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Mykhailo ORLYK

PhD (Economy), Associate Professor of the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Kherson State Agrarian and Economic University, 5/2 Avenue Universytetskyi, Kropyvnytskyi, Ukraine, postal code 25006 (orlik.mihail@gmail.com)

ORCID: 0000-0003-3394-1731

Researcher ID: ABD-6767-2020

Scopus-Author ID: 58167598200

Vasyl ORLYK

PhD hab. (History), Professor, Head of Department of History, Archeology, Informational and Archival Affairs, Central Ukrainian National Technical University, 8 Avenue Universytetskyi, Kropyvnytskyi, Ukraine, postal code 25006 (v.m.orlik@gmail.com)

ORCID: 0000-0002-7947-9557

Researcher ID: C-1025-2019

Scopus-Author ID: 57195333722

Михайло ОРЛИК

доктор філософії (економіка), доцент кафедри соціальних та поведінкових наук, Херсонський державний аграрно-економічний університет, пр. Університетський, 5/2, м. Кропивницький, Україна, індекс 25006 (orlik.mihail@gmail.com)

Василь ОРЛИК

доктор історичних наук, професор, завідувач кафедри історії, археології, інформаційної та архівної справи, Центральноукраїнський національний технічний університет, пр. Університетський, 8, м. Кропивницький, Україна, індекс 25006 (v.m.orlik@gmail.com)

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JEWELRY MADE FROM GOLD COINS IN THE MATERIAL CULTURE OF THE POPULATION OF THE NORTHERN BLACK SEA REGION, THE UKRAINIAN STEPPE, AND THE FOREST-STEPPE (4th century BC – early 3rd century AD)

Abstract. *The purpose of the study is to do the research on the problem of the use of ancient coins as ornaments by the population of the Northern Black Sea region, the Ukrainian Steppe, and the Forest-Steppe in the 4th century BC – early 3rd century AD. Methodology.* In the course of the research, the authors employed a range of general scientific, historical, and numismatic methods. Particular attention was paid to the descriptive research method. That is, the authors sought to provide a detailed and accurate account of the numismatic artifacts of the 4th century BC – early 3rd century AD discovered

in the Northern Black Sea region, the Ukrainian Steppe, and the Forest-Steppe that “survived” the process of demonetization, i.e., the transformation of a coin from a means of payment into an ornament. **The scientific novelty:** For the first time, the article analyzes a series of gold ornaments made from coins as objects of jewelry art in unity with the numismatic artifacts that served as the basis for their production. The use of numismatic imagery from the coins of the Bosphoran Kingdom in the manufacture of gold plaques by Scythian craftsmen is also examined. **The Conclusions:** In the course of this study, the authors analyzed the finds from the Northern Black Sea region, the Ukrainian Steppe, and the Forest-Steppe of 30 coins dating from the 4th century BC – early 3rd century AD that were transformed into ornaments (amulets), as well as a number of gold plaques imitating the coins of Panticapaeum. Information about these finds is contained in diverse sources: museum websites, scholarly works, the “Coins of Bospor” catalogue-archive website, and metal-detecting forums. Part of the information regarding the finds of “demonetized” coins was obtained personally by the authors from local historians. Taken together, this evidence made it possible to form a comprehensive understanding of the use of gold coins and their imitations in the material culture of the population of the Northern Black Sea region, the Ukrainian Steppe, and the Forest-Steppe in the 4th century BC – early 3rd century AD.

Key words: non-monetary uses of coins, coins as amulets, Greek coin-set jewellery, gold plaques.

ПРИКРАСИ ІЗ ЗОЛОТИХ МОНЕТ У МАТЕРІАЛЬНІЙ КУЛЬТУРІ НАСЕЛЕННЯ ПІВНІЧНОГО ПРИЧОРНОМОР'Я, УКРАЇНСЬКОГО СТЕПУ ТА ЛІСОСТЕПУ (4 ст. до Р.Х. – початок 3 ст. н.е.)

