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# FINDS OF ROMAN COINS OF ASIA MINOR PROVINCIAL MINTAGE IN THE TERRITORY OF CHERNYAKHOV CULTURE

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**Abstract:** *This paper focuses on the finds of Roman coins of Asia Minor mintage in the territory of the Chernyakhov culture. The number of coins of provincial mintage is 175 (0.8% of all finds of Roman coins within this territory), including only 6 coins minted in the provinces of Asia Minor. These coins can be divided into three chronological groups. The penetration into Chernyakhov territory of coins of Groups 2 and 3 can be connected with Gothic participation in the naval campaigns in Asia Minor in AD 256-275. Our findings are consistent with other sources. Finds of coins minted in Asia Minor in particular localities of Chernyakhov territory are evidence of participants in the campaigns settling far inland after the conclusion of the wars.*

## CHERNYAKHOV KÜLTÜRÜNDE ANADOLU KÖKENLİ ROMA SİKKELERİ

**Özet:** *Bu bildiri Chernyakhov kültürü sınırları içerisindeki Anadolu kökenli Roma sikkelerini konu edinmiştir. Yerel baskılı sikke sayısı 175'dir (Roma sikkelerinin % 0.8'i bu bölgedendir); bunlardan 6 tanesi Anadolu'daki eyaletlerde basılmıştır. Bu sikkeler üç kronolojik gruba ayrılır. Chernyakhov kültürü içine 2. ve 3. grup sikkeler Anadolu'da İ.S. 256-275 arasında varolan Goth istilası ile bağlantılı olabilirler. Buluntular diğer kaynaklarla da örtüşür. Chernyakhov kültürü sınırları içinde ele geçen Anadolu kökenli sikkeler savaşların sonunda iç bölgelere yerleşen askeri sefer katılımcılarla ilgili delilleridir.*

The circulation of Roman coins in the Late Roman period in the Ukrainian forest-steppe regions and in Moldova is traditionally connected by scholars with the existence of the Chernyakhov culture here (3rd-beginning of the 5th century AD). Nowadays it is well known that more than 25,000 Roman coins have been found in the territory of this culture including about 3000 coins (12%) as single finds and about 22,000 (88%) as treasures/hoards (Fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> Only 175 types (0.8%) of the coins above are of provincial Roman mintage; and only the six types of coins given below were actually minted in Asia Minor (Fig. 2).

- 1) In 1960 a bronze coin of the town of Tium minted during the reign of the emperor Gordian III (AD 238-244) was found near the village of Belyaevka, Odessa region.<sup>2</sup>
- 2) In 1931 a bronze coin of Caracalla (AD 211-217) minted in the town of Cessarium was found near the village of Ponyatovka, Odessa region.<sup>3</sup>
- 3) About 1980 a bronze coin of Macrinus (AD 217-218) minted in the town of Sinope was found near the village of Dumanov, Khmel'nitskii region.<sup>4</sup>
- 4) In 1822 a bronze coin of Gallienus (AD 253-268) minted in the town of Ephesus was found near the village of Shimkovcy, Khmel'nitskii region.<sup>5</sup>

5) About 1887 a silver denarius of Lucius Verus (AD 161-169) minted in one of the towns of Asia Minor was found near the town of Smela, Cherkassy region.<sup>6</sup>

6) About 2000 a copper coin of Gordian III (AD 238-244) minted in Trapezus was found near the village Khrushchovaya Nikitovka of Kharkov region (Fig. 3).<sup>7</sup>

Little has been written about them. As a rule, scholars were not much concerned with the spread of provincial coins among the Chernyakhov population. B. Magomedov was the first to address this problem. He considered the finds of Roman coins minted in Asia Minor to be closely connected with the sources of obtaining Roman coins by the Goths.<sup>8</sup>

The abovementioned coins can be divided in three compact chronological groups:

Group 1: AD 161-169 (coin of Lucius Verus);

Group 2: AD 211-218 (coins of Caracalla and Macrinus);

Group 3: AD 238-268 (two coins of Gordian III and one coin of Gallienus).

The finds of silver denarii of the 2nd century AD, which includes the coin in Group 1, are typical of the territory of Chernyakhov culture. Denarii of early mintage predomi-

<sup>1</sup> Myzgin 2008, 52.

<sup>2</sup> Kropotkin 2000, 32, no. 1874.

<sup>3</sup> Kropotkin 1966, 90, no. 97; 2000, 33, no. 1902.

