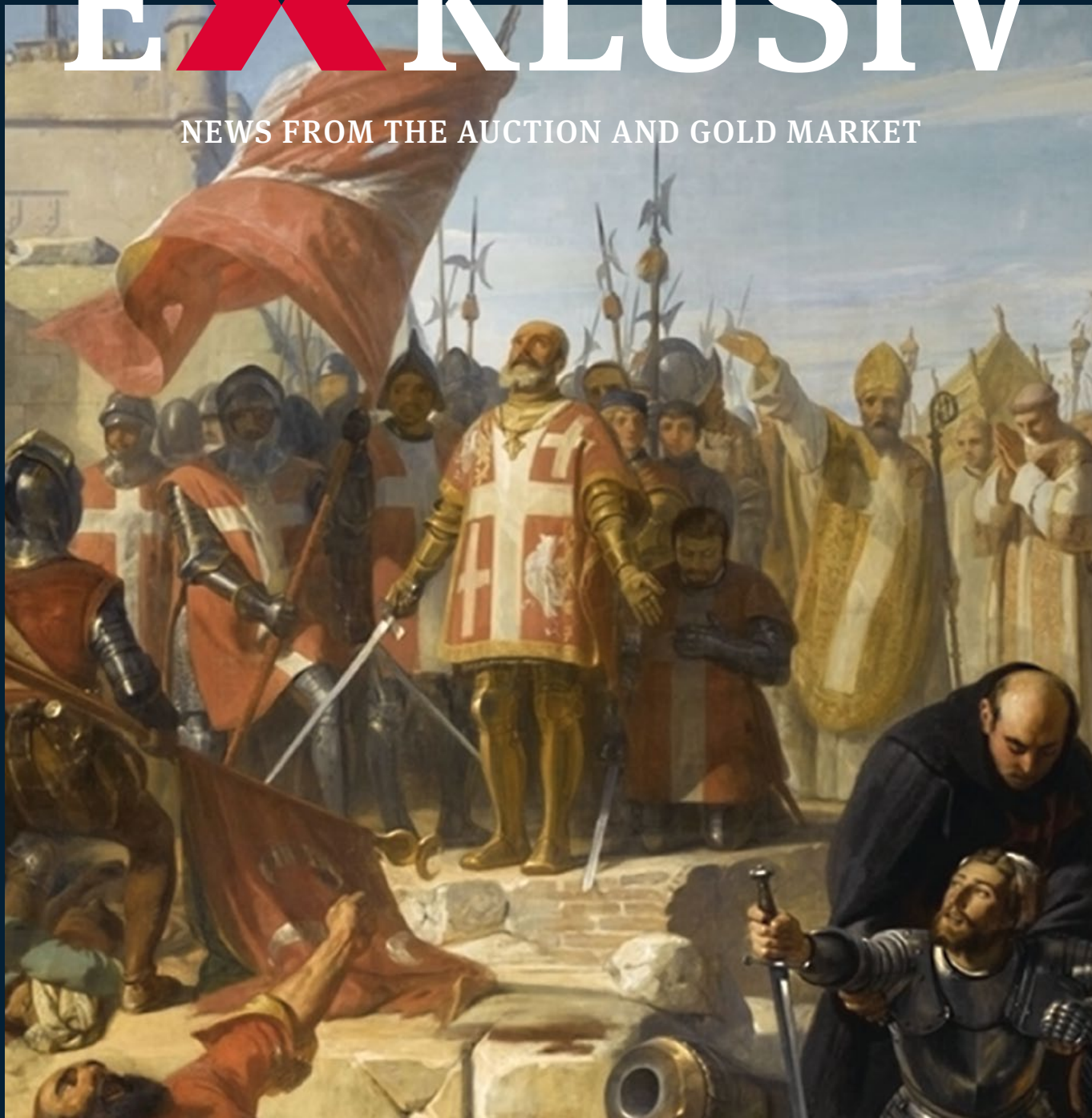


EXKLUSIV

NEWS FROM THE AUCTION AND GOLD MARKET



Fall Auction Sales

427-429

7-9 October 2025 in Osnabrück

eLive Premium

Auction 430-431

20-22 October 2025
on [kuenker.aux.de](https://www.kuenker.aux.de)

**Malta – a state
of the Order in the
Mediterranean**

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Cover picture:
The lifting of the siege of Malta.
 Painting by Charles-Philippe Larivière (1798-1876).
 Versailles Palace painting collection. Wikipedia, public domain.

Dates 2025/26

eLive Auction 89 Coins and Medals	17-19 September 2025
75ème salon numismatique in Paris	20 September 2025
eLive Auction 89 Orders and Decorations	26 September 2025
COINEX, London	26-27 September 2025
MIF Paper Money Fair in Maastricht	26-28 September 2025
Fall Auction Sales 427-429	7-9 October 2025
HKSC The 13 th Hong Kong Coin Show	10-12 October 2025
eLive Premium Auction 430-431	20-22 October 2025
Winter Auction Sale 2025 Ancient Coins	10-12 November 2025
eLive Premium Auction	17-21 November 2025
eLive Auction 90	1-5 December 2025
Berlin Auction Sale 2026	28 January 2026
World Money Fair, Berlin	29-31 January 2026

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Dear Customers and Coin Enthusiasts,



Welcome to the Fall 2025 edition of our magazine Künker Exklusiv! In this issue, we once again take you on a fascinating journey through the world of numismatics – from rare gold coins to exciting chapters in European and global history.

As usual, we begin with a preview of our upcoming auctions, the Fall Auctions 427-429, which feature a wealth of highlights: gold coins from around the world, an important special collection on the Ottoman Empire, another special collection on numismatics, the Henk Verschoor collection on the Dutch overseas territories, and – as a very special rarity – an extensive collection from Malta that brings the history of the Order of St. John to life. You can find background information on this history on pages 27-35.

In addition, get ready for exclusive insights into two eLive Premium Auctions: the continuation of the Lodewijk S. Beuth collection of Dutch paper money, and the Gerhard Lambert collection of coins and medals from Salzburg. Both catalogues show how diverse and fascinating numismatics and monetary history can be. Among other things, we take you on a journey in the footsteps of the VOC, whose coins tell of the heyday and dark side of the Dutch Golden Age (pages 19-26). We also focus on Maximilian I, the “Last Knight” (pages 36-43), as well as on “The Gryphon – On the Long Life of a Mythical Creature” (pages 44-55) and on a representative of the House of Löwenstein (pages 56-67). Finally, we introduce you to the museum in Manching, Upper Bavaria (68-71).

For lovers of coins from the ancient world, our winter auctions will take place from 10-12 November 2025, in the familiar surroundings of Osnabrück. There will be a special edition of Künker Exklusiv for these auctions.

It remains our goal to bring history to life in your hands – while always focusing on their beauty, rarity, and the stories behind the coins.

We hope you enjoy reading, discovering, and of course, bidding. Your feedback is important to us: Write to us at service@kuenker.de, share your thoughts, and help us continue to shape Künker Exklusiv. We would be delighted to meet you in person during our fall auctions at the Vienna House Remarque.

Dr. Andreas Kaiser
Dr. Andreas Kaiser

Ulrich Künker
Ulrich Künker

Fall Auction Sales 427-429: Dutch Overseas Territories: The Henk Verschoor Collection at Künker

From 7 to 9 October 2025, the first part of Künker's Fall Auction Sales will be held. In addition to world coins and medals, the auctions feature several special collections on topics including Malta, the Ottoman Empire / Turkey and – presented in a separate catalog – the Henk Verschoor Collection with coins from the Dutch overseas territories.

Künker will hold the first part of its Fall Auction Sales as an on-site auction from 7 to 9 October 2025. The sales comprise three catalogs with a total of 2,132 lots and an estimate of 5.5 million euros: Catalog 427 presents gold coins and medals from all over the world with a special collection focusing on the Ottoman Empire / Turkey. Catalog 428 is dedicated to world coins and medals with a special collection of issues from Malta. The first part of the collection of a Berlin numismatist is spread across both catalogs.

On 9 October 2025, Osnabrück will be all about the VOC, as the Hendrik Verschoor Collection of coins from Dutch overseas territories will be auctioned. Are you interested in Dutch numismatics, too? If so, you should definitely plan to attend the auction in person.

The second part of the Fall Auction Sales consists of two eLive Premium Auctions, the material of which can be viewed in Osnabrück during the on-site auctions. On 20 October 2025, catalog 430 with part 4 of the Lodewijk S. Beuth Collection presenting Dutch paper money will be on offer. It is one of the most important auctions ever held in this field. On 21 and 22 October 2025, the Gerhard Lambert Collection with coins and medals from Salzburg will be auctioned off. We will present both auctions in a separate auction preview from page 15 onwards.



For auction catalogs 427-429
and a detailed auction overview
simply scan the adjacent QR code

Auction 427: Special Collection Ottoman Empire

Are you interested in Islamic coins? Then you should mark 7 October 2025 in your calendar. Auction 427 will feature a small but impressive collection of Ottoman and Turkish gold coins. Connoisseurs can look forward to 66 lots, covering the period from Selim I (sultan from 1512 to 1520) to the Turkish Republic in 1975. Moreover, the attractive ensemble includes a variety of historically interesting specimens, as well as great rarities and luxury pieces.



Lot 300

No. 300: Ottoman Empire. Abdul Mejid, 1839-1861.
500 piaster, 1855 (= 1272 AH), Constantinople.
Very fine to extremely fine.

Estimate: 3,000 euros



Lot 323

Turkey / Republic.
500 piaster, 1927, luxury specimen. About FDC.

Estimate: 3,500 euros

Auction 427: Gold Coins and Medals from Around the World

This special collection forms part of the general catalog presenting gold coins and medals from around the world. Künker once again presents an extensive range of interesting lots, including several extremely rare pieces, some of which in excellent condition and / or of utmost historical and numismatic importance.



Lot 2

No. 2: Livonian Order. Gotthard Kettler, 1559-1561.
2 ½ ducats, n.d., probably Riga mint.
Extremely rare. About extremely fine.

Estimate: 50,000 euros

These include, for example, a 2.5 ducat of Gotthard Kettler. He became famous as the last Landmeister (Master) of the Teutonic Order in Livonia because he placed himself under the protection of Poland, converted to Protestantism and founded his own duchy using part of the former Order territory, having been

forced to do so by a Russian war of aggression. The coin, which was probably created in Riga, still bears his old title Magister Livoniae, used by the Masters of the Teutonic Order in Livonia.

Are you enthusiastic about Gothic gold coins from the late Middle Ages? If so, auction 427 offers a fine selection of issues from Flanders, Aquitaine, France and England. Of particular note is a London sovereign of Elizabeth I, which was of course struck in early modern times while its style with the horror vacui roots in the late Middle Ages.

Two extremely rare ducats from the Austrian princes of Lobkowitz und Sprinzenstein are also particularly noteworthy. The wealth of such princes is illustrated by the fact that, in 1676, Lobkowitz donated 190,000 (sic!) gulden to the imperial war chest to finance the war against France. Count Johann Ehrenreich von Sprinzenstein was also an expert in financial matters, and particularly in coinage. He served as Obersterblandmünzmeister (chief mint master) in Upper and Lower Austria. By the way, you can still admire the dies of the 1717 ducat in the Castle Museum Linz, where they have been on permanent loan since 1979.



1,5:1

Lot 95
 France / Aquitania. Edward, the Black Prince, 1362-1372.
 Hardi d'or, n.d., La Rochelle.
 Very rare. Extremely fine to FDC.
Estimate: 17,500 euros



Lot 117
 England. Elizabeth I, 1558-1603.
 Sovereign n.d. (1584-1586), London.
 Very rare. About extremely fine.
Estimate: 15,000 euros



1,7:1

Lot 200
 Russia. Peter II, 1727-1730.
 2 roubles, 1727, Moscow, Red Mint.
 Very rare. Very fine.
Estimate: 70,000 euros



1,7:1

Lot 511
 Austrian Princes.
 Ferdinand August von Lobkowitz.
 Ducat n.d. Very rare. Extremely fine.
Estimate: 17,500 euros

Lot 512
 Austrian Princes.
 County of Sprinzenstein. Johann Ehrenreich, 1705-1729.
 1717 ducat, Augsburg.
 Very rare. Extremely fine to FDC.

Estimate: 17,500 euros



1,7:1

Auction 427: Gold Coins and Medals from the German States

Of course, collectors of pieces from the German States will find an abundance of spectacular gold coins in auction 427. The offer includes, for instance, the quadruple ducat that the Bavarian estates presented to Elector Ferdinand Maria on the occasion of the birth of his son Ludwig Amadeus Victor on 6 April 1665. You will hardly find the name of the little prince in a work on Bavarian history, as he died just a few months later. This was not unusual in the 17th century. Henriette Adelaide, the wife of Elector Ferdinand Maria, lost four of her eight children while they were still toddlers.



Lot 531

Bavaria. Ferdinand Maria, 1651-1679.

4 ducats, 1665, Munich.

Very rare. Extremely fine +.

Estimate: 50,000 euros

A highlight of Brandenburg Prussian coinage is the 10-ducat portugaleser created on behalf of Joachim II in Berlin in 1570 to imitate the heavy Portuguese gold coins. Pay attention to the title that can be read on the obverse. It refers to Joachim II as “Dux Prussie”, i.e. Duke of Prussia. In fact, the Franconian line of the House of Hohenzollern held this title. However, Joachim enforced hereditary co-entfeoffment, which had a lasting impact on Prussian history.

Another noteworthy specimen is a Brunswick 10-ducat piece from 1706 with the portrait and the coat of arms of Anton Ulrich of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel. Right above the coat of arms, it shows the prince’s motto *CONSTANTER* (= constant).



1,3:1



Lot 578

Brandenburg-Prussia. Joachim II, 1535-1571.

Portugaleser of 10 ducats, 1570, Berlin.

Extremely rare. Traces of mounting. Very fine.

Estimate: 175,000 euros

The ducat issued by the city of Emden in 1694 is something very special. After all, the reverse mentions its weight. The fact that the coin was minted with the weight of a Hungarian ducat seems surprising at first glance. After all, the country had only been under Habsburg control again since 1687, and the Ottomans had not even yet recognized this. However, the Kremnica mint was under Habsburg control. There, they minted ducats that – since Kremnica was not part of the Empire – were permitted to deviate from the imperial coinage regulation. Kremnica ducats were slightly less pure. Emden, however, was located on imperial territory. So if Emden wanted to mint a ducat with lower fineness, this had to be clearly indicated.

A 12-fold ducat of the reformist bishop Wilhelm Anton von der Asseburg, created on the occasion of his election as bishop of Paderborn on 25 January 1763, is estimated at 125,000 euros. This extremely rare coin, which is probably the only specimen in private hands and was once owned by the House of Metternich, was minted with the dies of the konventionstaler.



1,5:1

Lot 633

Emden / City. 1694 ducat.
Extremely rare, probably unique.
Extremely fine to FDC.
Estimate: 20,000 euros

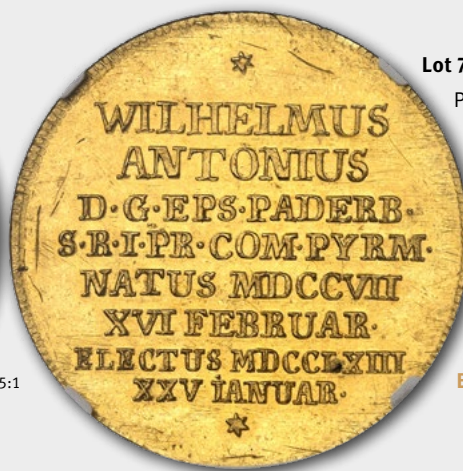


Lot 643

Hamburg / City. Bankportugaleser of 10 ducats, 1689,
by J. Reteke, commemorating the major European banking cities
of Amsterdam, Hamburg, Nuremberg and Venice.
Very rare. MS 63 PL. Extremely fine to FDC.
Estimate: 50,000 euros



1,5:1



Lot 729

Paderborn / Bishopric.
Wilhelm Anton von der Asseburg, 1763-1782.
12 ducats, 1763, Neuhaus, commemorating
his election as bishop. Minted with the dies
of the konventionstaler. From the estate
of the House of Metternich. NGC MS61.
Extremely rare, probably the only specimen
in private possession. Extremely fine to FDC.
Estimate: 125,000 euros

Auction 428: Special Collection Malta

On 8 and 9 October 2025, auction 428 will take place. Among other highlights, it contains a special collection presenting more than 40 lots from Malta. The time span ranges from the High Middle Ages to the end of the Order state during the French Revolution.

The coins and medals on offer feature not only portraits of the Grand Masters of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Saint John. We repeatedly encounter the Order of Knights' patron saint, St. John, or rather his head, which is usually depicted lying on a platter. Such depictions are also known from sculpture. Many Order churches had three-dimensional reminders of the beheading caused by Salome, some of which still exist today.



So-called Johannesschüssel.
Tyrol Castle. Photo: KW



Lot 1116

Sovereign Military Order of Malta.
 Juan de Omedes, 1536-1553.
 4 tari, 1662, Birgu or Fort St. Angelo.
 Very rare. Very fine to extremely fine.
Estimate: 7,500 euros



Lot 1134

Sovereign Military Order of Malta.
 Hugues Loubens de Verdalle, 1582-1595. 4 tari, n.d., Valletta.
 Very rare. Tiny scratches, Very fine to extremely fine.
Estimate: 4,000 euros

Auction 428: World Coins and Medals

Of course, auction 428 also contains a rich selection of rarities from the field of world coins. We can only make mention of a few examples here.



Lot 1111

Italy. Victor Emmanuele II, 1859-1861-1878.
 5 lire, 1859, Bologna. Extremely rare. About FDC.
Estimate: 17,500 euros



Lot 1177

Poland. Stephen Báthory, 1576-1586.
 1585 reichstaler, Baia Mare. Very rare. Extremely fine.
Estimate: 10,000 euros



Lot 1264

Holy Roman Empire. Tyrol. Ferdinand I, 1522-1558-1564.
 1528 representative taler, Hall. Commemorating the hereditary homage paid by the Tyrolean diet. Extremely rare. About extremely fine.
Estimate: 30,000 euros

Catalog 428: Coins and Medals from the German States

There is also a rich selection of pieces from the German States. At this point, we can only mention a Bremen double taler by George of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel from 1562. Bishop George was and remained Catholic during the conflicts surrounding the Reformation; however, he was unable to keep his bishoprics within the Catholic Church. Protestant historians have therefore tried to portray him as a reformist.

The fourth son of Henry I of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, George was destined for a career in the Church. Following his failure to take over the archbishopric of Riga in 1527, his family secured him the positions of provost in Hildesheim, cathedral provost in Cologne and in Bremen, and canonry in St. Gereon and Strasbourg. These offices did not only come with a generous income, but also with the theoretical possibility to advance to an even higher ecclesiastical office. His election as Bishop of Minden in 1554 came as something of a surprise, as his nephew Julius had actually been intended to fill this position. But the latter unexpectedly became heir apparent and recommended his uncle as his replacement to the Minden Cathedral Chapter. Four years later, George was also elected archbishop of Bremen and Verden, again succeeding a family member – his heavily indebted elder brother Christoph. Having been so successful in accumulating ecclesiastical offices, the ruler lists all these offices on his double taler: Archbishop of Bremen, confirmed [Bishop] of Minden and Verden, Duke of Brunswick. The last title obviously does not mean that George served as Duke of Brunswick. He was merely entitled to bear this title.



Lot 1348

Brandenburg-Prussia. 1684 reichstaler, Magdeburg.
Very rare. About FDC.

Estimate: 35,000 euros



Lot 1389

Brunswick and Lüneburg. Rudolph Augustus, 1666-1685.
Löser of 4 reichstalers, 1679, Zellerfeld.
Extremely rare. Extremely fine.

Estimate: 50,000 euros



Lot 1419

Bremen / Bishopric. George of Brunswick, 1558-1566.
1562 double taler, Bremen. Extremely rare. Extremely fine.

Estimate: 75,000 euros

Lot 1511

Mainz / Bishopric. Lothar Friedrich von Metternich-Burscheid,
1673-1675. 1674 broad double reichstaler, Mainz. Very rare.
Extremely fine.

Estimate: 30,000 euros



Lot 1654

Prussia. Large silver coin tankard,
created for the coronation of William I
of Prussia on 18 October 1861. Extremely fine.

Estimate: 25,000 euros



Lot 115

England. Henry VI, 1422-1461.

Noble, n.d. (1422-1427), London. About extremely fine.

Estimate: 1,500 euros



Lot 1073

England. Elizabeth I, 1558-1603.

1588 silver medal, minted, unsigned, commemorating the destruction of the Spanish Armada. Very rare. About extremely fine.

Estimate: 2,500 euros

Catalog 427 and 428: Special Collection “Numisnautics”

The term “numisnautics” has established itself over the past few decades. It was coined by the German numismatist Wolf Müller-Reichau when he and a few colleagues launched the magazine *Flaschenpost* (message in a bottle) as an information bulletin for the Numismatics Working Group in Germany. While ship depictions have long been a popular theme for collectors internationally, *Flaschenpost* drew the attention of many German collectors to questions about the history of nautical science that can be answered with the help of coins. Künker is pleased to offer the collection of a Berlin numisnautist, the first part of which is divided between auction catalogs 427 and 428. A second part will be auctioned in an upcoming eLive Auction.

Catalog 428: Coins of the German Empire

As usual, the 2025 Fall Auction Sales will feature an interesting series of coins from the German Empire. Here are some of the highlights.



