



# COINING VALUES

**BRONZE BETWEEN MONEY AND SCRAP  
IN LATE ROMAN AND EARLY MEDIEVAL EUROPE**

**26.–28. OCTOBER 2023 BONN**

# Information

Teilnehmende sind gebeten, sich spätestens eine Woche vor Beginn über [sekretariat.vfgarch@uni-bonn.de](mailto:sekretariat.vfgarch@uni-bonn.de) anzumelden. Es gibt nur eine beschränkte Anzahl Plätze.

Conference attendees have to register at least one week before the opening of the conference at: [sekretariat.vfgarch@uni-bonn.de](mailto:sekretariat.vfgarch@uni-bonn.de). There is only a limited number of seats available.

Tagungsort ist das Bonner Universitätsforum, Heussallee 18, 53113 Bonn.

The conference takes place at Bonner Universitätsforum, Heussallee 18, 53113 Bonn.

# 2023-10-26 DONNERSTAG / THURSDAY

13:00

## **Ankunft und Registrierung**

Arrival and registration

13:45

Begrüßung und Einführung (Dr. Anna Flückiger, Prof. Dr. Jan Bemmann)

Welcome and Introduction (Dr. Anna Flückiger, Prof. Dr. Jan Bemmann)

14:00

Fleur Kemmers, Money, metal, and the social construction of value

14:30

Ralph W. Mathisen, The role of base metals in Roman law, administration, and culture

15:00

Anna Flückiger, Hackbronze – coining a term for Late Antiquity

15:30

## **Kaffeepause**

Coffee break

16:00

Philip Smither, Coins, recycling and the end of Roman Britain: A view from the Saxon Shore

16:30

Ellen Swift, The uses and values of copper alloy artefacts in the late to post-Roman transition period in Britain

17:00

Fraser Hunter, „Scrap silver“? Changing approaches to the interpretation of hacksilver in the late Roman and early Medieval periods

18:00

## **Abendessen für Vortragende**

Dinner - for speakers only

# 2023–10–27 FREITAG / FRIDAY

**9:00**

Eckhard Wirbelauer, Argentei minuti aus dem elsässischen Niedernai: Überlegungen zur Interpretation einer Fundmünzengruppe

**9:30**

David Wigg-Wolf, What happened after coins? The collapse of a coin-using monetary economy in the late-Roman North-West.

**10:00**

Rahel Otte, Coins without value? Der Schatzfund von Rheindahlen und das Ende der Monetarisierung im Rheinland

**10:30**

**Kaffeepause**

Coffee break

**11:00**

Markus Peter, Failed fortunes from Late Roman contexts in Switzerland

**11:30**

Marcus Zagermann, Kings of Metal – Die spätantike Höhensiedlung von San Martino (Lomaso, Trentino) als sicherer Aufbewahrungsort von Schrott, Alteisen, Barren und Sonstigem

**12:00–13:00 Uhr**

**Mittagessen**

Lunch

# 2023-10-27 FREITAG / FRIDAY

**13:30**

Alessandro Bona, Traces of complexity. Monetary circulation in Mediolanum in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century AD: Persistences and Changes

**14:00**

Giulia Bison, The view from Rome: the social aspects and value of copper alloy recycling

**14:30**

**Kaffeepause**

**Coffee break**

**15:00**

Coining Values: Zwischenfazit

Coining Values: interim conclusion

**freie Abendgestaltung**

**Evening to explore the city independently**

# 2023–10–28 SAMSTAG / SATURDAY

**9:00**

Holger Komnick, Römische Bronzemünzen der zweiten Hälfte des 4. Jhs. im Fundmünzaufkommen von Ostdeutschland – Kein Geld oder Kleingeld?

