

# In Search of Caesar's *Aduatuca* in the Territory of the Eburones

## Abstract

The people of the Eburones living in the Lower Rhine frontier zone of northern Gaul has attracted the attention of historians and archaeologists since many generations. On the one hand because they successfully defeated a large Roman army at a place called *Aduatuca* during their revolt of 54 BC. On the other hand because they were almost completely destroyed by Caesar's revenge campaigns with genocidal traits in 53 and 51 BC. An important question for a full understanding of Caesar's confrontation with the Eburones is the location of the Roman winter camp and battle site of *Aduatuca*. In this article we aim to summarise the current debate and present a new hypothesis that locates *Aduatuca* at Tongeren-Berg (prov. Limburg/BE), a hilltop directly northeast of the Roman *civitas* capital of *Aduatuca Tungrorum*/Tongeren. Judging by the numismatic evidence, Berg seems to have functioned as a central place of the Eburonean polity, an hypothesis that can be tested by further archaeological research in the next few years.

## Keywords

Belgium / *Aduatuca* / Tongeren / Caesar / Eburones / central place

## Caesar and the Eburones

Caesar's *Commentarii* are a unique document for the study of Roman military expansion in the »barbarian north«. The Eburones at the northern edge of Gaul feature prominently in his reports, particularly in Books 5 (54 BC) and 6 (53 BC). Caesar's interest in the Eburones is out of all proportion to the limited political significance of this people, whom he derogatorily described as an »undistinguished and insignificant tribe«<sup>1</sup>. The exceptional attention they receive in his war narrative was entirely due to two

interrelated events. Firstly, the Eburonean revolt of 54 BC, when they succeeded under Ambiorix's command in ambushing and destroying a large Roman army near *Aduatuca*; this was Caesar's greatest loss in the period of the Gallic Wars. Secondly, the large-scale Roman punitive expeditions against the Eburones in 53 and 51 BC, by which Caesar sought to avenge his loss and restore his tarnished reputation. The revenge campaigns display genocidal traits in that they combine the massive use of violence with

<sup>1</sup> Caes. Gall. 5.28.1.

Nico Roymans, Vrije Universiteit, Faculty of Humanities, Department of Ancient Studies, Archaeology and Classics, De Boelelaan 1105, NL - 1081 HV Amsterdam, n.g.a.m.roymans@vu.nl, ORCID: [0000-0002-3146-7338](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3146-7338)

Marleen Martens, Vlaamse overheid, Agentschap Onroerend Erfgoed, Team Onderzoek en bescherming, Havenlaan 88, BE - 1000 Brussels, marleen.martens@vlaanderen.be, ORCID: [0000-0001-5874-8917](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5874-8917)



**Fig. 1** Tribal map of Belgic Gaul at the time of Caesar's conquest. – (Map B. Brouwenstijn, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam).

an explicitly stated intention to wipe the Eburones off the face of the earth<sup>2</sup>.

As one of the better documented historical examples of genocidal practice against a people during the Roman military expansion, the Eburonean case has long attracted the attention of both historians and

archaeologists. An important question for a full understanding of Caesar's confrontation with the Eburones is the location of the Roman camp and battle site of *Aduatuca*. In this article we aim to summarise the current debate and present a new hypothesis that may direct further research in the near future.

## The Eburonean Polity at the Time of the Conquest

Caesar situates the Eburones in between the Menapii and Nervii in the west, the Aduatuci and Condrusi in the south, and the river Rhine and the Sugambri in the north and east (fig. 1). At the time of the conquest they had a dual kingship that may have had a territorial basis, since Caesar refers to Catuvolcus as *rex dimidiae partis Eburonum*<sup>3</sup>. He also emphasises the Germanic roots of the Eburones; they belonged to a group of tribes collectively labelled as *Germani cisrhenani*, or *Germani* inhabiting the Gallic side of the Rhine. Archaeological evidence shows that the Eburones had a highly decentralised settlement structure characterised by the absence of major urbanised *oppida*<sup>4</sup>. In their clashes with the invading Roman legions they chose a strategy of guerilla warfare.

Caesar's revenge campaigns of 53 and 51 BC determined the fate of the Eburones. Although the

exact impact of his actions remains unknown, we can say that neither the polity nor the name of the Eburones survived the conquest, and that the early post-conquest period saw an influx of new Germanic groups from the east bank of the Rhine who probably incorporated rest groups of the Eburones<sup>5</sup>.

Until recently, archaeology has had little to say about Caesar's destructive campaigns against the Eburones. In the past two decades, however, archaeologists have been able to contribute to the study of the Roman conquest through numismatic research (see below) and the study of regional demographic trends in rural habitation in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC<sup>6</sup>. Pinpointing the site of the Eburonean central place and Roman camp of *Aduatuca* remains a major challenge, however.

In the past two decades, research on Late Iron Age coinage has provided important insights into

<sup>2</sup> Caes. Gall. 6.34.8; 8.24.4. On the use of mass violence and genocidal practices in Caesar's Gallic Wars, see Barrandon 2018; Lavan 2020; Raaflaub 2021; Taylor 2023; Shaw in print.

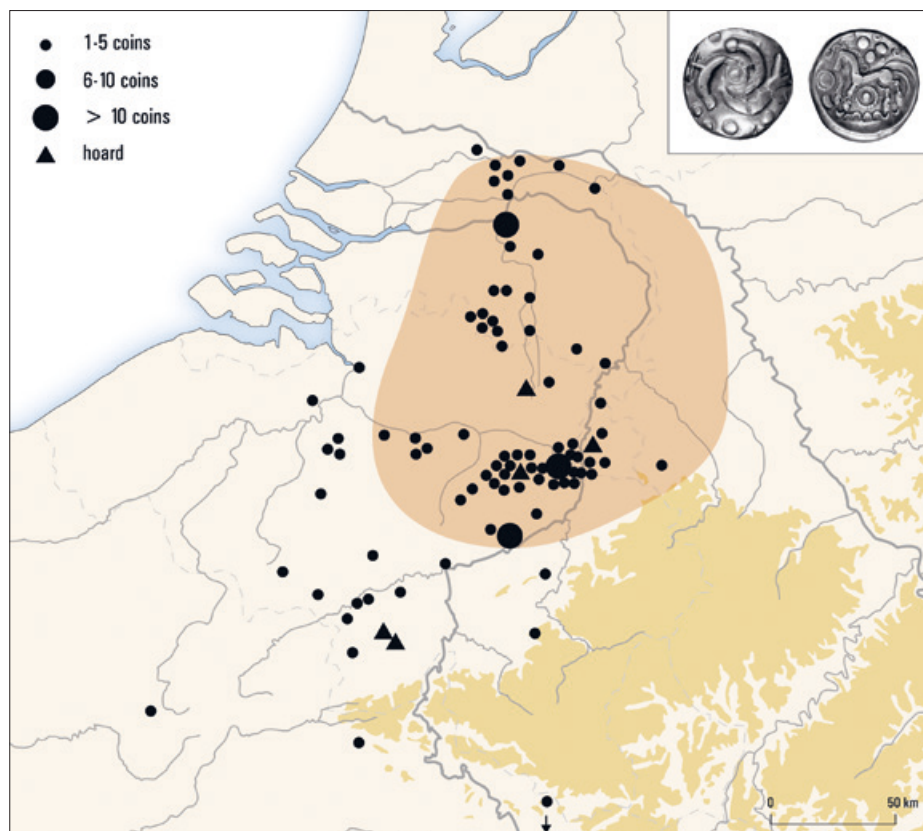
<sup>3</sup> Caes. Gall. 6.31.5.

