

N. Roymans, S. Heeren, W. De Clercq

A r c h a e o l o g i c a l S t u d i e s

# Social Dynamics in the Northwest Frontiers of the Late Roman Empire

BEYOND DECLINE

OR TRANSFORMATION

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EDITORS

NICO ROYMANS, STIJN HEEREN & WIM DE CLERCQ

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This book meets the requirements of ISO 9706: 1994, Information and documentation – Paper for documents – Requirements for permanence.

Cover illustration: solidus of Constantine III from the Trier mint. Emblem of the *Comites Largitionum* in the *Notitia Dignitatum*. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek & Münchener Digitalisierungszentrum.

Cover design: Kok Korpershoek, Amsterdam

Lay-out: Bert Brouwenstijn, ACASA Amsterdam

ISBN 978 94 6298 360 1

e-ISBN 978 90 4853 395 4 (pdf)

NUR 682/683

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## P R E F A C E

This volume is a collection of papers originally delivered at a Round Table Conference held in Tongeren (Belgium) on 15–16 January 2015, entitled *Decline and Fall? Social dynamics in the Late Roman Northwest (AD 270–450)*. The conference was part of a research project with the same title, carried out at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (NL) and Ghent University (B) in the framework of Flemish–Dutch cooperation, funded by the Dutch Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) and the Research Fund Flanders (FWO). The project started in the spring of 2012 and ended in 2016.

The central aim of the project also lies at the heart of the current publication: to present a new and innovative analysis of the Late Roman period in the northwestern provinces of the empire, thereby drawing on the wealth of new archaeological evidence gathered in the past few decades. Traditionally the Late Roman period is defined as the years between AD 270 and 450. Although the research period and some contributions to this volume also discuss developments in the earlier 3<sup>rd</sup> century, most of the research focuses on the far-reaching changes that took place in the 4<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> centuries. The end of effective Roman state authority and the swiftly changing relationship between the Roman state and external forces, as well as regional variety in the shape and pace of several developments, are key issues in this volume.

We would like to express our gratitude to NWO and FWO for funding the research, and the participants of the Tongeren conference for their papers and their contributions to the discussions. We thank the Gallo–Romeins Museum in Tongeren for providing hospitality during the conference. Furthermore, we express our gratitude to anonymous reviewers for their comments on an earlier draft of this book. It goes without saying that the responsibility for the contents remains with the authors and editors. Finally, we would like to thank Bert Brouwenstijn and Jaap Fokkema for the cartography and layout of the current volume, and Annette Visser (New Zealand) for checking the English of several papers. In July 2016 we received the sad news that Kenneth Painter passed away. We are very grateful for his contribution to this volume.

*Nico Roymans / Stijn Heeren / Wim De Clercq*  
Amsterdam/Ghent, 25 October 2016





# Introduction. New perspectives on the Late Roman Northwest

*Nico Roymans / Stijn Heeren*

- 1 Imperial power and frontier dynamics
- 2 Precious metal flows and imperial power
- 3 The archaeology of migration
- 4 Material culture and the ethnic debate
- 5 Town – countryside relations
- 6 Beyond decline or transformation

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## I IMPERIAL POWER AND FRONTIER DYNAMICS

Since the appearance of Gibbon's seminal work *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–1789), the final phase of the West Roman empire has always attracted much scholarly attention. Several key issues in the current debate are centuries-old and have been regularly revitalised. A remarkable constant in the discussion is the relation between imperial authority and external 'barbarian' groups, and this interaction of endogenous and exogenous forces will be the point of departure of this volume. The Roman empire cannot be understood without considering the social dynamics in its frontier regions. This volume focuses on the social and cultural dynamics in the northwestern frontier zone during the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century, paying special attention to Germania Secunda and Britannia, regions where important new archaeological research has taken place in the last decades in combination with innovative theoretical discussions.

This volume proceeds from a broad historical perspective in which four main forces or pressure groups are distinguished that determined the developments in the frontier zones, respectively imperial authority, the Roman army, rural elites and barbarian groups outside the Roman world. First, the contours of this historical perspective are elaborated in the contribution of Peter Heather. Next, Raymond Brulet's paper concentrates on the changing organisation and strategies of the Late Roman army and its strongholds in the northwestern provinces. Departing from the paradigm of frontier defence, he addresses the basic question whether the military control of the frontier was determined by a pragmatic *ad hoc* policy or by an underlying central strategic concept. The value of the papers of both Heather and Brulet is that they apply, adapt and expand already existing ideas to the northwestern fringes of the empire, thereby setting the scene for the following papers.

The following studies by Nico Roymans, Fraser Hunter & Kenneth Painter and Vince Van Thienen are dealing with mobile material culture and its relevance for the study of changing power relations in the Late Roman world. Finally, the contributions by Alain Vanderhoeven, Stijn Heeren, Simon Esmonde Cleary and Rob Collins focus on regional developments in Germania Secunda and Britannia, thereby making full use of newly acquired archaeological data. The comparison between Germania and Britannia has proved important: observations made in one paper have gained significance in the contexts of other papers. Not all contributions aim to present new perspectives and contribute to theoretical debates. Alain Vanderhoeven's paper, for example, focuses on providing an overview of the results of new archaeological

fieldwork in the Late Roman town of Tongres, which enable us to understand the contemporary social transformations from an urban perspective. This volume of complementary papers provides a number of new insights and points for debate that can direct future research. Some topics will be discussed in greater detail below.

## 2 PRECIOUS METAL FLOWS AND IMPERIAL POWER

The papers by Hunter & Painter and Roymans study deposits of Roman precious metal, mostly hacked silver and coined gold, which are regularly found in the frontier regions of the Late Empire. Roymans' paper focuses on the gold flows from the imperial centre to Frankish groups living in Lower Germany on both sides of the Rhine. This gold influx offers us insight into changing power relations between imperial authorities and Germanic groups. Imperial authorities used the gold payments for buying off of peace and stability and for the exploitation of the military potential of non-Roman groups. Roymans observes a considerable diachronic and regional variation in the imperial gold influx and tries to connect this to historically documented political interaction between Frankish groups and Roman authorities. Finally he addresses the question of the wider impact of the regular payments of gold tributes to frontier groups on the Roman state finances. This financial perspective on the decline of the Roman empire has been underexplored to date.

The papers of Hunter & Painter and Roymans show interesting differences between precious metal circulation in the Lower Rhine area and the British frontier regions. In the Lower Rhine region the influx of Roman gold plays a much larger role than in the British frontier, where Roman silver, and in particular *Hacksilber*, clearly dominates. How should we interpret such differences? Hunter & Painter consider two options, the first one being different cultural choices of local groups; frontier groups in Scotland may have preferred silver above gold. An alternative explanation may be a differentiated imperial policy. For the Roman authorities the military threat and the strategic importance of British frontier groups were relatively limited and did not require regular payments of gold subsidies. Were payments in silver satisfactory here to control these groups?

Important in this respect is the paper of Esmonde Cleary, who does not study precious metal specifically, but notes a diminished supply of Britain's northern frontier from the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Although Collins, in contrast to Esmonde Cleary, sees continued army presence and supply to Hadrian's Wall, he too notes a rather peaceful transition instead of the upheavals of war. The relative stability, resulting in a diminished imperial attention, seems an important background to explain the presence of silver instead of gold in this province.

Another interesting topic is how to understand the drying up of the Roman gold influx in the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century Lower Germanic frontier zone. Opinions vary on this theme. According to Roymans this marks the end of effective Roman authority in this region. Heather, on the other hand, interprets this as an indication for a successful restoration of Roman authority; it was no longer necessary for the emperor to buy peace with gold payments.<sup>1</sup> This latter interpretation, however, seems to underestimate the impact the early 5<sup>th</sup> century gold influx had on the internal social organisation of Lower Rhine Frankish groups. The stagnation of the gold influx (after a clear peak in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century) must have been a direct threat to the continuation of the power position of Frankish warlords. We can imagine two scenarios: 1. disintegration of the warbands and the loss of the social position of their leaders; 2. a move of the leaders and their

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Roymans, this volume, 74, and Heather, this volume, 32.

<sup>2</sup> Childeric, buried at Tournai in c. 482, is generally seen as an ally or even an official of the Roman emperor. The

gold objects in his grave, including approx. 100 solidi and many high-quality ornaments, probably represent gifts acquired from the emperor or one of his officials. Cf. Quast 2015, 233.

warbands to more southern areas in Belgic Gaul that were still under Roman control. Here, the Frankish leaders could still receive regular payments as allies of the emperor, thus enabling them to reproduce and further strengthen their power positions. This latter scenario corresponds well with the late 5<sup>th</sup> century presence of rivalling Frankish warleaders, including Childeric, in the southern half of Belgic Gaul.<sup>2</sup> They, or their fathers may have settled there a few decades earlier, coming from the Lower Rhine frontier zone. About 445 we hear from a battle at *vicus Helena* near Arras in North France, where the Roman general Aetius beat a Frankish army led by a king Chlodio, who then seems to have continued his position as a local Roman client king. This example shows that in the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century the southern move of Frankish groups to Northern France was well under way.<sup>3</sup> Against this background it is interesting to observe that many immigrant Frankish settlements from the early 5<sup>th</sup> century in the Lower Rhine/Meuse region were already abandoned after one or two generations. Although this requires further investigation, the stopping of the influx of Roman gold in the Lower Rhine region may be related to the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century southward migration of Frankish groups, as documented in the historical sources.<sup>4</sup>

### 3 THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF MIGRATION

Changes of all kinds in frontier situations were closely connected to the presence and pressure of external people living close by. Since Gibbon's study the phenomenon of migration has been a prominent academic subject, and archaeologists working from a cultural historical paradigm played an important role in the pioneer stages of migration studies.<sup>5</sup> In Anglophone processual archaeology an anti-migrationist attitude developed from the 1960s onwards, which preferred to explain changes in material assemblages in terms of exchange relations and changing identity-constructions, rather than by moving people.<sup>6</sup> The theme of migration became somewhat of an academic backwater, at least the archaeological treatment of migration. Although many arguments and cases have shown that anti-migrationist models provide valuable insights, the reality of ancient migration must not be questioned altogether.<sup>7</sup>

Several contributors to the current volume pay attention to migration in the Late Roman period. Heather discusses new tribal formations in the immediate foreland of the frontier and counts migration as one of the processes behind the new formations. Roymans argues for a connection between gold deposits in the Lower Rhine region and Frankish *foederati*, suggesting that migration of Frankish groups into the frontier area is reflected in the distribution pattern of gold hoards. Heeren specifically studies archaeological correlates for migration and concludes that mobilia (mainly pottery of foreign styles), distinct building traditions and indicators for diet, can be considered proxies for migrations. In the case of Germania Secunda, all three proxies are present and (in combination with regional discontinuities in habitation patterns) enable us to identify Germanic settlers on former provincial-Roman soil.

In the German archaeological tradition, migration and the ability of archaeologists to treat the phenomenon was questioned only recently. Methodologically, the research focused on devising distribution maps of particular types of object thought to be characteristic of certain ethnic groups. These distribution maps were seen as proof for migrations.<sup>8</sup> Looking back, we think that objects alone cannot reveal migration persuasively. Theoretical archaeology has argued convincingly that objects and peoples' ethnic identity cannot be equated since identities are complex, multi-layered and dynamic.<sup>9</sup> While some of the

<sup>3</sup> Wightman 1985, 302-303; Dierkens/Périn 2003, 169 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Blok 1968, 18; Wightman 1985, 303; Dierkens/Périn 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Hakenbeck 2008.

<sup>6</sup> For an overview of the debate, see Halsall 2000; Halsall 2007; Theuvs 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Burmeister 2000; Hakenbeck 2008; Halsall 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Brather 2004, 239-275.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Cohen 1985; Jones 1997; Roymans 2004; Brather 2004; Derks/Roymans 2009.

older German conclusions regarding the immigration of *foederati* in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century are now recurring, there is no question of returning to the same methods. The re-vitalisation of the migration debate comes from new theoretical avenues as well as different methodical approaches and is backed up by a growing empirical dataset.

Additionally, future studies on 5<sup>th</sup> century migration should also include linguistic research, since linguistic change is not only determined by acculturation but also by migration.<sup>10</sup> Finally, the promising study of geochemical analysis of isotopes in dental enamel of buried individuals should be mentioned. This area of research is rapidly developing. While the results of strontium isotopes alone have their limitations, multi-isotope approaches reveal more precise results,<sup>11</sup> and will provide a new science-based data-set in the migration debate.

All these new approaches offer valuable contributions to the study of ancient migration. We observe that the scholarly attention for this topic is already 250 years old, but is still – or again – highly vital.

#### 4 MATERIAL CULTURE AND THE ETHNIC DEBATE

The tradition of ethnic interpretation of material culture is over a century old. Since Gustav Kossinna formulated his thesis of *Kulturkreise* – regions of distinct material culture connected to the habitation area of a people – in 1911, a wide variety of objects has been interpreted in ethnic terms. Although this practice has attracted criticism in Anglophone archaeology as well as from theoretically-oriented German scholars,<sup>12</sup> ethnic labeling of artefacts is still widely used.<sup>13</sup> And since it is realised that the spatial distribution of objects almost never coincides with the territories of historically known tribal groups, there has been a tendency to reduce ethnic interpretation to broadly used macro-categories like ‘Germans’, ‘Franks’ or ‘Alamanni’.

The identification of finds in terms of a simple classification of Germanic versus Roman is often problematic. Even if it can be proven that finds were produced beyond the imperial border, were these objects (and their wearers) then Germanic and utterly un-Roman? The problem becomes more pregnant in the case of Germanic federate groups along the Lower Rhine. Roymans shows that the use of Roman precious metals, both gold and silver, coined and uncoined, also had an ethnic dimension since they were used to buy the loyalty of Frankish federates. Heeren elaborates on the link between the precious metal deposits and settlements of distinctly transrhinish character. Their inhabitants were certainly of Germanic descent, but were paid by the Roman state to fight in the name of Rome. This enabled these people to profile themselves as Roman soldiers and assume a (partly) Roman identity, while in other situations they could cultivate their Germanic origin and identity. It is therefore less helpful to classify their material culture as either Roman or Germanic. The use of these labels should be restricted to issues of provenance, not of ethnic identity.

Since the publications of Böhme and Werner the ethnic debate in the Lower Rhine frontier is closely related to the concept of *foederati*, i.e. autonomous non-Roman groups that had some kind of treaty relationship with the imperial authorities.<sup>14</sup> While the role of *foederati* has been deconstructed in the past two decades when treating the grave ritual (the topic of the so-called ‘weapon graves’),<sup>15</sup> several contributions of this volume now return to the subject, with different source material. As highlighted above, Roymans and Heeren treat precious metal deposits and built structures from settlements in the Lower Rhine region as indicators for federate groups; the *foederati* were probably the only groups that received gold payments from the Roman authorities in exchange for their military support.

<sup>10</sup> Blok 1981, 144-151; Lamacq/Rogge 1996; Schrijver 2014, 153-154.

<sup>11</sup> Font *et al.* 2012; Font *et al.* 2015.

<sup>12</sup> Jones 1997; Brather 2000; idem 2004; Geary 2002; Härke 2004.

<sup>13</sup> See for example Quast 2009; Martin 2014.

<sup>14</sup> Böhme 1974; Werner 1958.

<sup>15</sup> Halsall 2000; 2007; Theuvs 2009.

Interestingly, Collins uses the absence of large cemeteries and the continued use of Roman forts in northern England in the post-Roman period to argue for a slow transformation from Roman garrisons to warbands in Britannia. Sudden changes in burial ritual, for instance the appearance of cemeteries with furnished inhumation graves, have been associated with new ethnic formations or a dramatic change in social circumstances.<sup>16</sup> The fact that this did not happen in the north of England is taken as an indicator for relative stability by Collins. Along the Lower Rhine, however, sudden changes did take place, in the form of abandonment of the Rhine *limes* by the Roman troops and subsequent immigration of people of Germanic descent. Large cemeteries are present there. The role of warbands in shaping 5<sup>th</sup>-century society is important in both the North of Britain and in the Lower Rhine area, however, the developments in the 4<sup>th</sup> century in both areas show fundamental differences.

The problem of associating finds with certain social groups applies above all to the military or non-military interpretation of weapons and belt sets. Brulet argues that the distinction between the Roman field army (*comitatensis*), the Roman territorial army (*limitanei*) and external auxilia (*foederati*) is already problematic in the written sources. Collins and Esmonde Cleary show that archaeologists have even more difficulty to separate these groups on the basis of mobile material culture. While Collins argues for continued military presence along Hadrians Wall until the early 5<sup>th</sup> century and a smooth transformation in the following decades, Esmonde Cleary studies the coin distribution and military belts and argues for a much earlier separation of the North from the longer supported south of Britannia. The problems attached to interpreting material finds are partly explained by the shifting meaning of material culture. Van Thienen shows that even the crossbow brooch, often taken as the indicator for the Roman army, had different meanings and contexts of use that evolved over time.

Many scholars have put into perspective the importance of ethnic identities in the past by emphasizing their flexible nature.<sup>17</sup> Ward-Perkins, however, warns us not to over-emphasize the dynamic character of ethnic identities of individuals in Late Roman society.<sup>18</sup> For example, the different blood-prices in the *Lex Salica* indicate us that the distinction between Franks and Romans was still felt significant around AD 500. The break-down of ethnic boundaries between ‘barbarians’ and ‘Romans’ seems to have been a gradual process that took several generations. Indeed, the material correlates of these groups remain uncertain, but this should not lead us to judge the distinctions to be unimportant.

We suspect that the ethnic debate, the role of external *foederati* and the material representations of various group cultures will be at the forefront of research in the time to come. We argue here that a long-term perspective and the inclusion of various classes of evidence is more helpful than rigid oppositions or too specific labels borrowed from the written sources.

## 5 TOWN – COUNTRYSIDE RELATIONS

From the days of Augustus until the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD the basic units of the Roman imperial administration were the *civitates*, consisting of an urban center and its surrounding countryside. The landowning elite controlled the administration of the cities as well as the rural peasantry.<sup>19</sup> As Heather reminds us in his contribution, the landowning elite was a major pillar in the imperial control of the empire. In return for the tax they paid, the rights and interests of the landowning elites were central concerns of the emperor and the decision-making body around him. The ties between the central government and the regions, as well as between town and country remained strong into the Late Roman period.

<sup>16</sup> Halsall 2000; 2007; Theuvs 2009.

<sup>17</sup> Geary 1983; Jones 1997; Roymans/Derks 2009.

<sup>18</sup> Ward-Perkins 2005, 78 ff.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Roymans/Derks 2011, 14-28; Heather. For the Late Roman period specifically: Esmonde Cleary 2015, ch. 6-7; Heather, this volume.

The basic question various authors pose is: how long into the Late Roman period did this basic structure remain intact? For the West-Roman empire, Heather argues that the bond between emperor, army and landowning elites remained strong way into the 5<sup>th</sup> century and did not break before the settlement of Visigoths and others in the heartland of Gaul, where most taxes were generated. At the fringes of the empire, however, land-loss occurred earlier. Heeren argues for the settlement of *foederati* in Germania Secunda and Belgica Secunda from the first decade of the 5<sup>th</sup> century already, but large depopulations north of the road Cologne-Tongeren-Bavay already occurred more than a century earlier. Minor though these losses were from an empire-wide perspective, it weakened landholding and thus tax-revenues in these provinces from the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century onwards.

The question is how long the basic structure of elite landholding remained functioning south of the road Cologne-Tongeren-Bavay. Although the Late Roman transformations of villa estates received scholarly attention in previous decades,<sup>20</sup> no good answers have been given as to the extent to which villas still generated surpluses to support the cities and to pay taxes. The phenomenon of ‘squatter occupation’, by which the settlement of post-built farmhouses and sunken huts on (former?) villa estates is meant, is described by various authors, but the question of a continued functioning of the traditional villa system remains unclarified.<sup>21</sup>

Although the current volume contains no contribution to fill this research gap, we see it as an important direction for future research. South of the road Cologne-Tongeren-Bavay many Roman-style villas survived the so-called ‘crisis of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century’,<sup>22</sup> but the question is of how long they remained in use. Did they all stop producing in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century, or is this a matter of archaeological visibility? And how does this rural evidence relate to the development of urban elite dwellings in the last surviving *civitas* centres of Germania Secunda, Tongeren and Cologne? Vanderhoeven presents in his paper a clear picture of the situation in Tongeren. Urban *domus* – symbol of the land-owning elite – remain in function here until far into the 4<sup>th</sup> century, but they fall out of use around 400 and the town seems completely deserted around the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century.

## 6 BEYOND DECLINE OR TRANSFORMATION

Since the emergence of the school of Late Antiquity a marked break in the historiography of the Late Roman period is observed.<sup>23</sup> While Edward Gibbon and the following two centuries of scholarship voiced only the Roman perspective of a decline of imperial power, resulting in a narrative of impoverishment, loss of territory and ultimately the ‘fall’ of the Roman empire, the school of Late Antiquity changed the perspective and described changes from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century onwards in a more positive way. The Late Roman period and Early Middle Ages were increasingly seen as a transformatory stage between the High Roman empire and the empire of Charlemagne.<sup>24</sup> It is argued that early medieval kingdoms are in no way inferior to the Roman empire and that the role of invading barbarian groups must not be overstated. Many areas prospered, unaffected by invasions, many institutions were continued, and situations developed gradually instead of suddenly. While Late Antiquity has proved very influential indeed, the change of perspective is not uncontested. The ‘terrible twins of 2005’,<sup>25</sup> two publications very different in terms of coverage, size and approach, have in common that they forcefully argued that barbarian groups from outside the empire

<sup>20</sup> Van Ossel/Ouzoulias 2000; Lenz 2001; Lewit 2003; Van Ossel 2006.

<sup>21</sup> See note 20, especially Lenz 2001; Lewit 2003.

<sup>22</sup> Lewit 2001; Ward-Perkins 2005, 1-10; Halsall 2007, 19-22 for concise overviews of the debate.

<sup>23</sup> Lewit 2001; Ward-Perkins 2005, 1-10; Halsall 2007,

19-22 for concise overviews of the debate.

<sup>24</sup> Brown 1971 and Webster/Brown 1997; Wickham 2005; Mitchell 2007.

<sup>25</sup> An epithet borrowed from Esmonde Cleary 2013, 1, referring to Heather 2005 and Ward-Perkins 2005.

were a prime mover towards the end of Roman authority and that violence and impoverishment were true factors in the decline of Roman state structures in the west.

The current volume does not choose between one school or another. Transformations are highlighted in for instance the paper of Brulet on the Late Roman army and the continental frontiers and the one by Collins on Britain's northern frontier. In the contribution of Heather, decline and fall is a central feature: the sudden breakdown of imperial authority is evident. Roymans' paper focuses on gold hoards and the very nature of this source material, which is supplied by the state and is found because of a drain of gold to barbarian groups, provides arguments for the decline and fall scenario. However, both Heeren and Roymans argue that the perspectives of decline and transformation need not exclude each other; they refer to processes that happened at the same time and were also in the same hands. The *foederati* received gold payments and drained resources from the central government, and frequently turned against the Roman government. At the same time, they represented Rome, fought in the name of the emperor, and settled in former provinces, connected to sites previously used by the provincial population. Heather too makes some important observations on this subject. He argues that the political unification of the Franks, different to for instance the Goths and Alamanni, was a post-Roman creation, an effect, rather than a cause of the West-Roman imperial collapse.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, he warns us not to write off the imperial centre ability to control its northwest frontier too early in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Until the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century the central imperial authorities "remained the most powerful shark swimming in the West European waters, able to inflict damaging defeats on barbarians."<sup>27</sup> We conclude that both decline and transformation were historical realities. They represent two sides of the same medallion and we propose that the perspectives should not be used as a binary opposition.

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<sup>26</sup> Heather, this volume, 35.

<sup>27</sup> Heather, this volume, 32.



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# The Late Roman imperial centre and its northwest frontier

*Peter Heather*

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References

## I INTRODUCTION

Roman frontier studies have traditionally been more the preserve of archaeologists than historians. Whether in the long-established but still vigorous form of the *Limes* congresses and their associated studies of long-term development in particular Roman frontier provinces, or the more recent interest in frontier zones as dynamic theatres of interaction, the starring role has always been played by material cultural evidence.<sup>1</sup> Which is only correct. The range and quality of material cultural evidence available for every dimension of the Roman frontier world and its operations vastly outweighs what can be gleaned from the written historical source material, the vast majority of which tend to have been generated far away: in and around the various metropolitan centres of the empire.

But there are always exceptions, and particularly for the long 4<sup>th</sup> century – the period (in the west) between the restoration of unity under the Tetrarchy and the collapse of frontier stability in the first decade of the 5<sup>th</sup> century – the amount of relevant written source material increases. This was the era of the ‘inside out’ empire, when political and administrative control moved away from old centres, particularly the city of Rome – characterised by one highly-placed 4<sup>th</sup> -century political commentator as ‘a sacred precinct, far from the highway’<sup>2</sup> – towards the frontier: in the west, particularly, but not solely, in the direc-

<sup>1</sup> Important studies of development in Rome’s outer, originally frontier provinces include Mocsy 1974; Alföldy 1974; Wilkes 1969. Whittaker 1994 is an excellent introduction to the more recent interest in the frontier as a zone of contact.

<sup>2</sup> Themistius, *Or.* 6 83 c–d (part of devastating comparison of Rome with the much more usefully placed Constantinople).

tion of Trier. It is not by chance, therefore, that a series of written sources from this period – from the Latin prose panegyrics, through the works of Julian and Ammianus, to those of Ausonius, backed up by important legal-cum-administrative materials from the *Theodosian Code* and a host of others – have much more to say both directly and by implication about the northwest frontier within the overall functioning of the 4<sup>th</sup>-century empire.

In particular, there is enough material to examine in some detail the most important of the pressure groups operating within the policy-making structures of the empire, and the major lines of interest which they were seeking to further when it came to frontier matters. This both directly illuminates the systemic pressures behind the frontier policies of different imperial regimes, and, by extension, allows us to explore with greater security how these interest groups were affected by, and responded to, the unfolding crisis of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. The contours of this paper directly reflect these contentions, its three main sections exploring, first, the key interest groups within the Roman imperial system, second, how the different systemic pressures they exerted intersected to dictate frontier policies in the long 4<sup>th</sup> century, and, finally, how these interests continued to be played out in the unfolding crisis of the 5<sup>th</sup>.

## 2 INTEREST GROUPS WITHIN THE IMPERIAL SYSTEM

### 2.1 THE CENTRAL IMPERIAL DECISION-MAKING BODY

First in line is the central imperial decision-making body – emperors and their chief advisors from within the palatine ministries, the court, and the upper echelons of military command – which exercised levers of considerable power, despite the inherent limitations which affected governmental capacity in the largest pre-modern state that western Eurasia has ever known. Maximum land speed for men and supplies was only about forty kilometres per day – that is less than a tenth of what we might currently expect – and, while messages could move much more quickly, the central Roman bureaucracy also lacked the technology to process detailed information about the many local communities of which in practice it consisted. In reality, therefore, the latter tended to be self-governing on a day to day basis, run by small oligarchies of local landowners, and much of legal material in the *Theodosian Code* which appears to show central government interfering in the minutiae of local community life actually reflects processes whereby aspirant factions within these communities solicited central support against their local rivals. The central imperial bureaucracy did increase steadily in size in the course of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, but remained tiny by comparative standards, and essentially lacked the capacity to run vast stretches of the Roman world in the kind of centralised way that earlier 20<sup>th</sup>-century scholarship – with contemporary totalitarian states in mind – tended to imagine.<sup>3</sup>

But, all that said, the evolving fiscal reform which had helped restabilise the empire in the Tetrarchic and Constantinian periods did mean that 4<sup>th</sup>-century emperors and their advisors were in a much stronger position to understand their own revenue flows than their counterparts of earlier eras. Alongside, at least in some provinces, a population-based head tax, the main source of revenue, became a tax on agricultural production, which saw the central empire interfere in the operations of local communities as never before. Each of the city (*civitas*) territories was extensively surveyed and, on that basis, allocated a certain number of tax units: *iugera* (sing. *iugum*), which were units of equal value in terms of notional annual production,

<sup>3</sup> Examples of the old narrative of centralisation: the essays of Vinogradoff 1911; Reid 1911; Ensslin 1939a, 1939b; Oertel 1939. The focus of much of the last generation of scholarship on cultural history means that this narrative has yet to be fully rewritten, but for some introduction to

the intersection of centre and locality in the later Roman Empire, see Matthews 1976, esp. ch. 1-2; Heather 2005, ch. 1, 3. Bradbury 1994 on Christianisation provides an excellent generalisable model on intersection between central and local government in the Late Roman world.

not equal geographical size. Fourth-century emperors thus knew the total number of tax units at their disposal across the empire and could divide the total annual sum required by this figure to decide how much to charge per individual *iugum*. Designated city authorities were then presented with a total bill for their *civitas* and it was their duty to turn this into individual bills for the actual working estates and farms which fell within their jurisdiction. Follow-up surveys were conducted every 15 years to take account of changes in the productive landscape, and the city council offices of every *civitas* contained a master list of every piece of property within its territory, against which were two figures: one for the value of its annual surplus production, the other (presumably based ultimately on the first) for its tax liability. There were other taxes besides, and we know that in practice reductions were also often granted, but, thanks to these fiscal reforms Roman emperors had a strong sense of the likely order of magnitude of their annual tax revenues.<sup>4</sup>

Expenditure, too, was exhaustively monitored. The largest single item here was certainly military spending, with most scholars (if largely on the basis of analogy and guesswork) supposing that the army consumed between a half and two-thirds of imperial revenues. The *Theodosian Code* and other sources preserve some echoes of the administrative effort that was put into charting such things as troop rosters of individual units (to control pay), and expenditures on clothing, weapons, animals, food and fodder, not to mention military building of different kinds. Again, such were the vagaries of the available monitoring systems that even substantial sums could periodically go missing, and the potential for corruption was huge. One favourite scam was to report higher than actual troop numbers for your unit, and pocket the extra pay and rations.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, despite these substantial limitations – mirrored in most pre-modern states of any size, and some modern ones too – emperors had a strong enough sense of both revenue flows and likely expenditures to engage in the kind of relatively sophisticated cost-benefit analysis, without which any kind of rational policy-making is impossible.<sup>6</sup>

## 2.2 THE ROMAN ARMY

Although top-ranking generals formed part of the central decision-making body around any emperor, the army, or parts of it at least, has to be understood as a second, and in some important ways separate pressure group. Again, the process of restabilising the empire in response to the crisis of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century had changed how the army functioned as a political force within the overall imperial structure. Precise estimates vary, but the 3<sup>rd</sup> century clearly saw a substantial increase in its overall size. Its strength in the Severan period was perhaps around 350,000 men, equally divided between auxiliary units and citizen-manned legions, each of the latter a small expeditionary army of over 5000 men. This increased by at least fifty percent and may even have doubled in the course of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, and, not surprisingly, a great deal of the fiscal restructuring which gave Late Roman emperors a much stronger understanding of their financial position had been generated to pay for the increase. The sheer political power wielded by soldiers was also strongly reflected in the extent to which army-groups made and deposed emperors in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century crisis according to what they promised to do on the pressing issue of pay: one of the

<sup>4</sup> The best general introduction to Late Roman taxation remains Jones 1964, ch. 13, brought up to date by Corbier 2005a; cf. Bagnall 1993, 153-60 on the detailed evidence of Egyptian papyri.

<sup>5</sup> On administration and the army, see e.g. Jones 1964, ch. 17; Elton 1996, esp. ch. 3-4. MacMullen 1988 exhaustively catalogues the propensity for corruption within the

later empire, but does not put the material in any kind of broader context, which, in my view, would make it look rather less dramatic.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Jones 1964, 452-6, 462-9; despite all the limitations, later Roman emperors had a stronger capacity to set real budgets than their earlier Roman predecessors.

brute realities of the new empire which had helped demote the city of Rome and its senatorial elite to backwater status by the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup>

By the end of the Tetrarchic and Constantinian periods, the basic pay issue had been more or less resolved, but the army, or particular elements of it, continued to exercise significant political force. As well as expanding, it had been fundamentally reorganised. The old distinction between legions and auxiliary forces was replaced in the later 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries by a more important one between garrison forces (*limitanei*), distributed along the empire's major frontier lines, and field army forces (*comitatenses*). The latter were higher paid, better equipped and operated in concentrated clusters to deal with larger-scale problems: at the regional level in Illyricum, Thrace, and on the Persian front, and with the *praesentales*, a still more elite set of additional field army units, stationed close to the imperial person. The old idea that the 4<sup>th</sup>-century *limitanei* were a soldier-farmer militia, which could not do more than a little border policing, has been rightly debunked. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century, contingents of *limitanei* were mobilised on occasion for really major expeditions alongside comitatensian forces, and several units of *limitanei* could be put together to fight medium-sized engagements on their own sectors of the frontier.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, in the 4<sup>th</sup>-century empire, it was certainly the officer cadres of the elite comitatensian forces who were best placed to exercise political influence.

Commanders of the ultra-elite praesental forces occupied highly politically-sensitive positions, which tended to be given only to deeply trusted regime loyalists, and, while there are some examples to the contrary, the careers of such men are not usually marked by political dissidence. But commanders of the regional field army clusters, further away from the imperial presence, occupied a more independent position, and even their second-rank aides – *comites rei militaris* – occupied the kind of position to build up a following among the unit commanders, which could become the basis of usurpation. In this respect, the Gallic *comitatenses* behind the northwest frontier occupied something of a liminal position. They certainly began life as essentially a praesental army, put together by Constantine in the early 300s as the backbone of the force which defeated Maximian, Maxentius, and eventually Licinius to win unchallenged control of the entire empire. And, given the regular imperial presence at Trier in subsequent years, they retained much of this ultra-elite character. On the other hand, there were other moments in the 4<sup>th</sup> century when, in the absence of an Augustus or Caesar, they were more like a regional field army, at which point the elite, palatine character of many of the army's constituent units made it a particularly dangerous source of potential usurpation.<sup>9</sup>

### 2.3 THE LANDOWNING ELITES

The third major pressure group within the empire consisted of its landowning elites. There were rich merchants, of course, particularly shipping magnates able to exploit the empire's need to move goods around the Mediterranean, but wealth and social prestige, as in most pre-modern contexts, was based primarily upon landowning. The archaeological material, of course, suggests that Roman landowners in the far northwest itself would not have formed much of a pressure group. North of the Bavay-Cologne road, villa-based agricultural exploitation did not survive the crisis of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, as it also failed to do both in northern Britain and in the Balkans north of the Haemus mountains. As the huge range of survey evidence that has become available since the 1970s has made clear, however, these areas were very much the exception. Across most of the Roman world, the 4<sup>th</sup> century was a period of maximum agri-

<sup>7</sup> On the numbers issue, see e.g. Jones 1964, 679-86; Campbell 2005, 122-4.

<sup>8</sup> A full study of the evolving political role of the Late Roman army remains to be written. For good introduc-

tions to military reorganisation, see the literature cited in notes 5 and 7, and Brulet, this volume.

<sup>9</sup> On the evolution and character of the Gallic *comitatenses*, see Hoffmann 1969, ch. 6.

cultural exploitation, not – as had universally been assumed in the earlier 20th-century scholarship – one of general land abandonment, depopulation, and declining agricultural output.<sup>10</sup> Even if there were a few, actually very small gaps in the pattern, therefore, Roman landowners remained a vigorous and active political force in the later empire.

Like most pre-modern landowning elites, the empire's ranged along a spectrum running from hugely wealthy aristocracy at one end – with a portfolio of estates distributed widely across the empire (due to the vagaries of ancient imperial history, old Roman senatorial families often had landed possessions in southern Italy, Spain, and North Africa) – to more modest gentry families possessing only the one fairly substantial estate located in the home *civitas* which also formed the primary focus of all their public activity. With land, came membership of your local town council, if you had enough to qualify, and sufficient moveable wealth to equip your children with the full-scale private education in Latin language and grammar (and/or Greek in the eastern half of the empire), without which it was impossible to claim membership of the self-styled 'better part of mankind', which is how the empire's ruling elites portrayed and understood themselves. Of the more modest end of the spectrum, the family of St. Augustine provides an excellent example. His father owned one estate at Thagaste and belonged to his town council, but struggled financially to educate his son fully: the assistance of a wealthy patron played an important role, and there was still a year where the young Augustine had to cool his heels at home while his father got sufficient funds together to send him off to Carthage for the next stage of his education.<sup>11</sup>

As a group, landowners were obviously distributed right across the constituent territories of the empire and, as such, possessed neither the concentration nor the ability to apply brute force in extremis which made the officer corps of the *comitatenses* such a potential political force. Nor, of course, did emperors have to win elections to remain in power. But landowner opinion mattered profoundly to the system, above all because landowners both paid and collected most of the fiscal revenues which kept the empire in being, and their collective opinions had various avenues for making themselves felt within the Roman political process. Most obviously, many of the key civilian members of the central decision making body around the emperor were always members of the imperial landowning aristocracy. Emperors also tended to make use of new men, particularly vociferous complaints being made about this for the regime of Constantius II, but such men were never in the majority, and most top imperial bureaucrats and advisors had much grander origins. In earlier eras, this would have tended to mean that they derived from Roman senatorial families, but, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries, provincial aristocrats – reflecting long-term processes of romanisation all the way from Hadrian's Wall to the Euphrates – became equally if not more prominent, and, in any case, membership of the Roman Senate was utterly reformed. From the time of Valentinian I and Valens, senatorial rank (with membership of either the Senate of Rome or its counterpart at Constantinople) became the ultimate reward for distinguished bureaucratic service, with the result that both institutions not only increased in size, but were flooded with men of originally provincial origins.

The middle and lower ranks of the imperial bureaucracy, likewise, were full of provincial gentry. Bureaucratic expansion is one of characteristics of the later as opposed to the earlier empire, and, based largely on the same complaints about the regime of Constantius II, it used to be supposed that the 4<sup>th</sup>-century bureaucracy was an alien, centralising force in the structure of the empire, whose influence rapidly undermined that of the old landowning elites. From about 250 senior administrative personnel in the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, the bureaucracy expanded to comprise about 3000 senior positions in

<sup>10</sup> Areas of dramatic agricultural decline: Heeren in this volume; Esmonde Cleary 2013, ch. 8; Van Ossel/Ouzoulias 2000; cf. Heather 2007 with refs. to the Balkans. On empire-wide patterns and the survey evidence: Lewit 1991; cf. Ward Perkins 2005.

Roman gentry at one end of the spectrum, Matthews 1976 esp. ch. 1-2 to the Roman senatorial aristocracy at the other; cf. more recently Wickham 2005, 155-68. On the elite cultural formation which bound them together, see esp. Kaster 1988.

<sup>11</sup> Brown 1967 provides an excellent introduction to the



each half of the Empire by the year AD 400, most of which were held only for limited periods of time. In fact, as we have seen, this bureaucracy was still not large or efficient enough to run the empire in highly centralised fashion, and, in any case, it had recruited overwhelmingly from provincial landowning elites. Landowning elites from the provincial gentry in lesser bureaucratic office were bound by chains of patronage and connection both to aristocrats in the inner circles of policy formation, and to those who continued to live their public lives more or less exclusively in their home provinces. As the many surviving letter collections of the 4<sup>th</sup> century demonstrate (particularly those of the Cappadocian Fathers), these chains of connections were used to employ well-placed connections to extract desired favours, and, by the same token, also functioned as a mechanism by which information and opinion could circulate more effectively than you might expect even within such a geographically-dispersed group.<sup>12</sup>

At the local level, too, landowner opinion made itself felt within the system. The central imperial authorities were responsible for setting tax rates and interfered in the process by applying incentives and penalties, but most of the work of tax collection – not to mention much of the paying – was done by local landowners. Leading local landowners also played major roles – both formally (sitting with the governor in trials) and informally (via the retainers they clearly employed) – in maintaining law and order at the local level. This is why newly-promoted emperors spent the early months of their reign distributing favours to large numbers of the locally-important landowners, whose subsequent activities would (or would not) make fiscal revenues flow smoothly.<sup>13</sup> Interconnected chains of landowners were thus a crucial element in the imperial system, and were certainly involved in the political process – helping to stabilise or destabilise regimes according to their collective responses to their policies – even if they were not, unlike generals of the *comitatenses*, in a position to mount coups with overwhelming force.

By the same token, the imperial system also played a crucial role in the lives of landowners: a point I would emphasise as it has sometimes been overlooked in accounts of elite attachment to the structures of empire. Most fundamentally, the empire's highly-developed legal systems guaranteed the property settlement – the empire-wide distribution of landed assets – upon which the landowners' elite status was based. It was Roman property law and its brutal punishment of theft which prevented the overwhelming numbers of have-nots from taking away the estates of the small elite of the population – certainly less than 5% – who fell into the aristocrat/gentry nexus. Personal participation in imperial structures – whether those of local government in the *civitas* – or increasingly those of the central bureaucracy were also the path to social advancement for the ambitious. As we have seen, becoming a bureaucrat for a period, both because of the formal privileges it brought and because of the highly useful connections it allowed you to form to the great and the good, was increasingly the path even to local pre-eminence as the 4<sup>th</sup> century unfolded. And even for the entirely unambitious who were happy to stay at home and enjoy the pleasures of manorial living, some active engagement with the imperial system remained important to extract important favours, as the letter collections again document, whether in the form of tax reductions or postponements, or the fixing of legal cases (about which the Cappadocian Fathers are astonishingly

<sup>12</sup> The older centralising narratives were strong wedded to the 'new men' view of the developing imperial bureaucracy: refs. as note 3, largely based on the retrospective complaints of Libanius *Or.* 42. 24-5. The broader run of evidence, including Libanius' enormous letter collection – Petit 1957; 1994 – and the career and speeches of Themistius – Heather/Moncur 2001 – demonstrate that such new men were a small minority. On socio-political interconnection and the distribution of favour and patronage, see Heather 1994.

<sup>13</sup> For hostile accounts of this process in action, see Zosimus 2. 38. 1 (Constantine) and 4. 25. 2, 27-29 (Theodosius I); cf. Heather 1994, 14-16. For local landowners and the collection of taxation, see Jones 1964, 724-31 and Liebeschuetz 1972, 83-92 and 161-166, though Liebeschuetz's study deals with the atypical case of Antioch, where the centralising force of its imperial officials, as a regional imperial capital, loomed very much more heavily over local administration than would have been the case for more distant *civitates*.

unembarrassed), or grants of honorary status which allowed you to avoid the many public duties of the Roman world that might otherwise come your way.<sup>14</sup>

From the Roman side of the *limes*, therefore, frontier policy faced input from emperors themselves (or, more accurately, emperors and their innermost advisors), from particularly the officer corps of the *comitatenses* within the army, and, via a whole series of effective if more diffuse means, from elite land-owners by whom and for whom the whole imperial system was basically run. As in most comparable pre-modern agricultural states, the rest of the population, particularly the peasantry who made up the vast majority, had no positive input into policy formation, even if imperial propaganda did regularly justify policies on the grounds that they were good for the ‘farmers’. That is not to say the peasantry – amongst whom there were significant distinctions in wealth and legal status – were entirely without agency, just that their protests would of necessity tend to take the form of inchoate, low-level brigandage – a form of protest against the system – rather than enjoying any systematic avenue for the exercise of influence.<sup>15</sup> Beyond the *limes*, however, there existed a fourth set of interested parties with a much greater capacity to influence frontier policy.

#### 2.4 THE NON-ROMAN WORLD ON THE NORTHWESTERN FRONTIER

Just like the Roman world itself, the non-Roman world beyond the defended line of Rome’s north-western frontier along the Lower Rhine – and indeed counterpart non-Roman societies on every other major imperial frontier too – had undergone considerable transformation in the course of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. After the dust settled, the cast of protagonists who dominate 1<sup>st</sup>- and 2<sup>nd</sup>-century sources was replaced by new entities right along the Rhine and Danube frontiers, with Franks, Alamanni, and Goths in particular coming to the fore. This new order beyond the frontier was created partly by migration (in the case of the Goths and Alamanni in particular) but also by reorganisation. The label ‘Frank’ in particular seems to have been a new collective name for many of the long-established groupings of the Lower Rhine region, some of whom continue to find explicit mention in 4th-century sources. But even where migration was involved, political reorganisation was also central to the story. On the Middle and Upper Rhine, the Alamanni moved into new territories, some of which had been abandoned by the empire. But the Alamanni as such were also a new collective entity, which, despite some attempts to argue the contrary, clearly operated with some kind of overall group identity. At the local level, the sources present us with a multiplicity of Alamannic canton kings, each with their own territories, but the group also consistently threw up overkings, who exercised greater authority. The same was true of the Gothic Tervingi of the Lower Danube frontier region. In their case, the head of the confederation was called a ‘judge’ rather than a ‘king’ but it was a monarchical position in the literal sense of the term (‘sole ruler’), and one that seems to have been hereditary within the same family. Roman sources are quite explicit that, like Alamannic overkings, the judge of the Tervingi operated at the head of political society which contained subordinate kings with their own territories.<sup>16</sup>

In broad terms, therefore, the re-formed empire faced a non-Roman world which had been through a substantial process of simultaneous reformation, whose overall effect was to produce a smaller number of larger frontier partners. Fourth-century emperors thus found themselves working in a substantially different strategic context compared to their earlier predecessors, but there is one important caveat. The

<sup>14</sup> For further discussion of these points, see Heather 1994; 2005 esp. ch. 3.

<sup>15</sup> See e.g. Shaw 1984.

<sup>16</sup> A general introduction to these processes is Heather 2009, esp. ch. 2-3, but see also ch. 1 for an introduction

to the methodological problems inherent in the recent historiographical tendency to minimise the importance of migration in the remaking of Rome’s frontier hinterland.

4<sup>th</sup>-century Tervingi are well-documented in a wide range of well-informed contemporary sources, the Alamanni in the narrative accounts of Ammianus Marcellinus and Julian. By contrast, the Franks appear only occasionally in the same sources, and always (as we shall see in the next section) in contexts where imperial action was being directed at one particular sub-group. We have no explicit information, therefore, that in the Frankish case the new collective label had the same kind of substantive political significance as it did for the Alamanni and the Gothic Tervingi. Just how much political unity underlay the new name in the case of the Franks remains an open question.<sup>17</sup>

### 3 PRESSURE GROUPS AND IMPERIAL POLICY IN THE 4<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

#### 3.1 THE CENTRAL IMPERIAL DECISION-MAKING BODY

One dimension of any emperor's interest in frontier policy was always focussed on image-making and internal politics rather than anything to do with the practical operation of the frontier itself. Because imperial ideology routinely but consistently claimed that legitimate emperors were appointed by the supreme Divinity overseeing the entire Cosmos, and that the political order on earth directly reflected the Divine Will, there was a huge ideological pressure upon emperors to be seen to be victorious. Because these ideologies had to allow for the possibility that human error could mistakenly appoint an emperor who was not in tune with the Divine Will, since it was otherwise impossible to account for successful usurpation, what better indication of direct Divine support for a legitimate emperor could there be than victory on the battlefield? Hence 'victoriousness' was the most important imperial virtue of them all, because an emperor who failed in battle automatically started to look like an illegitimate one, who was not meant to be in charge. Closely linked to this ideological imperative was a practical, internal political one. In all 4<sup>th</sup>-century public discussions of the subject, the exaction of taxation was directly justified by the need for defence. Once again, this put a huge emphasis on military success because it made it so much easier for a regime to justify itself to its tax-paying, tax-raising landowning elites.<sup>18</sup>

In practice, this meant that internal political motivations regularly intruded themselves into the management of the frontier, bending policy away from what might otherwise be required. Thus Constantius II and his advisors became increasingly agitated in the later 350s as his Caesar Julian scored a series of dramatic (and well-publicised) victories over the Alamanni and Franks of the Rhine frontier. In ideological terms, this signalled divine approval for the Caesar's rule, and, as Constantius' regime clearly feared, these victories quickly became the springboard for Julian's assertion of political independence. Constantius' regime responded, therefore, by claiming that victories over 'naked savages' meant nothing and that Rome's real enemy was the great Persian empire. On his accession to the throne in the 360s, alternatively, following two imperial deaths in quick succession, Valentinian I tried to use the frontier to make up for any potential doubts about the legitimacy of his rule. Wanting to appear tough on barbarians, and place himself in a good light with the tax payers, Valentinian unilaterally lowered the value of the annual gifts which Rome routinely passed on to allied Alamannic kings beyond the frontier. This made for an excellent piece of political theatre for his taxpayers, but caused all kinds of trouble on the frontier itself, since the kings used these gifts to reinforce their own power, so that such reductions threatened a whole political status quo. A few years later, likewise, a senatorial fact-finding mission was treated to a carefully pre-

<sup>17</sup> For bibliography, see the contribution of Roymans, this volume.

1966, with McCormick 1986 on the enduring importance of victory.

<sup>18</sup> On the evolution of imperial ideologies, significant for the relative lack of impact of Christianity, see Dvornik

arranged stop and search mission, where imperial troops swarmed all over an Alamannic settlement just on the other side of the Rhine, whose compliant inhabitants then helped construct a small Roman fort.<sup>19</sup> Given the ideological and internal political imperatives surrounding the need for an emperor to be – or to ‘look’ – victorious, Roman frontier policy was bound always to contain a substantial image-making component, whose exact contents varied from regime to regime. The less secure a particular emperor was at any given moment, the more his regime was likely to attempt some attention-seeking frontier adventure.

Acknowledging this important reality does not mean, however, as has recently been argued, that the empire faced no real security threats at all along its Rhine frontier. In his study of the Alamanni, John Drinkwater argues – entirely convincingly – that even at their most united and aggressive under the leadership of Chnodomarius in the mid-350s, the Alamannic confederation was not powerful enough to pose a direct threat to the imperial jugular. The most Chnodomarius could manage was to annex a strip of territory about 50 km wide on the western side of the river valley. Comparing this to the total area even under the control of just the western empire (from the modern Scottish border to the Atlas Mountains of North Africa) puts the overall Alamannic threat firmly into perspective.<sup>20</sup> This is an entirely fair point, but it is not all that needs to be said. Fundamentally, as we have seen, the empire taxed agricultural production systematically to maintain the armies and other structures which kept the whole imperial edifice in being. Any loss of territory – however small – lowered imperial tax revenues, and effected a direct decrease in imperial power, not least in terms of the military establishment that could be maintained.

Nor were resulting losses of tax revenue limited to areas directly annexed. Apart from the 50 km strip of territory seized by Chnodomarius, the concomitant destruction of frontier installations (which was clearly a deliberate Alamannic policy) and associated removal of covering imperial garrisons, placed the revenues from a much wider area under threat. In this case, farmers across a further 150 km band of territory beyond the annexed region now also found conditions too insecure for their estates to function normally.<sup>21</sup> The astonishing finds dredged from the Rhine near the city of Speyer in the 1990s confirm both the reality of the threat, and underscore why it existed. They appear to be the remains of two cart-loads of booty from a looted Roman villa which some 4<sup>th</sup>-century Alamannic raiders were trying to get back across the river by raft, when the whole thing sank (perhaps because of Roman counteraction). What’s striking is what the raiders were interested in: not least every piece of metal kitchen equipment (including no less than 51 cauldrons, 25 bowls and basins, and 20 iron ladles) that they could get their hands on. Such was the differential in levels of economic development on either side of the frontier that the working farms of Roman gentry landowners offered a cornucopia of attractive prizes, and raiding was bound to be endemic.<sup>22</sup> It was precisely this kind of raiding that the structure of frontier forts and *limitanei* garrisons was designed to prevent, and if it was removed from any sector of the *limes*, then villa farming across a broad hinterland was always going to suffer extensive damage, as raiders were drawn to the broad range of undefended targets – including livestock, tools, and just about everything else – that would now come on offer.

Such processes, I would argue, are likely to have played some kind of a role in the disappearance of intensive agriculture in northern Britain, the Low Countries, and the northern Balkans. In the latter case, certainly, the abandonment of Dacia together with the associated *limes transalutanus* clearly made rich Roman farmsteads north of the Haemus much more vulnerable to raiders across the meandering and highly porous line of the lower Danube, and it can hardly be coincidental that the latter disappeared

<sup>19</sup> On Constantius’ regime and its response to Julian’s victories, see Matthews 1989, ch. 6. Drinkwater 2007, 267–72 and 283–92 respectively for convincing discussions of the incident with the gifts and staged episode of fort-building for civilian observers.

<sup>20</sup> ‘300 stades’ as reported by Julian, *Letter to the Athenians*,

279a; cf. Drinkwater’s overview of his argument laid out in the introduction and first chapter of Drinkwater 2007.

<sup>21</sup> Julian, *Letter to the Athenians* 279a–b.

<sup>22</sup> Detailed report: Künzl 1993; summary in English: Painter 1994.

simultaneously (although there is some chance that landowners retreated to towns and were able to exploit their estates for a time from there). And while you do not find large-scale destruction layers, a general increase in levels of insecurity, as faced by farmers in the 150 km zone beyond the annexations in the mid-350s, would be enough, if sustained for any lengthy period, to drive wealthier Roman farmers out of business. Rich, rural manor houses were an obvious target of choice for small-scale raiding, and any loss of security – as a broader tranche of Gallic landowners found in the time of Chnodomarius – made associated, more intensive forms of agricultural production much more difficult.<sup>23</sup>

Even if the 4<sup>th</sup>-century Alamanni did not threaten the overall existence of the empire, therefore, they still posed a serious regional threat, which, left unchecked, was capable of inflicting substantial damage to the empire's fiscal/military structures. Even relatively limited annexations of tax base involved not only the initial reductions in overall revenue from the lost territories, but also a substantial reduction in revenues from much broader areas beyond which would now fall prey to endemic raiding, unless and until still more revenues were spent re-establishing a defended frontier line, in a new, more withdrawn position: which is what had to happen at several points along Rome's European frontiers in the later 3<sup>rd</sup> century, as the empire withdrew from the *Agri Decumates* in the west, and Transylvania further east.<sup>24</sup> Proper frontier defence was not only a propaganda-driven, internal political issue for 4<sup>th</sup>-century emperors, but also played a crucial role in maintaining the tax revenues without which the structures of empire would collapse.

### 3.2 THE ROMAN ARMY

In an overall sense, the interests of the second main Roman interest group, the army, were generally in line with those of emperors and their close advisors. The flow of funds to the army depended on the successful raising of taxation, and the army's military function played a substantial and direct role in this endeavour. The stabilisation of tax revenues from the time of the Tetrarchy onwards also played a major role in diminishing the amount of general military unrest, caused by pay arrears or payments made in debased silver currency, which had previously manifested itself in political usurpation, creating a virtuous circle out of a vicious spiral.<sup>25</sup> The only other issue which might have caused general trouble within the army would have been large-scale losses from excessive, disadvantageous use of Roman military forces, which would have adversely affected morale. In the 4<sup>th</sup>-century, however, the largest losses suffered by the western military, particularly the Rhine field army, were in civil wars. There were some smaller-scale defeats in frontier contests, but, generally-speaking, the Roman army operated against its European enemies with considerable tactical advantages in organisation and equipment.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> For the Balkans, Heather 2007 with refs. Current modes of explanation for the situation in Northern Britain and north of the Bavay-Cologne road tend to downplay, while certainly not ignoring, military insecurity: Esmonde Clearly 2013, esp. 299-302; Heeren, this volume. But intensive agriculture based on undefended rural sites requires a high degree of security, and I would tend to think more along these lines.

<sup>24</sup> On withdrawal in the west, see Nuber 1993. Eastern refortification: Scorpan 1980; Petrovic/Dusanic 1996.

<sup>25</sup> The problem appears to have been that there was simply not enough silver available to carry on paying the expanded army in good quality silver coin. Debasement

was a short-term response to this problem, which was properly solved in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> and early 4<sup>th</sup> centuries by shifting army pay to a combination of standard annual payments in kind, supplemented by occasional donatives of high value gold coins: Jones 1964, 623-30; Corbier 2005a, 2005b.

<sup>26</sup> In the two largest combats recorded by Ammianus on the Rhine frontier, the Gallic field army lost 247 men at Strasbourg in 357 compared to 6000 on the Alamannic side plus others carried away in the river (Amm. Marc. 16. 12. 63), and 1200 men killed and 200 wounded compared to 6000 dead and 4000 wounded for the Alamanni at Châlons-sur-Marne in 366 (Amm. Marc. 27. 2. 4-7).

But if we consider just the officer corps of the *comitatenses*, there were some potential lines of tension that could divide particular emperors from their key army commanders. Pure individual ambition was one of them. All imperial regimes were in a sense usurpations, in that power was rarely handed on smoothly from one regime to the next, even in cases of dynastic succession. The accession of Constantine's children, for instance, was accompanied by massive blood-letting within the extended family, and the three brothers who came to the fore showed a marked tendency to jealous rivalry, not stopping short, in one instance, of civil war. If an ambitious military man smelt blood in the water, therefore, as Magnentius (*comes rei militaris* in the Gallic *comitatenses*, and commander of two leading palatine regiments of the Gallic field army, the *Joviani* and *Herculiani seniores*) did in the case of Constans, then the threat of usurpation was always there.<sup>27</sup>

That aside, there was also a more structural issue. Armies received annual pay and rations (often in kind) supplemented by regular cash donatives. All of this was notionally set in stone, but in practice not. Emperors were usually driven by political necessity and would often pay donatives early (or late) according to immediate need. It was also the case that donatives – not to mention other kinds of more informal benefits, such as promotions, favours, invitations to dinner and so on – flowed more intensively the closer you were to the imperial presence and dwindled away to nothing the further you were from court. For that reason, not to mention more general prioritisation in the spending of the imperial military budget, having an emperor close to hand was always desirable, and any threat to the direction of this highly beneficial patronage flow was fiercely resisted.<sup>28</sup>

For much of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the potential toxicity of this issue among Rome's northwest frontier army groups was hidden by the fact that, under the Constantinians, Trier emerged as an imperial capital, of the new, inside-out empire.<sup>29</sup> Down to the 370s, a regular imperial presence in the city, and otherwise in the major cities of Gaul more generally (such as Paris, Vienne, and Autun) guaranteed a satisfactory flow of regular patronage of all kinds to the Roman field army of Gaul, and above all its officer corps, although particular issues within the overall patronage distribution could still cause problems. Surviving accounts of Magnentius' usurpation lack much in the way of convincing circumstantial detail, but does suggest that Constans lost the loyalty of the Gallic officer corps – as he clearly did since no one was willing to fight on his behalf – by showing too much favour to a series of outside 'barbarian' favourites.<sup>30</sup> And when that flow came under more direct threat, ambitious officers were quickly able to mobilise the discontent stimulated by declining patronage flows to generate usurpation. As we shall see, Gratian had good reason to want to shift the centre of his operations to northern Italy in the early 380s, but this was more than enough of a threat for Magnus Maximus to generate sufficient military support among the Gallic military to overthrow him with remarkably little resistance, even though he was the son of Valentinian I who had consistently shown them favour.<sup>31</sup> Field armies could be used by their ambitious officers as powerful pressure groups and woe betide the emperor whose policy-making took insufficient account of this basic fact.

To put this into perspective, Zonaras 13. 8 reports that Magnentius' forces lost 24,000 out of a total of 36,000 at the battle of Mursa against Constantius II in 351. On general Roman military efficiency against 4<sup>th</sup>-century barbarians more generally, see Elton 1996, esp. ch. 8-9.

<sup>27</sup> On Magnentius, see *PLRE* 1, 532. The units he commanded were later transferred to Italy: see below note 61.

<sup>28</sup> On the practice of declaring imperial anniversaries when it was politically convenient to use them to raise 'crown gold', an extra tax in gold which provided the necessary metal for donative payments in gold to the army (as

above note 4), see Bagnall *et al.* 1987, 23-4. On crown gold, theoretically a voluntary payment made by senators and town councillors, see Jones 1964, 430.

<sup>29</sup> A good introduction to the development of Trier is Wightmann 1970.

<sup>30</sup> The ancient sources – e.g. Zosimus 2. 42 and Aurelius Victor *Caes.* 41. 23 – all tell broadly the same story.

<sup>31</sup> Zosimus 4. 35. 2 – 6 (AD 383); Orosius 7. 34. 10; cf. Matthews 1975, ch. 7. Like Constans, Gratian found no one willing to fight for him. On the shift of the court to northern Italy in 381: see McLynn 1994, 149-57.

In the same broad terms, the interests of landowners were also well-aligned with those of the imperial court. Some recent scholarship has tended to portray Roman landowners as interested only in minimising their tax bills. They certainly did like to see taxes reduced, and the regime of Valentinian and Valens in particular won good reviews for policies which directly linked lowering subsidies to barbarians (on which more in a moment) to tax reductions. The philosopher Themistius has also been much quoted for an argument put forward in a speech of 368 which maintained that military activity on the frontier benefitted only the frontier regions concerned, at the expense of core, internal provinces who faced higher tax bills to pay for the relevant campaigning.<sup>32</sup>

Any tendency to conclude from this that imperial taxpayers always preferred peace to the expense of war must, however, be firmly resisted. For one thing, Themistius' speech needs to be put in context. He was a spin doctor, speaking for emperors to the landowners, not vice versa as he claimed. In 368, Valens found himself in the middle of a difficult war in the Balkans against the Goths. The campaign was proving frustratingly inconclusive, and, worse, the emperor had just found out that another war had broken out on the distant but much more important Persian front. Themistius was speaking in Valens' presence within the walls of Marcianople, his main military base for the campaign, and the argument gave the emperor exactly what he was looking for. Valens needed to disengage from the Goths and move towards the east in haste, but – given the importance, as we have seen, of ideologies of victory – without losing too much face.<sup>33</sup> More generally, landowners were well aware that their broader interests – as a small landowning elite of haves in a massive ocean of have-nots – depended on the structures of the empire, and that any breakdown in frontier security directly threatened the profitable exploitation of their landed estates for hundreds of kilometres beyond the actual *limes*. Tax payers always wanted to be reassured that they were getting overall value for money, and, individually (like all taxpayers since the beginning of time) wanted to pay as little tax as possible, but that does not mean that they did not understand that the imperial system as a whole maintained their position, and that it was reasonable for them to pay for the military who kept the whole edifice in being.

One interesting case in point occurred in the reign of Julian. For the campaigning season of 358, the Caesar needed to bring supplies for his troops by ship from Britain down the Rhine to his jumping off point at Mainz. The Frankish Salii and Chamavi occupied either side of the river's mouth and were in a position to bar the grain fleet passage if they so choose. One option, favoured by Constantius' appointee Florentius, who, as Praetorian Prefect, was Julian's chief financial and requisitioning officer, was to pay the Franks two thousand pounds weight of silver to guarantee safe passage for Julian's grain fleet of six hundred ships. The money was to be raised by a special supertax. Julian learned, however, that this would be highly burdensome for taxpayers who had been on the receiving end of several years of insecurity, and that, if he forced the Franks to allow the ships through by campaigning against them, there would be no need to raise the extra taxation.<sup>34</sup> I suspect that what we are seeing here is an example of the network of landowner connection at work: stretching into the lower and middling levels of the bureaucracy. Julian, already with more than half an eye on usurping the title Augustus, was keen to free himself from Constantius' advisors, and someone then provided him with the necessary figures to formulate an alternative plan. Even if that is too strong an interpretation, the incident certainly makes the point that landowners were perfectly capable of understanding the direct connection between cost-effective use of the military and their own prosperity, even if that did involve paying some taxes.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> The argument of Goffart 1981 has proved influential, quoting, amongst other texts, Themistius *Or.* 8. 170–4. On the deliberate policies of tax reduction adopted by Valentinian and Valens to distinguish themselves against their Constantinian predecessors, see Heather/Matthews

1991, 27, notes 38–39; cf. Lenski 2002, 386–307.

<sup>33</sup> Heather/Matthews 1991, ch. 2.

<sup>34</sup> Julian, *Letter to the Athenians*, 280 a–c.

<sup>35</sup> On the broader context for this incident see Drinkwater 2007, 241–6 on the military side (although I disagree

Nor was it just in the area of defence that landowners' interests were broadly aligned with those of the imperial state. A great deal has sometimes been made of the fact that, by the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the old gentry landowners who made up the city councils of the local *civitates* were giving much less to their home towns – witness the huge fall off in inscriptions, many of which recorded donations of one kind or another – and much less interested in performing local, public service. But as the new archaeological evidence for general Late Roman rural prosperity makes clear, old interpretations of this phenomenon, which saw it as a sign of great socio-economic crisis for the empire's landowning classes, were much too simple, as, indeed, much of the historical evidence confirms. Landowners are much too present, active, and prosperous in our 4<sup>th</sup>-century sources for any general 'crisis of the aristocracy' hypothesis to carry much conviction. Rather, their lack of interest in the old patterns of local political life had their roots in an entirely new set of circumstances which incentivised alternative forms of elite behaviour. In the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century, desperate to fund its rapidly expanding military, the central state confiscated the remaining city level funds, derived from endowments and local taxes and tolls. All the spending budgets that made competition for domination of your local town council such a worthwhile investment in the early years of empire had disappeared. At the same time, a series of exciting privileges were being obtained by an expanding imperial bureaucracy, which made an imperial career an increasingly attractive option. Over the course of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the situation continued to evolve until a brief period of service in the imperial bureaucracy had become the new *sine qua non* even for those landowners whose interests were primarily focussed on local society, because retired imperial bureaucrats – called *honorati* – now acquired all the interesting tasks at local level, such as allocating tax bills in periods of reassessment and sitting with the governor to judge legal cases. The expansion of the imperial bureaucracy was in fact the result of evolving consumer demand, not of centralising imperial agendas, as the run of legislation trying (but failing) to control the increase in numbers makes clear. In essence, the overall effect of all these changes was to make imperial service crucial for local pre-eminence, in a way, arguably, that it had never been before, thus tying landowners ever more firmly into the imperial system.<sup>36</sup> Rather than using your local town council as the path to local pre-eminence, finding a place in imperial service was the new game in town, and provincial elites responded to it with enthusiasm.

Stepping back from the detail, it is certainly possible to see potential lines of tension between the frontier interests of the three main protagonist groupings on the Roman side of the *limes*. The army was the most expensive item on the imperial budget, and costs rose substantially when it was mobilised for actual campaigning, generating a potential issue for tax-paying, tax-raising landowners. The officer corps of the different comitatensian army groupings were in potential competition with one another for imperial attention, likewise, while emperors were faced with an internal political imperative to appear victorious, which might make them use the army – and hence spend hard-earned tax revenues – when there was no military necessity to do so. But for most of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, these (and related) lines of potential tension tended to be issues of momentary political debate, affecting particular regimes in particular political contexts, and so long as the frontier was not under too much pressure, then there were no profound structural antagonisms within the system. Landowners' legal and economic dominance – as the agricultural landowning elite of the empire – was in the main being effectively protected by the empire, in return for tax payments which were not overwhelmingly high, and emperors were consequently able to present themselves as reasonably victorious for a reasonable amount of money. Tax payers would always grumble (when do they not?), some officers would always want more pay and patronage, and some emperors would struggle to present themselves convincingly as God-appointed rulers for the whole of mankind. But with a broadly secure frontier line, so that agricultural estates could function effectively, to

with important elements of his interpretation) and Matthews 1989, ch. 6 for the politics of Julian's gradual self-assertion of political independence.

<sup>36</sup> For a fuller account of these developments, see Heather 1994.



fund regular distributions of well-aimed patronage, the quarrels would be limited to jockeying within the system, not pressure to break it apart. And this, as far as we can see, was broadly the situation for most of the 4<sup>th</sup> century on all the empire's European frontiers, and certainly those in the west along the Rhine.

### 3.4 THE NON-ROMAN WORLD ON THE NORTHWESTERN FRONTIER

Looked at in the round, the historical sources indicate that Rome managed its European frontiers broadly effectively in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. The precise policy mix varied from regime to regime, but depended on a series of well-trying methods, which were too reactive, perhaps, to be considered a Grand Strategy in Luttwak's sense of the word, but which certainly amounted to more than a series of ad hoc improvisations. Stepping back from the detail, the empire was prompted into a really serious – and hence expensive – military campaign on each major sector of its riverine European frontiers (Rhine, Middle Danube, Lower Danube) about once per political generation: every twenty years or so. The purpose of these campaigns was certainly to 'punish' and intimidate (since it usually required some kind of cross-border problem to prompt emperors into this kind of large-scale action), but immediate military domination was then always used to set in place a political/diplomatic settlement designed to preserve peace beyond the short term. Larger – therefore more threatening – confederations and alliances were broken up, and the opportunity was taken to extract useful resources: forced levies of recruits for the army, labour services and raw materials for rebuilding damaged frontier installations. More positively, compliant-looking sub-kings were promoted to independence, and potentially more reliable frontier partners were rewarded with trading privileges and rights to annual gifts which helped cement their authority amongst their home political audience, while the whole edifice was shored up by taking high status hostages to be trained up in Roman court circles. The resulting situation was far from perfect, and sometimes the empire had to intervene quite quickly in ad hoc ways – a particular favourite being to kidnap or assassinate frontier dynasts who were beginning to look too powerful or independent, but a functioning approach to the frontier which required you to mount a major campaign only every twenty years or so represents, I think, a reasonably effective return on the investment of tax *solidi*.<sup>37</sup>

But if the 4<sup>th</sup>-century frontier was being run in a manner which was generally compatible with all the main pressure groups within the Roman system, the prevalent modes of exercising imperial power can only have generated highly ambiguous responses on the other side of the *limes*. On the one hand, for its favoured diplomatic partners, the empire was a source of financial and political support, which bolstered their positions in their home societies, and, for some modern commentators, this undoubted fact has generated an overwhelmingly positive model of non-Roman responses to imperial power and wealth.<sup>38</sup> But in my opinion that is again not all that needs to be said. Different regimes could change policy in ways that would have felt utterly arbitrary on the other side of the frontier. Valentinian I, as we have seen, suddenly and unilaterally lowered the value of the annual gifts accorded Alamannic leaders, no matter that this so undermined their standing within their own society that trouble was bound to follow. Constantius II, likewise, suddenly decided in the late 350s that the Sarmatian Limigantes should

<sup>37</sup> Luttwak 1975 set out a model of three distinct phases in Roman frontier management, which was rightly criticised from various angles, perhaps most profoundly for its lack of reflection about whether Roman political and administrative structures had the capacity actually to be 'strategic' in approach. His account of the Late Empire's supposed resort to 'defence in depth' is vitiated by his complete non-use of the historical evidence which

documents the Empire's systematic military, diplomatic, and political interference in a stretch of territory beyond the frontier. Amm. Marc 17.12-13 (Constantius II operating beyond the Middle Danube frontier in 358) is perfect example, but the evidence for the general employment of this kind of policy mix is substantial. See in more detail Heather 2001.

be expelled from the – advantageous – positions close to the frontier that they had occupied since the time of his father.<sup>39</sup> Romans, likewise, thought nothing of breaking oaths and agreements if it so suited them. Valentinian, again, built forts where it had been agreed that he would not, and when a Roman commander turned round and massacred a group of Saxon raiders who had been granted safe passage out of the empire, Ammianus commented:<sup>40</sup> *‘And although some just judge will condemn this act as treacherous and hateful, yet on careful consideration of the matter he will not think it improper that a destructive band of brigands was destroyed when the opportunity at last offered.’*

The standard 4<sup>th</sup>-century Roman iconographic presentation of barbarians showed them lying in prostrate submission at the feet of the emperor, with the goddess Victory looking on in satisfaction. This was much more than a pretty picture. Our written sources consistently describe grovelling as the expected – and duly displayed – attitude of barbarian dynasts faced with the divinely-appointed ruler of the entire world, and Valentinian I eventually died of a stroke when some ambassadors of the Quadi failed to show the requisite deference.<sup>41</sup> There is no reason not to take this seriously, since Roman superiority in this diplomatic dance was established by the regular application of direct and large-scale violence, which saw much collateral damage inflicted on non-Roman communities living on the other side of the frontier. It is certainly reasonable to think of non-Roman partners to the diplomacy of the 4<sup>th</sup>-century much more as members of a Roman world-system than as the unspeakable ‘other’, as imperial propaganda sometimes found it convenient to portray them. Emperors would do deals with them, keep favoured partners in power, and found it convenient to draw upon them for military and economic support. But even favoured partners were only junior and secondary members in what was firmly a Roman world system. The partners always sought to maximise their position, of course, but the basic terms of any relationship were set at imperial sword point.

Not only were the individual exchanges largely and unambiguously demonstrative of Roman domination, but Roman interests were at least in some contexts structurally in conflict with the unfolding rhythms of life on the other side of the frontier. Longer-term Roman policy towards the Alamanni was clearly aimed to prevent the consolidation of power by one of the group’s many kings. Just within the pages of Ammianus, Chnodomarius, Vithicabius, and Macrianus all became Roman targets because of the pre-eminence they were building up among their fellow Alamanni. That is three overkings within a 25 year period, which strongly suggests that there was an innate tendency within 4<sup>th</sup>-century Alamannic socio-political organisation to throw up such a leader, reflecting more general trajectories of socio-economic and political development which had become established in the non-Roman world in the first few centuries AD.<sup>42</sup> Arguably, indeed, it was contact with Roman wealth, and a dynamic response to it on the part of particular groups beyond the frontier which lay at the heart of this transformation, so, in opposing the appearance of overkings where it could, Roman policy was in fact placing itself directly in the path of a long-term historical transformation. There were good reasons for this Roman resistance, of course. It was the rise of such new confederations in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, under the banner of the most successful of the ambitious of these dynasts, which had forced the empire into the cost-benefit analyses which had led to the abandonment of such territories as the *Agri Decumates* in the west, and Transylvanian Dacia further east. But it did mean that Roman interests were in part set directly against patterns of longer-term transformation on the other side of the frontier.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>38</sup> For this general perspective in an older generation of scholarship, see, e.g., Thompson 1966. For a similar, more recent perspective based on archaeological data set: Halsall 2007.

<sup>39</sup> Amm. Marc. 17. 12.

<sup>40</sup> Forts: Amm. Marc. 28. 2. 5–9. Saxons: Amm. Marc. 28. 5. 7.

<sup>41</sup> Iconography: Calo Levi 1952. Cf. Amm. Marc. 17.12. 9–10 for an example of the ideal-type of barbarian defe-

rence in action (the Sarmatian prince Zizais) and Amm. Marc. 30. 5. 15 for Valentinian’s apoplectic rage when barbarian ambassadors broke the norm.

<sup>42</sup> In more detail: Heather 2009, 37–43 with full refs.

<sup>43</sup> On these longer-term transformations and the role of interactions with the empire in stimulating them, see Heather 2009, ch. 2–3.

It is hardly surprising to find, therefore, plenty of evidence of non-Roman hostility towards the empire. During the construction of his confederation in the run up to Strasbourg, Chnodomarius gained further recruits when the subjects of one canton king who remained loyal to Rome overthrew and murdered him because they wanted to join in the fight.<sup>44</sup> And although it gets much less coverage in Ammianus' narrative, within ten years of Julian's stunning victory at Strasbourg, another large, clearly confederative Alamannic alliance gave full-scale battle to Roman armies at Châlons-sur-Marne and, while again defeated, inflicted upon Roman forces substantial casualties: some 1200 killed and 200 wounded. This is likely to have been 10% or thereabouts of the Roman forces engaged, and about five times as many troopers as fell at Strasbourg.<sup>45</sup> The leadership of the Gothic confederation of the Tervingi, likewise, consistently resisted the kind of closer, dominated relationship that Constantine imposed upon them in 332, even though this brought them both annual gifts and the chance to serve in Roman armies on occasion for pay. Having to toe the imperial line, obey orders, and accept cultural domination in the shape of Christian missionaries clearly made this an unattractively subordinate relationship, despite the sweeteners that were added into the deal.<sup>46</sup> The same point is reflected, I think, even in the material evidence. Everyday Roman material goods occur pretty regularly in the immediate frontier region, but not high status items, which were a attribute of elite burials only among groups situated further away from the frontier. Showing yourself as too firmly within the Roman orbit, it would seem, was not an attractive strategy for frontier dynasts. In practice, even the larger confederation leaders (such as Athanaric of the Tervingi or Chnodomarius and Macrianus among the Alamanni) were able substantially to bend imperial agendas in more favourable directions only when emperors were faced with other, more-pressing issues (civil conflict, or wars against Persia), but the desire to do so is well-evidenced.<sup>47</sup>

Most of the better historical information from which these perspectives derive relates either the Gothic confederation of the Tervingi of the Lower Danube frontier region, or to the Alamanni of the Upper and Middle Rhine. The current volume is concerned above all, however, with the region bordered by Frankish groupings, about which much less is heard. How much of all this can reasonably be applied to them? I am confident, in fact, that most of it can. The same mixture of momentary but very violent hostility punctuated by longer periods of relative calm clearly characterised Romano-Frankish relations, with the same propensity for sudden changes in imperial policy to have dramatic effects for erstwhile Frankish partners. Large-scale campaigns against the Franks seem to have occurred as regularly as against the Alamanni in the 50 years after the elevation of Diocletian. In the same period, Frankish contingents were nonetheless recruited for particular Roman campaigns, and Frankish raiders chanced their arm on Roman territory in search of booty. Julian's decision to save Gallo-Roman taxpayers from funding a supertax to allow the grain fleet from Britain through the mouth of the Rhine also demonstrates how dramatically changes of imperial policy could affect life on the other side of the frontier. Instead of being two thousand pounds (in weight) of silver richer, the Salii and Chamavi found themselves assaulted with full Roman force in May/June 358. They had presumably been approached previously to enquire what they would charge, and then suddenly found themselves facing the wrath of Julian and the Gallic *comitatenses*.<sup>48</sup>

The only structural element missing here is decisive evidence that the Franks had the same ingrained tendency towards agglomerative confederation as the Goths and Alamanni. On the one hand, the Romans did now use a collective label for the groupings beyond the Lower Rhine frontier, but we meet no confederation leaders either in the pages of Ammianus or anywhere else for that matter. In fact, as we shall see,

<sup>44</sup> Amm. Marc. 16. 12. 17 (the followers of Gundomadus).

<sup>45</sup> Amm. Marc. 27. 2. 4-7.

<sup>46</sup> Heather 1991, ch. 3.

<sup>47</sup> Macrianus won Valentinian's recognition as overking when the Emperor needed to deal with trouble on the Middle Danube: Amm. Marc. 30. 3. 3-7. Athanaric was

able to win separatist concessions from Valens in the treaty of 369 because the eastern emperor needed to shift his forces to the Persian front: Heather 1991, ch. 2.

<sup>48</sup> Frankish raiders: Amm. Marc. 16. 3; 17. 2. Grain fleets: above notes 34-35.

the Franks remained highly disunited even in the 5<sup>th</sup> century when any Roman limits on confederation had long been lifted. This suggests that the tendency was not as strong among the Franks as some of the other groups, and there is, of course, no reason why processes of socio-political development – however generally-established in the frontier region – should have been working themselves at the same speed in every particular context. It was so far advanced among the 4<sup>th</sup>-century Goths, for instance, that east Roman policy accepted it as a given, whereas western emperors, across different regimes, consistently (and in some cases successfully) undermined overmighty Alamannic confederation leaders.<sup>49</sup>

#### 4 THE 5<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY CRISIS OF EMPIRE

In the final quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, although its full effects were only felt in the west in the first decade of the 5<sup>th</sup>, the Roman imperial system returned to a state of crisis. Its causes have been extensively debated in recent years, particularly the balance between internal and external factors, but its fundamental effect by c. 420 was a radical recasting of the overall strategic situation of the western empire. By this date, two large confederations of recent immigrants had coalesced on imperial soil: the Visigoths in southwestern Gaul (comprising a new alliance of groups who had originally entered the empire in 376/80 with others who had crossed in 405/6), and the Hasding-led Vandal/Alan alliance in southern Spain (comprising a politically-reformed combination of some of the survivors of the Rhine crossing of 406), who already had half an eye on North Africa.<sup>50</sup> The creation and continued survival of these new entities on Roman soil had significant knock-on effects for all the pressure groups whose interests had intersected to set central policy for the northwest frontier region in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. The end result could not but be dramatic for the frontier itself.

The basic overall effect on the imperial court – which emerges from the detailed political history of what was sometimes a swift succession of mutually hostile and competitive regimes – was first to drag its attention and then the court itself further south, towards the imperial interior. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the northwest frontier region had acted as a strategic buffer for the richer revenue-producing territories of the interior. By 420, the two new confederations were established at the heart of those key revenue-production centres: the Visigoths in southwestern Gaul, and the Vandal/Alans in southern Spain, then, from the 430s onwards, with much worse effects, in North Africa. Everything indicates that these confederations were more powerful than anything that had so far developed on the non-Roman side of the frontier. The narrative sources demonstrate that each was composed of several, originally independent migrant groups, and both – particularly the Visigothic confederation generated by Alaric – demonstrated a capacity to stand up to imperial field armies not just in single battles but across sustained and repeated campaigning. This sets them apart in terms of military-political capacity from, for instance, the 4<sup>th</sup>-century Alamanni or Tervingi.<sup>51</sup> With new groupings on this scale establishing themselves at the heart of the west-

<sup>49</sup> See generally, Heather 2009, esp. ch. 3, with Heeren in this volume on the Franks.

<sup>50</sup> The causes behind the arrival of these groups on western imperial territory have been much debated, with one body of opinion emphasising changes of policy on the Roman side of the frontier: e.g. Goffart 1981; Halsall 2007, ch. 6–7 (slightly different variants). In my view, it remains overwhelmingly likely that exogenous Hunnic shock caused not just the Gothic and other lower Danubian convulsions of 376–80 (as a plethora of detailed, contemporary sources insist), but also a second round of Middle Danubian crisis in the first decade of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, on whose causes there

is no explicit information: Heather 1995; 2009, ch. 4. The process of group-formation on Roman soil is comparatively well-evidenced, and there is much less controversy over its overall effects upon west Roman state structures.

