

Roman Coins in the Northern Black Sea Littoral Region: the Cherniakhiv Culture Perspective

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The article analyses the finds of Roman coins, and their imitations and copies found in the Cherniakhiv culture area in the Northern Black Sea Littoral region. There are several peculiarities of their distribution: the almost complete absence of hoards of Roman denarii or their copies and imitations; a small number of finds of antoniniani, Roman provincial coins, aurei, gold and gold-plated imitations and solidi; a considerable spread of single finds of Roman Imperial denarii and late Roman bronze issues, the presence of siliqua finds. All of these distinguish this region from other areas of the Cherniakhiv culture, which may be due to several different reasons.

KEY-WORDS: Roman coin finds, hoards, Cherniakhiv culture

This article is devoted to analysing the finds of Roman coins outside the ancient centres in the Northern Black Sea Littoral region. As in any attempt at conducting a regional study in archaeology there is the issue of the very subjective grounds on which the boundaries of the study area are defined (for example, they can be modern administrative units or ethnographic regions).¹ In the past, a number of attempts have been made to define separate areas within the wider zone of the Cherniakhiv culture. For example, as early as 1957, Mariya Tikhanova defined five local variants of the Cherniakhiv culture (Tikhanova 1957). Local groups and microregions of the culture were also defined by Evgeniya Makhno (1970a; 1970b), Volodymyr Baran (Baran 1981: 163–165), and Oleh Prykhodniuk (1994: 65–67). One of the most recent attempts at such zoning was made by Borys Magomedov two decades ago, proposing nine regions of the Cherniakhiv culture (Magomedov 2001: 18). My research will concentrate on the territorial boundaries that Magomedov

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1 I have touched on this issue in more detail in a study of Roman coin finds from Volyn (Myzgin 2019c: 30).

defined for the “Northern Black Sea”.² At the same time, I should stress that I am primarily interested in the finds associated with the barbarian contexts.

Another problem of a purely methodological nature relates to the quality of the source base used in this article. The present study would be far from complete and objective if it were based only on previously published finds of Roman coins, including those originating only from the few (especially in recent years) archaeological studies of Late Roman sites in the region. I have also used coin finds found by amateurs, either accidentally or those deliberately hunting for artefacts with the help of metal detectors. As is well known, the “era of the metal detector” in archaeology has radically changed our ideas about the quantity and variety of metal artefacts found on Late Roman sites in Eastern Europe. The collection of similar data on the finds of ancient coins in the territory of Ukraine has increased the databases on various categories of coins threefold and sometimes tenfold (see below for more details).

Nevertheless, the active use of the newest material is currently hindered by the low quality of the information available, and not in all cases can such information be verified. As a rule, information obtained from open sources (treasure-hunting forums or social networks) rarely contains information about the exact location of finds (at best, the administrative region can be clarified), the available images of coins are not often of a particularly high quality. Therefore, data of such low reliability can only serve as a source of additional information, subject to critical evaluation, though they can allow a more objective assessment of trends in the distribution and number of findings.

The history of the studies of Roman coin finds in barbarian contexts in the territory of the Northern Black Sea Littoral region is not particularly substantial. For example, the article by Aleksandr Zograf devoted to the monetary circulation of the Northern Black Sea Region focused only on Greek coinage in this area, whereas the Roman coin finds were not taken into account (Zograf 1955). The same is in the monograph by Piotr Karyshkovskiy, who also focused mainly on coin production (1988). These authors practically do not mention the coin finds in the region outside of ancient contexts.³ The authors of the catalogues of finds in the territory of Eastern Europe, Vladislav Kropotkin (1961) and Mykhailo Braichevskiy (Braichevskiy 1959), did not pay much attention to this region either.

A few paragraphs on the Roman coin finds from the barbarian contexts in the Northern Black Sea Littoral region were devoted in Borys Magomedov’s

2 “The Northern Black Sea Region occupies the coastline between the mouths of the Dnister and Dniipro rivers – an area of the “Black Sea type” of sites (Magomedov 2001: 18). In earlier publications, Magomedov called this region “North-Western Black Sea Region” (cf., Magomedov 1987).

3 P. Karyshkovskiy devoted one paragraph to such findings. Cf. Karyshkovskiy 1988: 117–118.

monograph (Magomedov 1987: 77–79). However, these observations could be better described as general observations of the coin circulation on the territory of the entire Cherniakhiv culture rather than on the region of interest only. The monograph by Elena Stolyarik (Stolyarik 1992; also published in English: Stolyarik 1993), has the most significant connection with the Northern Black Sea Littoral region. For its time, it presents an impressive analysis of finds of Late Roman and early Byzantine coins from here, as well as a comparison with finds from the neighbouring Dobrudja region. In general, however, the study of Roman coin finds related to barbarian contexts in the Northern Black Sea Littoral region leaves much to be desired.

