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The Kingdom of Cologne and the Early Frankish Silver Coinage

Jérémie Chameroy, Guillaume Blanchet, Guillaume Sarah

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Jérémie Chameroy, Guillaume Blanchet, Guillaume Sarah. The Kingdom of Cologne and the Early Frankish Silver Coinage. *Germania : Anzeiger der Römisch-Germanischen Kommission des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts*, 2023, 100, pp.245-290. 10.11588/ger.2022.99119 . hal-04188494

HAL Id: hal-04188494

<https://hal.science/hal-04188494v1>

Submitted on 30 Aug 2023

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GERMANIA

ANZEIGER

DER RÖMISCH - GERMANISCHEN KOMMISSION
DES DEUTSCHEN ARCHÄOLOGISCHEN INSTITUTS

JAHRGANG 100

2022

1.-2. HALBBAND

PDF-Dokument des gedruckten Beitrags

Jérémie Chameroy, Guillaume Blanchet und Guillaume Sarah

**The Kingdom of Cologne
and the early Frankish silver coinage**

SCHRIFTFÜHRUNG FRANKFURT A. M. PALMENGARTENSTRASSE 10-12



GEBR. MANN VERLAG BERLIN

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MIT 80 TEXTABBILDUNGEN, 17 TABELLEN

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ISBN 978-3-7861-2906-6

ISSN 0016-8874

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Gebr. Mann Verlag · Berlin – www.reimer-mann-verlag.de

Graphische Betreuung: Oliver Wagner, Lara Hies, Römisch-Germanische Kommission

Formalredaktion: Nadine Baumann, Bonn;

Julia Hahn, Timo Müller, Römisch-Germanische Kommission

Satz und Druck LINDEN SOFT Verlag e.K., Aichwald

Printed in Germany

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Die mit den Initialen gekennzeichneten Résumés wurden von Yves Gautier (Y. G.) übersetzt.

The Kingdom of Cologne and the early Frankish silver coinage

By Jérémy Chameroy, Guillaume Blanchet, and Guillaume Sarah*

Keywords: Cologne / Rhine Franks / Merovingian silver coinage / argenteus / archaeometry
Schlagwörter: Köln / Rheinfranken / Merowingische Silbermünzprägung / argenteus / Archäometrie

Mots-clés: Cologne / Francs rhénans / monnayage d'argent mérovingien / argenteus / archéométrie

Introduction

The birth of the Germanic kingdoms in 5th century Gaul brought with it a transition from the Late Roman to Early Medieval monetary economy which involved only partial changes. Certainly, this was related to the fact that the Germanic populations installed in the Empire, such as the Franks, had long been in close contact with the Roman economic and administrative structures when they took political control over the provinces between the Seine and the Rhine. Therefore, their first coinages not surprisingly imitated the current imperial gold and silver issues by copying or adapting roughly the same types and striking the same denominations of the *Augusti*, whereby the weight and fineness of the Germanic gold coins were consistent with their imperial models. The most apparent discontinuity with the Roman monetary system concerns the abrupt break in the issue of bronze coinage, limited to a few series in 5th century Gaul¹. However, the very long use of late Roman bronze coins seems to be attested by single finds from early medieval horizons and graves². Thus, the availability of this low denomination coinage allowed in theory the continuation of an at least partially monetised economy in Merovingian Gaul based on gold, silver, and bronze denominations, resembling that of the late Roman provinces.

Nevertheless, the beginnings of the Frankish coinage in Gaul raise more questions when one tries to identify the authorities and the mints involved in the production. This is

* It is a great pleasure for us to thank Dr Claudia Klages, not only for her warm welcome at the Coin Room of the LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn, where we had the possibility to study the coins from Cologne-Rodenkirchen, but also for allowing us to publish this exceptional ensemble and to loan some of the coins for analyses at the IRAMAT-CEB (UMR 7065, University of Orléans). Carola Murray-Seegert improved the English text.

¹ GRIERSON / BLACKBURN 1986, 460 no. 339 (king Gundobald, 473–516); 471 no. 391 (king Childebert I, 511–558).

² The recent focus on the interpretation of Roman

bronze coins in Medieval contexts yielded arguments for the monetary function of these coins and their late Roman (or Medieval?) imitations in the Merovingian economy, which seems to have been more monetised than supposed (BOMPAIRE et al. 2015/16, 6–7; 20–21). In the lower Rhône Valley and Provence, small bronze coins circulated and were issued up to the middle of the 6th century (BOMPAIRE et al. 2015/16, 183–196). In some cases, however, late 4th century bronze coins were regarded as a source of metal and recycled during the 5th century, e.g. in Holtum (NL) (KEMMERS 2014, 165–167).

undoubtedly due to the fact that one cannot recognise any “typical Frankish” signs on the coins like the characteristic Victory on most of the Visigothic *trienses*³ or the king’s monogram on the reverse of Burgundian gold, silver, and copper coins⁴. In this context, stylistic considerations are often too subjective to help attribute particular coins to a precise authority – imperial or Frankish.

These uncertainties surrounding the early Frankish coinage may explain the widespread assumption that the Franks started producing coins only after Clovis unified Gaul under his rule and that their first issues were gold⁵. Even if the existence of tiny silver coins (*argentei*⁶ of c. 0.1 g) of possibly Frankish origin has been long noted among the finds from northern Gaul⁷, the problems raised by their dating and attribution meant that they were often excluded from reference works on the Merovingian coinage. As a typical example, Philip Grierson and Mark Blackburn made only a brief mention of these silver issues on the grounds that they began before Clovis and were “essentially pre-Merovingian in character”⁸. The authors thus left them out of their standard work on Medieval European Coinage. In most cases, however, scholars have found it easier to attribute all early Frankish coins to Clovis, as the most powerful king in late-5th and early-6th century Gaul (or to his descendants), while overlooking others, such as the king of the Rhine Franks⁹, Sigibert the Lame, who had his seat at Cologne up to c. 509¹⁰. For early Merovingian Gaul, the possibility of a complex structure of coin production implying different authorities (or levels of authority) – kings, chiefs as their followers, cities, or private entities – has so far not been considered in detail.

³ GRIERSON / BLACKBURN 1986, pl. 10 nos 178–185 with the name of Anastasius (491–518).

⁴ GRIERSON / BLACKBURN 1986, pl. 17 nos 336–339 with the name of Anastasius and the monogram of king Gundobald.

⁵ SUHLE 1930, 105; WERNER 1935, 7; LE GENTILHOMME 1943, 97; DIEPENBACH 1949/50, 144; GILLES 1981, 29; 1996, 509–510. Lastly, DAHMEN 2017, 71–72; 79 considered the silver royal issues as insignificant and McCORMICK 2013, 338 stated that Merovingian kings first started issuing coins in the 6th century. Older studies like REINHART 1939, 38 argued that the exclusive presence of Roman coins in Childeric’s grave would be proof that at the time of his death, the Franks did not begin issuing coinage yet. Actually, the 300 gold and silver coins from Childeric’s grave, stretching over five centuries, are not representative of the coin circulation in late 5th century Gaul but were arranged by his son Clovis to highlight Childeric’s political legitimacy, as suggested by FISCHER / LIND 2015, 12; 29; particularly the silver coins may have been collected over many years in the *barbaricum* by Childeric’s forefathers, as proposed by R.-ALFÖLDI / STRIBRNY 1998, 43.

⁶ Although widely used in numismatic literature, the term *argentei minuti* actually refers to a passage in *Codex Vaticanus Reg. Lat.* 1050, 158–159 (see CONRAT 1908, 258). If this name seems to conform to the metrological specificities of *argentei*, it is not

certain if it refers to these coins in particular, or perhaps to late Merovingian *denarii*.

⁷ PROU 1892, XCIX was right in assuming that the tiny silver coins must be attributed to the late 5th or early 6th century Franks on the basis of the concentration of their findspots in Northern Gaul. In his Volume 4 dedicated to the Merovingian coins of uncertain mint and attribution, A. de Belfort reproduced no less than 23 *argentei* he considered as imitations of Roman imperial silver coins from Honorius to Valentinian III (DE BELFORT 1894, Vol. 4, 3–10 nos 4999–5021).

⁸ GRIERSON / BLACKBURN 1986, 90 did not explain what they meant with the supposed “pre-Merovingian character” of the coins in question; they rather considered the *argentei* as “aberrant elements” of the first phase of the Frankish coinage, starting c. 500 with mainly pseudo-imperial gold denominations.

⁹ Note that the designation “Rhine Franks” only aims at distinguishing the Franks living around Cologne from the Salian Franks. As a late term first mentioned by the Cosmographer of Ravenna, however, it cannot have a strictly political significance in 5th century Gaul (SPRINGER 1998, 254–255).

¹⁰ Generally, it has been argued that no Merovingian coinage was struck in Cologne before the gold *solidi* issued by Clovis’ grand-son Theudebert I (534–548) (PÄFFGEN / RISTOW 1996, 151; FISCHER 2002, 299).

In the following, this view of a Frankish dynasty (that of Clovis) which monopolised the issuing of coin in Gaul will be challenged, based on partly unpublished silver coin finds from the Merovingian cemeteries of Cologne-Rodenkirchen and Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf. The many die links provided by the *argentei* from both findspots raise the possibility of the production of some of them at Cologne, while analyses of their composition make it possible to characterise some issues as a regional production. In the light of the results developed below, it is necessary to assess the function of these coins in the economy and their role in the Romano-Frankish society. In addition, one should reconsider the Kingdom of Cologne as a potentially minting authority in early Frankish Gaul and its political significance in the struggle with the Salian Franks.

The silver coins from Cologne-Rodenkirchen and Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf

Previously, the 32 silver coins and fragments from Rodenkirchen (see catalogue R 1–32), located 5 km south of the city wall of *Colonia*, were only known from short mentions in the archaeological literature¹¹. The cemetery from which they come included Roman and Frankish graves and extended 750 m southwest of the old church of Rodenkirchen at a distance of 120 m from the Rhine¹². It was privately excavated in 1906/7 by the site technician Friedrich Springensguth (1869–1958), who sold part of the finds¹³ to the museums of Cologne and Bonn. The latter bought the coins together with harness pieces. Although the silver coins from Cologne-Rodenkirchen have sometimes been regarded as a hoard coming from a single grave¹⁴, one must stress that *argentei* have been recorded as single finds in graves too, as will be described below. Hence, there is no compelling reason for considering the 32 coins and fragments to be a hoard, even if no information can be gained about the archaeological context of the finds from the cemetery in Cologne-Rodenkirchen.

The history of the finds from Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf shows striking parallels with that of Cologne-Rodenkirchen. Located for the most part 450 m northwest of the double church of Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf on the right bank of the Rhine (now Bonn-Beuel)¹⁵, the cemetery was privately excavated between 1900 and 1904 by the Bonner merchant Christian Brink, who sold the finds to various museums¹⁶. Most of the objects were acquired in

¹¹ The short mention of “25 ‘Argentei’” from Cologne-Rodenkirchen by WERNER 1935, 136 nos 66–90 suggests that he did not see the coins. In the same way, E. Nuber reported that the coins could not be examined as she worked on Cologne’s volume of the *Fundmünzen der römischen Zeit in Deutschland*, so that her catalogue comprises no description of the *argentei* (NUBER 1984, 612 no. 27,1). Even the most recent studies on Merovingian Cologne contain no precise information about the coins from Cologne-Rodenkirchen (FISCHER 2002, 300 nos 10–41; RIEMER 2006, 416).

¹² About the site and the history of the finds see RIEMER 2006, 256; 307; 413; 416.

¹³ Weapons and gold disc brooches have been recorded among the Frankish finds.

¹⁴ FISCHER 2002, 296 (“die Silbermünzen stammen

alle aus einem reichen Grab”); 300 nos 10–41.

¹⁵ MÜSSEMEIER 2012, 311; 314–315; as in the case of Cologne-Rodenkirchen, the coins from Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf have been sometimes considered as a hoard (e.g. HAGEN 1976, 40 no. 11: “in einem (?) Grab des fränkischen Gräberfeldes in der Lehmgrube südwestlich der Kirche”), although Behrens’ catalogue of 1947 allows to definitively rule out this hypothesis. BERTRAM 1999, 15–16 is not aware of the location of the cemetery.

¹⁶ The most interesting *fibulae* from Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf were bought by museums in Berlin, Bonn, Frankfurt, and Hamburg (BEHRENS 1947, 1; 34). Some pieces of jewellery were copied by the *Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum* before their dispersion into other collections (see the list BEHRENS 1947, 31–32).

July 1904 by the *Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum* (now *Leibniz-Zentrum für Archäologie* [LEIZA], Mainz [DE]) through the Mainzer antique dealers Isidor and David Reiling¹⁷. However, the comprehensive inventory of the finds was published only in 1947 by the museum's director, Gustav Behrens (1884–1955)¹⁸, who described some 600 objects and 1000 beads from 87 graves¹⁹. In all, two gold *trienses*, 27 silver Roman or Merovingian coins, and eight Roman bronze coins (2nd to 3rd century AD) are related to the deposits from the cemetery, though only exceptionally to a specific grave. Both *trienses* and 15 Merovingian silver coins were published in 1930 by Walter Hävernich (1905–1983)²⁰, but the reassessment of the entirety of the coin finds from Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf in the collection of the LEIZA has shown that the cemetery produced no less than 26 often fragmented *argentei* (see catalogue S 1–26).

Among the 18 *argentei* attributed to a specific grave, an equal distribution can be observed between male and female burials (eight coins for each group, *Tab. 1*), while one-third of the coins occurred as single finds. Their exact location in the tomb is known only for grave 30, where two Merovingian silver coins were deposited in the deceased's mouth. As such, they certainly can be regarded as Charon's obols²¹.

Imperial and pseudo-imperial silver coinage in early Frankish Gaul

As shown in the catalogue, the *argentei* from Cologne-Rodenkirchen and Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf all have blundered legends – when they are not anepigraphic. To understand the origin of these coins, one must look back at the silver series they took as models (in part), i. e. the silver coins of c. 1.0 g struck on very tiny blanks with the name of Valentinian III (425–455) or Theodosius II (402–450) and three different reverse types (Roma seated left [*Fig. 1*] and, more rarely, Roma seated facing or standing emperor). These coins all show the same legend V(I)RTVS ROMANORVM and the mint mark TRPS in the exergue. There are a number of reasons why the identity of the authority that minted these coins is still being discussed. Irregularities in the legend (on some coins VRTVS instead of VIRTVS) or the type²² have been interpreted as signs of a barbaric production that would

¹⁷ Isidor being the father of Netty Reiling, better known under her pen name Anna Seghers (1900–1983).

¹⁸ Except for some glasses and ceramics published in SCHUMACHER 1911. The finds from Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf in the collection of the RGZM / LEIZA are registered under the inventory nos O.2654 to O.2766 and can be consulted under https://www3.leiza.de/invbuch/page.php?lang=de&page_id=4833.

¹⁹ The list also comprises the finds entered in other collections (BEHRENS 1947, 31–34).

²⁰ HÄVERNICH 1929/30, 100–101. Hävernich was not aware of the silver coin from grave 5 (see catalogue S 3) and left out many silver coin fragments; brief mention of the coins in WERNER 1935, 136 nos 53–65.

