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THE UNIVERSITY COIN COLLECTION IN UPPSALA

The first 300 years

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The history of the Uppsala collection is very much coloured by the overall condition of numismatics in Sweden. There is one national collection in Stockholm, the Royal Coin Cabinet, founded in 1572. As well, there are two university collections, in Uppsala and Lund, and there have been more than twenty minor but good collections at the old Cathedral schools. Of these minor collections, only a few are now actively maintained and many have been amalgamated into the provincial museums of their towns – though only in one case with a curator in charge of the numismatic collection. It is especially sad that the excellent collection in Gothenburg has been inaccessible for many years, with only faint hopes of a revival. Besides the Royal Coin Cabinet, only the two mentioned university collections and the collection in the provincial museum of Växjö in southern Sweden are today open to the public or accessible for research.

The interplay between these cabinets and the Royal Coin Cabinet has largely depended on how the law – initially enacted in 1666 – concerning treasures, has been adhered to, at any given time. Finds of coins or other archaeological artefacts should be given to the central authorities, under threat of various degrees of sanctions. This has led to an important number of coin hoards being given to the Royal Coin Cabinet in Stockholm, which is now home to approximately 200,000 coins found in Swedish soil, predominantly Anglo-Saxon, German, and Islamic coins from the Viking Age. Thus today, when the law is very strictly enforced, all known hoards go to Stockholm and generally remain there after identification and study. Due to lack of trained staff or for security reasons, very few such hoards are acquired by provincial museums.

This has not always been so. Even if educated people knew the law very well, many new hoards discovered in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, found their way into private or other collections. People who had studied at university and started collecting coins, perhaps late in life, often came to work at or near places rich in coin hoards, such as the islands of Öland or Gotland. There they could easily acquire interesting pieces and build up good collections. In the 19th century, however, due to the strong personality of Bror Emil Hildebrand (1806–1884), who from 1837–1877 was not only head of the Royal Coin Cabinet in Stockholm but was also the National Antiquarian, hoards were more regularly sent to Stockholm. This did not prevent energetic leaders of other cabinets in Sweden from acquiring important hoards for their collections, sometimes by buying coins from goldsmiths just before they were melted down. Numismatic research, as it was, was not

restricted to a few scholars at central institutions, but was also a favourite occupation of many who could afford to spend time and money on their interests.

In the late spring of 1694, three years before his death, Swedish King Karl XI (reigned 1660/1672–1697) donated a magnificent gift to Uppsala University. It was the famous Augsburg Kabinettsschrank (Augsburg cabinet), that was given to Swedish King Gustavus Adolphus II (reigned 1611–1632) in 1632 when he entered the town of Augsburg during the Thirty-Years' War. It had been ordered and assembled by the well-known Philipp Hainhofer (1578–1647), who had for several years brought together and ordered exquisite objects of ivory, ebony, and other precious materials, to be put into the more than two-metre-tall cabinet. It was said that he and the king spent days together, discussing all the hidden objects lying in the secret little drawers, hidden behind the beautifully decorated doors. Certainly, they also looked at the approximately 200 coins and medals in the cabinet.

These coins and medals from 1694 formed the first numismatic collection of the university, as far as we know. However, this was far from the only or even the earliest coin collection in Uppsala. We have information about more than twenty learned coin collectors living or studying in Uppsala in the second half of the 17th century. Among them were the archbishops of Uppsala, father and son Benzelius (Erik Benzelius the Elder and Erik Benzelius the Younger, 1632–1709 and 1675–1743 respectively) and the erudite Professor Johannes Schefferus. Schefferus (born in Strasbourg, 1621; died in Uppsala, 1679) had been invited to Sweden by Queen Kristina (reigned 1632–1654). He brought along his own coin collection and used it in his lectures. One of his pupils was Elias Brenner (1647–1717), who in 1691 published the *Thesaurus Nummorum Sveo-Gothicorum* (in two versions, Latin and Swedish), which earned him the honorary title, “Father of Swedish Numismatics”. Equally important, in 1666 a board, the *Antikvitets Collegium* (College of antiquities), was established in Uppsala by order of King Karl XI. Under the direction of its first Assessor, Johan Hadorph (1630–1693), it was to gather information and describe Swedish antiquities and archaeological finds for national historical records. When Hadorph died, his family was asked to return the medals and coins he had taken home from the Collegium. He also cited coins in his 1680 paper *Påminnelser om de tre kronor* (Memorandum concerning the three crowns). We may thus confidently state that, even if we have no evidence of a collection of coins at the university, many private collections as well as the *Antikvitets Collegium* were certainly located in Uppsala at the end of the 17th century.

We do not know exactly what happened to the coins and medals in the Augsburg cabinet after 1694, but two professors were asked to compile an inventory of it only a few years later. In 1784, there were complaints that coins had “probably been taken out of the cabinet to form part of the Academy’s Coin and Medal Cabinet”. We also know that Queen Kristina had taken coins and medals from it for her famous collection. How much she took with her and how much she left in Amsterdam on her way to Rome, after abdicating in 1654, is unknown. In

1695, at least a part of her coin collection was brought back from Amsterdam by King Karl XI.



Fig. 1. Bust of Lovisa Ulrika, Queen of Sweden (1751–1771).

Sculptor: Johan Tobias Sergel (Stockholm, 1740–1814).

