

Review on Introduction to Numismatics written by Márton Kálnoki-Gyöngyössy

Kálnoki-Gyöngyössy Márton: *Bevezetés a numizmatikába*. L'Harmattan, Budapest, 2025. ISBN: 978-963-646-145-4

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The book written by Márton Kálnoki-Gyöngyössy is 344 pages long, with 266 pages of main text, bibliography and 53 pages of illustrations. The cover of the volume is an imposing black with 10 coins of different colours and similar sizes placed on the right side of the cover. The illustrated booklet is colourful and voluminous, which is no longer cost-effective for history textbooks and is therefore not fashionable. At the same time, the reader will find eye-catching illustrations of coins, Hungarian paper money and Hungary's best-known medals from different periods, both Hungarian and European. For anyone who was ever a child and was interested in collections, this appendix will be the most exciting part of the volume, which does not qualify the contents of the volume in a negative way.

The introduction above leads us to the conclusion of this article: the book of Kálnoki-Gyöngyössy is a fine piece. This is a seemingly empty statement and could even be taken as meaningless in case of a textbook. However, considering the content, it is nevertheless very justified, firstly because its professional merits are obvious, and secondly because its subject matter is both important for its aesthetic and practical value. This is also reflected in the target audience for which the author has intended the book: history students, collectors, dealers and enthusiasts interested in numismatics. The most obvious value of the book is that it is the first numismatics textbook and handbook in Hungarian university education.

The content is "medium depth". Two examples: in my research, I often encountered the term "Rhenish forint" (Forint originated from the Rhine region) in 17th-century lists of grievances, but it is not used in the book. At the book launch of the volume (April 2025), I noticed that the purchase value of the coins was not mentioned. This is also an interesting point, as the 17th-century lists of grievances on damages done by the Ottoman gave the estimated value of stolen goods in forints, so it may be a good point of reference here. On the one hand,

this is a good indication that the volume does not go down to the deepest questions of factual history. On the other hand, any university lecturer would be pleased if history students knew ‘only’ as much about numismatics as is contained in this volume.

The volume is divided into 8 major chapters: basic concepts and methodology, coinage of the West, coinage of the East, coins, paper coins, specialised studies, key terms, and the literature. The latter is also a bibliography in exhaustive detail, which is also listed in sections under each sub-chapter. A particular highlight of the volume is the terminology, in Hungarian, German, and English. The reviewer considers the English terminology accurate. The most extensive and chronologically structured of the chapters is *The Coinage of the West*.

In accordance with the reviewer’s area of expertise and interest, the reviewer looks at the section on early modern monetary history (pp. 173–185). The author of the volume seeks to list the currencies of the various states but does not describe the socio-political background to the changes. Yet one might expect to find fascinating connections between the rapid rise and fall of Dutch capitalism in the 17th century, or the Spanish Armada (1588) and other invasion attempts, and the financial systems and coinage of these states. However, this omission is understandable given the limitations of space and goes beyond the author’s commitment. However, Kálnoki-Gyöngyössi makes important allusions to the politico-social context of the Hungarian minting.

This is also interesting because the author has argued in several serious debates on the evaluation of the reign of Mátyás Hunyadi, for which he found arguments through Mátyás’s monetary reforms. In other words, he used numismatic results as a historian, demonstrating the importance of auxiliary historical studies. In the context of the early modern period, he notes that the estates of royal Hungary and the Habsburg court fought a continuous struggle over the issue of coinage because of the Hungarian character of the coins. As a result, the Habsburgs introduced new currencies and denominations, and the medals were emblazoned with royal titles and a two-headed eagle. At the same time, the ducats of the Principality of Transylvania continued to be minted in the Hungarian pattern until 1691. This is an interesting reflection of the political situation: the Principality of Transylvania remained the heir of the former Kingdom of Hungary in terms of numismatics.

The book by Márton Kálnoki-Gyöngyössi is a thorough, systematically structured textbook on numismatics with a beautiful collection of images, which can be confidently recommended to the target audience chosen by the book.