²¹ The deposition of gold or silver coins in the mouth has been quite frequently observed in Merovingian cemeteries (WERNER 1935, 3; KRAUSE 2002, 289; especially for Cologne, see FREMERSDORF 1955, 91) and often attributed to Frankish graves (see MARTIN

2004, 251; 259 stressing the deposition of Roman *denarii* as Charon's obols east of the Rhine in the 5th and 6th centuries). In Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf, the *triens* O.2752 lay in the mouth of a male deceased (BEHRENS 1947, 13–14 grave 39), the position of the other (O.2751) is not attested (BEHRENS 1947, 4–5 male grave 10). Concerning the silver coins specifically, see e. g. the male grave 227 from Rheinsheim (Lkr. Karlsruhe, DE) with three silver coins in the mouth (WIELANDT 1951, 613) or the graves 80 and 125 from Frankfurt am Main-Harheim, in which the silver coins lay on the teeth of the defunct (VON FREEDEN 2017, 472; 2020, 74–78).

²² These elements were pointed out by C. E. King in two articles; however, her interpretation changed as she first considered these silver series to be a “local phenomenon” of non-official imperial issues (KING 1988, 202–204; 206; 208) before attributing the coins of better style and weight (c. 1.0 g) to “local remnants of the Roman establishment” without

Grave no. (inventory no.)	Sex	<i>Argentei</i>	Position	Catalogue no.
5 (LEIZA O.2655)	male	1	?	S 3
7 (LEIZA O.2657)	male	“1 Silberplättchen”	?	?
30 (LEIZA O.2680)	?	“2 Silberplättchen, anscheinend Münzen”	in the mouth	?
33 (LEIZA O.2683)	female	1	?	?
34 (LEIZA O.2684)	female	1	?	?
35 (LEIZA O.2685)	male	2	?	?
36 (LEIZA O.2686)	female	1	?	?
52 (LEIZA O.2702)	female	3	?	?
53 (LEIZA O.2703)	male	4	?	?
77 (LEIZA O.2727)	female	1	?	?
84 (LEIZA O.2734)	female	1	?	?

Tab. 1. Schwarzerheindorf: *argentei* attributed to specific graves (after BEHRENS 1939; 1947).

best correspond to early Frankish silver issues in Gaul. Certainly, the mint-mark TRPS (for [*Moneta*] TR[*everorum, Argentum*] P[*u*]S[*ulatum*]) on the reverse should not be viewed as a reliable indication of the mint or the authority because it could have been copied by the Franks from Roman coins, regardless of the minting site of the *argentei*. However, the many findspots of V(I)RTVS ROMANORVM coins attest to their main area of circulation, especially between the Meuse and the Oise in the northwest, the Marne in the South and the Rhine in the east²³ (Fig. 2), which would be consistent with their production in Trier. Furthermore, a small hoard of six *argentei* with the name of Valentinian III (all of the same reverse type Roma seated left) found by the cathedral in Trier²⁴ provides two die-linked coins that might indicate their hoarding near their place of issue, i. e. Trier. Finally, the very homogenous style of the emperor's busts on the one hand, and the high number of dies used for their production (as suggested by the scarcity of the die links) on the other, could argue for centralised and voluminous issues which are likely to be expected from an imperial mint like Trier²⁵. From a historical perspective, at the supposed time of

proposing a mint place, and the copies of barbaric style on a reduced weight standard (0.5 to 0.3 g) to the Franks (KING 1992, 193).

²³ CHAMEROY 2020, 212–214 (especially fig. 8).

²⁴ GILLES 1982, 12–13; R.-ALFÖLDI 2006, 210

no. 3006,3 (Domgrabung, Liebfrauen-Areal).

²⁵ This is also the conclusion of J. P. C. Kent who recorded them in the last volume of “The Roman Imperial Coinage” (KENT 1994, 171; 374–375 nos 2094–2103).



Fig. 1. Imperial *argenteus* struck at Trier for Valentinian III. The reverse type is VRTVS (*sic*) ROMANORVM, Roma seated left, holding Victory on globe and sceptre. Mint-mark TRPS on the exergue. Findspot: Arcy-Sainte-Restitue (reference in Fig. 2,6); Depository: Musée d'Archéologie Nationale, Saint-Germain-en-Laye (FR).

Obverse type	Reverse type	Rodenkirchen	Schwarzrheindorf
Valentinian III	seated Roma	8	5
	Victory	2	1
Theodosius II	Victory		1
Anastasius	seated Roma	1	
	Victory	2	
	?	1	
uncertain	seated Roma	2	6*
	Victory	1	
	?	2	4
uniface <i>argentei</i>			
obverse (uncertain)		1	2
reverse (seated Roma)		10	4
reverse (Victory)		4	3
Total		34	26

*2 Roma seated r.

Tab. 2. Pseudo-imperial *argentei* from Cologne-Rodenkirchen and Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf: conspectus of the types.

issue of these *argentei* under Valentinian III (425–455), the Frankish kings settled in Gaul controlled a territory which certainly did not reach further south of the Somme, as long as Aegidius and Syagrius held Soissons as representatives of the Roman state²⁶. Since the *argentei* in question principally circulated south of the Marne and the Meuse, it seems difficult to attribute their issue to the Franks, who, around the middle of the 5th century,

²⁶ DIERKENS / PÉRIN 2003, 170–173; 181. The archaeological record speaks against a massive presence of the Rhine Franks in Trier and, more broadly, in the

Belgica II up to the late 5th century (STAAB 1997, 554–556).

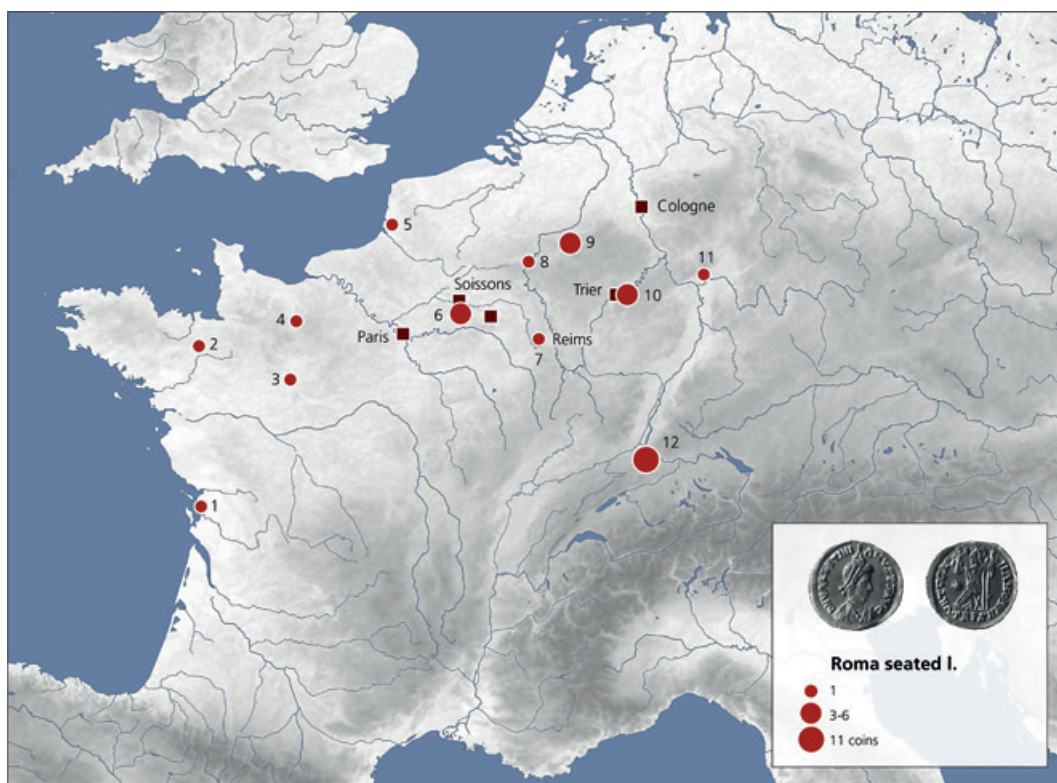


Fig. 2. Findspots of imperial *argentei* (seated Roma type) struck at Trier for Valentinian III or Theodosius II. 1 Châtelaillon-Plage (départ. Charente-Maritime, FR) (LAFaurie / Pilet-Lemière 2003, no. 17.94.2); 2 La Mézière (départ. Ille-et-Vilaine; FR) (documentation P.-A. Besombes); 3 Le Mans (départ. Sarthe; FR) (LAFaurie / Pilet-Lemière 2003, no. 72.181.1); 4 Fel (départ. Orne; FR) (LAFaurie / Pilet-Lemière 2003, no. 61.161.1); 5 Vron (départ. Somme, FR) (LAFaurie / Pilet-Lemière 2003, no. 80.815.1.1); 6 Arcy-Sainte-Restitue (départ. Aisne; FR) (LAFaurie / Pilet-Lemière 2003, no. 2.22.1.17–19); 7 Lavoye-Autrecourt (départ. Meuse; FR) (LAFaurie / Pilet-Lemière 2003, no. 55.285.2.2); 8 Vireux-Molhain (départ. Ardennes, FR) (LAFaurie / Pilet-Lemière 2003, no. 8.486.2); 9 Vieuxville (prov. Liège; BE) (van Hoof 1991, 115); 10 Trier, Domgrabung (Gilles 1982, 12–13; R.-ALFöldi 2006, 210 no. 3006,3); 11 Weilbach (Main-Taunus Kr., DE) (Gorecki 1994, 312 no. 1127,1; Martin 2009, 30; 46 list C17); 12 Basel-Kleinühningen (CH) (Cahn 1938).

had no authority over these regions. Based on the arguments presented above, it therefore seems preferable to consider the *argentei* V(I)RTVS ROMANORVM (Fig. 1) as the last imperial coinage struck at Trier, perhaps during the years when the city stood under the control of Aetius²⁷.

It is now easy to point out the contrast between the imperial *argentei* issued at Trier and the *argentei* found in Cologne-Rodenkirchen and Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf: the latter are light weight imitations of the former, reproducing – more or less fancifully – the seated Roma type, or introducing a new one (standing Victory) on the reverse. Among the coins struck with two dies, the seated Roma is the commonest reverse type (Tab. 2), accounting

²⁷ Kent 1994, 26 (later 420s without argument). Following the commentary of Cahn 1938, 429–430, Lafaurie dated their production in the years 443

to 455, since Trier was controlled by Rome, and interpreted them as issues for the soldiers of Aetius (Lafaurie 1964, 179; 1987, 305–306; 308; 314).

for 22 coins (Valentinian III: 13, Anastasius: one, uncertain: eight). Seven *argentei* of the Victory type (Valentinian III: three, Theodosius II: one, Anastasius: one, uncertain: two) are modelled on imperial gold instead of imperial silver coins (see below). Lastly, the *argentei* with the name of Anastasius (four coins) show that imitative Germanic issues of the seated Roma or Victory type were not necessarily coupled with the emperors depicted on Trier's imperial *argentei*: Anastasius actually never struck silver coins with the seated Roma or the Victory type at this mint. Even the uniface coins (three struck with an obverse and 21 with a reverse die) refer exclusively to the Roma or Victory types, though in a rougher style. According to the preceding remarks, the *argentei* from Cologne-Rodenkirchen and Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf should be regarded as pseudo-imperial coins, partly imitating genuine imperial coins and to some degree creating new ones for the silver coinage. Based on the legible obverse legends referring to the emperors Valentinian III (16 coins), Theodosius II (one) or Anastasius (four), successive issues can be assumed up to the late 5th or early 6th century.

Much work on pseudo-imperial silver coins from Merovingian Gaul has been done by Jean Lafaurie (1914–2008) so that the present research benefited significantly from his many publications on hoards and single finds of *argentei*²⁸. However, by focussing on the pseudo-legends more than on the findspots of the coins, Lafaurie thought he could read the names of Strasbourg²⁹, Worms³⁰, or Metz³¹ on some of them, concluding that the pseudo-imperial silver series started in eastern Gaul between the Mosel and the Rhine, probably after Clovis defeated the Alamanni by Zülpich in 496³². Relying on often far-fetched readings of very uncertain legends, these identifications of the mints are, however, not supported by the archaeological evidence; this shows a lack of finds east of the Mosel up to the Rhine, compared with an evident occurrence of the pseudo-imperial *argentei* west of the Mosel up to the Seine in the south and the Rhine in the north. Additional findspots are also attested east of the Rhine (see below). Eventually, the combined study of the find places and the die links should provide more substantial evidence to identify the mint place(s) of the pseudo-imperial *argentei* considered in this study.

²⁸ Brief accounts of the finds are now presented together with early medieval bronze and gold coin finds from France in LAFURIE / PILET-LEMIÈRE 2003.

²⁹ LAFURIE 1988a, 382 read C (retrograde) ARGENTO VSIC on a coin found in a grave at Mailly-le-Camp (départ. Aube, FR) and developed the legend as *civitas Argentoratensium*. Further findspots of this hitherto unique coin would be needed to support Lafaurie's assumption.

³⁰ Reassessing the uniface coins from Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf (our S 18–19), LAFURIE 1988b, 421 proposed to read VANGNEFIT (by “torturing the legend” in his own words), so that he attributed the coin type to the *civitas Vangionum* and its sup-

posed capital Worms; DOPPELFELD 1964, 161 saw for this type only a series of “sinnlose Buchstaben (VMNEN)”.

³¹ On the silver coins from Châtel-Saint-Germain (départ. Moselle, FR), the legend MITTIS clearly refers to Metz as a mint place (LAFURIE 1992, 209–210). Nevertheless, their reverse type (a cross on three steps) suggests that they belong to the early 7th century and have nothing to do with early Frankish silver issues (McCORMICK 2013, 367; CHAMEROY 2020, 213; 225 note 30).

³² In earlier works, Lafaurie attributed the imitations to Aegidius in Soissons (LAFURIE 1964, 181–182), but there is no evidence for a coin production there in the 5th century (KENT 1994, 27).



Fig. 3. Pseudo-imperial *argentei* of the seated Roma type: coins from Cologne-Rodenkirchen and Bonn-Schwarzhemdorf with external die links.

Pseudo-imperial *argentei* possibly issued at Cologne

Coins struck with two dies (biface)

The seated Roma type

Some pseudo-imperial *argentei* differ from their imperial model struck at Trier in the position of Roma (seating right: S 12–13) or her attribute (holding a cross on a small globe instead of a Victory on a globe: R 4–7, S 2 and 4). Moreover, the star in the left field of the reverse was not systematically reproduced on the pseudo-imperial coins (R 4–7), not to mention the legends which were corrupted. The profound stylisation of the seated goddess, of her attributes and the *sella curulis* can make identification of the intended coin type particularly difficult (R 8, S 13).

Three coins from Cologne-Rodenkirchen are die-linked (R 4–6), a fourth (R 2) is die-linked with a coin from Rübenach (Lkr. Koblenz, DE), and a fifth (R 1) with two coins found in the cemeteries of Éprave (prov. Namur, BE) and Sézanne (dép. Marne, FR)³³ (Fig. 3). Surprisingly, the seated Roma coins from Cologne-Rodenkirchen provide no die links with those from Bonn-Schwarzhemdorf. Nevertheless, one *argenteus* from Bonn-Schwarzhemdorf (S 1) provides an obverse-die link with a coin found in a grave at Éprave, while an additional two (S 4–5) were struck with the same dies as an *argenteus*

³³ CUMONT 1890, 217; SCHIESSER 2012, 140 no. 15.

found in Lohmar (Rhein-Sieg-Kreis, DE; *Fig. 3*). Furthermore, obvious stylistic affinities in the engraving of the diadem, the eye, and the nose of the emperor's busts suggest that some *argentei* from Cologne-Rodenkirchen and Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf (compare R 1 and S 1–2) were struck with dies made by the same engraver. In other words, these die links and stylistic parallels support the proposal that R 1–2, R 4–6, S 1–2, and S 4–6 come from the same mint, which should be localised on the middle Rhine due to the concentration of the finds.

