Elephant Coins:

I. Greeks and Asian Elephants

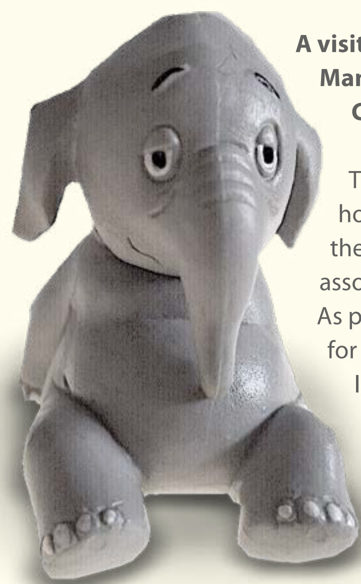

Fig. 1: Loriot's Wendelin cast in plastic. (JN)

A visit to the Mannheim-Ludwigshafen Coin Collectors' Club

This year, the Künker auction house is once again supporting the work of numismatic associations by financing lectures. As part of Künker's support for numismatic scholarship, I gave a Künker lecture at the Münzenfreunde Mannheim-Ludwigshafen on 12 June 2024.

The Chairman of the association, Claus Engelhardt, had selected the lecture about elephants on coins from three lectures offered in consultation with the association members. The focus was to be on coins from antiquity, but views of later times were also desired. In this lecture, I wanted to use a few examples to give a first impression of what rulers wanted to express with their depictions of elephants on coins, and which historically significant events are reflected by such coins. In this issue of Exklusiv, we publish the first part of the lecture, which deals with the Greek world.

Once again, it was a great pleasure for me to meet with the members of this extremely lively association and spend an evening in the "Zorba the Greek" restaurant with them, discussing the topic of the lecture and general aspects of coin collecting.

Our special thanks go to Professor Frank L. Holt, who provided us with a photograph of the Alexander double daric by Osmund Bopearachchi for this article.

