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THE LATE ROMAN GOLD HOARD OF BEILEN II. THE COINS

(pls. xxviii–xxix; fig. 26)

The exceptional interest of this 4th century Roman coin find does not only lie in the outstanding quality of nearly all its pieces but especially in its composition. The more so, if we consider it in close connection with the other part of the treasure, the neckrings and bracelet.

In the Netherlands it is second in importance only to the famous Velp hoard, found in 1715 and to be dated after 425.¹ This consisted of a large—unstated—amount of gold coins which have been all dispersed, and five 5th century gold medallions of which three have been preserved;² the latter were attached to a chain. Elsewhere, in- and outside the boundaries of the Roman Empire, several hoards of the later 4th and the first quarter of the 5th century have come to light. The most important is the Dortmund find consisting of 435 solidi.³ Of special interest from our point of view—as will be seen later on—is the First Corbridge Find from Northumberland.⁴

To the 22 solidi of Beilen recently discovered, another might be added, found in 1845 and lost since then, but known to us from an excellent description.⁵ All are to be dated between 364 and the end of the century, a momentous period in Roman history, in which a last and strenuous effort was made to consolidate the Western part of the Empire and to preserve the Rhine frontier.⁶

This effort was initiated, at the very beginning of his reign in 364, by Valentinian I who proclaimed himself Restorer of the Empire. In the same year he co-opted his brother Valens as his colleague. From 367 onwards Valentinian's son Gratian shared the empire. When Valentinian suddenly died in 375, his son Valentinian (II) was proclaimed Augustus. Valens was slain at the battle of Adrianople in 378. The year after, in 379, Gratian co-opted Theodosius. The latter proclaimed his son, Arcadius, Augustus in 383 (after Valentinian II's death in 382), his younger son Honorius in 393. At his death in 395 he was succeeded by Honorius in the West, by Arcadius in the East.

This vigorous effort naturally included the issue of a large amount of gold coins and liberal payments to barbarous chieftains. The current gold coin was

the solidus (*i.e.* aureus solidus, coin of solid gold), instituted by Constantine the Great to replace the obsolete aureus. In the 4th century the coinage was more and more rigidly organized and centralized under the direct supervision of the imperial chancellery. Instead of the mobile variety, so characteristic of the earlier Empire, a severe uniformity had set in. The types were few in number, striking and easy to understand also for those who were less educated and not thoroughly Romanized. The legends were reduced to a very few simple slogans. The same rules were valid for every mint. The mintmarks only served an administrative purpose. They did not limit in any way the circulation of the coins which were current universally.

Valentinian re-established, in 365, the weight of the solidus at 4,55 gm; in practice it mostly weighed somewhat less,⁷ as is the case with the Beilen solidi. But soon the necessity arose to take new measures for the stabilization of the gold coinage. Finally new solidi were issued, in 368, with the letters OB—abbreviation of *obryzon*, pure gold—added to the mintmark as an official guarantee of the gold's quality. In 388, mintmark + OB were replaced by the inscription COM, abbreviation of *comes auri*, the official in charge. This measure intended to enhance the unification of the coinage. But evidently the omission of OB aroused suspicions: COM was replaced by COMOB. This was not generally accepted either. In the West COMOB could be maintained. But the initials of the mintmark had re-appeared, now in the field. The final unification had failed.

Also from 368 onwards, gold and silver coins were only struck at the residence of the emperor. Their mintmarks often testify to the imperial peregrinations, otherwise unknown to us. The emperor strikes coins not only in his own name, but also in that of his co-rulers. But all portraits are alike, to demonstrate the perfect unity and harmony between the colleagues. On coins of the caesars and junior augusti, however, the effigies are mostly smaller and the legends unbroken. Thus coins with different portraits or rather portraits differentiated by their legends, may belong to one and the same issue. Therefore, to appreciate the contents of a late 4th century hoard, the coins have to be listed as to date or period and not as to the emperors represented.

The Beilen solidi show only three reverses. First comes the *Restitutor Reipublicae*, a type inaugurated by Valentinian in 364 proudly to proclaim his restoration program. In the eventful year 368 appears the more static type of the two emperors enthroned, with the legend *Victoria Augustorum* which will last far into the 8th century. The new efforts after Eugentius' defeat are heralded by the reappearance of the proud *Restitutor-type* but with the *Victoria* legend. Stress is laid on the emperor's victorious power by the addition of a small captive under his raised left foot.⁸

The Beilen hoard contains the following solidi (pls. xxviii–xxix):

364–August 367

Rev. RESTITVTOR REIPUBLICAE. Emperor standing, facing, head to the right, holding labarum and Victory on globe. In ex.: mint-mark.