1,3:1

Lot 1709

German Empire. Bavaria. 3 marks, 1918.
Golden wedding jubilee of the royal Bavarian couple.
Very rare. About FDC.

Estimate: 30,000 euros



1,5:1

Lot 2045

German Empire. Reuss / Older line.
Henry XXII, 1859-1902. 20 marks, 1875.
Very rare. Very fine to extremely fine / Extremely fine.

Estimate: 25,000 euros



1,5:1

Lot 2093

German New Guinea. 10 New Guinean marks, 1895.
Very rare. Only 2,000 specimens minted.
Extremely fine to FDC.

Estimate: 50,000 euros

Catalog 429: Netherlands – The Henk Verschoor Collection

A separate catalog presents the second part of the Verschoor Collection. It contains coins from Dutch overseas territories, and is therefore all about the VOC, the Dutch East India Company. Its logo with the three well-known letters can be seen on many issues. Other silver coins that were created for long-distance trade in the Netherlands depict the so-called silver rider. It was so well-known that it was used as a countermark for Indish coins that were to be used for financial transactions in Batavia.

A 1/4 gulden from Utrecht, produced for the Dutch East Indies in 1900, is extremely rare. Only five specimens of this type were minted.

Those attending the auction in person will also have the opportunity to view the material of auction 430, featuring part 4 of the Lodewijk S. Beuth Collection, this time containing Dutch banknotes. This important auction will be held as an eLive Premium Auction on 20 October.



Lot 2501

Vereenigde Amsterdamsche Compagnie.
1/2 daalder of 4 reales, 1601, Dordrecht.
Very rare. Very fine to extremely fine.

Estimate: 10,000 euros



1,5:1

Lot 2546

Issues from West Frisia.
1728 ducaton, Hoorn. Very rare.
Extremely fine to FDC.

Estimate: 5,000 euros



1,5:1

Lot 2598

Issues of the Province of Utrecht.
Off-metal strike in gold from the dies
of the Ku.-½ duit, 1758, Utrecht.
Extremely rare. Extremely fine.

Estimate: 3,000 euros



1,5:1

Lot 2620

Java. 1693 Dutch ducat, of Holland,
mint of Dordrecht, with countermark of Batavia
(of 1700) on the obverse. Extremely rare.
Extremely fine to FDC.

Estimate: 5,000 euros



1,5:1

Lot 2621

Java. 1 rupee, 1692/3, from India
with countermark of Batavia. Extremely rare.
Coin: Very fine. Countermark: Extremely fine.

Estimate: 5,000 euros



1,5:1

Lot 2623

Java. 1 rupee, 1783, Batavia.
Extremely rare. Adjusted, extremely fine.

Estimate: 7,500 euros



1,5:1

Lot 2648

Dutch East Indies. ½ rupee, 1743, Surabaya.
Extremely rare. About extremely fine.

Estimate: 5,000 euros



1,5:1

Lot 2680

Wilhelmina, 1890-1948. ¼ gulden, 1900,
Utrecht for the Dutch East Indies. Only 5 specimens minted.
Extremely fine to FDC on a polished planchet.

Estimate: 7,500 euros

Paper Money from the Netherlands and Coins from Salzburg: Two Special Collections as eLive Premium Auctions

From 20 to 22 October 2025, two high-caliber eLive Premium Auctions will be held by Künker. The first one contains part 4 of the Beuth Collection presenting an extensive offer of Dutch banknotes, including great rarities. The second one features the Gerhard Lambert Collection with coins and medals from Salzburg.

1,378 lots with a total estimate of 960,000 euros – this is the material of eLive Premium Auctions 430 and 431. Printed catalogs are available for both the fourth part of the Lodewijk S. Beuth Collection, auctioned off in collaboration with Laurens Schulman B.V., and the Gerhard Lambert Collection. The coins can be viewed during the Fall Auction Sales held in Osnabrück from 7 to 9 October.

Auction 430: Paper Money from the Netherlands



For auction catalogs of eLive Premium Auction 430-431 and a detailed auction overview simply scan the adjacent QR code

Those familiar with banknotes and their prices will only need one figure to understand the importance of this sale: there are 363 lots with a total estimate of 368,000 euros, equating to an average estimate of more than 1,000 euros! In other words, just like previous parts, part 4 of the Lodewijk S. Beuth collection is top-class.

During his long collecting career, Beuth also succeeded in acquiring a number of extremely important banknotes – in the condition in which they were available. Whenever Beuth found an opportunity to do so, he bought a specimen of higher quality to replace one in poorer condition. Regarding many rarities, however, he could only choose between a specific specimen and nothing at all.

Therefore, it is all the more rewarding when rarity and high quality coincide, as with the three banknotes bearing handwritten signatures and serial numbers. These probably originate from a farewell gift to the Dutch Minister of Finance, Floris Adriaan van Hall. Floris Adriaan van Hall is well known to any Dutch person with an interest in history. In 1844, he saved the country from national bankruptcy with voluntary bonds amounting to 127 million guilders. However, the bonds

were not entirely voluntary. It was common knowledge that if the sum was not raised, a compulsory tax would be introduced instead. At the time, people referred to it as the “stick behind the door”. Van Hall’s plans were not just risky but controversial, too. King William II is said to have once told him: “This could cost me my throne.” Van Hall replied: “And it could cost me my head.”

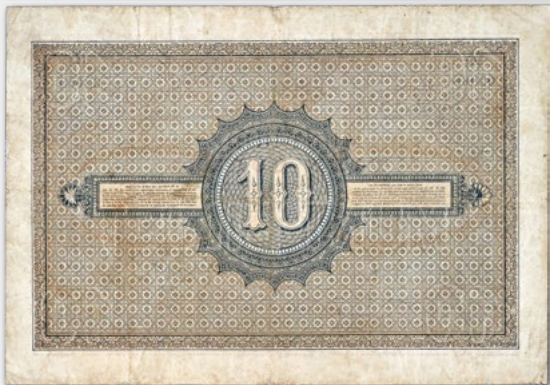
All Banknotes were graded by PMG.



Lot 3054
Netherlands. 5 guilders, type 1846. State note, registration, signatures and serial number added by hand. Probably part of a farewell gift to the Dutch Minister of Finance Floris Adriaan van Hall. Extremely rare. PMG 35. Extremely fine.
Estimate: 30,000 euros



Lot 3076
Netherlands. 10 guilders, type 1846. State note, registration, signatures and serial number added by hand. Probably part of a farewell gift to the Dutch Minister of Finance Floris Adriaan van Hall. Extremely rare. PMG 35. Extremely fine.
Estimate: 25,000 euros



Lot 3084
Netherlands. 10 guilders, type 1878II. State banknote of 1 December 1891. PMG 25. Extremely rare. About very fine.
Estimate: 10,000 euros



Lot 3229
Netherlands. 50 guilders, type 1884. State banknote of 12 November 1885. PMG 25. Extremely rare. Fine +.
Estimate: 15,000 euros



Lot 3305

Netherlands. 300 guilders, type 1860 of 2 September 1919. Extremely rare. PMG 55. About uncirculated.

Estimate: 15,000 euros



Lot 3312

Netherlands. 1000 guilders, type 1860 of 6 July 1904. PMG 40. Extremely rare. About extremely fine.

Estimate: 30,000 euros

Auction 431: Special Collection with Coins from Salzburg

Gerhard Lambert is a third-generation coin collector. Even his grandfather was interested in numismatics. Gerhard Lambert's father was enthusiastic about Salzburg, and his son continued these interests with his own collection. Künker's customers can thus look forward to an ensemble that, like any good old collection, has a bit of everything: top pieces of utmost rarity in perfect condition as well as average pieces that every true Salzburg collector needs.

The 1,014 lots have an estimate of roughly 600,000 euros – and estimates range from two- up to five-digit figures. This means, there is something for every Salzburg collector!

Anyone who already collects Salzburg coinage knows how exciting this field is, and what a wonderful document its coinage is of the power, wealth and cultural zeal of Salzburg bishops. Those who do not yet collect Salzburg issues may well be inspired to start by the beautiful coins and medals in this catalog. By the way, although this preview mainly shows gold coins, the collection contains far more silver coins.



Lot 4001

Salzburg. Leonhard von Keutschach, 1495-1519. 3 ducats, 1513. Very rare. Extremely fine.

Estimate: 15,000 euros



Lot 4106
Salzburg. Johann Jakob Khuen von Belasi, 1560-1586.
4 ducats, 1561. Extremely rare. Very fine.

Estimate: 4,000 euros



Lot 4225
Salzburg. Wolf Dietrich von Raitenau, 1587-1612. 4 ducats,
n.d. Extremely rare. Traces of mounting. About extremely fine.

Estimate: 6,000 euros



Lot 4258
Salzburg. Wolf Dietrich
von Raitenau, 1587-1612.
Quadruple reichstaler klippe, 1594,
tower issue.
Extremely rare. Very fine.

Estimate: 3,000 euros



Lot 4333
Salzburg. Markus Sittikus von Hohenems, 1612-1619.
4 ducats, 1615. Very rare. Extremely fine to FDC.

Estimate: 15,000 euros



Lot 4389
Salzburg. Paris von Lodron, 1619-1653.
10 ducats, 1628, commemorating the consecration
of the cathedral. Very rare. Very fine.

Estimate: 7,500 euros



Lot 4491
Salzburg. Guidobald von Thun und Hohenstein, 1654-1668.
6 ducats commemorating the erection of the salvator statue on
the pediment of the cathedral's façade. Very rare. Extremely fine.

Estimate: 12,500 euros



Lot 4804
Salzburg. Sigismund III von Schratzenbach.
Donativum of 12 ducats, 1753, celebrating his election
as Archbishop. Very rare. Extremely fine.

Estimate: 10,000 euros



East Indiamen off a Coast. Painting by Hendrick Cornelisz Vroom, between 1600 and 1630. Rijksmuseum / Amsterdam.



Vereenigte Amsterdamsche Compagnie.
1/2 daalder of 4 reales, 1601, Dordrecht.
Very rare. Verschoor Collection. Very fine to extremely fine.
Estimate: 10,000 euros.
From Künker Auction 429 (9 October 2025), No. 2501.

hunt big game and eat venison. We would probably have preferred to eat the grain porridge of the peasants. After all, the fridge had yet to be invented and the meat would go off quickly. Spices were the preferred means of masking its foul flavor. As a result, spices became incredibly expensive.

To make money from the spice trade, the merchants equipped four ships with 290,000 guilders. The ships returned in 1597 without having even reached the Moluccas. The leader of the expedition was truly incompetent. He brought home less than half of his crew and had bought only a few barrels of pepper. Still, those were enough to make a nice profit.

The Precursors of the VOC

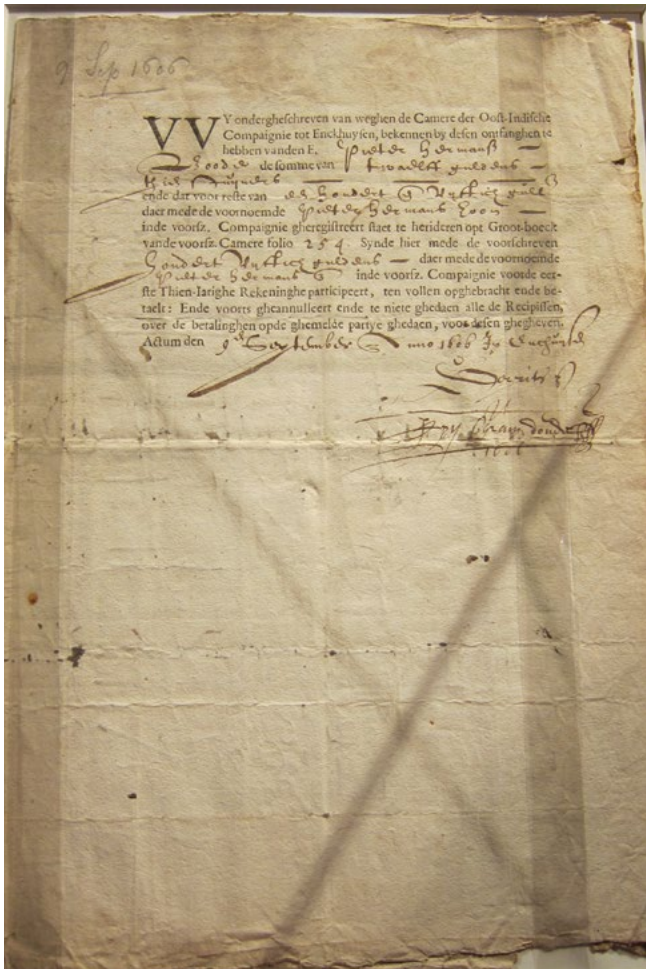
Naturally, the whole of Amsterdam was talking about this expedition. And there was a consensus: with better leadership, the profits would have been even greater. Some well-read merchants quoted Jan Huyghen van Linschoten, who had published a detailed study on the spice trade the previous year. Huygen had travelled there on behalf of the Portuguese and claimed that the Portuguese system there was run-down. Their trading monopoly was protected by the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas, which was guaranteed by the Pope. The Pope? The Dutch Calvinists were not interested in the Pope. After all, they had driven out the Spanish king. So, the merchants probably argued among themselves,



Vereenigte Amsterdamsche Compagnie.
1 real (schelling of 48 duits), 1601, Dordrecht.
Very rare. Verschoor Collection. Very fine to extremely fine.
Estimate: 3,000 euros.
From Künker Auction 429 (9 October 2025), No. 2502.



Vereenigte Amsterdamsche Compagnie.
1/2 real (1/2 schelling of 48 duits), n.d. (1601), Dordrecht.
Very rare. Verschoor Collection. Very fine.
Estimate: 1,000 euros.
From Künker Auction 429 (9 October 2025), No. 2503.



Share certificate of the VOC,
issued on 9 September 1606 in Enkhuizen,
purchased by Mayor assistant Pieter Harmensz.
Westfries Archief, Hoorn, Oudarchief Enkhuizen.
Inv. No. 424. Photo: KW.

Founding the VOC – a Matter of Supply and Demand
65 ships sailing to the Spice Islands, competing for
spices there and bringing their goods to the market
at roughly the same time – you do not need a degree
in economics to understand what this means for the
profit margin. It fell drastically. This gave rise to the
idea of merging the various companies into one large
corporation.

On 20 March 1602, the States General signed a privilege
that gave a monopoly on East Indies trade to the newly
formed Dutch East India Company (VOC) for 21 years.
But this was not all. The VOC was also granted the right
to sign treaties, declare war, establish colonies, raise an
army, administer justice and mint coins.

In this way, the Dutch government outsourced the
conquest, occupancy and exploitation of the Spice
Islands to a privately funded company controlled
by a board of directors at home. The so-called Lords
Seventeen consisted of eight representatives from
Amsterdam, four from Middelburg and one from
Enkhuizen, Hoorn, Delft and Rotterdam. All involved
cities, with the exception of Amsterdam, took turns
in appointing the voting chair. This ensured that
Amsterdam alone never would have an absolute
majority.

Today, the VOC is known as the world's first modern
joint-stock company. Historians have pointed out that
there were, of course, precursors. Think of the bonds
of Italian cities that were traded like shares; or the
so-called “kuxe”, mining shares that were used to
finance the development of a new mine. And yet the
VOC differed from previous financing models in
two key aspects:

- Their financiers had no say in what the company did.
- The money was not invested in a single enterprise,
but for a period of 10 years after which dividends
were due. After that, shareholders could reinvest the
money in the VOC – or refrain from doing so.

why they should be intimidated by the Portuguese?
A second expedition was equipped with haste, and it
brought a return of impressive 400%. The result: by
1598, five different trade organizations sent their ships
out; and 1601, 65 (!) ships set off.

The Money for the Spice Islands

Until then, European merchants in the East Indies
had used Spanish currency. The peso de a ocho
had established itself as the most popular coin. The
Vereenigte Amsterdamsche Companie therefore
demanded to issue its own coins in the same weight
standard. It was granted this privilege by an edict of
the council issued on 1 March 1601. The Company of
Middleburg was granted the same privilege in December
of the same year.

The Verschoor Collection contains almost all
denominations minted by the Amsterdam company. The
coins show the coat of arms of Holland on the obverse,
and that of Amsterdam on the reverse. The lines and
dots on the side of the coat of arms of Holland are
remarkable. They allow even those who cannot read the
Latin letters to see what the coin is worth.



The marketplace of Haarlem as a meeting place for merchants. The first stock exchanges were nothing but marketplaces with a roof, protecting merchants from the weather. Painting by Gerrit Adriansz Berckheyde around 1690/98. Kunstmuseum Basel. Photo: KW.

In theory, any Dutch person could invest in the VOC. In practice, this was only an option for very wealthy citizens, as each share was worth 3,000 guilders. In this way, 6.5 million guilders were raised by 1,800 investors.

VOC shares immediately became a product whose price fluctuated daily. Even before shareholders had paid for their shares, the price had risen by 17%. The shares were bought and sold on the market. And since the affluent probably did not like to stand in the freezing cold – the Little Ice Age had Europe firmly in its grip at the time the VOC was founded – Amsterdam stockbrokers moved to the commodity exchange that the city had just built in 1612. As a result, the Amsterdam stock exchange is said to be the oldest one in the world.

The Founding of Batavia

On 18 December 1603, the first fleet of the VOC set sail. Its mission was to seize the East Indies from the Portuguese, to make a rich booty and also to trade a little. The first conquest of the VOC dates back to 1605: the center of the clove trade on the island of Ambon. It was not to be the only coup. Nevertheless, the Lords Seventeen felt that things were moving too slowly: in 1610, they appointed Pieter Both as governor-general to improve local coordination.

Both had several forts built to ensure the VOC's military presence. He recognized the strategic position of the city of Jayakarta on Java. However, the local sultan forbade the construction of a fort and allowed only a trading post to be set up. While Both had respected this, his successor, Jan Pieterzoon Coen, used brute force. He defeated the combined forces of the sultan and the English, burned down the town of Jayakarta and had Fort Batavia built, from which he controlled the whole of eastern Java.

To provide the necessary labor, he had 1,000 Chinese kidnapped from Macau. But only a few dozen survived the hardships of the voyage. Therefore, he ordered the



Batavia castle. Copper engraving by Johannes de Ram around 1670.



VOC. Issued by the Province of Holland. 1728 ducaton, Dordrecht. Very rare. From the Verschoor Collection. Extremely fine to FDC. Estimate: 3,000 euros. From Künker Auction 429 (9 October 2025), No. 2512.



VOC. Issued by West Friesland. 1728 ducaton, Hoorn. Very rare. From the Verschoor Collection. Extremely fine to FDC. Estimate: 5,000 euros. From Künker Auction 429 (9 October 2025), No. 2546.



VOC. Issued by the Province of Zeeland. 1738 ducaton, Middelburg. Extremely rare. From the Verschoor Collection. Extremely fine. Estimate: 5,000 euros. From Künker Auction 429 (9 October 2025), No. 2561.

survivors of the Banda massacre to settle in Batavia. There were 600 of them – after the conquest of the VOC, the 15,000 inhabitants of the Banda Islands had been reduced to 600 people.

By 1623, Coen could boast of having controlled the locals, and of having driven the Portuguese and the English out of the spice trade. The VOC now had a monopoly on all products from the Spice Islands. No one at home asked what Coen had done to achieve his.

Coins for the VOC's Empire

Within a few years, the VOC's trading empire stretched from the Red Sea to Japan. It was based on a dense network of fortified trading bases, where the goods to be traded were produced and collected. The VOC did not only operate as a long-distance trading agency. It engaged in any business that promised profit, ranging from glass making to textile production and beer brewing.

The VOC needed a well-working currency for its trading empire. Although it used the coins that were circulating on site, such as the Spanish peso or the Indian rupee, this was not enough. It was therefore decided to export coins minted at home. All of them feature the VOC's monogram and often the coat of arms of the province of origin, as can be seen on these coins under the rider.



Batavia. 1/2 stuiver, 1644. Rare.
 From the Verschoor Collection. Very fine.
 Estimate: 100 euros.
 From Künker Auction 429 (9 October 2025), No. 2618.

What can you do if you do not have the means to produce enough coins, but still want to monitor coin circulation in some way? You use countermarks. With an order of 3 September 1686, the authorities in Batavia stipulated that a countermark bearing the Dutch rider was to be added to any ducaton that made its way to the treasure chamber of the VOC. The countermark increased the coin's value: pieces with countermark were worth 60 stuivers, all other pieces only 55 stuivers.

Ducats and fractional pieces with this countermark are highly rare. Even the Verschoor Collection does not contain a specimen. However, there is a ducat with the countermark B for Batavia, which had not been known until recently. Henk Verschoor himself published the specimen for the first time in 2022.

Rupees from Surat, India, with rider countermark that was added in July of 1693 are also extremely rare. This countermark determined their value as 28 stuivers. However, the value appears to have been too low, as the coins were hoarded. That is why the VOC increased its value in 1699 to 30 stuivers. These pieces are also extremely rare!



Batavia. 1/4 stuiver, 1644. Very rare.
 From the Verschoor Collection. Very fine.
 Estimate: 250 euros.
 From Künker Auction 429 (9 October 2025), No. 2619.

Nevertheless, cash shortages occurred time and again – particularly in Batavia. The administration made a first attempt to remedy the situation by granting a Chinese craftsman named Conjok the privilege of producing copper coins of 1/2 and 1/4 stuiver on 19 August 1644. Conjok produced these coins as he knew it from his homeland – by casting them. That is why the copper coins of the first issue from Batavia look different from the small change that was produced at the same time in Europe. On the obverse, the coins show the slightly altered coat of arms of Batavia: there is no laurel wreath on the upright sword. The reverse shows the face value and the monogram of the VOC.