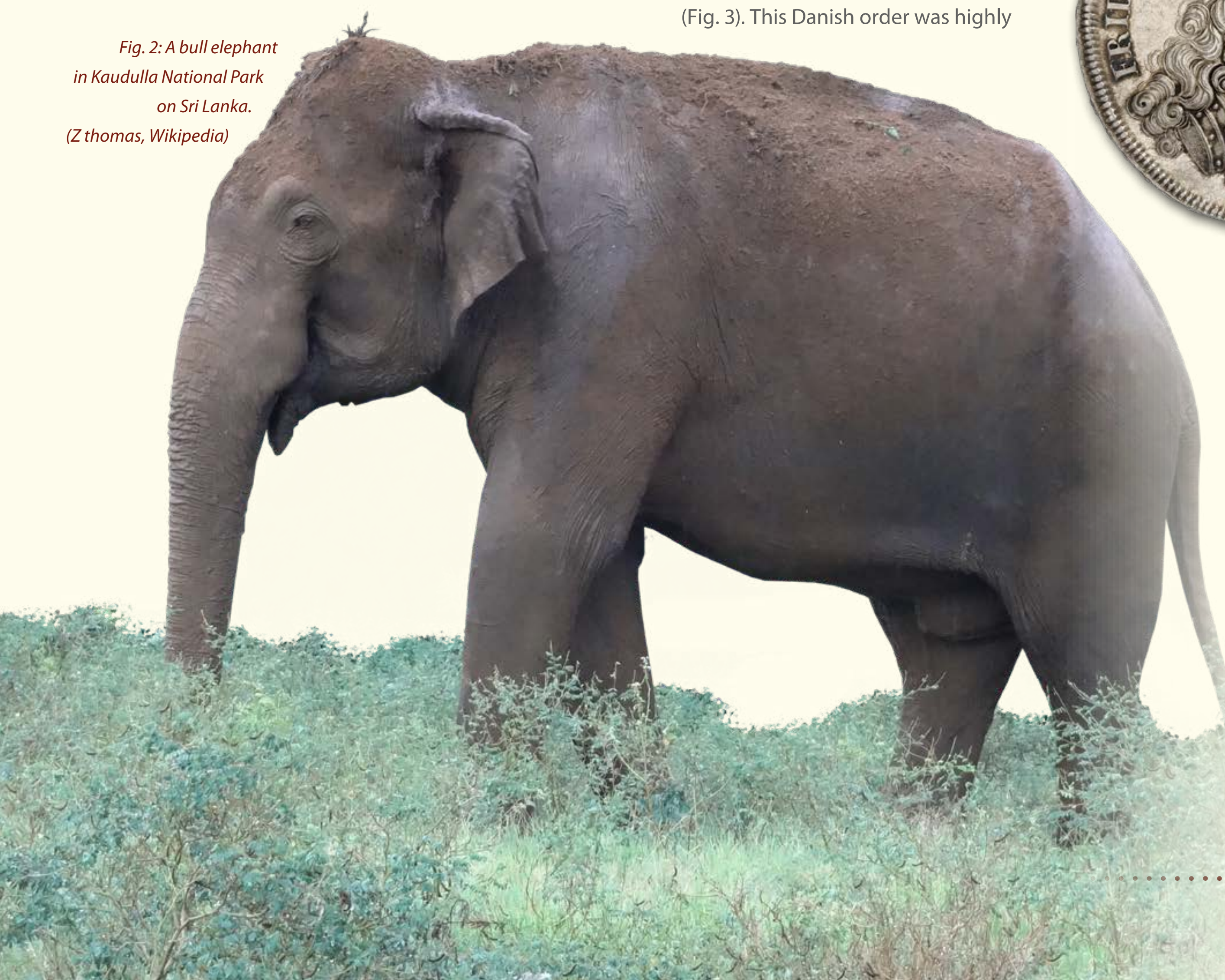

Fig. 2: A bull elephant in Kaudulla National Park on Sri Lanka. (Z thomas, Wikipedia)

Images of Elephants, Today and in the Past

Thanks to a brilliant German humourist and a TV show, our modern image of the elephant in Germany has been infiltrated by the idea of a cute and bright, but also somewhat silly cartoon-, plastic- or stuffed animal called Wendelin, who eventually ties a knot in his trunk so as not to forget anything important (Fig. 1).

This image of the elephant stands in stark contrast to the ideas that circulated about this animal in ancient times. The elephant (Fig. 2) was an animal with extremely positive connotations, and was held in great esteem. In the first chapter of the eighth book of his "Natural History", in which the elephant is the first animal to be discussed, Pliny the Elder (who died in 79 AD during the great eruption of Vesuvius that destroyed Pompeii) summarised what ancient Greeks and Romans associated with the elephant: "Let us now turn [after man] to the other animals, and first of all to the land animals. The largest of these is the elephant, and it comes closest to human sensory perception, for those animals understand the language of their homeland and obey commands; they remember what they have learned about their duties. They have a desire for love and fame, and even what is rare in humans: righteousness, prudence and a sense of justice, as well as a reverence for the sun and moon."

The "Natural History" of the elder Pliny had been preserved in numerous manuscripts from antiquity until the Middle Ages, so that this unique ancient work was still well known. The humanists of the Renaissance and the following period gained even easier access to Pliny's work, as no fewer than 222 complete editions of it were published between 1469, when the first printed edition of "Natural History" appeared in Venice, and 1799. This flood of publications also helped to spread the positive image of the elephant. Given the elephant's good reputation, it is not surprising that the oldest and highest Danish order of knighthood was named after this exemplary animal. A golden elephant with a white enamel coating hangs from the golden chain of the order (collar), which itself is formed by golden elephants (Fig. 3). This Danish order was highly

