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Transmissions and Translations in Medieval Literary and Material Culture

Edited by

Megan Henvey
Amanda Doviak
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Cover illustration: Cloister, Cathedral of Notre Dame du Puy-en-Velay, Auvergne. 12th century.
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Abbreviations

AFM	Annals of the Four Masters. John O'Donovan, ed./trans., *Annala Rioghachta Eireann: Annals of the kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters, from the earliest period to the year 1616.* 7 vols. (1848–51; repr. Dublin, 1990).
AU	Annals of Ulster. Seán Mac Airt and Gearóid Mac Niocaill, ed./trans., *The Annals of Ulster* (*to AD 1131*) (Dublin, 1983).
BAA	British Archaeological Association
BAR	British Archaeological Report
CASSS	Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
DOE	Dictionary of Old English
HE	*Historia Ecclesiastica*. Bertrum Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors, ed./trans., *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford, 1969)
JADHS	(*Seanchas Ardmhacha*): *Journal of the Armagh Diocesan Historical Society*
JBAA	*Journal of the British Archaeological Association*
JRSAI	*Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
NAI	National Archives of Ireland
NLI	National Library of Ireland
NMI	National Museum of Ireland
OCRE	Online Coins of the Roman Empire
PL	Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Latina. 221 vols, ed. Jacques-Paul Mignes (Paris, 1844–1855 and 1862–1865).
PMLA	*Publications of the Modern Language Association* (of America)
PRIA	*Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*
RCAHMW	Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales
RIA	Royal Irish Academy
RIC	Roman Imperial Coinage

Contributors

Tarren Andrews
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iconographies and Christian beliefs in the early Middle Ages, with wider research interests including the nature of borders and their function and value in the classification of material heritage.

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Alison Elizabeth Killilea
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Ross McIntire
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CHAPTER 1

UNCONQUERED ROME? TRANSLATING THE VISUAL IN EARLY MEDIEVAL MATERIAL CULTURE

Matthias Friedrich

Introduction: The Visual Tradition of the Roman Empire

[page 9] The transformation of the Roman World into the Middle Ages is an ever-recurring theme in (art-)historical and archaeological scholarship. While there is some interest in material translations in prehistoric archaeology,[1] the visual *and* material transformations and translations in the archaeological record of the Middle Ages have not been in the academic limelight. After the political disintegration of the Roman Empire in western Europe in the 5th and 6th centuries, we only have scarce evidence of 'figural' images compared to more 'classical' times, yet those we encounter often resemble Roman imperial iconography. Such objects, mostly metalwork, were common across western and central Europe in the 5th to 10th centuries. A small number of disc brooches found in 7th-century female burials from Merovingian Europe resemble late Roman medallions and coins depicting the enthroned personification of Rome framed with the inscription

[1] In a recent article, the prehistoric archaeologists Kerstin P. Hofmann and Philipp W. Stockhammer ask the rhetorical question of whether translations should be on everyone's lips, while providing the straightforward answer "No". They do argue, however, that material translations are a relevant concept in archaeology: Kerstin P. Hofmann and Philipp W. Stockhammer, "Materialisierte Übersetzungen in der Prähistorie," *Saeculum* 67, no. 1 (2017), 45-66.

INVICTA ROMA (unconquered Rome). Despite the fact that Rome was *not* unconquered – the *urbs aeterna* was sacked three times in the 5th century – Roman elites stuck to the mantra of invincible Rome.[2] These brooches, which translate the visuality of unconquered Rome, are the starting point for this study, while other early medieval objects that transform imperial images – such as that of the emperor – into new forms, materials, and contexts will also be considered. Besides the Roma Invicta brooches, the so-called nummular brooches – fibulas that resemble or incorporate coinage – and other objects that include **[page 10]** ancient coins and gemstones will be examined. By this means, the relevance of categorising material culture in terms of being 'authentic' or a mere 'imitation' of the Roman visual tradition is critically assessed. While this distinction is closely related to cultural associations of objects being 'Roman' or 'Germanic,' new interpretations based on the concepts of object biography and assemblages as an alternative for understanding the visual and material translations in early medieval material culture will be explored.

Roma Enthroned

With this in mind it is useful to consider the small number of repoussé disc brooches showing the personification of invincible Rome. Such brooches are scarce in the archaeological record[3] and in contrast to most of the images considered here, the 'Roma Invicta' scheme occurs only on those

[2] Peter Brown, The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200-1000 (1996; 10th rev. ed. Chichester, 2013), p. 194.

