



NON-EUROPEAN NUMISMATICS: THE COLLECTION OF
COINS FROM THE ORIENT, COLONIES AND OVERSEAS IN
THE NÁPRSTEK MUSEUM

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The history of the Náprstek Museum's numismatic collection is relatively short, compared with other departments of the institution. While coins donated by the Czech emigrants or by Mrs Náprstek figured among the museum's exhibits as early as Vojtěch Náprstek's era, at that early stage they could hardly be regarded as a systematic collection. Only in 1962, a specialized department was founded within the museum, which absorbed a smaller part of the corpus of non-European coins preserved at the National Museum in Prague, together with several items of its reference library. The first head of the department was **Dr Jarmila Štěpková (1926 - 1997)**, graduated of the Charles University in Prague, Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies, and subsequently a member of the scholarly staff of the Numismatic Department of the National Museum. She was specialized in Islamic coinage, focusing notably on the minting activity of the Umayyad caliphs. In 1963, the Náprstek Museum purchased the private collection of **Bedřich Augst (1889 - 1972)**, the Czech Lands' significant collector of non-European coins, whose lifelong collecting endeavours produced a systematic corpus of coins dated from the Classical period through modern time and covering all territories ranging from the Near East to the Far East. That important acquisition laid the foundation for an extensive systematic collection of Oriental coins. Simultaneously, the Náprstek Museum started to collect numismatic material of the colonial period and coins of the American continent.

The typological system of the collection, which was worked out later on by Dr Štěpková on a historical and geographical basis, is remarkably concise and detailed. During her tenure at the Náprstek Museum, the number of collection items increased to almost 13,000. In 1996, **Pavel Ševčík's** collection of more than one thousand Islamic coins was purchased.

The numismatic collection of the Náprstek Museum is a comprehensive, chronologically and territorially representative corpus of coins and other numismatic material documenting the economic, cultural and political history of non-European civilizations. While representing a corrective historical source, the numismatic material also documents aesthetic standards, advanced metalwork techniques, and artistic tastes of particular periods. For all these reasons, the Náprstek Museum's numismatic collection has been widely used for scholarly purposes, and its various parts have been repeatedly displayed in public. Exhibitions like „Near East Coins“ (1959, still as part of the National Museum's collections); „2500 Years of Iranian Coinage“ (1971); „Spanish Colonial Coins and Columbian Medals“ (1994); „Coins of the USA“ (1996); and „Coins of Egyptian Ptolemaic Dynasty“ (1997) are noteworthy. Thanks to Dr Štěpková's scholarly erudition, in the course of more than three decades, the collection became systematically classified according to the historical-geographical and thematic criteria, as follows:

- I Ancient and Classical Orient (Asia, Africa)
- II Non-Islamic Near East (Middle Ages and Modern Era)
- III Sassanids and Coins of Sassanian-type
- IV Islamic East and Indian Islamic Coins
- V Non-Islamic India
- VI Far East
- VII Colonies and Dependencies (Asia, Africa, the Americas, Australia and Oceania)
- VIII Non-European Modern States (Asia, Africa, the Americas, Australia and Oceania)
- IX Paper Money
- X Money, Tokens, Private Issues
- XI Medals
- XII Orders and Distinctions
- XIII Glass Jetons, Weights, Jetons
- XIV Amulets, Religious Coins, Votive Coins, Souvenirs
- XV Forgeries

