

# **| Dr Aleksandra Krzyżanowska**

(24 June 1928 – 11 April 2012)

Dr Aleksandra Krzyżanowska, an eminent specialist in the numismatics of antiquity, long-standing curator of the Department of Coins and Medals, who worked for the National Museum in Warsaw for over half a century, died after a protracted grave illness on 11 April 2012. Those familiar with her field called her Poland's First Lady of the numismatics of antiquity.

Krzyżanowska was born Aleksandra Zahorska on 24 June 1928 in Zaleszczyki in a family with strong patriotic traditions. Her father was an officer with a Murmansk past, her mother had taken part in the defence of Lvov and a grandfather had fought in the January 1863 Uprising. She herself served as a messenger in the Warsaw Uprising.

She finished secondary school in Warsaw during the Second World War. In 1946 she began to study archaeology at the University of Warsaw, and in 1952 obtained her Master's degree in classical archaeology. Already in her second year of university, in August 1948, she began to work part-time at the National Museum in Warsaw, in the Department of Ancient Art. She was employed full-time in January 1950 as an assistant in the Department of Coins and Medals.

Almost from the beginning, Aleksandra Krzyżanowska's scholarly interest focussed on antique coins. Her Master's thesis examined the iconography of the Severus family on the basis of the Roman coin collection of the National Museum in Warsaw (published in 1957 in the *Annuaire du Musée National de Varsovie*). In October 1967 she was awarded a doctorate in the humanities by the University of Warsaw, with a dissertation on Pisidian Antiochia. Her research was supported by a grant from the Polish Academy of Sciences in France, where she was able to study ample coin and book collections. Her dissertation, published in 1970 in French as *Monnaies coloniales d'Antioche de Pisidie*, won international acclaim.

In January 1968 Aleksandra Krzyżanowska was appointed curator of the Collection of Ancient Coins, and from 1 March 1971 to 1 September 1986 served as the curator of the Department of Coins and Medals. Heading Poland's largest numismatic collection presented enormous challenges and involved new responsibilities. Thus, 1974 saw the conclusion of negotiations about bringing General Jerzy Węsierski's collection from London to Poland. The collection was annotated, a catalogue was published and it was put on view as the first major exhibition of Polish coins and medals in the museum's post-war history. Its owners agreed to donate the collection to the Royal Castle in Warsaw. During her tenure, other gifts enriched the Department of Coins and Medals: the collections of Andrzej Piękoś from Canada, Father Franciszek Gabryl from the United States and Włodzimierz Głuchowski from Łódź. In this period the department was also exceptionally active in putting on exhibitions: an international show of "20<sup>th</sup>-century coins" was staged in Vienna in 1973, "Coins as mirrors of kings" was put on at the Paris Mint in 1978 and Polish royal medals were exhibited in Brno, Kroměříž and Gottwaldov (Zlin) in 1980. There were also shows in Poland, including a studio exhibition in the museum's main building and several co-organized with other Polish museums.

As well as working for the museum, Aleksandra Krzyżanowska was actively involved in many professional organizations, for several terms chairing the board of the Polish Archaeological and Numismatic Society and serving as a member of the Numismatic Commission. In 1966 she joined the editorial committee of *Wiadomości Numizmatyczne*,

and in 1966–1986 was a member of the editorial board of *Biuletyn Numizmatyczny* and since 1981 of *Prace i Materiały Muzeum Archeologicznego i Etnograficznego w Łodzi*.

Dr Krzyżanowska's half-century of scholarly activity produced about 150 publications: articles, monographs, catalogues and reviews.<sup>1</sup> Her study of the Severus family tops the list of her iconographic works. The subject of Roman minting in imperial Pisidian Antiochia forms a whole separate category. Another important group in her bibliography are the coin discoveries in Poland, such as hoards from Drzewicz or Golub on Drwęca, which she analyzed in articles and in longer publications. *Vademecum historyka starożytnej Grecji i Rzymu* [Handbook for the historian of ancient Greece and Rome] included a history of minting in ancient Greece.<sup>2</sup>

In her long professional career she attended many conferences, symposia and numismatic congresses in Poland and abroad, in Rome, Copenhagen, New York, Budapest and Brno, where she presented her research findings about the coins of antiquity. She was also a regular participant in Polish numismatic meetings in Nowa Sól and sessions about medals in Gorzów Wielkopolski.