[3] Egon Wamers mentions approximately "two dozen" Roma Invicta brooches, without providing a detailed list: Helmut Roth and Egon Wamers, eds., *Hessen im Frühmittelalter: Archäologie und Kunst* (Sigmaringen, 1984), p. 128; for Germany, 10 brooches are listed by Margarete Klein-Pfeuffer, *Merowingerzeitliche Fibeln und Anhänger aus Preßblech,* Marburger Studien zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte 14 (Marburg, 1993), p. 199. 13 brooches are listed by Reto Marti, *Zwischen Römerzeit und Mittelalter: Forschungen zur frühmittelalterlichen Siedlungsgeschichte der Nordwestschweiz (4.–10. Jahrhundert)*, Archäologie und Museum 41 (Liestal, 2000), p. 374.

a b

FIGURE 1.1 Unconquered Rome: (a) Repoussé brooch from Dotzheim, Germany. 7th century. Resembles the personification of Rome as represented on (b) *solidus* (reverse) of Priscus Attalus. 5th century. Not to scale
Copyright: Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin. Photograph: Lutz-Jürgen Lübke (Lübke und Wiedemann)
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found in 7th-century female burials known mostly from eastern France, Switzerland and southwest Germany.[4] Though differing in detail many brooches are closely related, and previous studies that focussed on this particular group of artefacts have stressed the resemblances to Roman coinage and medallions.[5] One of the best-preserved pieces, which has been kept in the British Museum since the mid-19th century, was found in Wiesbaden-Dotzheim (Fig. 1.1a) without any documented archaeological context.[6] Here, an enthroned figure holds a staff in the left hand, while the outstretched right hand holds a small figure. The headdress is possibly a simplified version of a helmet or diadem, while the small figure can be understood as *Victoria* on the globe, as depicted on late **[page 11]** antique coins and medallions (see Fig. 1.1b). Framing this scene is the barely legible

[4] On the chronology of early medieval disc brooches in southern Germany, see Matthias Friedrich, *Archäologische Chronologie und historische Interpretation: Die Merowingerzeit in Süddeutschland*, Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde 96 (Berlin, 2016), pp. 88-92.

[5] Gustav Behrens, "Merowingische Pressblech-Scheibenfibeln," *Mainzer Zeitschrift* 39-40 (1944-45), 17; Helmut Roth, *Kunst und Handwerk im frühen Mittelalter: Archäologische Zeugnisse von Childerich I. bis zu Karl dem Großen* (Stuttgart, 1986), p. 272; Klein-Pfeuffer, *Merowingerzeitliche Fibeln*, pp. 199-201; Barbara Sasse, *Ein frühmittelalterliches Reihengräberfeld bei Eichstetten am Kaiserstuhl,* Forschungen und Berichte zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte in Baden-Württemberg 75 (Stuttgart, 2001), pp. 53-56.

[6] Klein-Pfeuffer, *Merowingerzeitliche Fibeln*, p. 466.

a b

FIGURE 1.2 Imperial Portraits and the Personal: (a) Repoussé disc brooch showing portrait. 7th century. From Niederbreisig, Germany; (b) Repoussé disc brooch. 7th century. From Marchélepot, Somme, France. Translates the image of the Roman emperor from imperial coinage to personal objects. Not to scale

inscription INVICTA ROMA. Other brooches of that type feature an additional VTERE FELIX (use it with luck) which is now missing from the Dotzheim brooch.[7]

While enthroned figures, such as the personifications of Rome or Constantinople, were frequently used on the reverse of coins throughout the imperial period, the phrases *Roma Invicta* and *Invicta Roma* are rare. They appear on coins of the (self-proclaimed) emperors and usurpers Domitius Alexander and Priscus Attalus.[8] Recent investigations have shown that some usurpers in late Antiquity invoked the notion of Rome as the *urbs aeterna* as a political means.[9] An early 5th-century *solidus* of Priscus Attalus, now held in the Münzkabinett Berlin, illustrates this political manoeuvre, illustrates this political manoeuvre (Fig. 1.1b).[10] The reverse shows a figure seated on a throne, holding a sceptre or a staff and *Victoria* on the globe, accompanied by the legend

[7] Ibid., p. 199.

[8] Online Coins of the Roman Empire (OCRE). Available at: http://numismatics.org/ocre. Accessed 2020 May 8. This includes the records from the Roman Imperial Coinage volumes (RIC) for: Domitius Alexander (RIC 6: Carthage 62 and 68); Priscus Attalus (RIC 10: Priscus Attalus 1403-8 and 1411-12).

[9] Martijn Icks, "Three Usurpers in Rome: The *Urbs Aeterna* in the Representation of Maxentius, Nepotian, and Priscus Attalus," *Studies in Late Antiquity* 4, no. 1 (2020), 4-43.

[10] Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, inv. 18200521 (RIC 10: Priscus Attalus 1406).

INVICTA ROMA AETERNA. Other late antique coins and medallions feature similar representations, but lack the *Roma Invicta* **[page 12]** inscriptions.[11] The Dotzheim brooch translates various aspects of this coinage into a new material and visual form. The adaption of unconquered Rome and its credo *Roma Invicta* is not just a literal, but also a visual and material, translation of imperial Rome into the early Middle Ages.

