins and Medals in 1864 [fig. 4].

Up to the mid-19th century the collection of the Coin Cabinet included 56,321 coins and medals. Some known Russian private numismatic collections were added to the Hermitage Coin Cabinet. 5200 Greek and Roman coins from the Shodoir col-



Fig. 4

lection were purchased by the Hermitage in 1838 together with the catalogue prepared by D. Sestini in 1831. Following the guidance of Nicholas I, in 1851 a wonderful collection of Russian coins and medals numbering 4,712 pieces was acquired from J.J. Reichel (1780-1856), the most prominent collector in St. Petersburg, an artist and medallist. Jacob Reichel was a person of many interests, numismatics being his main passion. In 1820s he started collecting Russian and Western European coins and medals, which he purchased at international auctions and from known Russian and West European numismatists with many of whom he was in correspondence. Reichel's collection gained world-wide recognition thanks to its nine volumes catalogue published in 1842-1850 (B. Köhne helped preparing the 3rd and 4th volume). The rest of Reichel's collection, comprising 41,875 Medieval and Western European coins and medals, was acquired by the Hermitage from his heirs in 1856-1857; it not only enlarged the museum collection, but upgraded its quality and in certain areas it formed the core of the holdings and added many rarities.

Nicholas I, who paid great attention to acquisitions and replenishment of the museum collections, gave orders to supply the numismatic department annually with "obligatory" production samples from all Russian mints. This order remained in force until

1917, and was later confirmed by V. Lenin's decree. The Imperial Archaeological Commission founded in 1859 would also supply the Coin Cabinet with coins from excavations. Specimens acquired at auctions abroad entered its collection as well. The Hermitage collection of orders started in 1861 with the purchase of some Western European orders and the acquisition of acting Russian orders from the Capitulum. P. Shouvaloff (1819-1901) donated his wonderful collection of 1219 Islamic coins to the Hermitage in 1864. The main part of this collection (about 6000 coins) was received later, in 1925. 379 coins were purchased from A. Grant, director of Indian Railways, in 1883, a few of them may be from the famous Oxus treasure. I. Batholomei's collection (over 2,000 coins) especially interesting for its Sassanian component was purchased in 1888. The famous collection of Byzantine coins (1050 items) of Photiades Pacha was purchased in Paris 1890. The collection of General A. Komarov, which he started in his youth and during his service in Central Asia and Persia, was added to the Hermitage Coin Cabinet in 1892 (about 2,500 coins). It was studied in detail by V. Thisengauzen (1825-1902), renowned Russian scholar and curator (1882-1885). The library, the antiquities and the coin collection (2013 items) of Prince A. Lobanov-Rostovsky were purchased for the Hermitage in 1896. The great Kunstkammer numismatic collection, which included specimens from Peter the Great's personal collection and from those of known collectors and numismatists like J. Bruce, P. Mussin-Pushkin, A. Osterman and others, was added to the Coin Cabinet little by little from the middle of the 19th century on. In 1894 the numismatic collection of the Academia Museum of Classical Archaeology came to the Hermitage Coin Cabinet (about 35,000 coins). The most interesting and most valuable part of it were the classical coins formerly in the collection of General P. Suhtelen (1788-1833).

After 1917 the Hermitage Coin Cabinet continued as the Coin Section and later – the Numismatic Department of the Museum. Following the directions of the new authorities, nationalised private collections such as the Stroganoff (in 1925 about 53,000 items), Jusoupoff (in 1928), Shouvaloff (in 1928 – 5,692), the collection of The Archaeological Society (in 1925 – 16,187 items) and others entered the Hermitage Museum along with acquisitions from various official institutions like the Museum Fund, Petrosoviet, the Extraordinary Commission, the Emblem Museum. The outstanding collection of I. Tolstoy (over 15,000 Russian coins, stamps etc.) was donated to the Hermitage in 1920. During the two post-revolutionary decades the Hermitage numismatic collection grew to 577,800 objects in 1939.

The curators of the Hermitage numismatic collection were recognized scholars and numismatists. O. Retovskiy (1849-1925) was curator in 1900-1924. He published the coins of the kings of Bosporos, and the medieval coins of the Girey dynasty. Retovsky participated in a joint project of the Hermitage and the Berlin Academy to assemble a Corpus of Greek Coins. V. Alexeev (1881-1951) wrote a catalogue of Chinese Coins published in 1907. A. Markov (1858-1920) was a senior