<sup>4</sup> Roymans 1990, 201. 213; 2004, chapter 2; Hornung 2016, 281 ff.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. the recent studies on the ethnogenesis of the Batavi (Roymans 2004) and Tungri (Raepsaet 2013).

<sup>6</sup> Roymans 2019a.

**Fig. 2** Distribution of the S 31 gold staters ascribed to the Eburones. – Brown: approximate size of the Eburonian territory according to Caesar's information. – (After Roymans 2020, fig. 3).



indigenous coin circulation in the Eburonian polity in the conquest period. Two coin types can be identified that cluster in the territory of the Eburones as indicated by Caesar: the Scheers 31 (S 31) gold staters (fig. 2) and the silver rainbow staters of the Lith type. Both are contemporary since they are associated in the gold hoards of the »Fraire-Amby horizon«<sup>7</sup>. There is strong evidence that both coinages were in full circulation and production in the 50s BC. Their distribution patterns show two core zones, a northern and a southern one. It is an interesting hypothe-

sis to relate this spatial bi-polarity in the numismatic evidence to the dual kingship of the Eburones as referred to by Caesar.

We have published extensively on the S 31 gold staters in 2012 and in papers from 2019 and 2020<sup>8</sup>. This coinage has its densest distribution in the Tongeren-Maastricht region (prov. Limburg/BE; fig. 2), which can be regarded as the political core of the southern part of the Eburonian polity. It is here that we can expect the production site or sites of the S 31 staters.

## The Roman Winter Camp of *Aduatuca* and its Location

At the end of the campaigning season in 54 BC Caesar decided to set up one of the winter camps for his legions at an unspecified location in the territory of the Eburones<sup>9</sup>. The Eburones revolted in the autumn of that year, and the entire Roman force of one and a half legions was ambushed and destroyed

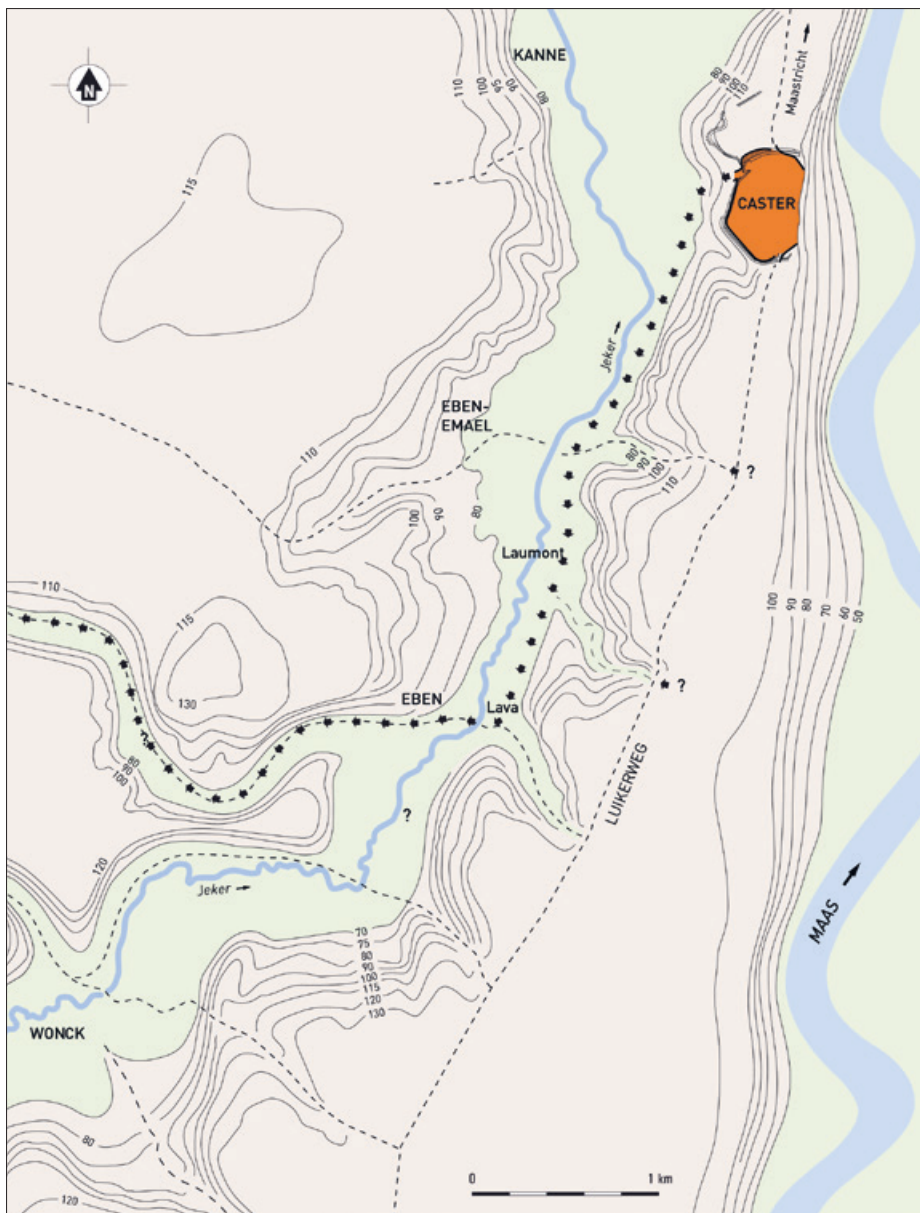
close to the winter camp. In 53 BC the deserted camp was occupied again by the Roman army and used as a base for large-scale revenge campaigns against the Eburones, with a mighty force of ten legions and a large body of auxiliary troops. Caesar now mentions the name of the camp: *Aduatuca*, situated »almost in

<sup>7</sup> For recent overviews of the distribution and chronology of both coin types, see Roymans 2019b; 2020; Roymans/Scheers 2012. A key argument for their dating in the 50s BC is their association with a POTTINA stater of the Treveri (type S 30-IV) in both the Amby (Maastricht, prov. Limburg/NL) and Heers (prov. Limburg/BE) hoards. The presence of this

stater at Alesia (dép. Côte-d'Or/FR) provides a *terminus ante quem* of 52 BC for the production of POTTINA staters.

<sup>8</sup> Roymans/Scheers 2012; Roymans 2019b; 2020.

<sup>9</sup> Caes. Gall. 5.24; 5.26.



