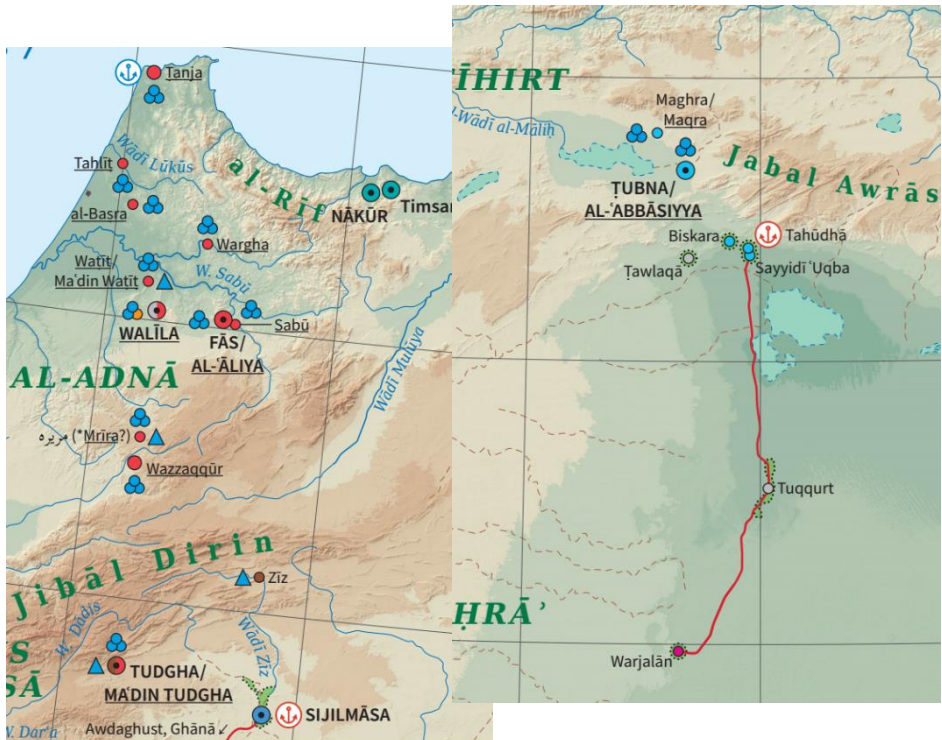


# Hybrid Workshop

## Silver and Gold for the Empire



Mints and Mines in North Africa

© Kurt Franz, Stefan Heidemann (cart. Martin Grosch)

## Program and ABSTRACTS

**June 20, 2024**

RomanIslam – Center for Comparative Empire and  
Transcultural Studies (Early Islam)

## Introduction

This workshop explores the role of mining and minting in the western Mediterranean world at the end of the Long Antiquity. It looks at the three large regional and political entities, North Africa, the Iberian Peninsula, and Frankish Western Europe. A special focus is on the spatial, political, and economic dimensions of mints and mines.

Where have the mines of the Iberian Peninsula, North Africa, and in Francia been situated? Who was able to exploit them? How long did they provide silver and gold? Also, where have the mints been located? What are the commercial and administrative networks that conveyed them to the mints? Why was silver processed into coins, as bullion for trade, and for regional monetary circulation? How have the mints been related to the commercial and state organization and who held the agency to mint coins?

Contents

**Stephen Merkel** .....3

Mines and Currency in the Islamic Empire.....3

**Alberto J. Canto** ..... 4

Mines in al-Andalus: an unresolved problem..... 4

**Stefan Heidemann** .....5

North African Mints and Mines for the Empire.....5

**Rory Naismith**..... 6

Sources of Bullion in the Frankish World ..... 6

**Kurt Franz** .....7

Mints, Mines, and Maps: Challenges and Benefits of Charting Historic  
Economic Activities .....7

**Contact** .....8



## Stephen Merkel

Ruhr-Universität Bochum



### Mines and Currency in the Islamic Empire

#### Abstract

In this talk, I will introduce the methods used to characterize and track metals and present an overview of metals research on the expansion and development of silver mining from the beginning of dirham production into the 10th century AD (3rd century AH). Focusing on North Africa and Spain, I will summarize the theories developed based upon analytical results over the last few decades, present the latest research on North African dirhams and point out high potential areas for future research.

