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Rome's hunger for metals. Roman mining in and outside the provinces and the part of the Roman military

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Session Abstract: The development of raw material sources, especially mineral resources, was one of the main motives of Roman expansion plans. This is exemplified by the conquests of Britain (zinc) and Dacia (gold). Rome had a special requirement of raw materials, especially shortly before or during the establishment of a province. Especially at those times it was necessary to guarantee the supply of the extensive military juggernaut and to establish the infrastructure and, of course, to stabilise the state finances.

Isotope analyses on lead finds from the early military sites of the Augustan occupation in Germania revealed, the Eifel and Sauerland as regions of origin for example. For this reason, prospecting must already have been carried out in advance of military operations. Further examples are known from the Iberian Peninsula (e.g. Las Medulas ESP, Três Minas PRT), from Britain, from the Balkan region, from eastern Egypt or the foreland of the Germanic provinces, e.g. along the river Lahn (D).

This session looks at the development of Roman provinces from the perspective of exploitable resources and Roman mining. Archaeological, (in)written and scientific sources will be used for this purpose. What role did the military play in the exploitation of the deposits? Were the mining areas militarily secured? In addition, the question must be asked to what extent and under what circumstances Roman troops and state institutions became directly active. When or under what circumstances was the actual mining of raw resources carried out directly by Roman soldiers or organised through contractual partners of the indigenous population? Are there examples where the military was initially active and later took over indigenous contractual partners, in the sense of "start-up production"? Can increased mining activity also be seen in times of strained state finances?