

The aim of the project is to study the use of ancient coins (i.e. Greek, Celtic and Roman coins issued between the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC until the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD) within the East-Central Europe in the early Middle Ages and on until the modern period (approximately from the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD until the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century). Two aspects of the outlined research problem will need to be considered. First of all, one must examine the sources of ancient coins used in East-Central Europe throughout the Middle Ages and the modern period. Secondly, the project will focus on establishing the functions of ancient coinage during the times between 7<sup>th</sup> and the turn of 18<sup>th</sup> century. And so, one of the aims of the project will be to determine to what degree ancient coinage functioned as money and how often its use was more limited, e.g. to providing a source of precious metals. Furthermore, ancient coins could also be used not as money, but as Charon's obols or worn as amulets, jewellery, or maybe even as Christian devotional medals.

Coins were the sole element of the material culture of Antiquity which could actually reach, on a large scale, the common people of East-Central Europe in the Middle Ages and the modern period. Coinage of this type, arrived here primarily in the Roman period. Such artefacts were, and still are, being found in abundance in the area (including present Poland). The finds are most commonly Roman denarii from 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, often recorded in hoards of several thousand pieces. However, other types of ancient coins are also represented in the finds assemblages from the area. Ancient coinage, almost exclusively Roman denarii, also constitutes a small percentage of hoards and other assemblages dated (with the latest coins present) to either the Middle Ages or to the modern period. Such finds can be seen as strongly indicating that ancient coinage did function as means of payment within the period with which the proposed project is concerned. This hypothesis is further supported by written sources. Moreover, ancient coins have also been recorded at other sites in medieval and modern period contexts e.g. in burial sites, which are less easy to interpret than hoards. Finds often include pierced coins and others showing suspension loops, which suggests they may have been used as amulets, jewellery or devotional medals. Other finds, such as Roman coins placed in alms boxes in modern period churches in Silesia, also point to a religious context. At the same time, written sources attest that at least since the Late Middle Ages, Roman denarii were known to common people as St John's pennies (*pieniążki św. Jana*). The name is associated with a Christian interpretation of the image of the emperor's head on the coin, resembling that of John the Baptist on a silver platter. The term was still used in 19<sup>th</sup> century in non-academic circles and evolved several variants. Roman coins were called *główki św. Jana* [St. John's heads], *denary św. Jana* [St. John's denarii] or *Iwankowe* [Little Ivan's coins] in the eastern reaches of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. German speakers called them *Johannesschüssel* (a term analogous to *Regenbogenschüsselchen* used for Celtic coins). The earliest record mentioning *Saint John's pennies* in Poland is found in a mid-15<sup>th</sup> century source. It is believed that these coins were associated with local Saint John's Eve celebrations.

The analytical-interpretive research carried out within the framework of the project will be based on both the archaeological assemblage data and on the written sources. While studying a phenomenon spanning several consecutive historical periods, one must adopt an interdisciplinary approach. And so, the study into the problems outlined above will need to be conducted outside of the schemata of research limited to just one chronological period or to just one category of sources. Moreover, since the proposed project will examine these questions within the broader European context, its conclusions will not be compromised by sample size (too small) or narrow (regional) range. While the project will focus primarily on numismatic research, it will also encompass research drawing from fields such as history, archaeology and ethnology, particularly in the context of the Middle Ages and the modern period. The work will also take into account the so called *longue durée* aspect of classical antiquity and explore the problem of awareness of ancient legacy. No numismatic research has been conducted in Poland or in Europe with such comprehensive approach as yet.

Through an interdisciplinary analysis of such a long-lasting and multifaceted phenomenon, the project has the potential to answer many questions about the history of money in medieval and modern East-Central Europe. The results are expected to shed light on the problem of how such coinage functioned as currency, despite being unregulated in local markets. Furthermore, the research could answer some of the questions concerning legal and economic systems of countries of East-Central Europe within the studied timeframe. Moreover, the project is expected to provide new data sets useful in understanding the religious or magical beliefs and customs of the East-Central European population in the Middle Ages and the modern period. It is important to stress that the data will primarily concern the common population, not belonging to cultural or social elites, and should prove very interesting for studies of both pre-Christian and Christian beliefs associated with Saint John's Eve. What is more, the project will explore questions related to the reception of Classical Antiquity and ancient history in general by the common population of East-Central Europe.