

The very beginning of Europe?

Cultural and Social Dimensions of Early-Medieval Migration and Colonisation
(5th-8th century)

Archaeology in Contemporary Europe

CONFERENCE BRUSSELS - MAY 17-19 2011

Relicta Monografieën 7

Archeologie, Monumenten- en Landschapsonderzoek in Vlaanderen
Heritage Research in Flanders



Internationales Sachsensymposium
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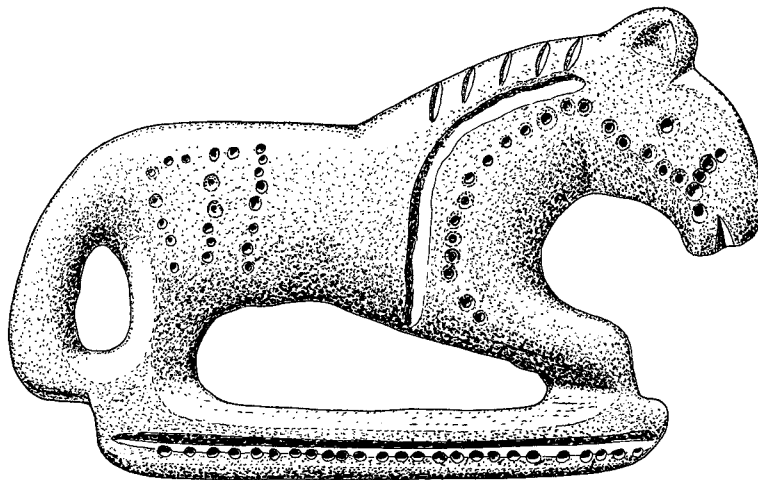
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Index

9 Foreword

II The legacy of Yann Hollevoet

2I Beyond migration and ethnicity? Introduction to the theme of “The very beginning of Europe? Cultural and Social Dimensions of Early Medieval Migration and Colonisation (5th - 8th centuries)”

Dries Tys – VUB, Brussels, Belgium

SESSION I: THE ISSUE OF MIGRATION: THEORETICAL APPROACHES

29 Archaeology and Migration: Rethinking the debate

Guy Halsall - University of York, United Kingdom

4I The status of horses in late Avar-period society in the Carpathian Basin

Ilona Bede – Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, France

5I Probable Frankish burials of the sixth century AD at Saint-Dizier (Haute-Marne, Champagne-Ardenne, France)

Marie-Cécile Truc – Inrap/CRAHAM UMR6273/Université de Caen, France

SESSION II: IDENTITY AND LANDSCAPE

69 Settled landscapes – a regional perspective from early Anglo-Saxon Kent

Stuart Brookes UCL – Institute of Archaeology, London, United Kingdom

8I Early medieval communities around the North Sea: a ‘maritime culture’?

Pieterjan Deckers, Dries Tys – VUB, Brussels, Belgium

89 The ‘Slavonisation’ of the southwestern Baltic area: Preliminary report on the investigations in the Pyritz region

Sebastian Messal – Roman-Germanic Commission, Frankfurt/Main, Germany

Bartłomiej Rogalski – National Museum Szczecin, Poland

10I Forms of late antique settlement in Lusitania

Adriaan De Man – Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal

109 Continuity within change

Two sites in the borders of the former Iceni territory in East Anglia

Penelope Walton Rogers – Anglo-Saxon Laboratory, York, United Kingdom

SESSION III: IDENTITY AND URBAN CENTRES

- 125 Tournai, capitale du Bas-Empire et évolution au Haut Moyen-Âge**
Raymond Brulet – *Directeur du CRAN et pdt. de l'Institut INCAL, Belgium*
- 135 The Late Roman and early medieval urban topography of Tongeren**
Alain Vanderhoeven – *Flanders Heritage Agency, Brussels, Belgium*
- 147 New light on the origins, development and decline of the Middle Saxon trading settlement of Lundenwic**
Lyn Blackmore – *Museum of London, United Kingdom*
- 159 Barcelone, de sede regia à capitale comtale: continuités et changements**
Julia Beltrán de Heredia Bercero – *Musée d'Histoire de Barcelone, Spain*

SESSION IV: MATERIAL CULTURE. HOW ARE IDENTITIES REFLECTED IN THEIR MATERIAL CULTURE?

- 187 Questioning Migration. Continuity and change in the cemetery at Rhenen (4th – 8th century AD)**
Annemarieke Willemsen – *National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden, The Netherlands*
- 197 Who were buried at the Broechem cemetery? (5th - 7th century AD, prov. of Antwerp, Belgium)**
Rica Annaert – *Flanders Heritage Agency, Brussels, Belgium*
- 205 Céramiques et verres mérovingiens dans la vallée mosane: miroir d'une civilisation en evolution (du milieu Ve au VIIIe siècle)**
Line Van Wersch – *Flanders Heritage Agency, Brussels, Belgium*
- 215 Hand-made pottery along the Channel coast and parallels from the Scheldt valley**
Jean Soulat – *Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sor-bonne, Paris, France*
Anne Bocquet-Liénard – *Craham of centre de recherches archéologiques et historiques anciennes et médiévales, France*
Xavier Savary – *SDAC, Service Archéologie du conseil général du Calvados, France*
Vincent Hincker, *SDAC, Service Archéologie du conseil général du Calvados, France*

POSTERS

- 227 Early metallic artefacts of adornment in Portugal**
Andreia Arezes – *University of Porto, Portugal*
- 237 Merovingian reuse of Bronze Age barrows at Beerse-Krommenhof (prov. of Antwerp, Belgium)**
Stephan Delaruelle, Bart De Smaele, Catherina Thijs, Simon Verdegem, Sofie Scheltjens, Jef Van Doninck – *AdAK, Belgium*
Rica Annaert – *Flanders Heritage Agency, Brussels, Belgium*
- 243 L'établissement germanique du Bas-Empire à Baelen/Nereth, province de Liège (Belgique)**
Frédéric Hanut, Claire Goffioul & Eric Goemaere – *Archéologue, Direction de l'Archéologie. Service public de Wallonie, Belgium*
- 255 Cultural discontinuity and the migration hypothesis. The 6th-century Slavic migration in the light of new archaeological finds from Bohemia**
Nad'a Profantová – *Institute of Archaeology Prague, Czech Republic*
- 265 The rise and fall of a Frankish intention. The early history of a frontier site between Saxons and Slavs on the river Elbe**
Jens Schneeweiss – *University of Göttingen, Germany*

Foreword

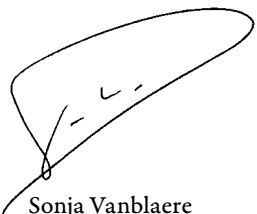
This volume of *Relicta* presents the proceedings of the international symposium *The very beginning of Europe? Cultural and Social Dimensions of Early Medieval Migration and Colonisation (5th – 8th century)*, which took place in Brussels from 17 to 19 May 2011. Both the symposium and this publication are framed within the five-year European project *Archaeology in Contemporary Europe* (EU Culture Programme 2007 – 2012). In 2007 the then Flemish Heritage Institute (since 2012 subsumed into the Flanders Heritage Agency), joined this European network, which is coordinated by the French Institut National de Recherches Archéologiques Préventives (INRAP), along with thirteen other partners. The project was instigated against the background of the European Malta Convention. Aims of this treaty are to embed archaeology into the planning and development process, and to encourage international cooperation between archaeologists across Europe. The *Archaeology in Contemporary Europe* or ACE project focusses on the role, responsibilities, significance and visibility of professional archaeology in Europe. By exchanging ideas and expertise the partners aim to answer a wide range of questions: how do we identify the significance of the past and how do we make this relevant to the present? How does modern-day archaeology operate? How can methods and practice be compared and shared? Who are today's archaeologists? How many are there and what motivates them? How does one become a professional archaeologist? How do we communicate archaeology to the wider public? And how can we make archaeology fascinating for society, both today and tomorrow?

Within the four main ACE themes, the Flanders Heritage Agency carried out a number of activities. Firstly, an international workshop titled 'Digital Management in Archaeology' (2009) as part of the theme 'Comparative Practices in Archaeology'; secondly a study of the evolution of the archaeologist in Flanders (2010-11) within the theme 'The Archaeological Profession' and thirdly the publication of a children's book titled *De archeoloog* (The archaeologist), with Clavis Publishers (2011), within the 'Public Outreach' theme. Within the same theme, the ACE partners jointly organised a photographic exhibition on the archaeological profession. This exhibition currently travels around Flanders and Europe.

The 2011 international symposium on issues surrounding early medieval migration and colonisation, of which this publication contains the proceedings, falls within the theme of 'The Significance of the Past'. Delegates from across Europe took active part in the symposium, both as speakers and as authors. From the picture that emerges from their stories it is clear that migration and colonisation are timeless phenomena and have no geographic restrictions. The problems surrounding aspects such as ethnicity, acculturation, social acceptance, conflict, etc. do not appear to have changed dramatically over the centuries. As noted by Leo Lucassen, in his evening lecture on the 18th of May, the urge to roam and the need to know what lies beyond the horizon appear to be key elements of the human existence. This item is the symposium's contribution to the theme 'The Significance of the Past': by enhancing their knowledge of past societies, archaeologists will obtain better insight into the evolution of human behaviour and how and why this evolution influences our current way of life.

By way of posthumous recognition, the scientific committee of this symposium wishes to dedicate this volume to their colleague Yann Hollevoet, who passed away earlier this year. The early medieval period had a special place in his heart; more importantly, it was Yann who put this period on the map of inland Sandy Flanders. Yann not only contributed to the symposium as a member of the committee but also as a speaker, through his lecture titled *Material culture and ethnicity: the evidence of coastal Flanders*. Sadly, although it was one of the last things he did, it was not possible to include his talk in these proceedings.

The Flanders Heritage Agency was an active and fervent partner in the ACE-project with a whole team of collaborators under the proficient coordination of Rica Annaert. Rica also organized the ACE-colloquium, chaired the scientific committee and ensured that the proceedings are available within the time limits of the project. I want to thank and congratulate Rica and all other contributors for their efforts and the quality of their work.



Sonja Vanblaere
Administrateur-generaal, Flanders Heritage Agency

The legacy of Yann Hollevoet

What does a scientist leave behind, when his life on earth is exchanged for a stay in another, unknown, perhaps non-existent place? Preferably not only a pile of publications but also some insights, practical advice, experiences generously shared, hopeful wishes and a basket of plans never realised. Now and then, this legacy is not only of use for a small group of contemporaneous or future scientists, but also proves to be of benefit (consciously or not) for a wider audience. Ideally, colleagues and public share a feeling of appreciation for all that hard work. At that moment the legacy becomes heritage, in the sense of ‘things from a near or distant past we take an interest in, admire aesthetically, assign a value to, and that we hence want to preserve at all means’. The strength of that definition lies in its vagueness: ‘interest’, ‘beauty’, ‘value’, ‘things’. Not coincidentally, these terms also come into play when evaluating the legacy of archaeologist Yann Hollevoet (Ostend, 1962 - Ostend, 2012).



Yann Hollevoet studied archaeology at the University of Ghent at a time when, for that field, a separate line of education did not yet exist. In 1985, he finished his studies in ‘History, option Oldest Times’ with the presentation of a six(!)-volume work entitled “*Archeologisch onderzoek in de gemeente Oudenburg: prospectie, analyse, synthese*” (Archaeological investigation of Oudenburg: prospectation, analysis, synthesis). The area around Bruges was clearly the centre of his scientific interest and that it would almost never cease to be. A PhD project around the theme “*Het Houtland in de Romeinse en vroegmiddeleeuwse periode: continuïteit of cesuur? Archeologische bijdrage tot de bewoningsgeschiedenis van zandig Binnen-Vlaanderen*” (The Houtland area in Roman and early medieval times: continuity or cultural divide? An archaeological contribution to the occupation history of inland Sandy Flanders) prolonged his stay at the university, from 1986 to 1990. During that period, Yann and his *compagnon de route* Bieke Hillewaert undertook several archaeological rescue operations, necessitated by the expansion of the harbour of Bruges and other building projects in the area. Short reports about this work were published in series such as *Westvlaamse Archaeologica* or the chronicle *Archeologie*, published by the ‘*Nationale Dienst voor Opgravingen*’ (National Service for Archaeology) and, after its regionalisation, the ‘*Instituut voor het Archeologisch Patrimonium (IAP)*’ (Flemish Heritage Institute).

In 1991, Yann started working for the IAP, further exploring his favourite study area until the end of 1999. Sites excavated during this period were reported upon in the series *Archeologie in Vlaanderen* and its successor *Relicta. Archeologie, Monumenten en Landschapszorg in Vlaanderen*. The most important excavations of that period took place at Ettelgem, Oostkamp, Oudenburg, Roksem, Sint-Andries (Brugge), Snellegem, Varsenare and Zerkegem. During that period, Yann was also responsible for the archaeological watching briefs that accompanied the construction of a pipeline in the province of West-Flanders. At the start of this project, the attention for archaeology was so minimal that it gave the term ‘rescue archaeology’ an even more desperate, fatal sound than it already had.

In 2000, Yann left the IAP to become an assistant at Ghent University. Towards the end of 2002 he returned to the state services, this time to coordinate a group of colleagues that, at that time, started to develop archaeological heritage management as an independent responsibility within the Flemish governmental administration. This was certainly not an easy task. Although, in 1993, a law on archaeology had created some possibilities for managing this part of Flemish heritage, the financial framework remained a huge problem, especially because Flanders did not implement the European Treaty of Valetta (Malta). Later on, in 2006, Yann would become part of the department of ‘Spatial Planning, Housing Policy and Heritage’ and would continue his battle to ‘get Malta into the system’. He also took part in the long preparation process of new legislation on ‘Archaeology, Monuments and Landscapes’, a project still not finished.

Within the life and work of Yann Hollevoet pure research clearly was not the single focus of attention. The care and management of our heritage took an equally important place. According to Yann, research without social debate was as irrelevant as heritage management without research. On top of that, he advocated that the broader public should never be forgotten and should be

addressed on all levels. Consequently, they should also and always be invited to participate. Yann put this point of view into practice through his involvement in local heritage projects. As a member of the *'Heemkundige Kring Brugs Ommeland'*, he was one of the founders, in 1996, of the *'Werkgroep Archeologie Brugs Ommeland'* (WABO), a working group that participated in excavations in the area around Bruges, often in cooperation with the town service of archaeology. This initiative would prove to lay the foundations for the later, regional service for archaeology *'Raakvlak'*.

On the Flemish level, Yann was, in many respects, a frontrunner. He promoted preventive archaeology (when he started, still clearly 'rescue archaeology') at a time when state services and universities almost exclusively concentrated on research excavations. A situation that led to an experience with a profound impact, at the beginning of his career, when he witnessed how through the expansion of the harbour of Bruges a whole prehistoric and historic landscape was destroyed while only a group of young archaeologists (including himself) tried, as well as they could, to record the devastation. Fortunately, this pioneering work helped to change public opinion and influenced the attitude of politicians, eventually leading to the establishment of preventive archaeology as an accepted and much needed part of heritage management in Flanders. In the early years, Yann tried to 'manage his heritage' without much help from legislation or other structures. His weapons were the results of prospection (field walking) campaigns, the aerial photographs of Jacques Semey and the local newspapers, reporting on imminent building activities. This way of working meant a style shift compared to what was then commonplace in archaeological circles and even within his own institute.

This was not the only aspect of archaeology, innovative for Flanders, that Yann brought to wider attention. His inspiration came out of the archaeology of the UK and Scandinavia, where new ideas were developing about the translation of excavation data into the understanding of the past. Examples are the framework of cultural anthropology and the need for theoretical structure when interpreting archaeological finds. Consequently, even when Yann was a supporter of in-depth studies of material remains and an expert on early medieval ceramics, for him, an artefact remained 'not so much a pot, more a way of life' (Cumberpatch and Blinkhorn 1997). Additionally, experimental archaeology, be it the production of pottery replicas or the crafting of models of buildings excavated by himself, was (rightly) considered a useful step in helping to bridge the gap between the artefact or the archaeological feature and the person(s) originally behind it.

The scientific value of the studies of Yann Hollevoet can best be appreciated through the attention they received on an international forum. For French, British and Scandinavian colleagues, Yann was, for a long time, the only messenger through which information was received from the unknown and inaccessible, early medieval country of Flanders. The early Middle Ages (the second half of the first millennium) in the *pagus flandriensis*, the political entity that would eventually become the county of Flanders, were his core business. One of his last public speeches started with the statement: "Light into the dark!". And that is indeed what he has achieved and how he will be remembered scientifically. Together with Bieke, Yann developed - for the first time - a clear view on the Merovingian and Carolingian occupation of the inland border of the Flemish coastal plain. Most parts of Flanders still lack such a corpus of interpretation for the Dark Ages and his achievements received international acclaim. Lifting the results from rescue archaeology to a higher interpretational level, Yann attracted the attention of renowned scientists from across the Channel, such as Alan Vince and Helena Hamerow, and published his results together with them. Meanwhile, he was also active within the French scientific community, with a contribution about early medieval ceramics at the famous colloquium of Outreau as a milestone. In his own country, Yann continued to publish his excavation results in reports characterised by strongly built interpretations, corroborated by a broad literacy.

The history of the Roman occupation of the border between the coastal area and inland Sandy Flanders also benefited from the pioneering work of Yann Hollevoet. Although he sometimes admitted 'not to be fond of the Romans', he still enlarged our knowledge about these people's impact upon the area around Bruges through the excavation of native farmsteads and cemeteries. The campaign at 'the Refuge' (Bruges) produced the first completely excavated native settlement from Roman times for Flanders. In terms of funeral archaeology, the 500 Roman cremation graves of Oudenburg were a landmark.

During the last years, Yann was somewhat less active on the scientific publication front. Still, his contributions in books as *Vondsten uit vuur* (Finds from the fire), about the Roman cemetery at Jabbeke, and *Op het raakvlak van twee landschappen* (Where two landscapes meet), about the earliest occupation history of the area around Bruges, present a synthesis of the knowledge and ideas he collected over 30 years of fieldwork and research. The same will be true for a contribution in a work of synthesis that will appear posthumously at Oxford.

Important parts of the legacy of Yann Hollevoet thus merit to be preserved: ‘interest’, ‘beauty’, ‘value’ and ‘things’, without exception aspects close to his heart. His insatiable scientific eagerness to learn, not to be remedied by yard-lengths of books, must serve as an example, while his publications will stimulate even more curiosity about the past. Equally important was his love for his study subjects. Yann was fond of the area around Bruges, of the early Middle Ages, and of the pots he excavated. The latter especially for the story they told but also because of their sober design, making them things of sheer beauty. It was no coincidence that Yann’s office desk was decorated with early medieval replicas. Always present were also the care for our heritage, the drive to convince people that this had a higher value, and the observation, at the same time, that it remained a difficult, sometimes hopeless battle, knowing that ‘all things of value are defenceless’ (Lucebert 1974). Finally, there were the ‘things’, the elementary particles of heritage that are difficult to grasp without a formal mind frame. Yann called for more theory in Flemish archaeology; it would bring structure in the widely diverging and even opposing thoughts and ideas wandering around without guidance or direction. Not everybody saw the use of this approach and followed his line of reasoning. However, now Yann is no longer around, we can perhaps start trying to grasp what he was actually aiming at.

ANTON ERVYNCK (Flanders Heritage) & WIM DE CLERCQ (Ghent University)

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Beyond migration and ethnicity?

Introduction to the theme of “The very beginning of Europe? Cultural and Social Dimensions of Early Medieval Migration and Colonisation (5th – 8th centuries)”

Dries Tys¹

This volume deals with the archaeology of a key period that forms a turning point in the history of Europe, the 4th to the 7th century, during which Roman society would develop into medieval society. Due to the problematic historiographic and ideological context, which has had a strong influence on the representation of this period (see below), it received less and less attention from researchers during the second half of the 20th century. However, over the last 15 years, debates around early medieval society and material culture have re-ignited thanks to historians such as Mike McCormick, Chris Wickham, Bonnie Effros and Guy Halsall, and archaeologists such as Catherine Hills, Martin Carver, Andrew Reynolds, Frans Theuws and many others.

Doubtlessly the renewed attention given to this period is partly the result of a number of present-day issues. Over the last 20 years, issues surrounding migration, cultural integration and identity have been central to political and cultural debates in Europe, and it would seem logical to seek parallels in the one period that is strongly associated with the issues of integration of new cultural groups in an old world, i.e. the time of the mass migrations that led to the fall of the Roman empire. Previous researchers have ominously labelled the 4th- to 7th-century interval the ‘Dark Ages’, the ‘time of the mass migrations’ or the ‘Migration Period’, etc.

