

The Unification of Pontos: The Bronze Coins of Mithridates VI Eupator as Evidence for Commerce in the Euxine

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Introduction

It is well known that the main aim of Mithridates VI Eupator, king of Pontos, was the creation of a strong Pan-Pontic state on the Euxine in order to counteract the Romans' growing power as well as the power of the neighbouring Hellenistic kingdoms. It is also well known that he wished to bring the greater part of Asia Minor under his rule as the traditional domain of his predecessors. For these reasons, if no other, he began in the last decades of the 2nd century BC to enlarge his kingdom at the expense of the communities of the northern and eastern Black Sea littoral.

The main tasks that faced the king in this endeavour were the proclamation of these regions as his ancestral domains and their inclusion as administrative units into his state. He began with Tauric Chersonesos and Olbia, which came under his power around the second to last decade of the 2nd century BC. The Kingdom of Bosphoros next recognized Mithridates as king between approximately 111/110 and 108/107 BC, and Kolchis fell under his power around the last decade of the 2nd century BC. Once all of these regions were in the hands of the Pontic dynasty, the king proceeded to link them as closely as possible with each other and with Pontos.

These cities had been longstanding commercial partners with the Greeks in northern Anatolia and in the Aegean, but the establishment of Mithridates' Kingdom of Pontos transformed this relationship. A good indication of the existence of this new economic and political relationship in the Euxine in this period is the continually widespread use of Pontic coins throughout that region. The purpose of this paper is thus to study the coins that were in use in the Euxine under the rule of Mithridates VI of Pontos in the hope that such a study will shed light on the trade and other commercial activity that took place during the creation of this new economic landscape.

A new economic landscape

It has long ago been well established, following the evidence of various literary sources, that the Hellenic cities of the southern Black Sea coast – Herakleia Pontike, Sinope, Amisos, Amastris and Trapezous – were active commercial partners of the Greeks on the northern shore. In the 5th and 4th centuries BC, Herakleia Pontike, followed by Sinope as a close second, was the greatest wine and oil trader in the area, as is confirmed by the amphorae connected with these two cities. These two cities also served as middlemen in the trade with the Aegean, particularly with Athens. The main items of this trade, which were of great importance to the Greeks, were natural resources such as grain, fish, leather and timber. In the Hellenistic period, the role of these cities (and those just mentioned above) in the Black Sea commerce had diminished dramatically, although some of them, in particular Sinope, went on playing a facilitating role in the trading between the northern and eastern Black Sea coasts and Rhodos, Kos, Byzantion, and some other Aegean communities.

Because the Kingdom of Pontos initially lacked access to the Black Sea, the main task facing its earliest rulers was to gain control of the Greek *poleis* in the Black Sea coastal zone. By the beginning of the 2nd century BC, these rulers had succeeded in capturing practically all the main trading cities: Amisos, Amastris, Trapezous and its colonies, and finally Sinope and her colonies. King Pharnakes I had even created a new coastal city, called Pharnakeia after himself – an event that reveals how important he deemed the Black Sea area to be for the Kingdom of Pontos. The only thing he failed to do was to retain Tieion on the Bithynian coast, which he first conquered, but then had to release according to the conditions of a peace-treaty in 179 BC (Diod. 29.23; Polyb. 25.2). Pharnakes was also the first among the Mithridatids to establish political relations with the Greek cities outside northern Anatolia – Tauric Chersonesos (Polyb. 25.2; *IOSPE I*², 402) and Odessos (*IGBulg I*², 40). In his treaty with Chersonesos, he even vowed to defend its agricultural possessions in the North-west Crimea, a rich grain-producing area, from the Scythians (*IOSPE I*², 401). All of this serves to demonstrate that already in the early 2nd century BC the rulers of Pontos were keen to acquire access to the fertile lands of the northern Black Sea regions.

Some scholars believe that Pharnakes I was trying to create a Pan-Pontic state similar to that later established by Mithridates Eupator. To my mind this belief is incorrect; instead Pharnakes was searching for new allies after the unsuccessful war of 183-179 BC and his severe defeat, which left the economic position of his kingdom seriously weakened.¹ Pharnakes' attempt to find new allies on the Euxine was no doubt due to his desire to restore the shaken economy of his realm. It is for this reason in particular that he was interested in defending the grain-producing area of Chersonesos, from which, at that time, traders, presumably from Amisos and Sinope, the new capital of his kingdom, traditionally bought wheat.

Yet Pharnakes I could hardly have achieved any success in creating a Pan-Pontic state. The Scythians and the Sarmatians had completely destroyed the rural lands of the Greek cities to the north, while the Thracians and the Celts had done the same with the *poleis* of the West Pontic region. Bosporos, the main grain-producing centre of the area for hundreds of years, was practically under the control of the Scythians: an inscription from Pantikapaion describes the close dynastic links between the Scythians and the Spartokids.² Olbia was also deeply entrenched under the Scythian power of Skilouros, as we can see from the coins of this king, struck in this city.³ The Olbians had also almost entirely lost their *chora*.