Obv. Imperial bust, diademed, draped and cuirassed

DN = dominus noster; PFAVG = pius felix augustus; PER = perpetuus.

1.	DNVALENTINI-ANVSPFAVG;	TR ⁸	(Treviri = Trèves)		
			RIC 13, 1a, n. 4	(R)	4,43 gm
2.	_____	SMTES	(Thessalonica = Saloniki)		
			RIC 173, 2a	(RR)	4,43 gm
3.	_____	SMN€	(Nicomedia)		
			RIC 250, 2a, n. 2	(RR)	4,41 gm
4.	DNVALEN-SPFAVG;	TR [•]	(Treviri)		
			RIC 13, 1c, n. 1	(R)	4,5 gm
5.	_____	SMLUG	(Lugdunum = Lyon)		
			RIC 42, 1c, n. 1	(R)	4,50 ⁵ gm
6.	_____	RB ⁸	(Roma)		
			RIC 117, 2c, n. 6	(R)	4,47 gm
7.	DNVALENS-PERFAVG;	ANTE	(Antiochia)		
			RIC 272, 2d (but REIPUBLICAE)		4,43 gm

As to the mint-marks: SM = sacra moneta; the € of ns. 3 and 7 indicates the *officina*; the • of n. 4 indicates one of a series of issues; the small crown of ns. 1 and 6 alludes to the fact, according to prof. Ulrich-Bansa, that for these issues the aurum coronarium was used i.e. the contribution in gold exacted from the provinces, originally destined for the triumphal crown.

(R = rare; RR = very rare; RRR = extremely rare)

August 367–383

367–375

8.	DNVALENTINI-ANVSPFAVG;	SMTR	(Treviri)		
			RIC 16, 14a	(R)	4,49 gm

Rev. VICTOR-IAAVGG. Two emperors seated facing, jointly holding a globe, under the wings of Victory (of whom the upper part is represented); between, a palm branch. In ex.: mint-mark GG indicates two, GGG three emperors.

9.	DNVALENS-PFAVG;	TROB ^C	(Treviri)		
			RIC 17, 17e, n. 2		4,44 gm

378 (for Theodosius 379)–383

10.	DNGRATIA-NVSPFAVG;	TROBT	(Treviri)		
			RIC 24, 49b		4,41 gm
11.	DNTHEODO-SIVSPFAVG;	TESOB	(Thessalonica)		
			RIC 180, 34c	(RR)	4,44 gm
12.	_____	TESOB	RIC 180, 34c	(RR)	4,45 gm

As to the mint-marks: the C of n. 9 indicates the first (*Capitalis*) *officina*, the T of n. 10 the third (*Tertia*) one.

388-392

388

13. DNTHEODO-SIVSPFAVG;	COM	(struck at Thessalonica)	
		RIC 180, 34j; UB 95 (RR)	4,46 gm
14. _____	COM	RIC 180, 34j; UB 95 (RR)	4,48 gm

388/9

15. DN GRATIA-NVSPFAVG;	COM	(struck in N. Italy)	
		RIC 77, 5d; UB 96	4,43 gm
16. _____	COM	RIC 77, 5d; UB 96	4,42 gm
17. _____	COM	RIC 77, 5d; UB 96	4,55 gm
18. DN VALENTINI-ANVSPFAVG;	COM	(struck in N. Italy)	
		RIC 77, 5e; UB 96	4,5 gm

389-392

19. DN VALENTINI-ANVSPFAVG;	COM	L D in field (Lugdunum)	
		RIC 50, 38a	(RRR) ??

September 394-12 January 395

Rev. VICTOR-IAAVGGG. Emperor standing as above but with small captive under his raised left foot.