Small Change? Nummular Brooches and Medallions

Within the same family as the Roma Invicta brooches, and developing along similar lines, are Merovingian repoussé disc brooches derived from Roman numismatic templates. Among the Merovingian collections donated by J. P. Morgan to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, in 1917 are two die-impressed brooches that illuminate the different ways in which Roman coinage was used as a visual template in the early Middle Ages (Fig. 1.2). A remarkable piece from Niederbreisig (Fig. 1.2a) is only 3.5 cm in diameter and shows a portrait with a wreath encircled by an inscription, reconstructed as DOMIT AVG GERM COS XIII CENS PER P P.[12] Besides the inscription, one detail is striking: the small dotted line just above the letters AVG GERM indicates that the metal sheet was stamped directly from a Roman coin of the emperor Domitian (AD 81–96).[13] Coins depicting Domitian as a laureate and that fit the legend of the Niederbreisig brooch are *asses* or *sesterces* minted in AD 87.[14] A coin probably quite similar to a bronze *as* of Domitian (Fig.

[11] Klein-Pfeuffer, *Merowingerzeitliche Fibeln*, p. 200, Fig. 63.9-10.

[12] Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 17.193.46: Katharine R. Brown, Dafydd Kidd, and Charles T. Little, eds., *From Attila to Charlemagne: Arts of the Early Medieval Period in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York, 2000), p. 353; cf. Klein-Pfeuffer, *Merowingerzeitliche Fibeln*, pp. 420-22, no. 239.

[13] Klein-Pfeuffer, Merowingerzeitliche *Fibeln*, p. 208; Brown, et al., *From Attila to Charlemagne*, p. 249.

[14] OCRE: http://numismatics.org/ocre. Accessed 2020 May 8. RIC 2, 1: Domitian, 525-32, 542-51.

FIGURE 1.3 Bronze coin (*as*) of Domitian, minted in Rome AD 87
Copyright: Seminar für Alte Geschichte,
Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg. CC: BY-NC-SA

1.3) was used to translate Roman visual traditions into the early Middle Ages;[15] this coin was at least half a millennium old when used as a template for the die-impressed sheet from Niederbreisig in the 7th century. It is quite astonishing that such ancient coins were used in what is, in this case, a quite literal *and* material translation which applies the physical *and* visual impression of an old Roman object to the dress of the early medieval period.

[page 14 (p. 13 figures only)] Such instances where the actual, physical Roman object served as an immediate and direct material template are rare, but were not unknown. Far more common are loose adaptions of Roman imperial coinage, as demonstrated by the piece from Marchélepot (Somme), France (Fig. 1.2b).[16] As with the Niederbreisig brooch, the die-impressed gold sheet was attached to a copper-alloy base-plate and shows a bust in profile encircled by a beaded line. With this, the brooch translates the shape and visuality of an actual Roman coin: the

[15] RIC 2, 1: Domitian 542. Today held in the Münzsammlung des Seminars für Alte Geschichte, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg: https://ikmk.uni-freiburg.de/object?id=ID2750. Accessed 2020 May 8.

[16] New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 17.191.24: Brown, et al., *From Attila to Charlemagne*, p. 345.

emperor's image, and its bead-and-reel frame. The hair of the bust is indicated by various curved lines, intersected by shorter orthogonal lines: these may well indicate that the head was intended to represent the emperor wearing the radiant crown linked to the prevalent iconography of *Sol Invictus* on Roman coinage. Even further 'reduced' is a brooch of unknown provenance, likewise held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.[17] In the centre it shows various straight and curved lines that render the obverse of Roman coins in very abstract and stylised ways, when compared to the brooches and coins discussed above. A similar intensity of abstraction can only be found in the late 5th- and 6th-century gold bracteates from northern Europe.[18]

However, nummular brooches (*Münzfibeln*, *fibules monétiformes*), which incorporated coins, or casts of coins, are mostly a phenomenon of the 'later' early Middle Ages, dating generally from the 8th to 11th centuries, although early forms appear from the 5th to 7th centuries, as demonstrated. They resemble coins of varying origins, dates, forms, and shapes: Roman, Byzantine, Carolingian, Ottonian, and Arabic coins are the most prevalent types. In his work on Carolingian and Ottonian-period disc broches from northern Europe, Hans-Jörg Frick lists 117 nummular brooches subdivided into six different types: those resembling gold *solidi* of Louis the Pious (Type 1); those with Carolingian or Ottonian (Type 2), Roman (Type 3), Anglo-Saxon (Type 4), Byzantine, or Arabic coins as the prototype (Type 5); and nummular brooches with an unknown prototype (Type 6).[19] Mechthild Schulze-Dörrlamm criticised the data and distributions put

[17] New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 17.192.86: ibid., pp. 249, 350, fig. 21.29. For similar brooches, see Klein-Pfeuffer, *Merowingerzeitliche Fibeln*, pp. 210-11.

[18] Nancy L. Wicker, "Decolonising Gold Bracteates: From Late Roman Medallions to Scandianvian Migration Period Pendants," in *Postcolonising the Medieval Image*, ed. Eva Frojmovic and Catherine E. Karkov (London, 2017), pp. 17-36.