XVI Issues of the Czech emigrants

XVII Countermarked Coins

Highlights of the first of the above-listed categories include assortments of Phoenician and Judean coins, as well as an extensive corpus of Parthian, Elamese and Bactrian coins. An exceptionally fine cross-section of relevant material is likewise presented by a group of Ptolemaic coins. The second category is exemplified most notably by coins minted on the territories of Transcaucasia and recent Ethiopia. A set of over three hundred drachms of the Persian Sassanids is remarkable for its catalogue of dynasties as well as for the quantity of coins. These are followed by dirhams of the Arab-Sassanian type, Tabaristani and so-called Bukhar-Hudat coins, as well as Indo-Sassanian and Hephthalite coins. Almost one-half of the collection consists of the production of the Islamic world. Series of coins of Arab-Byzantine provenance are of primordial historical importance, as well as the samples of Umayyad coins, historically succeeded by Abbasid ones and those issued by other dynasties associated with the subsequent collapse of the caliphate. Regarding the criteria of representativeness and compactness of individual sections, one ought to point out the group of coins minted by Yemeni Rasulid dynasty, likewise as those of the Samanids, Ayyubids and Mamluks. From the scholarly typological viewpoint a selection of Fatimid glass jetons is worth to mention. One of the collection's largest Islamic sections, in terms of absolute quantity, is that of Mongolian-Golden Horde coins, and coins of the Ottoman sultans and other dynasties of Turkish descent. Recent acquisitions in particular have enriched the collection by unique lots of coins minted by the Crimean khans, Genoese colonies in Crimea and major Central Asian dynasties. The museum's fine corpus of coins issued by Indian Islamic dynasties (the Sultans of Delhi, and the Great Mughals) is also remarkable.

The Islamic section of the numismatic collection is not only extraordinarily comprehensive and representative; at the same time, it prides on number of rarities. One should mention at least a unique Sarbadarid multiple dirham; Bagratid figural bronze coins; or rare Abbasid copper coins. The fifth of the above-listed categories, comprising the Indian section, exemplifies a cross-section of the Subcontinent's coin production, ranging from punched metal to coins of the independent Indian principalities under British sovereignty. The sixth category covers the Chinese and Japanese coin productions, as well as that of the states to the east of the Indian peninsula. The seventh category contains coins, those features characterize the symbiosis of European influence with authentic forms cultivated

in the countries under the colonial rule. Recent non-European production is listed under the collection's eighth category. The ninth category, the least numerous section, reflecting the youngest stage of the evolution of numismatics, comprises paper means of payment. An interesting sample of pre-coin money is concentrated in the collection's tenth category. In the following category, there are, among other items, medals documenting the history of the Turkish Wars. The remaining categories contain miscellaneous objects which are not defined as coins, and which relate to the Czech emigrants settled in non-European countries.

The Náprstek Museum's numismatic collection is the only one in the Czech Republic specialized in non-European numismatics. Although of a shorter tradition and less quantity of material in comparison with the world's major museums, its breadth of scope, comprehensiveness, representative assortment and systematic scholarly arrangement make it comparable with many leading coin cabinets on the European Continent.

Islamic coins in the collection of the Náprstek Museum:



N13646 Umayyads - Arab/Sasanian type, Ubaydallah b. Ziyad (d.AH 67/AD 686), AR dirham, BJRA (Al-Basra), AH 60.



N13421 Abbasids - Al-Ma'mun (AH 195-218/AD 810-833), AR dirham, Marw, AH 202.



N8843 Urtuqids - Qutb ad-Din II Ghazi II (AH 572-580/AD 1176-1184), AE dirham, (Maridin), no date.



N13381 Urtuqids - Nasir ad-Din Mahmud (AH 597-619/AD 1220-1222), AE dirham, Al-Hisn, no date.



N13678 Fatimids - Al-Muizz (AH 341-365/AD 952-975), AV dinar, Mistr, AH 365.



N13811 Saljuqs of Rum - Ghiyath ad-Din Kaykhusraw II (AH 634-643/AD 1236-1245), AR dirham, Qunya, AH 639.



N13680 Mamluks - An-Nasir ad-Din Faraj (AH 801-808 and 809-815/AD 1399-1405 and 1406-1412), AV dinar, Al-Qahira, AH 813/4.



N7760 Ottomans - Abd al-Aziz (AH 1277-1293/AD 1861-1876), AV 500 qurush, Qustantiniya, AH 1277/ year 9.