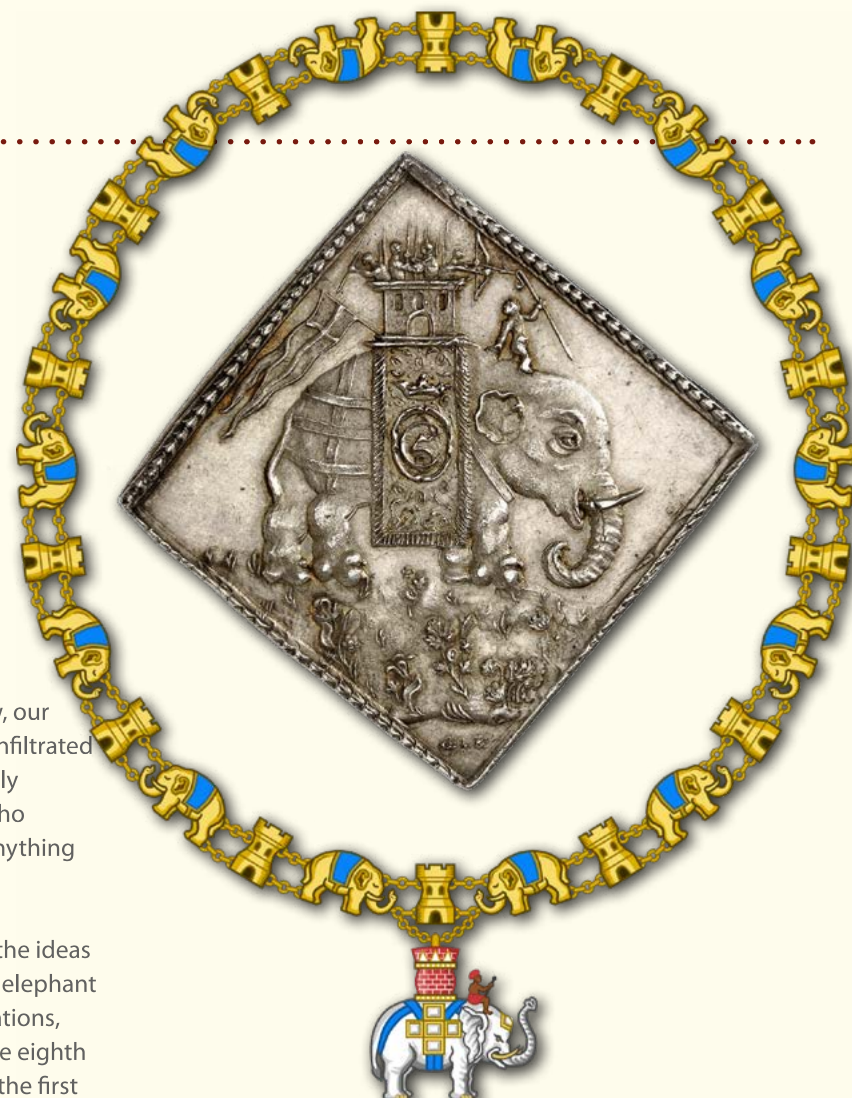

Fig. 3: Collar of the Danish Elephant Order. In the centre is the reverse of a klippe-like silver medal of Christian V from 1670, which was minted on the occasion of his coronation and alludes to the elephant order with the elephant depiction: An elephant stands on a flowery meadow with a tower-like carrying basket, which is occupied by warriors. The Danish flag, the Danebrog, is attached to the carrying basket. The elephant is being guided by a mahout (elephant driver). The richly-decorated belt of the basket bears the monogram "C5", the crowned monogram of Christian V. For this klippe, see Künker Auction 350, 1 July 2024, Lot 1763. Estimate: 3,000 euros, hammer price: 4,800 euros

Fig. 4: Taler. Portrait of Frederik IV in armour with the Elephant Order around his neck // Crowned coat of arms, consisting of the coats of arms of Denmark, Norway and Sweden, surrounded by the order chains of the Order of the Danebrog and the Elephant Order. Künker Auction 387 (20 July 2023), Lot 517. Estimate: 8,000 euros, hammer price: 7,000 euros

Fig. 5: Double ducat: Head of August II of Poland, Lithuania and Saxony (Augustus the Strong) // The Polish-Lithuanian coat of arms with the Saxon heart shield, surrounded by the chain of the Order of the Elephant. Künker Auction 368 (20 June 2022), Lot 258. Estimate: 15,000 euros, hammer price: 22,000 euros

esteemed, and there are quite a few coins and medals from the early modern period that show not only Danish kings (Fig. 4), but also rulers of other states who were honoured with it, such as Augustus the Strong (Fig. 5).

First came the ivory

The ancient world of the Mediterranean region had initially only come into contact with the tusks of the elephant, and not with the animal itself. As early as the Mycenaean period (ca. 1580 - 1200 BC) -- that is, long before Pliny -- the Mycenaean Greeks were familiar with ivory, which they acquired through trade in Asia Minor with the Hittites. The Greeks formed the word "elephas" (genitive "elephantos") from the Hittite word for ivory – "lahpa" – which was adopted into German via Latin in the form "Elefant" (cf. E. Laroche, Sur le nom grec de l'ivoire, Revue de Philologie 39, 1965, 56-59). In Homer's "Odyssey", the use of ivory in a Mycenaean palace is described: Telemachus, the son of Odysseus, looked around the banquet hall of King Menelaus in Sparta and was enchanted by the magnificent decorations: "What a brilliant gleam in the echoing room of the palace! There is also bronze and ivory, and gold and silver and amber! The interior of the hall of Zeus in Olympus is probably similar. An immeasurable abundance. I am awestruck by what I see." (Odyssey IV, 71-75).

Although the German name for ivory "Elfenbein" is assumed by many to mean "elves' bone", since "Elfen" means "elves" and "Bein" means "bone", the German word was actually derived from the Latin and Greek words for "elephant" as indicated above, and has nothing to do with elves.

The Greeks did not learn about the animal from which this ivory came until the fifth century BC. Herodotus (c. 490-430 BC) used the word eléphas for both ivory and the elephant. However, it was not until the late fifth to early fourth century BC that Ctesias of Knidos provided his fellow countrymen with more detailed information about elephants. He was a physician at the court of the Persian king, and was one of the first Greeks to see Indian elephants in the flesh and write about them. We know of his work only from the quotations of later writers. One of these is Aristotle, 384-322 BC (Fig. 6). He criticised Ctesias sharply because the writer had given only a superficial description of the elephant, and had made many claims on the basis of hearsay without investigating them. Aristotle apparently had the opportunity to examine elephants sent to Macedonia by Alexander in more detail, and even to dissect parts of their bodies, such as their trunks.

Alexander's elephant coinage and a heated numismatic controversy

Alexander the Great (Fig. 7) was the first Greek to be confronted with Asian war elephants. In the Battle of Gaugamela/Arbela (in present-day northern Iraq) on 1 October 332 BC, the Persian King deployed 15 Indian war elephants, but they were unable to prevent his own downfall and the triumph of Alexander, who managed to capture some of the elephants alive. For the Macedonian King, however, this was only the beginning of his encounters with elephants.

When he came to India in 326 BC, the local princes presented him with elephants as gifts of honour, as was the tradition in India. Other Indian rulers, however, tried to stop Alexander's advance into India, particularly through the use of their own elephants.