Thus, in order to achieve economic profits within the Euxine state, Pharnakes needed either to establish good relations with the barbarian world, or to conquer the Scythians along with the Sarmatians. The latter was impossible, as his military and economic power had been seriously weakened after the war.⁴ As well, it was only after the war in eastern Anatolia that Pharnakes I began to pose as a “philhellene” and “a friend of the Romans”, while before it he was aggressive towards the Greeks, conquering Sinope and other cities. This led to a certain suspicion towards him on the part of the Greeks in both the Aegean and on the Euxine, and it took some time before this negative attitude became a positive one. Polybios’ opinion of Pharnakes I is particularly noteworthy: “Pharnakes surpassed all previous kings in his contempt for laws” (Polyb. 27.17).

His son, Mithridates V Euergetes, was luckier in his Black Sea policy. Although we know most about the Aegean affairs of this ruler (OGIS 366 = ID 1558, 1559), there is some evidence for his links with the Greeks of the Black Sea. He gave gifts to the Sinopeans, probably in connection with their temple of Apollon, conjoining the cult of this god with that of Perseus and making it official throughout his kingdom.⁵ Through his governor, Mithridates V Euergetes also supported the town of Abonouteichos in Paphlagonia.⁶ Emigrants from Sinope and Amisos, as well as from Paphlagonia, came to live in the Bosporan Kingdom as early as the second half of the 2nd century BC, as is shown by various grave-stones (CIRB, 124, 129, 131, 530). They may have been either regular traders or traders functioning as intermediaries. It is noteworthy as well that the greatest number of emigrants from Amisos and Sinope to Athens and Delos seem to have arrived at the time of Euergetes, and this could be a result of his efforts to establish commercial relations between the northern Black Sea and the Mediterranean.⁷

Certainly, Mithridates Euergetes considered the establishment of these commercial relations to be an important contribution to Pontos’ economy, which greatly depended on the trading activity of its cities. Unlike Pharnakes I, who was only able to establish and continue trading links with Tauric Chersonesos and Odessos (for the Bosporan Kingdom, we know only of private advertising stamps belonging to Rhodian *emporoi*, and connected with the selling of wine there in the name of Pharnakes I),⁸ Mithridates made the

Bosporan Kingdom a cornerstone of his Euxine commercial policy. It seems possible to suppose that Mithridates did not renew the anti-Scythian conditions of the Pontic-Chersonesian treaty of 179 BC (I have earlier put forward my arguments against speculations dating the treaty to around 155 BC)⁹ and so managed to gain the respect of the Scythians in order to continue trading with Bosporos for the mutual profit of both sides.

Mithridates Euergetes used traditional trading links with Sinope and Amisos. In the 2nd century BC, Amisos played a major role in commerce throughout the Euxine. One of the main exports from this city was terracotta figurines, which chiefly reflected different aspects of the cult of Dionysos.¹⁰ A great number of them have been found throughout the whole Black Sea region and are dated to the late 3rd-1st centuries BC.¹¹ The economic importance of this *polis* is also confirmed by a large quantity of silver drachms, mostly of the type "Hera/owl with wings up"¹² discovered in numerous places including Nikonion, Chersonesos, Tyritake, Phanagoria, western Georgia and others. Early issues of silver coins from Pantikapaion, drachms of Gorgippia and Phanagoria were overstruck at the time of Euergetes' rule from Amisean silver coins, a procedure which testifies to the spread of Amisean coins throughout the Bosporan Kingdom during the second half of the 2nd century BC, that is to say, within the years of Euergetes' reign. These coins were popular in the Bosporan cities until the early 1st century BC.¹³

Some particularly interesting conclusions have been drawn after a careful spectral analysis of the metal used in the minting of Amisean and Bosporan coins. The alloy of silver used in the minting of Pantikapaion drachms of the type "Apollon/bow in quiver" is nearly identical to the metal of Amisean drachms of the late 2nd century BC. At the same time, the metallic components of Pantikapaion coins of the same type, but of an earlier period, resemble the metallic composition of earlier Amisean coins. The late bronze coins of Spartokid Bosporos, issued on the eve of the Mithridatic invasion, were struck from pieces of yellow Pontic copper. All this allows us to draw the certain conclusion that the Kingdom of Pontos not only supplied the Bosporan Kingdom with Amisean coins, but also provided metals for the minting of local coins.¹⁴

The consequences of this policy were very important for Bosporos. Not only were the city's links with Amisos and Sinope strengthened and through them its links with the Kingdom of Pontos, but also its economy seemingly began to improve. This last is demonstrated by the fact that abundant minting took place in Pantikapaion in the 2nd century BC. This minting included silver drachms of the "Apollon/*gorytos*" and "Apollon/tripod" types, as well as coins of lesser denominations in silver along with bronze coins with an Apollon type as well. The types of these coins reflect the impact of Pontic symbols and coin-types, particularly in the early years of Mithridates Eupator.¹⁵ This has led some scholars to suppose that Mithridates VI may even have given financial donations to the Bosporan Kingdom during the late 2nd century BC.¹⁶

