

Collector Coin



face value	100 zł
metal	900/1000 Au
finish	proof
diameter	21.00 mm
weight	8.00 g
mintage	3,400 pcs

Obverse: Image of the Eagle, established as the state Emblem of the Republic of Poland. Notation of the year of issue, 20-04, on either side of the Eagle. Inscription, ZŁ 100 ZŁ, below the Eagle. Circumscription, RZECZPOSPOLITA POLSKA in the rim. The Mint's mark, $\frac{m}{w}$, under the Eagle's left leg.

Reverse: Bust of King Sigismund I the Old. Above, on both sides of the bust, below elements of a wreath, in circumscription the years of the King's rule, 1506 on the left, 1548 on the right. Below the bust, the circumscription, ZYGMUNT I STARY.

Coin Designer: Ewa Tyc-Karpińska



On June 7, 2004 the National Bank of Poland puts into circulation a collector coin of the face value of 100 zł, struck in gold, in proof finish, depicting a bust of King Zygmunt I Stary, Sigismund I the Old. The coin is a continuation of the "Polish Kings and Princes" series initiated in 1979, and completes, in accordance with the subject, two silver coins and one cupro-nickel coin, depicting King Zygmunt I Stary, issued in 1994.

Sigismund I the Old, the youngest son of the king Casimir IV the Jagiellonian (Kazimierz IV Jagiellończyk) and Elizabeth Habsburg of Austria (Elżbieta Rakuszanka), was born on January 1, 1467 in Kozenice. On October 20, 1505 Sigismund succeeded his brother Alexander I as the Grand Duke of Lithuania. On December 8, 1505 he was elected king of Poland, crowned at the Wawel Cathedral on January 24, 1507. The beginnings of the reign of this 40-year old King were difficult. He inherited after his predecessor many unsolved problems, both in internal and external affairs.

The most important aspect of Poland's external affairs was its relationship with the Habsburg Empire that affected Poland's relationship with other countries. Sigismund I strove to preserve political balance with the Habsburgs and to counter their actions aimed to weaken the Jagiellonian states – their strongest competitors in Central Europe. Sigismund the Old was a peaceful

Coin struck by the State Mint in Warsaw.

Printed by NBP Printing Office

Design: DECORUM

Zygmunt I Stary
– Polish Kings and Princes –

man, a careful politician and an experienced ruler, having ruled the Głogów and Opawa duchies. Yet he had to wage many defensive wars against Muscovy and Moldavia, both attacking Poland and Lithuania. As a result, Lithuania lost Smoleńsk in 1514. The Toruń treaty, signed in 1466 to end the 13-year war with the Order of Teutonic Knights, failed to prevent further disputes between Poland and the Order. Since neither the pope, nor the Holy Roman emperor confirmed the provisions of the Toruń treaty the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, Albrecht Hohenzollern, with the support from Maximilian I Habsburg, refused to make the oath of fealty to the Polish king. Moreover, Emperor Maximilian promised his armed support to Vasily III of Moscow in the war that Muscovy waged against Lithuania. As matters stood, Sigismund the Old decided to meet personally the Holy Roman emperor Maximilian I during a formal convention held in Vienna in 1515. The king entered into an alliance with the emperor, who withdrew his support to Muscovy and acknowledged Poland's rights to the Prussian fief. The Teutonic Grand Master, Albrecht Hohenzollern, refused to accept the terms of the Vienna convention and started to prepare for a war with Poland by looking for armed support in the Reich. In 1519, the war between Poland and the Teutonic Order broke out. In 1521 Sigismund's army approached Królewiec (Königsberg). Sigismund agreed to conclude a four-year armistice. In 1525, wars between Poland and the Teutonic Knights ended with a treaty concluded in Kraków in 1525. When Albrecht Hohenzollern converted to Lutheranism, he dissolved the Teutonic Order, and set up a laic state in its place. In 1525 Hohenzollern, as the hereditary Duke of Prussia, paid a public homage, the so-called Prussian Tribute, to Sigismund the Old. Thus, Ducal Prussia came under the suzerainty of the Jagiellonian monarchy. In 1529, after the death of the last of the Piast dynasty of Mazovia's rulers, Sigismund incorporated the Duchy of Mazovia into the Polish state. In 1531 Sigismund's army defeated the invading forces of Moldavia at Obertyn, thus ending the war at the Moldavian border. Realizing that Poland was not strong enough to contest the Turkish empire, Sigismund concluded a trade, friendship and peace treaty with the Ottoman Turks in 1533, thereby safeguarding Poland's southern borders. He also strove to maintain the good relationship with the Habsburgs.

From the very beginning of his rule, Sigismund the Old paid careful attention to his Kingdom's financial matters. He significantly reduced the Crown Treasury's indebtedness, restored its control over many land areas owned by the crown that had fallen under unfavorable liens, thus increasing the revenue they brought, introduced a new customs system, improved the management of the Wieliczka salt mine, separated public taxation accounting from the Crown Treasury, reformed the monetary system, and was committed to the development of the kingdom's cities. In his rule he consulted a council of senators and competent ministers. Nearly every year, he

managed to convince the Parliament (the Sejm) to approve an extraordinary tax that financed the "common defense" system at the southeastern border. Aided by his counsellors, Sigismund the Old executed a rational and realistic approach in Poland's politics. He avoided fighting many enemies at a time, and chose solutions that were favorable but not risky. Sigismund the Old was committed to introducing order into Poland's legal system. He ordered a project for unifying the law in the entire country – the so-called Taszycki's correction. The project was however rejected by the Parliament in 1534. Working with his advisors, the King reorganized the diplomacy service and created the cornerstone for a standing army.

In 1518, after the death of Sigismund's first wife, Barbara Zápolya of Hungary, the King married Bona Sforza, the niece of the Roman Emperor Maximilian and the daughter of the Prince of Milan. Sigismund had four daughters and one son by the queen. The queen, born in a tiny Italian duchy, did not fully understand the nature of the country where the king was subject to law and shared his power with the Parliament. She tried to reinforce the power of the monarchy by leveraging a new group of magnates. To ensure the dynasty's financial independence, the queen purchased Crown lands, mostly in Lithuania. On her instigation, in 1529 her 10-year-old son Sigismund Augustus was hastily elected and next year crowned co-King of Poland, shortly after he had been crowned Grand Duke of Lithuania. Queen Bona's political influence continued to grow as the aging king kept losing energy. In 1544, the old king transferred the power over Lithuania to his son, while preserving his own supremacy. Although King often clashed with opposition, he was very popular throughout his life.

Sigismund and Bona were patrons of the Renaissance culture, which began to flourish in Poland under their rule. The King brought Italian artists to Kraków, had the Wawel castle rebuilt and an Italian-style chapel constructed. He also founded the "Sigismund" Bell.

During his reign, Poland became the most tolerant country in Europe. Sigismund the Old died on April 1, 1548 in Kraków. He was buried at the Wawel Cathedral.

Compiled by NBP based on the following sources:

1. "Poczet królów i książąt polskich," Czytelnik 1978
2. „Księga królów i książąt polskich,” ed. Stefan K. Kuczyński, Świat Książki 1999
3. "Polskie dzieje od czasów najdawniejszych do współczesności," Alicja Dybkowska, Jan Żaryn, Małgorzata Żaryn, PWN 1994 and encyclopedic sources

All collector coins are legal tender in Poland.