<sup>51</sup> It is one of the myths circulating in some recent historiography that the Empire did not resist the migrants. The Visigothic alliance had to ‘earn’ the right to exist through multiple confrontations with Roman armies, and the Vandal–Alan confederation came into existence in direct response to vigorous imperial counterattack: Heather 2009, ch. 4. Cf. note 26, by comparison, on the Alamanni.

ern empire's key revenue-producing territories, it is hardly surprising that an overall decline is observable in the degree of central government commitment to the northwest.

A first move came as early as the reign of the Emperor Gratian, who, in 381 shifted his court and the centre of western politics and administration in the form of all the palatine ministries (the *Magister Officiorum*, *agentes in rebus* and *scrinia*, the *notarii*, the office of the quaestor, the Sacred Largesse, and the *Res privata*) from Trier to Milan in northern Italy. It is hard to see this cumbersome and complicated manoeuvre as anything other than a response to the Gothic crisis which had exploded over the lower Danube frontier of the eastern empire five years before in 376. In the interim, after the defeat of Valens at Hadrianople, Gratian had not only been responsible for appointing a replacement colleague for the east, but his troops – a point carefully hidden by Theodosius' propaganda – had played the central role in constraining the Goths to a point where they were willing to negotiate, and not only the Goths, but other dimensions of the trouble had spilt over into the administrative border into his territories in the western Balkans.<sup>52</sup> The shift of the court may have been originally envisaged as no more than temporary, but a fully-legitimate emperor would never again reside in Trier. When dynastic control was restored after the usurpation of Magnus Maximus in 387/8 (on which more in a moment), Valentinian II situated his ill-fated court at Vienne, much further south, and, by the time the dust settled after the usurpations of Eugenius and Constantine III, and the invasions of 405/6, the imperial court was immovably fixed in Italy, alternating at different points between Milan, Ravenna, and Rome. This was not so much a response to insecurity in the region of Trier itself, where the empire was to retain in control for the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, as to the fact that much more pressing necessities required imperial supervision closer to the imperial heartlands.

This political retreat southwards was matched administratively. Although the palatine ministries had followed Gratian southwards, Trier remained the official seat throughout the 380s of the Praetorian Prefecture of Gaul, the chief financial and legal officer of a vast region comprising not just Gaul, but the Iberian Peninsula and the British provinces as well. At some point after 390, however, the Prefecture retreated south to Arles, right on the Mediterranean coast. Whether this rearrangement was a product of the political conditions of the early years of Stilicho's regency in some way, or was a direct result of the invasion period from 405/6 is unclear (and will probably remain so), although my money is on the latter.<sup>53</sup> Either way, the same necessity which redirected western emperors southwards also ensured that there would be no return to Trier, even when a considerable degree of order was restored to the empire's Gallic possessions from the mid-410s. Not only did the Prefect's seat stay at Arles, but the new council of the Gallic provinces, reconstituted, as John Matthews argued, to deal with the potential local political fallout from the settlement of Goths in Aquitaine, was also located there.<sup>54</sup> For the last half century of the empire's existence, the centre of Gallo-Roman life moved from Trier to Arles, confirming the overarching shift of focus within the system away from the northwest.

In the first instance, this shift of imperial authority had the kinds of effect upon the officer corps of the Gallic *comitatenses* that you would expect. Essentially, it opened up a substantial potential fissure between central imperial and regional military interests. As the centre of imperial patronage moved away from Trier, the Gallic officer corps lost influence and reward, and, not surprisingly, was highly resistant to the process. However logical Gratian's move to northern Italy might have been in terms of meeting new strategic necessities, it reduced the corps' access to imperial patronage, not to mention supervision, making it much easier for ambitious individuals to sow the seeds of discontent. The sources tell us that discontent

<sup>52</sup> Heather 1991, 165-75 (cf. Heather/Moncur 2001), ch. 4; with McLynn 1994, 119-20 on the move of Gratian's court.

<sup>53</sup> Chastagnol 1973 argues for a date of 408 tying the move into Constantine III's usurpation; Bleckmann 1997, 575-

85 to the mid-390s associating it with the closure of the mint of Trier shortly after the suppression of Eugenius' usurpation (394).

<sup>54</sup> Matthews 1975, ch. 13.

came to a head when Gratian – presumably as part of an attempt to renew stability on the Danube – took into his service on favourable terms a large body of those Alans, who had been set in motion by the Huns. This allowed Magnus Maximus to recruit sufficient support to overthrow and murder the emperor in what seems to have been otherwise an essentially bloodless coup d'état. The usurpation began with the British troops Maximus commanded, but quickly moved over the Channel where Gratian, deserted by all his Gallic troops, fled from Paris to Lyons where he was handed over and murdered. The complete lack of loyalty to Gratian shows the extent to which the emperor, whose regime had operated from Trier for the best part of five years, had subsequently forfeited control over his Gallic officer corps.<sup>55</sup>

The same phenomenon was a major factor in the collapse of the regime of Gratian's half-brother Valentinian II in the early 390s, and in the usurpation of Constantine III a decade or so later. The sequence of events surrounding the death of Valentinian is less than certain. The sources report alternatively that Valentinian either committed suicide because his orders were continually disregarded by the leading western general Arbogast, or that Arbogast actually murdered him. Either way, the interests of the Gallic military were certainly at stake. At this point, the imperial court was still situated in Gaul at Vienne, but Valentinian was agitating for a further retreat into Italy, and this was the issue which brought his conflict with Arbogast to a head.<sup>56</sup> By the time of Constantine III, the switch of attention and therefore patronage away from Gaul was close to terminal. The regime of Stilicho was at that point bound up in a quarrel with Constantinople over the position of Alaric in the Balkans, and facing up to renewed instability beyond the frontier which had already manifested itself in Radagaisus' invasion of Italy in 405/6. Further troubles were in the offing, which, combined with the regime's focus which had been almost entirely Italian and Mediterranean since the turn of the century made it possible for Constantine III to repeat the pattern of Magnus Maximus. The usurpation began with unrest among the British military, but quickly gathering support in Gaul once the standards of revolt moved across the Channel.<sup>57</sup>

As events turned out, the usurpation of Constantine III was the last political hurrah of the field army groups of the empire's northwest frontier. Despite the fact that every functioning imperial regime of the 5<sup>th</sup> century had an Italian political epicentre, there is little sign of independent action or even protest on the part of Gallo-Roman armies, the one slight exception coming in 461, when Aegidius, the commander in Gaul, refused to acknowledge the rule of Ricimer when the latter assassinated the Emperor Majorian who had been responsible for Aegidius' promotion.<sup>58</sup> The reason for this at first sight surprising political reticence among what had been such a powerful political pressure group of the previous century becomes clear when full account is taken of the empire's broader strategic situation.

*Pace* some recent scholarship which has tried to turn the end of the western empire into a largely peaceful process, the first two decades of the 5<sup>th</sup> century saw huge losses for the Roman army of the west. The *Notitia Dignitatum* contains a general listing (actually two) of western field army from c. 422/3: *Occ. V* and *VI* giving the overall command structure for all comitatensian units, and *Occ. VII*, the *distributio numerorum*, their regional distribution. From these documents, two key points emerge. First, the western field army had suffered an enormous rate of attrition since 395. In that year, Stilicho commanded the entire imperial *comitatenses* of east and west as a single force, before sending half of it back to Constantino-

<sup>55</sup> Refs. as above note 31.

<sup>56</sup> Refs. as *PLRE* 1, 934-5; cf. Matthews 1975, ch. 9; McLynn 1994, 330-41.

<sup>57</sup> Refs. as *PLRE* 2, 321-5. Thanks to the loss of Olympiodorus' full text, and the garbling by Zosimus of his early extracts, the precise chronological and causative relationships between Stilicho's interest in an alliance with Alaric, his renewed quarrel with Constantinople, and signs of growing chaos in the middle Danube region west of the

Carpathians are open to question. In my view, the latter (evident as early as 402 with the arrival of Vandals opposite Raetia) made Stilicho want Alaric's military support, which then necessarily involved him in a quarrel with Constantinople which had legal control over the area of Illyricum where Alaric was established: Heather 2009, ch. 4 with full argumentation and references to alternative reconstructions.

<sup>58</sup> Refs. as *PLRE* 2, 11-13.

ple. Assuming that he made a reasonably equal division, and it is overwhelmingly unlikely that he would not have disadvantaged the western half of the empire of which he was taking personal control, then the extent of subsequent losses comes into focus by comparison to the eastern empire's comitatensian listings (*Or. V* and *VI*) which date more or less exactly to the point of division in 395. At the point of division, about four-fifths of the eastern field army regiments dated back before the accession of Theodosius I in 379, and about one fifth had been raised by him in the intervening sixteen years. But in the western field army of c. 422/3, only about one third of all the surviving comitatensian regiments predated the split of 395, the rest being new units raised during the reign of Honorius. The western army of 422/3 remained comparable in scale to its eastern counterpart (at 181 field army units compared to the east's 157), which suggests, on the highly probable assumption that Stilicho had not massively short-changed himself in 395, that it had suffered losses of over sixty percent of its pre-existing units in the intervening 25 years. This was a disastrous rate of attrition: much higher than the eastern *comitatenses* had even suffered in the Gothic campaign around Hadrianople.<sup>59</sup>

Second, while these losses had been made good in terms of the total number of field army regiments, many (over half) of the 'replacements' were in fact units of frontier *limitanei* hastily re-graded as *pseudo-comitatenses*, rather than proper, newly-recruited *comitatenses*. This problem was particular severe in Gaul, where fully 37 of the reconstituted regional field army of 58 units consisted of promoted *limitanei*, and the rest were mostly transfers from other provinces rather than new units. The Italian field army of 422/3, by contrast, was a much more formidable force. Thirty-two of its 44 units pre-dated Stilicho's division of 395, and of the other twelve, eight were 'proper' new formations and only four re-graded *limitanei*.<sup>60</sup> The losses of the western Roman army, in other words, had not been shared out equally in regional terms, but applied in particularly crippling terms to the army of Gaul, whose old coherence and esprit de corps clearly could not have survived in the new order of battle.

Unlike the 4<sup>th</sup> century, most of these losses between 395 and 410 seem to have been sustained in wars against outsiders rather than internal Roman civil conflict. The defeats of Maximus and Eugenius presumably inflicted substantial losses on the western field armies which were defeated in both conflicts, but Stilicho's division of 395 will presumably have compensated for this, since he would not have left himself short-handed in the west. Subsequently, Constantine III and the other usurpers were brought down by siege and strategy, and no full-on conflict is recorded between any of them and the forces of Fl. Constantius. Stilicho was presumably also responsible for some or even most of the transfers of the old elite *praesental* units of the western field army from Gaul to Italy which show up so clearly, as we have seen, in the *distributio numerorum*. The mint of Trier was closed shortly after the defeat of Eugenius, and coins were used above all to pay the army, and, from 395, both Stilicho (mainly) and the Emperor Honorius (exclusively) were based in Italy, which provides a logical context for these important transfers, which, even before subsequent losses, would certainly begun to shift the military – along with the political and administrative – epicentre of the western empire southwards from Trier into northern Italy.<sup>61</sup> Once this partial military recalibration had been reinforced by the devastating losses which are so evident in the

<sup>59</sup> The defeat at Hadrianople led to the total destruction of 16 elite eastern field army regiments: Hoffmann 1969, 450–8. Two-thirds of Valens' army was exterminated in the battle, with estimates of the total figure for Roman losses varying between 10,000 and 25,000. My own preference would be at the lower end: Heather 1991, 146–7.

<sup>60</sup> The significance of the western field army listings is brought out fully by Jones 1964, app. II.

<sup>61</sup> For some further discussion, see Hoffmann 1969, ch. 10, but the transfer of the elite units of the western field

army from Gaul to Italy are not one of his main focuses of interest, though see esp. p. 520 for some relevant comment about Stilicho. Contra Halsall 2007, ch. 7. I would not conclude from this that Stilicho abandoned the northwest from 395 onwards. Even in 422/3, the Gallic field army was still larger on paper than its Italian counterpart, and Constantine III found enough troops in Gaul to power an extremely dangerous usurpation in 407. For further discussion, see Heather 2009, ch. 4.

*Notitia*, Italy was left as the western empire's unique centre of surviving elite military concentration, and the inability of the Gallic military to exercise an effective independent influence within the structures of the 5<sup>th</sup>-century empire becomes fully comprehensible.

There is no reason to think that any of this had been a remotely voluntary process, even if it did mean that Italian-based emperors and advisors no longer faced a serious threat of Gallic usurpation. The loss of tax revenues from the settlement areas conceded to the Visigothic and Vandal-Alan coalitions was substantial. Areas given up for legal settlement in the 410s – the Garonne valley in Aquitaine in the case of the Visigoths – combined with those simultaneously annexed – illegally – by the Vandals and Alans (pretty much all of Spain except *Tarraconensis*) represented an initial set of serious losses to the western treasury. Equally important, many other areas had been damaged by barbarian raiding and occupation in the events leading up to the settlement (large parts of Gaul in the case of the Vandal-Alans, and the suburbicarian provinces around Rome in the case of the Goths), and all these areas, too, required major tax reductions. Nearly a decade later, the suburbicarian provinces were only producing one seventh of their normal tax revenues, and this seems to have been a standard level of tax reduction afforded areas affected by intense barbarian activity. By 420, Britain, clearly an important source of tax revenues in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, had also been abandoned, adding up to a total loss to the western empire which is not precisely quantifiable but clearly represented a substantial – maybe 20%? – decline in its total tax revenues.<sup>62</sup> Against this backdrop, the inability of the centre to restore the Gallic field army to 4<sup>th</sup>-century levels as shown up in the *Notitia* becomes utterly comprehensible.

Nor was this the nadir of the problem. Further groups of outsiders in the forms of Alans and Burgundians, if not on the scale of the Visigothic or Vandal-Alan coalitions, were settled on western territories in the 430s, when the Visigoths also mounted a major revolt, which must have disrupted imperial revenue-flows from much of southern Gaul. And, much worse than any of this, the Vandal-Alan coalition then seized the western empire's cash cow in 439, capturing Carthage and the key revenue-producing provinces of North Africa (Numidia, Byzacena, and Proconsularis), a conquest which the advent of a new era of large-scale Hunnic attack then forced both halves of the empire to recognise. This pushed Aetius' regime into a further stage of financial crisis which prompted a further running down of the west's military establishment, a process which finds explicit mention in some of its legislation, and whose effects become perhaps most visible in the fact that, to confront Attila's rampage through Gaul, Aetius was forced to construct a complex military alliance drawing on a series of contingents from most of the barbarians then settled on western territory (Goths, Alans, and Burgundians) in addition to his own surviving imperial forces.<sup>63</sup>

Subsequently, after Attila's death and the disappearance of the Hunnic empire as a major political force, the mid-450s inaugurated a new zero sum game. From that point onwards, western regimes possessed such limited military resources of their own that they routinely needed to buy in military/political support from at least some of the barbarian coalitions now settled on western territory. The problem was that this usually cost them still further items from their rapidly diminishing tax base – in 462, for instance, the *civitas* of Narbonne was ceded to the Visigoths in return for their support for Libius Severus – until by the late 460s the imperial centre was left with insufficient revenues to support military forces large enough to keep itself in being. At that point, the leaders of the larger outside coalitions settled on Roman soil – Visigoths, Burgundians, and Vandal-Alans – all started annexing territories outright, and as quickly

<sup>62</sup> Tax reductions: *C. Th.* 11. 28. 7 and 12 (suburbicarian provinces: 80% and 91% reductions respectively, the latter dating to 418) matching the 85%+ reduction granted North Africa provinces temporarily occupied by Vandal-Alans in the mid-430s: *Nov. Val.* 13. On arguments surrounding the abandonment of Britain (a key source of

grain for Julian's 358 campaign: above notes 34–35), see Heather 2009, ch. 6.

<sup>63</sup> On this further stage of the developing crisis, see generally Heather 2005, ch. 6–7. The fiscal crisis generated by the loss of North African revenues shows up clearly in *Nov. Val.* 4, 7. 1, 7. 2, 10 and 13; cf. Heather 2005, 296–269.



as possible, until there were insufficient assets under central control for it to exercise any kind of power beyond Italy itself. The centre, in other words, had effectively ceased to be the centre of anything much, and the central imperial authority structure had effectively dissolved.<sup>64</sup>

The beginnings and end of the associated process of attrition for the Gallic *comitatenses* are clear enough. In 420, it still existed as a coherent military force, even if it had lost its political pre-eminence within the western imperial structure. That damaged military effectiveness then presumably declined still further in a series of stages as the money began to run out. The story was probably one of declining numbers and impoverished levels of equipment combined with occasional stark, combat losses (the kind of thing documented in the *Life of Severinus* for the Norican *limitanei*, if on a much larger canvas), even if it cannot be explored in any detail. In the main, I suspect, the tendency ought to be resisted to write off the Gallic *comitatenses* and the imperial centre's ability to project its power in the northwest frontier region too early in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. There are records of Roman campaigns against Frankish groups in the late 420s and 430s, as order was restored after the mayhem of invasion and usurpation, and it is striking that gold flows to Frankish groups seem to have dried up at this point.<sup>65</sup> This strongly suggests that the empire was no longer just having to buy peace on the northwest frontier, and, certainly until the loss of African revenues in the 440s, the central imperial authorities – if now more on the basis of Italian rather than Gallic *comitatenses* – remained the most powerful shark swimming in West European waters, able to inflict damaging defeats on barbarians in Spain in the 410s, and to face down a major Gothic rebellion in the late 430s. A force of some size still existed in Gaul, likewise, even in the early 460s. This was substantial and solid enough not only to back the revolt of Aegidius against Ricimer, but also to morph in due course into the so-called Kingdom of Soissons which carried on for two decades under Aegidius' nephew and successor. The continued existence of the distant descendants of some Gallo-Roman military units as a distinct entity with their own standards and elements of uniform under the Merovingian Frankish kings even finds one brief mention in the 6<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>66</sup> But, particularly with the loss of Africa from the 440s onwards, numbers, equipment, and professional training had been presumably declining steadily with the drying up of funds and supplies from the centre.

It is also highly likely that regular units were periodically being replaced in practice with contingents of barbarians on a more permanent basis than the old ad hoc drafting in of contingents for particular campaigns, as had happened in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Again, detail is lacking, but, as argued by Stijn Heeren in this volume, this had perhaps already begun to happen by c. 420 in the far northwest, with Frankish warbands replacing the *limitanei* of Belgica II and Germania II, who are missing from the *Notitia Dignitatum*. We know, too, that Alans were later settled in substantial numbers around Orleans in the 440s and Frankish contingents, including one led by Clovis' father Childeric, seem to have served Aegidius in the 460s. The Burgundians, resettled on Roman territory around Lake Geneva in the later 430s, may also have been brought onto the western army roster.<sup>67</sup> But if detailed reconstruction is impossible, the general picture is clear enough. As the funds ran out, the Gallic *comitatenses*, followed by the whole military edifice of the western empire, declined steadily into impotence.

The knock-on effects of all this for Gallo-Roman, but also western imperial landowners more generally, were straightforward. One model of landowner mentalities in this era of imperial eclipse suggests that they were positive advocates of the process, because they saw opportunities to reduce their tax liabilities by switching their political allegiances to one of the emerging successor kingdoms. This is a highly optimistic interpretation of how documented processes of imperial collapse impacted upon the

<sup>64</sup> Narbonne: Hydatius *Chronicle* 217; cf. generally Heather, 2005, ch. 8-9.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Roymans, this volume, esp. fig. 3.

<sup>66</sup> 420s and 430s: see the papers of Roymans and Heeren in this volume. Aegidius: above note 58, with MacGeorge

2002. Descendants of Roman soldiers in Frankish armies: Procopius, *Wars* 5. 12. 16-19.

<sup>67</sup> Heeren, this volume, 167-170. Alans and Burgundians: Heather 2005, 287-8.

life and wealth of elite Roman landowners. First, much of it was a violent process of political transformation which involved many large-scale campaigns combined with considerable episodes of looting and plundering. These would certainly have harmed incomes from the landed estates which were the basis of elite wealth and status (witness the level of tax remissions generally granted to areas that had come under barbarian occupation). The idea that the transfer of political authority to the successor states was 'a largely peaceful' process is a myth of extraordinary proportions given the number of engagements, large and small, which are recorded – however briefly – in our sources and the documented levels of attrition suffered by west Roman armies even just by the 420s.<sup>68</sup>

Second, whereas tax paid to the imperial state essentially represented the handing over of a certain amount of the annual interest from elite estates, the establishment of the successor states everywhere involved losses of actual capital. Walter Goffart famously argued that the new rulers paid off their conquering armies by transferring to them elements of existing Roman tax revenues, not actual real estate, and there is no doubt that reallocations of tax revenues did form part of the rewarding process. On the other hand, as a series of studies have recently shown, the evidence is also unambiguous that transfers of actual real estate were also part of the rewarding process, and that Roman landowners did lose control of the revenues from some of their holdings. There was also no one universal model across the whole of the Roman west as Goffart originally supposed. In practice, there could not be since, what we are dealing with here was fundamentally a political process, whereby successor state kings were balancing the interests of useful Roman landowners against the demands of the warrior followings who had put them in power, so that Roman landowners were always likely to lose more in smaller kingdoms with fewer resources than in larger ones with more assets to play with. Nonetheless in every documented instance, including the Ostrogothic kingdom under the rule of that supposedly great Romano-ophile Theoderic, establishing a successor kingdom involved confiscating some assets from Roman landowners, even if they were not completely stripped of their wealth.<sup>69</sup>

Elsewhere, as you might expect in contexts where no unified authority (such as the Gothic or Burgundian monarchies) existed to mediate a process of negotiation, then Roman landowners seem to have fared even less well. Unlike areas closer to the Mediterranean, there is no sign that any elite Roman landowners preserved their landed fortunes in the transfer to successor state rule either in lowland, Roman Britain, or in areas to the northeast of Paris. In recent years, the anti-migrationist stance championed particularly by Anglophone processual archaeology has generated various arguments that there are better ways to account for the observable patterns of material cultural change in these regions in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries than by, respectively, Anglo-Saxon and Frankish migration processes. And, certainly, the old culture-history migration models of more or less total ethnic cleansing of large regions are completely unconvincing. But while it is just about possible to build a model to account for the observable material cultural transformations involving little or even no migration – as it usually is in fact, since most of the possible archaeological reflections of migration will be at best ambiguous – it remains extremely difficult to account for the associated non-material cultural, especially linguistic changes without some kind of predatory migration process, which saw a substantial new elite taking control of much of the landscape. Nor should it really surprise us that such migrant-led land seizures might occur. Roman landowners were a tiny elite, supported by the Roman imperial state structure, which governed fundamentally in their interests. It was only natural that the disappearance of that protective state structure threatened the survival of this elite, as sharks from both inside and outside were circling who had a strong interest in rearranging the massively one-sided property settlement on which the existence of this old landown-

<sup>68</sup> Goffart 1980, 1981 for the view that the end of the western empire was essentially a non-violent process of tax avoidance.

<sup>69</sup> Goffart 1980 for the original argument, but see now col-

lected case studies in Porena/Rivière 2012 with full references to the substantial body of literature in between, which has convincingly shown that Goffart's original model was both too simple and too monolithic.

ing elite relied. In many ways, it might surprise us more that the bulk of them managed to negotiate a path to survival in the more-organised successor kingdoms than that many of them elsewhere fell by the wayside.<sup>70</sup>

Nor, I think, should too much be read into the fact that we have evidence in the letters of Sidonius, particularly from the 460s, that some Roman landowners were making apparently voluntary accommodations with barbarian kings. Fundamentally, they had no choice but to come to an accommodation if they possibly could. Unlike other forms of wealth, landed estates were fixed in place. They were where they were, especially for gentry-level members of the elite with no empire-wide portfolio of estates to fall back on. If your territory fell under the control of new non-Roman power, you had no choice but to make some kind of accommodation if you could. Within Sidonius' circle, some clearly did it earlier, seeing the writing on the wall of imperial decline, but all had to in the end, whether they wanted to or not: even Sidonius himself. In the late 460s and early 470s, he struggled desperately to ensure that his estates and the *civitas* of Clermont in which they were situated would remain part of a rump west Roman state. But when that option disappeared, then even he had to kiss up to the Visigothic king Euric, whose interests he had previously fought, and did it enthusiastically enough to get at least some of his confiscated wealth back.<sup>71</sup>

It is impossible to reconstruct in detail how our fourth party to the frontier world – groups beyond the defended Roman line – responded to the imperial crisis of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, but the historical and archaeological evidence between them suggest a number of separate phases. Both types of material indicate that the usurpation of Constantine III and his successors, first of all, inaugurated a period of Frankish expansion. The historical evidence is clear that, desperate for troops – probably to confront an Italian field army that had already been strengthened by substantial transfers of elite units to Italy – the usurper (and indeed his successors like Jovinus) bought in Frankish military assistance. This coincides with a massive influx of gold into the regions either side of the Rhine, and an early settlement phase, which suggests that Frankish warbands and their dependents were now being allowed to occupy the relatively empty lands in the north of Belgica II and Germania II.

This seems, however, to have been a relatively short-lived period of initial expansion and prosperity. The historical evidence records that in the 420s and 430s the central western authorities mounted a series of campaigns against Frankish groups in the northwest. It needs to be taken seriously. Fl. Constantius effectively began the process of restoring order after the Rhine invasions of 406 and the usurpation of Constantine III, and, after the power struggle which followed his early death in 421, his successors, especially Aetius were able to continue the work. A fair measure of its effectiveness would seem to be the more or less total drying up of the gold flow into the far northwest in the middle part of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. This strongly suggests that any overblown Frankish ambitions had been effectively brought to heel by the restored empire, as does the fact that, still in the 450s and 460s, as far as we can see (although the evidence is admittedly thin), Frankish warlords were still largely fighting in Roman service, and not (as, by comparison, Goths and Burgundians certainly were) on their own behalf.<sup>72</sup>

All the evidence for really large-scale Frankish expansion in fact dates to the 480s and beyond: the career of Clovis, essentially, rather than that of his father Childeric. In his reign, an overarching Frankish unity was forged – for the first time – by his elimination of seven named rival Frankish warband leaders, and the incorporation of their followings into his own. It is also no accident, in my view, that Clovis' reign also saw the spread of Frankish power southwards, with the effective conquest of Syagrius' holdings,

<sup>70</sup> On the broader intellectual evolution which has so profoundly affected the study of 1<sup>st</sup>-millennium migration, see Heather 2009, esp. ch. 1 and 11. See also further Heather 2009, ch. 6, on Anglo-Saxon and Frankish land-grabbing, starting to develop potential parallels with the

very well-documented Norman Conquest.

<sup>71</sup> Heather 2005, 215-25.

<sup>72</sup> On both phases, see the paper of Roymans in this volume with full references.

the Alamanni, and much of Visigothic Gaul. The two processes were probably inseparable. Not only did Frankish unification provide Clovis with a large enough military following to power his extraordinary run of conquests, but the fruits of these conquests were highly necessary, when distributed as patronage, to convince all the followers of his dead rivals that Clovis was the correct leader to follow.<sup>73</sup> I would argue, therefore, the evident lack of centralised unity among the Franks at the time of Clovis' accession is itself a further indication that processes of political transformation among the Franks – powered as they were, just as was the case with the Goths and the Vandals, by the wealth of the Roman world – were at a relatively unadvanced stage. Frankish unity, in other words, and the capacity of the Franks to expand their area of dominion must be seen as post-Roman phenomena, *effect* and not *cause* of Roman imperial collapse.

## 5 CONCLUSION

The northwest frontier zone was certainly a backwater in Late Roman imperial terms. It was neither a significant source of tax revenue after its agricultural patterns failed to recover from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century crisis, nor did neighbouring Frankish groups beyond the frontier pose the same level of threat as Goths and Alamanni elsewhere, among whom long-term confederative trajectories seem to have been more powerfully entrenched. Nonetheless, the region was still tied into the broader 4<sup>th</sup>-century imperial system in some highly significant ways, and, because of this, it still provides an excellent avenue for exploring both the general operations of that system, and how the different pressure groups combined to set overall policy for this relatively remote frontier region. Not least, the northwest played a crucial defensive role, providing protection against the endemic low-level raiding and occasional larger-scale threats which would otherwise have derailed more intense agricultural production further away from the frontier line. The surviving landowners, south of the Bavay-Cologne line, were also, like the rest of their peers across the rest of the empire, still firmly tied into imperial legal, political, and fiscal systems without which it was impossible for this tiny socio-economic elite to continue to exist. The northwest remained home, likewise, to important comitatensian forces, whose particular interests provided another powerful voice in the shaping of overall policy in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. If certainly something of a backwater, then, the northwest was still highly integrated into the systems of empire at this point, fulfilling important roles within the whole.

Nor, when the imperial system returned to crisis in the later 4<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, did the centre give up control of the northwest lightly. Some military and political transfers had occurred by 395, but large Roman forces – *limitanei* and *comitatenses* – were still stationed in Gaul, and it was only the heavy losses in both manpower and revenue sustained in the period 395–420 which actually reduced the Gallic field army to a second-rate, improvised status, and perhaps generated a handover of immediate frontier protection to hired-in bands of Franks. Even so, the regime of Aetius restored marked degree of control over Frankish groups, as evidenced by their continued lack of unity and the slowing down of gold supplies. Only when further, permanent losses of territory to the Visigoths, Vandal-Alans and others in the 440s and 450s ripped out the fiscal heart of the empire was its ability to integrate the northwest completely lost. At that point, Frankish warlords could employ the new revenue streams now available to them to advance associated processes of unification and conquest, and surviving Roman landowners were left to make what deals they could to try to survive in the absence of the protective structure which had previously sustained their existence.

<sup>73</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Histories* 2. 40–2, with e.g. Heather 2009, 308–10.

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# The Roman army and military defence in Northern Gaul and the Germanic provinces during the Late Empire

*Raymond Brulet*

- 1 Introduction
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## References

## I INTRODUCTION

Late Antiquity was a time of permanent mutation, with substantial changes affecting the army, which was regularly subjected to reforms. The successive stages of evolution are incompletely documented.<sup>1</sup> These changes had strategic consequences.<sup>2</sup> Military systems were adapted to the geopolitical situation of each region and benefited from new construction or restoration initiatives decreed by the central authorities.<sup>3</sup> Some have argued for the appearance of a new overall military strategy during the Late Empire, but this hypothesis is not justified by the evidence.<sup>4</sup> In fact we should consider a number of factors that were in play: the decisions of individual emperors and the actions of senior commanders who often adopted similar measures, ranging from restoring a situation that had been destabilised by crisis – provoked by

<sup>1</sup> See Southern/Dixon 1996, 18. Other recent general works on the Late Roman army: Nicasie 1998; Richardot 2005; Le Bohec 2006; Le Bohec 2015. See also the chronicle: *L'armée romaine tardive dans quelques travaux récents: Antiquité tardive* 8, 2000, 321–341 and 9, 2001, 351–361.

<sup>2</sup> For strategy, see Elton 1996, 199–233, and Le Bohec 2006, chap. X–XI. The ‘grand strategy’ as defined by Luttwak (1976) is rejected in favour of a particular strategy (Le Bohec 2012) or no strategy at all (Isaac 1989).

<sup>3</sup> The best known along the frontiers are those of Diocletian, Constantine and Valentinian. Zosimus, *Historia Nova*

2.34, confirms the impression that the frontiers were secured everywhere by Diocletian, with major and lesser fortresses garrisoned by the entire army (Southern/Dixon 1996, 24). Amm. Marc. (28, 2) praises Valentinian for building a defensive line from Raetia to the Channel.

<sup>4</sup> Luttwak’s (1976) ‘grand strategy’ theory has been much criticised: Mann 1979, Millar 1982, Isaac 1989, Whittaker 1989. Luttwak’s efforts to rehabilitate it have not carried general conviction: see his new edition Luttwak 2009 and Wheeler 2009. Heather has argued that it makes no sense to assign periods to types of military strategy (Heather 2000, 57 ff.).



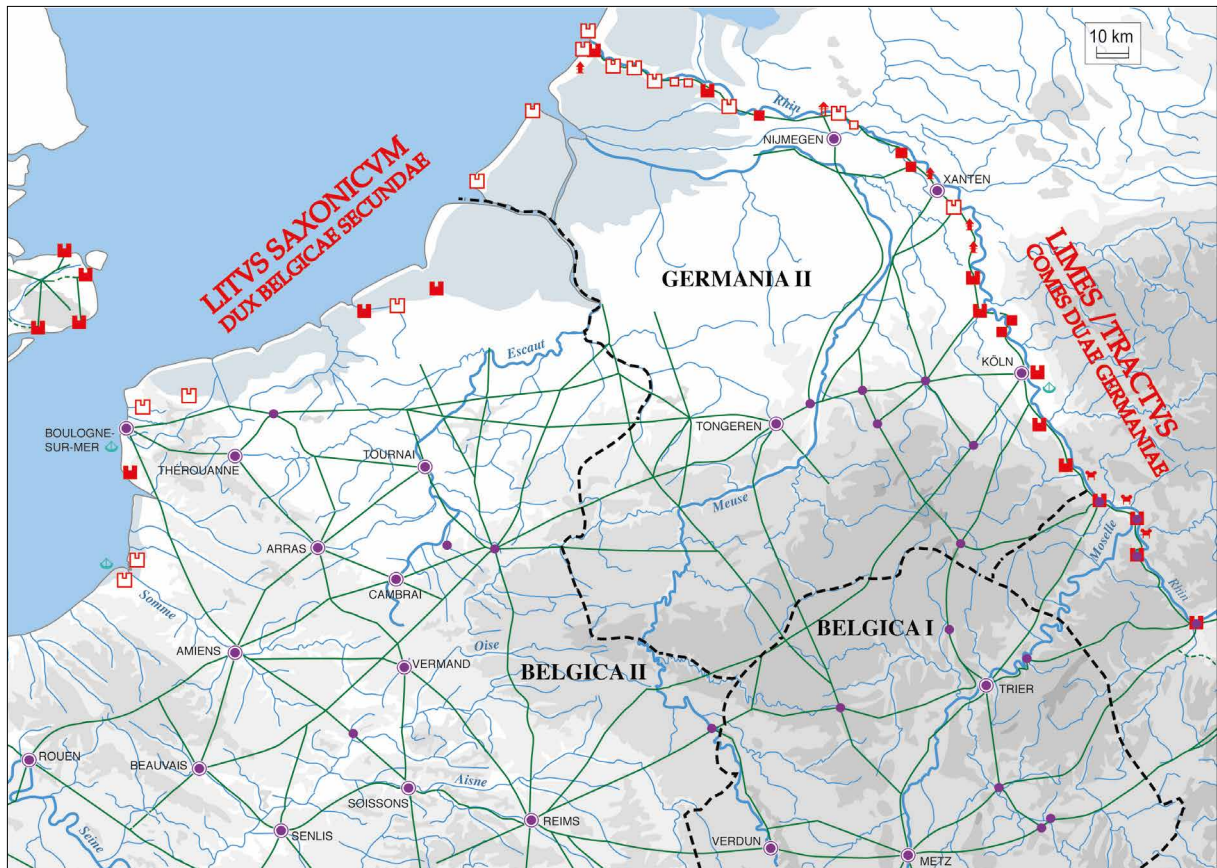


Fig. 1. Late Roman military forces on the frontiers: command centres and fortifications.

- *Litus saxonicum* under the command of the *Dux* of *Belgicae Secundae*.

- Rhine *Limes*. *Comes duae provinciae* (Count of Two Provinces) (c. 370), later reorganised, for *Germania Prima*, under the command of a *Dux* (Duke) with a *Comes* (Count) in Strasbourg (now designated *Tractus*).

	1		4		7		10
	2		5		8		11
	3		6		9		12

Legend Figs 1 and 2: 1 city (*caput civitatis*); 2 walled small town; 3 fort; 4 fortlet; 5 possible fort or *burgus*; 6 tower; 7 fortified landing place; 8 bridgehead fortlet; 9 road-post or road *burgus*; 10 official factory (*fabrica*); 11 *praefectus laetorum/sarmatarum*; 12 military fleet.

either internal strife or external invasion – to modernising the military toolkit. We also have to take into account a decline in military manpower over time,<sup>5</sup> the dispersal of soldiers into smaller units, and the increasingly multicultural recruitment of military forces, a trend that would pose problems of its own.<sup>6</sup>

The linear disposition of the troops was retained (fig. 1), even as the notion of a frontier to be defended evolved.<sup>7</sup> It was sometimes necessary to reinforce a particular sector, or replace incompetent commanders, as evidenced by the greater frequency with which field army units were stationed at various points along

<sup>5</sup> Southern/Dixon 1996, 67–75 (recruitment); Carrié 2004 (tax pressure).

<sup>6</sup> Barbero 2009, 219–236. The excessive ‘barbarisation’ of the army, which increased after 376 with the arrival of the Goths, was to cause more and more problems:

Richardot 2005, 332–339.

<sup>7</sup> Graham 2006. The anonymous author of *De rebus bellicis* (20) suggests that the frontier problem could be solved by building a continuous line of *castella* linked by a wall with watchtowers: Arce 2000, 7.

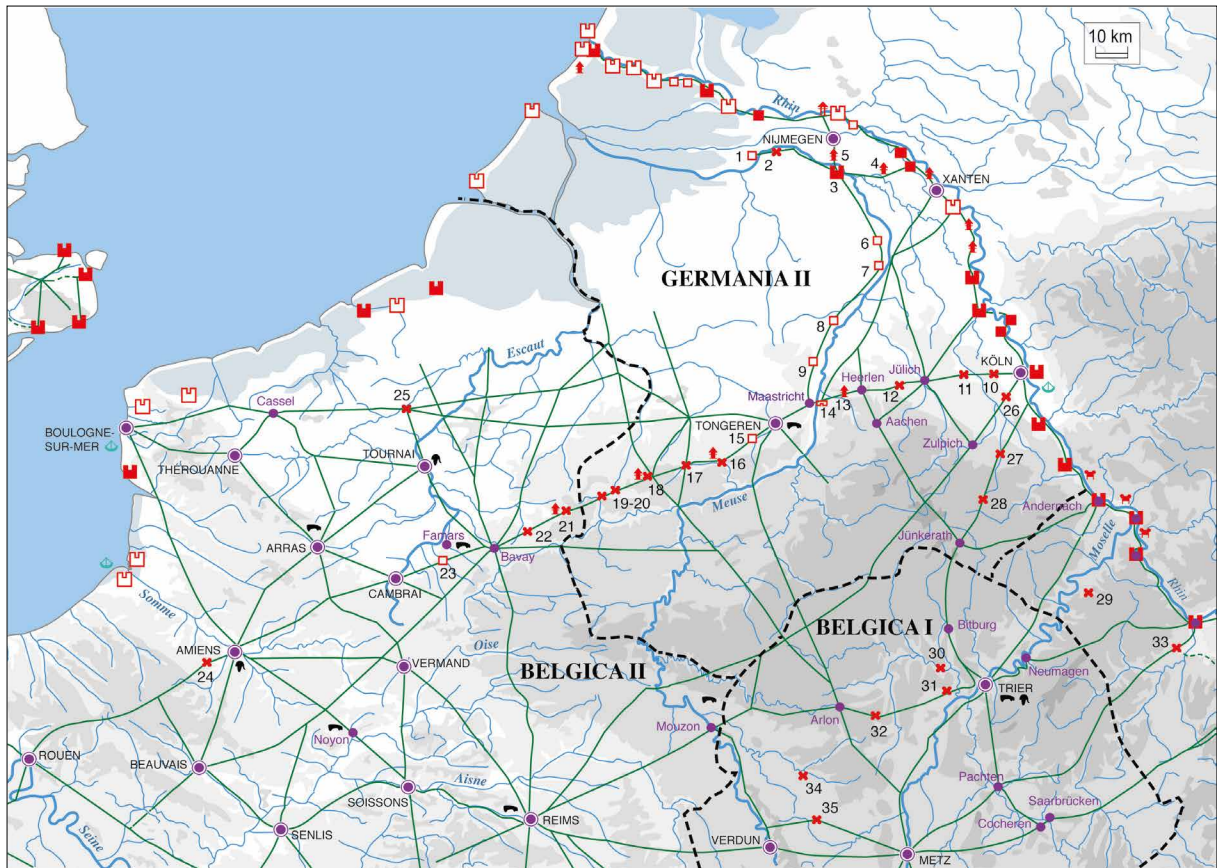


Fig. 2. Late Roman military forces in the interior: walled small towns, road-stations or *burgi*, location of the *praefecti laetorum*, *fabricae* and naval bases. Legend: see fig. 1.

Sites: 1 Rossum; 2 Kessel/Lith; 3 Cuijk; 4 Asperden; 5 Heumensoord; 6 Lottum; 7 Blerick; 8 Heel; 9 Stokkem; 10 Quadrath-Ichendorf; 11 Lich/Steinstrass; 12 Rimbürg; 13 Hulsberg; 14 Wijk; 15 Oreye; 16 Braives; 17 Tavier; 18 Cortil-Noirmont; 19-20 Liberchies; 21 Morlanwelz; 22 Givry; 23 Bernerain; 24 Revelles; 25 Kortrijk; 26 Brühl/Villenhau; 27 Euskirchen; 28 Nettersheim; 29 Mittelstrimmig; 30 Echternach; 31 Altrier; 32 Dalheim; 33 Bad Kreuznach; 34 Saint-Laurent-sur-Othain; 35 Senon.

the frontier, especially after the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>8</sup> Another measure was to establish buffer zones occupied by non-Roman groups on both banks of major rivers.<sup>9</sup> What changed in regard to past practice was that defensive networks extending behind the frontiers (fig. 2) became stronger and better organised.<sup>10</sup>

What are we to make of the idea of an empire going from decline to disappearance during those years, particularly where the army and its role in this process are concerned? For the celebrated 18<sup>th</sup>-century historian Edward Gibbon, the story was entitled *Decline and Fall*, and the greatest culprit was emperor Constantine, who, by weakening the frontier defences, dealt the empire a blow which proved to be mortal.<sup>11</sup> This is plainly wrong. The theory of 'decline' does not fit the facts, for again and again the army successfully adapted to changing circumstances. Diminished military performance during the later

<sup>8</sup> During the Valentinian era troops from the field army were sometimes redeployed in the frontier zone to garrison the forts: Southern/Dixon 1996, 44.

<sup>9</sup> This diplomacy, which might lead to a negotiated agreement instead of a military action, could be useful in deal-

ing with *gentes externae*: Blockley 1998; Heather 2000 (Late Roman art of client management).

<sup>10</sup> Brulet 1990; Brulet 1993; Brulet 1995.

<sup>11</sup> Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 1776.

4<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> century was simply not the case everywhere. Nicasie's arguments – that the quality of the frontier garrison troops, reduced to inferior status, had declined by the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century – are ill-founded. We can concede that there were no doubt negative consequences resulting from the loss of well-trained technical personnel at the battles of Adrianople and the Cold River (in the 370s and 380s), and we note the famous passage in the *Theodosian Code* to the effect that men whose physical condition was not up to service in the field armies could still serve in the *militia ripensis*.<sup>12</sup> But the fact that Roman armies continued to win regular victories right up until the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century contradicts any thesis of diminished military effectiveness during those years.<sup>13</sup>

What is clear is that the 'Fall' of the Western Empire resulted from a succession of interlinked failures of varied nature and origin which for the most part were not military failures. One crucial factor was a growing disconnection over the course of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. The political decision-makers became increasingly disconnected from the military, and within the military organisation the field armies and the frontier garrisons became more separated. The latter found themselves increasingly on their own. Informed by archaeology, recent scholarship regarding the end of Hadrian's Wall in Britain has proposed various scenarios for what may have happened in different places, ranging from the simple abandonment of military structures to occupation by armed groups under local command.<sup>14</sup> The geophysical and political situation along the Lower Rhine led to the abandonment of that frontier under very different conditions, imposing a different set of choices, sometimes at an even earlier date than in Britain. Where the mobile field armies were concerned, other conditions and choices occurred, but the central fact was the loss of control by any central authority. The development of military units composed of federate troops was a further complicating factor. Later, from the 450s, there was only one mobile field army under 'Roman' command left in the north of Gaul.<sup>15</sup>

## 2 THE LATE ROMAN ARMY

### 2.1 THE ARMY ACCORDING TO THE WRITTEN SOURCES

Late Antique authors, Western or Byzantine, were quite conscious that significant changes had taken place in military structures from earlier times. For Vegetius, writing in the 380s, the term 'legion' was a word inherited from the past; he is aware that in his day it was becoming increasingly difficult to recruit enough men to muster the former strength of a legion.<sup>16</sup> For Zosimus, size differed from legion to legion: here you might have five legions at the old strength of 6000 men, there six legions with 4000 each.<sup>17</sup> Agathias had legions of yesteryear in mind when he offered some figures, which were exaggerated.<sup>18</sup> New legions made their appearance alongside the traditional ones inherited from past times. The new ones were much smaller in strength – 700 to 1200 men – and often made up of units dismantled from larger formations.<sup>19</sup>

The principal military restructuring in Late Antiquity was the articulation of two types of armies with very different missions (see below). A distinction, only indirectly and incompletely reflected in the written sources, was established between frontier garrison troops (*limitanei*) and a mobile field army (*comitatensis*),

<sup>12</sup> Nicasie 1998, 4; 60; *Cod. Th.* 7, 22, 8 (AD 372).

<sup>13</sup> Elton 1996. See also the report in *Antiquité tardive* 8, 2000, 327. See also Heather, this volume.

<sup>14</sup> Collins 2012, 106–110. See also Collins, this volume.

<sup>15</sup> Idea developed by Liebeschuetz 1993; Elton, 1992, 176: 'Gaul was lost to the Empire when the Romans no longer defended the Rhine, and this occurred when they

could no longer fund an army in Gaul.'

<sup>16</sup> Vegetius, *De Rei Militari* II, 3. Janniard 2008.

<sup>17</sup> Zosimus, *Historia Nova* V.45.1; VI.8.2–3.

<sup>18</sup> Agathias, *Historiae* V, 13.

<sup>19</sup> Coello 1996; Richardot 2005, 63–65 (new size of the units).

which could manoeuvre widely across territories. From about the 340s onwards regional field armies emerged, and it seems that the central army was now made up of palatine troops.<sup>20</sup>

Ammianus Marcellinus is our best source for the evolution of the army during the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>21</sup> Then comes the *Notitia Dignitatum*, offering a list of military units, their commanders, and the overall military structures to which they belonged. We should note that this document telescopes together information reflecting different situations, which was obtained at various times in Late Antiquity, particularly the Valentinianic period and the very early 5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>22</sup> It is for this period that we have the most precise idea of overall organisation. There was an elite striking force, the Imperial Guard or *Scholae*, composed of five units in the West, as well as regional field armies (*comitatenses*, *pseudocomitatenses*) and territorial armies commanded by a duke with authority over the province.<sup>23</sup>

Unfortunately, we know very little about the territorial troops along the Rhine because those lists have not come down to us, except for the northern zone of *Germania Prima*. The *Notitia* does sometimes give us the names of particular units that may have originated in the Rhine area, although listed as a garrison far from the original homeland. The *Notitia* also lacks the small fortifications belonging to the overall defensive system revealed by archaeology.<sup>24</sup> We are told of a Duke of Mainz, commanding eleven military units along the Middle Rhine frontier, but to complicate matters we also hear of a *Dux Germaniae Primae*; both titles probably refer to the same man.<sup>25</sup> There was also a Count (*comes*) for Strasbourg. These snippets of information leave us rather poorly informed about the military organisation of the province of *Germania Prima*, although Ammianus Marcellinus does tell us that in 368, the command of both Germanic provinces was assumed by Charietto.<sup>26</sup>

The *Notitia* describes the military defence of the coastal regions separately.<sup>27</sup> A *Dux Belgiae Secundae* had under his command three or four sites located in estuaries with access to the sea (fig. 1); these are designated *Litus*, *Classis*, *Portu*). Further south and west the *Tractus armoricanus* incorporated several provinces, with a military system designed to defend their towns and *civitas* capitals, whose continuity of urban occupation is archaeologically demonstrated, but we cannot precisely date the military structures involved. Another inconsistency is the term ‘*Nervicani*’ also used to designate this *Tractus*. If we go back to the time of Carausius (286–293), we know from Eutropius that there was a unified command over the *Tractus Belgicae et Armoricae*.<sup>28</sup>

Zosimus tells us that the troops of the field armies were lodged in the towns,<sup>29</sup> a noted practice in the days of Constantine and mentioned by Ammianus Marcellinus, who makes it clear that a policy of dispersing troops in the interior of Gaul was frequently adopted.<sup>30</sup> We know very little, however, about the local militias, which protected the towns in their newly-erected ramparts, or whether the cities were also provided with a garrison of the regular army.

Finally, the *Notitia* offers us no information regarding the federate groups settled within the Roman frontiers, even though they might well have played a key defensive role at some time by obstructing the passage of other external groups through the zones where they were established. It was a common practice from the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century to make a treaty (*foedus*) with barbarian groups, offering them lands in return for military service; the lands might be located within or outside the imperial borders, in

<sup>20</sup> Southern/Dixon 2000, 35–37; for *limitanei*, see Isaac 1988; for *comitatenses*, see Seston 1955, 322.

<sup>21</sup> Various modern views on Ammianus Marcellinus were recently reviewed: *Antiquité tardive* 10, 2002, 417–425; 14, 2006, 325–328; 15, 2007, 356–357 & 16, 2008, 328–334. For a different use of the source, see Heather 2000.

<sup>22</sup> Demougeot 1975.

<sup>23</sup> Richardot 2005, 79–141.

<sup>24</sup> Southern/Dixon 1996, 30.

<sup>25</sup> Gauthier 2000, 16.

<sup>26</sup> Amm. Marc. 27, 2.

<sup>27</sup> Maxfield 1989; Brulet 1991; Brulet 2015.

<sup>28</sup> Eutropius, *Breviarum* 9, 13.

<sup>29</sup> Zosimus, *Historia Nova* 2.34.

<sup>30</sup> Demougeot 1956; Mac Mullen 1991; Brulet 2004; Richardot 2005, 237–239.

the wake of more or less tragic events.<sup>31</sup> These *foederati* might be recruited directly into the army; they might even serve as distinct units commanded by their own officers. Their role in the military landscape continued to grow during the 5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>32</sup>

Let us not forget another barbarian group from outside the empire who came to be settled within it, whether as freed prisoners of war or as simple immigrants, the *laeti*.<sup>33</sup> This practice had such a high public profile at the time that a special administrative structure, the Prefecture for *laeti*, was created. This was still in existence when the *Notitia Dignitatum* was drawn up. *Laeti* were not like regular Roman prisoners: they were conquered people who, as a group, were allowed to settle in the Roman provinces to work on previously abandoned lands. Although *laeti* were potentially dangerous and a case of looting by *laeti* is attested,<sup>34</sup> there is no foundation for the idea that they were a sort of semi-autonomous military colony,<sup>35</sup> depending on a Prefecture which was little more than an administrative bureaucracy concerned with immigration. Nor were *laeti* brought into the empire as ethnic garrisons distinct from the civilian population, a theory often proposed on the basis of weapons burials. However, recruits for the army were drawn from their midst.<sup>36</sup>

## 2.2 MILITARY REFORMS

The military reforms of the Late Empire present some common features. At the very beginning of the period the number of units multiplied, but their average size was steadily reduced.<sup>37</sup> Thus the traditional practice of detaching smaller units (cohorts, *vexillationes*) for service elsewhere now occurred less frequently. During the Early Empire the fighting units had been stationed along the frontier, but this changed gradually during the Later Empire. The major reform of 325 introduced the distinction between two types of military corps, one intended as a striking force and the other as a frontier guard. Different terms are used in the sources to designate the *comitatenses*<sup>38</sup> or striking force (field army, mobile army, reserve army, army of intervention, army on manoeuvre) and to distinguish it from the stationary or territorial army (*ripenses*, *riparienses*, *limitanei*, *burgarii*, *castellani*).<sup>39</sup> It is sometimes asserted, perhaps wrongly, that the quality of the frontier forces steadily declined, as its best units were regularly incorporated into the mobile army. In fact the latter might often be sent to the frontier for long tours of duty, and increasingly as time went on we see it intervening to reinforce the garrison troops. The two are very difficult to distinguish from an archaeological perspective, particularly in the final phases of the Late Empire. The interior regions of the empire were also reorganised along military lines, so that the overall security came to depend in these years on a defensive network stretching right across the imperial territory.<sup>40</sup>

The different stages of reform are sometimes hard to recognise. The reigns of Diocletian and Constantine can be taken as a continuum, with a general tendency to recruit larger armies and to reinforce the frontiers. Diocletian revised the size of the legions. Some he maintained at their traditional strength while new, smaller ones were created following what appears to be the new norm. The size and structure of the typical Roman camp reflects these new dispositions. We can cite, as prototypes, the camp at El Lejjun,

<sup>31</sup> Demougeot 1974 for the policy of *hospitalitas* as the means of supporting barbarian 'guest forces'. Goffart (2006, 123-135) argues against the thesis that this could have been the basis for barbarian settlement within the empire.

<sup>32</sup> Southern/Dixon 1996, 71-72. For the literature regarding federates, see most recently: Syv anne 2015.

<sup>33</sup> Barbero 2009, chap. XII, 195-217.

<sup>34</sup> Amm. Marc. 16.11.4.

<sup>35</sup> Barbero 2009, 207.

<sup>36</sup> Different view by Elton 1996, 131-132.

<sup>37</sup> Coello 1996.

<sup>38</sup> For the origins: Carri /Rousselle 1999, 621-628. Southern/Dixon 1996, 15-20.

<sup>39</sup> Richardot uses this terminology to distinguish three successive generations of soldiers stationed along the frontier: *riverains* (in 325), *frontaliers* (in 298 and after 363) and *ch telains* (after 398).

<sup>40</sup> Brulet, 1990; Brulet 1993; Brulet 1995; Brulet 1996a.

dated to the era of the Tetrarchs, and the one at Burg bei Stein, dated by an inscription of 294.<sup>41</sup> It was Constantine who in 325 established the famous distinction between a mobile striking force (*comitatenses*) and frontier garrison troops (*ripenses*), though this was not clearly worked out at the beginning.<sup>42</sup>

The battle of Mursa in 353, which led to a reduction in troop levels and the abandonment of some fortifications on the Rhine, opened the door to some devastating barbarian incursions. Its consequences for the state of the Roman military are incalculable, even though Julian successfully restored order. In the following years the mobile forces were reinforced, as units from the frontier garrisons were incorporated into them under the name *pseudocomitatenses*; these were replaced by new units entitled *seniores* and *iuniores*.<sup>43</sup> The frontier troops as a whole (*limitanei*) were broken up into a variety of smaller units of different sizes, designated *cohortes*, *auxiliae*, *numeri*, *milites*. They were commanded by counts (*comes*) or dukes (*duces*) whose authority was territorial. Germanic refugees were at this time often settled within imperial territory with a statute as *federates* (*foederati*). Under Valentinian we still see legions of 3000 men, but regular surveillance of the frontiers depended on cohorts of augmented size (30%) and on cavalry units, whose number had been doubled. Apart from these dispositions, more and more recourse was made, after 378, to barbarian mercenaries.

These were the military forces still holding the Roman frontiers during the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. But forts were not always occupied and local situations could lead to special arrangements. After that the frontier army dissolved along with the imperial state, its numbers diluted with the swelling of barbarian forces on the ground. Three major phenomena characterise this final period. Agreements reached with various Germanic groups settled within imperial territory led to them playing an ever larger role in the defence of the border regions they occupied. This is notably the case with the Franks, the Alamans and the Burgundians. The field armies gradually reduced their zones of operation with self-defence militias developing to play a role, for example in Armorica where they are mentioned in an edict of Valentinian III dating to about 440.<sup>44</sup> The last *comes* operating officially, until 469, was Count Paul. After that there were no more field army units in Gaul, just warbands enlisted under the authority of the generals Aegidius and Syagrius in what a later historian called their 'kingdom', existing until 486.

### 3 MILITARY STRATEGY OF THE LATE EMPIRE

Throughout Late Antiquity there must always have been a military strategy tailored to meet the needs of the moment. But the notion that there was also a long-term political strategy, the so-called 'grand strategy of the Roman Empire' as defined and defended by the historian Edward Luttwak, is an illusion. The vocabulary is modern; it cannot help us to understand and elucidate Roman intentions.<sup>45</sup> Nor does it help us to think that a new strategy with a particular focus could have been implemented to the exclusion of all others, as some of Luttwak's critics have pointed out.<sup>46</sup> In reality, different strategies co-existed and were sometimes in operation at the same time: maintaining border defence, using mobile troops to defend the interior provinces when barbarians had crossed the borders, attacking the enemy in their own territory over the borders. Indeed, proactive cross-border attacks were a frequent feature of military operations in this period.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>41</sup> El Lejjun: Parker 1987; Burg bei Stein: *CIL* XIII 5256.

<sup>42</sup> Van Berchem 1952; Brigetio and *Cod. Th.* 7.20.4.

<sup>43</sup> Nicasie (1998) links the creation of 'senior' and 'junior' units to Constantine's enlargement of his *comitatensis* army.

<sup>44</sup> *Cod. Th.* Val. III. N, IX.

<sup>45</sup> Southern/Dixon 1996, 29.

<sup>46</sup> See literature cited in n. 2 and 4.

<sup>47</sup> For the 'defence in depth' theory, see Luttwak 2009, 203-293. He uses this term to describe a coherent overall military system, but in reality a variety of strategies were practised during the Late Empire (Heather 2000, chap. C) and 'defence in depth' can only signify additional measures taken to reinforce defensive networks in the interior, such as highways, towns and hilltop fortifications.

It must be said, however, that an important component of the grand strategy theory, called ‘defence in depth’, did correspond – at least partially – to reality. But it is misleading to imagine ‘defence in depth’ as a plan to trap warbands that had managed to cross the frontier illegally. The real danger came from massive invasions, and only a considerable striking force operating from a reserve military base could respond adequately.

The ‘defence in depth’ strategy in fact amounts to a very pragmatic response to threats. It relied upon a varied infrastructure that had been put in place to protect the territories within the empire. Towns defended by ramparts offered shelter to the field armies on manoeuvre or over winter, and provided a reliable logistical base. These strongholds were complemented by new series of small or medium-sized fortifications along the roads, assuring communications, and resident militia groups could help protect the rural areas.

All these initiatives were not put in place at the same time. We have already noted that different measures came into effect at distinct times between the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, and this suggests that it is not helpful to see them as parts of a ‘grand strategy’. Where the defence of the interior is concerned the only real military novelty was the system of fortifications of small or medium size built alongside the roads to help secure the countryside.

#### 4 MORPHOLOGY OF MILITARY FORTIFICATIONS

The morphology of military sites for this period is more varied than in previous times, with the size of fortifications adapted to the smaller-sized new contingents. Some of the old legionary camps continued to function within their traditional limits at least through the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, although, given the smaller unit sizes, all the space may not have been used. After that time the site might develop a variety of uses, military and civilian combined. This was the case with the major legionary bases at Mainz, Bonn (fig. 4) and Strasbourg. In 2011 a good comparative study of the evolution of this type of site during the Late Empire was published.<sup>48</sup>

Alongside these examples we can cite cases where later towns developed from a Late Roman military initiative. One such is Kaiseraugst, deriving from *castrum Rauracense*, which is attested at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century; others are Maastricht, attested in the Constantinian era and Xanten (*Tricensimae*; fig. 3), a former *colonia* partially rebuilt under military auspices. As for the traditional towns within the empire, they were now surrounded by walls and subject to partial occupation, from time to time, by military units wintering or on manoeuvre. They also functioned as part of the military logistics network (manufacturing equipment or storing supplies).

The new model legion, whose strength no longer surpassed 700 to 1000 men, inspired a new form of fortress, with a square plan divided by two axes into four quadrants with four gates, and a total surface area of about 2 ha. We find this model along both shores of the *Litus Saxonicum* (Oudenburg: 2.37 ha, fig. 4; in Britain, Portchester, Richborough, Lympne); along the Rhine frontier (Deutz: 1.81 ha, fig. 4), Krefeld: 2 ha under Diocletian); and also along the road network approaching the *limes* (Alzey: 2.6 ha, Bad Kreuznach: 2.8 ha, Cuijk 1.5 ha).<sup>49</sup>

Fortresses on a smaller scale than these were less uniform, varying in size from 40 to 25 acres. On the frontier one of these might occupy part of an older camp, fitting into a corner, for example, as in Dormagen (fig. 5). But brand new, autonomous structures were also built, for instance at *Haus Bürgel* (fig. 5). Others were built along the road networks (Liberchies, fig. 5). From a functional standpoint they replaced

<sup>48</sup> Konrad/Witschel 2011.

<sup>49</sup> For a synthesis on forts and fortresses, see: Brulet 2006, 155-179. See also the site catalogue in the same work.

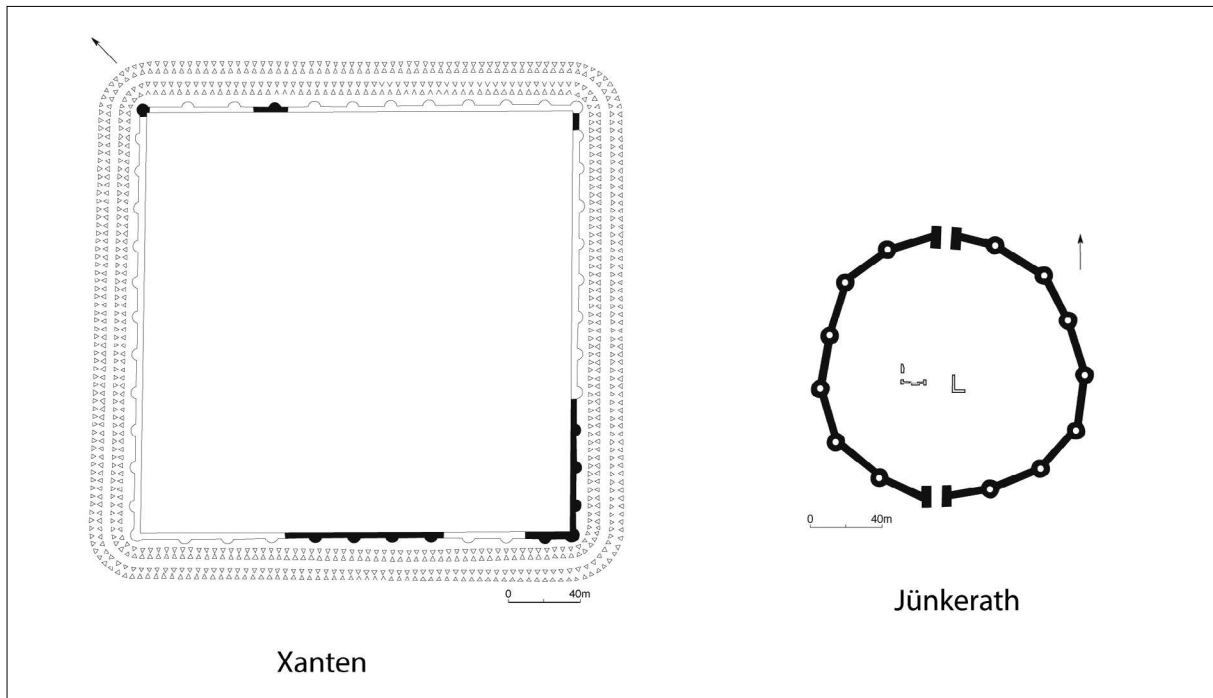


Fig. 3. Morphology of the bigger and smaller towns. The former were able to shelter significant military units (e.g. Xanten/*Tricensimae*?), the latter were agglomerations of the *vicus*-type, which survived chiefly because they were now walled (e.g. Jünkerath).

the earlier auxiliary camps but, as is the case with legionary camps, they were much smaller. Altogether these two types of structure bear witness to a drastic reduction in military strength.

One specific measure that does indicate a new strategic initiative to protect the road networks was the return to an earth-and-timber architectural idiom to erect small roadside *burgi* of 15 to 20 acres. The oldest date to the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. Just a little later massive stone towers were being built, sometimes on the same sites (figs 6-7).<sup>50</sup>

The Valentinianic project of reinforcing the Rhine frontier with a chain of towers sited more closely together is documented, although rather imperfectly, along the river in Germania Secunda but not in *Sequania*.<sup>51</sup> We also find a number of small ports along major rivers, notably the Upper Rhine and all along the Danube (fig. 8).<sup>52</sup> To complete the typological variety of military structures let us take note of fortified bridgeheads not only along the *limes* itself but also at certain strategic river crossings in the interior, such as Cuijk and Maastricht.

## 5 DEFENSIVE NETWORKS

When they were all operating at the same time, the different defensive dispositions put into place in Northern Gaul and the Germanic provinces<sup>53</sup> offered a great capacity to respond to contemporary threats. But the various systems did not all derive from the same initiatives, nor did they all remain opera-

<sup>50</sup> Brulet 2006, 167-168 and 159-164.

<sup>51</sup> Recently: Matter 2009 (map).

<sup>52</sup> Höckmann 1986; Mrav 2003; Mrav 2011.

<sup>53</sup> Brulet 1993; Brulet 2006a; Dietz 2011; Scharf 2005 (Germania I).



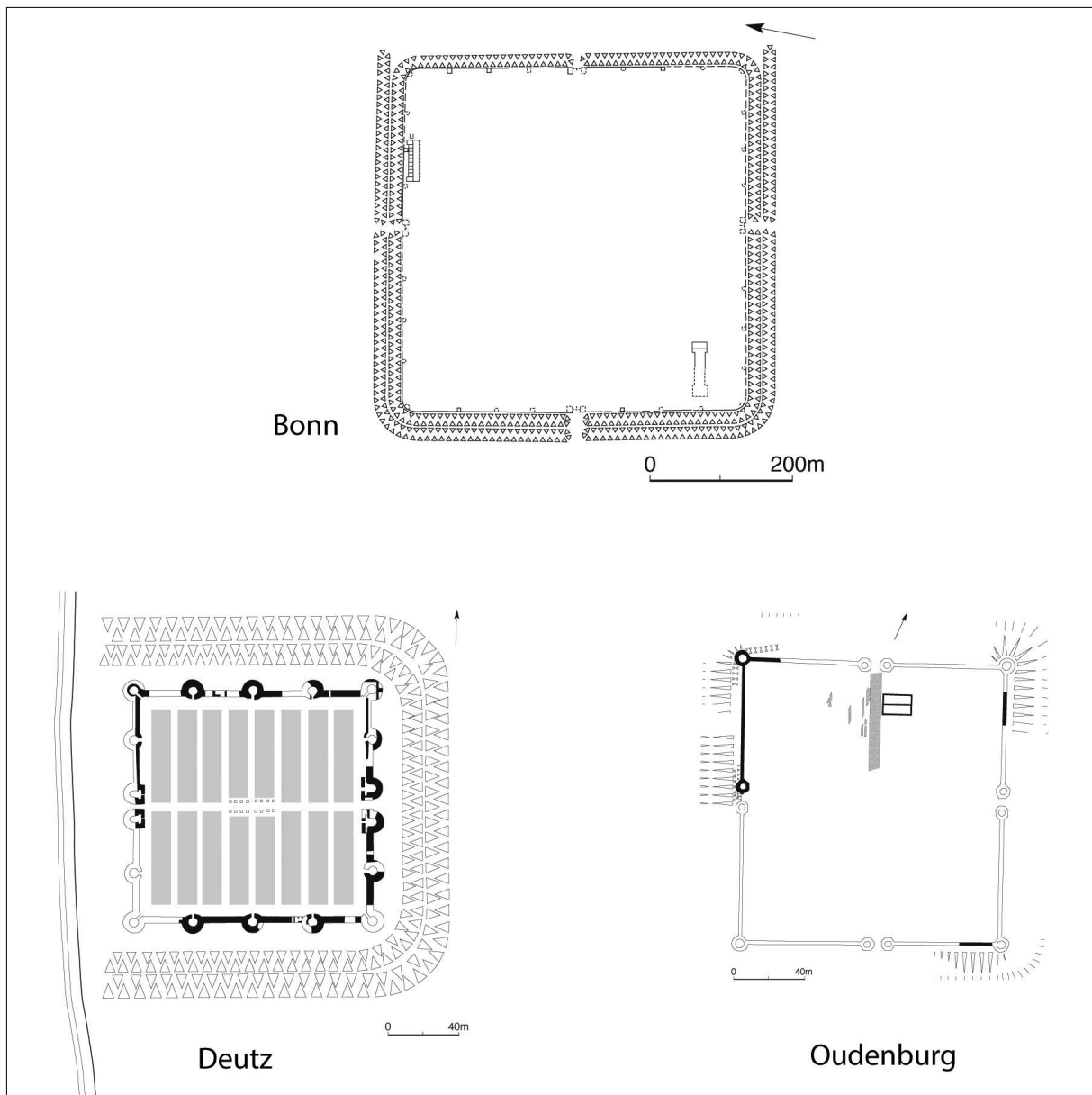


Fig. 4. Morphology of the legionary camps (forts). Some of the large old legionary camps were maintained for a time before also housing a civilian population (e.g. Bonn). The new legionary camps of the Late Empire are smaller and present a standard plan of about two hectares, whether on the seacoast or along the Rhine frontier (e.g. Deutz, Oudenburg).

tional throughout the period, which would have been the case had there been a ‘grand strategy’ in place.

Let us take the defence of the maritime frontier (fig. 1), where the defensive infrastructure was directly linked to political conflicts like those at the time of Carausius as well as to the increasing threat of pirate attacks. This system remained in force for quite a long time, but we know most about it during its late phase when it was known as the *Litus Saxonicum* placed under the authority of the *Dux Belgica Secunda*. But it lost its significance after 407, at least in Britain, when Constantine III withdrew his troops from the province.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>54</sup> For Britain, recently: Pearson 2011.

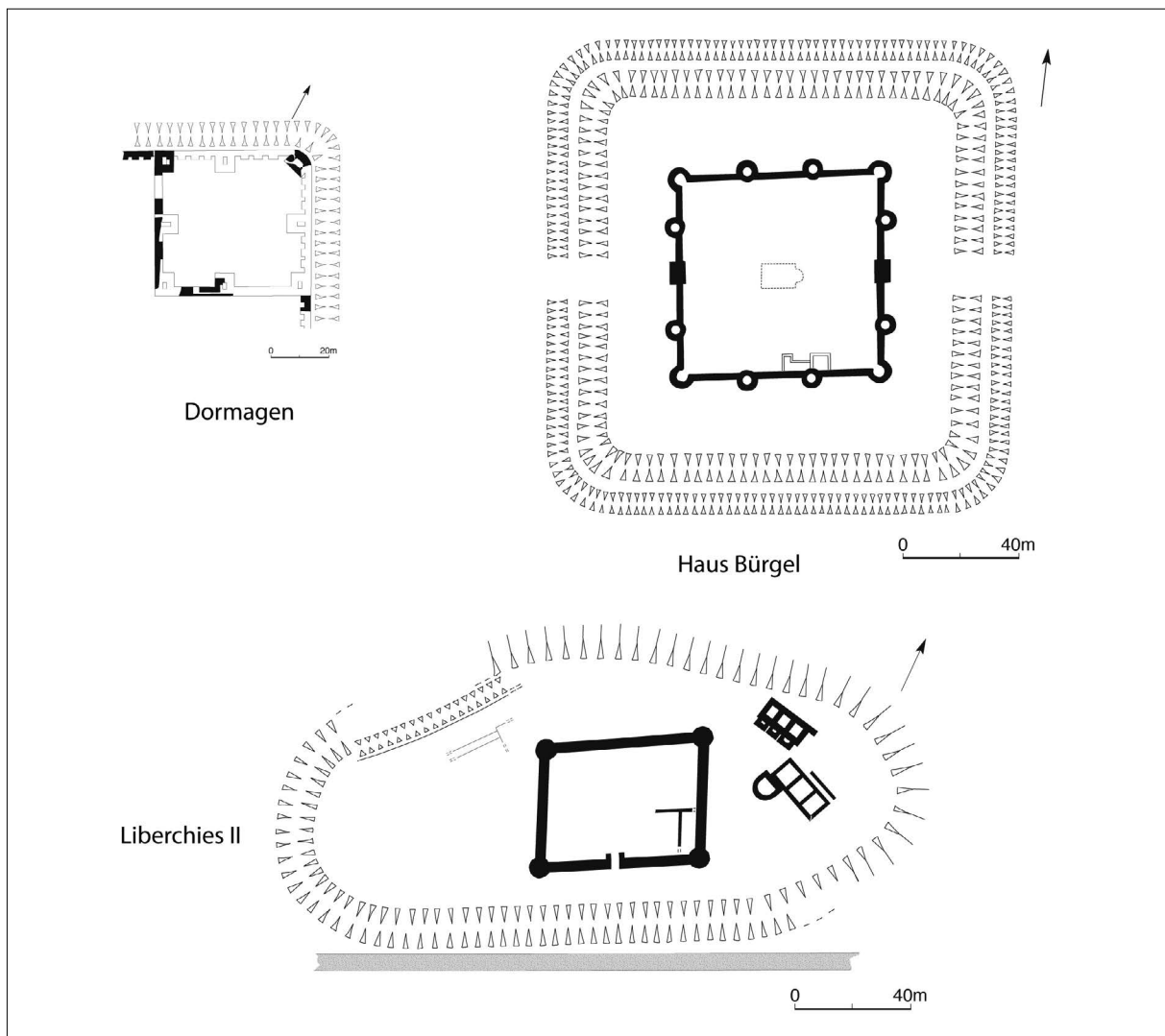


Fig. 5. Morphology of small forts. These are smaller in size and more irregular in plan than the old auxiliary camps of the Early Empire. Some of them were built within the confines of an older camp (Dormagen); some offer original square plans, with projecting towers on the frontier side (e.g. Haus Bürgel) or facing the highway (e.g. Liberchies II).

On the continent there is a problem of attribution for three or four military sites listed under the authority of the *dux*. It is unclear how sites discovered north of the Menapian *civitas* are to be attributed because this zone was not part of that duke's province. Other sites of a military nature must have been located within an estuary, such as those of the Somme, the Authie, and the Canche rivers. Besides the case of Oudenburg a number of possible sites near the coast have been proposed, so far without conclusive evidence, although the presence of cemeteries with 'Germanic' burials nearby (which are not in themselves decisive proof) argues in favour of the hypothesis. However that may be, the excavations of Oudenburg do provide a reliable chronological model for the development of this element of the maritime front. Between 260 and 280 the defences were rebuilt in stone; then, after a period of abandonment (c. 280–c. 320), the fortress was renovated under Constantine and the site maintained its military character into the first decade of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, when civilian families with a 'Germanic' material culture seem to have settled within the camp itself.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>55</sup> The chronological evolution of the disposition of military forces on the continent has become clearer thanks to

the excavation of the fort of Oudenburg and its publication.

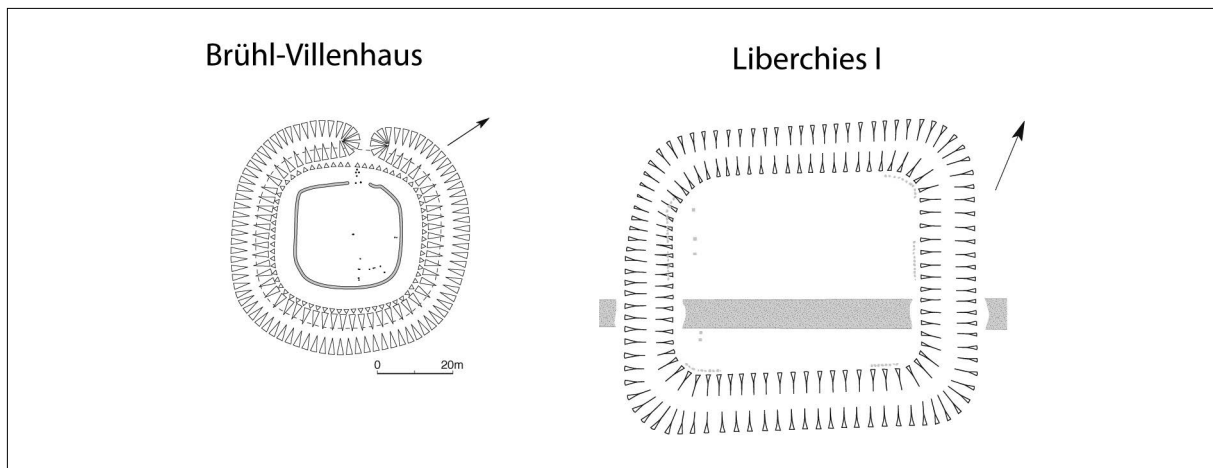


Fig. 6. A network of *burgi* of earth-and-timber construction illustrates the earliest defensive network developed alongside the highways (c. 275) (e.g. Brühl-Villenhaus, Liberchies I).

The story of the Rhine *limes* in northern Gaul is even more eventful, especially after 355, when garrisons were more often moved around and sites might be abandoned for a time, then reoccupied.<sup>56</sup> The Valentinianic period is particularly well documented, both in the writings of Ammianus Marcellinus, who discusses the rebuilding of the border defences and the new units which were installed or passed through, and by archaeology. The excavations at Krefeld-Gellep and Alzei offer excellent data regarding the internal occupation of these major fortresses right into the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Certainly they remained in use well after the abandonment of the maritime fortifications. As in the case of the questions posed by researchers regarding the abandonment of Hadrian's Wall in Britain, we can consider different possible scenarios here, ranging from a pure and simple abandonment of the military installations sometime between 430 and 450/460 to a replacement of the official units by armed bands of *foederati*, or Franks (who are attested in control of the region by the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century). Nor should we forget that civilian groups mixing with soldiers and settling within military installations is one of the features of this period. The examples of Alzei and of Krefeld point, in this regard, in opposite directions.<sup>57</sup>

Although the *Notitia Dignitatum* is unhelpful in providing us with much useful information regarding the survival of a structured military organisation along the Lower Rhine following the upheavals of the later 4<sup>th</sup> century, the archaeological and climatological data now suggest that we need to distinguish two geographical sectors with very different fates during this final period. Looking beyond Xanten, to the southeast, the Rhine defences were restored and maintained under Constantine III and Jovinus, with a continuity in the occupation of military sites well into the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. But things seem to have changed in the zone to the west of Xanten and Nijmegen. Some authors suggest that this region was no longer regarded as strategically important, and all military presence was withdrawn early in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Some scholars have put forward the interesting theory that the Rhine was no longer seen as a border to be defended against incursions, but rather defended as an essential communications corridor for transport by river and sea.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> See the articles on Krefeld-Gellep, Neuss, Monheim, Deutz, in Bridger/Gilles 1988, and the state of research on the occupation of the legionary camps at Xanten, Deutz, Bonn, Mainz, Strasbourg and *Castrum Rauracense*, during the Late Roman period: Konrad/Witschel 2011.

<sup>57</sup> On the military situation in the Lower Rhine, see Otten/Ristow 2008, 567-570.

<sup>58</sup> Otten/Ristow 2008, 567 and Richardot 2005, 197 argue for a real abandonment of the Germanies and the territory around the mouth of the Scheldt river. Heeren adopts a different position in this volume: the near total abandonment of the countryside need not signify the loss of military control over the Lower Rhine *limes*, as long as the primary objective of keeping secure the lines of river

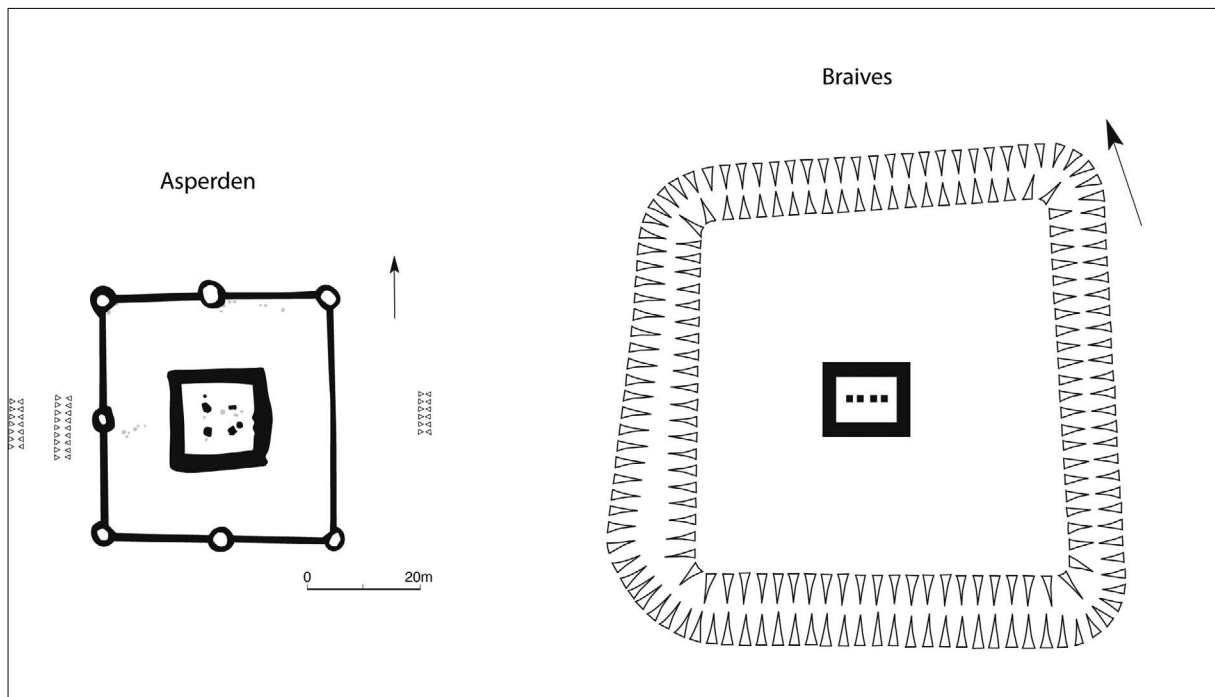


Fig. 7. Few watchtowers have been found along the frontier. However, a number of massive, well-defended watchtowers have been found along major roads, and sometimes on the site of *burgi* dating to the era of Constantine or Valentinian (e.g. Asperden, Braives).

