

Aleksander Bursche

Circulation of Roman Coinage in Northern Europe in Late Antiquity

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- 1 Coins, excepting perhaps glass beads, are the most frequent category of Roman imports encountered in *Barbaricum*, i.e. the territory north of the Danube and east of the Rhine. A quantitative comparison of four main categories of Roman imports discovered in Poland (Table 1) – terra sigillata, glass and bronze vessels and coins ¹ — gives an idea about the possible proportions ². What is extraordinary is that in most parts of Northern Europe Roman coin finds greatly outnumber early medieval issues ³. And this brings us to the vital question — how did Roman coins circulate within native societies in the *Barbaricum* and what was their function among these peoples.

Table 1. The most frequent categories of Roman imports in Barbaricum north of the Carpathian Mts. in approx. numbers

	<i>Coins</i>	<i>Terra sigillata</i>	<i>Bronze vessels</i>	<i>Glass vessels</i>
N° of sites	2,000	250	170	190
N° of pieces	70,000	320	370	360

1. Reasons and ways of influx

- 2 Circumstances and directions of the influx of Roman coins into *Barbaricum* are considerably differentiated and depend on the period, denomination and territory settled by a given tribe. After a brief episode under Augustus ⁴, mass export of coins from the Empire to the North resumed during the reign of Marcus Aurelius and continued — with varying intensity and many interruptions — until the late ⁵th, in some regions, even into A.D. 6th century. The influx of imperial gold and silver coinage was regulated by political reasons, the influx of bronze denominations — senatorial sestertii in particular — by exchange. It is possible to distinguish short-period streams of coins connected with tributes, *donativa*, annual or military payments made to Barbarians, and more long-lived waves associated in general with contact of an economic nature ⁵.
- 3 Second century *denarii* are the largest group of all Roman coin finds recorded in central and north European *Barbaricum*. They have been registered in over 500 hoards and in 3,000 single finds — total of around 140,000 silver coins altogether ⁶. The period of their outflux from the Roman Empire was very short, from Marcus Aurelius until the first years under Septimius Severus. This stream of silver coinage is a reflection of political contacts between the Roman Empire and Northern Barbarians. Second-century *denarii* crossed the Roman frontier as part of tribute payments made by the emperors to *nobiles* or *reguli* — the leaders of *superiores barbari*, that is, of Barbarians living at a greater distance from the borders of the empire. Written sources, especially Cassius Dio, repeatedly mention tributes paid by Romans during and after the Marcomanic Wars ⁷. Once Septimius Severus had come into power, there was no more reason to continue such payments.
- 4 In North-Central Europe 2nd century *denarii* and *subaerati* are noted almost always in Late Roman and Early Migration Period contexts, i.e. between A.D. 3rd and the 5th century ⁸. Most

of the denarii hoards, which additionally contain non-numismatic elements, mainly ornaments, are dated to the Migration Period⁹; many deposits from Gotland are recorded even in Late Migration Period contexts¹⁰. Denarii continue to appear also in Frankish graves dated to 5th and 6th centuries and even later. Strong wear of the denarii from *Barbaricum* suggests that they were used over a long period.

5 The other very important group of Roman coinage in *Barbaricum* are 2nd and early 3rd century sestertii found particularly on the south-eastern Baltic — in Pomerania, Sambian peninsula and the lower Neman River, areas settled by Germanic and West Balt societies. Sestertii are registered in hoards, graves, and as stray finds¹¹. In my opinion the influx of the wave of sestertii to the Baltic coast ought to be dated to the period between A.D. 180 and the mid 3rd century, until early Valerianus and Gallienus. There is evidence that they originated from the western Empire and the latest series, dated to the mid-3rd century, may have come directly from northern Italy. The distribution, chronology and provenance of this very specific group of coinage strongly suggest its links with the amber trade which, as a result of Marcomanic Wars, had to take place by a roundabout sea route.

