

# NUMISMATIC CURIOSITIES FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF MONEY

## PORCELAIN COINS

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Money has passed through a long period of development and various noteworthy changes from ancient times to the present. Every period in its development was influenced by political, economic and social changes. The expression of value was always characteristic of money. In tribal societies, objects accepted by individual members of the tribe as expressions of value, already circulated. Money has retained this attribute throughout its existence and obviously still does today.

The well-known facts include the fact that the first metallic money was coins made in the 7th century BC in the territory of modern Turkey, from a natural mixture of gold and silver. Money in the form of coins gradually became a special form of product. The fact that around the Eastern Mediterranean, in Egypt and India, precious metals were used to produce it also contributed to this. The fact that banknotes were first used as money in 11th century China is also not entirely new to the public. The paper money used in China originally had the form of hand written receipts and only later acquired fixed values.

The period of the striking and use of ancient and medieval coins and the money, both metallic and paper, used in modern times is a special chapter in the development of money. Every period in the development of money can be considered interesting from various points of view, and from the numismatic point of view more or less attractive both for collectors and for the general public, for example, from the point of view of the heterogeneous subjects depicted on money. The forms of money from individual periods of history bear the stamp and signs of the periods in which they circulated. They are more or less „mirrors“ of their times. This feature reliably identifies them in space and time, and assigns them to their correct place in history.

The Middle Ages, defined by the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476 and the discovery of America in 1492, is an interesting period in European history. Apart from Byzantium, the Frankish Empire became the leader of feudal development in Europe. In con-

nection with this period in the development of money, it is necessary to mention that Charlemagne, who unified Frankish coin production, introduced a new type of coin: the silver denarius. However, this was preceded by finds of silver in French territory in the 8th and 9th centuries.

The money used in Slovakia in the period of the Kingdom of Hungary is also interesting from the territorial point of view. It is mainly a matter of issues of the denár from the 11th century to the beginning of the 14th century, the groš (groschen, groat) from the beginning of the 14th to the middle of the 16th centuries and of the thaler from the mid 16th century to 1892. The origin of new types of coin was caused mainly by changes in the economic situation. The type of thaler known as the Maria Theresia Thaler from 1780 also originates from this period. In the 16th-18th centuries, the nominal value of money came to be detached from its material substance, which enabled the transformation of the coin as money into the paper order, which later developed into the banknote. The period of the crown currency began in 1892.

The development of money in individual countries and periods was often determined by complex economic developments. The monetary development of the capitalist world (the global economy) in the 20th century was significantly influenced by the First World War and later by the Great Depression. Large quantities of inflationary paper money were put into circulation. State notes were put into forced circulation in this period. They were issued by the state or state treasury, rather than by the central bank.

Emergency money (Notgeld) was used in the 1920s. It was produced in paper form in times of need, or in the form of coins of metal or other materials. Emergency money replaced normal money in exceptional or unusual and non-standard situations. However, it circulated either only symbolically or for an unavoidable period. It was characteristic of emergency money that it was issued by cities or regions. Germany and Austria are examples of countries,



*Paper emergency money (NOTGELD), 25 Pf, 1920*



*Bielefeld, emergency money (NOTGELD), silk, 25 M, 1921*

where emergency money was issued. So-called work stamps used as payment for some work duties, have a similar character. They were made from glass and sometimes coloured.

The production of porcelain (ceramic) coins and medals, especially by the world famous porcelain works at Meissen in Germany, is one of the points of interest, which undoubtedly deserves special attention. The beginnings of the production of white porcelain go back to the first years of the 18th century. J.F. Boettger is regarded as the inventor of the production of European porcelain. The crossed swords found on every product of the Meissen porcelain works including coins and medal, since 1722, is thought to be the longest used commercial trade mark in the world. Although the Meissen works is mainly famous for white porcelain, its output over the centuries has been much more varied.

Slovakia has practically no literature on the existence or history and creation of porcelain coins and medals. In his book *Muenzen aus Porzellan und Ton* (1978), Karl Scheuch gives all the available information concerning the products of the Meissen and

other porcelain factories. According to this and other accessible sources, issuing of porcelain coins began at the end of 1920.

The basis for the production of porcelain coins, which were not replicas of metal coins, was brown porcelain. It was preferred to white porcelain because it had a high level of resistance to counterfeiting and a more advantageous production technology. From the practical point of view it was not as sensitive to dirt as white porcelain. Brown and white porcelain were also advantageous materials for coins and medals because of sufficient emphasis of relief with the ornamentation and rims of the coins and medals. Coins made from brown porcelain had an advantage in that the possibility of damage or breakage was reduced to a technological minimum. It is worth mentioning that an experiment with production of white ceramic coins was already recorded in the period 1914-1918 by the company Philip Rosenthal and Co. However, these coins were used only as internal currency and the experiment was generally considered unsuccessful.

Regular production of porcelain coins began at the



**Quedlinburg, brown porcelain, medal, 1922**



**Meissen, white porcelain with indication of value, 10 M, 1921**



**Saxony (Sachsen), 5 M, brown porcelain with decorative margins to the relief of the coin, 1921**



**Saxony (Sachsen), 10 M, black porcelain with decorative rim to the relief of the coin, 1921**



**Brown gift coin with rim and parts in relief**

end of 1920 and in the first months of 1921. Some experimental plaster casts (gipsform) were produced first. The production of limited numbers of two types of experimental casts of porcelain coins for Germany and for the State of Saxony (Freistaat Sachsen) was also connected with their issue.

Porcelain coins with face values from 10 pfennigs to 20 marks were later issued in various types and numbers for various German cities and regions including Meissen. At the beginning of the 1920s, various company and gift coins were produced from porcelain for the cities of Dresden, Erfurt, Hannover, Berlin, Leipzig, Meissen and others. The first examples of porcelain coins were produced from plaster moulds. It was a matter of experimental products, fired in limited numbers of 5 to 20 pieces from each hand mould. They can be distinguished from later products of steel moulds by the fact that the experimental casts from plaster moulds have finer, less

sharp lines and rougher surfaces and are thinner than the casts from steel moulds.

From both the numismatic and historical points of view, the period of the beginning of production of porcelain coins is especially interesting. Porcelain coins were produced for a long period after their origin in varying numbers. According to number produced, porcelain coins were classified into nine groups. The first group includes the largest numbers of coins with 100-641 thousand produced, while the eighth group contains coins produced in numbers of 201-500. The ninth group is a special category consisting of coins produced in numbers smaller than 200. Assignment to the groups concerns coins made of both brown and white porcelain.

The literature only very briefly mentions black porcelain coins from the period 1920-1923 and black medallions, but their occasional occurrence is already confirmed. Therefore, their origin and existence remains an open question awaiting the attention of historians or experts on the problem.

The porcelain coins were generally very popular and attractive especially for their varied designs, general appearance and finally also for their precise production. However, from the practical point of view, they could not be used for long because of their fragility. Porcelain coins could not replace the existing monetary units, and from the point of view of assessment of their real economic importance, they could not fulfill the function of money as currency in their period.