In Southeastern Europe, Roman coins are represented by almost all the main denominations of the Roman Imperial period. The vast majority of these are 1st–2nd century denarii (68%), but antoniniani (7%), 2nd–3rd century Roman provincial coins (12%) and bronze issues of the 4th – first half of the 5th centuries (5%) are also represented (cf., Myzgin 2018b: 87). In the case of any discussion of the statistical distribution of Roman coin finds in the Northern Black Sea Littoral region (without taking into account finds from Olbia, Tyras, Nikonion and their neighbourhood), we can, unfortunately, still operate only with old data because newer information from here is not systematically taken into account. The data in question are those contained in the work of Mykhailo Braichevskyi (Braichevskyi 1959), Vladislav Kropotkin's (1961; 1966; 2000) and Elena Stolyarik's catalogues (1984; 1992; 1993). Moreover, in the catalogue of my PhD thesis (Myzgin 2010), there are also data on a few unpublished single finds known from the region at that time. In total, the current statistics refer to 158 finds of Roman coins, originating from single finds and hoards. As in the rest of Southeastern Europe, Roman imperial denarii make up the majority of finds in the Northern Black Sea Littoral region (53%), followed by Late Roman bronze coins (24%), and then, in much smaller numbers, antoniniani (9%), the Roman provincial coins of the 2nd–3rd centuries (4%), siliquae and official bronze denominations of the 1st–2nd centuries (3% each), aurei, solidi and imitations of Roman coins (1% each; Fig. 1). Of course, these statistics are very far from an objective reality (these figures can be verified only by massive registration of the newest materials), however, in my opinion, they give an some idea of specific trends in their distribution. We may examine each of these categories in more detail.

As noted above, the main group of Roman coin finds represented are the **Roman imperial denarii**. Their influx to the region is most probably connected with the arrival into Southeastern Europe at the beginning of the 3rd century of the Wielbark culture and possibly also of the population of the Przeworsk culture, who would have brought these coins from the territory of Central Europe. There they, in their turn, received them as a result of the Marcomannic Wars (for details, see: Myzgin 2013: 221–223; Dymowski and Myzgin 2014; Myzgin 2019b). Single finds of denarii

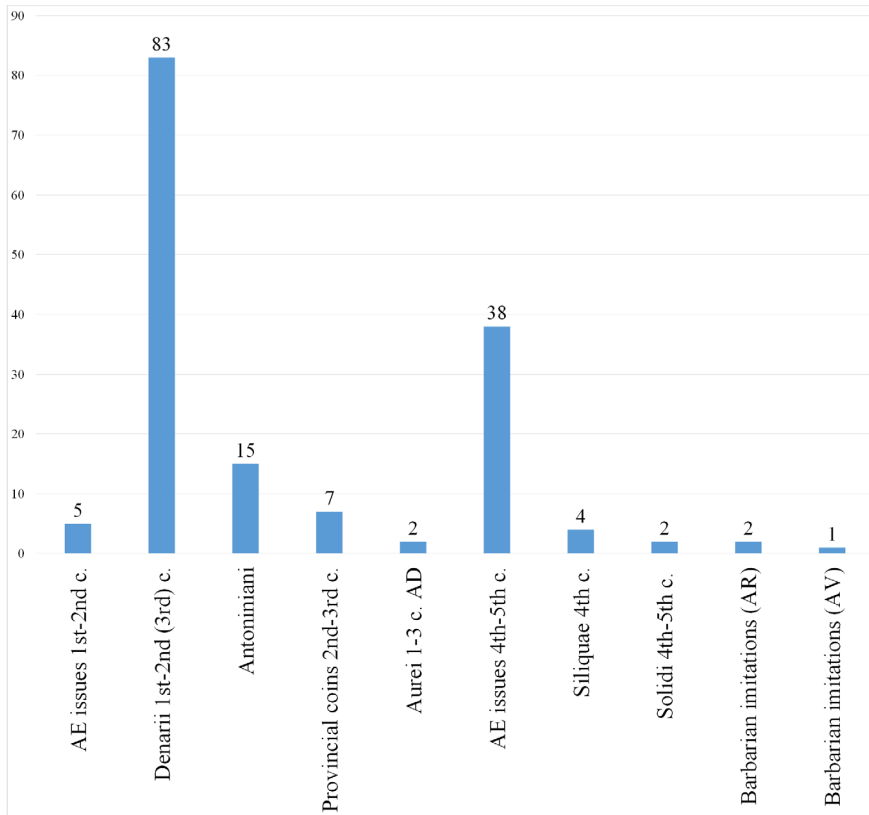


Fig. 1. Roman coin finds from the North Black Sea Littoral region, related to the Cherniakhiv culture area: published data (on the basis of Braichevskiy 1959; Kropotkin 1961; 2000; Stolyarik 1984; 1992; Myzgin 2010; Anokhin 2015).