6 Before streams of solidi from the second half of the 5th and early 6th centuries started their advent on the Baltic Sea, the only more frequent group of coins found in the Barbarian hinterland were the House of Constantine folles and their fractions. Most were struck in Western mints, particularly Trier. They cluster in small groups in southern reaches of Przeworsk culture territory, i.e. the upper basin of the Vistula, as well as in western Pomerania¹². An analogous and probably related group of finds is registered in Westphalia¹³.

7 Roman 4th century gold medallions are not numerous but form a spectacular category of imports. They are known from 6 Scandinavian and 29 continental finds, many of them extremely rich hoards¹⁴. Almost all the medallions from Barbarian finds are dated to the period from late Constantine I to the House of Valentinian.

8 Later finds of solidi from the Baltic Sea area — i.e. Pomerania, Gotland, Oland and Bornholm — indicate political links maintained in the late 5th and early 6th century with the region of early Germanic states, particularly the Ostrogoths¹⁵.

9 What was the function of these different categories of Roman coinage within native societies of Northern Europe? Were Roman coins for Barbarians an ancient Euro or modern cauri-shells? What was the semantics of money uses in *Barbaricum*?

2. Outline of theory

10 Unfortunately written sources are largely silent on the role of Roman currency among *superiores barbari*. The reference in Tacitus (Germ. 5) concerns much earlier period and — without doubt — is a classical topos¹⁶. Consequently, the only sources available to us are the coin finds themselves.

11 In modern literature the role of Roman coins in *Barbaricum* continues to be analysed largely in terms and with the apparatus of market economy, mostly of Marxist origin¹⁷. But this is a grave anachronism aptly summed up by Karl Polanyi as « our obsolete market mentality »¹⁸.

12 The role of Roman coinage exported beyond the Rhine and the Danube, whether as tribute or as payment for goods, captives or services, radically changed once it reached the Barbarian hinterland settled by *superiores barbari* i.e., Germanic and West Balt communities. The circulation of coins in native societies during Late Roman and Early Migration Periods needs to be analysed similarly as this is done for the Dark Age in Europe. We must turn to anthropological theories regarding non-market economies, introduced by substantivistic and primitivistic schools of K. Polanyi, G. Dalton and R. Hodges¹⁹. To understand the semantics of money uses in Northern Europe in antiquity we need to leave behind the world of economic profits, Euro and credit cards, and venture into a widely different age were all social relationships where regulated by tradition, prestige and honour.

- 13 The simplified model describing the function of Roman coins in Northern *Barbaricum* proposed here (Fig. 1) is quite complex; this is because the role of practically every category of coinage (gold, silver and bronze) varied depending on the region and period of its occurrence²⁰. I propose to discuss these functions on three levels: circulation, transformation and deposition.