20. DN HONORI-VSPFAVG;	COM	M D in field (Mediolanum = Milan)	
		RIC 84, 35c; UB 170, 61	4,49 gm
21. _____	COM	RIC 84, 35c; UB 170, 61	4,52 gm
22. _____	COM	RIC 84, 35c; UB 170, 61	4,46 gm
23. _____	COM	RIC 84, 35c; UB 170, 61	4,45 gm

First of all, the excellent quality of nearly all specimens strikes the eye. Secondly, it appears that these 23 solidi are about equally divided between the 6 emperors represented. Only Valens has one more than the average four, Valentinian II

	Treviri	Lugdunum	Roma	N. Italy	Mediolanum	Thessalonica	Antiochia	Nicomedia	Total
Valentinian I	2	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	4
Valens . . .	2	1	1	—	—	—	1	—	5
Gratian . . .	1	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	4
Valentinian II	—	1	—	1	—	4	—	—	2
Theodosius .	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4
Honorius . .	—	—	—	—	4	—	—	—	4
Total	5	2	1	4	4	5	1	1	23

one less. As follows from what we pointed out above, such a division has nothing to do with either dates or issues. It cannot be fortuitous but must be the result of a deliberate choice. To provide the goldsmith with the gold for neckrings and bracelet—weighing together 457.6 gm—the treasure's owner needed at least 101 or 102 solidi (not taking into account the neckring found in 1851). Evidently he had kept, from his original hoard of a 125 solidi, the finest specimens of each emperor's portrait. Thus he proves himself to have the makings of a coin collector! The owner of the First Corbridge Find was of the same fastidiousness;⁹ he had the same sense of quality but no iconographical interest.

The treasure in its entirety clearly shows that its owner was—though in a small way—one of the barbarous chieftains the support of whom was sought after

	Treviri	Lugdunum	Roma	N. Italy	Mediolanum	Thessalonica	Antiochia	Nicomedia	Total
364-67 . .	2	1	1	—	—	1	1	1	7
367-75 . .	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
378/9-83 .	1	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	3
388-92 . .	—	1	—	4	—	2	—	—	7
After 395 .	—	—	—	—	4	—	—	—	4
Total	5	2	1	4	4	5	1	1	23

by the Romans to restore their prestige in the West. Among the 23 solidi 7 (n. 1-7) are from the period 364-7; their number testifies to the vigour of Valentinian's effort. Of the next period 368-83, though five times as long, there are only 5 (n. 8-12) and not one of the issue 375-8. Then a gap is clearly to be seen which lasts till 388. This corresponds exactly with the dominion of the usurper Magnus Maximus and his son Flavius Victor, which cut off the West from the legitimate government. In the First Corbridge Find, this same period is exclusively represented by Magnus Maximus, not to be marveled at in Britannia where he was proclaimed Augustus; the only coin of Theodosius is dated, by its mark COM, after the usurper's defeat. Among the 433 solidi of the Dortmund find, 9 are in the name of the usurpers. Thus, among the original 125 of the Beilen chieftain, some could be expected. Was he not able to obtain gold coins in this period or did he not want to out of loyalty? Or did he prudently remove them when the legitimate power was re-instated? In any case, his collection as it is, speaks clearly of his fidelity to the legitimate Roman emperors.

Immediately after the defeat of Magnus Maximus friendly relations were resumed: there are not less than 6 coins of the years 388–9. But soon this new effort decreases in vigour. Only one coin—and that unfortunately lost!—is of the period 389–92. Besides, our collector was not able to reach the average four in the case of Valentinian II. Then a new gap sets in, to be accounted for by the usurpation of Eugenius (392–4), naturally not represented either, whereas the Dortmund find contains 6 of his coins.

After Eugenius' as after Magnus Maximus' death, relations are soon resumed. The splendid solidi of Honorius—all four from the Milan mint—are of the issue struck under Theodosius but distributed after his death.¹⁰ They are brandnew and in such perfect mint condition that they must have come straight from the mint. Evidently the contact resumed was very close and direct. It did not last long. In or shortly after 395 our chieftain felt compelled to bury his beloved treasure which he was never to recover. The abandonment of the *limes* on one hand, the oncoming invasions of the Anglosaxons on the other hand must have made his position untenable.

In this portrait gallery Arcadius is conspicuous by his absence. We may suppose that Honorius' instructions to the West were only accompanied by coins with his own effigy; may be the first sign of the practically complete break between Western and Eastern Empire from 396 till 403!¹¹ The Arcadius solidi of the same issue must have come indirectly—and therefore later—to these distant regions.

