

Tedo Dundua (Tbilisi)

INFLUX OF THE ROMAN COINS IN GEORGIA

Georgia is a tiny country but with a big history. Being a suburb of Europe, she has always been glad to accept thoroughly general European fashions, as well as numismatic one.

As far back as in the 6th c. B.C. Themistagoras from Miletus made Phasis in Colchis (East Black Sea Coast) home for himself and his Greek colonists. Thus West Georgia has been involved in the European matter. Actually, the West of Georgia was Colchis, and the East and South – Iberia. Georgia is a synthesis of the West and the East.

Greek commercial superiority was substituted by the Roman hegemony over the small coastal strip of Colchis, already called Lazica in the 1st c. A.D. And that hegemony was based upon well-manned castellum-system from Pitius up to Apsaros. Lazi client-kings, dwelling in the hinterland, largely enjoyed Roman *pax* and prosperity, gaining a handsome profit by trading with the gallant Pontic cities, like Sinope, Amisus and Trapezus. The whole Black Sea area might be looked upon as a multicultural region of which the general principles were still based on Hellenism, but that was facilitated mostly by the Roman money and defended by the Roman soldiers. Further towards the East, Iberian kings, sometimes even possessing Roman citizenship, welcomed Graeco-Roman transit from Central Asia and India. Spices, precious wood and stones were brought to Europe via Transcaucasian trade-route (Strabo, XI, 7, 3; Plin., Nat. Hist., VI, 52).¹ Still there did exist some other routes.²

Soldiers and merchants brought money, rich deposits of which show the picture as follows (fig. 1):³

¹ Dundua T., Colchis, Iberia and the Kingdom of Pontus According to the Numismatic Material, Tbilisi 1993, 29-37 (in Georgian with Russian and English summaries).

² Dundua T., Georgia within the European Integration, Tbilisi 1999, 30-32.

³ For the numismatic data v. G. F. Dundua, Money Issues and Monetary Circulation in Georgia in Antiquity (the 6th c. B.C.-4th c. A.D.). Doctoral Thesis (in Russian), Tbilisi 1982; Dundua G. F.,

For Colchis/Lazica

The 2nd -1st cc. B.C.

a) Coastal strip (Dioscurias and environment) – 7 republican denarii altogether, dated from 171/151 B.C. up to the times of M. Antonius.

b) Hinterland (Vani and some other places) – 26 republican denarii, and one quinarius, dated from 119/110 (90/80) onwards. 23 denarii form a hoard together with denarii of Augustus (2) and drachm of Archelaus, king of Cappadocia.

Mints are mostly Occidental.

The best thing to demonstrate money circulation of Lazica in the Roman times is to manipulate with the numismatic data from the celebrated coastal castellum Pitius and the city in the neighbourhood, and with some hoards from Lazi hinterland.

a) Pitius

the 1st c. – dupondius of Augustus.

the 2nd c. – municipal copper of Trapezus – 25 pieces; silver coins of Caesarea in Cappadocia – 9; both, silver and copper, Rome – 7; Asian mint – 1; Pautalia – 1.

The 3rd c. – 340 pieces in all. First half of the 3rd c. – 247 pieces: municipal copper of Trapezus – 191; silver coins of Caesarea – 31; copper of Neocaesarea – 3; of Sinope – 1; of Amisus – 1; of Nicomedia – 1, etc. 149 pieces form a hoard. Structure of the hoard is as follows: municipal copper of Trapezus, dated by the 2nd-3rd cc. (L. Verus-Philip Junior) – 139; Caesareian silver issues – didrachm of Hadrian – 4; didrachm of Commodus – 1; drachm of Septimius Severus – 2; drachm of Julia Domna – 1; drachm of Geta – 1; drachm of Caracalla – 1. Date of the hoard-deposit is 245 as *terminus post quem*. This hoard could emerge due to threat of Gothic invasion from the Crimea in 252. Pitius was the place severely attacked by them. Both, Pitius and Dioscurias/Sebastopolis show some 238 samples of Trapezuntine municipal issues. Second half of the 3rd c. – some 100 pieces, mostly copper: struck in Rome – 70 pieces, including also Antoniniani; Antioch – 11; Cyzicus – 6; other mints are represented by unique samples.