3. Circulation

- 14 Within the Empire coins were used as all-purpose money. Not so, in Northern *Barbaricum*, where they served special purposes in a prestige economy, circulated as means of payment in socially or politically motivated transactions such as the payment of tribute, ransom, blood-money, dowry or heirloom. This function they probably shared with other media, such as glass beads. Roman currency may have been used in gift-exchange transactions in the same way as seashell necklaces functioned in the *kula* tradition among the Triobriand societies of the Western Pacific²¹ or as pieces of copper in the *potlach* custom among the North American Quaquits²², to mention only the most famous examples. In very limited circumstances, within centres of trade and power or early « ports of trade »²³ the most common coins, the denarii, may have played the economic function as means of exchange. Recent research — made using metal-detectors — of early emporia on the Baltic, such as Gudme and Lundeberg on Fyn/Funen, Sorte Muld on Bornholm or Upåkra near Lund²⁴, helped to uncover several dozen to hundreds of denarii, scattered, with other categories of Roman coinage, all over these settlements. More than a hundred denarii and subaerati were discovered at a number of power-and-craft centres on the mainland, i.e., Jakuszowice in southern Poland and Gródek Nadbuzy on Poland's eastern border²⁵. Even within these « gateway communities » it is more likely that the denarii circulated as personal wealth containing tangible and fluctuating value, varying from one transaction to the next. There were no standard values or, even more so, standardised prices; this notion is particular for communities with developed statehood and as such did not exist within Barbarian societies of Northern Europe of the period. Neither could Roman coins have been used in the form of a value guarantee within Barbarian societies, because the central authority minting them (the Roman emperor or senate) was external and had no real power in the North. At the same time, the Barbarians themselves developed no domestic coinage of their own before the Middle Ages. Barbarian counterfeits of denarii, aurei, siliquae and solidi were minted — in a very limited number at that — mostly on territory close to the limes²⁶.
- 15 Another use the Barbarians apparently invented for Roman coinage was as gaming pieces. Almost all the denarii from the bog booty-sacrifice at Illerup on Jutland, dated to the early 3rd century, were discovered close to belt fittings (strap-ends, belt buckles), usually together with combs and tooth-picks²⁷. There is little doubt that originally these coins were contained in pouches worn at the belt of Germanic warriors. Illerup produced no finds of Roman gaming stones (*talli and calculii*), a common element of furnishings in chieftain's graves dated to the Late Roman Period²⁸. Roman gaming pieces and gaming boards are also known from other bog deposits such as Vimose, which site produced just one denarius²⁹. I suggest that Scandinavian warriors imaginably wishing to imitate their principes, socially superior, in their manner of living and pastimes, used Roman denarii instead of the more difficult to find gaming pieces. From my childhood I remember a game of this sort, which is quite old in its origin. It is called « Cymbergai », from the Yiddish language. To play « Cymbergai » we used pieces of very small change (one *grosz*, that is, a penny coin), which had no market value. In this game a player needs to have at least one comb and between one and seven coins. Perhaps Barbarians used Roman coins in the similar manner.

4. Transformation

- 16 Roman coins in Northern Europe were often made into amulets, ornaments or jewellery. In Germanic and West Balt societies *denarii* and *sesterii* were pierced and affixed in necklaces

next to glass and amber beads³⁰. They apparently were used by Barbarian elite in similar way as Belgian medals worn on his chest with European and native pendants by Tata Beaka, the chief of the Wagena people on the river Congo, photographed in 1997 by a known Polish photographer Krzysztof Miller.

17 Another function Roman coins apparently had among Barbarians was ideological: their iconography — the imperial portrait in particular — apparently played a special role in the Germanic symbolic language. Images seen on obverses of Roman coins must have been mysterious and fascinating to non-Romans, especially within Germanic societies, where portraiture was avoided. Gold plates cast from coin obverses were used as fittings of Barbarian war gear³¹ or as ornaments on wooden caskets³². Representations of Roman emperors played a more important role still: pierced, looped or/and framed gold coins and medallions were used as a symbol of prestige and power by the Germanic elite, always worn face-side up as shown by their invariably worn reverses³³. Ownership and display of the imperial image, undoubtedly was a matter of prestige for the high-ranking Barbarians.

18 Roman coins were also used as a handy stock of scrap metal. *Denarii*, *sestertii* and a *solidus* were contained in a silversmith's hoard at Frombork (former Frauenburg), east of Gdansk³⁴. Finds of partly melted halved denarii are recorded in the context of silversmith's workshops³⁵. Silver and gold ornaments, valuables and armour fittings often are identical in chemical content to *denarii* or *solidi*, some even corresponding to the coins in weight³⁶. Apparently, Roman coinage was in *Barbaricum* a very useful source of metal.

19 Relatively few *denarii* and *siliquae* were cut up or clipped, and are almost never noted in Nordic hoards of scrap silver³⁷. They participated in the weight-based economy of the Migration Period on a very limited scale, differently as silver coins in the Middle Ages³⁸.