**Fig. 3** Ground plan of the Late Iron Age fortification of Kanne-Caestert in between the Meuse valley and the cirque of the Jeker, with some scenarios (dotted lines) showing the retreat of the Roman legions in 54 BC. – (Map redrawn after Vanvinckenroye 2001, fig. I, with additions).

the middle of the territory of the Eburones<sup>10</sup>. In the Early Roman period *Aduatuca* was the formal name of the capital of the *civitas Tungrorum*, situated at Tongeren in eastern Belgium<sup>11</sup>.

Below we will discuss the issue of the location of Caesar's *Aduatuca*. In doing so, we proceed from the following. First, it was customary for Roman winter camps to be located in existing indigenous settlements (often fortified) with a central place function. Second, the numismatic evidence mentioned above suggests that *Aduatuca* was located in the political core zone of the Eburones, which was the region of Tongeren-Maastricht. Third, Caesar reports that

*Aduatuca* was situated in the immediate proximity of a bowl or cirque in which the Roman army was ambushed<sup>12</sup>. In the Tongeren-Maastricht region, this would correspond to the narrow valley of the river Jeker, which flows from Tongeren to Maastricht where it joins the river Meuse.

### The Fortification of Kanne-Caestert

The most obvious interpretation would simply be to locate the Caesarian camp of *Aduatuca* at the site of the later Roman *civitas* capital of the same name.

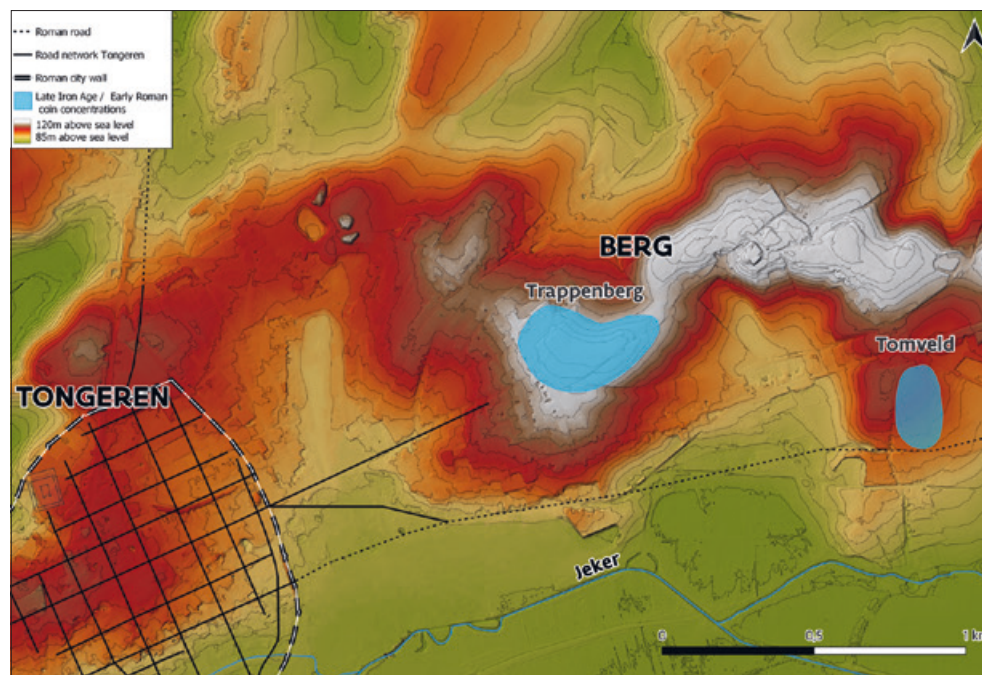
<sup>10</sup> Caes. Gall. 6.32.4; 6.35.

<sup>11</sup> Nouwen 2023, 24-25. On the formation of the Tungrian *civitas* in the middle Augustan period, see Raepsaet 2013.

<sup>12</sup> Caes. Gall. 5.32, speaks of a *magna convallis*.



**Fig. 4** Topography of the landscape of Tongeren and the village of Berg showing the principal zones where Late Iron Age and Early Roman coins have been found. – (Map G. Verbeelen, Flemish Heritage Agency).



However, archaeological excavations in the ancient centre of Tongeren since the early 1990s rule out this option: the town of *Aduatuca Tungrorum* appears to have been a new foundation from the middle Augustan period (final decade BC) and lacks a pre-Augustan habitation phase.

This brings us to another hypothesis, which equates the Caesarian camp of *Aduatuca* with the Late Iron Age hillfort of Kanne-Caestert (prov. Limburg/BE), situated near Maastricht on the high ridge between the Meuse and Jeker rivers (fig. 3). Its size is substantial – almost 19 ha – and a recent small-scale test excavation has even produced evidence for a possible annex<sup>13</sup>. Its strategic situation between the Meuse valley and the cirque of the Jeker would correspond perfectly to the topography of the battle site near *Aduatuca* as sketched by Caesar. This prompted Willy Vanvinckenroye and Tom Buijten-dorp to develop detailed scenarios for »the battle in the Jeker valley« and the role of the fortification as a central place of the Eburones in the conquest period<sup>14</sup>. According to two radiocarbon dates, the hillfort was constructed and used in the period between 200 and 40 BC<sup>15</sup>.

There is a major problem with this hypothesis, however: a complete absence of find material from the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century BC. Although no excavations have taken place to date in the interior of the fortification, parts of the site have recently been surveyed

by means of metal detection<sup>16</sup> and it was frequently visited by private metal detectorists in past decades. The complete absence of Late Iron Age and Early Roman coins, fibulae, fragments of militaria or Roman pottery is significant. If this hillfort had been used by a large Roman force in both 54 and 53 BC, we would expect to find some material evidence for this. The absence of such evidence suggests that the site was never permanently inhabited, and that it functioned (in the pre-conquest period only?) as a kind of refuge fort in times of crisis. Another point is that the distance between the hillfort of Caestert and Tongeren is too great (some 20 km) to explain the homonymity between the Caesarian *Aduatuca* and the Roman town of Tongeren. It is a well-known phenomenon in Belgic Gaul that Roman towns continued the name of their Late Iron Age predecessors, but in that case the latter were generally situated at the same site or just a few kilometres away<sup>17</sup>.

### Tongeren-Berg: the Numismatic Evidence

An alternative hypothesis would be to locate *Aduatuca* at Berg (prov. Limburg/BE), a small village directly northeast of the Roman town of Tongeren (fig. 4). The site occupies an elongated hill along the ancient Roman road from Tongeren to Maastricht.

<sup>13</sup> Verhoeven 2008.

<sup>14</sup> Vanvinckenroye 2001; Buijten-dorp 2018, chapters 11–13.

<sup>15</sup> Verhoeven 2008, 98. Unfortunately, a dendrochronological date of the hillfort published earlier, seems to be unreliable.

<sup>16</sup> Verhoeven 2008, 97–98.

<sup>17</sup> Wightman 1985, 75.