Even today, the 4th- to 7th-century period is associated with migration and colonisation by entire tribes and cultural strife between two extreme opponents: civilised antiquity and barbarian ethnic tribes, such as the Franks, Lombards and Visigoths. These Barbarian mass migrations were to cause the downfall of the glorious Roman culture – on Christmas eve 476 AD, to be precise. Migration and ethnic conflict were put forward as the causes of large-scale cultural change (figure 1).

However, this historical construct is based on restricted and one-sided written traditions by members of the Christian Late

Roman and early medieval elite who can be held responsible for the creation of the ethnic labels as they have become known. For example the notion of the Saxons as external ethnic colonisers of England is highly problematic and appears to be a 6th-century construct by Bede (and other authors) (Wood 1990: 96). This is typically what happens: group identities are most clearly defined in terms of how they differ from how other groups define themselves (Hills 2011: 3, see also: Halsall 2007, Effros 2003, Theuws 2003). Or, as Geoff Emberling put it: “Tribal names given by outsiders do not often reflect shared self-identification by those so-labeled” (1997: 297).

Although these texts, with their strongly ethnic discourse, barely had any relevance to 4th- to 7th-century population and society, their historical impact was significant as a result of how they were received throughout more recent history. Particularly during the 19th century, the writings of Bede, Gregory and others were taken literally and followed faithfully in the nationalistic and teleological historiography so typical of the period. Territories and tribal alliances with constructed ethnic labels were necessarily associated with the new nation states, which were seen as having been colonised and/or determined by them. Typical examples include the Franks and Clovis in France, Tacitus’ Germanic tribes in Germany and the Anglo-Saxons in England (Theuws & Hiddink 1997: 70).

Therefore, it is vital to pay close attention to the historiographic and conceptual formation processes of these ethnic tribes and territories. Nevertheless, the negative ethnic constructs and associations surrounding the early medieval barbarian tribes have had a lasting effect. (Effros 2003: 6). So powerful is this legacy that even today we still ask questions regarding the role of migration and ethnicity as drivers of historical change.

However, between the 1800s and the 1970s, medieval archaeology was seen as less important than history and art history. This poses a large problem. Medieval archaeology merely illustrated

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FIG. 1 The cliché representation of poor barbarian tribes migrating *en masse* in their wooden carts (note the solid wooden wheels!) from the wilds of Germania to the civilised Roman world, of which they would cause the downfall due to their primitiveness. This drawing appeared in a book popularising the national history of Belgium, which until the 1980s would determine the way generations of Belgians viewed their history (copyright Artis Historia).



the historical master narrative, which was relied upon to explain the temporal and spatial distribution of objects and the shapes they took. In other words, the content, the meaning of objects, styles and shapes, was placed entirely within the framework of the story as told by the written sources.

This fitted perfectly within the tradition of the classification of archaeological material that was prevalent in the second half of the 19th century. Artefacts were divided into chrono-typological groups which were then plotted onto distribution maps. The distribution of artefacts, styles and shapes was interpreted as the distribution of cultures and, by extension, of the ethnic groups associated with them. Conversely, artefacts with the same typological classification were seen as part of homogeneous cultures and ethnic groups. Naturally, the dynamics of the temporal and spatial distribution were the result of migration, or of one group dominating another, forcing its material culture on the subjugated group, thus erasing or influencing other styles and shapes. This paradigm, known in archaeology as cultural diffusion (or cultural history), was heavily criticised and refuted as early as the 1930s by Gordon Childe (see below).

Following the same line of thinking, diffusionism was also swiftly applied to objects found in early medieval cemeteries. Stylistic differences between jewellery and other artefacts from early medieval graves were associated with different cultural and ethnic groups. Thus stylistic classifications became carriers of historical ethnic identities and tribes: “We have given objects ethnic labels on the basis of the historical sources whose literal truth we have come to doubt” (Hills 2011: 7). The distribution of these ethnic markers was then associated with information regarding the migration of Franks, Saxons, Lombards etc., as stated in the written sources.

Evidently, this spread of styles and artefacts was entirely the result of ‘migration’. A fine example of this approach is *La civilisation Mérovingienne, d’après les sépultures, les textes et le laboratoire* by Edouard Salin (1959), in which a ‘Merovingian’ style is

translated into civilisation and culture, as if it were a Late Stone Age lithic culture. In her important study of identity and ethnicity at early medieval cemeteries in Bavaria, Susanne Hakenbeck demonstrates clearly how this ethnic-diffusionist paradigm not only leans heavily on a literal reading and understanding of the few written sources, but also to what extent this ethnic paradigm in itself is based on an inherently circular argument (Hakenbeck 2011: 39 and fig. 2).

The cultural-diffusionist paradigm was heavily criticised as early as the 1930s by Vere Gordon Childe and during the post-World War II decades, by the proponents of the New Archaeology. The main criticisms are that an archaeological culture is more than a collection of art-historical types and stylistic differences, that first and foremost it is defined by common internal social practices (such as distinction and emulation) rather than purely external influences (such as migration and cultural domination). Nor are archaeological cultures superior or inferior, or homogeneous and monolithic, but chronological, geographical and socially specific.

It is strange that the diffusionist ethnic paradigm was refuted so much sooner elsewhere in the archaeological world, or, conversely, that it continued to influence perceptions and research questions so much longer in early medieval archaeology, even if the conceptual issues surrounding this paradigm had been known for some considerable time.

In a recent contribution, Webster (2011) demonstrates how perilous it is to associate style directly with ethnicity. Like many phenomena, stylistic visual culture and stylistic discourse are the result of cultural formation processes, and due attention should be paid to perception, reception, imitation and transfer of style and stylistic ideas among social rather than ethnic groups. Webster demonstrates nicely how what is known as the Anglo-Saxon style in fact evolved out of three 5th-century stylistic trends that are emphatically not ethnically determined. On the contrary, many aspects can be traced back to Late

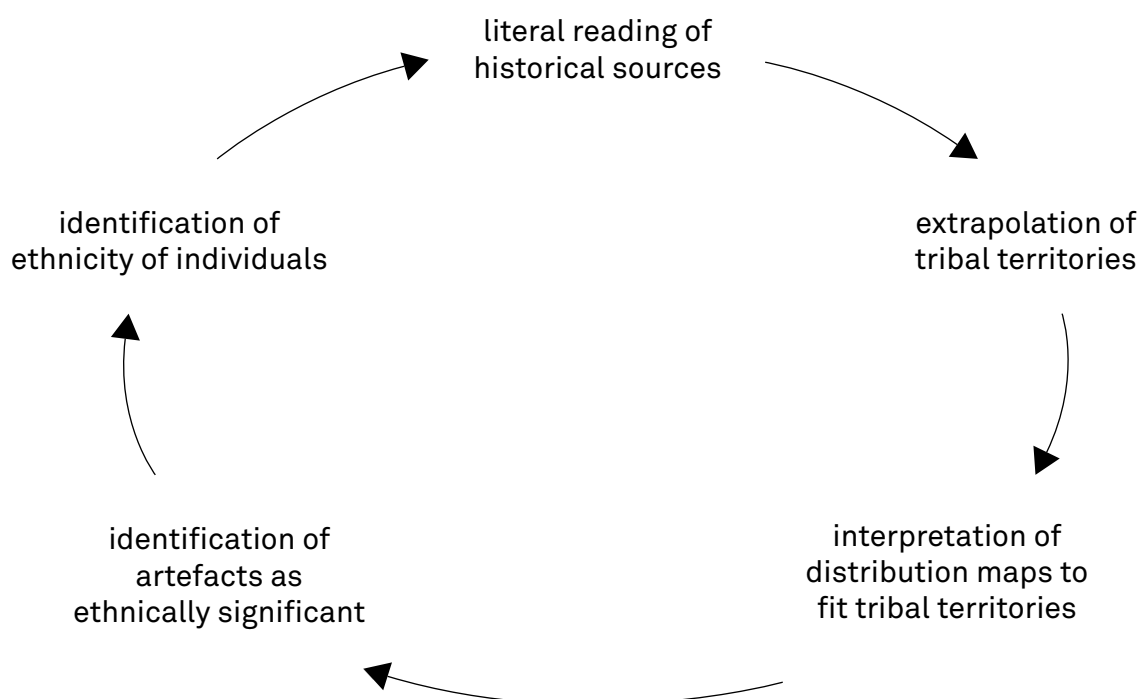


FIG. 2 Schematic representation of the circular argument presented in the traditional ethnic approach to grave goods from several cemeteries in southern Germany (Hakenbeck 2011: 39: “The sources are thought to provide a framework of facts and dates into which archaeological evidence can be fitted. Fragments of information gained from historical sources are taken out of context and used to identify the movements and settlement areas of the barbarian peoples. Distribution maps of specific artefact types then apparently identified these areas on the ground. The next step is to identify the ethnicity of individuals by making a connection between these artefacts and the identity of those that were buried with them. Once the tribal areas became populated with people, these people then turned fully-clothed into the actors mentioned in the historical sources.”).

Roman visual culture. Style is continually being negotiated between those who produce decorative art objects and those who use them, and in this process, factors such as ideology, social emulation and meaning should be taken into account rather than provenance.

In recent years, attempts have been made to investigate descent and ethnicity through mitochondrial DNA. Cutting-edge research has shown the importance of being careful when considering the application range of these data, and particularly their implications. Present-day DNA is the result of centuries worth of formation processes and selection processes that stretch back millennia, versus influences and migration. Any attempt to demonstrate early medieval ethnicity on the basis of these formation processes is fraught with problems. Investigation of the DNA from skeletons from a number of 5th- to 7th-century cemeteries in England mainly yielded information regarding the Mesolithic repopulation of England (Moreland 2010, Hedges 2011). Supposed early medieval migration and differences cannot be demonstrated. It must always be borne in mind that ethnicity is not biologically determined and that any quest for a link between DNA and ancestry leads through a minefield (Burmeister 2000, Effros 2003).

Therefore, we must adopt a critical approach to early medieval concepts and perceptions regarding ethnic groups and migrations, and be bold enough to deconstruct them. The

archaeological evidence must be re-examined, without preconceptions. The traditional discourse of migrations of ethnic groups is a loaded historical discourse, a master narrative that does not heed archaeological arguments but does (aim to) determine the content of archaeological research. Early medieval texts and artefacts are the products of the same past and society, but seem to document different phenomena or other aspects of the same phenomena. Excavations should start from research questions on the material culture and lifestyle of early medieval societies, independent from historical preconceptions.

To quote Guy Halsall in this volume: “Ethnic identities such as Frank, Lombard, Saxon, Goth, Frisian or Alaman could not and could never emerge from the archaeological record on their own, no matter how many computers the data were put through”. Perhaps the focus on migration says more about our current issues than past historical realities...

It is becoming increasingly clear that the importance of ethnic differences and mass migrations of all kinds of ‘tribes’ during the 4th- to 7th-century interval is highly relative and should not be given too much weight as an indicator of the transformation from Late Roman society (Wood 1990, Theuvs & Hidink 1997, Hills 2003 and 2011, Moreland 2010, Halsall 2007 and this volume and many others, Goetz 2003; Brather 2004, Curta 2007).

The 4th- to 7th-century interval is not a period of stark differences but rather one of gradual evolution, during which people attempted to build on Roman culture and society, albeit in a new political context. Departing from a social and economic point of view, already Henri Pirenne (1937) saw these centuries as a sort of Late Antique period; according to him, the real change did not take place until the 8th century, although he wrongly used ethnic arguments to underpin this (Arab control over North Africa).

As early as during the Classical Roman Period, there was contact between the regions east of the Rhine and the Roman empire. This was mostly peaceful, focussing on the exchange of luxury arts and crafts objects (gift exchange) as well as goods and services (Theuvs 2003). The so-called *barbaricum* and the Roman world were not separate worlds and the elites of the groups from the *barbaricum* were in close contact with Roman courtly culture. It is not surprising that Childeric (certainly his descendants who determined his burial culture) referred directly to the Byzantine courtly culture in his concepts of dress.

There are also no indications that the agricultural landscape was deserted, that the so-called Gallo-Roman population fled Gaul *en masse* or was deported, nor that there would have been a demographic break (see also Hills 2003 for England). Most towns continued to exist, albeit with a strongly modified conceptual role, and in those urban centres, churches were built after examples found in Rome and Constantinople. As said, stylistic trends in arts and crafts had evolved out of Late Antique stylistic developments and motifs, in combination with a number of Germanic motifs (Moreland 2010).

The choices behind the application and consumption of these styles were the result of the construction of identities by members of the elites, often followed by the lower social classes in a top-down process of emulation. As Moreland puts it: "Material culture was integral to the process through which people constructed themselves ... and the group to which they belonged, by drawing upon a range of resources – including a belief in common ancestry and a myth of migration" (2010: 143).

The difference between early medieval and late Roman society is the fact that the administrative, political and administrative character of society became less centralist and eventually disappeared; charismatic chiefs (of whatever ethnicity) would take over as leaders of society, referring to (late-)Roman systems of governance (rex, consul, bishop). The fact that eventually, in the course of the following centuries, geographic mobility grew across Europe is more the result of a series of developments than the cause.

In the context of this debate, is it crucial to search for new directions and research questions surrounding the notion of identity during this important formative phase of the early medieval period. In this we must not be led by traditional dramatic images of catastrophic migrations and ethnic colonisations that were to herald a 'new beginning' for Europe. We must base ourselves on a new analysis and interpretation of artefacts and material culture, so that our thinking is not guided by traditional frameworks. The artefacts (from little objects like dress accessories or cooking pots to landscapes)

studied in early medieval archaeology are not mere reflections of history but are active and even interactive forms of material culture that can only be understood by an integrated contextual approach.

In so doing we must not be afraid to ask questions regarding the construction of social identity and status by means of (all forms of) material culture. Identity should primarily be considered from the perspective of a search for a place in the world by means of references or resistance to shared meaning and traditions in objects, settlements, landscapes or burial rituals. Like Burmeister, we can attempt to make a distinction between material culture that can be associated with external factors and material culture that can be connected with internal societal factors (Burmeister 2000).

Externally, we find practices with an outward focus, aimed at adapting to or resisting the social agreements or modes that were prevalent in society at that point in time. Such externally focussed practices are strongly connected to social and economic conditions and contexts and are therefore sensitive to adaptation. Internal aspects of society are far less sensitive to outside influences or expectations. The social importance of those practices is less significant, unless we are dealing with practices through which a certain connectedness is expressed with traditions that are not generally accepted externally. People can have multiple identities, which are used externally to adapt to status and expectations, and internally to conform with more traditional expectations. Early medieval people may have had a socio-political identity, a military, economic, religious and even ethnic identity, and these multiple identities need not have conflicted (Burmeister 2000).

The 5th- to 7th-century burial ritual, which was by no means homogeneous and static, primarily reflected the choices of the relatives of the deceased. It was they who determined the image and perception of the deceased, thereby determining the associations and construction of the identity, for instance by using references to Christian religion or not. It was not just about how they wished the deceased to be remembered, but by making choices regarding grave goods and the layout of the grave, they also aimed to communicate their own identity to other members of the group (Effros 2003). Therefore, early medieval cemeteries necessarily contain features that reflect cultural and communal social and religious practices and burial rituals combined and interwoven with more specific, individual or contextually constructed identities.

When investigating early medieval identity and material culture, we should therefore search for those values and indicators that inform us regarding what place people aimed to take up in society, based on their practices and social strategies (adoption, adaptation and emulation). This can be reconstructed by examining how people organised dwelling, which values are reflected in which types of architecture, what goods were traded to what places, how society was reflected in the landscape, or in clothing and personal adornment, we have to investigate if and how people adapted or rejected references to social and religious 'power' – in other words, we have to look at their material culture, taking into account its specific geographical, chronological and social context.

We have therefore attempted, both at the conference and in these proceedings, to focus on issues of social structure and identity construction and phenomena such as settlement, land use and landscape, as well as the formation of cultural and political identities in the past. The contributions were selected within the four connected themes:

- I. The issue of migration: theoretical approaches;**
- II. Identity and landscape;**
- III. Identity and urban centres, and**
- IV. Material culture. How are identities reflected in their material culture?**

The selected contributions come from all over Europe and offer a critical insight into the themes addressed at the conference. Following the essential and critical theoretical contribution by professor Guy Halsall, we present a fine selection of recent finds and reinvestigations, and results of rescue archaeology and academic projects, with attention to pottery, landscape, settlements and towns, taking into account aspects of continuity and change. We hope to offer some new data and insights and thus to make a small contribution to the renewed debate surrounding the important early medieval period, free from obsolete traditional conceptualisations.

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SESSION I

The issue of migration: theoretical approaches

Archaeology and Migration: Rethinking the debate

Guy Halsall - *University of York, United Kingdom*

The status of horses in late Avar-period society in the Carpathian Basin

Ilona Bede - *Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, France*

Probable Frankish burials of the sixth century AD at Saint-Dizier (Haute-Marne, Champagne-Ardenne, France)

Marie-Cécile Truc - *Inrap/CRAHAM UMR6273/Université de Caen, France*



Archaeology and Migration: Rethinking the Debate

Guy Halsall¹

Abstract

This paper argues that, by concentrating on debating the existence or scale of migration, we are missing the really important questions about the fifth- and sixth-century migrations. These concern why they took place in the first place. After a case study concerning Anglo-Saxon settlement archaeology, the paper argues that the terms of the debate need radical rethinking. Fifth-century migration needs to be placed in a longer-term perspective looking at both sides of the divide between the 'Roman' fourth century and the 'migration-period' fifth century. We must also see the Roman and 'barbarian' regions as interlinked parts of the same world rather than as two antagonistic, opposing, confronted worlds. Doing this will not only allow a better understanding of the migrations themselves. That this is the case is suggested by a quick look at the North Sea regions. Finally, such a recasting of the debate will permit a more politically responsible contribution to modern discussions of migration.

Keywords

Migration, Early Middle Ages

1 Polarised debates

We find ourselves at a moment when it is opportune to reassess the frameworks of the debate on migration and the origins of Europe. In academic terms there is an ever-increasing body of good-quality data. Politically the debates over immigration into Europe require academic archaeologists and historians to

contribute in ethical and responsible fashion, rather than perpetuating old crude narratives that provide ammunition to xenophobes and nationalists.

In the study of these centuries around the North Sea, we have seen the production of ever more data of all sorts, better and geographically more evenly spread than hitherto, and of many forms that were unknown or poorly represented in the past. Yet, the interpretative frameworks, into which they are forced, have not developed with the same rapidity. Indeed, in some areas we seem to be going *backwards*, in our interpretations, almost as fast as techniques of recovery and analysis are going *forward*. Ironically, this retreat is covered by a smoke screen laid down by appeal to the latest scientific techniques. Politically, this is no time for a decline in the sophistication of our interpretations of the historical phenomena of migrations, their causes and consequences. This is more than an academic issue; it is one of social and political responsibility.

These points can be illustrated with a case study, my choice of which is somewhat random, and possibly unfair, but nevertheless draws out the key issues. Traditionally, changes on rural settlement sites and the new forms of building that appeared in lowland Britain the fifth and sixth centuries were ascribed to movement into the area of people from *Germania*². These changes are well known: the spread of the *Grubenhaus*, the appearance of post-built halls with confronting doorways, and so on. The similarity in building styles between lowland Britain (or England) and the North Sea areas of Germany and the Netherlands cannot be denied. However, in the 1980s, as the popularity of migration as an explanation declined, people looked more closely at the settlement data without the existence of migration governing their analyses. It was noticed that post-built houses had many of the same features, in terms of the ratio of length to breadth, etc., as some buildings on Romano-British sites. A classic article suggested that there might have been a fair amount of Romano-British input into the development of the Anglo-Saxon hall. 'How Saxon' it was asked, 'is the Saxon house?'³ The absence from Britain of the long house, the *Wohnstallhaus*, so

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² Welch 1992, 9-42.

³ James, Marshall & Millett 1985; Dixon 1982; Hodges 1989, 34-36.

familiar from North-West mainland Europe, was noted, as was the more disorderly arrangement of early Anglo-Saxon settlements when compared with the lay-out of, say, Feddersen Wierde in the fourth century⁴. With these points in mind, some authors began to question the extent to which there had been an Anglo-Saxon migration at all⁵. The 'no migration' argument finds its most extreme form in a popular volume written by the Bronze Age specialist Francis Pryor, to accompany a television series⁶. This gave voice to the idea that *perhaps* the whole idea of the Anglo-Saxon migration was an historical myth. Some, mostly younger, British Anglo-Saxonists have come close to this interpretation, often linking it to the alleged dominance or tyranny of a set of documentary historical narratives⁷.