The encounter between Alexander and the Indian elephants is commemorated to this day by 10-drachma and 5-shekel coins (Fig. 8) that resemble medals. On the obverse, Alexander the Great is shown in profile, his head turned to the left. Alexander is identifiable by his distinctive helmet, which resembles a Phrygian cap with its forward-overhanging tip and is therefore called a Phrygian helmet. Two very large white feathers protrude from either side of the helmet's peak. This helmet, which made Alexander particularly conspicuous, repeatedly brought him into great danger because it attracted enemy attacks. The coin shows Alexander with a lightning bolt in his outstretched right hand. This dangerous weapon of lightning was normally only in the possession of Zeus, who, in his role as the god of the weather, was considered to be the cause of thunderstorms. With the lightning bolt in his hand, Alexander, who had conquered large parts of Asia virtually "in a flash", was equated with Zeus. However, the divine weapon in Alexander's hand also illustrated the rumour that Zeus, and not Philip of Macedonia, was Alexander's real father. It is possible that the depiction of Alexander holding the lightning bolt of Zeus is based on a painting by the famous Greek artist Apelles, who was a contemporary of Alexander. On the decadrachm, Alexander grasps a lance with his raised left hand, and wears a sword on his belt. A soldier's cloak hangs over his shoulders. A winged goddess of victory, Nike, crowns him as a victor. Alexander's victory is depicted on the reverse of the medallion, where Alexander – again recognisable by his striking helmet – is seen on horseback, attacking an Indian war elephant from behind with a long lance. The Indian warrior sitting on the elephant's back tries to fend off Alexander's lance, while the warrior in front of him hurls another lance at the attacker.

Since these extremely rare coins do not bear any inscription except for a monogram that can be read as BA or AB, and thus do not name their minting master, there are still many assumptions and attributions today. However, the coin can be quite easily linked to the battle at the Hydáspēs (the river in Pakistan now called Jhelum) fought at the end of May or beginning of June 326 BC: In this battle, Alexander was able to defeat the Indian King Porus/Puru and the elephants that King had deployed in large numbers, but in doing so Alexander lost his beloved horse Bukephalos (its Greek name means "bull's head"). After the battle, Alexander founded two cities: One he named Bukephala in honour of his horse, the other Nicaea, meaning "city of victory". The decadrachms are obviously intended to preserve the memory of Bukephalos by depicting the horse's last charge; but they also celebrate Alexander's magnificent victory at the Battle of Hydáspēs, with the "son of Zeus", lightning bolt in hand, being crowned by the goddess of victory Nike. A tetradrachm (2 shekels or 4 drachmas) is linked to this larger coin by the same monogram (BA or AB). It shows an archer on the obverse and an elephant trotting away on the reverse (Fig. 9).

Fig. 8: Decadrachm, minted after the Battle of Hydáspēs: Alexander with lightning bolts // Alexander in the Battle of the Elephants (Baldwin's & Markov & M&M, The New York Sale 27, 4 January 2012, Lot 304).

Fig. 9: Tetradrachm: Archer // Elephant trotting away (Baldwin's & Markov & M&M, The New York Sale 27, 4 January 2012, Lot 305).

Fig. 10: Gold coin of Alexander minted in the double daric standard: Alexander with the ram horns of the Greco-Egyptian Zeus Amūn and elephant exuvia. // Elephant striding to the right (image by O. Bopearachchi, kindly provided by F.L. Holt).

Both coins/medals were probably awarded by Alexander as decorations or gifts of honour to fighters who had distinguished themselves by their bravery.

One gold coin that can be considered a double daric on the basis of its weight obviously belongs in this context. So far, only a single piece of it has emerged in connection with the huge treasure trove found in Mir Zakah, Afghanistan, in 1992 (Fig. 10). On the obverse, it shows a picture of Alexander the Great, from whose visible temple a ram's horn emerges, linking him to the Greek-Egyptian god Zeus Amūn.