<sup>4</sup> Kropotkin 2000, 55, no. 2334.

<sup>5</sup> Kropotkin 2000, 38, no. 1994.

<sup>6</sup> Kropotkin 1961, 89, no. 1256.

<sup>7</sup> Published for the first time.

<sup>8</sup> Magomedov 2008, 173.

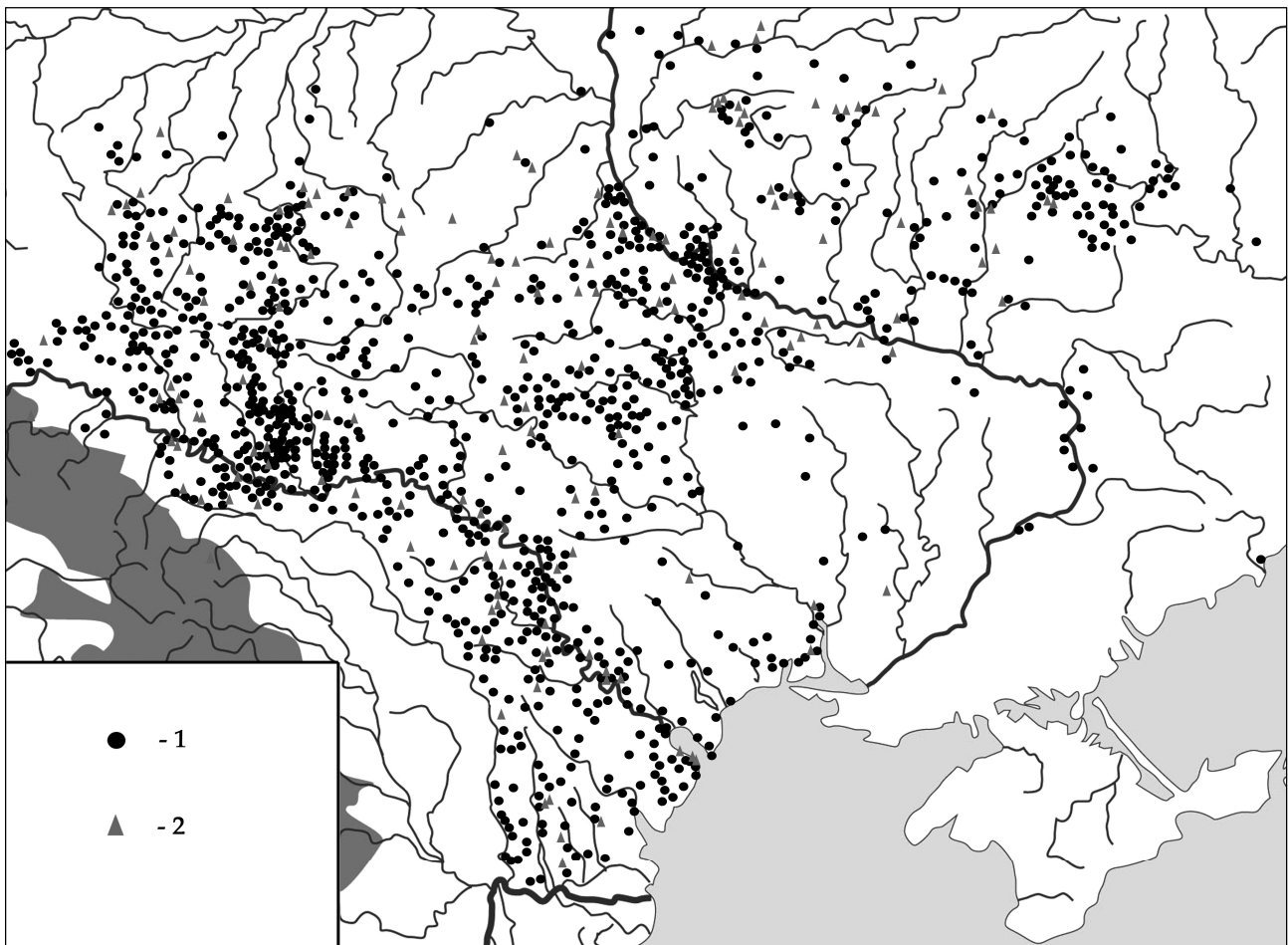


Fig. 1: Finds of Roman coins in the territory of Chernyakhov culture. 1. Single finds; 2. Treasures

nate among numismatic finds in the Chernyakhov area, forming 52% of single finds and about 80% of coins found in hoards.<sup>9</sup> Traditionally, scholars have explained this by the higher silver content of these coins than later emissions. Tacitus (*Germania* 5) draws our attention to the German tribes' preference for coins of earlier mintage. The most active debasement of the coinage began under Septimius Severus (AD 193-211), under his rule the silver content of a coin was 57% compared with 36% under Trebonianus Galus (AD 251-253).<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, for Chernyakhov culture the silver denarius of Lucius Verus is a unique find: it was of provincial mintage whereas almost all coins were minted in Rome.