These sorts of question were important for the development of the discipline; many of the points were either valid, or at least needed to be raised to make people look more closely at the evidence. Nonetheless, the revisionist interpretation came in for formidable critique from Helena Hamerow, who pointed out, notably, that the *Wohnstallhäuser* disappear on fifth-century mainland sites too and that fifth-century settlements in the Anglo-Saxon homelands also lost their planned lay-outs in the fifth century⁸. Thus the opponents of the migrationist reading of the settlement data were not comparing like with like. Fifth-century settlements in lowland Britain were much more like their contemporaries on the east shore of the North Sea than the critics had imagined.

The revisionist interpretation of the Anglo-Saxon settlement data rapidly went from reasonable arguments, that the new house types were more of a hybrid than people had believed, to coming close to denying that a migration had even taken place. Similarly, arguments in favour of the input of Anglo-Saxon migrants into socio-cultural change, usually (it must be said) rather less subtle even in their moderate form, soon reached the point of explaining *all* change in terms of migration and incorporating various extra, less intellectually worthy, elements⁹. The measurement of the width of doorways was alleged to show that houses were 'Anglo-Saxon' on both sides of the North Sea. I have to say that measuring doorways to prove the migration of an ethnic group, seen in fundamentally primordialist terms, does not, to me, represent a great theoretical advance from measuring skulls to the same ends, such as went on a century ago and which took place in French Merovingian archaeology until at least the 1990s¹⁰.

Similar arguments occur elsewhere within settlement archaeology. It was once proposed that the first phase of the famous Anglo-Saxon high status settlement site at Yeavering was British¹¹. The counter argument essentially involved finding parallels for the various building features, concluding that more were found on 'Anglo-Saxon' sites than elsewhere and thence declaring the phase to be 'Anglo-Saxon'¹². One really must wonder whether this is a valid means of establishing the ethnicity of a site's inhabitants. The discussion implies – essentially – that if

one can determine where material cultural traits originate geographically (or where most of them do), that will indicate the geographical roots of the people concerned. In turn, runs the implication, the geographical roots of the people concerned will provide their ethnic identity: Saxons or Britons. When reduced to a simple numerical exercise one must wonder whether it can withstand any critical scrutiny.

Other examples multiply, especially when one moves outside England. The spread of Anglo-Saxon settlement in what is now Scotland has, for example, been measured by the distribution of *Grubenhäuser*¹³. Yet, these are now known from sites right up the North Sea seaboard of Scotland as far as Moray¹⁴. Similarly, although such 'Sunken-Featured Buildings' are known in Gaul from the third century and are increasingly being discovered across Roman and post-imperial Europe, and are not known universally, either through time or region, in *Germania*, these buildings are still somehow claimed to represent unproblematically the presence of 'Germanic' newcomers, wherever these newcomers may have come from and whether or not they ever used such buildings in their homelands¹⁵. *Grubenhäuser* are known further inland in *Germania* from earlier periods,¹⁶ yet their appearance in the Saxon homelands is rarely to my knowledge explained in terms of migration. This debate sums up some principal problems with the discussion of migration around the end of the Roman Empire.

It raises a number of crucial issues. The first is polarisation. Either migration occurred and largely explains every observable change in the archaeological record, or it did not occur on any scale and so had little or no explanatory role. Frequently, even if one does not wish to take either side in this debate, one still finds oneself assigned to one or other camp. For arguing that the migrations did not bring down the Roman Empire I have been claimed to argue that the period saw only slow transformation¹⁷. For saying that various cultural forms are not evidence of migration I have been accused of denying that there were migrations. Anyone with a university post really ought to have the intelligence to be able to distinguish between the argument that a piece of evidence does not prove that migration took place, and the argument that no migration took place. The first argument might be employed as an element of the second but there is no reason at all why it needs even imply agreement with the latter.

The second issue is the debate's domination by a historical master-narrative, even in counter-migrationist work. The archaeological evidence is, crucially, simply not allowed to speak for itself, particularly when it seems to contradict a set of pre-determined ideas. This is especially visible in burial archaeology. The introduction of furnished inhumation is still regarded as an index of the appearance of 'Germanic' barbarians within a region, regardless of the fact that the archaeological record provides absolutely no *prima facie* support for the idea. Frans Theuws, Sebastian Brather and I have long made this point and it is

4 Some of these features had been noted for some time: Rahtz 1976, 58–61.

5 Hodges 1989, 42, 65–68.

6 Pryor 2004, 124–58, making heavy use of Lucy 2000.

7 Jones 1996; Lucy 2000; Williams 2002; Hills 2003, 110–111. A bizarre, explicit denial of Frankish migration can be found in Simmer 2008, 412–3.

8 Hamerow 2002, 48–51; Hamerow 1994; Hamerow 1997.

9 E.g. Hamerow 1999.

10 E.g. Simmer 1993; Schnitzler (ed.) 1997, 93.

11 Hope-Taylor 1977, 154–7, 209–13.

12 Scull 1991; Lowe 1999, 26–28.

13 Lowe 1999, 18–19. For English *Grubenhäuser*, generally, see Tipper 2000.

14 Lowe 1999, 20.

15 For Gaul, see e.g., Van Ossel 1992; Périn 2002; Peytremann 2003.

16 E.g. Waltersdorf, (Kr Königs Wusterhausen); Tornow (Kr. Calau): Donat 1983.

17 Brogiolo & Chavarría Arnau 2010, 45–48; Valenti n.d., 29.

possibly beginning to gain ground, but one only needs to look at the circular arguments and utter illogic that pervade the defences of the traditional position to see how reluctant archaeologists are to abandon it¹⁸. It is time to consider afresh other aspects of the material cultural record, like the *Grubenhäuser*, using the archaeological data similarly to see what they say on their own terms. When we do so, we should not reject their testimony if they appear (superficially) to contradict the historical master-narrative.

A third problem revealed by the debate on the origins of Anglo-Saxon settlement and building types is its attitudes towards ethnicity. This all too often remains untouched by the decades of research into the nature of ethnicity by anthropologists, sociologists and historians¹⁹. It seems still to be believed that archaeology provides some way into discovering the ethnicity of the people whose remains, funerary or otherwise, skeletal or cultural, are uncovered in the course of excavation. In 2011, it is surely time to admit that it does not. Objects do not have an ethnicity and the plotting on distribution-maps of cultural features – ritual, artefactual or in terms of building design – even where a geographical and chronological point of origin is revealed, does not yield any clear insight into the ethnicity of the people involved²⁰. While I want to stress that this is a point that ought to have been learnt by now, I also want to stress – equally clearly – that this does not mean that archaeology has nothing to say about the archaeology of the early Middle Ages, as seems (inexplicitly) to be the fear of traditionalists such as Volker Bierbrauer and Gianpietro Brogiolo²¹. Nor does it even mean that archaeology has nothing to say about ethnicity or ethnic change. It certainly does not mean that ethnicity was unimportant in the period, which is a conclusion that has wrongly been drawn from the lack of a direct correlation between the archaeological record and historically-attested ethnic groups.

The whole ethnicity debate is a manifestation of just how deeply archaeology of this period is permeated by the documentary historical master-narrative, incidentally and ironically a master-narrative of which most historians are nowadays sceptical. Ethnic identities such as Frank, Lombard, Saxon, Goth, Frisian or Alaman could not and could *never* emerge from the archaeological record on its own, no matter how many computers the data were put through²². To talk in terms of a 'Frisian' brooch or a 'Frankish' buckle automatically, and by that act alone, subordinates the archaeological record to the documentary, evaporates any claim at all to be using pure archaeological argumentation or to be following any rigorous 'Cartesian' approach to the data. However, we can still read defences of H.J. Eggers' 1950s argument that archaeology's most important role in understanding this era is through the identification and study of ethnic groups²³. Eggers famously argued that he was avoiding 'Misargumentation' but using historically-attested ethnic groups to name *any* grouping at all in the archaeological record is impossible without Misargumentation²⁴. Saying this does not represent the intrusion of some sort of new-fangled form of

post-modernist theory into early medieval archaeology; it is simply the application of logic and argumentative rigour.

Related to this is another key problem raised by the case study I mentioned: the persistence, even if often merely implicit, of Germanism, the idea of some kind of shared Germanic ethos or identity that transcends things like time and space. Thus, if *Germani* from a particular area, who have never hitherto used burial with grave-goods, settle in a specific part of the Roman Empire and furnished inhumation is found there, then that custom must be a sign of the presence of these Germanic newcomers, because other peoples within the enormous area occupied by speakers of Germanic languages, extending from Scandinavia to the Ukraine, used this rite at some point (whether or not contemporaneously or even, on occasion, in a prior era) and the rite can therefore be adjudged 'Germanic'. The same goes for other material cultural features such as the *Grubenhäuser*.

The fact that this approach stems ultimately from Graeco-Roman ethnographic chauvinism, turned round in the German renaissance and then, especially in the nineteenth-century process of German reunification, is well-known. Less widely-appreciated, but well-documented, is the fact that the term 'Free Germany' or *Germania Libera*, so frequently encountered in the literature, originated in the twentieth century²⁵. The uses to which the idea of a pan-Germanic history, culture and ethos were employed in the middle of the twentieth century are generally recognised, even if the ways in which they are essentially continued beliefs and political agendas that were common enough in the nineteenth are not²⁶. And yet, in spite of the modern, politically contingent nature of these formulations being established facts, the idea that one group of *germani* can be treated interchangeably with another, and that there were fundamental, shared aspects of '*germanitas*', of a 'Germanic' culture and ethos, continue to be encountered. Thus the term 'Germanic' continues to be employed as though it has any meaning or analytical worth at all outside the sphere of linguistics. Historians now argue strongly that it does not²⁷.

2 A conflict of theories?

The polarised sides in the argument over migration have deployed their own bodies of theory. Those who minimise the importance of migration have tended to turn to theory about ethnic identity and its mutability developed by social anthropologists, perhaps refining this with theories of practice, most obviously that developed by Pierre Bourdieu²⁸. This lays great stress on human beings as active agents in historical change, through the interplay of all sorts of different political identities, of which those based on ethnicity are only one aspect. The 'migrationist' camp has, by contrast, deployed so-called 'migration theory'²⁹. The problem here is that one body of 'theory' by no means stands in opposition to the other.

'Migration theory' is not theory on the level of Bourdieu's or Giddens' or their analogues. It is a set of observations about

¹⁸ Brather 2004; Halsall 2010, 91–167; Theuvs & Alkemade 2000; Theuvs 2009; Response: Bierbrauer 2004; Schmauder 2003, 279–80, n.31.

¹⁹ Pohl 1998a; Pohl 1998b; Pohl 2005; Halsall 2007, 35–62, for survey.

²⁰ Halsall 2010, 131–67; von Rummel 2010.

²¹ Bierbrauer 2004; Brogiolo & Chavarría Arnau 2010, 45–48.

²² Siegmund 1998; Siegmund 2000; Brather 2004.

²³ Kazanski & Périn 2008; Kazanski & Périn 2009.

²⁴ Von Rummel 2010.

²⁵ Neumaier 1997.

²⁶ Kulikowski 2006; Callander Murray 2002.

²⁷ Jarnut 2004.

²⁸ Pohl 1998a; Halsall 2007, 38–43.

²⁹ Hamerow 1994; Hamerow 1997; Hamerow 1998; Scull 1998.

how migrations work. This does not imply that it is not of significance. It is of considerable importance, although in a different way from those in which it has been employed thus far. Migration Theory has simply been adduced to show that migration *could* have taken place, even on a large scale, in the early Middle Ages. Once the migrants have moved, however, one is still faced with the same old problems about how the newcomers brought about cultural and political change or about how the ethnicity of what, even on a maximalist view, could only represent a small minority of the post-imperial population of a former imperial province, might come to be adopted by the remainder, and for that one needs to resort to the other types of theory, just mentioned, about socio-cultural interplay. Or one assumes that migration suffices to explain all of these changes on its own. And indeed that is usually what happens. Once having adduced Migration Theory – and in so doing evidently thinking that one has countered one's opponents' use of Bourdieu and the rest – the argument progresses no further in explaining cultural, ethnic and political change³⁰.

It should be clarified that the debate on the import of post-imperial British building types, discussed earlier, is one that seems to have died off to some extent in recent years. Points similar to the ones that I have made have sometimes already been suggested by writers on the topic. Nonetheless the ending of that debate has not come about because of the emergence of a new and more subtle synthesis or interpretative framework. Indeed, my suspicion is that the *communis opinio* of early Anglo-Saxonists remains much the same as it ever was, in favour of large-scale migration³¹. Similarly, although nods have been made towards moving away from the migration framework, this has rarely been followed thorough in practice. To take one example at random, doubtless unfairly, in a solidly researched and interesting piece on the Yeavinger burials, Sam Lucy (a vocal critic of the migration explanation) concludes by critiquing the debate on whether the occupants of the site were 'British/native' or 'Anglo-Saxon', saying (surely correctly) that many different elements were fused into a new Anglo-Saxon whole (indeed one could claim that in some ways my own argument is at base no more than that)³². So far, so good. Unfortunately the conclusion moves on to discuss an interpretation based around 'incoming Anglo-Saxons' taking over 'a going concern', with a 'dependant British' population. The burials seem closer to a 'northern British' than a 'southern Anglo-Saxon' context and '[w]hether this is a function of the status of the people buried there may never be resolved', unless isotope evidence elucidates the issue³³. Thus, the general points have not really been internalised in the explanation, which remains locked within the old framework.

An example from what might be seen as the opposing camp makes a similar point. Helena Hamerow states that "[t]oday there is little doubt that the early accounts of mass invasion and population replacement ... are in large part 'origin myths' devised to serve the interests of the ruling elites of later periods by offering a unifying, stabilising ideology that would confer political legitimacy."³⁴ But she immediately states that 'immigration did play a critical role in the formation of an Anglo-Saxon identity'. The reasons for this conclusion are clear from the preceding

pages of the article: the ascription of an ethnic identity to particular material cultural forms on the basis of the alleged preponderance of geographical analogues. The idea remains, throughout, that 'British' and 'Anglo-Saxon' cultures and people can be (or ought to be able to be) recognised in the archaeological record and that if they cannot then the explanation must be that one group 'assimilated' or 'hybridised' with the other. The fundamental assumptions involved have not been challenged, as the 2007 edited volume on *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England* repeatedly makes clear³⁵.

At this point, one might borrow Mercutio's famous cry from *Romeo and Juliet*: "A plague on both your houses!" Indeed, in some ways that is the Leitmotif of my paper. In a negative sense, one can read this as saying that both sides are *wrong*. This is a defensible position, but a more politic or emollient reading might be that both sides are *right* – as far as they go, or if we reconfigure the questions correctly. Or that both sides have important things to bring to the table. Frequently, as I read it, the traditional migrationist viewpoint is rooted in the better knowledge of archaeological data, but the opposite viewpoint usually has the more subtle ways of reading those data.

It seems to me therefore that the data are being hammered into a framework which they will not and cannot fit. Neither side in these debates is, therefore, capable of carrying the day. Neither side is capable of producing a really convincing explanation. This is why so little real progress has (in my view) been made in the interpretation of the archaeology, even as our knowledge of the nature of the archaeological data has progressed astonishingly.

3 Migration and archaeology

It is, therefore, time to rethink the debate. The base line of my argument is acceptance of the fact that migration happened. As I want to stress throughout this paper, the movement of people across the North Sea in the fifth and sixth centuries is not in doubt. One does not need the written data to know about that. The linguistic change that occurred in what is now England after the fall of the Roman Empire is impossible to account for without migration, and the same is true of a range of archaeological or material cultural features: certain forms of artefact and the cremation burial rite – even if we must admit that this was not the only factor involved, and even if we must admit that this was a migration over a long period of time³⁶. But it is also important to underline that while it is impossible to account fully or persuasively for these changes without population movement, population movement is not necessarily what, in itself, explains them.

But the fact is that normally migrations are very difficult to detect archaeologically. Migrants frequently leave no material cultural trace. Often they adopt the culture of their new homeland very rapidly. We know full well from a range of sources that many, many thousands of barbarians from Germania and elsewhere crossed into Roman territory, throughout the whole period of the late Republic and the Empire. Yet these immigrants left almost no archaeological trace of their presence. Often the only archaeological traces of their movement are in the reverse direction. Thus the Saxons who joined the Roman army are only

30 Hamerow 2005, 267–9.

31 E.g. Stuart Brookes, this volume.

32 Lucy 2005, 143.

33 *Ibid.*

34 Hamerow 2005, 269.

35 Higham (ed.) 2007.

36 Hamerow 2005, 269.

visible archaeologically from the fact that after returning home they were cremated wearing their old uniform, with its buckles and brooches, or had these items buried with them.

The Anglo-Saxon migration to Britain is one of the few that can be demonstrated independently of historical evidence. Indeed it is more or less the only post-imperial migration from *barbaricum* into the Empire that can be so demonstrated, with the exception of some short-distance movements across the Rhine and Danube. Ironically, most of the movement, before c. 400, attested to by the archaeological record is in completely the opposite direction – from the Empire to *barbaricum*, as, for example, with the Saxons' burial with their old uniform, just mentioned. Further, much of the evidence cited as archaeological proof of migration is no such thing. Furnished inhumation is one example; I think that the *Grubenhaus* will turn out to be another, once more rigorous arguments are adopted. That, however, does *not* mean that migration did not happen. When looked at in comparative context it is, if anything, the Anglo-Saxon case that is the unusual and unexpected one. There is no especial reason why we should expect migration to show up at all in the archaeological record. As stated, four centuries of migration from *barbaricum* into the Empire are more or less archaeologically invisible.

4 Ethnicity

One reason why this is the case is that ethnicity – so often the object of archaeological investigation – is itself archaeologically invisible. It is a shame that in 2011 this is still a point that needs to be made. Early medieval historians, since the 1960s and thus for nearly half a century, have adopted and adapted ideas from social anthropology about the ways in which ethnic identities are mutable and not a fixed 'given'³⁷. Analyses of ethnicity reveal that there is no fixed element that defines an ethnic group³⁸. For every case where such a grouping was said to be defined by a belief in common descent, or shared religion, or language, or whatever, there was another where the opposite was the case. The only constant is that ethnicity is a simple matter of belief. People think of themselves as belonging to one group and think of other groups (for whatever reason) as different. Trying to find an innate (or primordial) factor, allowing us to identify past people as members of an ethnic group, other than what they said they were (at particular times), is a pointless task³⁹. The implications of this for the archaeology of post-imperial Europe are obvious.

Furthermore, anthropological studies of ethnic groups in Africa and south-east Asia revealed quite clearly that the links between material culture and ethnic identity were very vague indeed. Sometimes they were the diametric opposite of those assumed in traditional archaeology; artefacts associated with one group were actually used in another to stress other types of social difference, such as age-grades⁴⁰. What people *said* were the distinctive traits of their ethnic group ran contrary to what could actually be observed in practice⁴¹. One can find late antique parallels for these features⁴². These problems must be borne in mind when reading archaeological interpretations of 'Britons', 'Saxons',

'Franks', 'Alamans' or 'Gallo-Romans'. They raise all but insurmountable obstacles to accepting such ethnic identifications.

The other crucial lesson of modern social anthropology (and closer study of the written evidence from mainland Europe) was that ethnicity can be *changed*. In other words, over time, a family that at one point thought of itself as, say, Catuvellaunian Britons could come to see itself as Roman. That same family might, with the passing of further centuries, eventually consider itself to be East Anglian or English. The reasons why people change their identity are complex but one important factor is political and social advantage. It is thus not difficult to envisage how post-imperial people might adopt new identities in order to maintain or improve their social standing in a world dominated by warrior élites who claimed a barbarian ethnicity: Frankish, Gothic, Burgundian or Saxon⁴³.

Putting all these ideas together we can conclude that, even if we *can* identify the geographical origins of a custom, type of object or feature of a building, this would not necessarily provide a sure guide to the ethnicity of the people who used them. Even if we *could* plausibly link material culture to an ethnic identity, it would not necessarily mean that *all* such people originally came from the same area. 'Saxons', for example, could include immigrants from all over the Saxon homelands of north-west Germany but also people of native Romano-British descent and perhaps of other origins as well. These conclusions are vital.

They have not, however, gone unchallenged. It has been objected that people cannot just pick and choose whatever identity they want. There are constraints on this, such as whether the group into which membership is sought will accept them. Furthermore, ethnic identity is not just a matter of political advantage; even minority identities can exert a powerful affective force, holding back change. Simple 'straight swaps' are in fact not very clearly attested in the evidence from this period⁴⁴. Actually, however, none of these good points ultimately negates the general thrust of the broadly constructivist/situationalist position vis-à-vis ethnicity⁴⁵.