According to Ammianus Marcellinus there was a line of interesting forts along the Meuse, before Julian. But we cannot be sure that these forts, located between Cuijk and Mouzon, constituted a specific and coherent defensive disposition, intended as permanent. We do know, in any event, that Julian was particularly concerned with protecting the passage of the Meuse, for he restored three forts along the same line.<sup>59</sup>

The towns present us with some interesting questions, which are not easily solved. Among them is the role the army may have played in the construction of the town walls. No general answer is possible, though in a particular case, that of Sens, we do know that when Julian was besieged there he ordered the ramparts to be raised.<sup>60</sup> We also do not know much about the administrative status of the towns, which makes it all the more difficult to decide on the civil or military function of the walls. It appears most probable that the small agglomerations in the interior of the provinces themselves erected ramparts in order to survive during a general climate of insecurity. It is worth noting that we find more of these in the east of Gaul and in Germania Prima than we do in the north of Belgica Secunda. The fortified towns were probably defended by local militias, of which we know nothing. Certainly they would have provided shelter for military units on manoeuvre, and they probably played an important role in the logistics of supply. In one way or another they thus contributed to the military infrastructure. They were also useful as command centres for the *burgi* located along the highways.

This chain of small fortresses situated along the major road networks was clearly a military initiative responding to the crisis of the Late Empire, and, set at regular intervals, succeeded or was superimposed upon the earlier network of agglomerations called *vici* (fig. 2). They assured a degree of control over traffic along the highways and the movement of refugees fleeing attacks; the closer one gets to the *limes* the

and maritime transport linking Britain to the Rhine and Meuse areas was maintained.

<sup>59</sup> Amm. Marc. 17.9.

<sup>60</sup> Amm. Marc. 16.4.

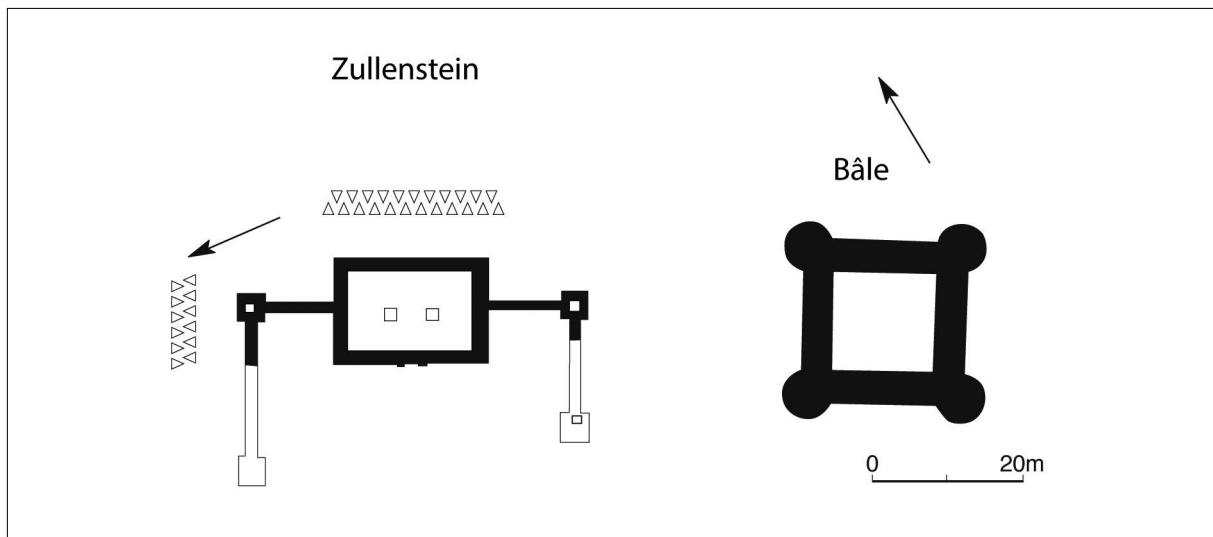


Fig. 8. Military structures complementing Late Roman fortifications on the right bank of the Rhine: fortified landing places (e.g. Zullenstein) and bridgeheads (e.g. Basel).

more numerous they become. Their small garrisons were without doubt detachments from larger units based in the *civitas* capitals and the other walled towns, which were all connected by these roads. We do not know what the exact administrative status of these soldiers was, and moreover, their status could have changed over time.

The general initiatives of military reform were undertaken at various times during the Later Empire, but they should not be seen as part of a continuous effort. However, if we take the example of the site of Revelles,<sup>61</sup> south of Amiens, as a case in point, we are looking at a network of fortifications defending a major highway, which traverses several provinces, from Cologne on the Rhine to Rouen on the Lower Seine. We can distinguish three periods that characterise the overall effort. The first goes back to the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and is typified by the appearance of *burgi*. The second is the era of Constantine the Great, when a network of fortresses and guard towers was assembled; these were sometimes built within the area of the former *burgi* and sometimes as transformations of an older funerary monument. For the most part, these small fortifications were abandoned by the middle or perhaps the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. The larger fortifications of the *castellum* type, situated at greater distances from one another, were sometimes still active early in the 5<sup>th</sup> century (the third period), along certain of the major highways, for example between Bavay and Cologne.<sup>62</sup>

There is another series of Late Roman fortifications to consider, although it is even more problematic to see them as elements of a systematic network than the cases we have already discussed. There are a number of defended hilltops in the Ardennes and the Eifel, in the *civitas Tungrorum* (some in the Meuse Valley, others in the south of the province) and further south in the Moselle Valley.<sup>63</sup> Questions regarding their nature, their exact status, their function and the span of their occupation continue to stimulate discussion but of the fortifications known in the regions cited above we can note that they were not very large and rarely offer proof of long occupation. Thus we would not group them with the true hilltop settlements known elsewhere, in Gaul or in free Germany, where these are well attested. The interpretation that has been proposed for the Moselle sites as places of refuge for the social elite can only be sustained

<sup>61</sup> Reddé/Brulet/Fellmann/Haalebos/von Schnurbein 2006, 368-369.

<sup>62</sup> Brulet 1995b.

<sup>63</sup> Brulet 2008; Hunold 2011.

for the larger sites.<sup>64</sup> In Germania Secunda the surface area of the defended elevations is usually quite small – the average is less than 35 acres. The nature of surrounding cemeteries (e.g. Éprave, Vireux-Molhain) confirms the military nature of these sites.

Two principal chronological phases can be distinguished for these hilltop sites: the period before the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, and after the Valentinianic era. There are examples of occupation going back to the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century with a break in the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> (linked to Magnentius' revolt?). A reliable chronology is necessary to pursue discussion of the function of these sites overall. Later ones, those plausibly linked to the era of Theodosius, could have served to attract Germanic settlement in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. We lack enough reliable data about these, although there are examples of accompanying cemeteries still in use in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. These elements hint at a certain continuity of rural settlement throughout the 5<sup>th</sup> century, adopting new forms about which we know very little indeed.<sup>65</sup>

In regard to more traditional rural settlement in the Late Roman countryside, there are cases known of defensive structures associated with villas, which still functioned in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. These were quite distinct from the *burgi* of this period. The structures in question were defended watchtowers or storage silos. A certain number have been identified in the plains around Cologne and among the Treveri.<sup>66</sup> There is no way to assess their official status.

## 6 CONCLUSION

There remains a fundamental problem with our efforts to identify the units of the Late Roman army in Germania Secunda as the text of the *Notitia Dignitatum* relating to this province has disappeared, if it ever existed. Furthermore, after the mid-4<sup>th</sup> century, the frequent movements of the field army, sometimes stationed in towns in the interior and sometimes on the *limes*, blur our understanding of the overall military structure on the frontier. What we can say is that the various military contingents maintained their coherence and carried out identifiable territorial missions. Priorities were defending the coastline and the river corridor connecting it to the upriver provinces, as well as other key river systems in the southeastern part of the province where fortified towns and *castella* bordered the banks of the Meuse, for example, and *burgi* lined the highways. Sometimes we try to link a particular group of fortified sites to certain military initiatives, but it remains difficult to grasp how such armed groups as *foederati* or *laeti* (to say nothing of forces under private command) fit into an overall administrative structure.

When all of these projects, which were not always simultaneously in force, are correlated together they offer the best result where territorial defence is concerned. But it is more realistic to label this a 'defence of the interior' rather than 'defence in depth'. A 'defence in depth', in the strictly military and strategic sense of the term, could only have been in play at particular times during the history of the Late Empire when the high command of the moment decided to combine several initiatives in order to combat a particular threat.

At all events, measures undertaken at a particular time, whether strengthening frontier defences, building guard towers along the highways, protecting harvests in the countryside or rebuilding the fortifications of hilltop sites, should be taken as aspects of a deliberate initiative to create defensive networks. It is these networks that must be studied more closely to discern at what date or dates they came into operation. In this way we can understand with greater precision the general evolution of the military defence of Gaul and the frontier territories during the Late Empire.

<sup>64</sup> Prien/Hilbich 2013.

<sup>66</sup> Recently: Henrich 2015.

<sup>65</sup> Brulet 1986.

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# Gold, Germanic *foederati* and the end of imperial power in the Late Roman North

Nico Roymans

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Towards an interdisciplinary approach to Late Roman gold circulation
- 3 Patterns in the numismatic evidence
- 4 The payment of Germanic *foederati* in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century
- 5 Circulation and deposition of Roman gold among Germanic federate groups
- 6 Gold flows to the frontier and their impact on Roman state finances
- 7 Just ‘Decline and Fall’?

References

## I INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

The subject of this study is the remarkable concentration of Late Roman gold finds in the Germanic frontier zone on both sides of the Lower Rhine (fig. 1). From a period of less than one century, we currently know of some 2400 solidi, amounting to almost 11 kg in weight, and gold ornaments weighing about 1.5 kg,<sup>2</sup> bringing the total gold weight to over 12 kg. How this quantity relates to the real volume of Roman gold circulating there at that time remains speculative, but I would say it certainly represents less than 1%.<sup>3</sup> We therefore have to allow for an influx of several thousand kilograms of Roman gold in this period. The considerable increase in hoard finds and isolated finds in the past decades (largely

<sup>1</sup> This study is a product of the research project ‘*Decline and Fall? Social and cultural dynamics in the Low Countries in the Late Roman empire*, carried out in cooperation with Wim De Clercq (Ghent University, B) and funded by both the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) and the Flemish Organisation for Scientific Research (FWO). This paper is based on a systematic inventory of Roman solidus finds in the study area compiled by Stijn Heeren and the author. This numismatic database will be published elsewhere. I wish to thank Stijn Heeren, David Wigg-Wolf (RGK, Frankfurt) and Johan Nicolay (Groningen Institute of Archaeology, University of Groningen) for their critical comments on an earlier draft of this paper. The responsibility for the text, however, remains fully mine.

<sup>2</sup> We know of some 2240 solidi from hoards (table 1), as well as about 170 single solidus finds. We have assumed an average solidus weight of 4.5 gr. For the weight of the gold ornaments, see Quast 2009, esp. Abb. 10.

<sup>3</sup> I refer here to an analogy with the Late Iron Age gold coinages in Northern Gaul ascribed to the Eburones and the Nervii (Roymans/Scheers 2012, 16–17). The total number of listed coins (less than 1300) can be compared with the estimated volume of the coin emissions (222,000 items) based on the number of identified coin dies and the assumption of a minimum production of 1000 coins per obverse die. See also the calculations in Haselgrove 1984.

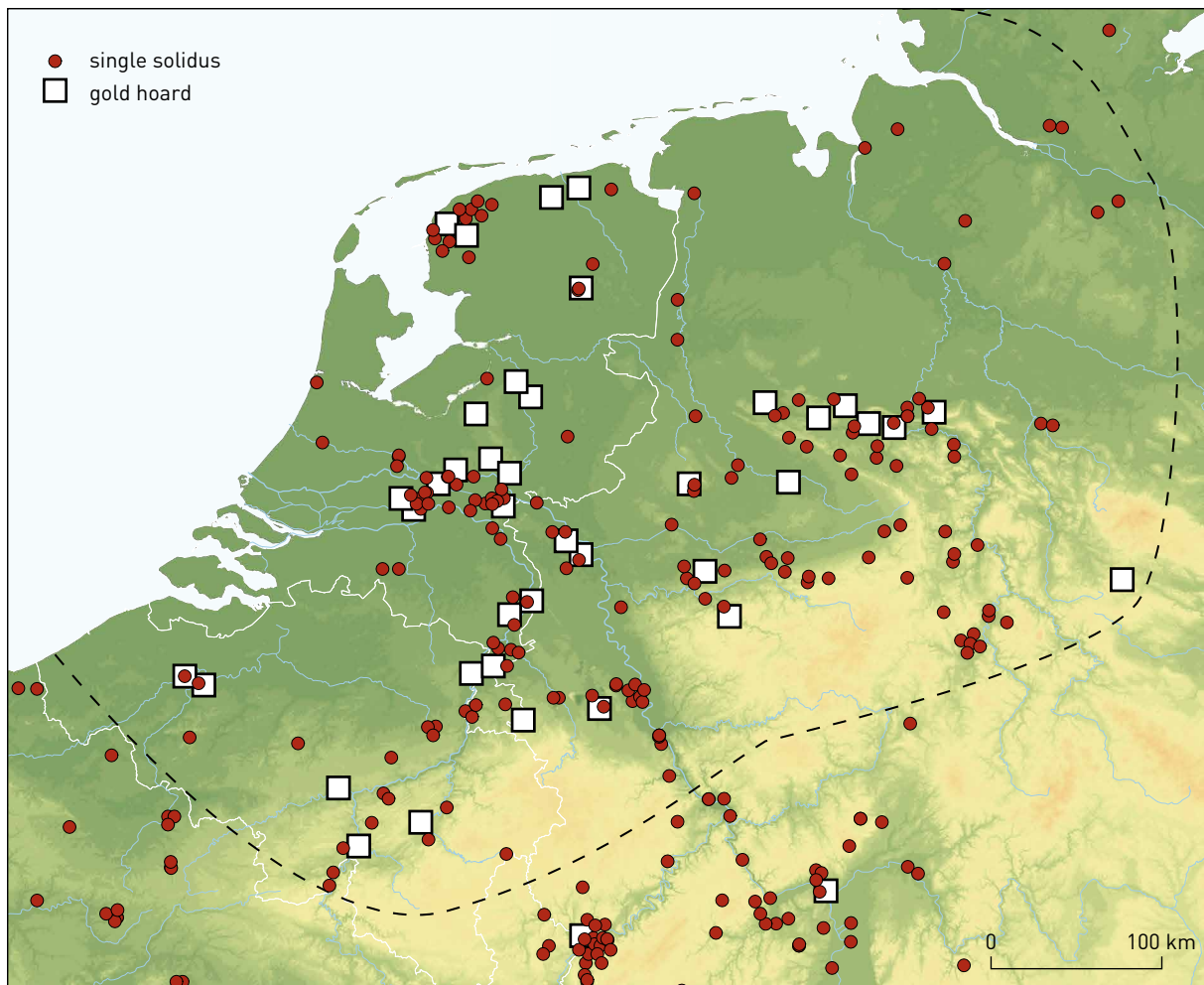


Fig. 1. General distribution of Late Roman gold finds (AD 364-455) in the study area between the rivers Scheldt and Elbe.

due to metal detection) enables us to identify significant patterns in the data. This study presents a new comprehensive overview of the material evidence as well as a social and historical interpretation. Specific objectives are:

1. Tracing fluctuations in the influx of Roman gold into the Lower Rhine frontier zone in the Late Roman period.
2. Identifying the spatial and temporal patterning in the practice of hoarding gold in this region.
3. Interpreting these patterns in social and historical terms, with special attention to the circulation and deposition of gold among Germanic groups, as well as the impact of this 'gold drain' to the Germanic periphery on the Roman treasury.
4. Exploring the potential of an holistic approach to gold circulation that combines methods, concepts and theories from archaeology, numismatics and history.

The study of gold circulation can in this way shed new light on Romano-Germanic interaction during the final phase of Roman authority in this specific frontier area. It could also offer an original perspective on the way Roman authority came to an end here. I will argue that the early 5<sup>th</sup> century, and in particular the short reign of the Gallic usurpers Constantine III and Jovinus, played a decisive role in these processes.

## 2 TOWARDS AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO LATE ROMAN GOLD CIRCULATION

For several millennia, gold played a prominent role in a wide range of societies across the globe, whether as ornaments, a means of payment or currency, a form of wealth storage or a standard of value. In many societies, including the Roman empire, the possession of gold was closely linked to political and military power because of gold's high intrinsic value compared to other forms of money. That is why ruling elites made great efforts to control its circulation, and why in state societies the production of gold coins was often a strict state monopoly.

This study employs an interdisciplinary approach that integrates data, methods and theories from history, archaeology and numismatics. Up to now Late Roman gold hoards have mainly been studied from a historical and numismatic perspective. The numismatic data were often interpreted from a Roman perspective, with little space given to the agency and motives of Germanic groups. It is therefore important that more attention be paid to the archaeological contexts of gold finds, which may provide information about the social use of gold valuables, the reasons for hoarding them and the identity of those responsible for the hoarding practices. In general, I will try to employ an holistic approach to money. Roman coins are regarded as both archaeological artifacts and historical documents, which enable us to 'furnish insights into behavior, actions, and events at all levels of society from top to bottom.'<sup>4</sup>

The Late Roman economy can be characterised as a gold-based monetary system.<sup>5</sup> The solidus was the principal means of payment and standard of value in all economic spheres. In the Germanic frontier zone, however, coined gold invariably appears to have been closely bound up with the military sphere as a means of payment to soldiers and 'friendly' groups.<sup>6</sup> Gold –whether coined or uncoined – offered the potential for enlarging or consolidating power networks through investment in alliances and warfare.<sup>7</sup> Against this background, changing interregional gold flows may tell us something about shifting power relations. The study of Roman gold circulation offers us insights into long-term shifts in power relations, but also into more short-term processes linked to the agency of individual rulers. The key question in this paper is what the study of interregional gold flows can teach us about the changing power balance between the West Roman empire and Germanic groups in the northern frontier zone.

As stated above, context information is the clue to understanding the motives for burying gold coins. Numismatists are familiar with the traditional distinction between (profane) *Versteckhorte* and religiously inspired *Votivhorte*; the former were intended to be retrieved later, while the latter were considered the enduring property of supernatural powers. In this study, I wish to put this contrastive view into perspective by arguing that the temporary hoarding of gold valuables in times of crisis may also have been embedded in religious notions.

Finally, we should be aware of some methodological problems when studying gold coinages. Because of their high intrinsic value and low velocity of circulation, these coins were seldom lost accidentally, thereby seriously reducing the archaeological visibility of gold circulation. In periods of crisis the practice of hoarding gives us a picture of the gold circulation in a particular region, but in periods of social stability this may largely remain invisible, making it difficult for us to interpret distribution maps. The absence of hoard finds in certain regions does not mean yet that gold circulation was of no significance there.<sup>8</sup> A further problem is the interpretation of isolated solidus finds. Should we view

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Haselgrove/Krmnicek 2012, 245, quoting Kemmers/Myrberg 2011, 89.

<sup>5</sup> Banaji 2001, 87.

<sup>6</sup> Duncan-Jones 1994, 82-85; Aarts 2015, 225 ff.

<sup>7</sup> On the key role of gold in the monetary economy of the Late Roman empire, see Banaji 2001, chapter 3.

<sup>8</sup> Banaji 2001, 79-81.

them as accidentally lost coins, as ‘mini hoards’,<sup>9</sup> or as parts of incompletely collected larger hoards disturbed by modern ploughing.<sup>10</sup>

### 3 PATTERNS IN THE NUMISMATIC EVIDENCE

I wish to start with an analysis of the Late Roman solidus hoards, since these generally provide a firm *terminus post quem* (TPQ) for the burial of the hoards. I will then discuss the isolated solidus finds, as well as the hoards with gold ornaments or *Hacksilber*, whether or not associated with solidi.

A total of 33 solidus hoards have been listed in the study area (table 1 and fig. 2),<sup>11</sup> which stretches from the Scheldt valley in the west to the Lower Elbe in the east, and from the Frisian terp region in

	location	youngest coin	tpq	before 364	Valentinian I (364-375)	Valens (364-378)	Gratian (367-383)	Valentinian II (375-392)	Theodosius I (379-395)	Maximus (383-388)	Eugenius (392-394)	Arcadius (395-408)	Eudoxia (397-402)	Honorius (395-423)	Constantine III (407-413)	Theodosius II (408-450)	Priscus Attalus (409-414)	Jovinus (411-413)	Johannes (423-425)	Valentinian III (425-455)	unknown	total	associated finds		
Group A	1 Westerkappeln	Valentinian I	364	16	2	1																c. 31	c. 50 gold bracelet fragment		
	2 Ellerbeck	Valentinian I	364	19	5	1																	25		
	3 Eidinghausen	Valentinian II	375	3	1	1		4															9		
Group B	4 Ophemert-Veelust	Arcadius	395	1							1												2		
	5 Grandhan	Arcadius	395	3	1						1												5		
	6 Kerpen-Langenich	Arcadius	395	x	x	x	x	x	x	xx		x											>400		
	7 Dreumel	Arcadius	400	1	1							1											3		
	22 Ezinge	Arcadius	395	1							1											x	2		
	8 Würselen	Honorius	400	7	3	11		3	1			2				5								32	
	9 Nottuln	Honorius	400	1											1							11	13		
	10 Beilen	Honorius	400	4	5	4	2	4								5							24	gold torques+bracelets	
	11 Venlo	Honorius	405	1	1			2				3				3							10		
	12 Obbicht	Honorius	405	5		1	2	2		1	1	3			3							2	17		
	13 Suarlée	Honorius	405	2	1	1	1	1			1	1			1								8		
	40 Vorchten	Honorius	400?						1						1								2		
	14 Dortmund	Constantine III*	407	42	113	48	39	46	32	7	6	42		60	3							5	443	gold torques+argentei	
	15 Echt	Constantine III	407		6			2	2							2							12	Hacksilber	
	16 Merelbeke	Constantine III	407													1							1	<i>siliqua</i>	
	17 Kessel	Constantine III	408	2	2			1			2	1	3	1	1							>5	>18	helmet	
18 Groß Bodungen	Constantine III	410	1			1	1				5	3	2									21	Hacksilber		
19 Sint-Denijs-Westrem	Constantine III	410	2	1			2						1	1								13	20		
20 Hatsum	Jovinus	411																1				1	2		
21 Menzelen	Jovinus	412	6	1	8	15	12			1	41		68	45		1	2						200		
Group C	23 Lions	Valentinian III	425																		1	1	2		
	24 Velp-Het Laar	Galla Placidia	425		x	x	x				x	x	x									x	>500?	pendants+torque	
	25 Lienden-Den Eng	Valentinian III	440					2					3	7								2	4	18	
	26 Xanten	Valentinian III	440	x	x	x			x		x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x			>400		
	27 Furfooz	Valentinian III	445												1							1	3	>3	>8
Group A-C	28 Winsum	Valentinian I	364		2																	x	>2?		
	29 Bückeberg	Valentinian I	364		1	1																xx	xx		
	30 Krietenstein	Valens	364			1																	1	2	
	31 Uddel	Valentinian II	375					1															4	5	
	32 Spradow, Herford	Theodosius	378						1														6	7	
without solidi	33 Huddestorf	Valentinian III	425																					silver ingots (stamped Val. III)	
	34 Beelen-Warendorf																							gold torque and silver jewellery	
	35 Östrich-Iserlohn																							gold torque and armring	
	36 Olst																							gold torques	
	37 Velp-Hervormde Kerk																							gold torques	
38 Nijmegen-Kraayenhoff																							gold torque		
39 Rhenen-Achterberg																							gold torque and chain		

\* The gold from Dortmund has been hoarded with a *tpq* of 407, although deposited much later; the *argentei* are considered a later addition.

Table 1. Overview of the composition and dating of 33 Late Roman solidus hoards in the study area and contemporary hoards with only gold ornaments or (in one case) stamped silver ingots. Sources: Van der Vin 1988; Kent 1994; Martin 2009; unpublished finds.

<sup>9</sup> Hoards are usually defined as ‘a set of objects deliberately deposited together, whether or not with the intent of later recovery’ (Haselgrove/Krmnicek 2012, 235).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. the story of the discovery of the gold hoards of Echt (Roymans/Heeren 2015) and Kessel (Prins 2000).

<sup>11</sup> Including five hoards with a less reliable *terminus post quem* date because only a few coins have been identified. See below, note 13. Most hoards have been published in Kent 1994 (= RIC X).

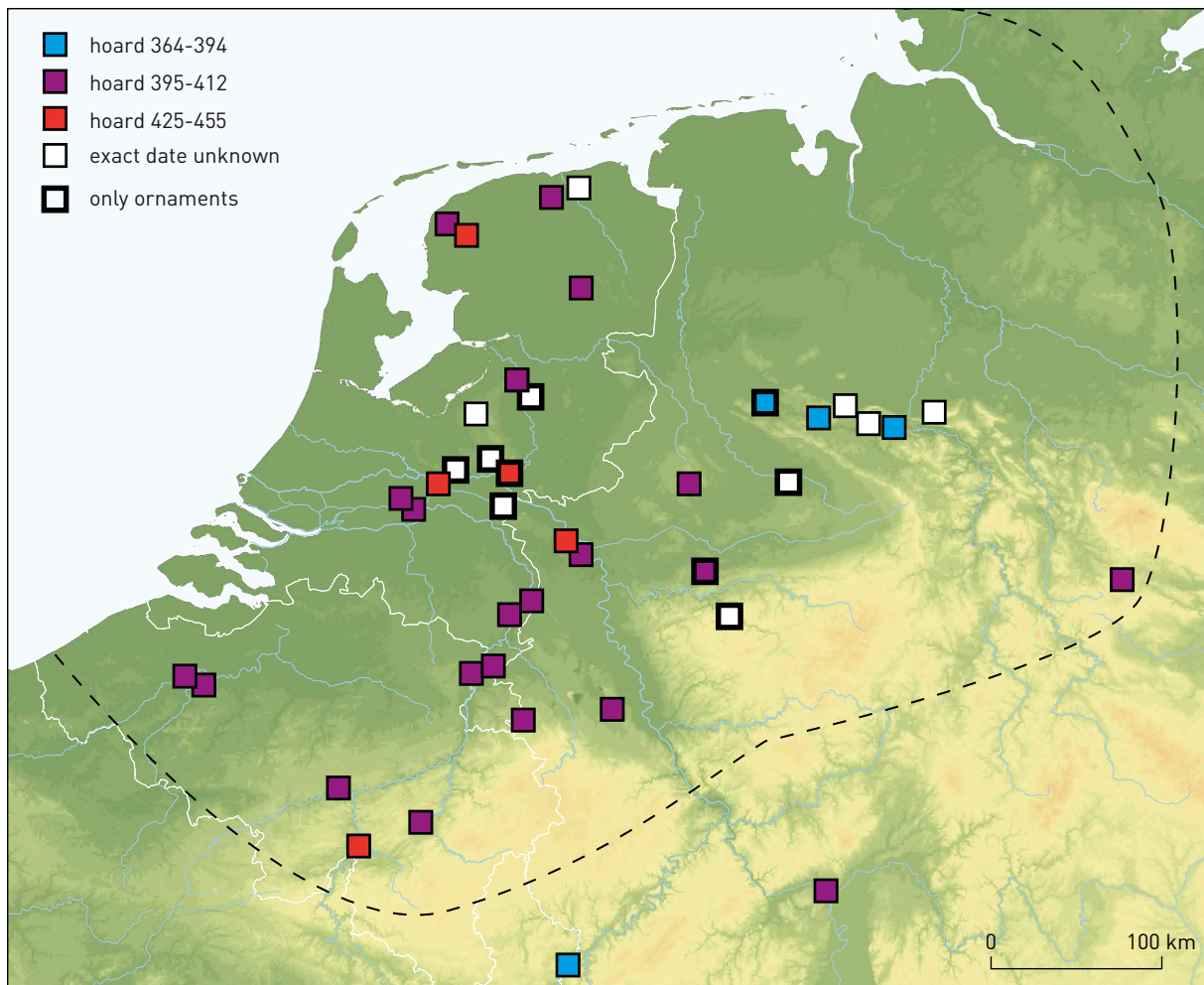


Fig. 2. Distribution of Late Roman gold hoards in the Lower Rhine frontier region, with an indication of the *terminus post quem* for each hoard.

the north to the Eifel and Ardennes hills in the south. I call this region the Lower Rhine frontier zone, which roughly corresponds to modern NW Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium. The striking similarities between the coin assemblages from the hoards was the reason for taking the area east and west of the Lower Rhine as a single unit of study; the Lower Rhine clearly functioned as an open frontier in this period.<sup>12</sup>

Our inventory covers the period of almost one century from the reign of Valentinian I to that of Valentinian III (AD 364–455). The hoards can be divided into three groups:

Group A – hoards with a TPQ between 364 and 375, or the period of Valentinian I and II;

Group B – hoards with a TPQ between 395 and 412, corresponding to the early reign of the West Roman emperor Honorius and the activity of the Gallic usurpers Constantine III and Jovinus;

Group C – hoards with a TPQ between 425 and 455, corresponding to the reign of Valentinian III.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. also the large quantities of 4<sup>th</sup> century bronze coins found on the right bank of the Lower Rhine: Ilich 2008.

<sup>13</sup> The hoards of Winsum, Bückeberg, Krietenstein, Uddel and Spradow are not included in this group as they have produced less than three identified solidi, which seriously

reduces the value of their TPQ; they might just as well belong to group B or C. In fact, the same is true of the Westerkappeln hoard (table 1), which included about 50 solidi, the great majority of which were lost unidentified. Cf. Quast 2009, 218 ff.

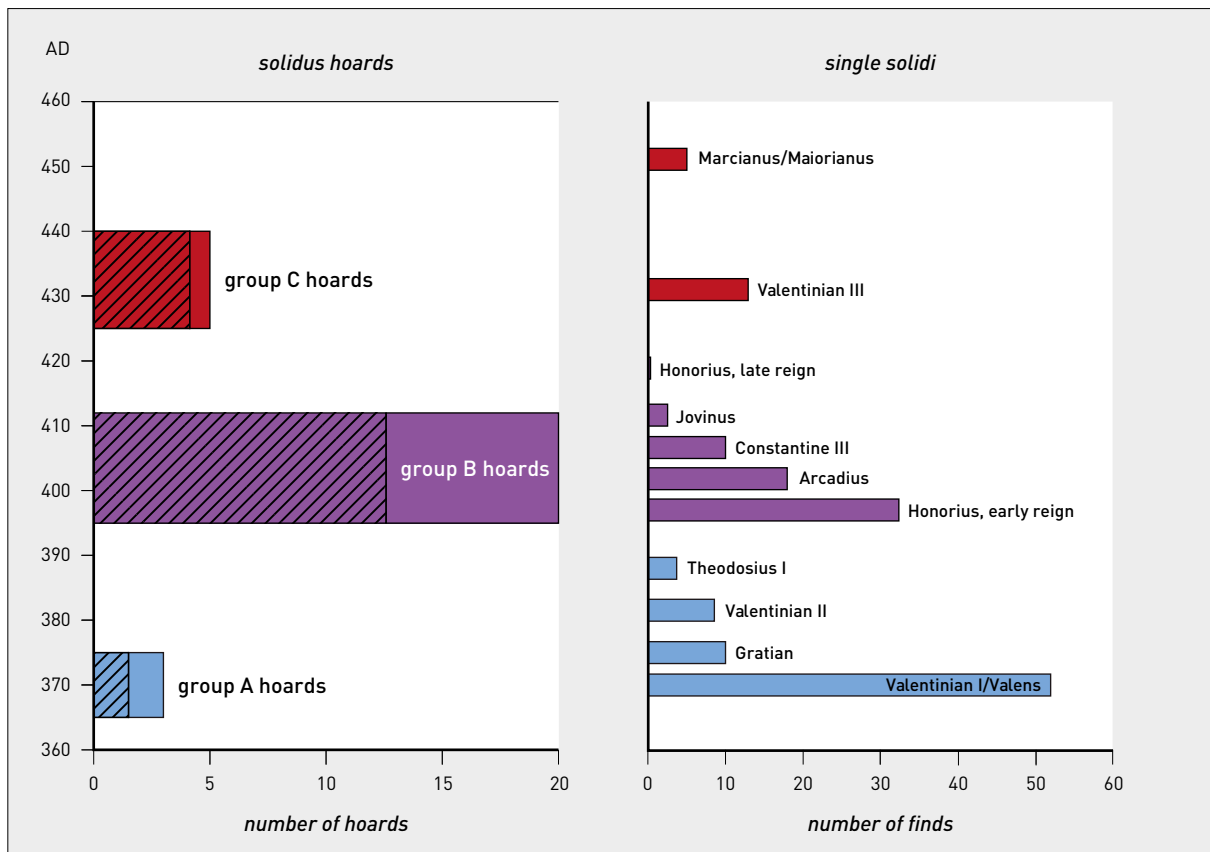


Fig. 3. Periodisation of the Late Roman gold influx into the Lower Rhine frontier region, specified for hoard finds (left) and isolated solidi (right). The hatched sections in the left-hand diagram indicate the relative proportions of solidi from previous phases.

Table 1 shows that the number of solidus hoards differs considerably per group. Groups A<sup>13</sup> and C have only three and five hoards respectively, whereas group B is by far the largest with 20 hoards.

It is plausible that the three groups correspond to different periods of Roman gold influx into the Lower Rhine frontier zone. The small number of group A hoards indicates that the volume of the gold influx was still fairly limited in the later 4<sup>th</sup> century, although the rarity of hoards does not necessarily mean that there was little gold coin in circulation. We also observe that the few hoards in group A are all situated east of the Rhine, while the group B hoards are spread equally over the area on both sides of the Rhine (fig. 2).

Most striking is the peak in gold deposition in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century; the group B hoards represent a clear hoard horizon that points to a major influx of gold into the area during the early reign of Honorius. It is significant that all Honorius coins from group B hoards were minted before 408. Also relevant is that the final coin in six hoards of this group is from Constantine III.<sup>14</sup> However, given the small proportion of Constantine III coins in these hoards (table 1), we should consider the possibility that hoards with a terminal coin of Honorius or Arcadius may well have arrived in the area during Constantine III's short reign.<sup>15</sup>

Group B hoards are further characterised by a high proportion (approx. 60%; fig. 3) of older solidi, especially from Valentinian I and II,<sup>16</sup> and by a mixed coin origin, with pieces from mints in the Roman

<sup>14</sup> The Dortmund hoard, consisting of a combination of two hoards, one phase B gold hoard with a terminal coin of Constantine III and a much later (late 5<sup>th</sup>-century) group of silver coins, has been included here. Cf. Lanting/Van der Plicht 2010, 113-114; Martin 2009, 7 (n. 30), 12, 44.

<sup>15</sup> The composition of the Dortmund hoard, containing 443 solidi, is significant. 102 specimens are from Arcadius/Honorius and only three from Constantine III. Cf. Regling 1908.

<sup>16</sup> Van der Vin 1988; Martin 2009, 9; Drinkwater 1998, 275.

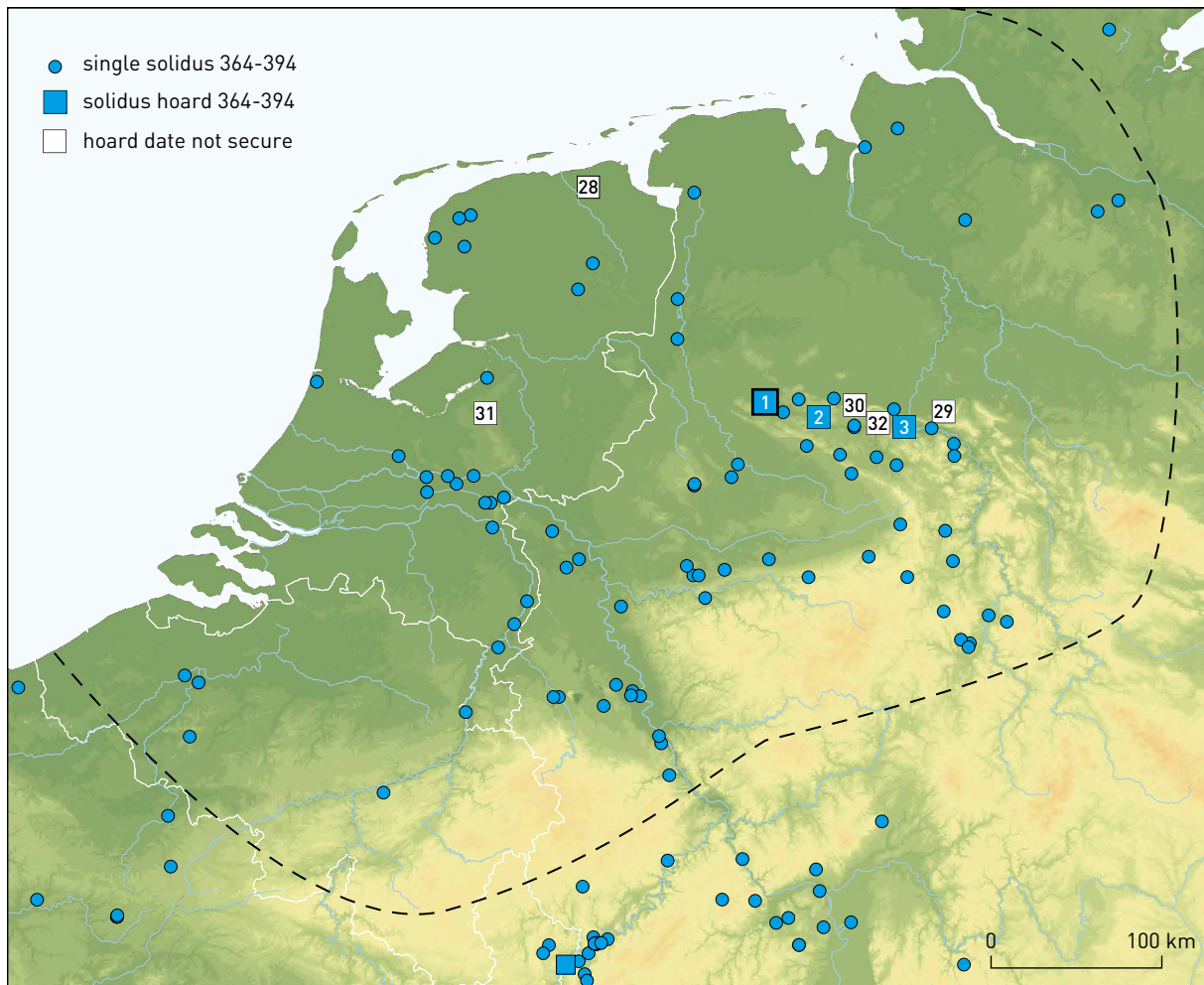


Fig. 4. Distribution of solidi from the period of Valentinian I and II (364–392). The numbering of the hoard finds corresponds to the numbering in Table 1.

West as well as from the East. The presence of older coins in the hoards does not imply that they were savings gradually collected by individual owners over a long period of time.<sup>17</sup> Rather, the gold hoards reflect military payments by the Roman treasury in the first decade of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, with a disproportionate number of older solidi.<sup>18</sup> The bulk of the early 5<sup>th</sup>-century gold influx may have originated from the

<sup>17</sup> See below n. 38.

<sup>18</sup> The composition of the large solidus hoards of Menzelen and Dortmund, which probably represent payments by the Roman treasury, points in this direction; even the Xanten hoard (TPQ AD 440) still contains many older solidi. See Table 1. Cf. Van der Vin 1988. The metrology of the completely excavated hoard find of Echt seems to represent a single transaction, as it consists of exactly a half Roman pound of silver and 1/6 pound of gold solidi. Cf. Roymans/Heeren 2015. The gold hoards of Menzelen and Xanten have also been interpreted as equivalents of whole Roman pounds: Martin 2009, 9; idem 1988. Some passages of the *Codex Theodosianus*

(12.6.12 and 12.6.13) suggest that from about 367 all gold collected as taxes was to be melted down before being paid to the treasury, which would mean that the treasury made payments in new coin only. See the discussion in Hendy 1985, 386–391. However, one may doubt whether this rule was still practiced during the reign of Honorius. And what was the policy of usurpers like Constantine III in this regard? The fact that not a single Late Roman solidus hoard is known from our study area with a homogeneous composition of coins from one emperor only, indicates that Roman authority had no problems with making payments in a mixture of old and new coins.



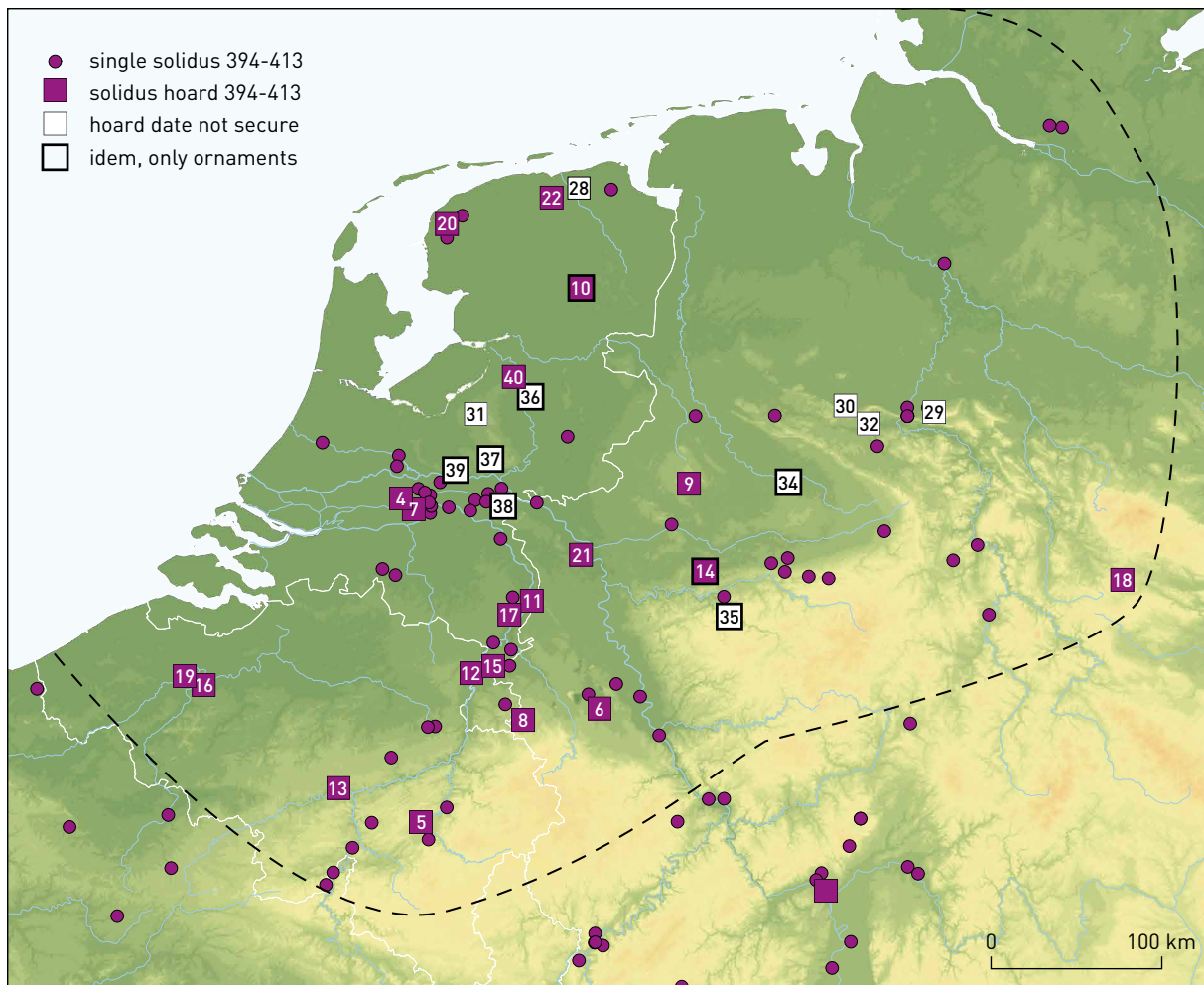


Fig. 5. Distribution of solidi from the early reign of Honorius and Constantine III (395-411) in the Lower Rhine frontier zone. The numbering of the hoard finds corresponds to the numbering in Table 1.

treasury of the usurper Constantine III, which still included many late 4<sup>th</sup>-century solidi (see also below).

From the 420s onwards we observe a sharp drop in the number of hoards (group C with only five examples).<sup>19</sup> Hoards with a closing coin in the late reign of Honorius are absent, indicating that the influx of Roman gold into the Lower Rhine frontier zone stopped completely after 412, followed by a small recovery under Valentinian III.<sup>20</sup>

How does the above hoard evidence relate to the evidence for single solidus finds? Figure 1 shows the distribution of some 170 findspots of later 4<sup>th</sup>/early 5<sup>th</sup>-century solidi. Like the hoards, these too occur on both sides of the Lower Rhine. Coins of Honorius, Arcadius and Constantine III are well represented (fig. 5), but the same is true of older coins from the period of Valentinian I and II (364-392) (fig. 4). The predominance of these older coins in group B hoards suggests that a substantial part of the older single solidi entered the region in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century. However, solidi were already circulating at an earlier date, as is shown by the occurrence of some group A hoards in the region east of the Rhine (fig. 2).

<sup>19</sup> According to Martin (2009, 11-14) the hoards of our group B were buried not until the reign of Valentinian III, and should therefore be included in our group C. I do not share his view, however. The influx of new solidi of Valentinian III is sizeable enough in our region (fig. 6)

to consider their absence in group B hoards as chronologically significant.

<sup>20</sup> The larger proportion of coins from Constantine III appears to be characteristic of these later hoards. Cf. the hoard of Lienden in Table 1.

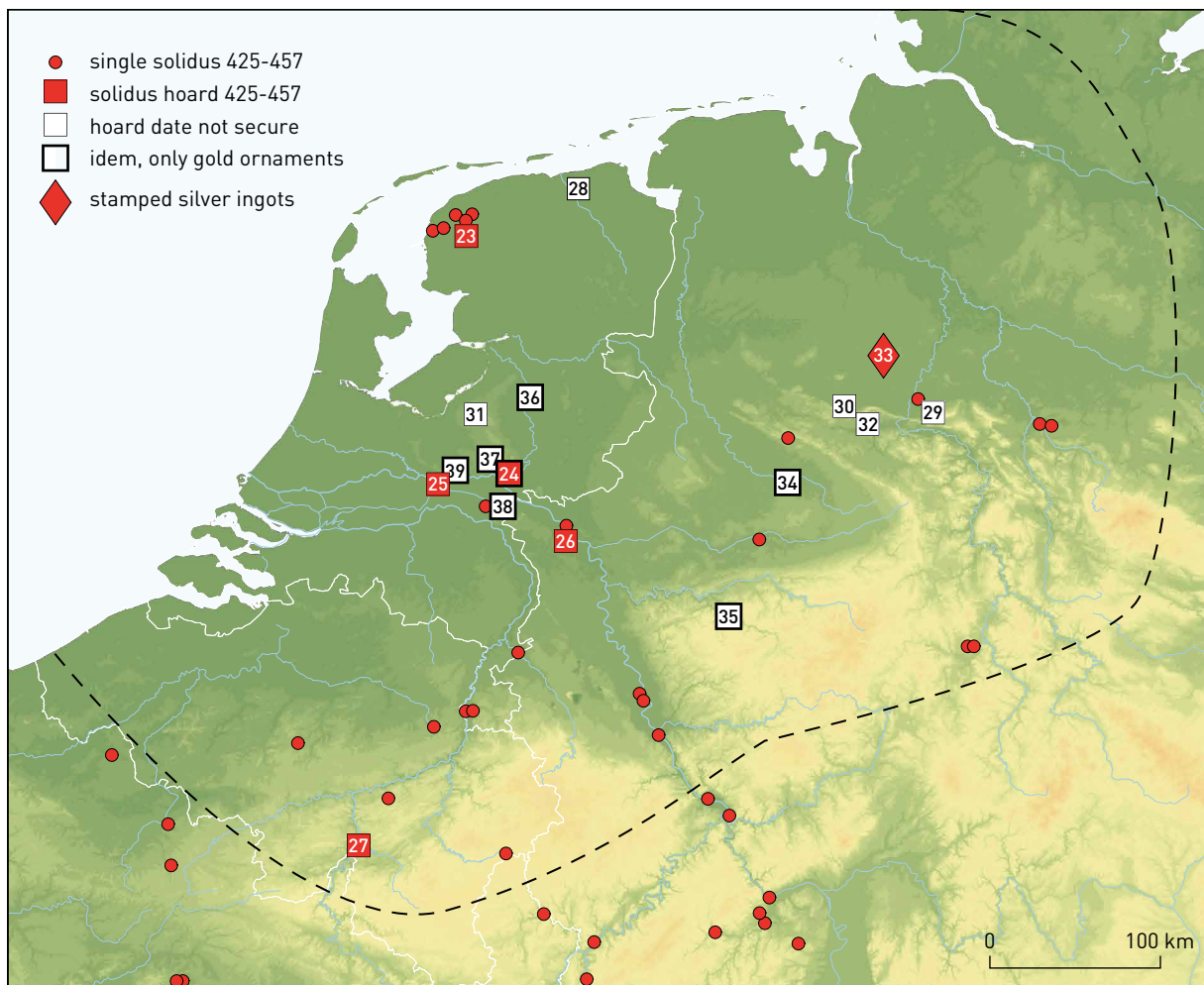


Fig. 6. Distribution of isolated solidi and hoard finds from the period of Valentinian III (425-455). The numbering of the hoard finds corresponds to the numbering in Table 1.

It is also important to note that a number of early 5<sup>th</sup>-century solidus hoards show associations with other find categories. Firstly, there are gold necklaces and bracelets (tables 1 and 2, fig. 4), which make their first appearance in the group B hoard of Beilen (fig. 11), but which also occur in the group C hoard of Velp–Het Laar.<sup>21</sup> Most scholars agree that the rings were made from melted-down solidi, which implies that they too can be considered part of the Late Roman gold influx. The only question is whether they were made in Roman or Frankish workshops (see below). Secondly, there are associations with Roman *Hacksilber* in the hoards of Echt and Gross Bodungen (fig. 7); this *Hacksilber* contains pieces of both functional domestic vessels and luxurious gift plates with a purely representational function.<sup>22</sup>

For the further interpretation of the gold finds described above it is important to separately analyse two phenomena: the early 5<sup>th</sup>-century peak in the gold *influx* into the northern frontier region and the peak in gold *deposition* in the same phase or slightly later. Different processes were responsible for these phenomena, which will be analysed in more detail in Sections 4 and 5.

<sup>21</sup> Heidinga 1990; Quast 2009. The Westerkappeln hoard, which also contained a fragment of a gold necklace or bracelet (probably of the Velp type), has a TPQ of AD 364. This TPQ is of limited value, however, since only 19

of the approx. 50 solidi have been preserved and identified. Cf. Quast 2009, 218.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Roymans/Heeren, 2015 (Echt) and Grünhagen 1954 (Gross Bodungen).



Fig. 7. Early 5<sup>th</sup>-century hoards of Echt and Gross Bodungen containing a combination of solidi and *Hacksilber*. After Roymans/Heeren 2015, and Von Freeden/Von Schnurbein 2002, 283.

#### 4 THE PAYMENT OF GERMANIC FOEDERATI IN THE EARLY 5<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

What processes were responsible for the massive influx of Roman gold in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century? Two general historical developments within the Late Roman empire are directly relevant for our study area: the increasing fragmentation of imperial power and the growing power of Germanic groups in the frontier zones. In the first decade of the 5<sup>th</sup> century these processes led to a catastrophic weakening of Roman central authority and to political and military chaos in the Roman North. Absolute low points were Stilicho's withdrawal of regular Roman troops from the Rhine in 402, the Germanic incursions of 405 or 406 near Mainz, the withdrawal of the Roman army from Britannia in 407, and the fierce struggle for power between Honorius and the usurpers Constantine III (407-411) and Jovinus (411-413).

Against this historical backdrop, how should we understand the early 5<sup>th</sup>-century gold influx into the Lower Rhine frontier zone? Most scholars agree that this phenomenon can be linked to payments by the Roman authorities to Germanic federate groups operating in Roman military networks.<sup>23</sup> West and south of the Lower Rhine, the distribution of gold hoards and isolated solidus finds corresponds to rural areas where the original provincial-Roman population had almost completely disappeared and where new Germanic groups had settled around 400.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Lamarcq/Rogge 1996, 110; Aarts 2015, 224, and esp. Martin 2009.

<sup>24</sup> Germanic settlements from the early 5<sup>th</sup> century have been excavated at Gennep, Goirle, Alphen, Breda, Tiel, Helden, Voerendaal, Neerharen, Hasselt and Geldrop.

These newly founded Germanic settlements from c. 400 AD can be well identified archaeologically. For a recent overview for the southern Netherlands and Belgium, see Lamarcq/Rogge 1996, 122 ff., fig. 23; Theuvs 2008; Heeren 2015, 284 ff. and Table 5; Heeren, this volume.

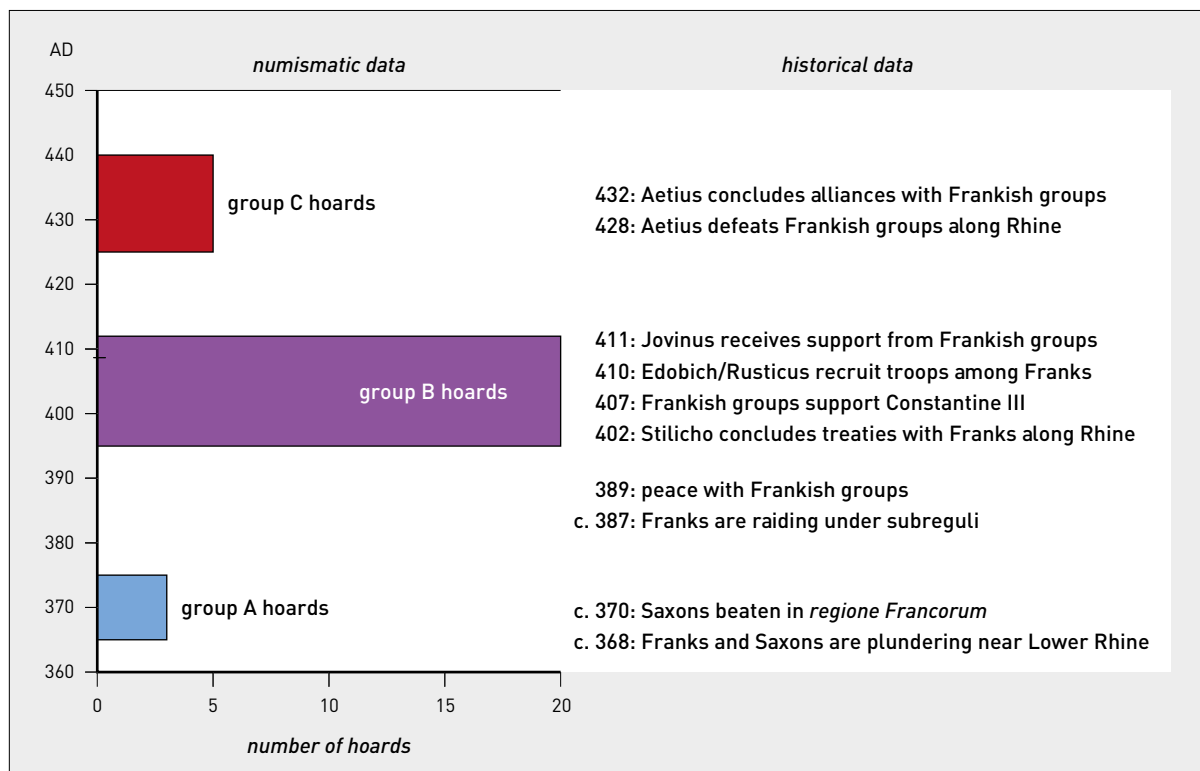


Fig. 8. Diagram showing the chronological ordering of Roman solidus hoards (left) and historical events possibly related to payments of gold to Frankish groups.

The control of the West Roman empire over Germanic groups in the Rhineland frontier zone had collapsed in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century. Germanic groups (both Franks and Alamanni) tactfully benefited from the civil war between Honorius and the Gallic usurpers. For Constantine III, the strategic importance of the Lower Rhine frontier zone was above all its role as a recruitment area for high-quality Frankish units.<sup>25</sup> If we combine the archaeological and historical evidence, we see a change in imperial policy with regard to Germanic *foederati*. Until the very end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, only defeated groups were allowed to settle in the empire, where they were compelled to work the land and provide recruits (the *laeti*). In the early 5<sup>th</sup> century autonomous federate groups were not only allowed to settle in Gaul, but their leaders on both sides of the Rhine were included in the Roman authorities' network of gold gifts.<sup>26</sup> The strategy of winning over external Germanic federate groups with gold subsidies and gifts was not entirely new here,<sup>27</sup> but it was now applied on a much larger scale and often combined with settlement within the empire.

<sup>25</sup> The Franks of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries did not yet form an ethnic group or tribe; 'Franks' should instead be seen as an external, collective name for a number of Germanic groups inhabiting the Lower Rhine frontier zone. Cf. Theuvs 2008, 766 ff; Esmonde Cleary 2013, 376 ff.

<sup>26</sup> Lamarcq/Rogge 1996, 110; Aarts 2015, 224, and esp. Martin 2009.

<sup>27</sup> Amm. Marc. 26.5.7 reports that in AD 364 the Roman authorities' failure to supply in full the regular gifts to the Alamanni prompted the latter to start a war. See also the payments to the Germanic tribe of the Juthungi in the

later 3<sup>rd</sup> century. The Greek historian Dexippos (Fragment 6; Martin 2006) reports that in c. 270 the Juthungi, after having ravaged the Roman provinces, demanded from emperor Aurelian 'gold, uncoined or coined, and silver.' The Juthungi saw this as 'a confirmation of their friendship'.

<sup>28</sup> Illustrative, however, are the excessive annual payments of gold by the East Roman emperor to the expanding Huns in the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century, and by the West Roman government to the Visigoths in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century. See below.

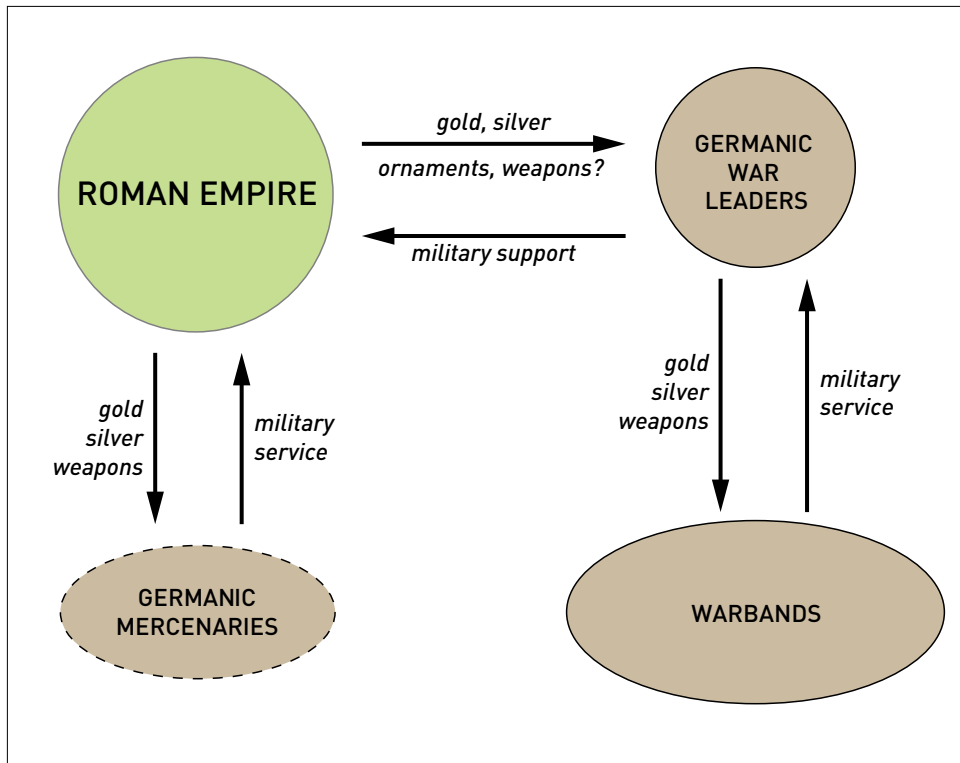


Fig. 9. Exchange relations between the Roman state and Germanic war leaders and their war bands in the Late Roman North.

Unfortunately, we lack concrete documentary evidence for payments of gold or silver to Germanic *foederati* in the early 5<sup>th</sup>-century Rhine frontier.<sup>28</sup> However, for our study area we can point to a series of historical references to Roman alliances with Germanic groups, which were presumably linked to payments in gold (fig. 8). These are:

- a. Stilicho's withdrawal of regular Roman Rhine troops in 401-402.<sup>29</sup> He supposedly made arrangements with Frankish groups about defending the Rhine border in the name of Rome. Indeed, during the *limes* fall of 405 or 406 only the Franks fought against the Germanic invaders, no doubt in order to perform their duty as federates.<sup>30</sup>
- b. Constantine III's invasion of Gaul in 407-408, whereupon he immediately concluded alliances with Germanic groups along the Rhine.<sup>31</sup> He quite possibly paid them with gold originating from the state treasury that he had brought with him from Britannia.<sup>32</sup>
- c. the raising of a new army among Germanic *foederati* by Constantine III in 410-411. His general Edo-bich, himself a Frank, led a diplomatic mission to the Franks and Alamanni on the east bank of the Rhine.<sup>33</sup> After the death of Constantine III the usurper Jovinus (411-413) seems to have taken over the Germanic armed force initially raised under Constantine's command.<sup>34</sup> Coins and medallions from Jovinus found in the Lower Rhine frontier zone show that he did indeed had a power base in this region.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Claudianus, *Bello Gothico*, 419-429.

<sup>30</sup> Orosius 7.40.3; Gregory of Tours, *HF* 2.9; Drinkwater 1998, 273; Kulikowski 2000, 326.

<sup>31</sup> Zosimus, *Historia Nova* 6.2.4. Cf. Hoffmann 1995, 560; Drinkwater 1998, 282.

<sup>32</sup> Esmonde Cleary 1989; Elton 1996.

<sup>33</sup> Gregory of Tours, *HF* 2.9. Cf. Hoffmann 1995, 560.

<sup>34</sup> Hoffmann 1995, 561; Drinkwater 1998, 288 ff.

<sup>35</sup> Werner 1958, Abb. 21 (Karte 5); Haalebos/Willems 1999, 260-261; Eck 2004, 824, n. 95.

Through what mechanisms did Roman gold fall into Germanic hands? We should envisage the military units of Germanic *foederati* as war bands, permanent or semi-permanent groups of warriors dependent on a leader for their subsistence, gifts and military equipment (fig. 9).<sup>36</sup> It is improbable that there were still regular Roman units in Germania Secunda in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>37</sup> a fact that had implications for how Germanic *foederati* were paid. The old model, whereby individual mercenaries returned with their savings to their homeland following lengthy service in a regular unit, is less useful for the early 5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>38</sup> Instead of direct payments to individual soldiers, we should think in terms of indirect payments via Germanic warlords, who then arranged internal distribution among their followers (fig. 9). Against this background we should understand most Roman gold finds in our study area to be the result of an internal Frankish distribution process.

After the deaths of Constantine III and Jovinus, the influx of Roman gold seems to have stagnated completely, and we also lack historical evidence for any attempt to restore Roman authority in the Lower Rhine frontier during the late reign of Honorius. Not until Valentinian III were there once again attempts to restore authority over Frankish groups along the Rhine.<sup>39</sup> The Roman general Aetius, who served under Valentinian III, brought Frankish groups on the Gallic side of the Rhine under Roman control again in the years 428–432.<sup>40</sup> After the death of an unnamed Frankish king, Aetius invited one of his sons to Rome and honoured the young prince.<sup>41</sup> Frankish troops had fought on his side in Aetius' famous battle against the Huns of 451.<sup>42</sup> It is tempting to relate a series of solidus hoards with terminal coins of Valentinian III, as well as isolated solidi of this emperor (fig. 6), to Aetius' activities.

Finally, for the early 5<sup>th</sup> century we should also bear in mind payments in the form of *Hacksilber*, which functioned as a sort of (uncoined) money. Hoards with Roman *Hacksilber* are known primarily from regions outside the Roman empire, which initially led many scholars to assume that these were vessels that had been looted and cut up by barbarians. Grünhagen was the first scholar to argue, in the 1950s, that the use of *Hacksilber* as money began as a Roman tradition that was adopted by Germanic groups in the 5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>43</sup> Concrete archaeological indications for a Roman origin are weight specifications on Roman silver plates and associations of *Hacksilber* with solidi in several hoards. There is also some historical evidence. Ammianus Marcellinus reports that emperor Julian promised every soldier 5 solidi and a pound of silver at his inauguration in 360; the amount of silver is indicated here not in coined money but in weight.<sup>44</sup> Against this background the cut silver in the above-mentioned hoards of Echt and Gross Bodungen can best be interpreted as Roman *Hacksilber* that was employed as a currency alongside coined gold.<sup>45</sup> However, we should also consider the option that Germanic warlords were also endowed with exclusive silver plates, which may have been cut up at a later stage in a Germanic context by leaders whose positions of power depended on regular donations of mobile wealth to their followers. Possible examples are the fragments of a silver imperial *largitio* plate from Gross Bodungen, and the fragment of a gilded silver plate from Echt, engraved with hunting scenes and with a reconstructed diameter of approx. 70 cm and a weight of approx. 5 kg.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>36</sup> On the social organisation and material dimension of Germanic war bands in the first millennium AD, see Steuer 2006 and 2009.

<sup>37</sup> Esmonde Cleary 2013, 350.

<sup>38</sup> The hoards of Gross Bodungen (Grünhagen 1954; Rau 2013, 343), Beilen (Zadoks-Josephus Jitta 1955, 107) and Kessel (Prins 2000) have been interpreted as savings-hoards of Germanic soldiers or officers who had served for a long time in the Roman army and finally returned home. See also Berger 1992, 174–179, for a similar interpretation of some group A gold hoards from the area east of the Lower Rhine.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Bleckmann 1997, 593 ff.

<sup>40</sup> Eck 2004, 689 ff.; Dierkens/Périn 2003.

<sup>41</sup> Priscus, frag. 20 (3).

<sup>42</sup> Jordanes, *Getica* 191; Gregory of Tours, *HF* 2.7.

<sup>43</sup> Grünhagen 1954, 58 ff.; Painter 2013.

<sup>44</sup> Amm. Marc. 20.4.18. On the use of silver merely as bullion in the Late Roman empire, see Banaji 2001, 43 ff.; Painter 2013; Guggisberg 2013.

<sup>45</sup> Gross Bodungen: Guggisberg 2013, 205 ff.

<sup>46</sup> Echt: Roymans/Heeren 2015; Gross Bodungen: Grünhagen 1954; Guggisberg 2013, 205 ff.



Fig. 10. Emblem of the Counts of the Largesse (*Comites largitionum*) in the *Notitia Dignitatum* (c. 400), showing imperial gifts displayed before a table with an image of the emperor. Image Bayerische Staatsbibliothek & Münchener Digitalisierungszentrum.

We can conclude that our early 5<sup>th</sup>-century gold horizon has an ethnic dimension: it represents the property of Germanic groups on both sides of the Lower Rhine that had a treaty relationship with the Roman authorities and which remained outside the Roman fiscal regime. The payment of federate groups must have led to a considerable gold drain to the Germanic frontier in the first decade of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. The emblem of the *Comites largitionum* in the *Notitia Dignitatum*, showing the gifts of coined and uncoined gold and silver plates displayed before a table with an image of the emperor (fig. 10), may give us some idea of the ritualised setting of imperial *largitio* practices relating to diplomatic treaties with Germanic warlords.

## 5 CIRCULATION AND DEPOSITION OF ROMAN GOLD AMONG GERMANIC FEDERATE GROUPS

The main theme of this chapter is understanding the early 5<sup>th</sup>-century boom in gold hoarding in the study region. Addressing this subject requires an analysis of the gold circulation within Germanic groups. Our point of departure is the model of a close, reciprocal relationship between Germanic war leaders and their war bands, a relationship that also had a material dimension (fig. 9). The regular donation of mobile wealth, especially in the form of gold and silver, was necessary to maintain the leader's position of power.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Roymans 1990, 39-43; Steuer 2006; idem 2009; Nicolay 2014.

This led to the formation of widely branched networks that covered a considerable geographic area. The volume and spatial distribution of the gold circulation suggest that almost all Germanic settlements in the Lower Rhine frontier zone in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century were familiar with the use of Roman *solidi*.

For a social interpretation of the hoards we can make a rough distinction between small hoards of less than five *solidi*, medium-sized hoards of five to 200 *solidi*, and large hoards containing over 200 *solidi* or an equivalent weight in gold ornaments. It seems plausible to associate the large hoards of Beilen, Xanten, Velp-Hervormde Kerk, Menzelen and Dortmund with Germanic warlords who had received payments from the Roman treasury.<sup>48</sup> On the other hand, the small and medium-sized hoards can best be interpreted as the property of Germanic warriors of varying rank who had served in war bands.

The study of the archaeological contexts of gold finds may provide us with important information about the use of gold in Germanic societies. Unfortunately, the issue of context information has received little attention to date. This is due in part to the fact that most gold finds were retrieved by non-archaeologists who are reluctant to provide detailed site information, and that archaeologists rarely succeed in carrying out control excavations on the sites. Nevertheless, we are able to draw some preliminary conclusions. When context information is available, we know that single *solidi* and small hoards often originate from settlements.<sup>49</sup> This group also includes some examples from urban centres such as Cologne, Maastricht and Tongeren. We may think here of gold items that were preserved in or around houses. Accidental loss probably played a negligible role in the case of isolated *solidi*; instead, I am inclined to view them as ‘mini hoards’. Conversely, it is remarkable that the large hoards and many of the medium-sized ones do not come from settlements, but from uninhabited off-site locations.<sup>50</sup>

The early 5<sup>th</sup>-century influx of Roman *solidi* will no doubt have initiated new forms of coin use within Germanic society, including in the ritual sphere. The scarce occurrence of coins in mortuary contexts is significant. We can only refer here to the presence of a *solidus* in a 5<sup>th</sup>-century grave at Rhenen and Vireux-Molhain.<sup>51</sup> Gold neck-rings and bracelets are even completely absent in the graves; in the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century there seems to have been a taboo on the deposition of gold status objects in the graves of elite individuals. As already stated, a large number of medium-sized and large hoards are known from uninhabited off-site locations, but an interpretation as regular cult places is unlikely in these cases, since these were always single depositions.

As for the reasons for hoarding gold, we are familiar with the distinction traditionally made in archaeology and numismatics between religiously inspired votive hoards and profane *Versteckhorte* that were buried in times of unrest with the intention of being retrieved later. The gold hoards discussed here probably represent crisis-related depositions, as is suggested by the extremely irregular deposition pattern through time, with a clear peak in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century. This evokes associations with *Versteckdepots* or ‘hidden treasure’. The group B hoard horizon may be the result of a network collapse and chaos in the years following the death of the usurpers Constantine III (411) and Jovinus (413). However, the location of the larger hoard finds at uninhabited sites argues against a simple interpretation as profane

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Regling 1908, 12-13.

<sup>49</sup> This also seems true of the considerable number of single *solidus* finds from the Frisian coastal region (fig. 1). Although their exact find location often remains unknown, there is no doubt that they originated from man-made *terp* mounds that were levelled in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Cf. Nicolay 2014.

<sup>50</sup> Examples are the hoards of Echt (Roymans/Heeren 2015), Kessel (Prins 2000; near villa site), Beilen (Waterbolk/Glasbergen 1955), Velp-Het Laar (Quast 2009; Beliën 2008), Obbicht (Van der Vin 1984, 275; 250 m

from a villa site), Gross Bodungen (Grünhagen 1954), and probably also Xanten-Hochbruch (Martin 2006) and Menzelen (Kaiser-Raiss/Klüssendorf 1984). See also Table 2.

<sup>51</sup> Rhenen-Donderberg, grave 842: Wagner/Ypey 2012. Vireux-Molhain, grave 12: Lemant 1985. A small *solidus* hoard is reported to have been found in the cemetery of Suarlée: Thirion 1967. However, the burial context is not reliable in this case (oral communication Raymond Brulet, University of Louvain-La Neuve).





Fig. 11. Early 5<sup>th</sup>-century gold hoards with neck-rings from Olst, Rhenen, Beilen and Velp-Hervormde Kerk. Photos courtesy National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden.

crisis depositions; one would expect such hoards on house compounds in settlements.<sup>52</sup> This suggests that the early 5<sup>th</sup>-century hoard horizon is more than a simple reflection of a crisis; this horizon also had ritual connotations and was embedded in the cosmology of Germanic groups. The hoards can be understood as a form of ritual communication with the supernatural among Germanic *foederati* groups in a period of social stress. We may point here to the vulnerability of federate groups because of their dependency on regular Roman gold payments, internal competition and the threat of external Germanic groups. It is against this backdrop that we can understand the probable religious connotations of hoards from off-site locations; we may be dealing here with crisis-related depositions of gold by local groups or individuals who placed their gold under the temporary supervision of gods, with the intention of recovering it later.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>52</sup> See, for example, the analogy with the horizon of later 3<sup>rd</sup>-century AD silver hoards in the Rhineland provinces, which are often found in settlement contexts: Haupt 2001; Schulzki 2001. Cf. also the similar discussion about Late Iron Age gold hoards in North Gaul in Roymans/

Scheers 2012, 19-20.

<sup>53</sup> For a similar discussion about Late Iron Age gold hoards in the Low Countries, see Roymans/Scheers 2011, 19-20.

site	gold rings	solidi	TPQ	context	reference
Westerkappeln	1	approx. 50	364	?	FMRD VI, 4071, 1-36
Beilen	6	25	400	off-site	Waterbolk/Glasbergen 1955
Velp-Het Laar	>1	>500?*	426	off-site	Quast 2009; Beliën 2008
Velp-H.Kerk	7	-		off-site	Quast 2009
Nijmegen	1	-		?	Braat 1954
Olst	4	-		?	Braat 1954
Dortmund	3	443	407**	?	Regling 1908
Rhenen	3	-		?	Heidinga 1990

Table 2. List of early 5<sup>th</sup>-century hoards with gold neck-rings or bracelets.

\*Willems 1986, 327, note 390. \*\* The gold from Dortmund was hoarded with a TPQ of 407, although deposited much later; the argentei are considered a later addition.

A prominent category of ornaments from the Late Roman Lower Rhine region are the gold necklaces of the Velp type (fig. 11). In the literature they are often regarded as ‘Germanic’ ornaments made out of melted-down solidi.<sup>54</sup> The argument is that with their typical hook fastener, their broadened base and punched decoration, the rings are of Germanic style, with distribution clusters in the region directly east of the Lower Rhine. Indeed, their high gold content and their weight suggest that they were made from solidi, and their presence in the hoards of Beilen and Dortmund that they were part of the phase B gold influx. Yet that does not prove that they were produced east of the Rhine. The following are arguments for a Roman origin of the Velp rings:

1. They represent a new product in terms of shape and decoration and cannot be considered a continuation of an existing Germanic type of ornament.<sup>55</sup>
2. They are associated with Roman solidi in the hoards of Beilen, Dortmund and possibly Velp-Het Laar (table 2), and with a Roman necklace in the hoard of Rhenen (fig. 11).
3. They seem to have circulated not as single ornaments but as a set of rings of different diameters (cf. fig. 11) and as far as we know, they show no traces of wear.<sup>56</sup> This all fits in perfectly with a status as diplomatic gifts.

It seems more appropriate to interpret the Velp-type necklaces as the product of a new hybrid frontier culture in which Germanic and Roman influences were closely intertwined, making simple ethnic classifications impossible.<sup>57</sup> They may well have been made in Roman treasury workshops as diplomatic gifts for Frankish warlords who were included in the gold gift network of the Roman authorities; these warlords received not only large numbers of solidi, but also gold ornaments. The emblem of the *Comites largitionum* from the *Notitia Dignitatum* (fig. 10) shows both silver plates with solidi, and gold ornaments that will have been produced in the imperial workshops. Roman diplomacy was acquainted with the taste of Germanic leaders and knew which gifts to offer.<sup>58</sup> This tallies with written evidence about early 5<sup>th</sup>-century diplomatic missions of the Roman generals Edobech and Rusticus to Germanic federate groups in this region. Significantly, Edobich, who concluded alliances with Germanic groups along the Rhine on behalf of Constantine III, was himself a Frank.

<sup>54</sup> Heidinga 1990, 16, 18; Quast 2009, 215; Martin 1987; Beliën 2008; Braat 1954, 4.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. the discussion in Quast 2009, 218.

<sup>56</sup> Waterbolk/Glasbergen 1955, 50; Heidinga 1990, 36, n. 23; Quast 2009, 215, 220.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Esmonde Cleary 2013, 377 ff.; Theuws 2008.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. also Guggisberg 2013, 203, who discusses distribution patterns of Late Roman gold and silver medallions. On the use of gold torcs in the Late Roman army, see Mráv 2015.

The study of Late Roman gold circulation has led to the identification of a clear horizon of gold hoards in the Lower Rhine frontier zone. The bulk of this gold seems to have arrived under Honorius during the first decade of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, at a time when the authority of the West Roman emperor had dropped to nil because of the Germanic invasions in Italy and the actions of the Gallic usurpers. Frankish groups made tactical use of the political chaos by choosing the side of the usurpers and providing military support in exchange for gold subsidies. The size of the early 5<sup>th</sup>-century gold influx into the Lower Rhine area reflects the strengthened power of Frankish groups. There is some historical evidence for attempts to restore Roman authority in the Lower Rhine frontier zone under Valentinian III after 425.<sup>59</sup> It is interesting to note the action of the Roman general Aetius, who, as stated above, is said to have resubjected Frankish groups on the Gallic side of the Rhine to Roman control in the years 428–432. It is tempting to relate a series of solidus hoards with final coins of Valentinian III and isolated solidi of this emperor to Aetius' activities. However, the inflow of gold under Valentinian III was modest compared to that under Constantine III. It is also clear that in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century there was no longer a functioning Roman state system based on a provincial administration in large parts of Germania Secunda.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, West Roman emperors and their generals still held nominal claims on this region, but these were less effective and of short duration, and only relied on alliances with local Germanic warlords. These alliances were probably primarily meant to control and exploit the military potential of Frankish groups.

A crucial question is how the developments reconstructed for the Lower Rhine region relate to those in other frontier areas, such as the Upper Rhine region, the Danube region and Britannia. Although a thorough comparative study is still lacking, historical evidence shows that the Late Roman gold drain to barbarian groups represents a wider phenomenon. However, we should be aware that there were considerable regional and temporal differences. In the Lower Rhine region we see a clear peak in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century, and a similar pattern in Britannia, where the gold influx may have ended with the departure of Constantine III.<sup>61</sup> But for southern Scandinavia and Poland the coin evidence shows a peak in the later 5<sup>th</sup> and early 6<sup>th</sup> century, probably related to gold subsidies paid to the Goths by East Roman emperors.<sup>62</sup> The historical evidence reveals similar differences. In 408 the West Roman government agreed to pay the Visigoths – who were threatening Italy – a subsidy of 1300 kg of gold, and in 409 the besieged city of Rome agreed to pay 1700 kg of gold and 10,000 kg of silver! In order to pay these huge sums Rome was forced to strip the ornaments from certain statues, and even to melt down gold and silver statues.<sup>63</sup> Other sources suggest a mid-5<sup>th</sup>-century peak in payments by the East Roman emperor to the Huns, who received annual tributes varying from 115 kg of gold in 422 to 700 kg in 447, and in one instance even 1600 kg!<sup>64</sup> Clearly, the size of the gold payments reflected the scale of the military threat by barbarian groups.

Unfortunately we have no data on the size of the imperial gold reserves in the Western Empire in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century, which makes it almost impossible to assess the effects of the gold flow to barbarian groups on the imperial finances. Compared to some other regions the gold influx into the Lower Rhine region may have been of modest size, but there is no doubt that the aggregate 5<sup>th</sup>-century gold

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Bleckmann 1997, 593 ff; Heather, this volume, ch. 4.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Willems 1984, 441, 459; Eck 2004, 683 ff.; Heeren, this volume, 167–170.

<sup>61</sup> Bland/Loriot 2010; Nicolay 2014, 212, Table 8.1.

