Mediaeval and Early Modern coins in the collection of Maiaky Lyceum Museum

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Abstract. The article examines 27 Mediaeval and Early Modern coins, along with one token, from the collection of the Museum at the Maiaky Lyceum (Odesa Oblast, Ukraine). These items were discovered by local residents in Maiaky and its surroundings, though the exact circumstances of the finds remain unknown. The collection serves as an important source for studying the history of regional currency circulation, because the village of Maiaky is located near the Dniester crossing, so this place held a strategic importance for centuries. The collection includes coins of the Byzantine Empire (1 pc.), Golden Horde (6 pcs.), Principality of Moldavia (1 pc.), Crimean Khanate (3 pcs.), Ottoman Empire (12 pcs.), Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth (2 pcs.), and Moldavian imitations of Swedish Livonia (2 pcs.).
Keywords: Maiaky; history of currency circulation; Golden Horde; Ottoman Empire; Crimean Khanate.

Monede medievale și moderne timpurii din colecția Muzeului Liceului din Maiaky. Articolul analizează 27 de monede medievale și moderne timpurii, împreună cu un jeton, toate aflate în colecția Muzeului de la Liceul din Maiaky (regiunea Odesa, Ucraina). Aceste obiecte au fost descoperite de locuitorii din Maiaky și din împrejurimi, însă circumstanțele exacte ale descoperirilor rămân necunoscute. Colecția reprezintă o sursă importantă pentru studierea istoriei circulației monetare în regiune, deoarece satul Maiaky este situat în apropierea unui vad de trecere peste Nistru, loc ce a avut o importanță strategică timp de secole. Colecția include monede ale Imperiului Bizantin (1 buc.), Hoardei de Aur (6 buc.), Principatului Moldovei (1 buc.), Hanatului Crimeii (3 buc.), Imperiului Otoman (12 buc.), Uniunii Polono–Lituaniene (2 buc.) și imitații moldovenești ale monedelor Livoniei suedeze (2 buc.).
Cuvinte cheie: Maiaky; istoria circulației monetare; Hoarda de Aur; Imperiul Otoman; Hanatul Crimeii.

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The Museum at the Maiaky Lyceum (village of Maiaky, Odesa Raion, Odesa Oblast, Ukraine) houses a collection of coins from various periods, ranging from Antiquity to the early 20th century. In addition to the Mediaeval and Early Modern coins discussed in this article, it includes a coin from Istros (a cast wheel-shaped coin), cast "dolphins" from Olbia, Roman coins from the 2nd–4th centuries AD, as well as coins of the Russian Empire of the 19th and early 20th centuries. The coins were discovered by local residents in Maiaky and its surroundings. The exact locations and circumstances of the finds are unknown. The village of Maiaky, located on the left bank of the Dniester River near its confluence with the Dniester Liman, held strategic importance for centuries due to a river crossing located there (Beletskaya 2016).

The earliest piece among the coins under study is an anonymous Byzantine *follis* of undefined class (A1 or A2), minted from 970 till ca. 1030 or 1035 (**Cat. no. 1**, **Pl. I**). Such anonymous *folles* dated to 10th–11th centuries are well attested in the northwestern Black Sea region, both in hoards and as single finds. Their influx was caused by the approximation of the Empire's borders to this region following John Tzimiskes' conquest of eastern Bulgaria in 971 and the strengthening of trade links with Byzantine centers (Stolyarik 1992, p. 59–71; Musteață 2014, p. 133–136).

Six coins in the Museum's collection belong to the period of Golden Horde (Ulus Juchi) dominance in the region (second half of the 13th – early 15th centuries). The earliest of them is an anonymous copper *pul* of Mengü Temür (1266–1282) minted in Qrim (now Staryi Krym) (**Cat. no. 2**; **Pl. I**). This coin marks the beginning of a new phase of flourishing trade and intensified currency circulation in the northwestern Black Sea region, particularly in the cities of Sakçi and Akça Kerman (now Isaccea and Bilhorod-Dnistrovskyi), during the late 13th century, when this area was under the control of *beylerbey* Nogai (Kazarov, Krivenko 2013). According to O. Beletskaya (2016, p. 192), a Golden Horde settlement may have existed at the Maiaky crossing in the second half of the 14th century.

