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ROMAN IMPORTS IN KRAJNA

Kokowski A., Kraszczuk R., Kuna J., Łoś J., Myzgin K., Pietruczuk J., Rola J., Szałkowska-Łoś J., Zawadzki M., *Corpus der römischen Funde im europäischen Barbaricum. Polen. Band 6 Krajna (mit Randgebiet – vor der Brda bis zur Weichsel)*, Kraków 2023, 135 pp.

One of the greatest difficulties associated with the study of Roman imports in the European Barbaricum is the fact that many of these finds come from old discoveries, often made by accident or during amateur research. A modern researcher who studies this issue, even for a small area, must perform the arduous task of searching for materials of interest in various, sometimes very distant centers. It usually turns out that the only physically available artifacts are those that eventually ended up in museums, survived wars and dislocations of collections, and the currently available information about their origin is only those that fortunately survived or were established in the course of provenance research. More often, he must be satisfied with old publications and documentation, which are unable to help answer many basic questions. This is accompanied by the awareness that all the information that has been gathered pertains to only a part, and likely a small one, of the actual discoveries made. Such conclusions arise not only from the assumption that since accidental finds of archaeological artefacts are currently being made during agricultural or construction work, similar discoveries must have occurred in the past, but that information about them was not recorded or has been lost. This can also be inferred from museum collections that date back to the 19th century, such as the coin collection at the Leon Wyczółkowski District Museum in Bydgoszcz (MOB). Among the several dozen Roman coins amassed before the outbreak of World War II, only a small fraction has a specified find spot. The others do not stand out due to features that would make them considered attractive acquisitions in the antiquities market, such as excellent preservation, rarity, or elements that are appealing from the perspective of conveying knowledge about antiquity or aiding the study of Latin, such as the bust of Commodus in a lion's

skin, a view of the harbour in Ostia, or especially interesting legends. These coins rather give the impression of finds for which information about the context of discovery was not recorded (or has been lost). In terms of preservation condition, chronology, and types, they do not stand out compared to finds from the region.

The symbols of contemporary research on Roman imports are the work done within interdisciplinary teams and the use of cutting-edge technologies. However, equally important is the organisation of information about ancient finds and their analysis in light of the latest knowledge. This work is largely conducted in libraries and museum store-rooms, rather than in settings resembling a space station. Unfortunately, it is not as highly valued by those making decisions about research grants, although both mentioned research directions should complement each other rather than be evaluated before they even begin. Fortunately, the scientific value of a given endeavour is determined by the methodology of the work and its outcomes, rather than by someone's arbitrary decision. The publication presented here is an excellent example of this. It is the result of the collaboration of a team composed of experienced researchers from various institutions and passionate regionalists. The authors were united by a shared passion and the desire to fill a significant gap in the archaeological literature – the presentation and analysis of Roman imports from the Krajna region, ranging from the earliest finds to the most recent ones, many of which are published for the first time.

Krajna is a region located on the border of the Kuyavian-Pomeranian, Greater Poland, and Pomeranian Voivodeships. Its northern border is the Kamionka River, the western border is the Gwda, and the southern border is the Noteć. The most difficult to define is its eastern border. It runs

along the Nakło-Słupowo line and then north-east to the Brda River. In the presented work, the research area was moved beyond the borders of the region towards the east, up to the Vistula River, covering archaeological sites in the area of Bydgoszcz, Solec Kujawski (including Przyłubie, Łążyn, Trzcianka, Otorowo), and the locality of Dobrcz (Dobrcz-Pauliny,¹ Strzelce Dolne). The work also covers the Dębogóra site south of the Noteć. This choice is fully justified by the state of research on the cultural situation from the first centuries AD but also envisages the creation of similar works for neighboring regions and the issue of establishing clear boundaries for them. The issue of Krajna's borders and its geographical conditions was described in detail in the reviewed work (pp. 10-17).

The section entitled "Krajna als Forschungsgebiet" presents the history of discoveries and research conducted in this region. It includes information about sites and their names, both German and Polish, names of researchers, institutions, and most important publications (pp. 17-23).

The following section presents an outline of the cultural situation in the studied area from the younger pre-Roman period (from about 250 BC to the turn of the eras) to the end of antiquity and the beginning of the early Middle Ages. In the younger pre-Roman period Krajna was sparsely populated. At the end of phase B1, the settlement of the Wielbark culture appears, and its greater intensity occurs from the beginning of phase B2. This process ended in phase C1a, which was associated with the migration of the Goths to the southeast. This was the only period of relatively stable settlement in Krajna in the first centuries AD. The areas that had been depopulated until the end of antiquity were invaded by the so-called Dębczyno group. There was probably also a migration of people from the Luboszyce culture, identified with the Burgundians. There is no data on the beginnings of Slavic settlement, which most likely began at the end of the 7th century AD (pp. 23-24).