<sup>62</sup> Fagerlie 1967, Table C (Sweden); Ciolek 2009, Tables 2–3 (northern Poland); Horsnaes 2008 (western Denmark and Bornholm); Nicolay 2014, 211 ff. and Table 8.1.

<sup>63</sup> Zosimus, *Historia Nova* 5.29; idem 5.41.4–7. Hendy 1985, 261.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Hendy 1985, 260–264; Heather 2005, 301, 307–308, 368. In addition to the official subsidies paid by the Roman state, barbarian groups also obtained Roman gold through other means, such as forced tribute payments by towns, war loot and ransoms.

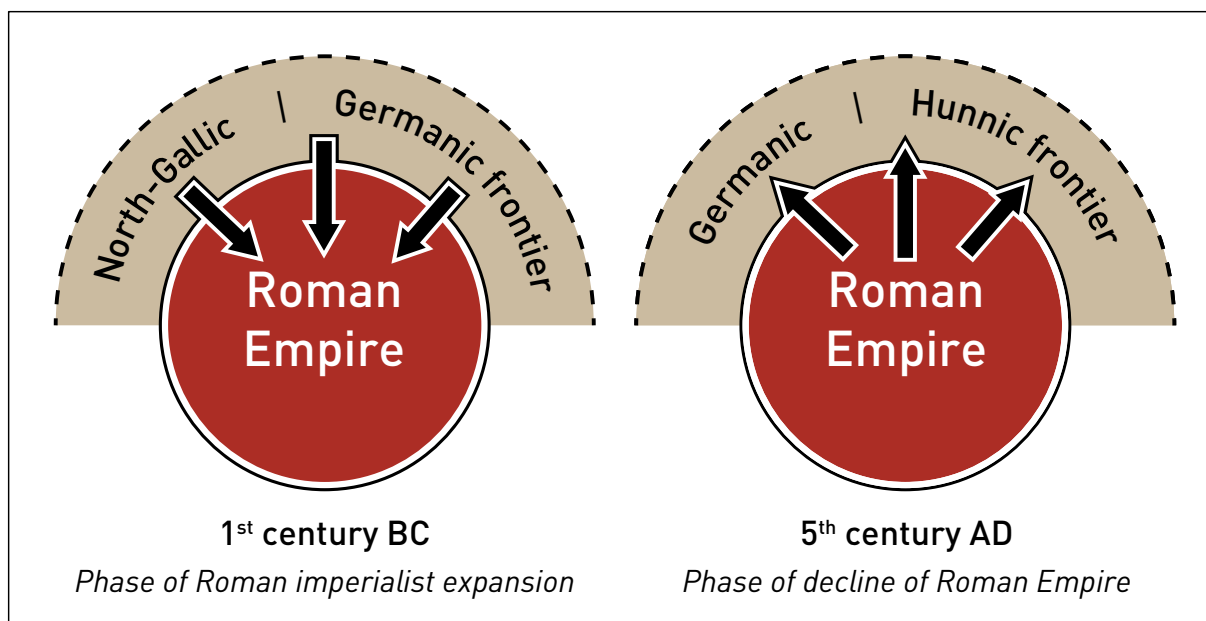


Fig. 12. Centripetal and centrifugal gold flows between the Roman empire and the barbarian frontier in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and 5<sup>th</sup> century AD respectively.

flows to Germanic groups must have represented a substantial assault on the gold reserves of the West Roman treasury.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, we should bear in mind that gold flows to Germanic federate groups largely remained outside the Roman fiscal regime, which seriously hampered the recovery of the imperial gold reserves through taxation.<sup>66</sup> We cannot speak here of a gold cycle, as the gold flowed in only one direction. We should also realise that the introduction of a system of gold payments to Germanic warlords marked an irreversible process; successful war bands wanted to be supplied with new gold subsidies on a regular basis and were not willing to accept lesser payments.

As stated in the introduction, the currently known gold finds from our study area only represent a fraction of the actual gold influx in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century, which probably amounted to several thousand kilograms. The bulk of the Roman gold remained in circulation in the later 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century and was recycled into ornaments, sword decorations, belt buckles, and later also coinage. We need to realise that Merovingian gold goes back for the most part to the early 5<sup>th</sup>-century influx of Roman gold.<sup>67</sup>

Finally, it is interesting to compare the early 5<sup>th</sup>-century centrifugal gold flows from the Roman centre to the Germanic frontier with the opposing centripetal flows at the end of the Late Iron Age as a consequence of Caesar's conquest of Northern Gaul (fig. 12). The Late Iron Age is the only other period in antiquity with a substantial circulation of gold coins and ornaments in our study area. Late Iron Age gold coins were also used intensively by tribal leaders for payments to war bands and allies.<sup>68</sup> However, there are no traces left of the once rich gold circulation in Northern Gaul after Caesar's conquest. The most plausible explanation is that the precious metal was carried off to Italy in the context of Roman imperialist expansion.<sup>69</sup> This confirms historical evidence that Caesar amassed enormous riches in Gaul during

<sup>65</sup> The East Roman state, however, seems to have had no direct problems with the regular payment of gold tributes to 'barbarian' groups. Cf. Henty 1985, 263-264.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Esmonde Cleary 2013, 348, 351. Heather (2005, 22) refers to the practice of towns paying 'crown gold' on the accession of a new emperor and on every 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his reign. Reece (2003, 142) emphasises that tax payments

were largely made in gold in the Late Roman empire.

<sup>67</sup> Nicolay 2014, 234-244.

<sup>68</sup> Haselgrove 1984; Roymans 1990, chapter 6; Roymans/Scheers 2012, 27-29.

<sup>69</sup> Haselgrove 1984; Roymans 1990, 140 ff; Roymans/Scheers 2012, 24.

his Gallic Wars, thereby greatly inflating the Italian gold market.<sup>70</sup> Thus we observe a substantial drain of gold from the Gallic/Germanic frontier to the imperial centre during the expansive phase of Roman imperialism, and an opposite flow from the imperial centre to the Germanic frontier during the reign of Honorius and Valentinian III. This confirms the principle that major interregional gold flows are often a direct reflection of changing power relations. This economic dimension has received too little attention in the current debate on the collapse of imperial power in the Roman West.

## 7 JUST 'DECLINE AND FALL'?

I realise that the analysis presented here seems at first to reproduce a rather traditional 'Decline and Fall' picture of the West Roman empire in Late Antiquity, as a period characterised by violence, disintegration and chaos in which civilisation was destroyed by barbarity. We cannot deny that in the Lower Germanic frontier zone the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century was a period of decline and collapse of Roman state authority and its institutions. However, we need to be aware that this negative image primarily reflects a Roman perspective that does insufficient justice to the complex social dynamics going on in the Germanic frontier region. There, the early 5<sup>th</sup> century was also characterised by the genesis of a new social order. In their interactions with the Roman authorities, Germanic federate groups developed into strong polities whose leaders based their power positions on the control of semi-permanent war bands. It was in this phase that the social foundations were laid for the development of a post-imperial Frankish state ruled by the Merovingian dynasty in the late 5<sup>th</sup> and early 6<sup>th</sup> century. The study of gold circulation offers us a unique opportunity to follow these processes and to gain insights into the role of the Roman state as an active agent in its relations with Germanic groups, as well as in the internal social dynamics of the frontier communities themselves. Against this background I would say that both 'Decline and Fall' and 'Transformation of the Roman world' are legitimate perspectives for understanding early 5<sup>th</sup>-century social developments in the Lower Rhine region.

<sup>70</sup> Badian 1968, 89 ff. Cf. Suetonius, *Div. Iul.* 54.2.

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# *Hacksilber* in the Late Roman and Early Medieval world – economics, frontier politics and imperial legacies

Fraser Hunter / Kenneth Painter

- 1 Introduction
- 2 The *Hacksilber* phenomenon: time, place and weight
- 3 *Hacksilber* north of Hadrian's Wall
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- 6 Conclusion: *Hacksilber*, economies and frontier politics

## I INTRODUCTION

*Hacksilber* is often seen as the poor relation of Roman silver.<sup>1</sup> Great hoards of plate such as Mildenhall or Kaiseraugst catch the imagination with the glimpses they offer into the world of the Late Roman aristocracy. Yet hoards containing battered and broken fragments of these same vessels were long blamed on destructive barbarians, and interpreted as a symbol of the difference between the civilised Roman world and the peoples beyond its gates.<sup>2</sup> The picture is not so straightforward. New work on *Hacksilber* is revealing fresh insights into the nature of the Late Roman economy and, of most relevance here, relationships across and beyond the frontier in the Late Roman and Early Medieval period. This paper draws on two ongoing projects at National Museums Scotland: one to re-examine the great *Hacksilber* hoard from Traprain Law in south-east Scotland, the largest such hoard known (fig. 1);<sup>3</sup> and the Glenmorangie Research Project which is reassessing silver use in Scotland from AD 300-900 in a wider European context.<sup>4</sup> Here, we shall review the current state of play on the phenomenon of *Hacksilber* in terms of distribution, date and character. We will then focus on the Scottish finds and place them in a wider context to see what light they can shed on frontier politics and social dynamics in the late and post-Roman north-west provinces.

<sup>1</sup> We follow Catherine Johns (1996) in using the German term rather than the English 'hacksilver'; the latter implies the material is cut, but it can also be crushed or folded.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Collingwood/Myres 1937, 312; Toynbee 1964, 312.

<sup>3</sup> Curle 1923.

<sup>4</sup> Papers from a conference on the topic of *Hacksilber* have

recently been published, and we make frequent reference to them here for supporting detail (Hunter/Painter 2013). We are most grateful to our collaborators in this project and our colleagues Alice Blackwell and Martin Goldberg from the Glenmorangie Project for their support in this work.

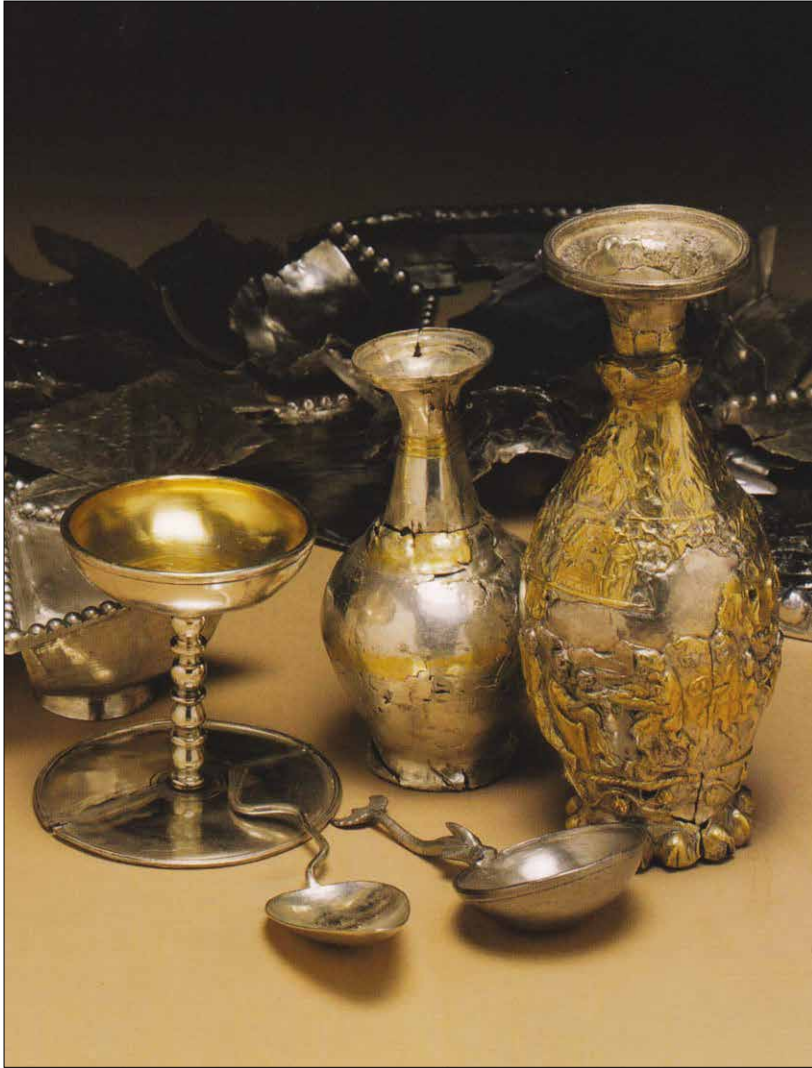


Fig. 1. Part of the Traprain Law hoard. © National Museums Scotland.

## 2 THE HACKSILBER PHENOMENON: TIME, PLACE AND WEIGHT

A recent review of *Hacksilber* showed that the phenomenon was a long-lived and widespread one but the vast majority of hoards containing *Hacksilber* date to the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries AD, particularly between c. AD 350–450 (fig. 2).<sup>5</sup> Their core distribution runs across both sides of the *limes* in north-western Europe but there are marked differences in the character of these hoards. If we differentiate between those which are *Hacksilber*-dominated and those where it is a minor component, the frontier becomes the dividing line (fig. 3): almost all hoards beyond the frontier are *Hacksilber*-dominated, while in those behind it *Hacksilber* is a minor element. Different processes were clearly at work. This takes us into the world of the Late Roman army, frontier politics, and the role of silver in the Early Medieval period. We shall return to these topics after considering the processes lying behind the hacking.

<sup>5</sup> Painter 2013. There are well-known difficulties in dating 5<sup>th</sup>-century material, and not all the hoards are closely or securely dated. We restrict our analysis for the moment to hoard material; one would anticipate the circulation of

individual cut-up fragments which might then occur as casual losses, but this is difficult to demonstrate convincingly (Hobbs 2013).

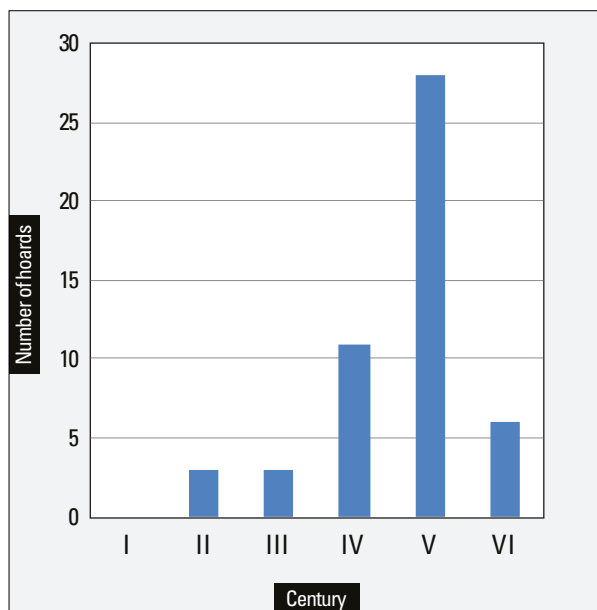


Fig. 2. Chronological distribution of *Hacksilber* hoards. Examples where the dating spans parts of two centuries are allocated half to both. (Image: F. Hunter)

A notable feature in many hoards is the care taken in the hacking process – for instance, splitting vessels into halves or quarters rather than random butchery. For example, Martin Guggisberg has noted that the *largitio* plate from Großbodungen (Thuringen/D) was cut neatly into six pieces, with each surviving sixth then split in two, perhaps at a later date.<sup>6</sup> The cutting process was typically aimed at producing a particular weight of silver, suggesting that the motive was economic – to convert silver items, especially plate, into smaller units of bullion. Analysis of fragment weights offers a valuable approach to

understanding *Hacksilber* hoards, as the patterns allow us to assess whether those responsible were working to Roman weight standards or not. The use of Roman standards strongly suggests that the cutting took place within the Empire for circulation within the Roman economic system, rather than beyond it. Individual instances of pieces of *Hacksilber* cut to a specific weight are well-attested. For instance, the Kaiseraugst (Basel/CH) hoard included a three-pound stamped ingot which had been cut down to two pounds.<sup>7</sup> The same approach can profitably be applied to hoards. A good example is the hacked silver from the Neupotz hoard (Rheinland-Pfalz/D), the so-called ‘Barbarenschatz’ from the old Rhine. These silver fragments are usually interpreted as being divided by the raiders who took the hoard as plunder, but it is notable that almost all the larger pieces are good or excellent matches for Roman weights. In our first analysis we noted the smaller pieces were not good fits to ounce units, and might have been subdivided by the looters,<sup>8</sup> but further assessment suggests otherwise: the five lightest fragments total one pound (to within 2% error), the remaining two 2/3 lb (within 1%). Thus, we suggest all the Neupotz material was cut to Roman weight standards: sometimes the weight of the individual piece was important, sometimes that of a group. This idea of group weight is found in other contexts: the scraps of *Hacksilber* in the Patching (Sussex/UK) hoard weigh 317.58 g, which is within 3% of a pound; a hoard of *Hacksilber* and 12 solidi from Echt (Limburg/NL) contained 168.37 g of silver (half a pound to within 1.4%); while the fragments from the Balline (Co. Limerick/IRE) hoard show only intermittent correlation to ounce units individually, but collectively weigh 1552.7 g, which is 4¾ pounds (within 0.2%).<sup>9</sup>

There are of course issues with this approach, and we are working on a robust overall assessment of it. It relies on intact, primary fragments with no secondary fragmentation from plough-damage or additions from later restoration. The estimate of the value of a Roman pound we use (327.45 g) has been debated.<sup>10</sup> Further assessment is also needed of how close a weight match was seen as acceptable in antiquity, and thus what should we accept as significant; it is noticeable, for instance, that inscribed weights recorded

<sup>6</sup> Guggisberg 2013, 205–207.

<sup>7</sup> 665.1 g (within 1.6% of two pounds); Cahn/Kaufmann-Heinimann 1984, 326 nr. 68. Interestingly the only piece of hacked plate from the hoard is a less good match; it is a folded, regularly cut segment of a plate but weighed 92.1 g, which is not a good correlation with any integer ounce

value (Cahn/Kaufmann-Heinimann 1984, 322 nr. 65).

<sup>8</sup> Painter 2013, 219, 232.

<sup>9</sup> White *et al.* 1999, 312; Roymans/Heeren 2015, table 1; the Balline material in the National Museum of Ireland was weighed by Fraser Hunter.

<sup>10</sup> Collingwood/Wright 1991, 1.

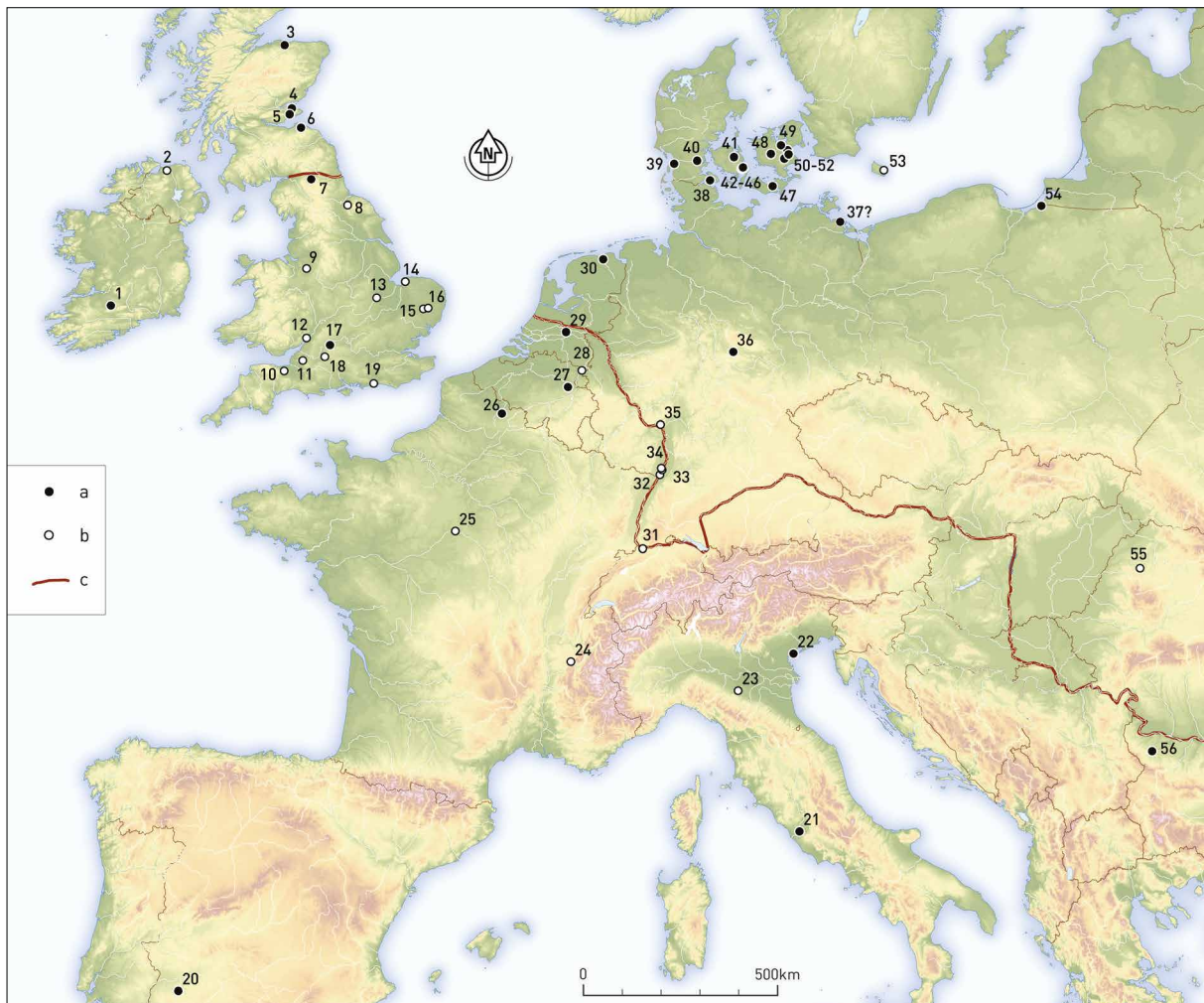


Fig. 3. Map of *Hacksilber* hoards, corresponding to table 1. a) hoards in which *Hacksilber* is dominant. b) hoards in which *Hacksilber* is a small component. c) Late Roman frontier. Image: Jaap Fokkema and Bert Brouwenstijn, based on Hunter/Painter base maps.

in Britain show considerable variation from their supposed norm,<sup>11</sup> though not all of these were official weights. Variation could also arise from the nature of what was being cut; a vessel is easier to divide into regular fragments than a brooch, for instance.<sup>12</sup> Finally, the temptation to add fragments together until one gets a convincing match must be avoided unless there is corroborating evidence; while a hoard may well conflate several weight-groups of material, this is very hard to demonstrate with confidence. Our focus at this stage of research is on single fragments or convincing groups.

One way to assess the validity of the approach is by rank size plots which show the overall mass distribution of the fragments. In the case of the West Bagborough (Somerset/UK) hoard, for instance, this demonstrated that almost all the larger fragments fitted tightly to ounce units. It also proved of great value in exploring the many smaller fragments. The plot has clear steps in it, indicating this is not a random distribution but one where there were deliberate attempts to cut the fragments to particular weights – multiples of a scripula, 1/24 ounce.<sup>13</sup>

The implication of this evidence across several hoards for careful subdivision and use of weight standards is clear. The role of *Hacksilber* was economic, within a bullion rather than a currency economy, with the cutting taking place within the Roman world – or at least within a Roman economic system.

<sup>11</sup> Collingwood/Wright 1991, 4-5.

<sup>13</sup> Minnitt/Ponting 2013, 286, illus. 17.3

<sup>12</sup> An observation we owe to our colleague Alice Blackwell.

findspot	reference
1. Balline (Co. Limerick, Ireland)	HF 73
2. Ballinrees, Coleraine (Co. Derry, UK)	HF 45
3. Gaulcross (Aberdeenshire, UK)	Goldberg <i>et al.</i> 2015; Noble/Goldberg, forthcoming
4. Dairsie (Fife, UK)	This paper
5. Norrie's Law (Fife, UK)	Youngs 2013
6. Traprain Law (East Lothian, UK)	HF 68; Kaufmann-Heinimann 2013
7. Vindolanda (Northumberland, UK)	Painter 2013
8. Whorlton (North Yorkshire, UK)	HF 70
9. Church Minshull (Cheshire, UK)	Hobbs 2013
10. West Bagborough (Somerset, UK)	Minnitt/Ponting 2013
11. East Harptree (Somerset, UK)	HF 49; Minnitt/Ponting 2013
12. Oldcroft (Gloucestershire, UK)	HF 59
13. Water Newton I (Cambridgeshire, UK)	HF 12; Painter 2013
14. Snettisham* (Norfolk, UK)	Painter 2013
15. Burgate (Suffolk, UK)	Hobbs 2013
16. Hoxne* (Suffolk, UK)	HF 52; Painter 2013
17. Blunsdon Ridge (Wiltshire, UK)	Hobbs 2013
18. Bishops Canning (Wiltshire, UK)	Hobbs 2013
19. Patching (Sussex, UK)	Abdy 2013
20. Almendralejo (Badajoz, Sp)	HF 89
21. Rome/Valerii (It)	Painter 2013
22. Venice (Veneto, It)	HF 13; Guggisberg 2013
23. Reggio Emilia (Emilia-Romagna, It)	Painter 2013
24. Saint-Quentin-sur-Isère (Isère, Fr)	Painter 2013
25. Chécy (Loiret, Fr)	HF 38
26. Saulzoir (Nord, Fr)	Painter 2013
27. Paspoel (Limburg, B)	HF 27
28. Echt (Limburg, NL)	Roymans/Heeren 2015
29. Tiel-Passewaaij (Gelderland, NL)	Contribution Heeren, this volume.
30. Winsum (Groningen, NL)	HF 82
31. Kaiseraugst (Aargau, Sw)	HF 22; Guggisberg 2013; Painter 2013
32. Hagenbach (Rheinland-Pfalz, G)	Painter 2013
33. Neupotz (Rheinland-Pfalz, G)	Painter 2013
34. Rülzheim (Rheinland-Pfalz, G)	Himmelmann <i>et al.</i> 2014
35. Wiesbaden-Kastel* (Hessen, G)	Painter 2013
36. Großbodungen (Thüringen, G)	HF 32; Guggisberg 2013; Rau 2013b
37. Hohendorf (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, G)	Rau 2013b (who considers the find is insecure)
38. Nydam (Jutland, Dk)	Dyhrfeld-Johnsen 2013
39. Høgsbrogård (Jutland, Dk)	Dyhrfeld-Johnsen 2013
40. Simmersted (Jutland, Dk)	HF 31; Dyhrfeld-Johnsen 2013
41. Fraugde Kærby (Funen, Dk)	Dyhrfeld-Johnsen 2013
42. Stenhøjgård I (Funen, Dk)	Dyhrfeld-Johnsen 2013
43. Stenhøjgård II (Funen, Dk)	Dyhrfeld-Johnsen 2013
44. Laurits' Mark (Funen, Dk)	Dyhrfeld-Johnsen 2013
45. Bjørnebanke (Funen, Dk)	Dyhrfeld-Johnsen 2013
46. Hesselager Fredskov (Funen, Dk)	Dyhrfeld-Johnsen 2013
47. Hardenberg, Maribo (Lolland, Dk)	Dyhrfeld-Johnsen 2013
48. Engelsborg (Zealand, Dk)	Dyhrfeld-Johnsen 2013
49. Mannerup, Roskilde (Zealand, Dk)	Dyhrfeld-Johnsen 2013
50. Kirke Skensved (Zealand, Dk)	Dyhrfeld-Johnsen 2013
51. Høstentorp (Zealand, Dk)	HF 30; Dyhrfeld-Johnsen 2013
52. Rosenbækgård Syd, Herfølge (Zealand, Dk)	Dyhrfeld-Johnsen 2013
53. Sorte Muld (Bornholm, Dk)	Dyhrfeld-Johnsen 2013
54. Młoteczno / Hammersdorf (Braniewo, Poland)	HF 83; Rau 2013b
55. Crasna (Sălaj, Romania)	HF 84
56. North-west Bulgaria	HF 3

Table 1. Hoards with Roman *Hacksilber*, mapped in fig. 3. 'HF' refers to numbers in Guggisberg 2003. Finds marked with an asterisk are those which contain intact components of larger objects, detached from their original setting; these are considered here to be buried as bullion rather than artifacts. The Gudme I West hoard is not included as it apparently contains only local, not Roman silver.

### 3 HACKSILBER NORTH OF HADRIAN'S WALL

Before comparing the nature of *Hacksilber* use beyond different frontiers, we shall summarise the Scottish evidence. Four *Hacksilber* hoards are known: from Dairsie (Fife), Traprain Law (East Lothian), Norrie's Law (Fife) and Gaulcross (Aberdeenshire) (fig. 3). Traprain and Dairsie are entirely Roman material, while the other two are rather later and are dominated by local products. We shall examine these finds in what seems to be their chronological order.

#### 3.1 THE DAIRSIE HOARD

In August 2015 a small hoard of Roman *Hacksilber* was found at Dairsie in north-east Fife. A metal-detecting rally uncovered the initial scatter, and subsequent excavation by one of the authors showed that the hoard had been buried in a small pit on a terrace above a flood plain. There was no settlement in the immediate vicinity, but it had been placed between a broken standing stone (probably an older prehistoric monument) and what seems to be a small peat bog. The ancient monument and the natural wet place apparently gave the spot some memorable character which led to the deposition of the hoard.

Work on the find is still in progress, but it appears to consist of pieces of four hacked vessels: a large portion of a ribbed basin which had been cut up and folded together, a quarter of a platter which had been folded up, a highly fragmentary unusual bowl with repoussé vegetal decoration, and a piece of sheet rolled into a cylinder. The fragments are large, indicating little secondary circulation. Typological parallels suggests a 3<sup>rd</sup>-century date; the repoussé vessel can be paralleled in the Chaourse hoard (Aisne/F), while the distinctive beading pattern of the platter is typical of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, found in the Chaourse hoard and many others.<sup>14</sup>

#### 3.2 TRAPRAIN LAW

The Traprain Law hoard is the main focus of our ongoing work.<sup>15</sup> The findspot was a hilltop settlement which was a major Roman Iron Age political centre in south-east Scotland. Its history was long and varied. It saw ritual use during earlier prehistory, with the first substantial occupation occurring during the Late Bronze Age, when the first ramparts were built. For most of the Iron Age it seems the hill was enclosed but not extensively settled – perhaps a central meeting place for nearby groups. In the Roman Iron Age it became a densely-occupied boomtown; it is plausible to link its emergence to the changing politics of the Roman frontier, with its development as a power centre to deal with the Roman world. The site received a wealth of Roman finds, and was a centre of contacts and craft activities. For most of the Roman Iron Age it was undefended as the older ramparts had fallen into disrepair, but some time in the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> century AD a substantial enclosure wall was built, with heavy stone foundations supporting a turf rampart. The site remained a focus of Roman contacts at this time: finds include high-quality imported glassware as well as a few items of Late Roman military equipment, suggesting some of the inhabitants served in the Roman army.

Over 200 fragments were recovered in the silver hoard, weighing over 23 kg and representing parts of at least 93 vessels (fig. 1). There are three or four small intact vessels<sup>16</sup> and a few others which were intact

<sup>14</sup> E.g. Baratte/Painter 1989, 122-124 nr. 61-64, 131-133 nr. 78-80, 166-169 nr. 110-114.

summary; Hunter 2006 for the site itself.

<sup>15</sup> See Curle 1923 and Kaufmann-Heinimann 2013 for a

<sup>16</sup> A triangular dish and two or three bead-rim bowls; Curle 1923, nr. 22, 23, ?27, 35.

but crushed; some are represented by several fragments, others by only a single piece, suggesting rather different circulation histories for the various items. The diversity of ornament styles and the range of owners' graffiti indicates the material was drawn from multiple sources. This is confirmed by the ribbed bowls. A normal dinner service would contain one: Traprain has fragments of six, giving a minimum number of sets which went to make up the hoard. The earliest items in the group date to around AD 300, the latest to the early 5<sup>th</sup> century. This diversity and range could be explained in various ways. One is that several individual payments or subsidies are incorporated, which could explain the diversity of owners and numbers of services represented. Some elements may have been taken elsewhere for further circulation, and some had certainly been taken for remelting. But there is another possibility – that the hoard was diverse when it came to the site because it was drawn from a mixed reservoir retained by late-/sub-Roman authorities for this purpose. How one can test between these hypotheses is still under consideration, but the latter possibility seems a good explanation for the sheer diversity of material.

Diversity is confirmed by analysis of the weights (fig. 4). This is more complex at Traprain than with other hoards because of the amount of restoration work which was done upon discovery, and the graph considers only pieces where we are confident there has been little or no impact on the weight. 'Steps' visible in the distribution tie in to ounce divisions, suggesting that a proportion of the material was cut to Roman weight standards. However, much of the material falls between these steps in smooth curves, suggesting a more random process as well. It is possible that some of these fragments were part of larger groups of bullion. A case in point is the two pieces of decorated rim from the same vessel;<sup>17</sup> individually their weights are of no significance, but combined they lie within a percent of eight ounces (219.85 g). Ongoing work correlating vessels, weights and hacking patterns will help to disentangle the different processes which led to the mass distribution. However, at first sight it seems likely that part of the material has seen a second phase of subdivision in a context where Roman weight standards were not of significance – in other words, that the material was first divided within the Empire and then a proportion of it was further divided beyond the frontier. The fact that this secondary cutting created a range of weights rather than a second set of "steps" in the distribution suggests it was not being cut to any local weight standard.

It is difficult to link Roman silver to source on art-historical grounds alone; trace element analysis may ultimately help, but this is in its infancy in this field. However, the likely source of the bulk of the material is indicated by the smallest items in the hoard – four clipped siliquae.<sup>18</sup> These are a peculiarly British habit which has caused extended debate.<sup>19</sup> Our preferred view sees large-scale clipping as an early 5<sup>th</sup>-century phenomenon connected with making fresh coin supplies. This was an attempt to maintain a circulating coin economy in civilian Roman Britain for one or two generations after ties were cut by the central state and the incoming coin flow ceased following the departure of the usurper Constantine III and much of the field army to the continent in 407.

The Traprain hoard could be seen either as payment for military service (as the Late Roman military equipment from elsewhere on the site might suggest)<sup>20</sup> or diplomacy, since the site's occupants had long and favoured relations with Rome. A broader view of Late Roman finds in Scotland suggests both processes were in operation.<sup>21</sup> For instance, a gold crossbow brooch from north-east Scotland<sup>22</sup> is likely to reflect someone who had served in the Roman army, as crossbow brooches were badges of rank which are otherwise exceedingly rare north of Hadrian's Wall. The only comparable find is a fragmentary *Kaiserbibel* of Diocletian from Erickstanebrae in south-west Scotland.<sup>23</sup> This is of a rather different character, as such brooches were presentation pieces. It is one of three remarkable gold finds from a small area just north-west of Hadrian's Wall; the cluster suggests these are best seen as a series of diplomatic gifts to

<sup>17</sup> Curle 1923, nr. 63 a-b.

<sup>18</sup> Guest 2013.

<sup>19</sup> See *inter alia* Guest 2013; Abdy 2013; Bland *et al.* 2013; summary in Hunter/Painter 2013, xix.

<sup>20</sup> Hunter 2009, 234, fig. 21.5.

<sup>21</sup> Hunter 2014.

<sup>22</sup> Curle 1931-1932, 392, fig. 36, nr. 4.

<sup>23</sup> Curle 1931-1932, 370-371; Guggisberg 2013, 196.



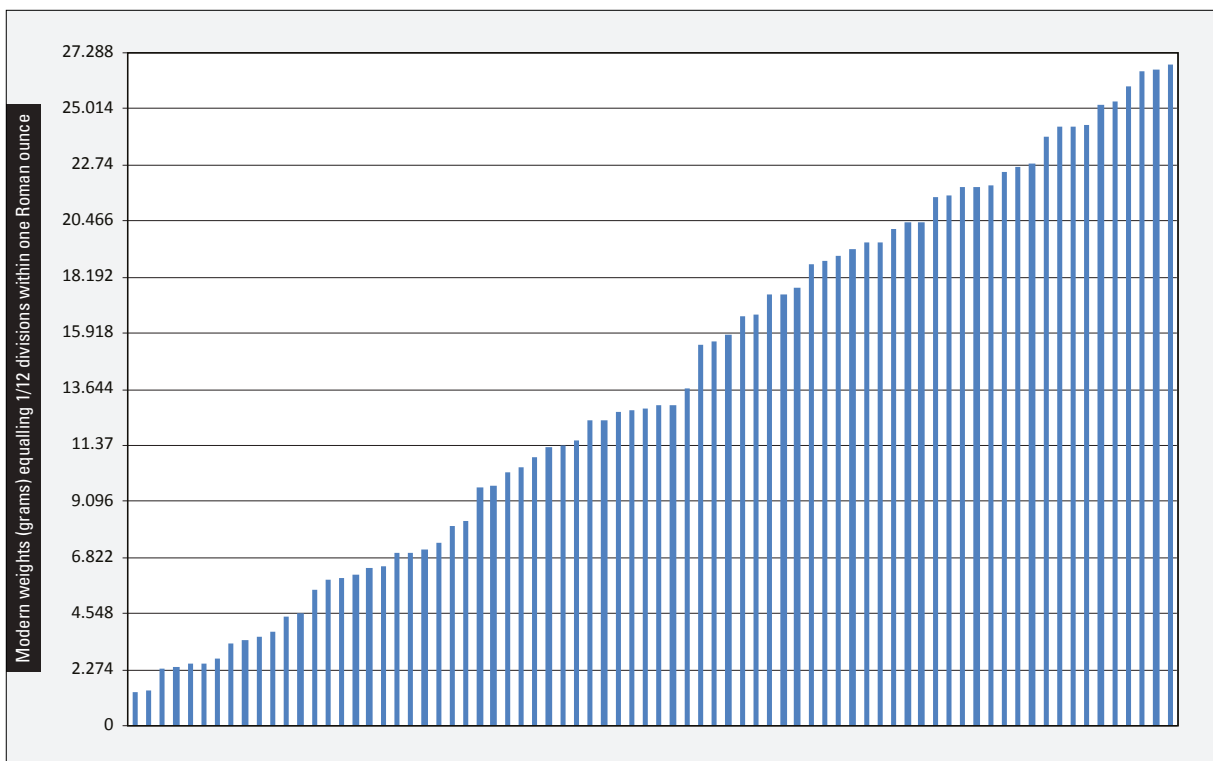
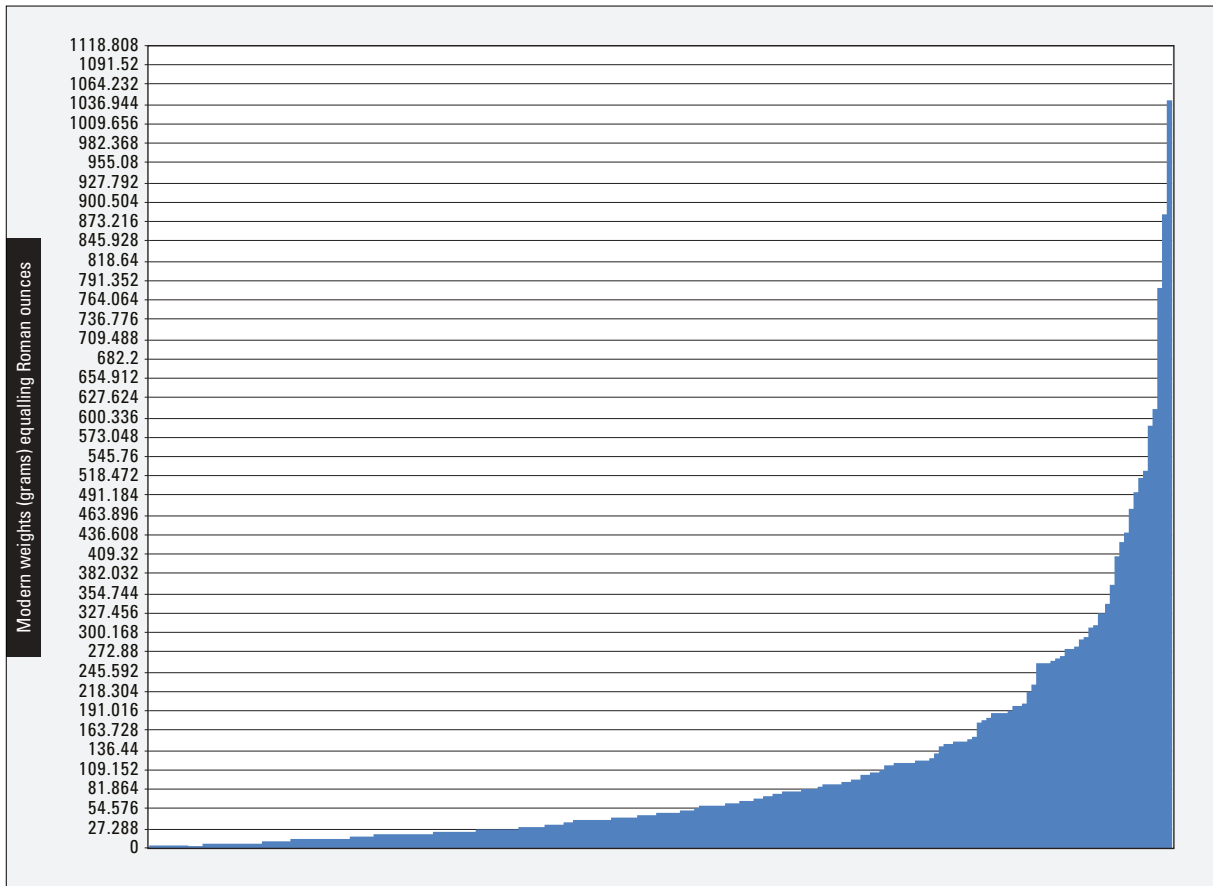


Fig. 4. Rank-size plot of weight distribution of those fragments in the Traprain Law hoard where the original fragment weight can be accurately assessed. Top: all fragments (scale division in Roman ounces). Bottom: detail of fragments weighing one *uncia* or less (scale division in 1/12 *uncia*). Image: F. Hunter.

secure the area. The other two are a medallion of Constantine II Caesar from the abandoned Roman fort of Birrens,<sup>24</sup> and a bracelet with conical terminals (so-called *Kolben* armring) from Cove carrying a Roman maker's inscription.<sup>25</sup>

Traprain itself is the most spectacular of a strong concentration of finds on the eastern seaboard.<sup>26</sup> This probably represents Roman attempts to build relations with this area as a 'buffer' between the province and the Picts, who had emerged as a strongly anti-Roman force in north-east Scotland in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Traprain treasure thus fits into a wider pattern of political relations with the Roman world over an extended period.

### 3.3 EARLY MEDIEVAL HOARDS – NORRIE'S LAW AND GAULCROSS

Two Early Medieval *Hacksilber* hoards with a component of Late Roman material are known from Scotland.<sup>27</sup> One from Norrie's Law in Fife was placed in an older burial cairn on a prominent hill only some 40 km NNW of Traprain Law. It was found around 1819 and much of it was melted down, so we only have a small portion of the original find.<sup>28</sup> The matter is further confused because some of the most spectacular finds were copied and became confused with the originals.<sup>29</sup> The bulk of the hoard is fragmentary indigenous metalwork, one piece bearing distinctive Pictish symbols, but some Roman material is also present. A single Roman spoon fragment has long been recognised, and rediscovery of an antiquarian sketch allowed some of the lost siliquae to be identified.<sup>30</sup> Recent scientific analysis has revealed a rather greater Roman component than previously realised: a batch of high-purity silver among the plain vessel fragments is likely either to represent Roman vessel fragments which lack surviving typologically diagnostic elements, or primary reworking of Roman pieces.<sup>31</sup> In this hoard we see a later stage in *Hacksilber* evolution – a lower percentage of Roman material, in small fragments, and with no pieces recognisably from the same vessel. The date of the deposit is heavily disputed; traditionally it has been dated to the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> centuries,<sup>32</sup> but ongoing research suggests it is rather older than this, deposited perhaps during the 5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>33</sup>

The fourth of our *Hacksilber* hoards has only recently been discovered, though elements of the find have long been known. A decorative pin, fine chain and bracelet were found while clearing a stone circle at Gaulcross (Aberdeenshire) in 1840.<sup>34</sup> Recent fieldwork by Gordon Noble and Martin Goldberg revealed that the intact ornaments were only part of a larger, scattered hoard.<sup>35</sup> Assessment is still ongoing but it appears very similar to Norrie's Law in date and composition, with fragments of indigenous brooches, pins and bracelets as well as some ingots and a small amount of recognisably Roman material (fig. 5): eight late 4<sup>th</sup>-century clipped siliquae, two spoon fragments, three vessel fragments, and four military belt fittings. Like Norrie's Law, the fragments are small and the chopped pieces all derive from different objects. The better preservation of the Gaulcross hoard in contrast to Norrie's Law shows that in several cases fragments had been grouped into bundles; analysis of the weights involved is ongoing.

<sup>24</sup> Bland 2012.

<sup>25</sup> Janiszewski 2012.

<sup>26</sup> Hunter 2010, 96-100.

<sup>27</sup> They are discussed more fully in Blackwell/Goldberg, forthcoming.

<sup>28</sup> Graham-Campbell 1991; Youngs 2013, 414-416.

<sup>29</sup> Goldberg/Blackwell 2013.

<sup>30</sup> Stevenson 1954-1956; Bland *et al.* 2013, 132.

<sup>31</sup> Ongoing research by Alice Blackwell, Martin Goldberg

and Susy Kirk; for an initial statement, see Goldberg 2012, 189-190.

<sup>32</sup> Graham-Campbell 1991; Youngs 2013, 413-416.

<sup>33</sup> Ongoing research by Alice Blackwell and Martin Goldberg, to whom we are grateful for discussion; see also Laing 1994.

<sup>34</sup> Stevenson/Emery 1963-1964.

<sup>35</sup> Goldberg *et al.* 2015; Noble/Goldberg, forthcoming.



Fig. 5. Fragments from the Gaulcross (Aberdeenshire/UK) hoard. Photo by Neil McLean, © National Museums Scotland.

#### 4 HACKSILBER IN THE LATE ROMAN WORLD

What role did *Hacksilber* play in the Late Roman world? Donatives were a key part of military pay by the 4<sup>th</sup> century, on an emperor's accession and at regular intervals during his reign. The emblems of the Count of the Sacred Largesse in the *Notitia Dignitatum* show the role of silver in this process, with gold coins piled in silver dishes and other precious metal items around such as military buckles.<sup>36</sup> This is clear also on silver vessels themselves: some bear images of the emperor (such as dishes of Licinius from Červenbreg in Bulgaria, and a find now in Munich);<sup>37</sup> others have relevant inscriptions, such as the Constans dish from Kaiseraugst, marking his tenth anniversary in power.<sup>38</sup> Thus Late Roman donatives link vessels, other objects (especially military equipment) and coins. However, other material could be used for donatives at times of crisis. Among the hoards of the usurper Magnentius (351–353), many of which have their origins as donatives, silver plate is all but unknown but stamped ingots, hacked ingots and hacked silver are found.<sup>39</sup> An usurper would struggle to obtain the raw materials and craftsmen needed at short notice to make silver plate in order to keep his troops loyal – *Hacksilber*, along with coins and ingots, offered a way to buy loyalty with bullion.<sup>40</sup> This argument is strengthened by the recent Echt (NL) hoard. The

<sup>36</sup> Garbsch/Overbeck 1989, 62, 70 nr. 9.

<sup>37</sup> Kaufmann-Heinimann 2003, Abb. 168–172; Kent/Painter 1977, 20–22.

<sup>38</sup> Kaufmann-Heinimann 2003.

<sup>39</sup> Guggisberg 2003, 281–283.

<sup>40</sup> Painter 2013, 223–224.

range of *solidi* suggests this was a payment from the usurper Constantine III; the hoard also contained half a pound of *Hacksilber*.<sup>41</sup>

We can thus see a more complex circulation system whereby vessels, particular ornaments and coins were suitable as donatives, but objects could also be cut for use as bullion, while ingots could be used as donatives or could be subdivided. We can assume that this *Hacksilber* in turn could be remelted into ingots for subsequent manufacture into objects – trace element analysis of the West Bagborough hoard indicated matches between *siliquae* copies and the irregular ingots which are thought to be formed from *Hacksilber*.<sup>42</sup> *Hacksilber* worked within this wider bullion system which was linked especially to military donatives.

## 5 HACKSILBER BEYOND THE ROMAN WORLD

As we have noted, late and post-Roman silver hoards from beyond the frontier are dominated by *Hacksilber* or have a significant proportion of it. Sometimes they include *Hacksilber* alone, sometimes coins (*siliquae* and/or *solidi*) and ingots. Some contain solely Roman finds, some a mixture of Roman and local, and some purely local: Andreas Rau has usefully differentiated these as groups I–III.<sup>43</sup> Only very rarely are complete vessels attested: the bowls from the Ballinrees (Northern Ireland) and Lengerich (Nordrhein–Westfalen/D) finds were probably containers for the accompanying hoard, while the plate from Altenwalde (Niedersachsen/D) may come from a burial.<sup>44</sup> So why are hoards from beyond the frontier more *Hacksilber*-focussed? Nico Roymans (*infra*) has considered gold hoards (predominantly *solidi* but sometimes with gold jewellery and occasionally *Hacksilber*) from either side of the Rhine in Lower Germany. He argued that these are linked to frontier security, but rather than being donatives as one would expect in the regular army they are payments to *foederati* from beyond the frontier. These date from Valentinian I to Valentinian III, but with a strong concentration in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century under Constantine III. Gold was the main medium of such payments but two hoards (Echt to the left of the Rhine and Großbodungen to the right) also included quantities of *Hacksilber*. Thus it seems silver bullion was a way of paying warriors recruited from beyond the frontier.<sup>45</sup>

Military payments are one explanation for such hoards, but they are not the only possibility. *Hacksilber* shows a strong concentration in Denmark, but Andreas Rau has noted that this area lay beyond the core distribution of Late Roman official military gear such as crossbow brooches, chip-carved belt sets and so forth.<sup>46</sup> From this he argued that Danish warriors were not commonly serving on the Roman frontier as the typical kit is absent. It is possible that *Hacksilber* moved through elite exchange networks within the Germanic world from areas closer to the frontier, but this seems unlikely as it is very rare elsewhere in Germania Magna. Instead, the Danish hoards are better seen as direct diplomatic gifts or subsidies from the Roman world which may have been accumulated as treasuries over a period of time.<sup>47</sup>

We thus have two plausible scenarios for *Hacksilber* arriving in barbaricum: as payment for warbands/soldiers or as diplomatic subsidies. Other scenarios can be imagined (such as trade or raiding), but we do not think the evidence suggests these were major processes. *Hacksilber* was a regular occurrence in two areas beyond the Late Roman frontier: in northern Britain and Ireland, and in southern Scandinavia. In the former it could represent either military payment or subsidy; in the latter, subsidies seem most likely.

The recent Scottish finds reveal striking similarities between hoards from Britain and Ireland on the one hand and Denmark on the other. Previously Rau could argue that his classes II and III (mixed and purely indigenous hoards) were typical of southern Scandinavia, but it is now clear that similar phenom-

<sup>41</sup> Roymans/Heeren 2015; Roymans, this volume.

<sup>42</sup> Minnitt/Ponting 2013, 285–286.

<sup>43</sup> Rau 2013a, 192

<sup>44</sup> Kent/Painter 1977, 127 nr. 230; Künzl 1979; 1988; Rau 2013b, 351, illus. 21.9. The few small intact vessels in the

Traprain Law hoard are very much the exception (Curle 1923, nr. 22, 23, ?27, 35).

<sup>45</sup> See also Painter 2013, 227–231.

<sup>46</sup> Rau 2013b, 351.

<sup>47</sup> Rau 2013a, 192.

ena were present in Britain. Traprain, Dairsie and Balline (Co. Limerick/IRE) represent his group I, and Gaulcross, Norrie's Law and perhaps Ballinrees (Co. Derry/UK) his group II.<sup>48</sup> These are broad characterisations, and the hoards need detailed autopsy. In developing Rau's model we predict that both the percentage of Roman material and the size of fragments will turn out to fall over time; that there will be an increasingly poor correlation with Roman weight standards as a result of this later circulation; that the purity of the silver will decrease over time; and that multiple fragments from one vessel are likely to indicate material which has not circulated extensively.

Such models are generalisations. It is clear, for instance, that material of the same date could go through very different processes. The late 5<sup>th</sup>-century *Hacksilber* from Patching (Sussex/UK) and Nydam IV (Jutland/DK) was reduced to tiny, barely recognisable fragments, while the hoard of a similar date from Bjørnebanke (Funen/DK) included multiple fragments from a small number of silver vessels.<sup>49</sup> It is noteworthy that Roman silver could survive in recognisable form for over a century rather than being consigned to the melting pot. This suggests silver was seen and used in various ways: as a raw material for reuse, but also as a resource to be retained for gift exchange or other processes. The recognisable character of the Roman material would act as a guarantee of quality, given the consistently high silver content of Late Roman silver. It perhaps also acted as a marker and reminder that the owner and their predecessors had a history of contact with the Roman world.

This broader context allows us to expand our model of *Hacksilber* use. We have seen in the Late Roman world that *Hacksilber* was used as bullion within a system of exchange. Within the barbarian world, we can see it used for both exchange and transformation into new objects. It was the means by which Roman silver came into barbarian hands. A series of transformations was then possible as the *Hacksilber* cycled through various phases of use: the retention of the original fragments; their further subdivision; their melting to form ingots; and the production of local material, which in turn could be hacked and start a further cycle. This silver ultimately of Roman origin continued to circulate for decades or centuries after its arrival. Surviving hoards of Roman *Hacksilber* represent only a fraction of what must have come beyond the frontier. In Denmark, locally-made precious metal objects (especially jewellery) are a dominant feature of the early Germanic Iron Age,<sup>50</sup> and in Scotland similar evidence is accumulating. Analysis of crucibles has identified silver-working from the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD onwards on Scottish sites, indicating the recycling of Roman material,<sup>51</sup> and there is a wealth of Early Medieval silver; it is notable that Scotland has more silver of this period than Ireland, suggesting differing access to Roman material in the two areas.<sup>52</sup>

The most striking products are a series of dramatic massive silver chains clustered in south-east and north-east Scotland, including an example from Traprain itself (fig. 6);<sup>53</sup> these are likely to be 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century in date. Surviving examples represent over 11 kg of silver. Silver was also used for a range of other products, such as brooches, pins and bangles, which played a key social role in displaying status.<sup>54</sup>

There is a very notable difference between the Scottish and Danish finds. Many of the Danish hoards include gold as well as silver, whether as solidi, bracteates or jewellery; none of the northern British and Irish finds do. This reflects larger-scale regional differences. Late Roman Britain has produced a disproportionate amount of silver hoards, whether plate or coin, compared to other parts of the Empire.<sup>55</sup> While

<sup>48</sup> See Blackwell/Goldberg, forthcoming, for a more detailed consideration of this question. The Ballinrees hoard is dominated by typologically Roman material, but the range of ingots includes both official Roman and non-standard forms, the latter representing reworked material (Abdy 2013, 112-113).

<sup>49</sup> Dyhrfeldt Johnsen 2013, 323-324.

<sup>50</sup> E.g. Hedeager 1992, 48-66.

<sup>51</sup> Though much of the dating evidence is poor; Heald 2005; Hunter 2013a, 7; 2013b, 25 note 63.

<sup>52</sup> Goldberg 2015, 154, 166-168; Stevenson 1956, 229.

<sup>53</sup> Youngs 2013, 403-411.

<sup>54</sup> Youngs 2013.

<sup>55</sup> Bland 1997; Hobbs 2006, fig. 14.



Fig. 6. Early Medieval silver neck-chains made from recycled Roman silver. Photo by Neil McLean, © National Museums Scotland

gold coins are common within the province they are all but absent beyond it, especially in comparison with other areas of barbaricum: there are only four Late Roman gold coin finds from Scotland and 13 from Ireland, the latter mostly from a single hoard.<sup>56</sup>

In contrast, gold was plentiful around the Lower Rhine frontier and in southern Scandinavia in the 4<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>57</sup> The most likely explanation is a difference in imperial policy: perhaps gold was kept as subsidies for the more threatening continental frontier, while silver sufficed for Britain. However, we should not rule out the possibility of deliberate local choice in this matter. The silver denarius became a very popular coin beyond the frontier in the later 2<sup>nd</sup> century, and was the most common denomination within the northern and western parts of the province of Britannia.<sup>58</sup> Gold, in contrast, was exceedingly rare in northern Britain and Ireland from the late Iron Age onwards, and one wonders whether a preference developed for silver over gold. This could have arisen from its perceived source: gold was a metal with long local traditions while silver was an exotic, Roman one. Whether arising from Roman policy or local preference, use of silver became a distinctive cultural marker in the Early Medieval period. Silver was the status material of choice in northern Britain and Ireland in contrast to gold in Anglo-Saxon areas, coming from a Germanic tradition.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Bland/Loriot 2010, 69, 294–295 nr. 703, 706, 297 nr. 710, 306 nr. 743, 334–336; Bland 2012.

<sup>58</sup> Hunter 2007; Walton 2012, 46–56.

<sup>57</sup> Roymans, this volume; Horsnæs 2013, fig. 39. Scandinavian finds continue into the 6<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>59</sup> Goldberg 2012, 182.

## 6 CONCLUSION: HACKSILBER, ECONOMICS AND FRONTIER POLITICS

We hope this paper has shown the potential of Hacksilber in exploring the long-term history of the Late Roman frontier. The economic (bullion) role of Hacksilber had a long pedigree and a wide distribution, but was focussed on the north-west frontier in the late 4th and 5th centuries. Here it gained a political role as well. It was used at specific times when usurpers needed to pay donatives, and more broadly in dealing with societies beyond the frontier, whether in hiring warriors or paying subsidies. Analysis of weights suggests that the initial cutting of this silver took place in the Roman world and it was sent north as bullion. In these northern worlds it had a transformative effect, making substantial quantities of this new, exotic material available which had a major impact in local patterns of status display, with silver ornaments becoming of great significance. There was also a continuing practice of Hacksilber in both Britain and Denmark, with mixed hoards of Roman and local material running through the 5th and perhaps the 6th century. This suggests that here too a bullion economy was in operation.

But there were also interesting differences in the context of use – in particular, the presence of Roman gold as well as silver in Germanic areas and its near-total absence in Britain and Ireland. This could have been a policy decision or a cultural choice, but it had long-term impacts on local social dynamics. Silver remained the key status material of choice in Scotland while gold was preferred in Anglo-Saxon areas. This Roman silver had lasting effects on societies beyond the imperial frontier.

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# A symbol of Late Roman authority revisited: a sociohistorical understanding of the crossbow brooch

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## I INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

The crossbow brooch is one of the most iconographic Late Roman objects. The golden and silver specimens of this brooch type are highly valued for their splendour and their often outstanding decorative techniques. Their inclusion in depictions of important historical figures and on monuments from Late Antiquity only adds to their reputation as elite Roman symbols. The full story of the crossbow brooch is much more complex, however. What started out as a simple copper-alloy-based functional object became one of the most compelling symbols of Roman power. These objects were found in every province throughout the Roman empire between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. Despite its prominent place in iconography, there are no known antique textual sources that discuss the significance of this artefact, its owners or the reason for its importance.

This paper seeks to contribute to the debate on the social and historical contexts of the crossbow brooch by applying a cultural biographical approach to an object-based material culture study. The purpose is to track the changing series of meanings attributed to this artefact type by incorporating archaeological, historical and art historical evidence into anthropologically attested models that consider how complex social structures are reflected in objects.

<sup>1</sup> This study is part of the research programme *Decline and fall? Social dynamics in the Low Countries in the Late Roman period*, a cooperation between Ghent University and the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, funded by the Netherlands

Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) and the Research Foundation Flanders (FWO). I wish to thank the project members Nico Roymans, Wim De Clercq and Stijn Heeren for their input and critical reading.



Fig. 1. Selection of figures from the Great Hunt Mosaic from the Roman villa del Casala at the Piazza Armerina (Sicily). Top right: a Roman soldier or officer on horseback at a tiger hunt. Left and bottom right: presumed owners of the villa with 'Pannonian hats'. After Pensabene/Gallochio 2011, 32.

## 2 PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON THE CROSSBOW BROOCH

### 2.1 GENERAL STUDIES AND MODELS

Crossbow brooches first appeared in archaeological studies in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> Early scholars began to discover the dating capacities of brooches and created general brooch typologies and extended catalogues, such as Almgren's extensive work on brooches found in northern Europe.<sup>3</sup> In those early works, the main discussion centred around the nature and origin of brooches, in keeping with the ethnic interpretation discourse of that time.<sup>4</sup>

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, research on the crossbow brooch developed as the number of finds increased, mainly from excavations in the northern and western provinces of the Roman empire. Most studies were regional studies<sup>5</sup> or artefact catalogues from particular sites or excavations.<sup>6</sup> Many of

<sup>2</sup> Behrens 1919; Almgren 1923; Kovrig 1937; Van Buchem 1941; Von Patek 1942; Heurgon 1958.

<sup>3</sup> Almgren 1923.

<sup>4</sup> For an overview, see Van Buchem 1966, 61 and 99 note 18.

<sup>5</sup> Van Buchem 1941; Keller 1971; Ettliger 1973; Böhme 1974; Feugère 1985; Hull/Hawkes 1987.

<sup>6</sup> Van Buchem 1966; Böhme 1972; Böhme 1974; Jobst 1975; Clarke 1979; Riha 1979.

them were carried out in different countries at about the same time, creating many typologies,<sup>7</sup> which led to some degree of methodological and descriptive variation.

While most of these early scholars were already treating the crossbow brooch as a specific type within their brooch classifications,<sup>8</sup> the first detailed typology was not created until Van Buchem identified five different groups, based on style and shape.<sup>9</sup> Although Van Buchem presented additional information on related iconographical sources and brooches with inscriptions, the international reach of his model was fairly limited. The most influential work was produced in 1971 by Keller,<sup>10</sup> whose typology consists of six successive types, based on well-dated burial finds from Pannonia. Many scholars preferred to use Keller's model rather than create independent typologies.<sup>11</sup> Despite the model's success, some scholars made regional and chronological adaptations to compensate for Keller's lack of regional variation.<sup>12</sup> The main adjustments were made by Pröttel,<sup>13</sup> who refined the chronology and merged two separate – often indistinguishable – subtypes into one.<sup>14</sup> Swift revised Pröttel's adjustments and refined the subdivisions, based on a larger, interregional comparison.<sup>15</sup> In addition to an elaborate study of regional variations across many western Roman provinces, Swift also introduced a non-linear evolution model for the lifespan of the crossbow brooch, illustrating the existence of chronological overlap.

These models still contain some blind spots, however. Firstly, they tend to focus mainly on the 4<sup>th</sup> century, rather neglecting both the initial development and the end phase of the crossbow brooch. Secondly, these typological models are mainly based on stylistic differences, resulting in assumptions about provenance and production based on little solid evidence. Thirdly, the object's transformations are only considered from a typological point of view. This makes it difficult to track changes over time rather than between subtypes, despite the chronological evidence gathered from archaeological contexts. And lastly, the occasional uncritical use of references to historical and art historical evidence has created rather undifferentiated ideas about the use and social significance of the crossbow brooch, as will be discussed later on.

To overcome these blind spots, more recent studies have gradually been adding information to these models on three major levels. The first level concerns the general distribution of the brooches, which has benefited from better knowledge of crossbow brooches from the northern and western provinces. Most new studies consist of case studies or collection catalogues from previously unstudied sites or regions. The inclusion of the eastern provinces in the Black Sea area has proven very valuable,<sup>16</sup> but so too has the addition of some forgotten regions in the western provinces, such as sites in Spain, Italy, Germany and Belgium.<sup>17</sup> More valuable studies have been undertaken in the Balkan area, such as the work of Petković, based on finds from Serbia, in which she assigns detailed chronologies to specific subtypes and links these to presumed workshops.<sup>18</sup> The second level attempts to address previously neglected questions, such as the initial and final developments of the crossbow brooch. A recent study on the finds from Augsburg focused on 3<sup>rd</sup>-century developments,<sup>19</sup> while another study from the Metropolitan Museum applied an art historical approach to consider the final stages in the transition between Late Roman and early Byzantine times.<sup>20</sup> The third level focuses on technological issues of production and composition by gathering 'solid data' from scientific analyses.<sup>21</sup> Although this method holds considerable promise for our ability to come

<sup>7</sup> Van Buchem 1966; Keller 1971; Böhme 1972; Ettliger 1973; Jobst 1975; Riha 1979; Feugère 1985; Hull/Hawkes 1987; Pröttel 1988.

<sup>8</sup> Böhme 1972; Ettliger 1973; Jobst 1975.

<sup>9</sup> Van Buchem 1941; Van Buchem 1966.

<sup>10</sup> Keller 1971.

<sup>11</sup> A summary is given in Swift 2000, 13.

<sup>12</sup> Riha 1979; Feugère 1985.

<sup>13</sup> Pröttel 1988.

<sup>14</sup> Type 3 and type 4 becomes type 3/4.

<sup>15</sup> Swift 2000, 13–88.

<sup>16</sup> Soupault 2003; Chiriac/Nuțu 2012; Lafli/Buora 2012.

<sup>17</sup> Buora 1997; Aurecochea 2012; Van Thienen/Vanhoutte 2012; Buora 2013; Pauli 2013.

<sup>18</sup> Petković 2010.

<sup>19</sup> Pauli 2013.

<sup>20</sup> Deppert-Lippitz 2000.

<sup>21</sup> Bayley/Butcher 2004; Giunlia-Mair/De Cecco/Vitri 2007.

up with new answers, it has not yet been widely applied to the crossbow brooch. Compositional analyses can result in technological groups that modify existing technological and production models based on stylistic and typological analyses. However, unless we excavate specific workshops or study direct manufacturing evidence, it will be difficult to make further significant progress in locating production centres.

## 2.2 THE STUDY OF PRODUCTION AND MANUFACTURE

As well as creating typological models, scholars have sought to resolve technological questions about the production and manufacturing processes for crossbow brooches. Early scholars made their first insights by examining how Roman brooches were made and used.<sup>22</sup> They quickly understood the brooch mechanism, as well as the manufacture and assemblage process, but the exact nature of production and composition was less obvious. Initially, the majority of crossbow brooches were recognised as bronzes, although there was more interest in the gold and silver examples, along with the various decorative techniques.<sup>23</sup> Since very little metal-working evidence specific to the crossbow brooch has been found, scholars have relied mainly on stylistic evidence to address questions of production and distribution.<sup>24</sup> Based on their largely similar shape and supposed official nature, scholars soon suggested that the brooches must have been made at a major state-run central production site.<sup>25</sup> The large number of finds and the references to the *fabricae* in the *Notitia Dignitatum* support the claim concerning a central production site in Pannonia, although some authors have argued for regional variations, thus suggesting there may have been regional production centres.<sup>26</sup>

Swift's interregional study compared styles and distributions of the different types across multiple provinces. This introduced a more complex narrative that combines both regional and central production models.<sup>27</sup> She concluded that while a general mainstream trend can be observed across all types, there are at the same time smaller distinct subgroups with a limited distribution. Her research suggests productions in the northwestern and Danubian provinces, with regional variations, and points to a dominant production in Pannonia for the better part of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>28</sup>

The copper alloy nature of these Roman brooch types has only been clarified more recently by compositional studies, revealing the complexity of the different manufacturing techniques required to handle the particular metals in these alloys. Bayley and Butcher undertook such an analytical study on the compositional characteristics of the Richborough Collection.<sup>29</sup> Unfortunately, it was not their aim to identify production centres specific to the crossbow brooch. Although Swift applied the analysis performed by Bayley in her research, she was only able to distinguish between a possible British or Continental origin, due to the lack of comparative analyses.<sup>30</sup> Another analytical study<sup>31</sup> suggested a small local production site in Socchieve (northeast Italy) in a short case study on a number of crossbow brooches and a possible imitation type.<sup>32</sup>

Apart from these few studies, there is not much analytical evidence available as yet to aid the interpretation and localisation of production centres. To improve production models for the crossbow brooch, more analytical studies are needed that will enable the comparison and identification of compositional groups. This is something future studies need to consider.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>22</sup> For example Riha 1979, 12-18.

<sup>23</sup> Bayley/Butcher 2004, 12-25, 106-120.

<sup>24</sup> A short summary is given in Swift 2000, 3.

<sup>25</sup> Riha 1979, 171.

<sup>26</sup> Jobst 1975; Clarke 1979.

<sup>27</sup> Only a brief summary will be given here. For a complete and detailed typological spatial analysis and discussion, see Swift 2000, 29-81.

<sup>28</sup> This mainly concerns type 3/4.

<sup>29</sup> Bayley/Butcher 2004.

<sup>30</sup> Bayley 1992; Swift 2000, 81-88.

<sup>31</sup> Giunlia-Mair/De Cecco/Vitri 2007.

<sup>32</sup> Called the Hrušica brooch

<sup>33</sup> An additional part of this study included the chemical analysis (by handheld XRF) on 185 crossbow brooches from different sites in the Low Countries. The results of these analyses will be published elsewhere.

Just as important as matters of technology are questions on how to understand the crossbow brooch in its social and historical context. The first scholars to study the crossbow brooch believed it to symbolise the growing ‘Germanic’ presence or influence in the Late Roman army and empire.<sup>34</sup> This view was dismissed once it became evident that it was a genuine Roman item, part of the *chlamys* costume.<sup>35</sup> The association with the army remained, since most brooches were found in or near military contexts and burials. Most scholars quickly associated crossbow brooches with elite status, due to a combination of the art historical evidence of high-ranking officers<sup>36</sup> wearing such brooches on their shoulders and historical references linking them to the imperial sphere.<sup>37</sup> This discussion about interpretation developed into a debate about their being restricted and available to various social positions, and possibly exclusively the military, as well as their economic and symbolic value.<sup>38</sup>

While many scholars added a range of views to this general debate, certain ideas were readily accepted based on the combined archaeological and art historical evidence. These observations led scholars to conclude that the crossbow brooch was intended to be worn only by men, fastened at the right shoulder<sup>39</sup> of the cloak and with the foot<sup>40</sup> pointing upwards. It later emerged that the brooch had not been available to all members of society but was most likely the preserve of the military and administrative elite. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was agreed that crossbow brooches should be regarded as military objects that had influenced civilian official dress as a result of the political and social ascendancy of high-ranking soldiers and the growing role of the military in the administration. It should therefore be interpreted as a signifier of Roman authority, a claim to membership of the Roman army or administration.<sup>41</sup>

In view of a three-century lifespan for the crossbow brooch as an active artefact, albeit subject to many regional and chronological variations and changes, the general interpretation as stated above fails to fully capture the full complexity of the brooch’s evolution. Some more recent studies have attempted to tackle this issue. Deppert-Lippitz, for instance, has made some valid reassessments from an art historical perspective, based on a specific selection of golden brooches and the iconographic evidence.<sup>42</sup> Although the few examples she discusses originate from across the empire, and range from the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century to the 6<sup>th</sup> century, her selection is clearly biased towards the more exceptional brooches. With this in mind, her interpretation should not be understood as a typological model in an archaeological sense and should therefore not be extrapolated to the entire range of crossbow brooches. Recently, Petković associated certain subtypes with different groups of owners, as implied by their manufacturing quality and archaeological context (in Gamzigrad, Serbia).<sup>43</sup> It is claimed that specific subtypes belonged to members of the imperial army and administration, while others with a seemingly undefined official character most likely belonged to the military units stationed at the discovery site. Apart from these attempts, most researchers still use an undifferentiated interpretation of Roman (military) authority, with little regard for chronology, regional differentiation or context.

<sup>34</sup> Almgren 1923; Kovrig 1937; Von Patek 1942; Heurgon 1958; Van Buchem 1966; Böhme 1972; Böhme 1974.

<sup>35</sup> For a comprehensive explanation about the *chlamys* costume, see Parani 2007, 500–505.

<sup>36</sup> The Monza diptych featuring Stilicho and his family is one of the most well-known and often used antique depictions of the crossbow brooch.

<sup>37</sup> Heurgon 1958, 23.

<sup>38</sup> Keller 1971, 27; Jobst 1975, 93; Clarke 1979; Swift 2000, 3–4.

<sup>39</sup> Although archaeological evidence from certain burials shows the crossbow brooch fastened at the left shoulder, which can be explained by considering that it needed to be fastened on the sword arm side. Swift 2000, 4.

<sup>40</sup> The foot of the brooch is the part in which the needle is set when the brooch is closed.

<sup>41</sup> Swift 2000, 232; Parani 2007, 501–503.

<sup>42</sup> Deppert-Lippitz 2000, 42–62.

<sup>43</sup> Petković 2010, 121–124.

Some general remarks can be made to caution against the unquestioned acceptance of art historical and historical references. In many cases, art historical examples are simply cited to illustrate a specific point, with little consideration of their wider context or related evidence from artefacts, monuments and architectural decoration, each with their own contemporary value and function in society. Similarly, most of the historical references cited consist of inscriptions or texts mentioning brooches or the cloaks associated with crossbow brooches.<sup>44</sup> None of these references discuss crossbow brooches directly, but mainly focus on the value of dress attributes and the regulations surrounding military and official dress, as will be discussed further on.

When studying an artefact type with a significant social and cultural impact, it is important to pay equal attention to the full contextual information. This will be attempted in this study and will be achieved by combining archaeological, art historical and textual evidence. The aim is to enable an appreciation of the evolving meaning of crossbow brooches.

### 3 A CULTURAL BIOGRAPHICAL APPROACH TO MATERIAL CULTURE

In order to expand our interpretation of the social and historical context of the crossbow brooch, we should consider alternative approaches to these matters in material culture. To this end, the present study applies the concepts of cultural biography as formulated by Kopytoff in *The cultural biography of things*.<sup>45</sup>

In Kopytoff's view, a biography of things explores the origin of an object, its life and ending; it looks at who made it and at its perceived ideal life. It also investigates possible cultural markers present in the object and attempts to recognise phases in the thing's life and how usage changes with age. What makes the biography of the object cultural is the perspective from which it is studied. A culturally-informed biography considers an object as an entity, made and defined by a culture and assigned to a certain class or group created by that culture.<sup>46</sup>

The cultural biographical approach can be used for a single artefact, but also an entire object class or type. In material culture studies, artefacts can be considered as a palimpsest, in the sense that they have evolving meanings over time.<sup>47</sup> The same is true for entire artefact types. The related approach of life-cycle assessment is useful for our purposes. Dannehl suggests the combined use of life-cycle mapping, which tracks an object's life from beginning to end, and object life stories, which study the transformation of an object through varying contexts.<sup>48</sup> In this way, a narrative can be created by stringing multiple biographical moments together to present a generalised biography covering the entire lifespan of the complete artefact type.

Relevant questions based on the object biography could include: When did the crossbow brooch first become recognisable with a specific function and meaning, and when did it stop fulfilling its purpose and fall out of use? How did it change, or vary, and what did these changes or variations signify? How is its transformation related to the varying contexts and why did these transformations occur?

The cultural biography of the crossbow brooch presented below considers the full extent of the changing symbolic and social values of this artefact type. The main indicator for change employed is the variation in the different kinds of contexts throughout its life cycle. This includes shifts in the archaeological and iconographic contexts in which the crossbow brooches are found, as well as the changing topics and associated people mentioned in inscriptions and illustrations.

<sup>44</sup> The Latin keywords are *fibula* and *chlamys*.

<sup>47</sup> Caple 2006, 7.

<sup>45</sup> Kopytoff 1986.

<sup>48</sup> Dannehl 2009.

<sup>46</sup> Kopytoff 1986, 66-68.

Phase/Style	Iconographic evidence	Description	Date	Location
Tetrarchy - Constantinian dynasty	Funeral monument Tilva roš	Part of a funeral scene	280-320	Bor, Serbia
	Frieze of Constantine	The campaign against Maxentius	312-315	Rome, Italy
	Lateran Sarcophagus	Scenes from the Old and New Testament	315-325	Rome, Italy
	Dogmatic Sarcophagus	Scenes from the Old and New Testament	320-330	Rome, Italy
	Sarcophagus of Marcus Claudianus	Early Christian scenes	330-335	Rome, Italy
	The Great Hunt mosaic	The hunt, capture and transport of animals	310-340	Piazza Armerina, Sicily
Theodosian dynasty	Silistra Tomb fresco	Servants carrying clothes to the heads of the family	350-380	Silistra, Bulgaria
	Projecta Casket	Woman and man appearing in a wreath	350-380	London, England
	Brescia Casket	Pontius Pilate washes his hands of Jesus	380-400	Brescia, Italy
	<i>Missorium</i> of Theodosius	Theodosius with Valentinian II and Arcadius	± 380	Madrid, Spain
	Theodosius obelisk pedestal (relief 1)	Theodosius offers laurels of victory	± 390	Constantinople, Turkey
	Theodosius obelisk pedestal (relief 2)	Barbarians bringing gifts to Theodosius	± 390	Constantinople, Turkey
	Carrand Diptych	Adam in paradise and scenes from the life of St Paul	± 380-400	Florence, Italy
	Consular Diptych of Stilicho	Consular diptych of General Stilicho and his family	395-408	Milan, Italy
	San Gennaro fresco	Theotecnus with wife Ilaritas and child Nonnosa	400-600	Naples, Italy
	Consular Diptych of Rufius Probianus	<i>Vicarius</i> Probianus with two secretaries/officials	± 400	Berlin, Germany
	Halberstadt Diptych	Consul with two secretaries	± 417	Halberstadt, Germany
	Diptych of a Patrician	Prominent figure dressed in the <i>chlamys</i>	± 425	Ravenna, Italy
	Felix Diptych	Patrician holding codicil	± 428	Paris, France
	Astyrius Diptych	Official consul position	± 449	Darmstadt, Germany
Leonid - Justinian dynasty	Consular Diptych of Areoabindus	Consul with two secretaries; scenes of the games	± 506	Zürich, Switzerland
	Santi Cosma e Damiano mosaic	Saint Theodore	± 530	Rome, Italy
	Barberini Diptych	Triumphant emperor	± 540	Paris, France
	San Vitale mosaic	Justinian and Theodora	547	Ravenna, Italy
	Maximian Chair?	Joseph scenes	545-553	Ravenna, Italy
	St Apollinare Nuovo mosaic	Christ stands before Pilate	561	Ravenna, Italy
Heraclian dynasty	Virgin and Child icon	Virgin and Child with angels and saints	± 600	Mount Sinai, Egypt
	David plates (1)	David before Saul	628-630	Karavas, Cyprus
	David plates (2)	Marriage of David to Michal	628-630	Karavas, Cyprus
	Hagios Demetrios mosaic (1)	Saint Demetrios with two dignitaries	± 650	Thessaloniki, Greece
	Hagios Demetrios mosaic (2)	Companion saint of Demetrios, protecting two children	± 650	Thessaloniki, Greece
	Hagios Demetrios mosaic (3)	Companion saint of Demetrios with dignitary	± 650	Thessaloniki, Greece

Table 1. Art-historical evidence with depictions of crossbow brooches, arranged chronologically and divided into phases linked to the corresponding style and imperial dynasty.



## 4.1 ICONOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

We can start this cultural biography by reviewing the available art historical evidence in chronological order (table 1). The dating of the artworks, sculptures and monuments discussed below is determined through art historical research, independently of the crossbow brooches depicted on them and unrelated to the archaeologically attested types and dates.

From the 4<sup>th</sup> century onwards, crossbow brooches featured in a wide range of artworks, such as sculptures, mosaics and frescoes. One of the earliest known examples is the ‘Great Hunt’ mosaic from one of the corridors of the Villa del Casala at the Piazza Amerina (Sicily).<sup>49</sup> This mosaic contains several illustrations of crossbow brooches (fig. 1). The clearest example can be found on a Roman soldier or officer, on horseback amid a tiger hunting scene. Less clear are two other examples: one on a man with a ‘Pannonian hat’, who is associated with the ownership of the villa; another on the shoulder of the presumed conductor of the hunt, a bearded man, again displaying a ‘Pannonian hat’.<sup>50</sup> These three illustrations have been found by examining pictures and drawings of the mosaic, although it is possible that there are more present in this extensive scene. The mosaic’s construction is dated to the Constantinian period (c. AD 310–340) and the villa owners are believed to have belonged to the senatorial class.<sup>51</sup>

The combined appearance of the crossbow brooch with the ‘Pannonian hat’ is an interesting, recurring aspect. It also occurs on the Arch of Constantine, for example, where the scene of Constantine’s advance from Milan, on the left of the west side relief (*profectio*), shows at least two men in the supply train with both a brooch and hat.<sup>52</sup> The surrounding, similar figures are too weathered to confirm the presence of brooches on their shoulders. This specific relief is attributed to 4<sup>th</sup>-century workshops, placing it around AD 315.<sup>53</sup> An additional example is the funeral sculpture from Tilva roš (Serbia).<sup>54</sup> This relief of two men and their assumed wives is dated to the transition from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Both style and date point to the same art style as the previous examples.

The number of examples increased in the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century with the introduction of early Christian sarcophagi, more specifically, the frequent representation of the ‘Arrest of St Peter’. This scene often includes two soldiers with the brooch-hat combination. Well-known examples are the Lateran<sup>55</sup> and Dogmatic<sup>56</sup> sarcophagi, respectively dated to AD 315–325 and AD 320–330, which are believed to have been made in the workshop that produced the Constantinian friezes.<sup>57</sup> Similar examples are the sarcophagus of Marcus Claudianus (fig. 2), the Husband and Wife sarcophagus and sarcophagus Vat 31578.<sup>58</sup> Although many more sarcophagi depict the Arrest of St. Peter, they rarely feature the brooch as part of military dress and may therefore be attributed to different workshops than the ones mentioned above.