Late Iron Age coins	number
<i>gold stater S 31, Eburones</i> (8 Class I; 4 Class II)	12
<i>silver rainbow stater, type Lith</i>	10
gold stater S 29-I, Nervii	2
gold stater S 30-IV, Treveri	1
gold stater S 24-I	1
gold quarter stater S 152-V	2
coin flan, gold	4
gold lumps	2
silver quinarius LT 5762, DVRNACOS/AVSCRO	1
silver quinarius LT 5405, Q.DOCI SAM	5
silver quinarius Aedui, Castelin 556 var.; LT cf. 5138	1
<i>silver quinarius S 58, ANNAROVECI</i>	9
silver quinarius S 57-I/II, Ubii	4
bronze rainbow stater, type Bochum	3
potin S 191, Remi?	1
potin S 190-IV, Nervii	2
silver denarius Eravisci, BMC 268	1
brass coin S 216, GERMANVS INDVTILLI.L	1
<i>bronze coin S 217, AVAVCIA</i>	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>

**Tab. 1** Overview of Late Iron Age coins collected at Tongeren-Berg. Regional coin types are italicised.

Early Roman coins	number
Republic, denarius/quinarius	20
Republic/Octavian, as/dupondius	2
Augustus, denarius	1
Augustus, as	9
Tiberius	-
Claudius	-
Nero, as	2
Otho, denarius	1
Flavii, as/dupondius	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>

**Tab. 2** Overview of Early Roman coins (1<sup>st</sup> c. BC/AD) collected at Tongeren-Berg.

**18** N. Roymans made systematic use of the following sources: the documentation of the Provinciaal Munt- en Penningkabinet (PMP) kept in the Gallo-Roman Museum (GRM) at Tongeren; the collections and archives of the GRM and of the Penningkabinet van de Koninklijke Bibliotheek in Brussels; the databank of the Centraal Archeologische Inventaris (CAI) of the Flemish Heritage Agency, Brussels; and the documentation of Simone Scheers (Leuven). The overview also includes some coins from private

The hilltop is located about 120 m above sea level and overlooks the town, which is some 20–30 m lower. Since the late 1980s the arable lands on the hill between Tongeren and Berg have attracted the attention of private metal detectorists from the region, who collected a large number of Late Iron Age and Roman small metal finds. As no excavations have been carried out there to date, we have to rely on the information reported by metal detectorists, knowing that only a small, selective proportion of the finds will have been reported to the official institutions. Coins are the best represented find category, in part because they have enjoyed the special interest of staff members of museums and numismatists.

**Tables 1** and **2** give us an overview of all the coins reported to the official institutions since the late 1980s – 106 items in total, 68 of them of Late Iron Age type and 38 Early Roman specimens (until the late 1<sup>st</sup> c. AD)<sup>18</sup>. There are certainly biases in the coin assemblage; precious metal coins are probably overrepresented and the proportion of bronze coins will be underrepresented, especially since the latter are often poorly preserved in the loamy plough soil of Berg.

Three main groups can be distinguished in the list of Late Iron Age coins (**tab. 1**). The coin spectrum is dominated by some types that are characteristic of the region and seem to have been produced there: the S 31 gold staters (**fig. 5, 1-9**), the silver rainbow staters of the Lith type (**fig. 5, 10-15**), the S 58 silver quinarii with the legend ANNAROVECI (**fig. 6, 1-6**) and the S 217 bronze AVAVCIA coins. The last two coin types date from the post-conquest period. Next is a group of coins produced in neighbouring regions; they are present in small numbers only. Finally, there is a group of seven silver quinarii from Central-East Gaul (**fig. 6, 7-11**) and a silver coin – rare for western Europe – of the Eravisci, a Celtic group that had its homeland in northern Pannonia (**fig. 6, 12**)<sup>19</sup>. These exogenous coins were not part of the regional coin circulation and their presence calls for a special explanation (see below).

The list of Early Roman coins (**tab. 2**) is dominated by Republican denarii and quinarii, but it continues into the late Augustan period and then seems

collections and coins recently collected during the metal detection survey by the Flemish Heritage Agency, organised by M. Martens. A detailed descriptive list of the coins from Berg will be published in the near future.

**19** The coin (= BMC 268) imitates a Republican denarius and was struck on a denarius standard, probably between 50 and 20 BC. Torbágyi 2008, 206 ff. N. Roymans would like to thank Simone Scheers for her help with the determination of the coin.



**Fig. 5** Gold S 31 staters (1-9) and silver rainbow staters (10-15) probably minted by the Eburones. – (Image N. Roymans).

to break off. The absence of coins of Tiberius and Claudius is significant, while specimens from the later 1<sup>st</sup> century AD are only marginally represented. This suggests that the influx of Republican silver may have been an early phenomenon here, lasting from the conquest period up into the reign of Augustus.

The spatial distribution of the documented coins is particularly instructive (fig. 4). The approximate find location is known for about half of the coins: they are widely distributed over the arable fields be-

tween Tongeren and Berg, covering an area of over 100 ha. Within this zone the great majority come from the Trappenberg or Trappersberg. To the south of Berg is a smaller find concentration at the Tomveld on flatter terrain close to the Jeker valley. The proportion of Roman coins is significantly higher here than in the Trappenberg area, where Late Iron Age coins are far more predominant. Given the considerable spatial size of the find complex at Berg, it would be wise to interpret it as a cluster of several sites rather than as a single site.