**9:30**

Aleksander Bursche/Kirill Myzgin/Anna Zapolska, Roman bronzes and East-Central Barbaricum

**10:00**

Anna Zapolska, The finds of bronze coins, their usage, and function in the West Balts' societies

**10:30**

**Kaffeepause**

Coffee break

**11:00**

Peter Bray, Chemical eddies. Tracking metal histories and connections in the mid to late 1<sup>st</sup> Millennium AD. REMADE (Roman and Early Medieval Alloys Defined)

**11:30**

Thomas Schierl, Bronze ... makes the world go round? Sozioökonomische Aspekte eines Werk- und Wertstoffes

**12:00**

**Abschluss der Tagung**

Farewell

# Abstracts

## Money, metal, and the social construction of value

Fleur Kemmers (Frankfurt a. M.)

What is money? Why is metal such a suitable money-medium? How to fix the value of money-objects? This paper will explore theories from economic anthropology on money and its social construction, which address these questions. In a next step, it will focus on the use of uncoined-metal in Iron Age and early Roman society before the introduction of coinage to see in how far this could be called 'money'. Finally, it will discuss how this theoretical framework might help to better grasp the use of scrap metal in a post-coinage society.

## The role of base metals in Roman law, administration, and culture

Ralph W. Mathisen (Urbana, Illinois)

Roman written records are replete with references to gold and silver as items of value. But references to base metals such as bronze, copper, or lead, do not appear as frequently, and when they do, it often is by metonymy, in words that have lost a direct connection to the metal-qua-metal. Thus one finds many references to "aes" in the generic sense of „money," or to "aerarium" in the sense of a "treasury." For example, *Cod. Theod.* 7.4.36 speaks of salaries of military officers in annona units "being received as money [aes]" and of soldiers' annona units being paid "in the form of treasury money [aerarium]." In such cases, however, it is not actual copper that is being paid but "money" in other forms, probably gold or silver, metonymically represented by words denoting base metal. In a like manner, the word "plumbum" often is applied to forms of punishment. More to the point for the present purpose are references to actual base metals themselves in a monetary sense or as items having value. When such mentions do occur, it sometimes is connected to criminal activity. The *Codex Theodosianus* (9.21.6, cf. 11.21.1) also observed, "We have learned that some metal workers are smelting the maiorina coinage, no less criminally than repeatedly, in order to separate the silver from the copper [aes]."

Those apprehended doing this were to suffer capital punishment and have their property confiscated. In this case, then, the copper coinage had value as an “ore” from which silver could be smelted. One might wonder whether some of the surviving copper detritus was a result of this operation.

Copper was assigned a more specific value in 396, when a law (*Cod.Theod.* 11.21.1) ruled that “a solidus be rendered by the property owner as the equivalent of twenty-five pounds of copper [coinage],” which works out to about 1700 copper coins. A law of 424 (*Cod.Theod.* 11.21.3) speaks of a *centenarius* (100 pounds) of copper (coinage) as being the standard against which an amount of gold was calculated. For the purpose of government transactions, then, copper coinage still had a standard value, even if the relative value of copper to gold continued to decline. Still other legislation regulated how copper coinage was to be received in the currency base.

By applying examples such as these, this contribution will look at issues such as the meaning, transformation, para-monetary functions, and immaterial values and meanings of base metal coinage or monetized objects from a literary perspective. One would hope that doing so might help to contextualize the material base-metal objects in a broader socio-literary context.

## **Hackbronze – coining a term for Late Antiquity**

**Anna Flückiger (Basel, Bonn)**

What happens if we consider bronze scrap in a similar manner to how research has lately approached late Roman Hacksilver? With regard to its exchange power and role in the economy, late Roman and early medieval copper alloy has so far not received the attention that more precious metals have been given. Fragments from archaeological contexts are still often treated under the umbrella term “recycling”. Drawing from theoretical considerations as well as case studies, this paper sets out to change and broaden this perspective on bronze artefacts and fragments, their possible shifting roles and values, and the human practices attached to them.



## **Coins, Recycling and the End of Roman Britain: A View from the Saxon Shore**

**Philip Smither (Newbury, Berkshire)**

In the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, on the east and south coasts of Britain and the NW Gallic coast, sat a series of fortified settlements known as the Saxon Shore. One particular settlement, Richborough, is well known to numismatists in Britain for breaking the British site coin average with 22,000 coins dating from AD388-402. It has been postulated that large numbers late *nummi* on British sites relate to a spate of continental hoarding in the late 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century and/or maintaining maritime links with major centres in Britain and the Rhineland (Moorhead et. al. 2013).