In addition to funerary sculptures, tomb frescoes can also be worth investigating. The Silistra tomb fresco in Durostorum (Bulgaria), for instance, shows two crossbow brooches. The first is worn on the shoulder of the master in the centre of the scene, while the second is fastened onto a cloak held by a servant (fig. 3). The master in the scene is thought to have been a Roman patrician belonging to the high military aristocracy. This is evident from the nature of his dress, the red colour of his cloak and the presence of a codicil. The paintings in the tomb are dated to AD 350–380.<sup>59</sup> An additional example is the family portrait of Theotecnus, located in the catacombs of San Gennaro in Naples (Italy). Despite the uncertainty surrounding Theotecnus’ social position and the date of the tomb, his wealthy attire and the location of the family tomb suggest that he was a member of the patrician or senatorial class.<sup>60</sup> Although

<sup>49</sup> Kitzyngier 1977, 9; Pensabene/Gallocchio 2011, 31–33.

<sup>50</sup> Kitzyngier 1977, fig. 6.

<sup>51</sup> Pensabene/Gallocchio 2011, 35.

<sup>52</sup> Elsner 2000, 165–172; Clarke 2003, 60–62.

<sup>53</sup> Weitzmann 1979, 399.

<sup>54</sup> Petković 2010, 131 (fig. 126).

<sup>55</sup> Sometimes referred to as Sabinus sarcophagus.

<sup>56</sup> Kitzyngier 1977, 24; Weitzmann 1979, 398–399.



Fig. 2. Detail of the sarcophagus of Marcus Claudianus showing the 'Arrest of Peter'. This scene often shows both men at Peter's side wearing the crossbow brooch/'Pannonian hat' combination. Origin and permission: Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, <http://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=54026>.

the tomb itself cannot be dated more accurately than within the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries, a date at the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century might be proposed, based on style and dress properties.

Before moving on to the 5<sup>th</sup> century, we should consider a new medium for crossbow brooch illustrations. Indeed, by the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century the brooches no longer appeared solely on architectural decoration or monuments; they also began to emerge on portable objects. The earliest known example is the image of a couple encircled by a marriage wreath on the lid of the Projecta Casket. The husband (Secundus) wears a very clear illustration of the brooch (fig. 4). Despite the couple's uncertain identity, a general date of AD 350 to 380 is accepted for this toiletry item.<sup>61</sup> A comparable object is the Brescia Casket, although it served a different purpose. The lid depicts a New Testament scene, in which Christ is

<sup>57</sup> Kitzinger 1977, 22; Weitzmann 1979, 399; Evans 1993.

<sup>58</sup> These examples were found by consulting the Divinity Library from the Vanderbilt University, consulted in February 2015 by the author: <http://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/>.

<sup>59</sup> Atanasov 2007, 449-454.

<sup>60</sup> Lioce 2013, 34-38.

<sup>61</sup> Van Buchem 1966, 53; Cameron 1985, 135-145; Shelton 1985, 147-148.



Fig. 3. Part of the Silistra tomb fresco. A servant brings a cloak to his master with a crossbow brooch already attached. After Atanastov 2007, 465.

brought before Pilate for judgement. Pilate and six Roman officials are each shown with brooches. The style of the casket, which was presumably produced in Milan, places it around AD 380 to 400.<sup>62</sup>

Around the same time, the *Missorium* of Theodosius was made to commemorate the *decennalia* of Theodosius in AD 388 (fig. 5). The image on this silver dish shows the emperor Theodosius with Valentinian II and Arcadius at his side.<sup>63</sup> The brooch in the scene is worn by an unidentifiable Roman officer receiving a diptych from Theodosius. Closely related to the *Missorium* are the reliefs on the base of the obelisk of Theodosius at the Hippodrome of Constantinople (erected around AD 390). Two of the reliefs include figures wearing crossbow brooches. On one side, Theodosius is depicted with his family in the imperial box and his retinue alongside, with two *chlamys*-wearing high members of court positioned in front of the soldiers on the left-hand side. On the other relief, the emperor is looking out of the imperial box, surrounded by the court and his bodyguard. Here, the younger looking figure on Theodosius' right is the one sporting a crossbow brooch.<sup>64</sup>

The transition to the 5<sup>th</sup> century marks the rise of consular diptychs as a popular attribute among the Late Roman political class. Many crossbow brooch illustrations can be found on these diptychs, due to

<sup>62</sup> Van Buchem 1966, 98; Weitzmann 1979, 597-598; Watson 1981, 292-293.

<sup>64</sup> Kitzinger 1977, 32-34; Elsner 1998, 75-78.

<sup>63</sup> Kitzinger 1977, 31-34; Weitzmann 1979, 74-76; Kilerich 2000, 278.



Fig. 4. The lid of the Projecta Casket, depicting Secundus with a crossbow brooch on his shoulder. Courtesy of British Museum, number 1866, 1229.1 AN493408001.

the stylistic choice to portray figures in contemporary attire and with contemporary dress attributes. A famous example is the Monza diptych of Stilicho and his family, dated to AD 395–408.<sup>65</sup> Diptychs were usually commissioned by private citizens and were used as political instruments, often sent out as gifts. Although the diptychs showed consuls in their official capacity, the primary focus was the functions performed during their consulship, rather than the person performing them.<sup>66</sup> The themes and attributes on these diptychs thus have an official character, as is also evident from the Probianus diptych (c. AD 400),<sup>67</sup> Halberstadt diptych (c. AD 417),<sup>68</sup> Patrician diptych (c. AD 425),<sup>69</sup> Felix diptych (c. AD 425)<sup>70</sup> and Astyrius diptych (c. AD 449).<sup>71</sup> They all display one or multiple brooch illustrations. The Carrand diptych (AD 380–400) appears to be an exception as it portrays scenes from the life of St Paul. However, the figure wearing the crossbow brooch is believed to be Publius, a princeps of Malta.<sup>72</sup> Thus, the brooch has to be seen as indicating the official nature of Publius' office, rather than being part of the religious theme of the scene. Although crossbow brooch illustrations seem to have disappeared altogether from diptychs in the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, a few examples are still known from the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The diptych of Areaobindus, dated to AD 506, shows two men with crossbow brooches flanking the consul.<sup>73</sup> The Barberini

<sup>65</sup> Van Buchem 1966, 78.

<sup>66</sup> Olovdotter 2003, 212–218; Eastmond 2010, 745.

<sup>67</sup> Kitzynger 1977, 35; Weitzmann 1979, 55–56; Deppert-Lippitz 2000, 61; Parani 2007, 503.

<sup>68</sup> Van Buchem 1966, 54; Olovdotter 2003, 19–22.

<sup>69</sup> Kitzynger 1977, 47; Weitzmann 1979, 56–58.

<sup>70</sup> Olovdotter 2003, 22–23.

<sup>71</sup> Olovdotter 2003, 23–25.

<sup>72</sup> Van Buchem 1966, 55; Gosserez 2005, 109–126.

<sup>73</sup> Olovdotter 2003, 37–44; Eastmond 2010, 743–745.



Fig. 5. Detail of the *Missorium* of Theodosius. On the left side of the fracture is a Roman official being handed a document by Theodosius. The unidentifiable official is illustrated with a crossbow brooch on the right shoulder. Origin and permission: catalogue of the Museo Nacional de Arte Romano, Inventario CE37652, property of the Ministerio de Cultura, <http://ceres.mcu.es/pages/Main>.

diptych (fig. 6) is dated even later, to around AD 540.<sup>74</sup> The difference in date and style of these last two might be attributed to a change from western to eastern Roman workshops.<sup>75</sup>

The art historical evidence from the 5<sup>th</sup> century is dominated by diptychs, while the 6<sup>th</sup> century again saw an increase in crossbow brooch illustrations in architectural decoration – more specifically, in apse mosaics in churches. The mosaic in the San Vitale in Ravenna (Italy) depicts Justinian and Theodora with their respective courts and the Archbishop (fig. 7) and is dated to AD 547. A total of five members of court are wearing a brooch on their *chlamys*.<sup>76</sup> A second example of an apse decoration can be found in the Santi Cosma e Damiano in Rome (Italy), showing a number of saints and dated around AD 530. The brooch is illustrated on the (military) Saint Theodore, who had supposedly lived or served under the reign of Diocletian.<sup>77</sup> A third example is found in the St Appolinare Nuovo in Ravenna (Italy), which portrays the familiar scene of Christ being led before Pilate. The mosaic is dated to AD 561. Pilate is adorned with a crossbow brooch and possibly the figure behind him as well, although that is rather unclear.<sup>78</sup>

The crossbow brooch appears to have disappeared from artwork for the remainder of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. However, there are still some 7<sup>th</sup>-century examples. The David Plates, for instance, can be dated to the first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>79</sup> This collection of silver plates displays scenes from the life of David, with the biblical figure of Saul present in two scenes: ‘David before Saul’ and ‘the Marriage of David’ (fig. 8).

<sup>74</sup> Kitzinger 1977, 96-97.

<sup>75</sup> Olovsson 2003, 7-8.

<sup>76</sup> Kitzinger 1977, 87; Weitzmann 1979, 76-78; Barber 1990; Bassett 2008.

<sup>77</sup> Kitzinger 1977, 92; Deppert-Lippitz 2000, 61-62; Cochran 2013.

<sup>78</sup> Deliyannis 2010, 153-158.

<sup>79</sup> Lazaridou 2011, 162-163.



Fig. 6. Detail of the Barberini Diptych from the left part of the panel. Origin and permission: Department of Decorative Arts: Early Middle Ages, Louvre, <http://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/leaf-diptych-emperor-triumphant>.

In both scenes, a shape resembling the long foot of the crossbow brooch can be distinguished on his *chlamys*.<sup>80</sup> The brooches have almost become unrecognisable, as is also the case with some (military) saint icons. Examples are the mosaics of St Demetrius and the wooden Virgin and Child icon.<sup>81</sup> This suggests that only the idea of the crossbow brooch remained.

After reviewing the art historical evidence in chronological order, we can distinguish several phases. These phases are more likely the result of the different art styles involved, often associated with movements away from or towards the more traditional styles. Developments in early Christian art and the transformation from Roman to Byzantine art play a major role here with regard to the choice of themes and figures. These phases also reflect the rather more dominant imperial reigns and reforms in Late Antiquity, such as the first Tetrarchy, the Constantinian dynasty and the reigns of Theodosius and Justinian. The gaps between these phases are not necessarily gaps in the biography of the crossbow brooch or periods without change on a social or historical level. We need information from other sources in order to see whether these gaps signify more than art historical intervals.

#### 4.2 HISTORICAL REFERENCES

As mentioned earlier, some caution is advised when referring to textual sources in the debate on crossbow brooches. This study found no texts with a direct indication or description of this type of brooch. Only four references to the word '*fibula(e)*' were found in contemporary sources (table 2). The earliest of these occurs on the base of the statue of Sennius Sollemnis – the 'marble of Thorigny'<sup>82</sup> – and is dated to AD

<sup>80</sup> Alexander 1977; Kitzinger 1977, 110; Weitzmann 1979, 478, 483; Leader 2000.

<sup>81</sup> Kitzinger 1977, 105-106.

<sup>82</sup> Pflaum 1948; Vipard 2008.

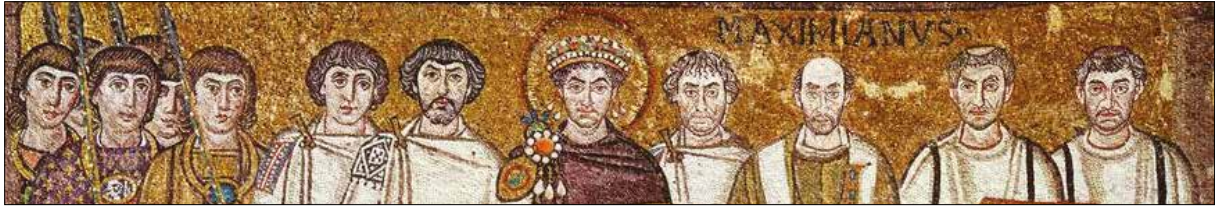


Fig. 7. Detail of the apse decoration from the San Vitale (Ravenna, Italy), showing Justinian with the imperial court. Three men alongside the Emperor are wearing a crossbow brooch. Origin and permission: Artstor library, Emperor Justinian and his Attendants, ID Number 30-01-10/12, <http://library.artstor.org/library>.

Source	Date (AD)	Part	Contents
Le marbre de Thorigny	219-220	Face 3	Letter from Claudius Paulinus (propraetor of Britannia) to Sennius Sollemnis (tribune of 6th legion)
Ammianus Marcellinus	350-380	XVI.5.11	About the virtues of caesar Julian
	350-380	XVI.13.13	About the behaviour of the courtiers in the camp of Constantius at Aquitania
	350-380	XXII.9.11	About Julian residing at court and speaking justice
<i>Codex Theodosianus</i>	438 (401)	I.15.16	Rules for <i>vicarii</i>
	438 (396)	VII.6.4	Rules about military clothing
	438 (382)	XIV.10.1	Rules for life inside the city walls
<i>Corpus Juris Civilis: Codex Justinianus</i>	534	CJ.XI.12.1	Prohibitions on precious dress items
	534	CJ.XII.39.3	Rules about military clothing
<i>Corpus Juris Civilis: Digesta Justinianus</i>	534	DJ.XXXIV.2.23.2	Rules for exclusive jewellery and official dress
	534	DJ.XXXIV.2.25.2	Rules for exclusive jewellery and official dress
Procopius of Caesarea	545-551 (531)	I.XVII.24-30	King Cabadas stripping gold ornaments from a patrician upon returning to Persia after defeat
	545-551 (544)	II.XXIII.19-4	The effect of the plague on Byzantium
<i>Notitia Dignitatum</i>	420	In partibus occidentis.IX	On official insignia for magistrates
	390	In partibus orientis.XI	On official insignia for magistrates

Table 2. Antique references to brooches and clothing. References searched for mention of both *fibulae* and *chlamys*.

219-220. On one side, there is a copy of a letter to Sennius from the proprietor of Britannia, listing the proprietor's gifts to Sennius to mark his appointment to the post of tribune of the 6<sup>th</sup> Legion. Among many luxurious goods is a gold brooch with gems. Considering the early date and the mention of gems, it seems unlikely that this brooch was of the crossbow type. A second mention of a gold brooch is found in the *Codex Justinianus*, in a section on the restrictions on the use of gems on precious dress items outside the imperial circle. The *fibulae* could only be 'valuable for their gold and artistic value'.<sup>83</sup> Another gold brooch is mentioned by Procopius of Caesarea in his history of the Justinian wars. He recounts the story of a patrician who was stripped of his gold decorations by the Persian King Cabades after being defeated in battle (c. AD 531).<sup>84</sup>

<sup>83</sup> *Codex Justinianus* 11.12.1.

<sup>84</sup> Procopius of Caesarea, *History of the Wars*, 1.17.24-30, translation by H.B. Dewing made available by

the Project Gutenberg: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/16764/16764-h/16764-h.htm>.



Fig. 8. Detail of the David Plate ‘The Marriage of David’. The central figure is Saul, performing the ceremony, with something resembling a crossbow brooch on his *chlamys*. After Lazaridou 2011, 162.

These references could include a crossbow brooch, but do not exclude other types of brooches either. The last reference to a brooch, also from the *Codex Justinianus*, does not specify the kind of brooch.<sup>85</sup> It is therefore not clear from the references whether crossbow brooches were considered a separate brooch type or an object that was only available to a restricted class.

Other textual evidence cited from past studies concerns references to the word *chlamys* (table 2). It is used to refer to either a single cloak or an entire costume. The first often appears in a military context, as demonstrated by an example from both the *Codex Theodosianus* and the *Codex Justinianus*, which states that one solidus should be given for each military cloak.<sup>86</sup> Ammianus Marcellinus uses *chlamys*

three times in anecdotes, hinting at a cloak that was part of imperial dress.<sup>87</sup> The second meaning is illustrated in a passage from the *Codex Theodosianus*, which stipulates that proper official dress should be worn at official events.<sup>88</sup> Procopius of Caesarea uses it in a similar manner when describing the effects of the plague in Byzantium. He states that no one could be seen wearing a *chlamys* in the streets because all men wore clothes fit for private use and remained at home.<sup>89</sup>

Although these texts contain a good deal of information on the restrictions or obligations of official and military dress and the correlation between these dress items and social identities, they cannot be used to comment directly on the use, significance or perception of the crossbow brooch as they contain no explicit mention or indication of this brooch type. Furthermore, very few crossbow brooches found in archaeological contexts are in fact made of solid gold, and this study has not encountered any use of gems, thus reducing still more the relevance of these texts.

#### 4.3 TEXTUAL FEATURES ON BROOCHES

In contrast to historical texts, some direct textual evidence can be obtained from textual decoration present on brooches from the 3<sup>rd</sup>- to 4<sup>th</sup>-century transition. These decorations and inscriptions often

<sup>85</sup> *Codex Justinianus*, *Digesta* 34.2.25.2.

<sup>86</sup> *Codex Theodosianus* 7.6.4; *Codex Justinianus* 12.39.3. Another military reference can be found in *Codex Theodosianus* 14.10.1.

<sup>87</sup> Amm. Marc. 16.5.11; 16.13.13; 12.9.11.

<sup>88</sup> *Codex Theodosianus* 1.15.16.

<sup>89</sup> Procopius of Caesarea, *History of the Wars*, 2.13.19-4.



Name	Text	Interpretation	Date (AD)	Provenance
Laci fibula	SEPTIMI VIV	Praise for Septimius (unappointed)	284-305	Laci, Albania
Arezzo brooch	HERCULI AUGUSTE // SEMPER VINCAS	Praise for a western emperor, most likely Maximianus (Herculius)	286-309	Arezzo, Italy
Taraneš fibula	IOVI AUG VINCAS // IOVI CAES VIVAS	Praise for an eastern augustus and caesar, possibly Diocletian and Galerius	293-305	Taraneš, Macedonia
“Diocletian” brooch	IOVI[O] AUG[USTO] // VOT[IS] XX	20th anniversary of Diocletian’s reign, celebrated at November 20, 303	303	Erickstanebrae, Scotland
Untersiebenbrunn fibel	CONSTANTINE VIVAS	Celebrating Constantinius	293-305	Untersiebenbrunn, Austria
Turin brooch	CONSTANTINE CAES VINCAS // HERCULI CAES VINCAS	Celebrating Constantinius	306-307	Unknown
Caput Adriae fibula	MAXENTI VINCAS // ROMULE VICAS	Celebrating Maxentius and his son Romulus	308-309	Aquilea, Italy or Centur, Slovenia
Louvre fibule	D N CONSTANINI AUG // VOT X MULTIS XX	10th anniversary of Constantine’s reign, celebrated on July 25, 315	315	Unknown
Niederemmel fibel	VOTIS X D N CONSTANTINI AUG // VOTIS X D N LICINI AUG	10th anniversary of Constantine’s (July 25, 315) and Licinius’ reign (November 11, 317)	315-317	Niederemmel, Germany
Julianus Brooch	IULIANE VIVAS	Praise for Julianus (unappointed, possibly Julian II)	?335-350	Unknown

Table 3. Crossbow brooches with inscriptions and textual decoration.

praise specific emperors (*augustus* and *caesar*) or celebrate imperial events, thus allowing the attribution of accurate dates to these brooches (table 3). For example, the ‘Arezzo brooch’ praises Maximianus and is therefore dated between AD 286 and 309. Another example is the ‘Taraneš brooch’. Its reference to both Diocletian and Galerius places it between AD 293 and 305. The commemorations of specific events also provide us with very precise dates. Examples are the reference on the ‘Diocletian brooch’ to the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Diocletian’s reign (celebrated on 20 November, AD 303), or the mention on the ‘Louvre brooch’ of Constantine’s *decennalia* (held on 25 July, AD 315).<sup>90</sup>

The brooches with imperial inscriptions appear to be confined to the first and second Tetrarchy, roughly between AD 280 and 320. Although these textual decorations make accurate dating possible, there is still a need for caution. A specific reference does not convey an exact fabrication date, nor does it necessarily imply a presence in the immediate surroundings of the emperor mentioned. Instead, these kinds of decorated brooches should be understood as part of the imperial cult – possibly integrated into the commemorative elite gift-giving system – and are more correctly used as a *post quem* indication.

#### 4.4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXTS FROM THE LOW COUNTRIES

In addition to the iconographic and textual evidence, archaeological contexts can also add valuable information to the sociohistorical debate, despite a frequent lack of accurate dates. The assessment of archaeological

<sup>90</sup> More examples can be found in Deppert-Lippitz 2000, 46-51 and Van Buchem 1966, 67-69.

AD	< 280	280-320	320-380	380-425	Total (n)	Total (%)
Fort	9	4	30	6	49	27.4%
Urban	8	14	38	4	64	35.8%
Rural		1	2		3	1.7%
Unknown	5	15	40	3	63	35.2%
Burial	2	2	42	6	52	29.1%
Non-burial	15	7	15	2	39	21.8%
Unknown	5	25	53	5	88	49.2%

Table 4. Number of crossbow brooches per chronological phase for the different types of sites and general contexts of the Low Countries. This table presents the 179 brooches selected for this study. Above: brooches ordered by site type. Below: brooches ordered by context.

contexts in this study is based on crossbow brooches from Late Roman sites in the Low Countries and is evaluated in chronological order to facilitate integration into the cultural biographical approach. Although this study focuses mainly on changes in context, it is also necessary to include the more significant changes in the general properties of crossbow brooches from the Low Countries.

The total number of brooches (Belgium and the Netherlands combined) comes to approximately 300 finds (fig. 9),<sup>91</sup> 179 of which were selected for detailed observation in this study (table 4). Unfortunately, nearly half proved to be stray finds or older finds for which the nature of the context has been lost. Despite their limited use in a context-based study, these finds have helped to reinforce observations of the changes in brooch properties over time.

In view of the dating difficulties of the archaeological contexts, the emergence of the crossbow brooch can be placed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.<sup>92</sup> The finds from the earliest contexts show us that the initial form can be seen as little more than the general form of a bow brooch, similar to other types, with a hinge mechanism, which was not uncommon in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.<sup>93</sup> The general shape of these earliest forms displays little variation across different sites in the Low Countries and shows only sparse decoration. The first change in the general properties of these brooches can be noticed around the transition from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> century, with the finds displaying an increasing variety in the form of the different components and decoration techniques. While the bulk of the composition remained a copper alloy, gold and silver coatings were encountered on multiple examples.<sup>94</sup> This greater variation in brooch appearance indicates some freedom of choice in the manufacturing process. Nevertheless, their general shape shows many continuities. Most likely, all brooches from this phase belonged to the same class of objects in the minds of observers.

The contexts in which these early crossbow brooches are found add little new information to our understanding of the emergence of this brooch type. The 3<sup>rd</sup>-century finds occur predominantly on military sites, as well as in smaller numbers on urbanised sites (Nijmegen and Tongeren), where a military presence can be expected (fig. 10b). No fixed or specific depositional context pattern emerges from the archaeological record of the Low Countries. In general, only a scattered distribution can be observed, mainly in non-burial contexts (fig. 10c), such as the excavation at the fort of Oudenburg. This excavation revealed a number of early crossbow brooches spread over a myriad of locations across the site, ranging from multiple pits to a

<sup>91</sup> I also included the inventory of Stijn Heeren, for which I am grateful.

<sup>92</sup> The earliest finds from the Low Countries were mainly dated on a typological basis, for which parallels from other regions were used. This makes it difficult to pinpoint an exact start date for the crossbow brooch in the Low Countries. Since, the first major changes in brooch properties

can be traced to approximately AD 280, this moment was chosen as an *ante quem* date for the initial archaeological phase, until more precise evidence can be found.

<sup>93</sup> Van Buchem 1941, 120, plaat 118 fig. 121-129; Ettliger 1973, 137-138; Riha 1979, 162-177; Feugère 1985, 18; Bayley/Butcher 2004, 179-185.

<sup>94</sup> Detected by means of XRF analysis.

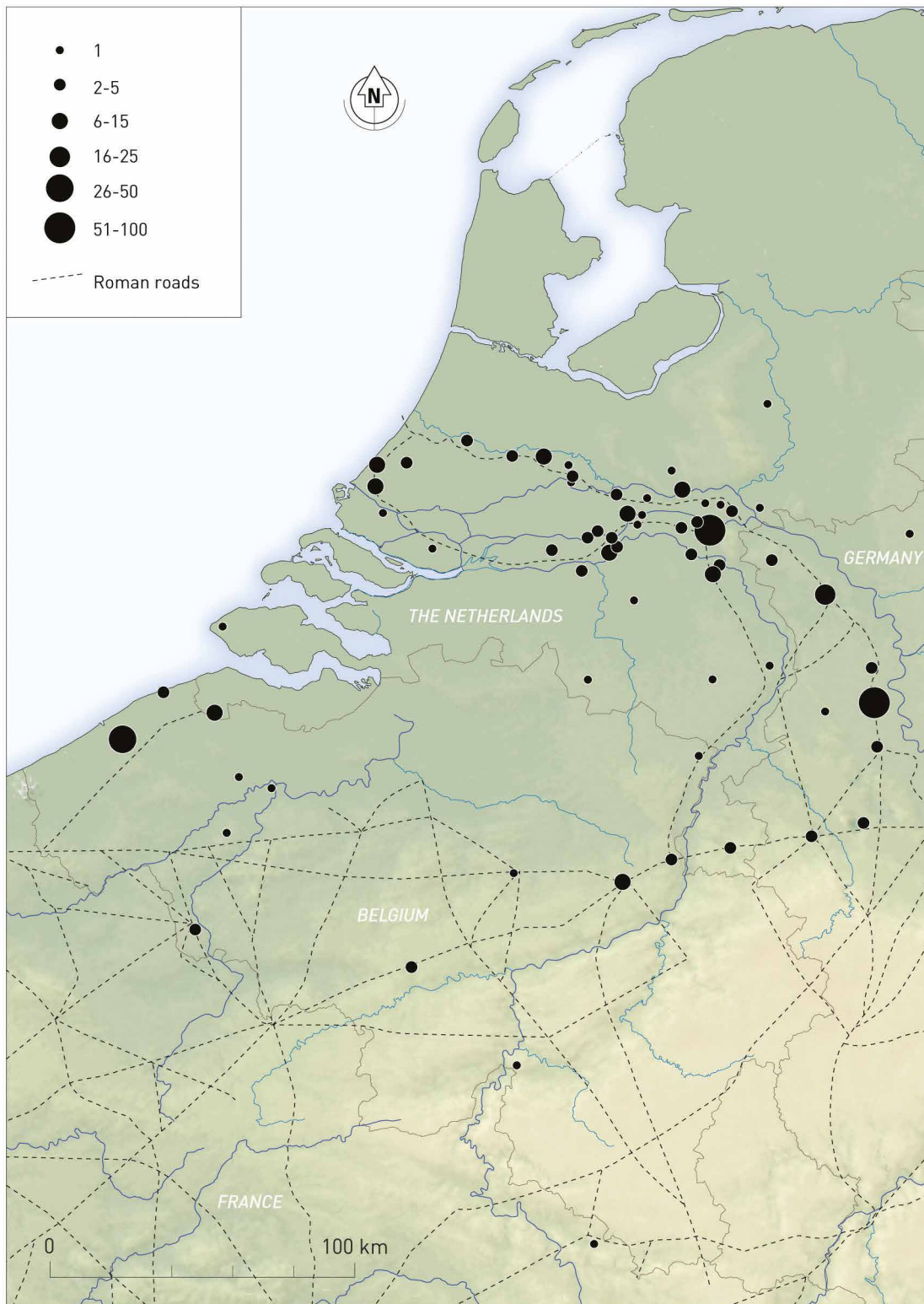


Fig. 9. Sites and locations with crossbow brooches throughout the Low Countries and surrounding areas.

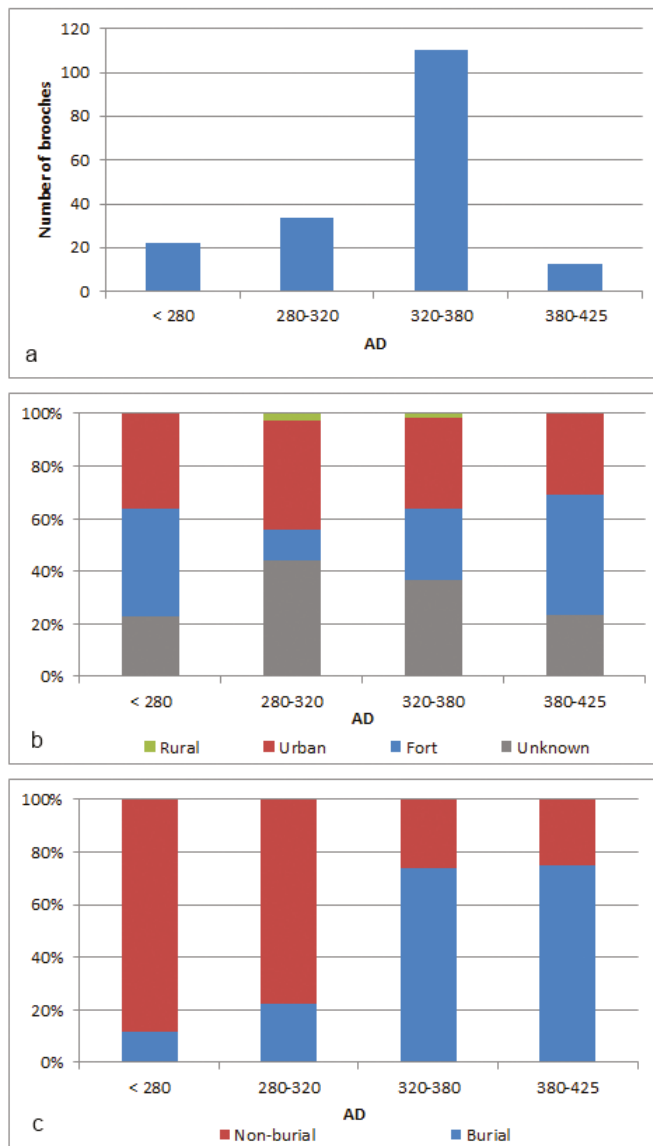


Fig. 10. a. Number of crossbow brooches per chronological phase of the 179 brooches presented in this study. The date ranges correspond to the dates of the subtypes based on archaeological contexts.

b. Percentage of brooches based on the different site types. The main function per site has been categorised as ‘fort’, ‘urban’ or ‘rural’. The ‘unknown’ category contains stray finds and contexts without an identifiable site or structure.

c. Percentage of brooches based on the main character of the depositional context (‘burial’ or ‘non-burial’).

construction layer for a well and a housing unit.<sup>95</sup> This random distribution best corresponds to accidental loss, indicating that the brooches were worn while their wearers performed everyday tasks. These general observations correspond to evidence from comparable sites such as Augsburg,<sup>96</sup> Augst<sup>97</sup> and Richborough.<sup>98</sup>

The increased variety in the 3<sup>rd</sup>- to 4<sup>th</sup>-century transition is related to a proliferation in the number of brooches in circulation (figs 10a and 11). This is not merely a representation of the archaeological record, for the nature of the depositional context has not altered. The majority of finds are still encountered in non-burial contexts on sites with a military presence or association (fig. 10b/c). However, this process changed over the course of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, when the

introduction of inhumation and the role of the crossbow brooch as part of the burial costume caused the burials to become the main depositional context. This shift is noticeable at other sites as well, for example in Augst,<sup>99</sup> where the finds no longer appear to be randomly distributed across the site, but are clustered in the burials. The sharp rise in the number of finds (fig. 10a) in this period also corresponds to the larger pattern from other provinces.<sup>100</sup> Even though this picture is potentially influenced by post-depositional processes and greater care in the excavations of burials, the main difference between brooches from burial and non-burial contexts suggests an actual shift. By the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century and the first decades of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the number of finds from Late Roman Low Countries sites diminishes considerably (fig. 10a). As a result, most brooches for this final phase originate from burials in Nijmegen, Tongeren and Oudenburg, i.e. the major military and administrative centres (fig. 10b/c). The shift to burials as the intended depositional contexts for

<sup>95</sup> Van Thienen/Vanhoutte 2012, 145-149.

<sup>96</sup> The total distribution of the crossbow brooches of the earliest phase is less well known. For the most recent distribution map, see Pauli 2013, 403-408.

<sup>97</sup> Riha 1979, 51.

<sup>98</sup> Bayley/Butcher 2004, 106-115.

<sup>99</sup> Riha 1979, 51.

<sup>100</sup> Swift 2000, 31.

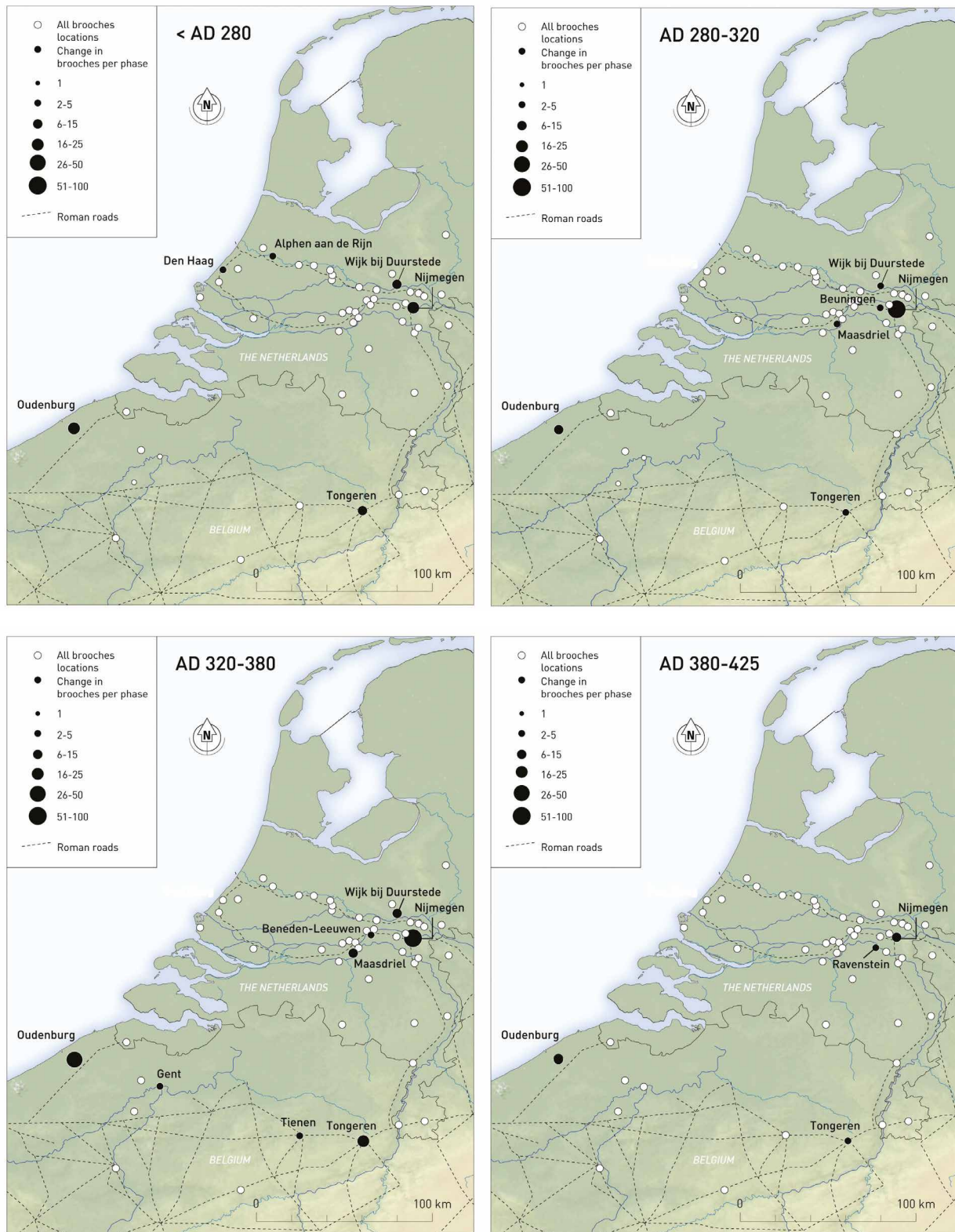


Fig. 11. Changes in the number of crossbow brooches in the Low Countries per phase, based on the 179 brooches included in this study. The four phases correspond to the changes observed in the archaeological record and finds from the Low Countries.

the crossbow brooch seems to have remained unaltered up to the end of the life of the crossbow brooch as an object type, although the small number of finds renders a definitive statement impossible.

Despite the increased use and number over the course of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the object variations appear to decrease at the same time: less differentiation in component shapes was observed, as well as a reduction in the range of decoration to combinations of a fixed set of motifs. Additionally, no gold or silver coating was detected on any of the Low Countries brooches. This evidence indicates a reduced freedom of choice in the manufacturing process, suggesting the possible involvement of a control system or some measure of standardisation. At the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the final phase for the Low Countries, this apparent standardisation of the brooch shape disappeared once more. New shapes and diversifications from its predecessors appeared, as well as new decoration techniques and motifs. And once again, multiple objects contained traces of gold in their coating.

The first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century marks the end of the archaeological evidence for the crossbow brooch in the Low Countries, corresponding to the withdrawal of Roman military forces and the abandonment of the administrative centres in the region.<sup>101</sup> The only exception is Childeric's brooch. Found in Childeric's burial site at Tournai, it is dated to AD 464–482<sup>102</sup> and is therefore the only known crossbow brooch from the northern parts of former Gaul dating from the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. It resembles the few others that have been found in and outside the borders of the later 5<sup>th</sup>-century Roman empire.<sup>103</sup> In general, the overall evidence for these late finds is poor and the context information usually unknown. Furthermore, the sharp drop in numbers appears to apply to the entire empire. Although this archaeological study has focused on finds and contexts in the Low Countries, no reliably dated finds or contexts for the 6<sup>th</sup> century were encountered for either the Western or Eastern Roman empire.

#### 4.5 DISCUSSION ON THE SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE CROSSBOW BROOCH

Proceeding towards a cultural biography of the crossbow brooch, we need to consider all the available evidence in its totality. The first question in an object biography is often the hardest to answer: how did this object come about? There is little doubt that the origin of the crossbow brooch can be placed within the wider developments of the class of bow brooches during the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. However, it is a challenge to pinpoint an exact point in time or an event in society that triggered the start of the crossbow brooch as a distinct type with a clearly intended and recognised message, for there are no known depictions before the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. A partial explanation lies in the dominant art style from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. The longstanding tradition of Classicism portrayed figures mainly in a divine or heroic setting in the classic Graeco-Roman tradition, i.e. not dressed as contemporary people.<sup>104</sup> When military figures are depicted in a more contemporary manner, for example on the Arch of Septimius Severus, they appear to be wearing disc brooches rather than bow brooches. This suggests that disc brooches were the preferred choice for members of the military class until the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century. Early crossbow brooches were not only invisible in the art historical evidence, but there is also a lack of textual references (see 4.2 above). Archaeological finds offer the most information about the initial developments, even though the evidence is scarce and the dating inaccurate. Reliable contexts containing these initial brooches can at best

<sup>101</sup> The Roman withdrawal from the Low Countries is likely to be placed around the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century (see contributions Roymans and Heeren, this volume) but there are some brooches that are stylistically dated to the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore is a date of c. AD 425

is taken as the latest archaeological evidence of the Low Countries, although slightly later dates are possible.

<sup>102</sup> Van Buchem 1966, 89–90; Deppert-Lippitz 2000, 59.

<sup>103</sup> Deppert-Lippitz 2000, 56–61.

<sup>104</sup> Kitzing 1977, 7–18.

be placed between AD 250 and 280, although the brooches may have occurred earlier on. The existence of the early crossbow brooch can be confirmed with certainty in the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.<sup>105</sup>

This still leaves unanswered the question of the owners' identity. Because of their simplicity and uniformity, it can be argued that these 'simple' brooches belonged to common soldiers. However, if the brooches were available to multiple ranks of soldiers, we would expect a larger number of finds.<sup>106</sup> The practice of recycling can partially account for the possible lack of finds, as well as the absence of these brooches in burials. So should this phenomenon be understood as a transition to the hinge-based brooch, did they coexist, or were they intended for different ranks or social backgrounds? Without further reliable contextual data or new evidence from iconographic or textual sources, the brooch continues to be associated with an unspecified type of military dress.

It is not until the 3<sup>rd</sup>- to 4<sup>th</sup>-century transition that interpretations can be based on more evidence. From an archaeological point of view, their everyday use and application remains almost as elusive as before. Despite the increase in the number of finds from the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, the archaeological record fails to shed light on the circumstances surrounding when and for whom it was appropriate or permissible to wear this type of brooch. Additional information is found in the first illustrations of crossbow brooches (fig. 12). In this phase, most examples feature individuals wearing 'Pannonian hats', such as the landowners of the Villa del Casala and the figures on sarcophagi. It is no coincidence that these first illustrations correspond chronologically to the first Tetrarchy and the Constantinian dynasty. Together with the larger military and administrative reforms, the art styles and themes changed as well. The move away from traditional Classicism and the introduction of Christian art created an interesting pagan-Christian mix. The 4<sup>th</sup>-century sculptures on the Arch of Constantine illustrate this new style, although it can be seen in the well-known porphyry group of the Tetrarchs as well, which is slightly older.<sup>107</sup> Despite the 'Pannonian hats' on the Tetrarchs, no crossbow brooches are present on the sculpture. This confirms that the emperors themselves did not wear them at this time.

It was in this phase (c. AD 280–320) that crossbow brooches with textual features made their appearance. Most inscriptions or textual decorations on the brooches praise the members of the Tetrarchies, often commemorating a specific celebration or event, such as the *decennalia*. This has to be seen in the context of the revival of the imperial cult after the turmoils of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. These specific brooches could have been intended as gifts, possibly to be worn at the official event described in the text, or to commemorate an occasion coinciding with these events.

Although the art style remained undifferentiated throughout the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the archaeological evidence changed after c. AD 315–320. A first observation is that textual features gradually disappeared from brooches lauding imperial events. A second and more significant change was the shift to burials as the depositional context. This can mainly be attributed to the growing practice of inhumation burials. This general shift from the world of the living to the world of the dead is striking. Although the brooches were still worn during a person's lifetime, it appears that the intended end of the brooch's life was its deposition in the grave, rather than being recycled or passed on to another owner. This suggests a close connection between the brooch and its owner. In addition, the illustrations occur most often on sarcophagi and in tombs. A final observation is that, despite a significant rise in the number of brooches at the end of this phase (fig. 10a), there was no equivalent increase in the iconographical evidence.

If we combine all this information, we observe a distinct difference in the symbolic value between this phase and the initial developments earlier in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. The social message conveyed by the brooches

<sup>105</sup> Riha argues a start near the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century (Riha 1979, 167. although the recent study from Pauli (Pauli 2013) and the evidence gathered from the Low Countries show primarily later contexts.

<sup>106</sup> The forts of Saalburg and Zugmantel provide the largest

number published from single sites, containing more than 100 specimens from both forts for a period of approximately 70 years, see Böhme 1972, her type 27.

<sup>107</sup> Kitzinger 1977, 9 (fig. 5).

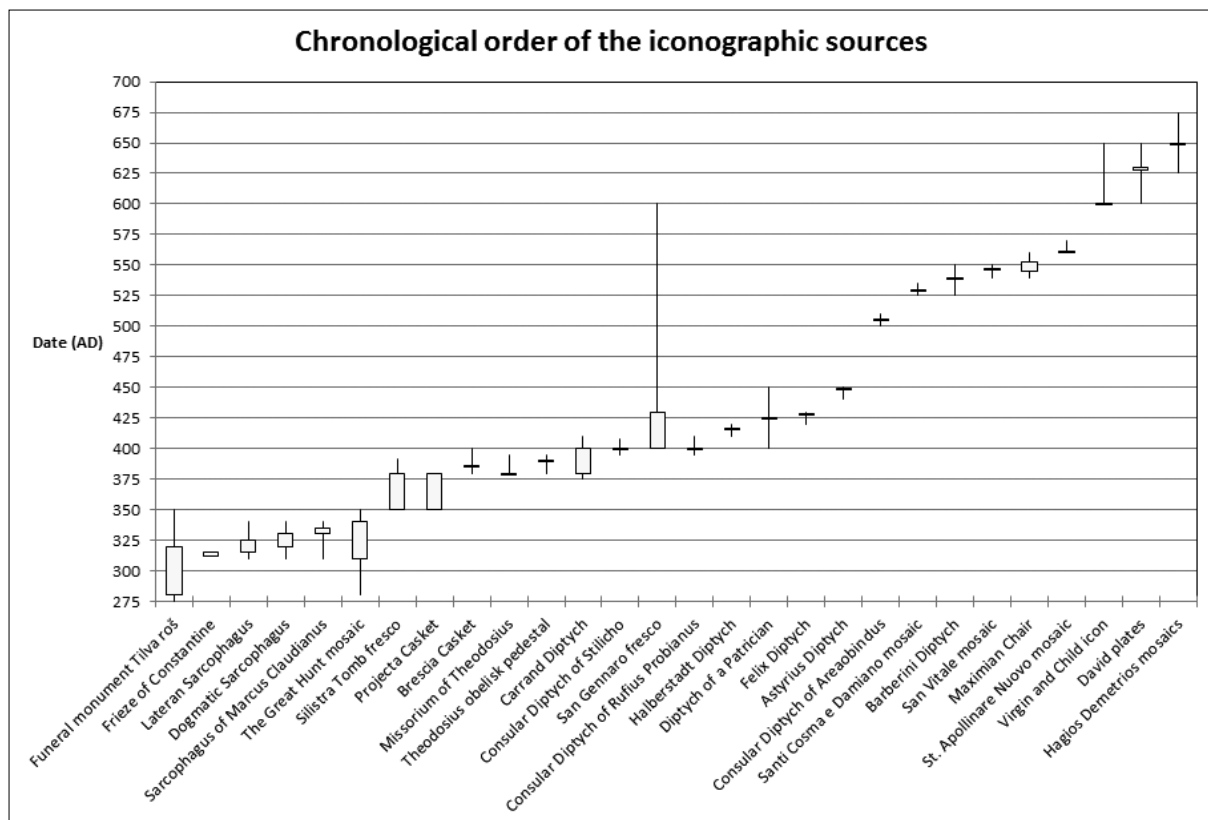


Fig. 12. Chronological distribution of the iconographic sources used in this study. The boxes indicate the accepted or suggested date range of the source. The whiskers indicate the possible margins of the date range.

had become important enough to be depicted, suggesting that they carried a comprehensible message that was recognised by any spectator. Furthermore, this increased significance is reflected in their place in the burial dress and in the references on the brooches to the imperial cult.

Based on the iconographic sources, the message appears to be twofold. On the one hand, the brooches are worn by anonymous members of the military, as can be derived from their complete garb, including the brooch-hat combination. Examples include the figures on the Arch of Constantine reliefs or the soldiers seizing Peter on sarcophagi. On the other hand, the brooches occur on more personal illustrations of individuals who were intended to be recognised, such as the villa owners on the mosaic of the Great Hunt, the master of the Siliistra tomb and possibly the two figures on the funeral monument from Tilva roš. This indicates that at that time (c. AD 280 - 335/350) the brooches were most likely worn by individuals with a military and wealthy background, i.e. military officers. It is not yet clear if these individuals also had active administrative or political roles. It is also possible that *foederati* – foreigners fighting in the name of Rome – were furnished with weapons by the Roman *fabricae* and that their warband leaders also wore crossbow brooches.<sup>108</sup>

In the next phase, illustrations no longer occurred exclusively on monuments and tombs, but started to appear on portable objects as well (fig. 12). The earliest examples are the Projecta and Brescia caskets, both adorned with images that contain Christian themes. In addition, the Missorium of Theodosius is in the same style as the caskets, despite the non-Christian nature of the theme. This style was not restricted to portable objects, as is evident from similarities to the reliefs of the obelisk pedestal in Constantinople. In general, there was a change in art style under Theodosius, sometimes referred to as the ‘Theodosian

<sup>108</sup> Böhme 1974. See the example of Tiel-Passewaaij, for a combination of a crossbow brooch with *Hacksilber* and Germanic jewellery, interpreted as the settlement of a *foe-*

*deratus* and his family (contribution Heeren, this volume).  
<sup>109</sup> Kitzinger 1977, 38–44.



Renaissance'.<sup>109</sup> The hierarchical order is decidedly present in this new style, although the figures portrayed still wear contemporary dress. Although many differences in the art historical evidence can be attributed to this new style, this appears to be confined to the choice of iconographic representation, rather than interfering with the general topics and themes. However, a possible significant change is the absence of 'Pannonian hats' on individuals with crossbow brooches.

At the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century and continuing into the 5<sup>th</sup> century, there appears to be a change in the identity of the figures portrayed with crossbow brooches. Observations show that the number of anonymous individuals fell in relation to the number of recognisable figures. This transformation is noticeable under the reign of Theodosius. The Brescia casket is possibly the last known example of completely unknown officials or officers being depicted alongside Pilate. Although the sources showing Theodosius himself still contain some anonymous officials, it can be argued that their identity may have been known to others, as they were probably connected with the imperial entourage. The large increase in the number of recognisable individuals illustrated with crossbow brooches was mainly due to the emergence of consular diptychs (fig. 12). Although some individuals, including Stilicho for instance, had a clear military history, it appears that the primary focus was their official position as consuls. Much like the textual decoration on brooches during the Tetrarchy, the diptychs are closely associated with the imperial cult and the practice of commemorating events through gifts reflecting their official nature. Not only the diptychs, but also the tombs display recognisable figures. The Silistra tomb can be used to illustrate our point, as can the depiction of Theotecnus.

As well as shifts in art historical sources, we can observe changes in the archaeological evidence. A first observation is the considerable decline in the number of finds (fig. 10a) despite their continued deposition in burials. A second observation relates to their limited distribution. By the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century the brooches occurred only in the largest administrative and military centres of the Low Countries, probably due to the withdrawal of military forces from the region. This makes it impossible to derive a social association from the archaeological record. Moreover, by this time, military dress had clearly influenced the official civilian dress, which makes it very hard to distinguish a military or civilian identity based on burial goods or other contextual information.

While historical sources do not provide us with direct information on the crossbow brooch, they can improve our understanding of the social codes regarding the dress that incorporated this brooch type and the people who were permitted to wear it. The *Codex Theodosianus* is relevant for this phase. Although the work was not completed until AD 438, it was compiled from older laws and can inform us about the 4<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> century transition. Two laws refer to the *chlamys* as a military cloak: one almost equates soldiers with their cloak,<sup>110</sup> while another mentions the rules governing a senator's military garb.<sup>111</sup> It seems that a senator was only allowed to wear military dress inside the city walls when chairing an official meeting or fulfilling his duties at a public trial. This implies a far-reaching amalgamation of military and official affairs in the higher ranks of the imperial government. A third section stresses the obligation for *vicarii* to wear their official dress at official events, using the word *chlamys* in the same manner as other references.<sup>112</sup> In addition to the *codex*, Ammianus Marcellinus also comments on this period, referring to the *chlamys* cloak on three occasions. Two passages refer to imperial dress, implying that the emperor also had a *chlamys* cloak.<sup>113</sup> Another passage recounts the improper behaviour of certain *agens*, who accepted gifts from the emperor.<sup>114</sup> None of these passages imply that the *chlamys* cloak was part of military garb. This indicates that by the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century there was already a shift away from the close military association of earlier periods towards the more administrative and political circles.

<sup>110</sup> *Codex Theodosianus* 7.6.4.

<sup>111</sup> *Codex Theodosianus* 14.10.1.

<sup>112</sup> *Codex Theodosianus* 1.15.16.

<sup>113</sup> Amm. Marc. 16.13.13 and 22.9.11.

<sup>114</sup> Amm. Marc. 16.5.11.

This moment in the biography of the crossbow brooch demonstrates its advance in social rank. Figures shown wearing crossbow brooches were expected to be recognised, often by virtue of their political or administrative positions. The general iconographic trend and the use of the word *chlamys* in the *codex* and in Ammianus' writings imply that they were worn in wealthy and politically influential circles that were linked to the military establishment. The objects themselves had become more highly decorated and greater skill was required to create them. It seems likely that at this time the owners of crossbow brooches were consuls and members of the senatorial class itself.

It is difficult to assign a start and end date to this phase. Most changes that characterise the 5<sup>th</sup> century appear to have originated at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century during the reign of Theodosius (c. AD 380). Due to the lack of art historical evidence between AD 335 and 380, determining the social position of crossbowbrooch owners immediately before this phase presents a challenge. Perhaps these developments had already occurred earlier in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Pinpointing the end is equally challenging, as there is another gap in the art historical evidence starting from c. AD 425–430 (fig. 12). Unfortunately, this also coincides with the end of the archaeological evidence from the Low Countries, making it difficult to ascertain whether this phase could be extended further into the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Only the Astyrius diptych (c. AD 450) can be placed in this chronological gap. Until more evidence is available, this phase can be regarded as roughly corresponding to the Theodosian and Valentinian dynasties, c. AD 380–430.

Apart from Childeric's grave, there is no more archaeological evidence available from the Low Countries from the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, archaeological contexts containing crossbow brooches are scarce across the Roman empire. Many finds are old or stray finds, more often valued for their splendour than for their contextual information. Some of these brooches have been found beyond the recognised borders of the empire and could have belonged to local leaders with strong imperial ties, such as the Childeric brooch (c. AD 464–482) and the Apahida brooch (c. AD 454–473). The latter supposedly belonged to a 'Germanic' leader called Omharus.<sup>115</sup>

The art historical sources provide us with information again from the start of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Some diptychs still contained illustrations of crossbow brooches, although more often than not they are absent. A new medium were church mosaics, depicting themes linked to the imperial sphere, such as the San Vitale and the St Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna and the Santi Cosma e Damiano in Rome. This resurgence of iconographic sources reflects Justinian policies and the emergence of Byzantine art styles.

More historical texts are available for this period, although still without direct reference to the crossbow brooch. In the *Codex Justinianus*, the *chlamys* is used in both military and official contexts. However, the most explicit military association is a direct copy from the *Codex Theodosianus*.<sup>116</sup> This suggests that the duality of meaning was derived from recycling old law texts, rather than reflecting an actual dual significance.

In spite of little available evidence for over half a century, it appears that crossbow brooches became very exclusive objects during the Leonid and Justinian dynasties. The distribution of the archaeological and iconographical sources appears to be mainly confined to the Western political centres of Late Antiquity, such as Ravenna and Rome. The few examples found outside the official borders of the Roman empire can be ascribed to 'Germanic' leaders, possibly connected to, or in service of, the emperor. By way of a general conclusion, they can be understood to represent a very elitist sphere, confirmed by their value in gold and the level of decoration. They may have been gifts from the emperor, or were only permissible for, or available to, the highest imperial ranks.

After another gap of half a century, the final illustrations of the crossbow brooch are found on portable Byzantine art from the 7<sup>th</sup> century (fig. 12), such as the David Plates and certain votive icons. The brooch illustrations feature on popular Late Antique figures from Christian history, e.g. some military saints and the biblical figure of Saul. The brooches are hard to recognise – only the foot pointing upwards from the shoulder alerts us to their presence. In addition, there is no available archaeological or textual evidence. This

<sup>115</sup> Deppert-Lippitz 2000, 57.

<sup>116</sup> *Codex Justinianus* 12.39.3.

suggests that crossbow brooches had ceased circulating, from which we can only conclude that they were no longer in use by this time. Perhaps they were still recognised as indicating important historical figures.

The disappearance of the crossbow brooch is unlikely to have been sudden. What is more plausible is that their exclusiveness from the later 5<sup>th</sup> century led to their gradual disappearance. Although some continued to exist during the reign of Justinian in the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, we lack properly dated archaeological finds to support this. It can be suggested that after Justinian's efforts to restore the former Roman empire, crossbow brooches had already ceased to exist and their significance was only remembered through illustrations in works of art. The few 7<sup>th</sup>-century examples demonstrate that their appearance was no longer familiar, nor their proper context of use.

## 5 CONCLUSION

The combination of archaeological, art historical and historical evidence has enabled a more differentiated view of the changes that crossbow brooches underwent in a sociohistorical context. By using a generalised cultural biographical approach, this study has covered all phases of the brooch's life span: its origin, the changes and developments over time, and its ending. As well as providing a chronological overview of the available information, the different phases in the crossbow brooch's life have been considered in their sociocultural context and evaluated for their own contribution to the sociohistorical narrative. The changing contexts in which the brooches are found, illustrated or mentioned demonstrate the considerable transformations in perception and significance. The rise of the military ranks in the Roman empire's administrative and political establishment meant that crossbow brooches also rose in the social ranks.

The crossbow brooch originated from the heterogeneous class of bow brooches in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. Although the precise circumstances of its initial evolution are still unclear, from the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century onwards, the crossbow brooch was certainly perceived as a separate brooch type with a specific message intended to be understood by others. During this initial phase, the brooch exhibited a military association in the archaeological evidence. Without further reliable information from other sources, the crossbow brooch can merely be described as an attribute to military dress, possibly owned by common soldiers or low-ranking military officers.

More information is available from art historical and textual evidence in the 3<sup>rd</sup>- to 4<sup>th</sup>-century transition, coinciding with the reign of Diocletian and the first Tetrarchy. The most characteristic feature on the sculptures is the crossbow brooch/Pannonian hat combination. The figures dressed in this manner suggest a kind of military authority, as is also reflected in their roles in the scenes. Although these figures appear to fulfil an important function in many of the scenes, their features are alike and the individuals are anonymous. This slowly changed during the course of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, when the depicted figures become recognisable by virtue of their role, their personal attributes and even their physical features. These people were associated with the large military and administrative body that supported the Late Roman empire. At the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, corresponding to Theodosius' rule, anonymity disappeared from the wearers of crossbow brooches. The main characteristic medium became the diptych, portraying Roman officials who wielded political and administrative power. From Theodosius into the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the crossbow brooch became an attribute worn by consuls and members of the senatorial class, and as such it symbolised Roman power. By the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, this symbol extended beyond the borders of the empire, with brooches found in the burials of 'Germanic' leaders along with other objects associated with Roman power. Some connection appears to have remained between these leaders and the imperial court, since illustrations of similar brooches can be found in 6<sup>th</sup>-century apse mosaics in churches linked to Justinian's rule. By the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, the crossbow brooch was the preserve of the high elite, of people closely related to the imperial court.

It was at this point in time that the life of the crossbow brooch as an active object came to an end. Its exclusiveness in its final phase may have resulted in the brooch becoming detached from its former values. The depictions from the 7<sup>th</sup> century illustrate the loss of knowledge about its true appearance and significance. Its final meaning can only be seen as one of the symbols associated with important figures from Roman history or perhaps even the Roman empire itself.

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# The Late Roman town of Tongeren

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- 1 Introduction
- 2 The Vermeulenstraat sites
- 3 The site of the Church of Our Lady
- 4 The western sector of the Late Roman town
- 5 Conclusion

References

## I INTRODUCTION

Tongeren (Atuatuca Tungrorum) was founded c. 10 BC as the *civitas* capital of the Tungri. The formation of the *civitas Tungrorum* was part of the Augustan project to create a Germanic province on both sides of the Rhine.<sup>1</sup> The project was abandoned after the defeat of Varus in 9 AD, perhaps not in the minds of the Julio-Claudian emperors, but at least in practice.<sup>2</sup> The *civitas* may have subsequently been transferred to the province of Gallia Belgica – at least, that is what Pliny the Elder seems to suggest on two occasions.<sup>3</sup> After the creation of the two Germanic provinces by Domitian the *civitas* definitively became part of the province of Germania Inferior. Like many other urban centres in that province, the town acquired municipal status in the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century or the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.<sup>4</sup>

In the Late Roman period the Tungri were part of the province of Germania Secunda.<sup>5</sup> Ammianus Marcellinus describes Tongeren, together with Cologne, as a large and prosperous town in Germania Secunda.<sup>6</sup> In 358 the emperor Julian received in the *caput civitatis* a legation of Salii, who had illegally occupied Toxandria, the northern part of the *civitas Tungrorum*, which was depopulated in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.<sup>7</sup> De Tungri were closely involved in the defence of the province. Units of Tungri, *sagitarii Tungri*, *Tungrecani Seniores* and *Tungrecani Iuniores* occur in late antique written sources, dating from the second half and the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>8</sup> At that time they were incorporated in the *comitatenses*, but one may assume that at least the *sagitarii Tungri* and the *Tungrecani (Seniores et Iuniores)* originally defended the province, especially

<sup>1</sup> Raepsaet 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Wolters 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Plin., *Nat. Hist.* IV, 17, 105-106 and XXXI, 8, 12.

<sup>4</sup> Vanvinckenroye 1994; Raepsaet-Charlier 1994; idem 1995.

<sup>5</sup> Gautier 2002, 14-15; Vanderhoeven *et al.* 2002; Raepsaet-Charlier 2002/2003, 35-41; Raepsaet-Charlier/Vanderhoeven 2004.

<sup>6</sup> ‘*Secunda Germania, ..., Agrippina et Tungris munita, civitatibus amplis et copiosis*’ (Amm. Marc. XV, 11, 7). That Tongeren was part of Germania Secunda is also confirmed

by the *Notitia Galliarum* (*Not. Gall.* VIII, 3).

<sup>7</sup> Amm. Marc. XVII, 8, 3; De Boone 1954, 89-91; Heeren 2015, 284-287; Roymans/Derks 2015, 30-31.

<sup>8</sup> Tungri in Illyricum (*Not. Dign. Occ.* V and VII); *sagitarii Tungri* in Illyricum (*Not. Dign. Occ.* V and VII); *Tungrecani Seniores* in Cabylloña/Chalôn-sur-Saône (Amm. Marc. XXVII, 1, 2), in Italia (*Not. Dign. Occ.* V and VII) and in Dubris/Dover (*Not. Dign. Occ.* XXVIII); *Tungrecani Iuniores* in Constantinopolis (Amm. Marc. XXVI, 6, 12); Van Berchem 1955, 142; Hoffmann 1969, 149, 160, 164, 177-179 and 180.



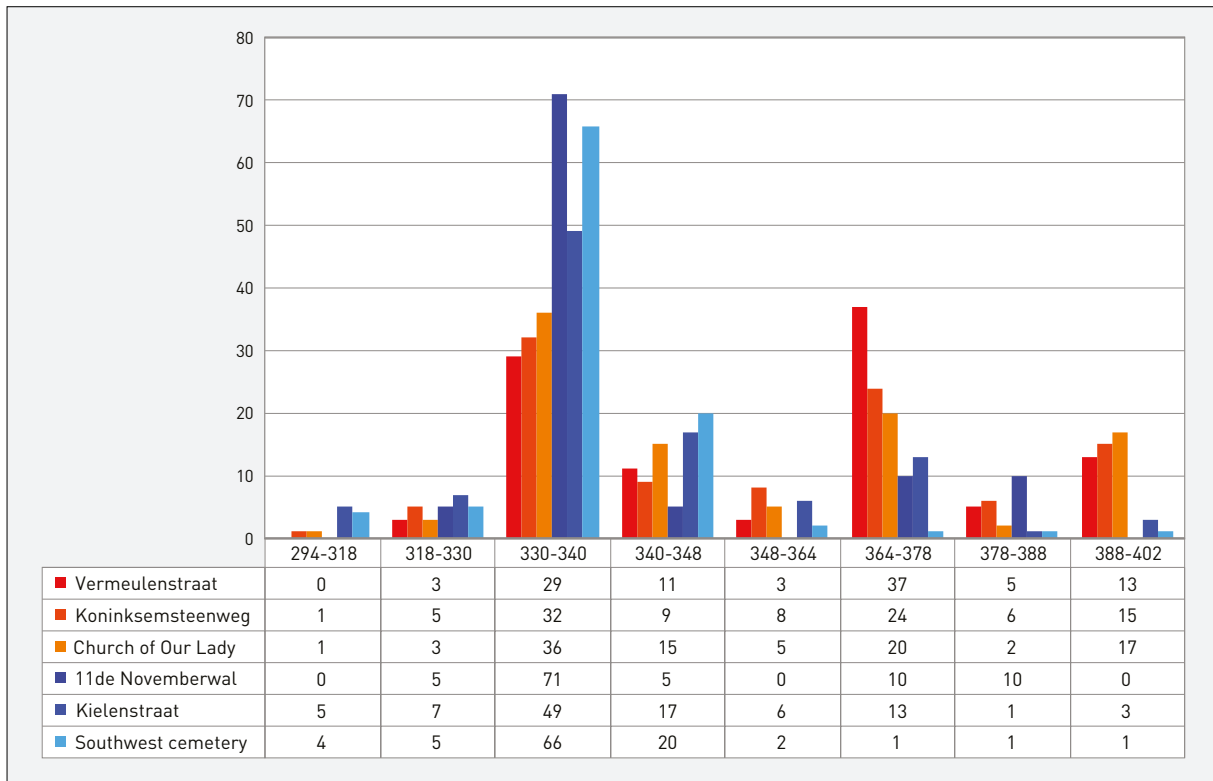


Fig. 1. Tongeren. Late Roman coin loss at three sites inside the 4<sup>th</sup>-century town wall (Vermeulenstraat, Koninksemsteenweg and Church of Our Lady) and three sites outside the 4<sup>th</sup>-century town wall (11de Novemberwal, Kielenstraat and southwest cemetery), based on Jammaers 2013.

the road from Boulogne to Cologne.<sup>9</sup> Tongeren may also have been the seat of the *Praefectus Laetorum Lagensium prope Tungros*.<sup>10</sup> Towards the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century Servatius was bishop of the Tungri.<sup>11</sup> He was present at the synods of Serdica in 343<sup>12</sup> and Rimini in 359<sup>13</sup> and at a church assembly at an unknown location, probably in Gaul and probably in 346.<sup>14</sup> In 351 he was one of four members of a diplomatic mission sent by the usurper Magnentius to Athanasius and Constantius II.<sup>15</sup> This suggests that Servatius was a partner in an extended elite network in northern Gaul and Germany. We may assume that his seat and his church were located in the *civitas* capital.

Although written references to Late Roman Tongeren are limited in number, they are very diverse: documents of the Roman administration, acts of church assemblies, historiographical work and treatises of church fathers. Taken together, they depict the town as a major centre in the province of Germania Secunda. We will now turn to the material evidence to see whether it confirms this picture or adds nuance. The statistical overview of coin loss can give a first impression of the urban development in Tongeren in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Fig. 1 shows an overview for six areas. We observe a striking difference between the pattern of loss on sites inside and outside the Late Roman town wall (fig. 2). The pattern on sites

<sup>9</sup> Our sources suggest cooperation of the *sagitarii Tungri* (Tongeren) with the *sagitarii Nervii* (Bavay) and of the *Tungrecani* (Tongeren) with the *Divitenses* (Cologne).

<sup>10</sup> *Not. Dign. Occ.* XLII; Roosens 1968.

<sup>11</sup> De la Hay 1985; Brennecke 1986; Ristow 2007, 61–63 and 2013, 10. Servatius is the only Late Roman bishop of Tongeren we know of. Whether Maternus, bishop of Cologne at the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, played a

role as church leader in Tongeren remains uncertain (Eck 2004, 635, note 27).

<sup>12</sup> Athanasius, *Apologia Secunda* 49, 1, nr. 85.

<sup>13</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *Chronicon* II, 44, 1 and 3.

<sup>14</sup> *Concilia Galliae* I, 27. The acta of the pseudo-synod of Cologne in 346 are an early medieval falsification, but the list of participants is considered to be authentic.

<sup>15</sup> Athanasius, *Apologia ad Constantium* 9.



Fig. 2. Tongeren. a) Late Roman town. b) Early Roman town. c) cemeteries. d) sites with Late Roman coin loss inside the 4<sup>th</sup>-century town wall. e) sites with Late Roman coin loss outside the 4<sup>th</sup>-century town wall. 1) Vermeulenstraat. 2) Koninksemsteenweg. 3) Church of Our Lady. 4) 11de Novemberwal. 5) Kielenstraat. 6) southwest cemetery.

inside the wall (Vermeulenstraat, Koninksemsteenweg and Church of Our Lady) is typical of many central places in the region.<sup>16</sup> The majority of coins date from the period 330–348, especially the years 330 to 340. In the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, we see a gradual decline, apart from two phases with more

<sup>16</sup> Military sites, located in vici on the road from Tongeren to Bavay (Brulet 1990, 9–30), or the Late Roman cult place in Liberchies (Severs 2008, 59–73 and tableau 3). There are also other patterns of Late Roman coin loss and hoards in

the land of the Tungri, for instance the rural Germanic settlements in the northern part of the *civitas*, dominated by coins of the period 388–402 (van Heesch 1998, 161–175; Aarts 2000, 225–230; Stroobants 2013).



Fig. 3. Tongeren. Late Roman tower at the Vrijthof after excavation in 1994-1995 (Agentschap Onroerend Erfgoed).

pronounced coin losses: first in the years 364-378 and second in the years 388-402.<sup>17</sup> On sites outside the Late Roman town wall (11de Novemberwal, Kielenstraat and southwest cemetery) the majority of coins still date from the periods 330-340 and 340-348. This is even more pronounced than on sites inside the wall, but there is a sharp decline in the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. These differences are likely to be the result of different uses of space. In the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, many areas outside the town wall, located in the officially abandoned sectors of the Early Roman town, seem to have been occupied either as sites for semi-permanent habitation, or as zones for further demolition of Early Roman buildings and the reuse of the building materials for the new town wall and for construction inside the wall.

Early Roman Tongeren and its cemeteries extended over an area of more than 150 ha (fig. 2). In the 4<sup>th</sup> century the surface area of the *civitas* capital of the Tungri was reduced to about 50 percent of that of the Early Roman town and became confined to the highest and most easily defensible part of the site. The new town wall was still an impressive monument, some 2600 m long, with towers positioned at equal intervals of about 20 m (fig. 3). The Early Roman town wall of the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century was reused in the north, over a distance of some 500 m. The Late Roman wall was approx. 3 m wide at its base. Remains of a ditch were recorded at two sites. The ditch was 9 to 10 m wide and approx. 2 m deep and consequently shows a weak profile, quite unlike the classical V-shaped ditches of the Early Roman town wall. No exact dating of this huge building project is possible, although the appearance of the masonry is traditionally interpreted as Constantinian.<sup>18</sup> A radiocarbon date from the 1970s for wood from one of the foundation posts in the northern sector placed the post in 1700 ±50 BP or 260 ± 50 AD.<sup>19</sup> Another

<sup>17</sup> The pattern occurs inside the town wall on highly urbanized sites in the eastern part of the settlement, such as the Vermeulenstraat and the Church of Our Lady, as well as on sites with only faint traces of occupation and use

in the western sector, such as the Koninksemsteenweg or the recently excavated site of the Beukenbergweg (Kemmers 2014, Afb. 7.9).

<sup>18</sup> Vanvinckenroye 1985, 66-67; Brulet 1990, 79-83.



Fig. 4. Tongeren. Late Roman burial chamber (Provinciaal Gallo-Romeins Museum).

radiocarbon date for charcoal from a recently excavated fragment of the wall in the Vermeulenstraat gives  $1739 \pm 32$  BP (AD 240 - 350 with a probability of 68.2%).<sup>20</sup>

The southwestern, northern and eastern cemeteries of the Early Roman town remained in use in the Late Roman period. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries many late antique burials were excavated there.<sup>21</sup> They reveal a rich and heterogeneous urban population, a mix of romanised inhabitants and Germanic immigrants, and of civil and military elements. An exceptional Late Roman grave gift is a silver bar with the inscription LEO EXC(udit) MOG(untiaci?), from a burial in the southwestern cemetery. This type of object was given as payment to dignitaries and soldiers of high rank (*donativum*).<sup>22</sup> Another rare and prestigious grave gift from a Late Roman burial is a highly decorated distaff in jet. The decoration and material, generally used for jewellery, suggest that the object was more of a prestige good than a tool.<sup>23</sup> The most recent Roman burials date to the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>24</sup>

On two occasions excavators believed that they had discovered early Christian cemeteries. In the 1870s and 1880s several burial chambers came to light in a loam-pit, situated in the southwestern cemetery of the Roman town.<sup>25</sup> One of them was preserved and is now part of an exhibition at the Provincial Gallo-Roman Museum in Tongeren (fig. 4). Its interior walls are decorated with festoons and pigeons. The iconography cannot unambiguously be interpreted as early Christian. However, another burial

<sup>19</sup> Mertens 1977.

<sup>20</sup> Pers. comm. by P. Driesen and N. De Winter (ARON bvba), the excavators of the site.

<sup>21</sup> The bibliographical references are compiled by Lesenne 1975, 81-86. More recent excavations and discoveries are published in Vanvinckenroye 1984, Vanderhoeven/Vynckier 1998 and 2002 and Pauwels *et al.* 2005 for the southwestern cemetery, Vanvinckenroye 1983 and 1995 and Vanderhoeven *et al.* 1995/1996 for the eastern cemetery and Vanderhoeven/Vynckier 2003 and 2006 for the

northern cemetery.

<sup>22</sup> Kaufmann *et al.* 1984, 68; Wiegels 2003, 93-94, no. 54; Beyelers 2011; Van Heesch 2012, 108-111.

<sup>23</sup> Hagen 1937, 97-98, 135, nr. G11 and Tafel 34.

<sup>24</sup> Van Heesch 1992; Brulet 2013.

<sup>25</sup> The bibliographical references are compiled by Lesenne 1975, 84; De Boe 1986; after the discovery the find was donated to the Musée Diocésain de Liège, but it is now integrated in the collection of the Provinciaal Gallo-Romeins Museum of Tongeren (Henrard *s.d.*).

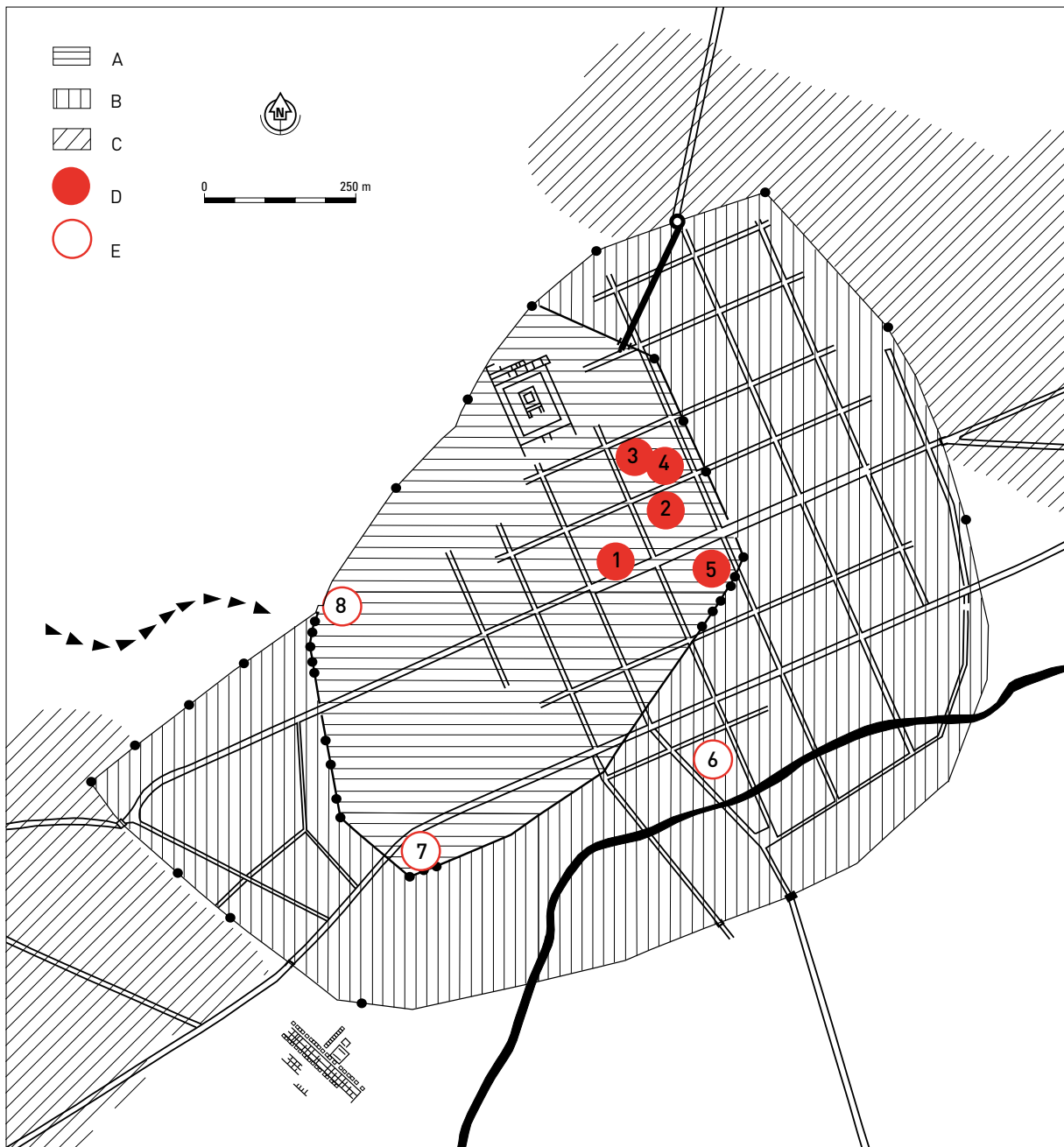


Fig. 5. Tongeren. a) Late Roman town. b) Early Roman town. c) cemeteries. d) Late Roman *domus* and basilica. e) Late Roman habitation traces of unknown nature. 1) Sint-Truiderstraat. 2) Maastrichterstraat. 3) second Vermeulenstraat site. 4) third and fourth Vermeulenstraat site. 5) Church of Our Lady. 6) Minderbroedersstraat. 7) Koninksemsteenweg. 8) Beukenbergweg.

chamber, unfortunately not preserved, was decorated with a Christogram, according to eyewitnesses to the discovery. The finds were therefore interpreted as the remains of a cemetery of an early Christian community in the town of Tongeren. In the 1980s and 1990s part of a Late Roman sector of the eastern cemetery was excavated.<sup>26</sup> The burials were all inhumations, without grave gifts and oriented west-east. One of the graves contained a silver ring, decorated with a Christogram, but the burials are not necessarily of Christians.

<sup>26</sup> Vanvinckenroye 1983 and 1995; Vanderhoeven *et al.* 1995/1996.

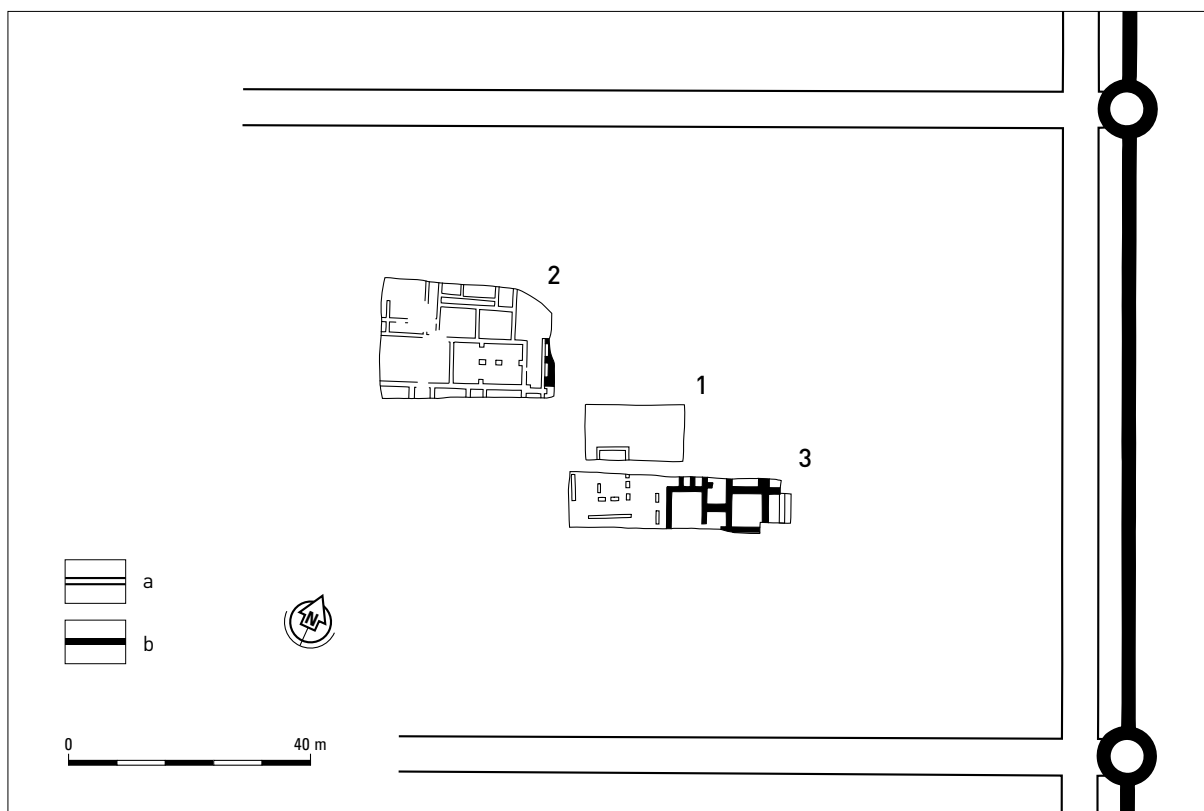


Fig. 6. Tongeren. Location of the Vermeulenstraat sites. a) Early Roman architecture. b) Late Roman architecture. 1) first Vermeulenstraat site. 2) second Vermeulenstraat site. 3) third Vermeulenstraat site.