Анотація. **Мета дослідження** дослідити проблему використання населенням Північного Причорномор'я, Українського Степу та Лісостепу в 4 ст. до Р.Х. – на початку 3 ст. н.е. античних монет як прикрас. **Методологія дослідження.** У процесі проведення дослідження авторами було використано різку загальнонаукових, історичних та нумізматичних методів. Особлива увага приділена дескриптивному методу дослідження. Тобто автори намагалися надати детальний і точний звіт про відомі нам нумізматичні пам'ятки 4 ст. до Р.Х. – на початку 3 ст. н.е. знайдені на теренах Північного Причорномор'я, Українського Степу та Лісостепу і які “пережили” процес демонетизації, тобто перетворення із монети як засобу платежу на прикрасу. **Новизна дослідження** У статті вперше проаналізовано низку золотих прикрас з монет як пам'яток ювелірного мистецтва, в єдності з нумізматичними пам'ятками, що стали основою для їх виготовлення. Також з'ясовано використання нумізматичних сюжетів монет Боспорського Царства для виготовлення золотих бляшанок скіфськими майстрами. **Висновки.** Під час написання даної статті автори проаналізували знахідки в Північному Причорномор'ї, Українському Степу та Лісостепу 30 монет 4 ст. до Р.Х. – на початку 3 ст. н.е. які були перетворені на прикраси (амулету), та низку золотих бляшанок, імітуючи монети Пантікапея. Відомості про ці знахідки містяться у різнопланових джерелах: сайтах музеїв, працях дослідників, сайті “Coins of Bospor” catalogue-archive, форумах скарбошукачів. Частину інформації про знахідки “демонетизованих” монет автори отримали особисто від краєзнавців. Усе це в комплексі дало змогу сформулювати цілісне уявлення про використання золотих монет та їхніх імітацій у матеріальній культурі населення Північного Причорномор'я, Українського Степу та Лісостепу 4 ст. до Р.Х. – на початку 3 ст. н.е.

Ключові слова: немонетарне використання монет, монети як амулети, грецькі ювелірні вироби з монетами, золоті бляшки.

Problem Statement. The traditions of using coins as ornaments have been known for nearly two and a half millennia. The distinguished French scholar F. Lenormant noted that “we possess a large number of antique jewels of all kinds, chiefly necklaces and bracelets, in which gold coins of that time play a significant role. Nothing occurs more frequently than Roman gold medallions of the imperial period, fitted with a loop or set in turned and engraved mounts, often extremely refined, thus transforming them into pendants for necklaces” (Lenormant, 1878, p. 35). Finds of coin jewelry are known in Europe, the Levant,

and North Africa. Assistant Curator at the Art Institute of Chicago S. Caruso quite rightly points out that “in this context, coins were used predominantly as pendants but also in the creation of bracelets, belts, and rings” (Caruso, 2024).

From the time of their emergence-initially as coins struck in precious metals, notably electrum and gold-coins, at the discretion of their owners, underwent a process of “demonetization” and were transformed into ornaments, thereby losing their purely economic function.

Antique coins reached the highest degree of jeweler’s craftsmanship in Roman times: “the most elaborate of them inserted the coins – usually in gold – into pendants, rings, bracelets, brooches, belts, body-chains” (Perassi, 2021, p. 39). Nevertheless, the origins of the use of ancient coins for the production of ornaments date back to the second half of the 1st millennium BC.

Review of Recent Literature. Analyzing contemporary research on the problem of the use of coins of the 4th century BC – early 3rd century AD as ornaments, it should be noted that, with minor exceptions, this issue remains almost unexplored. One of the first scholars to address the transformation of coins into ornaments in antiquity was F. Lenormant, a distinguished French researcher whose scholarly interests included ancient numismatics. F. Lenormant pointed out that coins used as ornaments bore a perforation and that “anyone who has handled a sufficient number of ancient coins must have had the opportunity to observe specimens under such circumstances” (Lenormant, 1878, p. 35).