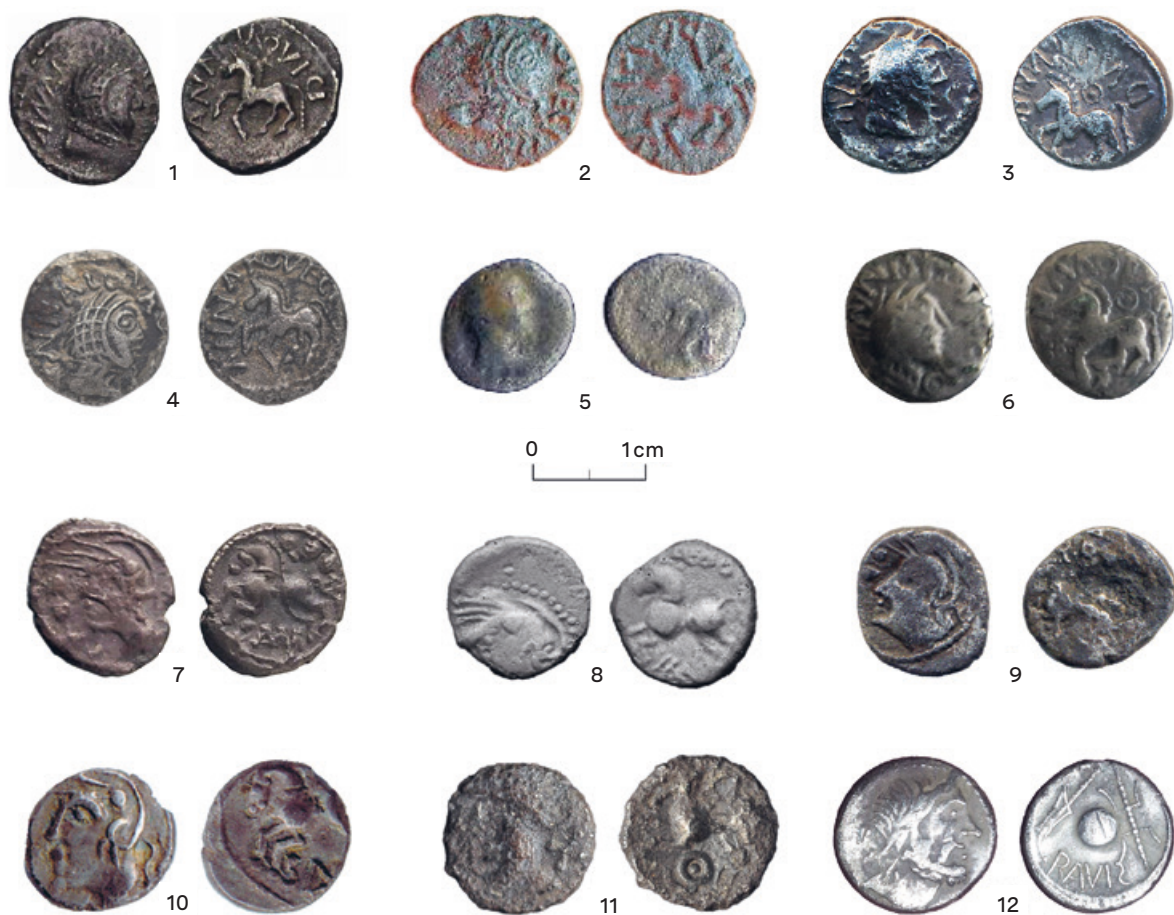


Fig. 6 Silver ANNAROVECI coins (1-6), quinarii from Central-East Gaul (7-11), and a silver coin of the Eravisci (12) from Berg. – (Image N. Roymans).

### Tongeren-Berg: a Central Place of the Eburonian Polity?

The quantity and variety of the coin assemblage of Berg suggests that we are dealing here with a site of regional importance. Johan Van Heesch, as well as Simone Scheers and Guido Creemers have all interpreted the site as a possible cult place and suspect that the coins were ritually deposited, thereby referring to the coin evidence from Late Iron Age sanctuaries in Gaul and from Empel along the Meuse near 's-Hertogenbosch (prov. North Brabant/NL)<sup>20</sup>. Such a cult place interpretation may be plausible for a part of the Berg find complex, but the size of the site suggests that we are dealing with a multi-focal complex that may also include zones of habitation and craft production<sup>21</sup>. Unfortunately, we are still poorly informed about other find categories at Berg. We only

know of some Late La Tène and Early Roman fibulae and fragments of glass La Tène bracelets. Of great significance, however, is evidence of gold coin production. The Trappenberg site (fig. 7) has produced some gold lumps and four flans for gold coins (fig. 8). The limited weight of the flans (approx. 5.4 g) as well as their low gold content (tab. 3) suggest that they were half products of the S 31 staters of the Eburones, which are the dominant coin type at Berg<sup>22</sup>.

The quinarii from Central-East Gaul, in particular those with the legend Q.DOCI SAM, deserve special attention since they may point to a Roman military connection in the period between 60 and 30 BC. It is a well-known hypothesis that the diffusion of these coinages to the northern edge of Gaul was the result of their use as pay to Roman soldiers and Gallic auxiliary troops from interior Gaul<sup>23</sup>. In hoard contexts they are often found in combination with

<sup>20</sup> Van Heesch 2005, 252, 257; Scheers/Creemers 2012, 135-136. For the coin assemblage from Empel, see Roymans/Aarts 2005.

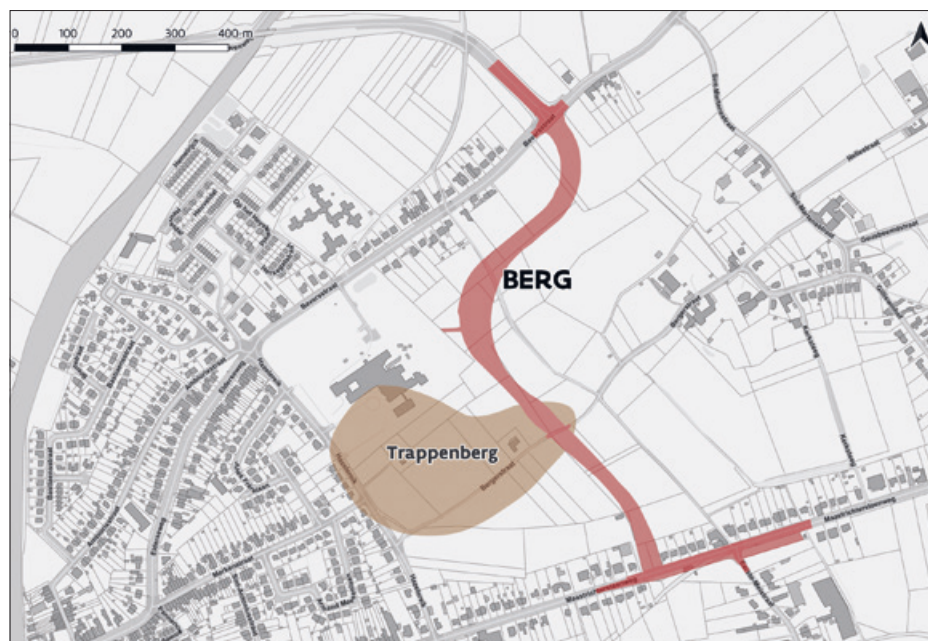
<sup>21</sup> The termination of the coin list in the late Augustan period also seems to contradict a cult place interpretation.

<sup>22</sup> The weight of the S 31 staters of Class I ranges from 5.5 to 5.8 g; Class II coins are slightly lighter. Cf. Scheers 1983, 440; Roymans 2020, 112.

<sup>23</sup> Wigg-Wolf 2019; Martin 2013, vol. I, 126-127, 132-134.



**Fig. 7** Map of Tongeren-Berg with the major find concentration on the Trappenberg and the planned route of the new Tongeren-East motorway. – (Map G. Verbeelen, Flemish Heritage Agency).



**Fig. 8** Gold coin flans (1-4) and some gold lumps (5-6) from Berg, possible evidence of local gold coin production. – (Image N. Roymans).

**Tab. 3** Descriptive list of coin flans and some gold lumps retrieved from the Trappenberg area at Tongeren-Berg. The numbering of the finds corresponds to fig. 8. GRM = Gallo-Roman Museum, Tongeren; CAI = Centraal Archeologische Inventaris, Flemish Heritage Agency.

number	object	metal	metal composition (XRF analyses) %	weight (g)	collection
1	coin flan	gold/electrum	Au 43; Ag 45; Cu 12	5.39	GRM unnumbered
2	coin flan	gold/electrum		5.40	GRM 19995
3	coin flan	gold/electrum	Au 53; Ag 36; Cu 6	5.54	S. Scheers
4	coin flan	gold/copper	Au 39; Ag 19; Cu 42	5.29	CAI 226275
5	lump	gold		13.13	GRM 20015
6	lump	gold/copper		4.70	GRM 20016

Republican denarii. The occurrence of these coins in the *oppida* of the Titelberg (ct. Esch-sur-Alzette/LU), La Chaussée-Tirancourt (dép. Somme/FR), Liercourt-Érondelle (dép. Somme/FR), and Etrun (dép. Pas-de-Calais/FR) suggests a link with Roman army camps<sup>24</sup>. The East-Celtic silver coin of the Eravisci from Berg-Tomveld may also have arrived here via the Roman army<sup>25</sup>.