The Victory type

The reverse type with a Victory standing left or right and holding a long cross certainly copies the reverse type of imperial *solidi* from the 420s onwards³⁴. This is particularly obvious for R 12–13 with the name of Anastasius and corrupted versions of the legend VICTORIA AVGVSTORVM or a somewhat different Victory (standing right on R 13, walking right with palm-branch and wreath on R 12). Moreover, both *argentei* show the letters CONOB (or corrupted OIID) in the exergue, which normally attest to the purity of the imperial *solidus* and its fractions³⁵ and are specific to those gold coins. A third coin of a style similar to R 12 has been recorded in a grave from Rittersdorf (Eifelkreis Bitburg-Prüm, DE)³⁶ (*Figs 4–5*), but additional finds would be needed to determine the site of the mint of the two *argentei*.

However, the concentration of the findspots of the die-linked coins R 9–10 and S 6 (with a pseudo-legend for Valentinian III) should speak for their production in a nearby mint (perhaps Cologne?), although a fourth coin struck with the same dies occurred in a grave in Abainville (départ. Meuse, FR)³⁷ (*Fig. 4*).

There is still a paucity of evidence concerning the chronology of the pseudo-imperial *argentei* with seated Roma or Victory type. Considering the fact that they did not generally occur in hoards together with the imperial *argentei* struck at Trier, one may conclude that the issue of pseudo-imperial *argentei* started after the mint at Trier ceased its silver coin production, at the latest after the death of Valentinian III (455)³⁸. This seems consistent with the issue of pseudo-imperial *argentei* with Victory holding a long cross, which copies an imperial model that began to circulate in the West in the 420s at the earliest. These considerations suggest the second half of the 5th century as the most probable period of issue of the pseudo-imperial *argentei* with seated Roma or Victory type.

³⁴ The voluminous issues celebrating the *Vicennalia* of Theodosius II on *solidi* depicting a Victory standing left supporting a long, jewelled cross (KENT 1994, 256 nos 218–220; dated 420–422) certainly contributed at first to the diffusion of the type into the west of the Roman Empire. Less convincing is the assumption that the silver coinage of Majorianus (457–461) depicting a Victory with cross on the reverse served as a model for the Frankish pseudo-imperial *argentei*, because the coins of Majorianus (probably struck in Lyon) did

not circulate north of the Saône (DOYEN 2020, 121 fig. 7; 128–131).

³⁵ CON(*stantinopolis*) [*Aurum*] OB(*ryzum*), i.e. refined gold struck at the mint of Constantinople (KENT 1994, 24).

³⁶ WERNER 1935, 136 no. 45; BÖHNER 1958, 213 M 45; GILLES 1981, 32 no. 5.

³⁷ LAFAURIE / PILET-LEMIÈRE 2003, 217 no. 55.1.1.1.

³⁸ CHAMEROY 2020, 213. Of course, one cannot exclude that a selection of the coins between imperial and pseudo-imperial *argentei* caused these differences in the hoarding process.

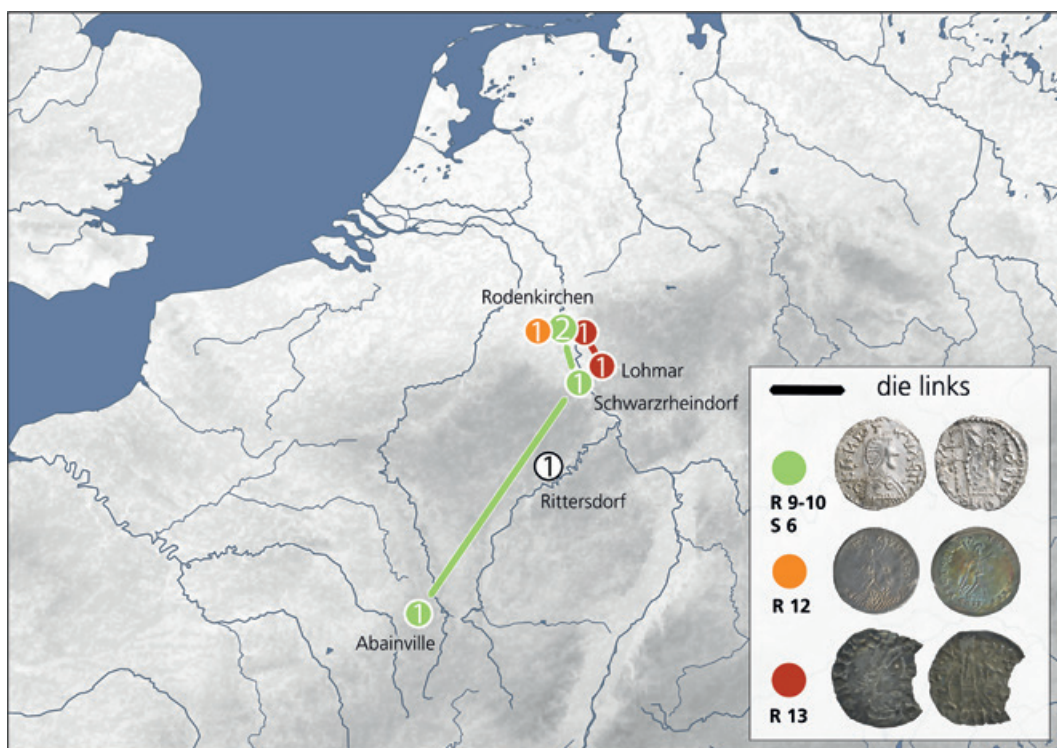


Fig. 4. Pseudo-imperial *argentei* of the Victory type: coins from Cologne-Rodenkirchen and Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf with external die links.



Fig. 5. Pseudo-imperial *argenteus* of the Victory type with the name of Anastasius (compare with R 12). Findspot: Rittersdorf (see WERNER 1935, 136 no. 45; BÖHNER 1958, 213 M 45; GILLES 1981, 32 no. 5).

Uniface coins

The seated Roma type

Uniface coins struck with only a reverse die like R 21–30 and S 18–20 seem to be highly stylised copies of the seated Roma type in which Roma’s attributes (spear and cross on globe) can be recognised, while Roma herself and the *sella curulis* degenerate into dots, stars, lines, crosses, and curves. Through the publication of the coins from Cologne-Rodenkirchen, a much clearer picture of the archaeological evidence now emerges for this

coin type. Particularly impressive is the concentration of findspots in Cologne and environs (Fig. 6), including seven coins from Cologne-Rodenkirchen (R 21–27), three from the *Knabengrab* from Cologne cathedral³⁹, two from Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf (S 18–19), and one from Frankfurt am Main-Harheim⁴⁰. All 13 coins were struck with the same single reverse die. A further five reverse dies depicting a similar type were used to issue R 28 and another coin from Frankfurt am Main-Harheim⁴¹, R 29–30 and S 20 (Fig. 6), while two additional *argentei* found at Ave-et-Auffe (prov. Namur, BE) and Rheinsheim (Lkr. Karlsruhe, DE)⁴² are in a similar style but provide no die links with the other coins (Fig. 7). As mentioned above, Lafaurie, who was not aware of the coins from Cologne-Rodenkirchen, attributed this pseudo-imperial type to Worms, based on the legend which he read as VAN-GNEFIT⁴³. Now, in light of the obvious concentration of the findspots further north, the production of the uniface *argentei* with the unstructured seated Roma type can definitely be placed in Cologne – as Hävernack first suggested⁴⁴.

Most significant for the chronology of this coin type is the occurrence of three examples (all die-linked with R 21–27 and S 18–19) in the boy's grave from Cologne cathedral (Fig. 6). The location of the grave in the church, on the east side of the famous *Frauengrab* identified as that of Queen Wisigard, wife of Theudebert I⁴⁵, implies that the boy died at about the same time as the queen⁴⁶. A clear *terminus post quem* for her burial date is provided by the twelve imperial or Ostrogothic gold and silver coins deposited in her grave, the latest being a half *siliqua* of Athalarich (526–534)⁴⁷. Thus, the *terminus* yielded by this coin seems consistent with the historical tradition whereby queen Wisigard died only a short time after her marriage with Clovis' grandson, i. e. in the 540s⁴⁸. A further element from the *Knabengrab* itself is provided by the dendrochronological analysis of the oak board covering the grave, which dates the felling of the tree to 537 (± 10 years)⁴⁹. Consequently, the issue of the *argentei* deposited with the boy and, therefore, of the die-linked coins R 21–27 and S 18–19 must have taken place at Cologne before c. 540⁵⁰. At present, we cannot say whether the other reverse dies depicting the same type (Figs 6–7) already existed or were engraved later.

³⁹ DOPPELFELD 1964, 161 nos 1–3 and pl. 38; NUBER 1984, 90–91 no. 1001,5.

⁴⁰ Grave 131, coin 2,1 (VON FREEDEN 2020, 76–77).

⁴¹ Grave 131, coin 2,4 (VON FREEDEN 2020, 76–77).

⁴² ANONYMOUS 1900, 467; WIELANDT 1951, 614 no. 3.

⁴³ See note 30.

⁴⁴ HÄVERNICK 1929/30, 101 dated this coin type up to the end of the 6th century; DOPPELFELD 1963, 55; 1964, 186; SPIEGEL / STEUER 1980, 217. Surprisingly, Hävernack did not mention this important attribution in his monograph on the mint of Cologne, for which he did not record any issue between the Gallic usurper Postumus (260–268) and Theudebert I (HÄVERNICK 1935, 15).

⁴⁵ This is the conclusion from a recent reassessment of the *Frauengrab*, whose jewellery suggests that “die um 538 in Köln beigesetzte etwa 28-jährige sozial hochstehende Frau am Hof des Langobardenkönigs Wacho eingekleidet wurde und es sich um Wisigarde

handelt, die Theudebert I. heiratete; sie hatte ihren gesamten Schmuck von der mittleren Donau mitgebracht” (KOCH 2012, 55).

⁴⁶ DOPPELFELD 1964, 186 did not exclude that the boy and the woman were buried on the same day.

⁴⁷ DOPPELFELD 1960, 93–94; NUBER 1984, 89–90 no. 1001,4.

⁴⁸ Greg. Tur. Franc. III, 27.

⁴⁹ HOLLSTEIN 1980, 75 (Analysis of the *Abdeckbrett* A1). Note that the analysis of the DNA found on the gloves deposited in both graves did not reveal any family relationship between the woman and the boy. However, there persists a doubt as to whether the DNA came from the deceased or from the persons who deposited the gloves in the graves (RISTOW 2012, 87–88).

⁵⁰ How long the coins circulated before they were put into the grave is difficult to say. A specific study on the wear rate of these uniface coins would be necessary to gain certainty.

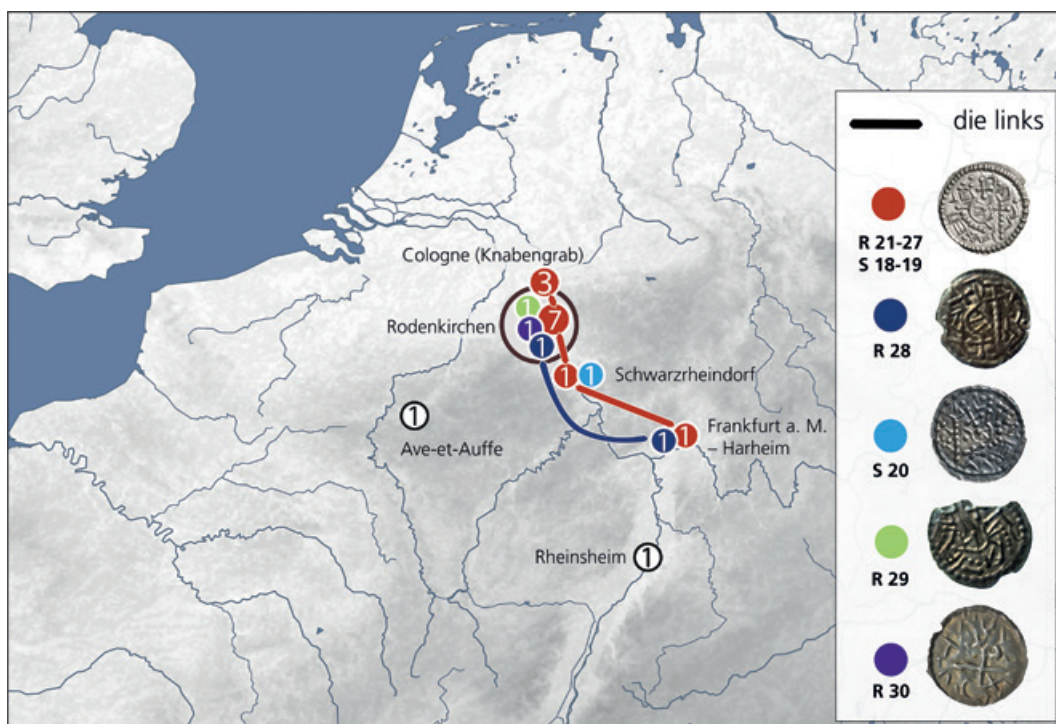


Fig. 6. Uniface pseudo-imperial *argentei* of the seated Roma type from Cologne-Rodenkirchen and Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf, with external die links (see DOPPELFELD 1964, 161 nos 1–3 and pl. 38; NUBER 1984, 90–91 no. 1001,5. – Grave 131, coin 2,1 and 2,4 [VON FREEDEN 2020, 76–77]; ANONYMOUS 1900, 467; WIELANDT 1951, 614 no. 3).

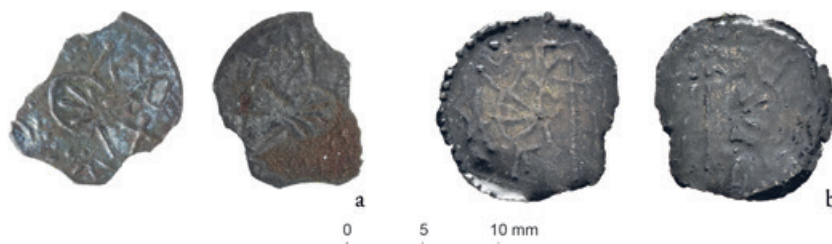


Fig. 7. Uniface pseudo-imperial *argentei* of the seated Roma type from a Ave-et-Auffe and b Rheinsheim (see ANONYMOUS 1900, 467; WIELANDT 1951, 614 no. 3).

Victory types

Seven uniface *argentei* from Cologne-Rodenkirchen and Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf depict two different Victory types⁵¹. The die-linked coins R 31–32 show a Victory standing right and holding a long cross, corresponding as seen above to the reverse type of imperial *solidi*. In a more fanciful version, the Victory looks like a bird-monster without a body, but with long legs, a head, and wings and holding a wreath in its beak; in the left field, a wreath and a star (?) are represented (S 21–22 and R 33, all with blundered legends). Although

⁵¹ Note that R 34 and S 23 are too fragmentary to recognise the Victory type on the coin.



Fig. 8. Uniface pseudo-imperial *argentei* of the Victory type from Cologne-Rodenkirchen and Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf, with external die links.

they were struck with three different dies (Fig. 8), these *argentei* display obvious stylistic affinities implying their issue in the same mint – possibly at Cologne.

In the absence of precise archaeological evidence, the uniface *argentei* with the Victory types may purely hypothetically be dated to the first half of the 6th century, as are the uniface *argentei* of the seated Roma type. Be that as it may, the frequency of the finds in and around Cologne and the significant number of recorded die links between the *argentei* from Cologne-Rodenkirchen and Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf invite us to further characterise these silver issues through analyses of the composition of some coins.