Nonetheless, recently, as well as generally unconvincing appeals to cemetery data to support the counter-revisionist position, genetic evidence has been adduced to prove large-scale immigration, particularly the study of modern DNA. Other, more sophisticated analyses of skeletal data have also been developed which might also be able to shed light on the migration. These include the analysis of the stable isotopes in the tooth enamel of the excavated skeletons of this period and 'ancient DNA', extracted from bone samples from early medieval cemeteries. Techniques have now advanced to a stage where this data is considered capable of furnishing usable conclusions.

One might point to numerous general methodological problems involved in the study of modern DNA evidence⁴⁶. Crucially, though, it also fundamentally misses the point. Examination of its underlying assumptions is revealing. One assumption is that migration happened in discrete periods. Thus, for example, the fifth and sixth centuries are often known as the period of *the* migrations (an appellation long criticised). In this view, then,

37 Pohl 1998a; Pohl 1998b.

38 Survey in Halsall 2007.

39 Brather 2004; Von Rummell 2010.

40 Larrick 1986.

41 Moerman 1968.

42 Halsall 2007, 57–58, 110, 150.

43 Halsall 2007, 470–82.

44 Heather 1996.

45 Halsall 1999 and 2007, 35–45.

46 Hills 2003, 57–71; Evison 2000; Halsall 2007, 450–2.

demonstrable population-mixing can be dated to such specific blocks of time. Yet migration is a constant of human existence. People were moving from *barbaricum* east of the Rhine into the Roman Empire for centuries before 400. People moved *within* the Empire on a large scale, too, and of course they have continued to move and to marry the inhabitants of other areas ever since. The similarities between the modern DNA of England and Germany might result from late antique migration from Germany but it might stem from such movement at many other times and, indeed, from movement in the opposite direction. Once again, movement from the Empire to *barbaricum*, amply demonstrated in the archaeological record, is excluded from reasoning because it does not fit a model derived from problematic written sources. Thus this use (or misuse) of DNA is driven by a particularly crude reading of history and its results are chosen to fit this story rather than to examine it.

Another, perhaps even more serious, problem concerns the movement from DNA to conclusions about ethnic or political identity. DNA chains, like bronze belt buckles, do not have an ethnic identity. One way in which one counters the points made against the mutability of ethnicity is by stressing that it is multi-layered⁴⁷. It is deployed (or not) in particular situations as the occasion demands. A person's DNA will not give you a sense of all of the layers of that person's ethnicity, or of which s/he thought the most important or even if s/he generally used a completely different one, or of when and where such identities were stressed or concealed.

Let me illustrate this. A male Saxon immigrant into the Empire in, say, the fourth century, would – one assumes – have DNA revealing the area whence his family came, but he would probably increasingly see himself, and act, as a Roman. His Saxon origins would have no part in his social, cultural or political life, and even less for his children if he stayed in the Empire. If he returned home with all the cachet of his imperial service, it might well have been his *Roman* identity that gave him local status. However, if a distant male relative of his moved into Britain a hundred and fifty years later, his DNA might be very similar but, in complete contradistinction, this man might make a very big deal of his Saxon origins for they would, or could, propel him to the upper echelons of society. DNA tells us nothing about any of this.

What is pernicious about this use of genetic data is that it is *essentialist*. It views a person's identity as one-dimensional and unchanging, and it sees that dimension as entirely derived from that person's biological and geographical origins. In short, it reduces identity to something very similar to nineteenth-century nationalist ideas of race. Everyone sane knows that people moved from northern Germany to Britain in the fifth and sixth centuries. In that sense, these expensive analyses tell us nothing we did not already know.

However, in their implicit reduction of identity to a form of race, and in masking all the other contingent and interesting aspects of cultural interaction and identity-change, they not only risk setting back the understanding of this period by more than

a century but provide pseudo-historical and pseudo-scientific ammunition for present-day nationalists, xenophobes and racists. Many of the same general points can be levelled at other analyses of such things as the isotopes from teeth, which are far less exclusive in the geographical zones revealed than one might hope – again, the part of the map chosen is often determined by the historical story the analyst wants to tell.

5 Migration and explanation

All these points are profoundly significant and cannot be ignored. Allow me to reiterate. Archaeology does not and cannot in itself reveal ethnicity; genes do not and cannot reveal ethnic identity; we should not expect migration necessarily to show up in the archaeological record; yet there is no need to doubt migration happened in the post-imperial period, or even that it in some cases, such as the North Sea it happened (over time) on some scale.

The important issue is the relationship between migration and explanation. The example of the two hypothetical Saxon migrants to Britain makes the point clear. We must ask why the role of migration and ethnic change in fifth-century history was different from that played in the third or fourth centuries. To deal with this, we need new questions: a new agenda.

In the current political situation it is, furthermore, extremely important to establish this agenda. Moving from the demonstration of migration to the explanation of the downfall of the Roman Empire through appeal to migration can be highly irresponsible, at best. A German newspaper, for example, reviewed a museum exhibition set out according to traditional paradigms as showing how little comfort we, with 'a new Völkerwanderung into our *Imperium*' could draw from the history of the Empire, with hardly any sign of 'multiculturalism' and where the migration of peoples meant, besides 'acculturation', above all 'plunder, burning and death on a massive scale'⁴⁸. A Dutch right-wing extremist has recently deployed the history of the barbarian migrations at some length in an argument against, specifically Muslim, immigration⁴⁹. So, set against this background, when a British historian places an argument that the Roman Empire fell because of the immigration of large numbers of barbarians next to arguments that the end of Rome was the end of civilisation and that we need to take care to preserve our own civilisation,⁵⁰ when another British historian writes sentences saying 'the connection between immigrant violence and the collapse of the western Empire could not be more direct',⁵¹ and especially when the arguments of both involve considerable distortions of the evidence to fit their theories,⁵² one cannot help but wonder whether these authors are wicked, irresponsible or merely stupid. Are they setting themselves up as ideologues of the xenophobic Right or have they (perhaps even more shockingly for academics) simply not realised the uses to which such careless thinking and phrasing can be put? I have already drawn attention to the worrying implications of the use of genetic data to study this period, and they do not stop with implications about monolithic ethnic identities based upon genetics.

⁴⁷ Halsall 2007, 38–40, 478–82.

⁴⁸ D. Schümer, Review: 'Die Barbaren mochten das Schöne: Angst und Grössenwahn: Die Kunst der Völkerwanderungszeit im Palazzo Grassi', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Wednesday 26 January, 2008.

⁴⁹ http://www.geertwilders.nl/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1740

(accessed 11 August 2011).

⁵⁰ Ward Perkins 2005.

⁵¹ Heather 2009, 339. Reviewers have pointed out the way Heather's writings can provide sustenance

for the Right for many years, without making any difference to the way he expresses his view, something which begs important questions. See also Kulikowski 2011.

⁵² Halsall 1999 and 2007.

If we accept that it is fundamentally misguided to start looking at the archaeological record primarily in terms of whether or not it demonstrates migration, broad new interpretative horizons are opened up. Simultaneously, ways of contributing in more humane fashion to current debates about immigration are presented if we break down the set of binary oppositions that bedevil the study of the period: Romans against barbarians; Saxons against Britons; (especially importantly) the Roman empire against *barbaricum*; the Roman period against the Migration period; Britain versus the mainland of Europe; the Saxon migration moving simply from east to west. As a means of demonstrating this, I want to end by suggesting some ways of recasting the study of the North Sea in this period.

6 The Channel/North Sea Cultural Zone: A different framework

My key point is that we should view the late and post imperial North Sea in the same way as archaeologists have long become used to seeing it in the seventh century and later: that is to say as a zone of cultural exchange and interaction, not as a political border⁵³. The domination of the historical narrative means that we are accustomed to see the North Sea principally as a zone for hostile or intrusive travel in an east-west direction, first by Saxon raiders and then by migrants to Britain. We have also become used to separating this limited study of the interaction of the two sides of the North Sea from that of Northern Gaul. To understand this period, we must look at all the areas around the North Sea, not just those which the historical sources lead us to think were involved in particular migrations, as destinations or as points of departure. This will change our perspective importantly.

One of the most important ideas to break down is that which sees the Roman and barbarian worlds as in a binary opposition. There were dense links between the two. Hostile military confrontation was only one element, and probably not the most common. The lands east of the Rhine and north of the Danube were saturated with Roman influences that took all sorts of forms and went far beyond the simple import of Roman goods, enormously important though this was. The exchange of goods and of cultural influences in the fourth century went overwhelmingly *from the Empire to barbaricum*⁵⁴. The network of relations determined the nature of politics, depending upon the links that rulers could make with the Empire. Roman cultural ideas also dominated. Alamannic chieftains may have produced imitations of the brooches used as badges of office in the Roman army; as mentioned Saxons used the elements of their uniform as key elements of funerary display. Barbarians were long accustomed to modelling their own jewellery on Roman exemplars. And so on. Large numbers of barbarians served in the fourth-century Roman army. Many went home, as we have seen, when their period of service was up. Clearly traders plied the routes not only along the North Sea coast as far as Scandinavia, but also along the amber routes along the Elbe⁵⁵.

By the fourth century, then, Germanic-speaking *barbaricum* was very much socially, economically and culturally the hinterland of the Roman Empire. It depended upon links with the

Empire for all sorts of social and political stability. Similarly a good case can be made that the late Roman Empire itself depended upon the existence of the barbarian world for its political and social stability, even if in very different – political and ideological – ways⁵⁶. These were not, therefore opposed, separate worlds, but intricately interwoven areas of the *same* world. In the fourth century, furthermore, individuals were travelling north from the Empire to *barbaricum* to at least as great an extent as they were moving from *barbaricum* to the Empire, even if they were only going home. Note too that contacts and cultural influences seem to have spread from Roman Britain to the Saxon homelands, and indeed it might be that an official settlement of Saxons took place in Britain in the late fourth century, which would increase the ties between the two regions, but they were also dense between the north of Gaul and the Saxon homelands. The areas around the North Sea, on both sides of the frontier, form a single interlinked world, even if politically and culturally divided. This is of huge importance if we want to use Migration Theory to understand what went on in the fifth and sixth centuries. This theory has stressed the importance of the flow of information in both directions, to and from the land of destination.

The way that North Sea *barbaricum*, northern Gaul and Roman Britain were interlinked is made especially clear by the profound crisis that all three suffered at the same time, around 400. The crisis in Britain might require some nuance in terms of the speed of collapse but it cannot be denied that a dramatic crisis took place leading within a couple of generations to the collapse of town life, of the hitherto prosperous villa-system, of monetary economy, of organised industry, of long distance trade and so on⁵⁷. At the same time, northern Gaul suffered a sharp decline in its towns, one or two of which were abandoned, the final collapse of a villa-system and dramatic economic decline⁵⁸. This synchronicity is acknowledged all too rarely, and this means that explanations for one region rarely take account of the similarity of the changes in the other – although the explanations must differ to some extent⁵⁹. More remarkable, though, is the way that these transformations within the Empire are contemporary with very similar structural changes in the Saxon homelands. There too, we see the desertion of settlements and changes in the location of cemeteries, as well as the appearance of the new furnished burial ritual and the concomitantly increased use of the funerary ceremony as a means of cementing or restoring a family's local social position⁶⁰. We must see the appearance of very similar-looking settlements in all three areas, with post-built halls and *Grubenhäuser*, against this background.

Such a way of thinking by-passes old interpretations linking new types of building purely to single, concrete ethnic types and their arrival, or denying any such link at all. What we have are new developments responding to similar circumstances through the interplay and interchange of cultural influences. This allows us to incorporate the appearance of similar building forms in different areas, not linked by the same process of migration, and the early appearance of *Grubenhäuser* in northern Gaul. It incorporates migration and permits it to have a role in the spread of ideas but it does not restrict the explanation either to migration alone or to indigenous development. Migration theory is

⁵³ E.g. Pestell & Ulmschneider (ed.) 2003.

⁵⁴ Halsall 2010, 107–30.

⁵⁵ Halsall 2007, 127–8, 150–2.

⁵⁶ Halsall 2007, 149–50.

⁵⁷ Esmonde Cleary 1989; Dark 2000; Laycock 2008.

⁵⁸ Summary: Halsall 2007, 346–57.

⁵⁹ Esmonde Cleary 1989 is the exception.

⁶⁰ Halsall 2007, 383–7.

important in that it has stressed that movement during migration is rarely one-way. Migrants return home, either permanently or, as scouts, to bring new migrants and show them the way. Thus even during the fifth century we should not envisage movement across and around the North Sea and the associated exchange of ideas and influences as only one-way. The written sources themselves describe movements in both directions.

Migration, then, must be retained as an element of the description and as a part of the explanation of specific cultural forms, but the important point is to view the North Sea world as a interlinked whole, moving the main problem of explanation elsewhere. Migration is a symptom of change but not its cause. What produced the migration? What produced the crisis that we can see taking similar forms in various areas around the north-western fringes of the Roman Empire? We must return to the close linkage of the regions on both sides of the frontier. They shared, in admittedly different ways, the fact that social stability relied upon a particular style of Roman imperial government, based on the frontier. In northern Gaul the state had harnessed the rural landscape to the supply of the military and bureaucratic personnel resident in the region. In a different way, much of the prosperity and stability of Britain was related to its supply of grain and other raw materials to the Roman army. The imperial court's location in northern Gaul served other purposes in distributing and redistributing patronage and maintaining the north-western aristocracy's involvement in imperial governmental structures. That in turn was probably vital to maintaining regional aristocrats' local pre-eminence. Simultaneously, imperial government closely watched the frontier and maintained a balance of power between different barbarian groups. Gifts were important, particularly to the leaders of those groups away from the frontier and those around the North Sea coast evidently relied heavily on the control of trade and thus access to prestigious Roman imports.

Thus, when the imperial government was removed to Italy from 381, definitively from 395, and took its eye not only off the management of patronage in the north-west but also off the maintenance of frontier policy, it is not difficult to see why crisis ensued, resulting equally in the Great Invasion of 406 and the British usurpations of the same year. The archaeological changes we can detect in all of the regions under consideration can easily be understood as manifestations of this crisis. In the convoluted politics that followed, and the social and political crises on both sides of the North Sea, a matrix of 'push' and 'pull' factors, such as Migration Theory has discussed, can be envisaged, creating new relationships across the North Sea and movement of people, particularly from the Saxon homelands into Britain. It is worth remembering that the Saxons only appear in the third century, like many other groups, and that earlier groupings like the Frisians, Angles and Jutes disappear, only to reappear in our period. The Saxon confederacy seems to have fractured and fragmented, and some groups who lost out moved into the former Empire, in a manifestation of a dynamic that is attested as far back as Caesar's day and earlier. The importance of taking a wide perspective – and not looking at migration between regions in isolation – is that this process was probably also linked to the appearance

and short-lived sixth-century political dominance of the Thuringian kingdom on the Elbe valley⁶¹.

In Britain especially and in Northern Gaul local social competition created a context within which barbarian warrior-leaders could create opportunities for themselves, very much within frameworks whose outlines had existed since the fourth century. Thus the crisis around the North Sea produced push factors from *barbaricum* and pull factors within the provinces, but all ultimately stemmed not from the previous antagonistic separation of these worlds but their intimate symbiotic connections.

What matters in this discussion of cultural *exchange*, in all directions around the North Sea, is that it frees us from seeing material culture as ethnic, or as a manifestation of a geographically-rooted ethnicity. We no longer have to discuss 'hybridisation' or 'assimilation' (a heavily-loaded term, politically). We are spared the mistaken quest for the ethnic-cultural origins of burial forms or house types, in order to decide which of the supposedly opposed ethnicities or cultures was dominant and which had to assimilate and 'become invisible', or which was 'dependent' on the other. No more need we, therefore, try to answer the question of where the 'Britons' are amongst the 'Saxons'⁶² (or where the 'Gallo-Romans' are amongst the 'Franks'⁶³): a question that cannot even be asked without assuming that identities such as 'Briton' or 'Anglo-Saxon' might be archaeologically detectable, meaningful or distinguishable. We can finally internalise the point (made by Lucy in 2005⁶⁴) that these ethnicities are regional creations, political identities (and only one level of such personal identity at that), with no necessary link to any genetic or geographical origins. Saying this does not imply that ethnic identities themselves were not socially, politically and affectively very important. Nor does it imply that ethnic identities were not made manifest by material culture. It simply requires us to bring our understanding of what is meant by an ethnic identity into line with modern thinking⁶⁵.

Conclusion

This framework is subtle and flexible enough to accommodate a range of interpretative factors, geographical and chronological dynamism and variability. It incorporates the evidence as it stands without having to explain away data that do not fit, and does not force people into one or another of two mutually exclusive, opposing camps. This framework also allows the archaeological evidence to speak for itself without adopting a confrontational attitude towards the study of the written sources and what they have to tell us. Finally, it should promote more sensitive understanding of the challenges of modern migration and its processes, rather than erroneously positing 'us' Europeans as the civilised 'Romans' opposed to 'them', the threatening foreign outsiders, whom the French Right at least are already accustomed to calling 'les Nouveaux Barbares'. Thus, although this might have seemed to be a paper that set out to annoy everyone, it is in fact an attempt to propose a framework within which a new more intellectually subtle and sophisticated consensus might be possible⁶⁶.

61 Halsall 2007, 392–9.

62 The *Leitmotif* of Higham (ed.) 2007.

63 Attempted – with no reference to up-to-date thinking on the subject – by Härke 2007, 61–62.

64 Lucy 2005, 143.

65 Hills 2007, 24, fails to grasp this point.

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The status of horses in late Avar-period society in the Carpathian Basin

Ilona Bede¹

Abstract

This paper analyses the funeral practice of horsemen and horse burials in the context of late Avar-period social identity. I propose a methodology, tested on six cemeteries, that examines the place of the horse as a central character in burials and agent in the burial ritual, as well as a grave good and faunal deposit. The analysis also demonstrates other instances of the horse's occurrence in the archaeological record of this early medieval culture. This phenomenon is generally associated with the nomadic cultures of the Eurasian steppes and can be seen as a marker of ethnicity. The recent investigations demonstrate the existence of social stratification, although not strictly vertical, which in turn can be connected to the system of values of the elite in early medieval Europe.

Keywords

Avars, early medieval period, central Europe, horse burial

The Avar period takes its name from the Avars, an ethnic group that migrated from the Eurasian steppes into Europe in the second half of the 6th century. The first mention of the Avars in the Byzantine sources dates back to the mid-5th century and follows the death of Attila, about 463 AD. Priskos the Rhetor reports that emissaries from the east came to Byzantium and informed the imperial court about great changes on the steppe: “*The people*

living on the sea coast had driven out the Avars, the Avars had sent the Sabirs into flight, and the Sabirs had attacked the Saraghurs and Ughors who had therefore left their dwelling places and appeared at the entrance to the Caucasus.”² About a century later, Theophylact Simocatta, in his *History of the World* and, shortly after him, Theophanes, described the break-up of the Avars into Europe. Their first embassy arrived in Byzantium around 557-559 AD and their appearance recalled that of the Huns: “*Die ganze Stadt lief zusammen, um sie zu betrachten, da man ein solches Volk noch nie gesehen hatte. Denn sie trugen die Haare hinten ganz lang, gebunden mit Bändern und geflochten, während die übrige Tracht den anderen Hunnen ähnlich war.*”³ (The entire town gathered to see them, as no one had ever seen such a people. Their long hair was plaited and bound, while the rest of their attire was similar to that of other Huns.) Walter Pohl points out that at this time the name ‘Huns’ was used similarly to ‘Scythians’, namely to refer to all nomadic people coming from the eastern steppe. From the beginning the Avars were seen as one of the groups formed on the basis of tribal alliance, with ways of life and traditions that were very similar to those of the Scythians described by Herodotus almost a thousand years earlier in the 4th book of *The Histories*. According to historical and linguistic sources, one of the main Avar tribes was the Juan-Juan, who originated from central Asia and the Mongolian steppes. Following a conflict with Turkic tribes, they allied themselves with the Hephthalite, also known as the ‘White Huns’. These populations jointly migrated west, into Eastern Europe and Byzantium (fig. 1)⁴.

In the archaeological record, the importance of the horse in these Asiatic nomadic cultures appears mostly in horse burials, a custom that first emerges during the Iron Age in the Carpathian Basin. After this time and during the Sarmatian, Hunnic and Germanic periods it becomes increasingly rare. The custom reemerges in the early Avar period (late 6th – early 7th century AD), when it is practised frequently but still less so than in the

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² Róna-Tas 1999, 209.

³ Pohl 2002, 18. Theophanes 6050. In: Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*, Ed. Karl de Boor, Leipzig, 1887, 232. German translation: Peter

Schreiner, *Bibliothek der griechischen Literatur* 20, Stuttgart, 1985.