The most plausible model at present is to view Berg as a multi-focal central place of the Eburonean polity where rituals were carried out, periodic assemblies organised, political decisions taken and coins minted. Such central places – which were not necessarily fortified and may have been open settlements – were of key importance for the social and political functioning of Late Iron Age societies<sup>26</sup>. In Late Iron Age Gaul they often developed into defended *oppida* with a substantial population. In the Eburonean polity, however, with its more decentralised and less hierarchical settlement pattern, this process may still have been in an initial phase in the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century BC. It was important for the Roman conquerors to control such sites, especially in the northern areas with a more decentralised settlement structure.

The hypothesis of an Eburonean central place at Tongeren-Berg is directly relevant to the discussion about the location of Caesar's *Aduatuca*, where the Romans had set up a winter camp in 54 BC. Historians and archaeologists have long speculated about

the camp's location and have proposed many sites<sup>27</sup>, but none have provided convincing archaeological evidence thus far. Based on the name similarity, the Roman *civitas* capital of *Atuatuca*/Tongeren would be the most obvious candidate. However, since the excavations of the early 1990s we know that the Roman town lacks a Caesarian horizon. This is in contrast to the Berg site, which is now an attractive candidate for Caesar's *Aduatuca*.

If *Aduatuca* were located at Berg, this also gives us an indication of where to expect the site of the famous battle of 54 BC. Caesar speaks of a cirque about 2 miles (approx. 3 km) from the Roman camp<sup>28</sup>. The valley of the Jeker is rather wide at Berg, but it becomes smaller and deeper some 3 km downstream at Sluizen, and is therefore an ideal location for an ambush. This suggests that the Roman force had left the camp of *Aduatuca* in a southwesterly direction and entered the narrow Jeker valley, probably with the intention of crossing southwards to the Meuse valley on their way to the winter camp of Labienus in the southern Ardennes region<sup>29</sup>. In this context it is relevant to refer to a bronze helmet of the Coolus-Mannheim type found at Tongeren in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (fig. 9). Such helmets were widely used by Roman legionaries in the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century BC<sup>30</sup>. Unfortunately, the exact find location of the Tongeren specimen is unknown, but the patina suggests an origin from a wet context, probably the valley of the Jeker<sup>31</sup>. Is this a silent witness to the »battle in the Jeker Valley«?

## Prospects for Further Research

The substantial coin assemblage collected in Tongeren-Berg challenges us to reconsider the current picture of the city's earliest history. The town was founded in the middle Augustan period, but the coin evidence collected at Berg points to an older habitation that certainly existed at the time of the Caesarian conquest. Moreover, the coin evidence may point to Roman military activity in the period 60–30 BC. Most plausible is a model of Berg as a central place in the Eburonean polity. The break-off of the coin

list in the late Augustan period corresponds to the foundation of the new town of *Atuatuca* on lower ground close to the river Jeker. The archaeological evidence presented by Alain Vanderhoeven shows that the Roman army had played a prominent role in the design and implementation of the first layout of the new town<sup>32</sup>.

We are fully aware that the ideas presented above about the location of *Aduatuca* and the relationship between Tongeren and Berg remain hypothetical at

24 Doyen et al. 2019; Bayard 2018.

25 This silver coin (unique for Belgic Gaul) of the Eravisci, a people in the north of the later province of Pannonia, is an imitation of the Roman denarius of Cn. Lentulus, Crawford 393-1a (struck 76–75 BC). Cf. also Torbågyi 2008, 206 ff. and map 4 for the distribution of Eraviscan coins.

26 Roymans/Derks 2015; Fernández-Götz/Roymans 2015.

27 Cf. Nouwen 2023, 25–29.

28 Caes. Gall. 5.32.

29 T. Buijtdorp (2018, 257–263) provides arguments for locating Labienus' camp somewhere in the neighbourhood of Bastogne (prov. Luxem-

bourg/BE) in the Belgian Ardennes. He also argues (p. 232–233) that the Roman forces had left *Aduatuca* with the intention of going to the camp of Cicero in the Nervian territory. However, a retreat to the camp of Labienus is also a possibility. Caesar (Gall. 5.37.7) reports that Roman soldiers who had survived the battle at *Aduatuca* arrived – after wandering – at the camp of Labienus.

30 Poux 2008, 341–342.

31 Vanvinckenroye 2001, 66.

32 Vanderhoeven 1996, 220–221.

**Fig. 9** The Roman bronze helmet of the Coolus-Mannheim type, found at Tongeren. – (Photo Royal Museums of Art and History, Brussels). – Without scale.



present; the actual archaeological evidence – all surface finds from the fields at Berg – does not allow a definitive conclusion as yet. We wish to emphasise, however, that there will be concrete opportunities in the next few years to test the hypothesis outlined above. Firstly, there is the Flemish government's planned construction of the new motorway of Tongeren-East. Its route will traverse the major find concentration at the Trappenberg (fig. 7), thus creating opportunities for stratigraphical research, material studies and the identification of possible defensive ditch systems<sup>33</sup>. If Berg was used by the Roman army, this would imply that the site (or at least part of it) was fortified at that time.

Secondly, the Flemish Heritage Agency has launched a programme of geophysical prospections at Berg, carried out by a team from Ghent University. Both the Trappenberg and Tomveld site are included in the prospections. We have to take into account the problem of the varying degree of archaeological preservation of the Trappenberg site. The top and the slopes of the hill are severely affected by soil erosion as a consequence of centuries of ploughing (probably from the Roman period onwards). This erosion has

gradually washed the original loamy topsoil down to the nearby depressions, which were covered by thick layers of colluvium. We could perhaps predict that only more deeply dug-in features are preserved on the top of the hill. Possible traces of defensive embankments will have disappeared here, but remains of ditch systems may be intact along the edges of the hill.

Thirdly, the Flemish Heritage Agency also begun a programme of systematic metal detection using registered volunteers. This community archaeology project has so far yielded a limited number of new Late Iron Age and Roman coins but, sadly, it confirms that the present plough soil of Berg has been intensively looted by metal detectorists in past decades. One of the surveys is planned at Sluizen near the »entrance« to the narrow zone of the Jeker valley.

We hope that these new research initiatives will enable us in the coming years to test the ideas outlined above, and to improve our understanding of the dramatic history of the Eburonean people in the conquest period and of the genesis of the Tungrian *civitas* in the decades following the Caesarian conquest.

**33** However, it is disturbing to note that the archaeologists responsible for the plan of action and the preliminary investigations at Berg (Linten 2019; Van Genechten/Pawelczak 2024) do not seem to be aware of the

potential significance of the site as a central place of the Eburones at the time of the Roman conquest, nor of its importance for the archaeology and history of the Roman conquest of Gaul.