Composition analysis

Twenty *argentei* from both cemeteries have been analysed at the IRAMAT-Centre Ernest Babelon by ICP-MS (inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry) using laser ablation (Tab. 3). This method has been used in this laboratory for about 15 years for silver coins⁵². The implementation of LA-ICP-MS analyses on silver coins has several advantages⁵³. Firstly, this method can be considered non-destructive since the micro-samples taken by laser ablation measure less than one-tenth of a millimetre and are therefore utterly invisible

⁵² SARAH et al. 2007.

⁵³ For more details about the application of this method to silver coins see SARAH / GRATUZE 2016.

Catalogue no.	Ag (%)	Cu (%)	Pb (ppm)	Au (ppm)	Bi (ppm)	Zn (ppm)	Sn (ppm)	Ni (ppm)	As (ppm)	Sb (ppm)
R 1	98,2	0,4	1304	12479	51	5,6	19	2,3	1,9	1,1
R 4	95,0	2,2	2479	25370	158	1,4	7,6	2,3	0,7	2,4
R 5	98,1	0,3	5970	10150	2,9	37	261	1,9	7,3	9
R 6	91,1	5,9	8908	9896	266	4445	6096	6,0	136	298
R 10	89,9	7,3	9070	12663	121	2641	2687	29	110	55
R 15	84,7	9,2	10378	12407	283	17811	17468	16	2172	732
R 19	87,8	9,6	5993	11197	458	4399	3454	16	71	153
R 21	92,3	4,0	8298	25838	376	523	1123	5	13	111
S 1	98,4	0,2	81	13375	27	26	3	0,99	0,7	0,6
S 4	90,7	5,6	16523	11460	269	2442	6201	20	34	33
S 5	95,5	2,8	1176	15377	33	266	127	0,85	1,6	0,7
S 8	93,3	4,0	6822	17599	291	1015	1342	8,7	19	16
S 9	89,6	4,8	9560	22353	373	20302	2309	12	104	166
S 10	84,3	6,2	15406	5858	456	52885	19313	20	299	519
S 11	85,7	7,8	7076	40778	243	9291	7457	14	75	159
S 12	88,1	1,4	9312	21009	359	46546	26366	52	177	282
S 14	83,6	4,8	13938	11200	74	44966	44242	25	518	652
S 18	91,4	2,9	32225	11095	96	9542	3852	46	61	31
S 20	91,7	4,6	6895	13225	192	6623	10457	6,09	112	208
S 22	83,9	11,8	7031	16405	239	8394	9964	11	122	322

Tab. 3. Results of the LA-ICP-MS analyses on 20 *argentei* from Cologne-Rodenkirchen and Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf. Die links are highlighted in colour.

to the naked eye. Secondly, it provides concentration profiles that can be used to visualise and identify compositional variations between the surface and the interior without any sample preparation. Finally, this method allows the determination of a large number of elements with very low detection limits, which is particularly interesting for identifying coinage made from different metal stocks. Because of the punctual nature of the sampling, three analyses are performed on each coin to ensure that the results obtained are representative.

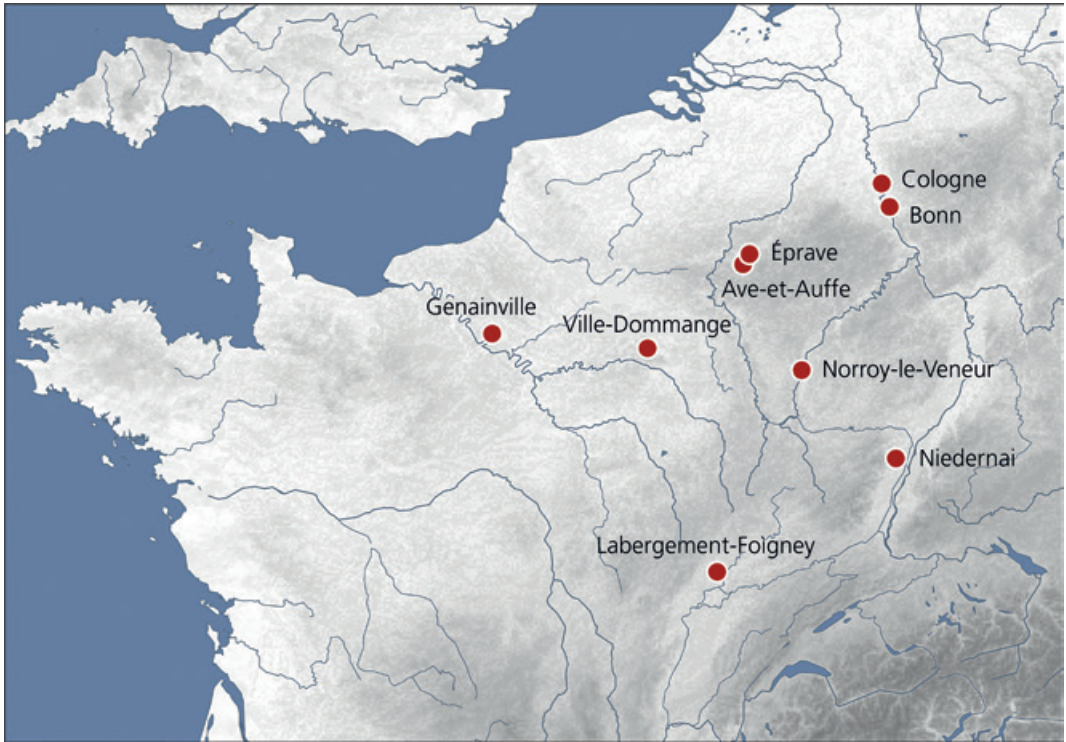
As part of this study, eight *argentei* from Cologne-Rodenkirchen and twelve from Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf were analysed, excluding fragments that were too small and coins with crystallised metal. Two other *argentei* from Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf (S 11, 22), which had already been submitted to the analysis (by LA-ICP-MS also) in a previous paper⁵⁴, are included in this batch. The 20 specimens considered below comprise the most common types on both sites, i.e. the reverse types showing Roma seated left or right, the Victory standing left, and, finally, the uniface seated Roma type⁵⁵.

The objective of the archaeometric analysis is twofold. Firstly, the silver coins that circulated on the two sites must be chemically characterised. Secondly, the elemental

⁵⁴ BLANCHET et al. 2020, 238 tab. 1,22.23.

⁵⁵ These types, with the exception of the Roma seated left, have never been the subject of a publication

concerning their analysis. The set of analysis results that will be used for comparison with this batch comes from G. Blanchet's PhD thesis (in progress)

Fig. 9. Findspots of pseudo-imperial *argentei* from Table 4.

	Rhineland group						Western Gaul			Total	
	Rodenkirchen	Schwarzheldorf	Niedernai	�prave	Ave-et-Auffe	Norroy-le-Veneur	Labergement-Foigny	Ville-Dommange	Genainville		
Roma seated l.	6	7	5	4				1	2	25	
Roma seated r.		1					1			2	
Victory standing l.	1	1				1			1	4	
Uniface seated Roma		2			1					3	
Uncertain	1	1								2	
Total	8	12	5	4	1	1	1	1	3	36	
	20								16		

Tab. 4. Reverse types of pseudo-imperial *argentei* from Cologne-Rodenkirchen, Bonn-Schwarzheldorf and other sites selected for comparison.

“Production and circulation of silver coins minted in the 5th–6th centuries in the Western Roman Empire: an archaeometric and archaeological study of the

argentei”, see BLANCHET 2020). It should be noted, however, that Roma seated left and uniface seated Roma coins have been the subject of recent analyses

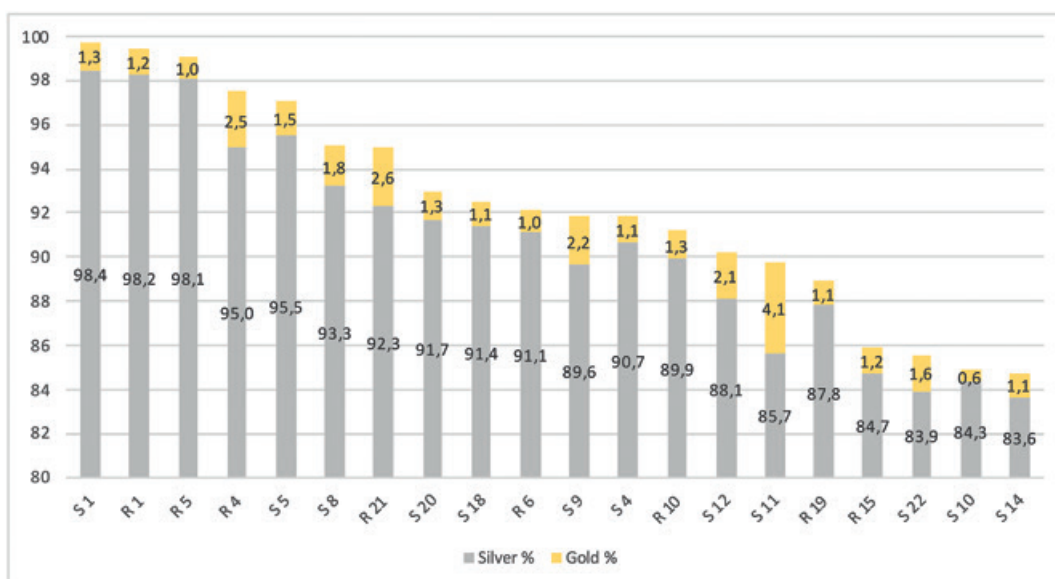


Fig. 10. Silver and gold content of analysed coins from Cologne-Rodenkirchen (R) and Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf (S) classified in descending order.

characteristics of the *argentei* (major and trace elements) are examined to compare them with *argentei* of the same type discovered on nearby or more distant sites, with the aim of determining whether the coins from Cologne-Rodenkirchen and Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf have their own specificities. To this end, their composition will be compared with that of 17 *argentei* of the same type but from seven different findspots from France and Belgium (Tab. 4 and Fig. 9)⁵⁶.

The fineness of the *argentei* from Cologne-Rodenkirchen and Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf

The fineness of the *argentei* ranges from 84.7% (S 14) to 99.8% (S 1) (Fig. 10). More than half of the coins have a fineness above 90%, which is slightly lower than the *siliquae* of the late 4th century⁵⁷ and the Ostrogothic silver coins of the early 6th century⁵⁸.

(VON FREEDEN 2020, 114–115). Nevertheless, the results of that study were produced by XRF, which does not seem to have allowed the detection of two important tracer or discriminant elements (bismuth and tin); therefore, these results cannot be exploited in the present study.

⁵⁶ In this context, the external sites used are those of Éprave (prov. Namur, BE; CUMONT 1890), Avet-Auffe (prov. Namur, BE; ANONYMOUS 1900), Niedernai (départ. Bas-Rhin, FR; unpublished), Norroy-le-Veneur (départ. Moselle, FR; unpublished), Labergement-Foigny (départ. Côte-d'Or, FR; CHARRIER 2015), Ville-Dommange (départ. Marne, FR; PROU 1891), and Genainville (départ. Val-d'Oise, FR; MITARD 1978).

⁵⁷ GUEST 2005, tab. 60; 119–121: according to the results delivered by these analyses, the *siliquae* of the second half of the 4th century (all mints combined) have an average content of 96.4% (XRF and ICP-AES analyses). In addition, analyses of a sample of contemporaneous *siliquae* from the *Cabinet des monnaies, médailles et antiques* of the *Bibliothèque nationale de France* give a close average: 95.4% (selection and LA-ICP-MS analysis performed by G. Blanchet and G. Sarah, unpublished results).

⁵⁸ Unpublished results, obtained from 25 specimens struck by various Ostrogothic kings (average of 96% silver; selection and LA-ICP-MS analysis performed by G. Blanchet and G. Sarah).

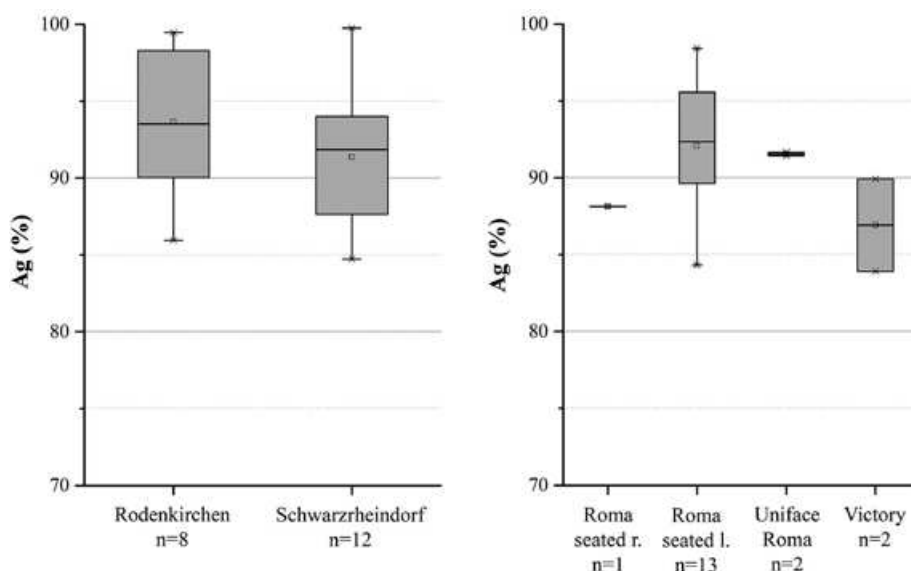


Fig. 11. Comparison of the silver content of the coins from Cologne-Rodenkirchen and Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf (left) and among the coin types (right).

There is no apparent difference between the coins from either site (*Fig. 11*); however, the coins from Cologne-Rodenkirchen are on average slightly richer in silver than those from Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf, respectively 92.1% (eight examples) and 89.3% (12 examples).

Discrimination by reverse type (*Fig. 11*) shows that the Roma seated left coins, although presenting the most scattered silver contents (84.3 to 98.4%, 13 examples), are those which have the most silver on average, followed very closely by the uniface seated Roma coins (two examples). The Roma seated right (one example) and the Victory coins (two examples) are the types with the lowest silver content (88.1% and 83.9%, respectively).

Characterisation of Rhineland coins: gold as a discriminating element

In addition to the *argentei* from Cologne-Rodenkirchen and Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf, four further coin samples from Niedernai (dép. Bas-Rhin, FR), Éprave, Ave-et-Auffe, and Norroy-le-Veneur (dép. Moselle, FR; *Tab. 4* and *Fig. 9*) allow us to constitute a “Rhineland group”. This association is justified, on the one hand, by the geographical proximity of the findspots (Norroy-le-Veneur) and, on the other hand, by their stylistic affinity (Niedernai, Ave-et-Auffe) or by the die links (Éprave) with the coins from Cologne-Rodenkirchen and Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf. These batches will thus be compared to *argentei* found in Western Gaul (i. e. the Lyonnaise provinces).