curator and keeper of the Numismatic Department in 1900-1920. He was an outstanding Russian scholar, specialist in Classical, Byzantine, Medieval, Oriental and Russian coins. He compiled a manuscript catalogue of the Hermitage Oriental coins as well as an inventory of hoards of Oriental coins. N. Bauer (1888-1842) worked on the catalogue and classification of the Medieval, Byzantine and Russian coins in the Hermitage in 1912-1938. R. Fasmer (1888-1938) during his tenure at the Hermitage in 1911-1934 prepared a manuscript for an eight-volume catalogue of the Kufic coins and an extensive research on Kufic hoards and the finds in Eastern Europe. In 1920 A. Ilyin (1858-1942) was appointed keeper of the Numismatic and Glyptic Departments by the Hermitage Council. During his years at the Hermitage he prepared many volumes for the catalogues of Russian coins from the medieval period to the time of Peter the Great, as well as an inventory of finds of ancient Russian coins. He invited A. Zograf (1889-1942) to the Hermitage in 1922 as curator of classical coins and later Zograf became keeper of the numismatic collection (1935-1942). Ilyin invited A. Bykov (1896-1977), a specialist of Oriental history, languages and numismatics to the Hermitage. He only became curator of Oriental coins in 1938. A. Sivers (1866-1954) headed the medal division of the collection (1923-1929) and he prepared the Catalogue of medals in the Hermitage following L. Forrer's system.

In the 1930s many works of art were sold in the USSR, and thousands of the most precious gold and silver classical, medieval, Western European and Russian coins and medals got lost through the Soviet philatelic association and the "Antiquarian" company.

During the Great Patriotic War in 1941-1945 the Hermitage numismatic collection was evacuated to Sverdlovsk (Ekaterinburg). When after the war the museum collections were moved back from the Ural, a new, more suitable building with a vast numismatic library and depositories was created for numismatics, and hundreds of thousands of coins were re-attributed, classified and put back into trays. The numismatic collection continued to be augmented by donations and purchases. In 1952, 228,832 coins came to the Hermitage from the State Depository in Moscow. Important numismatic collections were moved to the Hermitage in 1930 from the Academy of Sciences, the Archaeological Institute, the Asian Museum (over 38,000) and the Library of the Academy of Sciences, the Russian Museum, the Museum of the Pavlovsk Palace etc. The most significant private collections acquired by the Hermitage were that of N. Lihachev in 1938, and part of the collection of I. Tolstoy in 1964, as well as the collection of A. Pakhomov in 1965 (over 10,000 coins).

From the 1950s to the 1980s the Hermitage sent about 29,000 coins and medals on loan to several Russian and foreign museums to supplement their own numismatic collections. Small local Russian museums as well as large numismatic collections received generous gifts from the Hermitage duplicates.

Many eminent specialists and curators from the Hermitage perished during the war and in the long period of Stalinist repression. N. Bauer and R. Fasmer were arrested and killed. A. Ilyin and A. Zograf held their position in the Hermitage until their death in 1942 during the siege of Leningrad.

In 1946 I. Spassky (1904-1990), who spent five years in a labour camp in Karaganda and fought in the Second World War in 1941-1944, was invited back to the Hermitage by the director I. Orbeli. He worked as curator of Russian coins and medals, badges and decorations for about 45 years. In 1967 his fundamental work on the Russian Monetary System was published. Ivan Spassky also wrote a monograph on proto-Russian coins, and researched the topography of Russian hoards of bar money, co-authored by his student Dr Marina Sotnikova. His study of the history of the ruble of Constantin and of jefimoks became Spassky's new word in numismatics. Distinguished Russian scholars such as V. Riabtsevich, E. Schukina, M. Sotnikova, A. Mel'nikova were Spassky's students.

V. Potin (1918-2005) became curator of European coins and medals in 1959 and worked as keeper of the Numismatic Department for almost twenty-five years (1974-1998). His works *Old Russia and European States in 10th-13th centuries* (1968), and *Sylloge of British Isles* (part I : *Anglo-Saxon Coins to 1016*, vol. 50, Hermitage Coin collection) (1999) are among the best known.

The Hermitage curators continue their work using the experience of previous generations of numismatists, who formed and assimilated this unique collection during a period of more than three hundred years of history.

Nataliya SMIRNOVA

The holdings of the department are divided into four main sections: ancient, Western-European, Russian and oriental:

**Classical:** 130,000

Curators: Greek – Ju. Dukov, Roman and Byzantine – V. Guruleva

**Oriental:** 230,000

**Medieval, Western-European, American:** 350,000

Curators: Dr T. Slepova, Dr E. Yarovaya, K. Chernyshev, N. Frolova

**Russian:** 250,000

Keeper – V. Kalinin, curators: Dr M. Sotnikova, E. Lepehina

**Medals, orders, decorations:** 60,000

Curators: Dr E. Shchukina, M. Dobrovolskaya, L. Dobrovolskaya

**Banknotes**

Curator: M. Marshak