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**A NEW VOLUME ON ROMAN COIN
FORGERY: COUNTERFEITS, IMITATIONS,
AND COPIES OF ROMAN IMPERIAL
DENARII**

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A New Volume on Roman Coin Forgery: Counterfeits, Imitations, and Copies of Roman Imperial Denarii

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In February 2025, the volume *Counterfeits, Imitations, and Copies of Roman Imperial Denarii: Making and Faking Coins on Both Sides of the Limes*, edited by Dr Arkadiusz Dymowski and Dr Kyrylo Myzgin, was published by Brepols in the series *Warsaw Studies in Archaeology*. This book serves as the final publication of the long-term research project *Barbarian Fakers. Manufacturing and Use of Counterfeit Roman Imperial Denarii in East-Central Europe in Antiquity*, financed by the National Science Centre, Poland (grant no. 2018/31/B/HS3/00137), and carried out between 2019 and 2024 under the direction of Dr Dymowski at the Faculty of Archaeology, University of Warsaw.

However, the purpose of this volume is not solely to present the results of the project. It also seeks to offer a comparative perspective on the phenomenon of coin counterfeiting both within the Roman provinces and in the regions beyond the imperial frontiers, known collectively as the *Barbaricum*. The volume is based on papers originally presented at three academic conferences: Mezhybizh, Ukraine (2019), Warsaw, Poland (2021), and the XVI International Numismatic Congress (2022). It contains eleven chapters authored by an international group of scholars, including both researchers directly involved in the *Barbarian Fakers* project and external specialists.

Within the Roman Empire, the study of counterfeit coin production has a long historiographical tradition. Already in the sixteenth century, hundreds of clay molds used for casting counterfeit denarii of the first to third centuries CE were discovered in France. Today, several such counterfeiting workshops have been systematically investigated, including sites in Augusta Raurica (Switzerland), Pachten (Germany), and Châteaubleau (France). One chapter in the volume, written by Fabien Pilon, focuses specifically on the evidence from Châteaubleau.

The waves of counterfeit production — especially of cast denarii — within the Empire are often referred to as “epidemics”. In addition to Gaul, Roman Britain appears to have been a major epicenter of this phenomenon. This topic is addressed in a contribution by Richard Brickstock.

Yet the most intriguing insights have emerged from research into counterfeit denarii produced

beyond the Roman limes. The results suggest that counterfeiting practices were more widespread in the Barbaricum than previously assumed. These findings raise important new questions concerning the sources of technological knowledge involved in counterfeiting and the dating of such activity. At the same time, they point to a more complex and dynamic role played by Roman coinage within non-Roman societies.

Outside the Roman Empire – particularly in Central and Eastern Europe – the phenomenon of counterfeit coin production only began to attract broader scholarly attention in the 1990s. Research at that time focused primarily on silvered denarii, many of which were discovered at the settlement site of Jakuszowice in Poland. In the present volume, Jarosław Bodzek, Szymon Jellonek, and Barbara Zając revisit the coin finds from Jakuszowice in light of recent investigations. They argue that some of the specimens were cast, while others were produced by silvering base metal cores. Until recently, however, there was no clear evidence of the local production of *subaerati* (silver-plated counterfeit denarii) in the Barbaricum. It was generally assumed that these coins had been imported from within the Empire.

In this context, Arkadiusz Dymowski's contribution is particularly significant. His study demonstrates that communities beyond the Roman frontier possessed a sophisticated knowledge of silvering techniques. This is illustrated by a distinctive group of silvered imitations known as ONAV denarii, the overwhelming majority of which have been found in Ukraine. This geographic concentration suggests the existence of a counterfeit workshop producing *subaerati* in western Ukraine. Moreover, several of these silver-plated denarii show no signs of the so-called "barbarisation" typically observed in such imitations, indicating a deliberate and technically adept effort to deceive.

Recent discoveries, however, show that the most widespread practice was the production of cast coin copies. This phenomenon is attested across the entire Barbaricum, from Scotland to the Don River in Russia. In Scotland, as Fraser Hunter argues in his chapter, the proximity of Roman Britain likely influenced the emergence of local casting traditions.

It was only with the application of modern metallurgical analyses that the full scale of this phenomenon could be appreciated. In Thuringia, present-day Germany, for instance, Mario Schlapke notes that the density of cast coin finds at certain sites – such as Fienstedt – may point to local production. Nonetheless, the most extensive evidence for such activity comes from Ukraine. Here, large quantities of cast copies made from non-precious alloys – or occasionally from silver – have been unearthed, alongside the remains of at least six distinct workshops.

One chapter, authored by Oleksandr Nadvirnyak and Oleh Pohorilets, is dedicated to the technical analysis of these coins and production remains found in Ukraine. Together with Kyrylo Myzgin and Oleksandr Buhay, the authors also present the results of compositional analyses carried out using X-ray fluorescence (XRF) and the more detailed Particle-Induced X-ray Emission (PIXE) method. The scale of this coin production was such that these cast denarii circulated well beyond their place of origin, reaching neighbouring regions such as modern-day Belarus. Finds from Belarus – together with their metallurgical profiles – are thoroughly examined by Vital Sidorovich in his chapter.

Yet these findings raise a broader question: is it time to systematize our knowledge of cast denarius copies on both sides of the limes? This is precisely the challenge taken up by Kyrylo Myzgin in his concluding contribution. He attempts to provide a coherent overview of denarius counterfeiting through casting in both the Roman provinces and the Barbaricum. Moreover, he proposes the introduction of a new numismatic term to characterize this phenomenon: *denarii flatii*. This terminology is further elaborated by Bartosz Awianowicz, who notes that the Latin verb *flo, flare, flavi, flatum*—as well as the participle *flatu*s, -a, -um—appears in numismatic contexts in several ancient sources. Whether this term will gain broader acceptance among numismatists remains to be seen. Terminological innovations often require decades to be adopted, but the term *denarii flatii* is already being used by some researchers in Poland, Ukraine, and Romania.

The book is available in hardcover and as an open-access e-book, accessible at Brepols Publishers (<https://www.brepols.net/products/IS-9782503612447-1>). It comprises 220 pages,

including 20 black-and-white illustrations, 75 color images, 13 black-and-white tables, and 10 maps. In our view, it offers a valuable new resource for archaeologists, historians, and numismatists interested in ancient monetary forgery. As the editors, we warmly encourage scholars to explore its contents.

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Making and Faking Coins on Both Sides of the Limes

Edited by Arkadiusz Dymowski and Kyrylo Myzgin

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