To my mind, this is one of the main reasons why Mithridates Eupator allowed Amisos to continue to mint its own silver coinage until the beginning of the 1st century BC, an act which seems very unusual in light of ordinary Pontic monetary practice. The king of Pontos was perhaps trying to take advantage of Amisos' status in order to attract the interest of the Greek trading aristocracy in the cities of Bosporos and the neighbouring lands of Pontos and his own kingdom. At the same time, Mithridates Eupator, and his successors, were deeply concerned with the economic situation on the northern shore of the Black Sea, an area which was important to them because of their political and military aims. We know that Bosporos in the late Hellenistic period was in a deep economic crisis, which was intensified by the Sarmatians' constant demand of tribute (Strab. 7.4.4). In the same period, a certain development of the economy did take place, reflected in the minting of coins with the help of Amisos and the Pontic kings. Thus, presumably, the money brought in from Pontos to Bosporos was aimed mainly at covering the expenses of the Spartokids in paying off the large tribute due to the barbarians.

This payment allowed the Greek *emporoi* in the cities to continue their commercial operations with the barbarians and the Greeks within the Euxine and abroad, thus increasing the profits of the Hellenic cities of northern Anatolia and the Kingdom of Pontos as well. This was the first step in the economic unification of Pontos, but it remained purely an economic issue and not one of policy. At this time, i.e. in the second half of the 2nd century BC (until the submission of the Scythians and an alliance with the Sarmatians was formed under Mithridates Eupator in the late 2nd-early 1st century BC), it was impossible to create a political and economic union between Pontos and Bosporos, particularly since Kolchis had not yet become subject to the Mithridatids. Only when the eastern Black Sea coast together with Armenia Minor became a part of the Kingdom of Pontos in the very beginning of the 1st century BC,¹⁷ did it become possible to begin the unification of the Euxine in an attempt to restore the ancestral domain of the Mithridatids.

Amisos and, to a lesser extent, Sinope played a major role in the Mithridatids' policy of reunification. By the 2nd century BC, Herakleia Pontike, Amastris and Sinope had temporarily lost their positions in Pontic trade, while Amisos with the assistance of the royal dynasty, on the contrary, had begun to organize and control both internal Euxine and foreign trade. The city, along with Amaseia, was the first among the Greek *poleis* to be incorporated into the Pontic Kingdom; it was historically connected with inland eastern Anatolia, had stable links with Athens and cities in Asia Minor, as well as with Kolchis. Two coins from Amisos of the types "Ares/sword" and "Dionysos/*cista mystica*" were found in the Athenian agora, while an Amisos coin of the type "Gorgon's head/Nike with palm" comes from the town of Satala in eastern Pontos, and a similar coin has been discovered in Alexandria Troas - all finds belong to the time of Mithridates VI (105-65 BC).¹⁸ Amisos'

silver coins from an earlier period reached even Central Asia, some of them having been found in the Parthian city of Nysa in Margiana. This suggests that the city was widely involved in the trade of metals, natural resources, oil, wine etc., all of which its representatives acquired and sent to the Bosporos, Chersonesos and other places.

Amisos had a vast rural area and could freely use its agricultural resources for export trade. When Mithridates VI came to power he immediately surrounded himself with the noble citizens of Amisos, who occupied important positions in the kingdom (Strab. 12.3.32-34; App. *Mithr.* 17; Plut. *Luc.*, 17; Plut. *Pomp.* 42; OGIS 372, ID 1572; OGIS 374, ID 1573, 1569, 1570), and were surely able to encourage the city's trading activity.¹⁹ The city received from the king the privilege of minting a great number of coins in different series, unlike the other cities of Pontos who minted fewer coins and were restricted to a much smaller number of series.²⁰

Coins from Amisos were the main currency of the Pontic Kingdom: among the Mithridatic bronze coins in the Amasya Museum (most of which come from ancient Amaseia), coins from the Amisos mint are predominant and are dated to ca. 100-65 BC.²¹ In the coin-hoards from Pontos, Amisean bronze coins exceed those from such centres as Sinope, Amastris, Gazioura, Komana, Chabakta and others more than seven times (72,12 % against 12 % for coins from Sinope, which are the second most frequent class of coins) (IGCH 1382, 1385-1389).²² The most popular Amisean coins in the internal market of Pontos seem to have been the series "Ares/sword", "Athena/Perseus", "Gorgon's head on Aegis/Nike with palm branch". They belong to the period of 111-90 BC, according to F. Imhoof-Blumer's chronological scheme, or to 95-85 BC, according to the newly suggested and preliminary chronology of F. de Callataÿ.²³ To compare: among the coins of Pantikapaion in Pontos there are only two from Amisos in the Amasya Museum collection, dated to the 2nd-1st centuries BC²⁴ and only one in the hoards – from Merzifon (IGCH 1386). Coins thus confirm that Amisos was most active in commerce inland around the late 2nd–early 1st century BC.