5. Deposition

20 Coin hoards may have been a special category of personal belongings, in their own right, representing only individual wealth and no objective value, items of personal possession, rather than units of wealth. Hundreds of *denarii* included in rich dynastic hoards, often together with Roman gold medallions, gold and silver plate as well as jewellery playing the role of high-status valuables, symbolised rank, prestige and power. In such context the purpose of deposition may have been apotropaic — to carry their owner's power (*mana*) into the afterlife, in the same way as grave goods accompanying the deceased in death³⁹. In keeping with the old custom these objects would have been destroyed — bent out of shape, broken or cut up. Tradition recorded in sagas of the later period suggests that the 5th and 6th century inhabitants of the Baltic zone buried their property for later use in the Valhalla⁴⁰. Consequently such deposits represent a unique form of cenotaph; their burial had a sacral and symbolic dimension.

21 Archaeological context of some of the Late Roman and Early Migration Periods assemblages suggests that Roman money played a very important role in *rites de passages* of Northern Barbarians. Coin deposits have been discovered under dwellings or inside stone walls, placed there presumably as foundation-offerings⁴¹. Coins cast into springs, wells, lakes and moors presumably played a similar role of chthonic offerings⁴².

22 Roman coins were also a very common funeral offering. In some cases they played the role of typical grave goods, appearing as pendants, elements of necklaces, attire (in pouches attached at the belt) or war gear. Therefore their presence cannot be interpreted as intentional and ritual. Nevertheless it was observed in a number of cremation burials that unlike other grave goods coins showed no trace of having been in the funerary pyre⁴³. This suggests they were deposited after cremation, i.e. during the ceremony of the burial itself and that their significance was ritual. Also quite frequently the position of a coin in an inhumation grave suggests its intentional deposition as the so-called *obolus*⁴⁴. Nevertheless it should be

- underlined that this rite had nothing to do with the one known to us from classical tradition, rather, it had its common anthropological roots in rites of passages ⁴⁵.
- 23 In West Balt societies of Late Roman Period (particularly the 3rd century) shiny gold-like brass sestertii were commonly used as grave offerings. We know of cemeteries in Sambia/Samland where every other grave produced at least one sestertius. Single or several (up to 20) coins were noted in burials in various positions, usually close to the head, sometimes inside a birch bark vessel ⁴⁶. Let me note that the birch tree is thought to have played a significant role in Balt mythology and features prominently in many Balt *dainas* — sagas — where it has the function of the « cosmic tree » ⁴⁷. In the absence of a birch bark container coins were placed inside an accessory vessel or underneath it, sometimes also wrapped in a piece of cloth. It is interesting that in Balts areas (especially Lithuania) the custom of placing coins in graves continued until 19th century.
- 24 Chieftain graves of the Leuna-Hassleben-Zakrzów horizon from Thuringia, Bohemia and Silesia, dated to late 3rd century A.D., are an interesting example of a specific funeral rite among the Barbarian elite (*reguli, nobiles, principes*). Aurei of Gallic emperors, probably part of payment made to German chieftains for leading their troops against Gallienus (*ingentia auxilia Germanorum*), are usually found inside the mouth of the buried individuals. In some cases the aureus is substituted by a golden finger-ring or a round-shaped plaque ⁴⁸.
- 25 The special and multi-faceted function of Imperial coinage in Barbarian societies is illustrated best by gold pieces circulated in the North of Europe during Late Roman and Early Migration Periods. This purpose varied considerably depending on the chronological period or territory, ranging from specific social, political and religious roles in a system of gift-exchange, through symbols of rank and status to tokens of loyalty and friendship in political and personal contacts. Roman gold medallions in particular, their imitations and Nordic bracteates, had very specific functions in this respect, comparable with medieval regalia, where the Roman emperor's portrait played an important sacral and charismatic role comparable to the Christian cross. Images seen on 4th century imitation medallions and 5th century Germanic bracteates are accompanied by imperial insignia shown next to local power symbols and Roman titles written in sacred runes ⁴⁹. Roman gold was often melted down to be transformed into more familiar, native primitive-valuable, such as spiral rings or ingots, or into different forms of status symbol, such as neck-rings, Kolbet-bracelets, medallion imitations and later Scandinavian bracteates, both used in the Migration-Period weight-based and/or prestige economies ⁵⁰.
- 26 There was no uniform function of Roman coinage in Northern Europe. Its role was that of symbol or sign in social communication of a heterogeneous meaning. The Barbarian societies of Late Antiquity lacked clear dividing lines separating the economic from the social, political or symbolic function of coins, between *profanum et sacrum*, and indeed this continued to be the distinctive feature in Northern Europe until the medieval period.

