



Argentum Romanorum sive Barbarorum

Permanences et évolution des usages monétaires
de l'argent du IV^e au VI^e siècle dans l'Occident romain

Tradition und Entwicklung im Gebrauch des Silbergeldes
im römischen Westen (4.-6. Jh.)



Late Roman silver in Germania: Constantine III and the Rhine Frontier

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Within the framework of the project "Corpus der Römischen Fund im Europäischen Barbaricum", coordinated by the Römisch-Germanische Kommission in Frankfurt, all published finds of Roman coins from Germany outside the Roman Empire north of the rivers Rhine and Main have been recorded in the database „Antike Fundmünzen in Europa (AFE)“.

First large-scale regional geographical and temporal analysis of the material has revealed a significant concentration of silver coins of the late-fourth and early-fifth centuries (up to Constantine III) in South Hessen on the right bank of the Rhine opposite Mainz. Even if the hoard from Wiesbaden-Mainz-Kastel is not taken into consideration, South Hessen has produced significantly more Late Roman silver than the rest of the German Barbaricum combined.

It has been suggested that the coins are connected with the recruitment of Germanic troops by Constantine III. However, this interpretation does not satisfactorily explain the comparative lack of similar silver coins outside of South Hessen. Given new insights into the presence of Argonne sigillata in the forts along the Rhine, which suggests that they were still in use up until the mid-fifth century, other interpretations for the silver "hotspot" must be taken into consideration. Are the coins perhaps evidence for the settlement of Germanic foederati organised by Constantine III to secure the route taken by the Germanic tribes who breached the Rhine frontier so dramatically in 406/407?

It is perhaps also significant in this context that Constantine III drew a significant proportion of his army from Britannia where he had been proclaimed Augustus, a province in which silver played a particularly prominent role in the Late Roman period.

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