Carolingian Denar, mining mint of Melle  
© coinarchives.com





## Alberto J. Canto

Universidad Autónoma de Madrid



### Mines in al-Andalus: an unresolved problem

#### Abstract

It has been nearly 16 years since a colloquium on mining in al-Andalus reopened the subject and seemed to stir up research on this subject. Unfortunately, the progress made in recent years does not seem to have been enough to make significant progress in this field.

The profound dissociation between what the sources mention about mining exploitation in the different districts of al-Andalus and what has been verified by archaeological method is a dead end.

The state of the mining industry in Roman and Visigothic Hispania has only obtained consistent results in the high-imperial period; As time goes by, both information about the Late Empire and the Visigothic world decreases radically and, by extension, something similar happens with al-Andalus.

The main problem is the methodological issues:

On the one hand, the difficulty of dating underground mining operations, with very similar technology and continuous exploitation.

On the other hand, there is a lack of isotope analyses that can compare objects and coins with sources of precious mineral provenance.

Establish, with some scientific basis, the prevailing trends in the use of precious metals beyond what is mentioned by the sources.



## Stefan Heidemann

RomanIslam Center, Universität Hamburg



### North African Mints and Mines for the Empire

#### Abstract

Between the 164/780-1 and 178/794-5 the mints of north Africa played an oversized role in the money supply of the entire Islamic Empire. It peaked in 171/787-8 producing about 86 % of the total annual output of all mints of the Empire. The principal mints lay within the imperial province of Ifrīqiya, Qayrawān and Ṭubna, instead the most prolific mines lay beyond the empires political reach in the Atlas Mountains. Some of the principal Berber capital cities had mints such as al-Mubāraka/Tihirt al-Haditha and Walila, Tudgha and finally ‘Aliyya/Fās. Apart from these, numerous short-lived mints sprung up in this period. The role of these different mints in the production of silver and its trade will be studied.

Coins from al-Andalus © Stefan Heidemann







**Rory Naismith**

Cambridge University



## Sources of Bullion in the Frankish World

### Abstract

The Frankish kingdoms and their neighbours issued precious metal coins from the sixth century onwards. This paper surveys the question of where the bullion behind these coinages came from, looking at gold in the period down to c. 670, and primarily at silver thereafter, which reflects the dominant metal used in the coins. Recent archaeometallurgical work has suggested that the silver used c. 670-750 derived primarily from the eastern Mediterranean, with a pivot to the Frankish mines of Melle thereafter. I will consider the ramifications of these changes, and how they may have related to the profuse silver and gold of the Islamic world.

Frankish coins © Rory Naismith





## Kurt Franz

RomanIslam Center, Universität Hamburg



### **Mints, Mines, and Maps: Challenges and Benefits of Charting Historic Economic Activities**

#### **Abstract**

Maps are often airily rated a means of spatial visualization undertaken only after research is complete. However, the fragmentation of most historic evidence (and that of economic matters in particular) makes it that both crafts would rather interact spirally: cartography induces new research efforts that need to be plotted in turns, etc., etc. In my talk, I will exemplify this operation in view of minting and mining places in the early Islamic western Mediterranean.

Plotting these places then results in what to the historian is less of a telling geographical map than a *chart* as is used in nautics or aeronautics — a representation of firstly isolated places that require correlation and interpretation on the user's part in order to 'steer one's course through the open'. In other words: cartography here allows us to conceive resource extraction and flows, coinage and the pertinent toponymy, and, perspectively, the economic and social developments that ensue therefrom in a synoptic way. Hence mapping/charting has a unique potential beyond linear written portrayal to respond to the spatial condition of history by spatial means proper.



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## Information and Abstracts

<https://www.romanislam.uni-hamburg.de/events-news/workshops.html>



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