The work presents the history of research on Roman imports to Krajna, divided into two periods. World War II is considered their boundary. The word "imports" that appears in this part is placed in quotation marks. As one might guess,

the aim is to emphasize that this term does not have to reflect the nature of the influx of Roman objects to Krajna in a way analogous to its current meaning. However, this is rather a form of drawing attention to this issue, rather than striving for precision in the use of terminology. A very good idea is to include in this part of the work a table presenting the described discoveries in chronological order, with information on the category of the find and the most important literature devoted to it. There is another table with a list of finds presented alphabetically according to where they were found and with indications in which publications they were included or not. The rest of the work contains instructions on how to use the catalogue (pp. 31-35) as well as information on the authors and a list of literature (pp. 37-60). The catalogue includes 100 sites (pp. 61-93). The rest of the book contains indexes (pp. 95-110), 20 plates with illustrations, and a commentary on maps and the database (pp. 133-135). At the end of the work, there is a fold-out page with two maps.

The oldest known find included in the work are unspecified coins found in the town of Wyrzysk before 1818. They were discovered in a cemetery, probably of the Wielbark culture, which makes them an all the more interesting find as they do not have many analogies.² The find is known only from descriptions (pp. 25, 91). Among the described finds from Krajna are objects discovered during excavations conducted by Fritz von Wilckens in 1879 in the town of Dorotowo (Dorotenhof vel Dorotheenhof) at the Wielbark culture cemetery. One of the cremation burials was placed in a bronze vessel dated to the end of the 2nd-mid-3rd century AD. Currently, this relic is in the collections of the Archaeological Museum in Gdańsk. Its availability for research was reflected in the described work, among other things, by providing the elemental composition of various parts of the vessel. From Dorotowo come Roman glass gaming stones but also a gold necklace made in Barbaricum³ and

¹ About 11 km to the north-east, there is the Topolno site, no longer included in the work, known for cremated burials in bronze vessels of type E44 and E45, among others Skóra K. 2020. *Omnia mors aequat? Soziale Stratigraphien in der Römischen Kaiserzeit und Völkerwanderungszeit im Gebiet der Wielbark-Kultur*, Łódź, p. 214.

² Cf. Bursche A. 1983. *Moneta i kruszec w kulturze wielbarskiej w okresie późnorzymskim*, Przegląd Archeologiczny, 31, 47-90; Romanowski A. 2007. *Znaleziska monet rzymskich z terenów kultury wielbarskiej na Podlasiu, prawobrzeżnym Mazowszu i zachodniej Białorusi*, Wiadomości Numizmatyczne, R. LI, z. 1 (183), pp. 29-53; Kurzyńska M. 2015. *Linowo stanowisko 6. Bi-rytualne cmentarzysko kultury wielbarskiej z północno-wschodniej części ziemi chełmińskiej*, Grudziądz-Toruń, p. 62, 286, 307.

³ Andrzejowski J. 2014. *Zapomniane złoto – nieznanne cmentarzysko kultury przeworskiej z Plebąki*

presented in the form of a 19th-century photo, considering the subject of the work, as if on its margin. A notable find of coins is a hoard of about 5,000 antoninianii from Gallienus (253-268) to Aurelian (270-275), discovered in 1905 or 1906 in Piła. This is the largest hoard of Roman coins discovered on Polish lands to date. The find is well known from the literature,⁴ and this work does not significantly expand on the knowledge about it, which is understandable due to the unknown fate of this find. However, a good decision is to present reproductions of plates from a hard-to-find publication by H. Wefels,⁵ which makes studying these coins easier. Available at the District Museum in Bydgoszcz is a set of Roman coins from Rynkowo (in the work "Bydgoszcz – Rynkowo"), discovered in 1928 or 1929. The authors took advantage of the physical availability of coins and supplemented the information about them known from the existing literature.⁶ Among other things, the data on metrology has been supplemented but also the place where they were found has been described in more detail. Commenting on these descriptions, it is worth adding that the holes in the denarii of Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius were evidently made sometime between the discovery of the coins and their purchase for the Museum's collections in 1964. It should be emphasised that also in other cases when the authors had the possibility of physical access to the described finds from Krajna, the information about them was carefully verified and supplemented. An example is the sestertius of Filip the Arab, discovered in Gościeradz, which is in the collections of the District Museum in Bydgoszcz.⁷ In the existing literature, this sestertius was presented in a very general way as a "bronze coin", additionally illustrated with a photo of another coin of Philip the Arab – antoninianus found in Bydgoszcz.⁸ In the next publication, it is presented as antoninianus with information on the collections it is currently

in, but without an inventory number or further details.⁹ The reviewed work also contains incorrect information that it is an antoninianus, but the rest of the description leaves no doubt as to the denomination, providing detailed metrological data and a catalogue analogy (p. 71). In the case of the Valentinian III solidus, which was purchased for the MOB in 1966 as an accidental find made in Bydgoszcz on Mill Island in 1965, they provide precise data on its metrology, enabling its unambiguous identification, supplementing the knowledge about it known from the existing literature (p. 64).¹⁰ The work also includes information about another gold coin from Krajna – a Theodosius II solidus found before 1975 in the locality of Rosochy and previously known from a little-known publication of an internal informant nature.¹¹ The coin is currently in the collections of the Archaeological and Ethnographic Museum in Łódź¹² (p. 93). The source of information about two coins found in an unspecified location in the former Wyrzysk county before 1975 are their plaster casts, which are in the possession of the Archaeological Museum in Poznań¹³ (pp. 90-91). One of the described coins – a fragment of a denarius of Marcus Aurelius, was discovered in 1969 during archaeological excavations in Strzelce Dolne as a fragment of an early medieval silver hoard. It was accompanied by 21 fragments of Islamic coins from the 10th century and 6 fragments of silver objects¹⁴ (p. 89). Among other categories of finds, it is worth mentioning two fragments of woolen fabric, discovered in a grave of the Wielbark culture in Lędyczek during robbery excavations before 1998 (p. 72, Tabl. VI).¹⁵ The latest finds recorded in the described work include the Mark Antony denarius discovered in Białe Błota in 2020 during a metal

