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coins and medals in the
Hungarian National Museum***

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Hungarian National Museum, Department Of Coins And Medals, Budapest, Hungary

The Hungarian National Museum was established in 1802, when a very wealthy aristocrat, Ferenc Széchenyi donated his collection to the nation. A very serious part of his collection was the coin collection which contained 2,675 pieces of selected Hungarian and Transylvanian coins and medals from the middle and modern ages. The first catalogue of the collection was published in 1807, which is now in use as the inventory book of the Széchenyi collection.

The National Museum was moved to a brand-new building in 1847, which was built especially to be a museum, and where it is still functioning.

At the beginning, the numismatic collection belonged to the collection of antiques. The coin collection was divided into two parts in 1898. The collection «A» contained ancient – Greek, Celtic, Roman – coins, medals and the coins of the Austrian Empire. Medieval and modern coins belonged to the collection «B». The coin collection became independent as the Department of Coins and Medals in 1926.

Now there are four independent collection groups, as follows:

1. Ancient – Greek, Celtic, Roman – and Byzantine coins.
2. Hungarian and foreign coins from the middle and the modern ages, and primitive moneys.
3. Medals, decorations and orders.
4. Banknotes, securities, jettons and badges.

Today, the collection of coins amounts to approximately 300,000 numismatics objects, including a relatively large number of gold coins.

The collection was developed by donation, purchase and exchange. The private collections have developed the whole collection of the museum to a high level. Now, I'd like to illustrate it with some examples:

- The first donor was Ferenc Széchenyi, as mentioned above. From his collection came a very rare piece: 10 ducats of Mózes Székely, who was a Prince of Transylvania in 1603. This piece which was minted in 1603 is a precious relic of his coinage.
- In 1836, the Jankovich collection was acquired by the help of Palatine Joseph. This collection contains mainly gold pieces. Very valuable pieces were in the collections: barbar imitations of Koszon golds or 100 ducats of Apafi Mihály Prince of Transylvania.
- In 1841, the Palatine Joseph purchased for the museum the Weszerle collection. This collection contained 1,300 pieces Greek, 4,900 pieces

Roman coins and a lot of medals. From his collection came this star-formed gold coin. This type of Transylvanian golds (star-, moon-formed coins) were never in use, they functioned as gifts.

- In 1843, was acquired the collection with 6,350 pieces of Ferenc Kiss. A very important part of his collection was the Roman coin collection. Each Roman ruler is represented by a coin in his collection. Thanks to this system, we have the coin of Regalianus, who was a usurper in the times of Gallienus in 262.
- Delhaes István was a painter, who lived in Vienna and left his collection to the Hungarian National Museum. His collection contained 20,000 pieces. Among them are very valuable coins: the gold of Arsinoe II, dekadrachmas of Syracuse. From his collection came a medal commemorating the peace treaty of Westphalia.
- In 1917, the museum acquired the Szivák collection. In his collection there was a very rare ducat of Ferencz Rákóczi. This is the only one on which the bust of Ferencz Rákóczi is depicted.
- At the beginning of this century, the Greek collection, however, was still very humble compared to the other materials of the Coin Cabinet. Therefore, a separate fund was set up to develop this part of the collection. Coins were purchased from different foreign and domestic individual collectors and coin dealers until the Great War and the subsequent economic crisis made an end to this development.
- In 1938, the Greek collection of count Miklós Dessewffy which contained almost 1,000 pieces of Greek coins got into the Coin Cabinet as a heritage.
- The latest big collection which was donated to the museum in 1968, was the collection Niklovits, with 35,000 pieces.

Our coin collection contains coin-finds too. In 1959, was found a gold hoard in Brigetio which was a legion camp by the Danube. These unique medallions of Maximianus Herculus are from the hoard. The unique stamped gold bars from Kraszna (Krasna, Rom.) arrived as finds to the Museum in the last century.

The collection developed by purchase and exchange too:

Mihály Apafi's 50 ducats were acquired by exchange in 1977. A medal of Lajos the II and his wife Maria made in stone from Kelheim by Hanzdauher was acquired by exchange in 1980. The bonds of Kossuth Lajos, which were printed in America, were acquired by purchase in 1917. Kossuth collected money with the help of these notes in order to continue the Hungarian War of Independence.

Beside the Hungarian coins, our collection is very rich in barbaric ones, coins of the southern Balkan region, the coins of the Hapsburg dynasty and papal medals.

And now, I'd like to talk in short about the most important themes at the Department of Coins and Medal:

- *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum Hungary* is a systematic working up of the Greek coins – approximately 12,000 pieces – of the coin collection of the Coin Cabinet in the Hungarian National Museum. The Hispanian, Gallian, Italian, Dacian and Moesian coins of the collection have already been published in two volumes.
- *FMRU- Die Fundmünzen der Römischen Zeit in Ungarn* is the most complete working up of the ancient coin finds in Hungary which is suitable for a database for research into coin circulation and economic history. The data is published county by county. The coin finds from three counties (Fejér, Győr-Moson-Sopron, Komárom-Esztergom counties) have already been published. The complete database is put into a computer which is suitable for the network service as well.
- *The Corpus of the Hungarian Historical Securities* – this project will realize the database of historical securities which are preserved in the large Hungarian collections. It would be suitable for scientific research as well.
- «*The History of Hungarian Coinage*» on CD – is in process.
- Last week, a series of exhibitions named Europalia '99 were opened in Brussels, where Hungary represents herself, among others, with a numismatic one: "*A thousand years of Hungarian coins*».