The local representatives of the VOC seems to have been pleased with the coins. They commissioned Conjok again on 26 February 1645, together with a Dutchman called Jan Ferman. This time, silver coins with the same design and values of 48, 24 and 12 stuivers were produced. These pieces are so rare today that not even a collection as extensive as that of Henk Verschoor contains one of them.



Province of Holland. 1693 ducat, Dordrecht, with countermark added in Batavia. Extremely rare.
 From the Verschoor Collection. Extremely fine to FDC.
 Estimate: 5,000 euros.
 From Künker Auction 429 (9 October 2025), No. 2620.



India. 1692/3 rupee, Surat, with countermark added in Batavia. Extremely rare. From the Verschoor Collection. Coin very fine. Countermark extremely fine.
 Estimate: 5,000 euros.
 From Künker Auction 429 (9 October 2025), No. 2621.



Batavia. 1 rupee, 1766, Batavia.
From the Verschoor Collection. About extremely fine.
Estimate: 250 euros.
From Künker Auction 429 (9 October 2025), No. 2625.



Batavia. 1 rupee, 1783, Batavia.
From the Verschoor Collection. Extremely fine.
Estimate: 200 euros.
From Künker Auction 429 (9 October 2025), No. 2626.



Batavia. 1 rupee, 1799, Batavia.
From the Verschoor Collection. Very rare. FDC.
Estimate: 500 euros.
From Künker Auction 429 (9 October 2025), No. 2629.

It was not until around a century later that the next decree on coinage was passed. On 17 February 1747, the order was given to mint what we now know as Java Rupee or Batavian Rupee. Contemporaries called them dirham or Javanese silver money. The coin weighing 20.5 stuivers was intended as an equivalent to the Indian rupee and bears Arabic lettering as a tribute to its target group. As the VOC's seigniorage was too low, it decided to end the production of these coins on 18 June 1754. Production was resumed on 6 November 1764 and

stopped on 15 January 1768, when enough coins had been minted to satisfy demand. There was no need for continuous coin production in Batavia, but isolated emissions were issued from time to time.

The Duit

The most important fractional coin in the VOC's trading empire was the duit. It was also minted in Batavia to push out foreign coins made of base metal. No surprise: the seigniorage for local small change was much higher than the profit made from precious metal coins. On 9 November 1764, the VOC declared the Dutch duit to be the only valid fractional coin of Batavia. All other forms of small change were confiscated without replacement.

The value was also fixed: four duits were equal to one stuiver; 120 duits were equal to one silver Java rupee; 264 duits were equal to one Spanish peso; 1,920 duits were equal to one gold Java rupee.

Another colony tells us what could be bought with one duit. A letter from the Cape of Good Hope tells us that the price for a pound of fat mutton there fluctuated between 20 duits in 1705 and 13 duits in 1714. Two Afrikaans idioms show that the duit has left a linguistic mark on South Africa: If you want to reprimand



Batavia. Copper duit, 1765, Batavia.
From the Verschoor Collection. Extremely fine.
Estimate: 150 euros.
From Künker Auction 429 (9 October 2025), No. 2630.



Batavia. Golden Java rupee, 1783, Batavia.
From the Verschoor Collection. Extremely rare. Extremely fine.
Estimate: 7.500 Euro.
From Künker Auction 429 (9 October 2025), No. 2623.

someone for speaking their mind without being asked, you say “‘n Stuiwer in die armebeurs gooi” (=a stuiver in the poor box). And if something is not worth anything at all, you say it is not even worth “‘n dooie duit” (= a dead duit).

Incidentally, the first settlers on the east coast of North America spoke of the New York penny when they meant a duit. This is linguistic evidence that the Dutch had founded New York.

The Demise of the VOC

In the late 17th century, the VOC was the most powerful trading company in the world. It owned around 40 warships and 150 merchant ships that transported goods from the East Indies to the Netherlands. Around 50,000 employees worked for the VOC worldwide, which is all the more impressive given that only about 2 million people lived in the Netherlands at the time. According to modern calculations, only one in three of the more than one million Europeans that the VOC sent to Asia returned. Only some of them survived the voyage to get there. Conditions on the VOC ships were not much better for employees than for slaves. And tropical diseases killed new arrivals like flies. The damage to the VOC's reputation became so great that the Lords Seventeen ordered the confiscation of all the diaries of the returnees.

The misery in the East Indies made the Netherlands rich. The VOC poured so much money in Dutch cities that it was able to finance what we now call the Dutch Golden Age.

By the end of the 17th century, however, a fundamental problem began to emerge – and we are not referring to the VOC's much-lamented corruption and inefficiency issues. The cost of enforcing the trade monopoly on the Spice Islands with its countless bays and anchorages was enormous. 10,000 soldiers had to be paid to maintain the monopoly. This cut into profits, especially when spice prices began to fall for a variety of reasons. Although the VOC continued to pay dividends, it had to take on more and more debt.

When the VOC declared bankruptcy in 1799, it left debts of 12 million guilders. They were taken over by the Dutch government and paid by taxpayers. In return, the Netherlands annexed the VOC's colonial empire. Its provinces did not regain freedom until 1949. Today, the colonial past of the Netherlands is a difficult legacy to come to terms with that continues to be a source of debate.



Batavian Republic. Issue of the Province of Holland.

1802 guilder, Enkhuizen.

From the Verschoor Collection. About FDC.

Estimate: 400 euros.

From Künker Auction 429 (9 October 2025), No.2632.



Dutch Indies. Queen Wilhelmina, 1890-1948.

¼ guilder, Utrecht. Only five specimens minted.

From the Verschoor Collection.

Extremely fine to FDC on polished blank.

Estimate: 7,500 euros.

From Künker Auction 429 (9 October 2025), No.2680.

Literature

- Stephen R. Bown, *Merchant Kings. When Companies Ruled the World*. Vancouver (2009)
- John Bucknill, *The Coins of the Dutch East Indies an Introduction to the Study of the Series*. Reprint New Delhi – Madras (2000)

Malta – a state of the Order in the Mediterranean

“Your army has won wonderful victories, and even in its misfortunes it proved to be invincible. It may have lost a battle, but it never lost the courage to fight. One empire may have been lost, but another was founded. Its capital may have changed its name, but it remained steadfast in its goals.”
(from an address by Pope Pius XII to the Knights of the Order on 15 January 1940).

By Margret Nollé

In our Auction 428, we are offering a most interesting special collection of coins minted by the Order of Malta. Of the three major orders of knights from the Crusader era, the Order of Malta and the Order of St. John are the most prominent today. Almost everyone is familiar with the St. John Ambulance and the Maltese Aid Service. However, very few are aware of the Order’s magnificent and influential past in world history. The small island of Malta, south of Sicily, was particularly influenced by the Order of St. John, who later called themselves the “Maltese” and were active there for three hundred years (Fig. 1). Today’s visitors are particularly impressed by the island’s enormous fortifications, constructed as a bulwark against the westward expansion of Islam – an expansion which was largely halted by the five centuries of struggle waged by the Knights of Malta.

The Knights Hospitaller in the Holy Land as “the soldiers of Christ”

“Our brotherhood will be everlasting because the soil in which this plant is rooted is the misery of the world – and because, God willing, there will always be people who want to work to alleviate this suffering and make this misery more bearable.”
(Master Gerhard, founder of the Order of St. John)

The Order of St. John is the third oldest religious order in the Christian world, and is now over nine hundred years old. It originated with a hospital in Jerusalem founded by merchants from Amalfi in the second half

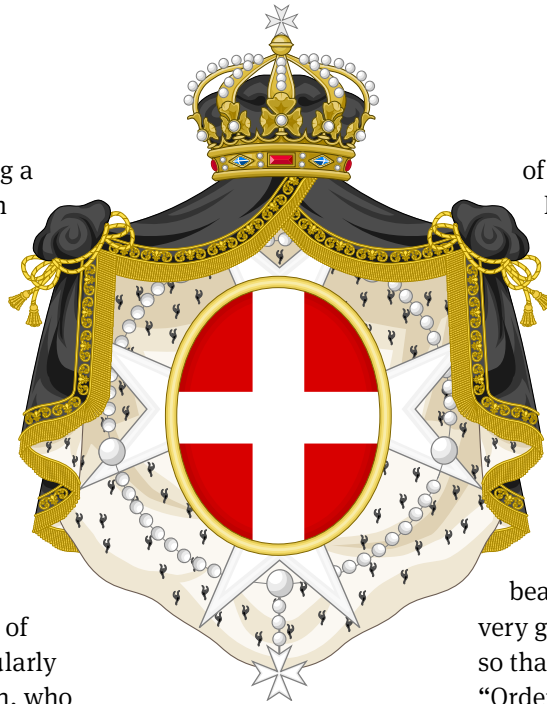


Fig. 1: Coat of arms of the Order of Malta.

of the ninth century and run by Benedictines, where pilgrims found shelter and care in case of illness. In 1048, they founded the “Order of the Hospital of St. John in Jerusalem.” They chose John the Baptist as their patron saint, who also gave their order its name, “the Johanniter.” The founder of the order was Gerhard Tonque (1040-1120), who was later beatified. The hospice soon received very generous donations and bequests, so that Pope Paschal II recognised the “Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem,” as it was officially named, as early as 1113 (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2: Map of the Crusader states around 1135. Wikipedia.



Fig. 3: Krak des Chevaliers of the Knights Hospitaller in Syria.
JN 2009.

In the early 12th century, the brothers of the order were given an additional task to their original duties: the protection of pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. They remained “servants of the poor,” but under their leader Raimund de Puy they also became “soldiers of Christ.” To this end, the Order acquired castles in locations that were as impregnable as possible from local landlords, and converted them into large-scale fortresses. These were the backbone of the four Crusader states – the Kingdom of Jerusalem, the Principality of Antioch, and the counties of Edessa and Tripoli – which had been founded as a result of the successful First Crusade in Syria and Palestine. Strong keeps, surrounded by towers and concentric walls based on the French model, were a special feature of these Johanniter fortresses. A particularly beautiful example of these structures is Krak des Chevaliers, located high on a rock above the Homs valley, which the Johanniter were able to hold until 1271 (Fig. 3). A fleet was added, and from 1300 onwards, the title of “Admiral” was also introduced.

Raimund de Puy himself continued to call himself “Master”; the title “Grand Master” was first granted in 1267 by Pope Clement VI to the head of the Order, Hugues de Revel (reigned 1278-1277) (Fig. 4).

The Order of St. John comprised three classes of members: The highest rank was held by knights, who were required to prove their noble ancestry over four generations in order to be admitted to the order. The second class consisted of clergy, who did not necessarily have to belong to the aristocracy. The lowest class was made up of brothers, who performed mainly serving functions but also had military duties. Auxiliary personnel who did not belong to the Order were referred to as “sergeants.” The Order was divided into eight regional associations – called “tongues” – based on their respective national languages, each headed by a so-called pilier. They formed the “Grand Council,” which elected the Grand Master for life. To avoid turf wars between the different “tongues”, the French tongue always provided the head of the medical service, the Hospitalier; the tongue of the Auvergnat-speakers of that Occitan dialect provided the supreme commander of the armed forces (the Grand Marshal); the

Germans, the supervisor of the fortifications, the Grand Bailiff; and the Italians provided the Admiral. Initially, the Knights Hospitaller wore simple black monk’s habits. As the original hospital service was increasingly supplemented by the armed protection of pilgrims and fighting in the Crusader territories, from the 13th century onwards the knights wore black overcoats with a white cross ending in eight points.



Fig. 4: Urn for the election of the Grand Master, private collection, JN 2024.



Fig. 5: Moat and wall of Rhodes, heavily fortified by the Knights Hospitaller, JN 2008.

The Order is expelled from the Holy Land and conquers Rhodes (1309–1522)

“... to acquire the island of Rhodes, which is oppressed under the yoke of the unbelief of the schismatic Greeks, with God’s help, through great hardship, great effort, and expense, by your strong arm, and to expel the schismatics and all unbelievers from there ...”

(Pope Clement VI confirms the Order’s possession of Rhodes in a document dated 5 September 1307).

At the end of the 13th century, the Christian defence of the Holy Land gradually collapsed. After the fall of their last fortified stronghold Acre in 1291, the Knights Hospitaller were expelled from Syria and Palestine and lost their possessions there. The Order had thereby lost its primary task, which was to care for pilgrims and the sick in the Holy Land. It was thus no longer able to carry out its second task, which was to protect pilgrims and defend the holy sites against the Muslims. The Grand Master and the last knights fled to Cyprus and remained there from 1292 until the conquest of Rhodes. During this time, the Grand Master resided as a guest in Limassol and devoted himself to the internal reorganisation of his Order, without, however, changing its rules. The Knights Hospitaller were on the lookout for a new home. It must have seemed like a gift from heaven when the Genoese Vignolo de Vignoli, an adventurer and pirate, proposed to Grand Master Fulko de Villaret that they jointly conquer Rhodes and the other islands of the Dodecanese (Leros and Kos), which were still under the rule of the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Emperor Andronikos. In the knights’ imagination, possession of Rhodes seemed to guarantee financial

independence – and also to be an ideal springboard for the reconquest of the Holy Land. The only delicate aspect of this action was the fact that Christians would have to fight against fellow Christians. But Pope Clement V approved the plan, declared the

Orthodox Greeks to be “schismatics”, and allowed it to go ahead. The Knights Hospitaller contractually assured Vignolo that one-third of the income they would derive from the new territory would be paid to Vignoli for life. In the summer of 1306, the knights landed on the island with their galleys and the ships of the Genoese adventurer, and were initially able to capture the fortress on Mount Filerimos, eight kilometres southwest of the capital Rhodes. But it was not until August 1309 that the city of Rhodes surrendered to the besiegers. With papal confirmation, the Knights Hospitaller were now subject solely to the Holy See (Fig. 5).

For more than two hundred years, the knights enjoyed a prosperous existence on the exceptionally beautiful and very fertile island. The Order developed into a naval power feared throughout the Mediterranean. The defences and the city of Rhodes were expanded, and a large hospital and an enormous Grand Master’s Palace were built. Money flowed in from all over Europe to expand the fleet, and a dense network of spies kept the Order informed about everything that was happening in the cities of the Middle East and the Levant. In their agile galleys, the Knights Hospitaller set out on “caravans,” i.e. raids on the Mediterranean, where they plundered the heavy merchant ships of the Ottomans and took rich booty, especially slaves. A year on the Order’s ships was as much a part of its novices’ training as a year of nursing.

The great siege of 1480 by the elite troops of Sultan Mehmed II, the conqueror of Constantinople, brought the Knights Hospitaller into serious distress. It was a life-and-death struggle against a vastly superior

force, in which the 57-year-old Grand Master Pierre d'Aubusson himself fought on the ramparts. To this day, it remains a mystery why the Turkish fighters fled over the destroyed walls and allowed themselves to be slaughtered at the very moment when their victory was almost certain. Between 1503 and 1510, there were renewed attacks, but these were easily repelled. Apparently, the Ottomans considered the strategic importance of the island as a bulwark of the Christian West to be extremely significant. In June 1522, Sultan Süleyman “the Magnificent” launched a major attack on Rhodes. He personally led the siege, which began with heavy bombardment followed by an assault by his elite troops, the Janissaries. Grand Master Philippe Villiers de l'Isle Adam, who came from one of France's most prominent families, heroically resisted the enemy's superior forces with his knights. He also stubbornly rejected the honourable peace offers made to him by the Turks in December. Only when the Rhodians wanted to surrender on their own initiative did the Grand Master agree to a chivalrous and honourable surrender with Süleyman on 26 December. The Knights Hospitaller were required to leave Rhodes on 1 January 1523, after 213 years of rule there. They themselves and all of the inhabitants who wanted to go with them were given safe passage.

In exile

“Nothing in the world was lost as gloriously as Rhodes”

(Emperor Charles V after the fall of the island fortress).

After the loss of Rhodes, Grand Master Philippe de Villiers de l'Isle Adam sailed with the surviving knights on the main ship, the carrack Santa Maria, and a greatly-reduced fleet toward an uncertain exile. As the Order's most precious treasure, he carried with him the supposed right hand of St. John as a relic in a jewel-encrusted container. The exile of the Order, which had now become homeless, was to last seven years, taking it to Chania in Crete, Viterbo in Tuscany, and Nice. In a Europe shaken by political and religious upheavals at the time, no power seemed interested in giving the Knights Hospitaller their own territory. After many efforts, especially an appeal by Pope Clement VII (1523-1534, formerly Giuliano/Julius de' Medici and a one-time knight of the Order) to Charles V, the small Maltese archipelago south of Sicily – which had belonged to the new Kingdom of Spain since 1516 – was offered to the Knights Hospitaller as a perpetual imperial fief. The fiefdom agreement was concluded on 24 March 1530. In the document, the Knights Hospitaller undertook, in a symbolic act, to send Emperor Charles V a falcon (the famous “Maltese falcon”) every year, and to

provide the garrison for Spanish-occupied Tripoli. The limited sovereignty that the Emperor granted to the Order was reflected in his refusal to cede to it the right to mint coins, which it had possessed in Rhodes. It was not until the tenure of Grand Master Juan de Homedes (1536-1552) that this right was restored (Fig. 6). The Order of Malta had begun minting its own coins immediately after the conquest of the island of Rhodes in 1318. These coins were not original creations, but replicas of coins from other states such as France and Venice. The first coins to enter circulation were silver grossi weighing around four grams. Half a century later the first gold coin, the zecchino, appeared. It was not until around 1500 that the Order's coins gradually took on an identity of their own, with the image of St. John the Baptist on one side and the Order's coat of arms and cross, as well as the coat of arms of the respective Grand Master, on the other. Over the centuries, innovations were continuously introduced, such as the introduction of the date of minting and value indications. The quality of the execution and the aesthetic appearance of the coins improved considerably over time. Maltese coinage reached a qualitative peak with the reforms introduced by Grand Master Manoel de Vilhena (1722-1736). The Maltese currency unit was called the scudo (= shield, from the Latin scutum); one scudo was equal to 12 tari, which in turn were equal to 240 grani. The tari was a currency unit that originated in the Arab world. However, the Maltese currency remained a domestic currency, which survived the rule of the Order in Malta until 1798 and remained in circulation under the subsequent British colonial administration until 1825.

The rocky island of Malta under the cross of the Knights Hospitaller

“The island of Malta is nothing more than a rock of soft sandstone, called ‘tuff’ (meaning limestone), about six or seven miles long and three or four miles wide; the rocky ground is covered with little more than three or four feet of soil. ... On the east coast there are many headlands, smaller and larger bays, and two particularly large harbours, spacious enough to accommodate a fleet of any size.”

(from the report of a delegation of the Knights of St. John to assess the island).

On 16 October 1530, after a papal bull had provided confirmation, the Knights Hospitaller took possession of the islands of Malta, Gozo, and Comino. The new official title of the Order was now: “Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta.” This gave rise to the short name “Maltese” or



Fig. 8: Auction 428, Lot 1122.

Malta, Order of St. John. 4 tari, no year, minted in Birgu or Fort St. Angelo.

Coat of arms of Grand Master Jean de la Valette (1557-1568) // The severed head of John the Baptist lying on a platter, surrounded by words from Psalm 45 in Latin: "Propeter veritatem et iustitiam" (For truth and justice).

Very rare. Attractive specimen with a magnificent patina, extremely fine.

Estimate: 1,250 euros.

sailed between the trading metropolises of Alexandria and Istanbul, were attacked and robbed by the Maltese. In doing so, the Order captured not only goods, but also slaves for the rowing benches of their own galleys and for the construction of the convent's fortifications. Malta was one of the most important Christian slave markets of the early modern period.

The Maltese put to the test: the great siege of 1565

"Small islands such as Corfu and others will be safe if their fortifications are built in this way (as they were in Malta), for when an enemy appears before them, he will always be hampered by a lack of food, water, wood, hay, straw, and many other things – this is how the island of Malta heroically defended itself against the Turks."

(Vincenzo Scamozzi, architect and fortress builder, 1615 regarding Malta)

In the 1560s, Sultan Suleiman I "the Magnificent," a brilliant Ottoman ruler under whom the Turkish Empire reached its territorial zenith, reigned over the Bosphorus. In 1529, his troops stood before Vienna; his fleet dominated the Mediterranean, for Venice, previously the greatest maritime power, had been decisively defeated by the Turks in the naval battle of Profeza in 1538. The lords of the Order of Malta, with their ever-growing fleet, severely disrupted traffic between the Ottoman possessions in Europe and Africa. In the fall of 1564, the Maltese had already been warned that Suleiman was equipping a huge invasion fleet. On 18 May 1565, the hour had struck: The Ottoman fleet was sighted off St. Elmo. The Sultan wanted to "smoke out" the Maltese

"hornet's nest" with 200 ships and an army of more than thirty thousand men. Fortunately, the Order had an extremely capable Grand Master in the 71-year-old Jean Parisot de la Valette from Provence, under whose leadership the Order's knights prevented the Turkish superpower from advancing further into Western Europe, and inflicted a decisive defeat on the Sultan's forces (Fig. 8).