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Notes

1 A comparison of this sort between the absolute number of coins against other Roman import categories hardly reflects the reality. Bronze and glass vessels and terra sigillata tend to be discovered in burials in contrast to coins which mostly occur in non-funerary contexts, except for notably, the West Balt area. The funerary rite — among Barbarian peoples of Late Antiquity predominantly cremation — favouring the preservation of some categories of finds was destructive of others, e.g., glass beads are largely absent from cremation graves; further remarks on the subject of representativeness of Roman imports. Cf. Eggers, H. J., 1951; Bursche, A., 1996c and Kolendo, J., 1998.

2 Numbers in Table 1 were estimated basing on data in Kunisz, A., 1965, 1969, 1973, 1985; Wielowiejski, J., 1970, 1985; Kubiak, S., 1979; Kolendo, J., 1981, 1998; Godłowski, K., 1985; Stawiarska, T., 1999; Tyszler, L., 1999; Ciolek, R., 2001; Nowakowski, W., 2000; Kaczanowski, P. & Margos, U. (eds.), 2002. Glass beads were not included because the present state of research is insufficient to distinguish Roman products from Barbarian ones. Cf. Stawiarska, T., 1985, 1987; Tempelmann-Maczyńska, M., 1985; Nowakowski, W., 2001. One must not forget that some of the quite important categories of Roman imports were perishable, e.g., textiles, wine transported in barrels or subsequently melted down ingots.