⁴ Kürti & Lőrinczy 1991, 4; Grousset 1965, 227.

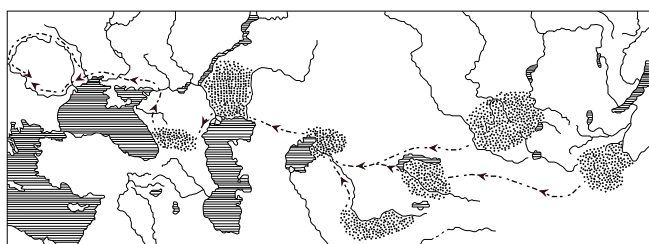


FIG. 1 Avar migration route from central Asia to central Europe (Kürti & Lőrinczy 1991, fig. 2).

Voie de migration avar depuis l'Asie intérieure jusqu'à l'Europe centrale (Kürti and Lőrinczy 1991, fig. 2).

Eastern European Pontic steppes. This difference seems to have disappeared by the end of the 7th century, which is also the beginning of the late Avar period⁵.

The middle and late Avar periods are marked by the emergence of a new material culture, characterised by new object types, such as bronze cast belt mounts decorated with griffons and tendrils, sabres, stirrups with straight foot plates, bits with side-bars, neckrings, and clasps. At the same time, however, cultural continuity can be observed with the survival of certain domestic and costume objects, or burial customs⁶. They present at least very slow variations. Nor did their name change: Avars remained 'Avars'. In contrast to the early Avar period, this phase sees a significant homogenisation in the finds assemblages and a strong cultural unity, while evidence for settlement are becoming more frequent.

Through the examination of the practice of horse burial, I aim to analyse funerary rituals and their significance in Avar society. The underlying assumption is that burial rituals are discourses not only about death itself but also about the deceased, and through them the living society. They emerge and find their significance against a cultural backdrop, which is based on collective representations, a system of values and a techno-economic system.

A 'ritual' is seen as a repetition of coded phenomena. In the course of several generations this repetition evolves into tradition and in the process may lose its original meaning. If the horse burial practice is part of the Asiatic nomadic heritage, the questions arise what beliefs underpinned it, how it fitted into Avar society's own value system, and what it aimed to communicate during the actual funeral. After more than a century of progressive settlement in the Carpathian Basin, to what extent can the presence of the horse in the funerary system be seen as an indication of ethnic identity? Is it a sign of the social identity of the deceased, or at least of what his or her family/community wants to demonstrate to society? Is it a suggestion of a religious belief in an afterlife or in supernatural beings?

A funerary system is the material expression of a society's representations, a way for a society to deal materially and spiritually with death, the dead and the survivors. Elements such as space, time, and ritual are essential components of a community's funerary discourse. Generally these practices are strictly coded, but subtle divergences from the rule can be observed. During

a funeral the deceased effectively becomes the 'possession' of the family or community, and this subgroup of the larger society can diverge from the established custom. The question is what this society aims to express through funerary ritual, and if and how archaeology can reconstruct this discourse. What archaeological tools are available to rebuild all the gestures, the ceremony and the ritual, and what did they mean to the community? We propose a methodology that examines all aspects of the funerary system and attempts to reconstruct them in detail. This type of analysis, which Patrice Méniel and I have called "funerary archaeozoology"⁷, is generally used to study human burials, but can equally be applied to animal burials.

The horse, it is suggested, can be seen as a recognisable individual, a central figure at the very heart of the funeral, and in this investigation horse burials were approached from three different perspectives. Firstly, the shape and size of the burial space, as well as its organisation and complexity, such as traces of a construction or a superstructure or of a coffin, all provide clues as to the significance of the horse burial, as do taphonomy and the state of preservation of the skeleton. Analysis of the *ante-* and *post-mortem* treatment of the horse informs us about how much value the society placed on it. The horse's sex, age, pathologies and cause of death were all taken into account in the investigations. As the assumption was that the animal was at the centre of the funerary ritual, any material associated with the horse burial, the horse's grave goods, also required analysis. Important criteria here were the position of these objects, their quantities and the association of different categories of objects with the horse burial.

Secondly, the horse's relationship with its owner within the funerary space was examined. It appeared that the horse burial is not an animal burial in its own right but rather in direct relation to the human burial. The horse, then, is just another grave good for the dead person, and consequently it was analysed as such: a typology was built based on the form of the 'object', and its position and orientation in the funerary space with respect to the deceased. Although not everyone was buried with a horse, the wider picture was also examined. As a first step, age and gender classes were considered, but the state of health and mortality causes could usefully be examined in a further stage.

Finally the horse was considered as a faunal deposit. Here the main question was that of its role in the funerary system and the differences that can be observed between the horse burials and those of other animals in the same cultural context, in the same cemetery or grave. Animal remains could have been a funeral offering, a sacrifice, or the possession of the dead. In a sacrifice, the 'object' offered is destroyed and the receiver tended to be a deity⁸. The receiver of a simple funeral offering is the deceased. If the offering is not destroyed, the connection between the dead and its offering remains unchanged⁹. A horse offering can have different functions: it can be food; it can fulfill an apotropaic or psychopomp role, be a gift for the gods or indicate social distinction. The assumption is that archaeological analysis has the ability to discern these roles.

The exact number of Avar horse or horseman burials is not known, even during the later phase. At the beginning of the 21st

⁵ Kiss 1996, 387–388; Bóna 1979.

⁶ Vida 2003, 306.

⁷ Méniel 2008; Bede 2008 and 2010.

⁸ Hubert & Mauss 1899.

⁹ Testart 2004, 29–40.

century, Tivadar Vida counted 60,000 Avar burials and for the last few years, the number of Avar horse and warrior burials is estimated at around 6000, ca 10% of the total population¹⁰.

The data presented here are the results from an initial investigation of six cemeteries in Hungary and Slovakia¹¹, complete with a part of the abundant bibliography¹². Statistical analysis has revealed the main trends in late Avar horse-related burial practice, as well as anomalies.

The first important thing to note about horse burials is that there appear to be various ways of burying the animal. It can be entirely buried, partially, or even symbolically. The horse can be buried in the same grave as the person, alone in a single grave, or in a grave with a symbolic human burial. Most of the

deceased buried with a horse are male, but there are also instances of females and children with horse burials¹³. In the late Avar period the most common burial type is the full horse inhumation together with the horseman (fig. 2). Single entire horses are not common but well known – this practice existed mostly in Transdanubia in the early Avar period. It becomes more frequent in the second half of the Avar period and spreads to the eastern side of the river Tisza¹⁴. The best example of it is the cemetery of *Tiszafüred-Majoros*, with 70 single horse burials¹⁵. While initially considered ‘individual’ burials (Attila Kiss’s Type VII¹⁶), it has been demonstrated that the horse burials are generally located in the proximity of a human burial¹⁷. These ‘individual horse burials’ have therefore been reinterpreted as ‘horsemen burials’.

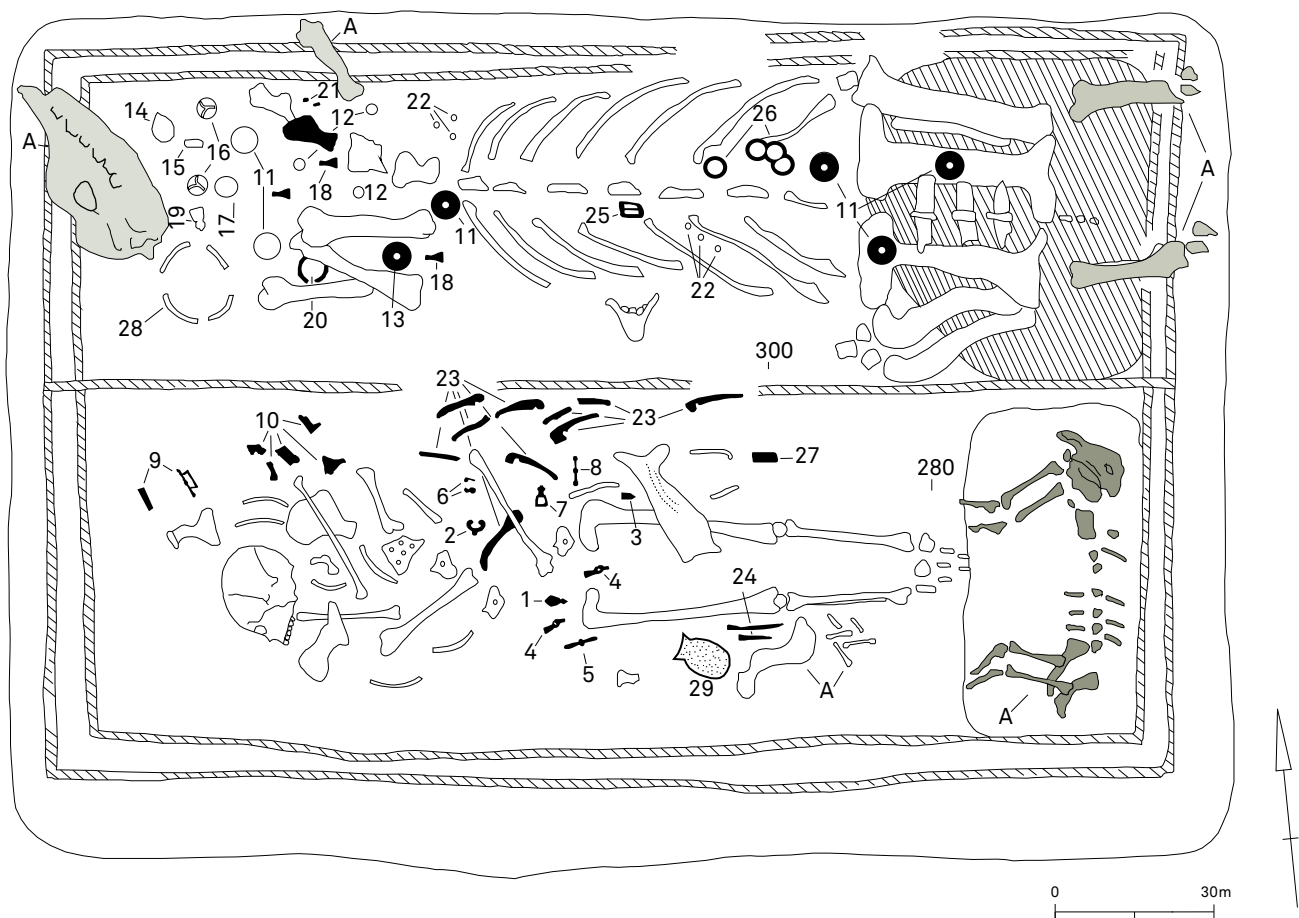


FIG. 2 Entire horse inhumation together with the horseman in grave 114 at Komárno-Schiffswerft / Komárom-Hajógyár - Slovakia, County of Nitra (Trugly 2008, fig. 70).

Inhumation d'un cheval entier avec le cavalier dans la sépulture 114 de Komárno-Schiffswerft / Komárom-Hajógyár - Slovaquie, Comitat de Nitra (Trugly 2008, fig. 70).

¹⁰ Vida 2003, 304: estimation based on the cadastre edited by József Szentpéteri (Szentpéteri (ed.) 2002). The evaluation of horses' and horsemen's burials is from Miklós Makoldi, whom I would like to thank for this information.

¹¹ Bede 2010.

¹² *Tiszafüred-Majoros* (Hungary, County of Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok): Garam 1987 and 1995; Makoldi

2008. *Orosháza-Bónum téglagyár, Orosháza-Béke TSz homokbánya and Szarvas-Grexa téglagyár* (Hungary, County of Békés): Juhász 1995; 2000; 2004. *Komárno-Schiffswerft / Komárom-Hajógyár* (Slovakia, County of Nitra): Trugly 1987; 1993; 2008. *Kassa-Zsebes / Kosiče-Šebastovce* (Slovakia, County of Kassa): Budinský-Krička & Točík 1991; Csiky 2006.

¹³ Čilinska 1990.

¹⁴ Balogh 2009, 17.

¹⁵ Garam 1987 and 1995.

¹⁶ Kiss 1962.

¹⁷ For a recent review of research on this question, see: Makoldi 2008.

A few examples are known of single burials of entire horses which are not associated with a human burial¹⁸. They are considered 'individual', or seen as the remains of a sacrificial offering by the community¹⁹. While the way in which the animal is buried is exactly the same as the one used for the other horse burials, these burials could also be seen as symbolic human graves. This type is also known in the late Avar period, and takes several forms: a single horse with grave goods for the horseman, such as belt fittings (fig. 3.1)²⁰, or a burial of an entire horse with the space for the human deceased left empty (fig. 3.2), or even occasionally without any skeleton²¹. The interpretation as symbolic burial is generally based on the observed ritual of the wider cemetery context.

Another late Avar period practice is the partial inhumation of a horse. This is well known for the early Avar period²² but remains uncertain for the late phase. One late Avar cemetery where it was significant is *Orosháza-Béke TSz. homokbánya*. However, due to the absence of archaeozoological analysis of the bones it is impossible to establish the type of burial. Irén Juhász considered them partial horse burials (fig. 4)²³, but some could have been entire horses and just one is certainly partial²⁴. Single skull burials are rare but also known²⁵ and one example of a symbolic horseman burial with a partial horse is known²⁶.

The symbolic horse burials are mostly inhumations of the horse's harness. In the late Avar period these harness burials

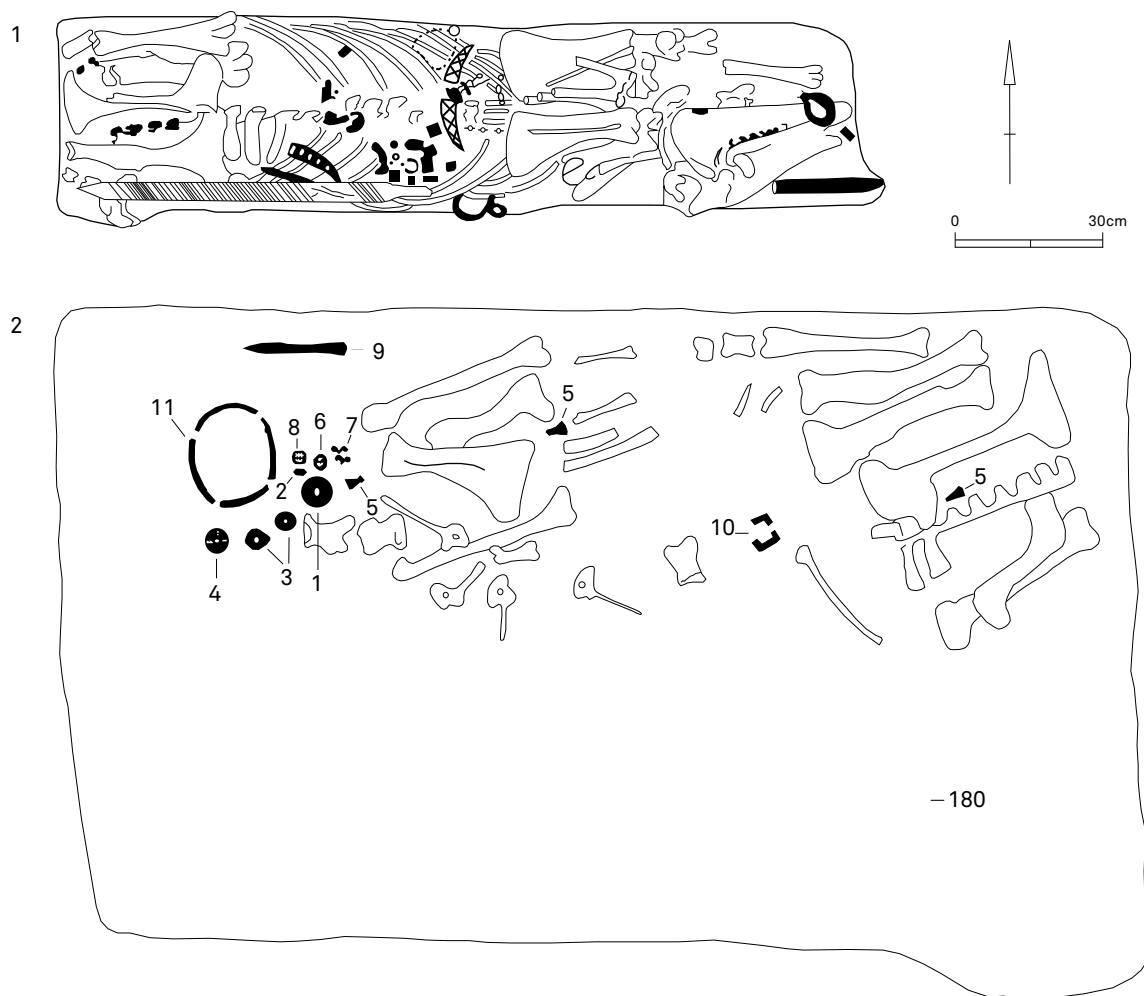


FIG. 3 Symbolic horsemen burials: 1. Individual entire horse burial with three arms and a belt fitting in grave 186 at *Tiszafüred-Majoros* – Hungary, County of Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok (Garam 1995, fig. 11); 2. Burial with an entire horse near an empty place left for the horseman in grave 129 of *Komárno-Schiffswerft / Komárom-Hajógyár* - Slovakia, County of Nitra (Trugly 2008, fig. 73.3).

Sépultures symboliques de cavaliers : 1. Sépulture individuelle de cheval avec 3 armes et une garniture de ceinture dans la sépulture 186 de Tiszafüred-Majoros – Hongrie, Comitat de Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok (Garam 1995, fig. 11) ; 2. Sépulture avec un cheval entier et une place laissée libre pour le cavalier dans la sépulture 129 de Komárno-Schiffswerft / Komárom-Hajógyár - Slovaquie, Comitat de Nitra (Trugly 2008, fig. 73.3).

¹⁸ *Tiszafüred-Majoros*, Gr. 705 and 183; Makoldi 2008, 131, n.70; *Orosháza-Bónum* 132; Juhász 2000, 73.

¹⁹ Balogh *ibid.*

²⁰ *Tiszafüred-Majoros*, Gr. 186; Makoldi 2008, 115.

²¹ *Komárno-Schiffswerft*, Gr. 122 and 129; Trugly 2008, 83; *Košice-Šebastovce*, Gr. 374; Budinský-Krička & Točík 1991.

²² Kiss 1962; Némethi & Klima 1992.

²³ Juhász 2000, 73-74.

²⁴ *Orosháza-Béke*, Gr. 73; Juhász 1995.

²⁵ For example in *Orosháza-Bónum*, Gr. 221; Juhász 1995.

²⁶ *Tiszavasvári-Petőfi u. 49*, Gr. 10; Makoldi 2008, 136.

appear mostly in the south-eastern region between the Maros, the Körös and the Tisza rivers. The cemetery in which this type is the most relevant is *Szarvas-Grexa téglagyár*²⁷. Livia Bende noted that this type is often associated with so-called “niche graves” (*Nischengräber*) (fig. 5)²⁸.

The grave pits’ analysis provided an usual picture of the well known Avar graves. The most common shape is a rectangular grave with vertical walls in which the size of the pit corresponds to the size of the dead. The latter does not necessarily apply to the single entire horse burials, which seem to be shorter and

narrower than the human ones, as well as shallower. It also appears significant that single horses are almost always buried in simple grave pits. The complex pits, with steps, niches or alcoves, are – barring a few exceptions – reserved for human burials.

Regarding the interior structure of the grave, the presence of funerary chambers or coffins in the human graves demonstrate a reality also observed in other Avar burials. It is thought here that what is more relevant is the presence of coffins and postholes in the single horse burials in *Tiszafüred-Majoros*. The horses buried alone have been given a grave configuration, which was normally reserved to selected human deceased.

