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Polish coins depicting martial arts and the art of war

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Abstract

Aim. The subject of the research is Polish coins which represent military or martial arts culture. The authors, using a multi-disciplinary approach attempt to show how national heritage in a specific area of culture, is promoted by the issuing of commemorative coins. This is their description along with their attempts to explain the phenomenon.

Material and Methods. The research material comprises Polish coins and in addition, some selected foreign coins (issued between 1923 and 2013) excluding test coins. The content of the drawings (the graphics) and the inscriptions are discussed and subsequently interpreted. Subject literature and National Bank of Poland advertising material is also included.

Results. The use of symbolism, Polish historical military formations, weapons and armour, famous battles of the Polish army and fortifications were successively considered. Reference was also made to the presence of the theme of martial arts on “sport and the Olympics” coins. The analysis is illustrated with photographs of selected coins.

Conclusions. Some countries promote their own traditions of physical culture, others promote the combat sports, in which they are most successful. In the case of the National Bank of Poland these traditions are mostly knightly and military. The Polish traditions of fencing and Asian martial arts, in which sports the Poles have had considerable success are still underrepresented on Polish coins.

1. Introduction

The theoretical perspective extends from the anthropology of martial arts and the humanistic theory of martial arts through hopology, to the science of weapons [cf. Draeger 1979; Cynarski, Kurek 2009], the art of war as understood by Carl von Clausewitz [1832-1834], semiotics and numismatics. Semiotics is here understood as the science of the explanation of symbolic language (the meaning of words, symbols and picture images) similar to Carl Gustav Jung’s [1976] definition.

Knightly culture or, more broadly, military culture, includes the heritage of military art, martial arts, educational systems of the warrior’s way (as the Japanese *budo*), weapons and armour, and their use. Martial arts are here presented according to the humanistic theory of martial arts and martial arts anthropology [Cynarski 2012a; Cynarski, Skowron 2014].

Coins relating to sports themes are collected by many people, while a lot of the literature of sports science and numismatics contains work especially

devoted to Olympic coins [Czaplicki 2002, 2006, 2013]. This is not surprising, taking into consideration the global popularity of the Olympic Games and the fact that sport is heavily involved in politics. In particular, the Olympic Games are largely political events, and a similar (promotional) role is played by the issuing of coins and banknotes.

The state of knowledge on the subject of martial arts on coins is much slimmer. They are, by far, single papers covering this subject in passing [cf. Sieber, Cynarski 2008; Smurawa 2012]. There has, so far however, been no collected monograph on the subject. This study aims to partially fill this gap at least in respect of Polish coins.

2. Material and methods

The research material comprises Polish coins and in addition, some selected foreign coins (issued between 1923 and 2013) excluding test coins, which are related to martial arts or the art of warfare.

Coins are here treated as artefacts; they are analysed directly and on the basis of their images. The images depicted and the inscriptions are discussed and subsequently interpreted.

The analysis of the material included data relevant to numismatics and collecting, but less important for an analysis of content related to the military and to Polish national culture, or directly, to the phenomenon of martial arts. It concerned the size of coins, the metal from which they were made and their weight. Data concerning circulation and market price of individual numismatic stocks were omitted.

References to the history of Poland in this paper are short and succinct. For Polish historians these are quite basic facts. However, since this study is aimed at the "Ido Movement for Culture. Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology", which is a global quarterly, and Polish history is still poorly known around the world¹, the authors have decided to list relevant historical facts and stress only selected issues.

Subject literature and National Bank of Poland advertising material is also included. The use of symbolism, Polish historical military formations, weapons and armour, famous battles of the Polish army and fortifications were successively considered. Reference was also made to the presence of the theme of martial arts on "sport and the Olympics" coins.

3. Symbolism

Eagles, lions and bears inspired the ancient warriors of Europe. As symbols of strength and courage, bravery and valour, they have been accepted as an emblem by various clans, tribes and towns. To this day, they are associated with struggle, even a symbolic or formal one, as in martial arts and combat sports [Sieber, Cynarski, Litwiniuk 2008]. Additionally, there are also figures from mythology and Christian tradition.