[19] Hans-Jörg Frick, "Karolingisch-ottonische Scheibenfibeln des nördlichen Formenkreises," *Offa* 49-50 (1992-93), 309.

forward by Frick and Peter Berghaus,[20] **[page 15]** arguing that 'pseudo-coin' brooches (or, fibulas that only resemble coinage) and those made from actual Carolingian coins should be treated separately.[21] For the Dutch Province of Friesland, J. M. Bos listed such 9th- to 11th-century pseudo-coin brooches by categorising nearly 180 fibulas into various types and variants,[22] while Stijn Heeren and Lourens van der Feijst specify 122 pseudo-coin brooches from the 5th to 10th centuries.[23] For late 'Anglo-Saxon' England, Rosie Weetch counted 106 specimens of nummular brooches (her Type 2), also sub-divided them into pseudo-nummular brooches (Type 2.A) and those made from actual coins (Type 2.B).[24] This brief typological survey shows two things: first, the tendency for archaeologists to classify and organise the material record according to formalist categories, and second, the pervasive notions of 'pseudo' versus 'real,' objects oscillating between original and copy, between authenticity and inaccuracy, between innovation and imitation. Such concepts are misleading when considering the translation of Roman iconography in early medieval material culture because both 'pseudo' and 'real' coin brooches translate Roman images – that of the emperor (except, of course, brooches based on Arabic Dirham coins)[25] – into new forms and materials, and eventually, social contexts.

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[20] Peter Berghaus, "Münzfibeln," in *Die frühmittelalterlichen Lesefunde aus der Löhrstrasse (Baustelle Hilton II) in Mainz*, ed. Egon Wamers, Mainzer archäologische Schriften 1 (Mainz, 1994), pp. 106-15.

[21] Mechthild Schulze-Dörrlamm, "Münzfibeln der Karolingerzeit," *Archäologisches Korrespondenzblatt* 29, no. 2 (1999), 275. On Carolingian-period graves with coin finds, including 'real' coin brooches, see Mechthild Schulze-Dörrlamm, "Gräber mit Münzbeigabe im Karolingerreich," *Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums Mainz* 57 (2010), 339-88.

[22] Type 2.6 and its variants: J. M. Bos, "Medieval Brooches from the Dutch Province of Friesland (Frisia): A Regional Perspective on the Wijnaldum Brooches, Part IIII: Disc Brooches," *Palaeohistoria* 49-50 (2007-8), 755-67.

[23] Stijn Heeren and Lourens van der Feijst, Prehistorische, Romeinse en middeleeuwse fibulae uit de Lage Landen: Beschrijving, analyse en interpretatie van een archeologische vondstcategorie (Amersfoort, 2017), p. 224.

[24] Rosie Weetch, "Brooches in Late Anglo-Saxon England Within a North West European Context: A Study of Social Identities Between the Eighth and the Eleventh Centuries" (PhD thesis, University of Reading, 2014), pp. 69-70.

[25] On dirham finds, see Christoph Kilger, "Kaupang from Afar: Aspects of the Interpretation of Dirham Finds in Northern and Eastern Europe Between the Late 8th and Early 10th Centuries," in *Means of Exchange: Dealing with Silver in the Viking Age*, ed. Dagfinn Skre, Kaupang Excavation Project 2 (Aarhus, 2007), pp. 199-252.