At present, however, virtually the only specialized study is the article by the eminent Italian scholar G. Gorini, published in 2017 in the proceedings of the international conference held in June 2009 on the island of Ios. This article is directly devoted to the issue of the use of ancient Greek coins as ornaments (Gorini, 2017). The scholar notes that the Greeks treated their own coins with great respect, and it is in this context that he sees the tradition of “the appreciation of Greek coins as ornament or jewels” (Gorini, 2017, p. 27). At the same time, the author rightly emphasizes that “this kind of reuse is not known in the archaic period and it is very rare in classical period owing to the scarcity of gold and silver on the Greek market. Furthermore, we can consider that gold and silver coins were put to uses unconnected with their original function and this happens when the coin loses its value” (Gorini, 2017, p. 27).

Among the corpus of finds of ancient Greek coins that underwent the process of “demonetization,” G. Gorini also mentions rings with staters of Panticapaeum discovered during archaeological excavations of the Great Ryzhanivka kurgan near the village of Ryzhanivka, Zvenyhorod district, Cherkasy region. These finds were examined in detail by the archaeologists S. Skoryy and J. Khokhorovski (Skoryy, & Khokhorovski, 2018).

Coins of the 5th – 4th centuries BC used as ornaments – “coins used as ornaments (pierced and suspended at the neck)” (Kakhidze, A., Iashvili, & Vickers, 2001, p. 283) – and discovered in burials on the Black Sea coast of southwestern Georgia are mentioned in the article by A. Kakhidze, I. Iashvili, and M. Vickers. However, these authors do not specifically investigate the use of coins as ornaments; rather, they merely record this fact and analyze the coins themselves, identifying their varieties and degrees of rarity. Nevertheless, the photographs presented in the article significantly expand our knowledge of this process of “demonetization”.

The use by the Scythians of gold decorative plaques based on motifs of ancient coins has been thoroughly studied by the Ukrainian archaeologists M. Daragan and S. Polin in their work “Golden jewellery of the Vodoslavka Scythian burial-ground of the second and third

quarters of the 4th century BC” (Daragan, & Polin, 2022). Certain information about ancient Greek coins used as ornaments and discovered in various regions of Ukraine is contained in the articles by V. Orlyk (Orlyk 2022; Orlyk, & Mekh, 2022; Orlyk, 2023; Orlyk, 2024).

At the same time, historiography lacks a comprehensive study of ornaments made from ancient coins within the material culture of the population of the Northern Black Sea region, the Ukrainian Steppe, and the Forest-Steppe in the 4th – 1st centuries BC, which underscores the relevance of the problem addressed in our article.

Research Results. Ornaments, regardless of whether they are items made by hand for personal use (or for use by close individuals) or products crafted by skilled artisans, constitute one of the components of material culture. Ornaments convey the aesthetic taste of their period. The authors fully support the view expressed by G. Gorini that the chronological framework for the transformation of coins into ornaments “is probably slightly later [than] the period of minting, respectively to the 4th and 3rd c. BC and in areas where or when the coins have lost their value” (Gorini, 2017, p. 27). Indeed, the practice of producing ornaments from coins that had gone out of monetary circulation, or had become obsolete and lost their nominal value, also occurred in subsequent historical periods (Orlyk, & Pavlenko, 2023).

The analysis of the finds known to the authors of ornaments made from gold ancient coins of the 4th century BC – early 3rd century AD from the territory of the Northern Black Sea region, the Ukrainian Steppe, and the Forest-Steppe makes it possible to systematize them according to their method of manufacture and intended use.

According to the method of manufacture: a) jewelry items, possibly produced by ancient craftsmen; b) primitive methods of demonetization by piercing the coin with a through-hole using improvised tools.

According to their intended use: a) ornaments for wearing on the finger; b) pendants; c) elements of clothing.

A separate category consists of ornaments made from impressions (appliqués) and imitations of coins.

Let us consider the ornaments made from gold ancient coins of the 4th century BC – early 3rd century AD known to the authors, discovered in the Northern Black Sea region, the Ukrainian Steppe, and the Forest-Steppe, in accordance with the proposed classification and taking into account the nature of the find: archaeological or accidental.