The earliest members of the Piast Family adopted the albino eagle (*Aquila chrysaetus*) as their emblem, and the eagle appeared on the first Polish coins. It was during the partition of Poland when the Polish eagle was opposed to the two-headed Russian eagle and other emblems. The Poles, a nation of warriors (out of historical necessity, in order to survive), showed the Greek goddess of victory Nike on their coins, taking inspiration from the Nike of Samothrace. Nike appeared on the silver 5-zloty, 33 mm, 18 g, Ag 750, between 1928 and 1932, and then the Warsaw Nike was depicted on the 10-zloty coin in 1965.

As in all of Christian Europe, a cross was a very important or even the most important symbol. On the 100th anniversary of the Pol-

ish Scouting Association (2010) a 2-zloty coin bearing the scout cross was minted. On the coin next to the cross, as on the *Virtuti Militari Order*, is the scout lily and wreath and the motto "be prepared" (photo 1). Scouting has been, and remains, an educational organization promoting Polish patriotism. A similar cross can be seen on the Hussars' pennant (photos 5-6).

4. Military formations, armour and weapons

The genius of the great leaders and the strength of the Polish army have assured Poland's survival from the tenth century up till now despite its difficult geopolitical position. We shall leave out here the great leaders and heroes, who were commemorated on the coins of the Second Commonwealth of Poland (Jan III Sobieski, Romuald Traugutt, Józef Piłsudski), the heroes of Poland and the USA, such as Tadeusz Kościuszko and Kazimierz Pułaski (frequently shown on the coins of the People's Republic of Poland) other great Poles, including Witold Pilecki (10 zł, 2010, "The 65th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp"). We are going to concentrate on military formations, weapons and the techniques for using them.

Between 2006 and 2011 the National Bank of Poland (NBP) issued a series of coins, "The History of the Polish Cavalry", dedicated to five Polish cavalry formations. They were: a Piast Horseman, a C15th Mounted Knight, a C17th Hussar, a *Cheval Leger* of the Imperial Guard of Napoleon I and an Uhlan of the Polish Second Commonwealth. In each case the coins were in denominations of 200 zł (27 mm, 15.5 g Au 900), 10 zł (klippe 32 x 22, 14.14 g Ag 925) and 2 zł (27 mm, 8.15 g, CuAl5Zn5Sn1).

The Warriors (photo 2) from the time of the



Photo 1. The reverse of the 2-zloty coin, 2010 – "The 100th anniversary of the Polish Scouting Association".

¹ The exceptions are publications by Norman Davies and Ewa Thompson.



Photo 2. 2 zł, 2006 – A Piast Horseman.



Photo 3. 2 zł - C15th Polish Knight.

Piast Dynasty (from Mieszko I to Mieszko II) were able to unite almost all the lands of the Western Slavs from time to time. They were able to resist the forces of the German Empire. On the other hand, good fighting skills and the strength of character of Polish knights, supported by great tactics during the battle of Grunwald (pulling the enemy into a trap) allowed the Polish and Lithuanian knights (photo 3) to defeat the Teutonic Knights.

A unique phenomenon in the history of the military was the Polish hussars, perhaps the best cavalry ever. These winged knights (photos 4-6) operated as a horseriding formation from 1500 to 1702. As the “invincible power” they became famous because of their great victories in the seventeenth century at Cutrea de Argesz (25 November 1600), Kircholm (27 September 1605), Klushino (4 July 1610) and Chocim (7 September 1621). This was due to appropriate combat tactics, as well as the training of each individual soldier. They were the best of the best, knights coming from rich homes of the nobility. They were

armed with long spears, sabres and guns, whereas the mace (photos 5-6) was the weapon of officers [more: Zabłocki 2000, 2001; Żygulski 2000; Sawicki 2011, 2012; Cynarski 2008a, b].



Photo 4. 2 zł, reverse – a hussar on horseback.



Photo 5. 200 zł – a hussar's armour.



Photo 6. Klippe 10 zł, 2009 – a helmet and mace.