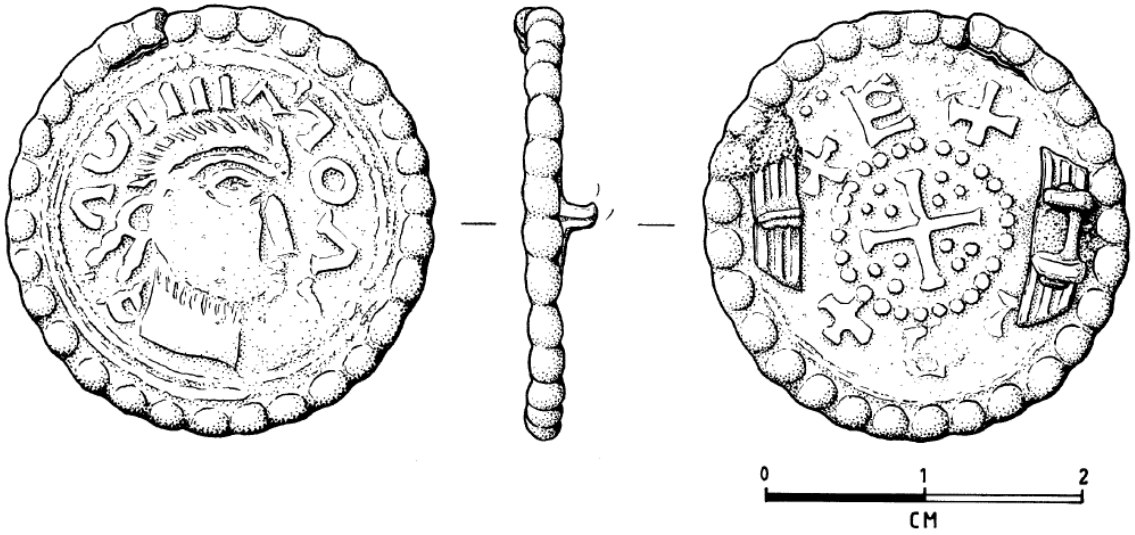

FIGURE 1.4 Copper alloy brooch from Shropham, Norfolk. 9th century

An example of this tendency is a copper-alloy brooch from Shropham, Norfolk, based on Carolingian coinage (Fig. 1.4).[26] The brooch, from Weetch's Type 2.A (pseudo-nummular), consists of a central disc enclosed by a beaded ring, with an iron pin and hinge attached to its reverse. The obverse shows a stylised portrait; of interest here are a loop and two lines in the figure's neck **[page 16]** that denote the tied ends of a *taenia*, and thus suggest that the head is supposed to be understood as surmounted by a diadem or a wreath,[27] similar to that depicted on the previously mentioned coins of Domitian (Fig. 1.3). In the Portable Antiquities Scheme entry, Andrew Rogerson argues that the obscure legend of the nummular brooch from Shropham reads KAROLVS IMP AVG, suggesting that the prototype is a post-coronation *solidus* or *denarius* of Charlemagne.[28] However, coins with the attribute IMP AVG – following the coronation in AD

[26] Portable Antiquities Scheme find number: NMS-A39743. Available at: https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/600841. Accessed 2020 May 28.

[27] On the different types, forms, and shapes of the emperor's wreath in Roman art and archaeology, see Birgit Bergmann, *Der Kranz des Kaisers: Genese und Bedeutung einer römischen Insignie,* Image and Context 6 (Berlin, 2010).

[28] Andrew Rogerson, "NMS-A39743: A Early Medieval Brooch." Available at: https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/600841. Accessed 2020 May 28.

800 – are extremely rare in the corpus of coins minted by Charlemagne. Bernd Kluge records only 35 coins that make use of the title *imperator augustus*, while the previous title *rex Fr[ancorum]* accounts for more than 1,000 coins.[29] Far more common – as prototypes for nummular brooches both in early medieval England and on the Continent – are coins with the portrait of Louis the Pious;[30] the reverse of such coins seems to have been used as a template for the reverse of the Shropham piece, as Rogerson argues.[31] Given the rather illegible nature of the inscription, the obverse could also be inspired by coins of Louis the Pious. Fortunately, for the purpose of this **[page 17]** discussion, the question of whether the brooch renders coins of Charlemagne or Louis the Pious is not of the most pressing significance.[32] Across the early Middle Ages, nummular brooches – no matter the degree to which a portrait and its attributes are recognisable or the legend is decipherable – share certain characteristics: a portrait that resembles the Roman *imperator* (regardless of whether it is an actual Roman emperor *of old* or the contemporary Carolingian-Ottonian iteration), an inscription (legible or not), and a beaded frame or border. In fact, in the cases of 'illegible' or 'garbled' inscriptions or stylised portraits, the individual emperor's significance as a political figure is diminished, while the powerful image of *the* emperor, not *one* in particular, takes over.

[29] Bernd Kluge, *Numismatik des Mittelalters, Band 1: Handbuch und Thesaurus Nummorum Medii Aevi,* Veröffentlichungen der Numismatischen Kommission 45 (Berlin, 2007), pp. 86-87.

[30] Frick, "Karolingisch-ottonische Scheibenfibeln," pp. 309-14; Weetch, "Brooches in Late Anglo-Saxon England," pp. 208-12.

[31] Rogerson, "NMS-A39743."

[32] For portraits on Carolingian coins, see Ildar H. Garipzanov, *The Symbolic Language of Authority in the Carolingian World (c. 751-877)*, Brill's Series on the Early Middle Ages 16 (Leiden, 2008), pp. 208-16.

FIGURE 1.5 Heginric medallion from Klein-Roschaden, Germany, 10th century
Copyright: Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin. Photograph: Lutz-Jürgen Lübke (Lübke und Wiedemann). Creative Commons. CC: BY-NC-SA license

There are cases, however, where the particular political figure is indeed in the limelight, as is the case with the Heginric Medallion (Fig. 1.5).[33] The medallion was found in 1887 in Klein-Roschaden in Lower Saxony as part of a deposit that contained brooches, coins, and another silver disc, which renders a highly stylised portrait with the letters C and X (and was thus labelled the CX medallion).[34] The central disc of the Heginric Medallion is enclosed by braided silver wires and a beaded frame, forming a medallion *c.* 5 cm in diameter. In the centre we encounter a figure in profile wearing a diadem and dressed with a *paludamentum*, adapting the classical iconography of the Roman emperors and other (military) dignitaries. The inscription encircling the head reads,

[33] Heginric Medallion: Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, no. 18206256. Available at: https://ikmk.smb.museum/object?id=18206256. Accessed 2020 May 28. Cf. Kluge, *Numismatik des Mittelalters* 1:314-15, no. 287.