There is some evidence from Richborough to suggest the recycling of copper-alloys in the late 4<sup>th</sup> century, the metal for which might have come from the coinage. However, a large number of these late Roman *nummi* were found dispersed in stratified contexts and in the topsoil. This could suggest that the coins were distributed across the site for other purposes, not just hoarding for recycling. A make-do-and-mend attitude is also evident in many late Roman artefacts, suggesting there was a need to mend and recycle objects with little new material arriving from the continent.

This research looks at the context for the vast number of late Roman coins from Richborough and to what extent they, and other objects, were the raw materials or products of recycling.

## **The uses and values of copper alloy artefacts in the late to post-Roman transition period in Britain**

**Ellen Swift (Kent)**

Abstract to follow. The paper incorporates both an overview of some previously published work, and some new research on the topic.

## **„Scrap silver“? Changing approaches to the interpretation of hacksilver in the late Roman and early Medieval periods**

**Fraser Hunter (Edinburgh)**

Hacksilver in the late Roman and early Medieval periods has seen more extended scholarly treatment than hacked bronze, mostly because such treatment of „precious metal“ objects has been seen as curious or „barbarian“. Metal-detecting has produced a wealth of new evidence, while recent scholarship has considered it from a range of different angles, from the economic to the diplomatic and ritual, with a strong concern around life cycles of this material. This may be of some value in considering the ways in which bronze could have been used and reused at this time. A particular focus will be on the different forms in which silver was circulating in the fourth and fifth centuries, considering how hacksilver fitted into wider patterns of silver use.

## ***Argentei minuti* aus dem elsässischen Niedernai: Überlegungen zur Interpretation einer Fundmünzengruppe**

**Eckhard Wirbelauer (Strasbourg)**

In einem 1995 aufgedeckten Gräberfeld bei Niedernai (Dép. Bas Rhin) wurden in zwei Gräbern Fragmente von insgesamt sieben sogenannten *argentei minuti* geborgen, die im Rahmen eines ANR-DFG-Programms (NiedArc5 2014–2018, Leitung: Susanne Brather-Walter, Freiburg und Eckhard Wirbelauer, Straßburg) näher untersucht werden konnten. In dem vorgeschlagenen Beitrag sollen diese für das Oberrheintal außergewöhnlichen Funde typologisch und historisch eingeordnet werden. Dabei wird die im beginnenden 20. Jahrhundert entstandene Bezeichnung dieser Fundmünzengruppe einer Kritik unterzogen und gefragt, ob der aus einer Schriftquelle gewonnene Begriff wirklich zu den Fundmünzen passt, die durch die Forschungen Lafauries und Fischers inzwischen recht gut bekannt ist.

## **What happened after coins? The collapse of a coin-using monetary economy in the late-Roman North-West.**

**David Wigg-Wolf (Frankfurt a. M.)**

As David Schaps puts it: "Occasionally an invention succeeds so thoroughly that it changes permanently the terms in which society thinks. It becomes an essential part of the world; life without it is hardly conceivable." (Schaps 2004, 1). Coinage is one of those inventions. But whereas Schaps was interested in what preceded the invention of coinage and the establishment of a monetary economy as we might recognise it today, less work has been done on what happened in situations where the monetary economy had collapsed. What happened after coins?

One such case is the end of Roman rule in the north-western provinces when the supply of coinage, in particular bronze, abruptly ceased. There is often an assumption that somehow a kind of coin-using monetary economy must have continued, either with existing coins remaining in use with the same or a similar function for considerable periods, or with objects such as bronze scrap supplementing or replacing coins. It is, as Schaps points out, hard for us to conceive of life without coins once they are there. However, the question of the extent to which the economy of the north-western provinces was monetised in Late Antiquity needs to be addressed, and therefore the extent to which coins were actually needed. Indeed, imperial rescripts indicate that coins were perhaps not as widespread as the picture we have from coin finds might suggest. How did people with insufficient access to coins cope?