the 4th c. – more than 500 copper pieces in all, 310 – form a hoard. Structure of the hoard is as follows: Constantine I – 11; Helena – 4; Constantine I (struck after his death) – 52; Constantine II – 6; Constantius II – 102; Constans – 75; Constantius II or Constans – 60. Constantius' issue is the last one. Mints: Constantinople – 20; Antioch – 87; Nicomedia – 51; Cyzicus

Numismatics of Georgia in Antiquity, Tbilisi 1987 (in Russian); Dundua T., Georgian Ethnocultural Evolution and the West According to the Numismatic Material (the 6th c. B.C.-1453), Tbilisi 1997 (in Georgian with English summary).

– 31; Alexandria – 10; Siscia – 9; Thessalonica – 1; unidentified – 101. Single finds provide us with the names of Licinius, Constantine I, Helena, Constantine I (struck after his death), Crispus, Constantine II, Constantius II, Constans, Valentinian II. Mints – Antioch – 30; Constantinople – 20; Nicomedia – 11; Cyzicus – 5; Thessalonica – 6; Siscia – 7; Trier – 1; Sirmium – 1; Alexandria – 1; unidentified – 127.

b) Hoards from the hinterland

– Gerzeuli hoard – some 469 pieces. Structure: denarius of Augustus – 1; local imitation to the stater of Lysimachus – 1; Caesareian silver issues – Nero (1); Vespasian (30); Domitian (9); Nerva (22); Trajan (165); Hadrian (90); Antoninus Pius and M. Aurelius (122); L. Verus (28). Nominals: hemidrachm, drachm, didrachm.

– Eki hoard – 907 pieces. Structure: Orodes I of Parthia – 1; Caesareian didrachm of Nerva – 1; Caesareian didrachm of Trajan – 2; Caesareian didrachm of Hadrian – 712; Caesareian didrachm of Antoninus Pius – 55; Caesareian didrachm of L. Verus – 1; denarius of Commodus, struck at Rome – 1; denarius of Pertinax, struck at Rome – 5; denarius of Niger, struck at Rome – 1; denarius of Septimius Severus – 101 (mints: Rome (12), Orient (84), Alexandria (5)); Julia Domna – 14 denarii, struck at Rome (5) and Oriental mint (9), and Caesareian drachm – 1; Caracalla – denarii, struck at Rome – 2, and Caesareian drachm – 1; Geta – denarius (1), struck either at Rome or Antioch, and Caesareian drachm – 1; Elagabalus – Caesareian drachm (1); Severus Alexander – 6 denarii, struck at Rome (1) and Oriental mint (5). Caesareian output numbers 775 as many; denarii – 131, mostly struck at Oriental mints.

– Sepieti Hoard – approximately 377 pieces. Structure: Roman denarii – 365 (mints: Emesa (158), Rome (118), Oriental mint (62)), and a few number of Caesareian coins. Money of Septimius Severus dominates the hoard (227 pieces), mostly struck at Emesa in 194. Severus Alexanders' issue of, probably, 222 provides a certain date for the hoard.

List of the coins from the extreme Eastern provinces of Lazica: denarius of Augustus – 56; denarius of Tiberius – 1; denarius of Caligula – 1; Caesareian hemidrachm of Nero – 1; Caesareian drachm of Nerva – 3; denarius of Trajan – 1; Hadrian – Caesareian didrachm (2), Caesareian hemidrachm (2); Caesareian didrachm of Antoninus Pius – 2; denarius of Faustina Junior – 1; denarius of Julia Domna – 1 (Laodiceia); solid of Constantine I – 1 (Siscia); solid of Constantius II – 2 (Antioch); semiss of Constantine I – 1 (Constantinople); semiss of Constantius II – 1 (Antioch); triens of Constantius – 1 (Antioch).

