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Svante Fischer & Lennart Lind. The Coins in the Grave of King Childeric

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Reviewer 1 (anonymous)

S. FISCHER, L. LIND, The Coins in the grave of king Childeric

The text submitted for review and its illustrations are spoilt by substandard editing and quite a few technical issues, too many mistakes in the spelling of personal and geographical names and in the titles of the reference works cited in the bibliography, all of which makes this contribution extremely difficult to read, and some passages impossible to understand. The JAAH editors would do well in future not to submit texts at this stage to reviewers as this greatly complicates their job.

Most of my comments are marked in the text [Editors' note: not included here owing to anonymity problems]. The Authors address the views published earlier on the subject (German language publications in particular) with a certain nonchalance, give an incorrect account of the meaning of some of them (e.g. Max Martin's views) and leave out a few crucial works altogether (e.g., contributions in M. MÜLLER-WILLE (ed.), *Zwei Religiöse Welten: Bestattungen der fränkischen Könige Childerich und Chlodwig Mainz 1988*, particularly M. R.-ALFÖLDI, K. STRIBRNY, *Zu den Münzbeigaben im Childerichgrab*).

The view that the gold coins (*solidi*) were selected beforehand, i.e., prior to the funeral ceremony, seems very unlikely to me. This would mean that the most of mourners taking part in Childeric's obsequies had a good knowledge of Latin and could read the legends on the coins since the portraits on fifth-century coins are too standardised to identify a particular ruler. If the Authors accept that it was really so, this should have been stated *expressis verbis*, for this would be a research sensation. However, this is a matter for an informed academic discussion rather than for a peer-review evaluation invited by editors.

In the part dedicated to the analysis of the *denarii*, the paragraphs (jointly almost two pages) on the supposedly long-term extended circulation of second-century *denarii* within the Roman Empire are unnecessary. The small number of coin hoards discussed in detail (why discuss them at all?) to support this claim are an exception if we consider the hundreds of other hoards which challenge this argument. See for example, a crucial statistical analysis in H. Schubert's, *Das Verhältnis von Denar zu Antoninian in den Münzschätzen der ersten Hälfte des 3. Jahrhunderts n. Chr.*, *Litterae Numismaticae Vindobonenses* 4, 1992, p. 259-280, that the Authors omit to mention; this analysis has been confirmed by many hoards found recently. The Authors do not grasp the nature of the processes of inflation observed during the third century within the Empire (cf. several contributions from R. Duncan-Jones and K. Hopkins). It was not the society of the Empire who melted down the older coins with a higher silver content (something that, in any case, was prohibited by the law), this was done by the central mint which withdrew the coin from circulation in the form of taxes, proscriptions etc., to increase the number of monetary issues. This was a highly efficient mechanism and the Copernicus-Gresham law took effect fairly quickly, thus by AD 250 no second-century coins remained in circulation. In any case, this entire section of the text is unnecessary, serving only as a defence of L. Lind's old views from more than thirty years ago, ones deservedly criticised at that, and has no impact on the main discourse of the text. Better to include in its place the most recent study by H. HORSNÆS (2013) on Bornholm, the views and the discussion presented therein on the circulation and the time of influx of *denarii* to the Barbaricum.

After some revision guided by the corrections marked on its text, careful proofreading and edition, also of the bibliography, this article may be published as an interesting, albeit rather controversial, contribution to the ages long discussion of Childeric's grave.

Comments on “The Coins in the Grave of King Childeric” by Svante Fischer & Lennart Lind

The grave of the Frankish king Childeric I. is without any doubts a key find for the early medieval period. It was detected over 360 years ago but there is always something new in the discussion. One can follow the research history on the archaeology of the Merovingian period by reading the articles dealing with this royal grave. Since several years, one of the magic words in analysing archaeological sources is narrative. Svante Fischer and Lennart Lind are using this approach – even if they do not name it explicitly. In addition, of course a royal grave is a perfect example of narrative.

Fischer and Lind focus their article on the coins of Childeric’s burial. Two main points were analysed by them: The gathering of the more than 300 coins themselves (when and where did they come from) and the meaning of these coins in as part of the furniture. Both are - like usually done by numismatics dealing with this treasure – divided in reviewing the denarii and the solidi. As I am not a numismatic, I do not feel comfortable to give any comments to the composition of the coin treasure deposited in Childeric’s grave. For Fischer and Lind the Solidi have been gathered from “at least two perhaps three separate sources” and the largest part – all from eastern mints – arrived via Italy. That those eastern coins could be a payment from the emperor in the East is excluded by the authors but without any argument/discussion (see contrary R.-Alföldi & Stribrny 1998 [missing in the bibliography of the authors!] who have the same results for the silver coins). I don’t know how this fits to the coin circulation in the late Roman Empire but there are other objects in the grave that are in minimum arouse suspicion to be from the eastern part of the Empire e.g. the extremely high quality cloisonné objects (Böhme 1994. – cf. for an Italian origin Périn / Kazanski 1996) and the golden brooch with opus interasile (Toth 2012) . How do we bring the coins and the named objects into a coherent interpretation?

Another question arise reading the article of Guy Halsall about Childeric’s grave (Halsall 2001) which is in the bibliography of the article of Fischer and Lind. Halsall debates critically the date of Childeric’s dead and Clovis succession based on written sources and usually given with 481/82. Halsall gave a much wider span. How does this fit to the solidi in the grave or vice versa what tell the solidi about the idea of Halsall? How would the treasure look like if Childeric’s dead had been first at 490 or already 475? This is certainly a question of a non-numismatic.

The second main point of the article is the meaning of the coins resp. the composition of them in the grave. This collection is not a “real grown” treasure and we can start with the premise that it was only a part of the royal treasure, because the control over this treasure was an important instrument of leadership for Clovis. Many written sources demonstrate the significance of the royal treasure (e.g. Hardt 2004; Gasparri 2004). Therefore, Clovis had to bring it under his control. He could spend only a symbolic part as furniture for his father’s grave. We know this symbolic treasures from the 3rd century AD in some princely burials, and to come back to narrative, they should tell about wealth and tradition of the owners family, and demonstrate the legitimation of his/her leadership (Quast 2011). With this background, it seems quite logical to study what kind of objects from the royal treasure that Clovis deposited in the grave. Of course,

it is difficult to detect which objects had been Childeric's personal adornment and equipment but the coins had surely been part of the treasure. Again – it just was a part of the royal treasure and the question which coinage was used is of interest, if it was not a random selection. Fischer and Lind argue that it was manipulated for ideological purposes by Clovis. Only coinage of legal emperors are in the grave and this is a remarkable difference to the a little bit younger but neighbouring Vedrin hoard, that ended with solidi of Anastasius. In addition, this selection of coinage in the Childeric grave should display political and ideological legitimacy according to the authors. However, to whom? Fischer and Lind suggest a few names of officials (Remigius, Syagrius, the owner of the Vedrin hoard) who attend besides Clovis at the festivity but maybe the most important participants had been the warriors of Childeric. Were these warriors really able to read the inscriptions on the coins and remember who was an Usurper and who was a legal emperor? Moreover, if so, did they have any sentiments for the legal emperor? Was it not the “legal” one who paid them? In addition, is there a meaning given by the different quantities of coinage?