In the first place, the silver content does not distinguish the Rhineland coins from the other *argentei* (*Fig. 12*). The values range from 74% to 98% for the first group and from 86% to 96% for the second. The wider range for the Rhineland group should certainly be linked with the larger volume of the sample comprising 31 coins, of which only five are from Western Gaul. This is emphasised by the very similar average values determined for both groups, 91.7% (Relative Standard Deviation 6.4%) for the Rhineland coins and 91.4% (RSD 4.2%) for the Western Gaul group (leaving aside an inconsistent coin from Genainville with only 32%). We can thus assume that the *argentei* from the Rhineland

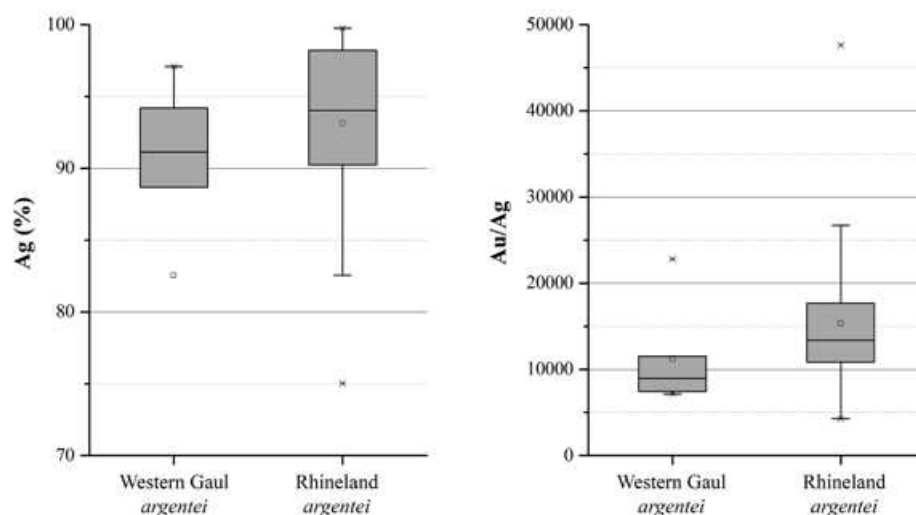


Fig. 12. Comparison of the silver (left) and gold (right) contents between *argentei* from the Rhineland and from Western Gaul.

area and from Western Gaul were minted according to a similar silver standard with a loose control of the fineness.

The gold content of the *argentei* seems, in a second phase, to deserve greater attention. The concentrations of this element in the Rhineland *argentei* vary from 0.4% to more than 4% (average 1.4%). Two-thirds of the 20 analysed coins from this area (*Tab. 4*) provide a gold content above 1%. The pioneering work of A. Gordus demonstrated that silver obtained from ore transformation⁵⁹ contains limited amounts of gold⁶⁰ (below about 0.5–1%). When the silver is recycled or purified, the gold content in the silver remains unchanged by the metallurgical processes. Consequently, grades such as ours can hardly be the result of silver ore processing only. In the case of the Rhineland *argentei*, two hypotheses are conceivable: either golden-silver objects were recycled and incorporated into the alloy or gold altered by a significant addition of silver was melted and then integrated. In all cases, the levels of this element appear much higher in the Rhineland group than in the coins from Western Gaul (*Fig. 12*). It can therefore be assumed that a gold content above 1% is characteristic of the Rhineland *argentei* and that this gold content can be used to discriminate them among *argentei* of other origins.

Copper and its associated elements

In our attempt to characterise the alloy of the Rhineland *argentei*, the next step is to examine the levels of copper and its metallurgically associated elements. The percentage of copper in the Rhineland *argentei* varies considerably, from 0.13% to 13.5% (average 4.3%).

⁵⁹ GORDUS 1970, 543; 1972.

⁶⁰ See GUEST 2005, 199–132 where the gold content of late 4th century *siliquae* does not exceed 1% except in two cases out of 106; see BUTCHER / PONTING 2014, 176–179: the analysis of 78 Roman *denarii* (1st century AD) reveals a gold content of less than

1% in 85% of cases (maximum content: 1.8%). The Ostrogothic silver coins of the early 6th century and the Merovingian silver coinage of the late 6th–early 7th century (see FOUCRAY et al. 2020) also provide less than 1% gold.

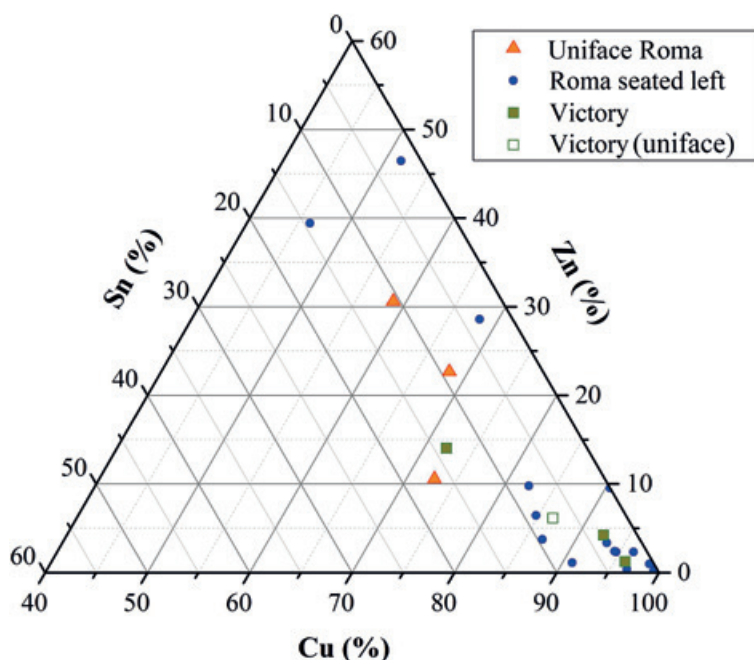


Fig. 13. Copper (Cu)-Tin (Sn)-Zinc (Zn) ternary plot showing the characteristics of the alloy added to the silver.

In addition to the copper content alone, the copper alloy added to the silver of the *argentei* can provide information on its nature, especially by examining the proportions of zinc and tin it contains.

To study the nature of the copper-based alloy added to the silver, the concentrations of copper, zinc, and tin were normalised to 100% to obtain the composition of a virtual alloy⁶¹. The results are represented in *Figure 13*.

In our interpretation of the calculated value, the copper alloys are classified as follows: “unalloyed copper” is used when the sum of zinc and tin is below 2%; “bronze” or “brass” is used when the calculated percentage of tin and zinc are both above 1%, and their ratio does not exceed 3; “bronze or brass” is used when tin or zinc calculated concentrations are above 2% and the value determined for the most abundant of these two elements is at least three times higher than the others.

Ten Rhineland *argentei*, i. e. a third of the sample analysed, contain copper with levels of tin and zinc so low that it can be considered unalloyed. All of them belong to the Roma seated left type. Fifteen further coins are made of a ternary copper alloy, containing zinc and tin both in significant proportions. These calculated compositions may reflect the addition of ternary alloys of varying compositions, or, more probably, the opportunistic mixing of scrap metal from different origins and compositions. Those 15 coins (i. e. half of the corpus) belong to all typological groups. The eight remaining coins divide as follows: one

⁶¹ Obviously, it is not assumed that the calculated composition corresponds precisely to one alloy available at the mint: mixes may have occurred between unalloyed copper and copper alloys of different nature, but we are unable to determine this. In addition,

it should be noted that lead, though it may have been contained in significant proportions in ancient copper-based alloys, is not considered here since the respective contributions of lead from the silver and lead from the copper cannot be determined.

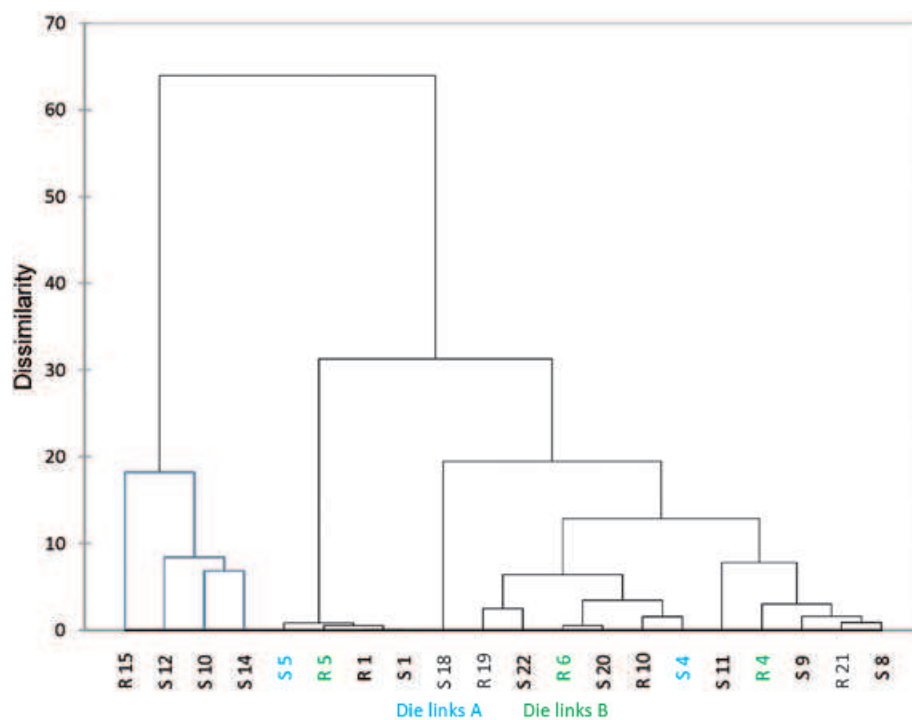


Fig. 14. Dendrogram showing compositional dissimilarities between coins struck with the same dies.

argenteus containing bronze (Roma seated left type), five *argentei* containing brass (three Roma seated left, one uniface seated Roma, and one uniface Victory), while coins S 14 and 17 showing inconsistent values in zinc have been discarded here.

Two main conclusions can be drawn from those observations: first, the most widespread practice among the mint(s) responsible for the production of the Rhineland *argentei* seems to have been the recycling of scrap-copper alloys without consideration for their compositional characteristics; second, if we rely on the results obtained from our sample, the use of unalloyed copper could be used as a discriminating tool for identifying *argentei* of uncertain reverse type from the Rhineland area as Roma seated left coins.

Comparison between die-linked coins

Die-linked coins⁶² have a dissimilar composition, both in terms of fineness and of trace elements, as is shown in this dendrogram⁶³ (Fig. 14). This observation does not indicate that the metal has a different origin but more likely that the alloys struck with the same dies do not belong to the same charge. In contrast, coins that are not die-linked may show strong similarities in their composition (fineness and trace elements), such as coins R 6–S 20 or R 5–S 1. These observations give some indications concerning the organisation of

⁶² Within the coins analysed, the die links are as follows: R 4–R 5–R 6; S 4–S 5; S 1–Éprave.

⁶³ A dendrogram or a hierarchical cluster analysis (HCA) is a binary tree for which each sample represents an ultimate branch. The branches of the

samples are linked iteratively, at a height proportional to their distance measure. Thus, the lower the height (level of inertia) of a junction is, the more similar the linked elements will be.

production: on the one hand, blanks from the same charge could be struck with different dies, and, on the other hand, similar dies could be used to strike blanks from different charges. Perhaps these are indications of a centralised production that is far from anecdotal.

To conclude the analyses, the *argentei* discovered in quite large quantities in Cologne-Rodenkirchen and Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf seem to have a common chemical characteristic with high proportions of gold. By comparing these coins with other finds made outside of the Rhine valley, one realises that the few *argentei* circulating some kilometres west of the Rhine have the same characteristics, although this is not the case for coins found in western Gaul beyond the Meuse.

Finally, the examination of the alloy added to the silver has established that the uniface seated Roma coins were made by adding brass, while the other coin types – especially the classic seated Roma type – seem to have benefited from the addition of low- or unalloyed copper. Thus, the uniface seated Roma type most probably belongs to a specific phase of production in the Rhine region, although the “gold signature” persists.

Early Frankish silver issues at Cologne

The mint authority

Based on the numismatic and archaeological evidence as well as the archaeometric analyses presented above, we could characterise different issues of pseudo-imperial *argentei* that must have originated in the middle Rhineland, as is suggested by the concentration of the findspots around Cologne. At least 20 coins from Cologne-Rodenkirchen and ten from Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf should belong to these issues⁶⁴. This raises the question of the authority responsible for the silver coin series.

From the historical point of view, if one accepts the assumed chronology presented in this paper, the issue of pseudo-imperial *argentei* in Cologne started with the seated Roma and Victory types⁶⁵ when the city was controlled by the Rhine Franks, who besieged and took the former colony c. 459–461⁶⁶. Against the simplest assumption that the successive kings of the Rhine Franks residing in the city ordered the coin issues, one may object that the pseudo-imperial *argentei* lack a decisive element – such as an explicit legend – needed to confirm such an attribution. However, it is worth noting that, in comparison to the Burgundians or the Ostrogoths, the 5th century Franks seem to have avoided any signs of their kingship on the coins they struck. For this reason, we are not even able to identify with certainty the coins issued under the rule of Clovis⁶⁷. The first silver coins with a monogram of

⁶⁴ These are R 1–2, R 4–6, R 9–10, R 21–33; S 1–2, S 4–6, S 18–22.

⁶⁵ Clearly, these coins are among the earliest Merovingian issues in the Rhineland but certainly not the first ones if one considers the late 4th–early 5th century imitations of *siliquae* of Constantius II to Honorius. The coins from the woman's grave in Heilbronn-Böckingen (Stadt Heilbronn, Baden-Württemberg, DE) provide a representative sample of these imitations of *siliquae* with reverses like *vota* in wreath and newly created types (e.g. a stylised anchored-cross). Although some of these coins have been recorded in northern Gaul (but

not yet in Cologne), some of them seem to have been issued east of the Rhine in the Hellweg zone (KOMNICK 2020, 181–186).

⁶⁶ ZÖLLNER 1970, 31; STAAB 1997, 546–547 doubts if the Rhine Franks stayed in the city after their victory.

⁶⁷ Since the late 17th century, attempts have been made to attribute Frankish gold coins to Clovis, although no obvious sign on the coins could help identifying the king as the minting authority. By contrast, no one considered whether his father Childeric might have also issued coins (LAFURIE 1982, 72–73; 75; 1997, 785–786).

a Frankish king (on the reverse) belong to the reigns of Clovis' sons⁶⁸, while Theudebert I, as is well known, was the first Frankish king to strike gold in his own name⁶⁹. Thus, there is no inconsistency in supposing that the kings of the Rhine Franks struck pseudo-imperial *argentei* with the seated Roma or Victory type in Cologne from the late 450s or early 460s onwards, even if the coins themselves do not mention the royal minting authority.

If this is correct, it should be asked whether these pseudo-imperial *argentei* were part of a larger royal coinage which (like the Ostrogothic and Burgundian) would have comprised gold coins, too. Unfortunately, there is to date insufficient evidence from the distribution of the finds or the recorded die links to precisely attribute gold issues of the late 5th–early 6th century to Cologne. Therefore, since no gold or silver coinage can be attributed to Clovis with certainty, the question of whether the Frankish kings seated in Cologne issued *solidi* and *trienses* – potentially in parallel to the pseudo-imperial *argentei* listed above – must remain open.

Contrary to the situation observed in late 6th century Gaul⁷⁰, there is no textual or archaeological evidence suggesting that in the early Merovingian period a city like *Colonia*, or some of its inhabitants as private entities, could have been involved in the issue of coinage through their own *officinae* – which is unlikely given that Frankish kings had their residence there. In any case, regarding the great variety of engraving styles provided by the hundreds of pseudo-imperial *argentei* recorded in northern Gaul, other sites for mints and authorities than the Kingdom of Cologne must be considered. Should we assume that most of the Frankish kings settled in Gaul⁷¹ issued silver coins during the second half of the 5th century? A further assumption would consider whether Frankish chiefs – as subordinates to the kings – ordered the production in the rural settlements, where they lived at a distance from the royal residences. If we fail to prove the validity of one of these hypotheses at this stage, the number of *argentei* found between the Loire and the Rhine⁷² suggests not only the complexity of their production but also their widespread use.