Gold coins used in jewelry intended for wearing on the fingers are rings “with bezels made from gold coins” (Berezova, 2001, p. 46). A gold stater of Panticapaeum was used as the bezel of these rings. On the obverse, it depicts the head of a bearded satyr wearing a wreath facing left; on the reverse, the legend ΠΑΝ and the image of a griffin holding a spear in its jaws facing left, with an ear of grain below.

Five specimens of such rings were discovered from the late 19th to the early 21st century during excavations of two kurgans in Zaporizhzhia and Cherkasy regions, as well as one find under unknown circumstances in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. The first three specimens of such gold rings were discovered in the Great Ryzhanivka kurgan near the village of Ryzhanivka, Zvenyhorod district, Cherkasy region. Two rings were found during the excavations of 1887 (Fig. 2.1–2)¹, and one during the excavations of 1995 (Fig. 2.3)².

¹ Photo: Agnieszka Susul, Archaeological Museum in Krakow.

² The authors express their gratitude to Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor Serhii Skoryi, for granting permission to publish the photograph of the stater discovered during the 1995 expedition, reproduced from the monograph Skoryi & Khokhorovski 2018.

The fourth specimen of a ring, in which a gold Panticapaeum stater was also used as the bezel (Fig. 2.4), was discovered during the archaeological excavations of 1976 in kurgan “No. 9, burial 1, near the village of Mariivka, Zaporizhzhia region” (Berezova, 2001, p. 46).

The fifth specimen of a similar ring (Fig. 2.5), as noted above, was found in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. This find is likely detector-based. Information and a photograph of this ring are available on the website Coins of the Bosphorus (Coin passport: 109-2075-81).

Thus, four out of the five specimens of gold rings with a gold Panticapaeum stater belong to the category of archaeological finds, while one specimen belongs to the category of accidental finds.

As for the dating of the minting of these staters, there is no unified opinion in numismatic scholarship. The researchers who studied four of the above-mentioned rings distinguish the staters used as bezels into several successive types struck in different chronological periods. In particular, it is believed that the first two rings discovered in 1887 in the Great Ryzhanivka kurgan used staters of the emission dated approximately to 330–315 BC, while the third ring, found in 1995, contained a stater of the emission dated approximately to 314–294 BC (Skoryy & Khokhorovski, 2018, p. 97). In the ring discovered in 1976 in a kurgan near the village of Mariivka, the bezel was made from a stater of the emission dated approximately to 310–304 BC (“A Ring with a Bezel from a Panticapaeum Coin”). The datings employed by these researchers were based on the chronology developed by D. Shelov (Shelov, 1956, p. 140) and supported by M. Mielczarek (Mielczarek, 1986, p. 102).

At the same time, according to V. Anokhin, the minting of these coins should be dated slightly later, within the chronological framework of 314–304 BC (Anokhin, 1986, p. 140–141). S. Skoryy and Y. Khokhorovski did not share a unified opinion regarding the periodization of these staters; one of the authors considered V. Anokhin’s chronology to be more realistic and attributed the staters to the emissions of 314–310 and 310–304 BC (Skoryy & Khokhorovski, 2018, p. 97). At the same time, in our view, the concept proposed by S. Polin appears to be more scientifically substantiated, according to which the minting of gold staters in Panticapaeum was completed in the third quarter of the 4th century BC (Polin, 2009, p. 226).

All four rings could have been produced either by ancient Greek or by Scythian craftsmen, as evidenced by the relatively simple manufacturing technique. Gold staters of Panticapaeum depicting the head of a satyr on the obverse and, on the reverse (which served as the inner side of the ring), a griffin holding a spear in its jaws, were used as bezels. To the bezels of three specimens – two from the Great Ryzhanivka kurgan and one from the kurgan near the village of Mariivka—two flat gold strips (hoops) were attached on both sides of the inner surface; their ends were sharpened and overlapped one another. Thus, these rings were adjustable in size. This may indicate the mass production of such rings, since the size could be adjusted independently depending on the thickness of the finger on which the ring was worn.