Now about interpretation, first empiric level. Sea coast has mostly provincial silver of Caesareian issue, municipal copper of Trapezus and

Imperial copper money, struck predominantly at the mints of Antioch and Asia Minor, in the complexes, hoards and as single finds. Hinterland absorbs only Caesareian silver, accompanied by Roman denarii, struck in greater quantity at the Oriental (ex. Syrian) mints. Further Eastwards Late Roman gold pieces and denarii of Augustus, mixed with Caesareian silver issues, make really amazing picture for Lazica. Academic level of interpretation commences with Caesareian prominent accumulation – merchants could bring them for sure and those merchants had to be from Sinope or Amisus, the import of which dominates Lazica. But good commercial balance sees those money to facilitate the foreign trade, and not the domestic exchange. Some more money was necessary. If it could happen as follows: since Lazi never had their own coinage, they could barter the sufficient amount of the Roman money for their economics, and the closest *aerarium* branches were that of Cappadocia and Syria. As to copper absence in the hinterland, there does exist only one explanation – there was no need of small trade in Lazica generally. Thus copper coins could come here for military purposes only, as a part of soldiers' *stipendium*. This statement can be argued:

Why the soldiers had to be paid in copper?! Indeed, silver money and especially gold, due to total weight lightness, was easier for a transfer to a camp.⁴ Then, why do the former camps everywhere (ex. on the Rhine) show bronze predominantly?!⁵ When you are paid some few hundreds per year, and – usually in three installments, everybody expect this to be done in basic units. That is absolutely logical. But when you are in military camp, having all supplies, and also – future opportunity to get a small farm with carefully saved money just invested in, what would you prefer – whole money with you at the border, or the most kept safely in bank. The last thing would work perfectly with the Roman I cycle of Capitalism and normal banking-system in

⁴ Wolters R., Bronze, Silver or Gold? Coin Finds and the Pay of the Roman Army. *Zephyrus. Revista de Prehistoria y Arqueología*. LIII-LIV, Salamanca 2000-2001, 579-588.

⁵ Wigg D. G., Coin Supply and the Roman Army, *Roman Frontier Studies* (1995), In: Proceedings of the 16th International Congress of Roman Frontier Studies. Oxbow Monograph 91 (1997) 281-288; Wigg D. G., The Development of the Monetary Economy in Northern Gaul in the Late La Tène and Early Roman Periods. *Roman Germany. Studies in Cultural Interaction. Journal of Roman Archaeology*, Supplementary series 32, Portsmouth, Rhode Island 1999, 111, 121; Wigg D. G., Die Rolle des Militärs bei der Münzversorgung und Münzwirtschaft am Rhein in der frühen Kaiserzeit. *Rom, Germanien und die Ausgrabungen von Kalkriese*. In: *Osnabrücker Forschungen zu Altertum und Antike-Rezeption 1* (Osnabrück 1999) 327-346; Berger F., Untersuchungen zu römerzeitlichen Münzfunden in Nordwestdeutschland. *Studien zu Fundmünzen der Antike 9*, Berlin 1992.

service.⁶ Then soldiers received only copper as a pocket-money. Narrative speak about some silver donatives to the legions. But narrative speak also how dangerous could it happen big money to be in a camp – Vitellius made his way to the throne thanks to his soldiers' financial assistance (not necessarily with money) (Tac. Hist., I. 57). Thus officials could avoid dangerous accumulation of money in the camps, on one hand, and on another hand, they always possessed some extra money for large state commercial operations.

Georgian case can provide more arguments for the copper being paid to the soldiers.