It is speculative to discuss on this level – but we can do so and design a frame or an imagination of the ceremony of the royal burial. What we know from the written sources is very few. Clovis was 16 years old when his father died. It must have been a dangerous period for him because one can imagine that some of Childeric's military leaders thought to be the better successor and additionally from outside of the Belgica II there could be some covetousness. Clovis (quite certainly supported by his mother Basina) had to perform the burial for his own legitimation. Moreover, – to name it lax – it must have been a great show. It needed to measure up to the expectations of everybody in the “audience”. For the Thuringian warriors horses were offered, for the Frankish warriors the “official dress” with garnet cloisonné was used and esp. the divine origins of the Merovingian family was shown by the bull's head on the sword belt referring on the Quinotaurus. For the “old Roman elites”, the signet ring, the sceptre and - according to Fischer and Lind – the coins demonstrated Childeric's legitimation.

This is the narration of the grave and even if we cannot prove it, the interpretation seems probable. The analysis of the coins given by Fischer and Lind fits to this context very well. However, Childeric's grave is singular and not excavated and documented in the necessary way and the furniture is incomplete. So maybe Clovis simply took two hands full of golden coins out of a box and deposited them inside his father's grave to demonstrate the wealth of his family.

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Authors' reply Svante Fischer & Lennart Lind

We would very much like to thank the two peer-reviewers for the pertinent critique and the helpful suggestions in terms of relevant reference literature and many important questions regarding the frequency of literacy in 5th century Gaul. We have tried to address all issues raised by the peer-reviewers to the best of our ability, especially by expanding the comparative approach to encompass further 5th century literary sources and inscribed objects in Frankish princely burials from the period. In addition, we have added an expanded sample of mixed precious-metal hoards in table IV to highlight the very unusual context that the Childeric grave represents.

Original text

The Coins in the Grave of King Childeric

Svante FISCHER and Lennart LIND

Svante Fischer
Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, Uppsala University
Box 626, 751 26 UPPSALA, Sweden

Lennart Lind
Department of Archaeology and Classical Studies, Stockholm University
Wallenberglaboratoriet, 106 91 STOCKHOLM, Sweden

Résumé en français (à traduire)

This paper contextualizes some one hundred mid- to late 5th century solidi and two hundred silver coins found in the grave of King Childeric in Tournai, Belgium. The grave was discovered on May 27, 1653 and then followed an excavation of the burial monument. The latter enclosed the earthly remains of Childeric and a rich assembly of grave goods, including the coins. The grave and its surroundings had been constructed in 481-482 AD at the request of Clovis. The unusual find combination of coins from a funerary context was first described and published by Chiflet with the help of his son.

In this paper, the Chiflet publication and its description of the coins are compared to a variety of archaeological contexts, especially similar find combinations including late 5th century solidi and denarii, notably the Vedrin hoard in Namur, Belgium, but also hoards found in settlements on the Southeast Scandinavian islands from Bornholm in Denmark, and Gotland, Helgö, and Öland in Sweden.

The Childeric grave is the only known inhumation burial of a mixed gold/silver coin hoard of three hundred coins covering five centuries and thus constitutes an anomaly beyond all comparative estimates. The Childeric hoard must hence be explained in a different manner that takes Clovis' ideological motives into consideration as the grave and its contents runs contrary to all normal explanations. Therefore, we argue that it was Clovis who decided what was to be put into his father's grave. It follows that the solidus hoard together with the other coins is a meaningful composition that has been manipulated for ideological purposes by Clovis himself. This interpretation differs considerably from other assessments in that we argue for a much wider background to the coins, where meaningful selection from several different sources must be highlighted.

Abstract

This paper contextualizes some one hundred mid- to late 5th century solidi and two hundred silver coins found in the grave of King Childeric in Tournai, Belgium.¹ The grave was discovered on May 27, 1653 and then followed an excavation of the burial monument. The latter enclosed the earthly remains of Childeric and a rich assembly of grave goods, including the coins. The grave and its surroundings had been constructed in 481-482 AD at the request of Clovis. The unusual find combination of coins from a funerary context was first described and published by Chiflet with the help of his son.² The subsequent literature on Childeric's grave is immense. We are unable to present a full review of all this research, but the key works have previously been listed elsewhere.³

In this paper, the Chiflet publication and its description of the coins are compared to a variety of archaeological contexts, especially similar find combinations including late 5th century solidi and denarii, notably the Vedrin hoard in Namur, Belgium, but also hoards found in settlements on the Southeast Scandinavian islands from Bornholm in Denmark, and Gotland, Helgö, and Öland in Sweden.

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¹ The research for this paper has been generously financed by the Royal Swedish Academy of Antiquities, History and Letters, KVHAA, through its Western Europe scholarship and the Enbom Foundation. We wish to thank Birgit Arrhenius, Frands Herschend, Ulf Näsman, Patrick Périn, Dieter Quast, and Ulla Westermark for discussing the topic with us. We are also indebted to the helpful staff of the KMK and the KVHAA library.

² CHIFLETIUS 1655. We have been very fortunate to be able to use a preserved example of Chiflet's work, currently kept at the KVHAA library. The volume previously belonged to Oscar Montelius, the founder of Swedish archaeology, see BADOU 2012. This gave us the opportunity to access the primary source. After having read and reexamined this work, we confess to hold the professionalism of Chiflet in the highest esteem. He was an unusually proficient scholar at the time and his work is as much a monument to Dark Age numismatics as the grave of Childeric is a monument to the ascendancy of his young successor Clovis.

³ BÖHNER 1981; KAZANSKI & PÉRIN 1988; HALSALL 2010, p. 169.

Introduction

Childeric's grave in Tournai was built in 481-482 AD at the request of his son Clovis. Unfortunately for us, the main archaeological investigator arrived too late at the site of the excavation that had begun in that last week of spring of 1653. In 1655, Jean Chiflet was a Jesuit scholar in his fifties, fluent in Latin and French. Although absent from the excavation of the grave, Chiflet was able to see and illustrate the finds after they had been removed from the burial context, and subsequently cleaned. The quality of Chiflet's illustrations shows a considerable knowledge of Roman numismatic iconography. He was undoubtedly familiar with the names and the chronological order of the Roman emperors just as he was familiar with a number of Roman coin hoards discovered in his own time. Chiflet had no trouble understanding the occasionally quite stylized representation of the shield on the reverse of the solidi. Chiflet listed 100 gold coins and 200 silver coins. Of these, Chiflet was able to describe 89 solidi, 41 denarii and one siliqua individually.⁴ Only 12 solidi, three denarii and the siliqua are depicted, however. The four illustrated silver coins are pierced. After various tribulations and burglaries, only two solidi remain today.

