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| face value | 20 zł |
| metal | 925/1000 Ag and paints: blue, gold, green and red |
| finish | proof |
| diameter | 38.61 mm |
| weight | 28.28 g |
| mintage | 44 000 pcs |

Obverse: An image of the Eagle as the national emblem of the Republic of Poland, on a decorative curtain background, with the circumscription made in gold paint: RZECZPOSPOLITA POLSKA in a semicircular arrangement. Below an Easter lamb, Easter eggs made in paints: blue, gold, green, and red, and willow branches. The year of issue: 2003, marked on the left; and an inscription: 20 / ZŁ, on the right. Under the left talon of the Eagle, the Mint mark: $\frac{m}{w}$.

Reverse: Scene showing boys and girls pouring water over each other, with a well, cottages, and part of a church in the background, and the circumscription: ŚMIGUS DYNGUS in a semicircle below.

Coin designer: Robert Kotowicz



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|------------|--------------------------|
| face value | 2 zł |
| metal | CuAl5Zn5Sn1 alloy |
| finish | standard |
| diameter | 27.00 mm |
| weight | 8.15 g |
| mintage | 600 000 pcs |

Obverse: An image of the Eagle as the national emblem of the Republic of Poland, straddled by an inscription of the year of issue: 20-03; and with the circumscription: RZECZPOSPOLITA POLSKA preceded and followed by six pearls. Under the left talon of the Eagle, the Mint mark: $\frac{m}{w}$.

Reverse: Scene showing boys pouring water at a group of girls, with a well, two cottages, and part of a church in the background, and a semicircular circumscription: ŚMIGUS-DYNGUS above.

On the edge: an inscription: NBP, eight times repeated, every second one turned by 180 degrees, separated by stars.

Obverse designer: Ewa Tyc-Karpińska

Reverse designer: Robert Kotowicz

Collector's Coins



Coins were struck by the State Mint in Warsaw.

Printed by NBP Printing Office

Design: DECORUM

Śmigus-Dyngus
– The Polish Calendar
of Traditional Customs and Rituals –

On 16th April 2003 the National Bank of Poland, is putting into circulation the Śmigus-Dyngus collectors' coins, of the following face value:

- 20 zł - struck in silver, in proof finish,
- 2 zł – struck in standard finish, in CuAl5Zn5Sn1 alloy, the so called Nordic Gold

Throughout the whole of Poland Easter Monday – also known as *lany poniedziałek* ("Wet Monday") is a day that cuts a splash. It's the day of the *śmigus-dyngus*, a playful custom indulged in by one and all, but chiefly children and young people, and consists in the mutual throwing of water on one another.

Originally the names *śmigus* and *dyngus* referred to two distinct, ancient customs:

1. *Śmigus* – striking, thrashing, or merely touching other persons (chiefly girls and young married women) with a green branch, otherwise known as the *green* or *dry śmigus* encountered in Northern Poland and in the Cieszyn area of Silesia; or splashing them with water. Both of these varieties of *śmigus* were believed to foster health, ensure beauty, and bring vitality.
2. *dyngus* – a merry Eastertide procession and the cadging of gifts (usually painted eggs and sundry Easter treats), sometimes in combination with water-splashing, which invariably turned into an occasion for flirtation and courting.

With time the two customs merged into the joint *śmigus-dyngus*, and notwithstanding local variations, came to be associated with a range of games played with water in which the boys in town and country would drench – and still continue to drench – the pretty and best liked girls. And the more soaked she is, the more honoured the lass.

These customs had been observed throughout the length and breadth of Poland, and in all of the social estates, since time immemorial. And the more water, the merrier. Whole bucketfuls were cast on pretty, frolicsome, attractive girls; or they themselves would be cast into pools, ponds, or cattle-toughs. The girls ran and screamed, but in reality they'd be pleased. To be dry and have no dousters around on Wet Monday was genuinely humiliating for a girl. So all morning, or even all day, the chase would go on, with tossing and tumbling, laughter and screams, and endless cascades of water.