(Myzgin 2013: 220, fig. 2: I) are widespread in all regions of the Cherniakhiv culture, including the Northern Black Sea Littoral region (Fig. 2). The situation, however, is fundamentally different in the case of denarii hoards: they are concentrated mainly in the forest-steppe zone, while in the Northern Black Sea Littoral region, especially in its southern part, there are practically none (Fig. 3). The exception is comprised by just four deposits. One hoard was found no earlier than the mid-twentieth century in the vicinity of ancient Tyras in the Odesa Oblast, in the “Popushnaia landing” area: it contained at least twenty coins from Vespasian to Commodus (Kropotkin 1961: 70, no. 742). The other example is an unpublished hoard found in 2016 from the vicinity of Kobleve village in the Mykolaiv Oblast. Another hoard was allegedly found in the vicinity of the town Snyhurivka in the Mykolaiv Oblast, but only one

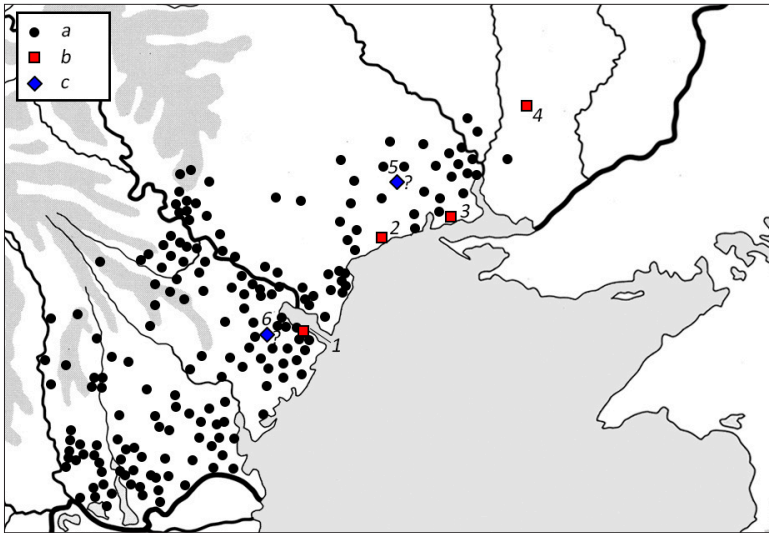


Fig. 2. Finds from the North Black Sea Littoral region of Roman Imperial denarii and their imitations (after: Myzgin 2010; Anokhin 2015; with some additions).

- a – single finds; b – finds of Roman Imperial denarii hoards, mentioned in the text of article;
- c – finds of imitations of Roman Imperial denarii.

1 – Bilhorod-Dnistrovskiyi (environs); 2 – Kobleve; 3 – Dmytrivka; 4 – Snyhurivka; 5 – Bilhorod-Dnistrovskiyi district (without precise location); 6 – Mykolaiv district (without precise location).

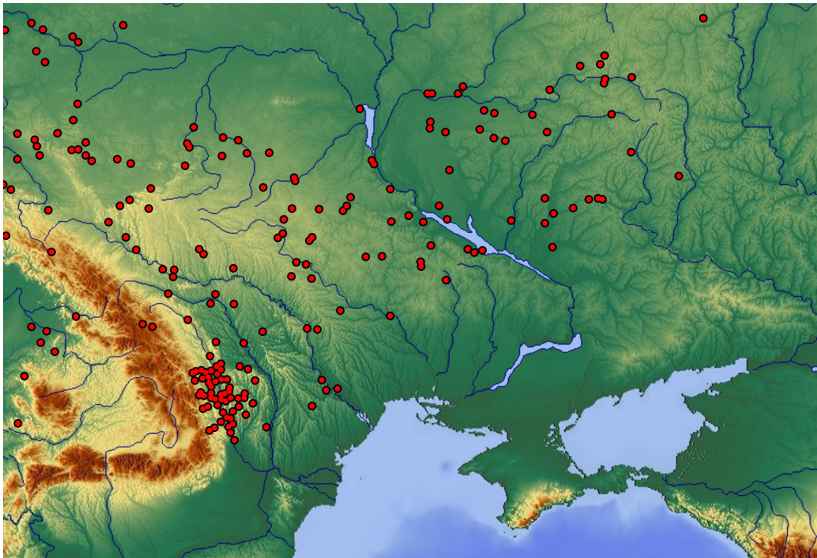


Fig. 3. Finds of Roman Imperial denarii hoards from South-East Europe (detail extracted from Dymowski *et al.*, 2020, map 1).

coin of Marcus Aurelius has been preserved (Kropotkin 1961: 69, no. 733). However, it is not entirely sure that this was a hoard. Another hoard was discovered in 2021 in the vicinity of the Dmytrivka village, also in the Mykolaiv Oblast. It contained ten denarii issued between the reigns of Nero and Marcus Aurelius and could be associated with the nearest ancient settlements of Yaselka or Petukhivka 2 (Stolba and Peter 2021: 223–232). Thus the hoards from the vicinity of Tyras and near the village of Dmytrivka could very likely be associated with the contexts of ancient cities, the hoard from Snyhurivka is questionable, while the hoard from Kobleve, which may well have had a barbaric context, belongs to the low confidence finds.