Clovis - Son of Childeric, King of Franks and Roman Consul

One must begin the account of the coins of the Childeric grave by reiterating two dry facts that have been quite correctly stressed by the historian Guy Halsall.⁵ First, it is not the buried individual who decides what grave goods are to accompany him or her into the afterlife. Rather, this something ultimately decided by the descendants. In the case of the grave of Childeric, it is rather easy to pinpoint the responsible descendant. Second, there is no point in depositing precious grave goods unless they are arranged in a meaningful order that may be appreciated by those partaking in the burial rite. Therefore, we argue that Clovis' burial of his father was an important transitory event. It materialized once and for all the aspirations of the Germanic successor kingdoms in Northwestern Europe.

Clovis apparently succeeded his father to the throne without any major interference from neither relatives nor unrelated rivals. The opulent burial of his predecessor was the first real manifestation of power in the reign of the young Clovis. Later he would go on to conquer Gaul, convert to Catholicism after a victory over the Alemanni, defeat the Visigoths at Vouillé in 507 and become an honorary Roman consul during the reign of the eastern emperor Anastasius. We can thus establish that Clovis is the single individual who must have supervised the deposition of the coins in his father's chamber grave in Tournai. But the coins given by Clovis to Childeric to guard in his afterlife puzzle us. Clovis left behind a riddle. He deposited coins stretching over five centuries, from the Roman Republic in the first century BC down to eastern emperor Zeno (474-475, 476-491). But the coins have obviously been arranged in a meaningful order. Why? What were Clovis' motives? This can only be discerned if we assess all the major grave goods and burial structures in the grave complex through the framework of the burial rite.

The Burial Rite

How can we begin to appreciate the nature of the burial rite? It would appear reasonable to assume that a burial rite has a beginning and an end.⁶ There may be words spoken aloud along with a procession of mourners. One could further surmise that the rite is intended to relate to important events or acts in the real life of the deceased throughout its necessary duration. It would probably take a little more than one full hour's time to recapitulate Childeric's life in front of audience.

We know very little of Childeric's life. The eulogy delivered at his burial would have been useful information indeed. But one may find comfort in that we do know of the acts of one of his contemporaries, Theoderic, king of the Visigoths in Aquitaine. In a letter to his brother-in-law Agricola, Sidonius Apollinaris details the daily routines of Theoderic in 454 AD, presumably at a residence in or around Toulouse.⁷ We can thus see that the king first sits on his throne for one hour or two. He then inspects his treasure chamber. After this, he goes to inspect his stables. This structured chain of events bears a very strong resemblance to the composition of Childeric's grave in terms of

⁴ CHIFLETIUS 1655, plate 272.

⁵ HALSALL 2010, p. 187: « Clovis used the elaborate burial of his father to recreate a web of social relationships and to establish a right to succeed to a social position ».

⁶ For an account of the interpretation of the Merovingian burial rite within archaeology, see EFFROS 2002; 2003.

⁷ « *Hora est secunda: surgit e solio aut thesauris inspiciendis vacaturus aut stabulis* »; « *The second hour arrives; he rises from the throne, free to inspect his treasure-chamber or stable.* » Sidonius, *Letters*, 1.2. Latin text Lütjohann 1887, English translation Dalton 1915.

delineating action in time and space. At the center is Childeric. Next to him are his coins, tucked away in purses, and his regalia and weapons.⁸ Outside his grave are a vast number of horses.⁹

Clovis probably made sure that the right people were invited to the staged event; Gallo-Roman church leaders and imperial functionaries along with high-ranking Frankish nobles are likely to have participated in the burial rite. The participants were required, requested or invited, all depending on rank, by Clovis to walk past Childeric on his *lit de parade*. A select few would then proceed to peruse the main objects of his treasure chamber, after which they were all free to venture further away to look at the stables. When everything was found to be in good order by the select few, all participants could congratulate Clovis to a job well done. He, in turn, could now ask his prominent guests to be seated at his royal table to eat and drink.¹⁰

The Solidus Hoard

We argue repeatedly in this paper that the coins in grave must have been assembled for the specific purpose of the burial rite. We further argue that the participants in the burial rite were allowed to look at the coins before the grave was sealed. This is where we must begin to ask what was made explicit in the composition of the coin assemblies in the grave. The Childeric solidus hoard itself is unusual in many ways. First, it is the single largest solidus hoard found in a grave. Second, it has a distinct composition that puts it into a clearly defined group of hoards that are found in three locations: I) northern Gaul, II) southeastern Scandinavia, III) northern Italy.¹¹ Third, the solidus hoard is accompanied by a denarius hoard and a *siliqua*, at a time when denarii are relatively difficult to come by inside the Roman Empire and the *siliquae* have begun to run scarce. Fourth, the other burial goods included a scepter and a signet ring, indicating the desire to manifest the high status of the deceased in relation to the Roman Empire.¹² Fifth, there is an assembly of weapons and horses that is reminiscent of princely burials in Barbaricum.

The purpose of the coins, then, was to display political and ideological legitimacy. Access to solidi would not have been very difficult to a warlord like Childeric. There would have been plenty to choose from in the treasure chamber. Thus, the choice of what solidi should be included would have presented no difficulty to Clovis. He was probably well aware of who the different 5th century emperors were and how they were considered legitimate by the Eastern emperor. He also knew that current Eastern coinage carried a higher standard weight than Western solidi did during the third quarter of the 5th century.

Therefore, all the « bad » solidi Childeric had received as a warlord in Gaul and northern Italy during the collapse of the Western Empire have, with a few notable exceptions, been removed from the assembly. By contrast, the rare specimen of the Western consular solidi of the legitimate and eventually senior emperor Valentinian III in 435, the Eastern issue struck in his name by the new junior emperor Marcian in 452 and that of the new régime of the senior emperor Leo I in 457 were probably some of the major showcases of the purse in Childeric's lap.

Clovis could count on that the prominent attendants would appreciate this window-dressing of the treasure inventory. After all, they had just like Childeric, once served under a variety of semi-legitimate forms of Western government, with substantial issues of illegitimate and/or underweight solidus coinage greasing unwashed palms. They all knew less about the turbulent political affairs in Constantinople in 474-477. Clovis included all these types for good measure; Basiliscus and Marcus, Zeno and Leo Caesar. He also included a 474 solidus for Julius Nepos, Zeno's appointee in the West, but there is no coinage for Zeno struck by Odoacer in Ravenna and Milan. By contrast, this later post-476 issue is a striking feature of the Vedrin and Helgö hoards.

The denarii and the *siliqua* are a different matter altogether. Clovis and the others inspecting the *lit de parade* are all unlikely to have been able to identify the imperial personae depicted on the silver coinage. The idea of mixing different coinage in a grave is highly unusual. The denarii themselves are not unusual, though. But in this context they have a collective configurative role in the burial rite. They are there in bulk as a single symbol of Imperial silver in Barbarian custody, as had been the tradition in leading affinities outside the Empire for many generations already. The combination of the two coin types was ample proof that Clovis, like his father before him, was loyal to the Eastern emperor while simultaneously well connected to the top political players outside the Empire.

⁸ BÖHNER 1981, p. 453: « Es ist anzunehmen, dass der verweste Lederbeutel in Childerics Schoß, in dem sich die Goldmünzen fanden, zu der mit dem Bügel versehenen Tasche gehört hat ».