The next coin in chronological order is an anonymous *pul* from the reign of Jānībeg with a double-headed eagle on the obverse, dated to 743 or 744 AH (1342–1344) (**Cat. no. 3**; **Pl. I**). This type preceded the appearance of another anonymous *pul* dated to 751–753 AH (1350–1353) (so called rosette-type *puls*), which was mass-produced at several Juchid mints (despite they bear only the name of the capital mint Saray al-Jadīd) (Boldureanu, Dergaciova, Nicolae 2023, p. 39–40). It is possible that this coin reached the territory of Maiaky later, along with the main influx of rosette-type *puls*.

The largest group of Juchid coins in the collection (three specimens) dates to the reign of ʿAbdallāh (1367–1370). One coin was minted in the North Caucasian possessions of the Juchids, in Mājar (now Budyonnovsk) (**Cat. no. 4**; **Pl. I**), while

the other two were minted at an unlocalised mint called al-Jadīd (**Cat. nos. 5–6**; **Pl. I**). According to K. Khromov (2016, p. 87), this mint was placed at the nomadic headquarters of the khan, particularly near the Golden Horde settlement near the village of Shipilovka in Luhansk Oblast, Ukraine.

According to L. Vorotyntsev (2019, p. 79), the so-called *Tatar trade route*, running from Azaq and Caffa to Lviv and further towards Poland in the late 13th–14th centuries, passed through Maiaky. However, K. Khromov (2019, p. 56) believes that Maiaky was located on a different trade route that crossed the Black Sea from Caffa to Akkerman and then continued by land along the right bank of the Dnieper towards Podolia.

Besides Maiaky, finds of late Juchid *puls* (dated to the 1370s–1410s), minted in Crimea and the Azov and Volga regions, have also been recorded in other western territories of the Golden Horde, notably in Costești (Ialoveni Raion, Republic of Moldova). According to Boldureanu, Dergaciova, Nicolae (2023, p. 47-48), these coins were brought by warriors who had fought in the Golden Horde Dynastic War on the side of Mamai and later settled in Costești, as well as by supporters of Tūqtāmish fleeing through the region, after his defeats in 1395 and 1399. The finds from the Lyceum's collection suggest that late Juchid *puls* reached the Prut-Dniester region in the late 14th – early 15th centuries via Maiaky.

Written sources mention a castle at Maiaky in 1432 under the control of the Lithuanian prince Švitrigaila (Beletskaya 2016, p. 189). During this period, late Juchid silver *dangs* with Lithuanian countermarks predominated in the currency circulation in Podolia (Huletsky, Liszewski 2019, p. 9–11), which then included Maiaky. However, such coins are absent in the Lyceum's collection, and the period of Lithuanian rule is not represented here. This is most likely because Juchid silver *dangs* are perceived by finders as having higher market value, so they may be less willing to donate such coins to museum collections. Overall, the Maiaky Lyceum's collection is composed primarily of copper coins, while silver coins are mostly represented by fragments or low-denomination pieces, especially small Ottoman coins weighing no more than 0.5–0.7 g (*akçe* and *para*).

The collection under examination contains one coin of the Principality of Moldavia: an anepigraphic half-groat of Stephen II (1433–1447) bearing a key to the left of the heraldic shield on the reverse (**Cat. no. 8**; **Pl. I**). Such coins are well attested among finds from neighboring Bilhorod-Dnistrovskyi (Boguslavskiy, Dergaciova 2011, p. 87, nos. 21–22). However, the right bank of the Dniester, where Maiaky is situated, was not part of the Principality of Moldavia. Nevertheless, Moldavian coins, including copper and billon half-groats intended for domestic circulation, have been found east of the Dniester, even as far as Crimea. These finds testify to trade routes connecting Moldavia to Crimea (Dergaciova, Bojko-Gagarin 2010).