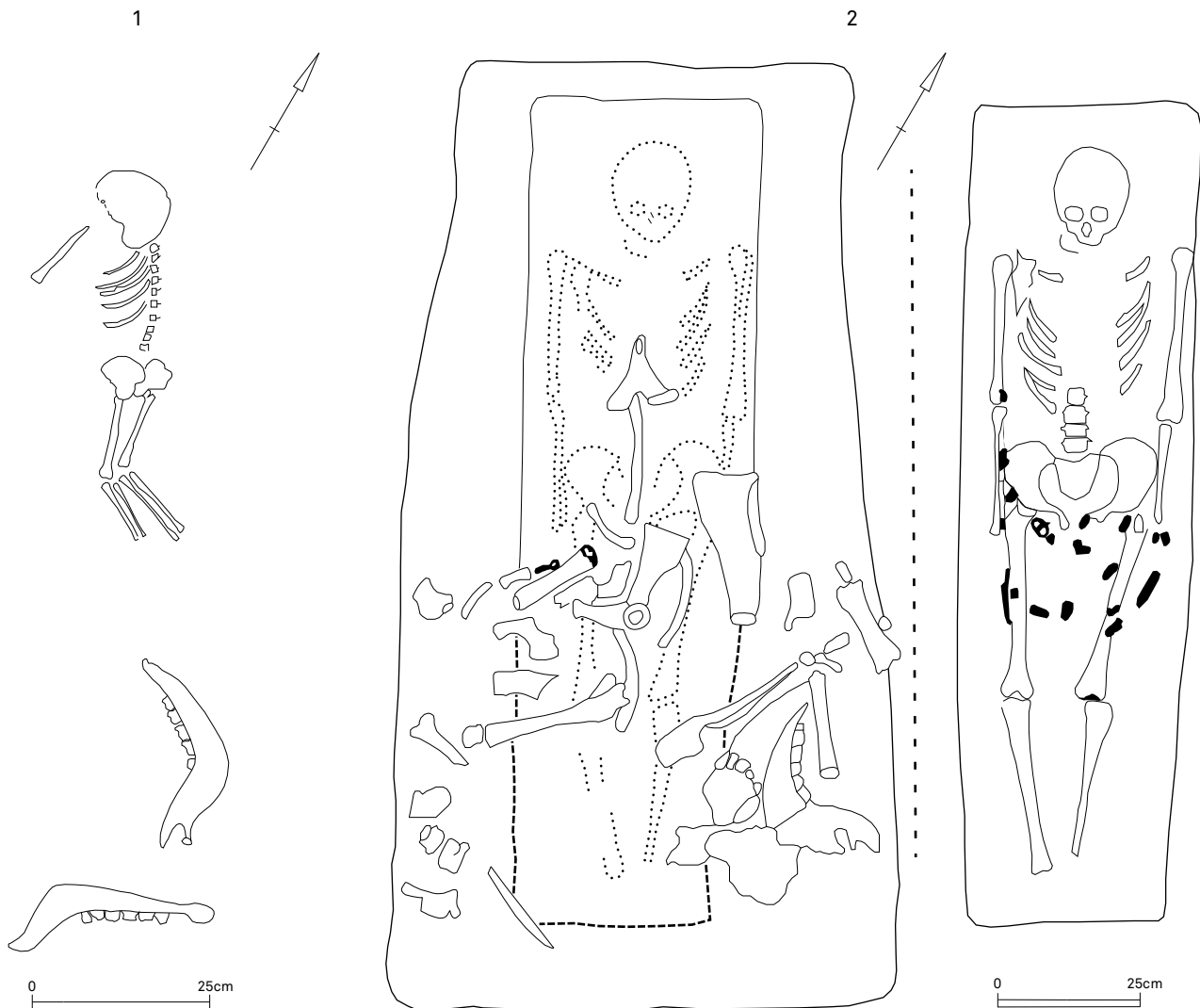


FIG. 4 Partial horse burials: *Orosháza-Béke TSz homokbánya* – Hungary, County of Békés 1. Child burial with a horse mandible in grave 73; 2. Adult burial with a (partial?) horse above him in grave 142 (Juhász 2000, Tab. 5.1, 6.1).

Inhumations partielles de chevaux : Orosháza-Béke TSz homokbánya – Hongrie, Comitat de Békés 1. Sépulture d'un enfant avec une mandibule de cheval dans la sépulture 73 ; 2. Sépulture d'un adulte avec une inhumation (partielle ?) de cheval au-dessus de lui dans la sépulture 142 (Juhász 2000, Tab. 5.1, 6.1).

²⁷ Juhász 2004.

²⁸ Bende 2000, 253-254, fig. 18.

The relationship between horse and horseman depends on their association or separation, but also on the orientation and position of the horse relative to the human burial. Where they are located in separate graves, the two ‘individuals’ have been clearly separated, but even within the same grave they can be separated by a wooden panel. This can be a horizontal panel laid on the grave wall steps, a timber wall inside the funerary chamber, or even a separation made by the coffin of the human burial. The horse never lies in a coffin when it is buried together with the human deceased.

The most common positions of the horse relative to the horseman for the late Avar period seems on the left hand side of the horseman (Kiss’s Type III) with the same orientation and on the right hand side of the horseman with the opposite orientation (Kiss’s Type I)²⁹. Attila Kiss noted that if we look at these two types from the horse’s point of view, the horseman is always on the horse’s left which is the side from where he mounts³⁰. Types II, where the horse is on the right facing in the same direction, and Type IV, where the horse is on the left facing in the opposite direction, are rarer and tend to occur on the margins of the Avar Khaganat territory³¹.

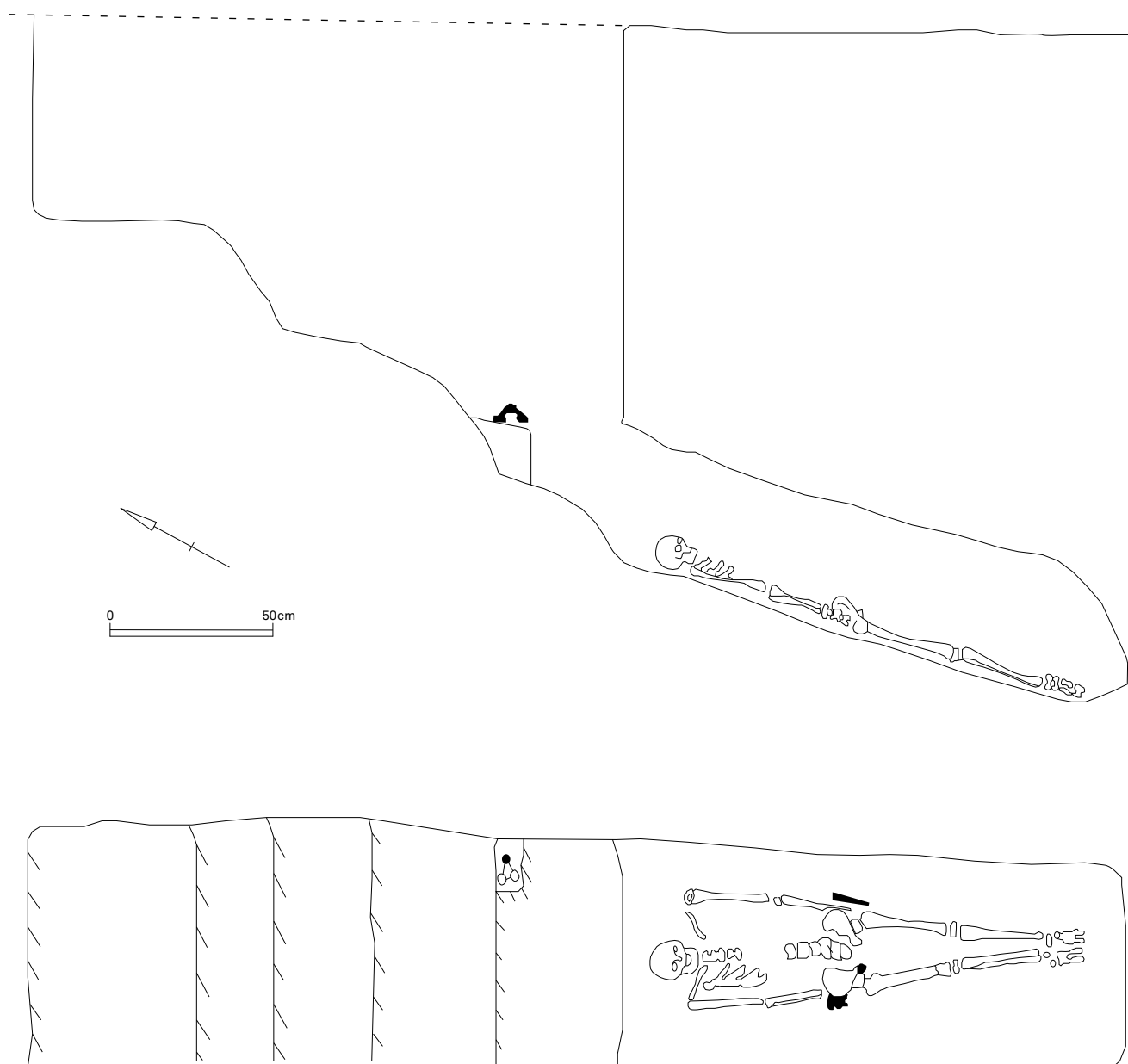


FIG. 5 Harness in a horseman burial in niche grave 209 at Szarvas-Grexa téglagyár – Hungary, County of Békés (Juhász 2000, Tab. 8.1). *Harnachement de cheval avec l’inhumation d’un cavalier dans la sépulture 209 de Szarvas-Grexa téglagyár – Hongrie, Comitat de Békés (Juhász 2000, Tab. 8.1).*

²⁹ Kiss 1962; Kiss 1996, 390.

³⁰ Kiss 1962, 158.

³¹ Bóna 1979, 17.

Relative to the horsemen, entire horses can be buried on their right or left hand side, near their head, their feet or above them. All these five positions can overlap one another and are not strictly distinguished from one another. As Bóna István noted, that the relationships between the horsemen and their horses buried near them cannot be strictly categorized³². Partial and symbolic horse burials are often near the head or feet of the deceased, but it is unclear what if anything this signifies, nor how it related to the position of entire horse burials.

In general the funerary rituals for the horses fit in with the rituals for the cemetery as a whole. This also applies to the grave goods. What is specific to the horse is its harness, but this does not appear in all horse burials. One wonders whether these horse played the same role in the funerary system as harnessed horses. Another specific aspect of graves with horses buried alongside their owners is the association with arms and belts, but these materials do not appear in the same proportion in each cemetery. For example, in some of them, an abundance of arms suggests the presence of a warrior class³³, while in other ones, a rare occurrence of arms relative to the wealth of the graves points towards an economic or political elite³⁴. Other cemeteries and horsemen graves are less rich, but the horse is still an indicator of social distinction. Nevertheless it cannot be asserted that it shows the existence of a vertical structure, because numerous rich graves of the late Avar period are not associated with horse burials.

The other sources that inform us about the role of the horse in the late Avar period come from the depictions of horses or horsemen on archaeological remains. Several fragments of belts, harness or jewellery show horse heads, a warrior, an archer on a horse or on a mystical harnessed animal. Well known examples are the figures on pot number 2 of the 'treasure' of Nagyszentmiklós / Sânnicolau Mare (Romania)(fig.6).

Among the written sources, the *Strategikon* is the most important for our knowledge of early Avar cavalry. It is a military book written by – or on the orders of – the Emperor Maurice (582 – 602 AD). It mentions many details about the Avar cavalry, how they were trained from a very young age and the close relationship between horse and horseman³⁵. Unfortunately there is no specific mention of late Avar period horseriding, or indeed about the practice of burying horses.

The significance of the horse in late Avar funerals could be a sign of their nomadic heritage which may eventually have come to define their ethnic identity when faced with other European cultures. The fact that not all Avars were buried with their horses is a indication of social stratification found in strongly hierarchical societies. The horse may also have had a religious meaning in the funerary ritual; the mystical horse-like figures and the horse teeth found in some graves could support this idea. Rather than being mutually exclusive, these aspects of the funerary ritual can be said to interact. The specific place of the horse in Avar society can only be determined by relating it to the part it played in the late Avar cultural system.



FIG. 6 'The triumphant prince', Detail of pot no. 2 in the Nagyszentmiklós / Sânnicolau Mare Treasure – Romania (Kovács (ed.) 2002).

'Le prince triomphant', Détail du vase n°2 – Trésor de Nagyszentmiklós / Sânnicolau Mare – Roumanie (Kovács (ed.) 2002).

Résumé

La place du cheval dans la société de la période avar tardive du Bassin des Carpates

Les Avars, nomades des steppes asiatiques, arrivent dans le Bassin des Carpates à la fin du 6^e s. Leur domination perdure jusqu'au début du 9^e siècle. Cette étude propose une réflexion sur la société de la période tardive (8^e s.-9^e s.) à travers les tombes de chevaux et de cavaliers. Après plus d'un siècle de sédentarisation progressive et de relations avec les cultures européennes voisines, le cheval « bien le plus précieux des nomades » reste l'objet d'un geste funéraire spécifique et codé, réservé à une certaine population. Nous proposons ici une méthodologie plaçant tour à tour le cheval au centre du rituel, tel un individu à part entière, puis en tant que mobilier du défunt, et enfin en tant qu'animal. Les tombes de chevaux et de cavaliers sont estimées à 6 000 sur environ 60 000 sépultures avares connues. Les résultats qui ne peuvent être définitifs proviennent d'une première étude menée sur six nécropoles. Nous y soulignons la diversité des types d'inhumations pratiquées et montrons les recoupements possibles entre ces rituels. Ceux-ci associés à certaines catégories de mobilier permettant de relever la présence de différentes couches économiques et sociales, au sein desquelles le cheval est un marqueur distinctif. La présence de tombes contemporaines d'une certaine richesse sans association avec un cheval ne permet pas de conclure catégoriquement à un signe de structuration verticale.

³² *Ibid.*, 18.

³³ For example in *Tiszafüred-Majoros* and in *Košice-Sebastovce*: Makoldi 2008, 140.

³⁴ For example in *Komárno-Schiffswerft*: Trugly 2008.

³⁵ Szádeczky-Kardoss 1998. Mauricius XI 2, 19. In: Mauricius *Strategicon*, Ed. Haralambie Mihaescu, Bucarest, 1970.

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Probable Frankish burials of the sixth century AD at Saint-Dizier (Haute-Marne, Champagne-Ardenne, France)

Marie-Cécile Truc¹

Abstract

In 2002, excavations carried out by Inrap at Saint-Dizier revealed three exceptionally rich graves – a woman, two men and a horse – dating from around 525 – 550 AD. These graves present features that differ from the usual funerary practices known in the region: Morken-type chambers, horse burials, swords with rings, etc. These elements link the Saint-Dizier tombs with the 6th century ‘Frankish chieftain’ graves, interpreted as evidence for Frankish expansion. The questions of whether the people buried at Saint-Dizier were Franks is not strictly addressed in terms of ethnicity but rather in terms of social and political identities. The splendour and ritual of these graves indicate that the dead had a particular material culture and were eager to demonstrate that they belonged to an elite that followed a strict set of rules regarding death and burial.

Keywords

Privileged burials, ceremonial swords with pommel rings, Morken-type burial chamber, horse burial

Introduction

The excavation in 2002 of an early medieval settlement at the La Tuilerie district of Saint-Dizier brought about the unexpected

discovery of four burials, of two male and one female human, and a horse (Fig. 1). The exceptionally rich grave goods suggest that the deposit can be dated to the second quarter or the middle of the 6th century AD². The La Tuilerie district is located to the south of the town, in an area that has provided abundant archaeological data. The area is particularly well known as a result of a series of evaluations and excavations that began in 1993, in advance of the construction of the southern Saint-Dizier bypass and the development of the adjacent commercial area of Chêne Saint-Amand. In the latter area alone, more than 10 hectares have been the subject of evaluations, with almost 6 hectares consequently excavated³. These archaeological investigations have shown that the entire sector was continuously occupied from the late Iron Age until the 12th century AD.

1 The presentation of the site and the finds

The graves were situated about 30 cm. apart. This may suggest inhumations that were either simultaneous or else very close in time, two possibilities that are confirmed by the homogeneity of the grave goods. In the latter case, the juxtaposition of the graves can be taken to imply knowledge of the previous burials, still visible in the earth. In either case, this grouping demonstrates a clear desire to bring together these individuals in death, and apart from chronological considerations, probably indicates an important family or social group.

The individuals buried at this Saint-Dizier site are a male aged around 30⁴ (Burial 11)⁵, an adolescent female aged 17 to 19 (Burial 12)⁶, and a male aged around 50 (Burial 13)⁷. Biological analysis⁸ has revealed that all three were in a much better

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² End of Phase MA1 and Phase MA2 of Legoux,

Périn, Vallet 2006.

³ Beague-Tahon 199; Durost 2004; Truc 2009.

⁴ Diagnosis of sex determined with five morphoscopic characteristics after Bruzek 1991.

⁵ All the visible cranial sutures are open: Masset 1982.

⁶ Moorrees *et al.* 1963; Ferembach, Schwidetzky

& Stloukal 1979; Birkner 1980.

⁷ Synostosis coefficient of the exocranial sutures: 1.2, stage 6, giving an age-range of 38 to 64, with a potential error of plus or minus 13 years, after Masset 1982.

⁸ Carried out by Cécile Paresys, Inrap; see also her report in Truc 2009, vol. 1.

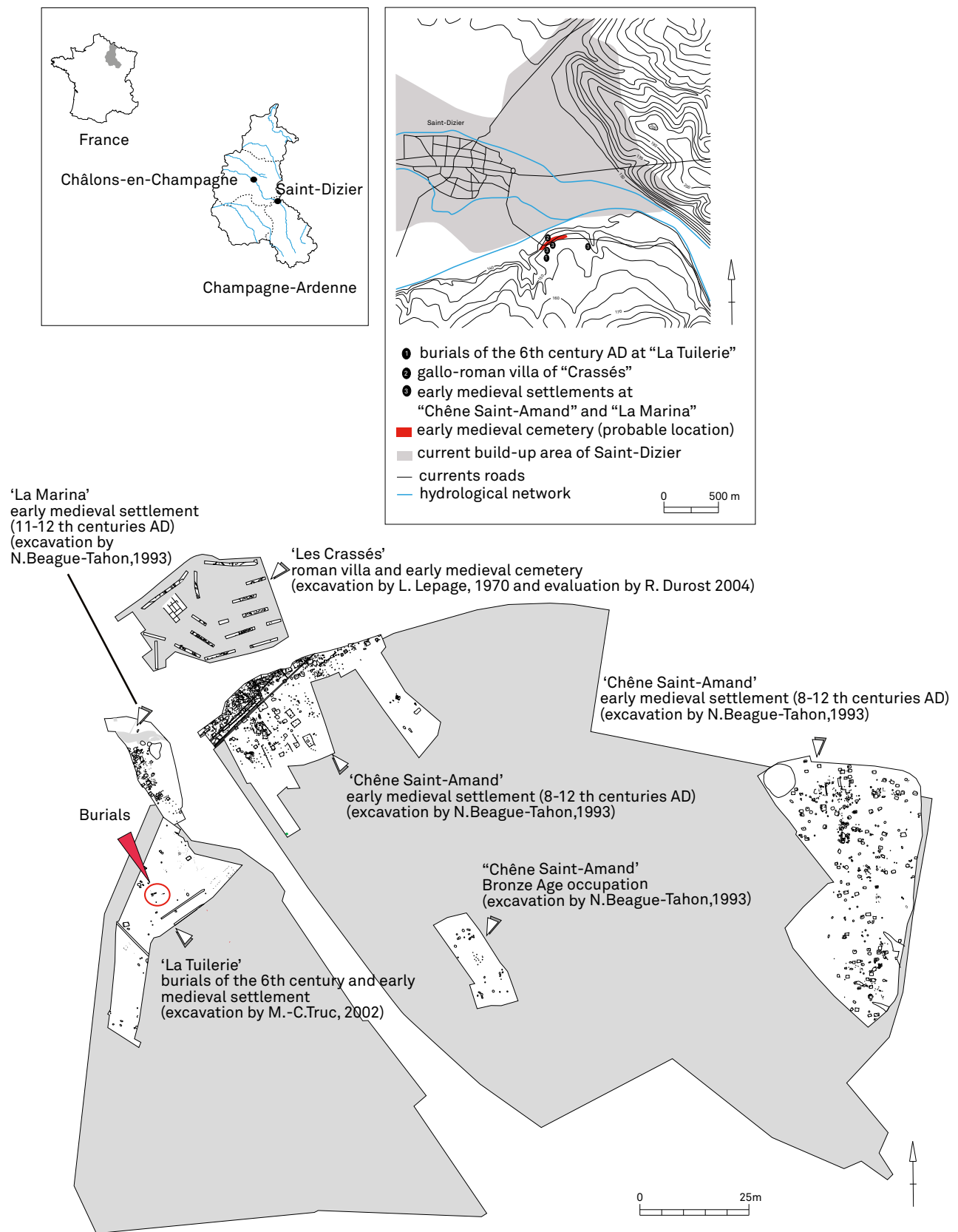


FIG. 1 Location of the excavations. Map by Inrap.

state of health than that of previously studied contemporary populations, and indicates life in rather favourable conditions for the period.

1.1 The female grave (Burial 12) (fig. 2-3)

The young woman was in a supine position in a pit, accompanied by a abundant jewellery, clothing accessories and tableware.

