

Elisabeta Gjoni: Role of money in wartime

Opening remarks by Ms Elisabeta Gjoni, First Deputy Governor of the Bank of Albania, at the Second Conference of the Museum of the Bank of Albania, Tirana, 20 September 2018.

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Dear guests, participants, researchers, academics, numismatists, collectors, students,

Welcome to the Bank of Albania!

It is a special pleasure for me to open the proceedings of the Second Conference of the Museum of the Bank of Albania on “Role of money in wartime”.

The rich collection of coins and banknotes and other items exhibited in our Museum becomes more meaningful when supported by the historic background of the period of the country of issue. The organisation of this Conference, an annual one, contributes to the both the historic and educational role of the Museum. This conference is also an excellent opportunity to share experiences with representatives of the main institutions of culture in Albania and museums of central banks and other prominent foreign institutions in this field.

I am happy to see in this room both old and new collaborators, whom we wish to be “permanent consultants” of the Bank of Albania. We aim to create and cultivate a solid and productive relationship with the best experts in numismatics, museology, cultural heritage and research.

Dear participants,

Today’s presentations will address the mutual, complicated and multi-dimensional relation between money and war. Wars have had an impact on the economy and development of human kind from the birth of civilisations to modern times. Meanwhile, in the words of the Socrates, the Greek philosopher, “all wars are fought for money”.

We heard some good examples that illustrate this relation in last year’s conference. We heard from Prof. Picard about King Monunius, who is known thanks to the respective coin. He had it minted for the sole purpose of raising a strong army, convinced that his might rested with the army. From Prof. Egro, we learned that Mahmut Pashë Bushatliu and Ali Pashë Tepelena tried to introduce their coins and banknotes, independently from the Ottoman Empire, not for financial purposes but as a token of rebellion or an attempt to break away from the Empire. Later on, in WW1, we see the banknotes of the Republic of Korça, which are a rare phenomenon not only in terms of numismatics, but also a materialisation of the early issues as a result of the war, after the formation of the Albanian state. During WW2, the Albanian currency underwent radical changes. On its obverse and reverse we no longer see King Zog. Instead, Victor Emanuel III is featured and the most significant change is that the Albanian franc was officially pegged to the fate of the Italian lira. We will have the opportunity to hear, during the day, other interesting and important examples in the monetary and economic history of Albania.

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

This conference does not seek to analyse wars and the various factors triggering them; instead, it aims to show how the radical changes introduced by wars or conflicts on political systems and alliances, or the divisions between states have affected monetary developments. The history shows that conflict or war periods are particularly related to radical changes in monetary systems and policies.

Over the centuries, we find various examples of such developments, materialised in changes in the monetary system or introduction of temporary fiscal policies, additional quantity of money

issued before the start and during a war, massive circulation of a monetary type in areas far away from their place of origin, higher number of hoards found in a conflict zone or massive usage of the currency of allied countries. Numerous phenomena testify to the constant presence of a relationship throughout epochs, between military conflicts on the one hand and the role of money in wartime on the other.

To better reflect the relationship between conflicts or war and money, we have decided for the conference proceedings to follow a chronological order of presentations, starting from antiquity, to middle ages and the modern history of the XX century. Our guests are distinguished professors, scholars, historians, and representatives from central bank museums who responded to our invitation to research and lecture on this topic.

The views and conclusions expressed in the presentations are of the authors and not necessarily of the respective institutions or the Bank of Albania.

Wishing success to the conference, I hope that all the participants will benefit from the interesting presentations that will be shared with the audience today.

I have now the pleasure to invite our keynote speaker, Prof. Olivier Picard, former Director of the French Archaeological School in Athens, Professor at the Sorbonne University, Member of the “Académie des Inscriptions et Belles – Lettre” (Institute of France), who will hold a presentation on “Minting of coins in Illyria in wartime”.

Thank you!