If we then turn to the Euxine markets, the picture is as follows. In Olbia the most widespread Pontic coins were those dated to 111-105 BC (group III of Imhoof-Blumer 1912), which is about 60 % of the total (single coins from 120-111 BC: Imhoof-Blumer 1912 groups I-II have also been found) and from 105-90 BC (Imhoof-Blumer 1912 group IV) – about 30 %. Single coins dated to 90-80 BC have also been found. Thus, the high point of Olbian – Pontic relations occurred in 111-90 BC.²⁵ In Chersonesos we are aware of only nine coins dated to 120-111 BC, while coins from 111-105 BC compose 55 % of all Pontic coins in the city, and from 105-90 BC – ca. 25 % (40 coins in all; there are only six coins, dated to 90-80 BC, Imhoof-Blumer 1912 group V).²⁶ In Olbia and Chersonesos Amisean coins are dominant; coins from Sinope are the second most frequent type of coins, while we also have some few coins from other cities such as Amastris, Pharnakeia, Laodikeia, and Gazioura.

In Chersonesos the most active period of trade with Pontos occurred between 111 and 90 BC, and its *chora's* commercial relations with the Kingdom of Pontos blossomed at the same time.²⁷ In Tyras we only know of *tetrachalkoi* of Amisos from between 111 and 105 BC (Imhoof-Blumer 1912 group III).²⁸ From Bosporos we have coins, distributed among the Imhoof-Blumer 1912 groups in the following way: groups I and II – single coins, group III – 18.75 % of all Pontic coins, group IV – ca. 19 %, group V – 9 %.²⁹ The picture here is again familiar: the peak of Pontic (Amisos, Sinope) – Bosporan commerce corresponds to that of Olbia, Tyras, Chersonesos and inland Pontos, that is to say, the period between 111 and 90 BC.

In Kolchis, using the data from the finds at Vani, the Amisean coins seem to be the most common as well: the earliest among them is dated to 111-105 BC (*tetrachalk* “Ares/sword”), but the coins of 105-90 BC (group IV of Imhoof-Blumer 1912) compose more than 70 % of the Pontic coins found (30 coins against 1 from 90-80 BC, and 5 from 80-70 BC). In Escheri, 9 coins from 105-90 BC and 3 coins, part of a late quasi-autonomous series of Pontic bronze coins, have been found. The most popular among Mithridatic bronze coins here, as is the case with other places in the Euxine, were those with the types “Gorgon/Nike” and “Ares/sword”, issued by Amisos and Sinope; coins from Amastris only occur sporadically.³⁰ This corresponds to what we know of the monetary circulation in the Pontic Kingdom at the same time where the same coin-types and the same centres also were prevalent.³¹ The remaining *poleis* of Pontos are represented on the northern and eastern Black Sea coast by single finds of coins minted between 111 and 85 BC and this seems significant.

Probably all the commerce between Pontos and the Euxine countries passed through the coastal cities of Pontic Kappadokia and Paphlagonia: export goods from eastern Anatolia, southern Kolchis and Armenia Minor were presumably transferred through Amisos, or from Trapezous to Amisos (although some of them could have been sent directly from Trapezous, it is still likely that the traders would have used Amisean coins anyway). It should be remembered that at the time of Xenophon the dealers and traders from Herakleia Pontike, the largest export and intermediary trading centre in the 5th and 4th centuries BC, travelled along the coast of northern Anatolia in order to obtain goods required by their mother-city (Xen. *An.* 5.6.19). If traders from Herakleia did this, why should it not also be possible for those from Amisos? As for goods from Central Anatolia and Paphlagonia, they could have passed through Sinope and Amastris. These centres were also traditional intermediary trading points with the Aegean. The more so, that emigrants from these *poleis* were living in Athens, Delos and the other cities of Greece. This means that the circulation of commodities from the Euxine to southern Pontos and to the eastern Mediterranean also passed through the above mentioned cities.

The overwhelming majority of Pontic bronze coins found in different places in the Black Sea region have the same types and fit the same chrono-

logical groups of Imhoof-Blumer (1912). The greatest number of them seems to have come from the monetary workshops of Amisos, and to a lesser extent from those of Sinope. This should be taken as the result of an attempt on the part of Mithridates VI Eupator to unify the monetary system of the Euxine in order to link his ancestral domains in Pontos and Paphlagonia with the Black Sea's northern and eastern shores through stable economic relations. A central place in this policy was clearly reserved for Amisos, the leading centre for commerce with the Greeks on the coast of the Black Sea.

This process of economic unification, carried out by Mithridates Eupator, was a continuation of the earlier economic policy of Mithridates V Euergetes. Euergetes chose this method in an attempt to restore the potential of Pontos after the disastrous war waged by Pharnakes I, because the losses resulting from the war and the tribute placed upon his kingdom were so heavy that it was impossible regularly to strike large silver coins. We know, in fact, of only a few, rare, Pontic royal tetradrachms minted after the war.³² Mithridates Euergetes' attempt was made at the expense of Bosporos and other northern Black Sea cities, promoting the development of their economy and trade.