Function of the pseudo-imperial *argentei*

In the past, the almost exclusive occurrence of *argentei* in funerary contexts raised some doubts about their economic function. In particular the *argentei* which were pierced or provided with loops and mounted as pendants, as known from the graves of Graben-Neudorf (Lkr. Karlsruhe, DE), Heilbronn-Böckingen (Reg.-Bez. Stuttgart, DE) and Basel-Klein-*hüningen* (CH)⁷³, led earlier scholars to regard these pieces as ornaments, thus denying them a monetary function⁷⁴. Comparison with other cemeteries shows, however, that many

⁶⁸ The findspots of these royal *argentei* point to their production in the Frankish Provence (CHAMEROY 2020, 219–221 and fig. 16).

⁶⁹ GRIERSON / BLACKBURN 1986, 116 pl. 19 no. 389.

⁷⁰ FOUCRAY et al. 2020, 258–260 identified different issues of *argentei* struck in the late 6th–early 7th century in Paris and at least three other cities nearby; the coin legends of the reverse mention the mint place, but the mint authority (a Merovingian king possibly represented by the monogram figuring on the reverse?) cannot be clearly identified (FOUCRAY et al. 2020, 274).

⁷¹ Gregory of Tours mentions King Ragnachar of

Cambrai (II, 27; 42), his brothers Ricchar and Rignomer (II, 42) and King Chararic (without specifying his place of residence), who did not assist Clovis in his campaign against Syagrius (II, 41). At the present state of research, no gold or silver coin can be attributed to these *reges Francorum*.

⁷² BLANCHET 2020, 353 has recorded no fewer than 771 coins from about 258 findspots.

⁷³ Respectively CAHN 1938; MARTIN 1982; KOMNICK 2020.

⁷⁴ Commenting on the *argentei* from the grave of Arcy-Sainte-Resitue (FR), A. de Barthélémy asked if they were not some “pièces fabriquées pour servir

argentei have no trace of reworking at all and were placed at various locations in the grave: on the breast, in the hand, or in a bag placed near the pelvis, legs, or feet of the deceased⁷⁵. In these examples, the *argentei* may have enjoyed a function as gifts of money for the dead. As such, they took over the role of the Roman *denarius* that was deposited in the same positions in the graves from the Rhine region up to the 6th century⁷⁶. The important point here is that the *argentei* could have various functions in a grave – as Charon’s obol, amulet, element of jewellery or money – so the burial context does not exclude a primary function as coins for daily payments. In Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf and Cologne-Rodenkirchen, where the Merovingian silver coins were neither looped nor pierced, the custom of Charon’s obol can surely be identified, and perhaps for some of the coins that are fused together (S 9 + 15; S 12 + 17; S 16 + 21 + 26), the deposition of small amounts of money in the graves.

Nevertheless, it may seem paradoxical that despite their monetary function, finds of *argentei* have hardly been reported outside the cemeteries: of the 771 *argentei* G. Blanchet recorded until 2020, only 8% come from non-funerary contexts while 70% come from graves⁷⁷. There is no doubt that these small, thin silver coins are more easily found during the meticulous excavation of a grave than the excavation of an urban or rural settlement. More surprising is, however, the absence of hoards in which pseudo-imperial *argentei* would have more easily survived, fused together with others⁷⁸. Therefore, their fragility cannot be the only explanation for their exceptional lack of occurrence in non-funerary contexts. If pseudo-imperial *argentei* really played the role of low denomination coinage (taking over, to some extent, from the bronze coinage that was only rarely issued), their worth was probably too low⁷⁹ to serve as a store of value. Closely linked to this remark, their volume of production (although now difficult to estimate) may have been too limited to allow frequent hoarding or enable long-distance circulation far from their place of minting.

d’ornement” (BARTHÉLÉMY 1878, 154). Similarly, the *argentei* from the grave of Heilbronn-Böckingen led M. R.-Alföldi to conclude that they were “keine Umlaufmünzen im eigentlichen Sinn des Wortes (...). Sie dienen hauptsächlich der Fortführung der Sitte, Hals- oder Gürtelschmuck mit Münzen zu bereichern” (R.-ALFÖLDI 1962, 142).

⁷⁵ In a grave from Courbillac-Herpes (départ. Charente, FR), eleven silver coins were deposited in the hand of the deceased (LAFURIE 1964, 200 no. 11; LAFURIE / PILET-LEMIÈRE 2003, 100–101 no. 16.109.4); the five silver coins from the *Knabengrab* in Cologne were deposited on the breast (probably in the case with the knives found on the breast of the boy; DOPPELFELD 1964, 161); the seven silver coins from the rider’s grave no. 10 at Aldingen (Lkr. Ludwigsburg, DE) were in a bag near the pelvis (NAU 1981, 603). Further examples in KRAUSE 2002.

⁷⁶ VAN HOOFF 1991, 98–99; 101; MARTIN 2004, 247–249. Note that in some women’s graves from Heilbronn-Böckingen, Graben-Neudorf, and

Arcy-Sainte-Restitue, both *denarii* and *argentei* constituted the elements of a necklace.

⁷⁷ BLANCHET 2020, 357. The find context of c. 22% of the recorded *argentei* is not known. Note that the corpus also includes earlier and later *argentei* than the issues discussed in this paper. Even the twelve finds of early pseudo-imperial *argentei* (*vota*, anchored cross, cross in wreath types) listed by MARTIN 2009, 47 comprise at least two *Siedlungsfunde* and one *Einzelfund*.

⁷⁸ Even the mix of *argentei* with gold coins remains exceptional: in the hoard from Dortmund (DE), 444 *solidi* (up to 407 AD) and three gold neck rings were deposited with 16 *argentei* belonging to earlier series (cross in wreath type, dated to c. 420–430 by LAFURIE 1991, 79); REGLING 1910, 4; MARTIN 2009, 31.

⁷⁹ Going from a gold:silver ratio of 1:14.4 since the late 4th century (CARLÀ-UHINK 2020, 6), 216 pure silver *argentei* of 0.1 g would theoretically be needed to equal a pure gold *triens* of 1.5 g.

The *argentei*, “small change” for local use?

Focussing on the pseudo-imperial *argentei* we have attributed to Cologne, it is worth analysing more precisely their diffusion as reflected by the finds shown in *Figures 3–4*. First, we stress their restricted distribution beyond the limits of Sigibert’s kingdom, which stretched southward to Mainz and the valley of the Mosel from Toul (FR) to Koblenz (DE)⁸⁰. In this sense, one wonders why the pseudo-imperial *argentei* from Cologne did not occur at other places in or around the city, for example in the early Frankish graves from St. Severin’s church⁸¹, located 1 km south of the Roman city-wall of Cologne, or in the cemeteries of Junkersdorf and Müngersdorf situated respectively 6 and 5 km westward⁸². To the best of our knowledge, it seems likely that each of the cemeteries considered here reflects a population living in settlements (hamlets or villages) consisting of groups of farmsteads founded in the immediate vicinity of Cologne⁸³. If this assumption is correct, such a cemetery would correspond only to a very small sample of the rural Romano-Germanic population.

Furthermore, the social structure of the settlements and the funeral rituals they observed are equally important factors that might have affected the deposition of coins in the graves. For instance, it is worth stressing that the 543 graves from Cologne-Junkersdorf surprisingly provided only four coins (all of gold⁸⁴) of the 6th to 7th century while the smaller cemetery of Cologne-Müngersdorf (149 graves) 1 km eastward yielded 28 antique (mostly late Roman), two silver, and two gold 6th century coins⁸⁵. In St. Severin’s church, 13 Merovingian graves (5th to 8th century) contained 27 coins in all, most of them late Roman⁸⁶. Given the fact that Germanic populations (and among them, the Franks) are supposed to have closely observed the custom of depositing silver (or gold) coins in the mouth of the dead⁸⁷, these examples suggest that there is no clear relation between the number of graves and the chronology of the cemetery to explain the occurrence of coins; this seems to depend on social and ethnic criteria still imperfectly known to us. A more serious consequence, finally, is that the picture presented by the graves cannot be considered as representative of the diffusion and use of the *argentei* among the inhabitants of the Rhineland.

⁸⁰ EWIG 1976a, 483; 502; 1980, 14; STAAB 1996, 237–238; WIECZOREK 1996, 255–256; TRIER 2011, 13. The limits of the kingdom in the west and southwest are not known.

⁸¹ Particularly the two boys’ graves III,64–65 dating to the second third of the 5th century, which respectively contained, among other objects, one and four late Roman bronze coins (PÄFFGEN 1992, Vol. I, 322; Vol. II, 227–230). Graves V,205 (with weapons; second half of the 5th century) and V,217 (including a wooden coffin with gold and silver jewels but only a single late Roman bronze coin; c. 500 to early 6th century) also belong to the time when *Colonia* was the seat of the Rhine Franks (PÄFFGEN 1992, Vol. I, 324; Vol. II, 589–590; II, 599–603).

⁸² The earliest graves from both cemeteries belong to the second half of the 5th century (PÄFFGEN 1992, Vol. I, 284–285; 291). Concerning the topography see RIEMER 2006, 259–263.

⁸³ Compare BÖHNER 1977, 186–188 presenting the

rural settlements around Ingelheim; DAMMINGER 1998, 57–58; SPIEGEL / STEUER 1980, 208 assumed that the 149 graves excavated in Cologne-Müngersdorf would have correspond to 35 to 45 people living there at the same time, suggesting the existence of two or three farmsteads; at Cologne-Junkersdorf (543 graves), about 130 people in the 6th and 150 in the 7th century would have lived in five or six farmsteads. To what extent these estimates remain valid for the cemeteries of Cologne-Rodenkirchen and Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf is not known.

⁸⁴ They are four *trienses* (LA BAUME 1967, 49–50). See *footnotes 82–83*.

⁸⁵ FREMERSDORF 1955, 43–44; 91–92. Only 16 out of the 149 graves provided coins. See *footnotes 82–83*.

⁸⁶ Merovingian coins occurred only in graves III,81 (*solidus* as a coin ring), 99, and 110 (one Merovingian *denarius* in both) (PÄFFGEN 1992, Vol. I, 487; 490; 492).

⁸⁷ MARTIN 2004, 251; 259.

Moreover, the particular composition of the coins deposited in the graves possibly gives us a glimpse of the status of the different coinages in the early Merovingian society and how they were regarded. It should be noted that indeed the pseudo-imperial *argentei* from Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf and the boy's grave in Cologne cathedral were not mixed with any other gold or silver imperial coins, while Queen Wisigard had twelve imperial and Ostrogothic gold and silver coins but not a single pseudo-imperial *argenteus* in her grave. In Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf, the pseudo-imperial *argentei* in simply furnished male and female graves⁸⁸ certainly belong to modest rural inhabitants. It seems, therefore, that the use of pseudo-imperial *argentei* (as Charon's obol, money for the dead, or for daily transactions) was as widespread among the urban elite to whom the boy from the Cologne *Knabengrab* belonged⁸⁹ as in the wider Frankish rural population. Regarding the latter, it is likely that those who lived in the surrounding villages such as Cologne-Rodenkirchen and Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf received pseudo-imperial *argentei* in exchange for supplying Cologne with agricultural products. Frankish soldiers living in those rural settlements possibly also received coins as gifts or in payment for their service to the king, so they may have contributed to the coin circulation outside Cologne. It is not certain, however, whether military pay was an essential function of the *argentei*⁹⁰.

Based on the limited evidence available, it does not seem that pseudo-imperial *argentei* were limited to a specific category of the Frankish or Roman population, although access to new coinage was certainly easier for the Frankish or Roman elite and the urban populace than for rural settlers. From the economic point of view, the pseudo-imperial *argentei*, also issued in many workshops outside the Kingdom of Cologne, instead filled the local need for low denomination coinage and through their low value also usefully served ritual purposes in funerary contexts. As shown by the scarcity of their finds at more distant places, *Colonia's* *argentei* had more of the status of a local coinage in comparison with (pseudo)-imperial or royal gold coins that enjoyed a larger acceptance outside their area of production.

Reassessing the Kingdom of Cologne

Assuming that the Rhine Franks actually issued pseudo-imperial *argentei* with the seated Roma and Victory types in Cologne, this production ended at the latest when the Rhine Franks, having lost King Sigibert the Lamé and his son Cloderic in 509 through Clovis' ploy⁹¹, recognised the Salian king as their sole ruler. After that, the issue of uniface *argentei* started in Cologne at some time before 540, as indicated by their deposition in the boy's grave in the cathedral. The change observed in the composition of the alloys between the Roma / Victory series and the uniface coins confirms, in addition, that the latter belong to an entirely new issue which may have taken place after the death of Clovis. If this is correct, the uniface *argentei* could be contemporaneous with the first gold issues attributable to Merovingian Cologne (those in the name of Theudebert I⁹²), suggesting that they were royal silver coinage issued in the important residence on the Rhine.

⁸⁸ Iron scissors, flints, and a clay jug belong to the recurrent grave goods of male deceased; fibulae and bead necklaces are the most common offerings in female graves (see *Table 1* and BEHRENS 1947).

⁸⁹ STEIN 1996, 102; 118 considers the boy and the woman from Cologne's cathedral as "Angehörige der [rheinfränkischen] Königsfamilie".

⁹⁰ This has been assumed by STROOBANTS 2020, 201–202 on the basis of the preponderance of the Belgian findspots at or related to hilltop fortifications.

⁹¹ Greg. Tur. Franc. II, 40.

⁹² At least, one issue of *solidi* is identified through the mint mark COL – V (for *Colonia?*) in the field of

The observations made above emphasise the role of Cologne as a major mint in the early Merovingian period and contrast sharply with the lack of evidence, so far, for any coin production during the same period at the residences of Childeric and Clovis in Tournai⁹³, Soissons, and Paris. By renewing the mint activity in Cologne, interrupted since the late 3rd century, the Rhine Franks might have considered themselves to be the heirs of the Roman emperors in the West⁹⁴. As such – not only because of their alliance with the Burgundians – they would have offered Clovis serious competition in the unification of Frankish Gaul. In traditional historiography, however, the Rhine Franks always stand in the shadow of the Salians. It seems clear that the paucity of information about the Rhine Franks provided by Gregory of Tours, who knows of only one king (Sigibert the Lame) at Cologne and depicts him and his son Cloderic as loyal allies of Clovis during the battles of Zülpich and Vouillé⁹⁵, explains this biased view of the Kingdom of Cologne. But this narrow perspective may also be due to the nationalistic approach of the French historians who, since the 19th century at least, have regarded Clovis as a forefather of the *Grande nation*, heir of the fallen Roman Empire, and defender of the Rhine as a frontier of the civilised world against the Germanic barbarians (the Alamans, ancestors of the modern Germans, always willing to expand west of the Rhine). Following this interpretation, there was no place for a second Frankish kingdom that would have competed with Clovis' authority in completing the unity of Gaul, achieved at the religious level through his conversion to Christianity⁹⁶. It seems possible that this line of reasoning strongly influenced studies of early Frankish Gaul as well as historians' lack of interest in examining the role of Cologne and its kings in the construction of Clovis' kingdom⁹⁷. By the division of 561 at the latest, however, Cologne had ceded its political significance to Rheims (FR)⁹⁸, which definitively became the chief residence of the Austrasian kings.

the reverse (DE BELFORT 1892, Vol. 1, 456 no. 1603; PROU 1892, 15 no. 56 and pl. I,22; GRIERSON / BLACKBURN 1986, 117).