The two other known rings had solid, monolithic hoops. In all cases, the hoops (shanks) were attached to the edges of the coins by soldering. Two rings from the Great Ryzhanivka kurgan bear traces of repair, specifically the re-soldering of the hoop to the coin. S. Skoryy and Y. Khokhorovski quite rightly note that “the rough quality of the secondary soldering of the loops may indicate that the repair was executed rather unskillfully, probably within a Scythian environment” (Skoryy & Khokhorovski, 2018, p. 97).

Gold coins were also used as pendants and possibly as elements of clothing ornaments. Some of the specimens known to the authors have a soldered loop and were used as pendants.

Among these is a gold stater of Asander (46–21 BC), minted in Panticapaeum (Fig. 2.6). On the obverse, the coin depicts the head of Asander wearing a diadem, facing right; on the reverse, the legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΣΑΝΔΡΟΥ ΒΟΣΠΙΟΡΟΥ and the image of an attacking horseman with a spear, facing right (Coin: 000-4770).

A stater of Cotys II of the emission of AD 131–132 (Fig. 2.7) also bears a special attachment for use as a pendant. On the obverse, there is a bust of the king facing right, surrounded by the legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩC ΚΟΤΥΟC. On the reverse, a bust of Hadrian facing right and the date ΗΚΥ (year 428 of the Bosporan era) are depicted (Coin passport: 478-4349-7). Unfortunately, there is no information not only about the archaeological context of these finds, but even about the specific place or region of their discovery.

All other gold coins known to the authors that were used as ornaments underwent a primitive process of “demonetization” through drilling (piercing) a hole in them. These include 23 specimens of gold staters dating from the second half of the 1st century BC to the early 3rd century AD. In particular, five specimens of Panticapaeum staters of Asander are known: 44–43 BC (7th year of reign), 43–42 BC (8th year of reign), 37–36 BC (14th year of reign), 35–34 BC (16th year of reign), and 28–27 BC (23rd year of reign). On the obverse of these coins is depicted the head of Asander in a diadem, facing right; on the reverse, the legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΣΑΝΔΡΟΥ and the image of Nike with a wreath and a branch to the left (Fig. 2.8–2.12) (Coin passport: 230-4347-3; Coin passport: 000-4525-3; Coin passport: 234-4653-2; Coin passport: 235-4343-4; Coin passport: 241-4705-5).

Of the five aforementioned specimens, only one coin (Fig. 2.9) has an established archaeological context. It was discovered during the archaeological excavations of 2006 at the Late Scythian settlement of Kara-Tobe (village of Pryberezhne, Yevpatoria district, Autonomous Republic of Crimea) (Coin passport: 000-4525-3).

A gold Panticapaeum stater of the emission of 21–20 BC was also used as an ornament. On its obverse is depicted the head of Queen Dynamis wearing a diadem, facing right, while the reverse bears the legend ΒΑΣΙΛΙΣΣΗΣ ΔΥΝΑΜΕΩΣ, along with a star and crescent; to the right, ΖΩΣ (year 277 of the Bosporan era). This coin has a perforation (Fig. 2.13). It was found at the Gurzuf Saddle pass, Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Ukraine. At present, the coin is held in the Russian-occupied Yalta Historical and Literary Museum, Zolota Komora (“Golden Chamber”). Detailed information about this coin is available on the website Coins of the Bosporus (Coin: 253-5240).

A stater also belonging to the emission of Dynamis, but from the period of her second reign, was likewise “demonetized” in the same primitive manner by piercing a hole (Fig. 2.14). On the obverse of this coin appears a portrait of Augustus facing left; on the reverse, a head of Agrippa facing right, with the monogram ΔΥΜ to the left of the portrait and, below, the letter T (year 300 of the Bosporan era, corresponding to AD 3–4) (Coin: 267-5265).