Mithridates VI Eupator was much more successful than his father. The peak of commercial activity between Amisos and Sinope and Bosporos and the other parts of the northern and eastern Black Sea fell during the period 111-90 BC, just after Olbia, Tyras, the whole of Taurica and Taman became a part of the Pontic Kingdom. Even if we use the new chronological scheme of Pontic minting, suggested by F. de Callataÿ (which needs some correction), we still find that the most extensive period of monetary exchange between northern and southern Pontos took place in 100-90 BC.³³

All these facts imply that Mithradates Eupator's policy of unification of Pontos began in 111-90 BC. This policy was regarded as an economic measure meant to unite his true ancestral domains in Asia Minor with recently added territories, which he also proclaimed as ancestral. The new currency from the Kingdom of Pontos, chiefly in the form of coins from Amisos and Sinope, was meant to encourage the exchange of trade goods within the new kingdom of Mithridates Eupator. The date of the economic and financial unification of Pontos is confirmed by hoards of Pantikapaion and Phanagoria coins which were used during the 2nd century BC. Their accumulation in hoards is a witness of their withdrawal from circulation shortly before the new Mithridatic Pontic and Bosporan coin-series were introduced in the last decade of the 2nd century BC.³⁴

The rise of trade and commercial exchange in the Euxine in 111-90 BC coincided with a number of important political and military steps on the part of the Pontic king. In between 108-103 BC, he invaded Paphlagonia and Galatia (Justin 37.4.3, 38.5.4; Strab. 12.3.1, 3.9); in 102 BC, he sent an army to Kappadokia, for which he was contending with the ruler of Bithynia (Justin 38.1.1-5). In 101/100 BC, Mithridates VI added Kolchis and Armenia Minor to his possessions, and in 95 BC, together with the Armenian king Tigranes

II, he clashed for the first time with the Roman troops of Sulla in Kappadokia (Justin 38.3.2-3; Plut. *Sulla* 5.6; App. *Mithr.* 10, 57; Frontin. 1.5.18; Liv. *Ep.* 70). At the same time, his troops were in battle against the Sarmatians, Bastarnes and other barbarians of the northern Black Sea littoral (Strab. 7.3.16; 18; [Plut.] *Mor.* 2.324). By 89 BC, most of the barbarians around the Black Sea recognized the power of Mithridates (Poseidonios apud Athen. 5. C 50.213L).³⁵

The beginning of political and military unification in Pontos coincided with the appearance of a vast royal mintage of gold and silver staters and tetradrachms, which began to circulate in Asia Minor at the end of the 2nd century BC but most actively after 96 BC.³⁶ The common opinion on these coins is that they were minted especially because of the war with Rome, and de Callataÿ has convincingly shown that the most intensive minting of royal tetradrachms took place during the years of military conflict in which the Pontic Kingdom participated.³⁷

At the same time, they, without a doubt, indicate a certain development of the Pontic economy, a development which was in the first place the result of commercial relations having been established throughout the Euxine. This conclusion is confirmed by the fact that royal coins of Mithridates VI seem never to have been used as payment on the northern coast of the Black Sea. We know of only single finds of such coins, given exclusively as gifts to the sanctuaries (on the Gurzuf Saddle and in Pantikapaion in the temple from the late 2nd–early 1st century BC).³⁸ All payments were made in Pontic bronze coins or in the local currency.

It is worth noting that during the period of Mithridatic rule, Olbia, Bosphoros and Chersonesos continued to mint their own coins. Bosphoros struck obols of the types “Poseidon/*prora*” (Pantikapaion) and *tetrachalks* “Artemis/resting stag” (Pantikapaion, Phanagoria) dated to 109-100,³⁹ or 100-90 BC.⁴⁰ At the end of the 2nd and the beginning of the 1st century BC, particularly in the first quarter of the 1st century, Pantikapaion struck silver hemidrachms and bronze *dichalks* of the type “star/tripod”.⁴¹ Pantikapaion and Gorgippia also issued drachms of the type “Dionysos/running stag, *thyrsos*”, which can be dated to 100-90 BC (Anochin), or 109-100 BC (Šelov), or 90-80 BC (Golenko), or, finally, 100-75 BC (Zograph).⁴² These are coins that were mainly overstruck on the drachms of Amisos from the late 2nd century BC. The most intensive minting, however, took place in 90-80 BC: Pantikapaion, Phanagoria, Gorgippia put into circulation silver didrachms of the type “Dionysos/wreath”, Pantikapaion and Phanagoria struck the hemidrachms “Dionysos/*thyrsos*” and Pantikapaion alone – the drachms “Artemis/grazing stag”. Bronze issues were also abundant: Pantikapaion, Phanagoria, Gorgippia minted *obols* of the type “Men/standing Dionysos” and the *tetrachalks* “Dionysos/tripod, *thyrsus*”.⁴³

N.A. Frolova and S. Ireland have revised the dating of the Mithridatic coinage of Bosphoros and concluded that it first began in 96/95 BC and continued until 65 BC. Along with *polis* mints there were governors’ issues, i.e. the so-called anonymous *obols* of the type “Dionysos/*gorytos*”.⁴⁴ Chersonesos

struck its own coins in 90-80 BC,⁴⁵ Olbia struck a series of *chalkoi* of the type "Athena/shield and spear" in the last decade of the 2nd century BC, and in 90-80 BC two series of *chalkoi* with local types of Apollon.⁴⁶ All these coins circulated together with Pontic bronze coins.