Until recently little was known about the habitation pattern of the Late Roman town (fig. 5). The remains of an important Late Roman building with an extended complex of floor heating were discovered in the Sint-Truiderstraat in 1902. Some further observations could be made on the same site in 1971.<sup>27</sup> The building was initially interpreted as a public bath house, but this is not supported by the evidence. It could equally have been an important *domus*. In 1916 the remains of another Late Roman building were partially excavated in the Maastrichterstraat. Elements of the same building came to light in 1985 but could not be properly excavated.<sup>28</sup> Based on the brief description of the finds, the structure may well have been another *domus*. A complex of three small Late Roman ovens was excavated in the Minderbroedersstraat in 1991.<sup>29</sup> One of them was partly constructed in the robber trench of an early Roman *domus*, dating from the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries. The findspot is situated some 150 m outside the 4<sup>th</sup>-century town wall and the oven is possibly connected with the systematic recovery of building materials for the construction of the Late Roman town wall or other Late Roman buildings.

Our knowledge of the habitation pattern of Late Roman Tongeren received a major boost after the excavations in the Church of Our Lady, carried out from 2000 onwards, and after several sites were investigated in the Vermeulenstraat, starting in 2005. All these excavations took place in the eastern sector of the town: the Church of Our Lady is located south of, and the sites at the Vermeulenstraat sites north of, the *decumanus maximus* towards the gate to Maastricht. The latter town was a *castellum* on the Meuse, about 15 km to the east of Tongeren, and there are strong links between Late Roman developments in

<sup>27</sup> See Lesenne 1975, 66, for an overview of the bibliography.

graph and Vanvinckenroye 1985, 57 and Afb. 29.

<sup>28</sup> See Lesenne 1975, 64-65 for an overview of the biblio-

<sup>29</sup> Vanderhoeven *et al.* 1995/1996.

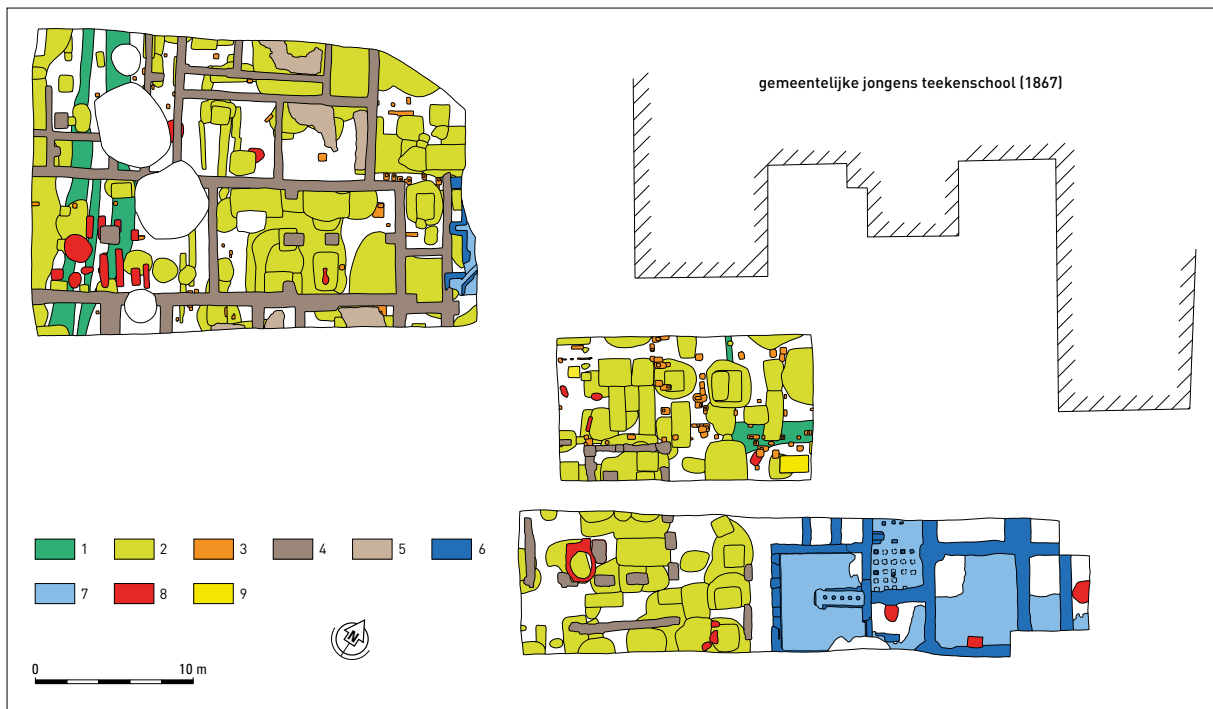


Fig. 7. Tongeren. Vermeulenstraat sites. 1) ditches. 2) pits. 3) postholes. 4) Early Roman *domus* (walls). 5) Early Roman *domus* (floors). 6) Late Roman *domus* (walls). 7) Late Roman *domus* (floors). 8) ovens and fireplaces. 9) lime pits.

both Tongeren and Maastricht.<sup>30</sup> It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that the eastern sector of the *civitas* capital, oriented towards Maastricht, was chosen as the location for important buildings.

## 2 THE VERMEULENSTRAAT SITES

From 2005 to 2008 three sites were excavated in the Vermeulenstraat (fig. 6). No remains of late antique masonry came to light at the first Vermeulenstraat site, but an east-west oriented palisade probably dates to the 4<sup>th</sup> century (fig. 7).<sup>31</sup> It must have been built after the demolition of a small rectangular workshop dating to the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries. Moreover, the lower part of the approx. 2 m thick layer of dark earth that covered the first Vermeulenstraat site contained a Late Roman finds assemblage. We may therefore assume that the nearby area was inhabited in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. The upper part of the dark earth comprises the remains of the earthen rampart of the 13<sup>th</sup>-century town wall, which is in turn covered by a layer of building debris that marks the construction of a school in 1867.<sup>32</sup> After the abandonment of the Late Roman town and before the construction of the town wall in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the area of the Vermeu-

<sup>30</sup> Maastricht is the first rural centre (*vicus*) on the road from Tongeren to Cologne and developed around a bridge across the Meuse. In the Late Roman period, a *castellum* was built that became the centre of a prosperous Late Roman and early medieval settlement and ultimately the seat of the early Merovingian bishops of the diocese of the Tungri. The relocation of the seat of the bishop took place at an unknown date between the

middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century and the 6<sup>th</sup> century (Panhuyzen 1996, 19–73 and 2014; Panhuysen/De la Hay 2002; Raepsaet-Charlier/Vanderhoeven 2004, 66–69).

<sup>31</sup> Vanderhoeven/Vynckier 2008a and 2009; Vanderhoeven 2011 and 2012.

<sup>32</sup> The ‘Gemeentelijke Jongens Teekenschool’ (Schlusmans 1990, 213).



Fig. 8. Tongeren. Third Vermeulenstraat site: Late Roman *domus*: hypocaust-heated room (Stad Tongeren/Kristien Borgers).

lenstraat sites was a waste land for many centuries. This explains why the 4<sup>th</sup> and even the 3<sup>rd</sup>-century occupation levels are no longer visible and became homogenised and integrated into the dark earth.

At the second Vermeulenstraat site, remains of late antique architecture were preserved.<sup>33</sup> The western side of a Late Roman *domus* was visible at the eastern side of the excavated area (fig. 7). It was built on top of the remains and the robber trenches of an earlier *domus*, dating to the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries. The Late Roman features consist of a partly preserved *praefurnium*, the western exterior wall of a large room and fragments of the base of its floor-heating system, which seems to be a canal hypocaust.

More and better preserved remains of another Late Roman *domus* were excavated at the third Vermeulenstraat site,<sup>34</sup> where no fewer than six rooms or parts of rooms were situated in the eastern part of the excavated plot (fig. 7). Not only the stratigraphic position of the remains, above features dating to the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries, but also the use of different kinds of *spolia* point to a Late Roman date for the building. One of the rooms was heated by a pillar hypocaust, another by a canal hypocaust. The latter measured approx. 6 x 6 m and must have been one of the most important parts of the *domus*, presumably a winter reception or dining room (fig. 8). The interior walls of the room were decorated with an agrarian calendar, with scenes for each month of the year.<sup>35</sup> The finds assemblage has not yet been studied, but the provisional piecing together of some fragments shows a harvest scene in front of a villa and the letters AVG(ustus), indicating the month of the year. Some fragments with the letters NOV(ember) are also preserved. The whole seems to be the northwestern part of a large *domus* that extended further in a southeasterly direction. Its inhabitants must have been members of the Late Roman wealthy, landowning aristocracy of the Tungri, whose lifestyle was influenced by classical Roman ideals and values.

<sup>33</sup> Vanderhoeven/Vynckier 2008b and 2010; Vanderhoeven 2011 and 2012.

<sup>34</sup> Borgers *et al.* 2008; Vanderhoeven 2011 and 2012.

<sup>35</sup> Ferdière 2011; Vanderhoeven 2014, fig. 6.



The three Vermeulenstraat sites that were excavated between 2005 and 2008 revealed for the first time important and well-preserved remains of Late Roman urban houses in Tongeren. Elements of two different *domus* were visible, separated by a wooden palisade or fence. No pits or ditches were dug in the open areas unoccupied by the buildings. This is in remarkable contrast to the Early Roman phases of the *civitas* capital, where open areas are usually covered by concentrations of excavated structures such as loam pits, cesspits, drainage gullies or ditches. These features contain huge amounts of settlement debris. For the Late Roman period, our information is limited to a layer of finds at the base of the dark earth covering the Roman soil archive.

In 2014 and 2015 a fourth site was excavated at the other side of the Vermeulenstraat. The excavated plot was much larger than the first, second and third sites combined.<sup>36</sup> The area of the site located within the Late Roman town wall is bounded in the east by a street running north-south and by the town wall, and to the south by a street running east-west and a portico. The remains of the Late Roman architecture occupy the southeastern corner of the same insula where the first, second and third Vermeulenstraat sites are centrally situated. The features and finds of the recently excavated fourth Vermeulenstraat site have not yet been studied, but it appears that a bath house stood at the southeastern corner of the insula in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Remains of several hypocausts, with at least two building phases, different drainage systems and a *latrina* were identified.<sup>37</sup> The complex may be part of the same *domus* whose western periphery was excavated at the third Vermeulenstraat site.

### 3 THE SITE OF THE CHURCH OF OUR LADY

The site of the Church of Our Lady is located in the southeastern corner of the Late Roman town, between the *decumanus maximus* of the street grid in the north and the town wall in the south (fig. 9). A long tradition has identified the location as the site of the early Christian episcopal church of the Tungri.<sup>38</sup> In 1240, when excavating the foundation trenches for the first Gothic choir, excavators discovered older foundations that could not have belonged to the Romanesque church they had just demolished; these foundations were therefore seen as the remains of the church of Saint Servatius, at that time believed to have been the first Roman bishop of the Tungri.<sup>39</sup> During the installation of a heating system inside the church in 1912, a Roman apse was revealed to the east of the choir of the Gothic building. In 1961 a hole was dug in the southern wall of a Romanesque cellar underneath the first and second northern lateral chapels of the Gothic church. Behind that wall, not only was the foundation of the northern exterior wall of the Romanesque church revealed, but also the lower part of a Late Roman wall that was incorporated into the medieval foundation. By combining both discoveries, Geukens was able to reconstruct the ground plan of a basilica, interpreted as the church of Saint Servatius, bishop of the Tungri. Finally, the position of the Church of Our Lady within the Late Roman town, on the periphery but just inside the town wall, is often seen as an argument for its being the location of an early Christian cult place.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>36</sup> The first Vermeulenstraat site is about 144 m<sup>2</sup>, the second approx. 532 m<sup>2</sup> and the third some 306 m<sup>2</sup>. The excavated area of the fourth Vermeulenstraat site measures about 2730 m<sup>2</sup>, of which some 1710 m<sup>2</sup> lie inside the Late Roman town wall.

<sup>37</sup> Pers. comm. by the excavators P. Driesen and N. De Winter (ARON bvba).

<sup>38</sup> Baillien 1979, 17-18; Vanvinckenroye 1985, 128-131;

Geukens 1990, 23-32.

<sup>39</sup> The discovery was recorded in a chronicle that is preserved in a printed version of 1579 (archive of the Church of Our Lady, Reg. 5, fol. 196, in Paquay 1906).

<sup>40</sup> A peripheral position just inside the Late Roman town wall is known from many but far from all early Christian churches (Gautier 2014, 367-369).

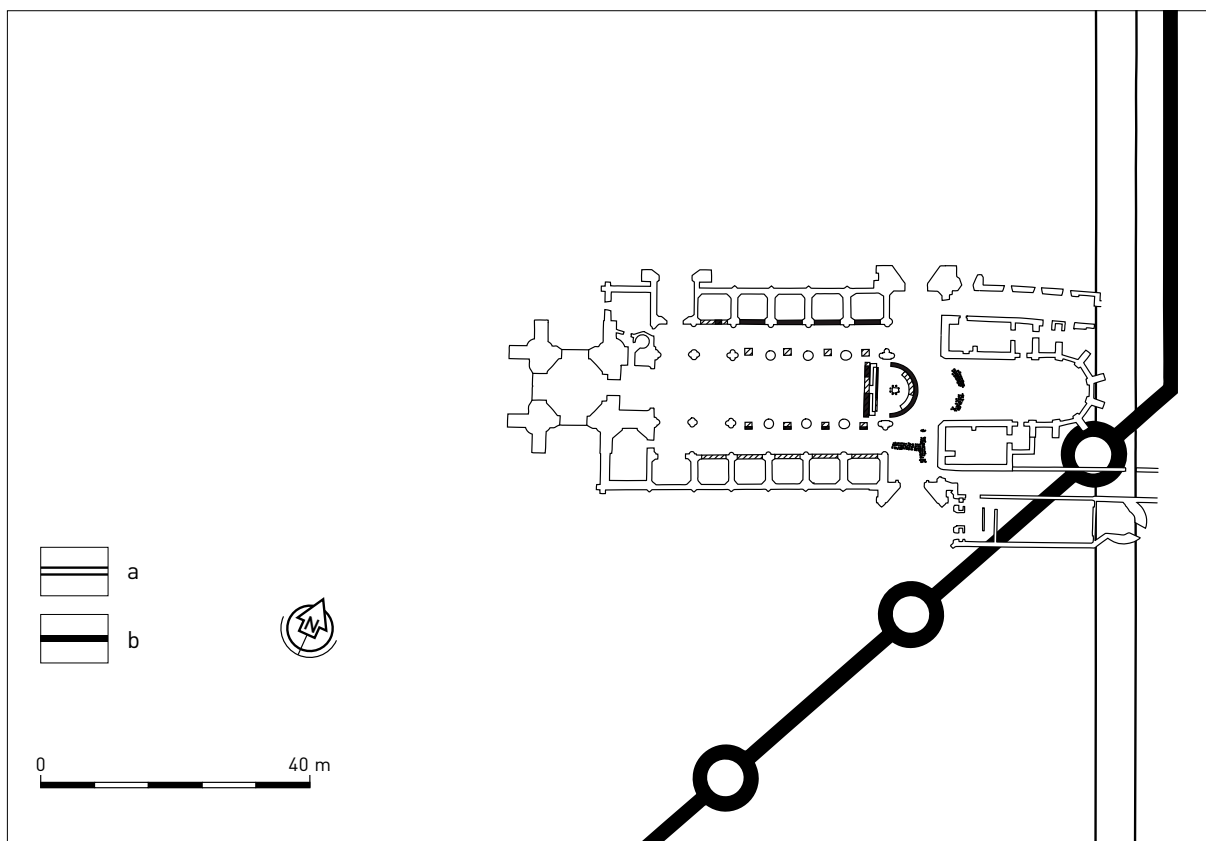


Fig. 9. Tongeren. Location of the Church of Our Lady. a) Gothic church. b) Late Roman basilica and town walls.

Rescue excavations undertaken between 1997 and 2008 confirmed that a Late Roman basilica was built on the site of the Church of Our Lady.<sup>41</sup> In the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries the site was occupied by parts of two *domus*. The border between the two parcels on which the urban houses were built corresponds more or less to the axis of the church. After the *domus* were destroyed by fire in the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, the area was completely rearranged. The southeastern track of the 4<sup>th</sup>-century town wall crosses the ruins of the early Roman urban quarter, taking no account of the original orientation of these buildings. Similarly, the location of the Late Roman basilica broke with the spatial organisation of the site in the Early Roman period. Although oriented in the same way as the preceding buildings, it was erected partly on the ruins of the northern *domus* and partly on the remains of the southern one.

The excavation revealed the remains of the northern exterior wall, the apse of the eastern exterior wall, the foundations of several pillars that separated the southern lateral nave from the central nave, and two floor levels inside the basilica. No remains were preserved of the pillars between the northern lateral nave and the central nave, of the western exterior wall with the entrance and of the southern exterior wall. However, the symmetrical layout of the building on both sides of a central axis does allow us to make a reconstruction of the ground plan (fig. 10).

The northern exterior wall was discovered in 1961 when a hole was dug across the wall of a Romanesque cellar and the foundation of the northern exterior wall of the Romanesque church. The Late Roman wall, integrated into the medieval foundation, can be traced over a distance of some 27 m.

<sup>41</sup> Large-scale excavations became necessary after the decision was taken to construct a floor heating inside the church and to replace the existing church foundations by new ones. The excavations lasted from 1999 till 2008.

In 2010 the study of the features and finds started. The results will be published from 2016 onwards. A first overview is presented by Eryvynck *et al.* 2008.

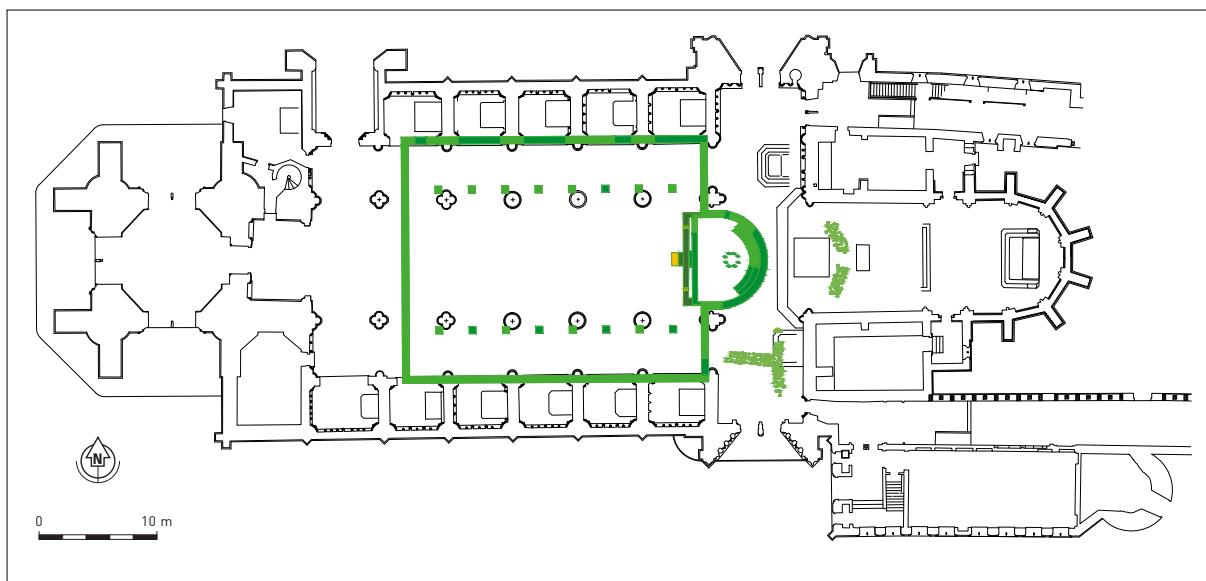


Fig. 10. Tongeren. Church of Our Lady: the Late Roman basilica (Agentschap Onroerend Erfgoed/Daan Celis).

The apse, discovered in 1912 when the heating system was built, is semicircular and has a diameter of approx. 6 m (fig. 11). Elements of the lower part of a bench in stone were preserved inside the wall. The floor consisted of a 10 to 20 cm thick layer of *opus caementicium*, on a foundation layer of fragmented flint stones. An octagonal arrangement of eight small circular mortar imprints were visible on the floor in the centre of the apse. They indicate the positions of eight small pillars, presumably built with circular hypocaust tiles, cemented to the floor and probably also to each other with pink mortar. The pillars were subsequently jointed with white mortar. Remains of that white plaster were preserved around one of the imprints on the floor. The eight small pillars supported an entirely demolished octagonal or circular monument about 1.3 m in diameter. The apse, which has a floor that is raised about 50 cm above the floor level in the nave of the basilica, is separated from that nave by a small wall. The apse was slightly enlarged in a second phase. This involved demolishing the small partition wall and replacing it with a new one, built approx. 50 cm to the west of the old one. The raised floor of the apse needed to be enlarged between the line of the demolished first partition wall and the second partition wall. The enlargement consisted of a layer of yellow loam, covered by a thin layer of pink mortar, probably to avoid a contrast with the pink floor in *opus caementicium* of the first phase. Circular hypocaust tiles were incorporated into the second partition wall at two points, one in the north and one in the south, but both equidistant from the basilica's central axis. They may be the bases of small pillars on top of the partition wall. In the centre of both partition walls, stairs gave access from the nave to the apse with its raised floor.

Two successive floors were built in the nave of the basilica. The first consisted of a layer of yellow loam, covered with grey mortar. The mortar may have been the original floor, or the remains of the grout for a tiled floor whose tiles were completely removed. The second floor consisted of a 10 to 20 cm thick layer of *opus caementicium*, on a foundation layer of yellow loam. The first floor is contemporaneous with the first partition wall of the apse, the second floor was laid after the second partition wall was built.

Fragments of four foundations for pillars or columns were recorded between the central and southern lateral naves. Since only the southern edges of these foundations were visible, the remaining parts being hidden by foundations of the Romanesque church, nothing can be said about their shape and dimensions. The observed foundations are positioned at approx. 6 m intervals. They may originally have been the foundations of pillars or columns spaced approx. 3 m apart. Unfortunately, however, the locations of the hypothetical foundations in between the observed ones correspond to the Gothic enlargements of the Romanesque foundations, which completely destroyed the Roman-period remains.



Fig. 11. Tongeren. Church of Our Lady: apse of the Late Roman basilica (Agentschap Onroerend Erfgoed).

Finally the western and southern exterior walls of the Late Roman basilica were not preserved. What remained of the western exterior wall may have been integrated into the foundation of the original western exterior wall of the Romanesque church, in the same way that the northern wall of the Late Roman basilica was preserved in the foundation of the northern exterior wall of the Romanesque building. But the original western Romanesque wall and its foundation were completely demolished in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, when a west tower was added to the church. The southern exterior wall of the basilica was probably completely destroyed long before then, when an early medieval ditch was dug at the same place once occupied by the wall.

Three radiocarbon dates and a small number of coins are available to reconstruct the chronology of the basilica and the rearrangement of its interior. The radiocarbon dates have been obtained from charcoal samples. Two fragments were found in mortar from two different foundations for the pillars in between the central and southern lateral naves. The third was preserved in the floor of the first phase of the apse. A statistical test revealed that the three dates represent the same event. All three combined date the building of the basilica to AD 250 – 330 (68.2% probability). But since three coins were found under the first floor of the building,<sup>42</sup> they can also be taken into consideration, which gives a narrower date range of AD 320 – 380 (68.2% probability). We may therefore assume that the basilica was built around the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. To date the enlargement of the apse, we can use a small assemblage of five

<sup>42</sup> Coins of Constantinus I (312–313), Constantinus I (322–323) and Crispus (322–323).

Late Roman coins that was found between the two partition walls and beneath the enlarged floor of the apse. The most recent one, an *aes* 2 of Gratianus from Lyon, dates to 378 – 383. This means that the apse was enlarged in the last quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century or in the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

More Late Roman foundations came to light in two sectors of the excavated plot, one to the east and one to the southeast of the basilica. They consist of alignments of postholes, more or less regularly laid out in rows of four posts (fig. 12). To the east of the basilica they show the plan of an apse, and to the southeast they reveal two walls oriented perpendicularly to each other. When combined, these features show the plan of the eastern part of another aisled basilica. It is obvious, however, that this building project was never finished. There were no preserved traces of masonry or robber trenches on top of these wooden foundations. Moreover, this phenomenon is limited to the two sectors mentioned above. The construction predates the building of the basilica from the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century since the wooden foundations are covered by a layer of dark earth that was deposited after the construction of the apse of that basilica.

There are no clear indications regarding the function of the Late Roman basilica. We think immediately of the episcopal church of the Tungri, but there is a lack of indisputable epigraphic or iconographic evidence. Many arguments can be advanced in favour of an early Christian church, but they are all indirect evidence. The stone bench inside the apse may have been a bench for priests, the partition walls between the apse and the nave may demarcate a *presbyterium* and the enigmatic circular or octagonal monument in the centre of the apse may have been a cult-related structure. We may also point to the chronological coincidence of Servatius' activities and the construction of the basilica. Finally, the site was the scene of one and a half millennia of church building and we can regard the Late Roman basilica as the starting point for that tradition. This last argument at least receives some support from the archaeological evidence. It seems obvious that the builders of the Merovingian church around the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century replaced an intact Late Roman basilica.<sup>43</sup> The exterior wall of the Roman apse was not demolished but was reused and integrated into the early medieval building. The builders of the Merovingian church knew the precise location of the Late Roman circular or octagonal monument at the centre of the apse, since they built their own monument on the same spot. One of the foundation layers of the early medieval floor of the Merovingian church was made of fragmented red-painted plaster taken from the second partition wall of the Late Roman apse. Finally, the second floor in *opus caementicium* in the Late Roman nave was reused as the first floor of the Merovingian church and nowhere has a layer of debris been recorded between the Late Roman and early medieval structures that could point to a period in which the site was abandoned. All these observations suggest that the Late Roman basilica was well maintained and in continuous use during the 5<sup>th</sup> and early 6<sup>th</sup> centuries.

#### 4 THE WESTERN SECTION OF THE LATE ROMAN TOWN

The sites discovered in the Sint-Truiderstraat in 1902, the Maastrichterstraat in 1916 and those recently excavated in the Vermeulenstraat and the Church of Our Lady, all located in the eastern part of the Late Roman town, are characterised by late antique private or public monumental architecture. Although we know less about the western part of Tongeren in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the few elements at our disposal suggest that the habitation pattern was different there (fig. 5).

<sup>43</sup> The Merovingian church was obviously part of a larger building project. To the south of the church, a central construction with four small apses was situated (fig. 13). It was built on top of the foundation of a tower of the Late Roman town wall that must have been demolished before. It predates the 10<sup>th</sup> century, since a defensive

wall of that date was carefully constructed around the building. The monument, known as the Saint Maternus Chapel, was demolished in 1803 and is only known from archival sources and post-medieval images (Baillien 1948; idem 1951; Geukens 1990, 35–47; Vanderhoeven/Vynckier 1995).



Fig. 12. Tongeren. Wooden foundation of an unfinished basilica, predating the basilica of the mid-4<sup>th</sup> century (Agentschap Onroerend Erfgoed).

In 2013 excavations took place at the Beukenbergweg in the northeastern part of the Roman town. Remains were found of an Early Roman cemetery, a Flavian pottery workshop and urban houses dating from the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries. A Late Roman occupation phase was identified, but its nature remains unclear.<sup>44</sup> The excavators were able to trace a configuration of three gullies, made of stones and tiles, a well, two pits, a palisade and a ditch, about 2.5 m wide and visible over a distance of some 10 m. The finds date these features to the 4<sup>th</sup> century and the early decades of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. No Late Roman houses were encountered. These faint traces contrast sharply with the highly structured and dense occupation in the eastern part of the town. In 1991 a small excavation took place in the southwestern sector of the Late Roman town, just inside the town wall. No Late Roman features were found, although a finds horizon of 4<sup>th</sup>-century material was present in the lower part of the dark earth covering the Early Roman remains.<sup>45</sup> Once again, the contrast with the eastern urban quarter of Late Roman Tongeren is remarkable.

## 5 CONCLUSION

Late Roman Tongeren took its shape with the building of a new town wall, possibly in the Constantinian era. The town played its traditional role as *caput civitatis* of the Tungri but it also became an important stronghold in the defence of the province of Germania Secunda. The cemeteries of the Early Roman town were reused in the Late Roman period. Different habitation patterns seem to have developed inside the town wall. Rich, urbanised habitation quarters were situated in the eastern part of the town, while in the western sectors, the nature of the habitation is more difficult to establish and is not yet understood.

<sup>44</sup> Veldman *et al.* 2014, 173-179.

<sup>45</sup> The Late Roman coins are summarized in fig. 1.



Fig. 13. Tongeren. a) Late Roman town. b) Early Roman town. c) cemeteries. d) Merovingian buildings. e) Merovingian burials. 1) near the Early Roman temple. 2) near the gate to Maastricht in the 2<sup>nd</sup>-century town wall. 3) near the Early Roman aqueduct. 4) around the Merovingian church. 5) Merovingian church. 6) Saint Maternus chapel.

Rich *domus* are obviously absent in that area. Abandoned Early Roman quarters outside the new town wall were frequently visited in the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, either as habitation quarters or a source of *spolia*. In the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, habitation seems to have been confined to areas inside the Late Roman town wall. Historical and archaeological sources for Late Roman Tongeren reveal a rich and diverse population, made up of civilians and soldiers, highly Romanised urban elites as well as Germanic elements. Features and finds from the town and its cemeteries show that the settlement was inhabited until the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> century.



Fig. 14. Tongeren. Silver pin and golden Merovingian coin (Provinciaal Gallo-Romeins Museum/Guido Schalenbourg).

Many indications point to a discontinuity of habitation in the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. The list of bishops for the diocese of the Tungri reveals an interruption in the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century and the 5<sup>th</sup> century, and the episcopal see was relocated to Maastricht in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The cemeteries of Roman Tongeren were no longer in use and there are no traces of habitation in the former *civitas* capital dating to the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. The spatial distribution of the early medieval graves in Tongeren shows a complete break with the Roman burial tradition (fig. 13). Over the years, two – possibly three – early medieval burials have been identified on the territory of the *civitas* capital. The first was excavated in 1964 in the ruins of the monumental temple at the Keverstraat site in the northern periphery of the settlement.<sup>46</sup> The second was excavated in 2001 on a site near the gate to Maastricht in the eastern periphery of the 2<sup>nd</sup>-century town wall.<sup>47</sup> In 2014 a golden Merovingian coin and a silver pin decorated with a Christogram were discovered by a metal detectorist in the filling of a clay pit (fig. 14). The earth could be traced back to a parcel in the northern periphery of Early Roman Tongeren, near the spot where the aqueduct entered the town and the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>-century town walls converged. The objects may be early medieval grave gifts. Perhaps not coincidentally, the two, possibly three, burials are all located on prominent sites of the Roman town, close to important edifices: a temple, a gate and an aqueduct. The locations seem to have been deliberately chosen. The nearby monuments may still have been visible and the memory of the former Roman *civitas* capital may still have been alive in the region. But the relation-

<sup>46</sup> Roosens/Mertens 1970.

<sup>47</sup> Hensen *et al.* 2006, 50 and fig. 17.



ship to the ancient cemeteries was broken. Finally, a cemetery developed around the Merovingian church that replaced the late Roman basilica, starting in the 7<sup>th</sup> century (fig. 13).

But the excavations in the Church of Our Lady also show that the Late Roman basilica was most probably maintained during the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century until it was replaced by a Merovingian church in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, a period in which the settlement seems to have been abandoned. The maintenance may have been the work of whoever claimed authority over the former *civitas* capital of the Tungri at that time. The construction of the 6<sup>th</sup>-century church was presumably the work of the Merovingian bishops of the Tungri, then residing in Maastricht and seeing themselves as the inheritors of the Roman authority over the diocese. By doing so they may have been pursuing a tradition that went further back into the 5<sup>th</sup> century, a time when their unknown and therefore hypothetical predecessors were maintaining and using the Late Roman basilica.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> The author wishes to thank D. Celis, A. Dallemage, A. Detloff, N. De Winter, P. Driesen, B. Emons and G. Schalenbourg for their contribution to this article.

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# From Germania Inferior to Germania Secunda and beyond. A case study of migration, transformation and decline

*Stijn Heeren*

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References

## I INTRODUCTION

The negative view of the Late Roman period that has long dominated scholarly accounts is rapidly disappearing. Rather than being compared with the High Empire of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries, resulting in an interpretation of decline, the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> centuries are now increasingly understood as a period of transformation between the Roman era and the kingdoms of the Early Middle Ages. Although the present study shares this general view, the province of Germania Inferior witnessed widespread depopulation in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century, and it is therefore hard to avoid a negative view of developments there during that time. Furthermore, immigration followed depopulation about a century later, and migration is another complex subject for archaeologists, with longstanding beliefs and negative judgements playing a role. The aim of this article is simple – to describe and interpret the archaeological habitation history of Germania Inferior, later called Germania Secunda. The approach adopted is more complex, however, because several existing debates on migration and burial archaeology have to be elucidated before developments in this province in the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> centuries can be described.

## 2 ATTITUDES TO MIGRATION

There is a deep divide between the Anglophone and German tradition of archaeological research concerning migration. In many German studies particular styles of material culture are associated with ethnic groups and changes in material culture are explained by migrations of peoples. In Anglophone archaeological thought migrations are approached critically and social change is the preferred explanation for changes observed in the archaeological record.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Burmeister 2000; Hakenbeck 2008.



Fig. 1. Germania Inferior and neighbouring provinces in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

Migration as an academic subject developed in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century as a result of European colonisation of Africa and the Middle East. The idea of *Ex oriente lux* was formulated by Western scholars: civilisation spread from Africa to the West.<sup>2</sup> Several archaeologists took this idea further and linked a change in material culture to movements of people. The German scholar Kossinna formulated the concept of *Kulturkreis*, in which sharply defined archaeological provinces coincide at all times with specific peoples or tribes.<sup>3</sup> This principle led to *etnische Deutung*, the ethnic interpretation of artefacts based on their form. Spatial distribution maps of specific objects were made, and the distribution map of Saxon pottery, for example, was interpreted as the living area of the Saxons.

Mainly, although not exclusively, in German archaeology, cultural-historical studies based on the theory of *etnische Deutung* prevailed throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> centuries in our study area, the works of Joachim Werner and Horst Böhme were particularly influential. These authors observed a rapid change in material culture, primarily metal dress accessories, in the later 4<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> century in Northern Gaul and adjoining areas beyond the Roman frontier. The newly emerging material culture was associated with Franks and Saxons, who took service in the Roman army and later settled in (former)

<sup>2</sup> Hakenbeck 2008, 8-9.

<sup>3</sup> Kossinna 1911, 3; cf. Hakenbeck 2008, 10-12.

Roman territory, thereby bringing the Frankish and Saxon material culture into Northern Gaul.<sup>4</sup> Their studies influenced many others, including Dutch and Belgian researchers.<sup>5</sup> For the later 5<sup>th</sup> century, various types of brooches were attributed to the Saxons, Thuringians and Burgundians and despite increased criticism of *etnische Deutung* within German archaeology itself,<sup>6</sup> these identifications are still practised.<sup>7</sup>

The longevity of cultural-historical archaeology employing *etnische Deutung* is surprising, especially when seen in comparison with Anglophone archaeology, which largely abandoned this way of thinking in the 1970s. Earlier in the 20<sup>th</sup> century G. Childe had already used the less specific term ‘diffusionism’ alongside migration as an explanation for changing material culture.<sup>8</sup> When processual archaeology replaced the cultural-historical paradigm, the focus shifted towards the study of local and regional developments and migration virtually ceased being studied from an archaeological perspective. Culture-historical notions of migration were deconstructed and some argued explicitly for a ‘retreat from migrationism’.<sup>9</sup> One of the key arguments against the archaeological approaches is that judgements about ethnic groups from the written sources were stereotypes used to ‘prove’ Roman superiority. Ethnic labels had no bearing on material culture in antiquity. The modern ethnic interpretation of material culture reflects a nationalist identity or origin myth rather than an ancient practice.<sup>10</sup>

The dismissal of ethnic interpretation led to a general tendency to disregard migration and supra-regional causes for change. Social change and newly emerging identities became the preferred explanation for changes in the archaeological record. Migrations were largely ignored or their occurrence was even denied altogether! As a reaction to these ‘localist’ or ‘immobilist’ studies, long-distance movements were once again placed on the agenda, although now the more general term ‘mobility’ was often used to consider long-distance trade and travel alongside migration.<sup>11</sup>

From the mid-1990s onwards, isotope analysis of human remains offered new hopes of establishing migration by archaeological means. By comparing several isotopes (carbon, nitrogen, oxygen, strontium) from bone and teeth, it can be ascertained whether or not individuals were local to the environment where they were buried. Prehistorians were the first to use the new techniques on human remains of the Bell Beaker Culture, techniques that were applied some years later to the Late Roman period and Early Middle Ages.<sup>12</sup> While the various methods do indeed offer new potential, the output is not very influential yet since only small series of isotope samples have been processed and the results permit only limited conclusions. A local or non-local origin can be proven at best since outcomes are associated with landscape type rather than geographical provenance.

Another strand of research was proposed by Anthony, Burmeister and Hamerow, who focused attention once again on possible archaeological criteria for recognising migration.<sup>13</sup> By studying the European exploration of North America, Burmeister assessed the extent to which the architectural and artefactual remains represented the original nationality of the settlers. To start with, he established that building style was not a reliable criterion. Scandinavian log cabins were suited to the landscapes that the new settlers encountered, which is why that form was also adopted by migrants of non-Scandinavian origins; many settlers soon abandoned the building traditions of their own region of origin. The same holds true for most subsistence strategies: after the initial failure of the dietary traditions of their homelands, fear of starvation caused new settlers to very quickly adopt the habits of indigenous peoples or earlier successful settlers. The main reason why building style and subsistence strategies developed so rapidly is that these

<sup>4</sup> Werner 1958; Böhme 1974; 1999; 2009.

<sup>5</sup> For instance Erdrich 1998; Taayke 1999; idem 2003; Opsteijn 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Pohl 1988; Brather 2000; 2004.

<sup>7</sup> For instance Quast 2009; Martin 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Childe 1925.

<sup>9</sup> Adams/Van Gerven/Levy 1978; cf. Burmeister 2000,

539; Hakenbeck 2008, 14–15.

<sup>10</sup> Geary 2002; Härke 2004; Halsall 2007, 10–19.

<sup>11</sup> Chapman/Hamerow 1997; Hakenbeck 2008, 17–18.

<sup>12</sup> Recent examples are Evans/Stoodley/Chenery 2006; Chenery/Eckardt/Möldner 2011.

<sup>13</sup> Anthony 1992; idem 1997; Burmeister 2000; Hamerow 1997; idem 1999.



<b>excavation</b>	<b>dendrochronological date</b>	<b>literature</b>
Nederweert-Rosveld	AD 211-212	
Wijnegem	post AD 214 (+5)	
Venray-Hoogriebroek	AD 230	
Deurne-Groot Bottelsche Akker	AD 236	
Veldhoven-Zilverackers (Oerle Zuid)	AD 235-236	
Breda-West, Huifakker	post AD 232	
Breda-West, Huifakker	post AD 239	
Reusel-Kruisstraat	AD 242	
Hoogeloon-Kerkackers	post AD 227 (+17)	
Best-Aarle	AD 254/255	pers. comm. L. Meurkens
Herk-de-Stad, Donk	post AD 383	
Hambach 500	AD 393 (+/-5)	Heege 1997
Bergeijk	post AD 396; repair AD 402	
Alphen-Kerkackers	AD 401-403	
Gennep-Stamelberg	post AD 390	Heidinga/Offenberg 1992, 65.
Gennep-Stamelberg	AD 408	Heidinga/Offenberg 1992, 65.
Valburg-Molenzicht	AD 418 (+/-6)	Van der Feijst/Veldman 2011, 42.
Meldert-Zelemsebaan	AD 422	Smeets/Steenhoudt 2012
Breda-West, Steenakker	post AD 465	
<b>North of the limes</b>		
Didam-Kerkwijk	AD 321 (+/-6)	Van der Veken/Prangma 2011, 74
Heeten-Hordelman	post AD 316	Erdrich 1998, 878.
Heeten-Hordelman	AD 335/336	Erdrich 1998, 878.

Table 1. Dendrochronological felling dates of timber used in the construction of wells from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> centuries. After Heeren 2015; only additions are cited here.

were dependent on the landscape. A second reason was the intensive interaction between various groups of settlers. Burmeister also found practices that did not develop quickly, however. Behaviour or choices that were guided by habit and tradition, such as the interior partitioning of buildings and pottery-making techniques, were termed ‘the culture of the private’. Because these ‘internal’ practices remained relatively stable for a longer period, they are a suitable archaeological criterion for studying migration.<sup>14</sup> The focus on pottery technique (tempering) rather than typology or decoration and on the internal division of buildings rather than their main construction are new directions for archaeologists.

Hamerow studied the influence of northern house-building traditions on Britain in the context of Anglo-Saxon migration. She observes that sunken huts, a common form of outbuilding in the Saxon homelands, were widely adopted and are found dispersed over Anglo-Saxon Britain. At the same time, the three-aisled longhouses that usually dominated the Saxon settlements were not taken up in Britain and are extremely rare. The migrants’ choice of another style of main dwelling was apparently influenced by existing architecture and by questions of identity, possibly the wish to look Romano-British.<sup>15</sup> These findings fit nicely with Burmeister’s argument: the highly visible main dwellings changed rapidly under the influence of social interaction, while the choice of secondary buildings, linked to daily practices such as weaving and food-processing that took place in the outbuildings, remained unchanged.

Recently, Halsall has argued that both approaches – the retreat from migrationism and the revived theoretical approach of archaeological migration studies – are wrong to base their arguments on the

<sup>14</sup> Burmeister 2000, 542.

<sup>15</sup> Hamerow 1997; 1999.

archaeological visibility/invisibility of migration. He states that the only migratory movement that is archaeologically tangible is the movement of people of Germanic descent from the Roman empire back home to their Saxon or Frankish homelands, where Roman military gear is found frequently. Their initial movement into the Roman empire is still not attested archaeologically. Halsall's first main point is that archaeologists should accept the fact that migration happened and was indeed an important aspect of daily life, but should not expect to find direct remains of migration in the archaeological record. His second point is that, even if we could identify migrants in the archaeological record, the identity of the travellers might have nothing to do with their area of origin. Identity is highly flexible and young Germanic men could adopt a Roman military identity in the 4<sup>th</sup> century as easily as a Late Roman officer could adopt a Frankish identity in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, for the simple reason that it would probably advance their careers. It is therefore meaningless to classify objects and practices as Roman or Germanic.<sup>16</sup> While Halsall's second point will be adopted and prove important in this article, his first will be contested in the sections below, after another aspect of the debate has been introduced.

### 3 MIGRATION AND THE BURIAL RITUAL

An important topic when discussing migration and the Late Roman period in the northwest are the so-called weapon graves. Several cemeteries in and around the study area were used in the late 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries and almost every cemetery featured one or several inhumation graves containing axes, spears, military-style belts and shields. Richly furnished female graves with sets of jewellery accompanied the male weapon graves. In the cultural-historical tradition, researchers discussed which historically known groups of people these weapon graves belonged to.<sup>17</sup> The custom of depositing weapons was not seen as Roman, since few of these graves were found in Roman centres and bearing arms was perceived as being prohibited by Roman law. Two arms-bearing barbarian groups were therefore associated with the weapon graves. *Laeti* is a term for barbarian groups defeated in battle who were settled within the Roman province and were bound to supply recruits to the Roman army. *Foederati* are barbarians who were paid to fight alongside Roman armies in independent units. The weapon graves were initially associated with *laeti* because the graves are found in Northern Gaul, where *laeti* are known to have lived. Later it was agreed that *foederati* were the more promising interpretation because only independent warriors owned their own weapons and were rich enough to deposit their weapons and valuable jewellery in graves. Distribution maps of the objects found in these graves were understood to represent Saxon and Frankish migration.<sup>18</sup>

However, in line with Anglophone revisionist studies sketched above, Halsall and Theuws have interpreted the emergence of weapon graves in social rather than ethnic terms. Halsall countered the Germanic interpretation of weapon graves with practical arguments: a) many of the weapons found in the graves were of Roman manufacture, b) cremation was the normal burial rite in the Germanic homelands, whereas the weapons are found in inhumation burials, c) many of the supposed Germanic brooches imported into the Roman empire might have flowed in the other direction, from the Roman empire to the Germanic homelands. Halsall then proceeded to argue that inhumation burials with rich grave goods are not a true reflection of the deceased's (ethnic) identity but should be seen as a ritualised communication of privileged social groups. These elite families were showing the burial audience that they possessed the means to defend the community in times of rapid change, i.e. the declining authority of the Roman state. Rather than seeing the custom of depositing weapons in inhumation graves as

<sup>16</sup> Halsall 2012, 31–34.

<sup>17</sup> Werner 1950; Böhner 1963; Böhme 1974 (cf. Halsall 2000 and Theuws 2009).

<sup>18</sup> Werner 1950; Böhner 1963; Böhme 1974; cf. Halsall 2000 and Theuws 2009.

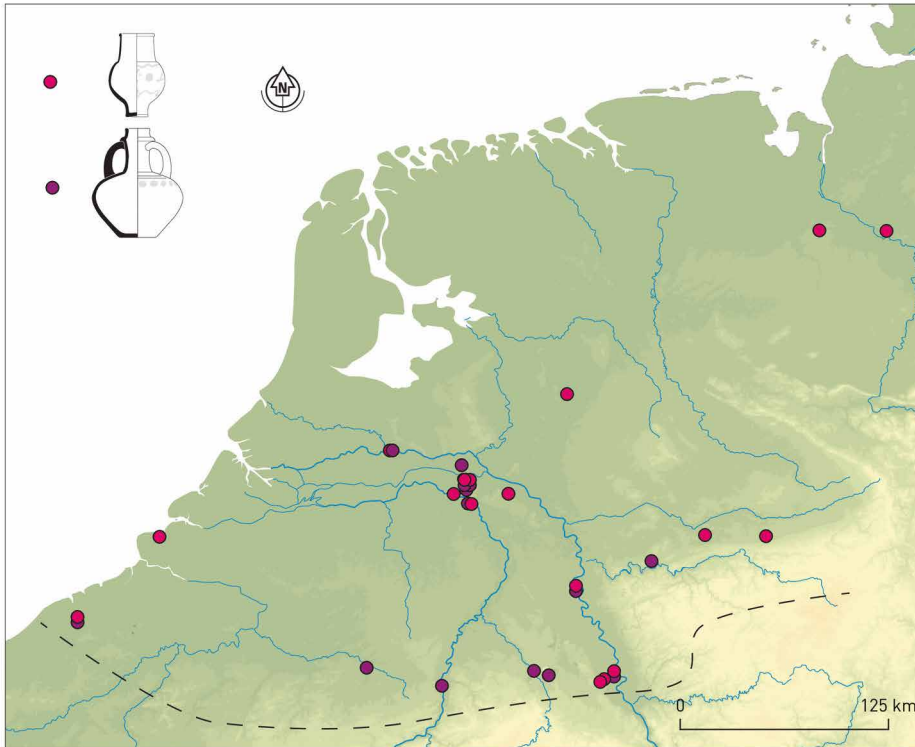


Fig. 2a. The distribution of colour-coated beakers Pirling 58-61 and jugs Pirling 71-74 (late 3<sup>rd</sup> and first half 4<sup>th</sup> century). The find catalogue will be published in Heeren, in prep. (2).

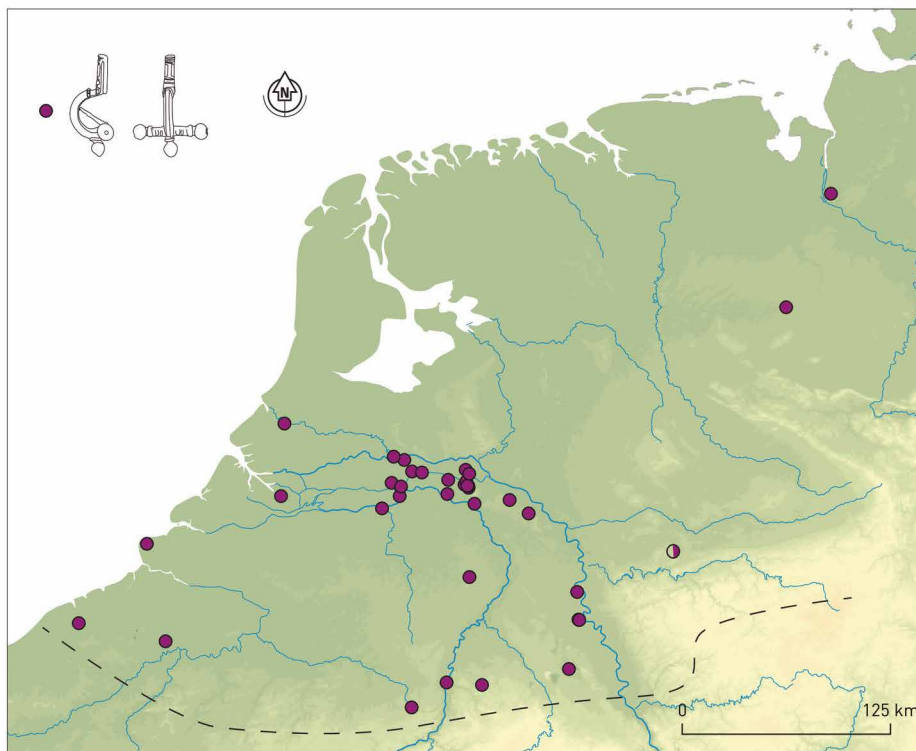


Fig. 2b. The distribution of crossbow brooches type 2 (first half 4<sup>th</sup> century). The find catalogue will be published in Heeren, in prep. (2).

an existing practice introduced by migrating Germanic people, Halsall proposed that this custom first appeared in the frontier area.<sup>19</sup>

Additionally, Theuvs argued that axes and spears should not be seen as weapons but as tools for hunting and clearing forests on unused land. These inventories must be understood as belonging to elites who

<sup>19</sup> Halsall 2000, 177-180.

<sup>20</sup> Theuvs 2009.

laid claim to land that was deserted in the course of the later 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century. Hunting was a practice of the Roman elite and the graves with spears must therefore be seen as expressing an ideal of the romanised elite rather than a Germanic custom.<sup>20</sup>

#### 4 GERMANIA SECUNDA: A PARTLY EMPTY PROVINCE

From the 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries, the modern-day Netherlands south of the Rhine, the adjacent German Rhineland and northeastern Belgium belonged to the Roman province of Germania Inferior. The province most likely had six *civitates*, of which five are relatively well known (fig. 1). In addition to official cities and secondary centres, it is especially the rural settlements of this province that are well researched. Villa settlements which usually comprised several stone buildings formed the majority of settlements in the fertile loess areas in the south of the province, while non-villa settlements consisting of two-aisled wooden byre-houses were the norm in the northern part of the province, which is dominated by sandy soils and riverine clay.<sup>21</sup>

Previous research has shown that many settlements in the countryside remained inhabited into the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. The countryside north of Tongres was depopulated in the third quarter of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, but there are no indications of violence: warfare and barbarian raids, often mentioned in the written sources, do not appear to be the main cause of this depopulation. The settlements in the Cananefatian and Batavian areas were not abandoned before the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, but almost all settlements were deserted in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. The speed and near completeness of the depopulation is remarkable: north of the Bavay-Tongres-Cologne road the countryside emptied out, with only two known exceptions, probably related to the presence of the army.<sup>22</sup>

The development of cities shows a different pattern. After initial damage in the military chaos of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, Cologne became the imperial residence for some decades and was repaired and seemingly thrived throughout the later 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>23</sup> In Tongres the 2<sup>nd</sup>-century city wall was partly abandoned and a new city wall was built around a much reduced area.<sup>24</sup> The same occurred in Xanten, where the Late Roman city wall encompassed only the nine central *insulae* of the former town. Because the town's Late Roman name, Tricensimae, refers to the 30<sup>th</sup> legion, this town is believed to have been a military fortification from that time onwards.<sup>25</sup> The completely deserted countryside is an additional argument for the end of the town as a civilian administrative centre. We see the same development from urban centre to military stronghold in Nijmegen: the town of Ulpia Noviomagus was deserted and a new *castellum* was founded at the Valkhof, an elevated location in modern Nijmegen.<sup>26</sup>

Although the date of these urban transformations cannot be ascertained with any certainty, it is probably significant that all authors date them to either the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century, the period of the Tetrarchy, or the early years of Constantine. Moreover, since the erection of new city walls and a *castellum* involved large-scale building activities, these developments do not seem to be isolated phenomena but part of a reorganisation carried out by provincial or imperial authorities. There is concrete evidence of an imperial presence in the years between AD 293 and 297, when one of the Panegyrics speaks of the victory of Constantius Chlorus, father of Constantine I, who purged the area of Frankish groups between the Scheldt and the two branches of the Rhine.<sup>27</sup> Although this episode is described as a military victory, it is quite possible that the cities and garrisons were reorganised at the same time, because the administrative reorganisation of the provinces was carried out some years earlier in 293.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Roymans 1996; Vos 2009; Heeren 2009; Habermehl 2013; Roymans/Derks/Hiddink 2015.

<sup>22</sup> Heeren 2015.

<sup>23</sup> Paffgen 2012; Eck 2004, 565-682.

<sup>24</sup> Vanderhoeven 2012.

<sup>25</sup> Otten/Ristow 2008.

<sup>26</sup> Willems/Van Enckevort/Thijssen 2009; Van Enckevort/Thijssen 2014.

<sup>27</sup> Panegyrici Latini VIII, 5; De Boone 1954, 58.

<sup>28</sup> Corcoran 1996.



Fig. 3. Germania Secunda and neighbouring provinces in the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

Constantius Chlorus' visit in or slightly before 297 was probably the practical implementation of the administrative measures taken earlier.

After the abandonment of large parts of the countryside and the reorganisation of civilian centres around AD 300, the countryside north of the Bavay-Tongres-Cologne road remained empty. Apart from artefact evidence, which is abundant for the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and lacking for the 4<sup>th</sup>, this is based on dendro-chronological foundation dates of new wells, which continued to be dug well into the 3<sup>rd</sup> century but not later. Inside the Roman province not a single excavated well dates from the period between the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> and late 4<sup>th</sup> century (table 1). By contrast, 4<sup>th</sup>-century wells are documented north of the Rhine.

For the province as a whole, this means that the civilian habitation of Germania Secunda was confined to two *civitates*. The villa-dominated landscapes around Tongres and Cologne had some degree of continuity,<sup>29</sup> but north of the road from Bavay to Cologne, the *civitates* were almost entirely depopulated. The Cananefatian *civitas* was completely empty, as was the northern part of the Tungrian *civitas*. The same holds true for the area of the Cugerni between Heerlen and Xanten, where not a single 4<sup>th</sup>-century settlement is known. We are less sure about the situation in the Batavian *civitas*. As with the other northern *civitates*, all excavated settlements in the countryside were discontinued, but unlike the other regions, a

<sup>29</sup> Gechter/Kunow 1986; Lenz 2011, 71-74.



Fig. 4. The settlement of Breda-Steenakker. After Berkvens/Taayke 2004, fig. 1.

number of 4<sup>th</sup>-century finds are known from the area around Nijmegen (fig. 2). Since the settlement of barbarian groups on the southern bank of the Rhine is implied in some sources, these finds may represent short-lived barbarian settlement or the remains of Roman armies acting against these groups.<sup>30</sup> In the absence of excavated structures, however, this remains speculative.

The *Notitia Galliarum*, a sort of civil appendix to the military *Notitia Dignitatum*, clearly states that Germania Secunda had two *civitates*: the Tungrian (Tongres) and the Agrippinensian (Cologne).<sup>31</sup> The documents were written in c. AD 425, but it is generally accepted that most of the information they contain reflects the situation in the late 4<sup>th</sup> century. Given the habitation history sketched above, it is very likely that as early as the Tetrarchic reorganisation onwards, only these two *civitates* remained (fig. 3). This does not mean, however, that the area north of the Bavay-Tongres-Cologne road was abandoned: both

<sup>30</sup> De Boone 1954, 90-92.

<sup>31</sup> Seeck 1962 (1876).



Fig. 5. The Late Roman house plans of Goirle-Huzarenwei. After Bink 2005, fig. 19.

the Lower Rhine and the Meuse were guarded by military fortifications and the area between the Rhine and the main land road must be seen as military territory.

This situation of an almost deserted countryside in the northern part of the province in the 4<sup>th</sup> century is important for the methodological approach to migration: when these lands were reinhabited in the late 4<sup>th</sup>/early 5<sup>th</sup> century, we can be sure that it was migrants who settled there.

## 5 REPOPULATION: IMMIGRANT SETTLEMENTS OF THE LATE 4<sup>TH</sup>/EARLY 5<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

We should describe a few examples of immigrant settlements in some detail before returning to the more theoretical discussions. The excavation plan of the Steenakker site at Breda (fig. 4) shows clustered farmhouses of the late 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries to the south and west and two farmyards with outbuildings of the late



Fig. 6. The Late Roman settlement of Helden-Schrames. After De Winter 2010, fig. 7.19 (yard 13).

4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> centuries to the north. Farmhouse 1 (H1) in the northern settlement is a three-aisled, west-east oriented farmhouse of approx. 25 x 7 m. House 2 is north-south oriented and poorly preserved. A nine-post outbuilding, probably a granary, is situated at a few metres distance from each of the houses. Other secondary buildings and a few pits surround house 1 and at least four sunken huts are located near house 2. The entire complex is surrounded by enclosure ditches in a more or less rectangular pattern. Since it is by no means certain that the two farmhouses coexisted and none of the buildings is dated with any precision, each of the outbuildings could have belonged to either of the two main buildings. One possibility is that the settlement consisted of two farmhouses and existed for one generation, but it is also possible that the two yards succeeded one another over two generations. Regrettably, this settlement phase is poorly dated, with only handmade pottery available.

The pottery is typical of the later 4<sup>th</sup> century and the one vessel that is more diagnostic (through its combination of form and decoration) dates to c. AD 400. According to the authors both the style and technology (temper and porosity) of the pottery matches the Rhine-Weser-Germanic pottery.<sup>32</sup>

Four main buildings (fig. 5), two sunken huts and several other small outbuildings have been excavated at the settlement of Goirle-Huzarenwei. The settlement was only partially researched and therefore no complete farmyards such as at Breda-Steenakker are available. The case of Goirle offers other important information, however. Firstly, both handmade and wheelthrown pottery are available, and the latter provides better dating information than the previously described case. Coarse ware forms Alzey 27, 28 and 30 in Mayen-like fabrics and *terra nigra* footbowls of the Chenet 342 type can be dated to the late 4<sup>th</sup> and/or first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. The handmade ware resembles the Rhine-Weser Germanic style but local temper material has been used.<sup>33</sup> Secondly, botanical macro-remains have been retrieved from the infill of a well. The botanical sample is dominated by rye, a species that was foreign to the area south of the Rhine in the Roman period but very common on the sandy soils north of the Rhine.<sup>34</sup> Thirdly, three of the four main buildings are relatively well preserved and some details of the structures can be investigated more closely. Entrance pits and double-posts in the walls and close to the entrances are structural features often encountered in byre-houses north of the Rhine.<sup>35</sup>

A farmyard very similar to that of Breda-Steenakker has been excavated at Helden-Schrames. A three-aisled main building with entrance pits forms the main feature and is surrounded by sunken huts, other outbuildings and several pits. Remains of ditches indicate that a more or less rectangular enclosure surrounded the yard, with a well located in the remaining corner of the enclosure (fig. 6). A coin hoard consisting of 182 coins and 86 coin fragments of aes coinage minted after AD 388 were found in sunken feature building no. 28. Together with *terra nigra* footbowls this coin hoard provides an indicative date in the late 4<sup>th</sup> or early 5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Berkvens/Taayke 2004.

<sup>34</sup> Van Haaster 2005.

<sup>33</sup> Bink 2005, 31-60.

<sup>35</sup> Van Es 1967, fig. 14-22; Waterbolk 2009, 54-85.



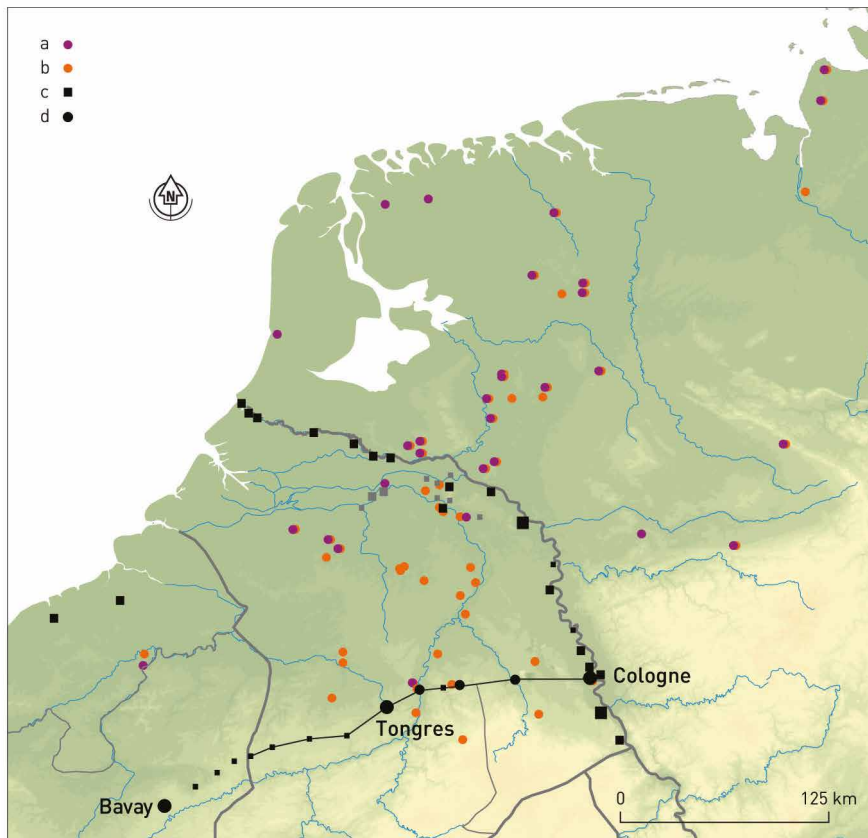


Fig. 7. Settlements with three-aisled byre-houses (a) and sunken huts (b) of the Roman period. The settlements south of the Rhine are listed in table 2. The settlements north of the Rhine are found in Hiddink 1999 and Van der Velde 2011. c military fortification; d civilian centre.

## 6 BUILDING TRADITIONS AND DIET AS EVIDENCE FOR MIGRATION

Three-aisled longhouses of a ‘northern’ tradition are the principal feature in the settlements of the late 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century treated above. The longhouses are also accompanied by sunken huts, which were very common in Roman-period and early medieval settlements in the area north of the Rhine and totally absent south of the Rhine before the late 4<sup>th</sup> century (table 2; fig. 7).<sup>37</sup> These two observations have been taken as indications that Germanic people from the area north of the Rhine settled in the southern Netherlands.<sup>38</sup> However, other scholars have been more critical of a direct association between building types and migrants. Their arguments are reviewed here and will be related to Burmeister’s ideas discussed above.

Longhouses combining a living area for people and a byre section for animals under the same roof were common on both sides of the Rhine from the Bronze Age until the modern period. North of the Rhine almost all buildings had a three-aisled interior and the evolution of these buildings has been well studied. The Hijken type, characterised by a limited length and the presence of outer posts supporting an overhanging roof, was common in the Late Iron Age. The Fochteloo type, longer and without outer posts, became common in the Early Roman period. In the Late Roman period the houses tended to become much larger and in parts of the house the roof-supporting pair of posts in the interior were replaced by posts close to the wall, the double posts (types Wijster B and Peelo A). This was done to create more open space without posts in the interior of the house and it had the added advantage that the internal

<sup>36</sup> De Winter 2010.

in Heeren 2015, 284.

<sup>37</sup> In three cases a 3<sup>rd</sup>-century date is assumed for a sunken hut south of the Meuse. These early dates are contested

<sup>38</sup> Bazelmans 1990; Heidinga/Offenberg 1992, 39, 66.

### The Netherlands south of the Rhine

1	Nijmegen-Canisiussingel	Willems/Van Enckevort 2009	1 SH; charred	
2	Wijchen-Tienakker	Heirbaut/Van Enckevort 2011	8 SHs at former villa-, probably burgus site	first half 5th century
3	Tiel-Passewaaij	Heeren 2009	two shorthouses, 1 Wijster B2-construction	late 4th/early 5th century
4	Breda West-Steenakker	Berkvens/Taayke 2004	6 of 8 SHs; 2 longhouses (no Wijster type)	one vessel of around AD 400
5	Alphen-Kerkakkers	De Koning 2005	28 SH's; 9 farmhouses (no Wijster type)	late 4th-early 6th century
6	Goirle-Huzarenwei	Bink 2005	2 SHs; 4 main buildings of which 1 Wijster-type	late 4th/early 5th century
7	Tilburg-Stappegoor	BAAC; pers.comm. M. Bink	2 shorthouses	first half 5th century
8	Geldrop-`t Zand A	Bazelmans 1990	5 SHs and 1 farmhouse	late 4th/early 5th century
9	Geldrop-`t Zand I	pers.comm. F. Theuws	5 SHs and yard demarcation	second half 4th/first half 5th century
10	Geldrop-`t Zand H	pers.comm. F. Theuws	3 SHs and 1 farmhouse	first half 5th century
11	Someren Lierop-Stemertseweg	Verwers 1991	1 SH	undated; some Late Roman pits near
12	Cuijk-Heeswijkse Kampen	Ball/Heirbaut 2005, 119	at least 1 SH	3rd century or later
13	Cuijk-De Nielt	Habermehl/Van Renswoude, in press	6 SHs	late 4th century
14	Gennep-Stamelberg	Heidinga/Offenberg 1992	more than 100 SHs; at least 5 Wijster-like houses	from AD 390 onwards
15	Horst-Hoogveld	Verhoeven 2000	2 SH's	apparently 3rd century
16	Venlo-Blerick-Heierhoeve	Schotten 1993	around 10 SHs	"several 4th-century coin concentrations"
17	Helden-Schrames	De Winter 2010	4 SH's; at least 1 three-aisled farmhouse	late 4th or 5th century
18	Swalmen	Willems 1983	1 Late Roman SH next to Merovingian cemetery	5th century
19	Sittard Geleen-Holtum Noord	Wagner/Van der Ham 2010; Tichelman 2012	around 5 SHs; main buildings present but unclear	late 4th/5th century
20	Maastricht-Witmakersstraat	Stoepker 1990	1 SH	5th century
21	Voerendaal-Ten Hove	Stoepker 1987; 1988	at least 17 SHs at villa site	4th-7th century
<b>Belgium</b>				
23	Baelen-Nereth	Hanut/Goffioul/Goemaere 2012	1 longhouse, 1 shorthouse, 4 possible SHs	mid 4th century
24	Neerharen-Rekem	Van Ossel 1992, 297-300	at least 25 SHs, 2 Wijster-like longhouses	late 4th/first half 5th century
25	Wange-Damekot	Opsteyn 2003	7 SHs at Late Roman villa-site	5th/6th century
26	Herk-de-Stad (Donk)	Van Impe 1984	SHs or byre-sections of longhouses?	second half 4th century
27	Meldert	Smeets/Steenhoudt 2012	2 SHs and unclear main buildings	late 4th/5th century
28	Sint-Martens-Latem	Vermeulen 1992, 243-244.	1 SH	
29	Nazareth	BAAC; pers.comm. T. Dyselinck	longhouse with double interior wall posts	
<b>Germany west of the Rhine</b>				
30	Froitzheim	Van Ossel 1992, 194.	1 SH within former burgus	around AD 300?
32	Harff	Van Ossel 1992, 196-197.	2 SHs on former villa terrain	second half 4th century
31	Rodenkirchen	Van Ossel 1992, 222.	1 SH on former villa terrain	4th century

Table 2. Rural settlements with three-aisled byre-houses and sunken huts of the Roman period south of the Rhine. The numbers correspond to fig. 7. SH = sunken hut.

use of space became less dependent on the roof construction. The constructional principle of replacing posts in the interior of the plan with posts closer to the wall was also applied to shorthouses, which in this case are called Wijster B2 shorthouses. In the early medieval Odoorn and Gasselte house types, still more roof-bearing posts were replaced by double wall posts.<sup>39</sup>

In contrast to the continuous and gradual development of house-building traditions north of the Rhine from prehistory into the Middle Ages, fundamental and sudden changes in building styles occurred south of the Rhine during several periods. Relatively short houses of the Haps type, characterised by a two-aisled structure and outer posts supporting an overhanging roof, were common in the Late Iron Age. Another type occurring at the same time was the Oss 5a type, a two-aisled building with double rows of small wallposts at the walls.<sup>40</sup> In the early 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, longhouses of the Alphen-Ekeren type appeared, with a two-aisled structure using deep, large postholes for the roof-bearing posts and a single row of smaller posts or a straight ditch for the walls, without outer posts to support the roof. This type became the standard for the southern Netherlands and northern Belgium in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD and disappeared in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century.<sup>41</sup>

Theuws has argued against a simple association between northern building types and Germanic settlers. He argued that almost no two Wijster-type house plans in the southern Netherlands are the same and that many differences can be observed between the southern examples and the house plans of the northern Netherlands. In his view, the settlers from Gennep-Stamelberg were not necessarily Germanic people from the north but could also have come from the south.<sup>42</sup> Although I sympathise with the main aim of Theuws' article, which is to replace the simple dichotomy of Roman versus Germanic material culture with a more nuanced approach,<sup>43</sup> I disagree with his argumentation based on house plans. House plans north of the Rhine are not uniform either. The typological order is based on constructional details but individual house plans within a group can differ markedly from each other.<sup>44</sup> By addressing constructional details we enter the domain of Burmeister's 'internal' sphere guided by habit and tradition. Examples are the double posts at regular intervals near the walls, and most importantly, the phenomenon of entrance pits. These are details of the northern house-building traditions that are also observed in the examples from the southern Netherlands. These elements are totally absent from the Alphen-Ekeren building tradition known in the southern Netherlands up until the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.<sup>45</sup> It is these key elements rather than exact copies of whole plans that are an argument for a northern origin.

The selective continuation or abandonment of house-building traditions in the examples of Burmeister and Hamerow were caused by two factors: the different landscape of the immigration area compared to the area of origin and social interaction between immigrants and natives in the immigrant region. However, in the case under discussion here, the sandy subsoil, climate and vegetation of the largest part of the immigration area (southern Netherlands and northern Belgium) were similar to those of the supposed area of origin (Netherlands and Germany north and northeast of the Lower Rhine). Moreover, the immigration area was empty: it had become depopulated a century earlier. This is why the house-building traditions of the region of origin remained virtually unchanged and recognisable in the immigration area. Partial adoption is observed in the small part of the Roman province where the subsoil was different, in the river area between the Rhine and Meuse mainly characterised by riverine clay. Buildings with northern constructions are found there, such as a Wijster B2 shorthouse at Tiel-Passewaaij, but not

<sup>39</sup> Waterbolk 2009, 54–85.

<sup>40</sup> Verwers 1972; Schinkel 1998; Hiddink/Roymans 2015, 53–60.

<sup>41</sup> Slofstra 1991, 137–145; Hiddink/Roymans 2015, 53–60.

<sup>42</sup> Theuws/Hiddink 1996, 78–80; Theuws 2008, 783–786.

<sup>43</sup> Theuws 2008, 786–788.

<sup>44</sup> Waterbolk 2009; Lange *et al.* 2014.

<sup>45</sup> Hiddink also addressed the trend of reducing the number of posts in the interior of Alphen-Ekeren houses, but this is done in a different manner, namely to replace a single post of the two-aisled construction with a combination of heavy posts as part of the wall; cf. Hiddink/Roymans 2015, 53–60.

Site	Date	Quantity (seeds)
<b>North of the limes</b>		
Zwinderen-Kleine Esch	late 3rd to 5th century	62
Heeten-Hordelman (Raalte)	4th/5th century	1898
Peelo-De Es	4th/5th century	688
Noordbarge-Hooge Loo	1st century	368
Ede-Veldhuizen	2nd to 5th century	1100
Deventer-Colmschate (Skibaan)	mid 4th century	20
<b>South of the limes</b>		
Goirle-Huzarenwei	late 4th/5th century	653
Alphen-Kerkackers	late 4th/5th century	500
Geldrop-'t Zand A	late 4th/5th century	247
Maastricht-Pandhof	late 4th/5th century	291
Maastricht-Derlon	late 4th/5th century	66
Voerendaal-Ten Hove	3rd to 7th century	75

Table 3. Seeds of rye retrieved from excavated settlements. Data courtesy dr. Laura Kooistra (BIAX Consult).

the sunken huts, which would be filled with groundwater most of the year. The Nijmegen and Wijchen sites, the only two exceptions where sunken huts do occur in the river area, are located on riverine sand dunes and an elevated ice-pushed ridge rather than on riverine clay.

A second important argument for a northern descent of the late 4<sup>th</sup>-century settlers in the southern Netherlands is the immigrants' diet. The well-known maxim 'you are what you eat' indicates the close connection between foodways and identity. In the context of discussions about romanisation, the use of mortaria, plates and beakers and the consumption of Mediterranean ingredients such as olive oil, fish sauce and coriander have been taken as indications for the adoption of a Roman identity by people from native communities.<sup>46</sup> In the current case study, rye has been found in considerable quantities in the immigrant settlements of the late 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century (table 3). Before then, it was unknown in the area as a cultivated plant. However, rye formed an important part of the diet in the communities inhabiting the sandy soils north of the Rhine from the 1<sup>st</sup> century onwards.<sup>47</sup> This is an important clue for the northern origin of the settlers south of the Rhine.

Also on this subject, Burmeister has warned that limitations imposed by the natural environment as well as social processes may have influenced dietary choices to a large degree.<sup>48</sup> In the current case study, however, we see the continuation of 'northern' practices, no doubt due to the fact that the immigration area's natural environment was largely the same as the settlers' region of origin and because of the absence of interaction with indigenous groups, since the area was almost completely empty.

In Anglophone archaeology, pottery style has long been discarded as suitable evidence for migration. However, in the examples provided above, the Rhine-Weser Germanic pottery matches the northern origin of the settlers, which was proven by other classes of evidence besides pottery. Contrary to the main trend in theoretical archaeology, it should be recognised that pottery style *can* provide clues to settlers' origins. However, settler origin is not the same as ethnic ascription or identity, as will be shown below. Provided archaeologists refrain from attaching ethnic labels to material culture, and also seek to combine material sources with other classes of evidence, material culture can be used as an indicator for migration and mobility.

<sup>46</sup> Baatz 1977; Meadows 1994; Heeren 2009, 254-256.

<sup>48</sup> Burmeister 2000, 541.

<sup>47</sup> Hiddink 1999, 157-162, and table 3.



Fig. 8. *Hacksilber* found near house 12 in the settlement of Tiel-Passewaaij (see also fig. 9).

## 7 FOEDERATI AND THE POLITICAL CONTEXT OF IMMIGRATION AROUND AD 400

Who were the immigrants that moved from the Germanic area north of the Rhine into the Roman province? Why did this immigration occur in the late 4<sup>th</sup> century and not earlier? Important clues are provided by the study of gold and *Hacksilber* hoards and single solidi of the late 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century on both sides of the Lower Rhine.<sup>49</sup> The circulation and deposition of gold and silver were closely connected to political-military circumstances. Because of the relative stability in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the gold and silver circulation of that period is barely visible to archaeologists. This changed with the political-military upheavals in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century. Stilicho's removal of garrisons along the Rhine for the defence of Italy in AD 402, the usurpation of Constantine III in 407 and his deployment of *foederati* along the Lower Rhine, and finally new alliances in the period of Aetius and Valentine III in AD 428–430, all resulted in peaks in the influx of Roman gold.<sup>50</sup>

How are these studies of gold and silver linked to the immigrant settlements studied above? To start with, the distribution map of gold and silver depositions<sup>51</sup> resembles our map of settlements with three-aisled main buildings and sunken huts (fig. 7): the depositions were made in the same area where the migrants originated and moved to. Moreover, two of the excavated settlements can be linked more directly to the gold and silver depositions. A collection of *Hacksilber*, which is a component of the hoards of Echt and Gross Bodungen for instance, was found in the settlement of Tiel-Passewaaij (fig. 8). The pieces of silver were found dispersed over an area of several square metres in the topsoil directly overlying house 12 of that settlement. House 12 is a shorthouse comparable to buildings from Ede-Bennekom, and house 2 of the same settlement is a good example of a Wijster B2 shorthouse, characterised by pairs of double posts near the wall bearing the roof structure (fig. 9). In addition to the silver, a crossbow brooch Keller 3/4, a Wijster-type hairpin, an assortment of Germanic-type brooches and Rhine-Weser-Germanic pottery were found (fig. 9). The crossbow brooch and the silver are good indications that at least one of the inhabitants was a soldier or veteran of the Roman army or a federate warband. The pottery, jewellery and architecture strongly imply a northern origin for the settlers.

The second example is Wijchen-Tienakker. The stone house protecting a well in a 2<sup>nd</sup>-century villa complex was re-used as a *burgus* in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. A settlement consisting of at least eight sunken huts appeared on the site around AD 400. Late Roman belt parts and a silver coin of Constantine III imply

<sup>49</sup> Roymans, this volume.

<sup>51</sup> Roymans, this volume, fig. 2.

<sup>50</sup> Roymans, this volume.

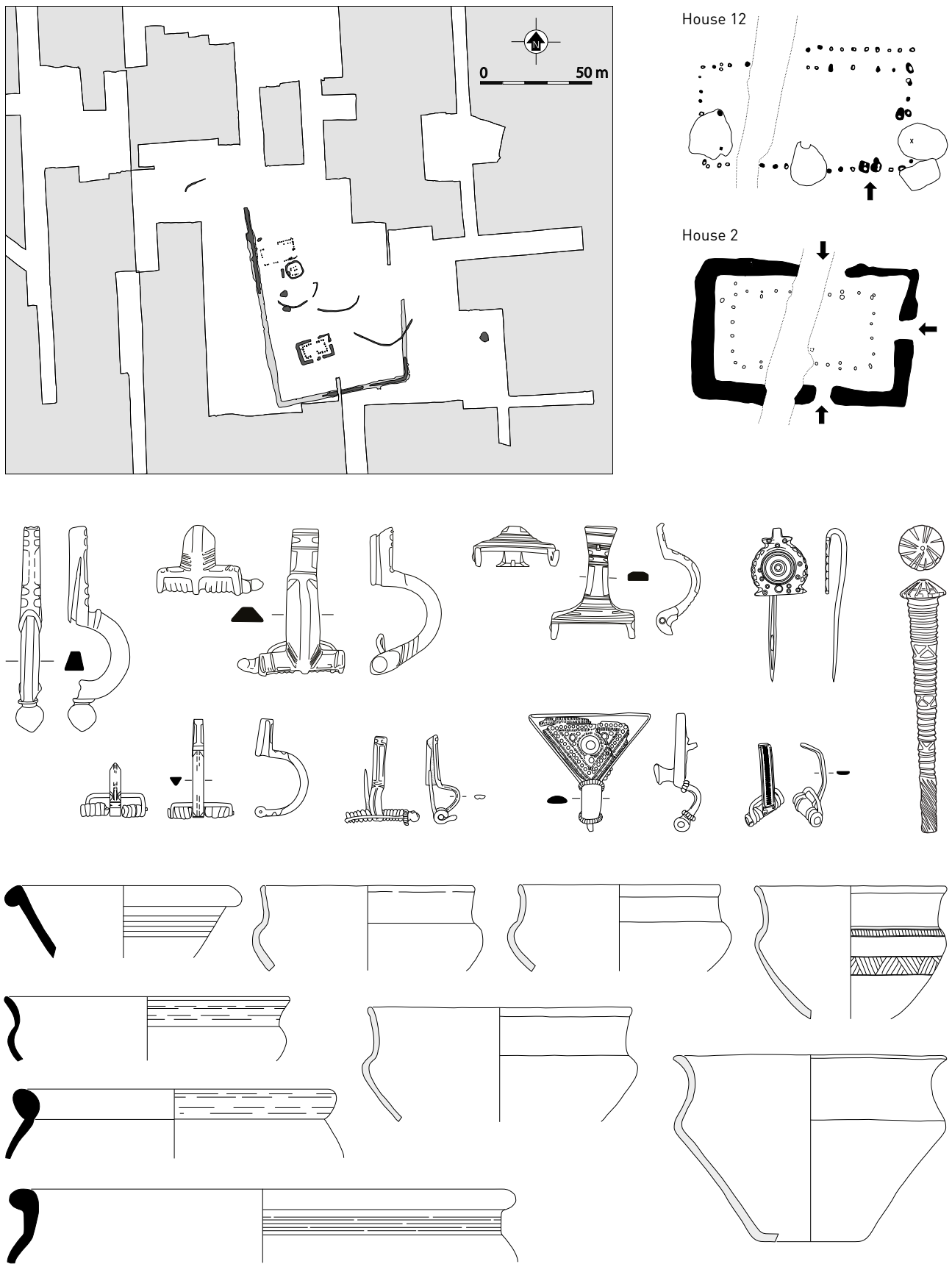


Fig. 9. Settlement plan, house plans and a selection of finds from the Late Roman phase of the Tiel-Passewaaij site. Settlement plan scale 1:2500; house plans 1:400; dress accessories 1:2; pottery 1:4.

that these settlers functioned as *foederati*.<sup>52</sup> The retrieval of a Germanic brooch of the supporting-arm type cast in solid gold from an old branch of the Meuse directly bordering the Tienakker site<sup>53</sup> is a further indication that these settlers were included in the Roman authorities' gold gift network. The gold and silver were used, among other things, to produce Germanic-style jewellery.<sup>54</sup> Two cemeteries from the same period (early-mid 5<sup>th</sup> century) are also known, one to the east and one to the southeast of the settlement, in which weapon graves containing complete military belts characterise the earliest phase. The presence of these cemeteries indicates that the settlers of Wijchen-Tienakker remained there for some time and were the founders of one (or more?) local communities.<sup>55</sup>

These two examples, and maybe also the discovery of a solidus of Constantine III not far from the settlement of Goirle-Huzarenwei at Abcoven,<sup>56</sup> attest to a close connection between the immigrant settlements and *foederati*, who were receiving gold and silver from the Roman authorities in exchange for military services. This close link is also apparent from the chronology: in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, when the defence of the frontiers was still firmly in the hands of the regular Roman army, the area south of the Lower Meuse remained empty. Although the area was depopulated, immigration was not allowed, and the emperor himself dealt with barbarian attempts to settle in these regions. The historical account of the Sali's request to settle in Toxandria is well-known: Julian II defeated these groups and sent them off.<sup>57</sup> However, when problems arose around AD 400 the garrisons of regular Roman troops were withdrawn and immigration started. It is significant that the reliable dates are all post AD 390 and one rather exact date attests to the foundation of a new well in AD 401-403 (table 1). Examples from other historical periods, for instance the frontier politics under Augustus, demonstrate that the Roman government was careful to locate groups with a long history of friendship in vulnerable areas.<sup>58</sup> For our period around AD 400 it is also assumed that removal of the garrisons was accompanied by agreements with allied groups. The fact that the Franks put up resistance to the massive invasions of AD 405 or 406 attests to the success of this policy.<sup>59</sup>

Theuws makes a distinction between Gennep on the one hand and small settlements such as Goirle on the other. At least four longhouses and more than 100 sunken huts were excavated in Gennep, where the investigated area formed part of a much larger site. This kind of site must have been inhabited by several families together and can be seen as an equivalent of the earlier military *vicus*, the settlement next to a military fortification.<sup>60</sup> Another settlement of this kind is Wijchen-Tienakker and possibly Wijk bij Duurstede-De Geer.<sup>61</sup> The other category contains small settlements, with as a rule only one or two houses: Goirle-Huzarenwei, Helden-Schrames, Tiel-Passewaaij, Breda-West Steenakker, Alphen-Kerkakkers, Tilburg-Stappegoor – the Geldrop clusters (table 2). Although a distinction can be made in size and function, the two examples at the start of this section – one a small site and one a probable military centre – show that all of the settlements were associated with *foederati*. It is a distinct possibility that families of the fighters who stayed in military fortifications, or veterans and their families, lived in the smaller settlements. These settlements also inform us about the scale of immigration: only one or two families inhabited each settlement, although clusters appear together. For instance, in the cases of Goirle/Tilburg/Alphen, Cuijk and Geldrop three farmyards at walking distance from each other are known, of which two were most likely inhabited at the same time.