A logical question arises: why, despite the significant amount of single finds of denarii in the Northern Black Sea Littoral region, is there almost no information about their deposition in hoards related to the barbarian context? It is not very likely that the lack of denarii hoards in the steppe area of the Cherniakhiv culture can be explained by insufficient research – this area has a relatively long history of archaeological studies. It is also unlikely that it could be connected with any local tribal tradition (considering the considerable presence of the Late Sarmatian and Late Scythian population), which might have suggested the absence of a tradition of hoarding coins. It is also doubtful that the local Cherniakhiv culture population lacked enough denarii for hoarding. The existence of single finds shows the opposite: enough coins were used here, allowing some to be lost and falling into the ground. There is even one case of a denarius found in a Cherniakhiv culture grave inventory (Grave 25 of the Kobleve cemetery: Symonovich 1979: 90). Consequently, the stock of Roman denarii would also have been sufficient to hide at least small deposits. Possibly, the explanation of the phenomenon of the lack of hoards of denarii in the Northern Black Sea Littoral region should be sought in the nature of the coin hoards in the Cherniakhiv culture, about which we do not know much. It is not entirely clear whether these hoards were deposits of individual wealthy representatives of a barbarian society or whether they were communal wealth. We should also remember that in Barbaricum, the making of non-retrievable (votive) deposits was practised. For example, such hoards are well known as bog deposits in Northern Barbaricum (cf., Bursche 2011). However, was this practice applied in the Cherniakhiv culture?

In my opinion, the fact that so few denarii hoards have been found in the Northern Black Sea Littoral region may indicate that their owners managed to remove them from the ground in time. When this happened and what the fate of these coins was, can only be a matter of speculation. It may be supposed that this was connected with the arrival of the Huns in the Northern Black Sea Littoral region at the end of the fourth century: here, their traces are clearly visible enough, unlike the forest-steppe areas (cf., Petrauskas 2021: 16, fig. 1). So the coin deposits could have been removed from the ground shortly before the nomads arrived and taken away together with the Cherniakhiv

population who left the area. As an alternative hypothesis, the Roman silver could have been given to the Huns as tribute. However, both versions are so far extremely hypothetical and require careful verification. On the other hand, it raises the question, why so many hoards been discovered in the Cherniakhiv culture forest-steppe zone have been discovered. The Hunnish invasion did not directly affect this region, i.e., there was no direct threat (cf., Petrauskas 2021: 26). What kind of catastrophe that neither found its way into the written sources nor the archaeological record would have been the reason why the owners of the coin deposits did not come for them? Answers to all these questions remain to be sought in the future.

No earlier than the mid-3rd, or more likely at the turn of the 3rd and 4th centuries, the population of Cherniakhiv culture imitated Roman imperial denarii (Dymowski and Myzgin 2021: 200–205) or copied them (Dymowski 2021; Awianowicz *et al.*, 2022). The main concentration of **imitations of Roman denarii** is in the area between the upper reaches of the South Buh River and the middle reaches of the Dnister River (cf., Dymowski and Myzgin 2021: 203), and in the Northern Black Sea Littoral region, their existence is a kind of exception. Unfortunately, most of the information on finds of imitations of denarii is very general as to their exact localization: often, it is restricted to the name of an administrative region. In Oleh Anokhin's catalogue, there is information on 14 finds of imitations of Roman imperial denarii from the Odesa Oblast (Anokhin 2015: nos. 6, 84, 184, 239, 336, 415, 443, 767, 897, 913, 990, 1032, 1080) and three from the Mykolaiv Oblast (Anokhin 2015: nos. 29, 575, 1053). They all imitate issues of official Roman denarii of the Antoninus dynasty period. However, whether they were found in the steppe part of these Oblasts or in their north remains mostly unknown. Theoretically, only two finds can be associated with the Northern Black Sea Littoral region: the Bilhorod-Dnistrovskiy district of the Odesa Oblast (Fig. 4: 1; Anokhin 2015: no. 443) and the Mykolaiv district of the Mykolaiv Oblast (Fig. 4: 2; Anokhin 2015: no. 575). As for finds of **copies of Roman imperial denarii** (plated and cast base metal-alloy coins) in the Northern Black Sea Littoral region, no statistics on these are available, nor is there information about their finds here, although, taking into account their general distribution, they are to be expected in this area.

From the data collected by Vladislav Kropotkin, we know about a few single finds of **antoniniani** in the south part of the Odesa Oblast (Fig. 5). We should mention discovery of an antoninianus of Philip the Arab (for Otacilia Severa) from the Stara Bohdanivka village (Kropotkin 2000: 55, no. 2328), antoniniani of Philip the Arab (for Otacilia Severa), Decius and Gallienus (for Salonina) from the vicinity of the village of Roksolany⁴ (Kropotkin 2000: 35–36, nos. 1905, 1907), and an

4 It is well known that the ancient town of Nikonion was situated near the modern village of Roksolany. However, there was also a settlement of the Cherniakhiv culture in the same vicinity (cf., Gudkova 1999: 306, fig. 1: 20).



Fig. 4. Barbarian imitations from the North Black Sea Littoral region (without scale; after: Anokhin 2015).