Photo 7. 2 zł, 2010 – Cheval Leger of Napoleon I.



Photo 8. 2 zł, 2011 – Polish uhlán of the Polish Second Commonwealth



Photos 9-10. Silver klippe 10 zł, 2011 – uhlán with sabre (obverse and reverse).

Polish martial art particularly excels in fencing and fencing on horseback [cf. Zabłocki 2001; Cynarski 2008a; Sawicki 2011, 2012; Cynarski, Szajna 2012; Szajna 2012]. Perfect mastery of horseriding skills and of wielding a gun while riding at a gallop meant that the Polish cavalry was the backbone of the Polish army until World War II. A Polish lancer (uhlán) excelled in using the lance and sword (Photos 7-10).

5. Great battles and unconquered fortresses

The glory of the Polish army especially comprises big, victorious battles, such as the Battles of Grunwald (1410), Klushino (1610), Vienna (1683) and Warsaw (1920). It also includes the courageous defence of Westerplatte (1939) and the Wizna River

(Polish Thermopylae – 1939), and the largest urban battle – the heroic Warsaw Uprising (1944).

Further consideration of coins depicting the Battle of Grunwald², where the Polish-Lithuanian army under the command of the Polish King Władysław Jagiełło (a bust on photos 11 and 14) defeated the extremely aggressive and possessive Teutonic State show banners and shields bearing Polish (crowned eagle) and Lithuanian (*The Pahonia*) emblems (photos 11 and 13), and the victorious

² By the way, Palau Island (2010) in the Pacific Ocean has released a series of three klippes devoted to the anniversary of the victory of Grunwald and Cook Islands – 5-dollar coin, 2010 – which is the third coin in the series Great Commanders & Battles: Władysław II Jagiełło - Grunwald (on the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Grunwald).



Photos 11-12. 10 zł, 2010 – 600th anniversary of the victory at Grunwald (1410-2010).

knights (photos 12-13). In this group there were outstanding warriors such as Zawisza Czarny de Garbów at Rożnów (*Zawisza the Black of Garbów*) Sulima Coat of Arms – the undefeated Europe-wide winner of numerous medieval tournaments.

In turn, the Polish army, whose main strength was the hussars, defeated the Russian army at Klushino despite being five times outnumbered by the enemy. The Polish troops were commanded by the hetman Stanisław Żółkiewski (the bust in photo 15). Subsequently the Polish hetman went to Moscow and took the Kremlin, and a year later in Warsaw a tribute to the Polish king Sigismund III Vasa by the deposed Tsar Vasilii IV Szujski and his brothers took place.

On the Polish side there is an emblem, hussars and banners, on the other side – a fence, spears, muskets and a double-headed eagle (photo 15). And finally there is the hussars charge (photo 16).

A series of “Great Battles” coins includes silver collectors’ coins and commemorative circulation 2 zł coins made of an alloy of Nordic Gold (CuAl5Zn5Sn1). The National Bank of Poland inaugurated the series in 2010. Its purpose was to present the great battles of the Polish army. The first series of coins commemorated the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Grunwald and the 400th anniversary of the Battle of Klushino (Table 1). The obverse of



Photo 13. 2 zł, 2010 – Grunwald 1410.



Photo 14. Silver 10 zł, 2010 – commemorative coin in a pouch.



Photos 15-16. 10 zł, 2010 – the 400th anniversary of the victory at Klushino

Tab. 1. The first Polish coins in the "Great Battles" series.

| Coin | Face Value | Alloy | Diameter | Weight | Date of issue |
|--------------------|------------|-------------|-----------------------------|---------|---------------|
| Grunwald | 10 zł | Ag 925 | 40,00×26,00 mm (ellipse) | 14,14 g | 2 July 2010 |
| Klushino | | | | | |
| Grunwald, Klushino | 2 zł | CuAl5Zn5Sn1 | 27,00 mm | 8,15 g | 1 July 2010 |

**Photo 17.** 2 zł, 2010 – the Battle of Warsaw 1920.**Photo 20.** 2 zł, 2009 – Westerplatte, September 1939.

the coins made of Nordic Gold alloy *show* an eagle, the year of *issue*, face value (2 gold) and the inscription "Republic of Poland" and the reverse presents the battle of the Polish army.