⁹ BRULET 1986, PÉRIN AND KAZANSKI 1988.

¹⁰ The names of those attending besides Clovis will probably remain unknown to us. It is tempting to suggest a few names of people who ought to have been invited, notably Remigius, Syagrius, and the owners of the Vedrin hoard.

¹¹ FISCHER 2011.

¹² QUAEST 2010.

Whence do the solidi hail?

A glance at previous research shows that the scholarly interpretation of the solidus hoard has largely focused on the origin of the hoard rather than its ideological function. The numismatist Jacqueline Lallemand and the archaeologist Joachim Werner incorrectly perceived the Childeric solidus hoard as a direct payment from the eastern emperor in Constantinople to Childeric.¹³ They further concluded that the contents reflected solidus circulation with the Late Roman Empire. Werner also adhered to the idea that coin hoarding always reflected social unrest and that solidi once circulated in trade.¹⁴ Later Kurt Böhner more or less uncritically accepted this stance and the solidus hoard was thus further evidence of an eastern origin for all the burial goods.¹⁵ But neither of these two theories appears to be accurate given subsequent research.

In his 2004 article on denarii burial contexts in Gaul, Max Martin clearly expressed the desire to further Werner's scenario where most of Childeric's grave goods derive from barbarian contexts connected to the Eastern Empire. In particular, Martin advanced the hypothesis that the solidi reached Childeric via Thuringia.¹⁶ This is difficult to accept for a number of reasons. Above all, there are no late 5th century solidus hoards in Thuringia that can be employed to substantiate this claim. The closest parallel is from Biesenbrow, Brandenburg, and belongs to the mid 6th century.¹⁷ There are a number of further arguments against the eastern and Thuringian theories. First, coin hoards are assembled and deposited during all periods due to very specific circumstances regardless of warfare.¹⁸ Second, coin hoards are related to each other as they reflect the total output and circulation (Thordeman's Law).¹⁹ Third, the weight/frequency ratio of coin hoards falls accordingly in time and space (Gresham's Law).

In addition, a number of numismatists have correctly pointed to two further facts. First, solidus hoards found outside the Roman Empire, in Poland and Scandinavia in particular, cannot be the result of commerce, but of tributes or payments to military units.²⁰ Second, the composition of the Childeric solidus hoard has more in common with the Italian hoards of Reggio Emilia and Zeccone, Radostowo in Poland, but also with Belgium and Scandinavia than with the mint of Constantinople itself.²¹ We must therefore seek a new explanation based on empirical data.

In 1965, Lallemand published the solidus hoard of Vedrin.²² The publication included a groundbreaking study of die-identities for Julius Nepos and western issues for Zeno. Two years later, Joan M. Fagerlie published the then current Danish and Swedish solidus catalogue, highlighting the unusually high frequency of die-identical coins in the Scandinavian material.²³ With the aid of Fagerlie's publication, Ulla Westermark, director of the KMK in Stockholm, read Lallemand's publication with extreme care and marked all die-identities between Vedrin and Scandinavian hoards with a led pencil in a copy preserved in the library of the KVHAA.²⁴ In 1994, JPC Kent published the tenth volume of the RIC, a typology that was to a considerable extent built on his studies of Swedish solidus finds kept at the KMK.²⁵

In 2009, Fischer read Lallemand's article at the KVHAA library and re-discovered Westermark's KMK pencil notes. Fischer was also able to acquire archaeologist Mats P. Malmer's annotated personal copy of Fagerlie's monograph, from which Malmer went on to write his study on the comparative chronology of solidi and bracteates.²⁶ After building the database LEO with over 7,300 solidi, Fischer could then proceed to present a case for the interconnectedness of all major solidus hoards in Belgium, Scandinavia and Italy using the RIC typology and

¹³ LALLEMAND 1965, p. 117: « Il est donc fort probable que le trésor monétaire de Childeric avait, comme d'autres objets que contenait son tombeau, une origine orientale »; WERNER 1980.

¹⁴ WERNER 1949. This idea was first brought up in Sweden by HILDEBRAND 1882. The commercial theory was further supported by METCALF 1995 and JONSSON 2003.

¹⁵ BÖHNER 1981, p. 454.

¹⁶ MARTIN 2004, p. 260.

¹⁷ A detector survey in 2011 at Biesenbrow revealed eight more solidi. One of these, an imitation struck in the name of Anastasius I is die-identical to a stray find from Kvie, Martebo Parish, Gotland, Sweden, see FAGERLIE 1967, find nr. 163 (SHM 9938).

¹⁸ SARVAS 1968, 1970; see also MALMER 1977, p. 170: « vergraben ist in primitive Zeiten einfach die normale Verwahrungsweise für Wertsachen. Wenn diese Hypothese richtig ist dann spiegeln die Horte in erster Linie nur den zeitgenössigen Reichtum an Edelmetall wider ».

¹⁹ THORDEMAN 1949.

²⁰ See HERSCHEM 1980; KYHLBERG 1986; FISCHER 2005, 2008; GUEST 2008; CIOLEK 2009.

²¹ GRIERSON AND MAYS 1992, pp. 288-291.

²² LALLEMAND 1965.

²³ FAGERLIE 1967.

²⁴ Westermark also published all new Swedish finds and re-discovered solidi in the KMK, linking them to other hoards, see WESTERMARK 1980, 1983.

²⁵ KENT 1994.

²⁶ MALMER 1977.

Fagerlie's catalogue supplemented by Westermark and Malmer.²⁷ LEO consists of 1,683 identified issues of RIC X, and an additional thousand that can be roughly identified according to the RIC. By the same token, it is relatively easy to add to this sum the 1,443 solidi of the Szikancs hoard.²⁸ We can thus see the relative frequency of coin types in find categories ranging from random finds to hoards with hundreds of solidi. The Childeric hoard has coin types that match at least 2,491 solidi in LEO. This allows for a rather certain estimate of just how typical the composition of the Childeric hoard was at the time for its deposition, see table I.

The Vedrin Hoard

The Vedrin hoard merits considerable attention, see table II. It is in many ways the most important key to the comprehension of the Childeric hoard. It is the closest hoard in time and space, and also contains a single denarius struck for Antoninus Pius after 141 AD.²⁹ In terms of its solidus composition, Vedrin spans over a long time from Magnus Maximus in 383 to the reign of Anastasius, extending into the early 6th century. Two of the earlier coins have a local connection of usurpers gaining access to the Trier mint, having been struck there in 383 and 407 respectively. Vedrin is also well connected to the contemporary Scandinavian hoards such as Åby in Öland, Helgö in mainland Sweden and Botes on Gotland by means of die-identities of both eastern and western issues. The Vedrin hoard contains almost everything that is so obviously missing in the Childeric hoard, even rare specimens of Avitus, Petronius Maximus and Glycerius. But the Vedrin hoard is also a key to the understanding of the Italian mints under Odoacer after 476. Vedrin serves as a nodal point for a number of different die-identities found in Öland that then branches out through the hoards of Åby and Björnhovda, but it also extends to Gotland and the Helgö hoard in the Mälär Valley of the Swedish mainland.