Local series of coins, however, were used exclusively on the northern shore of the Black Sea. Yet, we can discover few of them among coin-finds in Pontos itself (see above). I am aware of only one coin of Phanagorian mintage from the early 1st century BC (of the type "Artemis/resting stag") from the Athenian Agora⁴⁷ and one coin of the analogous type from the A.G. van der Dussen Collection: the location at which it was found, however, is unknown.⁴⁸ This fact leads to the conclusion that along with the appearance of a Mithridatic royal minting of staters, drachms and tetradrachms, used only outside the Black Sea region, the local minting of the Greek cities of the northern coast was valid for payments inside Bosporos and the neighbouring lands, except perhaps for Pontos, Paphlagonia, Armenia Minor and Kolchis. Presumably local traders, soldiers and ordinary people used local money for buying goods, while Pontic and foreign trade mediators in their turn paid Pontic bronze coins for purchasing goods in the Greek cities, chiefly at Bosporos. They then sent these goods to Pontos and sold them there at a higher price, or paid duties for ships transporting goods through the ports and harbours of Pontos, thus increasing the royal funds and the income of Amisos, Sinope and other Hellenic trading centres of the kingdom.

A similar process could well have taken place at Chersonesos, stimulating economic growth there. In their turn, the Bosporans or Chersonites, who arrived in Pontos on commercial business, spent Pontic coins to buy goods there, but when they returned to Bosporos or to the western Crimea, they sold goods for Bosporan money at Pantikapaion or Phanagoria, and in Chersonesos used local money (or Bosporan, as the city was joined with Bosporos by Mithridates VI).

In any case, Pontic coins served as inter-city currency. Such a practice strengthened the economy of Pontos and Bosporos, aiding the latter in overcoming the economic crisis that had struck the country in the last quarter of the 2nd century BC.⁴⁹ The appearance of plenty of silver coins in the cities of Bosporos from the 90s and 80s BC confirm the end of crisis there (and in Chersonesos, too), as Mithridates Eupator began first of all to support the *polis* economy and encourage commerce with the inland barbarian and semi-barbarian regions, taking advantage of traders from Amisos and Sinope.

Apart from general trade goods, the northern Black Sea littoral and Bosporos supplied the Kingdom of Pontos with grain (Strab. 7.4.6; *FGrH* 434: Memnon F 19, 54). Every year, the Bosporans sent 180,000 *medimnoi* of grain and 200 talents of silver to the king. On the eve of the third war with Rome, Mithridates collected around 2 million *medimnoi* of grain from various places in the Black Sea region (App. *Mithr.* 69). During the war itself, when the Romans besieged Herakleia and Sinope, Bosporos, mainly through Theodosia

and Chersonesos, supplied the two cities with grain (*FGrH* 434: Memnon F 53, 54). At the same time, Kolchis provided resources for the building and organizing of a fleet – timber, hemp, gold, various kinds of food, etc. This was a kind of *phoros* that the subjected territories had to pay to their sovereign. It became possible, however, only when the economy and trade flourished in those countries which were within the circle of inter-Pontic commercial relations, as was the case in the 5th to 3rd centuries BC, when grain from the northern Black Sea region was delivered to Athens and other urban centres of the Aegean. Ensuring this tribute from the subjected lands was a major task for the Pontic king when he created the so-called unification of the Pontos, soon after which he added Taurica, Taman and Kolchis to his kingdom.

K.V. Golenko and other scholars have noticed that a reduction in the spread of Pontic coins on the northern and eastern coasts of the Euxine took place around 85 BC and continued until the 70s BC, stimulating the rise of local minting.⁵⁰ This shows that the economy of the Greek cities and that of the Bosporos became more stable and that these same cities were able to pay tribute to the Pontic king and to a certain extent cover his needs for natural resources and food.

This picture changed radically during the Third Mithridatic War with Rome, when an economic crisis again hit the cities around the Euxine coast. Local coin-minting was seriously reduced; on the contrary, Pontic coins again became the most common form of currency in the local markets: for the period 90-80 BC we are aware of only isolated Pontic coins in Olbia (two examples), in Chersonesos (six examples), in Kolchis (Vani: one example), in Bosporos (nine examples). For the period between 80 and 70 BC we have: Olbia three examples (2.19 %), Chersonesos 33 (23 %), Kolchis six (3 %) and Bosporos 49 (51.4 %). After that period, Amisos lost its leading role in Pontic trade, while traders from Amastris and Sinope appear to have become more active, as is seen by the domination of coins from these centres throughout the Euxine.⁵¹ Of course, to some extent these calculations are provisional, but they still reflect the general proportions of the various types of coins in circulation.

Coinage from Bosporos was most common because after Mithridates' defeats in Asia Minor, the king turned to these lands for aid in organizing a new campaign against the Romans. In order to do this, he attempted to improve the local economy, just as he had done in the early years of his domination on the Euxine. We can, however, hardly speak of any kind of Pan-Pontic unity or unification of the monetary system at this time, as there had been earlier. This is particularly the case, in that the king had already lost practically all of his possessions in Asia Minor, even his ancestral kingdom. Yet he was still trying to use the resources of Bosporos, as before. This shows that the policy of unification of the Euxine was designed with the Kingdom of Bosporos as a main centre of trading activity with the barbarian world, something very necessary for the king in his struggle against Rome.

