

Public Abstract

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Title:THE NORTH SMELTER AT TITELBERG:

POST-IMPERIAL BRONZE RECYCLING IN BELGIC GAUL

The Titelberg in modern Luxembourg was not only the largest fortified town of the late Iron Age in northern Gaul, but the most long-lived, with occupations from about 300 BC continuous for centuries. This town ultimately prospered, due to copper and iron ore resources, as a mint and industrial center before and after Gallo-Roman contact, until eclipsed by larger centers. During the middle of the first century AD, the mint was razed, not to be rebuilt, and the population dwindled. After an interval of perhaps three hundred years, a new smelting furnace was built into the remains of the Gallo-Roman Minting Foundry; excavation shows this smelter was used to melt down bronze coins and artifacts for reuse or as bullion.

The questions arise from this, then: who was doing this and why? In the latter fourth century AD, were Franks moving into the territory and exploiting easy resources, or were local inhabitants profiting from metal sales? Was the recycling process due to economic and political woes or was there a deeper reason?

There is sufficient evidence to hypothesize continuity, with a local populace accustomed to accommodation, and a burgeoning economy fueling itself through a hunger for metal.