The coins of Group 2 are the rarest in Chernyakhov territory. They constitute less than 1% among single finds and 0.3% of hoards. Their emission dates back to the period of distributing copper and bronze face values that is connected with the outbreak of economic and political crisis in the Roman empire.<sup>11</sup> The coins of Group 3 are less rare but they form only 1.6% of single finds and 0.2% of hoards. Mostly these are copper and silver face values.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Myzgin 2008, 53.

<sup>10</sup> Kastan and Fuster 1996, 41.

<sup>11</sup> Myzgin 2008, 53.

<sup>12</sup> Myzgin 2008, 53-54.

How coins minted in Asia Minor were obtained by the Chernyakhov population is connected with the second stage of the Scythian wars (AD 256-275), in which the Scythians' main goal was to occupy the provinces of Asia Minor. The plunder of the Bosphorus and Tanais was followed by that of the Asia Minor provinces, carried out by land and naval campaigns.<sup>13</sup> The coastal cities of Asia Minor, such as Chalcidian, Nicomedia, Nicaea, Ephesus and Troy, were plundered;<sup>14</sup> minor naval campaigns to the islands of Rhodes, Crete, Cyprus, on the south coast of Asia Minor were undertaken at this time (Fig. 4).<sup>15</sup> If we assume that the coins of Groups 2 and 3 were in circulation in the Asia Minor provinces by the time of the second stage of the Scythian wars, we can explain how the Germanic population obtained them – by plunder of the provinces mentioned. This is shown by finds of coins from the cities of Ceasarea, Sinope, Ephesus, Trapezus and Tium that used to be plundered by the Goths. The coin from Group 1 could have been received in the first war stage as well as at the second one.

On the basis of written sources describing the first (AD 238-254) and the second (AD 256-275) stages of the Scythian wars, we can assume that the scale of the

<sup>13</sup> Magomedov 2008, 173.

<sup>14</sup> Volfram 2003, 81-82.

<sup>15</sup> Magomedov 2001, 136-37; 2008, 173.



Fig. 2: Finds of Roman coins of Asia Minor provincial mintage in the territory of Chernyakhov culture.  
 1. Chronological group 1; Chronological group 2; 3. Chronological group 3



Fig. 3: Roman coin of Asia Minor provincial mintage (Gordian III) from the village Khrushchovaya Nikitovka (Kharkov region, Ukraine)

plunder of the Roman provinces was much greater in the latter than in the former. However, numismatic evidence rebuts this: while 17 Roman coins date back to the first stage of the wars, only 6 definitely belong to the second. The small number of bronze and copper coins of the Gothic war period could be explained by the Goths wishing to obtain high quality silver coins; they simply

did not want provincial bronze and copper money, and if they got some, they recycled it by melting it down to produce parts of clothes (buckles, fibulae) or weapons. Unfortunately, a comparative analysis of the metal of provincial coins and that of Chernyakhov manufactured articles that could elucidate the issue has yet to be undertaken.



Fig. 4: The second stage of the Scythian wars (AD 256-275). 1. Campaign of 250-251; 2. Campaign of 257; 3. Campaign of 263; 4. Campaign of 264; 5. Campaign of 269-270; 6. Border of Roman empire; 7. Borders of Roman provinces

According to Zosimus (1. 33. 3), having completed the campaign its participants returned home rich with booty. Therefore, finds of coins minted in Asia Minor in the Odessa regions of the Dniester provide further confirmation that the initial localisation of the participants in the campaign was in the north-western Black Sea region. Finds of similar coins in other regions (Khmelnitskii and Kharkov) are evidence of campaigners settling far inland after the conclusion of the wars.

Thus, although we possess a small number of Roman coins minted in Asia Minor, their detailed analysis allows us to draw some conclusions about how and when they penetrated into the territory of Chernyakhov culture. Only

new finds of such coins can either confirm or reject these conclusions.

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