

Preface

Until relatively recently our knowledge of Roman coin finds from Eastern Europe was limited to the record assembled with admirable industry in the catalogues of V. Kropotkin,¹ M. Braichevskii² and K. Majewski.³ However, the two recent decades or so, what may be termed “the metal detector age”, have radically altered our understanding of the distribution range of this category of finds (and other categories as well). This is not to say that recording ancient coins from amateur finds made in Ukraine and Belarus (specifying the findspot, archaeological context) has been easy, and we have been able to make full use of this evidence, even with a constant and careful criticism of the information at hand. Unfortunately, we have little hope of ever recovering the greater part of this record. Still, even the small body of evidence we have succeeded in salvaging for research can occasionally offer entirely new perspectives on some of the earlier accepted interpretations.

Roman Republican coin finds and their imitations from Ukraine and Belarus are one category recently subjected to a major reassessment as to their distribution. This is because, according to conservative estimates, their number has increased three-fold. Out of this group the category of imitative coins modelled on Republican official coins, except for some finds already known from the Zakarpattya oblast, has been a true sensation of recent years. This means that researchers now need to address the task of interpreting these finds, subject them to careful analysis to settle the question of the date, routes and source areas of their influx, taking into account especially the new evidence from archaeology. This exactly has been the key objective of the present study.

This book was born of my participation in the Coins of the Roman Republic in Central Europe project financed by the National Science Centre of Poland on the basis of decision DEC-2013/09/D/HS3/04515. Implemented 2014-2017 at the Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw, the project is led by Arkadiusz Dymowski, project leader of a team of which Marcin Rudnicki (Institute of Archaeology,

¹ Kropotkin 1951; 1954; 1961, 1966; 2000.

² Braichevskii 1959.

³ Majewski 1949.

University of Warsaw), Andrzej Romanowski (National Museum in Warsaw) and myself have been members. In fact, the final and a more comprehensive publication resulting from the project has been by A. Dymowski who made an analysis of the finds of Roman coins from Poland, Belarus and the western region of Ukraine.⁴ The purpose of my research was much more modest, involving the analysis of Roman Republican coin finds from Belarus and Ukraine, since examining the finds from these two regions has been the main task during my participation in the Project.

My work presented here is in two parts: analysis of the coin finds and their catalogue. And whereas my catalogue includes all the available information about Roman Republican coins and their imitations published in the past and known from recent finds,⁵ the former is only a tentative analysis of this material using the information I had at my disposal. Too often, my conclusions had to be drawn from indirect data, where information about the archaeological context of a coin find was, at best, limited. The work was complicated further by the general deficiency of synthetic studies in Roman Republican coin finds from outside the Roman Republic. Lastly, the study of imitations of Roman Republican coins in general has an exceedingly meagre historiography. These reservations notwithstanding, we decided to embark on the study of our subject. What is more, I believe that we have been successful in recognizing the main trends in the distribution of the numismatic material in the territory under analysis, even if only in general. It is my hope that the findings presented here prove of use for the future research made in this field.

Before addressing the tasks set out in this book it is crucial to specify the scope of my study. While the main aim of the present book is analysis of coin finds from the territory of present-day Ukraine and Belarus, the discussion is limited to the coins found outside the borders of the antique world, ie, outside the ancient towns in the Northern Black Sea Coast region, Crimea included.⁶ I am firmly convinced that Roman Republican coin finds from the latter region deserve a separate study given that their influx is related to a different historical reality.⁷ In any case, present work may be said to represent only an “Introduction” to the study addressing the finds of Roman Republican coins and their imitations recovered in the territories of Ukraine and Belarus. It is to be hoped that the line of research presented here continues to be pursued, and its results contribute to an improved understanding of this group of issues.

Warsaw, 16 August 2016

⁴ Dymowski 2016.

⁵ The Catalogue presented here includes data about new coin finds additional to the record presented in my earlier publications (Myzgin 2015; 2016) and the Catalogue of A. Dymowski (Dymowski 2016, Catalogue).

⁶ Eg, Kropotkin 1961, nos. 617, 633, 714, 752 etc.

⁷ In this regard I have been influenced by the view of M. Choref, namely that during the Republican period Roman coins rarely spread farther than the border region settled by the barbarians. Not to mention that the Greek cities on the Black Sea Coast mostly issued their local coinages, minted to the traditional standard weights and styles (Choref 2011).