Uppsala University Coin Cabinet. (Photo: Teddy Thörnlund, Uppsala University).

The university collection grew considerably, when in the middle of the 18th century Queen Lovisa Ulrika (1751–1771, **Fig. 1 and 2**) gave it duplicates from the great numismatic collection that she had bought from Count Carl Gustaf Tessin (1695–1770). A few years later, in 1751, the university agreed to buy a collection of 2,699 coins, including a beautiful cabinet, from the university's Chancellor, Count Carl Didric Ehrenpreus (1692–1760). Important Swedish finds were also included among the new acquisitions. After these additions, the collection comprised more

than 5,000 coins. In 1752, Ewald Ziervogel (1728–1765), a young librarian at the university, was asked to catalogue the collection and to give regular lectures (as a professor from 1758). He also published many books, but after he died prematurely in 1765, there was no one to succeed him as curator of the coin cabinet until 1781. Eric Götlin (1744–1820), officially Professor of Rhetorics and Eloquency, but with a great interest in Islamic coins, took over and remained curator of the numismatic collection for almost 40 years, until 1820. During his tenure, he published important research, not only on Islamic coins, but also perceptive about the first Swedish coins (*De initiis monetae Svecanae*, 1806).



Fig. 2. Cabinet made for Queen Lovisa Ulrika's collection of *naturalia* in the Drottningholm Palace, Stockholm, now in the Uppsala University Coin Cabinet.
(Photo: Teddy Thörnlund, Uppsala University).

Götlin was succeeded by Johan Henrik Schröder (1791–1857), professor of history and head of the university library. He was also in charge of the archaeological collections, which may not have been very large, as he exhibited them at his home. During his time, the numismatic collection grew considerably, partly due to his energy and extensive contacts in Sweden and abroad, and partly to his charming personality, which helped him acquire objects that would otherwise have been given to other museums or collectors. In the numismatic field, he is especially known for his first speech (1827, published 1830) as a newly elected member of the Royal Academy of Letters, History, and Antiquities, in which he discussed the earliest Swedish coins. Before him, there were many nationalistic theories referring the first coins to an earlier mythical age, theories based more on discussions of previous authors' better or lesser arguments.

On the basis of his observation of the Viking-Age finds and their contents of imported coins, Schröder concentrated on those from the closest region – the Nordic countries. He demonstrated the historical, chronological and iconographical connections between, on the one hand, Æthelred's coinage (978–1016), followed by Knut the Great's (1016–1035), and on the other hand, the coinages in Denmark of 'Sven Tjuguskägg' (991–1014), in Norway of Olof Tryggvason (995–1000) and in Sweden of Olof Skötkonung (995–1022). When examining the coinages of these rulers more closely, Schröder found that 'They all show the same artistry and identical approaches used by contemporary masters'. From this, he concluded, it can be clearly established 'from where the art of striking coins in the Nordic countries originated'. (Elsa Lindberger, 2006, p. 13).

In Schröder's time, the coin cabinet was one of Uppsala's main attractions, just as it had been in the 18th century when Ziervogel gave his public lectures. That may have been an argument in favour of planning new premises for the Cabinet when the university's new main building was built in 1887. The coin collection received two rooms in these premises and could be shown to the public. Then again, at the university's 500th anniversary in 1977, an even larger exhibition was on display in showcases in the same building, displaying not only ancient, Swedish, and general coins, but also medals, banknotes, and some very rare denominations of the famous Swedish plate money. Today, the collection is still housed in the same building, though the rooms have been rebuilt for improved security and modern climate-control systems.

This collection now comprises over 35,000 objects. Although it is already well known to numismatists, especially those interested in Viking-Age coinages, it is now opening itself up still further to scholars and the general public alike through a series of catalogues (in press). Preparations are well advanced to web-publish selected coins as well as for exhibitions planned to open soon.

For further reading:

There is no monograph describing the history of the Uppsala University Coin Cabinet. Information can be found in Claes Annerstedt (1877), Bengt Hildebrand (1937–1938), and other histories of academies and learned institutions in Sweden. Much hitherto unpublished material, such as letters, is still to be found in archives. The papers by my predecessor, Dr Bertil Wærn (see below), from 1978 and 1993, though brief, are the best surveys available. Elsa Lindberger has written about the history and growth of the Anglo-Saxon coin collection in the Uppsala University Coin Cabinet, in the first volume of the new series *Studia numismatica Upsaliensia* (2006, in cooperation with The British Academy). A description of German Middle-Age coins has been published with the help of the Swedish Academy of Sciences and the German Numismatic Commission (Numismatische Kommission der Länder in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland) in the second volume of *Studia numismatica Upsaliensia* (2006), by two German scholars, Peter Berghaus and Hendrik Mäkeler. The sylloge volume also includes an introduction on the formation of this special part of the collection.

For a full bibliography of Swedish numismatics up to 1903, see below Björn-Otto Hesse (2004). The few titles listed below are only intended to survey some of the older published studies on the collection. In the following list, I have not attempted to refer to the general international literature on the origins of museums or university collections.

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- N. B.: The exact spelling of the Royal Academy of Letters, History, and Antiquities has changed several times since its foundation in 1753. Cf. the bibliographic hints at the Scholarly Societies Project (University of Waterloo Library): www.scholarly-societies.org/history/1753ksva.html.