With a handsome agriculture, which could find market everywhere – in the hinterland towns inhabited by the Colchians, in the prosperous Greek cities at the coastal strip with already mixed population and at last, abroad, first in Miletus, then Athens and Sinope – this land provided well-shaped middle-class, having monies⁷, but it failed to create small service-system until the 10th c.⁸ The hands were needed elsewhere. And the Hellenic economics also failed here due to the country's super-humidity; the Greeks had no idea about how to drain those marches.⁹ That is, perhaps, why the copper money had been never respected here. The only attempt of Phasis to issue small money was again connected with the beloved silver – 3 hemitetartemorii show this attempt to be an abortive one.¹⁰ Indeed, just a few copper of the 6th - 2nd cc. B.C. is found at the coastal strip.¹¹

And then amazing thing happens – copper "revolution" marks the 1st c. B.C. Copper is everywhere – Dioscurias and suburbs not only offer some twenty copper Pontic municipal pieces of Eupator's time¹², but also produce local autonomous Dioscuriadi (Pl. I N1)¹³, mostly to be spread in Crimean Bosphorus; Vani/Surion in deep hinterland demonstrates about 200 synchronous copper coins, struck either in Pontic cities, or at the spot by king of Colchis in 84 B.C. Mithridates Philopator Philadelphos, son of Mithridates

⁶ Dundua T., *The Cyclic Dialectics*, Tbilisi 1996; Andreau J., *La vie Financière dans le Monde Romain. Les Métiers de Manieurs d'Argent (IV^e siècle av. J.-C.– III^e siècle ap. J.-C.)*, École Française de Rome, Palais Farnèse 1987.

⁷ Dundua T., *Georgia within the European Integration as Seen in Coinage*, Tbilisi 1999, 4.

⁸ Dundua T., *Georgian Ethnocultural Evolution and the West According to the Numismatic Material*, 113-114.

⁹ Dundua T., *Making of Europe*, Tbilisi 2000, 3.

¹⁰ Dundua T., *Georgia within the European Integration as Seen in Coinage*, 8.

¹¹ Dundua T., *Colchis, Iberia and the Kingdom of Pontus According to the Numismatic Material*, 46.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Dundua T., Dundua G., Javakhishvili N., Eristavi A., *Money in Georgia*, Tbilisi 2003, 13, N19-20.

Eupator (Pl. I N2).¹⁴ Indeed, being a Pontic satrapy, Colchis enjoyed its own king only for a definitely small period (App. Mithr., 64). Full-scale economic transformation – that could be an immediate answer. Alas, it took whole century and a half, even more, for next influx of copper coins. Narrative tells us about the Romans stationed at the East Black Sea coast by that time; and archaeology reveals a plenty of synchronous copper coins. Until the 6th c. copper money comes and goes, and there is in fact one more gap for the 7th-9th cc.¹⁵ Byzantines had gone!

So, copper comes and disappears together with the soldiers. That means that partly the Imperial armies used to be paid in copper, or bronze, does not matter (fig. 2).

Now about copper coin's curriculum to the soldiers pocket. Municipal coins used for a payment first went to a local fiscus as taxes from individuals, only then – to a camp ascribed to a province. As to the Imperial copper – as far as the hoard from Pitius is represented by the pieces with different mint and chronological characteristics, the direct liaison of the mints and Lazi camps can be totally rejected. Trade never has existed without state credits¹⁶, which have to be returned back. From high commercial class, wholesale traders, money moves towards enterprises and estates, then – to the shops of smaller merchants. Upper and middle classes, already having monies, pay their taxes. State institutional system depends on them. The Roman soldiers could be paid this way, from the *fisci*¹⁷ of Asia Minor and Syria (fig. 3).

As to the Eastern West Georgian provinces in the Late Antiquity, they seem to form economic and political condominium of Lazica and Iberia. Former provides ex. the Caesareian issues for them, latter – denarii of Augustus and Late Roman gold.

Now about Iberia.

Some 25 republican denarii are found in East Georgia, dated from 118 B.C. up to early years of Octavianus' principate. Mints are mostly Occidental.

¹⁴ Dundua T., Colchis, Iberia and the Kingdom of Pontus..., 46-50.