The Vedrin hoard shows all normal characteristics of long-term hoarding combined with mercenary activities, with bits and pieces picked up from past generations, along with with at least two chunks of the hoard being distinct remnants of direct payments in Italy in the 460's and 470's, very much like in Öland in the first part, while leaning more towards the later Helgö hoard in the other. The obvious conclusion from tables I-II is that the Childeric hoard has very little in common with eastern hoards such as Bína in Slovakia, Szikancs in Hungary or Abrittus in Bulgaria, but looks rather similar to Italian, Polish and Scandinavian hoards. The largest part of the Childeric hoard must therefore have been assembled in northern Italy in the mid- 470's. But a comparison with other hoards containing similar coins further permits other conclusions. A key to the understanding of political events in Italy and the financial collapse of the Western Empire is the composition of solidus hoards and their respective frequency of Western die-identities. This is precisely the period when Childeric disappears in historical records.

Now, the origin of the coinage struck in Constantinople can easily be explained. It is a chunk of « good » solidi, taken out of the Eastern treasury to be used in Italy. Childeric must have received the money there before or shortly after Odoacer gained control over Ravenna. After 476, the Western government had small assets of financial capital that must have run dry at a fairly rapid pace; the meager funds were used by Odoacer to pay off mercenaries returning back to northern Gaul and southern Scandinavia.

Odoacer would soon try to remedy this down-sized situation by issuing an interconnected series of solidi in the name of Zeno after things had settled down in the East, realizing that the East was no longer interested in financing any major actions within Western government. There is thus a difference in hoarding patterns between various regional hoard groups around 476. In particular, the Reggio Emilia hoard and the Esquiline hoard in Italy are testimony to the Roman gold hemorrhage after 476 while the closely-knit hoards of Vedrin and Öland show the flux of the financial capital prior to 476. In the closely knit hoards of the earlier group we also find that for some Western emperors to be present at all there must be certain preceding series of Western coins. In particular certain issues of Libius Severus' and Anthemius' coinage condition the presence of solidi for Glycerius. This is the case in Vedrin in Belgium, but also in Bostorp, Sandby nr 10 in Högby, and Algotsum on Öland, and Saltholm on Bornholm.³⁰

Given this result, the composition of the Childeric hoard becomes a very clear-cut anomaly. If the hoard was deposited in 481/482, we would have expected the hoard to position itself in between the first group that

²⁷ FISCHER 2011; FISCHER, LÓPEZ SANCHEZ & VICTOR 2011.

²⁸ BIRO-SEY 1976; GUEST 2008; KOLNÍKOVÁ & PIETA 2009.

²⁹ LALLEMAND 1965, p. 115: « En Gaule nous ne connaissons, en dehors du trésor du Vedrin, qu'un seul dépôt important, enfoui d'ailleurs une dizaine d'années plus tôt que le trésor namurois : c'est le trésor de monnaies d'or du tombeau de Childéric I, mort en 481 ».

³⁰ This relationship was discussed already by KYHLBERG 1986.

is interconnected by die-identities prior to 476 and the second group with new coinage struck after 476, such as Reggio Emilia and the Esquiline. This is not the case however. Instead, the hoard contains elements of the first group's earliest coinage but not the normal western bulk from the 450's to the early 470's that usually accompanies the kind of eastern coinage of the same period.

The solidi in the Childeric hoard appear to have been gathered from at least two, perhaps three separate sources. One early western source contained specific western payments such as the first and tenth vota of Valentinian III in 425 and 435.³¹ The other source consists of a bulk of more recent eastern coinage of the very frequent issues RIC X 605 and 630 struck by Leo I and exported en masse to Italy to support the reign of Anthemius, augmented by earlier coinage for Marcian of types RIC X 506-51.

There were at least three consular solidi in the hoard. The first is from 435 for Valentinian III in Ravenna, the second very frequent issue from 441 for Theodosius II in Constantinople and the third a relatively infrequent issue for Leo I struck in 457 in Thessalonica. The latter issue is also the last consular issue to appear in the east for the remainder of the 5th century.

It is quite likely that Childeric may once have had access to coinage struck in the name of Majorian, Libius Severus, Anthemius and maybe even Glycerius, either genuine or as Visigothic imitations. Many events seem to have been conditioned by payments in return for military services. In 458 Aegidius and Childeric aided the illegitimate western emperor Majorian by pushing the Burgundians out of Lyons and then opening up the communications from northern Gaul down to Arles. In 463, during the reign of the illegitimate western emperor Libius Severus, Childeric assisted Comes Paulus of Angers in fighting the Visigoths at Orléans. In 465 he laid siege to Paris. He then fought Saxons and Bretons in 469 during the tumultuous reign of Anthemius, but also attacked the Alamanni. He must have been paid at this point. But with what coinage and struck by whom?

The oldest solidus in the Childeric hoard dates to c. 431, and the youngest possibly to 477, giving a hoarding range of some 46 years. But the hoard is void of most western and barbaric issues between 435 and 476, some 40 years. Why is this? The answer is twofold. First of all, the hoard appears to have been cleaned. It does not contain any issue emanating from any of the illegitimate western emperors, and the abundant western coinage of Anthemius is absent. Many western emperors are missing although they should have been there if the hoard reflected normal circulation patterns, that is specific payments that were hoarded together over time. It could potentially also have included Visigothic imitations, as found in hoards in England, Italy and Scandinavia.

Why is the Childeric hoard composed as it is in 481/482? A possible answer to this question is that after 476, things had changed. There no longer was a western emperor. Now, Anthemius struck quite a substantial amount of solidi.³² His fall in 472 may have caused him to become considered illegitimate. Another possible explanation is that the failed Anthemian offshoot in the West was no longer seen as legitimate by adherents of Zeno after the failed rebellions of Anthemius' two sons in Constantinople in 479. There are no non-legitimate western emperors or usurpers in the Childeric hoard, although their solidus coinage is present in the nearby Vedrin hoard and in the Scandinavian hoards. This means that there must have been a very conscious selection of solidi in the Childeric hoard prior to the deposit.

The Silver Coins

According to Chiflet there were « more than 200 silver coins »³³ in the grave, but he himself saw only 42 specimens. 41 of these seem to have been Roman denarii, the remaining one was a siliqua of the fourth century, with the portrait of Constantius II. Although the main part of these more than 200 silver coins, which were worn,³⁴ probably consisted of just denarii, there may have been more than one fourth century coin. Of this, however, we will never know for certain. Among the 41 supposed denarii, there was one coin, labelled « consularis » by Chiflet, with no further information added. This was most certainly a denarius of the Roman Republic. The other 40 were of the Imperial period but mostly determined only according to portrait of emperors and empresses.³⁵ Whether one chooses the number 200 or 41, it is the largest number of denarii found in a grave. The 42 silver coins are listed in table III.

Drawings were made of four coins, all pierced,³⁶ and these are the only ones among the 42 possible to determine more closely than to portrait. The presence of pierced specimens among the silver coins is probably not

³¹ For an explanation of the vota in the 5th century Western empire, see BURGESS 1988; GILLET 2001.

³² UNGARO 1985.