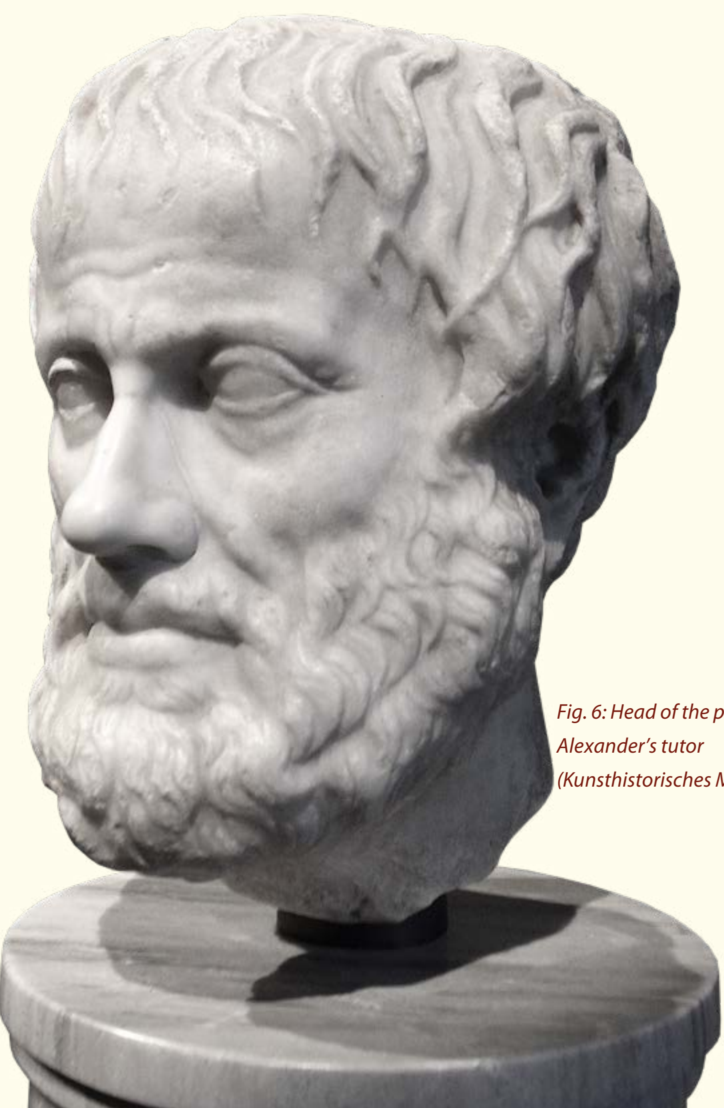

Fig. 6: Head of the philosopher Aristotle, Alexander's tutor (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, JN 2018).

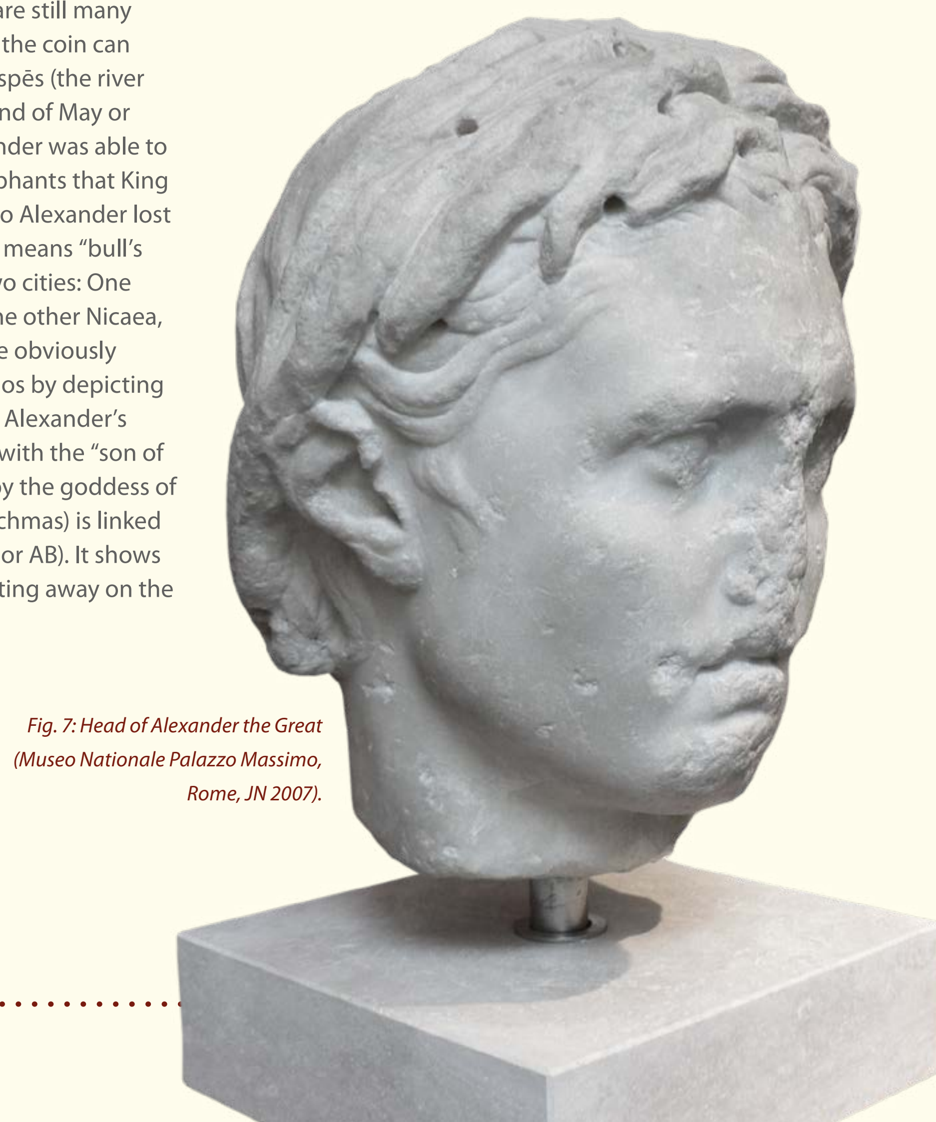

Fig. 7: Head of Alexander the Great (Museo Nationale Palazzo Massimo, Rome, JN 2007).