1 – an imitation of a denarius from the Odesa Oblast (Anokhin 2015, no. 443/ar); 2 – an imitation of a denarius from the Mykolaiv Oblast (Anokhin 2015, no. 575/ar); 3 – a gold-plated imitation from the Odesa Oblast (Anokhin 2015, no. 190/au).

antoninianus of Carinus from the Cherniakhiv settlement near the Bolhrad town, near Yalpug Lake (Kropotkin 2000: 32, no. 1876). It is also known that at least two finds of antoniniani hoards were made in the the Northern Black Sea Littoral region. The first one was discovered in 1977 or 1978, near the Vasylivka village in the Odesa Oblast. It consist of 15 coins issued between the reigns of Severus Alexander and Trebonianus Gallus (Rozumenko 1982: 135–137). The second hoard was found several years ago in the vicinity of Odesa itself. It included at least 44 coins

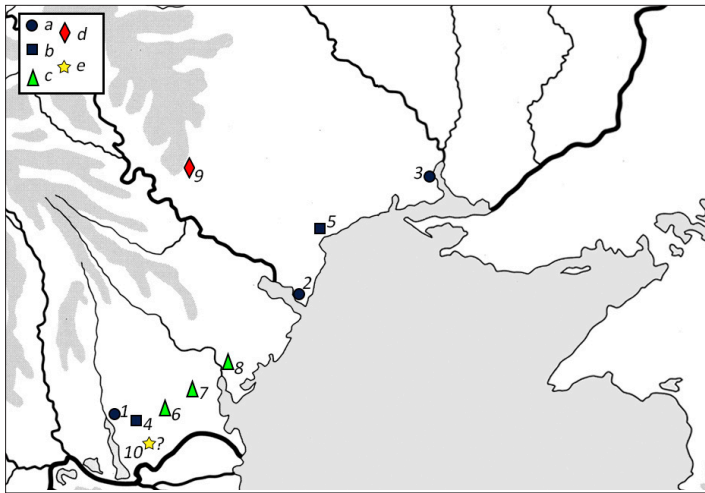


Fig. 5. Finds of 3rd-century AD Roman coins from the North Black Sea Littoral region.
 a – single finds of antoniniani; b – finds of antoniniani hoards; c – finds of Roman Provincial coins;
 d – find of aureus; e – find of gold barbarian imitation.
 1 – Bolhrad; 2 – Roksolany (environs); 3 – Stara Bohdanivka; 4 – Vasylivka; 5 – Odesa (environs);
 6 – Kamianske; 7 – Mykolaivka-Novorosyiska; 8 – Biliaivka; 9 – Dolynske; 10 – Izmail district
 (without precise location; drawn by K. Myzgin).

of the period of Gallienus (late issues) and Claudius II (Myzgin and Perederey 2021: 316). As can be seen, antoniniani are not frequent finds in the region. I believe there were at least three waves of influx of antoniniani into eastern Barbaricum (Myzgin and Perederey 2021: 317). The first wave was probably connected with the victory of the barbarians at Abritus, the consequence of which was the payment of contributions by Trebonianus Gallus (Bursche 1996: 97, 127; Myzgin and Perederey 2021: 317). The finds from Stara Bohdanivka, the antoniniani of Philip the Arab and Decius from Roksolany and a hoard from Vasylivka may be connected with this wave. The second wave reflects coins from the time of Valerian and Gallienus. I connect the influx of these coins with the military and political activity of the barbarians at the end of 250s and in 260s, when barbarian warriors could be actively recruited for service in the Empire, as well as with its enemies. For that, they could receive payment in gold and silver, including antoniniani (Myzgin and Perederey 2021: 317). The antoninianus of Gallienus from Roksolany is obviously to be associated with this wave. Finally, the final phase of the influx of antoniniani is associated with coins issued between the late reign of Gallienus and Diocletian. The rare finds of these coins in Southeastern Europe probably reflect the participation of individual

troops or warriors in the events of the late 260 – early 280s in the Empire (Myzgin and Perederey 2021: 317). The hoard discovered in the vicinity of Odesa may be connected with this wave of influx of antoniniani.

There is little information about the finds of **Roman provincial coins** in the Northern Black Sea Littoral region (Fig. 5). In the catalogues by Vladislav Kropotkin, only three finds from the Odesa area can be associated with the Cherniakhiv culture: a coin of Gordian III minted at Tium in Bithynia from Biliaivka (Kropotkin 2000: 32, no. 1874), a coin of Caracalla minted in Philippopolis in Thrace from Mykolaivka-Novorosiiska (Kropotkin 2000: 33, no. 1892) and a coin with portraits of Macrinus and Diadumenianus minted in Marcianopolis in Lower Moesia from Kamianske (Kropotkin 1961: 71, no. 777). During the last few years, I have actively collected information on finds of Roman provincial coins from the territory of Ukraine from open sources (Myzgin 2016; 2018b). In the statistics I compiled at that time, the Northern Black Sea Littoral region is included as part of “Southern Ukraine” (Myzgin 2016: 165, figs. 12, 13; 2018b: 95). Unfortunately, as in the case of other categories, the information obtained from amateur artefact collectors contains only general information about the region of finds. The “Southern Ukraine” region may include both finds from the southern and northern parts of the Odesa and Mykolaiv Oblasts. Therefore, unfortunately, this material is uninformative for the purposes of this article. However, the vast majority of coins from this conventional region were struck in the mints of Upper and Lower Moesia and in Thrace.