This paper will consider the extent of monetisation in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries, in particular the role of markets in sustaining a coin-using monetary economy, and the evidence of episodes of mass imitation of official coins as an indicator of monetisation.

Schaps 2004: D.M. Schaps, The invention of coinage and the monetization of ancient Greece (Ann Arbor 2004)

## **Coins without value? Der Schatzfund von Rheindahlen und das Ende der Monetarisierung im Rheinland**

**Rahel Otte (Bonn)**

Die regelmäßige Belieferung des Rheinlands mit Münzgeld endete um 400 n. Chr. Die letzten Münzen, die die Provinz *Germania secunda* noch in größerer Zahl erreichten, waren Halbcentenionales aus der Zeit von 388 bis 403 n. Chr. Die innere Zusammensetzung von theodosianischen Schatzfunden zeigt, dass diese Münzen auch nach dem Ende der Münzversorgung von der Bevölkerung noch eine Zeitlang weiterverwendet wurden. Zu diesen Schatzfunden gehört auch der 2017 entdeckte Hort von Mönchengladbach-Rheindahlen. Er beweist, dass Münzen dort noch bis etwa 410/420 n. Chr. benutzt wurden. Doch welchem Zweck dienten die Münzen? Stellten sie nur noch Altmetall für Recyclingzwecke dar oder wurden sie weiterhin in ihrer Geldfunktion verwendet? Und lassen sich die Ergebnisse auch auf die übrige *Germania secunda* übertragen? Diesen Fragen geht der Vortrag auf der Basis einer bislang noch unpublizierten Datensammlung zu Münzfunden aus dem ländlichen Raum nach.

## **Failed fortunes from Late Roman contexts in Switzerland**

**Markus Peter (Bern/Augusta Raurica)**

Anhand mehrerer Fundkomplexe und -kontexte des späten 3. und 4. Jahrhunderts werden mögliche Entstehungsmuster von archäologischen Befunden mit bedeutenden Mengen von Münzen vorgestellt.

## **Kings of Metal – Die spätantike Höhengiedlung von San Martino (Lomaso, Trentino) als sicherer Aufbewahrungsort von Schrott, Alteisen, Barren und Sonstigem**

**Marcus Zagermann (München)**

Befestigte Höhengiedlungen sind ein zentrales Element der spätantiken Besiedlung im alpinen Italien. Auf dem Monte San Martino bei Lomaso, nördlich des Gardasees, bestand von ca. 480/520 bis mindestens ins 8.

Jahrhundert eine solche Höhensiedlung. Diese war allerdings kein wehrhaftes Dorf, sondern vielmehr ein strategischer Punkt, in dem unter anderem verschiedene Werte sicher aufbewahrt wurden, vor allem Lebensmittel, aber auch Metallschrott unterschiedlicher Art. Das Spektrum reicht dabei beispielhaft von Altmünzen (Republik bis erste Hälfte 4. Jahrhundert), über seit Jahrhunderten aus der Mode gekommene Fibeln bis hin zu nicht näher klassifizierbaren Blechfragmenten. Klar ist, dass in gewissem Rahmen eine Weiterverarbeitung vor Ort erfolgte, vieles wurde aber offensichtlich lediglich hier verwahrt, um in einem nicht näher zu konkretisierenden Szenario unmittelbar Zugriff darauf zu haben. Das kann bei der Auswertung problematisch sein: Darf ein fragmentierter Waagbalken als Nachweis einer Schnellwaage gewertet werden, der damit auch Hinweise auf die Tätigkeiten innerhalb eines Gebäudes gibt? Oder handelt es sich um ein Objekt, das bereits fragmentiert auf den Berg kam und zum „Schrottensemble“ zu zählen ist? Gerade wenn klar ist, dass Altmaterial in großem Stil zur Weiterverarbeitung aufbewahrt wurde, muss für jedes Einzelstück gefragt werden, ob es eben dazu auf den Berg kam oder dort oben in seinem ursprünglichen Kontext und Verwendungszweck genutzt wurde. Gibt es Kriterien, die bei einer Entscheidung helfen?