Fig. 11: Gold stater of Ptolemy I, c. 312 BC, minted in Alexandria: Alexander's head with elephant exuvia to the right // prow of a ship to the right. The coin seems to celebrate the naval supremacy achieved in the eastern Mediterranean (Roma Numismatics 25, 22 September 2022, Lot 475).

Fig. 12: Tetradrachm of Ptolemy I, c. 311/310 BC, minted in Alexandria: Head of Alexander the Great with elephant exuvia to the right // ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ; Athena Promachos advancing to the right, holding a lance in her raised right hand and a round shield in her left hand, with which she covers her upper body, an eagle in front of her, three monograms in the field (Künker 382, 16 March 2023, Lot 207).

Fig. 13: Tetradrachm of Ptolemy I, similar to Fig. 12, but with the legend ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΕΙΟΝ ΠΤΟΛΕΜΑΙΟΥ (CNG Triton 16, 8 January 2013, Lot 585).

Fig. 14: Gold stater of Ptolemy I, 300-295 BC, minted in Euhesperides (Kyrenaika): Head of Ptolemy with diadem to the right. // ΠΤΟΛΕΜΑΙΟΥ / ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ; Alexander the Great rides to the left in an elephant quadriga, holding a lightning bolt in his hand – a comparison to Zeus. (Hess-Divo AG 339, 22 October 2020, Lot 50).

On this gold coin, Alexander has put an elephant's head – a so-called exuvium (Latin for "animal skin") – over his own. A scaly collar is wrapped around his neck, suggesting that he is wearing the so-called aegis, a snake-studded goat skin that Zeus and Athena were said to use to ward off attacks. On the back of the 16.75 g gold coin, an elephant can be seen trotting away; above it is the Greek letter Xi (Ξ), below it the monogram AB or BA, which was already being used on the silver coins.

To this day, there are some scientists who doubt the authenticity of the piece, usually with unconvincing arguments, without ever having held it in their hands. It is easy to get the impression that the main aim is to prove their particular expertise by debunking a supposed forgery. However, if one relies on the proven expertise of Osmund Bopearachchi and Frank L. Holt, then one is indeed inclined to associate this piece with the previously mentioned silver coins. The gold piece identifies Alexander as the "elephant king", the new Dionysus, and as the lord of India. It was probably only awarded to the most important commanders in Alexander's army, which explains its rarity.

Ptolemy I and his elephant coins: Alexander with the elephant exuvium and the elephant quadriga

One of the recipients of such a coin from Alexander's hand was probably Ptolemy, who became the ruler of Egypt after Alexander's death. He would likely have taken such a gold coin with him to Egypt as a precious reminder of the "elephant battle" in distant India. This makes it relatively easy to explain why, after Alexander's body was transferred from Memphis to Alexandria, Ptolemy used the image of Alexander with the elephant's exuvium as a model for the obverse of an Alexandrian gold stater (Fig. 11) and some tetradrachm series (Fig. 12) before he began to replace the commemorative coins of Alexander with his own image in 298 BC. It is significant that a few coins of this type bear the inscription "Alexandreion Ptolemaiū", which can be understood as "Ptolemy's Alexander coin" (Fig. 13). This inscription is easy to explain if we understand the golden Alexander coin of Mir Zakah as an "Alexander coin minted by Alexander himself". The elephant exuviae coins of Ptolemy I are a kind of reminiscence of the campaign in which he had taken part, perhaps also particularly of the preserved award of an Alexander-Alexandreion. Ptolemy was so keen to commemorate Alexander and his expedition to Asia that he wrote a detailed history of Alexander's campaign towards the end of his life. Unfortunately, it has not survived, but it forms the most important basis for the fully preserved Alexander history of Arrian of Nicomedia (c. 85-145 AD).

Fig. 15: Double daric of Seleukos I, mint of Ecbatana (Houghton & Lorber No. 219, after F.L. Holt – O. Bopearachchi, "The Alexander Medallion: Exploring the origins of a unique artefact", 2011).

After becoming King (or Pharaoh) of Egypt, Ptolemy I had gold staters minted in the Kyrenaika, which depicted his likeness on the front and a naked man with a lightning bolt in his hand – who is therefore identified with Alexander the Great – on an elephant-drawn quadriga on the back (Fig. 14). This coin image may possibly allude to the beginnings of the establishment of a cult of the dead for the "divine" Alexander. The image of the elephant quadriga already takes on the character of a symbol of divinisation (deification) on this coin.

The Seleucids as the "elephant kings" of Hellenism

Among Alexander's heirs, the Seleucids had the largest stock of elephants. This elephant troop had been founded by Seleukos I (born around 358, King after 305, assassinated in 281 BC): In 305 BC, he had concluded a peace treaty with the Indian prince Chandragupta and received 500 elephants in return. In 301 BC, Seleukos was able to defeat his opponent Antigonus Monophthalmus in the Battle of Ipsos, not least thanks to the use of his Indian elephants. Twenty years later, he eliminated his former ally Lysimachus in the Battle of Kūrūpédion (281 BC).