As for other gold Panticapaeum staters of the 1st – early 3rd centuries AD that underwent a similar primitive process of demonetization, these include two specimens of staters of Aspurgus from the time of his first reign (Coin passport: 288-4947-2; Coin passport: 311-4241-1). On the obverse of the first coin (Fig. 2.15) is depicted the head of Augustus facing left, and on the reverse the head of Agrippa facing right, with a monogram to the left and, below the portrait, year 307 of the Bosporan era (AD 10–11). On the obverse of the second coin (Fig. 2.16) appears the head of Tiberius facing right, and on the reverse the head of Agrippa facing right, with a monogram to the left of the portrait and, below, year 328 of the Bosporan era (AD 31–32).

One specimen of a Panticapaeum stater of Cotys I (Fig. 2.17) has on the obverse the head of Claudius facing right, and on the reverse the head of Britannicus facing right, with the monogram BAK on the left and, below, year BMT (342 of the Bosporan era – AD 45–46) (Coin passport: 332-4767-3).

Two specimens of Panticapaeum staters of Sauromates I (Fig. 2.18–2.19) are also known. On the obverse of the first appears a portrait of the king facing right with the surrounding legend BACIAEΩC CAYPOMATOY; on the reverse, a bust of Domitian facing right, with AqT below (year 391 of the Bosporan era – AD 94–95) (Coin: 000-4665). On the obverse of the second stater of Sauromates I is a bust of the king facing left with the legend IOYAI OY BACIAEΩC CAYPOMATOY around; on the reverse, a head of Trajan facing right, with Y below (year 400 of the Bosporan era – AD 103–104) (Coin: 394-4733).

Five specimens of Panticapaeum staters of Eupator of various years complete another subgroup (Fig. 2.20–2.24). On the obverse of these coins is depicted the head of the king facing right with the legend BACIAEΩC EYIIATOPOC around. On the reverse are busts of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, beneath which the year is indicated (year 458 of the Bosporan era – AD 161–162; 459 – AD 162–163; 460 – AD 163–164; 461 – AD 164–165; and 463 – AD 166–167) (Coin: 537-4300; Coin passport: 538-4251-11; Coin passport: 539-4234-3; Coin passport: 540-4254-9; Coin passport: 542-5166-1).

The group of “demonetized” Panticapaeum gold coins known to the authors concludes with six specimens of staters of Sauromates II (Fig. 2.25–2.30). One specimen bears on the obverse a bust of the king facing right with the surrounding legend BACIAEΩC CAYPOMATOY, and on the reverse a bust of Commodus facing right, with ζΠΥ below (year 486 of the Bosporan era – AD 189–190) (Coin passport: 567-4693-31).

The second and third specimens have a similar obverse (with some additional elements and variations in the spelling of the king’s name CAYPOMATOY), but on the reverse is depicted a bust of Septimius Severus facing right, with the year qY (490 of the Bosporan era – AD 193–194) (Coin passport: 567-4693-31) and AqY (491 of the Bosporan era – AD 194–195) (Coin passport: 572-4314-7).

The remaining three staters of Sauromates II have an almost identical obverse with the king’s bust facing right (differing only in minor additional elements), while on the reverse are depicted busts of Septimius Severus and Caracalla, with corresponding minting years: EqY (495 of the Bosporan era – AD 198–199) (Coin passport: 576-4308-6), ΦEqY (500 of the Bosporan era – AD 203–204) (Coin passport: 580-4457-17), and BΦ (502 of the Bosporan era – AD 205–206) (Coin passport: 582-4435-2).

All these coins are accidental finds lacking archaeological context; for some of them, the places of discovery are indicated and may be considered conditionally reliable. Thus, the website *Coins of the Bosporus* states that the coin (Fig. 2.21) was found in the outskirts of Vinnytsia (Coin passport: 538-4251-11); the coin (Fig. 2.23) was discovered in the territory of the former Tyvriv district, Vinnytsia region (Coin passport: 540-4254-9); and the coin (Fig. 2.28) was found in the territory of the former Polonne district of Khmelnytskyi region (Coin passport: 576-4308-6).

As can be seen, five specimens of “demonetized” gold Panticapaeum staters were minted in the 4th century BC, eight specimens in the 1st century BC, five specimens in the 1st century AD, ten specimens in the 2nd century AD, and two specimens in the early 3rd century AD.