Thus, the policy of unification of Pontos, as reflected by coins from this era, brought positive results only at the end of the second and the first third of the 1st century BC. The greatest number of Pontic coins from Olbia, Chersonesos and Bosporos stem from Amisos which was at its most important in this period. This same city was also used by the Pontic rulers to connect the northern and eastern Black Sea coasts with the Kingdom of Pontos as part of the ancestral domains of the Mithridatids, particularly in the time of Mithridates Eupator. Unlike the allied western Black Sea littoral, he ruled the northern and eastern parts of the Euxine through his governors.

We can follow two main trends in Mithridatic monetary policy throughout the Euxine: one aimed at imposing the Pontic currency on the subject states as a mean of ensuring the unification necessary for help in obtaining resources to aid in the successful struggle with Rome. The other was concentrated on keeping a local mint in the Greek cities, but one that was linked with the Pontic mint in terms of types and weights. A good example of this twofold policy is the coinage of Dioskourias in Kolchis, which, under royal control, was actively spread throughout the northern coastal area of the Black Sea, in particular Chersonesos and Bosporos. Along with Pontic coins, Dioskourias' coins were widely accepted by most, if not all, inter-Euxine trading partners, a fact which reflects the state of commercial operations between the northern and eastern coasts of the Black Sea. This was a result of the philhellenic policy of Mithridates Eupator who was trying to support the *poleis'* economic life and political rights, in as much as they remained under royal control and suited royal military and economic needs. This is perhaps why the king allowed his governors, in particular his sons Mithridates the Younger and Machares, to control the governor's minting of anonymous obols at Bosporos, struck there alongside the *polis'* coins.

We can also suppose that a desire to improve the economy of the Greek *poleis* was a major reason for the establishment of Amisos as a strong force in commerce throughout the Euxine, as the city traditionally had good connections with the Hellenic cities of the Aegean and Black Sea regions. The king certainly acted from such a desire in the case of Dioskourias, greatly increasing the importance of this city. Royal control through satraps and governors along with royal monetary officials was a real basis for the unification of Pontos on philhellenic principles, which included a certain kind of economic independence for the *poleis* regarding their trade and agriculture.

Another interesting point is that we have a small number of Pontic coins from the barbaric periphery of the area. They were used mostly in the coastal cities and their *chora*. This shows that the king often tried to support the economic potential of the cities, but was not concerned with that of the barbaric kingdoms, such as, for example, the Scythian. The tribes were his allies, not his subjects, unlike the Greeks who were the trading and commercial partners of the barbarian tribes and the subjects of the Pontic king. The economic prosperity of the Greek cities along with Bosporos and Kolchis, where, having taken

over former *poleis* lands, the king's administration organized vast royal land possessions, was a main reason for the economic and military growth of the Pontic Kingdom throughout the whole period of the Mithridatic Wars until the fall and death of the great King of Kings, Mithridates Eupator, in 63 BC.

Notes

- 1 For example, a Delian inscription that notes that Pharnakes was unable to give financial support to the annual Athenian religious festival, as he had previously done (*ID* 1497b = *OGIS* 771). See further, Reinach 1906, 46-50; Durrbach 1921, 100-105; Saprykin 1996a, 85.
- 2 Vinogradov 1987, 69; Molev 1994, 117.
- 3 Frolova 1964, 44-55; Zubar' 1996, 44-49.
- 4 Kolobova 1949, 35; Lomouri 1979, 56; Šelov 1986, 39.
- 5 Robert 1978, 151; Saprykin 1996a, 94. Following L. Robert, we had earlier presumed that Mithridates Euergetes could have given some donations to the temple of Apollon at Delos and that the statue of this god, which appeared on his tetradrachms was a reference to Apollon at Delos. Now, however, we would argue in favour of a Sinopean origin for the statue, depicted on coins of the king.
- 6 Leper 1902, 153-155; Reinach 1905, 113; Maximova 1956, 197-199; Saprykin 1996a, 207-210.
- 7 Rostovtzeff 1941, 593, 1455-1457: Amisenians and Sinopeans at Athens; Ferguson 1969, 437, 438: Amisenian and Sinopean citizens who had relatives and business contacts in Athens; Maximova 1956, 239-245; Couillond 1974, 208, 313, 323: Amisenians and Sinopean on Delos (necropolis of Rheinea). See also Pope 1947, 10; Mehl 1987.
- 8 Jajlenko 1985, 617-619.
- 9 Saprykin 1990, 207.
- 10 Summerer 1999, 40-53.
- 11 Denisova 1981, 90-96; Finogenova 1990, 192, 193.
- 12 *WBR* I², fasc.1, pl. VI.16-32; pl. VII.1-4; *SNG* Aulock, 49-54.
- 13 Golenko 1960, 28-30; Šelov 1965, 46; Golenko 1968, 39-42; Golenko 1973, 470; Anochin 1986, 72; Nesterenko 1987, 81.
- 14 Karyškovskij 1953, 109; Golenko 1964a, 61; Nesterenko 1987, 80-82; Smekalowa & Djukov 2001, 52-57.
- 15 Šelov 1956, 203; Golenko 1968, 39ff.; Anochin 1986, 72; Nesterenko 1987, 80-82; Smekalowa & Djukov 2001, 57.
- 16 Anochin 1986, 74-76.
- 17 Golenko 1977, 61; Dundua & Lordkipanidze 1983, 603; Todua 1990, 55. Cf., however, Braund (1994, 159, 159), who supports the date of ca. 100 BC for the coins of Dioskourias (a date commonly considered as the main evidence for the time of Mithridates' annexation of Kolchis), but who doubts that the Pontic king could have taken Kolchis into possession at precisely this time. For the reasons supporting the dating of the annexation of Kolchis by Mithridates VI to around 101-95 BC, see Saprykin 1996a, 165.
- 18 Kroll 1993, 254-255, cat. 854- 855; Bellinger 1961, 169, 170, n. 200; Lightfoot 1996, 149, n. 22.
- 19 Maximova 1956, 203-206; Olshausen 1974, 160-168; Saprykin 1996a, 128.
- 20 *WBR* I², 1, 14-44; pl. VII, 5-34; pl. VIII, 1-4; *SNG* Aulock, 55-72.