There is a certain regularity in the topography of finds of the Roman provincial coins in the territory of the Cherniakhiv culture: in the areas to the west of the Dnipro River, coins that were minted in the Balkan provinces and also in the western and north-western cities of Asia Minor prevail; in the regions to the east of the Dnipro River the dominant position is occupied by coins minted in the cities of northern and central Asia Minor (Myzgin 2016: 164–165). This fact is most likely explained by the peculiarities of the military activity of different groups of barbarians during the Gothic wars of the 3rd century. Finds to the west of the Dnipro River, including those from the Northern Black Sea Littoral region, are probably connected with the participation of Goths in the campaigns of 230s and 240s that were conducted in the Balkan provinces of the Roman Empire (Thrace, Lower and Upper Moesia, Dacia and Macedonia), and in the 260s in the north-western and western regions of Asia Minor, primarily in the territory of Bithynia (Myzgin 2016: 164–165). The coins east of the Dnipro reflect participation in the incursions to the northern regions of Asia Minor (Myzgin and Didenko 2021). These observations confirm findings from the Northern Black Sea Littoral region, minted in Lower Moesia, Thrace, and Bithynia.

From the information published before 2001, at least five **aurei** of the 1st–3rd centuries have been found (Fig. 5) in the territory of the Northern Black Sea Littoral

region (Kropotkin 1961: 70, nos. 739, 748; Kropotkin 2000: 30, no. 1851; 31, nos. 1861, 1862), of which only one could be connected with the Cherniakhiv culture because the findspot is situated at a certain distance from the ancient centres. This concerns an aureus of Diocletian found in a field near the village of Dolynske, Odesa Oblast (Kropotkin 1961: 70, no. 739). No particular changes to this picture are produced by the latest data. According to my information, there is only very general information about the find of an aureus of Hadrian from the Mykolaiv Oblast and fragments of aurei of Volusianus and Caracalla from the Odesa Oblast. It should be noted that the exact findspots are unknown and there is no guarantee that these coins were not found in the north of these administrative regions (i.e., oblasts), that is, they have nothing to do with the region under consideration. In general, it has already been repeatedly noted that the main area of finds of imperial gold coins in Barbaricum is the forest-steppe regions to the west of the Dnipro, especially the areas between the upper reaches of the Southern Buh and the middle reaches of the Dnister (cf., Myzgin 2018a: 45; Bursche and Myzgin 2020: 212–213, map 4). Several hundred finds of aurei have been found here, the vast majority of which dated back to the time between Gordian III and Decius.⁵ The predominance of finds of the mid-third century gold coins is associated with the victory of the Goths over the Roman army in 251 near Abritus and the seizure of the imperial treasury (Bursche 2013; Bursche and Myzgin 2020). A large number of coins also belong to the time of the reign of Gallienus, the influx of which could be connected with the service of barbarians as mercenaries in the Roman army or the armies of its adversaries (Myzgin and Filatov 2018). The same reasons can probably also explain the influx of gold coins from the period of the Tetrarchy and the early Dominate periods (cf., Myzgin 2018a: 37–38). Interestingly, from the last quarter of the third century, finds of gold coins spread to the east of the Dnipro (finds of earlier issues are almost unknown there). Hypothetically, this can be connected with a considerable expansion of the area of the Cherniakhiv culture in the late phase C2 or early phase C3 of the Central-European relative chronology system (cf., Lyubichev 2019: 145–178). Whether the finding of an aureus of Diocletian from Dolynske is related to these is an open question. It may have something to do with the influx of bronze coins of the late 3rd – first quarter of the 4th century to this region (see below).

The **gold or gold-plated imitations** are also rare in the Northern Black Sea Littoral region. About 180 years ago, Nikolay Murzakevich (Murzakevich 1844: 318, no. 20) wrote about a find of gold imitations supposedly within the borders

⁵ Incidentally, an aureus of Decius is also known from the finds from Bilhorod-Dnistrovskiy (Kropotkin 2000: 31, no. 1862), but whether it is associated with the Cherniakhiv culture is not clear; the presence or absence of a hole in the coin would help to clarify this: holes are the most characteristic for Roman gold coin finds from the Cherniakhiv culture (cf., Bursche and Myzgin 2020: 215–219).

of the modern-day Odesa Oblast. The imitations from the Odesa Archaeological Museum were mentioned by Vladislav Kropotkin (Kropotkin 1976: 26, 27), although there is no confirmation that they were local finds. In the catalogue of finds of barbarian imitations from the territory of Ukraine and Moldova, Oleh Anokhin associates seven gold and gold-plated imitations with the Odesa and Mykolaiv Oblasts (Anokhin 2015: nos. 4, 59, 141, 190, 198, 201, 221, 260). However, almost all of them are found in the northern parts of these administrative units. The only exception is a gold-plated imitation of an aureus from the Izmail district of the Odesa Oblast (Fig. 4:3; Anokhin 2015: no. 190). As in the case of the aurei, finds of gold or gold-plated imitations are concentrated far to the north of the Black Sea Region – in central and western Ukraine (cf., Myzgin *et al.*, 2018: 229, fig. 5). Most probably, their production was started not earlier than the 260s, but significantly activated at the late 3rd – early 4th centuries, apparently to make up for the lack of original Roman gold coins (Myzgin *et al.*, 2018: 230).

Coin finds from the Late Roman period in the Northern Black Sea Littoral region are represented by bronze issues (AE2, AE3), silver coins (siliquae) and gold issues (solidi).