Finds of coins of the Crimean Khanate and the Ottoman Empire (**Cat. nos. 9–23**; **Pl. I**) are associated with the fact that since the late 15th century, Maiaky was within the territory inhabited by the Budjak Horde which was under the dual protectorate of the Ottomans and the Girays. Among these finds, a *medini* of Murad IV (1623–1640) minted in Miṣr (Egypt) (**Cat. no. 14**; **Pl. I**) is noteworthy. This denomination had been issued in Egypt and Syria since the 15th century under the Mamlūks. After the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 1517, the minting of *medini* continued. However, according to known coin finds, this denomination began to spread actively in the Ottoman Empire's European territories only during the reign of Mehmed IV (1648–1687). Egyptian *medini* of previous sultans, such as the coin found in Maiaky, are rarely encountered in this region. Other finds of Murad IV's *medini* have been documented in the Izmail hoard (10 pieces, or 2.7% of the hoard) and as single finds in the Northwestern Black Sea region (2 pieces from the Odesa Archaeological Museum and 1 from a private collection). These coins likely reached the region later, together with other *medini* of Mehmed IV (Yanov 2024, p. 179–180, 184).

The *medini* of Mehmed IV in the Lyceum's collection (**Cat. nos. 15–16**; **Pl. I**) show clear signs of edge clipping; their shape is more polygonal than circular. Similar clipped coins of Mehmed IV (*akçe* and *medini*) are also known among other finds, particularly from the Izmail hoard (Yanov, Romankevich 2021, p. 107). According to R. Islamov (2016, p. 92), this clipping was carried out by Ottoman authorities during the reign of Süleyman II (1687–1691) in order to adapt the weights of older coins to the new reduced weight standard of *akçe*.

Christian European coins in the Lyceum's collection are represented by copper *solidi* of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (**Cat. nos. 24–25**; **Pl. I**) and Moldavian imitations of Riga *solidi* (**Cat. nos. 26–27**; **Pl. I**), which were mass-produced in the 1660s–1680s (Buzdugan, Luchian, Oprescu 1977, p. 93).

The Lyceum's collection also includes a religious token/amulet (**Cat. no. 28**; **Pl. I**), probably made of lead, bearing an Arabic inscription that appears identical on both sides. Interpretation of the inscription is complicated by its distorted form, particularly in the upper two lines. It is likely intended to read *mā shāʾa llāh* ("God has willed it"). This type of token has not been published, but similar lead tokens – with reeding on the rim and Arabic or pseudo-Arabic inscriptions – are occasionally found in Crimea and sometimes appear on specialised online forums or auction sites (cf. meshok.net). These tokens were presumably produced by Crimean Tatars in the 19th and early 20th centuries and circulated among the Muslim population of the Russian Empire.

A comparable amulet inscribed with *mā shāʾa llāh* on both sides is preserved in the collection of the British Museum. That specimen, however, is made of gold

and features inscriptions and decorative elements executed with great skill (Porter 2011, p. 160, A97).

Metal or stone amulets used for protection or to ward off the "evil eye" have been widespread in Muslim culture for centuries, with roots traceable to pre-Islamic traditions. Such amulets often bear quotations from the Qurʾān, prayers, invocations, the "Names of God", the names of prophets, imams, angels etc. (Porter 2011, p. 131–132).

Several of the Ottoman and European coins of the 16th–18th centuries (**Cat. nos. 12, 14, 16–18, 22–27**; **Pl. I**), as well as the token (**Cat. no. 28**; **Pl. I**), have been perforated, likely to allow them to be worn as pendants.

In general, the collection is not fully representative, as it contains only low-denomination coins that supplied one level of circulation – small everyday transactions. Another disadvantage is the absence of precise information about the circumstances of coin discoveries. Nonetheless, this collection holds significance for local history research and education. In addition to the commonly encountered types, the collection includes less frequent examples for this region, such as the Juchid *pul* of Mengu Timur minted in Qrim, the *pul* of ʿAbdallāh minted in Mājar, and the Egyptian *medini* of Murad IV. The coins require proper cleaning and conservation, as well as appropriate facilities for exhibiting.