3 Inventories of finds of early medieval coins from the territory of North-Central Europe are currently in preparation.

4 Cf. Wiegels, R., 2000.

- 5 Berger, P., 1992, 1996; Bursche, A., 1992, 1994a, 1994b, 1996a, 2003; Wolters, R., 1999, pp. 385-389; Erdrich, M., 2000, pp. 127-128.
- 6 Lind, L., 1981, 1988; Lucchelli, T. M., 1998a, 1998b.
- 7 Berger, P., 1992, 1996; Bursche, A., 1994a, 1994b, 2002a, 2003; R.-Alföldi, M., 1998; Lucchelli, T. M., 1998a, 1998b; Wolters, R., 1999, pp. 385-389.
- 8 Östergen, M., 1981; Kyhlberg, O., 1986; Nielsen, S., 1989; Bursche, A. & Okulicz-Kozaryn, J., 1999; Bursche, A., 2002a, 2002b, 2003.
- 9 E.g. Borotchitche (Bursche, A., 1999, pp. 69-72, 230; Mitkova-Szubert, K., 1999, pp. 145-150), Nezhin, Tchernica and Turia in northern Ukraine (Kropotkin, V. V., 1961), Frombork in eastern Pomerania (Peiser, F. E. & Kemke, H., 1914), Djbrowno in Malopolska (Kunisz, A., 1985, pp. 49-56), Swilcza in south-eastern Poland (Gruszczynska, A., 1999), Gjski & Zagórzyn in Wielkopolska (Bursche, A., 1998, pp. 51-61, 254-257; 1999, pp. 125-127), Selce in Slovakia (Ondrouch, V., 1964, p. 107), Smørenge on Bornholm (Kromann, A. & Watt, M., 1984), Lengerich in Lower Saxony (Zedelius, V., 1974, pp. 28-32) etc.
- 10 Lind, L., 1981, pp. 13-100; Östergen, M., 1981, 1989; Gaul, J., 1983; cf. also Jonsson, K. & Östergen, M., 1992.
- 11 Michelbertas, M., 1972, 1995, 2001; Bursche, A., 1992; Ciolek, R., 2001; Nowakowski, W., 2001.
- 12 Bursche, A., 1996a.
- 13 Berger, P., 1992, pp. 187-96.
- 14 Bursche, A., 1998, 2000, 2001; Seipel, W., 1999.
- 15 Werner, J., 1949; Fagerlie, J. M., 1967; Gaul, J., 1982; Westermarck, U., 1983; Iluk, J., 1985, 1998; Kyhlberg, O., 1986; cf. Metcalf, D. M., 1995.
- 16 Wolters, R. & Stoess, C., 1985.
- 17 Gaul, J., 1982 and Hedeager, L., 1988, 1992 are exceptional in this respect.
- 18 Polanyi, K., 1968b.
- 19 Polanyi, K. & Arensberg, C. M., 1957; Bohannan, P., 1959; Reining, C. C., 1959; Grierson, P., 1959; Desmonde, W., 1962; Dalton, G., 1965a, 1965b; Polanyi, K., 1968a, 1968b, 1968c, 1978; Gurevich, A., 1968; Humpreys, S. C., 1969; Melitz, J., 1970; Hodges, R., 1982, 1988; Köhler, U., 1985; Thurborg, M., 1988; Gaimster, M., 1992.
- 20 Cf. also A. Bursche, 1996b.
- 21 Malinowski, B., 1922; Mauss, M., 1950.
- 22 Benedict, R., 1934.
- 23 On the « port of trade » concept, cf. K. Polanyi, 1968c; S. C. Humpreys, 1969; K. Polanyi, 1978 and further discussion in the same review.
- 24 Kromann, A., 1987, 1989, 1990a, 1990b, 1994; Jensen, S. & Watt, M., 1993; Thomsen, P. O., 1994; Silvegren, U. W., 1999. Cf. also Dankirke on south-western Jutland (Hansen, J., 1988-1989).
- 25 Godłowski, K., 1995; Bursche, A., 1997a, 1997b; Bursche, A., Kaczanowski, P., & Rodzińska-Nowak, J., 2000.
- 26 Regling, K., 1930; Kuczynski, J., 1964; Krzyzanowska, A., 1968; *Hoops Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde*, 2 ed., vol. 2, Berlin-New York 1976, pp. 48-49 (Berghaus, P.); Zedelius, V., 1980, 1982; Lind, L., 1988, pp. 112-126; Berger, P., 1996, pp. 148-150.
- 27 Ilkjær, J., 1990, 1993; Kromann, A., 1992; I am currently preparing a contribution concerning these finds to the next vol. of Illerup monograph.
- 28 Krüger, T., 1982; Luik, M., 1994; Madyda-Legutko, R. & Zagórska-Telega, J., 2000.
- 29 Engelhardt, C., 1869.
- 30 Bursche, A., 1998, pp. 15-16; Bursche, A. & Okulicz-Kozaryn, J., 1999.
- 31 Ilkjær, J., 1993; Becker, M., 2000, p. 204.
- 32 Grempler, W., 1888, pp. 11-12, pl. vii.
- 33 Bursche, A., 1998, 2000, 2001; cf. Seipel, W., 1999.
- 34 Peiser, F. E. & Kemke, H., 1914.
- 35 E.g. at Gudme and Lundeborg (Jensen, S. & Watt, M., 1993; Thomsen, P. O., 1994; Vang Petersen, V., 1994; Jørgensen, L., 1994), Klein Köris (Gustavs, S., 1989) and probably