In 1920, a Polish soldier was depicted defending Europe against Bolshevism / Communism (represented by the hammer and sickle) (photo 17). The Polish army defeated Soviet Russia near Warsaw. This is also commemorated on a 20 zł coin (38.61 mm, 28.28 g Ag 925), which shows the profile of Marshal Józef Piłsudski and the Polish map and on the reverse, a counterattack of Polish soldiers (photos 18-19). In 1995, a 2 zł coin was also issued to commemorate the "75th Anniversary of the Battle of Warsaw", which depicts the scene where the soldiers were led in to battle by Father Ignacy Jan Skorupka bearing a cross.

In 1939, the Polish army had to fight the armies of two totalitarian powers, Nazi Germany and its ally Soviet Russia. Polish soldiers fought heroically, among others, in defence of the Westerplatte outpost (photo 20). They later fought on all World War II fronts including at sea. The series of 2 zł coins "*Polish Ships*" issued between 2012 and 2013 is dedicated to six Polish warships.

In 1944, the Poles fought and died in the name of their national dignity and honour in the Warsaw Uprising (photo 21), where the Germans were guilty of another genocide against the civilian population. Varsovians were helped neither by the Western Allies nor the Soviet Union. On the building there is the sign "Fighting Poland" (photo 21).

Among Polish fortifications and castles Jasna Góra occupies an important position. In 2005 a 20

**Photos 18-19.** 20 zł, 2010 – the 90th anniversary of the Battle of Warsaw.



Photo 21. 2 zł, 2009 – 65th anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising.



Photo 25. 2 zł, 2009 - Częstochowa – Jasna Góra.

zł coin was issued marking 350 Years of the Defence of Jasna Góra, with Father Augustyn Kordecki, prior of the Pauline monastery in the foreground (photo 22). The obverse contains the words of Pope John Paul II. "We have always been free here". A 2 zł coin was also issued in a similar format.

Then, in 2009, a series of "Towns in Poland" 2 zł coins was issued. "Częstochowa – Jasna Góra" (photo 25). Unfortunately, there is still no coin devoted directly to the fortress in Kamyanets-Po-

dilsky [Cynarski 2012b]. But on the coin depicting the creator of Trilogy and its characters: Colonel Jerzy Michał Wołodyjowski and Onufry Zagłoba on horseback the obverse shows a castle in Kamyanets-Podilsky and Polish flags (200 zł, 1996, 27 mm, 15.5 g, Au 900, mirror finish, photos 23-24).

6. Coins with sport themes

Despite the many successes of Polish representatives in international martial arts and combat sports, there are little on that theme on Polish coins. There has been nothing so far connected with Asian martial arts.

The martial arts depicted on Polish Olympic commemorative coins have so far only represented archery, fencing and wrestling [Czaplicki 2013]. But these are the most basic forms of martial arts in all cultures which have been a part of agnosticism since ancient times. Today they are also the basic disciplines of martial arts in the IOC Olympics.

To mark the Atlanta Olympics in 1996 two coins showing fighting wrestlers were issued in 2 zł (copper-nickel) and 20 zł (Ag 959, 38.61 mm,



Photo 22. 20 zł, 2005 – the 350th anniversary of the defence of Jasna Góra.



Photos 23-24. 200 zł, 1996 – Henryk Sienkiewicz



Photos 26-27. 20 zloties, 1995 to commemorate the Summer Olympics in Atlanta

31.1 g), 1995 (photos 26-27) denominations. Other countries have shown considerably more martial arts and combat sports on their coins.

6.1. Selected examples from other countries

Armenia – a series *Martial Arts*, with silver coins in denominations of 1000 dram – 1) *judo*, 2011; 2) *wushu*, 2011, 3) *karate*, 2012, and 4) *kokh* (an Armenian national martial art, a type of wrestling), 2012, diameter 38.61 mm, weight 28.28 g, assay Ag 925. A coin dedicated to *karate* shows a gate on the obverse, a symbol of Okinawa where karate was born [cf. Alexander 1991]. The reverse depicts a fight in the knock-down system (similar to the *kyokushin* style) and the kick technique – *yoko-tobi-geri* (photos 28-29).