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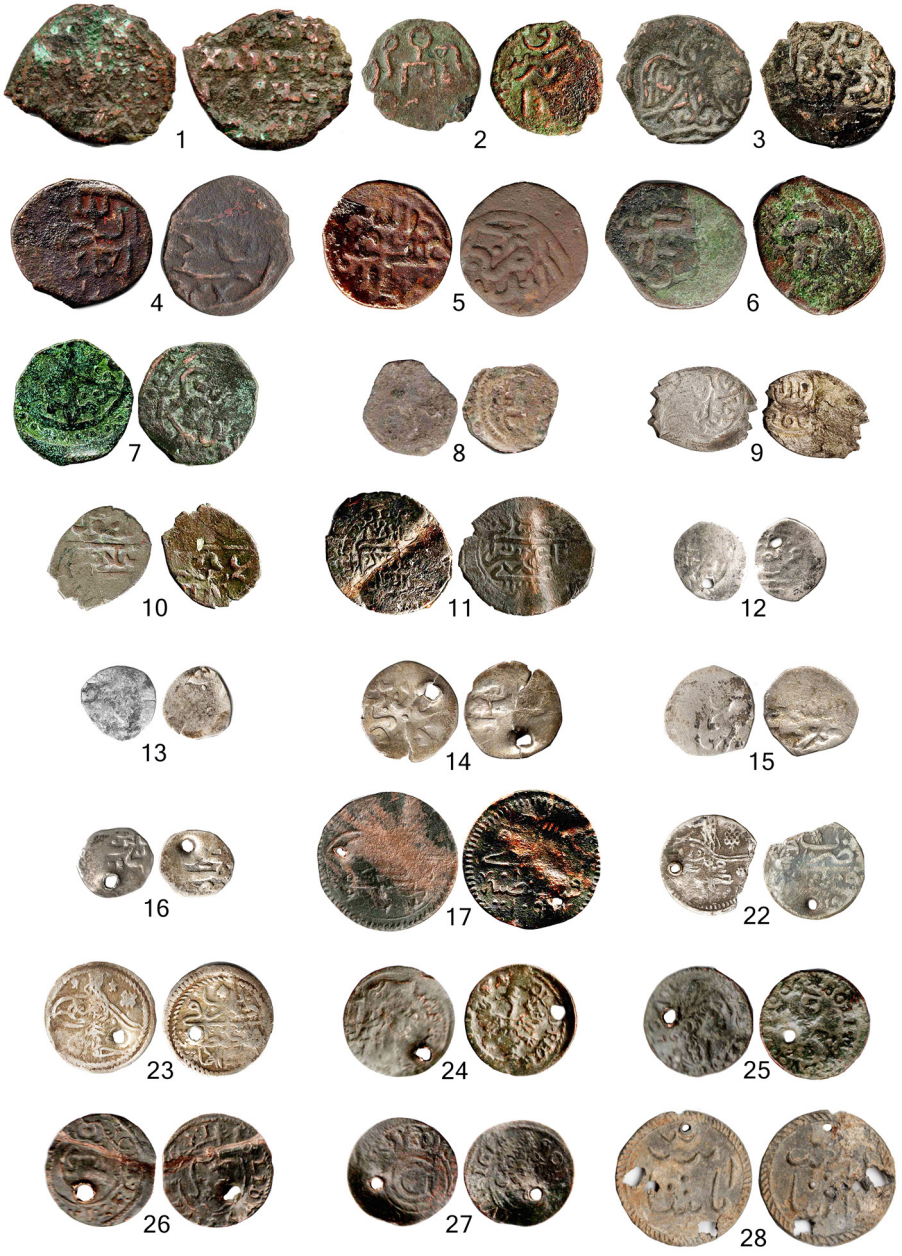
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The list of coins (Pl. I.)*