⁹³ In Tournai, only one grave (no. 10) from the cemetery where Childeric was buried provided three pierced pseudo-imperial *argentei* of the anchored cross type, some of which probably issued East of the Rhine (see *footnote* 65) and not at Trier as suggested by LAFAURIE 1991, 80.

⁹⁴ DOPPELFELD / PIRLING 1966, 9; 48 stressed how the discovery of the “royal” graves under the cathedral highlighted the role of the Rhine Franks “für das Weiterleben römischer Kultur” and shed light on the region of Cologne usually considered as a marginal area of the Frankish Kingdom. Recent archaeological works (e.g. on the Heumarkt, see TRIER 2011, 15–16) confirm the importance of *Colonia* in the early Merovingian period (ECK 2011, 10; HÖLTKEN 2016, 186–188).

⁹⁵ Greg. Tur. Franc. II, 37.

⁹⁶ This interpretation is particularly developed in Ernest Babelon's “Les Francs de l'Est” published in 1917. Compounded by the historical context of the World War supplying his hate rhetoric against the “Hohenzollern (...) toujours perfide” and the Germans qualified as “race de proie”, Babelon considered his book as a contribution to the “reconstruction de la France intégrale” (BABELON 1917, V–VII; 12; 15). In this sense, Clovis' Franks were competing with the Gauls as forefathers of the French nation a few decades later under the Vichy regime (POMIAN 1997, 22–49).

⁹⁷ So, it is no surprise that reference manuals for this period such as LEBECQ 1990 or WOOD 1994 devote not a single paragraph to the Kingdom of Cologne.

⁹⁸ As stressed by EWIG 1976b, 116 footnote 12, Gregory of Tours does not mention the main residences of the kings before the division of 561 (IV, 22), even if the bishop suggests that Rheims has been the capital of Theuderic since 511.

Catalogue

The analysed coins are marked with * (results in *Tab. 3*).

Cologne-Rodenkirchen (*Fig. 15*)

Argentei with the name of Valentinian III

Reverse type: Roma seated left

[...]IN(retrograde)T-IAN(retrograde)VG. Draped and cuirassed bust with diadem facing right.

VI[...]ITVN(retrograde). In the left field an eight-pointed star. In the right field a globe. In the exergue a wavy line. Roma seated left; she holds a Victory on a small globe in the right hand and a cross-sceptre in the left.

NUMER 1984, 612 no. 1010/27,1/3–32. It is die-linked with an *argenteus* found in a grave in Éprave (prov. Namur, BE; CUMONT 1890, 217) and another one found by Sézanne (départ. Marne, FR; SCHIESSER 2012, 140 no. 15). These *argentei* were very probably issued in Cologne (see *Fig. 3*).

R 1*. 0.27 g; 5 h; 15 mm. LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn 19822r.

C(retrograde)N(retrograde)VIN(retrograde)-[...]IVN(retrograde)G. Draped and cuirassed bust with diadem facing right.

VN(retrograde)I-[...]ΔTVN(retrograde). In the left field a multiple-pointed star. In the right field a globe. The exergue is broken out. Roma seated left; she holds a Victory on a small globe in the right hand and a cross-sceptre in the left.

NUMER 1984, 612 no. 1010/27,1/3–32. It is die-linked with an *argenteus* found in grave 428 in Rübenach (Lkr. Koblenz, DE; NAU 1966, 23–24 no. 1). These *argentei* were very probably issued in Cologne (see *Fig. 3*).

R 2. 0.22 g; 12 h; 15 mm. LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn 19822r.

C(retrograde)NIV[...]III[...]NAVC. Draped and cuirassed bust with diadem facing right.

VICTOR-[...]ΔVC. In the left field a nine-pointed star. In the exergue: TR[...]. Roma seated left on a *sella curulis*; she holds a Victory in form of a Christogram in the right hand and a beaded cross-sceptre in the left.

NUMER 1984, 612 no. 1010/27,1/3–32.

R 3. 0.19 g; 6 h; 14 mm. LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn 19822r.

VNAIVI-[...]ΔAN(retrograde)IC. Cuirassed bust with diadem facing right.

DHI-IAVIV. In the exergue [...]NO. Roma seated left on a *sella curulis* represented by a large X with triangle in each field of the X. She holds a beaded cross pattée in the right hand. Behind the seat stands a beaded sceptre ending with a cross pattée at the top; one range of three triangles on each side of the sceptre.

NUMER 1984, 612 no. 1010/27,1/3–32. All three *argentei* were struck with the same dies, very probably in Cologne (see *Fig. 3*).

R 4*. 0.17 g; 12 h; 14 mm. LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn 19822r.

R 5*. 0.15 g; 12 h; 12 mm. LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn 19822r.

R 6*. 0.11 g; 6 h; 13 mm. LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn 19822r.

CIVIN-V[...]INI. Draped bust with diadem and a round fibula on the right shoulder facing right.

VIII-[...]ΛVI. In the right field a star (?). In the exergue [...]. Roma seated left on a *sella curulis*; she holds a cross pattée in the right hand. Behind the seat stands a beaded cross-sceptre.

NUBER 1984, 612 no. 1010/27,1/3–32.

R 7. 0.15 g; 6 h; 14 mm. LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn 19822r.

[...]OV[...]. Draped and cuirassed bust with diadem facing right.

[...]. Roma seated left.

NUBER 1984, 612 no. 1010/27,1/3–32.

R 8. 0.1 g (broken out). LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn 19822r.

Reverse type: Victory standing left

VIAN(retrograde)OO(ligated)T-TVAGCC. Draped and cuirassed bust with diadem facing right.

C(retrograde)ΛVC(retrograde)-Ω-TOIIA. In the exergue ONO. Victory standing left; she holds a long beaded cross in the right hand.

NUBER 1984, 612 no. 1010/27,1/3–32. Both *argentei* were struck with the same dies and are die-linked with S 6 and a coin found in a grave in Abainville (départ. Meuse, FR; GUILLAUME 1989, 102 no. 10; LAFaurie / Pilet-Lemière 2003, 217 no. 55.1.1.1). These *argentei* were very probably issued in Cologne (see Fig. 4).

R 9. 0.23 g; 6 h; 14 mm. LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn 19822r.

R 10*. 0.19 g; 12 h; 14 mm. LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn 19822r.

Argentei with the name of Anastasius

Reverse type: Roma seated left

ANAS-[...]IV. Cuirassed bust with diadem facing right.

UU-UUΩ. In the right field a seven-pointed star. In the exergue a wavy line. Roma seated left on a *sella curulis*; she holds a cross pattée in the right hand and a sceptre ending with a cross pattée at the top and beads at the bottom to the left.

NUBER 1984, 612 no. 1010/27,1/3–32.

R 11. 0.34 g; 6 h; 17 mm. LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn 19822r.

Reverse type: Victory standing or walking right

[...]STΛ-S(retrograde)I[...]PPVVG (letters of the reverse legend appear incused on the obverse). Draped and cuirassed bust facing right.

VICTORIA – Λ-VGVST[...]RVI. In the exergue CONOB. Victory walking right; she holds a wreath in the right hand and a palm-branch in the left.

NUBER 1984, 612 no. 1010/27,1/3–32. It is worth noting the stylistic affinities with the *argenteus* (Fig. 5) found in grave 104 in Rittersdorf (Eifelkreis Bitburg-Prüm, DE; WERNER 1935, 136 no. 45; BÖHNER 1958, 207 M 3; GILLES 1981, 32 no. 5). See Fig. 4.

R 12. 0.27 g; 12 h; 16 mm. LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn 19822r.

D N ANA-S[...]C. Draped and cuirassed bust with diadem facing right.

C·C·C(retrograde)CIV[...]Λ[...]C. In the exergue OIID. Victory standing right; she holds a cross-sceptre in the right hand.

NUBER 1984, 612 no. 1010/27,1/3–32. It is die-linked with an *argenteus* found



Fig. 15. Pseudo-imperial *argentei* and fragments from the cemetery of Cologne-Rodenkirchen. – Scale 1.5 : 1.



Fig. 15. cont.

in Lohmar (Rhein-Sieg-Kreis, DE; LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn F 66/2005/2). See *Fig. 4*.

R 13. 0.17 g; 6 h; 14 mm. LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn 19822r.

Uncertain reverse type

ANA[...]-TASAI. Draped and cuirassed bust with diadem facing right.
[...]. Three lines making a quadrangular shape.
NUMBER 1984, 612 no. 1010/27,1/3–32.

R 14. 0.20 g; 14 mm. LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn 19822r.

Uncertain emperor

Reverse type: Roma seated left

[...]III-[...]II[...]. Bust with diadem facing right.
[...]IVI-[...]VAC. In the exergue I[...]. Roma seated left on a *sella curulis*; she holds a cross pattée in the right hand. Behind the seat stands a sceptre ending with a cross pattée at the top.
NUMBER 1984, 612 no. 1010/27,1/3–32.

R 15*. 0.17 g; 6 h; 14 mm. LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn 19822r.

[...]. Illegible.

[...]. Roma seated left on a *sella curulis*.

The attribution of this coin to Cologne-Rodenkirchen is not certain.

R 16. <0.1 g. LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn 19822r.

Reverse type: Victory standing left

[...]. Illegible.

[...]. Victory standing left; she holds a cross-sceptre in the right hand.

NUMBER 1984, 612 no. 1010/27,1/3–32.

R 17. 0.1 g; 14 mm. LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn 19822r.

Uncertain emperor and reverse type

AVI-[...]. Cuirassed bust with diadem facing right.
No legend (?). Wavy line crossing a quadrangular shape.
NUMBER 1984, 612 no. 1010/27,1/3–32.

R 18. 0.05 g; 11 mm (broken out). LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn 19822r.

[...]ONO[...]. Illegible fragment.

NUMBER 1984, 612 no. 1010/27,1/3–32.

R 19*. 0.1 g. LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn 19822r.

Uniface coins

Struck with an obverse die

No legend. Beaded line under schematically engraved hair.

NUBER 1984, 612 no. 1010/27,1/3–32.

R 20. 0.13 g; 13 mm. LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn 19822r.

Struck with a reverse die

Roma seated left

Pseudo-legend consisting of lines and dots. In the middle a round motif between two small crosses, a beaded line and a beaded spear.

NUBER 1984, 612 no. 1010/27,1/3–32. The seven *argentei* were struck with one and the same die and are die-linked with S 18–19, with three *argentei* from the *Knabengrab* of Cologne's cathedral (DOPPELFELD 1964, 161 nos 1–3 and pl. 38a–c) and with one *argenteus* found in grave 131 in Frankfurt am Main-Harheim (VON FREEDEN 2020, 76–77 coin 2,1). They all were very probably issued in Cologne (see *Fig. 6*).

R 21*. 0.15 g; 13 mm. LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn 19822r.

R 22. 0.13 g; 14 mm. LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn 19822r.

R 23. 0.13 g (broken out); 13 mm. LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn 19822r.

R 24. 0.1 g (broken out); 14 mm. LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn 19822r.

R 25. 0.08 g (two fragments); 13 mm. LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn 19822r.

R 26. 0.07 g (two fragments); 12 mm. LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn 19822r.

R 27. 0.05 g (fragments). LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn 19822r.

No legend. Long beaded cross-sceptre, two crosses, lines and dots.

NUBER 1984, 612 no. 1010/27,1/3–32. It is die-linked with an *argenteus* found in grave 131 in Frankfurt am Main-Harheim (VON FREEDEN 2020, 76–77 coin 2,4).

This *argenteus* was very probably issued in Cologne (see *Fig. 6*).

R 28. 0.15 g; 14 mm. LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn 19822r.

No legend. Lines, dots and a cross, a beaded line and a beaded spear.

NUBER 1984, 612 no. 1010/27,1/3–32. This *argenteus* was very probably issued in Cologne (see *Fig. 6*).

R 29. 0.13 g; 15 mm. LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn 19822r.

Legend consisting of pseudo-letters. In the middle a large cross between two smaller ones.

NUBER 1984, 612 no. 1010/27,1/3–32. This *argenteus* was very probably issued in Cologne (see *Fig. 6*).

R 30. 0.17 g; 13 mm. LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn 19822r.

Victory standing right

IVC(retrograde)VAV-I-I- [...]. Victory standing right; she holds a cross-sceptre in the right hand.

NUBER 1984, 612 no. 1010/27,1/3–32. Both *argentei* were struck with the same die, very probably in Cologne (see *Fig. 8*).

R 31. 0.1 g (broken out); 12 mm. LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn 19822r.

R 32. 0.08 g; 12 mm. LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn 19822r.

Victory standing left

Legend consisting of pseudo-letters. In the left field a four-pointed star and a wreath. Victory with a bird head above long legs and a wing standing left; she holds a wreath in her beak.

NUBER 1984, 612 no. 1010/27,1/3–32. This *argenteus* was very probably issued in Cologne (see *Fig. 8*).

R 33. 0.14 g; 13 mm. LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn 19822r.

[...]ΛO[...]ΛO[...]. Victory standing left.

NUBER 1984, 612 no. 1010/27,1/3–32.

R 34. 0.012 g (fragments). LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn 19822r.

Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf (*Fig. 16*)

Argentei with the name of Valentinian III

Reverse type: Roma seated left

C(retrograde)VANIV-IT[ΛVC]. Draped bust with diadem facing right.

VIN(retrograde) [...]. Eight-pointed star in the left field. Roma seated left on a *sella curulis*; she holds a Victory on a globe in the right hand and a long cross in the left. HÄVERNICK 1929/30, 100 pl. XXII,5; BEHRENS 1947, 29 pl. 1,5. It is obverse-die-linked with an *argenteus* found in a grave in Éprave (prov. Namur, BE; CUMONT 1890, 213; DE BELFORT 1894, Vol. 4, 3 no. 4999). This *argenteus* was very probably issued in Cologne (see *Fig. 3*).

S 1*. 0.22 g; 6 h; 14 mm. LEIZA O.2755.

[...]ENTIN-[...]N[...]. Draped bust with diadem facing right.

VΛO-[...]N[...]. Eight-pointed star in the left field. Roma seated left on a *sella curulis*; she holds a cross on a globe in the right hand and a long beaded cross in the left. HÄVERNICK 1929/30, 100 pl. XXII,6; BEHRENS 1947, 29 pl. 1,6. This *argenteus* was very probably issued in Cologne.

S 2. 0.20 g; 6 h; 13 mm. LEIZA O.2756.

IADN(retrograde)-[...]ΛCCC. Draped and cuirassed bust with diadem facing right.

Pseudo-legend with C (retrograde) and dots. Curved line in the exergue. Roma seated left; she holds a small sceptre in the right hand. The seat back consists of a long beaded cross; under the seat a six-pointed star and dots.

Found in grave 5. BEHRENS 1939, 18 fig. 6; BEHRENS 1947, 3. See *Table 1*.

S 3. 0.26 g; 6 h; 14 mm. LEIZA O.2655d.

DΛECE-NCOIC. Draped bust with diadem facing right; behind the diadem a six-pointed star.

IN(retrograde)ΛV-I-[]. In the left field a dot. In the exergue a curved line with two dots above. Roma seated left on a *sella curulis*; she holds a cross on a globe in the right hand and a long cross in the left.