¹⁵ Dundua G., Dundua T., Georgian Numismatics, Tbilisi 2006, 183-186 (in Georgian with English Summary).

¹⁶ For the Roman times v. Wolters R., Die Kreditkrise des Jahres 33 N. Chr. *Litterae Numismaticae Vindobonensis* 3, Wien 1987, 23-58; Lo Cascio E., How Did the Romans View Their Coinage and Its Function? In: *Studien zu Fundmünzen der Antike* 10. Coin Finds and Coin Use in the Roman World. The 13th Oxford Symposium on Coinage and Monetary History, 25-27. 03, Berlin 1993, 280 n. 27; for the Greeks v. Howgego Ch., *Ancient History from Coins*, London and New York 1995, 20, 26.

¹⁷ For the *fisci* v. Wolters R., The Emperor and the Financial Deficits of the Aerarium in the Early Roman Empire. In: *Credito e Moneta nel Mondo Romano. Atti degli Incontri Capresi di Storia dell'Economia Antica*, Capri 12-14 Ottobre 2000, 147-160.

As to the Roman times, there are three basic concentrations of the Imperial money: a) ancient capital Mtskheta and suburb towns, Agaiani and Nastakisi; and foot-hill places – b) Zguderi; c) Ertso and Jinvali.

a) Mtskheta and suburbs: Augustus – denarii struck at Lugdunum in 2 B.C.-4 A.D. – 145; Tiberius – Lugduni aureus – 1, and denarii, produced by Lugdunum and some other Gaulic mint – 3; Caligula – Caesareian drachm of 37-38 – 1; Nero – aurei struck at Rome in 64-68 – 4; Galba – aureus struck at Rome – 1; Vitellius – aureus struck at Rome – 1; Vespasian – aurei struck at Rome in 77-78 and Lugdunum – 2; Titus – aurei struck at Rome in 73, 76 and 80 – 4; Domitian – aureus struck at Rome in 76 – 1, and denarii of 77/78 – 3; Trajan – aurei (Rome), one of them struck in 106 – 2, and denarii of 103-111, 98-117 and 112-117 – 3, Caesareian hemidrachm – 1; Hadrian – aurei struck at Rome in 119-122, 125-128, 119-138 and 134-138 – 7, and denarii (Rome) of 125-128, 134-138 – 3; Antoninus Pius – aurei struck at Rome in 149/150, 155/156 – 2, and denarii, struck in 140-144, 155/156 – 2; Faustina Senior – aurei (Rome) of 141 – 2, and denarius struck after 141 – 1; Faustina Junior – under Pius: aureus struck at Rome – 1, denarii – 2, and denarius struck in 161-177; M. Aurelius – under Pius: aurei struck at Rome in 151/152, 156/157 – 2; Commodus – aureus (Rome?) – 1; Septimius Severus – aurei (Rome) of 201 – 2, Caesareian drachm – 1, and Æ. – 2; Gordian III – aurei – 2; Philip Senior – aureus – 1; Philip Junior – aureus – 1; Decius Trajan – aureus – 1; Valerianus – aureus – 1; Carinus – Æ. – 1; Constantine I – solid struck at Nicomedia – 1; Constantius II – solid struck at Antioch – 1; Valens – siliqua issued in Antioch – 1.

b) Zguderi: Augustus – denarii struck in 2 B.C.-4 A.D. – 32; Domitian – under Vespasian: aureus (Rome) of 77/78 – 1; Antoninus Pius – aureus (Rome) of 150/151 – 1; Faustina Senior – under Pius: aureus (Rome), struck after 141 – 1, and denarius (Rome), also struck after 141 – 1; M. Aurelius and Commodus – aureus (Rome) of 175/176 – 1; Commodus – aureus struck at Rome in 190 – 1; Caracalla and Geta – aureus struck at Rome in 198/199 – 1; Caracalla – under Severus: aureus struck at Rome in 204 – 1; Elagabalus – aurei struck at Rome in 218/219 – 1, 220-222 – 2, and in 218/219 at Oriental mint – 3; Severus Alexander – aurei struck at Rome in 226 and 228 – 2; Gordian III – aureus (Rome) of 240 – 1.

c) Ertso and Jinvali: Augustus – denarii struck in 2 B.C.- 4 A.D. – 14; Julia Domna – aureus struck at Rome in 198-209 – 1; Severus Alexander – aureus struck at Rome in 225 – 1; Gordian III – aurei – 2; Valerianus – aureus – 1; Carus – aureus struck at Antioch – 1; Diocletian – aureus – 1.