Australia – three five-dollar coins issued on the occasion of the Sydney Olympic Games showing judo, taekwondo and wrestling (38,74 mm, 20 g, bronze).

France with its love of judo marked the Summer Olympics in London 2012 by issuing that year a series of three coins depicting *o-soto-gari* and *tomoe-nage* throws: a 10 euro (37 mm, 22.2 g, Ag 900), a 50 euro (22 mm, 8.45 g, Au 920) and a 200 euro (37 mm, 31.1 g, Au 999) coin.

Kazakhstan – to mark the occasion of the same Olympics issued a 100 tenge coin (fighting wrestlers) in 2012 (38.61 mm, 31.1 g, Ag 925).

Mongolia – sumo – three 500 tögrög coins issued in 2005 show the sumo masters Tamikaze, Ounomatsu and Shiramui. 2005, 38,61 mm, one ounce of Ag 925. Additionally a 10000 tögrög coin (depicting a pair of fighting *sumoka*), 30 mm, 15.55 g, Au 999.9 and a 5000 tögrög klippe 40 x 90 mm, 155.5 g, Ag 999.9 [Smurawa 2012] have been issued. The klippe shows a scene of masters of sumo taken from a Japanese picture and a building depicting a sumo centre. Talented young Mongolians often pursue a career in sumo. But Mongolia also loves judo. To mark the occasion of the Olympic Games



Photos 28-29. Armenian 1000 dram, 2012 - series *Martial Arts*: karate.

in Beijing in 2008 two commemorative coins, a 500 tögrög (fighting judoka), 38.61 mm, 25 g, Ag 925 and a 1000 tögrög one – 13,92 mm, 1,24 g, Au 999.9 were issued.

People's Republic of China – to mark the Beijing Olympic Games (the 29th Summer Olympics) a gold 2000 yuan, 2008 coin was issued. (Au 0.999, diameter 60 mm). *The Olympic rings* are the symbol of Olympic sport, but also of some martial arts: four traditional styles of *wushu*, including 3 mohai wielding *classic cold steel*).

Russia – To mark the European Judo Championships in Chelabinsk in 2012, two coins were issued : a 3 rouble 39 mm, 33.94 g, Ag 925; and a 50 rouble one 22 mm, 7.89 g, Au 925.

UK –To mark the Summer Olympic Games in London in 2012 a 50 Pence coin was issued in 2011 depicting judo and wrestling (27.3 mm, 8 g, copper-nickel – CuNi).

Uzbekistan – 100 sum, 2001 – judo (22.6 mm, 7,89 g, Ag 999).

Discussion

Great historical battles fire people's imagination even in distant, exotic countries (hence the examples of coins from distant islands dedicated to the Battle of Grunwald). But perhaps more important were other big victories.

Poles were able to defend Europe and its Latin civilization twice: in Vienna 1683 (before *islamisation*) and in Warsaw in 1920 (before *sovietisation*). The victory of Vienna was mainly due to the Polish hussars, and the forces of Europe led by the Polish King Jan III Sobieski (between 1674 and 1696) who also took an active part in this battle. A copper-nickel 50 zł circulation coin from 1983 commemorating “300 years of the Battle of Vienna” was devoted to him, as well as an earlier silver 10 zł circulation coin from 1933 which also depicted him. In turn, the victory in the Battle of Warsaw and the Polish-Russian War was possible thanks to the clever tactical manoeuvre of Józef Piłsudski.