- 21 Ireland 2000, 19-28.
- 22 Weimert 1984, 28, 38, 42, 49, 52, 104, 120-123, 177; Mehl 1987, 162-176; Amandry, LeGuen-Pollet & Özcan 1991, 61-76.
- 23 Imhoof-Bluemer 1912, 169-192; de Callataÿ 2002, 159.
- 24 Ireland 2000, 11.
- 25 Zograph 1940, 293-297; Karyškovskij 1965, 62-67; Golenko 1973, 467; Karyškovskij 1988, 102-103; Saprykin 1996a, 169.
- 26 Golenko 1964a, 69; Gilevič 1968, 19-23; Saprykin 1996b, 73; Saprykin 1996a, 137.
- 27 Saprykin 1996b, 71-73. On the Pontic coins of Amisos in the North-west Crimea, see Lantzow 2001, 127.
- 28 Golenko 1973, 474, 492, nos. 2, 88; Šelov 1962, 102.
- 29 Golenko 1964a, 67; Golenko 1965a, 308-321; Šelov 1965, 46-48; Golenko 1973, 467-470; Saprykin 1996a, 169.
- 30 Dundua & Lordkipanidze 1977, 197-199; Dundua & Lordkipanidze 1979, 1-5; Shamba 1980, 142-145; Dundua & Lordkipanidze 1983, 16-75; Dundua 1987, 108-130.
- 31 Ireland 2000, 19-28 (Amisos), 35, 36 (Sinope); de Callataÿ 2002, 173, 174.
- 32 Robert 1978, 151: rare tetradrachm of Mithridates V. *WBR I²* 1, pl. 1, 11-14; *SNG Aulock*, 4.
- 33 de Callataÿ 2002, 159.
- 34 Zograph 1951, 181; Nesterenko 1987, 77-80; Lagos 2000, 268-274.
- 35 McGing 1986, 59; Saprykin 1996a, 151.
- 36 de Callataÿ 1997, 5-28.
- 37 de Callataÿ 1997, 283. Cf. Zograph 1951, 30; McGing 1986, 93-100; Smekalova & Djukov 2001, 54.
- 38 Novičenkova 2002, 47: two tetradrachms of Mithridates Eupator from the sanctuary on the Gurzuf Saddle; Zin'ko 2000, 220: a gold stater of Mithridates Eupator, dated to the 229th year of the Pontic era (or, what is more likely, to the 209th year of the same era).
- 39 Šelov 1965, 43; Anochin 1986, 72.
- 40 Golenko 1960, 35.
- 41 Zograph 1951, 187; Golenko 1964a, 63: at first dated them to the early 1st century BC, but later re-dated them to the late 2nd century BC, Golenko 1968, 41; see also Šelov 1965, 44, 45; Anochin 1986, 72-74.
- 42 Zograph 1951, 186; Šelov 1965, 43; Golenko 1960, 28-30; Golenko 1964a, 63; Golenko 1968, 39-41: he later placed them in the period 100-90 BC; Šelov 1983, 45; Anochin 1986, 72-74.
- 43 Zograph 1951, 186, 187; Golenko 1960, 34, 35; Golenko 1964a, 63; Golenko 1965b, 143-151; Šelov 1965, 44, 45; Šelov 1983, 45, 46; Anochin 1986, 72-74.
- 44 Frolova & Ireland 1999, 232-236.
- 45 Zograph 1951, 151; Golenko 1964b, 52-55; Anochin 1977, 57; Gilevič 1985, 614.
- 46 Karyškovskij 1988, 103; Anochin 1989, 53-56.
- 47 Kroll 1993, 254, no. 852.
- 48 *Ancient Coins. The collection of a Scholar and Connoisseur*. Part I. Veiling 23. Auction Sale.
- 49 Blavatskij 1949, 55-70; Gajdukevič 1971, 310-315.
- 50 Golenko 1966, 142-149; Saprykin 1996a, 176.
- 51 Saprykin 1996a, 169.