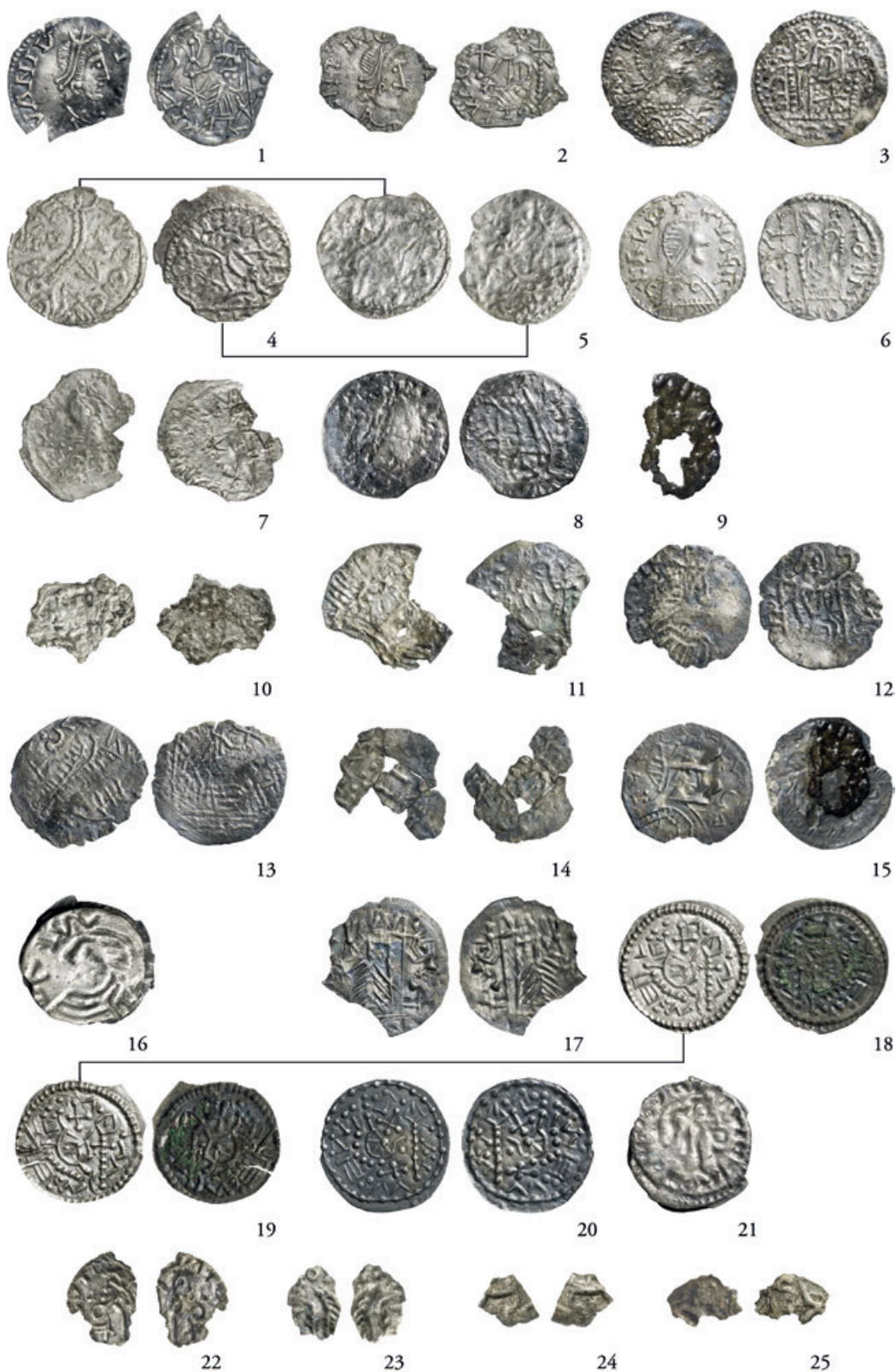


Fig. 16. Pseudo-imperial *argentei* and fragments from the cemetery of Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf. – Scale 1.5 : 1.

HÄVERNICK 1929/30, 100 pl. XXII, 7–8; BEHRENS 1947, 29 pl. 1,7.8. Both *argentei* were struck with the same dies and are die-linked with an *argenteus* found in Lohmar (Rhein-Sieg-Kreis, DE; LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn F 66/2005/1). They all were very probably issued in Cologne (see *Fig. 3*).

S 4*. 0.24 g; 6 h; 15 mm. LEIZA O.2757.

S 5*. 0.17 g; 6 h; 14 mm. LEIZA O.2758.

Reverse type: Victory standing left

C(retrograde)VIAN(retrograde)OO(ligated)T-TVΛGCC. Draped and cuirassed bust with diadem facing right.

ΛΛVC(retrograde)-C(horizontal)-TOIIA. In the exergue: ONO. Victory standing left; she holds a long beaded cross in the right hand.

HÄVERNICK 1929/30, 100 pl. XXII,3; BEHRENS 1947, 29 pl. 1,3. It is die-linked with R 9–10 and with an *argenteus* found in a grave in Abainville (départ. Meuse, FR; GUILLAUME 1989, 102 no. 10; LAFAURIE / PILET-LEMIÈRE 2003, 217 no. 55.1.1.1). These *argentei* were very probably issued in Cologne (see *Fig. 4*).

S 6. 0.23 g; 6 h; 14 mm. LEIZA O.2753.

Argenteus with the name of Theodosius II

D N THEO[...]SI[...] (double struck). Draped and cuirassed bust with diadem facing right.

VICTORIA[...] (double struck). In the left field an eight-pointed star. Victory standing right.

HÄVERNICK 1929/30, 100 pl. XXII,4; BEHRENS 1947, 29 pl. 1,4.

S 7. 0.14 g; 6 h; 14 mm. LEIZA O.2754.

Uncertain emperor (Valentinian III or Theodosius II)

Reverse type: Roma seated left

[...]. Draped bust with diadem.

[...]. Roma seated left; cross-sceptre in the left field.

HÄVERNICK 1929/30, 100 pl. XXII,9; BEHRENS 1947, 29 pl. 1,9.

S 8*. 0.30 g; 6 h; 14 mm. LEIZA O.2759.

Obverse illegible.

[...]VNVN[...]. Roma seated left; only the cross-sceptre and the back of the seat are legible on the fragment.

HÄVERNICK 1929/30, 100 pl. XXII,10; BEHRENS 1947, 29 pl. 1,10.

It is fused together with the reverse of the *argenteus* S 15 (LEIZA O.2760a).

S 9*. 0.13 g (two coins); 11 mm. LEIZA O.2760b.

[...]. Dots and lines which cannot be interpreted.

[...]. Roma seated left; she holds a cross in the right hand and a cross-sceptre in the left.

BEHRENS 1947, 30 no. 17.

S 10*. 0.31 g; 12 mm. LEIZA O.2768–2769.

[...]. Hair and bead-diadem of a head facing right.

[...]. Roma seated left; she holds a cross-sceptre in the left hand.

BEHRENS 1947, 30 no. 17.

S 11*. 0.11 g; 14 mm. LEIZA O.2767.

Reverse type: Roma seated right

[...]VI[...]VI[...]. Draped bust with diadem facing right.

DND(ligated)I[...]VAC. In the right field a six-pointed star. Roma seated right; she holds a cross-sceptre in the left hand. Behind the seat a cross-sceptre.

HÄVERNICK 1929/30, 101 pl. XXII,11b; BEHRENS 1947, 29 pl. 1,11b.

It was originally fused together with the *argenteus* S 17 (LEIZA O.2761a).

S 12*. 0.14 g; 3 h; 13 mm. LEIZA O.2761b.

C(retrograde)V(horizontal)[...]. Head with diadem of very barbaric style.

[...]ΛΛ. Roma seated right; she holds a cross (on a globe?) in the left hand. Behind the seat a cross-sceptre.

HÄVERNICK 1929/30, 101 pl. XXII,12; BEHRENS 1947, 29 pl. 1,12.

S 13. 0.22 g; 9 h; 14 mm. LEIZA O.2762.

Uncertain reverse type

[...]. Dots and lines.

[...]. Dots and lines.

BEHRENS 1947, 30 no. 17.

S 14*. 0.06 g; 13 mm. LEIZA O.2770c.

Uniface coins

Struck with an obverse die

Pseudo-legend. Bust with diadem facing right.

HÄVERNICK 1929/30, 100 pl. XXII,10; BEHRENS 1947, 29 pl. 1,10.

It is fused together with the *argenteus* fragment S 9 (LEIZA O.2760b).

S 15. 0.13 g (two coins); 14 mm. LEIZA O.2760a.

[...]-VVIAV. Draped bust facing right.

HÄVERNICK 1929/30, 101 pl. XXII,16; BEHRENS 1947, 30 pl. 2,16.

It is fused together with the *argentei* S 21 (LEIZA O.2766b) and S 26 (LEIZA O.2766c) and can only be examined from the incuse side.

S 16. 0.47 g (three coins); 14 mm. LEIZA O.2766a.

Struck with a reverse die

Roma seated left

[...]-VV-[...]. Roma seated (?) left; she holds a Victory in the right hand and a cross-sceptre in the left.

HÄVERNICK 1929/30, 101 pl. XXII,11a; BEHRENS 1947, 29 pl. 1,11a.

It was originally fused together with the *argenteus* S 12 (LEIZA O.2761b).

S 17. 0.15 g; 14 mm. LEIZA O.2761a.

Pseudo-legend consisting of lines and dots. In the middle a round motif between two small crosses, a beaded line and a beaded spear.

HÄVERNICK 1929/30, 101 pl. XXII,13–14; BEHRENS 1947, 30 pl. 2,13.14. Both *argentei* were struck with one and the same die and are die-linked with the *argentei* R 21–27 and an *argenteus* found in grave 131 in Frankfurt am Main-Harheim (VON FREEDEN 2020, 76–77 coin 2,1). They all were very probably issued in Cologne (see *Fig. 6*).

S 18*. 0.21 g; 14 mm. LEIZA O.2764.

S 19. 0.10 g; 14 mm. LEIZA O.2763.

The same as above but struck with a different die.

HÄVERNICK 1929/30, 101 pl. XXII,15; BEHRENS 1947, 30 pl. 2,15. This *argenteus* was very probably issued in Cologne (see *Fig. 6*).

S 20*. 0.21 g; 14 mm. LEIZA O.2765.

Victory standing left

Pseudo-legend. In the left field a four-pointed star. Victory standing left and holding a wreath.

HÄVERNICK 1929/30, 101 pl. XXII,16; BEHRENS 1947, 30 pl. 2,16.

It is fused together with the *argentei* S 16 (LEIZA O.2766a) and S 26 (LEIZA O.2766c) and can only be examined from its incuse side. It was very probably issued in Cologne (see *Fig. 8*).

S 21. 0.47 g (3 coins); 14 mm. LEIZA O.2766b.

[...]ΤΛ[...]. In the left field a four-pointed star. Victory standing left and holding a wreath.

BEHRENS 1947, 30 pl. 2,17. It was very probably issued in Cologne (see *Fig. 8*).

S 22*. 0.03 g; 10 mm. LEIZA O.2770a.

[...]ΟΙ[...]. Victory standing left.

BEHRENS 1947, 30 pl. 2,17.

S 23. 0.01 g; 7 mm. LEIZA O.2770b.

Uncertain reverse type

Illegible fragments of uniface coins.

BEHRENS 1947, 30 pl. 2,17.

S 24. <0,01 g; 6 mm. LEIZA O.2770d.

S 25. <0,01 g; 6 mm. LEIZA O.2770e.

Not identified

This coin is fused with and between nos 16 and 21 (LEIZA O.2766a–b) and cannot be identified.

HÄVERNICK 1929/30, 101 pl. XXII,16; BEHRENS 1947, 30 pl. 2,16.

S 26. 0.47 g (three coins); 14 mm. LEIZA O.2766c.

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Summary: The Kingdom of Cologne and the Early Frankish Silver Coinage

This paper presents a new catalogue of the Merovingian silver coins (*argentei*) found in the early 20th century in the cemeteries of Cologne-Rodenkirchen (34 hitherto unpublished coins) and Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf (26). The many (partly external) die links provided by the *argentei* from both cemeteries, and the analyses of the composition of some of the coins, make it likely that some issues are a local production that took place in Cologne between the mid-5th and the mid-6th century. These results permit us to consider the Kingdom of Cologne as a major minting authority in early Merovingian Gaul, where the beginnings of the Frankish coinage have traditionally been attributed to Clovis. Hence, the Roman legacy may have been a source of rivalry between the Ripuarian and the Salian Franks until Cologne lost its political significance after the mid-6th century.

Zusammenfassung: Das Königreich von Köln und die frühe merowingische Silbermünzprägung

Der Beitrag legt einen neuen Katalog der merowingischen Silbermünzen (*argentei*) vor, die im frühen 20. Jahrhundert auf den Gräberfeldern von Köln-Rodenkirchen (34 bisher unveröffentlichte Münzen) und Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf (26) ausgegraben wurden. Die vielen (z. T. externen) Stempelkopplungen, die die *argentei* aus beiden Gräberfeldern aufweisen, sowie die Analysen der Zusammensetzung bestimmter Münzen legen den Schluss nahe, einige Emissionen als lokale Münzproduktion zu charakterisieren, die zwischen dem mittleren 5. und dem mittleren 6. Jahrhundert in Köln stattfand. Diese Ergebnisse erlauben, das Königreich von Köln als wichtigen Münzherrn im frühmerowingischen Gallien zu betrachten, wo die Anfänge der fränkischen Münzprägung traditionell Chlodwig

zugeschrieben wurden. Somit dürfte das römische Erbe potenzielle Konflikte zwischen Rhein- und Salfranken ausgelöst haben, bis Köln seine politische Bedeutung nach dem mittleren 6. Jahrhundert verlor.

Résumé: Le royaume de Cologne et les débuts du monnayage d'argent mérovingien

L'article présente un nouveau catalogue des monnaies d'argent mérovingiennes (*argentei*) découvertes au début du XX^e siècle dans les nécropoles de Cologne-Rodenkirchen (34 monnaies jusqu'ici inédites) et de Bonn-Schwarzrheindorf (26). Les nombreuses liaisons de coins (en partie externes) offertes par les *argentei* des deux nécropoles, ainsi que les analyses de la composition de plusieurs d'entre eux suggèrent de caractériser certaines émissions comme relevant d'une production monétaire locale, qui eut lieu à Cologne entre le mi-V^e et le mi-VI^e siècle. Ces résultats autorisent à considérer le royaume de Cologne comme une autorité monétaire et émettrice majeure en Gaule mérovingienne précoce, où les débuts du monnayage franc sont traditionnellement attribués à Clovis. Ainsi, l'héritage romain dut être source de rivalités entre les Francs rhénans et les Francs saliens, jusqu'à ce que Cologne perde son importance politique après le milieu du VI^e siècle.

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Figs 1; 7a: G. Blanchet, Centre Michel de Boüard (CRAHAM). – *Figs 2–4; 6; 8–9*: authors, M. Ober, Leibniz-Zentrum für Archäologie (LEIZA). – *Fig. 5*: GILLES 1981, 32 no. 5. – *Fig. 7b*: ANONYMOUS 1900, 467; WIELANDT 1951, 614 no. 3. – *Figs 10–14*: authors. – *Fig. 15*: G. Blanchet, Centre Michel de Boüard (CRAHAM); L. Trommenschlager. – *Fig. 16*: R. Müller, Leibniz-Zentrum für Archäologie (LEIZA). – *Tab. 1*: authors after BEHRENS 1939; BEHRENS 1947. – *Tabs 2–4*: authors.