◉ The grave goods

At the level of the neck, two circular silver brooches, decorated with garnet cloisonné, had been used to close the collar⁹. Two asymmetric handled (radiate-headed) brooches in gilt silver had been placed on the abdomen of the deceased, having served to close the tunic¹⁰. These must also have held a belt, in perishable material – not preserved, but suggested by the presence of a knife and a large antler bead found between the knees.

Around the neck there was a necklace of thirty or so beads in amber and glass. On the chest were found about seventy beads in various shapes and materials¹¹. In the absence of evidence found in the excavation, the interpretation of their function is difficult, but we suppose that they must have been sewn into the border of the clothing, or else on a cloth or in a bag placed on the body. At her right hand there was a brilliant gold ring, set with garnets and decorated with gold filigree. On her left wrist there was a silver bracelet, with open, everted ends¹².

Finally the grave inventory was completed by a goblet¹³ and a bottle in glass¹⁴, a basin in copper alloy with bead-decorated rim, and a ceramic bowl. . The number of funerary vessels, as well as their quality, is wholly exceptional for the Champagne-Ardenne region.

◉ Burial method

The young woman was buried in a rectangular grave measuring 2.25 by 0.8 m. Heavy levelling of the area makes it impossible to determine the original depth.

The presence of nails and taphonomic indicators suggest that there was a rectangular coffin originally measuring 2.20 by 0.52 m. The deceased was laid inside adorned with her jewellery and clothing accessories. The presence of clothing is attested by the disposition of the jewellery and the brooches in their functional positions, as well as by some textile fragments found in contact with metallic objects.

The toppled position of the two glass vessels seems to suggest that they had been placed on the coffin at the time of the burial. The original positions of the basin and the ceramic bowl are less clear; when compared with the evidence from Burial 11, it is tempting to suggest that these vessels were also placed on the coffin.

1.2 The male graves (Burials 11 and 13) (fig. 4)

The two male graves show great similarity in the type and positioning of the grave goods, as well as in their architecture.

◉ The grave goods

The men were buried with a complete array of weapons (axes, shields¹⁵, arrowheads, seaxes, lances and angons), indicating both their status as warriors and their high social rank. In fact, even though in Merovingian graves it is relatively common to find an axe, a seax, and parts of shields, the addition of a sword, a lance or an angon is always characteristic of a member of the elite. Helmets and cuirasses may appear in graves of still higher status¹⁶.

The two swords at Saint-Dizier are unquestionably spectacular. They are preserved in their alder scabbards with a silver scabbard-head at the bottom. The scabbard of the sword in Burial 11 is decorated with two cylindrical beads in gold and ivory. Each sword has a pyramid-shaped pommel in gilt silver. The pommel of the younger male (Burial 11) bears a runic inscription whose transcription reads *alu*, which can be translated as 'progress' or 'power'¹⁷. These pommels were lengthened by two rings. Only those of the sword in Burial 11 have been preserved, but their

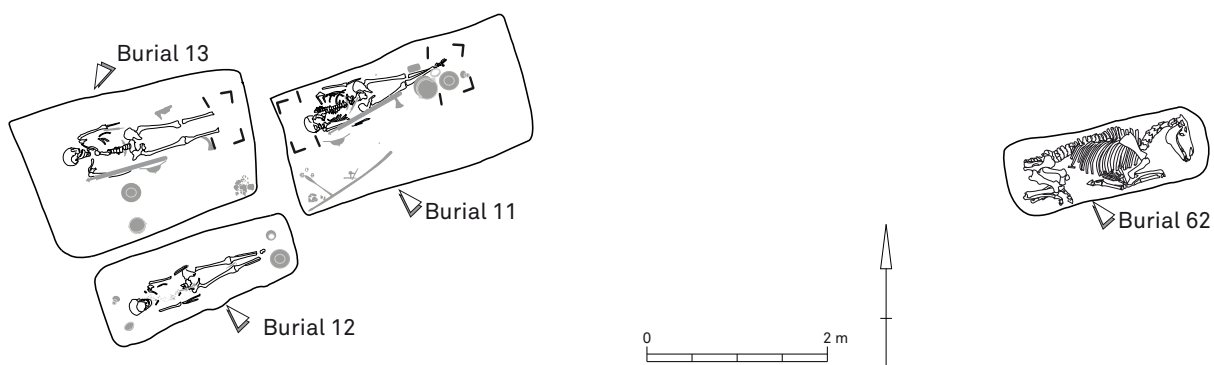


FIG. 2 Plan of the funerary deposit. Plan by C. Paresys and M.-C. Truc (Inrap).

⁹ Veilitz, 2003, 104, fig. 44, Group A6.

¹⁰ Koch 1998, 111-113, Group I3341.

¹¹ Ovoid beads in amber, large glass or rock crystal beads, tubular beads in blue glass, blue-green micro-pearls, cylindrical beads in clear or gilded glass, and pierced Roman silver coins linked by a

copper-alloy wire.

¹² Wührer 2000, 16, 123 & fig. 6, Type 2.1; Martin 1976, 84.

¹³ Feyeux 2003, Type 1.31a.

¹⁴ Feyeux 2003, Type 20.0. Glass analysis by Hubert Cabart; see his report in Truc 2009, vol. 1.

¹⁵ The shield bosses are Hübener 1989, 88, Abb. 2, Type II.

¹⁶ Périn 1972, 54-55.

¹⁷ Fischer *et al.* 2008, 105-107.

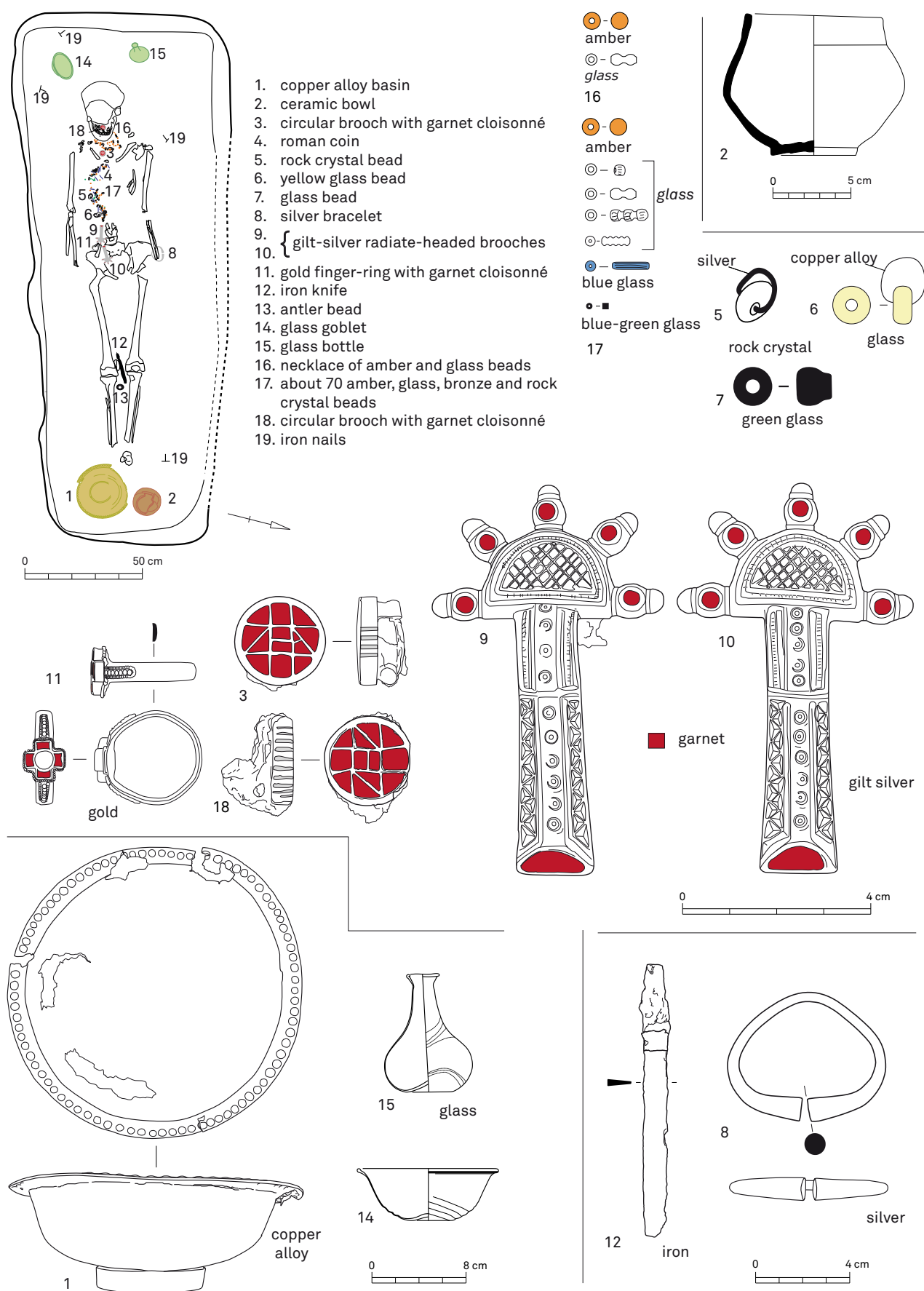


FIG. 3 Burial 12: plan and finds. Plan by C. Paresys; glass and beads drawn by C. Cabart; metalwork drawn by S. Culot; ceramics drawn by A. Ahü-Delor (Inrap).

presence on the sword in Burial 13 is indicated by an indentation made at the end of the pommel.

The axes, with their smooth profiles and ash handles – ash having been classically used for shafts and handles of thrown weapons¹⁸ – seem to be related to the francisca type of throwing axe¹⁹.

The seaxes were found in their alder scabbards, sheathed in leather and with a silver scabbard-head at the bottom. A long, fine knife with gold handle had been slipped into a pocket behind the scabbard of Burial 13. This type of knife, mainly found between the Seine and the Rhine, was in principle the privilege of wealthy burials, female as well as male²⁰.

In Burial 11 there were also a lance²¹ and an angon²², both originally with shafts made of ash, of which some traces remained. The angon was a characteristic Frankish weapon, used both for throwing and for hand-to-hand combat. A high status item, it is fairly rare in graves and is only found in the most prestigious burials²³. Among the accessories found were belt buckles and the clasps of purses. The former are in rock crystal and silver; the latter are of Arlon type²⁴, with the ends in the forms of horses heads, decorated with garnet cloisonné. The rectangular central frame of the Burial 11 clasp is inlaid with lapis lazuli, previously unknown on this type of object²⁵.

The younger male also wore a gold finger-ring on his left hand. Against his left leg there was a double-sided composite bone comb in its case, upon which there remained traces of a red colour. This comb is richly decorated with engraved lines and pierced circular eyelets forming a series of openwork quatrefoils. Combs of this type are rare in the early medieval period and in 1995, Michel Petitjean had recorded only fourteen, of which some, comparable to those found at Saint-Dizier, came from Lombard Italy from the beginning of the 6th century²⁶.

Additionally, three buckles were found in the south-west angle of the funerary chamber of Burial 11, in silver-Damascened iron, in copper alloy, and in silver, located. Their proximity with a horse's bit in silver-Damascened iron²⁷ suggests that they were part of a harness with the leather parts not preserved.

Each grave enclosed a substantial number of elements of tableware that is considerably superior to that found in other graves excavated in the region. Burial 11 yielded a goblet²⁸ and a bottle²⁹ in glass, a copper alloy basin with bead-decorated rim similar to the one found with the young woman, and finally a Westland cauldron in copper alloy³⁰, which enclosed two bowls, one in maple wood and one in glass³¹. Burial 13 also contained three glass vessels (two goblets³² and a bell-shaped beaker with terminal button³³), a copper alloy basin and a bucket. This last object is notable for its rich decoration: the upper part consists of a frame in copper alloy, decorated with

circular eyelets and nineteen triangular applied stamped decorations in the form of stylised human masks. The rings connecting the handle, with an openwork profile, were similarly decorated with circular eyelets, and the handle, also richly ornamented, is linked by means of a pin with the head of an animal. Finally three iron hoops held the pine staves in place. Until now just fifty or so examples of this type are known in western Europe, most of them found in rich graves found between the Rhine and the Meuse³⁴.

• Burial method

The men were buried in rectangular funerary chambers measuring 2.70 by 1.50 m., and at least 0.80 m. deep. These were sealed by a wooden lid, observed in the excavation by a particular colouration in the soil. Dark fibrous traces, detected against the wall of Burial 11 also provide evidence of a wooden box. Almost one square metre of the oak floor of the Burial 13 chamber was very well preserved.

The deceased lay dressed, each with their clothing accessories, their sword and their seax in a rectangular oak coffin, closed by iron brackets, which was set against the north wall of the chamber. The other weapons were found outside the coffin: shields and axes were set vertically against the south wall. The angon and the lance of Burial 11 were placed on the lid of the funerary chamber, the points towards the west.

The tableware was also outside the coffins: in Burial 11, the cauldron, the basin and the bottle were set on the coffin, above the feet. The glass goblet had been placed upside-down in the south-west corner of the chamber, probably at a height above the floor. In Burial 13, the basin and the bucket were set on the floor, the former overturned. In the latter there were silver aglets and shoe buckles. Lastly, the glass vessels were found broken in the south-east corner of the chamber.

Elsewhere in Burial 11, dark traces of wood were clearly visible at the foot of the coffin, marking a quadrilateral with an interior surface of 0.15 m². This was doubtless the remains of a chest that had contained offerings. Similar arrangements were observed in Grave 4 at Klepsau (Germany)³⁵ and in Grave 319 at Lavoye (France)³⁶.

1.3 The horse burial (fig. 5)

A horse burial was found at about 5.50 m. to the east of the human graves. The animal, a male of 8 to 10 years old, was buried on its side, at an inverse orientation to that of the humans. It must have been a horse for riding, as attested by the wear of the lower premolar teeth that is characteristic of the use of a bit³⁷. The immediate proximity of the burial to the human graves, along with the presence of a horse's bit in Burial 11, suggests that the horse may have belonged to this man.

¹⁸ Identification by Willy Tegel: see his report in Truc 2009, vol. 3.

¹⁹ Böhner 1958, tome 1, 22, & tome 2, pl. 31, Type A; and Legoux, Périn, Vallet 2004, 23, Type 2.

²⁰ Werner 1968, 653, fig. 1.

²¹ Böhner 1958, Vol. 1, 148, Type A4 and Legoux, Périn, Vallet 2004, 25, Type 33.

²² Von Schnurbein 1987, Type C.

²³ Von Schnurbein 1987, 419.

²⁴ Windler 1994, 94 and following pages.

²⁵ Analysis by Thomas Calligaro: see Calligaro 2005.

²⁶ Petitjean 1995, 165.

²⁷ Oexle 1992, tome 1, 34 (and following pages) Type I horse's bit with branches, and tome 2, fig. 2.

²⁸ Feyeux 2003, Type T.81.o.

²⁹ Feyeux 2003, Type 20.o.

³⁰ Pirling 1974, tome 1, 115, and probably Hauken

2005, 25-26, Type 2D.

³¹ Feyeux 2003, Type 81.1a.

³² Feyeux 2003, Type 81.1 acp.

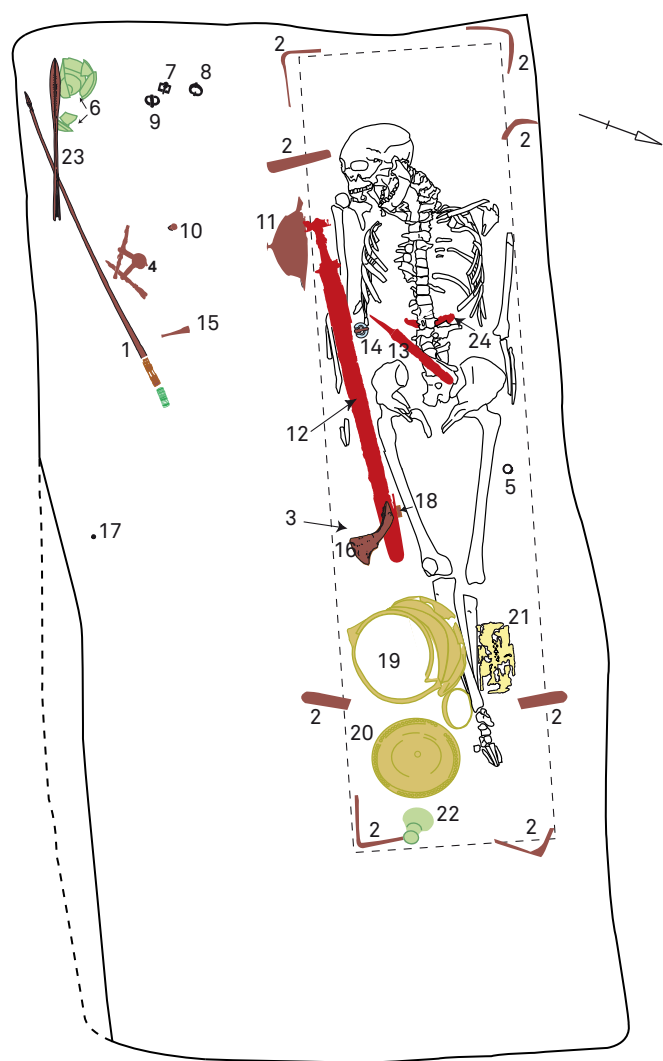
³³ Feyeux 2003, Type 56.1d.

³⁴ Pirling 1974, tome 1, 111-112.

³⁵ Koch 1990, 22-24 et fig. 4-5.

³⁶ Joffroy 1974, 100.

³⁷ Archeozoological analysis by J.-H. Yvinec; see his report in Truc 2009, 134.