The vastly-outnumbered Maltese contingent consisted of about four hundred knights and three to four thousand militiamen. Now the Maltese were actually aided by the island's scarcity of water, food, and wood: The Turks were forced to carry food, tents, and timber for the siege over a distance of more than 1,500 kilometres, and the few and very meagre water sources had been poisoned on the orders of the Grand Master. The Maltese were unable to prevent the Turkish troops from landing in the south of the island. They were forced to confine themselves exclusively to defending the three fortified bays. This is not the occasion to go into the details of the siege of Fort St. Elmo, the incredible efforts on both sides, the digging of trenches on an island that had no soil (only rock), the laborious setting up of gun emplacements by the Turks, and the reinforcement of the ramparts by the Maltese, which was carried out day and night. When the corsair and Admiral of the Ottoman fleet, Turgut Reis, joined the besiegers, the situation became very difficult for the Maltese,





Fig. 9: The lifting of the siege of Malta.

Painting by Charles-Philippe Larivière (1798-1876).

Versailles Palace painting collection. Wikipedia, public domain.

because he prevented the nightly supply manoeuvres via patrol boats from the defenders of St. Angelo to those in St. Elmo. The small Fort St. Elmo was then cut off from all help and exposed to constant assaults and bombardments. After three weeks of brave resistance, it finally fell into the hands of the Turks, who beheaded the dead knights, nailed their bodies to crosses, and let them drift with the current into the harbour of St. Angelo. The Maltese knights then beheaded all of their Turkish prisoners and shot the heads across to the enemy with catapults from St. Angelo. There was now no longer any question of a chivalrous battle on either side. When there were no more beds available in the hospital, ammunition was being rationed, and hunger had become unbearable, salvation came as if by a miracle: A Spanish relief army crossed over from Sicily and landed on the northeast coast of Malta. Although it consisted of only 8,000 men, the Turks (presumably misinformed by a bribed spy) greatly overestimated the

strength of the new troops and broke off the siege. On 8 September 1565, the bells of Birgu and Senglea rang out to herald the defenders' liberation. Jean Parisot de la Valette had saved Malta for the Order, which ruled it for two more centuries (Fig. 9).

**From the end of the 16th
to the end of the 18th century:
*internal stagnation and external pomp***

The toll which the Order had to pay after the siege was devastating. Around 200 knights had fallen, those who remained alive had suffered serious injuries, and the fortifications had been destroyed. In a major campaign, the whole of Europe now provided reconstruction aid, in recognition of Malta's strategically important position in the fight against the spread of the Ottomans and Islam and showing its gratitude for averting the danger. The fortresses were immediately rebuilt and

significantly reinforced, as a renewed attack by the Ottomans was feared. But the enemy did not return. There were two reasons for this: The arsenal in Istanbul, where enormous supplies of gunpowder had been stockpiled, was blown up – allegedly at the behest of the Grand Master of the Order’s spies. This huge explosion almost completely destroyed the Sultan’s shipyard and fleet. The new fortifications of Malta, which were completed towards the end of the 16th century, have been almost completely preserved to this day – and are probably among the most magnificent and impressive defensive structures in the world (Fig. 10). A new city, the capital of the Order, was to be built on Monte Sciberras, on the outermost tip of which lay St. Elmo. On 28 March 1556, the foundation stone was laid for this city, designed on the drawing board in a checkerboard pattern, “La Valette” (today the capital Valletta) – named after the heroic defender – with the Grand Master’s Palace and St. John’s Cathedral. To the left and right of the new city, two easily-blockable harbour basins were created. Girolamo Cassar was the principal architect of Valletta, the first in the series of Maltese baroque architects whose work documents the rich Order’s desired image. The magnificent expansion and creation of the current baroque face of the city of Valletta took place during this period. No opportunity was missed to create a lavishly-designed palace or garden. Culturally, the city was oriented towards southern Italy, which is clearly evident in the altars encrusted with colourful marble, the groups of figures erected outdoors, and the numerous works by Italian painters such as Caravaggio. But there is also an extensive archive and a large library with its own staff of scholars (Fig. 11).

In the centuries following the great siege, the Order – whose members came primarily from the most prominent French noble families – fulfilled its actual task of caring for the sick and wounded with the utmost care, despite increasing secularisation and a loosening of morals. The large hospital in Valletta was considered the best in Europe. Militarily, the Maltese galleys were the “police” of the Mediterranean, and the Order’s knights were even allowed to enter the Republic of Venice while armed. Malta’s prosperity grew over the centuries as a result of new branches of trade and commerce. During the reign of the Knights Hospitaller, the number of inhabitants on the island increased fivefold (Fig. 12).



Fig. 10: The port of Valletta with Fort St. Angelo, JN 2014.

The end: surrender to Napoleon

“Toutes les grandes gloires viennent de l’Orient”
(Napoleon regarding Malta in June 1798)

In revolutionary France, an order more than two-thirds of whose members were descended from old noble families was considered utterly obsolete. The Maltese also made the serious mistake of providing King Louis XVI with 500,000 francs for his attempt to escape from his revolutionary captors, which ended in Varennes. As a result, all of the Order’s French possessions were confiscated in 1792. The last Grand Master, Ferdinand von Hompesch zu Bolheim – unusually, a German in that office – surrendered the island of Malta to Napoleon without a fight when the latter appeared with his fleet off the bastions of Valletta during his Egyptian campaign in June 1798. The explanation can be found in part in the Order’s rule that Christians could not fight against Christians. In addition, their cannons were only suitable for firing salutes, and the Maltese population – which had been forced to pay increasingly higher taxes over time – was very dissatisfied with their “spiritual” lords. The French troops thoroughly plundered all of the churches and stole everything of value. Napoleon noted that it was above all the loss of “moral strength” that had caused the decline of the Maltese. At dawn on 18 June 1798, Grand Master Ferdinand von Hompesch left Malta with a mere 16 knights (Fig. 13).

Many knights of the Order emigrated to Russia, where on 16 December 1798 they elected Tsar Paul I, who granted them large estates, as their new Grand Master. Upon his death in the spring of 1801, the Order



1,5:1

Fig. 11: Auction 428, Lot 1134.
 Malta, Order of St. John. 4 tari without year, minted in Valletta.
 Coat of arms of Grand Master Hugues Loubens de Verdalle (1582-1595) // The severed head of John the Baptist lying on a platter, surrounded by words from Psalm 45 in Latin: "Propter veritatem et iustitiam" (For truth and justice).
 Extremely rare. Very fine to extremely fine.
 Estimate: 4,000 euros

transferred the right to appoint the Grand Master to the Pope. Between 1805 and 1811, all of the Order's possessions in large parts of Germany, Spain, Italy, and Russia were confiscated. The Congress of Vienna in 1815 confirmed that Malta would remain part of England. The Order, which no longer possessed any territory, was granted the status of a "sovereign subject of international law." In 1834, the Order moved its headquarters to Rome. Pope Leo XIII restored the dignity of the Grand Master by a bull dated 28 March 1879. In accordance with its motto "Tuitio fidei et obsequium pauperum" (Defense of the faith and service to the poor), the Order is dedicated today, as it was at the time of its founding, to supporting and caring for the sick, the elderly, and the disabled in 120 countries.



0,85:1



Fig. 12: Auction 428, Lot 1148.
 Malta, Order of St. John. Bronze cast medal 1729:
 Grand Master Antonio Manoel de Vilhena (1722-1736), F(r) = brother
 D(on) AN(tonio) MANOEL DE VILHENA M(agnus) M(agister = Grand Master)
 with allonge wig // Grand Master de Vilhena, standing in the manner of Aeneas on Turkish weapons scattered before him and accompanied by a lion, receives a sword and helmet from the personification of religion/the Catholic Church, surrounded by angels. Pope Benedict XIII had rewarded the Grand Master with such gifts for his successful battles against the Muslims. Accompanied by a Latin quote from Virgil's Aeneid XII 323: "The radiant glory of the deed."
 Contemporary casting. Very rare. Pinhole in the margin, extremely fine.
 Estimate: 3,000 euros



Fig. 13: "Surrender ceremony between General Bonaparte and the Grand Master of Malta before the capital city of Valletta, Malta, on 10 June 1798". Copperplate engraving, Zittau 1798-1800. Wikipedia, public domain.

Maximilian: The Last Knight and/or a Bankrupt

On 3 July 2025, we successfully auctioned off the Hermann Wohnlich Collection presenting more than 200 coins and medals from Tyrol. Contributing significantly to this success was the impressive ensemble of representative coins of Maximilian I. These masterful Renaissance works of art are an excellent testament to Maximilian I's ability to cultivate his image. The PR measures he used around half a millennium ago still shape our image of him today.

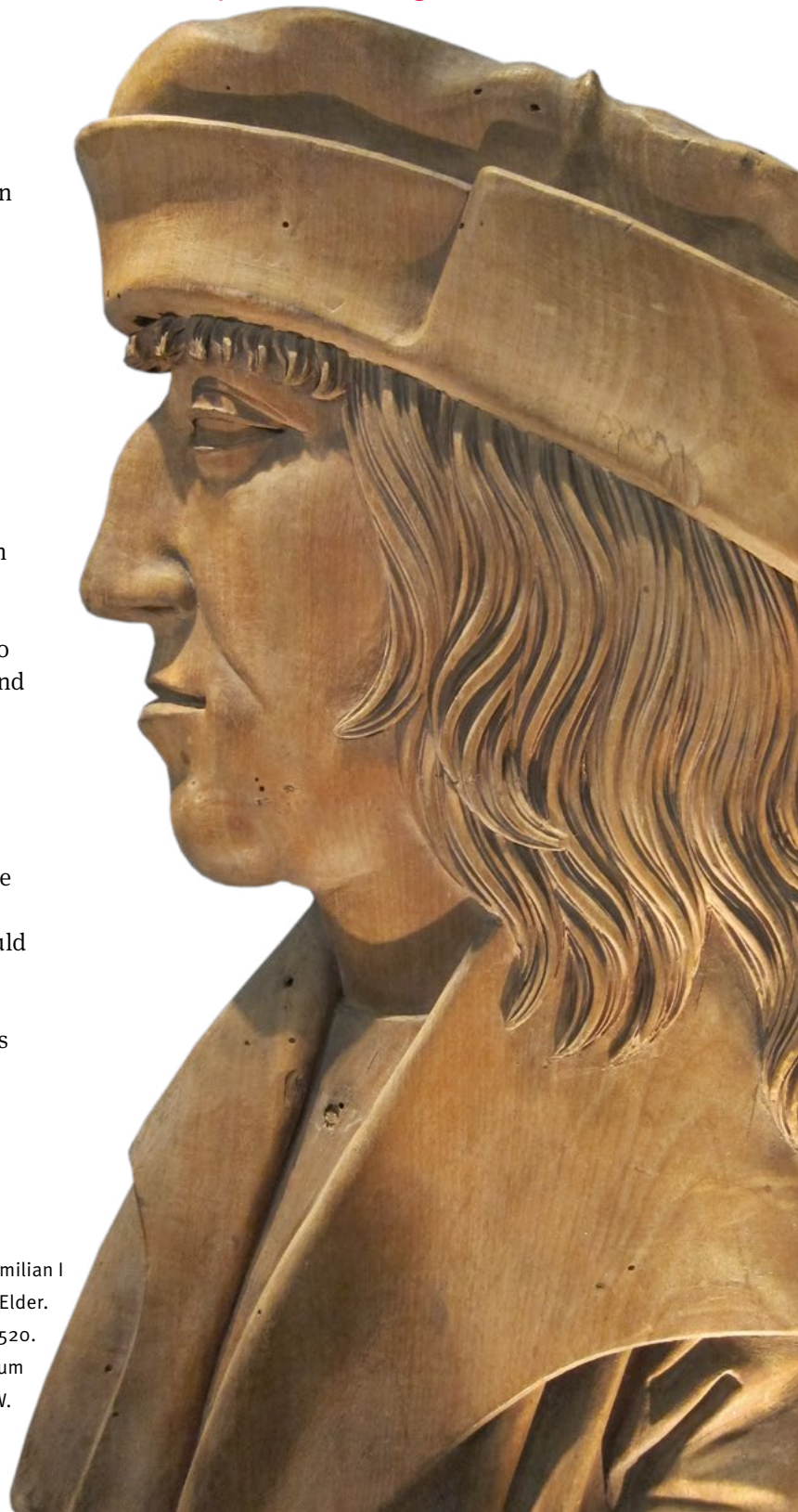
By Ursula Kampmann

What do you actually know about Emperor Maximilian I? Apart from the epithet “the last knight” and the Golden Roof in Innsbruck, can you think of anything else? What about the usual guarantors of eternal glory? Great battles and conquests? Brilliant military campaigns? Nothing? Well, this is not surprising as there were none. It is not that Maximilian did not wage any wars. But even a generous interpretation of his military track record would have to describe it as mediocre. The same applies to his political agenda.

Nevertheless, Maximilian I is better known than much more successful rulers of his time. Why is that? Well, Maximilian was a PR expert long before the term was invented. He used the most modern means available to cultivate his image and establish alternative truths. And these alternative truths became perceived history and are still relevant today.

An Unfortunate Start

The young Maximilian owed his election as King of the Romans to his father, Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III. In 1486, Frederick III ensured that the electors would make his son King of the Romans while he was still alive. This made sure that Maximilian would become emperor. The Hasburgs retained the title, and this was important. After all, their influence appeared to be waning. Matthias Corvinus had just conquered large areas of their home territory. He had been residing in



Portrait of Emperor Maximilian I
by Hans Kels the Elder.
Kaufbeuren, ca. 1510-1520.
Bayerisches Nationalmuseum
Inv. No. H250. Photo: KW.



Maximilian I. Emperor guliner n.d. (1508), Hall.
 Dies by Ulrich Ursenthaler. Very rare. Extremely fine.
 Estimate: 15,000 euros. Hammer price: 22,000 euros.
 From Künker auction 423 (3 July 2025), Lot 15.

Vienna since 1 June 1485, challenging Frederick for the title of Duke of Austria. Meanwhile, Habsburg troops were fighting in Flanders against the French king, who also laid claim to Charles the Bold's inheritance.

By the time Frederick died in 1493, the situation had improved somewhat: Matthias Corvinus had died childless and the Burgundian inheritance had been divided between the Habsburgs and France.

Nevertheless, the situation remained tense. So tense that Maximilian was forced to make significant concessions to the estates during the Imperial Diet at Worms in 1495. These were so significant that some historians argue that the early modern period began with this Imperial Diet. Maximilian ceded powers from the emperor to the imperial estates. Additionally, the establishment of the Imperial Chamber Court, coupled with the (unofficial) recognition of the Imperial Diet's right to play a decisive role in legislation, limited the power of all subsequent emperors.

Why do we overlook this failure when we think of Maximilian I? This is a perfectly legitimate question.

A Fortune Spent on PR Campaigns

Maximilian managed to divert attention away from his failure with his PR skills. And do not assume that this happened by chance – he knew exactly what he was doing. He commissioned the best artists of his time to create his public image. We know this because Maximilian himself said so. The translation of chapter 24 of his “Weißkunig” (The White King) reads: “Whoever does not create a glorious memory during his life will not be remembered by anyone after his death;

and this person will be forgotten with the sound of the death knell; and that is why the money I spent on my glorious memory will not be lost. But the money I do not spend on my glorious memory will prevent future generations from cherishing my glorious memory.”

Theuerdank, White King and Triumphal Arch

Before we examine Maximilian I's coinage, let us briefly consider the other propaganda tools he employed to create a memento. For one thing must but be forgotten: numismatics does not exist in isolation, but is part of an overall concept of a ruler's self-portrayal. If we want to understand the motifs depicted on coins and medals, it is helpful to consider the messages conveyed by other media.

Maximilian was a genius when it came to combining the innovations of his era to create something new. For example, in Switzerland – a major European power at the time that had just gotten rid of Charles the Bold – there were so-called illustrated chronicles. These manuscripts were full of depictions that translated their own truth into images and text. They were immensely successful. To this day, most Swiss people still believe that Charles the Bold attacked Switzerland. The recipe for success of illustrated chronicles was to present alternative truths through the most impressive images possible. Those who saw these illustrations did not question their accuracy.



The young king at his mint. We owe the most famous depiction of an early modern mint to Maximilian and his “Weißkunig”.



The Triumphal Arch of Maximilian I.
Hand-colored print by Albrecht Dürer, composed of
several woodcuts, with a size of 2.95 x 3.57 m(!). Photo: KW.

Maximilian adopted this approach and combined it with chivalric romance, a type of literature that was highly popular among the nobility. The result was the richly illustrated “Theuerdank”, a work that told the story of a knight’s fictitious quest for his beloved bride. The protagonist bore a striking resemblance to Maximilian I.

While only one copy of every Swiss illustrated chronicle existed, Maximilian had the Theuerdank printed to increase its readership. He gave copies to people who would now be called influencers. This ensured that they would repeatedly take out the book at their castle when followers or visitors were around to have the verses read to them (not everyone could read!) and to look at the pictures together. The Theuerdank was so successful that Maximilian followed it with “Weißkunig” and “Freydal”.

Another ingenious innovation was Maximilian I’s Triumphal Arch. It was not an actual stone construction, but a woodcut with the depiction of a fictitious arch adorned with detailed decorations of all kinds. This work of art can be described as a precursor to a poster. The gigantic woodcut, created by Albrecht Dürer himself, measured almost 3 meters in width and 3.60 meters in height. It was intended for display in town halls and palaces, so that it could be viewed by as many people as possible. Around 700 copies of the first version, produced in 1517/1518, were created and distributed as gifts mainly to imperial cities and princes. Anyone who received such an honorable gift from the emperor displayed it in the most conspicuous place possible. In this way, the recipient illustrated how favored they were by the emperor – while also spreading the emperor’s message.

The Triumphal Arch was also a means of self-representation for Maximilian I, showcasing all the events he wished to be recognized for. Today, it is difficult to imagine how much time and attention such a depiction received. While we live in an age of abundant imagery, most people in the early modern period only knew images from churches and public spaces. Those fortunate enough to see a painting took their time to look at it, to absorb as many details as possible and then went on to discuss them in depth with others.

To help viewers remember what they had seen, Maximilian had explanatory texts written in rhyming German.

Medals as Another PR Tool

As with the Theuerdank and the Triumphal Arch, Maximilian took inspiration from something he had seen elsewhere and developed it further to create his representative pfennigs. He was inspired by the medals he had seen at the court of Charles the Bold. Giovanni de Candida had been working there since November 1467. He was not a craftsman like the engravers at Hall, but a highly educated man, a cortegiano and gentiluomo of the kind produced by the Renaissance period. Born around 1445, probably in Naples, he had been one of the people that were closest to the Roman medal engraver Lysippos. Giovanni di Candida was as skilled a painter



Detail of the Triumphal Arch of Maximilian I. Photo: KW.



Maximilian I. Medal by Giovanni de Candida without year (1477) commemorating the wedding of Maximilian and Mary of Burgundy. Very rare. Original cast. Extremely fine. Estimate: 1,500 euros. Hammer price: 8,000 euros. From Künker auction 423 (3 July 2025), Lot 11.

as he was a goldsmith. He knew to enchant others with subtle conversation and impeccable manners. Charles the Bold appointed him a secretary to secure his loyalty. In this role, Candida was privy to all of his master's secrets. Following Charles' death on 5 January 1577, Candida must have hoped to find a new position with Maximilian. This is the context of the medal created for the wedding of Maximilian and Mary of Burgundy on 19 August 1477.

However, Maximilian and Giovanni di Candida were apparently unable to reach an agreement. From 1480, Candida worked for the French court.



Maximilian I. 1505 guldiner, Hall. Dies by Benedikt Burkhart. Very rare. Extremely fine. Estimate: 5,000 euros. Hammer price: 16,000 euros. From Künker auction 423 (3 July 2025), Lot 13.

However, Maximilian had recognized the potential of the medal. Like prints, medals enabled him to spread his image far and wide. After the death of Sigismund of Tyrol in 1496, he was in control of the Hall mint. It specialized in producing large, impressive silver issues. The guldiner, a technical masterpiece, had been invented there as recently as in 1486. Maximilian combined the guldiner with the concept of a medal, thus creating representative pfennigs, i.e. coins – the word “pfennig” meant “coin” in early High New German – that were not only intended to be a means of payment but works of art that should be looked at.



1,5:1

Maximilian I. Model for the issue of the 1506 representative pfennig, Hall. Dies by Benedikt Burkhart. Very rare. Clear original cast. Extremely fine. Estimate: 10,000 euros. Hammer price: 28,000 euros. From Künker auction 423 (3 July 2025), Lot 14.



Maximilian himself oversaw the design process and seems to have given his approval to every single one of the final drafts. For instance, a contemporary source tells us that he rejected a die because “the nose was a little too high, the face too long, and the abdomen too large”.

A letter from the imperial envoy Hieronymus Cassola to Maximilian in 1508 tells us that the representative pieces were well received by their target audience: “When I was in another legation, many princes and nobles asked me with great ambition and desire for coins bearing Your Majesty’s imperial portrait.”

Bianca Sforza, the Condottiere’s Grand-Daughter

The 1506 piece showing the double portrait of Maximilian and Bianca Maria Sforza is probably the rarest representative coin of this era. In general, unlike it had been the case with Mary of Burgundy, the emperor’s self-portrayal paid little attention to this woman. Some tried to explain this by arguing that Maximilian had loved his first wife and despised his second. This is romanticized nonsense. Self-promotion had nothing to do with love.

Bianca Maria Sforza was hidden away wherever possible because she was the granddaughter of an illegitimately

born mercenary leader who had replaced the Visconti as rulers of Milan thanks to his physical strength and enterprise. His son, Galeazzo Maria Sforza, used his wealth to secure an emperor as his son-in-law. Maximilian only married Bianca in 1493 for her dowry of 400,000 ducats in cash and 40,000 ducats’ worth of jewels. She was probably an embarrassment to Maximilian, particularly after the Sforza were expelled from Milan in 1499. It is often said that he left his wife and her entourage behind as collateral whenever he could not repay a debt.