³³ «... Nummi argentei duceni, eoque amplius », CHIFLETIUS 1655, p. 270.

³⁴ See CHIFLETIUS 1655, p. 38.

³⁵ See CHIFLETIUS 1655, p. 270.

³⁶ CHIFLETIUS 1655, p. 271.

without interest. More of this will be said below. One of these four coins is the single fourth century siliqua, the other three are denarii, of the second century AD. They are of common types, Hadrian RIC 244(d), AD 134-138, Antoninus Pius RIC 181, AD 148-149,³⁷ and Lucius Verus RIC 463, AD 161. The coin of Constantius II can be dated to AD 353-355.

As to the denarii, the Republican coin must have been struck before 30 BC, the Imperial ones between AD 54 and 217. The two youngest coins in the list, those of Julia Domna and Caracalla, may both have been issued before AD 200, but may as well have left the mint as late as 217. Nevertheless, most of these silver coins were 300 years old or more when put into the grave. Where did they come from? Were denarii of the first two or three centuries of our era still at large in Gaul in the late fifth century?

This question is more complicated than is usually assumed. Coins did circulate for a very long time in the Roman Empire. The find of Vienna Rennweg 44, made by archaeologists in 1989, deposited in AD 138 or later, consisted of 853 Republican denarii, 102 of them belonging to the second century BC, and 408 Imperial silver coins, mostly denarii and mostly of the period AD 64-138. The latest coin in this hoard was almost 300 years younger than the earliest.³⁸

Now, most of the denarii in Childeric's grave were issued before AD 193, and were as such presumably « good » silver coins, to the greater part consisting of silver, in contrast to those issued from 195 onwards, which had less than 50 % silver, due to Septimius Severus' reform or rather debasement of the silver coins in 194 or early 195.³⁹ It has been claimed that the « good » silver coins of the first two centuries of our era must have disappeared early in the third century in the Roman Empire «... später hatten sie im Geldverkehr des Imperiums keine Überlebenschance ».⁴⁰ Implied here is the presupposition that the old coins came to be regarded as bullion rather than legal tender and treated as such, i.e., melted down or exported to somewhere outside the Empire.

The idea of an export of « good » denarii towards the close of the second century or somewhat later seems to be corroborated by the presence of large numbers of such « good » coins in those parts of Europe not forming part of the Empire, i.e., in present-day Germany (to the east of the Rhine), Poland, Ukraine and Scandinavia.⁴¹ Hoards with thousands of first/second century denarii are recorded, such as that of Borochitsy in western Ukraine from 1928, with 2,049 coins documented out of perhaps 6,000 originally found.⁴² It is, however, an open question exactly when this export took place.

The Borochitsy hoard, for instance, does not seem to have been buried until late in the fourth or early in the fifth century.⁴³ Another hoard, from Zagórzyn in Poland, unearthed in 1926 or 1927 and quickly dispersed, is said to have encompassed 3,000 or more first/second century denarii as well as solidi and other gold objects of the fourth/fifth century.⁴⁴ It might have been buried about the same time as Childeric himself, or even later, like the hoard of Smöreng from the Danish island of Bornholm, some 500 first/second century denarii found with one solidus of Anthemius in the 1980s.⁴⁵ All these late deposited denarii are worn (or so it seems⁴⁶). Those of the Smöreng find are about as worn as the 1,488 extant coins of the largest hoard of first/second century denarii from Scandinavia, that of Sindarve (originally 1,500 coins), from the Swedish island of Gotland, found in 1870,⁴⁷ making a late deposition as probable as for the Smöreng find.

As a matter of fact, there is nothing to tell that « good » denarii disappeared inside the Empire as quickly as has been presumed. In northern Gaul there are several depots denoting a long survival, well into the fourth century, of denarii from before AD 200. Three of them are of special interest here, i.e., that of Épiiais-Rhus (France, 1979), that of Beaurains (France, 1922) and that of Betteldorf (Germany, 1911).

³⁷ A pierced denarius of the type Antoninus Pius RIC 181 has been found on Gotland, see LIND 1981, p. 53, no. 61a:42.

³⁸ DEMBSKI & ZAVADIL 2004.

³⁹ MOMMSEN 1860, p. 758, who dated Severus reform/debasement to c. AD 198, thought the post-reform denarii had 40-50 % silver; BUTCHER & PONTING 1997 fixed the percentage to 46-47.

⁴⁰ CHANTRAINE 1985, p. 412, recently echoed by MARTIN 2004a, p. 243.

⁴¹ See Lind 1981, pp. 113-141.

⁴² MITKOWA-SZUBERT 2000. Mitkova-Szubert says there were at least 18 kg of denarii, which makes c. 6,000 coins, with an average weight of c. 3.00 grams. The average weight of 1,687 coins in Warsaw is 2.99 g.

⁴³ For date of burial, see MITKOWA-SZUBERT 2000, p. 152. That people outside of the Limes accepted only « good » denarii is belied by the find of Schwabhausen in Thuringia in Germany from 1997, consisting of 29 denarii from 193 to 235, mostly from the period 218-235. See HENNING & MECKING 2007.

⁴⁴ KIETLIŃSKA 1957, pp. 288-290; BURSCHE 2000, pp. 125-127; BURSCHE 2003.

⁴⁵ KROMANN & WATT 1984; LIND 1988, p. 213, no. 196A; LUND HANSEN 2001, p. 65.

⁴⁶ From the Borochitsy hoard Lind saw 31 specimens in Warsaw the 25th of September 1976, cf. KIETLIŃSKA 1957, pp. 273-275, and on the same occasion two coins from the Zagórzyn find, KIETLIŃSKA 1957, pp. 288-289. See also the photographs nos. 1-7 in BURSCHE 2000, p. 135.

⁴⁷ LIND 1981 no. 62; LIND 2005.

The find of Épiais-Rhus⁴⁸ consisted of 91 denarii from 64 to 189⁴⁹ and 416 bronze coins from 71 to 243. The hoard, thus, cannot have been buried before 243. The find of Beaurains⁵⁰ is said to have consisted of c. 700 Roman gold and silver coins, of which c. 100 denarii and at least 1 aureus from before 200, the rest being gold and silver from the late third and early fourth centuries, with latest coin 315. 81 denarii from 69-191 are determined⁵¹. The hoard must have been buried in 315 or later. The find of Betteldorf,⁵² finally, had 33 denarii from 68 BC to AD 181, 10 argentei from 294 to 297 and 577 small bronze coins from c. 294 to c. 324, and must have been buried in the 320's, or later. In the opinion of Lind the denarii of the find from Betteldorf, in combination with those of Famars (see below) makes it unnecessary to presume an extra-Imperial origin for the denarii in the remarkable and much discussed find of Beaurains.⁵³

In contrast to the assemblage of Tournai, where the coin of Caracalla must have been issued after 195,⁵⁴ and that of Julia Domna might have been so too,⁵⁵ these three depots lack denarii issued after the debasement in 194-195, i.e., they consist of « good » denarii.⁵⁶ But the three hoards agree with that of Tournai in that these « good » denarii to the greater part consisted of coins from the Antonines, i.e., the period 138-192.