For many years Krzyżanowska also worked with the Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology of the University of Warsaw. Their cooperation yielded analyses of coins uncovered outside Poland, in Polish archaeological excavations in Myrmekion, Tell Atrib, Palmyra, Alexandria, Nea Pafos, Carthage and Bidzhan, and in Strymen and Oderca in Bulgaria.

Dr Krzyżanowska participated in excavations in Palmyra in Syria and Tell Atrib in Egypt, and for many years she researched minting in Palmyra and Roman Egypt. This research is well-known and respected by the international numismatic community. Her expertise and outstanding scholarly intuition yielded innovative approaches to minting in these regions. In 1999 she was invited to Damascus for an international conference devoted to Syrian minting, where she gave a paper on the chronology and circulation of Palmyra coins.<sup>3</sup>

We must also remember Krzyżanowska's contribution in publicizing her research by presenting numerous papers. Her admirable body of work shows what an exceptionally active person she was. She divided her time between raising her four children and work, and she often said that she would not have been able to do it without support from her dear ones.

She was rewarded for her activity and scholarly achievements. In 1978 the Minister of Culture and the Arts decorated her with the Order of the Meritorious Cultural Activist, and in 1982 she received the Golden Badge for the Protection of Antiquities. The Polish Archaeological and Numismatic Society awarded her the medal of the Distinguished Individual in Polish Numismatics. In 1987 she received the Knight's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta for her exceptional achievements in museum and scholarly work.

Going into early retirement in 1986, she did not leave the museum or the Department of

<sup>1</sup> A complete bibliography of Krzyżanowska's works can be found in Tomasz Bylicki, "Czterdziestolecie pracy numizmatycznej dr Aleksandry Krzyżanowskiej," *Wiadomości Numizmatyczne*, 3–4, XXXII (1988), pp. 251–4, and in Ryszard Kiersnowski, Mariusz Mielczarek, "Złoty jubileusz Aleksandry Krzyżanowskiej," *Wiadomości Numizmatyczne*, 1–2, XLIII (1999), pp. 4–6, recorded by Marta Męcłewska.

<sup>2</sup> Aleksandra Krzyżanowska, "Numizmatyka grecka," in *Vademecum historyka starożytnej Grecji i Rzymu*, Ewa Wipszycka, ed. (Warsaw: PWN, 2001), pp. 253–311.

<sup>3</sup> Krzyżanowska, *Les monnaies de Palmyre : leur chronologie et leur rôle dans la circulation monétaire de la région*, in *Les monnayages syriens. Quel apport pour l'histoire du Proche-Orient hellénistique et romain ?*, Actes de la table ronde de Damas, 10–12 novembre 1999, Christian Augé and Frédérique Duyrat, eds (Beirut: IFAPO, 2002), pp. 167–73. Institut français d'archéologie du Proche-Orient, Bibliothèque archéologique et historique, vol. 162.

Coins and Medals behind, and remained involved in their work. In 2000 we celebrated the golden anniversary of her work at the museum.<sup>4</sup> She conducted research almost until the end of her life. In 2009 her research on the coins discovered during Polish excavations in Tell Atrib in Egypt was published.<sup>5</sup> Her study of the Black Sea coins in the collection of the National Museum in Warsaw awaits publication as part of the *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum*.

We are bidding farewell to Dr Aleksandra Krzyżanowska, who was not only an outstanding numismatist and museum specialist, but also a splendid individual. We will remember the lightness and grace with which she moved among the hundreds of coins of antiquity, the fascinating stories she told about them. No detail of even the most worn-out coin escaped her keen eye. She was an extremely perceptive and intuitive researcher, an invaluable source of knowledge about the history of the Department of Coins and Medals and the National Museum.

Her passing marks the end of an era and of an atmosphere, which she created with her personality, which emanated tranquillity, serenity, friendship and generosity.

Janina Wiercińska

<sup>4</sup> On this occasion, the editors of *Wiadomości Numizmatyczne* dedicated a double issue to Dr Aleksandra Krzyżanowska as a festschrift. See *Wiadomości Numizmatyczne*, 1–2, XLIII (1999).

<sup>5</sup> Krzyżanowska, “Les monnaies,” in *Tell Atrib 1985–1995*, vol. 2, Centre d’Archéologie Méditerranéenne de l’Académie Polonaise des Sciences et Centre Kazimierz Michałowski d’Archéologie Méditerranéenne de l’Université de Varsovie (Warsaw: Éditions Neriton, 2009), pp. 75–203.