- in Jakuszowice (Godłowski, K., 1995, p. 159; Bursche, A., Kaczanowski P., & Rodzińska-Nowak, J., 2000, p. 117).
- 36 Werner, J., 1980.
- 37 Voss, O., 1955.
- 38 Thurborg, M., 1988; Gaimster, M., 1992.
- 39 Gurevich, A., 1968; Hines, J., 1989; Bradley, R., 1990; Hedeager, L., 1991; 1992, pp. 31-77; Bursche, A., 1998, pp. 222-223.
- 40 E.g. Icelandic Egils (Egill Skallagrimsson) saga — *cf.* Gurevich, A., 1968, pp. 126-138; Piekarczyk, S., 1979, pp. 173-179; Bursche, A., 1996a, p. 45.
- 41 *Cf.* particularly on Gotland (Lind, L., 1981, pp. 13-100); also in Swilcza in south-eastern Poland (Gruszczynska, A., 1999), Gjski in Wielkopolska (unpublished materials kindly made available to me by A. Cofta-Broniewska) or Gudme on Fyn (Kromann, A., 1987, 1989, 1990, 1994; Vang Petersen, P., 1994); *cf.* also Bursche, A., 2002c.
- 42 E.g. the spring at Bad Pyrmont in Lower Saxony (Geschwendt, F., 1978, pp. 14-50; Teegen, W.-L., 1999, pp. 213-258), the lake at Buczek in Pomerania (Geisslinger, H., 1981) or the solidi bog deposits from the area of the Baltic Sea basin (Fagerlie, J. M., 1967; Geisslinger, H., 1967; Hedeager, L., 1991; Ciolek, R., 2001).
- 43 A.g. denarius from Piecka Djbrowa in the central Poland (Kubiak, S., 1979, p. 63).
- 44 Rosenstock, D., 1982; Berger, P., 1992, pp. 216-222; Bursche, A. & Okulicz-Kozaryn, J., 1999; Bursche, A., 2002c.
- 45 *Cf.* M. Eliade, 1953; more on this subject, *cf.* A. Bursche, 2002c.
- 46 Bolin, S., 1926; Michelbertas, M., 1972, 1995, 2001; Bursche, A., 1992; Nowakowski, W., 1996, pp. 74-76, 2001.
- 47 Suchocki, J., 1991, pp. 283-286.
- 48 Werner, J., 1973.
- 49 Vierck, H., 1981; Andrén, A., 1991; Axboe, M. & Kromann, A., 1992; Seebold, 1992; Düvel, K., 1992; Lamm, J.-P., 1994; Axboe, M., 1994; Öhnell, T., 1996; Bursche, A., 1998, 2000, 2001.
- 50 Hedeager, L., 1988, 1991.

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Résumé / Abstract

La circulation du monnayage romain en Europe septentrionale au Bas-Empire.

Les monnaies sont les objets les plus souvent rencontrés en Europe septentrionale. Le raisons et les modalités de leur importation sont rapidement analysés. L'auteur tente de répondre

aux questions suivantes : comment les monnaies romaines circulaient-elles dans les sociétés barbares ? quelles étaient les fonctions de ces monnaies dans ces populations ? Ces fonctions sont analysées à trois niveaux : circulation, transformation et enfouissement.

Selon l'auteur, la monnaie romaine n'avait pas une fonction unique en Europe du Nord. Son rôle était un symbole ou un signe au sein d'une communication sociale multiforme. En effet, les sociétés de la basse antiquité ne possédaient pas de frontière séparant la fonction économique de la fonction sociale de la monnaie, pas plus que de séparation entre le rôle politique et symbolique des monnaies.

Mots clés : monnaie, archéologie

Coins are the most frequent category of Roman imports encountered in Northern Europe. Purposes and ways of their influx are briefly analysed. Author attempts to answer the following questions: how did Roman coins circulate within Barbarian societies and what were their functions among these peoples. These functions are discussed on three levels: circulation, transformation and deposition.

In author's opinion there was no uniform function of Roman coinage in Northern Europe. Its role in the first case was that of symbol or sign in social communication of a heterogeneous meaning. The Barbarian societies of Late Antiquity lacked clear dividing lines separating the economic from the social, political or symbolic function of coins.

Entrées d'index

Index chronologique : Antiquité

Index géographique : Europe