Late Roman bronze coin finds in the Northern Black Sea Littoral region comprise a relatively large percentage (Fig. 6). First, this applies to the western areas of the region, especially in the area of the lower Dnister and Danube rivers. According to Elena Stolyarik's calculations, more than half of these coins issued between AD 337 and 378 were found here. Not less than a third of all finds are coins issued between AD 284–337. Coins from the last quarter of the 4th century and the fifth century (AD 378–491) are known in the smallest quantity (Stolyarik 1992: 28–29; table 4). Generally, this is part of the greater concentration of Roman bronze that is observed to the east of the Dnister River (cf., Vorontsov and Myzgin 2019: 249, fig. 3). Obviously, the activity of Late Roman bronze coin influx into this area is connected with its proximity to Roman Limes. This territory could have been included in the orbit of direct trade interests of the Roman Empire (Myzgin 2013: 227). Another significant source could be the service of the local population in the Late Roman army as *foederati* (Bursche 1996: 121; Myzgin 2013: 227, 229). As a rule, all these coins were issued by mints of the Eastern Roman Empire, which may indicate their places of service (Magomedov 2006: 48–49). Including Late Roman bronze coins in the burial inventory is probably also connected with the Roman tradition. At least three such assemblages are known in the region: Graves 59, 73, and 86 of the Nahirne cemetery in the Odesa Oblast (Gudkova and Schultze 2017: 218, 225–226).⁶

6 Grave 203 from the Bilenke cemetery in the Odesa Region is also possible, although the exact dating of the coin there is unknown (Rosohackiy 1992: 36–38).

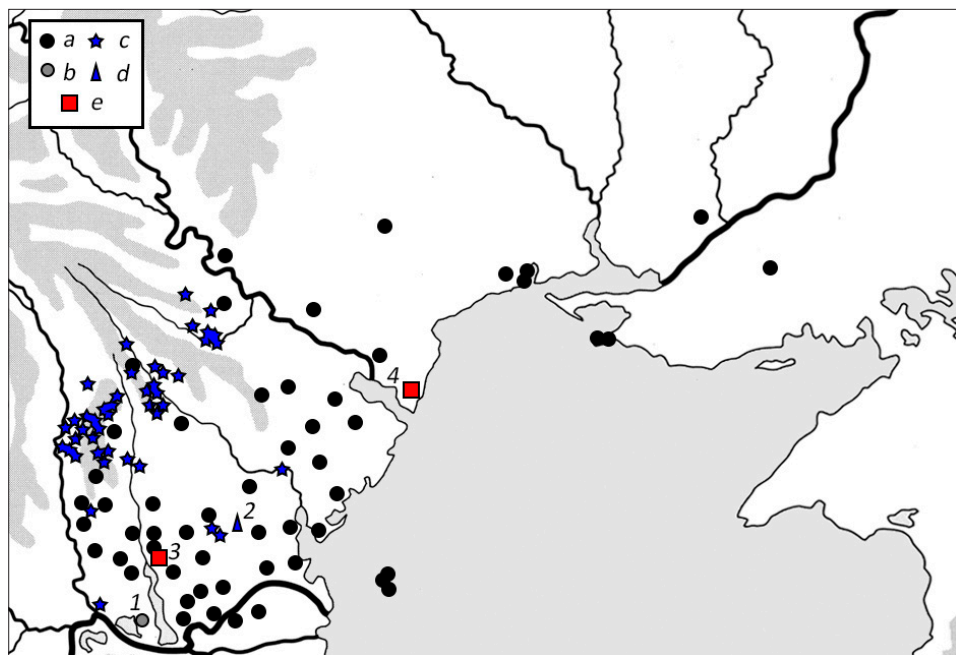


Fig. 6. Finds of Late Roman coins (early 4th – mid-5th centuries) from the North Black Sea Littoral region (after: Vorontsov and Myzgin 2019: 249, fig. 3; Dergaciova 2021: 186, pl. XXIV; with some additions).

a – single finds of AE issues; b – graves containing AE coins; c – single finds of siliquae; d – find of hoard of siliquae; e – finds of solidi; 1 – Nahirne; 2 – Kholmske; 3 – Hrybivka; 4 – Tabaky.

The **siliquae** finds in the catalogues of Kropotkin and Stolyarik cannot be called a frequent category (Fig. 6), and all of them, as in the case of Late Roman bronze coin finds, are known from the western part of the Northern Black Sea Littoral region (Kropotkin 2000: 32–33, no. 1887; Stolyarik 1992: 24–26). I also have unpublished information on several new single finds from this region. A hoard of siliquae found in 1982 near the Kholmske village is of interest. It was first published in 1985 (Gudkova and Stolyarik 1985), but it was recently thoroughly examined and republished by Lilia Dergaciova (2021). The hoard was discovered in a settlement of the Cherniakhiv culture. It contained 93 coins: 92 siliquae issued during the reign of Constantius II between AD 351 and 355 by the mints of Arles, Sirmium, Constantinople and Nicomedia, and one barbarian imitation of a Constantius II siliqua (Dergaciova 2021: 123–127).