Therefore, the 1506 guldiner featuring the portraits of Maximilian and Bianca was certainly not an imperial project. This is confirmed by the accounts of the Hall mint office of 1506. These accounts explicitly state that Benedikt Burkhart created the model for the representative pfennig without having been commissioned by the emperor. The mint office accounts also tell us that the engraver made four patterns at his own expense and gave them to the queen. We do not



1,5:1

Maximilian I. Representative guldiner n.d. (After 1511), Hall. Dies by Ulrich Ursenthaler. Very rare. About extremely fine. Estimate: 10,000 euros. Hammer price: 14,000 euros. From Künker auction 423 (3 July 2025), Lot 18.



2:1

Maximilian I. 1513 gold representative coin of 2 ducats, Hall, commemorating the funeral of his father Frederick III. Extremely rare, probably unpublished and the only known specimen. From the Wohnlich Collection. Extremely fine. Estimate: 10,000 euros. Hammer price: 55,000 euros. From Künker auction 423 (3 July 2025), Lot 19.

know whether more specimens were produced after these initial patterns. Is this the reason why this coin is so rare today?

Mary, Heiress of Burgundy

Mary, on the other hand, fit the emperor's image. This was probably the reason why, immediately after the death of Bianca Maria Sforza on 31 December 1510, Maximilian commissioned a wedding guldiner featuring the portrait of his first wife. Bianca was to be erased from public memory as quickly as possible. After all, a high-hearted – this is the word used in the circumscription – Archduke of Austria and Burgundy should not marry an upstart, but someone like Mary, daughter of Charles the Bold, heiress of Burgundy and Brabant. This was important to Maximilian, rather than her pretty little nose and grey-brown eyes, despite the fact that the newlywed praised her beauty in a letter.

The Father and His Funeral

Maximilian did not just exploit the memory of high-ranking Maria to strengthen his own position. Even the funeral ceremonies for his father served the sole purpose of elevating his reputation. This is demonstrated by a gold representative coin of 2 ducats, featuring a bust of Frederick III with a gold cap facing right on the obverse, and the deceased in full imperial regalia on the reverse. The legend is remarkable. It reads: In the year 1513, on 18 October. However, Frederick III died as early as on 19 August 1493. Why was such an elaborate coin issued some 20 years after his death?

To explain this, we have to go back to 1493. Although the Dutch master builder Niklas Gerhaert van Leyden had been working on Frederick's tomb for around 30 years, Maximilian was not satisfied with the result. Provisionally, he therefore had Frederick laid to rest in the ducal crypt of St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna – of course with all the pomp and ceremony possible. The entire church was draped in black cloth and illuminated by 583 candles – an incredible number at that time. In addition, Maximilian had an enormous castrum doloris constructed above the catafalque. Six bishops and thirteen abbots, together with numerous Viennese clergy, celebrated 8,422 Masses for the repose of the deceased. Maximilian had the entire process meticulously documented, and had the manuscript printed in German and Latin in the same year.

Then came the great failure – Maximilian was forced to relinquish significant imperial privileges during the Diet of Worms in 1495. It suddenly seemed crucial to him to rebury his father, the deceased emperor, in a fitting



2:1



Maximilian I. Representative guldiner n.d. (1518), Hall. Dies by Ulrich Ursenthaler. Very rare. Extremely fine. Estimate: 10,000 euros. Hammer price: 22,000 euros. From Künker auction 423 (3 July 2025), Lot 20.

tomb. The artwork's design was meticulously tailored to document imperial power. Maximilian invested 11,801 Rhenish guildens, 3 shillings and 4 pfennigs to complete this political statement made of stone. Almost 20 years passed before the tomb met Maximilian's requirements.

When it was finally completed in 1513, Maximilian decided to hold celebrations that were just as elaborate as those he had paid for in 1493. While this was partly about commemorating his father, Maximilian emphasized in a letter that it was much more about his generous attitude, which he had because of divine teaching, instruction, and the natural affection due to his love [for his father].

Unfortunately, it is impossible to reconstruct the chronological sequence of the funeral ceremonies. Even the coins minted for the occasion give different dates: The double ducat from the Wohnlich Collection mentions 18 October 1513. Gold coins distributed among the general public at the funeral are dated 12 November 1513. This discrepancy may be explained by the fact that the Emperor's body lay in Herzogenkapelle or Tirnakapelle chapel for several days before the actual burial took place.



1,5:1



Maximilian I. 1509 double representative gulden, Hall. Dies by Ulrich Ursenthaler. Very rare. Extremely fine. Estimate: 10,000 euros. Hammer price: 22,000 euros. From auction Künker 423 (3 July 2025), Lot 17.

The Last Knight and Tournaments

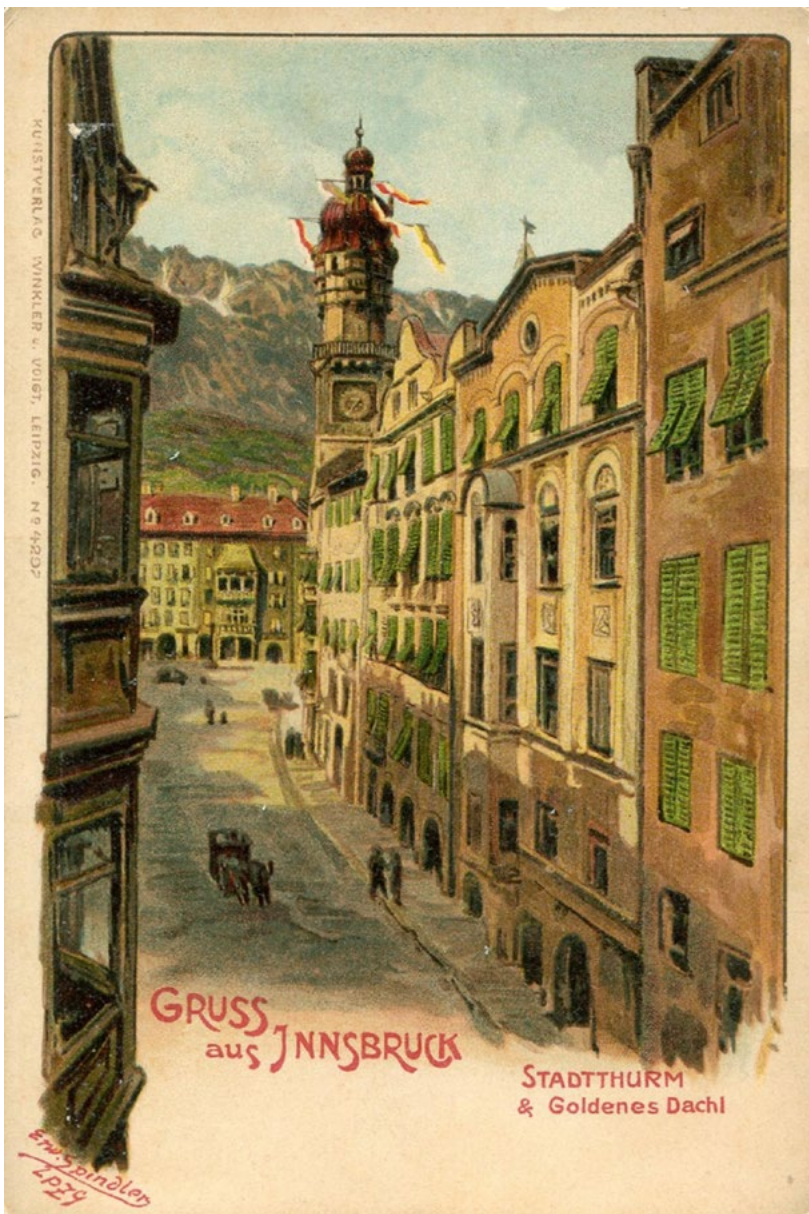
Let us conclude this exploration of Maximilian's PR measures with what is probably his best known epithet. The Last Knight – that is what we all know him as. And, indeed, Maximilian I particularly enjoyed being depicted as a knight on horseback in full armor, en route to a tournament. This 1509 double representative gulden is a wonderful testament to this. The reverse shows all the coats of arms carried in front of their owners at the tournament, while the herald proclaimed the participants' titles.

At the time, tournaments were the most important and the most expensive leisure activity for the nobility. It was risky to take part in them – not only because fatal accident occurred time and again. If you were defeated in a jousting tournament, the opponent was allowed to take your armor and your horse. This was a bitter loss given the high replacement costs!

Maximilian organized such events time and again. He constantly ordered new armor from the best Augsburg smiths. He wore them during the tournaments – even when he did not take part himself, but only watched. However, this became too expensive over time. So Maximilian set up an imperial workshop to produce armor in Innsbruck that employed 13 craftsmen and had an annual budget of 1,000 guildens. This had to cover not only wages, but also material costs.

However, no one would have thought to ride into battle wearing such magnificent armor. Even if this depiction wants us to believe otherwise. The “king and the most powerful prince over most of the European provinces”, as the circumscription reads, was almost 60 years old in 1518 – the time this piece was minted – and had only a few months to live. The days when he went into battle as a youthful hero were long gone.

((13 – Post card with the Golden Roof (“Goldenes Dachl”) in Innsbruck after a painting by Erwin Spindler))
By that time, Maximilian's health just allowed him to look down from the magnificent balcony with the Golden Roof in Innsbruck onto the square where he had once organized the most magnificent tournaments. He will have remembered this fondly when he looked at the woodcuts in the third book he financed: the Freydal tells the story of a young knight, easily identifiable as Maximilian I, who proves his true worth in 64 tournaments. Almost always victorious, he wins the hand of a powerful Queen – but he has to find and win her first, which is why this work leads seamlessly to the plot of the Theuerdank.



Postkarte mit dem Goldenen Dachl
nach einem Gemälde von Erwin Spindler

Once again, Maximilian is not remembered as a bankrupt, but as a pomp-loving Renaissance prince without material worries. The fact that Maximilian's splendor was largely financed by an Augsburg banker, who in return became the first German merchant to rise to the rank of imperial count, pales behind these images. And the fact that Innsbruck merchants refused to grant the court any credit in the year the last representative guldiner was minted, is also pushed into the background. Maximilian had no choice but to leave Innsbruck, and to travel to a city where he was supplied with food on credit. It is said that he became so angry that he suffered a stroke and died shortly afterwards in Wels on 12 January 1519.

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The Gryphon – On the Long Life of a Mythical Creature

By Johannes Nollé

A Künker Lecture in Mannheim

The coin enthusiasts of Mannheim-Ludwigshafen – whom mathematician and physicist Claus Engelhardt skilfully and successfully guides through periods in which associations focused on promoting culture do not have an easy time of it – invited me to give a lecture in Mannheim on 11 June 2025. The Mannheim group wanted to learn about the mythical creature “griffin” or “gryphon”, which is still very much alive in their hometown: The gryphon acts as the shield bearer of the city’s coat of arms, which shows a “wolf hook” (German Wolfangel)¹ and the Palatinate lion on a divided shield. This gryphon can be seen at the entrance to the city, where it adorns a bridge, and on the carnival medal of the traditional Mannheim marching corps (Fig. 1). The gryphon is such a common animal for the people of Mannheim that hardly anyone asks where it comes from, how it came to Mannheim, or what it wants to tell us. Not least because of its anchoring in Mannheim life, but also because of the aforementioned gaps in knowledge, Mannheim coin enthusiasts wanted to learn more about their “pet” from coins.

The Baden Gryphon

The gryphon holding and protecting Mannheim’s coat of arms dates back to the Baden Gryphon. In 1803, the former Electoral Palatinate residence city of Mannheim was ceded to Baden, which had been elevated to the status of an electorate. Baden’s Margrave Philipp I (1515/1527-1533) used a seal from 1516 onwards on which two upright gryphons flanked his coat of arms.² Such shield bearers were not only supposed to hold and present the sovereign’s coat of arms like squires, but also to protect it from disrespect or even attacks. The rulers knew only too well how unpopular many of them were with some of their subjects! Particularly strong animals such as lions and deer, but also mythical creatures such as wild men, heavenly beings such as angels, and monsters such as basilisks and gryphons seemed particularly suited to the role of coat of arms protector.



Fig. 1: The Mannheim gryphon on a medal of the Mannheim Traditions corps carnival association.

The Baden gryphon has survived not only in the Mannheim coat of arms, but also in the coat of arms of the German federal state of Baden-Württemberg (Fig. 2). While the stag represents Württemberg, the gryphon represents Baden. The two imposing and powerful animals hold the Baden-Württemberg coat of arms, which features three black lions striding to the left on a golden background. The lions are the heraldic animals of the Staufer dynasty. The colours of this coat of arms, black and gold, became the colours of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, i.e. the “Old Empire”. Even today, former free imperial cities – such as Aachen, Donauwörth, Dortmund, Goslar and Lübeck – still use this colour combination. At the Hambach Festival in 1832, the student movement placed a red stripe between black and gold. This tricolour increasingly came to be understood as a symbol of republican and anti-monarchist aspirations

and, after an eventful history, became the colours of the Federal Republic of Germany. The crown on the Baden-Württemberg coat of arms, made up of small shields, indicates that the “southwestern state” of Baden-Württemberg consists not only of Baden and Württemberg, but also of former Franconian (red rake), Hohenzollern (black and white), Palatinate (golden lion on a black background) possessions, and former parts of Vorderösterreich/Further Austria (white and red).



Fig. 2: Large coat of arms of Baden-Württemberg.

The gryphon also appears on coins from Baden. On a ducat of Margrave Karl Wilhelm von Baden (1709-1738) from 1721, two gryphons hold the crowned coat of arms of Baden with the red crossbar on a golden background. The coat of arms is surrounded by the collar of the Ordre de la Fidélité (Order of Loyalty) (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3: Baden Durlach, ducat 1721, Karl Wilhelm Margrave of Baden // Coat of arms held by gryphons. Künker Auction 409, 20 June 2024. Lot 2068, Hammer Price: 14,500 euros.

On a mining coin, the Baden kronenthaler from 1836, the head of Grand Duke Karl Leopold Friedrich (1830-1852) is depicted on the front. The reverse of this rare coin depicts a crowned gryphon holding an oval shield.

The shield depicts a hammer and pickaxe and a miner’s lamp. Above it is the “miners’ wish”, or traditional greeting, GLÜCK AUF (good luck). The legend around the upper edge of the coin explains the material background to this coinage: SEGEN DES BADISCHEN BERGBAUS (BLESSING OF BADEN MINING) (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4: Baden, kronenthaler 1836, Karl Leopold Friedrich // Gryphon with mining shield. Auction 2 of London Coin Galleries & Künker, 1 November 2016. Lot 1014, Hammer Price: 830 euros.

¹ The “wolf hook” is a barbed hook holding meat that was hung from a low branch so that agile predators such as wolves could jump for the tempting meat, but would get caught in the barbs of the wolf hook and die a cruel death. The brutal use of the wolf hook can be explained by the great damage that the wolves, which were widespread at the time, caused to the farmers’ valuable and vital livestock.

² See F. Zell, *Geschichte und Beschreibung des Badischen Wappens von seiner Entstehung bis auf seine heutige Form*, Karlsruhe 1858.



Fig. 5: Coat of arms of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.



Fig. 6: Coat of arms of the Duchy of Pomerania with numerous gryphons. 1st row: Duchy of Stettin, Duchy of Pomerania, Duchy of Kassuben; 2nd row: Principality of Rügen, Duchy of Wenden, Lordship of Usedom; 3rd row: Lordship of Barth, County of Gützkow, Duchy of Wolgast; 4th row: blood flag, indicating the Duke's jurisdiction over capital punishment.



Fig. 7: Coat of arms of the city of Greifswald.

The Pomeranian gryphon

A red gryphon appears in the coat of arms of the federal state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, which was newly founded after German reunification: The quartered coat of arms shows the crowned bull's head of Mecklenburg-Schwerin in the first field, the red gryphon of Pomerania in the second, the red eagle of Brandenburg in the third and, finally, another crowned bull's head in the fourth field, representing the coat of arms of Mecklenburg-Strelitz (Fig. 5).

Since the Middle Ages, the upright red gryphon has been the heraldic animal of the Dukes of Pomerania, who were also known as the "Gryphon Dukes".³ Many of Pomerania's neighbouring territories also featured a gryphon in their coats of arms, albeit in different colours and designs (Fig. 6). These included the city of Greifswald (Fig. 7). The western Baltic Sea region presents us with a striking concentration of heraldic gryphons.

With a sword in its front claw, the Pomeranian gryphon symbolises the power and fighting strength of the Pomeranian dukes. This can be seen on an extremely rare triple reichsthaler coin from 1613, which shows the bust of Duke Philip II of Pomerania (1606-1618) on the front, but on the back an upright gryphon with a sword and an open book, which can possibly be interpreted as a Bible; the Pomeranian dukes were proud of the Christianisation of their country (Fig. 8).

A silver medal commemorating the Pomeranian Agricultural Exhibition of 1876 in Belgard (on the Persante) shows a gryphon perched on a tree trunk on the front (Fig. 9). To this day the town, which now belongs to Polish West Pomerania and is called Bialograd, has an upright red gryphon in its coat of arms, with wavy lines below it referring to the Persante River (Fig. 10).

The DAI griffin

In 1979, the Federal Republic of Germany commemorated the 150th anniversary of the German Archaeological Institute (German: Deutsches Archäologisches Institut/DAI) with a 5-deutschmark coin (Fig. 11). This globally-active department of the Foreign Office was founded on 21 April 1829 on the Capitoline Hill in Rome. 21 April was already considered the mythical birthday of the city of Rome in ancient times. On this day in 1829, archaeologist Eduard Gerhard, the Prussian and Hanoverian envoys to the Holy See, Christian Karl Josias von Bunsen and August Kestner, as well as the Commissario della Antichità, Carlo Fea, and the sculptor Berthel Thorvaldsen, along



Fig. 8: Pomerania, triple reichstaler, Philip II, 1613:
 V(on) G(ottes) G(naden) (coat of arms) PHI(coat of arms)LIP(u)S
 (coat of arms) H(erzog) Z(u) S(Stettin) (coat of arms) POM(mern)
 (coat of arms); Bust of Philip II, right // CHRI(coat of arms)STO ET
 (coat of arms) REIP(ublicae) (coat of arms) ANNO – (coat of arms)
 1613 (coat of arms); the Pomeranian gryphon with sword and
 book (Bible?) (Künker Auction 308, 19 June 2018. Lot 2977,
 Hammer Price: 32,000 euros)



Fig. 9: Pomerania, silver medal for the agricultural exhibition in
 Belgard/Bialograd, 1876.
 Künker eLive Auction 65, 23 February 2021. Lot 7863,
 Hammer Price: 160 euros).



Fig. 10: Coat of arms of the town of Bialograd/
 Belgard an der Persante.

with others interested in antiquity, gathered to found the Instituto di corrispondenza archeologica, which eventually evolved into the German Archaeological Institute. The lion gryphon placing its front paw on a vase is a reminder that this institute emerged from an association called the “Roman Hyperboreans”. According to ancient myth, the Hyperboreans – their name means “people who live beyond the birthplace of the north wind” – were the inhabitants of a paradisiacal region at the edge of the world. They were friends of Apollo, the god of wisdom and culture, and neighbours of the gryphons. The learned artists and politicians from northern Europe who stayed in Rome were therefore only too happy to see themselves as Hyperboreans, and chose a gryphon as the emblem of their club. The Latin motto MONUMENTIS AC LITTERIS is engraved on the edge of the 5-deutschmark commemorative coin, which apparently means that the German Archaeological Institute is dedicated to “monuments as well as written records” and is committed to their preservation, scientific research and reappraisal.



Fig. 11: 5 deutschmarks, German Archaeological Institute.

³ N. Buske – J. Krüger – R.-G. Werlich (eds.), Die Herzöge von Pommern: Zeugnisse des Greifenhauses, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar 2012.

Appearance and name of the gryphon

The gryphon is not a real animal, but a mythical creature associated by the Greeks and Romans with times past and the edges of the then known world. The gryphon often has the body of a lion with wings and the head of a bird of prey. It is thus a combination of the strongest land animal (the lion) and the king of the skies (the eagle). It usually has long, upright ears reminiscent of a hare or donkey, and sometimes a tentacle-like stalk ending in a knob on its forehead (Fig. 12). It often has a long, curved neck and sometimes a jagged crest on its back, which makes it resemble a dragon.

According to the main rule of “How to Create a Monster”, it is constructed from unrelated parts of animals.⁴ However, there are also gryphons that have the appearance of a lion but – instead of the expected front paws – have the talons of a bird of prey. Finally, there was also the snake gryphon, which had a snake’s head on a lion’s body; its front feet were those of a lion, its hind feet those of a bird of prey.

There are fundamental misunderstandings among most people who hear the name of the gryphon, as well as ongoing disputes among linguists. The assumption that the name of the mythical animal (German name: Greif) derives from the German verb “greifen” (to grab) has been proven false. In reality, the name of the mythical creature is a foreign word that goes back to the Late Latin word *gryphus* and the Old High German word *grife* derived from it. One of the most famous German baroque poets, Andreas Greif, Latinised his family name Greif and thus became known as Andreas Gryphius (1616-1664). In contrast to late antique Latin, the gryphon was not called “gryphus” in classical Latin, but “gryps”, which is an exact adoption of the Greek word γρύψ (gryps).



Fig. 12: Olympia Museum: Gryphon attachment to a cauldron, JN 2017.