<sup>52</sup> Heirbaut/Van Enkevort 2011, 153.

<sup>53</sup> Willems 1984, 159.

<sup>54</sup> Nicolay 2014, 234-244.

<sup>55</sup> Cemetery Wijchen-Centrum: Heeren/Hazenbergh 2010. Cemetery Valendries (or Esdoornstraat): Nicolay 2008, site 285 (Plate 42).

<sup>56</sup> Bink 2005, 9 for the location; Callu/Loriot 1990, no.

1601 or NUMIS 1039614 for the coin identification.

<sup>57</sup> Amm. Marc. 17.8.3; Theuws 2008, 771; Roymans/Derks 2015, 31; Heeren 2015, 285.

<sup>58</sup> Roymans 2004, 23-29.

<sup>59</sup> Contribution Roymans, this volume.

<sup>60</sup> Theuws 2008, 778-782.

<sup>61</sup> The latter is unpublished (Heeren, in prep. 1).

The identification of *foederati* and their families as the inhabitants of the new settlements and as the garrisons of military sites along the Lower Rhine after AD 402 solves another thorny historical problem. Much has been written about the missing page for Germania Secunda in the *Notitia Dignitatum*, which leaves a gap between the Middle Rhine from Mainz to the Channel coast, for which no military units and fortifications are known. Some authors simply state that the page is lost,<sup>62</sup> while others have made reconstructions of copying errors.<sup>63</sup> Another argument is that the page was left out in haste because the highly decorated manuscript had to be presented to a new ruler who had risen to the purple unexpectedly.<sup>64</sup> These rather forced arguments can be rejected in the light of the defence of the Lower Rhine region by *foederati*. Because the *Notitia Dignitatum* listed only regular Roman army units there was no need to devote a page to a province under the control of external allied forces. There is an argument to support this thesis: the page for Belgica Secunda is preserved, but contains only three coastal *castella*. Inland fortifications such as Tournai (Turnacum) and Famars (Fanum Martis) are left out, while the *Notitia Galliarum* lists no fewer than 12 intact *civitates* for this area, including the *civitas Turnacensium*. This must mean that the entire stretch from Mainz to the Channel coast, including both the Lower Rhine riverbank and the Cologne–Tongres–Bavay–Tournai land road, were under the control of allied units rather than guarded by the regular army. This situation arose in AD 402, was reinforced by Constantine III in 407 and was not reversed between the death of Jovinus and the writing of the *Notitia Dignitatum* edition of 423/425.

Lanting and Van der Plicht argued for a complete restoration of the Lower Rhine *limes* to the pre-406 situation in the later reign of Honorius. A letter from Honorius dated to AD 418, in which civilian officers of Gaul, including the one for Germania Secunda, are summoned for a meeting, is taken as evidence for this.<sup>65</sup> The presence of this civilian office after the death of Constantine III and Jovinus must have meant that the province was once again under the control of Honorius, or so it is thought. Lanting and Van der Plicht follow Scharff in arguing that every province had both a civilian and a military organisation, and since Germania Secunda is mentioned, there must have been an army for that province too.<sup>66</sup> This rigid interpretation might have fitted the situation of previous centuries, but not the difficult reality of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. There are other possibilities. Honorius will have reinstated parts of all the provinces to safeguard the tax revenues of areas not laid waste by warfare, but raising money and recruits for new armies was impossible: already decades earlier the Roman reliance on federates was caused by a shortage of manpower. Moreover, the *Notitia* itself contains indications that the Lower Rhine was no longer guarded by regular Roman units. Following Nesselhauf, Hoffmann observed that units formerly stationed along the Rhine, such as the Truncesimani (=Tricensimani) originally from Xanten, turn up as *pseudocomitatensis* in the *Notitia*. This classification means that the unit was part of the field army and no longer of the *limitanei*, the territorial army of Germania Secunda, which must have been disbanded before the *Notitia Dignitatum* was written.<sup>67</sup>

The settlement of *foederati* in the northern part of Germania Secunda as discussed in the previous paragraphs supports Hoffmann and Nesselhauf's explanation regarding the *Notitia Dignitatum*. The fact that the two remaining *civitates* in the province – the Agrippinensian and the Tungrian – still had a civilian representative answering to Rome in AD 418 is valuable information, but it has no bearing on the

<sup>62</sup> Brulet 1995, 105; Hoffmann 1973, 15–16.

<sup>63</sup> Germania i (for inferior) could have been misread as 1 for Prima, and thus the page for Germania Inferior was later transferred into a page for Germania prima (Scharff 2005, 298–300, partly following Seeck and Nesselhauf; Lanting/Van der Plicht 2009/10, 44–45).

<sup>64</sup> Explicit in Lanting/Van der Plicht 2009/2010, 44; implicit in Scharff 2005, 309–316.

<sup>65</sup> Lanting/Van der Plicht 2009/2010, 44; Germania Secunda is also present in the *Notitia Dignitatum*, but this is less conclusive evidence for the existence of the province after Constantine III and Jovinus, since one could argue that this is a remnant of earlier versions of the document.

<sup>66</sup> Lanting/Van der Plicht 2009/2010, 44; Scharff 2005, 298.

<sup>67</sup> Hoffmann 1973, 15, following Nesselhauf.



military situation along the Lower Rhine and does not contradict the archaeological evidence for federate settlement in the northern part of the former province.

## 8 BEYOND THE ROMAN PROVINCE: NEW IDENTITIES

The fact that we have returned to the interpretation of *foederati* as the founders of new settlements and cemeteries (see below) does not mean that we are also adopting the traditional cultural-historical approaches and dichotomies of Roman versus Germanic that were fashionable when these identifications were made before. I follow the interpretations of Halsall and Theuvs that the essential meaning of the inhumation graves with weapons and belt sets is the expression of elite claims, and that weapons themselves are no proof of the federate status, Germanic origin or identity of the interred individual. I should, however, add that, contrary to the general thrust of Halsall and Theuvs' interpretations, it is distinctly possible – or even likely – that the weapon graves were linked to *foederati* and their families. The interpretations offered in this paper are largely based on a different category of finds – precious metal hoards – and not on artefact style. The payments in gold and silver highlight an important aspect of federate identity that has been somewhat neglected until now: the *foederati* were paid by Rome to fight for Rome. The icon of the *Comites largitione*, officers tasked with regulating army pay and diplomatic gifts, shows the display of wealth in front of an image of the emperor on a table.<sup>68</sup> Germanic war leaders receiving gold and silver were being addressed as clients of the Roman emperor. We should therefore take into account that these people and their families felt Roman to some degree.

More clues to probable Roman sympathies among the immigrant population can be found in burial archaeology. The 5<sup>th</sup>-century burial evidence of our study area can be divided into three groups based on size and continuity/discontinuity. The first group consists of burial grounds near Roman centres, such as Krefeld-Gellep and Nijmegen, where several 5<sup>th</sup>-century burials were added to the large cemetery that had been in use for a long time.<sup>69</sup> The second group contains burial sites newly founded around AD 400. Examples are Rhenen, Wageningen and Wijchen-Centrum, in which the oldest phase consists of early 5<sup>th</sup>-century weapon burials and parallel female graves with Germanic-style jewellery.<sup>70</sup> These cemeteries remained in use for centuries and slowly grew into burial grounds of considerable size (fig. 10). The third group of burial evidence consists of isolated graves located at former cemeteries of the provincial-Roman population that were out of use for at least a century. At Tiel-Passewaaij for instance, a single 5<sup>th</sup>-century inhumation burial was located on the fringes of a large cremation cemetery, consisting of small burial mounds over cremation pits that had been used from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries.<sup>71</sup> A second example is Zoelen-Scharenburg, where a female inhumation grave, furnished with a set of Germanic *Armbrust* brooches and a hairpin, was located at a cremation cemetery similar to that of Tiel.<sup>72</sup> There are more examples at another location near Tiel (Uiterwaard) and the Zoelen-De Beldert site.<sup>73</sup> The practice of selecting grave locations at sites still recognisable as the burial grounds of the former provincial-Roman population has important implications: the burial community was claiming a connection with the former population, thereby declaring some affinity with the provincial-Roman population. The same is true for

<sup>68</sup> Roymans, this volume, fig. 10.

<sup>69</sup> Pirling 1966 and later; Steures 2012.

<sup>70</sup> Rhenen: Wagner/Ypey 2012. Wijchen-Centrum: Heeren/Hazenbergh 2010. Wageningen: Van Es 1964; excavations of the 1980s unpublished.

<sup>71</sup> Aarts/Heeren 2011, 327, grave 92.

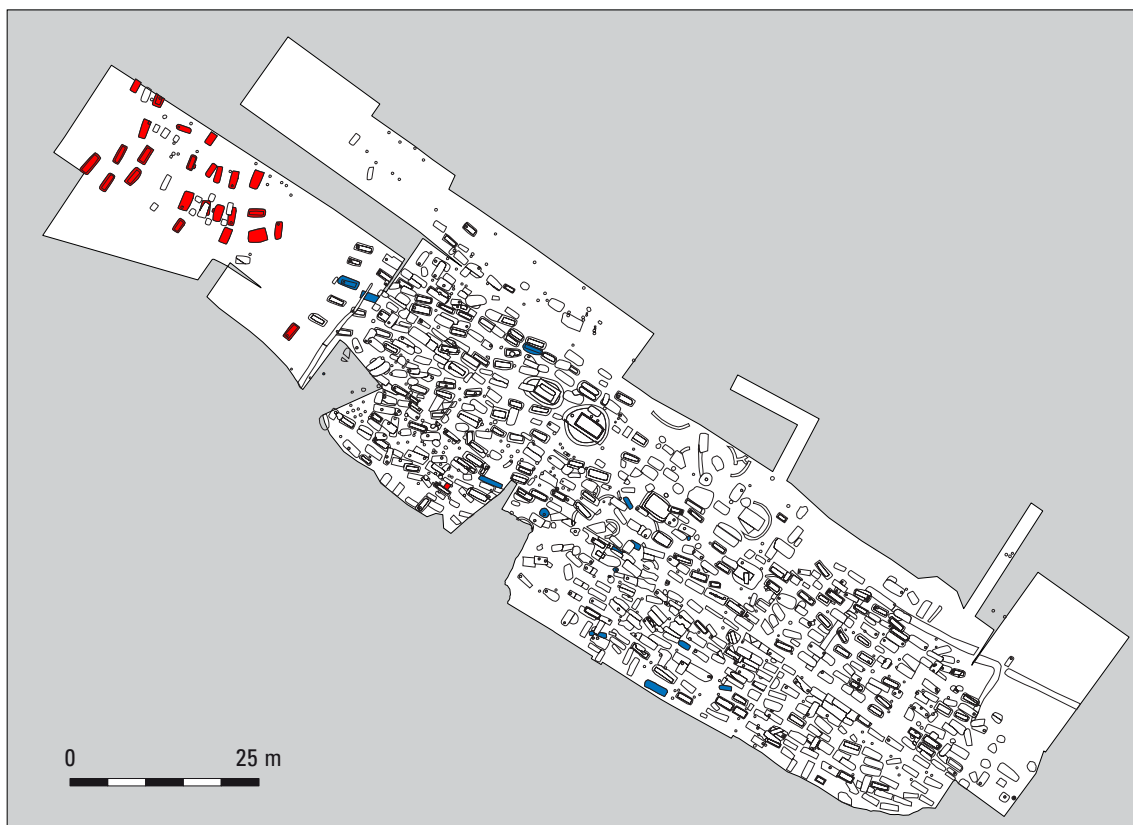
<sup>72</sup> Veldman 2011, 68–70. The German word *Armbrust* can be translated as crossbow but this term is reserved for

the heavy soldiers' brooches termed crossbow in English, *Zwiebelknopffibel* in German and *drieknoppenfibula* in Dutch. The German *Armbrust* is retained here for the family of usually quite small brooches with a round arch and broad spring of composite construction, see Schulze 1977.

<sup>73</sup> Heeren 2009, 211–213.



Fig. 10. The Late Roman and Merovingian cemeteries of Wijchen (left) and Rhenen (below). Red: early 5<sup>th</sup>-century. Blue: later 5<sup>th</sup>-century. Scale: 1:1000. After Heeren/Hazenberg 2010 and Wagner/Ypey 2012, modified by author.



the first group of burials: the fact that new burials were located in existing cemeteries points to a continuation of practices, a blending with an existing urban or military community. There is no hint of a Germanic versus Roman divide in the choice of burial locations of the first and third groups. The second group attests to the foundation of new communities.

The probable Roman element in the identity of the immigrants of Germanic descent can be elaborated still further. There is linguistic evidence for the continuity of a Latin-speaking core in the eastern river area. Place names like Tricht, Wadenooijen, Kesteren and Puiflijk have Latin roots. Germanic names

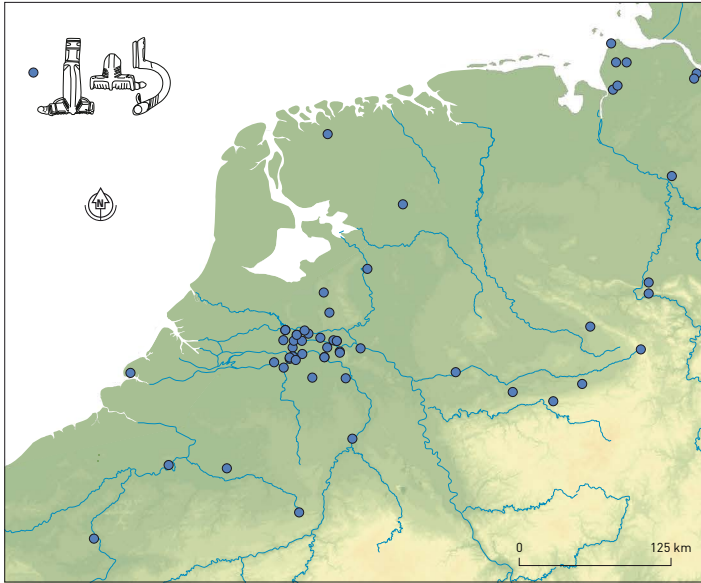


Fig. 11a. The distribution of supporting arm brooches, variant with the massive bow and short foot (Böhme 1974, 51-52), dated to the period 390-470. Find catalogue will be published in Heeren, in prep. (2).

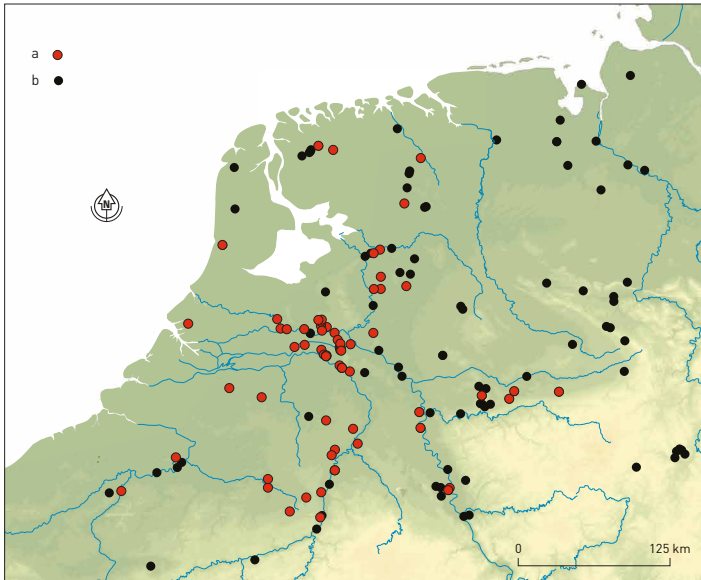


Fig. 11b. The distribution of terra nigra-like footbowls. a Chenet 342 type; b terra nigra bowl, form unspecified. The earlier form Gellep 273 (middle/late 4<sup>th</sup> century) is left out. After Hermsen 2007, afb. 97, with additions; communication Cl. Agricola, Goethe Universität, Frankfurt. Find catalogue will be published in Heeren, in prep. (2).

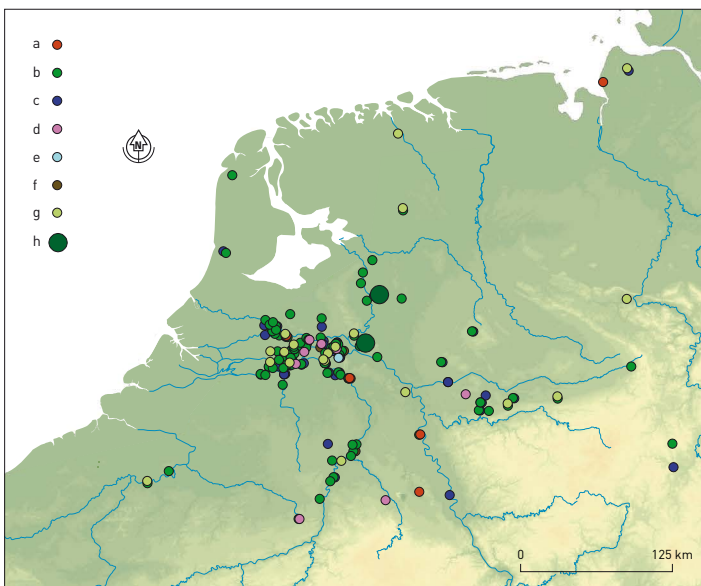


Fig. 11c. The distribution of Late Roman hairpins. Find catalogue will be published in Heeren, in prep. (2). Types after Böhme 1974, 35-39.  
a Cortrat; b Wijster; c Fécamp; d Tongeren; e Vermand; f Muids; g unknown; h casting mould of hairpin type Wijster or Muids.

with ‘-heem’ in various forms, often introduced in the Early Middle Ages and very numerous elsewhere in the Netherlands, are scarce in the Eastern River Area. This situation has led linguists to postulate the continued presence of a Latin-speaking population, as a result of which no Germanic immigrant population took over the area.<sup>74</sup> However, the archaeological habitation history shows that none of the provincial-Roman settlements survived in the Late Roman period: they were all abandoned. The linguistic situation seems to contradict the archaeologically attested immigration of Germanic *foederati* and their families, unless we assume that these people knew Latin. I am not arguing that all of them spoke Latin in everyday life, but I think it is likely that the tradition-bearing core used Latin occasionally, for instance in their contact with Roman officials. Since their access to the area was regulated by Rome’s highest representatives (Stilicho or Constantine III) and they received Roman pay from the *Comites largitione*, it is not too far-fetched to assume that the families or groups who entered this area were assigned living areas that were called by their Roman names, which continued in use later.

However, we should be careful not to stress only the cultural continuities. When looking at the cemeteries of the second group, which were founded anew and became very large in later ages, we observe the emergence of new communities, new social practices and an independent material culture. Following the interpretation of Halsall and Theuws, it was the waning of Roman authority that caused new elites to claim leadership and form new communities, among other things by performing highly visible burial rites when the community gathered to bury one of its members. It is significant that the early-5<sup>th</sup>-century phase of large cemeteries like Rhenen, Wageningen and Wijchen is only seen in burial sites of the Lower Rhine area. In the large cemeteries of the Middle Rhine area and Northern France, the first phase usually dates to the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>75</sup> There are also former frontier areas in which no richly furnished burial ritual occurred and new central cemeteries are lacking, for instance in the north of England. This has been explained by the gradual social development of Roman garrisons into medieval warbands, rather than the rapid disintegration of Roman authority.<sup>76</sup> Such a comparison demonstrates that our region stands out through both the early date and the high impact of these various developments. The retreat of the Roman armies and immigration of federate groups, allied to Rome but of Germanic descent, in a largely depopulated area, provides the explanation.

The interpretation of Germanic descent is based not only on the house-building tradition but also on the jewellery in many female burials. Halsall argued that the tutulus brooches for instance may not be Germanic at all but the products of Gallic workshops.<sup>77</sup> However, these brooches are actually quite rare in our study area, where the vast majority of brooches found in the settlements and cemeteries belong to the *Armbrust* tradition. Mechtild Schulze has provided distribution maps for all variants of this tradition and the eastern distribution of the oldest types prove the origin of this brooch tradition in present-day Poland, eastern and western Germany.<sup>78</sup>

I therefore consider the Germanic origin of the jewellery to be obvious, but that does not mean that the artefact style remained exclusively Germanic. The youngest of the *Armbrust* brooches evolved within the Roman province and some variants of supporting-arm brooches were also developed there. Most of the supporting-arm brooches have a triangular foot and are considered Germanic female brooches that date to the late 4<sup>th</sup> century. One variant, with the massive bow and short foot, is found in male graves accompanying the military-style belts of the 5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>79</sup> By far the most specimens are found directly south of the Rhine (fig. 11a). Combining the distribution area and the chronology, the creation of this later type within the former province is very likely. Hairpins with a faceted shaft like the Wijster, Fécamp and Muids types are another example of new styles that were newly developed in the 5<sup>th</sup> century and have

<sup>74</sup> Blok 1981, 144-151; Schrijver 2014, 153-154.

<sup>75</sup> Ament 1973; Wiczorek 1987.

<sup>76</sup> Collins 2013, 39; Halsall 2007, 364-367

<sup>77</sup> Halsall 2000, 171-172; Halsall 2007, 157-158.

<sup>78</sup> Schulze 1977.

<sup>79</sup> Böhme 1974, 52.

the densest distribution in the Dutch river area (fig. 11c).<sup>80</sup> With regard to pottery, the footbowls in Late Roman *terra nigra* can be mentioned. Because of the *terra nigra*-like fabrics, this group has been viewed as being of Roman manufacture, but others have identified the forms as Germanic. The prototypes appeared in the 4<sup>th</sup> century but the vast majority of specimens date to the late 4<sup>th</sup>/early 5<sup>th</sup> century. Derivatives of this tradition are found in 6<sup>th</sup>-century contexts.<sup>81</sup> A final example with respect to material culture concerns glass production. The *burgus* of Goch-Asperden was founded as a military installation in the 4<sup>th</sup> century; around AD 400 a glass workshop started operating next to the *burgus*.<sup>82</sup> Other glass production sites are known from the Hambacher Forst, and a 5<sup>th</sup>-century date is also established for several of them.<sup>83</sup> This means that a production infrastructure was taken over and expanded to make and distribute glass vessels, against a background of diminishing supply from the south and new demand from the elites of the immigrant communities.

In short, the material culture of the 5<sup>th</sup> century contains Roman elements and traditional Germanic forms but, most importantly, new forms were created and used well into the Merovingian period. Instead of referring to the mix of Roman and Germanic elements in terms of assimilation as is previously the case,<sup>84</sup> it might be better to see this material culture as an independent hybrid group and to acknowledge that most of it developed in the 5<sup>th</sup> century in the context of newly inhabited territories in the former Roman province.

## 9 CONCLUSION: MIGRATION, TRANSFORMATION AND DECLINE

I hope to have shown that migration can in some cases be demonstrated through archaeology. If studied in isolation, the evidence from domestic architecture, local subsistence practices and styles of handmade pottery provides insufficient proof of migration. If studied in relation to each other, however, the origins of migrating people can be shown. Moreover, the association of some immigrant settlements with gold and silver hoards provides further background to the political context of immigration.

However, immigrants' origins cannot simply be equated with their ethnic identity. Identity has many layers and is subject to rapid change and can therefore be studied only to a limited extent by archaeologists. Burial rites and material culture provide some insight into the matter but we should be wary of reducing practices or objects to a simple binary opposition between Roman and Germanic.

It has been fashionable for 20 years to deconstruct the Gibbonian narrative of 'decline and fall' and to stress the transformation of the Roman world into early medieval kingdoms. However, it is not necessary to make the choice between transformation or decline and fall: they went hand in hand. By this, I do not simply mean that transformation and decline happened at the same time: they really were in the same hands. While fighting in the name of Rome, the *foederati* at the same time exhausted the Roman treasury because of the excessive amounts of gold and silver needed to pay them. Federate groups representing Rome settled on provincial soil, but by doing so they founded new communities and introduced new social customs such as burial rites, resulting in the development of a new, independent material culture. In short, an essentially post-Roman society took shape in the northern part of the former Roman province and adjacent area north of the Lower Rhine, in close conjunction with and inseparable from the decline of Roman authority.

<sup>80</sup> Böhme 1987 for the revised chronology.

<sup>82</sup> Brüggler, in press.

<sup>81</sup> Van Es 1967, 158, 551; Erdrich 1998; Hegewisch 2011, 161-164.

<sup>83</sup> Gaitzsch *et al.* 2000; Brüggler 2009.

<sup>84</sup> Whittaker 1994, 232-237.

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# Roman state involvement in Britain in the later 4<sup>th</sup> century: an ebbing tide?

*Simon Esmonde Cleary*

- 1 Introduction
- 2 The coinage: denominations and distributions
- 3 The coinage: absences and presences
- 4 The coinage: discussion
- 5 Belt fittings: typologies and distributions
- 6 Brooches: typologies and distributions
- 7 Discussion: Britain and the Roman state at the close of the 4<sup>th</sup> century

References

## I INTRODUCTION

The study of the closing years of the Roman Diocese of the Britains and of what succeeded it has recently been revived after a long period when archaeological attention had largely shifted to the ‘Romanization’ debate of the first two centuries AD. After a time of quiescence the study of the later Roman period is now recrudescing and in intellectual good health.<sup>1</sup> One of the most hotly-contested topics is the form and chronology of the ‘end’ of Roman Britain, with some scholars favouring a ‘short’ chronology whereby the visible material culture of the diocese collapsed suddenly and catastrophically at the start of the 5<sup>th</sup> century as a consequence of the lapse of Roman rule,<sup>2</sup> whilst other scholars favour a ‘long’ chronology, a more drawn-out process as the relict Roman-derived populations and their elites adjusted to a changing world.<sup>3</sup> In this contribution I want to step back a bit from the chronology of what happened after 400, particularly after the traditional date for ‘the end of Roman Britain’ in 410/411. I want instead to look at some developments under way from the later 4<sup>th</sup> century which tell us about changing imperial perceptions of the diocese; though they may also have fed through into the processes visible in the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>1</sup> See Gerrard 2013 for a new general survey of the period, though concentrating largely on the southern part of the island; Collins 2012 complements with a northern perspective; the papers in Haarer (ed.) 2014 give some idea of the range of approaches and competing ideas.

<sup>2</sup> Esmonde Cleary 1989, esp. ch. 4 must take some of the blame, but see also Faulkner 2000.

<sup>3</sup> Hilary Cool has been a strong advocate of this scenario, e.g. Cool 2006, ch. 19; Cool 2014. Gerrard 2013 also argues in favour of such a process. R. White (2007) has argued through the scenario for parts of post-Roman western Britain far from the initial Anglo-Saxon incursions.

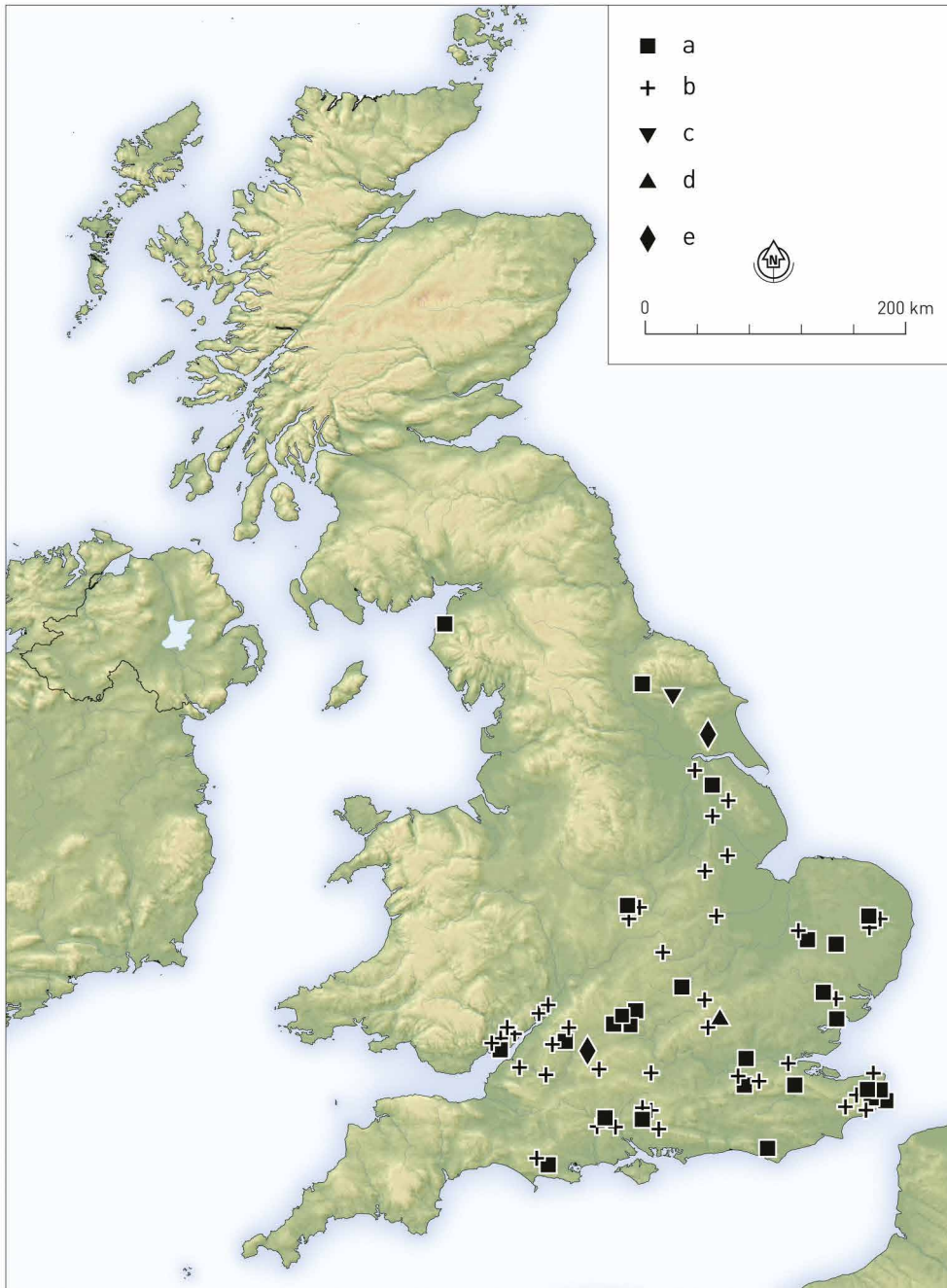


Fig. 1. Distribution of Late Roman military belts, buckles and brooches after Böhme 1986, Abb. 18. a) military belts. b) dolphin buckles. c) bow brooches. d) *Armbrust*-brooches. e) penannular brooches.

The origins of this paper<sup>4</sup> lie essentially in a series of distribution maps. These distribution maps relate to a limited range of classes of archaeological material but each class seems to me to be telling us something about those members of late Romano-British society who were involved with the affairs of

<sup>4</sup> I am very grateful to the organisers of the conference for the invitation to speak. Unfortunately ill-health prevented me from attending what would have been a very stimulating get-together. I hope this paper makes some amends for my absence, albeit it covers only part of what

I had intended to speak on. I am also very grateful to Rob Collins and Ellen Swift for their comments on a draft version and for many sensible observations that have saved me from myself and much improved the paper.

the Late Roman state, through being in its service. The distribution maps that piqued my interest did so because they all have restricted distributions focusing on the South/East of the island when one might have expected the object classes they map to be present in quantity also in the North/West. The first ones published were those published by Böhme in his consideration of classes of metalwork (principally belt-fittings and brooches) which can be related to the equipping of servants of the Late Roman state, military and civilian (fig. 1). Given the supposed presence of military garrisons in northern Britain in the 4<sup>th</sup> century (at least according to the *Notitia Dignitatum*) it is surprising that these classes of object come overwhelmingly from the south and east of the island, especially those which were probably supplied from outside Britain and which date to the turn of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>5</sup> More recent work on these distributions both setting Britain within its wider European context<sup>6</sup> and looking more specifically at distributions within Britain<sup>7</sup> have reinforced the message of Böhme's maps. This distribution of items of dress has more recently been reflected in the maps of the presence and absence of the latest issues of Roman coinage found in the island, according to the finds reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS),<sup>8</sup> which one might also have expected to have had a stronger presence in the 'military' areas of the Diocese of the Britains. Now, these maps cannot simply be taken at face value as unproblematic; for all of them there are considerations of the circumstances of deposition and recovery that need to be taken into account and problematized, and this will be done later in this contribution. But the skewed distributions do raise important questions. These objects, dress-fittings and coins, relate fairly directly to the operations of the Late Roman state, particularly in its military and bureaucratic capacities, since they seem to have been supplied by that state in connection with the equipping of its servants and the operations of the fiscal cycle including payment. These people in their turn formed an important group within Late Roman society by virtue of their status and values.

In this paper I wish to analyse these distributions more fully and to compare them with those for earlier objects of the same classes. Previous studies of these object classes have tended to concentrate on the presence of these objects and what this may mean for matters such as the occupation and dating of the sites from which they are recovered. In this paper absences will weigh as heavily as presences, if not more so, since a central contention will be that the closing decades of the 4<sup>th</sup> century see a marked retraction of these signifiers of the state into the South/East of Britain compared with the earlier and middle decades of the century. The paper will be concerned above all with questions of supply (or non-supply) of coins and items of apparel. To examine supply it will be necessary to examine patterns of deposition, and the relationship between the two is not straightforward since subsequent modes of use and deposition can modify the initial patterns of supply. Some of these objects, perhaps especially the crossbow brooches, could have complex 'life courses' and only have been deposited after extended use. Nevertheless, *grosso modo* it can be argued that patterns of deposition are likely to reflect regions to which materials were supplied and in which they were available: one cannot deposit what one has not got. Clearly subsequent modes of use and deposition will also bear on these patterns and they will be taken into account, but the emphasis here will be on trying to identify the regions to which these products were supplied or not supplied. This means that this paper will therefore be more interested in the dating available for the earlier periods of the 'life course' of these objects, their periods of manufacture and supply, than in how late they might have been in use and deposited thereafter.<sup>9</sup> These latter are crucial topics, but for a rather different set of arguments to those in this paper which are concerned more with when the objects ceased to be supplied rather than when they ceased to be used.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Böhme 1986, 493 (Abb. 18).

<sup>6</sup> Swift 2000.

<sup>7</sup> Leahy 2007.

<sup>8</sup> Walton 2012.

<sup>9</sup> For the same approach see Roymans, this volume, on the influx of gold *solidi* along the Lower Rhine area.

An enterprise that has been transforming our knowledge of and ideas on the archaeology of many periods of Britain's past has been the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) for England and Wales, which comprehends the area of the Late Roman diocese. The number of objects reported to the PAS has now passed the 1,000,000 mark. The implications of this for the Roman period have recently been surveyed.<sup>10</sup> At the time of Brindle's survey (undertaken in 2009) finds of the Roman period comprised some 40% of the total of PAS records, despite the period being only some 400 years in length.<sup>11</sup> The overall numbers have increased considerably since then, but the proportion dating to the Roman period has probably not shifted significantly. Of Roman-period finds by far the largest category has been coins. These have been considered by Philippa Walton<sup>12</sup> who based her study on a corpus of 57,993 coins, though she remarks that subsequently the number of records of Roman coins had grown by 100,000 and continues to grow.<sup>13</sup> Walton's 2012 monograph *Rethinking Roman Britain: Coinage and Archaeology* analyses and discusses coin distributions across the Roman period, including an important chapter on 4<sup>th</sup>- and early-5<sup>th</sup>-century issues.<sup>14</sup> This has been more recently augmented by a paper jointly authored by Walton with Sam Moorhead, specifically looking at the latest issues from Britain and their possible meanings,<sup>15</sup> along with one by the same two authors with the addition of Roger Bland looking at the silver coinage of this period.<sup>16</sup> It is important to note here that Walton's monograph uses the data from England alone, though Moorhead and Walton's paper and that by Bland, Moorhead and Walton use data from Wales also. For Wales the data in Guest and Wells' corpus *Iron Age and Roman Coins from Wales* supplement the English data.<sup>17</sup> Given the tiny number of Late Roman coins from Scotland this does not affect the overall picture.<sup>18</sup> The maps are presented here in figs. 2 and 3.

If one looks at the distribution maps of late-4<sup>th</sup>- to early-5<sup>th</sup>-century coinage in both Walton's monograph and Moorhead and Walton's paper, then *prima facie* there is a marked contraction in this period, with coin-finds largely confined to the regions south and east of the rivers Trent and Severn, though with an extension north of the Humber estuary in the area of York.<sup>19</sup> But *prima facie* is not enough; before discussing what these distributions may mean factors influencing the incidence of finds of Roman coins in England and Wales need to be made explicit and their possible influences on the observed patterns factored in to judge whether we are observing an ancient distribution or one conditioned by post-deposition and recovery factors. These factors are discussed in detail by Brindle<sup>20</sup> but some of the most important can be summarised here. A major conditioning factor is relief and terrain. By and large the main upland regions of Wales and England (land above 250m. AOD) were not permanently settled in the Roman period so are unlikely to have seen many Roman coins deposited;<sup>21</sup> the same largely seems to hold good for areas of wetland. These upland areas lie predominantly in the North/West of Britain. Another major constraint is modern land-use. Evidently major urban areas will tend to be unfavourable to the metal-detecting that lies behind so much of the PAS data. So also will areas such as Ministry of Defence restricted zones. But the most important is the contrast between ploughed and pasture. This affects all periods and the Roman period is no exception, the overwhelming majority of PAS Roman-period objects come from land under cultivation.<sup>22</sup> As a broad generalisation, cultivated lands lie predominantly in the South/East of England and south-east Wales, with grasslands in the North/West of England and most of Wales, so a bias towards the South/East might be

<sup>10</sup> Brindle 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Brindle 2014, 2.

<sup>12</sup> Walton 2012.

<sup>13</sup> Walton 2012, 17.

<sup>14</sup> Walton 2012, ch. 8.

<sup>15</sup> Moorhead/Walton 2014.

<sup>16</sup> Bland/Moorhead/Walton 2013.

<sup>17</sup> Guest/Wells 2007.

<sup>18</sup> Hunter 2007, 34-35, 58-59.

<sup>19</sup> Walton 2012, figs. 58-62; Moorhead/Walton 2014, figs. 6, 7.

<sup>20</sup> Brindle 2014, ch. 3; cf. Walton 2012, 27-30.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Brindle 2014, ch. 8.

<sup>22</sup> Brindle 2014, figs. 1, 3, 4.

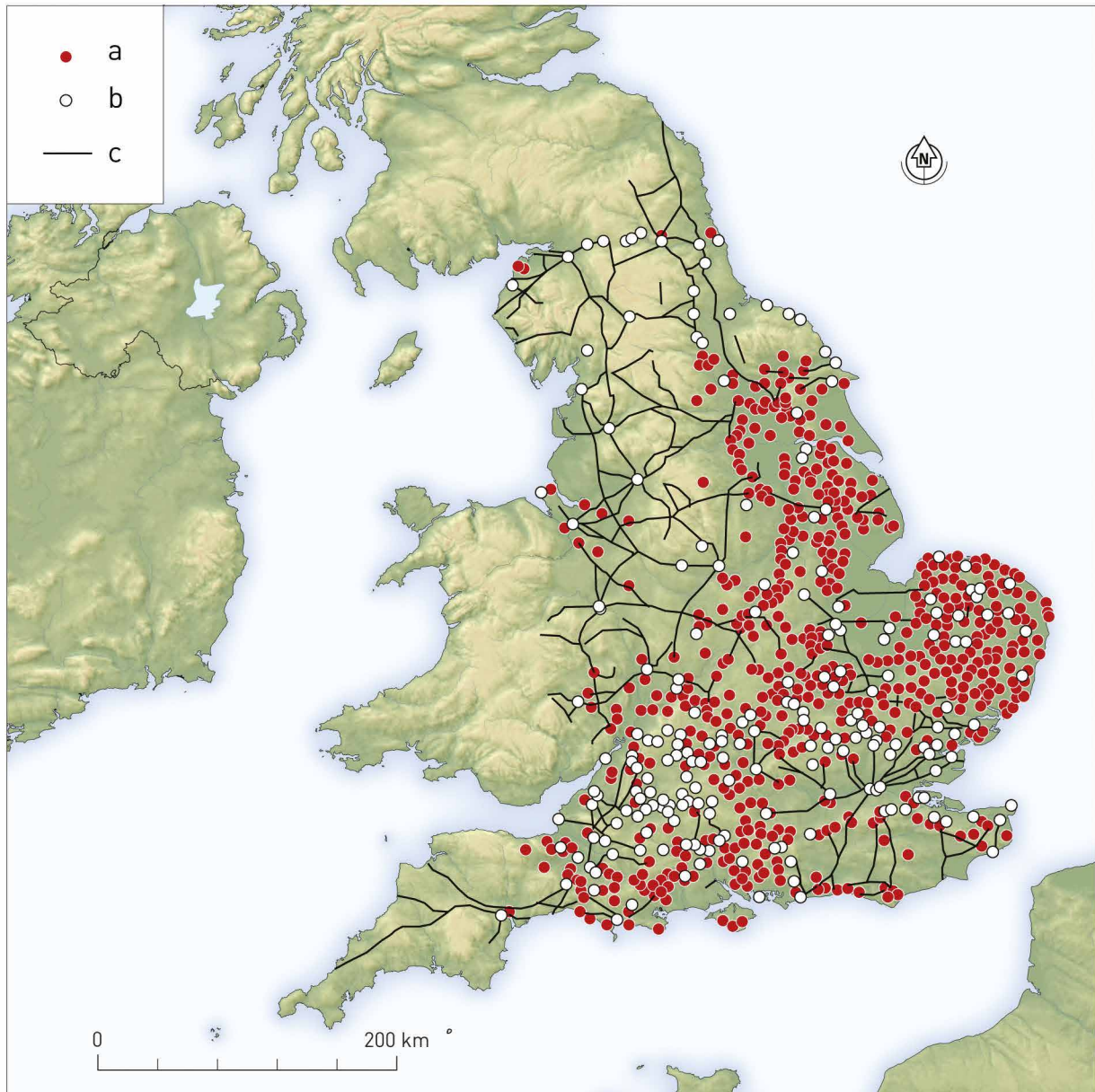


Fig. 2. Distribution (England only) of coins of Period 19 (AD 364-378). a) finds reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme ([www.finds.org.uk](http://www.finds.org.uk)). b) excavation finds of the so-called 'comparative sites' (see text). c) Roman roads. After Walton 2012.

expected. But this is not an absolute distinction; each major type of land-use occurs across the England and Wales and the map of the overall distribution of Roman objects from England and Wales<sup>23</sup> shows a spread of material into the West Midlands, the North-East and the North-West regions of England.

Another conditioning factor is the distribution of metal-detectorists; just as archaeological distribution maps can simply show the distribution of archaeologists, likewise for maps of metal-detected objects. So the distribution maps of Roman coins may tell us about factors affecting recovery and reporting at the present day as well as about ancient use and deposition patterns.<sup>24</sup> A further point about PAS data is that overwhelmingly they are from rural sites or isolated finds in rural areas; this is because important classes of Roman site such as forts, cities, 'small towns' and temples are under-represented either due to their being under modern built-up areas or because they are accorded a modicum of legal protection through being

<sup>23</sup> Brindle 2014, fig. 3.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Leahy 2007.



classified as Scheduled Ancient Monuments. Fortunately, there is a body of evidence from such sites, Walton's 'comparative sites',<sup>25</sup> based on work by Richard Reece<sup>26</sup> and with additional sites. This class contains the forts, towns and temples that the PAS by and large lacks and by combining them with the PAS data allows a more rounded picture to be drawn. In addition to these general factors there is one that may affect coins of the period with which we are most concerned here. The copper-alloy *nummi* of the House of Theodosius, especially of the last major issue to enter Britain, that of 388–402, are small and unprepossessing. This may mean both that they are less easily spotted and recovered than their larger predecessors (e.g. of the House of Valentinian) and that if recovered they may not be declared to Finds Liaison Officers as seemingly of little or no interest. Bearing these caveats in mind, there are still conclusions to be drawn from the observable data presented and discussed by Walton and others. It is therefore legitimate to move to discussing these distributions not just in terms of biases in modern recovery but also biases in ancient deposition (be it 'loss' or something more purposive) and lying behind that patterns of ancient use.

The first point to be made is that the retraction in the overall area of distribution of the issues of the House of Theodosius by comparison with those of the Houses of Constantine and Valentinian seems to be 'real' rather than a product of modern recovery. This is because coins of these earlier two dynasties have been regularly recovered and recorded north and west of the Trent and Severn<sup>27</sup> so if the issues of the House of Theodosius had been deposited in those areas then they should have been there to be recovered as well (even if possibly less preferentially because of module and appearance); moreover the pattern is evident in excavated as well as PAS finds (see below). Second, if the overall distribution is broken down on the one hand by metal/denomination and on the other hand by whether it represents single finds or hoards the results are broadly similar. Finds of bronze *nummi* of 388–402 overwhelmingly show the south-eastern distribution defined above, with a few north of the Humber estuary in the area of York and a trickle from there up to the eastern side of Hadrian's Wall. The distribution in Wales is geographically very limited, a smattering in south-east Wales and a grouping in north-west Wales,<sup>28</sup> with for the latter region a 'hot spot' at the fort of Caernarfon (*Segontium*),<sup>29</sup> though it should be noted that this 'hot spot' is the result of three coins of Period 21 (and none of Period 20) from the excavations and two *siliquae* recorded by the PAS.<sup>30</sup> There is, though, one major 'hot spot' for Period 21 coins in Wales and that is the more than 2,500 coins from Caerwent, including the hoard of 2,313 copper-alloy issues from House VI S.<sup>31</sup> Here the modern national boundary is a distraction; Caerwent and the surrounding lowlands north of the Severn estuary should be seen more as the edge of the 'core' south-east Britain distribution. The overall distribution in Britain of hoards of late *nummi*, matches closely that of the single finds<sup>32</sup> with few hoards from Wales<sup>33</sup> (including the major Caerwent deposit) and just one from the line of Hadrian's Wall.

The same holds good for the distribution of late silver,<sup>34</sup> both single finds of *siliquae* and hoards, though here there is a very marked concentration of hoards around York and to its north in the Tees valley (though not as far north as the Wall),<sup>35</sup> to which one might add the scatter of hoards already known, principally from North Yorkshire, and including the major Whorlton find.<sup>36</sup> This tendency towards retrac-

<sup>25</sup> Walton 2012, 20–23.

<sup>26</sup> Reece 1991.

<sup>27</sup> e.g. Walton 2012, fig. 58 for the House of Valentinian, fig. 66a.

<sup>28</sup> Moorhead/Walton 2014, fig. 4; cf. Walton 2012, fig. 66b.

<sup>29</sup> Guest/Wells 2007, 333–340.

<sup>30</sup> Bland/Moorhead/Walton 2013, Appendix 2.

<sup>31</sup> Guest/Wells 2007, 24–43. It is clear that there was at least one other late hoard, recovered in 1908 from the basilica and consisting of some 200 *nummi* including those of Period 21, Guest/Wells 2007, 26, so the figure of ca.

2,500 is probably an under-estimate.

<sup>32</sup> Moorhead/Walton 2014, fig. 5.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Guest/Wells 2007, index 3.

<sup>34</sup> Moorhead/Walton 2014, fig. 3.

<sup>35</sup> The question of the origins, dating and significance of clipped *siliquae* is not specifically considered here, cf. Guest 2005, ch. 7; Guest 2013; Bland/Moorhead/Walton 2014, since their distribution does not differ from that of unclipped pieces, suggesting that they derived from the same geographical areas.

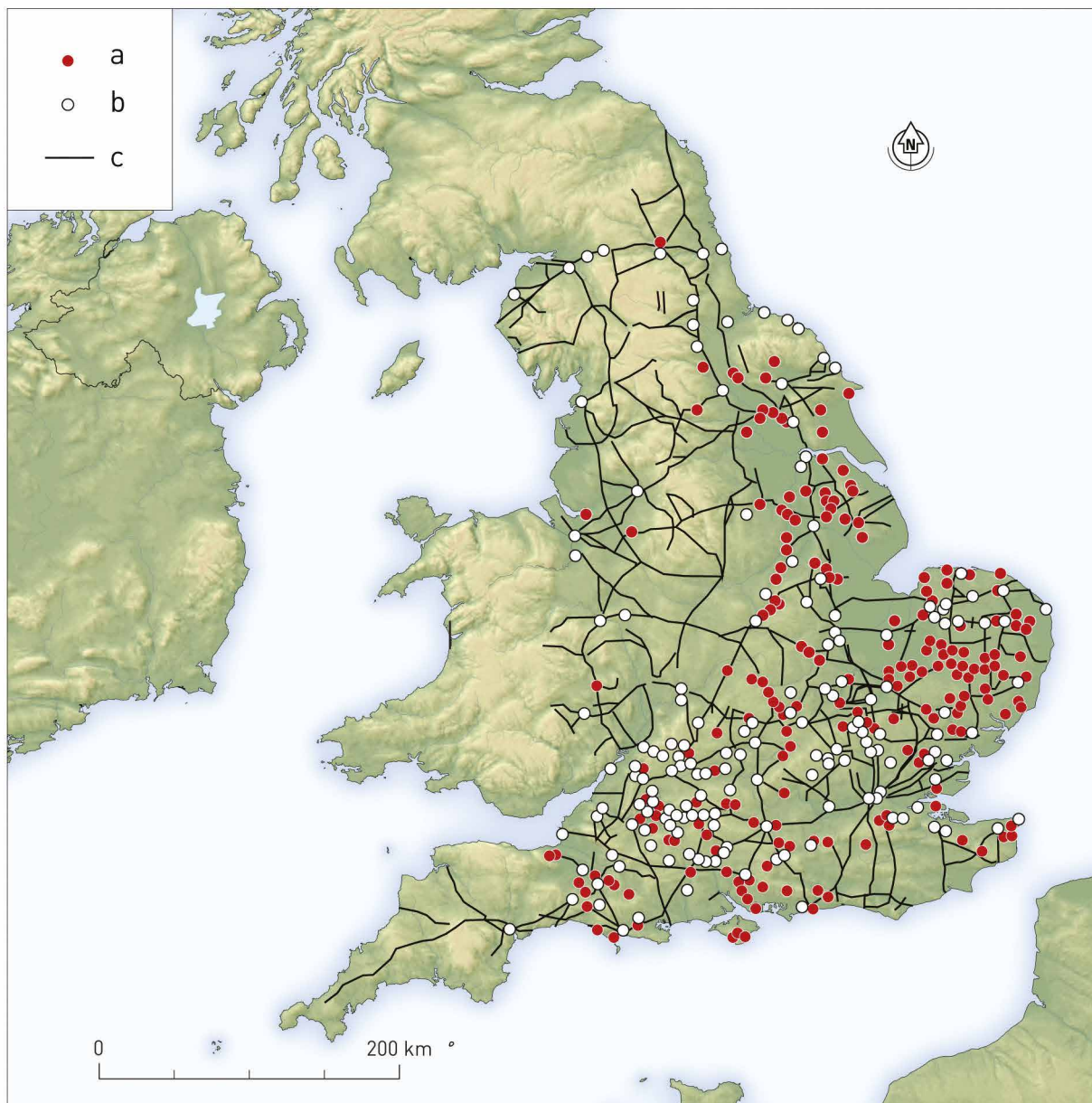


Fig. 3. Distribution (England only) of coins of Period 21 (AD 388–402). a) finds reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme ([www.finds.org.uk](http://www.finds.org.uk)). b) excavation finds of the so-called ‘comparative sites’ (see text). c) Roman roads. After Walton 2012.

tion of silver, interestingly, seems to have been developing from a somewhat earlier date than for the *nummi*, with PAS finds of silver of Period 18 (348–64) already by and large confined to the area south and east of the Severn and the Trent.<sup>37</sup> For gold, finds of single coins of this period are few, though there are some hoards containing gold issues of this date such as the Hoxne treasure<sup>38</sup> or the recent hoard of 159 *solidi* from Sandridge near *Verulamium*/St Albans, but overall both single finds and hoards generally have a very restricted south–eastern distribution.<sup>39</sup> The coincidence in the patterns of hoarding and single finds demonstrates the argument pithily expressed by Walton<sup>40</sup> that ‘Coins were hoarded wherever coins

<sup>36</sup> Robertson 2000, 399–401, map 24.

<sup>37</sup> Bland/Moorhead/Walton 2013, ill.10.2.

<sup>38</sup> Guest 2005.

<sup>39</sup> Moorhead/Walton 2014, figs. 1, 2; cf. Bland/Loriot 2010, figs. 33, 34.

<sup>40</sup> Walton 2012.

were available...’, to which one might add the rider that coin hoards do not occur away from areas of availability so the lack of hoards should mean a lack of circulating coin.

### 3 THE COINAGE: ABSENCES AND PRESENCES

Discussion of the significance of this developing late-4<sup>th</sup>- to early-5<sup>th</sup>-century pattern of deposition has not unreasonably tended to focus on the areas of incidence of this coinage.<sup>41</sup> But perhaps more needs to be said about the areas where coins are not found, where absence is more striking than presence. To start with the PAS data, coins and hoards of Coin Period 21 (388–402) are essentially absent from south-western England (fig. 3). The bulk of Wales is coin-free, save the fringe along the south-east coast and the Caernarfon area ‘hot spot’. East of the modern Welsh border the West Midlands are also almost entirely coin-free. North-eastern England is represented by the concentration in the area of York (essentially a northward extension of the ‘core’ area south of the Humber) with a scatter up as far as the Wall. North-West England by contrast is almost entirely devoid of PAS find-spots, even along Hadrian’s Wall. To this of course one must add the evidence from the ‘comparative sites’, which gives us the evidence from excavations rather than casual finds, and from forts and towns to counteract the rural bias of the PAS data. For the South-West, Exeter shows up. In Wales the (former?) legionary fortress of Caerleon and the towns of Caerwent and Carmarthen in the south appear. In the West Midlands, little outside the town of Wroxeter. In the North-East and the North-West a number of military sites show up, more particularly in the North-east along Dere Street, the main road on the eastern side of the Pennines up to Hadrian’s Wall; the North-West is far less consistent. Even *per lineam valli* (to use the formulation of the *Notitia Dignitatum*, Occ.XL), the distribution is intermittent, only some of the forts registering, mostly in the eastern and western thirds but little in the central sector. On the north-east coast the ‘Yorkshire signal stations’ also make their presence felt.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless many of the sites listed in the *Notitia* or more directly attested through archaeology to have been occupied in the later 4<sup>th</sup> century<sup>43</sup> have not yielded coins of the House of Theodosius.

In order to calibrate this further the coin-lists from major publications of sites along the Wall and to its rear were examined to determine the incidence of coins of the House of Theodosius (Periods 20 and 21) both absolutely and in comparison with the presence at the same sites of coins of the House of Valentinian (Period 19). The results are presented in the following table:<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> E.g. Walton 2012, 109–114; Moorhead/Walton 2014.

<sup>42</sup> Walton 2012, 106–07.

<sup>43</sup> Collins 2012, ch. 3.

<sup>44</sup> The reports utilised are as follows: *Carlisle Blackfriars*, D. Shotter, in McCarthy 1990, 98–104; *Carlisle Millennium Project (Mil 5)*, D. Shotter, in Howard-Davis 2009, 679–86; *Birdoswald*, J. Davies, in Wilmott 1997, 321–326; *Housesteads*, R. Brickstock/J. Casey in Rushworth 2009, 363–429; *Vindolanda*, J. Casey, in Bidwell 1985, 103–116; *Newcastle-upon-Tyne*, R. Brickstock, in Snape/Bidwell 2002, 175–209; *Wallsend*, R. Brickstock, in Hodgson 2003, 200–208; *South Shields 1979*, J. Casey, in Dore/Gillam 1979, 72–97; *South Shields 1994*, R. Brickstock, in Bidwell/Speak 1994, 163–76; *Corbridge*, figures in Reece

1991, 27; *Binchester 2010*, R. Reece, in Ferris 2010, 248–54; *Binchester 2011*, P. Walton, in <http://binchester.blogspot.co.uk/2011/06/coinage-from-binchester.html>; *Piercebridge*, figures in Reece 1991, 27; *Maryport*, Shotter 1997; *Catterick*, R. Brickstock, in Wilson 2002, Part II, 1–23; *Watercreek*, D. Shotter, in Potter 1979, 291–98; *Ribchester*, D. Shotter, in Edwards/Webster 1985, 86–93; *Yorkshire signal stations*, R. Brickstock, in Ottaway 2000, 131–37; *Dalton Parlours*, E. Pirie, in Wrathmell/Nicholson 1990, 75–9; *Ingleby Barwick*, R. Brickstock, in Willis/Carne eds. 2013, 100–01; *Rudston*, P. Curnow, in Stead 1980, 128.

Site	Period 19 (364-78)	Period 20 (378-88)	Period 21 (388-402)
<i>'per lineam Valli'</i>			
Carlisle (Blackfriars)	33	3	1
Carlisle (Mil 5)	17	1	2 (?+1)
Birdoswald	12	1	0
Housesteads	20	3	1
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	22	0	4
Wallsend	3	0	0
South Shields 1979	40	7	8
South Shields 1994	6	0	4
Sites south of the Wall			
Corbridge	113	3	4
Vindolanda	5	0	1
Binchester 2010	10	0	2
Binchester 2011	23	0	3
Piercebridge	127	5	42
Maryport	2	1	2
Catterick	92	6	25
Watercrook	2	0	0
Ribchester	5	0	0
<i>'Yorkshire signal stations'</i>			
Huntcliff	20	0	3
Goldsborough	11	0	5
Scarborough	55	0	21
Filey	11	1	13
<i>'Villas'</i>			
Dalton Parlours	1	0	0
Ingleby Barwick	2	0	3
Rudston	9	0	0

Table 1. Site finds of coins of Periods 19, 20 and 21 from sites in northern Britain.

At all sites with more than 10 coins listed for these three Periods the contrast between Period 19 and Periods 20/21 is stark, with the exception of the 'Yorkshire signal stations' (discussed below). For the other sites the combined totals for the later two Periods seldom approaches even 33% of the Period 19 figure, save at Piercebridge. It might be objected that this is a skewed and self-selecting sample consisting essentially of sites traditionally linked with the Roman military, 'forts' or major military-related sites such as Catterick and Corbridge. Two points might be made in response to this. First, these are the sites that have yielded coins to make this exercise possible; other sites in the region either have no coins or tiny numbers (rather like the 'villas'). Second, the very fact that coins of this type come overwhelmingly from such sites is in itself significant. The 'Yorkshire signal stations' contrast strongly with this, with at Scarborough numbers of Period 21 coins that are nearly 50% of or at Filey a little in excess of the Period 19 figures at each site. This is further emphasised by the presence at Filey of two hoards and at Scarborough of one hoard in all three of which Period 21 issues predominate.<sup>45</sup> It would seem that these sites were

<sup>45</sup> Brickstock in Ottaway 2000, 131-137.

receiving supplies of coin: but this also emphasises the low numbers and value of the Period 21 coins from the other sites recensed here. Moreover, the 'signal stations' have much higher representations of precious-metal pieces, with *siliquae* of Eugenius and Honorius from Goldsborough, of Eugenius from Scarborough and of Gratian from Huntcliff and Filey, again pointing up the contrast with the other sites (a sole *solidus* of Magnus Maximus from South Shields). Three northern villa sites have been included as a comparison; Ingleby Barwick 'villa' will be referred to again below. Whether the sites in the list other than the 'signal stations' and 'villas' were by the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century still 'military' in the sense traditionally ascribed to them will be considered in the Discussion section. It should be noted that the region around York was different; the area corresponding roughly to the modern counties of East and North Yorkshire was much more numismatically active through the late 4<sup>th</sup> century. In this the area looks more like the northern part of the South/East pattern, so the Humber estuary may not have been a boundary.

#### 4 THE COINAGE: DISCUSSION

What this means for the 'military zone' is as yet uncertain. If one looks at the traditional stages of a coin's life-cycle, production, supply, use, deposition, then there are remarks that may be made. Clearly the Roman state was still producing gold, silver and bronze coinage in the closing years of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, though seemingly in declining amounts. Equally clearly some of this was still being supplied to Britain, though in Period 20 (378-88) in small quantities. But of what was being supplied very little appears to have been getting north and west of the Trent and the Severn, which is clearly of importance in assessing state activity in Britain at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. As we have seen above, gold is rarely recorded from these northern and western regions either in the PAS data or from excavations, and silver also has a very restricted distribution outside the Vale of York, save at the 'Yorkshire signal stations'. Copper-alloy *nummi* were being supplied, but the small numbers of them recovered relative to earlier periods may suggest that they were arriving in markedly reduced quantities; such small quantities must raise the question of whether rather than being purposefully supplied they were instead getting to their final resting places through 'drift' from elsewhere in Britain. And as we have seen coins were deposited overwhelmingly at these major sites and are only very rarely found away from them. It seems reasonable to argue that most of the North/West had by the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century ceased to be involved in the coin-using systems of the Roman economy. Whatever was going on in these regions (and there is no good evidence for substantial depopulation) it no longer involved the consumption and use of Roman coinage.

Returning to the small numbers of Periods 20 and 21 coins from sites in the North/West, both absolutely and relative to earlier Periods and relative also to the greater concentrations in the South/East, questions must arise as to what this means for the identity and functions of the inhabitants of these sites. The 'standard model' for the production and supply of coinage by the Roman state, and this very much holds for the late empire, is that this was in large measure directed to discharging the state's obligations to its servants, above all the army and the bureaucracy; that is, paying them and supplying them. This may have been one of the functions of the copper-alloy coinage; another may well have been buying in precious-metal coins (above all gold) paid out. If any regions of Late Roman Britain should have been of official interest to the Late Roman state and to the authorities who supplied the army with coin then it was precisely these regions since they are supposed to be where the bulk of the frontier troops were garrisoned. This would seem to be evidenced by the presence in some numbers of coins of the House of Constantine and the House of Valentinian. If from late in the century the state was no longer supplying significant quantities of coin to these regions, and more particularly to the 'military' sites, compared with earlier in the century the question must be posed as to whether the inhabitants of the 'military' sites were any longer seen by the state as 'military' in the ways modern scholarship has traditionally used the word: members of a standing army paid, equipped and supplied by the Roman state? Possibly remunera-

tion had become entirely, rather than partially, in kind through the operations of the *annona militaris*, but if so this would be hard to parallel in the Western Empire at this date and still suggest that these units had in some way/s become different to comparable units on other *limites*. But this is to go beyond the currently-available evidence.

Turning to the South/East and the incidence there of coins of Periods 20 and 21, it was noted above that the distribution of the PAS coin data is overwhelmingly rural, which is in important part a result of where metal-detectorists operate. The lack of a context for the majority of these finds makes it impossible to say how the find-spots may have related to the supply, use or deposition of these objects. Nevertheless, the 'comparative sites' afford a corrective to this, and the types of site these represented were analysed by Walton for Periods 17 (330–48), 18 (348–64), 19 (364–78), 20 (378–88) and 21 (388–402) under the categories 'Urban', 'Rural', 'Villa', 'Military', 'Temple'.<sup>46</sup> This revealed a profound shift from a distribution dominated by rural and villa sites in Periods 17, 18 and 19 to one in Period 20 where urban sites had gained at the expense of rural and villa to the situation in Period 21 where urban sites dominated over rural and villa. Military sites featured very weakly in Periods 17 (absent) and 18, but more strongly in Periods 19, 20 and 21. Walton suggests two possible interpretations for this phenomenon, one that there was population movement from the countryside back into the towns, the other that this relates to the role of towns in the infrastructure of military supply.<sup>47</sup> This would mean a growing tendency in the South/East for the deposition of coins at sites of interest to the Roman state, which might either be accounted something of a paradox when compared with what seems to have been happening to 'military' sites in the North/West, or be accounted an index of the growing divergence between the two 'halves' of the Diocese. But this would still not account for the spread of coins in rural areas in the South/East; more work remains to be done to seek to tie metal-detected coins to sub-surface sites and features. In terms of the discussion above on the North/West, what this seems to show is that the coins produced by the Roman state in the late 4<sup>th</sup> century were still being supplied in number to this area of the Diocese of the Britains. They were still being used regularly in these regions and as the PAS data show they were being deposited widely and at a variety of site types. In contrast with the lands to the north and west of the Trent and the Severn the South/East of Britain was still implicated in the coin-using fiscal and economic structures of the Late Roman state. Or looked at from the perspective of the producer rather than the consumer of coin, the South/East of Britain still contained personnel and taxpayers of interest to the state (including the owners of the villas which almost all lay in the South/East?) in a way that the North/West seems largely to have ceased to do.

## 5 BELT FITTINGS: TYPOLOGIES AND DISTRIBUTIONS

At the start of this paper it was noted that it was not just the maps of coin distributions of the late 4<sup>th</sup> century that were of interest, but also those of another class of material which seems to betoken a link with the Late Roman state, namely the accoutrements of those in the service of that state. This comprises the buckles, strap-ends and other fittings that ornamented the belts indicative of official status under the late empire, and there are the brooches which seem to have had a similar, if not always identical, role in the manifesting of official identity, and in addition there are other, rarer items such as prick-spurs. The distributions of these sets of material will be considered, after the precise types to be considered have been defined (and in the process other related types excluded).

Belt-fittings, principally buckles along with strap-ends and belt-stiffeners have been the subject of detailed examination within Europe<sup>48</sup> and for Britain more specifically.<sup>49</sup> The same is true for the type of

<sup>46</sup> Walton 2012, 101–106.

2000, ch. 5.

<sup>47</sup> Walton 2012, 103.

<sup>49</sup> Hawkes/Dunning 1961; Böhme 1986; Leahy 2007; Lay-

<sup>48</sup> E.g. Bullinger 1969; Böhme 1974; Sommer 1984; Swift

cock 2008.

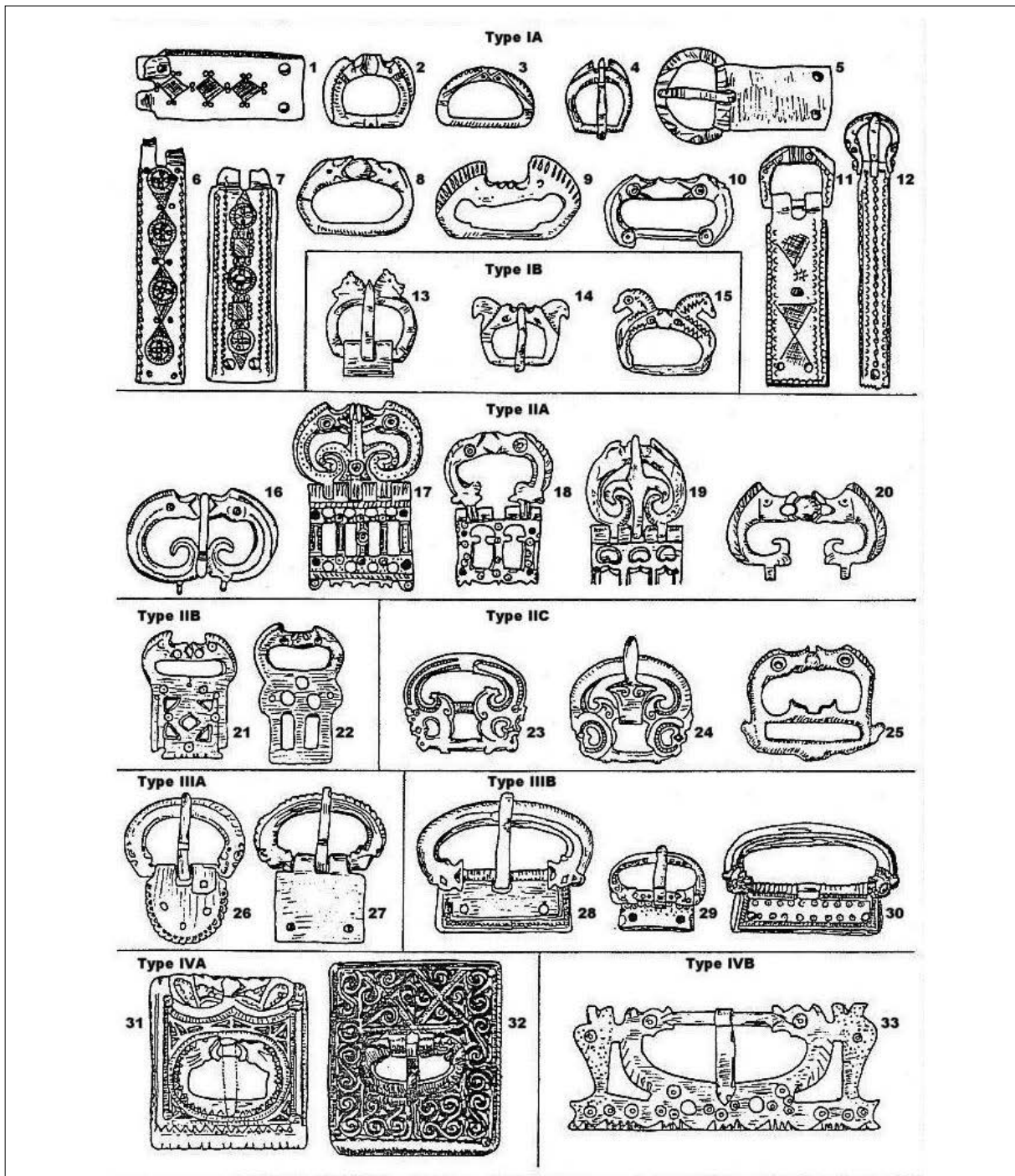


Fig. 4. Typology of Late Roman Buckles by Hawkes and Dunning (1961).

Late Roman brooch called in English the crossbow brooch (in German *Zwiebelknopffibel*),<sup>50</sup> with Ellen Swift's work setting the British material firmly in its continental context. There was a range of degrees of elaboration both for belt-suites and for brooches, from simple, plainly-decorated, copper-alloy items to more elaborately decorated and gilded examples through to those made in precious metals (largely gold, though some silver also). It is now generally accepted that the belt-fittings related to the broad *cingulum*, the symbol of service within the organs of the Late Roman state, more specifically the army or the

<sup>50</sup> Keller 1971; Pröttel 1988; Swift 2000.

bureaucracy (the latter technically a form of military service). The same broadly held true for the cross-bow brooch. In general terms these two classes of metalwork, particularly occurring in combination, seem to betoken an ‘official’ identity for the wearer. It is also the case that many of these items were probably produced in the *fabricae*, the state ‘factories’ for the production of armaments and other equipment for the army, with a major focus in Pannonia, but probably also at other centres further west also.<sup>51</sup> It is also clear that there were more local products, some perhaps ‘official’, created for military commands or establishments, others perhaps less ‘official’ by non-official individuals or groups. Towards the later 4<sup>th</sup> century this led to an increasing degree of regionalisation, which became more marked into the early 5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>52</sup> This is reflected in Britain as will be discussed below, where there were clear local productions taking their inspiration from imported styles. However, the discussion will focus on what have been termed the ‘official-issue’ metalwork; that is the belt-fittings and crossbow brooches that certainly or probably derive from outside Britain. How these objects got to Britain remains a subject for debate. Unlike coins, where it is accepted that they were supplied direct by the imperial authorities, it is uncertain whether these objects were shipped directly to Britain or arrived in the island round the waist or at the shoulder of an individual or group of individuals, as was suggested for the examples from the Lankhills cemetery, Winchester<sup>53</sup> or Scorton (see below). Nevertheless, even in the latter scenario the individual/s would presumably have been posted (‘supplied’) by the imperial authorities, so the general area of distribution of the objects should in some measure reflect the concerns of those authorities. For burials the contextual information becomes more precise, though of course for individuals rather than groups the choice of burial location may have been influenced by other factors and they had died or were buried elsewhere than at their place of posting.

For belt-fittings various typologies have been produced, with the most familiar one for Britain being that proposed by Hawkes and Dunning in 1961 (fig. 4).<sup>54</sup> This will be referred to here, though it suffers from having no very precise chronological framework; understandable given the poor availability of dated examples at the time the article was prepared. To refine the chronological framework reference will also be made to that proposed by Böhme, his Stufe I (c. AD 350–400), Stufe II (c. 380–420), Stufe III (c. 400–450).<sup>55</sup> These Stufen underlay his chronological phasing of the late-4<sup>th</sup>-century and later material from Britain,<sup>56</sup> though the dates he gives there are later than in his earlier work, and have not been universally accepted. In terms of the Hawkes and Dunning typology these Stufen comprise H&D Types II, III and IV, along with strap-ends of Type V and the belt-ends of Type VII. The excavated find-spots known to Böhme were listed by him,<sup>57</sup> and to these can now be added a small number from excavations, and the rather larger number reported to the PAS. These overwhelmingly show the same southern and eastern distribution as the late coinage, also again the region of York.<sup>58</sup> As with coins, the distribution maps need some analysis of their biases before they can be analysed and discussed. The PAS data, of course, have the same biases as were discussed above when introducing the coin distributions. Nevertheless, the observable distribution with its bias towards the South/East of Britain represents, like the coins, a distribution that is in important part the result of ancient deposition as well as modern recovery patterns. These objects are relatively large and distinctive (the more so the more complete they are) and it is certain they would have North/West: indeed a (small) number have been. Like the coins the overwhelming majority of the PAS finds suffer from the problem of lack of archaeological context. Many of the examples used by Böhme

<sup>51</sup> James 1988; Swift 2000, ch. 2.

<sup>52</sup> Swift 2000, ch. 5–6.

<sup>53</sup> Clarke 1979, IV.2.

<sup>54</sup> Referred to here as H&D Type x, to distinguish it from the Types for crossbow brooches of Keller 1971/Prötmel 1988; the latter also uses Arabic rather than Roman numerals.

<sup>55</sup> Böhme 1974, 79–90, esp. 80–81.

<sup>56</sup> Böhme 1986.

<sup>57</sup> Böhme 1986, Liste 1–2.

<sup>58</sup> Leahy 2007, figs. 1, 5, 6, 7; Worrell and Pearce 2012, esp. fig. 31.



in contrast have a context, having been recovered during excavations. These excavations display certain biases. One is that Böhme (and others, including Hawkes and Dunning) noted that some of the material came from sites classified as ‘Roman’, others from sites classified as ‘Anglo-Saxon’. The majority of the latter came from funerary contexts, whilst the ‘Roman’ material came principally from occupation sites, thus the incidence of the material may have been subject to differing patterns of deposition, taphonomic processes and preservation, and recovery. Bearing these factors in mind, it will be the material of H&D Types II-V and/or Böhme’s Listen 1 and 2 that will be the focus of study here. This omits two classes of related material which need to be alluded to here though they will not be considered in any detail here, though reference will be made to them in the Discussion section below. One is the metalwork of H&D Type I; the other is metalwork, particularly belt-fittings in the so-called ‘Quoit Brooch’ style.<sup>59</sup>

The most common class of this metalwork is what Hawkes and Dunning defined as their Type II,<sup>60</sup> buckles with opposed dolphins’ heads on the buckle loops, the tails of the dolphins often flanking the tongue of the buckle. These buckles had plates, often decorated with piercings: in H&D Type IIA the buckles and plates were hinged together, in H&D Type IIB the plates and buckles were cast in one piece. Some of these pieces were very competently executed and decorated, for instance the fine example from Colchester,<sup>61</sup> and are related to material on the continent, suggesting they may be ‘official’,<sup>62</sup> but there is a range of sizes and competence of execution, strongly suggesting that many of these were imitations of the high-quality pieces.<sup>63</sup> It is possible that some of the buckles may have been manufactured on and imported from the continent as part of the equipping of state soldiers and officials and subsequently were much copied. The evidence from Ickham (Kent)<sup>64</sup> for the manufacture of such metalwork along with mis-cast strap-ends from Cranwell and Navenby (Lincs)<sup>65</sup> shows that this was being done in Britain. Local groups have been defined on the basis of stylistic criteria,<sup>66</sup> again a strong argument in favour of copying within Britain.

The dating of H&D Type II buckles etc. is not well understood. It is of course derived largely from those sites at which objects have an archaeological context and where they are found deposited with datable material. Overall such sites seem to date from the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>67</sup> The group from Ickham containing the manufacturing evidence is proposed on the basis of the stratigraphy and associated finds to date to the late 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>68</sup> The overall distribution of H&D Type II is overwhelmingly to the south and east of the Severn and the Trent, with a few outliers with again the region of York showing up, one from Corbridge,<sup>69</sup> and a couple in the extreme south-east of Wales.<sup>70</sup> The coincidence with the distribution of coins of the House of Theodosius from the PAS is almost exact. Nor is this just an effect of both categories of material being from the PAS; as with coins so with belts, earlier classes of military-related metalwork have a much wider distribution into the North/West.

H&D Type III metalwork consisted of buckles whose width was greater than their depth and where the animal heads (rarely dolphins) were situated at the base of the loop at the junction with the hinge axis. The buckle plates tended to be smaller and less elaborately decorated than in H&D Type II, but as in that Type the distinction between IIIA and IIIB was a hinged buckle and plate in the former and a solid-cast plate and buckle in the latter.<sup>71</sup> H&D Type III is clearly cognate with buckle types in Böhme’s Stufen I and II and Sommer’s Sorte 1, dated by them to the closing decades of the 4<sup>th</sup> century and the early 5<sup>th</sup> century. Its distribution in Britain is very limited, again occurring almost exclusively south and east of the Trent and Severn, with a IIIB piece from York and the recently discovered IIIA buckle loop from Horton-cum-Peel

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Suzuki 2000.

<sup>60</sup> Hawkes/Dunning 1961, 50-59.

<sup>61</sup> Hawkes/Dunning 1961, fig. 17e.

<sup>62</sup> I am grateful to Ellen Swift for discussion on this point.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Hawkes/Dunning 1961, fig. 18.

<sup>64</sup> Riddler/Ager/Mould in Bennett/Riddler/Sparey-Green 2010, 152-165.

<sup>65</sup> Leahy 2007, 137.

<sup>66</sup> Laycock 2008, esp. ch. 5.

<sup>67</sup> Swift 2000, 15.

<sup>68</sup> Bennett/Riddler/Sparey-Green 2010, Part 2.

<sup>69</sup> Coulston 2010, fig. 6.1 B; fig. 6.7 B.

<sup>70</sup> Leahy 2007, fig. 5.

