



Aleksandra Krzyżanowska
1928–2012

Aleksandra Krzyżanowska, a wonderful human being and an excellent numismatist — invariably cheerful, kind, optimistic. Considered the Dame of Ancient Numismatics in Poland not without reason. For more than fifty years she had been associated with the National Museum in Warsaw, for almost as long she had worked with various missions of the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology of the University of Warsaw. She died on 11 April 2012 after a long and serious illness.

Born to the Zahorski family on 24 June 1928 in Zaleszczyki in the eastern borderlands of prewar Poland. She grew up in an atmosphere of Polish patriotism, her father being an officer of the Polish army who fought with the Bolsheviks at Murmansk in 1918–1919, her mother a defender of Lvov in 1918, and her grandfather an insurgent in the January Uprising of 1863. She herself served as a messenger in the Warsaw Uprising of 1944.

Hers was a wartime education, continued directly after the end of World War II at the University of Warsaw, in the Chair of Classical Archaeology then headed by Prof. Kazimierz Michałowski. She completed her academic studies in 1952. Those first years after the war, not easy in any way, were to be a source of memories for her, the university department being for that handful of students like a second home and the Professor their Master and highest authority on many matters.

In 1950 she started work in the Department of Coins and Medals of the National Museum in Warsaw and focused, virtually from the first day, on ancient numismatics. In 1967 she received her doctoral degree based on a study of minting in Pisidian Antioch. Published in French in 1970, the work “Monnaies coloniales d’Antioche de Pisidie” gained international acclaim and was highly noted.

From 1971 to 1986 she headed the Museum’s Department of Coins and Medals, which was Poland’s largest coin department at the time. Simultaneously she served several terms as board member of the Polish Archaeological and Numismatic Society and as a member of the Numismatic Committee. In 1966–1986 she was part of the editorial board of “Biuletyn Numizmatyczny” and a member of the editorial committee of “Wiadomości Numizmatyczne”. Early retirement in 1986 did not mean an end of her association with the National Museum, where she continued to work half-time and on contracts for many years, at the end as a volunteer, serving the Department in good stead with her extensive experience, unmatched knowledge of ancient minting and a numismatist eye which noted every detail of even the most obliterated ancient coin.

In the course of a long scientific career she published more than 150 articles, monographs, catalogues, reviews. She devoted much of her scientific work to finds of individual coins and hoards from Poland as well as from Polish archaeological excavations abroad. In the latter capacity she cooperated with the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, her work fruiting with studies of coins from the sites of Mirmeki (Crimea), Palmyra (Syria), Tell Atrib (Egypt), Nea Paphos (Cyprus), Carthage (Tunisia), Bijan (Iraq), Strymen and Oderca (Bulgaria). She took an active part in the excavations of the PCMA expedition to Palmyra (1972, 1975, 1978) and Palmyrenian minting became her passion for many years. Her knowledge and scientific intuition gave her study of local minting in the region an innovative approach. In 1999 she was invited to an international conference on Syrian minting organized by the Institut Français d’Archéologie du Proche Orient in Damascus. Her paper, “Les monnaies de Palmyre: leur chronologie et leur rôle dans la circulation monétaire de la région”, was published in the conference proceedings in 2002.

From 1983 through 1995 she cooperated extensively with the Polish–Egyptian team from the PCMA excavating Tell Atrib in Egypt. Her study of the coins from Tell Atrib was published jointly by the Institute of Ancient and Oriental Cultures of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the PCMA in 2009.

In recent years she devoted her time to completing various avenues of her research and preparing for publication the coins from Palmyra (soon to be published by the PCMA as a volume of “Studia Palmyreńskie”), Mirmeki and a collection of coins from the Black Sea littoral in the National Museum in Warsaw. The latter study, of which she is a co-author, is planned to appear in the “Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum” series.

Aleksandra Krzyżanowska will remain in our minds and hearts – thanks to her knowledge and achievements as much as thanks to her generosity and serenity of character.

Janina Wiercińska