Der Vortrag gibt einen Überblick über das vorhandene Spektrum und beleuchtet die daran anschließenden Fragestellungen an ausgewählten Beispielen.

## **Traces of complexity. Monetary Circulation in Mediolanum in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century AD: Persistences and Changes**

**Alessandro Bona (Milano)**

The paper aims to discuss and presents in detail a large number of coin finds brought to light during archaeological excavations in contexts datable to the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD in Milan (Northern Italy), some unpublished or never analysed from a contextual point of view so far. The deep contextual analysis I have dedicated to the coin finds from the archaeological digs carried out in the city allowed me to reconstruct the dynamics of the coin circu-

lation in *Mediolanum* between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. The diachronic results of my studies were recently analysed in my doctoral thesis (*Coins from Recent Excavations in Milan. New data from archaeological contexts for the recomposition of the monetary circulation in the light of the history of the ancient city*) discussed in June 2022 (Università Cattolica/ University of Warwick). The database examined (more than 3.500 coins) appears to be rather consistent. The model, however, differs considerably from what is known in the territory north of the Alps.

My paper, therefore, aims to highlight the great differences existing between the territories south and north of the Alpine watershed, trying to enrich the picture presented at the conference with an example from a different geographical area. In *Mediolanum*, coins continued to circulate at least until the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and metal fragments do not appear in the local market pool as para-monetary objects (so far?). An element of similarity, however, is the phenomenon of coin cutting, which was intensively practised in this period. It is therefore plausible that in a city like *Mediolanum*, until the very first years of the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD one of the 'capitals' of the Empire (402 AD) and located in northern Italy, so still reached by monetary flows from central Italy, the monetarization of society experienced a greater and more profound persistence than in the areas of the Rhine limes.

### **The view from Rome: the social aspects and value of copper alloy recycling** **Giulia Bison (Leicester)**

In spite of the very special status it still enjoyed in Late Antiquity - no longer the capital of the empire, but still a revered imperial seat and privileged residence of the senatorial aristocracy - in this period the city of Rome went through a series of transformations that had more than something in common with rather distant territories. In particular, the perception of public spaces and the values associated with them changed radically, as did that of the materials that formed part of these complexes; besides, even certain objects of everyday life were now seen in a different light.

The practice of recycling played a fundamental role in this new conception and is the instrument through which it was expressed at various levels. Recent archaeological investigations have brought to light phenomena inherent, in particular, to the reuse and recycling of small coins in metal-working structures, which not only make us think about the different value that was attributed to them, but also raise a series of questions concerning the way in which they were collected, as part of an operational chain that involved various agents, and must certainly have had not only economic, but also social repercussions.

Hence, what can we speculate about the people involved in these mechanisms, and the value they must have attached to this practice? How could these coins have been procured, and were they all out of circulation at the time of their remelting? Which hypotheses can be made, on the basis of what we know about the collection and recycling systems of other kinds of materials (for example, glass)?

On a different side of the question, the discovery of a dump of copper-alloy objects in one of the city's oldest sacred sites, located in the heart of the city centre - the Sanctuary of the Curiae Veteres, at the foot of the Palatine Hill - raises some similar questions: were these objects discarded and stored, waiting to be re-melted, or were they the products of a workshop? If so, what kind of workshop? And above all, what value - economic, but not only - was attached to these artefacts, and why did they end up as waste products along with other materials?

The two case studies that will be presented raise multiple questions about the dynamics of the use, reuse and recycling of copper alloy items, and whether these practices should simply be dismissed as signs of a general decadence, or whether they should be interpreted as evidence of deeper and wider transformations that still need to be questioned.