## Acknowledgements

We would like to emphasise that this research would have been impossible without the information provided by Erwin Meylemans and Ine Demerre (Flemish Heritage Agency), Guido Creemers (Gallo-Roman Museum, Tongeren), Simone Scheers (KU Leuven), Johan van Heesch (KU Leuven), Dirk Pauwels (Municipality of Tongeren) and Michiel De Wachter. Dennis Braeckmans (Laboratory for Material Culture Studies, Leiden University) provided a metal analysis of coin flan no. 4 with a Bruker Tracer 5g portable

XRF spectrometer. We also wish to thank the metal detectorists who reported their finds from Tongeren-Berg to the official institutions. Simone Scheers, Alain Vanderhoeven (Gallo-Roman Museum, Tongeren), Johan van Heesch, and Giel Verbeelen (Flemish Heritage Agency) kindly commented on an earlier draft of this paper. Responsibility for the text, however, is ours alone. Finally, we wish to thank Annette Visser (Wellington, New Zealand) for checking the English of this article.

## Bibliography

### Source

**Caes. Gall.:** Caesar, The Gallic War. With an English Translation by H. J. Edwards. Loeb Class. Library 72 (London, Cambridge MA 1917).

### References

**Barrandon 2018:** N. Barrandon, Les massacres de la république romaine (Paris 2018).

**Bayard 2018:** D. Bayard, L'occupation des oppida gaulois par l'armée romaine à la fin de la République. L'exemple du »camp César« de La Chaussée-Tirancourt. In: M. Reddé (ed.), Les armées romaines en Gaule à l'époque républicaine. Nouveaux témoignages archéologiques. Collect. Bibracte 28 (Glux-en-Glenne 2018) 155–178.

**Buijtendorp 2018:** T. Buijtendorp, Caesar in de Lage Landen. De Gallische Oorlog langs Rijn en Maas (Utrecht 2018).

**Doyen et al. 2019:** J.-M. Doyen / A. Jacques / G. Le-man-Deliverie / A.-V. Munaut / T. Oueslati, Recherches sur l'occupation protohistorique de la fortification d'Étrun (Pas-de-Calais): des légionnaires de César chez les Atrébates? Rev. Nord 433(5), 2019, 41–71. DOI: [10.3917/rdn.433.0041](https://doi.org/10.3917/rdn.433.0041).

**Fernández-Götz/Roymans 2015:** M. Fernández-Götz / N. Roymans, The Politics of Identity: Late Iron Age Sanctuaries in the Rhineland. Journal North Atlantic 8, 2015, 18–32. DOI: [10.3721/037.002.sp803](https://doi.org/10.3721/037.002.sp803).

**van Heesch 2005:** J. van Heesch, Celtic Coins and Religious Deposits in Belgium. In: C. Haselgrove / D. Wigg (eds), Iron Age Coinage and Ritual Practices. Stud. Fundmünzen Ant. 20 (Mainz 2005) 247–263.

**Hornung 2016:** S. Hornung, Siedlung und Bevölkerung in Ostgallien zwischen Gallischem Krieg und der Festigung der römischen Herrschaft. Eine Studie auf Basis landschaftsarchäologischer Forschungen im Umfeld des Oppidums »Hunnenring« von Otzenhausen (Lkr. St. Wendel). Röm.-Germ. Forsch. 73 (Darmstadt, Mainz 2016).

**Lavan 2020:** M. Lavan, Devastation. The Destruction of Populations and Human Landscapes and the Roman Imperial Project. In: K. Berthelot (ed.), Reconsidering Roman Power. Roman, Greek, Jewish and Christian Perceptions and Reactions. Collect. École Française Rome 564 (Rome 2020) 179–205.

**Linten 2019:** S. Linten, Archeologienota Tongeren, noord-oostelijke omleidingsweg fase 2. Verslag van Resultaten. BAAC Vlaanderen Rapport 1063 (Gent 2019). <https://loket.onroerendergoed.be/archeologie/notas/notas/10376/bijlagen/44397> (5.3.2025).

**Martin 2013:** S. Martin, Du statère au sesterce. Rome et la Gaule septentrionale et orientale (150 av. J.-C. – 50 ap. J.-C.) I–II [PhD thesis Univ. Paris 2013]. <https://theses.hal.science/tel-02009782/> (5.3.2025).

**Nouwen 2023:** R. Nouwen, Ambiorix tegen Caesar. De feiten en de mythe (Gorredijk 2023).

**Poux 2008:** M. Poux (ed.), Sur les traces de César: militia tardo-républicains en contexte gaulois; actes de la table ronde organisée par Bibracte, Centre Archéologique Européen, Glux-en-Glenne, 17 octobre 2002. Collect. Bibracte 14 (Glux-en-Glenne 2008).

**Raaflaub 2021:** K. A. Raaflaub, Caesar and Genocide: Confronting the Dark Side of Caesar's Gallic Wars. New England Class. Journal 48(1), 2021, 54–80. DOI: [10.52284/NECJ/48.1/article/raaflaub](https://doi.org/10.52284/NECJ/48.1/article/raaflaub).

**Raepsaet 2013:** G. Raepsaet, L'ethnogenèse de la civitas Tungrorum et la formation de la Province de Germanie. Ant. Class. 82, 2013, 111–148.