With regard to gold ornaments made from imitations of ancient Greek coins or from impressions (appliqués) of original coins on gold plaques, it should be noted that this

represents “a quite particular kind of the archaeological material, which takes intermediate position between ancient Greco-Roman coins and jewellery” (Kovalenko, 2017, p. 113). F. Lenormant emphasized that for the manufacture of ornaments, not original coins but rather imitations of imaginary coins or coins long withdrawn from circulation were quite often used. The French scholar provides the example of a bracelet he purchased in Greece in 1866: “this bracelet did not date from an earlier period than the Roman Imperial era, and it was composed of imitations of hectae (or one-sixth staters) in electrum from Mytilene, similar to those struck on that island between the Peloponnesian War and the reign of Alexander the Great. The pieces that had been copied were therefore coins that had gone out of circulation five or six centuries earlier – genuine medals worthy of antiquarian collections. The craftsman, moreover, had not taken care either to give all the pieces exactly the same weight or to reproduce with any precision the weight of the ancient coins, imitating only their external appearance. Furthermore, instead of striking them, as in the case of the original Mytilenean hectae and, in general, all ancient coins, he had cast them” (Lenormant, 1878, p. 35).

Finds of gold appliqués of ancient coins are quite widespread in the Northern Black Sea region, particularly in burials excavated at Panticapaeum, Chersonesus, and Olbia. For instance, in the well-known Kul-Oba kurgan near Kerch, gold plaques were discovered in 1830 that “are stamped on coins from Panticapaeum, Athens, and other Greek cities, and along their circumference one can see the holes through which the threads that attached them to the fabric once passed” (Lenormant, 1878, p. 39).

The British scholar F. H. Marshall, in the Catalogue of the Jewellery preserved in the British Museum, also refers to such finds from Olbia. For example: “Gold bracteate disk, imitating a coin of the Bosporan King Eumelos. It is stamped with a winged caduceus within a circle of dots. In the field, Z. From a tomb at Olbia on the Black Sea. Acquired, 1907. Diam., 2 cm.; wt., 5 grns. From a coin of King Eumelos struck in 304 B.C.” (Marshall, 1911, p. 367, #3072).

M. Rostovtsev emphasized the finds of gold plaques that “more or less crudely reproduce the same type of Panticapaeum coins that we also find in the Ryzhanivka kurgan” (Rostovtsev, 1925, p. 443). D. Shelov likewise pointed to the presence in Scythian burials of “gold plaques which reproduce the types of Panticapaeum staters” (Shelov, 1956, p. 140), particularly in the kurgans of Oguz and Diiv (Henichesk district, Kherson region), Verkhonii Rohachyk (Kakhovka district, Kherson region), the First and Second Mordvinivskiyi (Kakhovka district, Kherson region), Chortomlyk (Nikopol district, Dnipropetrovsk region), and Oleksandropol (Dnipro district, Dnipropetrovsk region). As Rostovtsev quite rightly noted, the matrices for such plaques were not original gold coins but their imitations (Rostovtsev, 1925, p. 445). In general, according to Rostovtsev, a number of gold plaques found in Scythian kurgans of the Northern Black Sea region imitated not only coins of Panticapaeum but also those of Athens, Heraclea, Cyzicus, Syracuse, Tarentum, and other ancient Greek minting centers (Rostovtsev, 1925, pp. 443–449).

The most detailed analysis of gold plaques produced after the motifs of ancient coins, particularly Panticapaeum staters with a satyr and griffin, was conducted by M. Daragan and S. Polin. The Ukrainian archaeologists not only provided a thorough description of the finds of gold plaques from the Scythian burial-ground of the second and third quarters of the 4th century BC, but also published high-quality photographs of these ornaments (Daragan, & Polin, 2022, pp. 73–75).