No.	Denomination	Issuer	Dating	Mint	Type
			Byzantine Empire		
1	**AE *follis***	anonymous type	970–ca. 1030/35	Constantinople	Class A1 or A2. Grierson 1973, p. 648–674, A1.1–A.2.51.
			Golden Horde		
2	**AE *pul***	Mengu Timur	ND (ca. 674 AH / 1275–1276)	Qrim	Savosta 2013, p. 9, no. 4.
3	**AE *pul***	anonymous (period of Jānībeg)	743–744 AH / 1342–1344	Qrim	Savosta 2013, p. 24, nos. 62.1–62.2.
4	**AE *pul***	ʿAbdallāh	767 AH / 1365–1366	Mājar al-Jadīd	ZENO#125392.
5–6	**AE *pul***	ʿAbdallāh	770 AH / 1368–1369	al-Jadīd	Savosta 2013, p. 55, nos. 3–4.
7	**AE *pul***	anonymous (period of Tūqtāmish)	790 AH / 1388 (?)	Qrim al-Jadīd	Savosta 2013, p. 26, no. 69.
			Principality of Moldavia		
8	**AR** half *groat*	Stephen II	1433–1447	Suceava	Boguslavskiy, Dergaciova 2011, p. 87, nos. 21–22.
			Crimean Khanate		
9	**AR *akçe***	Ṣāḥib I Giray	945 AH / 1538–1539	Qirq-Yer	Retowski 1903, p. 80, no. 3.
10	**AR *beşlik***	Maqṣūd Giray	1181–1182 AH / 1767–1768 (1st reign)	Baghche-Saray	Retowski 1905, p. 223, nos. 1–3.
11	**AE *beşlik***	Shāhīn Giray	1191 AH, r.y. 2–3 / 1778–1779	Baghche-Saray	Retowski 1905, p. 252–260, nos. 18–30b, 42–54.
			Ottoman Empire		
12	**AR *akçe* (?) (perforated)**	unidentified	16th–17th centuries	unidentified	
13	**AR *akçe* (?)**	unidentified	16th–17th centuries	unidentified	

No.	Denomination	Issuer	Dating	Mint	Type
14	**AR *medini / para* (perforated)**	Murad IV	1032–1049 AH / 1623–1640	Miṣr	Damalı 2012a, p. 1660, 17-MS-G1.
15	**AR *medini / para* (clipped)**	Mehmed IV	1058–1099 AH / 1648–1687	Miṣr	Damalı 2012a, p. 1789, 19-MS-G1.
16	**AR *medini / para* (perforated, clipped)**	Mehmed IV (?)	1058–1099 AH / 1648–1687 (?)	Miṣr	Damalı 2012a, p. 1789, 19-MS-G1 (?).
17–18	**AE *mangir* (perforated)**	Süleyman II	1099–1102 AH / 1687–1691	Kostantiniye	Damalı 2012b, p. 1889, 20-K-M1.
19–21	**AE *mangir***	Süleyman II	1099–1102 AH / 1687–1691	Kostantiniye	Damalı 2012b, p. 1889, 20-K-M1.
22	**AR *para* (perforated)**	Ahmed III	1115–1143 AH / 1703–1730	Kostantiniye	Damalı 2012b, p. 2046, 23-K-G11b (mint mark erased).
23	**AR *para* (perforated)**	Mahmud I	1143–1168 AH / 1730–1754	Kostantiniye	Damalı 2012b, p. 2146, 24-K-G5b (mint mark – *ʿayn alif*).
			Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth		
24	**AE Crown *solidus* (perforated)**	John II Casimir	1659–1668	Ujazdów / Brzeg	Kopicki 1995, p. 84, nos. 1545–1556.
25	**AE Lithuanian *solidus* (perforated)**	John II Casimir	1666	Vilnius / Brzeg	Kopicki 1995, p. 60, no. 3601.
			Swedish Livonia (Suceava imitation)		
26	**AE *solidus* (perforated)**	Christina	1632–1654 (prototype), 1661–1683 (imitation)	Riga	Buzdugan, Luchian, Oprescu 1977, p. 94–96, nos. 845–916.
27	**AE *solidus* (perforated)**	Charles X Gustav	1654–1660 (prototype), 1661–1683 (imitation)	Riga	Buzdugan, Luchian, Oprescu 1977, p. 98–99, nos. 985–994.
			Tokens		
28	**Pb Religious token / amulet (perforated)**		19th– early 20th century	Crimea (?)	Unpublished, Arabic inscriptions, presumably *mā shāʾa llāh* (God has willed it) on both sides.

* The weight and dimensions of the coins are unknown. The coins were identified by images.



Pl. I. Coins from the collection of Maiaky Lyceum Museum
(the numbers on the plate correspond to the numbers in the catalogue).
Pl. I. Monede din colecția Muzeului Liceului Maiaky
(numerele de pe planșă corespund numerelor din catalog).