Seleukos stationed his war elephants in Apamea in Syria and also maintained a stud farm there, which is mentioned by the geographer Strabo (XVI 2, 10 f.). The water-rich Apamea, situated on the Orontes River, offered the pachyderms enough water and green fodder. Apamea is also largely a well-fortified city; it is a strongly-walled hill in a wide valley – that of the Orontes, which flows into a large lake, wide swamps and immeasurably large meadows that are rich in pasture for cows and horses – to form a peninsula. ... There, both Seleukos Nicator and the succeeding kings kept five hundred elephants and the biggest portion of their army. ... The army's accounting chamber and the stud farm with more than 3,000 royal mares and 300 stallions were also located there, as were paid horse tamers, fencing masters and other teachers of the art of war.

It is therefore not surprising that coins of the dynasty founder Seleukos I and his successors repeatedly depicted elephants.

The obverse of a double daric without an inscription, which Seleukos I had minted, refers to Alexander's golden double daric, which shows Alexander with the elephant exuvia (Fig. 15). Seleukos I, who played a significant role in the Battle of Hydáspēs, was probably honoured with a similar commemorative coin by Alexander and probably wanted to recall this type by re-using its design.

A tetradrachm of Seleukos I, which was apparently minted after 296 BC and may celebrate the tenth anniversary of the peace treaty with the Indian ruler Chandragupta -- but certainly also evokes the historically significant victory of Ipsos in 301 BC -- shows the head of Zeus on the obverse, but the Macedonian goddess Athena Alkídēmos ("Athena, who defends the people") on the reverse. The goddess is shown in a quadriga drawn by elephants, charging into battle against the enemies of the Seleucids (Fig. 16). Strangely enough, the elephants pulling Athena have horns. These may be intended to recall Būképhalos, Alexander's horse, which was a heraldic animal of Seleukos and was depicted with horns because of its name – "bull's head". In any case, the horns are intended to emphasise the particular fighting power of the elephants. The anchor above the quadriga is the coat of arms of the Seleucid family.

Twenty years after the Battle of Ipsos, Seleukos once again achieved a magnificent victory with his elephant troops. In 281 BC, he defeated King Lysimachus, who had ruled over Thrace and western Asia Minor, on the plain of Kūropédion. Drachmas that show the head of Athena on the front and the head of an elephant on the back emphasise the importance of the Seleucid elephant army (Fig. 17).

Seleukos also gained control of Pergamon with his victory over Lysimachos, where the eunuch Philetairos, as Lysimachos' treasurer, administered a huge treasure trove on the castle hill. Philetairos was confirmed in his office as treasurer by Seleukos and, in gratitude, had extremely rare tetradrachms minted in very small numbers (Fig. 18), which again show a horned horse on the obverse but an elephant on the reverse. The Seleucids' power rested on their cavalry and elephants. The elephant-riding King Seleukos was not able to enjoy his victory and these coins for long, however, as he was assassinated shortly afterwards.

Fig. 16: Tetradrachm of Seleukos I, minted after 296 BC (ten-year anniversary of the peace with Chandragupta?), Seleukeia mint on the Tigris: Zeus with laurel wreath to the right // Athena (Promachos/Alkidemos) rides an elephant quadriga to the right; with her right hand she brandishes a spear, in her left she holds a shield; above the horned elephant anchor and monogram (Künker Auction 326 (7 October 2019), Lot 919).

Fig. 17: Drachma of Seleukos I, c. 291 BC, Susa mint: Athena's head with Corinthian helmet // elephant's head facing right, above it a spearhead, monogram on the left (Künker 347, 22 March 2021, Lot 764).

Fig. 18: Tetradrachm, minted around 281 BC in Pergamon: Head of a horned and harnessed horse to the right (Buképhalos) // elephant walking to the right, above it a bee, below it an anchor (NAC 124, 23 June 2021, Lot 233).

Fig. 19: Bronze coin of Antiochus I, minted in Smyrna after the Battle of the Elephants. Obverse: head of Athena with helmet to the right // head of an elephant to the left (Roma ESale 14, 27 December 2014, Lot 223).

Fig. 20: Drachma of Antiochus III the Great, minted in Apamea, the location of the elephant troop, in 212 BC: portrait of Antiochus III // elephant (Künker 347, 22 March 2021, Lot 790).

The Seleucids also used the elephants against the Celts, who had crossed the Bosporus in 278 BC, invaded Asia Minor, and spread fear and terror in the cities of western Anatolia. The invaders plundered the unprotected villages, committed countless murders and rapes, and extorted ransom for their prisoners. In the so-called Battle of the Elephants – the exact date of which has not yet been determined, but which must have taken place around 270 BC – the son of Seleukos, Antiochus I, succeeded in spreading panic among the Celts with a surprise attack using his elephants, at least temporarily stopping them from committing their crimes. Many Celts lost their lives in the battle, either being trampled to death by the elephants or fatally injured by their tusks. Seleucid bronze coins minted in Smyrna, which can be purchased relatively inexpensively, show the helmeted head of Athena and one of the elephants that brought disaster to the Celts (Fig. 19). Antiochus was honoured by the Greek cities of Asia Minor with the title of "Soter" (saviour) for his help. The final victory over the Celts was achieved by the kings of Pergamon: The Celts were settled in central Anatolia around Ankara and became the Galatians, to whom the apostle Paul sent his letter of mission, which was named after them.