## **Römische Bronzemünzen der zweiten Hälfte des 4. Jhs. im Fundmünzaufkommen von Ostdeutschland – Kein Geld oder Kleingeld?**

**Holger Kornick (Bonn)**

Mit dem 1996 in Kamenz-Jesau in Sachsen gefundenen Münzschatz, der 478 Münzen umfasst, lässt sich der größte mit Bronzemünzen des 4. Jhs. gebildete Münzschatz benennen, der im Osten Deutschlands gefunden wurde. Er setzt sich aus 475 Bronzemünzen des 4. Jhs. sowie aus drei Silbermünzen; die zu Beginn des dritten Drittel des 3. Jhs. einzuordnen sind, zusammen. Unter den Bronzemünzen befinden sich dabei 244 Exemplare, die in die zweite Hälfte des 4. Jhs. datieren, wobei die jüngsten aus der Zeit der valentinianischen Dynastie stammen. Ebenso lassen sich unter den Einzelfunden in Sachsen, denen des sich nördlich anschließenden Bundeslands Brandenburg sowie des Stadtstaats Berlin spätantike römische Bronzemünzen dieser Zeit fassen. Um etwaige Hinweise auf die Funktion dieser Münzen erhalten zu können, ist zunächst einmal die Zusammenschau der Münzen sowie der überlieferten Befunde erforderlich, aus denen die in der zweiten Hälfte des 4. Jhs. n. Chr. geprägten Stücke stammen. Ebenso ist auf sekundäre Veränderungen an den Münzen zu achten, die Hinweise auf ihren Gebrauch geben können.

## **Roman bronzes and East-Central Barbaricum**

**Aleksander Bursche/Kirill Myzgin/Anna Zapolska (Warsaw)**

In the Germanic areas of East-Central Barbaricum, bronze, along with precious metals, was imported in the form of wares, primarily from the Roman Empire. The use of bronze Roman coins to be melted down to produce local items is evidenced i.e., by the deposit of a goldsmith found in Frombork and by finds of fragments of deliberately cut specimens recovered from settlements. Their relatively modest number is a result of the poor state of settlement research on the Continent and the insufficient flow of information in this regard from the prospecting community (i.e. amateur users of metal detectors). There is no evidence to indicate the use of cut bronze coins as a



measure of value or means of exchange.

Apart from coins, another source of bronze in the Barbaricum areas in question was imports, especially bronze vessels, often found in fragments. Finally, as indicated by the content of pouches from sacrificial deposits, bronze scrap was an important element. The common practice was to use worn or damaged objects made of this alloy, possibly coming from spoils of war and robbed graves. During the Migration Period, when trade routes collapsed, grave robbing for raw material became a massive phenomenon. This is evidenced by the hoard of Łubiana, in Pomerania and traces of plundering of the graves of the Roman Period cemeteries.

The tradition of bronze use ceased in the majority of the discussed areas in the 7<sup>th</sup> century with the arrival of the Slavs.

## **The finds of bronze coins, their usage, and function in the West Balts' societies**

**Anna Zapolska (Warsaw)**

The West Balts societies, occupying the area of amber-reach, South-Eastern Baltic coast, are known for accepting of Roman bronze coins in exchange for amber. The bronzes, for the most part, sestertii made of orichalcum, played a crucial role in their everyday existence. Bronzes were treated in various ways by the West Balts – some of them were put in the graves probably as an obolus of the dead, some coins were adapted for suspension and a great deal of them were gathered in the form of bigger and smaller hoards. There is a common consensus, though, that most of them were treated as a source of precious metal, and were melted down and reused to make jewelry adjusted to the local taste and other parts of the dress. In my paper, I will present an overview of the functions of the Roman coins in the West Balts' societies, which varied slightly from culture to culture and address the problem of the social structure of these societies, which can be established based on the finds of Roman bronze coins and other bronze objects.

## **Chemical eddies. Tracking metal histories and connections in the mid to late 1<sup>st</sup> Millennium AD. REMADE (Roman and Early Medieval Alloys Defined)**

**Peter Bray (Reading)**

The chemical analysis of copper-alloy reveals the *last* composition of that material. Through combining large published analytical projects and targeted new work, we can begin to see deeper patterns that carry over from earlier patterns of production, use, and reuse. This paper introduces the REMADE project (Roman and Early Medieval Alloys Defined), which is a major new analytical project supported by UKRI (UK Research and Innovation) and hosted by the University of Reading, which studies the copper-alloys of the 1<sup>st</sup> Millennium AD across the UK. Alongside new chemical models and interpretative techniques to explore metallic histories, it will also discuss the importance of collaboration across all heritage disciplines. REMADE is working with major national museums, large independent archaeological units, smaller regional archives, trusts, and private collectors. Chemical case studies can demonstrate the close links between different object classes, for example coins, brooches, militaria and toilet sets. It also raises important possibilities of shared knowledge across materials that are too often studied separately today: glass, metals, and ceramics. Longer term, through working with small find specialists, theorists, and geographers we aim to support the core aims of this conference; using metal as a lens for understanding identity, value and shifting connections across Europe.