It is very likely that the Greek name for the gryphon is derived from the Greek word γρυπός (*grypós*), which means “crooked” and is linguistically related to the English words “crooked”, “cramp”, “brim” and “cripple”, all of which refer to something bent or twisted. Evidently, the curved beak and curved claws were such striking features of the mythical gryphon that it was named after them.

Because the Cretans and Greeks of the Bronze Age and Archaic Period adopted the mythical creature during their contacts with the cultures of the Near East and Egypt, it has repeatedly been suggested that the name used by the Greeks was borrowed from a Semitic language⁵ and that the term “gryphon” is etymologically related to the name of the Hebrew cherub – a servant and mount of the Hebrew god Yahweh⁶. The Greek choice of name for the mythical creature, which has its roots in Indo-European language, may have been influenced by the similar-sounding Semitic term. However, it is unlikely that it was directly adopted from Semitic, i.e. that it is a “loanword”.



Fig. 13: Persepolis, gryphon capital of the Apadana, audience hall of the Persian king. Hansueli Krapf, Wikipedia.

How the gryphon came to the Greeks

Gryphons appeared as early as the 4th millennium BC in the cultures of the Ancient Near East and Egypt, which associated the predator lion with parts of birds' bodies. Gryphons were protectors and servants of deities and rulers; sometimes, as in Egypt, they could represent the ruler himself. They guarded sanctuaries and palaces (Fig. 13). Some of them were also considered evil demons, whose repulsion or even defeat allowed gods and rulers to demonstrate their strength and power. In the 2nd millennium BC, the Assyrians drew on such Mesopotamian monsters, but also on gryphons from the Mitanni, a people who lived in northern Syria and Turkish Kurdistan. Of particular interest is a seal belonging to the Mitanni king Sauštatar (around 1440 BC), which shows an eagle standing on a lion – i.e. a preliminary stage of the fusion of the two animals into a gryphon (Fig. 14).

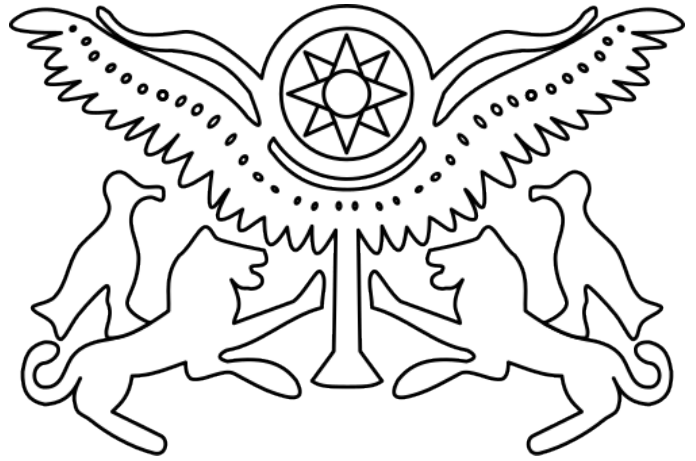


Fig. 14: Seal of the Mitanni king Sauštatar.
Wikipedia, public domain.

The Cretans adopted the gryphon from Egypt or the Ancient Near East. Gryphons placed on the walls protected the so-called throne room of Minos in Knossos, dating from the 15th century BC (Fig. 15). The Assyrians spread the gryphon as far as Cilicia and the Levant, where this monster was taken up by the Greeks

Fig. 15: The so-called Throne Room of Knossos.
Olaf Tausch, Wikipedia.



⁴ D.A. Amyx, *Corinthian Vase-Painting of the Archaic Period II. Commentary: The Study of Corinthian Vases*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 1988, 661: "Make-A-Monster (A Do-It-Yourself Kit)".

⁵ M.L. West, *The East Face of Helicon: West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth*, Oxford 2003 (1997), 580 f. Cf. H. Brandenburg, *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum XII*, 1983, under Greif, 951-995, esp. 951.

⁶ Old Testament, Psalm 18:11: "He rode upon the cherub and flew; he soared upon the wings of the wind."

from the 9th century BC – when the Greeks, after the Dark Ages (the “dark” centuries from around 1200-800 BC caused by the Late Bronze Age migration of peoples), once again advanced from their motherland to the coasts of Asia Minor and the Levant, thus bringing about the so-called Greek Renaissance. The newly-developing strength of Greek cities led to the expansion of the Greeks into many parts of the Mediterranean region, but also to a massive adoption of Oriental cultural assets. That is why this epoch is referred to as both the Greek Renaissance and the “Orientalising” epoch. The formation of a self-confident identity does not have to be in conflict with the creative adoption of foreign cultural assets.

The Greeks also advanced through the Bosphorus into the Black Sea region. There, they encountered Eurasian peoples, whom they called Scythians, and came into contact with another gryphon tradition. The Scythians were able to offer the Greeks grain, dried fish, and gold in payment for their luxury goods. Like the later conquistadors of Central and South America, the Greeks were interested in learning the origin of the gold on offer. The Scythians, who wanted to conceal the origin of the gold, told the Greeks stories that they obtained the gold from a mountain range in the far north (the Urals?) and that it was extremely dangerous to extract this gold because it was guarded by monsters that were a combination of eagles and lions. In her fascinating book *The First Fossil Hunters*⁷, Adrienne Mayor has traced the origin of the gryphon: While digging for gold in the permafrost, the Scythians came across well-preserved skeletons of the small dinosaur Protoceratops (Fig. 16) and reconstructed them as gryphons, which did not require a great deal of fantasy.⁸ The geographical connection with the mined gold thus made these monsters into the guardians of the precious metal resting in the ground. Proof that such gryphon stories actually circulated among the Scythians can be found in the tattoos of Scythian princes, some of whose bodies were preserved in the permafrost of Siberia. These tattoos depict gryphons, which were obviously intended to serve as personal guardian animals for the tattooed individuals (Fig. 17).⁹ Despite the threatening gryphons – or perhaps because of them – some Greeks attempted to penetrate the far North. The most famous of them was Aristeas (6th century BC), who came from the small island of Prokonnesos in the Sea of Marmara.¹⁰ His account of a journey to the land of the Scythians has not survived, but in the 5th century BC, the “father of history” Herodotus of Halicarnassus (today’s Bodrum) refers to him: “Now Aristeas, son of Kaïstrobios, from Prokonnesos, recounts in an epic poem how, seized by divine frenzy, he wandered to the Issedones, and beyond the Issedones, he says, live the Arimaspi, people with one eye, beyond the Arimaspi



Fig. 16: The Protoceratops.
After A. Mayor 44.



Fig. 17: Tattoos of Scythian princes.
After A. Mayor 25.



Fig. 18: The Earth according to Herodotus. Wikipedia, public domain.

live gryphons guarding gold, and beyond the gryphons live the Hyperboreans, who border on the sea. Of these peoples, one after another went to war against their neighbours, except for the Hyperboreans. First, the Issedones were driven out of their land by the Arimaspi, then the Scythians by the Issedones, and then, pushed by the Scythians, the Cimmerians had to leave their land on the southern sea.”¹¹ Herodotus assumed that the earth was a flat disc covered with water, on which three continents – Europe, Asia and Libya (= Africa) – floated, loosely connected. He settled the gold-bearing gryphons in what is now western Siberia, between the one-eyed Arimaspi and the Hyperboreans (Fig. 18).

When Alexander the Great (336-323 BC) expanded the Greek world eastwards to India, gryphons were also discovered there. In Bactria – which largely corresponds to present-day Afghanistan – the Greeks also heard of gryphons guarding gold. It is possible that in this case, too, it was the Scythians who had passed on this myth to their southern neighbours, the Bactrians: “The gryphon, the Indian animal, is, as I hear, four-footed like lions. It has enormously strong claws, which are also similar to those of lions. It has wings on its back; the colour of its plumage is black, the front part red, but the wings themselves are not of this colour, but white. The neck is covered with dark blue feathers, as Ctesias [a Greek physician at the court of the Persian Great King Artaxerxes II, 404-359 BC] recounts; the mouth is shaped like that of an eagle and the head is as artists paint and sculpt it. Its eyes, he says, are fiery. It builds its nest in the mountains. It is not possible to catch a full-grown gryphon, but the young ones are caught. The Bactrians, neighbours of the Indians, say that gryphons are guardians of the gold there, digging it out and building their nests with it; but the Indians take what falls down. The area where the gryphons live and the gold mines are located is extremely barren. The people who search

for the aforementioned metal come armed in their thousands, indeed twice as strong, bringing shovels and sacks with them and digging when the night is dark and there is no moonlight. If they remain unnoticed by the gryphons, they enjoy a double advantage, for they escape danger and also bring their load home. After those who are skilled in smelting gold have purified it by means of their art, they receive great wealth as a reward for the danger; but if they are caught, they perish. However, I hear that they do not return home until the third or fourth year.”¹²

⁷ A. Mayor, *The First Fossil Hunters: Dinosaurs, Mammoths, and Myth in Greek and Roman Times*, Princeton/Oxford 2000.

⁸ *Ibid.* 23.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ The surviving fragments have been compiled by J.D.P. Bolton in *Aristeas of Proconnesus*, Oxford 1962.

¹¹ Herodotus IV 13.

¹² Aelian, *De natura animalium* IV 28 (translation by K. Brodersen).

Apollo, Athena, Nemesis, and the gryphons

A Delphic myth linked Apollo with the Hyperboreans and their neighbours, the gryphons: According to the myth, the Hyperboreans lived in a paradise-like land high in the north on the Okeanos. Zeus had sent his illegitimate son Apollo, who was a thorn in the side of Zeus's wife Hera, to the Hyperboreans on a team of swans after his birth. This is based on the observation that some swans fly to the far north to breed. When Apollo grew up, he moved away from the Hyperboreans to Delphi, where he founded his most important oracle at the foot of Mount Parnassus. In winter, when it rained and became unpleasant in the Mediterranean region, Apollo would return to the land of his childhood and youth, the land of the Hyperboreans. During Apollo's winter holiday with the Hyperboreans, his Greek oracles remained closed. It was not until summer that he returned to Delphi and other oracles to help people with his advice and predictions.

Apparently, the Greeks developed the idea that Apollo used a gryphon as his mount on his journeys to and from the Hyperboreans. A beautiful stater coin made of electrum (a mixture of gold and silver) from the wealthy city of Cyzicus (Fig. 19), which lay on Apollo's route between the Hyperboreans and Delphi, shows him astride a gryphon. He is holding the laurel tree, which is sacred to him, in his hand, thus confirming the identity of the gryphon rider: The laurel tree is a reminder that, according to myth, Apollo was not lucky with women. The beautiful Daphne, with whom he had fallen in love, turned herself into a laurel tree to escape him. Even a handsome god was not always the darling of all women! Since then, the laurel tree has been called "daphne" in Greek. but Daphne has also remained a beautiful woman's name. The tuna placed under the gryphon on the stater is the heraldic animal of Cyzicus. In ancient times, the city benefited from the regular migration of this fish past it to the Mediterranean, and off Cyzicus, in the Sea of Marmara, took place what is known in Sicily as *mattanza* and in Spain as *almadraba*.

Because of these myths, the gryphon was closely associated with Apollo. Cities that minted a gryphon on their coins usually emphasised the importance of the cult of Apollo. This was particularly true of the Ionian city of Teos, whose main- and patron god from the 6th to the 4th century BC was Apollo. It was not until the 4th century that Dionysus took over this role.¹³ It is therefore not surprising that a beautiful gryphon facing to the right, or even just its head, was the main motif on the coins of Teos. On a stater from the 5th century BC, a gryphon facing to the right with long ears pricked up has its beak wide open, as if about to strike. It has raised its left lion's paw in a threatening manner. In



Fig. 19: Kyzikos, electrum stater 400-330 BC.
Apollo on a gryphon below a tuna // incusum.
Roma Numismatics 17, 28 March 2019, Lot 488.



Fig. 20: Teos. Stater, 5th century BC.
Gryphon facing right, wheel in front // incusum.
Künker Auction 416, 29 October 2024. Lot 1230,
Hammer Price: 12,000 euros.



Fig. 21: Teos, stater, 5th century BC.
Gryphon facing right, counting board in front // incusum.
Künker Auction 419, 17 March 2025. Lot 233,
Hammer Price: 3,200 euros.



Fig. 22: Abdera, stater 352 BC.
Abdera, gryphon leaping to the left // Apollo with patera,
laurel tree and deer.
Künker Auction 416, 29 October 2024. Lot 1109,
Hammer Price: 22,000 euros.



Fig. 23: Didyma, pilaster capital from the Temple of Apollo with gryphons. JN May 2017.

front of it is a wheel that will run over evildoers (Fig. 20). On another coin, the Teos gryphon makes the same threatening gesture, but this time a different object is depicted in front of it. This may be an abacus: The gryphon threatens to settle the score for evil deeds (Fig. 21).

Abdera, the colony of Teos located in Thrace, adopted the cults of its mother city, in particular the cult of Apollo and thus also the gryphon as a coin image. The colony of Abdera, founded by Greeks from the Ionian city of Klazomenai, was constantly exposed to attacks by the Thracians and was taken over by citizens of the city of Teos in 543 BC. They had decided to emigrate from their native city because they did not want to live under the rule of the Persians, who had conquered all of Asia Minor including their home.

The gryphon was such a familiar image on the coins of Teos and Abdera that both cities could afford to dispense with an inscription naming the minting city. Unlike those of Teos, the Abderite coins always show the gryphon facing left, making it easy to distinguish between the coins of the mother city and of the daughter city.

An extremely beautiful Abderite stater, which fetched 22,000 euros at our Auction 416 (Fig. 22), shows a gryphon leaping to the left on the obverse, and Apollo

embracing a laurel tree on the reverse. Behind him stands a deer. Apollo holds a sacrificial bowl in his outstretched right hand: Like other gods, he thus urges people not to neglect the sacrifices in his honour, which he himself instituted, as did Jesus at the Last Supper. However, the inhabitants of Abdera, the Abderites, did not honour Teos and its patron god Apollo. They became the simpletons of antiquity, known for all kinds of foolishness and embarrassment. The most important poet of the German Enlightenment, Christoph Martin Wieland (1733-1813) – a friend of Goethe's and tutor to the sons of Duchess Anna Amalia in Weimar – created a magnificent monument to the Abderites' city of gryphons in his novel *The History of the Abderites*. In the book he criticises and ridicules the stupidity and narrow-mindedness of his era. The novel remains timely and worth reading.

Gryphon images also adorned the Temple of Apollo in Didyma, which was one of the largest temples in Asia Minor and one of the most important oracles of Apollo (Fig. 23).

¹³ D.S. Lenger, A proposito del Grifone sulle monete d'Asia Minore, in: O. Tekin – A. Erol (eds.), *Ancient History, Numismatics and Epigraphy in the Mediterranean World. Studies in memory of C.E. Bosch – S. Atlan and in honour of N. Baydur*, Istanbul 2009, 215-222.



Fig. 24: Velia, didrachma 400-340 BC.
Head of Athena with gryphon as crest // lion, above it an owl.
Künker Auction 402, 14 March 2024. Lot 559,
Hammer Price: 800 euros.



Fig. 25: Assos, Æ minted between 400-241 BC.
Head of Athena // griffin facing left.
Numismatik Naumann 127, 2 April 2023. Lot 240.

Not only Apollo, but also the most warlike goddess of the Greeks, Athena, used the powers of the gryphon. On a coin from the southern Italian city of Elea, also known as Hyele or Velia and famous for its school of philosophy, the head of the city's patron goddess Athena is depicted on a didrachma minted between 400 and 340 BC (Fig. 24). Athena wears an Attic helmet with a gryphon on the helmet's bell. A bronze coin from the

Asia Minor city of Assos shows the head of Athena on the obverse; in this case, an olive wreath surrounds her helmet. On the reverse, a gryphon can be seen as the emblem of Assos (Fig. 25).¹⁴ Phidias (c. 500-430 BC) had earlier adorned the cult image of Athena in the Parthenon temple on the Acropolis in Athens with a gryphon helmet. Pausanias (I 24) discusses this in detail: "The cult image itself is made of gold and ivory. In the centre of the helmet sits the figure of a sphinx; ... but on either side of the helmet are gryphons. Aristeeas of Proconnesus tells in his works that these gryphons fought with the Arimaspians, who lived above the Issedonians, for gold. But the gold that the gryphons guard comes from the earth. ... The gryphons are lion-like animals with wings and eagle beaks."

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Fig. 26: Nemesis with gryphon from Perge, Antalya Museum. JN June 2017.

Nemesis, the goddess of retribution who gives everyone what they deserve and thus punishes crimes justly, has a gryphon, a wheel, and a cubit – i.e. a measuring rod – as companions or attributes. With the cubit, Nemesis could measure the severity of human transgressions before the gryphon seized the wrongdoer or the wheel rolled over him. A marble statue from Perge (Fig. 26), now on display in the Antalya Museum, shows the goddess with a gryphon at her side. In Smyrna, where two Nemesis goddesses were the divine protectors of the city, bronze coins were minted showing the Amazon Smyrna on the obverse, carrying a double axe on her shoulder, also known as an Amazon axe. The reverse side of the coin depicts a gryphon with its beak wide open, placing its left front paw on a wheel (Fig. 27). The gryphon symbolises the idea that divine and civil law should be enforced in Smyrna.

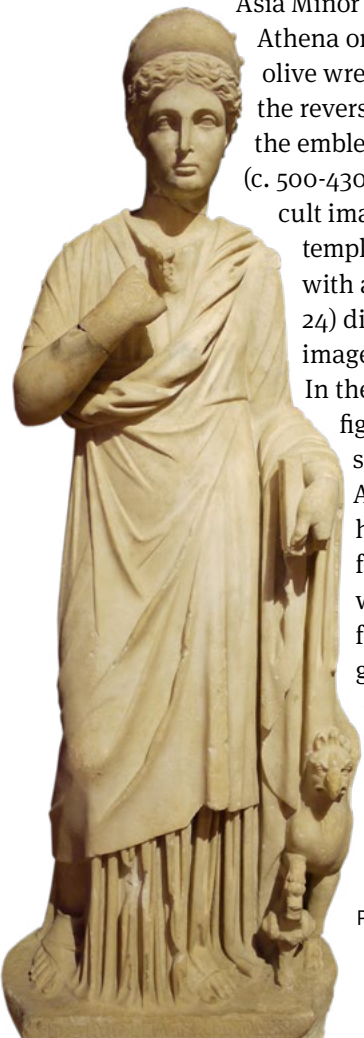
Emperors and gryphons

At the turn of the era, when Augustus (31 BC to 14 AD) founded the Roman Empire, the gryphon was a well-known animal in the ancient world. Although no one had ever seen one, everyone knew what it looked like and what it did. On the famous statue of Augustus from Prima Porta, now in the Vatican Museums, the Emperor wears a breastplate displaying an image in which Apollo sits with a kithara on a gryphon; on the opposite side, his sister Diana rides towards him on a stag (Fig. 28). While on Augustus's armour Apollo astride a gryphon is the Emperor's guardian god and patron of his cultural programme, on the armour of Augustus's successors the gryphons are more to be understood as protectors of the respective ruler's life and limb, such as the two gryphons on a marble statue of Hadrian from Perge in the Museum of Antalya (Fig. 29). As in the case of Nemesis, they probably also indicate that the emperor is capable of punishing injustice and evil.¹⁵

The gryphons survive the fall of the ancient world

The Edict of Milan (313), which granted Christianity recognition and tolerance in the Roman Empire, and Muhammad's flight from Mecca to Medina (622) mark the transition of the ancient world and its traditions into a new era. Two new world religions emerged, which from then on determined the fate of the Mediterranean region, Central Europe and the Middle East.

The gryphons survived this upheaval. In the Islamic Orient, ancient traditions about gryphons were taken up, especially those about Alexander the Great – who according to the tradition of the Alexander Romance is said to have ascended to heaven with the help of





1,5:1

Fig. 27: Bronze coin from Smyrna.

The Amazon Smyrna as city goddess // gryphon.

Numismatik Naumann 36, 4 October 2015. Lot 413.



Fig. 28: Apollo on a gryphon on the armour of Augustus of Prima Porta. JN 2005.



Fig. 29: Armoured statue of Emperor Hadrian from Perge, Antalya Museum. JN June 2017.

¹⁴ See J.O. Peuckert, *Der Greif als Parasemon von Assos*, *OZeAN* 6, 2024, 87-111.

¹⁵ See S. Wood, *Hadrian, Hercules and griffins: a group of cuirassed statues from Latium and Pamphylia*, *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 29, 2016, 223-238.

¹⁶ Ch. Tuczaý, *Motifs in "The Arabian Nights" and in Ancient and Medieval European Literature: A Comparison*, *Folklore* 116, 2005, 272-291; Ch. Tuczaý, *Dragon and Griffin: Symbols of Ambivalence*, *Mediaevistik* 19, 2006, 169-211.

gryphons. The Orient's love of storytelling further embellished such tales. The gryphon increasingly became a menacing bird that attacked travellers, especially sailors who had ventured into unknown seas. From then on, the gryphon became part of the eerie repertoire of horror stories, as we know them from the "Tales of One Thousand and One Nights".

Evidence of these Islamic gryphon traditions and their reinterpretation in medieval Europe can be found in a gryphon that the Pisans were said to have captured around 1100 in Moorish North Africa or Spain and placed on the roof of their cathedral, where it was to protect the Christian cathedral and even symbolise Christ as the conqueror of evil (Fig. 30). Isidore of Seville (c. 560-636), one of the most widely-read writers of the Middle Ages, had interpreted the gryphon as the lord of heaven and earth and thus as symbolising Christ.