Antiochus III ("the Great"; born 242 BC, King after 223, killed in 187 during the Temple robbery) tried to restore the splendour and greatness of the early Seleucid Empire, and also used his own elephant troops for his expansionist policy. Numerous drachmas of Antiochus show the King's portrait on the front of the coins, and an elephant on the back (Fig. 20).

Antiochus' ambitions, and in particular his invasion of Greece, brought him into conflict with the Romans, who were just as imperialistic as he was. In the Battle of Magnesia on the Sipylos in 190 BC, Antiochus III was defeated despite the use of many elephants: He thus ceased to be "the Great". The Roman legionnaires – under the tactically masterful leadership of the Scipio brothers – knew the weak points of the war elephants. They managed to panic the pachyderms, causing the animals to trample their own soldiers. In the peace treaty of Apamea, the Romans forced Antiochus to disband his elephant troop.

When he refused to do so, a delegation from the Senate travelled to Apamea and supervised the slaughter of the poor animals: When the senators learned that there was an army of elephants in Syria and that there were more ships than the maximum number that had been set as permissible for Antiochus, they sent these envoys to have the elephants stabbed to death and the ships burnt. The sight of the tame and rare animals being killed and the ships being burnt was said to be pitiful. In Laodicea there was a certain Leptines who could not bear the sight, and murdered Gnaeus Octavius, the leader of the Roman delegation, as he was enjoying himself in the gymnasium (Appian, Syriaca VIII 46). The killing of the innocent elephants, which were repeatedly misused by humans for their conflicts particularly in the Hellenistic era, was a brutal and cruel act. On the other hand, the Romans' fear of elephants is understandable, as they had already had bad experiences with war elephants – but this will be the subject of the second part of this article in the next issue of Exklusiv.

Johannes Nollé

A donation to the Berlin Numismatic Collection

On 20 June 2024, Bernd Kluge was honoured at Gobelin Hall in the Bode Museum on Museum Island in Berlin, upon the end of his tenure of more than 50 years of service and further development of "his" Numismatic Collection. The event also included the presentation of the associated donation from Fritz Rudolf Künker to the Berlin Numismatic Collection.

Bernd Kluge writes:

"The gift from Fritz Rudolf Künker to the Numismatic Collection consists of 128 coins and the shards of the vessel of a coin hoard from the 10th century, which was found in the village of Aaken in Belgium in the 1980s. The exact location of the find was determined through the research of Fritz Rudolf Künker. I only came across this treasure trove last year when I was working on the manuscript for the now-published volume of MODR II (France, Belgium, Netherlands) (MODR = Die Münzen des Ostfränkisch-Deutschen Reiches/The Coins of the East Frankish-German Empire).

"The treasure was sold in small quantities at Auctions 135-144 of the Jean Elsen coin dealership (Brussels) in 2017-2020. This part of the hoard, with a total of 212 pieces, has been published by Jean-Luc Dengis (J. L. Dengis: Le dépôt monétaire de Ciney-Dinant. Monnaies issues d'ateliers mosans dits indéterminés – monnayages d'imitation du Xe siècle, RBN 167, 2021, pp. 277-332). Since further examples also appeared at later Elsen auctions after 2020, I asked Fritz Rudolf Künker to use his contacts with Jean Elsen to learn more about the find and, if possible, to secure the part of the find that was apparently still available. He took a close interest in the matter, bought the 128 coins that were still in the possession of the finders, and had the intention from the outset of donating these coins to the Coin Cabinet for the MODR project on the occasion of my 75th birthday. He dispelled any legal concerns about whether a medieval treasure trove found in Belgium could be acquired by a museum in Germany by adhering to all of the regulations in Belgium for coin finds and obtaining the necessary export and import licences.

The treasure was probably buried around 970/80 and dates from the period between around 920/30 to around 970/80. This is a time for which we know of almost no coin finds, and certainly none of this size. More than 90 per cent of its contents consists of previously unknown coins, which Dengis interprets as imitations of contemporary Ottonian coins produced in the Meuse region ("imitations mosanes") and which he attributes to the mints of Liège, Huy and Maastricht. I am of the opinion that these are not imitations, but rather the regular oldest coinages of the Liège (MODR 261-262) and Huy (MODR 280.2-3) mints. Maastricht does not appear to be involved. In my opinion, the coins that Dengis also classifies as Maasland imitations based on the Cologne/Köln model (68 examples at Dengis, 18 examples in the Künker donation) are not imitations, but rather the previously unknown coins of the German King Heinrich I (919-936) from Köln. This is the numismatic sensation of this find, and makes the donation an invaluable gain for Berlin and the coin cabinet!"

From left to right: Fritz Rudolf Künker, Christian Stoess from the Berlin coin cabinet, Prof. Dr Bernd Kluge and Prof. Bernhard Weisser, Director of the coin cabinet.