Roman gold numbers total about 70 pieces, those of the second half of the 3rd c. are locally imitated, as well as celebrated denarius of Augustus with Gaius and Lucius Caesars on reverse (Pl. II).

Aurei and Augustan denarii form a bulk of money circulation of Iberia, other debasing denarii were, in fact, ignored – picture quite similar for the Roman Orient for some times.¹⁸ To confront this data to the Syrian import discovered in Georgia¹⁹, one can suggest the Syrian provincial treasury (Lazi enjoyed it a bit later) to be the source of supply for Iberia.

Severe Imperial crisis of the 3rd c. limits that supplies. Even if not that, Iberia would barter the Roman money no more. Socio-economic transformation of East Georgia towards Feudalism needed supply other than money. The country's stocks of the precious metal could be emptied down to support the general reformation – strengthening in number of the upper classes meant a gradual conversion of some yeomanry from the farmers to high-level administrators. Food-shortage could happen, and large-scale state food-supply was, perhaps, necessary one. Industry suffered also as some of the artisans had to earn living doing agricultural jobs. Amount of industrial goods *per capita* was fastly diminishing thus demanding small-scale local debased issues with a king as only potential power to strike these coins.²⁰

Thus the Roman copper money hurried back home with the Imperial garrisons withdrawn from Lazica; and silver or gold was back as a means of exchange for food; both of them having no opportunity of being re-struck as the Georgian money.

Illustrations

- Fig. 1. Colchis/Lazica and Iberia. Numismatic map
 Fig. 2. Copper money from Pitius
 Fig. 3. Copper coins' way to the camp

Plate I

N 1. Municipal copper issues of Dioscurias. 105-90 B.C. Chalkos (ex. 1, 3-3,1 gr.), dichalkon (ex. 3, 7-5 gr.) and tetrachalkon (ex. 6, 1 gr.)

N 2. Lotus-type issue of Mithridates Philopator Philadelphos, king of Colchis in 84 B.C.

Chalkos (1, 2- 2, 1 gr.) and hemichalkon (0, 8- 1, 1 gr.) (there do exist some silver pieces too)

¹⁸ Dundua G., Money Issues and Monetary Circulation in Georgia in Antiquity, 240.

¹⁹ Dundua T., Silagadze N., History of Georgia: Chronological or Themathical Concept?, Tbilisi 2000, 20, 52, 55 (in Georgian).

²⁰ Dundua T., Georgian Ethnocultural Evolution and the West According to Numismatic Material, 106.

Plate II

Iberian imitations to the Roman money:

imitation to denarius of Augustus. Silver. The 3rd c. 3, 55 gr. d = 18/19 mm.

imitation to aureus of Philip Senior. Gold. The 3rd c. 3, 87 gr. d = 20/21 mm.

imitation to aureus of Valerianus. Gold. The 3rd c. 3, 51 gr. d = 18 mm.