[34] CX Medallion: Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, no. 18217651. Available at: https://ikmk.smb.museum/object?id=18217651. Accessed 2020 May 28. Cf. Kluge, *Numismatik des Mittelalters* 1:314-15, no. 288.

upside down, HEGINRIC REX. The medallion was found alongside a deposit of nearly 700 coins with a *terminus post quem* of 996 and is thus generally accepted to depict the Ottonian King Henry I (919–936).[35] The Heginric Medallion resembles the visual tradition of late antique Roman medallions and coins – as do the rare imperial coins of Charlemagne – and **[page 18]** by doing so, it translates and transmits powerful 'Roman' images into an early medieval iconography of authority. As shown here, the translation of authority could imbue different material, visual, and eventually social scales, from everyday copper-alloy brooches to more valuable silver and gold fibulas and medallions, penetrating the *post-Roman* early medieval societies from top to bottom.

Reassembling Coins and Gemstones

In the light of these examples of the translation of powerful images, we can now turn to focus on the reuse of *old* Roman coins and gemstones in the making of *new* early medieval objects. The reuse and recycling of Prehistoric and Roman material – the past in the past – is a frequently discussed theme, from ancient objects in early medieval graves and burials in Roman ruins, to the use **[page 19]** of spolia in ecclesiastical architecture.[36] But rather than consider this in terms of reuse or recycling, it will be explored in terms of object biography. This concept operates on the

[35] Berghaus argued that the last Ottonian king and emperor Henry II (1002-1024) is not to be ruled out, as one more deposit was found in the vicinity of the Hengeric and CX medallions that contained some 70 coins with a *terminus post quem* of 1002; Peter Berghaus, "Die Darstellung der deutschen Kaiser und Könige im Münzbild 800-1190," in *Die deutschen Kaiser und Könige in Bildern ihrer Zeit: 751-1190*, ed. Florentine Mütherich (Munich, 1983), pp. 133-44, no. 80.2.

[36] For example: Howard Williams, "Ancient Landscapes and the Dead: The Reuse of Prehistoric and Roman Monuments as Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Sites," *Medieval Archaeology* 41, no. 1 (1997), 1–32; Hella Eckardt and Howard Williams, "Objects Without a Past? The Use of Roman Objects in Early Anglo-Saxon Graves," in *Archaeologies of Remembrance: Death and Memory in Past Societies*, ed. Howard Williams (Boston, 2003), pp. 141-70; on spolia, see essays in Richard Brilliant and Dale Kinney, eds., *Reuse Value: Spolia and Appropriation in Art and Architecture from Constantine to Sherrie Levine* (London, 2011).

understanding that things have a cultural *life* of their own,[37] and this life constantly reassembles itself in different social, cultural, and chronological places and spaces. In archaeology, a discipline of 'things',[38] this concept has naturally received much attention.[39] The most significant implication for the present discussion is that objects cannot, as Gosden and Marshall put it:

> be fully understood at just one point in their existence ... not only do objects change through their existence, but they often have the capability of accumulating histories, so that the present significance of an object derives from the persons and events to which it is connected.[40]

In recent years this understanding has been further established through the notion of things and objects as 'travellers' through space and time.[41] In a recent study on Roman objects in the *barbaricum*, Stefan Schreiber has argued for an understanding of 'imported' objects as travelling things that constantly change and reconnect in their material and social relations.[42] One example he uses **[page 20]** to exemplify this concept is of particular significance here: a rather unusual 5th-century pottery vessel found in an inhumation grave in Coswig, Saxony, that includes glass beaker fragments. Such vessels – labelled *Fenstergefäß* (window vessel) in German – are scarce in the

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[37] Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 64-91. Also, Janet Hoskins, *Biographical Objects: How Things Tell the Stories of People's Lives* (New York, 1998).

[38] Bjørnar Olsen, Timothy Webmoor, Michael Shanks, and Christopher Witmore, eds., *Archaeology: The Discipline of Things* (Berkeley, 2012); Ian Hodder, *Entangled: An Archaeology of the Relationships Between Humans and Things* (Malden, 2012).

[39] Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall, "The Cultural Biography of Objects," *World Archaeology* 31, no. 2 (1999), 169-78; Dietrich Boschung, Patric-Alexander Kreuz, and Tobias Kienlin, eds., *Biography of Objects: Aspekte eines kulturhistorischen Konzepts,* Morphomata 31 (Paderborn, 2015).

[40] Gosden and Marshall, "Cultural Biography of Objects," p. 170.

[41] Hans P. Hahn and Hadas Weiss, "Introduction: Biographies, Travels and Itineraries of Things," in *Mobility, Meaning and the Transformations of Things: Shifting Contexts of Material Culture Through Time and Space*, ed. Hans P. Hahn and Hadas Weiss (Oxford, 2013), pp. 5-7.