In the subject literature, several categories suggest themselves for further research as follows 1) brave rulers and leaders, and heroes, such as Mieszko I, Boleslaus the Brave, Stefan Batory, Jan III Sobieski, Józef Piłsudski, as well as the Polish and American heroes Tadeusz Kościuszko and Kazimierz Pułaski; 2) authors and characters from literary tradition including Henryk Sienkiewicz and Jerzy Michał Wołodyjowski, the latter, an undefeated master of the sword and a flawless knight; 3) heroism of war and heroes, such as the Polish soldiers in September 1939 and Major Henryk Dobrzański

“Hubal” and the Order of *Virtuti Militari* dedicated to them; 4) fortifications [Sieber, Cynarski 2008: 143].

One can also agree with the fact that “Precious metals emphasize the importance of the character, anniversary events, etc.” [Sieber, Cynarski 2008]. Gold and silver coins are more expensive, more durable, more likely to be kept as souvenirs by people who are not particularly engaged in numismatics. In contrast, circulation coins issued in larger press runs are usually minted of base metal alloys. It is difficult to decide which method is more effective to promote a given country and its culture. Obviously, a lot depends on strictly commercial conditions – nice coins have to sell well.

According to the summaries and descriptions of coins connected with *sport* and the Olympics, the theme of (Asian) martial arts on Polish coins is still absent [*cf.* Smurawa 2012; Czaplicki 2013], despite the fact that in the field of physical culture the Poles are considerably successful.

Conclusions

Some countries promote their own traditions of physical culture (Armenia - *kokh*, PRC – *wushu*), others the martial arts, in which they are most successful. In the case of the National Bank of Poland these are some traditions of knights and soldiers, as important in military history as the hussars.

From the analysed examples it can be concluded that the archetype of the warrior-hero is still present and has a very powerful effect on the imagination. There is also the figure of the sage-priest, who represents the clerical heroic heroes of Polish history. Christian symbolism, the ethos of chivalry, banners, emblems and weapons (swords, sabres) are all depicted.

The Polish traditions of fencing and Asian martial arts, in which sports the Poles have had considerable success are probably still under-represented on the country's coins.

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Photos – Łukasz R. Cynarski

Monety polskie o tematyce sztuk walki i sztuki wojennej

Słowa kluczowe: sztuki walki, kultura militarna, numizmatyka, polskie monety, symbolika

Abstrakt

Tematem opracowania są monety polskie, których treść wiąże się z kulturą militarną lub sztukami walki. Autorzy starają się w multidyscyplinarnej perspektywie (antropologia sztuk walki, haplogenia, numizmatyka, semiotyka) ukazać promowanie dziedzictwa narodowego we wskazanym obszarze kultury poprzez emitowanie okolicznościowych monet. Jest to zatem opis z próbą wyjaśnienia zjawiska.

Materiał badań tworzą monety polskie oraz – dodatkowo – wybrane zagraniczne (z lat 1923-2013), z pominięciem monet próbnych. Analizowana jest treść owych monet – rysunki, napisy. Uwzględniono też literaturę przedmiotu i materiały reklamowe Narodowego Banku Polskiego.

Kolejno podjęto kwestie symboliki, polskich historycznych formacji wojskowych, broni i zbroi, sławnych bitew oręża polskiego i fortyfikacji, jako tematów przedstawianych na monetach. Odniesiono się też do obecności tematu sztuk walki na monetach „sportowych i olimpijskich”. Analizę zilustrowano zdjęciami wybranych monet.

Niektóre kraje promują swe własne tradycje kultury fizycznej (Armenia - *koch*, ChRL – *wushu*) inne – sporty walki, w których odnoszą największe sukcesy. W przypadku Narodowego Banku Polski są to pewne tradycje rycerskie i żołnierskie, jak chwalebnie zapisana w historii wojskowości husaria.

W analizowanym zestawie można stwierdzić, że archetyp wojownika-bohatera jest tu wciąż bardzo silny i nadal oddziałuje na wyobraźnię. Pojawia się również mędrzec-kapłan – duchowni bohaterowie heroicznej historii Polski. Jest tu symbolika chrześcijańska, jest etos rycerski, są proporce, godła i broń (miecze, szable). Natomiast zapewne wciąż zbyt mało eksponuje się na monetach polską tradycję szermierczą i azjatyckie sztuki walki, w których Polacy odnoszą znaczące sukcesy.