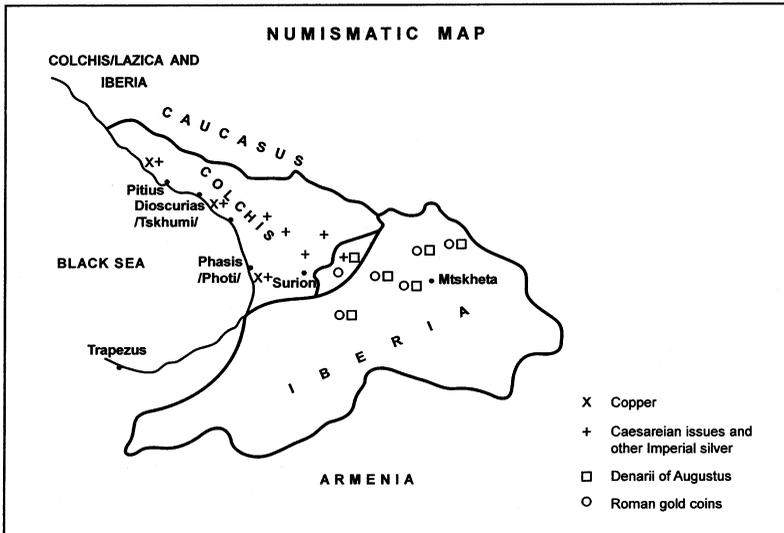


Fig. 1

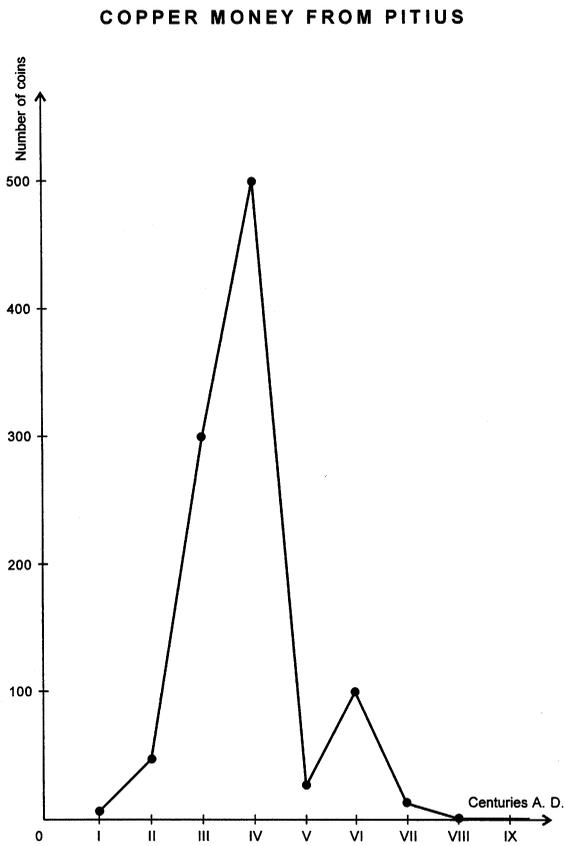


Fig. 2

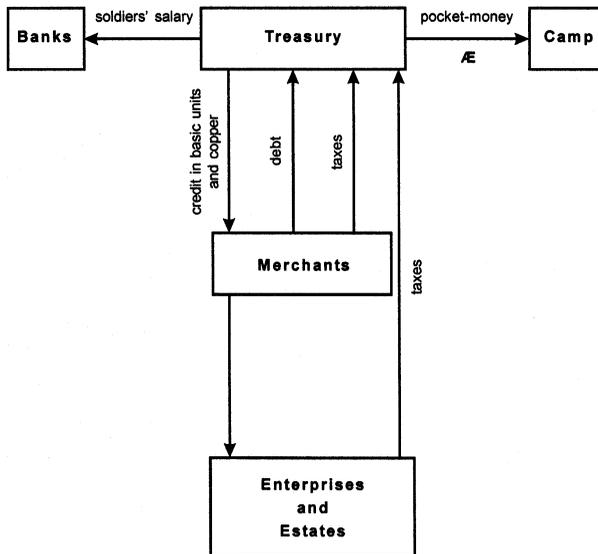
COPPER COINS' WAY TO THE CAMP

Fig. 3

Plate I

COLCHIS. LOCAL ISSUES OF THE 1ST c. B. C.



Plate II

IBERIAN IMITATIONS TO THE ROMAN MONEY

