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## TABLE OF CONTENTS - SOMMAIRE

<b>LAW AND PRACTICE REGARDING COIN FINDS</b>	
<i>Laws and Regulations on Coins and other Relics in China's Past and Present</i> , by Sven GÜNTHER and Shumeng LIU	1
<b>NUMISMATIC COLLECTIONS</b>	
<i>The coin collection of the American University of Beirut</i> , by Jack NURPETLIAN	7
<i>150 Years of the Münzkabinett Berlin. People – Coins – Medals</i> , by Bernhard WEISSER	17
<i>The numismatic collection of the University Library of Ghent</i> , by Huguette TAYMANS	40
<i>The numismatic collection of the University of São Paulo (USP), Brazil</i> , by Viviana LO MONACO	44
<b>OBITUARIES</b>	
<i>Ino Nicolaou</i> , by Demetrios MICHAELIDES, Evangéline MARKOU & Michel AMANDRY	50
<b>VARIA</b>	
<i>Stellungnahme der Numismatischen Kommission der Länder in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland e. V. zum Begriff „numismatischer Wert“ im Kulturgutschutzgesetz (KGSG)</i> , by Dietrich O.A. KLOSE & Bernhard WEISSER	59
<i>The size of numismatic literature. II. Playing through time (c. 1800-2018) with DONUM (ANS)</i> , by François DE CALLATAÏ	61
<b>MEETING OF THE INC</b>	
<i>Meeting of the Committee (Berlin, March 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>, 2018)</i>	80
<b>REPORTS 2018</b>	85
<b>ACCOUNTS OF THE INC</b>	94
<b>AUDITOR'S REPORT</b>	95
<b>COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE</b>	96
<b>MEMBERS</b>	
<i>Institutional members</i>	98
<i>Honorary members</i>	114

Huguette TAYMANS

**THE NUMISMATIC COLLECTION OF THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY OF GHEENT \***

The 'special collections' section of the University Library of Ghent contains an important numismatic collection, the history of which has already been extensively researched and documented by Prof. dr. Koenraad Verboven (his publication has been gratefully used here).

The collection is based on the private collection of the Ghent canon Martin-Jean De Bast (1753-1825), one of the most famous archaeologists and literary experts in the Netherlands of his time, and in 1817 one of the driving forces behind the founding of the Ghent University. His collection of coins and tokens was at that time regarded as one of the most important in the country. In 1822, De Bast sold it, together with other antiquities, to king Willem I for the enormous sum of 22,000 guilders. After the death of the canon on April 11, 1825, the king divided the collection between the Ghent University and the Royal Coin & Medal Cabinet in The Hague.

The question by the college of curators of the university to allocate the complete De Bast collection to Ghent was initially granted by Royal Decree of November 20, 1825, however with the exception of pieces kept separately by De Jonge, curator at The Hague. These turned out to be no less than 989 antique and 585 later coins, which were transferred from Ghent to The Hague in February 1826. They were, of course, the most beautiful and important pieces from the collection. In Ghent remained 2,377 antique and 2,259 medieval coins. Besides, the University of Ghent received in exchange 567 doubles from The Hague.

Lieven De Bast, a nephew of canon De Bast, was appointed as the first curator. He was succeeded in 1827 by François Den Duyts, who published in 1839 a catalog of the medieval pieces from Flanders, Brabant, Hainaut, Namur and Luxembourg. In 1847 an extensive edition followed with 318 pieces, almost all of which were depicted.

From 1888 to 1897, the Coin Cabinet was transferred from the Universiteitsstraat to the Library, which was then located in the former Baudeloo abbey. From then on, more precise overviews were made of the collection (albeit only globally, per period and type of metal).

It would take until 1905 before the collection would get a new impulse. In 1904, Georges Brunin received permission from the University administration to make a full inventory of the collection. His intention was to describe each piece on an individual record card, but eventually this was only done for the antique coins but not for the later ones.

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\* <https://lib.ugent.be/nl/databases>

Starting 1896, a register was created with the new donations and purchases. Unfortunately, the registration was done in very general terms, with no details regarding the acquired pieces. This register stops in 1930, hence there is no information available concerning later acquisitions.

A special donation came from Georges Brunin himself, who added no less than 1,017 coins to the collection between 1907 and 1914. Until 1942, both the archaeological and the numismatic collection were displayed in show-cases. Then the coins ended up in an iron box, which was transferred from the Universiteitsstraat to the Blandijnberg during the move in 1961.

With the start of the digital era, the digitization of the collection was undertaken. Brunin's individual record cards were entered into a database system. Digital photos are already available for part of the collection. Several specialized numismatists help to further inventory its items and make them digitally accessible. This is a long-term project and sometimes brings unprecedented treasures to the surface.

The collection of antique coins contains an *aureus* with the head of Trajan on the obverse and the facing heads of Trajan's father and Nerva on the reverse. This piece was discovered during archaeological excavations by Prof. dr. H. Thoen in Maldegem on June 15, 1990.



*Aureus of Trajan*  
(Inventory number BRKZ.NUM.002121)

The inventory of previously unprocessed material revealed a collection of siege coins from the Eighty Years' War, covering the cities of Alkmaar, Amsterdam, Breda, Cambrai, Deventer, Leiden, Maastricht, Middelburg, Oudenaarde and Zierikzee.



*Golden Crown of the siege of Middelburg*  
(Inventory number BRKZ.NUM.007038)

As for medieval coins of our regions, we mention in particular a silver *enseigne* of Philip the Fair from 1504, with the jewel of his Golden Fleece.



*Enseigne of Philip the Fair*  
(Inventory number BRKZ.NUM.008508)

The medal collection is also extensive, with more than 3,000 items, among which a remarkable example of the Erasmus medal by Quentin Metsys from 1519.





*Erasmus medal by Quinten Metsys  
(Inventory number BRKZ.NUM.015941)*



*Ghent Floralties medallion by Henri Thiery  
(Inventory number BRKZ.NUM.015899)*

In addition to a large number of papal medals, 19<sup>th</sup>-century Belgian pieces are also well represented, with creations of all the major Belgian engravers (including Joseph-Pierre Braemt from Ghent, François de Hondt from Bruges, and the Wiener brothers). It contains e.g. all the medals picturing buildings and monuments by Jacques Wiener.

Of course, the medals of the University are not missing in the collection, and a beautiful commemorative medallion of the Ghent Floralties of 1928 is also worth mentioning.