However, hoards mixing « good » denarii with « bad » ones, struck in 195 and later, are to be found all over the Roman Empire,⁵⁷ even in northern Gaul. A large depot of Roman gold and silver coins was unearthed in Cologne in 1909, on the precincts of the ancient Roman city. It was dug up casually and for long kept secret. It is said to have consisted of 22,500 coins, in gold and silver, going from the latter part of the reign of Claudius (51-54) to the reign of Maximinus Thrax (235-238). The coins were reputedly kept in four bronze vessels. However, only c. 4,500 coins have been in some way described. Most of these, c. 4,340 in all, are denarii.⁵⁸ The earliest denarii are said to bear the portrait of Nero, and may thus, theoretically, belong to the latest part of the reign of Claudius, when coins with his likeness in gold and silver were issued (known coins from this hoard in fact include a Nero aureus of 51-54), but they were most probably from Nero's own reign. This stated, it may be said that the denarii went from Nero (54-68) through Maximinus Thrax (235-238), with almost all emperors and empresses in between represented.⁵⁹ Although the greater part of the denarii belongs to AD 193 and later, coins issued before that year are numerous enough, making up c. 1,337 in all⁶⁰, and most of them from the Antonine period, as is the case with the Tournai hoard.

More difficult to assess are the finds made during quasi-archaeological excavations in 1824-1825 of the Roman baths of the ancient *Fanum Martis*, today Famars, not far from Tournai but on the French side of the border. A large number of Roman coins was dug up, among them, in 1824, denarii and argentei from Augustus to Constantius I, in three bronze vessels, with 3,920, 2,658 and 3,377 coins, respectively, and again, in 1825, 4,765 and 3,480 denarii and argentei from the Republic to Constantine I, in two bronze vessels. There were also, in clay pots or loose in the earth, denarii and antoniniani of the third century.⁶¹ This is almost all information we have.

A less debatable evidence of long survival of first-second century denarii is given by a hoard more to the southeast, in the French department of Haut-Savoie, on the border of Switzerland and Italy, in the modern city of Faverges, which partly covers the ancient town of *Casuarria*, with a *mansio* on the Roman road from Turin to Geneva. It mixes denarii and antoniniani.

The hoard was found in the course of archaeological excavations in 1971 in the remains of a burnt-down Roman building, where a bronze vessel was dug up, with content similar to that of the find of Cologne 1909. But in this case the coins were taken care of immediately. They were 1 drachm of Hadrian, issued in Amisus in Asia Minor (AD 130-138), 1,780 denarii from Nero to Gordian III (AD 64-241), with almost all emperors and empresses in

⁴⁸ MITARD 1985.

⁴⁹ The denarii include a Lucius Verus RIC 463, MITARD 1985, p. 19 no. 78.

⁵⁰ BASTIEN & METZGER 1977.

⁵¹ The denarii include one Antoninus Pius RIC 181, BASTIEN & METZGER 1977, p. 60 no. 92.

⁵² STEINER 1912.

⁵³ Cf. BASTIEN & METZGER 1977, pp. 207 and 215 and MARTIN 2004a, p. 256.

⁵⁴ Coins with his portrait were struck only from 196 onwards.

⁵⁵ Coins with the portrait of Julia Domna seem to have been struck from 193 to 217.

⁵⁶ Some of the denarii in the Beaurains find are, however, plated, and two of them cast. See BASTIEN & METZGER 1977, pp. 47-68.

⁵⁷ See for example, the Supplement Tables 7 and 8 in BOLIN 1958, pp. 351-357.

⁵⁸ *FMRD* VI, no. 1004.3.

⁵⁹ Among the denarii, Plotina, the wife of Trajan (98-117), and Didius Julianus (193) are missing. The reign of the latter, however, is represented by coins of his wife and his daughter. Also, some of the wives of Elagabalus (218-222) and one of the wives of Severus Alexander (222-235) are missing.

⁶⁰ Among them there is one Hadrian RIC 244(a), two Antoninus Pius RIC 181 and one Lucius Verus RIC 463.

⁶¹ BERSU & UNVERZAGT 1961, pp. 186-190; *TAF* II, pp. 31-33 no. 41; CALLU 1979, pp. 9-10, thinks the first/second century denarii had an extra-Imperial origin.

between represented, and 525 antoniniani from Caracalla to Trebonianus Gallus (215-253).⁶² The hoard must have been buried in 253 or later. The denarii of the years 64-192, 783 in all,⁶³ have a clear preponderance for the Antonine period, as the Tournai find.

In short, people in the Roman Empire do not seem to have been as willing as has been presumed to have coins melted down,⁶⁴ and it is possible to claim that denarii of the first and second centuries may have been at hand in Gaul in no small numbers as late as the 250s, and to some extent even some sixty or seventy years later, in the early fourth century. Of still later occurrences, however, there is no real proof. It is thus unlikely that the denarii in the grave of Childeric were taken from the pool of coins in circulation in northern Gaul by the time of the death of this Merovingian ruler. Admitted, Mommsen in 1860 had the idea that first/second century denarii circulated in what he called « Freies Germanien » continuously from c. 200 to c. 500,⁶⁵ and that the denarii in Childeric's grave proved this, because the realm of that king had become part of this same « Freies Germanien » after the fall of the Empire in the west.⁶⁶ This, however, is rather speculative and an opinion not held by many today.

It is of course possible to argue that the denarii formed an age-long heirloom in Childeric's family, acquired sometimes in the third or early fourth century, but this is unlikely, because Childeric's family does not seem to have been of long standing.⁶⁷ Also, in contrast to the hoard in Childeric's grave, all the abovementioned hoards from old Roman territory, as far as known, lack pierced coins. First/second century denarii treated in this way seem to be a phenomenon peculiar to hoards in Barbaricum.

Thus, whereas an extra-Imperial origin is an unnecessary presumption in the case of the first/second century denarii in the fourth century finds of Beaurains⁶⁸ and Famars,⁶⁹ it must be admitted that the denarii in Childeric's grave most probably had been brought there from some place not part of the Roman Empire with borders of c. 400. This brings us back to the odd coins in the grave, the Republican denarius from before 30 BC and the fourth century AD siliqua of Constantius II. To take the latter first, no hoard combining first/second century denarii with silver coins of the latter half of the fourth century is known from Gaul or elsewhere on Roman territory as it was in the fourth century, but there are some from outside the borders. There is the nineteenth century find of Lengerich in Lower Saxony in Germany, consisting of second century denarii, gold objects, siliquae and solidi of the fourth century.⁷⁰ There is also an early twentieth century find combining denarii and siliquae from the non-Roman part of Hungary, « Kecel I », ⁷¹ to distinguish it from « Kecel II », a large hoard of denarii found in 1934.⁷² More recently a mixed hoard of denarii and siliquae - yet to be published - is said to have been unearthed in Gudme on Funen in Denmark.⁷³ Gudme also boasts the largest hoard of fourth century siliquae found in the non-Roman parts of Europe, 293 coins from AD 337 to 366, recovered in the 1980s.⁷⁴

The most important and least debatable find in this category is the one found in Laatzten in Lower Saxony in 1967, with 74 denarii (including imitations) from Vespasian to Commodus (AD 73-192) and four fourth century silver coins, i.e., two of Constantius II, one of Julian II and one imitation of Constantius II.⁷⁵

Obviously there was an outflow of fourth century silver coins from the Empire, less distinct and of smaller proportions than that of the first/second century denarii.⁷⁶ Given the fact, that first/second century denarii were still at large in non-Roman Europe in the fourth and fifth centuries, shown for instance by the above mentioned hoards of Borochitsy, Zagórzyn and Smörence, it is natural to presume that they sometimes were added to such assemblages of older silver coins.