[42] Stefan Schreiber makes use of a figure called 'die Wanderin' – the (female!) traveller – to explain the various ways in which Roman 'imported' objects change and move, in Stefan Schreiber, *Wandernde Dinge als Assemblagen: Neo-Materialistische Perspektiven zum 'römischen Import' im 'mitteldeutschen Barbaricum'*, Berlin Studies of the Ancient World 52 (Berlin, 2018), pp. 207-32.

archaeological record.[43] As in the case of the coin and pseudo-coin brooches discussed above, Schreiber contends that *Fenstergefäße* unravel the archaeological bias for clear-cut classifications and their discontents: on a material basis, the *Fenstergefäß* is made from both clay and glass combined in one object, and while on a 'cultural' level the production is putatively 'Germanic,' it includes 'Roman' glass fragments.[44] Here, the established archaeological methods of careful typology and classification hit a wall: is the *Fenstergefäß* to be classified as pottery or glass vessel; is it one single object or two things at once (pottery vessel and beaker); is it opaque or translucent; is it 'Germanic' or 'Roman'?[45] Such 'either/or' explanations fall short in the light of the complex assemblage that constitutes the vessel. Schreiber shows that the various parts had different biographies or itineraries before they joined to form one particular object or, to be more precise and follow the concept as developed in Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy: an assemblage.[46] The *Fenstergefäß* sets off on new trajectories, including its deposition in an inhumation grave and its subsequent excavation, publication, and exhibition as an object of interest in a museum.[47]

[43] For further literature on Coswig inhumation grave no. 4 and *Fenstergefäße* in general, see ibid., pp. 25-31, 317, cat. 246/VIII-15-2/1.4.

[44] On the term 'Germanic' and its discontents in late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, see James M. Harland and Matthias Friedrich, "Introduction: The 'Germanic' and Its Discontents," in *Interrogating the 'Germanic': A Category and Its Use in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Matthias Friedrich and James M. Harland, Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde (Berlin, 2021), pp. 1–18.

[45] Schreiber, *Wandernde Dinge als Assemblagen*, pp. 29-30.

[46] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, trans. Brian Massumi* (Minneapolis, MN, 1987). Briefly on the concept in the humanities and archaeology: George E. Marcus and Erkan Saka, "Assemblage," *Theory, Culture & Society* 23, no. 2-3 (2006), 101-6; Yannis Hamilakis and Andrew M. Jones, "Archaeology and Assemblage," *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 27, no. 1 (2017), 77-84.

[47] Schreiber, *Wandernde Dinge als Assemblagen*, pp. 201-6.

a

b

c

d

PLATE 1.1 Objects as assemblages: Early medieval personal objects that incorporate Roman gemstones and coins. (a) 7th-century disc brooch with cameo; (b) 10th-century Ottonian star-shaped brooch with 4th-century sapphire intaglio; (c) 7th-century ring with chalcedony intaglio showing bearded figure; (d) 7th-century gold ring from Pfahlheim, Germany incorporating a 5th-century Byzantine coin

When things or assemblages cannot be understood 'at just one point in their existence' a different angle to explore the 'reuse' of Roman objects is essential. Returning to the visual and material translation of Roman images of power into early medieval material culture, there is a large and diverse body of material in addition to the nummular brooches that literally *incorporates* Roman **[page 21]** coins and carved stones, such as intaglios and cameos.[48] Well-known examples in the art of the Middle Ages are incorporated into book covers, reliquaries, and crosses mostly from ecclesiastical collections, such as a late 10th-century *crux gemmata*, the so-called Cross of Lothair, that features a cameo of Augustus as a laureate in its centre.[49] We also encounter Roman coins and gemstones outside ecclesiastical contexts in brooches (yet again) and finger rings, and these can also be considered in the context of object biographies and travelling things as assemblages.

Disc brooches provide a large quantity of samples throughout the early Middle Ages – this is true for the iconography of coinage as discussed above and also for the integration of cameos and intaglios.[50] An early 7th-century disc brooch (Plate 1.1a), now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art,[51] mounts a 2nd- or 3rd-century cameo with a figure and chariot, perhaps *Aurora* driving a *biga*,[52] while a later piece, an Ottonian star-shaped brooch (Plate 1.1b), includes a 4th-century

[48] For an overview, see Dale Kinney, "Ancient Gems in the Middle Ages: Riches and Ready-Mades," in Brilliant and Kinney, *Reuse Value*, pp. 97-120.

[49] On the cameo from the Lothair cross, see Erika Zwierlein-Diehl, *Antike Gemmen und ihr Nachleben* (Berlin, 2007), p. 148.

[50] On cameos and intaglios in the archaeology of Merovingian Europe, see: Hermann Ament, "Zur Wertschätzung antiker Gemmen in der Merowingerzeit," *Germania* 69 (1991), 401-24.

[51] Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 95.15.101: Brown, et al., *From Attila to Charlemagne*, pp. 154-55; James D. Draper, "Cameo Appearances," *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 65, no. 4 (2008), 17, no. 26. In her catalogue of Merovingian filigree brooches, Graenert lists the Cameo disc brooch from the MET as a potential forgery, but does not elucidate this classification: Gabriele Graenert, *Merowingerzeitliche Filigranscheibenfibeln westlich des Rheins,* Europe médiévale 7 (Montagnac, 2007), p. 319, cat. VIII: Nachträge, no. 008.