It is interesting to compare the Hapert hoard which came to light in the southern province N. Brabant.¹² This consisted of 2598 small bronze coins, the main part of which (about 2450) comes from the period in question. The latest coins, however, belong to an issue which ended in 393, under Theodosius. Here Arcadius is even better represented than Honorius (290 : 111), as there was not yet any question of the break between West and East. Though contemporary, these two hoards constitute a complete contrast. In Beilen a lavish princely treasure, closely connected with international politics. In Hapert the careful savings of a hardworking man or the working capital of an industrious merchant, slowly and laboriously acquired piecemeal. Ulrich-Bansa¹³ tells us that, in the second quarter of the 5th century, a solidus was the equivalent of 6000 *minimi*. Even if the relative value of gold has risen after 400, still the Hapert hoard must have been worth hardly more than half a solidus, the 250th part of the Beilen treasure! Both are typical of the conditions in the N. Netherlands where gold and bronze coins but no silver hoard ever came to light. Gold was for international relations, bronze for "the man in the street", silver for the soldiers who, however, had left this country long ago.¹⁴

As to the mints, we have 5 coins from Treviri (n. 1, 4, 8, 9, 10) and 5 from

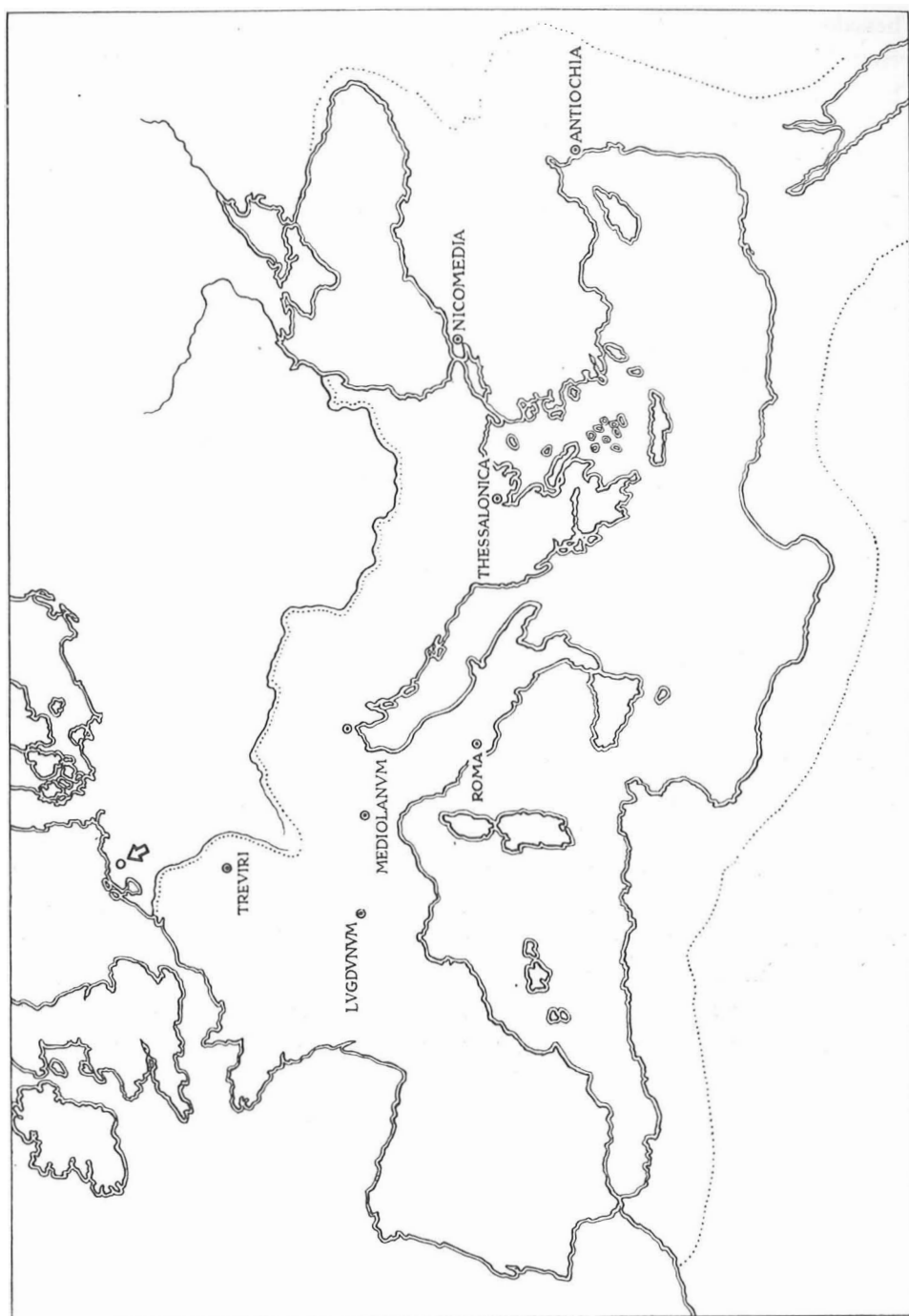


Fig. 26

Thessalonica (2, 11, 12, 13, 14), 2 from Lugdunum (5, 19), 1 from Rome (6), 4 from N. Italy (Aquileia or Mediolanum 15-8) and 4 from Mediolanum (21-3). The East only furnishes 2, Antiochia and Nicomedia one each (7, 3). In this the hoard differs as well from the Corbridge Find where Treviri is best represented (even without Magnus Maximus) as from the Dortmund hoard where Antiochia wins. This will be due to the difference in date. As to the first, Treviri seems to have been more prolific of solidi before than after 388, whereas 388/9 till 392 were meagre years for Beilen. As to the last, the Antiochia issue, though by far the largest, still needed many years to assert its preponderance in the extreme West. Both Treviri (TR, SMTR, TROBC and TROBT) and Thessalonica (SMTES, TESOB, COM) show successive phases. So does Lugdunum (SMLUG, COM LD) and may be Mediolanum (COM COMOB MD). Thus we witness the addition of OB in 368, the replacement of the mintmark by COM in 388, the return of the mint's initials and, after 394, the appearance of COMOB. We also see the inauguration of the *Restitutor* type in 364 and that of the new reverse *Victoria Augustorum* in 368. We see the modified *Restitutor* type combined with the *Victoria* legend from 394 onwards. On one coin (n. 10) we even observe the two enthroned emperors differ in seize to indicate the difference in their positions. We can distinguish smaller and larger effigies, unbroken and broken legends. In short, the Beilen hoard, small as it is, gives a brief synopsis of Roman coinage in this most important period.