⁶² PFLAUM & HUVELIN 1981; cf. *TAF* V/2, p. 93 no. 17.

⁶³ Among them, there are five Antoninus Pius RIC 181 and one Lucius Verus RIC 463, PFLAUM & HUVELIN 1981, p. 47 nos. 270-274 and p. 50 no. 472, respectively.

⁶⁴ Some melting down seems to have occurred, see JOHNS 1997.

⁶⁵ « Die von Nero bis auf Severus ... geschlagenen Denare ... müssen im dritten Jahrhundert im freien Germanien das gewöhnliche Courant gewesen sein ». MOMMSEN 1860, p. 813; « Man sieht, dass die neronischen Denare ... auch im vierten und fünften Jahrhundert fortführen bei den freien Germanen das gemeine Silbergeld zu bilden ». MOMMSEN 1860, p. 820.

⁶⁶ MOMMSEN 1860, p. 819-820.

⁶⁷ Already Merovech, the alleged father of Childeric, is half mythical.

⁶⁸ Although twelve of the 81 extant denarii in the Beaurains find are plated and two cast, none of them is pierced.

⁶⁹ As to an extra-imperial origin of the denarii in the Famars find, see CALLU 1979, p. 10. The Faverges find of 1971 makes the pessimistic attitude towards Famars shown by BASTIEN & HUVELIN 1963 less motivated.

⁷⁰ *FMRD* VII, nos. 1033-25.

⁷¹ ALFÖLDI 1920-1922.

⁷² JÓNÁS 1935; BIRO-SEY 1987; STRIBRNY 2003, pp. 18-30.

⁷³ HORSNÆS 2010, p. 139.

⁷⁴ KROMANN 1988; HORSNÆS 2010, pp. 138-139.

⁷⁵ ZEDELIOUS 1974.

⁷⁶ KROPOTKIN 1970, for the hoards of Zamość (Poland) and Orgeyev (Moldova).

As to the Republican denarius, it is of relevance that large hoards of first/second century silver coins from outside the Roman Empire at times contain one or two denarii of the Republic, so for example the mentioned Kecel II hoard, originally almost 3,000 coins,⁷⁷ and the hoard from Drzewicz in Poland, with perhaps 1,600 coins.⁷⁸ Both hoards have latest coin in the second decade of the third century. By the way, Kecel II originally had 27 pierced coins,⁷⁹ the Drzewicz hoard none; not all hoards in Barbaricum have such coins.

It has been argued that there might have been a connection between the Laatzten find and the two hoards from Kecel, seen as one assemblage,⁸⁰ The idea that the two Kecel finds should be two parts of one single hoard must be regarded as somewhat hypothetical, but a real connection exists between the Laatzten find and Kecel II, in the form of two ancient imitations of denarii, die-linked to each other, one in the Laatzten find, the other in Kecel II. There is also a connection of the same kind between a hoard of some 250 denarii found on the Swedish island Gotland and the Kecel II find,⁸¹ all this implying secondary movements of Roman coins outside the Limes over long distances.

In fact, these imitations,⁸² the general appearance and geographical distribution of which makes a (non-official) Roman origin unlikely, makes it difficult to claim that the numerous hoards of first/second century denarii found outside the Empire⁸³ essentially constitute working-material for silversmiths. The hoards must have been kept for their symbolical as well as material value – why else bother to make new coins with portraits of Roman emperors? There is nothing to belie that the numerous large hoards of denarii in Barbaricum in most or many cases were signs of status for the leading political affinities, who at times may have given some of it away to peers, as a token of friendship, a habit of which Childeric may well have profited.

If the two Kecel finds were really one single hoard in antiquity, we get a depot essentially consisting of denarii from the first and second centuries (imitations included), with a few Republican denarii, a few third century ones and a number of fourth century silver coins added, exactly the assemblage from which the 42 silver coins in Childeric's grave may form a detached part. This is not to say that the hoard of silver coins in the grave had its origin in Hungary, only that there is nothing strange or unexpected with its composition, in a fourth/fifth century extra-Roman context.

Finally, although there are fourth/fifth century hoards in Barbaricum consisting of first/second century denarii and fourth/fifth century gold coins – a few have been mentioned, Lengerich, Borochitsy, Zagórzyn and Smörence, but there are others, for instance on Gotland – none of them has a combination of gold coins similar to that of those in the grave of Childeric, see table IV.

Conclusion

We conclude that the solidus hoard together with other coins is a meaningful composition that has been manipulated for ideological purposes on behalf of Childeric's successor, Clovis.

Our research shows that the precious metal objects described by Chiflet derive from at least five different sources. There are at least two different solidus hoards that have been put together and cleansed of uncomfortable elements, that is, illegitimate 5th century Western emperors. Then there are coins that derive from at least one denarius hoard, and a siliqua hoard, proof of past Roman grandeur and connections to leading affinities in Barbaricum. In addition, there is the crystal ball, the signet ring and the weapons. These were signs of Childeric's past political legitimacy. Their inclusion in the burial rite meant that all Childeric's credentials were transferred upon to his rightful successor Clovis.

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FMRD = *Die Fundmünzen der römischen Zeit in Deutschland*. Berlin 1960-.

KMK = Kungliga Myntkabinettet (Royal Coin Cabinet, Stockholm)

⁷⁷ As for original size, see JÓNÁS 1935; as for Republican denarii, see BIRO-SEY 1987, pp. 31-32.

⁷⁸ See KRZYŻANOWSKA 1976, p. 75

⁷⁹ JÓNÁS 1935, p. 254, note 1. As to the Gotlandic Sindarve hoard, eleven out of 1,488 extant coins are pierced, LIND 2007.

⁸⁰ ZEDELIIUS 1974, pp. 40-44 and 53.

⁸¹ See STRIBRNY 2003, especially map on p. 58 and p. 59.

⁸² For these so-called barbarous imitations in general, see STRIBRNY 2003 and LIND 2007. Only recently has their real importance been realized.

⁸³ See, for instance, LIND 1981, with Map 3.

KVHAA = Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History, and Antiquities.

LEO = *Liber excelsis obryzacusque* (The Elevated book of pure gold).

RGA = *Hoops Reallexikon für germanische Altertumskunde*. Berlin/New York 1976-.

RIC = H. Mattingly & E. A. Sydenham, *The Roman Imperial Coinage* I-. London. 1923-.

SHM = Statens Historiska Museum (National Museum of History, Stockholm).

TAF = *Corpus des Trésors Monétaire antiques de la France*. Paris 1982-

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