

The region of East-Central Europe east of the Elbe and north of the Carpathians, including the territory of present-day Poland, Ukraine and Belarus was never, not even for a moment, a part of the Roman state. This means that all of the Roman coins found in this territory must be treated as imports. Roman coinage was brought to this territory in vast amounts primarily during the Roman period (between 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries AD). The Polish, Ukrainian and Belarusian finds are most commonly Roman Imperial denarii from the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD (from Nero to Septimius Severus), often recorded in hoards of several thousand pieces. These were coins struck in silver with a weight of ca. 2.0g to 4.5g in different periods of time.

In the recent years the attention was drawn to the numerous appearance of counterfeit Roman denarii in East-Central European finds, both plated denarii, so-called subaerates, fourrées, and coins made from base metal silver-like alloys. One of the most surprising outcomes of the most recent studies is that counterfeit Roman denarii from 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD recorded in finds from East-Central Europe were manufactured locally, in the territory inhabited by the Barbarians. Until recently, the territory of the Roman Empire was considered as the only centre of production of such coins. The category of counterfeit coins is something different from imitative coinage, eg., so called barbarian imitations of Roman denarii. It is difficult to clearly define the boundary between imitations and counterfeits, but – as a rule – imitations were not intended to deceive their users. Weight and silver standard of imitative denarii were close to the original Roman denarii. Imitative coinage from unofficial issues was manufactured to supplement the original money in use and was treated by its users in the same or very similar way as coins from official issues. On the opposite, counterfeit denarii were made entirely or in large part from base metals, much cheaper than silver. As a rule, they were intended to deceive their users.

The main aim of the project is to study the manufacturing and use of counterfeit Roman denarii from 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD within the East-Central Europe in antiquity. To achieve this, it is planned to use multidimensional and valid methods of obtaining data and their analysis as regards coins discovered within hoards, or as stray finds in Poland, Ukraine and western Belarus. These were the territories inhabited in the later phases of the Roman period by the Przeworsk, Wielbark and Chernyakhiv archaeological cultures.

Selected coins from Polish, Ukrainian and Belarusian finds will be analysed using physicochemical, non-destructive examination methods to confirm or reject, whether they are counterfeit specimens. The collected and analysed numismatic and archaeological material, and information furnished by the physicochemical examination will next be subjected to analysis and interpretation. The methodological base is to be an interdisciplinary analysis of historical, archaeological, numismatic sources and data obtained from physicochemical examination of archaeological metalwork.

The proposed project will allow, for the first time, to approach - at the interdisciplinary level - the problem of manufacturing and use of counterfeit Roman coins outside the Greco-Roman world. New findings regarding counterfeit denarii indicate that in the Barbaricum, especially within the territories inhabited by Przeworsk, Wielbark and Chernyakhiv populations, exchange of goods of economic or social nature could have been monetized to a quite large extent. Studying counterfeit denarii could help us to answer the question what purpose Roman silver coinage, its imitations and its counterfeits served in the barbarian societies. This should provide us new, valuable information about economic and social history of East-Central Europe in antiquity, very poorly described in fragmentally preserved written sources.