Both the single finds of siliquae from the Northern Black Sea Littoral region and the hoard from Kholmske are part of a wider area of finds east of the Dnister. All this is proved, among other things, by the die-links between some coins from the Kholmske hoard and the hoards of siliquae from Chişinău/airport, Taraclia, Teleneşti, and Lărguţa (Dergaciova 2021: 145). Dergaciova considers the bulk of the influx of siliquae to the region between AD 367 and 369 as payment to barbarian mercenaries who participated on the side of Procopius against Valens (Dergaciova 2021: 156). However, in Stolyarik's opinion, the coins could have arrived here earlier, and the hoard in AD 367–368 would have been hidden during the punitive expedition of Valens to the Lower Danube (Stolyarik 1989: 48). According to another hypothesis, this was a payment to barbarians for their service in the Roman army as *foederati* (Bursche 1996: 121; Shchukin 2005: 202). Generally, in my opinion, in considering the date of deposition of the siliquae hoards, including the hoard from Kholmske, we should consider the time of imitation of siliquae production, which was at least 5–10 years later than the official ones.

Finally, the finds of **solidi** in the region are known only in two cases (Fig. 6). This concerns a pierced solidus of Licinius from Hrybivka and a solidus of Zeno from Tabaky, Odesa Oblast (Stolyarik 1992: 22, 28). No newer finds of such coins from the region are known to me. As in the case of the two previous categories, these two coins are part of a larger area of their finds to the east of the Dnister River (cf., Gavritukhin 2005: 233, 234). The solidi of the first three-quarters of the 4th century (i.e., including the coin from Hrybivka) probably came to the region as a payment for military service in the Empire or as diplomatic gifts to the representatives of the barbarian elite (cf., Bursche 1996: 121). The solidi of the Hunnish time could result from diplomatic relations or/and trade (Myzgin 2013: 229–230).

This is a general overview of the finds of Roman coins, their copies and imitations found on the territory of the Northern Black Sea Region in the area of the Cherniakhiv culture. Several **conclusions** can be drawn from it

1. As a whole, the finds of Roman coins in the Northern Black Sea Littoral region related to Cherniakhiv culture have been studied relatively poorly. This is due to the somewhat inadequate level of their registration and the state of publication of the latest data. One significant a problem for the region is identifying coin finds from the “Roman” and “non-Roman” contexts. In this text, I have purposely ignored the finds of Roman coins from the territories of Olbia, Tyras and Nikonion, but some parts of them could likely have been brought there by the population of the Cherniakhiv culture. Of course, the situation is simplified if the finds of the coins on the ancient sites can be connected with the Cherniakhiv context. In other cases, however, it is challenging to identify coins from the Imperial and Barbarian territories in ancient or mixed layers and only if they have features typical for the barbarian

zone of the circulation of Roman coins. For example, this allows Borys Magomedov to suggest that these highly worn denarii could be associated with the Cherniakhiv horizon (Magomedov 2006: 49–50). Obviously, the coins of the 3rd–4th centuries on these sites could be more probably associated with the Cherniakhiv culture.

2. From the perspective of the Cherniakhiv culture, the region has the following features in the distribution of coin finds: a) despite the wide distribution of single finds of denarii, there are practically no hoards of them, a phenomenon that requires a closer study; b) there are very few reliable finds in the region of copies and imitations of Roman coins produced in barbarian workshops; c) there are few finds of antoniniani in the region, but there is a rare find of a hoard of them with issues of Gallienus and Claudius II; d) few gold coins of 1st–3rd and 4th–5th centuries are associated with the region; e) at the same time, however, the area is distinguished by a large number of finds of Late Roman bronze coins, f) as well as the presence of finds of siliquae, including a hoard of them.

3. Against the general background of the distribution of Roman coins in the territory of the Cherniakhiv culture, the Northern Black Sea Littoral region is rather different from the others (cf., Myzgin 2019a; 2019c). These differences are connected, first of all, with a much smaller number of finds of coins of the 1st–3rd centuries compared to other regions. At the same time, the distribution of coins of the 4th–5th centuries (bronze coins and siliquae) brings it closer to the westernmost areas of Cherniakhiv culture (i.e., those situated to the west of the Dnister). However, the latter case deals with material from the area between the lower reaches of the Dnister and the Danube Rivers. The areas to the east, between the lower reaches of the Dnister, the Southern Buh and the Dnipro, appear less rich in finds of Roman coins. Such a situation may be due to insufficient research in these territories. Nevertheless, I am more inclined to attribute these features to the specificity of the local distribution of the Cherniakhiv culture (about this, see: Magomedov 1987; Gudkova 1999). Some role, not yet clear to me, could have been played by the features of the traditional culture of the „indigenous” population (Late Scythian and Late Sarmatian), who were part of the „Gothic federation of tribes”, and also by the proximity of the population from the ancient centres (Olbia, Tyras, and Nikonion). Finally, a decisive factor, especially in the case of 3rd–4th century coins, was the proximity to the Roman Limes (this applies especially to the North-Western Black Sea area).

In any case, further processing of coin finds (both old and new ones) and their further detailed and critical publication is one of the essential perspectives in studying Roman coins in the Northern Black Sea Littoral region. This article can only be regarded as a prologue to this.

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