

Selection and rejection in the Fuente de Cantos hoard

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In *Acta Numismatica* 12 (1982), 97-125, Julia Chinchilla Sánchez publishes a hoard of 387 denarii, out of a slightly larger number, closing in 46/45 BC. Her Figure 3 (= Figure 1 here) conveniently displays the relative frequency estimated for the issues of the period in *Roman Republican Coinage* (1974), 641-707, compared with that actually attested by the specimens in the hoard. In general, it emerges that the predictive value of the model propounded in *RRC* turns out to be high. As one would expect, the issues of the closing years of the hoard are under-represented in it, since they had not had time to stabilise in circulation. As one would expect also, the issues earlier than the divide of the 90s BC are likewise under-represented. But the author also draws attention to the under-representation of the issues of 88 and 87 BC, of which there are only two pieces of Cn. Lentulus and one of L. Rubrius Dossenus. The issues of 89 BC are also thinly represented (I attach no significance to the alleged over-representation of the issues of 82 and 79 BC.) Her explanation is that the issues of that year did not reach Spain, because of the outbreak of hostilities between Marius and Sulla.

But the real explanation is quite different. The issues of 89 to 87 BC were debased (*RRC*, 569-72; confirmed by D. R. Walker, in *Metallurgy in Numismatics* I (London, 1980), 62); they were only about 94.5 % pure, instead of about 97.5 %, and it is quite clear that we have here a case, unique as far as I know for the Roman Republic, of the owner of a hoard deliberately rejecting even mildly debased pieces.