[52] Draper, "Cameo Appearances," p. 17.

sapphire intaglio with a profile portrait.[53] Besides brooches, finger rings are objects that commonly adapt, transform, or reassemble Roman coins and cut gemstones.[54] A 7th-century gold ring recovered from southern Italy (Plate 1.1c) surmounted by a chalcedony intaglio with a bearded figure is considered either a Lombardic or Byzantine object.[55] As with the *Fenstergefäß* **[page 24 (pp. 22-23 figures only)]** from the central European *barbaricum*, the ring resists unambiguous cultural classification with, for example, the MET catalogue description reading "Byzantine or Byzantine-Langobardic."[56] The ring can be better understood as being made of different things from various trajectories, or as assembled from things at different points within their individual cultural biographies that *meet* at one point, and are thus translated into a *new* assemblage. Another such 'assemblage' is a gold ring from Pfahlheim, Germany, that incorporates a Byzantine coin, possibly of Heraclius or Constantine III (Plate1.1d).[57] The various parts of assemblages travel from their 'initial' use as a coin or a precious gemstone to the ring or brooch, constituting a completely new, *assembled* object in a new context, being buried and excavated, researched, and displayed in a museum, while also travelling to this very article.

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[53] Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv.1988.15: William D. Wixom, *Mirror of the Medieval World* (New York, 1999), p. 58, no. 71.

[54] For a brief summary on early medieval rings, with a particular focus on the Merovingian and Carolingian periods, see Christamaria Beckmann, Helmut Roth, Sebastian Ristow, and Egon Wamers, s.v. "Fingerring," in *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde*, ed. Johannes Hoops, vol. 9, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1995), pp. 56-66.

[55] Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 17.230.128. Brown, et al., *From Attila to Charlemagne*, pp. 128, 356. For additional finger rings in the J. P. Morgan collection: Hélène Guiraud, "Ten Rings from the Collection of J. Pierpont Morgan," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 32 (1997), 57-63.

[56] Brown, et al., *From Attila to Charlemagne*, p. 356.

[57] Germanisches Nationalmuseum Nürnberg, inv. FG1149: Manfred Nawroth, *Das Gräberfeld von Pfahlheim und das Reitzubehör der Merowingerzeit,* Wissenschaftliche Beibände zum Anzeiger des Germanischen Nationalmuseums 19 (Nürnberg, 2001), p. 245, cat. 16.39.

Conclusion: Translating the Visual in post-Roman Europe

This chapter began by introducing Merovingian 7th-century repoussé disc brooches depicting the personification of invincible and unconquered Rome. While these Roma Invicta brooches (Fig. 1.1a) resemble rare late antique medallions and translate their distinctive imperial iconography to early medieval female dress, the 5th to 11th-century nummular brooches (*Münzfibeln*, *fibules monétiformes*) adopt imperial coinage more miscellaneously. The common ground of the nummular brooches discussed here is the likeness of the emperor that was a frequently used template in early medieval material and visual culture. The visual translations range from stylised portraits, such as the Merovingian-period brooch from Marchélepot (Fig. 1.2b) to such splendid works as the 10th-century Heginric Medallion (Fig. 1.5), and up to actual coins reworked and reused in medieval objects. Here, the reuse of coins and carved gemstones in brooches and finger rings (Plate 1.1) was explored through the notions of objects biographies and 'travelling' things. These 'assemblages' combine *old* and *new*-form objects in a new social and historical setting and, for that reason, withstand established classification and categories.

In general, the adaption, translation, and reassembling of images and actual objects of authority to personal objects play active roles in the vast changes in the post-Roman West. The well-established imperial and **[page 25]** powerful motifs provide a strong visual and material anchor in the social and political changes after the end of the Roman world, a visual transformation of the Roman power of images into the early Middle Ages.[58] While the widespread image of the defeated and untamed barbarian as the complementary counterpart of the victorious and civilised Roman world

[58] Based on the seminal works by Paul Zanker, *Augustus und die Macht der Bilder* (Munich, 1987) and David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago, 1989). This topic is further explored in Matthias Friedrich, Image and Ornament in the Early Medieval West, 400-800: New Perspectives on Post-Roman Art (Cambridge, forthcoming).

faded in late Antiquity,[59] the victorious Roman image lived on, even though this *life* changed significantly in the early Middle Ages. While the city of Rome was conquered and the Roman Empire ceased to exist in the West, the visual translation of Rome and its authority was truly *un*conquered: paradoxically, the power of images from the Roman world thrived on its fading.

[pp.25-28: Bibliography]

[59] Philipp von Rummel, "The Fading Power of Images: Romans, Barbarians, and the Uses of a Dichotomy in Early Medieval Archaeology," in *Post-Roman Transitions: Christian and Barbarian Identities in the Early Medieval West*, ed., Walter Pohl and Gerda Heydemann, Cultural Encounters in the Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages 14 (Turnhout, 2013), pp. 365-406.