The Crusades brought Europeans into closer contact with Islamic gryphon traditions.¹⁶ Medieval poems recounting journeys to the Holy Land drew on Islamic gryphon tales. The best known of these is the Bavarian verse novel *Herzog Ernst* written around 1180, in which the wonders of the Orient, including gryphons, feature prominently. From then on, Europe no longer had only Isidore and Pliny's "Natural History" to draw upon for gryphon lore. In that work, Pliny had written about the gryphon, closely following Herodotus. The Renaissance finally uncovered a wealth of forgotten ancient writings about gryphons and made them accessible again through book printing. Around 1500, this laid the foundation for gryphon traditions and gryphon fantasies to find their way into the complex coats of arms of the rulers that were then emerging. Thus, the dukes of Pomerania were able to stylise themselves as gryphon dukes, and the gryphon became Mannheim's mascot.



Fig. 30: The "captured" gryphon that once stood atop the Pisa Cathedral, now on display in the Cathedral Museum.

Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein: A count introduces himself

Medals commemorating the rise of the House of Löwenstein-Wertheim-Rochefort in 1711, with a look at the “Sendling Christmas Massacre”

Dedicated to His Highness Alois Konstantin, Prince of Löwenstein-Wertheim-Rosenberg

By Hertha Schwarz



1:1

Fig. 1: Silver medal by Philipp Heinrich Müller dedicated to Imperial Count Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein-Wertheim-Rochefort, 1709/1710. Künker Auction 244, 6 February 2014, Lot 184. Estimate: 5,000 euros; Hammer Price: 5,500 euros.



1:1

Fig. 2: Gold medal by Philipp Heinrich Müller dedicated to Imperial Count Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein-Wertheim-Rochefort, 1709/1710, on display at the County Museum in Wertheim. After Beck/Morschek 22.22.

On 6 February 2014, an extremely rare silver medal of Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein¹ (1656–1718) was auctioned at our Auction 244 in Berlin (Fig. 1); I cannot find any other examples of this medal in the coin trade catalogues available to me. This alone suggests that the medal was not minted in large quantities, and was intended only for an exclusive circle. Its size and weight also support this assumption: The silver coin has a diameter of 57.07 mm and weighs 80.91 g; gold coins with the same diameter and a weight of approx. 80 g – almost three ounces – have so far only been found in the coin cabinet of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna and in the Grafschaftsmuseum Wertheim (Fig. 2).

The lion with its eyes open

The profile portrait of Maximilian Karl on the obverse of the medal can without exaggeration be called a masterpiece: The finely-crafted features show a man of middle age with a tall allonge wig (Fig. 3). He is armed with a richly-decorated cuirass, from the neckline of which a fine lace cloth peeks out. His neck is covered by a light scarf.

The signature of the die-cutter – P. H. MILLER – nestles inconspicuously under the arm of the bust. This aesthetically-pleasing legend provides the most important information about the person depicted:



Fig. 3: Philipp Heinrich Müller, silver medal dedicated to Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein (Fig. 1), obverse.



1,7:1

Fig. 4: Philipp Heinrich Müller, silver medal dedicated to Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein (Fig. 1), reverse.

MAX(imilianus) • CAR(olus) • COM(es) • in
LOW(enstein) • WERT(heim) • ROS(chefort) • ET
MON(taigu) • PR(inceps) • DE CHAS•BIER • S(acrae) •
C(aesareae) • M(aiestatis) • CON(siliarius) • INT(imus) •
ADMIN(istrator) • BAV(ariae) – *Maximilian Carl,
Count of Löwenstein, Wertheim, Rochefort and
Montaigu, Lord of Chassepierre, Privy Councilor
to His Imperial Majesty, Administrator of Bavaria.*

The reverse side of the medal is dominated by a large rotunda with an imposing dome and a ball-crowned lantern (Fig. 4). Its base appears to the viewer as two steps, while pilasters with Ionic capitals divide the wall into uniform sections. The tall arched windows fitted between the pilasters lend the building a floating lightness. A cornice with a balustrade tops off the image and forms the transition to the dome. Despite its somewhat unusual features – pilasters instead of columns, walls instead of an open space – the rotunda visually evokes the impression of a monopteros, a Greek round temple, and thus a sacred site. The entrance, the central focus of the image, is an open arch that allows a view into the interior. Above this portal is a large, crowned shield, the field of which is occupied by a double-headed eagle with a halo, typical of the imperial coat of arms on imperial coinage (Fig. 5). In its right talon it holds a sword, but in its left talon, instead of the usual sceptre, it holds a palm branch as a symbol of peace.



Fig. 5: Joseph I (1705–1711), reichsthaler 1705, München. Künker Auction 394, 28 September 2023, Lot 4829. Estimate: 750 euros; Hammer Price: 1,900 euros.

In the lower half of the medal, occupying the foreground of the image and thus creating a sense of depth, lies a majestic lion. It looks attentively to the left over its shoulder, as if observing what is happening outside of the image. This turn of the head, as well as

¹ A detailed biography of Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein is not yet available. For further biographical data, please refer to: Karl-Heinz Zuber, *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, Vol. 15, p. 98 f. s.v. Löwenstein-Wertheim-Rochefort, Maximilian Karl Fürst zu Löwenstein-Wertheim-Rochefort, Maximilian Karl Fürst zu.

the entire facial expression, lend the lion an incredible dynamism and vitality: Although it lies quite calmly in the grass, it could spring up and attack at any moment. The message of this image is absolutely clear: Anyone who wants to enter the sanctuary can do so only if the lion allows them to, for there is no other way past it. Unsurprisingly, the motto in the section “Mission and Self-Image” confirms this: VIGILANTIA CVSTOS. Literally translated, this means “*protector through vigilance*,” reinforcing the message of the image that the lion protects the rotunda through its inherent vigilance. “*Vigilance makes the guardian*” would perhaps be a more appropriate German or English translation of the Latin motto “*Vigilantia Custos*,” as it is much closer in meaning.

Every contemporary of Maximilian Karl understood this image immediately. All were well aware that the rooster is placed on the roof to wake the maids in the morning and cry out to the Lord in heaven, but it is rather the lion which is stationed as a guardian in front of the doors of churches and sanctuaries – since the lion sleeps with its eyes open and is therefore always alert.² The Augsburg medallist Philipp Heinrich Müller apparently even drew on a common representation of this symbol for the design of the medal, which shows the lion as a guardian in front of the door of a round church (Fig. 6). In Müller’s much more elegant depiction the round sanctuary, unmistakable through the coat of arms above the door, symbolises the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein – the play on words with the name (German: “Löwe” = Lion, “Stein” = stone) was certainly not only welcome here, but intentional – is the majestic temple guardian who protects the empire from its enemies with the lion’s never-ending vigilance and ever-open eyes.

This coin depicting Imperial Count Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein is strikingly beautiful, a feature it shares with many other medals of its time. However, its unique combination of elegance and understatement makes it one of a kind. One instinctively senses that this is much more than just an artistically successful play on symbols and names. But unlike the contemporaries to whom this coin was addressed, today’s viewer can no longer even guess at the story behind the medal image.

² Arthur Henkel/Albrecht Schöne (eds.), *Emblemata: Handbuch zur Sinnbildkunst des XVI. und XVII. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart/Weimar 1967, ND 1996), col. 1215, s.v. *Vigilantia et custodia*.

³ Christl Hutt, *Maximilian Carl Graf zu Löwenstein-Wertheim-Rochefort und der fränkische Kreis 1700–102: Eine Studie zur Reichs- und Kreispolitik in zwei Bänden, Vol. I*, p. 225 f.



Fig. 6: Andrea Alciato, *Vigilantia & custodia*, Emblem XV from: *Les emblèmes latins-françois du Seigneur André Alciat excellent jurisconsulte. Avec argumens succincts pour entendre le sens de chaque emblème* (Paris 1548), fol. 23v.

The “*Hüt und Wach*” (guard and watch) in Old German was: “*Das der Han anzeigt mit seim Krehn | Das der Tag komb und thu sich nehn | Und wegt die schlaffenden Mägd auff | Das sie uber die kunckel lauff | Wirt auff die Kirchthürn gmeinlich gsetzt | Das Ertzin blech, das er man stets | Das Gemüt das er wacker sey | Und zu Gott ubersich auff schrey | Der Löw aber wirt drumb gstelst für | Der Tempel, Kirchen und Thumb thür | Zu einem Hüter dieweil er mit offnen Augen schlafft daher.*” It deals with the aforementioned contrast between rooster and lion as symbolic watch-animals [Henkel/Schöne (see note 2), col. 1215].

Fig. 7: Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein-Wertheim-Rochefort, detail from the portrait Fig. 17, 1711. Kleinheubach, private collection. Photo H. Schwarz.

Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein-Wertheim-Rochefort

Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein (Fig. 7), born on 14 July 1656 in Rochefort in the Ardennes, was the eldest son of Imperial Count Ferdinand Karl von Löwenstein-Wertheim-Rochefort and Landgravine Anna Maria von Fürstenberg-Heiligenberg. Throughout his life, he never distinguished himself in military campaigns, as the cuirass might insinuate. On the contrary, he was a first-class diplomat with an impeccable reputation who, behind the scenes, had a greater impact on the course of history than had many of his contemporaries on the battlefield. When Emperor Charles VI appointed him Principal Commissioner of the Perpetual Imperial Diet in Regensburg in November 1712, he justified this decision on the basis of Löwenstein's noble birth, his loyalty and skill, but above all because of his

*“impressive experience and knowledge in matters of the empire and the world, especially those relating to the alliances negotiated and concluded by His Majesty at the beginning of the ongoing war, as well as the domestic and foreign joint affairs associated with them.”*³ However, the medal cannot be minted on this basis, as Maximilian Karl was elevated to princely rank on April 3, 1711, but the title still refers to him as a count. Taking this title into account, it therefore seems reasonable to connect the undated medal to Maximilian Karl's activity as Administrator Bavariae.



Fig. 8: Votive image in the parish church of St. Laurentius in Rottach-Egern with a synoptic representation of the events during the attempt to conquer München on Christmas Day 1705. Photo H. Schwarz.

An elector gambles away his country

When the Bavarian Elector Maximilian II Emanuel abandoned his country and people after losing the Battle of Höchstädt on August 13, 1704, and hastily fled to the Spanish Netherlands, Emperor Joseph I appointed the experienced diplomat Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein as Governor of the Duchy of Upper Palatinate, the County of Cham, and Administrator in Bavaria because of his “*excellent qualities, strong common sense, and extraordinary experience*”⁴. It was the most thankless task imaginable at the time. Max Emanuel had led Bavaria into dire economic straits through his aggressive policies directed against the Emperor and the empire, and had made it hated by its neighbours; one need only recall the conquest of the free imperial cities of Ulm and Augsburg or the barbaric invasion of Tyrol. Contrary to the widespread but incorrect view today that Bavaria fell under Austrian, or even Habsburg, rule in 1704, no Austrian administration was established at that time, but rather an imperial one; legally, it could only be

an imperial administration, since Bavaria was not a conquered country, but rather a constituent state of the Empire. The imperial administration did not interfere with Bavarian affairs at all, but continued to work with the existing officials after they had sworn allegiance to the Emperor. However, Bavaria was treated like any other imperial territory. It was required to make the same contributions, provide soldiers for the imperial army, and pay for the quartering of various regiments stationed in the country. These demands placed the already exhausted Bavarian subjects in existential distress. The excesses committed by unruly soldiers did their part as well and gave rise to the subjects’ feeling that Bavarians had become prey to the Austrians and were being forced to atone for the sins of their sovereign. It was not love for the Elector or the fatherland, but the sheer misery of the average individual that sparked the uprising in 1705 – which today, greatly simplifying the complex events, remains alive in the memory of Bavarians as the “*Sendlinger Mordweihnacht*” (Sendling Christmas Massacre).⁵

The Sendlinger Mordweihnacht

The uprising in the Bavarian Oberland, instigated by Bavarian officials and citizens (who pressured the peasants with methods even worse than those used by the imperial commissions during conscription), culminated in a massacre on Christmas Day 1705 outside München, near the village of Sendling. Well-trained and heavily-armed imperial cavalry and infantry slaughtered defenceless, in part unarmed peasants from the Oberland who had long since surrendered and had knelt down to pray.

A votive image donated to St. Laurentius in Egern by survivors captures the events of 25 December 1705 in a vivid and poignant manner (Fig. 8). To this day, it remains unclear whether this massacre was ordered – and if so, by whom, as is also unclear – or whether, as some suggest, it was an excessive act of violence by undisciplined soldiers, which was not uncommon at the time.

An advocate for Bavaria

Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein, the civil Administrator of Bavaria, had recognised the danger arising from the brewing crisis and had urgently warned against overburdening the Bavarian subjects, asking for leniency. On 10 November 1705 he informed the Court War Council that *“this country will soon be finished”* if *“the excesses of the past are not stopped and the unruly soldiers are not brought to due obedience.”*⁶ The President of the Court War Council in Vienna at that time was none other than Prince Eugene of Savoy-Carignan. Ruthless and without any sense of the great hardship involved, he insisted on the stipulated demands so as not to jeopardise his war efforts in Italy. It is probably no exaggeration to describe him as one of the main persons responsible for the Bavarian uprising. Betrayed by their own officials and mercilessly harassed by the Court Council of War, the Bavarian subjects found their advocate, as paradoxical as this may sound, in the imperial Administrator. Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein worked tirelessly – and ultimately successfully – to ease the heavy burden on the country and its people. In Vienna, he was even criticised for being too lenient toward the Bavarians, but by stabilising conditions in Bavaria and ensuring a certain degree of recovery, he made a much greater contribution to the imperial finances than if he had used force to squeeze everything out of the country. When Max Emanuel was reinstated to his position in 1715 as a result of the peace treaties of Rastatt and Baden, and returned to Bavaria from exile in France, even his ministers were full of praise for the *Administrator Bavariae* for his *“wise, just, and gentle administration”*, and continued to praise him long after Maximilian Karl had passed away.⁷

Protector of the Empire

Through his prudent administration of Bavaria, Maximilian Karl not only secured an important resource for the Emperor during the War of the Spanish Succession, but even before the outbreak of this war: Through his work as imperial envoy to the Upper Rhine and Franconian circles, he had ensured that these important imperial circles did not declare themselves neutral or, worse still, take the French side, but instead sided with the Emperor.⁸ This was of crucial importance for the internal cohesion of the empire, because the War of the Spanish Succession was not an imperial war that would have obliged the “imperial circles” to support the Emperor, but a dynastic war between the Habsburgs and the Bourbons, which did not oblige the imperial circles to do anything. Had the Bavarian Elector and his French allies been successful in their efforts to win over the imperial circles, not only would Louis XIV have gained a foothold in the empire, but the empire could have been brought to the brink of collapse.⁹ The Count of Löwenstein, whose integrity certainly played a significant role in the negotiations, averted this danger through his vigilance and skill. He may accurately be portrayed as the protector of the Empire, as one who watched over the course of events like a lion and intervened to restore order. This explains Müller’s medal image perfectly, but the medal’s date and the actual purpose of its minting remain unclear.

⁴ Ibid., p. 212.

⁵ On the Bavarian uprising of 1705/1706, see: August Kühn, *Der Bayerische Aufstand 1705: Die Sendlinger Mordweihnacht* (München 1995); Sigmund von Riezler/Karl von Wallmenich (eds.), *Akten zur Geschichte des bayerischen Bauernaufstands 1705/1706*, in: *Abhandlung königlich bayerischer Akademischer Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-philologische Klasse*, Bd. 26, Vol. 26 (München 1912–1915).

⁶ Christian Strasser, *Der Aufstand im bayerischen Oberland 1705 – Majestätsverbrechen oder Heldentat?* (Münster 2005), p. 23.

⁷ Hutt (see note 3), p. 221.

⁸ Hutt (see note 3), p. 242; on the imperial administration, see: Alfred Fricke, *Die Administration in Bayern von 1704–1714* (Vienna 1954).

⁹ On Max Emanuel, see: Ludwig Hüttl, *Die Politik des Bayerischen Kurfürsten Max Emanuel im Lichte der französischen und österreichischen Quellen*, in: *Zeitschrift für Bayerische Landesgeschichte* 39, 1976, pp. 693–775.



Fig. 9: Copperplate engraving by Johann Balthasar Wening commemorating the elevation of Imperial Count Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein to princely rank, 1711. British Museum, <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/image/795559001> (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) – See obverse of Philipp Heinrich Müller’s silver medal on Maximilian Karl von, 1709/10 (Fig. 1).

Elevation to princely rank

The decisive clue to the interpretation of the medal is provided by a copperplate engraving from 1711 (Fig. 9) created by Johann Balthasar Wening after a model by Johann Degler. At its centre is a medallion with the portrait of Maximilian Karl on a high pedestal. To the right of the pedestal sits Iustitia with a sword and scales; expressing sympathy for Maximilian Karl, she places her right hand on his medallion. To the left of the pedestal stands Sapientia, representing wisdom and prudence, with a book and a sun sceptre in her left hand. With her right hand, she crowns the count’s

image with a laurel wreath. Above the scene, directly above the portrait of Maximilian Karl, the eye of God looks down approvingly on the ceremony. Apart from the date and the artist’s signature, the image contains neither names nor other written messages. But even without these, it is perfectly clear that this allegorical image refers to the elevation of the Count of Löwenstein. On 3 April 1711, shortly before his early death, Emperor Joseph I (1678–1711) elevated Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein-Wertheim-Rochefort to the rank of Imperial Prince, addressing him as “*Highborn, Dear Uncle.*”¹⁰ On the pedestal bearing the portrait of the Prince of Löwenstein, the medal image with the lion in front of the sanctuary (including the motto *VIGILANTIA CUSTOS*) is prominently and unmistakably displayed. This indicates the basis for Maximilian Karl’s elevation to the rank of prince, namely his loyalty, intelligence, skill, and prudence, which are expressly attested to in various sources. This in turn justifies the conclusion that Philipp Heinrich Müller’s medal must also have a direct connection to Maximilian Karl’s elevation in rank.

A count introduces himself

Elevation to princely rank was not only subject to strict conditions, it was also very difficult to achieve. The large number of people interested in an elevation in rank was countered by the unwillingness of the princes already represented in the Imperial Council of Princes, who had no interest in an increase in their number of votes through the admission of new members. Although the right to elevate a count to the rank of prince lay exclusively with the emperor, he could not do so without taking the existing imperial princes into consideration. Anyone aspiring to be elevated to the rank of prince therefore had to secure their favour, draw attention to himself, and remind them of his services to the empire. Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein submitted his request for elevation to the Emperor in 1709. The medal commemorating Maximilian Karl’s services to the Emperor and the empire is therefore not a memento of his time as Administrator in Bavaria, but rather a discreet reference to his request for elevation in rank; it must therefore have been created in 1709 at the earliest.

¹⁰ Austrian State Archives, General Administrative Archives (AT-OeStA/AVA) Adel RAA 254.14.



Fig. 10: Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein – mottos and emblems. Copperplate engraving by Franz Joseph [Xaver] Spätt after the model by Johann Andreas Wolff, 1710. British Museum, <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/image/795561001> (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).



Fig. 11: Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein – maxims and emblems (Fig. 10), detail CLEMENTER TIMERI SATIS EST.

In 1710, the München engraver Franz Xaver Joseph Spätt created a sheet with the portrait of Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein, surrounded by various emblems and mottos (Fig. 10), based on a drawing by the Bavarian court painter Johann Andreas Wolff. The portrait, set in a double oval frame, shows the count in a slight three-quarter view, looking directly at the viewer. The portrait is of great artistic quality and, beyond the external features such as the wig and cuirass, bears a striking resemblance to the profile image on the medal. If one could turn the face in the copperplate engraving into profile, the result would be the image on the medal. Even a cursory glance at this copperplate engraving shows that we are looking at a characterisation of Count von Löwenstein that describes his qualities in war and peace. This is indicated by the inscriptions on the ribbons wrapped around the palm fronds that frame the portrait medal: BELLO (*war*) on the left, and PACE (*peace*) on the right. Two emblems directly refer to the symbol of the lion: On the war side, the medal shows an upright, alert lion (Fig. 11). In front of it, a hare crouches without any fear, behind it stands a sheep, also free of any fear, while in the background a roebuck looks around, carefree. This is the realisation of an ancient symbol from the emblemata morales: “*The brave and noble lion watches day and night without ever closing its eyes, a living symbol and image of the one who reigns in supreme dominion. The hare, which is a fearful little animal, watches out of pure cowardice. The hare and the lamb can sleep when the lion watches over them in order to protect them.*”¹¹ The inscription around the



Fig. 12: Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein – maxims and emblems (Fig. 10), detail SAPIENTER SPLENDORE REGIT.

edge, CLEMENTER TIMERI SATIS EST (*It is enough to be feared moderately*) refers to the *Clementia*, or clemency, that the lion shows even in war.