In Central Poland, Silesia, and Great Poland adolescent lads would go round with a *kurek dyngusowy* – a handsome cockerel tied to a cart painted red and decked with ribbons, beads, trinkets, and puppets in regional costumes on a turntable. With time real roosters were replaced by artificial ones – stuffed or wooden toys covered with feathers, roosters made of pastry or potter's clay etc.

Along with their *dyngus* cart boys would always have a basket for donations, water-spraying devices, and a variety of accessories such as *straszaki*, bogeys made of wooden boards with a sharp point on the end to prick the girls as they dashed away screaming.

The ritual was a form of courting, since the boys would visit those houses where there were eligible girls. It was intended as an aid to match-making, and to ensure young married women of an abundance of healthy offspring.

The pageant would proceed to the tune of merry songs in praise of fertility and the plucky cockerel, since time immemorial symbol of male comeliness and prowess, vigour and fecundity.

In Little Poland the boys would dress up in costumes with straw hats and straw ropes for belts. They'd be known as *dziady śmigustne* (*śmigus* gaffers) or *słomiaki* (jackstraws), and they'd go round from house to house in silence with just the occasional whistle. According to legend they represented envoys who had lost their voices for refusing to believe in Jesus' resurrection and spread the good news. There were also *talking śmigus* gaffers with water-sprinklers to douse the farmers and wish them – often in a rhyming speech – happiness, many children, an abundant harvest, and healthy livestock. They'd be treated to Eastertide sweetmeats and hard-boiled eggs, then off they'd go to the next house. Donating eggs was a traditional ransom to fend off a shower of dyngus water, the customary gift to placate any boys or young men who insisted on exercising the rite.

In the neighbourhood of Cracow the dyngus boys would go round from house to house singing and pulling an *ogrojczyk*, a little fenced cart padded with moss or green tissue paper and holding a statue of the Risen Christ with an Easter banner and an arm raised in the gesture of blessing.

In many parts of Poland *śmigus-dyngus* celebrations would spill over into Easter Tuesday, which was treated as the third day of Eastertide. Now the girls took the initiative and doused any men they encountered, in retaliation for the Wet Monday. But the feminine version of *śmigus-dyngus* soon turned into a watery free-for-all, carrying on into the next days in accordance with an old adage which went, "Right until Whitsun Day dousing's allowed each Friday." It soon turned out that any day of the week, not just Friday, was good for a lark with the water-hose.

Since the most ancient times water has always been an important attribute and symbol not only of Easter, but all the traditional spring festivals. An essential for life, water has been accorded respect and worship all over the world, commanding a special position in the Polish folk customs and agrarian rituals, traditional remedies and therapies, and in magic, especially in charms and spells associated with love.

Practices associated with water – sprinkling, washing, dousing, and submerging – so characteristic of the Easter festivities, along with the *śmigus-dyngus* customs, go back to ancient rites of cleansing much older than Christianity and initially frowned upon by the Christian Church – rites which were to bring on the rain needed for cultivation, ensure health, vigour, love, and fertility.

The oldest records of *śmigus-dyngus* in Poland date back to the 15th century. They were ecclesiastical injunctions prohibiting "the pagan custom called dyngus." In the *Dyngus Prohibeatur* decree issued in 1420 by the synod of the Diocese of Poznań and signed by Bishop Andrzej Łaskarz the stern prelate regarded the *śmigus-dyngus* practices a mortal sin and instructed the priests of his diocese to "forbid the men and women to solicit for eggs and other gifts on the second and third day of Eastertide, or to drag each other into the water."

Despite such injunctions *śmigus-dyngus* has come down to our times, but only as a game. Like the other rites and customs of Eastertide, it is an expression of the power and joy of life. Pranks involving water are still a favourite pastime for Easter Monday with the youngsters, though occasionally they may be troublesome to the older or staid folk who get soaked in the fray.

Barbara Ogradowska
The State Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw

All collector's coins are legal tender in Poland.