For thirty years our Beilen chieftain had taken an active part—modest as it will have been—in the making of Roman history. We can only marvel at the thoroughness and the efficiency of Roman organization which, in these troublous times, reached as far as this outlying region and applied such zeal and skill to secure the support of a small local potentate. But all in vain. The failure of the imperial policy in the West marks the downfall of this loyal supporter of the Roman Empire, far outside its boundaries. Evidently he was a civilized and more or less educated man, able to appreciate the fineness of Roman coins and the interest of their effigies and to read the emperors' names. It is pleasant to imagine that his pro-Roman attitude was not prompted by greed and ambition alone but also by genuine love and respect of Roman civilization.

NOTES

¹ Zadoks-Jitta (with older references); Toynbee 62 n. 34; Ulrich-Bansa 1949, 174-6, 233-4.

² One at the Cabinet des Médailles, Paris and two at the Royal Coin Cabinet, The Hague.

³ Regling; Pearce 140 n. 3.

⁴ Craster; Gruber.

⁵ Van der Feltz.

⁶ For this period see RIC and Ulrich-Bansa 1949, *passim*. Where these authors disagree, the latter's opinion is mostly preferred. Prof. Ulrich-Bansa kindly read the first draught of my manuscript and suggested several valuable additions and corrections. I want to take, however, the full responsibility of this paper, the more so as I cannot agree with him on various important points. At the same time I want to express my heartfelt thanks for his helpful advice and encouraging criticism.

⁷ Panvini Rosati 438 ss.

⁸ Ulrich-Bansa 1949, 154 points to Constantinian examples. For this motif in general see: Caló Levi.

⁹ Gruber 55-6.

¹⁰ Ulrich-Bansa 1949, 159.

¹¹ Prof. Ulrich-Bansa dates these Honorius coins in the years 397-8 and accounts for the lack of Arcadius solidi by the practically complete break between Western and Eastern empire between 396 and 403. For this break: Ulrich-Bansa 1949, 200 ss.

¹² Knippenberg.

¹³ Ulrich-Bansa 1949, 220 n. 5.

¹⁴ Ulrich-Bansa 1955, 166 n. 2. See also, especially for the finds of solidi in the Western provinces: Panvini Rosati 432-5.

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364-367

1-7



367-375

8-9



378-383

10-12

PLATE XXIX



388-392

13-18



394-395

20-23