The *Clementia* of the lion in war is contrasted on the peace side by *Sapientia*, or wisdom. As the inscription on the medal states, this is accompanied by splendour: SAPIENTER SPLENDORE REGIT (*He rules wisely with splendour*). As a symbol of this splendour the leaping lion of the zodiac, surrounded by numerous stars, adorns the medal (Fig. 12). Regulus, “the little prince” – the brightest and largest star in the constellation that can be seen with the naked eye – is prominently displayed on the medal image on the lion’s heart. However, the star derives its light from the sun, the unique “planet” that imparts splendour to everything around it. Louis XIV chose the sun as his emblem because, “according to the rules of heraldry, it represents the highest nobility.”¹² However, as the flag on the right above the portrait of Maximilian Karl shows, one can only ascend to the sun, or the highest nobility, with the right attitude. The lion on Spätt’s copperplate engraving has achieved this: On the medal’s image, it circles the sun like a shining star. As a sign of victory, a laurel bush flourishes in the foreground. Between the two medals is Maximilian Karl’s full title in 1710: Illusstrissimus & Excellentissimus Dominus Dominus MAXIMILIANVS CAROLVS S(acri) R(omani) Imp(erii) Comes in Löwenstein, Wertheim, Rochefort & Montaigu, Princeps absolutus in Chasse-Pierre, Dominus in Scharffenegg, Preyberg, Kerpen,

Casselbourg, Herbimont, Neufchateau, Sacrae Caes(are)ae M(aiesta)-tis Consiliarius Intimus, nec non pro tempore Superiore & Inferioris Bavariae Administrator (*Most famous and excellent Lord, Lord Maximilian Carl, Count of the Holy Roman Empire in Löwenstein, Wertheim, Rochefort, and Montaigu, Lord in Chassepierre, Lord in Scharfeneck, Breuberg, Kerpen, Casselburg, Herbemont, Neufchâteau, Privy Councilor to His Imperial Majesty, at this time Administrator of Upper and Lower Bavaria*). In contrast to this title, which clearly identifies Maximilian Karl as a count, a princely hat trimmed with ermine, flanked by two count's crowns, tops the arrangement of portrait medal and flags. This princely hat, in combination with the year of origin of the print, 1710, proves that this image is directly related to Maximilian Karl's request for elevation to princely status. It is a perfectly thought-out program in which Maximilian Karl explains in an inimitably reserved manner why he in particular is worthy of princely status. Philipp Heinrich Müller's medal, which also refers to war and peace through the attributes of the imperial eagle – sword and palm branch – and this copperplate print must therefore be understood as a single entity. Regardless of whether they were created at the same time or slightly offset from each other, these are the media that Maximilian Karl used in his campaign in the Imperial Council of Princes. They also included the thaler that Maximilian Karl had minted in 1711 (Fig. 13).

The image on the obverse corresponds in every detail of the breastplate to the design of Müller's medal, and one can safely assume that Philipp Heinrich Müller was the die-cutter. Unlike Maximilian Karl's thaler from 1697 (Fig. 14), the image on the reverse no longer shows his coat of arms, but a "speaking" image with a motto. An upright lion places its right paw on a stone. Its head is turned toward the viewer, as if it wants to whisper the motto in the upper semicircle to reassure them – depending on their point of view – or perhaps as a warning: *IN CASVS PERVIGIL OMNES* (*In all cases [I am] completely vigilant*). The title on the front still refers to Maximilian Karl as a count, which means that the coin was minted before the imperial decree of 3 April, which elevated Maximilian Karl to the rank of prince.



Fig. 13: Imperial Count Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein, thaler, 1711. Künker Auction 406, 20 March 2024, Lot 4253. Estimate: 5,000 euros; Hammer Price: 7,000 euros.



Fig. 14: Imperial Count Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein, thaler, 1697. Künker Auction 370, 21 June 2022, Lot 1561. Estimate: 6,000 euros; Hammer Price: 6,750 euros.



Fig. 15: Prince Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein, thaler, 1712. Künker Auction 406, 20 March 2024, Lot 4254. Estimate: 2,500 euros; Hammer Price: 3,400 euros.

¹¹ Henkel/Schöne (see note 2), col. 399 f., s.v. Pervigilant ambo.

¹² Uwe Schultz, *Der Herrscher von Versailles Louis XIV und seine Zeit* (München 2006), p. 101.



Fig. 16: Silver medal by Philipp Heinrich Müller depicting Prince Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein-Wertheim-Rochefort, 1716. Leipzig coin dealer and auction house Heidrun Höhn Auction 102, Lot 2511. Hammer Price: 1,620 euros.

As a prince, he had another thaler minted a year later, in 1712 (Fig. 15). The image on the front shows the bust of Maximilian Karl wearing a princely cloak and the first part of the legend D(ei) • G(ratia) • MAX(imilianus) • CAROL(us) • S(acri) • R(omani) • IMP(eri)i (*By the grace of God, Maximilian Karl, Holy Roman Empire*), which continues on the reverse: PRINCEPS • IN LOWENSTEIN • WERTH(eim) • 17 12 (*Prince in Löwenstein-Wertheim, 1712*). The princely mantle and the princely hat as a crown of rank enclose the Löwenstein coat of arms on the reverse.

The Prince

During his last years as administrator in Bavaria, Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein also held the office of Principal Commissioner at the Perpetual Imperial Diet in Regensburg. Emperor Charles VI had appointed him to this office in 1712; in 1716, he then appointed the Prince of Löwenstein as Governor of Milan. Maximilian Karl had a medal minted in Regensburg in 1716 to mark this appointment (Fig. 16).¹³ In keeping with his calm and steady nature, he chose the motto that had accompanied him throughout his career: VIGILANTIA CVSTOS. The reverse side shows the same image of the lion in front of the sanctuary, created by Philipp Heinrich Müller for the first minting. The bust on the obverse, however, was adapted to the current circumstances. The clearly older Maximilian Karl wears the princely mantle around his shoulders, and the inscription names him as D(ei) • G(rati)am • M(ax)imilianus • CAROL(us) • S(acri) • R(omani) • I(mperii) • PRINCEPS • IN LOWENST • WERTH • (*By the grace of God, Maximilian Karl, Prince of the Holy Roman Empire in Löwenstein-Wertheim*). This stamp also comes from the hand of Philipp Heinrich Müller; the medal was minted in gold and silver.

It is extremely rare and, as far as I know, only one very worn specimen has been offered on the coin market to date.

Intellect, reason, ability, and loyalty: These are the terms that constantly appear in the writings of the time when referring to Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein. Measured by his achievements and the high esteem in which he was held by all, his “presentation” here appears very modest. Even the reference to his Wittelsbach ancestry – as everyone knew, the House of Löwenstein traced its roots back to Frederick the Victorious (1425–1476), Elector Palatine – is only subtly hinted at in Spät’s engraving. Only when you look very closely do you realise that the Bavarian diamonds fill the background of the picture. What Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein revealed about himself could be verified by anyone and corresponded to reality. It is a self-portrayal that is neither artificial nor untrue. Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein had no need for self-aggrandisement. He was convincing through his personality, his character, and his empathy, which revealed deep humanity.

However, the intelligence, ability, and reason for which Maximilian Karl was so highly praised would have been of little value if they had not been accompanied by steadfastness. It is easy for an intelligent person to recognise what reason dictates, but it requires willpower and steadfastness to follow the dictates of reason despite all temptations. The steadfastness of the Prince of Löwenstein was put to the test at an early age. When Charles II of the Palatinate died in 1685, ending the Simmern line of the Counts Palatine of the Rhine, Louis XIV made him a more than tempting offer: If he, Maximilian Karl (then 29 years old) were to claim the Palatinate electorate on the basis of his ancestry, he would have the entire French army at his disposal. The French King is said to have offered him a million guilders for the transfer of his claims.¹⁴ The offer was delivered to him by his uncle Wilhelm Egon von Fürstenberg, his mother’s brother, who – although an imperial prince – had devoted his entire life to the service of the French crown and thereby brought great suffering upon the empire. Wilhelm Egon von Fürstenberg was an excellent diplomat. While Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein certainly learned a great deal from him, he never adopted his uncle’s views and policies. His sober mind told him what devastating consequences it would have to allow himself, as an imperial count, to be used in the service of French interests. He remained steadfast and refused.



Fig. 17: Johann Andreas Wolff (?), Imperial Prince Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein-Wertheim-Rochefort in full ceremonial armour with princely cloak, hat, and commander's staff, 1711. Kleinheubach, private collection. Photo: H. Schwarz.

All of Maximilian Karl's characteristics outlined here are reflected in his facial features, which have been preserved for us on medals, prints, and above all in the life-size portrait, probably created by the Bavarian court painter Johann Andreas Wolff (Figs. 7 and 17): *"A handsome majesty of physique, joyful starry eyes fired with a strange brilliance, a high, cheerful forehead, and throughout a masculine beauty of countenance, a lively memory, the sharp quickness of a far-seeing mind, mature judgment, and an innate honeyed eloquence,"* whereby everyone could therefore easily see *"that the first fundamental rule of his princely nature ... was to increase in age and wisdom."*¹⁵

¹³ StAWt R-Rep. 58 No. 28.

¹⁴ Johann David Köhler, *Historische Münzbelüstigung*, Fünfter Theil, Nürnberg 1733, 39th piece, pp. 305–312.

¹⁵ StAWt R-Lit. B 968: Aus der Trauerrede auf Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein, zitiert nach Hutt (see note 3), p. 55.



Werner Beck and Jürgen Morschek

Coins and medals of the Counts of Wertheim and the House of Löwenstein-Wertheim (1363–1806).

Published by the Wertheim Historical Society in conjunction with the Wertheim State Archives (Publications of the Wertheim Historical Society, Volume 11, Wertheim 2025, 564 pages).

As Count of Wertheim, Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein also had "normal" coins minted – kreuzers, batzens, and half-thalers. An overview of his entire coinage activity can be found in Werner Beck and Jürgen Morschek, *Coins and Medals of the Counts of Wertheim and the House of Löwenstein-Wertheim (1363–1806)* on pages 326–344.

Wertheim, located at the confluence of the Tauber and Main rivers, was an important hub for trade on the Main. The transshipment of goods in the port alone and the customs duties and fees levied on them required constant monetisation with a sufficient volume of small change. The Counts of Wertheim and later the Counts of Löwenstein-Wertheim, who divided into two lines in 1611 – the so-called older Protestant line of Löwenstein-Wertheim-Virneburg (Freudenberg) and the younger Catholic line of Löwenstein-Wertheim-Rochefort (Rosenberg) – developed a correspondingly lively coinage activity. Werner Beck and Jürgen Morschek have not only meticulously documented this in comprehensive detail with regard to the necessary numismatic data, they have also succeeded in providing pictorial evidence of each coinage. This is of considerable importance for numismatic work. Since medals and commemorative coins also find their rightful place in the work, the new reference work on Wertheim coinage becomes a visual journey through the economic, political, and dynastic history of the town and county of Wertheim.

Manching: kelten römer museum manching

Prior to the robbery, Manching in Upper Bavaria and its museum were only known to a select few. Visitors can admire many of the artefacts unearthed during the excavation of the Celtic oppidum there. So even after the tragic robbery of the Celtic gold treasure, there is still plenty to see at the kelten römer museum manching.

By Ursula Kampmann



Reconstruction of a Celtic city gate with a section of the Murus Gallicus described by Caesar. Photo: KW.

11,800 solid cubic meters of wood, two tons of iron nails, 6,900 cubic meters of limestone, not to mention 90,000 cubic meters of soil – modern scholars estimate that this is how much building material the Celts needed to construct the 7.2-kilometer city wall surrounding the Oppidum of Manching. This means that there can be no doubt: In Celtic times, Manching was not a small, sleepy village, but a thriving economic center that could afford to protect its inhabitants with strong walls.

The Oppidum of Manching

The settlement, whose ancient name is unknown, was founded in the 3rd century BC. Its location was ideal

in terms of transport: It was situated at the intersection of trade routes running from north to south and from west to east. In addition, a small river connected the port of Manching with the Danube. These were ideal conditions that enabled Manching to grow into a booming economic metropolis. The Oppidum of Manching was probably the center of the Vindelici tribe, who inhabited the Alpine foothills between Lake Constance and the Inn River up until the reign of Augustus. We know this because their tribal name was inscribed on the Roman victory monument at La Turbie, commemorating the victorious Alpine campaign of 15 BC.

With an urban area spanning 380 hectares and a population of up to 10,000 people, Manching is said to have reached its peak in the middle of the 2nd century BC. It is said that Manching was the largest Celtic oppidum north of the Alps. Archaeological finds suggest that there

was international trade as well as a thriving glass and metalworking industry.

You might be wondering why Caesar did not mention Manching in his propaganda work *De bello Gallico*. He wrote it too late, as Manching had already begun to decline by 100 BC. This is why the city was never conquered by the Romans.

The Roman Fort at Oberstimm

Speaking of the Romans, they built a fort in Oberstimm under Emperor Claudius, which is about an hour's walk away. The fort was part of the Upper Germanic-



The stolen Manching coin hoard. Photo: KW.



Tools for coin production: upper and lower die as well as a punch to create the dies. Photo: KW.



Clay tablets with molds used to produce blanks. Photo: KW.

Rhaetian Limes and housed a mobile troop comprising about 500 cavalymen and foot soldiers. There must also have been a small fleet at a port in Oberstimm, but we will discover more about this later because artefacts from Oberstimm can also be seen in the kelten römer museum manching.

In any case, Oberstimm lost its military-strategic function in 120 AD. The fort was abandoned. The civilian settlement that formed next to the fort survived until the 3rd century AD.

kelten römer museum manching

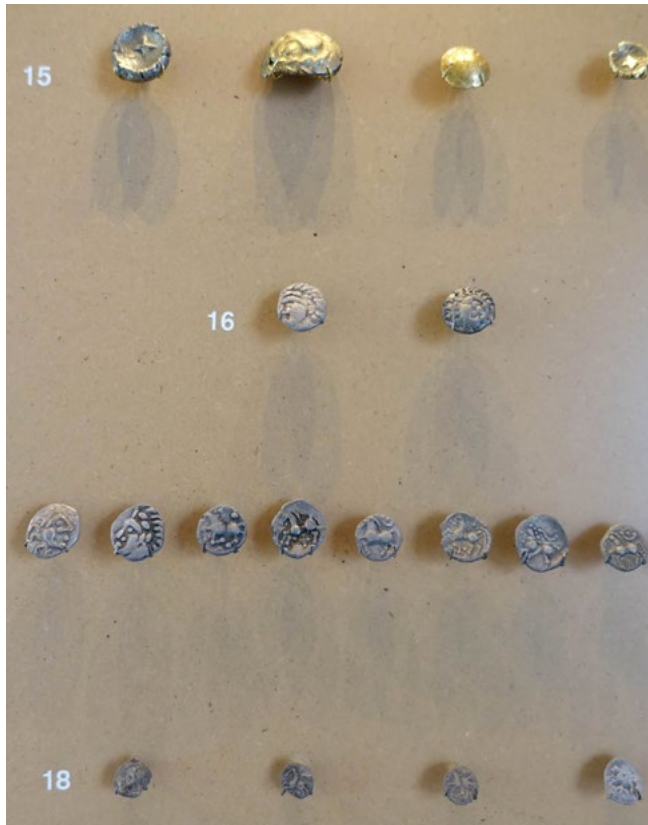
As early as in 1831, Manching was first mentioned as a find location. The first excavation took place in 1892/3. But it would take some time until the eminent

Bavarian archaeologist Paul Reinecke identified the ring wall at Manching as the remains of a Celtic oppidum. Excavations have been carried out repeatedly ever since. It is fair to say that Manching is now one of the best-researched Celtic oppida in Central Europe. For this reason, there has long been a desire to display the finds stored in the Bavarian State Archaeological Collection in Munich at the site where they were discovered.

Therefore, a separate museum was built in Manching. It opened its doors on 2 June 2006. Creating such branches of the State Archaeological Collection is part of the Bavarian concept. Rather than concentrating all finds in a single museum in the state capital, the aim is to provide other regions with museum centers, where the past of the specific region can be explored. The State Archaeological Collection has established eight branches throughout Bavaria. Each of them displays valuable artefacts found at the site of their discovery.

What Coin Collectors Can No Longer Admire in Manching

It is highly unlikely that visitors will ever be able to see again what is probably the museum's most significant numismatic attraction. It was an impressive hoard of Celtic gold coins, discovered in 1999 – and this is truly exceptional(!) – during the official excavations at the Manching site. This means that, for once, we know the exact location and context of the coin find.



Overview of the coins found in Manching. Photo: KW.

However, the hoard is interesting for another reason, too: it consists of 483 coins that are Boii shell staters, rather than rainbow cups with a bird's head that are much more likely to be found in this area. It is assumed today that these shell staters were minted in Bohemia, and the entire hoard is dated to the late 2nd or early 1st century BC. So how did these 483 Bohemian gold coins end up in Manching? We will never know.

Incidentally, the coin hoard did not only contain gold coins but also a so-called Goldgusskuchen ("gold cast pie") with a weight of 217 g. The hoard had a total weight of 3.724 kilograms of gold, so its gold value alone would amount to about 300,000 euros today, on 30 July 2025.

This attracted a gang of criminals who stole the gold treasure on the night of 22 November 2022. Although the perpetrators have been caught and convicted in the initial trial, most of the coins are still missing. Only 18 gold lumps were seized from a suspect's trouser pocket at the time of their arrest. The material composition of the lumps corresponds exactly to that of Bohemian shell staters. However, Maximilian S's defense attorney claims that this is "far from" proof that the man in whose trouser pocket these lumps were found was involved in the burglary.



Hoard of materials belonging to a Roman goldsmith. Photo: KW.

Nevertheless, the police assume that the 18 gold lumps were created by melting down four Celtic shell staters each. This should clarify the whereabouts of approximately 70 coins. The rest of the treasure is still missing. The defendants, who were sentenced to lengthy prison terms on 29 July 2025, refuse to divulge any information.

Tragically, at the time of the theft, this unique coin hoard had not yet been scholarly examined in detail. There is only a 14-page summary by Bernward Ziegeus, published in the 18th volume of the series "Die Ausgrabungen in Manching" from 2013. This volume presents the overall results of the excavations carried out between 1996 and 1999, and 14 pages is next to nothing given the significance of this hoard. Thus, the theft of the gold hoard did not only deprive the museum of one of the highlights of its exhibitions. It also deprived researchers of an opportunity to examine and publish one of the largest Celtic gold finds in history – a hoard with an unusually verifiable find context – using the most modern methods.

What Coin Enthusiasts Can See Nonetheless

Even though this famous hoard disappeared, there is still a lot to see in Manching for coin enthusiasts. The museum had presented the gold treasure in its numismatic context, and many other numismatic artefacts have been unearthed. For example, visitors can see the various types of Celtic coins found in Manching. Even more impressive are the minting tools, which prove that not only weapons, tools and glass bracelets but also coins were produced in Manching.



The Roman ships of Oberstimm. Photo: KW.

You can see several clay tables with molds of the kind that have also been unearthed in many other Celtic excavation sites. It is believed that these were used to produce blanks, which were then struck in a second step. To do so, precisely weighed quantities of metal were poured into the individual molds and melted. This is how the Celts made sure that each of the coins had approximately the same weight.

Also on display are two upper dies for coin production, as well as a large lower die with several coin images engraved into it. A punch, which was also found, was probably used to transfer the motifs.

Last but not least there is a small Celtic box used to store gold coins. The piece measures just 4 centimeters.

Also on display are several hoards of materials, i.e. found bars, metal fragments or scrap metal intended for further processing. Although this material was not used as currency, it undoubtedly had material value.

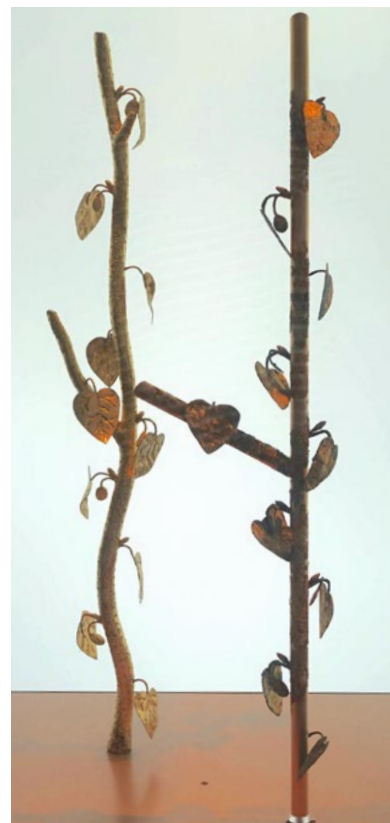
The Museum's Two Non-Numismatic Highlights

Finally, let us take a look at the museum's non-numismatic highlights. The most remarkable object is the so-called cult tree of Manching. Do not take the "cult" element too seriously. Whenever archaeologists are unsure what something is, they refer to a "cult" or identify it as a "children's toy".

Ultimately, we do not know what purpose the enchanting little tree with golden leaves might have served. It was kept in a wooden box, the remains of which were also discovered during the excavation. Was it a decorative piece? That does not sound much more likely, either. For now, it remains a cult object, speculated to have been carried in processions. Perhaps a kind of Celtic mini maypole.

The purpose of the two Roman highlights, on the other hand, is undisputed. The two wooden boat wrecks, which were discovered in 1986, were part of the fleet of Oberstimm. They are a truly extraordinary find, as they are the best-preserved Roman military ships north of the Alps. The wrecks provided so much detail that a team led by the Institute of Ancient History of the University of Hamburg built a replica of one of the boats. Dating from around 100 BC, it was used as a patrol and combat boat. The boat's seaworthiness was proved by students at the University of Hamburg, who took their replica called "Victoria" on a voyage.

As you can see, even after the theft of the coin hoard, a visit to the *kelten römer museum manching* is well worth it. Perhaps the thieves will come to their senses and reveal where they left the rest of the stateres from the find. While they were hoping to be acquitted due to lack of evidence, there was no reason for them to do so.



The so-called "cult tree" (Kultbäumchen) of Manching. Photo: KW.

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