<sup>71</sup> Hawkes/Dunning 1961, 59-60.



Fig. 5. Distribution of Late Roman belt fittings (updated until 11.2005). After Leahy 2007, fig. 1.

(Cheshire)<sup>72</sup> being the occurrences in the North/West. Perhaps the best-known H&D Type III buckles in Britain are those from disturbed burials in the earthworks of Dyke Hills on the western side of the fortified ‘small town’ of Dorchester-on-Thames (Oxon) discovered in 1874 and 2009. These burials form the best candidates to date for Late Roman *Waffengräber* and their proximity to the fortified ‘small town’ which has yielded significant numbers of coins of the House of Theodosius only adds to their interest.<sup>73</sup>

H&D Type IV consists of buckles set in plates with ‘chip-carved’ (*Kerbschnitt*) decoration.<sup>74</sup> To the small number known to Hawkes and Dunning (all from the South/East) may be added the elaborate belt-suite suite found in Grave 538 of the eastern cemetery of London (along with a gilt, sheet-bronze crossbow brooch) and dated on the basis of the artefacts to the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>75</sup> Hawkes and Dunning designated these belt-plates Type IVA, with Type IVB consisting of a single example, the wide buckle loop (in fact related to Type IIIA) from Catterick.<sup>76</sup> This piece apart, all the H&D Type IV examples (and there are not many of them) have a securely South/East distribution (fig. 5).<sup>77</sup>

<sup>72</sup> PAS LVPL-71B7F1.

<sup>73</sup> Booth 2014.

<sup>74</sup> Hawkes/Dunning 1961, 60-62.

<sup>75</sup> Barber/Bowsher 2000, 206-08, 305-306.

<sup>76</sup> Hawkes/Dunning 1961, fig. 22.

<sup>77</sup> Leahy 2007, fig. 6.

Hawkes and Dunning also catalogued instances of strap-ends of forms and decorations they considered associated with the buckles of Types II-IV; these they designated Type V.<sup>78</sup> Their Type VI was the small number of rosette-decorated attachments for supporting frogging hanging from belts.<sup>79</sup> Type VII was a small number of belt end-plates with tubular mount along one long side,<sup>80</sup> at that time rare, though one may now add the two examples from Dorchester-on-Thames 2009. These H&D Types correspond to material from Böhme's Stufe I and more particularly Stufe II and thus their deposition dates to the turn of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries or later. The most common of these was the strap-ends, and their distribution again then showed a resolutely South/East distribution, with two outliers north of the Humber at Malton. The picture has changed somewhat with the advent of the PAS allowing up-to-date distribution maps for the North/West to be drawn up, including buckle varieties not defined in H&D Types.<sup>81</sup> These again show a concentration in the York region, recalling the patterns of coin presences in the area (though this may be in part an effect of a concentration of metal-detector activity in the county of North Yorkshire).<sup>82</sup> There are a few further north, with a scattering along the Wall and hardly anything west of the Pennines. One burial that deserves mention is from right at the edge of the South/East distribution: the 'Gloucester Goth', a burial on the northern cemetery of the town of Gloucester of a male with silver buckles and a strap-end of east-European types,<sup>83</sup> whose isotopic signature suggests an origin in the eastern part of Europe.<sup>84</sup> The belt-fittings from this burial are certainly of interest for their parallels, though since they are so dissimilar to the normal run of 'official-issue' metalwork in Britain they remain a typological outlier. A related class of metalwork, whose significance has only more recently been recognised, by Sally Worrell and Hilary Cool,<sup>85</sup> is the prick-spur, which seems to have had some sort of 'official' link or significance and as Cool shows had a principally South/East distribution, but with some northern examples from the Humber up to the Wall.

## 6 BROOCHES: TYPOLOGIES AND DISTRIBUTIONS

Crossbow brooches were the dominant type of Late Roman brooch in Britain, a time at which brooch-wearing had become uncommon and largely associated with an 'official' presence.<sup>86</sup> The standard typology is that of Keller<sup>87</sup> as updated by Pröttel,<sup>88</sup> with Swift<sup>89</sup> providing a wide-ranging survey that sets the British material in its continental context. The material from northern Britain has been considered in more detail by Collins.<sup>90</sup> Though Keller/Pröttel Types 1 and 2 brooches manufactured in the early to mid 4<sup>th</sup> century (though some may be later<sup>91</sup>) occur in Britain, the most commonly occurring type of crossbow brooch on the island is the Keller/Pröttel Type 3/4, a solid-cast, copper-alloy form, often with circle-and-dot decoration on its foot.<sup>92</sup> The dating of this type seems to run from the mid into the late 4<sup>th</sup> century, the second and third thirds of the century, possibly later. Unfortunately it is not as yet possible to refine this further and assign particular sub-types to 'early' or 'late'. As Swift's map shows,<sup>93</sup> the distribution in Britain is largely the South/East, with some in the extreme south-east of Wales, three sites in the English Midlands then a small number of sites in the North, principally along Hadrian's Wall. The chronologically later Types 5 and 6 are not common from Britain and their distribution is again mainly in the South/East. They may have had a somewhat different social significance since they were often of

<sup>78</sup> Hawkes/Dunning 1961, 63-65.

<sup>79</sup> Hawkes/Dunning 1961, 66-67.

<sup>80</sup> Hawkes/Dunning 1961, 67-68.

<sup>81</sup> Coulston 2010, figs. 6.1-6.5.

<sup>82</sup> Coulston 2010, 54.

<sup>83</sup> Hills/Hurst 1989.

<sup>84</sup> Chenery/Evans 2012.

<sup>85</sup> Worrell 2004; Cool 2010, 4-7.

<sup>86</sup> Mackreth 2011, esp. ch. 9.

<sup>87</sup> Keller 1971.

<sup>88</sup> Pröttel 1988.

<sup>89</sup> Swift 2000, ch. 2.

<sup>90</sup> Collins 2010, esp. 64-68.

<sup>91</sup> Swift 2000, 15.

<sup>92</sup> Swift 2000, 50.

<sup>93</sup> Swift 2001, fig. 42.

sheet bronze rather than solid-cast (suggesting use with finer fabrics) and often were gilt. So they may have been the mark of men of higher status than were the Type 3/4 examples.

The more recent maps by Collins surveying the incidence of crossbow brooches north of the Humber-Mersey line and drawing on PAS data not available to Swift, shows a higher incidence in the North (fig. 6), thirty-seven sites,<sup>94</sup> with particular concentrations around York again and along Hadrian's Wall.<sup>95</sup> But as Collins also shows,<sup>96</sup> these are overwhelmingly of the earlier-4<sup>th</sup>-century Keller/Pröttel Types 1 and 2 and the mid- to later-4<sup>th</sup>-century Type 3/4, with Type 1 being the most numerous class (>40%) followed by Type 3/4 (>30%). He also notes<sup>97</sup> the complete lack of Type 5 from his survey area, and only three examples of Type 6. Of these one was from the Moray Firth, far to the north of the Wall, the other two being from the major centre at Corbridge and the 'villa' at Ingleby Barwick (though from a very late deposit associated with 'Anglo-Saxon' pottery); this is a site which has also yielded some highly-decorated vessel glass of a type unique in Britain and possibly from Egypt.<sup>98</sup> Quite what the function of Ingleby Barwick was by the later 4<sup>th</sup> century is open to debate.<sup>99</sup> An important site whose publication is forthcoming<sup>100</sup> is the cemetery at Scorton 650m. north-east of Catterick whose population of nineteen was overwhelmingly young, male and associated with belts and brooches, suggesting perhaps they were military, perhaps *comitatenses*. Stable isotope analyses suggest that most of the deceased originated from outside Britain. The coins and dress elements from the graves suggest a date-range for burial/deposition centred on the third quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. So overall the chronological bias in the representation of crossbow brooches north of the Humber-Mersey line seems to favour Types produced in the first two thirds of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, with the Types characteristic of the end of the century or into the 5<sup>th</sup> century vanishingly rare. Some Type 3/4 brooches may have been deposited towards the end of the century or even later, but it is not possible to be sure about this; but from the point of view of supply they probably do not extend as late as that. Alongside crossbow brooches, a case has been put forward<sup>101</sup> that penannular brooches may have had a military or 'official' significance, given their incidence north of the Humber. Type E penannulars, which seem to date mainly to the 4<sup>th</sup> century, are found at sites along Hadrian's Wall and in its hinterland (though interestingly not at York). Though they were probably worn by military (unless they have a gendered significance), it is uncertain whether they had the same semiotic weight as crossbow brooches.

## 7 DISCUSSION: BRITAIN AND THE ROMAN STATE AT THE CLOSE OF THE 4<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

How then to interpret the observed distributions of coins and of 'official-issue' metalwork in the later 4<sup>th</sup> to early 5<sup>th</sup> centuries? Below are offered some comments, which are not designed to be a definitive statement but rather to suggest possibilities and to contribute to debate. First of all, it is necessary to reiterate and acknowledge the point that here only two classes from a much wider range of evidence-types from Late Roman Britain are considered in this paper. The rationale for this was explained at the start of the paper, the relationship of these classes of material to the Late Roman state. Other classes of material will have their own stories to tell, as will be alluded to below.

As suggested early in this contribution, it is the absences as much as, if not more than, the presences of these classes of material that concern us here. Traditionally discussion of this material has concentrated on its presence, particularly for the coinage as a dating medium and thus in combination with the stratigraphic sequence and sometimes the pottery the debate over how late sites were in occupation. For the

<sup>94</sup> Collins 2010, figs. 7.3-7.4, Appendix 7.1.

<sup>95</sup> Collins, this volume, fig. 2.

<sup>96</sup> Collins 2010, figs. 7.2-7.3.

<sup>97</sup> Collins 2010.

<sup>98</sup> Price in Willis/Carne 2013, 123-124.

<sup>99</sup> Petts in Willis/Carne 2013, 195-199.

<sup>100</sup> Eckardt/Müldner/Speed 2015.

<sup>101</sup> Collins 2010, 68-73.

dress elements they have been seen as betokening the continuing presence of state servants, particularly the military. Both of these approaches have value but perhaps tend to accentuate the positive by concentrating on the presences of this material without sufficiently acknowledging the absences. So the first comment is on the need to give as much attention to the absences as to the presences. This is not to say that the absences have not been remarked on,<sup>102</sup> but presences have perhaps been accorded more weight. Moreover this has been in relation largely to classes of object other than coins.<sup>103</sup> Adding in the absences of coins of the House of Theodosius (Periods 20 and 21) from the PAS and the absences or low representations of these Periods from excavated sites creates a supplementary perspective from which to assess this material. It seems clear that the latest types of coins and metalwork to be struck or manufactured by the imperial authorities on the continent and supplied to Britain in the last quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century hardly appear in the North/West, both in terms of absolute numbers and also relative to their earlier equivalents and to what was going on in the South/East. The exception is the York region, which should perhaps be seen as the northern end of the South/East distributions. In particular, the incidence of these types of material, especially the belts and brooches, at ‘forts’ in this region is minimal, with a number of forts known to be occupied at this time (near-)devoid of them; Birdoswald is a good example with one coin of the House of Theodosius and no late belt or brooch material, yet stratigraphically the site remained very active.<sup>104</sup> Given that the coins were related to the fiscal cycle including the payment of state servants such as soldiers and the belt-fittings and largely also the brooches related to the equipping of the soldiers and thus the construction and proclamation of their identity, then are we seeing the end of such an identity? Did the Roman state towards the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century cease to sustain what had been its forces in the North and West? Or did it turn to other methods of recompense, or to other relations with providers of military force? Did those forces then create for themselves some other form/s of identity?

It has been argued by Rob Collins, building on earlier suggestions by others such as Tony Wilmott,<sup>105</sup> that as and when Roman state power, military commands and fiscal systems broke down what had been the garrisons of the forts in the north reforged their identities and instead of regular army units commanded by imperial officers became war-bands commanded by ‘warlords’, what on the continent would be referred to as *bucellarii*.<sup>106</sup> To date this has usually been seen as something occurring in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century, particularly after the suppression of Constantine III in 411, after which Roman power structures and officials seem not to have been re-installed in Britain. Is it possible that the start of this process should now be moved back before 400 into the last quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century? Should we envisage that the frontier troops, the *limitanei*, as presented to us by the *Notitia Dignitatum* had ceased to exist as a coherent arm of the Late Roman army? After all, this is what seems to happen over much of the West more generally from the second decade of the 5<sup>th</sup> century; perhaps northern and western Britain anticipating this by a generation and more?<sup>107</sup> In this case had all the attributes that went to make up a Late ‘Roman’ soldier and a Late ‘Roman’ unit and a Late ‘Roman’ frontier command ceased to operate in northern Britain, and thus a Roman-style military identity no longer held meaning? And just to emphasise here that the suggestion that the garrisons of the regular army may no longer be recognisable from the late 4<sup>th</sup> century in the North/West is not to claim that occupation at the erstwhile garrison sites ceased at that moment. It is clear from the stratigraphy at several sites that they continued to be occupied<sup>108</sup> and from the artefactual and environmental sequences also.<sup>109</sup> Nevertheless, the changes that took place at several of these forts in the later 4<sup>th</sup> century<sup>110</sup> such as the disuse of granaries and the alteration to *principia* do

<sup>102</sup> e.g. Collins 2012, ch. 3; Cool 2010; Swift 2000, 30–70, 211–213.

<sup>103</sup> Collins 2012, 58–59 is an exception.

<sup>104</sup> Wilmott 1997, ch. 10.

<sup>105</sup> Collins 2012, ch. 4, esp. 107–109, his Scenario 4 is closest to the argument here; cf. Wilmott 2000.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Whittaker 1994, ch. 7.

<sup>107</sup> Esmonde Cleary 2013, 341–352.

<sup>108</sup> Collins 2012, ch. 4, esp. 101–110.

<sup>109</sup> Papers in Collins/Allason-Jones (eds.) 2010; Cool 2000.

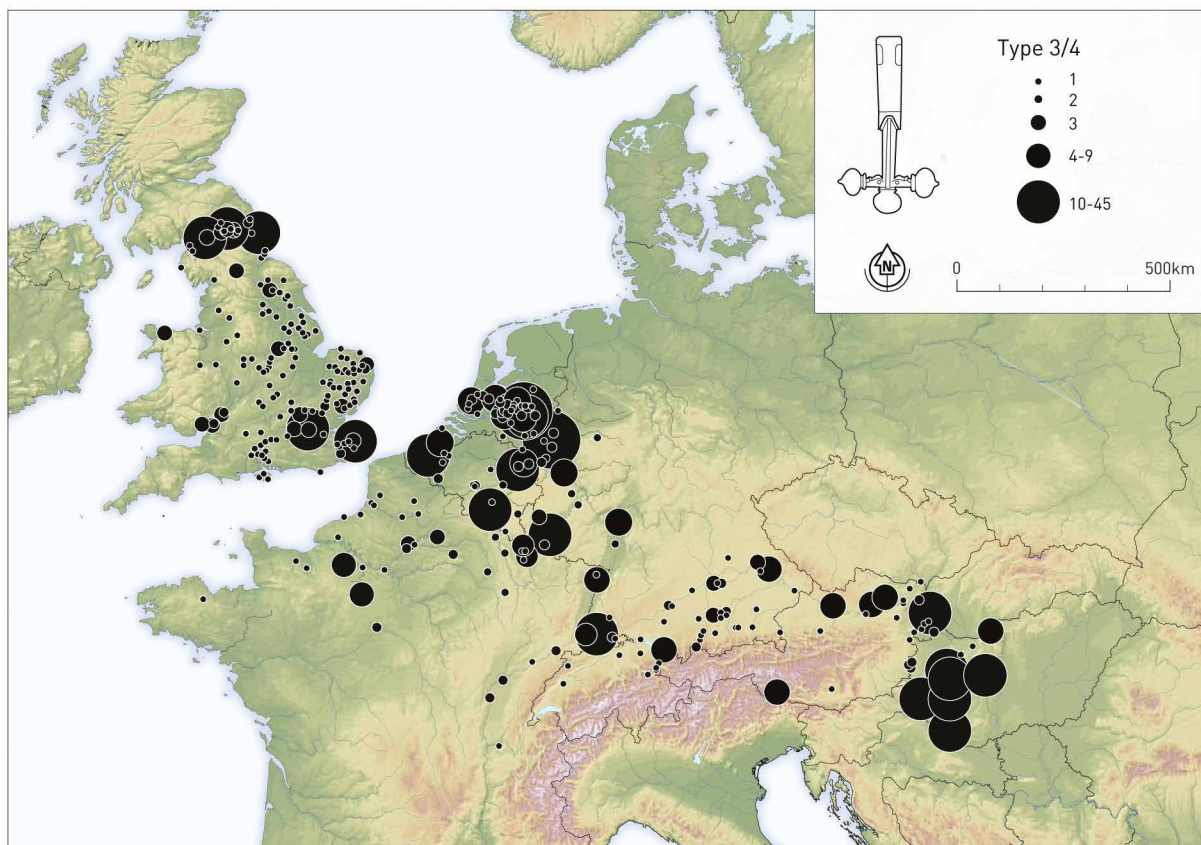


Fig. 6. Distribution of crossbow brooches type 3/4. After Swift 2000, 46 (fig. 42) with additions by Collins and Van Thienen, this volume.

seem to have undermined (sometimes literally) their capacities as military bases. We are so habituated to the long history of these sites as ‘forts’ that we tend to use this vocabulary to describe them right down to the bitter end (whenever that might be), but this is to prejudge what is clearly a much more complex set of considerations and evidence. Richard Reece proposed some time ago because of his scepticism as to whether Romano-British ‘towns’ in the 4<sup>th</sup> century really were urban places that we should call them TCTs (Things Called Towns):<sup>111</sup> perhaps we need now to think about TCFs (Things Called Forts)? One final comment is perhaps worth making here, and again it is an absence. There is little or no sign in the North/West that whatever local power structures succeeded to the Roman army used Roman-army-derived semiotics of power. These regions had contained Roman military garrisons for some three hundred years and the Roman army had been one of the dominant, if not the dominant, groupings in terms of power, society and economy, and a grouping moreover with a very particular series of symbols in the built environment, dress, diet, speech and other media. That being so one might have expected whatever structures of power succeeded to that identity to have used elements derived from it in areas such as dress and equipment to claim some sort of continuity of its authority and prestige. The only sort of ‘continuity’ in dress-fitting would seem to have been in the use of the penannular brooch, with the 4<sup>th</sup>-century Type E developing into the later Type F; though whether they carried the same significance as crossbow brooches is not certain.<sup>112</sup> That apart, it would seem that in the North/West the metal dress-accoutrements of servants of the Late Roman state, symbols of power and identity, had ceased to be of significance or had been actively rejected.

<sup>110</sup> Collins 2010, ch 4.

<sup>112</sup> Collins 2010, 72.

<sup>111</sup> Reece 1988.

The South/East in contrast shows a much greater presence of coins and ‘official-issue’ metalwork and of the influence of the latter on local fashions in both the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> centuries. This is not to say that the distributions were anything like uniform; there were ‘presences’ and ‘absences’ as much at this micro (meso?) scale as there were at the macro scale of the entirety of the Roman territory. Sometimes the variability is geographical, for instance the contrasts in the incidence of ‘official-issue’ and related metalwork to the north and to the south of the estuaries of the Humber and the Thames.<sup>113</sup> In the case of the Humber this seems to reflect a ‘real’ division in deposition of the material rather than modern conditions of preservation and recovery.<sup>114</sup> Sometimes the variability may be related to site-type, as with the increasing concentration of Periods 20 and 21 coins at towns in the South–East. More research will need to be done on these variables before their precise significance can be ascertained.

It was noted above that Philippa Walton argued that over the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century there was a change in the nature of the find-spots of coins, principally copper-alloy *nummi*, with a progressive emphasis on urban sites, both major towns, ‘*civitas*-capitals’, and lesser centres, ‘small towns’. She suggested this might represent the growing importance of centres of interest to the Roman state, the converse of what was happening in the north and east, though as also noted above ‘Saxon Shore’ forts show only patchily. Given that by the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century all the major towns had been surrounded by stone walls as had many of the ‘small towns’ with more of the latter also being defended in the 4<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>115</sup> this supports the suggestion that these sites were increasingly of governmental use and significance. It may also tie in with observable changes in the building-stock within the defences of the major towns,<sup>116</sup> with a move away from the elaborate, high-status ‘town houses’ of the earlier 4<sup>th</sup> century to more modest and functional structures of later in the century. Nevertheless, coins of Periods 20 and 21 are still found widely distributed in rural areas of the South/East, suggesting that the populations of these areas were still tied in to some extent to the fiscal and economic structures that required the use of coin. Since the fiscal system involved the use of low-value, copper-alloy coinage both to purchase precious-metal coins for tax render and to facilitate the recovery of precious metals, above all gold, this may explain at least in part the presence of such coins in rural areas, which therefore were still subject to and participating in the Late Roman fiscal structures. The PAS and other data also show that silver coins were part of the circulating coin-pool and available in sufficient numbers to be thesaurized across the South /East. The fact that the clipping of *siliquae* to recover silver, perhaps to strike the imitation pieces that do exist, seems to have originated in the closing decades of the 4<sup>th</sup> century<sup>117</sup> suggests both that the silver coinage remained an important medium of exchange and that supply from the mints was not matching demand, especially after the state ceased to supply silver to Britain from 411. Once copper-alloy coins ceased to be supplied by the state, there is in contrast little evidence for attempts to imitate them. The contrast with the numismatic penury of the North/West is stark.

The distribution of ‘official-issue’ metalwork (for the purposes of this discussion subsuming belt-fittings, brooches and prick-spurs into this classification) is equally clear-cut, overwhelmingly to the south and east of the Trent and the Severn, with only the area in the vicinity of York showing any significant concentration outside those limits.<sup>118</sup> This is matched by the regional and local variants produced within Britain itself, as the trend to regionalization developed through the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Excavations within the towns and their cemeteries of Late Roman Britain has yielded the common 4<sup>th</sup>-century types, H&D Type II buckles and Keller/Pröttel Type 3/4 brooches. The finds of H&D Types III, IV and VII fittings and Keller/Pröttel Types 5 and 6 brooches are few in number. Some do have an urban pattern, not all; but they certainly do not contradict the hypothesis from the coins that towns were of increasing interest to the state at the close of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>113</sup> Leahy 2007, 135.

<sup>114</sup> Leahy 2007, 137; cf. Brindle 2014, ch. 7.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Esmonde Cleary 2007.

<sup>116</sup> Faulkner 2000.

<sup>117</sup> Guest 2013.

<sup>118</sup> Leahy 2007, fig. 1.

Another way in which the South/East differed markedly from the North/West is in the influence of the ‘official-issue’ metalwork on local traditions. As has been clearly demonstrated,<sup>119</sup> H&D Type II dolphin and related buckles were widely imitated in south-eastern Britain (the same was not true for Types III and IV). What this meant about the status and functions of the people who wore them is still debated. One approach is to emphasise the links of the parent material with the Roman army and suggest that the locally-produced material went to equip some ‘para-military’ or ‘militia’ force, which proclaimed its identity and function through adopting dress derived from state personnel. At present this is incapable of proof. Stuart Laycock has argued<sup>120</sup> that the variations in design and distribution (along with those of H&D Type I) should be read as proclaiming the identities of different ‘tribal’ militias fighting over the spoils of 5<sup>th</sup>-century Britain. This poses huge questions of whether such ‘tribal’ identities existed (or persisted) at this period, as well as problems of dating and distributions. Another possibility is that this is part of a wider civilian adoption of military-style dress and equipment because of the prestige of the army, particularly in provinces near the frontiers.<sup>121</sup> The quality of the fittings from Britain suggests that this was by no means the preserve of the elites. But either way it argues that the Roman army and officialdom remained a major focus of power, influencing the self-representation of civilians, but in the South/East rather than the North/West.

This is buttressed by the Hawkes and Dunning buckles excluded from the discussion above, their Type I. This was a purely insular phenomenon, clearly influenced in form and decoration by ‘official-issue’ buckles but differing from them in important respects. The principal respect was that they were associated with narrow straps, usually under 4 cm wide in contrast to the wider belts of the official *cingulum*. Their distribution centres in the west of Britain, particularly the modern county of Gloucestershire and its surrounds, but they are also distributed to the south and south-east of that area into Dorset and Hampshire as well as across the Midlands as far as Lincolnshire and East Anglia and up into Yorkshire. Some of these buckles and their plates have been found in female graves of ‘Anglo-Saxon’ type, but whether they had a similar gendered significance in the 4<sup>th</sup> century is much more doubtful; such straps and belts would not accord with what we think we know of female dress in Late Roman Britain. Their possible significances will need to await the full publication of research currently under way, but for the purposes of this paper the important point is that they show that Late Roman ‘official-issue’ dress and its fittings remained very influential in the 4<sup>th</sup>-century South/East. The same can be argued from the decorative schemes of the 5<sup>th</sup>-century metalwork subsumed under the appellation of the ‘Quoit Brooch’ style.<sup>122</sup> In the context of this paper one might think above all of the elaborate belt-suite with *Kerbschnitt* decoration from Grave 117 of Cemetery 1 at Mucking (Essex), so clearly influenced by Late Roman precedents.<sup>123</sup> Metalwork in this style, often of a quality suggesting high status, is found on both sides of the Channel<sup>124</sup> and dates broadly to the 5<sup>th</sup>- to early 6<sup>th</sup> centuries. It has tended to be discussed in ‘ethnic’ terms, ‘sub-Roman’ or ‘Anglo-Saxon’, though other perspectives such as status-related ones are possible. But either way, what this style of decoration shows, like H&D Type I buckles, is the lasting influence of Late Roman official styles in south-eastern Britain, even after the collapse of Roman control in those areas of the island.

At the outset it was remarked that the study of Late Roman Britain and the end of the Roman period in the island is undergoing a period of recrudescence. One of the themes across much recent publication has been an undermining of old certainties through a blurring of categories and boundaries.<sup>125</sup> One of the old certainties was the persistence of a unified entity called ‘Roman Britain’ down to the early 5<sup>th</sup> century, comprising the entirety of the territory to the south of Hadrian’s Wall. Another was that this entity of Roman Britain continued to be defended from external threat by commands of the Late Roman army

<sup>119</sup> Leahy 2007.

<sup>120</sup> Laycock 2008, ch. 5.

<sup>121</sup> Esmonde Cleary 2013, ch. 2.

<sup>122</sup> Suzuki 2000.

<sup>123</sup> Hirst/Clark 2009, 662–668.

<sup>124</sup> Soulat 2009.

<sup>125</sup> e.g. Gerrard 2013.



as listed in the *Notitia Dignitatum* again down to the early 5<sup>th</sup> century when the systems underpinning the existence of such an army broke down. This paper has taken two classes of material culture from a much wider range of possible material to ask whether we should be quite so sure of these certainties or whether major divergences in that material culture may be indicative of diverging trajectories within Britain in the last quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. One of those trajectories may well be the degrees to which the Late Roman state paid attention to Britain and the degrees to which Britain responded to the Late Roman state.

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# Decline, Collapse, or Transformation? The case for the northern frontier of Britannia

*Rob Collins*

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- 2 The final-phase frontier in northern *Britannia*
  - 2.1 'Maximian' or Theodosian reorganisation
  - 2.2 The warband transformation
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References

## I INTRODUCTION

The fragmentation of the Western Roman Empire over the course of the 5<sup>th</sup> century began with a sequence of events that started in the Rhineland with the resultant permanent loss of *Britannia* by c. AD 410. The severance of imperial rule of Roman Britain is often thought to have resulted in a drastic collapse of many, perhaps most of the structures of provincial life in the first decades of the 5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> Explicitly linked to the loss of Roman civilization is a presumed withdrawal of the Roman soldiers from Britain: 'Britain faced economic meltdown in the early 5th century, *after the withdrawal of Roman armies* and the end of the Roman provincial administration around 410'.<sup>2</sup> However, we should be critical of the widely received view of the end of Roman Britain. While the permanent separation of Britain from the rest of the Roman Empire was a definitive political event, it should also be remembered that the diocese of *Britannia* consisted of four or five provinces, and there is a danger in assuming that the divorce from the Empire had the same impacts in each province.<sup>3</sup> Archaeological evidence from Hadrian's Wall indicates continued occupation at a number of Roman forts that prompts a broader question of what happened in the Roman frontiers as imperial authority retreated back to the core of the Empire.

A series of models have been proposed that provide a basic framework specifically for the end of the Roman frontier in Britain, though these models are of course also bound to the broader notion of the end of Roman Britain and the Roman West more largely. Barbarian migration remains a prominent and relevant theme for the Rhine and Danube frontiers, but for *Britannia*, questions regarding the latest occupations of the imperial frontiers can be explored without the complications of debates surrounding barbarian

<sup>1</sup> Faulkner 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Wickham 2009, 150, italics my emphasis.

<sup>3</sup> White 2007 is explicit in this with his treatment of *Britannia Prima*.

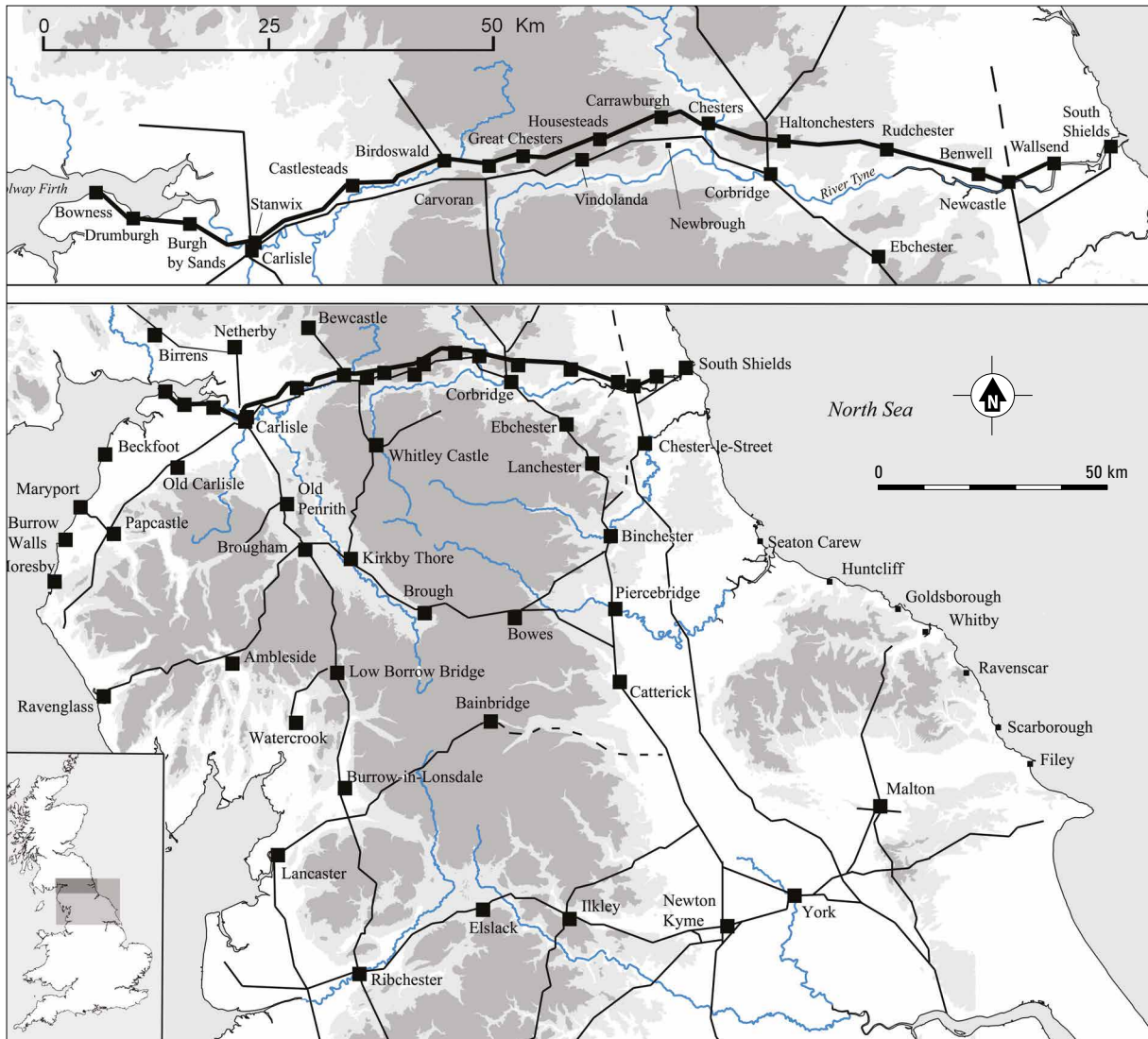


Fig. 1. Map of the northern frontier of *Britannia*, with the upper panel detailing the sites along Hadrian's Wall.

migration. Discarding the distraction of those aspects strongly linked to barbarians, we are allowed to focus on the more fundamental question of how we identify the Roman army, specifically the *limitanei*, of the later 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries AD through the archaeological record. Beginning with a brief summary of the key models for the decline and/or transformation of the northern frontiers, these models are then assessed relative to archaeological evidence from sites in the frontier. The paper closes with a discussion of the military archaeology of the frontier, and raises questions for our understanding of the latest phases of military occupation for other Late Roman military frontiers. Figure 1 is provided for reference.

## 2 THE FINAL-PHASE FRONTIER IN NORTHERN BRITANNIA

In recent decades, new archaeological evidence has prompted a reconsideration of what happened to Hadrian's Wall and northern *Britannia* in the late 4<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> century. For centuries, the dominant

<sup>4</sup> Halsall 2013 discusses the dating of Gildas, arguing for a later 5<sup>th</sup>-early 6<sup>th</sup> century date.

<sup>5</sup> Halsall 2007, 519-526.

narrative was that Roman soldiers were withdrawn from Britain for the defence of Italy and other distant parts of the empire, derived and sustained primarily from Gildas' section on the northern history of the former diocese of *Britannia* written in the early-mid-6<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup> However, new models suggested alternative 'endings' to the frontier, in light of the evidence emerging primarily from the sites of South Shields, Vindolanda, and Birdoswald. These models are presented relative to their historical chronology.

## 2.1 'MAXIMIAN' OR THEodosian REORGANISATION

There is a presumed reorganisation and possible relocation of the frontier and its garrison that has been linked to historical episodes documented in textual sources. Primarily, these are the usurpations of Magnus Maximus in 382/383 and of Constantine III in 406/407, though there is disagreement among modern scholars as to which usurpation may have been more important.

Most recently, Halsall has argued that it was in the context of Magnus Maximus' preparations for forcing his claim to the purple in Gaul in 382/383 that he reorganised the defences of Britain, purportedly stripping the regular soldiers of Britain for his own army and replacing them with northern Germanic *foederati* (that is to say, 'Saxons').<sup>5</sup> Under such an arrangement, *foederati* would take over the existing military installations and duties, and Halsall argues that the material culture of these new soldiers would appear very much the same as 'normal' Roman soldiers, but would also explain the non-standard appearance of some structures at these military sites, such as the 'timber halls' at Birdoswald (discussed below).

The same changes to military organisation can also be credited to Constantine III, following the reasonable assumption that he stripped Britain of at least some soldiers to support his claim to the imperial throne. Furthermore, the presence and distribution of so-called official military metalwork suggests that regular Roman soldiers were repositioned to guard the economically richer villa zone of southern *Britannia*.<sup>6</sup> The role of Magnus Maximus and Constantine III will be considered in greater detail below, when textual evidence is examined in section 3.

## 2.2 THE WARBAND TRANSFORMATION

Excavations at Birdoswald, primarily the demolition of the Roman granaries and their replacement with a series of timber-built structures interpreted as (feasting or mead) halls prompted Wilmott<sup>7</sup> to argue that the *limitanei* garrisons ceased to function as soldiers for the Roman state and instead became warriors in the service of a local leader, essentially forming a warband that is a common feature of post-Roman vernacular texts. Wilmott dates this change to the 5<sup>th</sup> century in Britain and significantly does not argue for any mass withdrawal of soldiers. Archaeological evidence from other fort sites, notably South Shields and Vindolanda in the Wall corridor and the legionary fortress at York, provide indications for changes to military buildings and continued activity and occupation into the 5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>8</sup>

Subsequently, I have modified this model, accepting the transformation of soldier to warrior (table 1), but arguing that the seeds for this change were planted in the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>9</sup> The *limitanei* experienced (and perhaps contributed to) a process of increasingly distinct regionalisation through the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Regionalisation was particularly pertinent to the *limitanei* in stable frontiers that did not as frequently require

<sup>6</sup> Halsall 2007, 196–198; 2012; Cool 2010 and Esmonde Cleary (this volume) have also advocated a retreat of the 'frontier' to a more southerly line that corresponds with the Roman road known as the Fosse Way.

<sup>7</sup> Wilmott 1997.

<sup>8</sup> South Shields: Bidwell/Speak 1994; Vindolanda: Bidwell 1985; Birley 2013; York: Phillips/Heywood 1995.

<sup>9</sup> Collins 2012.

	<b>Soldier</b>	<b>Warrior</b>
Membership	Member of army	Member of warband
Leadership	Answers to local commander (in a defined command hierarchy), in service to state leadership	Answer to patron, who may be independent or subservient to another authority
Resourced from	Trained and paid for by state via taxation (a profession)	Maintained through patron's revenue
Supply	Likely to be consistent at micro- and macro-levels	Locally differentiated
Material evidence	Likely to provide links to broader geo-political entity	Ambiguous evidence for geopolitical links

Table 1. Categories by which soldiers and warriors can be distinguished from each other from a sociological perspective.

direct imperial interventions, but significantly the occurrence of this process was also consistent with institutional changes to the Late Roman military and state. Furthermore, the process of regionalisation in combination with the institutional structure of the late Roman army blurred some of the distinctions between the soldier and the warrior, particularly in the years after 410.

### 2.3 MILITARY WITHDRAWAL

The possibility has also been raised that the changes observed in Late Roman forts in northern Britain cannot be attributed to soldiers; rather, these changes may indicate a completely new, non-military population or community inhabiting the forts in the aftermath of a complete military withdrawal by the early 5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>10</sup> Withdrawal need not have occurred in a single event; rather, the usurpation of Constantine III may have been the final withdrawal of an already reduced garrison, depleted in previous decades by the usurpations of Magnus Maximus and Eugenius and the planned eastern campaigns of Stilicho. This argument accepts the more recent archaeological evidence for 5<sup>th</sup> century activity and occupation, but otherwise follows the historical narrative of complete military withdrawal promulgated in the 6<sup>th</sup> century by Gildas and followed by some modern historians, attributing the withdrawal to one or more usurpers that started in Britain.<sup>11</sup>

A central point of disagreement in the three models above is when or if the 'regular' frontier soldiers, the *limitanei*, were withdrawn from the frontier. The models also rely to a varying degree on textual or archaeological evidence, and these data must be treated discretely.

## 3 TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

It must be emphatically stated that there is no reliable contemporary account of the later 4<sup>th</sup> or early 5<sup>th</sup> century that indicates exactly when and how many soldiers were withdrawn from Britain or the provision of *foederati*. Much of the narrative for the early 5<sup>th</sup> century is drawn from fragments written by Olympiodorus preserved in the later texts of Sozomen and Zosimus, supplemented by Orosius and the Gallic Chronicle of 452.<sup>12</sup> Three usurpers were raised in Britain in quick succession in response to barbarian incursions across the Rhine at the end of 405.<sup>13</sup> The last and most successful of these, Constantine III, left Britain for the continent in 407, and must have travelled with an army. The source of the soldiers and the size of his army from Britain is unresolved; it is generally accepted that he probably withdrew the British field army under the command of the *comes Britanniarum*.<sup>14</sup> In 409/410, the Britons and northern Gaul revolted against the regime of Constantine III, though the immediate causes for this are still debated.<sup>15</sup> After this, Britain was never reintegrated with the Roman Empire.

<sup>10</sup> Hodgson 2009, 40.

<sup>13</sup> Kulikowski 2000.

<sup>11</sup> Salway 1997.

<sup>14</sup> Drinkwater 1998, 275.

<sup>12</sup> Bartholomew 1982; Woolf 2003.

For historians of Britain, Gildas' *De Excidio Britanniae* is particularly prominent as it provides a narrative for the Roman and early post-Roman history of Britain, also having been written in Britain (or so it is regularly presumed). But this prominence is problematic for a number of reasons. Gildas explicitly named Magnus Maximus as the man that took the whole of Britain's army to the continent, with the implication that the absence of professional, state-supported defence and the subsequent incursions by Picts and Irish raiders was the impetus for the building of two walls across northern Britain.<sup>16</sup> Later in the narrative, an unnamed *superbus tyrannus* is credited with inviting Saxon mercenaries to Britain, presumably, as all the soldiers had been withdrawn. The walls (the Antonine Wall and Hadrian's Wall) were built at the behest of the native Britons, not a *foederati* garrison in need of support. It is also claimed that the northern part of the island was seized amid much slaughter, presumably instigated by the Picts, and with the subsequent abandonment of many towns. Significantly, Constantine III is not named by Gildas, and the last emperor of Roman Britain is Magnus Maximus.<sup>17</sup> As with Gildas' entire work, the claim for the withdrawal of the entire military garrison of Britain and the incorrect sequence of wall-building that follows are written in the highly stylised fashion of Late Roman rhetoric.<sup>18</sup> It seems that within the 70–140 years between the presumed end of Roman Britain and Gildas' account, the Hadrianic origins of the Wall were no longer known. For Gildas, the Wall simply connected and defended pre-existing towns (*urbes*).<sup>19</sup> These historical inaccuracies, as well as the rhetorical and polemic function and structure of the text undermine any confidence that can be placed in Gildas' history of Roman Britain.

Unfortunately, Ammianus Marcellinus, usually our best source for the 4<sup>th</sup> century, does not venture past the Battle of Adrianople in 378, and therefore has nothing to add. Occasional references or brief accounts from other texts can be utilised, such as the *Galic Chronicle of 452*, but these continental sources usually refer to events that are most likely attributed to southern Britain, making their relevance to the frontier zone uncertain at best.

While textual sources are often employed to support an argument for the removal of soldiers from Britain, these same sources may also reveal events that could see an influx of new soldiers and/or frontier refurbishment. Short of explicit statements of actual numbers of soldiers removed, the use of textual accounts to support an argument for total military withdrawal is, at best, inconclusive. The most convincing source for withdrawal of army units from Britain is the *Notitia Dignitatum*, which provides more evidence for the redeployment of units from the commands of the Saxon Shore and the field army of the *comes Britanniarum* than that of the *dux Britanniarum* in the north.<sup>20</sup> Of the 39 units under the command of the *dux Britanniarum*, only two can be confidently asserted to have been transferred to other com-

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 285–286. The entry for the 16<sup>th</sup> year of Honorius' reign (409 or 410) in *Galic Chronicle of 452* claims that the Britains were devastated by Saxons, and this entry has been evoked to explain the revolt against Constantine III's regime. Kulikowski (2000, 338) links barbarian activity in 409 to the revolt of Gerontius against Constantine III.

<sup>16</sup> Gildas 13.1–14; 15.1–18.3.

<sup>17</sup> Woolf (2003) points out that Gildas named Magnus Maximus as the last Roman emperor of Britain, and the later occurring, unnamed emperors, such as the *superbus tyrannus*, would follow the pattern established by Orosius, who was a known source for Gildas. Following this reading, Gildas follows Orosius' example of Maximus as the last named emperor, which would allow the *tyrannus* to be identified as Constantine III. Halsall (2007, 519–

526), however, identifies the *superbus tyrannus* as Magnus Maximus, arguing that Gildas' history can be separated into a 'northern section', 'eastern section', and 'Christian section' (see also Miller 1975). These geographic sections, Halsall argues, are relatively symmetrical in terms of historic events and episodes, and the activities of the *superbus tyrannus* occur in the eastern section and mirror the activities of Magnus Maximus in the northern section. If this sectional reading of Gildas is correct, then the invitation of the Saxons as *foederati* would be located in the 'eastern section' and should be further detached from Pictish attacks in the north of Britain (Gildas 23).

<sup>18</sup> Lapidge 1984.

<sup>19</sup> Gildas 18.2; 19.2.

<sup>20</sup> Collins/Breeze 2014, 68–70, table 2.



mands, while the *comites Britanniarum* and *litoris Saxonici* each have at least three units (of nine) that appear under other commands elsewhere in the *Notitia*. This represents at least one-third of the units under the command of each *comes* being reassigned. While using the *Notitia* in this manner is hardly foolproof, it offers some indication of the movement of units from Britain in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. The *Notitia* also indicates that the units along the Wall in the late 4<sup>th</sup> or early 5<sup>th</sup> century were generally unchanged from the later 2<sup>nd</sup> century, the presence of which is confirmed by inscriptions.<sup>21</sup> In other words, the Wall was garrisoned by the same units that occupied it during the Principate and did not undergo reorganisation through the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries, as is apparent elsewhere under the command of the *dux Britanniarum* and most other frontier commands in the *Notitia*. Accepting the limitations of written accounts underscores the importance of the archaeological evidence.

#### 4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE I: MORTUARY DATA

The archaeological evidence can be separated into three broad categories: mortuary remains, military metalwork and site/settlement activity. It is important to distinguish between these categories, as the northern frontier zone of Britain has excellent evidence for occupation and activity dating from the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries, spanning the traditional end date for the Roman imperial rule of Britain. The northern British frontier zone has some evidence for artefacts of the period, but there is very little mortuary evidence of that date. Yet, it is the differential presence of evidence in these categories that distinguishes the northern frontier of Britain from the Rhine and the Danube.

The contrast is most clearly seen in the mortuary evidence. Furnished inhumation burial rituals become increasingly common through the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries along the Rhine and the Danube, manifesting initially in weapon-bearing graves and subsequently in the occurrence of sizeable row-grave cemeteries that corresponds generally to the frontier zone.<sup>22</sup> Officers of the imperial army, barbarian *foederati* and post-Roman elites are recognised by the burials containing weapons, belt sets, and crossbow brooches. Yet the Late Roman mortuary record for the northern frontier of *Britannia* suffers from a dearth of evidence. A fairly typical example associated with Hadrian's Wall are the four inhumation graves found outside the southwest gate of the fort of South Shields;<sup>23</sup> the graves date to the 5<sup>th</sup> century based on both a TPQ from the stratigraphic sequence and <sup>14</sup>C samples. The graves contained only human bone, with no evidence for any accompanying grave furniture or goods. Recent fieldwork at the sites of Birdoswald and Maryport has revealed ten Late Roman or early post-Roman graves, but analysis of these graves are in progress. Significantly, only one of these graves appears to have been accompanied by any objects, a bead necklace from a cist grave at Maryport. A Late Roman burial outside of the town of Corbridge at Shorden Brae, however, saw the inhumation of an individual buried with a crossbow brooch against the external walls of a 2<sup>nd</sup> century mausoleum.<sup>24</sup> While the sample is admittedly small, these burials are likely to represent the 'normal'

<sup>21</sup> The *per lineam valli* section of the *dux's* command (*Not. Dig. Oc.* 40, lines 32-49) lists the following: 33. *Tribunus cohortis quartae Lingonum, Segeduno*; 34. *Tribunus cohortis primae Cornoviorum, Ponte Aeli*; 35. *Praefectus alae primae Asturum, Conderco*; 36. *Tribunus cohortis primae Frixagorum, Vindobala*; 37. *Praefectus alae Sabinianae, Hunno*; 38. *Praefectus alae secundae Asturum, Cilurno*; 39. *Tribunus cohortis primae Bataborum, Procolitia*; 40. *Tribunus cohortis primae Tungrorum, Borcovicio*; 41. *Tribunus cohortis quartae Gallorum, Vindolana*; 42. *Tribunus cohortis [lacuna - secundae] Asturum, Aesica*; 43. *Tribunus cohortis secundae Dalmatorum,*

*Magnis*; 44. *Tribunus cohortis primae Aeliae Dacorum, [lacuna - Banna]*; [lacuna - 44a. *tribunus cohortis secundae Tungrorum,*] *Amboglanna*; 45. *Praefectus alae Petrianae, Petrianis*; 46. [...], *Luguvallii*; 47. *Praefectus numeri Maurorum Aerlianorum, Aballaba*; 48. *Tribunus cohortis secundae Lingonum, Congavata*; 49. *Tribunus cohortis primae Hispanorum, Axelduno.*

<sup>22</sup> Brather 2005, 162-168.

<sup>23</sup> Snape 1994, 143-144.

<sup>24</sup> Gillam/Daniels 1961, 56-58.

burial ritual in the Wall corridor, perhaps even the broader frontier zone – unfurnished inhumation, sometimes with a cist burial – with the example from Corbridge an exception to the rule.

This makes the cemetery of 15 furnished 4<sup>th</sup>-century burials from Scorton, north of the fort and town of Catterick all the more striking.<sup>25</sup> Four of the graves contained crossbow brooches, and six graves contained belt fittings, two classes of artefact that are identified as military metalwork and are typically employed to identify officers, soldiers, veterans, and/or government officials; at Scorton, the individuals buried with these objects all appear to be male. Significantly, isotope analysis identifies the individuals buried with brooches and belt accessories as having origins in the European mainland; individuals bearing military metal-work were non-local. Eckardt *et al.* note the temptation to identify the foreign men as members of the Late Roman field army, the *comitatenses*, but refrain from making this assertion.<sup>26</sup> Rather, they observe that the military was composed of individuals with diverse geographical origins.

Scorton, however, is a rather anomalous cemetery not only for the northern frontier region, but for the whole of *Britannia*. Large, inhumation cemeteries containing a number of highly furnished burials are not commonly found in Britain. Moreover, where they do occur, they appear to be associated with towns rather than military sites, as at Lankhills.<sup>27</sup> This association is important, as it provides a context for which a burial ritual that emphasised military status may be more important. In the frontier zone or at a fort, many if not most men may have expressed a military identity, whereas in a town an army officer was only one of many high status identity groups.

## 5      A R C H A E O L O G I C A L   E V I D E N C E   2 :   M I L I T A R Y   M E T A L W O R K

The association of crossbow brooches and belt accessories with the Roman army in Roman visual media also means that these objects can be used to identify a military presence in absence of a burial or military-type site. As noted above, the overall distribution of the so-called military metalwork has been used to argue for a redeployment of the Late Roman army in *Britannia*.<sup>28</sup> However, these overall distributions mask a number of important observations.

Crossbow brooches offer an illustrative example. Swift's excellent study looked at the distribution, form, dating, and association of crossbow brooches across the Late Roman West, confirming not only their association with the army and Late Roman state, but also highlighting regional patterning.<sup>29</sup> Subsequently, I have examined the brooches from the frontier zone and Britain more broadly, incorporating new data that emerged after Swift completed her study.<sup>30</sup> The latter study assessed a dataset of 286 brooches from Britain drafted from the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS; 143 examples), Swift (69 examples) and Collins (74 examples). This initial distribution revealed that crossbow brooches could be found across most of England, with greater occurrence south and east of the line drawn roughly from the Severn estuary to the Tees estuary and along Hadrian's Wall. However, the distribution relative to the frequency of crossbow brooches at a given site alters the perception of the distribution; it is clear that they more commonly occur at military sites, namely Hadrian's Wall and the Saxon Shore, London, and the cemeteries of Lankhills and Scorton (fig. 2). Nearly all other locations were individual finds. The presence of a number of military officers and state officials bearing crossbow brooches in London is not surprising given that it was the diocesan capital, and the signal presence of the cemeteries of Scorton and Lankhills further underscores how cemetery sites can significantly add to the quantity and distribution of brooches known. Removing London, Scorton and Lankhills from the distribution further highlights that crossbow brooches most frequently and commonly occur and cluster at military sites.

<sup>25</sup> Eckardt/Müldner/Speed 2015.

<sup>26</sup> Eckardt/Müldner/Speed 2015, 27, 28.

<sup>27</sup> Clarke 1979; Booth *et al.* 2010.

<sup>28</sup> See Esmond Cleary, this volume, fig. 5.

<sup>29</sup> Swift 2000.

<sup>30</sup> Collins 2010; 2015a.

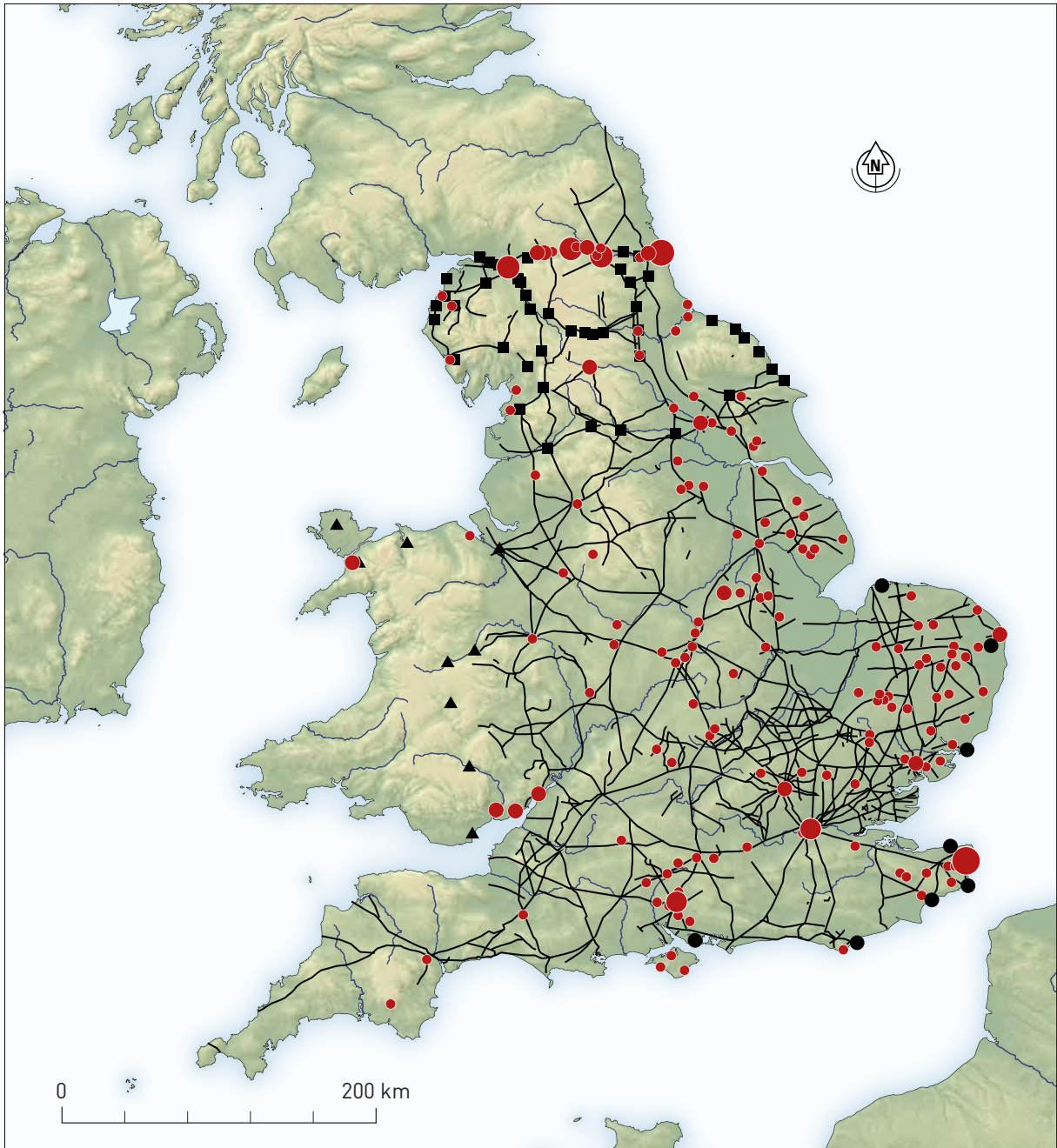


Fig. 2. The distribution of crossbow brooches (in red) by frequency overlaying the distribution of military sites (in black) occupied in the later 4<sup>th</sup> century. Black squares indicate forts under the command of the *dux Britanniarum*, black circles indicate forts of the *comes litoris Saxonici*, and black triangles are unattributed sites in Wales. The smallest red circles represent single finds, middle-sized circles represent 2-9 brooches, and large circle represents (more than) 10 brooches.

The overall and ‘filtered’ distributions also mask important aspects of the typology and production of crossbows. Swift observed clusters of crossbows with the same typology and decorative motifs recurring along distinct sectors of the Rhine and Danube frontiers, with some outliers forward of and behind the frontiers.<sup>31</sup> This suggests access and distribution to crossbow brooches with a more centralised production.

<sup>31</sup> Swift 2000, 79.

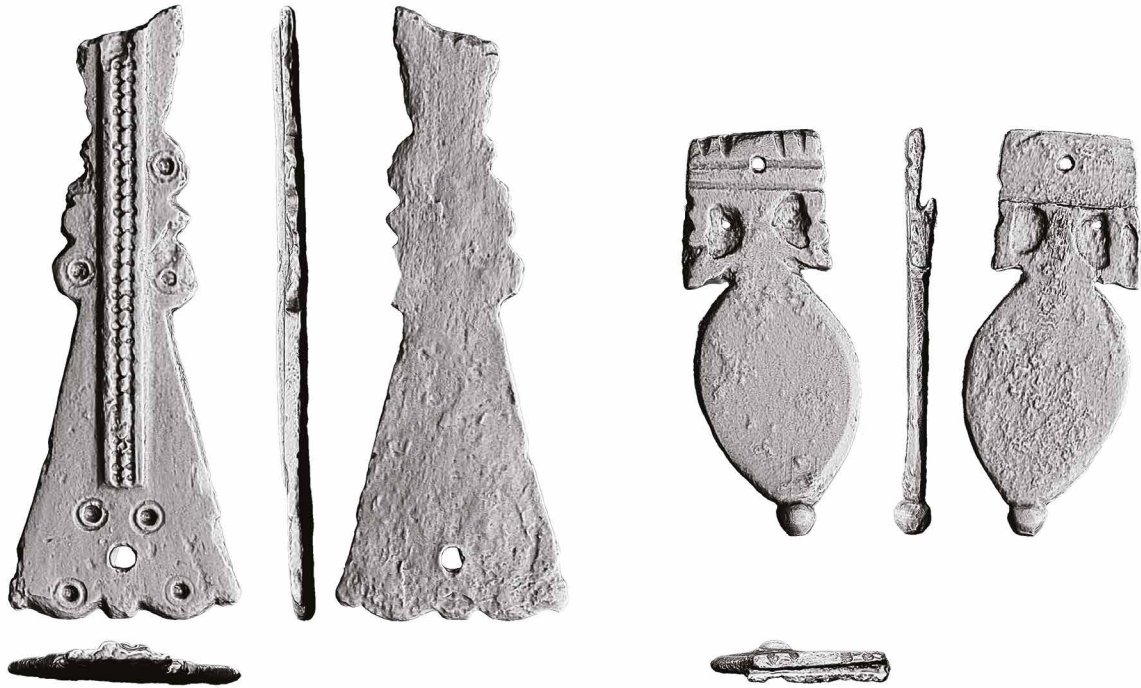


Fig. 3. A 3D scan of an incomplete propeller-shaped belt mount from Carrawburgh, and the unfinished amphora-shaped strap end from South Shields. Note the uncleared metal between the 'handles' and the 'neck' of the amphora, and the missing back plate of the split end at the top of the strap end. Source: NU Digital Heritage.

In contrast, *Britannia* seems to have a more diverse range of crossbow brooches, suggesting more localised production and distribution, reinforced by the fact that many crossbow brooches in Britain do not neatly fit into the standard typologies.<sup>32</sup> Data from the PAS is particularly significant here, as PAS-recorded crossbow brooches are not generally associated with military or urban sites; many PAS-recorded crossbows tend to display a greater divergence from standard typological forms than those found at military and urban sites, particularly in type 3/4 which is the mostly widely occurring type of crossbow brooch.

Another brooch form may have also been considered as military metalwork, namely the zoomorphic penannular brooch. It is notable that in the northern frontier zone, Fowler type E penannulars are predominantly associated with military sites; furthermore, where contextual information is available, these type E penannulars date to AD 360 and later.<sup>33</sup> While the link between the army or other aspects of Roman imperial authority is unproven, the fact that zoomorphic penannular brooches continued to develop into larger and more conspicuous form and were associated with the elite in early medieval Britain is suggestive.<sup>34</sup>

Metalwork associated with belt suites must also be critically considered. Within Britain, emphasis is typically placed on Hawkes & Dunning<sup>35</sup> type buckles and similar zoomorphic derivatives which have a distinctly southern British distribution.<sup>36</sup> Yet, Late Roman buckles from military sites in the northern frontier, including the burials at Scorton, tend to be non-zoomorphic forms that fall outside the Hawkes & Dunning typology with zoomorphic buckles along the Wall limited to three examples from South

<sup>32</sup> Collins 2015a, 474.

<sup>33</sup> Collins 2010, fig. 7.9; 2014.

<sup>34</sup> Laing 1993.

<sup>35</sup> Hawkes/Dunning 1961.

<sup>36</sup> See also Esmonde Cleary, this volume; Böhme 1986; Halsall 2012; Worrell/Pearce 2012. Note that Leahy 2007 observed the distinct dearth of evidence in proximity to the Saxon Shore forts.

Shields and Corbridge.<sup>37</sup> Thus, a more cautious approach should be taken to zoomorphic buckles, particularly those without any secure archaeological provenance. The widespread occurrence of zoomorphic buckles across southern *Britannia* may provide testimony to the hypothesis of a self-consciously militarising civil elite.<sup>38</sup> Other accessories typical of military belts, such as propeller-shaped stiffeners are only associated with military sites in the frontier zone, while strap ends have a wider distribution.<sup>39</sup> Evidence for local production of amphora-shaped strap ends, however, has been found with a lead mould-piece from the fort at Stanwix along the Wall, and an unfinished piece from South Shields (fig. 3).<sup>40</sup>

Despite the evidence for local production, the forms and decorative motifs displayed in crossbow brooches and belt equipment indicate that the northern frontier was still participating in contemporary aspects of military display, albeit with some local ‘flavour’. What is required, however, is a more detailed study of the belt equipment from Britain, teasing out differences in production, style, and distribution in detail; arguably, this is more likely to indicate not only clearer chronological variation, but may also further distinguish between official military and a broader adoption of this material outside of military communities.

## 6      A R C H A E O L O G I C A L   E V I D E N C E   3 :   S I T E   O C C U P A T I O N / A C T I V I T Y

At the start of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the northern frontier of *Britannia* had not changed substantially from the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century. A legionary fortress was still located at York in the east and Chester in the west. Forts were regularly placed along the roads leading north from these fortresses to Hadrian’s Wall. The Wall itself was still garrisoned from its east to west end, and there was a screen of four outpost forts to the north of the Wall. The Wall had changed somewhat since its erection in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century; most turrets were no longer standing, let alone occupied, and it is uncertain to what extent the milecastles along its length were manned. But the Wall forts still housed soldiers. The forts, however, would have appeared as rather outdated to soldiers serving in other frontier zones of the Late Roman Empire. Most Wall-forts retained the plan of their initial foundation, which for the majority of sites was in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, taking a playing-card shape, with a principle gate along each stretch of wall, with modest square or rectangular towers built on or inside the curtain with very little projection. The fort curtain retained an earth rampart against its back, and only rarely were any upgrades made to defensive architecture. The internal plans of forts also generally retained the 2<sup>nd</sup> century origins, with a *principia* in the centre, flanked by *horrea* and a *praetorium*; barracks and other buildings were found in the front and rear ranges of the fort. This is not to claim that every fort was uniform in appearance or unchanged from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century; there had been many changes. But it is striking how conservative the military architecture of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries of northern *Britannia* is in comparison to that of the Rhine, Danube, and Eastern frontiers. The exception is most notably seen in the erection of the new installations along the North Yorkshire coast, which were fortlets typical of the Valentinianic era with a central square tower inside a curtain bearing projecting bastions.<sup>41</sup>

I have discussed aspects of the changes to 4<sup>th</sup> century forts in detail elsewhere,<sup>42</sup> but a summary of trends can be offered. Unsurprisingly, given the length of occupation and use of most forts in northern Britain, repair and/or refurbishment was made to a number of buildings, including barracks, *praetoria* and *principia*. The regular standardised barracks of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century were replaced with either semi-standardised

<sup>37</sup> Coulston 2010.

<sup>41</sup> Symonds 2015.

<sup>38</sup> Gerrard 2013.

<sup>42</sup> Collins 2012.

<sup>39</sup> Coulston 2010, fig. 6.4.

<sup>40</sup> Collingwood 1931, no. 75; Allason-Jones/Miket 1984, no. 3.610.

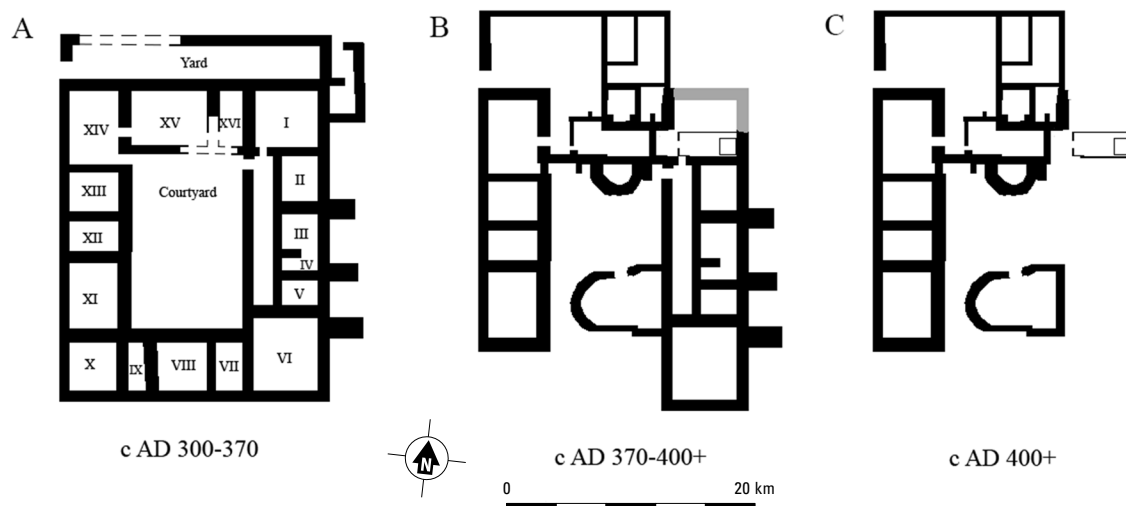


Fig. 4. The phase sequence of changes to the Vindolanda *praetorium*. The standard courtyard house is modified c. 370, with the addition of a new bathhouse replacing the north wing, the demolition of the south wing, and the addition of an apsidal structure projecting from the east wing into the courtyard. In the next phase, the east wing appears to have been demolished.

or less regular chalet-style barracks, which were further repaired or refurbished as necessary. Greater irregularity in the internal arrangements, size and position of individual rooms and structures has been identified at some sites occurring after c. 370.<sup>43</sup>

Buildings were not only repaired, however, and many underwent a change in use alongside considerable modification. For example, there is evidence for the blocking of gate portals accompanied by re-use of the space. *Principia* have evidence for new activities, such as butchery, metal-working, new storage rooms, or even more domestic remains suggesting living space. Such changes are found in *principia* along the Wall, as at Housesteads and Vindolanda, as well as in the legionary basilica in York. In barracks, *principia* and *praetoria* there is evidence for larger rooms having walls inserted, creating smaller units of space. There are instances of barracks being demolished, as well as the demolition and/or conversion of *horrea* for other functions. The 4<sup>th</sup> century courtyard house at South Shields, presumed to be the *praetorium*, may have been a furniture workshop in its final phase after AD 400.<sup>44</sup> Different building techniques were also employed, for example with increasing use of earth and/or timber, and it is notable that at many forts, the latest road pavements show a marked decrease in quality. As well as these changes to the internal spaces of buildings, the use of space within the fort also saw a number of changes. New building refurbishments could extend onto the former road space, and patterned coin loss at some sites suggest marketplace activities occurring inside the fort walls.

While these trends can be found at nearly every Roman fort occupied in the 4<sup>th</sup> century and later in the northern frontier of Britain, there is very little consistency in terms of the frequency in which these trends were applied at any given site, and the dating of these activities vary between sites. Table 2, for example, provides a summary of granaries at sites along Hadrian's Wall where the granaries were converted or demolished in the later 4<sup>th</sup> century or after.<sup>45</sup> Even among a handful of sites, there is no clear agreement in regard to dating when these changes were implemented. In general, some significant changes can be attributed to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, for example the blocking of some gate portals; however, most of the trends noted above occurred in the mid- and later-4<sup>th</sup> century, typically after c. 360. While these trends are broadly consistent with a later 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century date, each site has its own history and

<sup>43</sup> Hodgson/Bidwell 2004.

<sup>45</sup> Collins 2015b.

<sup>44</sup> Greep 2014.

Site	Granary	First built	Subsequent changes	TPQ of changes
South Shields	forecourt	early 3 <sup>rd</sup> c	fire damaged?	late 3 <sup>rd</sup> c
			<i>opus signinum</i> surface laid	early 4 <sup>th</sup> c
			subfloor infilled	c. 370
			demolished, quarried, and subsequent paving	5 <sup>th</sup> c
Newcastle	east	late 2 <sup>nd</sup> /early 3 <sup>rd</sup> c	subfloor infilled, <i>opus signinum</i> floor laid, timber porch added	late 3 <sup>rd</sup> /early 4 <sup>th</sup> c
	west	late 2 <sup>nd</sup> /early 3 <sup>rd</sup> c	demolition/robbing	5 <sup>th</sup> c
			subfloor infilled, trench hearth inserted	c. 370
			demolished, drain inserted through foundations	5 <sup>th</sup> c
Housesteads	Hadrianic	120s	north granary	late 2 <sup>nd</sup> /early 3 <sup>rd</sup> c
			collapse?	4 <sup>th</sup> c
			south granary	late 2 <sup>nd</sup> /early 3 <sup>rd</sup> c
			insertion of dividing wall, new entrance	c. 350?
Vindolanda	bldg XV	late 3 <sup>rd</sup> /early 4 <sup>th</sup> c	loss of eastern end to new bathblock	340/360
	east	c. 211	new floor laid	c. 330
			demolition?	c. 400?
			new structure reuses southern portion	5 <sup>th</sup> c
	west	c. 211	fire	c. 275
			rebuilt	c. 300
			demolition?	c. 400?
			reduced size to southern portion	5 <sup>th</sup> c
Birdoswald	north	c. 205	subfloor modifications	3 <sup>rd</sup> c
			west end subfloor infilled	late 3 <sup>rd</sup> c
			roof collapse at east end of building	c. 350
			west end roof collapse, robbing, and dumping	c. 350
	south	c. 205	1 <sup>st</sup> timber building	c. 390
			2 <sup>nd</sup> timber building	5 <sup>th</sup> /6 <sup>th</sup> c
			subfloor modifications	3 <sup>rd</sup> c
			central section subfloor infilled	late 3 <sup>rd</sup> c
			entire subfloor infilled	c. 360
			subsequent refloorings	c. 390
			roof collapse	5 <sup>th</sup> c.

Table 2. Summary of changes to granaries at selected Wall forts in the late Roman period.

chronology, reinforcing the notion that these are widespread changes occurring within the military communities of the northern frontier rather than impositions as a consequence of a single event like a large-scale settlement of *foederati*.

In addition, there is evidence from a number of sites that occupation continued into (and probably far into) the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries. The sequence of timber halls at Birdoswald, succeeding the demolished granaries is perhaps the most well-known,<sup>46</sup> but there is post-Roman use and occupation of granaries at Vindolanda and South Shields.<sup>47</sup> Sequences from *praetoria*, namely those at South Shields, Vindolanda, and Binchester demonstrate a drastically changed use for much of the commanding officers' homes in the decades surrounding 400 (fig. 4).<sup>48</sup> What is significant, and arguably links the occupation of the post-

<sup>46</sup> Wilmott 1997.

<sup>48</sup> Collins, in press.

<sup>47</sup> Vindolanda: Birley 2013; South Shields: Bidwell/Speak 1994.

Roman phases to the Roman phases is that the buildings are adapted, or demolished and replaced in a piecemeal fashion. This arguably suggests some continuity of population.

## 7 IDENTIFYING A MILITARY OCCUPATION

Identifying discrete categories of archaeological and textual evidence is a useful exercise, in that it enables a more direct confrontation to be made between expectations of what is classified as ‘military’ and what actual evidence is for military presence. At one level, there is a tension between expectations of institutional standardisation and regional variation, often implicitly intertwined with the significance of production, distribution, and supply.

Military metalwork from the Wall and broader northern frontier zone demonstrates an awareness of the new forms and styles favoured by the Late Roman army on the European mainland, but it also appears to be produced locally. In contrast, forts tend to retain a relict appearance, with important modifications made to key buildings such as the *principia*, *praetoria*, and granaries that initially seem out of place in a military context. But a longer-term perspective argues for these changes to be seen as acceptable and ‘natural’ developments from the garrisons of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and early 4<sup>th</sup> centuries. The similarity of these changes across the region, though following individual site histories, also supports the notion of these changes as part of a regional phenomenon. Mortuary data, while sparse, also seems to be in agreement with a consistent regional pattern, which tends toward unfurnished inhumation or inhumation in a cist grave. Exceptions to this rule can be linked to graves that are associated with a more diverse and urban-based community, as at Shorden Brae (Corbridge) and Scorton (Catterick). Significantly, the lack of numerous furnished inhumation cemeteries associated with a fort or other military site severs the crucial link between the Late Roman army and mortuary data that has been established along the Rhine and Danube frontiers. This further underscores the very cogent arguments that these furnished inhumations need to be understood as aspects of elite competition at the local level.<sup>49</sup> The widespread absence of this mortuary rite in northern *Britannia* in the late 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries is therefore even more significant – the region had not destabilised at the social or political level that has been suggested for the lower and middle Rhine.

Aspects related to military supply further underscore that northern Britain should be understood as a cohesive region. The primary supplier of ceramics in the later 4<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> century were the potteries of East Yorkshire, with kilns supplying calcite-gritted coarsewares and the finewares of the Crambeck industry.<sup>50</sup> These fabrics and their latest forms are found distributed across a range of sites in the greater Yorkshire region, but beyond this they are predominantly found on military sites, including the west coast of Cumbria. This distribution suggests that the Yorkshire ceramics were strongly tied to military supply in the 4<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> centuries.

In contrast, the distribution and numbers of the latest coinage in the northern frontier highlight intraregional variation.<sup>51</sup> Towns have the greatest number of coins, fully supporting the idea of the town as a commercial centre. But the military sites have to be separated between those along Hadrian’s Wall, and those forts south of the Wall. The Wall sites have relatively small amounts of the latest Theodosian coinage of 388–402, while the military sites south of the Wall generally have greater numbers, at least for those east of the Pennine Hills. Seemingly at odds with the other military sites, the Yorkshire coastal fortlets have rather high numbers of the latest coins, particularly given the relatively small size in contrast to the larger forts in the region.

<sup>49</sup> Halsall 2000; Theuvs 2009.

<sup>51</sup> See Esmonde Clear, this volume, table 1.

<sup>50</sup> Bidwell/Croom 2010.



How can we explain this apparent discrepancy? It is best rationalised relative to notions of military pay and supply, as well as where coins have a functional utility. Taking the Wall sites first, it should be remembered that nearly all the Wall sites had been occupied since the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century, with long-standing networks for supply and provision. By the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, much of a soldier's pay was in kind rather than in cash via the *annona militaris*,<sup>52</sup> and there may have been limited opportunities for spending cash within a fort settlement; cash exchanges were more likely to take place in towns. The forts south of the Wall are often, though not always, associated with towns outside the walls of the fort, and this probably explains the higher number of coins at these sites. But does that mean that there were great commercial opportunities to be had at the Yorkshire coastal fortlets, where there is the highest concentration of the latest coinage? Probably not, but the coin numbers here likely reflect payment relative to supply; the coastal fortlets were new installations without long-established supply networks, and so payment to soldiers at these locations may have been easier to produce in cash than in kind.

There are clear exceptions for this explanation of coin distribution relative to taxation, use, and pay. The fort at Binchester has relatively high levels of the latest coinage, but does not seem to have a large extramural settlement or town associated with it by the late 4<sup>th</sup> century. However, recent excavations have underscored the results of excavations from the 1970s-80s that demonstrate very high levels of cattle butchery at the site from the mid-4<sup>th</sup> century on.<sup>53</sup> Binchester may be a fort related to aspects of military supply rather than purely tactical and strategical applications of force – a regional *fabrica* if you will.

If all the archaeological evidence is considered holistically, a case can be made that demonstrates a clear regional cohesion for the northern frontier, from the Wall south to the line of the Humber estuary. Unsurprisingly but crucially, this corresponds to the command of the *dux Britanniarum* in Chapter 40 of the *Notitia Dignitatum*, though this is not to say there is perfect agreement between the *dux*'s command in the *Notitia* and the archaeology. There are discrepancies, for example in the number of military sites that have evidence for late 4<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> century occupation that are not attested in the *Notitia*. But these highlight the problems with the *Notitia* rather than the archaeology. If the arguments made above about intraregional variation in the evidence from military sites can be explained relative to the economics of military supply and pay, then a key factor in the development of regionally distinctive archaeological signatures can be identified and tested.

Crucially, the archaeological evidence needs to be assessed divorced from expectations or presumptions established by textual sources and subsequent historical narratives. For the northern frontier of Britain, Gildas' account of complete military withdrawal under Maximus is at odds with the archaeological evidence, which demonstrates that occupation of fort sites continued into the 5<sup>th</sup> century. It is feasible that Maximus withdrew some soldiers from the northern frontier region; certainly his coinage reached the Wall. But there is no clear link between Constantine III and the northern frontier. It is significant that none of his coinage has been found in the frontier zone, in contrast to its presence in southern Britain in hoards and as single finds.<sup>54</sup> We can identify the occupation at forts as military on the basis of the consistency of small finds that suggest military supply (e.g. ceramics) and identity (e.g. brooches), *contra* Esmonde Cleary (this volume).

But who were the soldiers occupying the northern frontier? Were they normal *limitanei*, the descendants of the auxiliary units that garrisoned the frontier in the early empire, as purported in the *Notitia*

<sup>52</sup> Collins 2012, 57-66 discusses the economy of the frontier in more detail, but note that there is considerable scope for further research into the Late Roman military economy. Hoards of precious metal objects and coins – not least of which is the Traprain Law hoard – attest to the circulation of gold and silver coins. There are even a

few rare examples of base metal coins found along the line of the Wall that must have been deposited in the 5<sup>th</sup> century (Collins 2008).

<sup>53</sup> Ferris 2010.

<sup>54</sup> Bland and Loriot 2010 provide a useful overview for gold and some silver coins.

*Dignitatum*? Or were the occupants new *foederati* soldiers, as Halsall has argued?<sup>55</sup> In other frontier sectors, notably along the Rhine, the presence of soldiers of barbarian extraction is usually inferred from artefacts found in furnished inhumations, or more rarely from the military site itself. For northern *Britannia* in the late 4<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> century, there are no diagnostic artefacts that signal a large-scale barbarian presence, Pictish or Germanic, despite an unambiguous statement that a ‘large and strong force’ of Alamanni was sent to Britain in 372.<sup>56</sup> Hunter has argued that some objects found in the frontier zone may reflect Pictish settlement or recruitment within the Roman diocese of Britain,<sup>57</sup> but these occur in such low numbers that while the presence of individual or perhaps small unit (ie family) migration can be accepted, the argument for large-scale resettlement of entire barbarian communities cannot be sustained. The evidence, therefore, suggests the continued presence of the *limitanei* through the ‘end’ of Roman Britain into the early-mid 5<sup>th</sup> century; the dating evidence and stratigraphy is ambiguous enough that the occupation could feasibly continue to an even later date.

## 8 CONCLUSION

Notably, I have focused on the northern frontier zone of *Britannia*, arguing for two key points. First, the archaeological evidence indicates a regionally cohesive material signature, one in which the military sites can be distinguished as different from non-military sites. Second, the archaeological evidence supports the model of warband transformation which saw the uninterrupted occupation of the *limitanei* through the 4<sup>th</sup> century and into the 5<sup>th</sup> century, beyond the accepted political separation of Britain from the empire c. 410. Admittedly, the northern frontier of Britain does not look the same as other Late Roman frontiers, underscoring the significance of the regional unit as well as the tension between regional diversity and larger scale homogeneity expected of the Roman army and/or empire.

The northern frontier of Britain can offer a useful comparison for other regions, particularly in terms of reassessment not only of the evidence, but the presumptions underlying our interpretive frameworks. Lacking a rich record of furnished inhumation cemeteries, the structural evidence from forts and other military installations has to be interrogated for evidence of the social dynamics of the Late Roman army. Similarly, fewer furnished inhumations results in fewer examples of military metalwork. Critical assessment of brooches and belt equipment has highlighted that behind the distribution are further questions related to production and dissemination. Indeed, the rapid accumulation of new data over the past 20 years across northern and western Europe highlights the need for a critical reassessment of the origins and associations of a range of artefact classes. To what extent can we still confidently identify any barbarian group by a single type of object? Equally, can we identify or should we distinguish between ‘official’ military metalwork, local production and non-official copying of such metalwork? What is ‘barbarian’ and what is ‘military’? Ideally, addressing these questions enables us to reassess the subtleties and nuances of our data, disentangling the melange of interpretive issues that complicate our conceptualisation of the later Roman West.

<sup>55</sup> Halsall 2012.

<sup>57</sup> Hunter 2010.

<sup>56</sup> Amm. Marc. 29.4.7.

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