## **Bronze ... makes the world go round? Sozioökonomische Aspekte eines Werk- und Wertstoffes**

**Thomas Schierl (Marburg)**

Gerade das geographische Herz Deutschlands ist spätestens seit den Arbeiten von H.J. Eggers bekannt für seine zahlreichen hochwertigen provinzialrömischen Bronzefunde, die im 19. und 20. Jh. vor allem in den kaiserzeitlichen Körpergräbern der einheimischen Elite zutage traten. Eine

seit dem systematischen Einsatz von Metalldetektoren stark ansteigende Zahl an Metallfunden von Siedlungsplätzen bereichert das Formenspektrum an nachzuweisenden Bronzefunden entscheidend, und lässt uns die ehemals vorhandene verhältnismäßig hohe Zahl solcher Objekte, aber auch ihre Präsenz in zahlreichen Lebensbereichen antiker Realität deutlich vor Augen treten. Unter diesen finden sich regelmäßig, nicht seltenen zahlreiche – teils verschmolzene, teils beschnittene – Metallfragmente, die an eine Verwendung als Werkstoff für die Herstellung eigener Erzeugnisse denken lassen. Andererseits sind es vor allem ungewöhnliche, in den entsprechenden Kontexten kaum zu deutende Buntmetallobjekte aus germanischen Beisetzungen, die auf einen symbolischen Charakter solcher Gegenstände verweisen. Zwar kann eine temporäre oder regional begrenzte Münzwirtschaft basierend auf römischen Münzen wenigstens im 3. Jh. nicht ausgeschlossen werden, doch lassen einige Indizien ebenso an die Verwendung von Münzersatz denken. Alle Hinweise lassen an eine vielschichtige Bedeutung bzw. an unterschiedliche kontextgebunden betonte Funktionen auch des Wertstoffes Bronze denken.

Zweifelsohne bietet sich Mitteldeutschland als Ausgangspunkt für eine eingehende Betrachtung von Bronze und Messing als Werk- und Wertstoff an, gelangten doch im 1. und vor allem im 3. Jh. große Mengen an Buntmetallobjekten – wohl vor allem im Kontext der Limesstürme – aus dem Römischen Reich in diese zentrale Landschaft des germanischen Siedlungsraumes und lassen sich dort in unterschiedlichsten Zusammenhängen nachweisen. Vor allem diese bieten die Möglichkeit das Verhältnis der einheimischen Gruppen zum Metall am „Vorabend“ der Spätantike genauer ins Auge zu fassen. Zwar scheinen die wenigen Metallfunde des 4./5. Jahrhunderts allgemein auch auf einen nachlassenden Zustrom aus dem Imperium denken, doch belegen Keramikfunde eine fortgesetzte Anbindung wenigstens der westlichen Gebiete an den imperialen Wirtschaftsraum an Rhein und Donau, so dass gerade in dieser Periode auch ein ähnlicher Umgang mit Metall als monetäre Einheit denkbar erscheint.

Anhand von ausgewählten mitteldeutscher Fundkomplexen werden zu-

nächst wichtige Aspekt eines gemeinschaftlichen und individuellen Umganges mit Bronze und Messing im 1.–3. Jh. beispielhaft beleuchtet. Erst in einer Gegenüberstellung mit Fundkomplexen aus anderen gut erforschten Regionen, wie bspw. Westfalen und Mainfranken, gelingt es, die schütterten zentraldeutschen Zeugnisse des 4. und 5. Jh. für eine wertebasierte Metallwirtschaft sozioökonomisch und historisch einordnen zu können.

# Notes