na Kujawach, Wiadomości Archeologiczne, LXV, p. 110, 113.

⁴ E.g. Ciołek R. 2007. *Die Fundmünzen der römischen Zeit in Polen. Pommern*, Wetteren, 156-180; idem 2020. *A Forgotten Hoard of Antoninianii from Piła (Poland): Large Volume, Little Value*, Journal of Ancient History and Archaeology, pp. 7, 185-191.

⁵ Wefels H. 1921. *Fund römischer Münzen*, Berliner Münzblätter, 42, 230/231, Taf. 90-94.

⁶ Cf. Ciołek R. 2007. *Op. cit.*, p. 23-26.

⁷ Inv. no. MOB Mo-4902.

⁸ Inv. no. MOB Mo-4901. Potemski C. 1963. *Pradzieje Bydgoszczy i powiatu bydgoskiego*, Bydgoszcz, p. 103, Tabl. XXI, 2.

⁹ Ciołek R. 2007. *Op. cit.*, p. 85.

¹⁰ Cf. Ciołek R. 2007. *Op. cit.*, p. 26; Borowczak I. 2009. *Złote monety w zbiorach Muzeum Okręgowego im. Leona Wyczółkowskiego w Bydgoszczy*, Przegląd Numizmatyczny, 1, 64, p. 10.

¹¹ Gupieniec A. 1975. *Złota moneta z Rosochy*. Łódzki Numizmatyk. Wewnętrzny komunikat dla członków sekcji numizmatycznej im. Kazimierza Stronczyńskiego PTAiN XIV, 1-4 (117-120), p. 1.

¹² Inv. no. MAEL-N-A-10955.

¹³ Cf. Gałęzowska A. 2016. *Monety rzymskie w zbiorach Muzeum Archeologicznego w Poznaniu*, Fontes Archaeologici Posnanienses, 52, p. 239.

¹⁴ Cf. Bogucki M., Ilisch P., Suchodolski S. 2016. *Frühmittelalterliche Münzfunde aus Polen*, Inventar II. Pommern, Warszawa, p. 511-512.

¹⁵ Cf. Maik J. 2012. *Włókiennictwo kultury wielbarskiej*, Łódź, p. 41, 117.

detecting survey. At the time the book was submitted for printing, the denarius was deposited in the MOB by the Provincial Office for Monument Protection in Toruń, Bydgoszcz Branch (p. 61). The fate of 10 coins from Przyłubie, from the times of Constantine the Great (p. 86) and a fibula from Włoscibórz, discovered in 2021 (p. 90) are similar. The described work is the first publication of these findings. The find of a posthumous denarius of Faustina the Elder from Zakrzewo, discovered in 2021 (p. 91), and a fibula and 3 coins from Radawnica (p. 86) are also described. These artifacts were not transferred to the Monument Conservation Office, but the authors of the work managed to obtain information about them. One can only hope that over time they too will end up in public collections and that the work described will prove to be not only a support for professional research but also a positive example for those people conducting surveys using detectors who are not indifferent to the cultural heritage of the region in which they operate. The described work not only organises, supplements, and updates the information on Roman imports found in Krajna but also draws attention to this region, shows its research potential, encourages citing the finds, and undertaking further research. From an archaeological point of view, Krajna is an interesting area. It is not only the influx of Roman imports that is visible here but also their influence on local culture.

Objects from the Roman Empire are often accompanied by refined objects that are their imitations and made by local communities,¹⁶ but also completely original objects.

The described work contains only two minor errors: the one mentioned above concerning the denomination of the coin from Gościeradz, and also in the description of as of Hadrian found in Bydgoszcz, where there is no information that the coin weighs 10.725 g (p. 66). This does not negatively affect the reception of the whole in any way. From the perspective of such a difficult task that the Authors have set for themselves, this is a forgivable and insignificant thing. The disadvantage of the work that is worth writing about, however, is its small circulation concerning the important issue it concerns. The book should be available not only to a narrow circle of researchers but also to people living and working in Krajna, whom it can help in understanding the sense of protecting archaeological sites and reporting incidental finds. It should also be an easily accessible inspiration for undertaking similar work for other regions.

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¹⁶ For example, ceramic vessels that imitate glass vessels made in the Roman Empire, Łosiowie J. i J. 2007. *Z dziejów archeologii w bydgoskim Muzeum*, Kronika Bydgoska, XXIX, p. 309.