Regarding Rostovtsev’s assumption that gold plaques from Scythian kurgans imitated coins of various ancient Greek minting centers, M. Daragan and S. Polin indicate that only

“two small series of plaques have been reliably demonstrated to be imitations of Panticapaeum staters and Philip II of Macedon tetradrachms respectively” (Daragan, & Polin, 2022, p. 72). The gold plaques carefully examined and systematized by these scholars indeed allow these two groups of imitations to be unequivocally distinguished (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Gold appliqués imitating staters of Panticapaeum and tetradrachms of Philip II of Macedon (not to scale)^{3*}

At the same time, the visual analysis conducted by the authors of this article of other published gold plaques of the Scythian period has revealed the presence of gold appliqués depicting a Gorgoneion facing with open mouth, discovered in the city of Nizhyn, Chernihiv region (Gladkyy, 2018, pp. 312–313). These are close in iconography to the didrachm of Athens of the “Wappenmünzen” type, circa 520 BC (Attica, Athens, Didrachm), as well as to the silver hemistater of Macedon, Neapolis, circa 500–480 BC. However, it is impossible to state unequivocally that these specific coins served as prototypes for imitation, since, unfortunately, the archaeological context of this find is unknown to us.

It should also be noted that the widespread use of the griffin image in the production of gold plaques was characteristic of both Scythian culture and the Greek world, due to processes of cultural interaction and mutual influence. For example, during excavations of a Greek burial in Olbia, a plaque depicting a griffin was discovered (Buyskykh, Denysova, & Yvchenko, 2016, p. 71).

Such items were produced through a relatively simple manufacturing process, in which coins or their imitations were used as matrices. They were first covered with foil, over which a lead plate was placed. The image was then struck using a wooden hammer. After this operation was completed, the impression of the coin on the gold foil was cut out according to the size of the original coin. S. Kovalenko quite rightly notes that “the simple mechanical process of manufacturing the appliqués, as well as their discovery in the various sorts of tombs, shows that they fulfilled the needs of wide circles of the ancient population of the northern Black Sea littoral” (Kovalenko, 2017, p. 114). F. Lenormant stated that ancient coin-shaped appliqués “were used by sewing them, like sequins, onto very sumptuous garments, at least among Asians and semi-Hellenized barbarians” (Lenormant, 1878, p. 35).

Conclusions. The Ukrainian archaeologist M. Braichevskyi noted that the use of coins as

^{3*} The authors express their sincere gratitude to Dr. S. Polin for providing us with the photographs and for granting permission to use them in our publications.

ornaments is a characteristic feature of a society in which a relatively developed commodity-money economy has already been formed. In his view, in order for “a coin in a given society to be used as an ornament, it must first exist there in its direct monetary function, as a means of commodity circulation” (Braichevskyi, 1959, p. 31).

Modern scholarship does not offer a unified opinion regarding the primary causes of the transformation of coins into ornaments. G. Gorini suggests that it is quite possible that the function of such transformations “is above all more paramonetary, as talisman... or somebody thought they have healing powers, to preserve from the illnesses: ἀλεξίκακος, φυλακτικός” (Gorini, 2017, p. 27). Notably, the Italian scholar had already emphasized this function of coin transformation into ornaments in his earlier publications (Gorini, 1978; Gorini, 1993).

At the same time, the analysis conducted by the authors of ornaments made from ancient coins of the 4th century BC – early 3rd century AD discovered in the territory of the Ukrainian Steppe and Forest-Steppe demonstrates that coins subjected to jeweler’s processing (Figs. 1–7) were incorporated into jewelry items with consideration of the obverse imagery. Conversely, in the majority of coins that underwent a more primitive process of “demonetization” through piercing (drilling) holes, the iconographic composition was not taken into account. This may indicate the absence of an aesthetic purpose in such acts of “demonetization.”

Among the coins transformed into ornaments or protective amulets (talisman), whose finds have been recorded in the territory of the Ukrainian Steppe and Forest-Steppe and in adjacent regions, there are specimens from the entire chronological span under study: five rings, two amulets, and twenty-three coins with primitive perforations. In addition, a series of gold plaques that may have imitated coins in jewelry and decorative applications has been analyzed.

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Fig. 2.



Fig. 2 (continued)

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