- Roymans 1990:** N. Roymans, *Tribal Societies in Northern Gaul*. Cingula 12 (Amsterdam 1990).
- 2004:** N. Roymans, *Ethnic Identity and Imperial Power: The Batavians in the Early Roman Empire*. Amsterdam Arch. Stud. 10 (Amsterdam 2004).
- 2019a:** N. Roymans, *Conquest, Mass Violence and Ethnic Stereotyping. Investigating Caesar's Actions in the Germanic Frontier Zone*. Journal Roman Arch. 32, 2019, 439–458. DOI: [10.1017/S1047759419000229](https://doi.org/10.1017/S1047759419000229).
- 2019b:** N. Roymans, *Late Iron Age Coin Hoards with Silver Rainbow Staters from Graetheide (NL) and the mid-1<sup>st</sup> Century BC Hoard Horizon in the Lower Rhine/Meuse Region*. Germania 97, 2019, 65–91. DOI: [10.11588/ger.2019.78611](https://doi.org/10.11588/ger.2019.78611).
- 2020:** N. Roymans, *Muntslag in crisistijd. De goudstaters van de Eburonen en Caesars verovering van de Nederrijn/Maasregio*. In: V. van Vilsteren (ed.), *Overpeinzingen op een vuilnisbelt. Liber amicorum aangeboden aan Wijnand van der Sanden ter gelegenheid van zijn afscheid als conservator bij het Drents Museum* (Groningen 2020) 111–121.
- Roymans/Aarts 2005:** N. Roymans / J. Aarts, *Coins, Soldiers and the Batavian Hercules Cult. Coin Deposition in the Sanctuary of Empel in the Lower Rhine Region*. In: C. Haselgrove / D. Wigg (eds), *Iron Age Coinage and Ritual Practices*. Stud. Fundmünzen Ant. 20 (Mainz 2005) 337–359.
- Roymans/Derks 2015:** N. Roymans / T. Derks, *Rural Cult Places and the Symbolic Construction of Supralocal Communities*. In: N. Roymans / T. Derks / H. A. Hidink (eds), *The Roman Villa of Hoogeloon and the Archaeology of the Periphery*. Amsterdam Arch. Stud. 22 (Amsterdam 2015) 229–243.
- Roymans/Scheers 2012:** N. Roymans / S. Scheers, *Eight Gold Hoards from the Low Countries. A Synthesis*. In: N. Roymans / G. Creemers / S. Scheers (eds), *Late Iron Age Gold Hoards from the Low Countries and the Caesarian Conquest of Northern Gaul*. Amsterdam Arch. Stud. 18 = Atuatuca 3 (Amsterdam, Tongeren 2012) 1–46.
- Scheers 1983:** S. Scheers, *La Gaule Belgique. Numismatique celtique* (Louvain 1983).
- Scheers/Creemers 2012:** S. Scheers / G. Creemers, *The Gold Hoard of Heers*. In: N. Roymans / G. Creemers / S. Scheers (eds), *Late Iron Age Gold Hoards from the Low Countries and the Caesarian Conquest of Northern Gaul*. Amsterdam Arch. Stud. 18 = Atuatuca 3 (Amsterdam, Tongeren 2012) 125–170.
- Shaw in print:** B. D. Shaw, *The Exterminating Angel: The Roman Imperial State and its Indigenous Peoples*. In: F. Yarbrough / M. Maas (eds), *States and their Indigenous Peoples* (Norman OK, in print).
- Taylor 2023:** T. S. Taylor, *Caesar's Gallic Genocide. A Case Study in Ancient Mass Violence*. In: B. Kiernan / T. M. Lemos / T. S. Taylor (eds), *The Cambridge World History of Genocide. 1: Genocide in the Ancient, Medieval and Premodern Worlds* (Cambridge, New York 2023) 309–329.
- Torbâgyi 2008:** M. Torbâgyi, *Questions of Coin Use in the Late Celtic Transdanubia*. Cerc. Num. 14, 2008, 203–212.
- Vanderhoeven 1996:** A. Vanderhoeven, *The Earliest Urbanisation in Northern Gaul. Some Implications of Recent Research in Tongres*. In: N. Roymans (ed.), *From the Sword to the Plough. Three Studies on the Earliest Romanisation of Northern Gaul*. Amsterdam Arch. Stud. 1 (Amsterdam 1996) 189–260.
- Van Genechten/Pawelczak 2024:** B. Van Genechten / P. Pawelczak, *Nota Tongeren, Noordoostelijke omleidingsweg fase II. Deel 1: Verslag van Resultaten*. BAAC Vlaanderen Rapport 2688 (Evergem 2024). <https://loket.onroerenderfgoed.be/archeologie/notas/notas/28601/bijlagen/127974> (5.3.2025).
- Vanvinckenroye 2001:** W. Vanvinckenroye, *Über Atuatuca, Cäsar und Ambiorix*. In: M. Lodewijckx (ed.), *Belgian Archaeology in a European Setting II*. Acta Arch. Lovaniensis, Monogr. 13 (Leuven 2001) 63–67.
- Verhoeven 2008:** M. P. F. Verhoeven, *Studieopdracht naar een archeologische evaluatie van het plateau van Caestert (Riemst, prov. Limburg)*. RAAP Rapport 1769 (Weert 2008).
- Wigg-Wolf 2019:** D. Wigg-Wolf, *First contacts. Münzen und Militär im spätrepublikanischen Nordgallien*. In: S. Bödecker / E. Cott / M. Brüggler (eds), *Spätlatène- und frühkaiserzeitliche Archäologie zwischen Maas und Rhein*. Mat. Bodendenkmalpfl. Rheinland 28 (Bonn 2019) 135–153.
- Wightman 1985:** E. M. Wightman, *Gallia Belgica* (London 1985).

# Zusammenfassung

## Résumé

### Auf der Suche nach Caesars *Aduatuca* im Territorium der Eburonen

Das Volk der Eburonen, das im niederrheinischen Grenzgebiet im nördlichen Gallien angesiedelt war, hat seit vielen Generationen die Aufmerksamkeit von Historiker\*innen und Archäolog\*innen auf sich gezogen. Einerseits, weil sie während ihres Aufstandes im Jahr 54 v. Chr. an einem Ort namens *Aduatuca* erfolgreich eine große römische Armee besiegten. Andererseits, weil sie durch Caesars Rachefeldzüge mit genozidalen Zügen in den Jahren 53 und 51 v. Chr. fast vollständig vernichtet wurden. Eine wichtige Frage für ein umfassendes Verständnis von Caesars Konfrontation mit den Eburonen ist die Lage des römischen Winterlagers und des Schlachtfelds von *Aduatuca*. In diesem Artikel fassen wir die aktuelle Debatte zusammen und stellen eine neue Hypothese vor, die *Aduatuca* in Tongeren-Berg (prov. Limburg/BE) lokalisiert, einer Hügelkuppe direkt nordöstlich der römischen *civitas*-Hauptstadt *Aduatuca Tungrorum*/Tongeren. Nach den numismatischen Belegen zu urteilen, scheint Berg als zentraler Ort des Eburonischen Gemeinwesens fungiert zu haben, eine Hypothese, die in den nächsten Jahren durch weitere archäologische Untersuchungen überprüft werden kann.

### À la recherche de l'*Aduatuca* de César dans le territoire des Eburones

Le peuple des Eburones, qui vivait dans la zone frontalière du Rhin inférieur dans le nord de la Gaule, a attiré l'attention des historiens et des archéologues depuis de nombreuses générations. D'une part, parce qu'ils ont réussi à vaincre une grande armée romaine à un endroit appelé *Aduatuca* lors de leur révolte de 54 av. J.-C., d'autre part parce qu'ils ont été presque entièrement détruits par les campagnes de vengeance à caractère génocidaire menées par César en 53 et 51 av. J.-C. Pour bien comprendre l'affrontement entre César et les Eburones, il est important de savoir où se trouvait le camp d'hiver romain et le site de la bataille d'*Aduatuca*. Dans cet article, nous résumons le débat actuel et présentons une nouvelle hypothèse qui situe *Aduatuca* à Tongeren-Berg (prov. Limburg/BE), une colline située directement au nord-est de la capitale de la *civitas* romaine d'*Aduatuca Tungrorum*/Tongeren. A en juger par les preuves numismatiques, Berg semble avoir fonctionné comme une place centrale du peuple éburonéenne, une hypothèse qui pourra être testée par de nouvelles recherches archéologiques dans les années à venir.

## Schlüsselwörter

### Mots-clés

Belgien / *Aduatuca* / Tongeren / Caesar / Eburonen / zentraler Ort  
Belgique / *Aduatuca* / Tongres / César / Eburones / place centrale