1. iron and copper alloy angon
2. iron bracket
3. oak coffin fragment
4. horse's bit in silver-Damascened iron
5. gold finger-ring
6. glass goblet
7. copper alloy buckle
8. iron buckle
9. buckle in silver-Damascened iron
10. copper alloy rivet of the shield boss
11. iron shield boss
12. sword in alder scabbard with silver, ivory and gold decoration
13. scramasaxe in alder scabbard
14. rock crystal and silver buckle
15. iron nail
16. iron axe
17. copper alloy ring
18. iron arrows
19. copper alloy cauldron
20. copper alloy basin
21. bone comb
22. glass bottle
23. iron spear
24. clasp of purse (silver, garnet cloisonné, lapis lazuli)

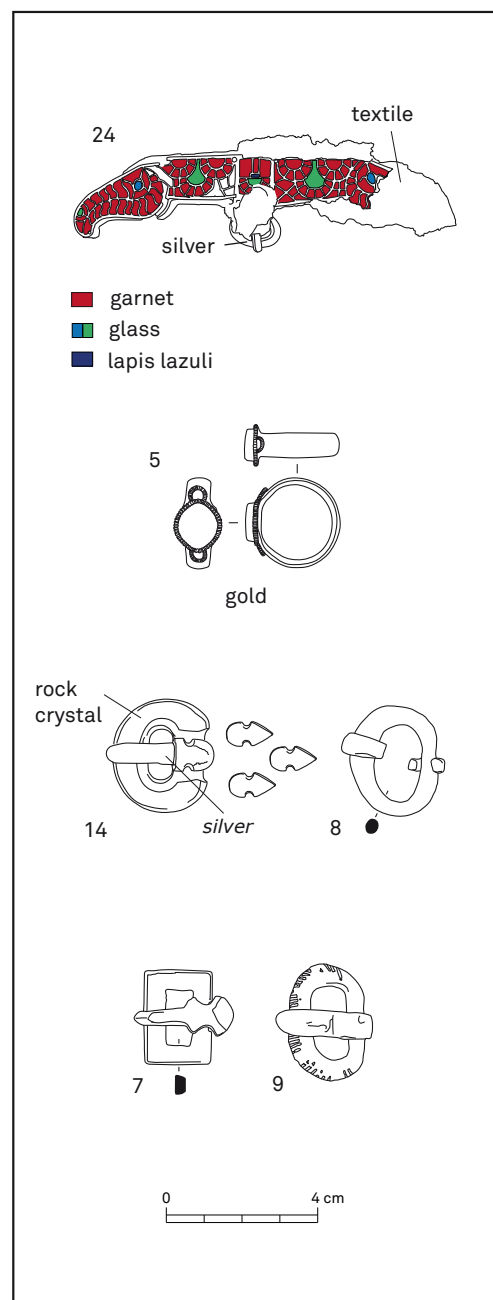
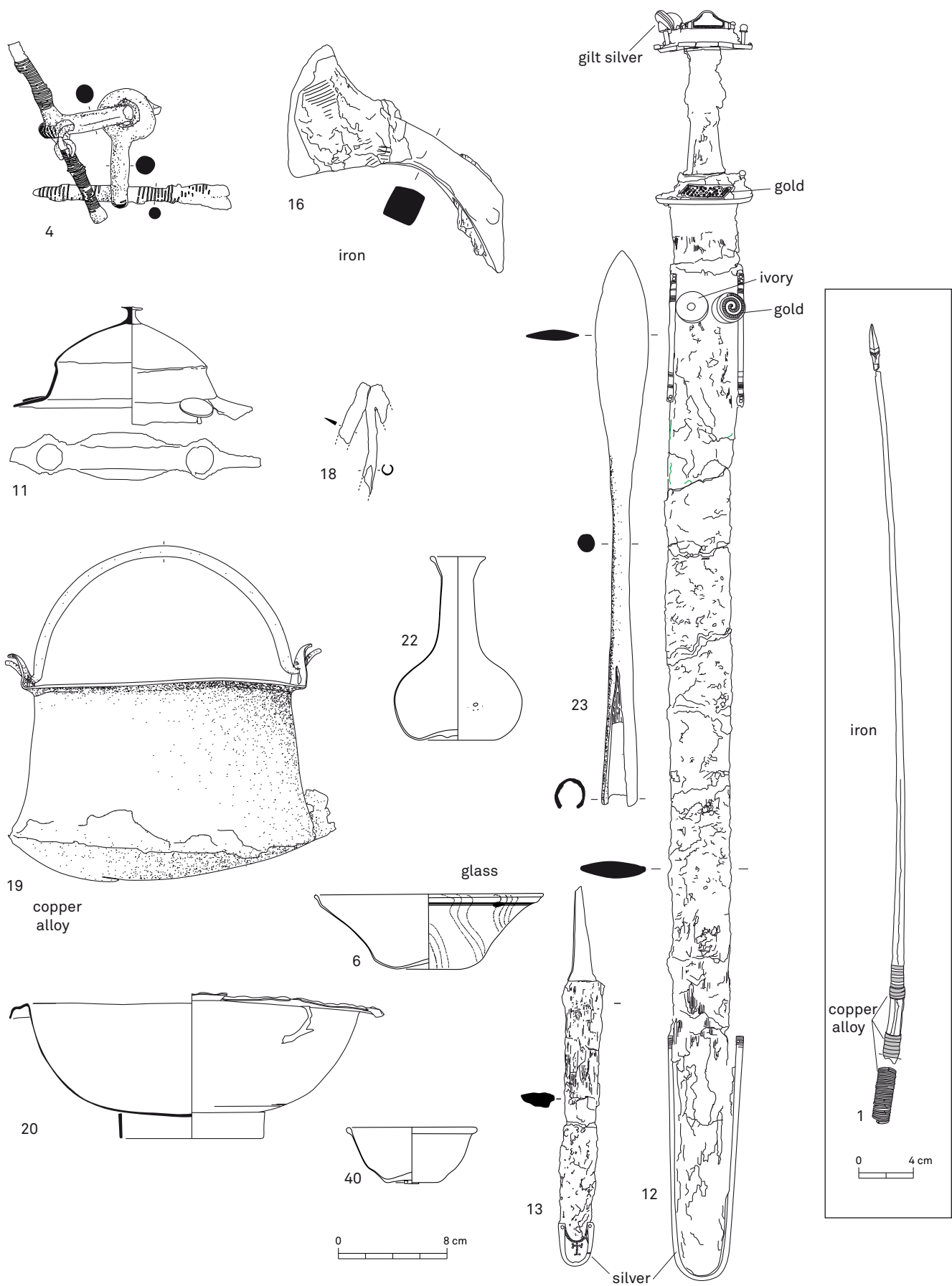
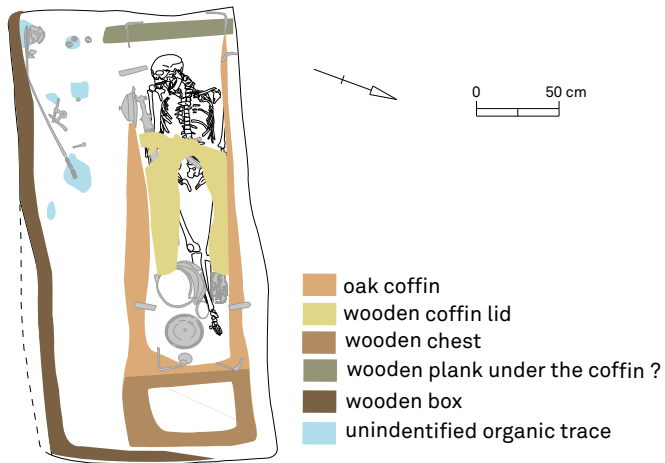


FIG. 4 Burial 11: plan and finds. Plan by C. Paresys; glass and beads drawn by C. Cabart; metalwork drawn by S. Culot (Inrap).



Burial 11



Burial 13



Burial 11



M.-C. Truc / Inrap

Laurent Juhell/Inrap, SRA Champagne-Ardenne



M.-C. Truc / Inrap



V. Peltier / Inrap

FIG. 5 Male burial chambers and the horse burial. Plan by C. Paresys; photos by M.-C. Truc (IINRAP).

2 Provisional interpretation of the funerary deposit

These three inhumations represent funerary rites that are different from those normally observed in this region, and they are rather closer to practices common to regions to the north and east, with Germanic and particularly Frankish influence.

2.1 Allochtoon funerary rites

◉ The funerary chambers

The reconstruction of these graves shows that the two males at Saint-Dizier were inhumed in a Morken-type burial chamber, after the eponymous site in the Rhineland (Germany)³⁸. This type consists of a rectangular excavation of 1.10 to 3 m. wide by 2.20 to 3 m. long, framed with horizontal planks and sometimes including a floor. The interior space is divided into two areas: in the northern half there is the funerary bed or coffin, with the deceased laid to rest inside, along with clothing, weapons and jewellery. The southern part of the chamber is used for offerings, other weapons and various objects³⁹. The origins of this type of chamber go back to Late Antiquity, and during the 6th century AD they are attested in the Frankish regions. Since they usually feature abundant funerary deposits, they are a demonstration of the high social status of the deceased. In the 7th century there is a process of democratization, and they are no longer a privilege of the elite⁴⁰.

In Champagne-Ardenne the only two other sites – Charleville-Mézières (Ardennes) and Gye-sur-Seine (Aube) – with funeral chambers are, like Saint-Dizier, atypical sites that are quite different from other cemeteries in the region. At Charleville-Mézières in particular, the chamber graves are male burials dated to the first half of the 6th century. Their furniture and organisation are in every way comparable with the graves at Saint-Dizier, indicating that they are part of the same archaeological phenomenon. The Charleville graves have been interpreted as graves for “Frankish chiefs”⁴¹. The site at Gye-sur-Seine is also deeply atypical for the region: the number of burial chambers, their dimensions and the types of grave goods evoke the cemeteries beyond the Rhine⁴².

◉ The horse burial

The burial of horses, particularly complete horses, is also a rare practice in our region. The few known examples, such as those at Vouciennes and Conflans (Marne)⁴³, were found in early excavations, where unfortunately the archaeological context was not well recorded. Therefore discussion of the chronology or the funeral rituals is difficult. For the moment, based on the distribution maps established by Müller-Wille, Saint-Dizier remains one of the southernmost sites where this practice has been recorded⁴⁴.

Horse burial is in fact a Germanic custom⁴⁵ that developed mainly between the 5th and 7th centuries AD on the east side of the Rhine. Less frequently practiced on the west side, this ritual

is found essentially between the Somme and the Escaut, in other words at the heart of the first Frankish kingdoms⁴⁶. Thus in France, horse burials are more associated with the north of the country. These burials are interpreted as giving (the horse) a function as a psychopomp, but also as a participant in the funerary splendour, along with the chambers and the ceremonial objects, and thus underlining of the high social status of the deceased⁴⁷.

◉ The grave goods

The objects deposited in the graves seem to represent a remarkable cultural homogeneity. This situation is particularly notable in view of the distribution maps of handled brooches⁴⁸, bracelets⁴⁹, angons⁵⁰, gold-handled knives⁵¹ and buckets⁵². It is clear that these objects have distribution areas that are limited to the north-east by the Rhine and to the south-west by the Seine. The young woman is also dressed in a manner considered to be characteristic of wealthy Franks⁵³, with the heavy open silver bracelet and especially with the group of four brooches (two small ones decorated with garnet cloisonné at the neck, and two handled brooches at the abdomen), along with a knife and an antler bead hanging from a belt⁵⁴.

While it is always debatable to try to prove the geographic origin of a population on the basis of distribution maps of finds, in this case the correlation of the maps to several sets of data (funeral rituals, the types of grave goods and their specific arrangement with the furniture in the chamber) can serve to suggest that the Saint-Dizier burials are clearly different from other local contemporary inhumations and are instead closer to discoveries made in Frankish regions.

2.2 An elite, an indication of Frankish expansion?

A final element is the presence of a double ring attached to the pommel of the sword in Burial 11. In northern Europe, a number of rich male graves – often accompanied by equally well-furnished female graves – have included this kind of sword with the pommel lengthened with a double ring, either moveable or not (fig. 6). These graves, dated to the 6th century AD⁵⁵, all comprise similar associations of objects (weapons, tableware, clothing accessories) arranged in a manner that seems almost standardized.

The function of these rings (prophylactic, symbolic, ethnic, political etc.⁵⁶) has already been much discussed. Among the theories most often cited is that of Vera Evison⁵⁷, for whom these rings symbolise the links of one man to another: a chief or other important individual would give a ring to one of his warriors as a way of expressing thanks for a service rendered, or to acknowledge a particular responsibility, or as a symbol of mutual loyalty. Some swords have an indentation suggesting that there had been such a ring which had subsequently been removed: this is the case with the sword of Saint-Dizier Burial 13.

38 Böhner 1959.

39 Stein 1993, 6.

40 Stein 1993, 21.

41 Périn 1972.

42 Scapula 1951, 142-151.

43 Salin, 1959.

44 Müller-Wille, 1970.

45 Salin, 1959, p. 24.

46 Koch 1996, 725 ; Dierkens, Le Bec, Périn 2008, 281.

47 Dierkens, Le Bec, Périn 2008, 281.

48 Koch 1998, maps 10, 31 and 32.

49 Wührer 2000, 17.

50 Werner 1968, 103 et fig. 5.

51 Werner 1968, fig. 1.

52 Martin 1976, 117 : carte 30.

53 Périn 1997.

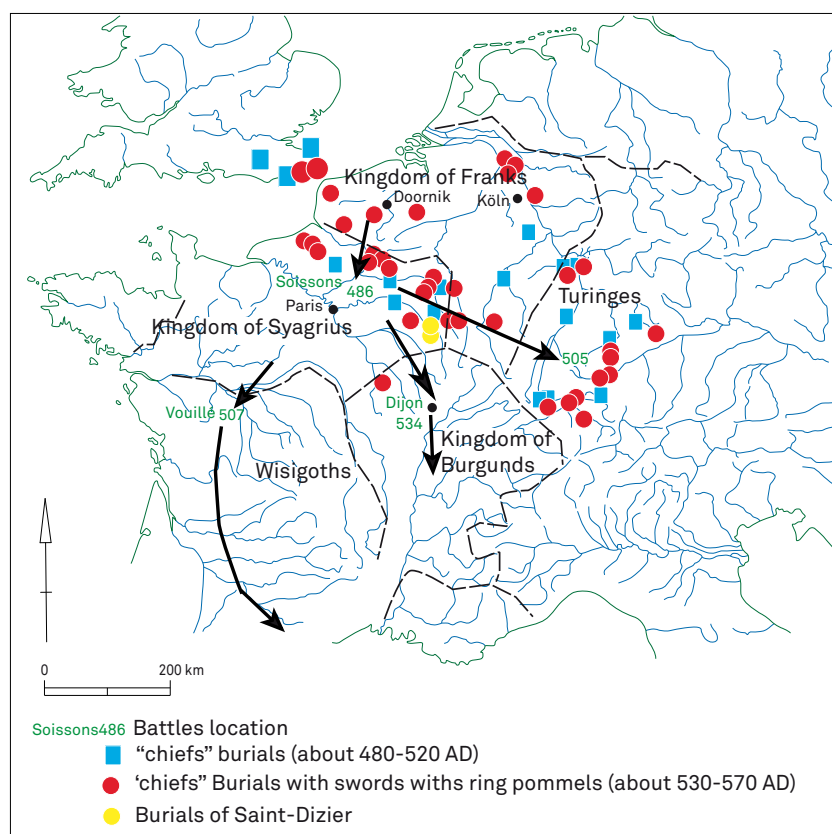
54 Claus 1987, 512.

55 Menghin 1983.

56 Among others: Böhner 1949, 170 and Steuer 1987, 203-205. See also Fischer *et al.* 2008, 23-26, who summarizes the various theories on the subject.

57 Evison 1967, 63 ; Périn 1972, 58.

FIG. 6 Distribution map of ceremonial swords with pommel rings. Map and commentary by G. Achard-Corompt and M.-C. Truc (Inrap), after Menghin 1983, 57, Tafel 24.



The presence of complete arrays of weapons, of rings on the swords as well as the distribution⁵⁸ of these graves at the margins of the Frankish kingdoms, has led Patrick Périn to interpret them as archaeological evidence of the securing of power over Gaul by Clovis and his descendants⁵⁹.

Should we therefore conclude that the individuals buried at Saint-Dizier were Franks? This is not necessarily so much an ethnic question as one of social and political identity. The splendour and the ritual of these inhumations reflect a specific material culture, which departs from what is habitually found in cemeteries in the surrounding region. This reveals a clear wish to demonstrate the belonging of these individuals to an elite or to a high social – and doubtless warrior – class that maintains a very precise style of inhumation. And this is a style that is found in the territories that fit closely with the edges of the first Frankish kingdoms from the end of the 5th to the 6th century AD.

3 Interactions with the local environment?

3.1 A Roman-period estate

Some 200 m. north of the graves lie the remains of the Gallo-Roman villa of Crassés, known since the 19th century. Limited excavations carried out in the 1960's showed that the *pars urbana* was occupied from the end of the 1st century until at least

the 5th century AD⁶⁰. In 2004 Inrap⁶¹ undertook an evaluation (trial trenches) covering the whole of the site, bringing a better understanding of the buildings, which seems to have been developed towards the east⁶². If the excavations, as yet incomplete, seem to show that the Gallo-Roman form of the *pars urbana* was abandoned during the 5th century, this does not necessarily mean that the site itself was abandoned. Indeed numerous of ceramic sherds dated from the end of the 5th century to the beginning of the 6th, and found residually throughout the sites at *Chêne Saint-Amand*, *La Tuilerie* and *La Marina*⁶³, provide evidence of just detectable human presence.

The three people who were buried in the 6th century therefore did not choose an entirely deserted or virgin landscape. Even if at the time of their arrival we do not know the state of the villa buildings, it can be suggested that their presence in this location was not accidental, but came from a desire to control an agricultural estate.

3.2 An early medieval cemetery

This cemetery was established on the ruins of the villa, and has not yet been excavated. For the moment it is known only from early discoveries and from the 2004 evaluation, which nevertheless made clear its extent and chronology. The proposed provisional dating, based on the types of finds and the use of

⁵⁸ Menghin 1983, 57.

⁵⁹ Périn 1997, 70–83.

⁶⁰ Lepage 1970, 7–8; Durost 2004, 9–10.

⁶¹ Institut national de recherches archéologiques préventives (France).

⁶² Durost 2004, 29.

⁶³ Truc 2009, volume 1, 181.

Bourguignon-Champenois-type sarcophagi, spans the 7th and 8th centuries AD. This cemetery seems thus later than the 'chiefs' graves⁶⁴. The latter were separate from the cemetery, but at a sufficiently close distance to suggest that there could have been a link between these two funerary installations. In fact numerous researchers have already suggested that the wealthy graves of the early 6th century were often the progenitors of cemeteries and that they frequently occupied a significant position at the core of the latter⁶⁵: either they were installed at the heart of a funerary deposit toward which subsequent burials were attracted, or, by contrast, they were somewhat outlying, as at Lavoye (Meuse, France)⁶⁶.

3.3 An early medieval settlement

The cemetery – whose dates of creation and abandonment remain to be firmly established – no doubt served for the burial of all or some of the inhabitants of a settlement that developed on the site from the 8th century. Indeed, in the terrain adjacent to *La Tuilerie*, excavations carried out in 1993⁶⁷ led to the discovery of a large and densely-populated late medieval settlement. In its early stages this implantation grew alongside the *pars urbana*, and respected the land-use of the villa. Then, from the 10th to 11th century, the settlement seems to break free of this Gallo-Roman spatial constraint and acquires a new character as a metal-working site, with forges and bloomeries⁶⁸.

This settlement was abandoned during the 12th century, which is perhaps a phenomenon that is either linked to the development of the town of Saint-Dizier, then surrounding itself with fortifications and concentrating the population, or to the creation in 1227 of the Cistercian Abbey of Saint Pantaléon, which seems to have controlled part of the area⁶⁹.

Were those who were buried in the privileged graves of *La Tuilerie* the founders of this settlement? It is impossible to confirm this view with the presently available archaeological data. However the presence of iron ore, abundant in the Saint-Dizier area and even in places visible on the surface, may have been an attraction. Iron ore has been worked at the site since at least the Carolingian period, as is attested by early metallurgical workshops⁷⁰. But there is nothing to say that it was not extracted and worked in earlier times. The establishment of a warrior elite in this place could be the result of a desire to exploit this primary resource.

Conclusion

This article does not pretend to answer all the questions that arise from the discovery of these four exceptional graves. It seems that the individuals buried at Saint-Dizier belonged to a social elite, with their membership expressed in an ostentatious manner in the funeral rituals. It seems equally likely that the graves bear archaeological witness to Frankish expansion. The question of their ethnic origin remains unresolved: were they Gallo-Romans who became Frankish in culture, or Franks who had come from the north?

Their presence in this location seems to be connected to the existence of a large Gallo-Roman agricultural estate, but again,

we know little of the landscape at the time of their arrival, just as we know little of the role they may have played in the development of the settlement and the later cemetery.

Yet some answers may be forthcoming in the near future, notably concerning the dating and manner of the abandonment of the villa, as well as the precise chronology of the cemetery. This is because the town of Saint-Dizier, anxious to preserve this extraordinary archaeological heritage, recently purchased the plot of the *Crassés* villa, and excavations should begin there in the summer of 2011.

Collaborators

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Computer graphics: Sylvie Culot and Guillaume Achard (Inrap)

Résumé

En 2002, des fouilles menées par l'Inrap à Saint-Dizier ont permis la découverte de trois tombes d'une richesse exceptionnelle – une femme, deux hommes et un cheval – datées des environs de 525-550.

Habillée et parée de nombreux bijoux, la jeune femme (sép. 12) reposait à l'intérieur d'un cercueil sur lequel avait été déposé de la vaisselle en verre, alliage cuivreux et terre cuite.

Chaque homme (sép. 11 et 13) a été inhumé dans une chambre excavée coffrée de chêne. Ils reposaient dans leur cercueil avec accessoires vestimentaires épée d'apparat au pommeau prolongé par un double anneau. Les armes plus volumineuses (hache, bouclier, lance et angon) ainsi les objets de vaisselle avaient été placés sur le cercueil et dans le reste de la chambre funéraire.

Enfin, à quelques mètres du groupe humain, un cheval avait soigneusement été inhumé dans une fosse. Il n'était accompagné d'aucun mobilier, mais des éléments de harnachement retrouvés dans la sépulture 11, laissent suggérer que le cheval appartenait au défunt.

Ces tombes présentent des caractéristiques qui tranchent sur les rites funéraires habituellement observé de la région : chambres de type Morken, inhumation de cheval, épées à anneaux, etc. Par ailleurs la plupart des objets découverts à Saint-Dizier ont une aire de diffusion en principe centrée sur des régions plus

⁶⁴ Durost 2004.

⁶⁵ Dierkens 1984, 48; Simon 2002, 97.

⁶⁶ Joffroy 1974, 94 et planche I.

⁶⁷ Excavations of the *Chêne Saint-Amand* and of

La Marina: Beague-Tahon & Bourdin 1993.

⁶⁸ Leroy & Merluzzo 1998.

⁶⁹ Bur 2005, 525-538.

⁷⁰ Leroy & Merluzzo, 1998.

septentrionales qui correspondent aux territoires sous contrôle franc au VI^e siècle.

Ces éléments incitent rattacher les tombes de Saint-Dizier au faciès archéologique des tombes dites « de chefs francs » du début du VI^e siècle. Ce faciès est caractérisé par une cinquantaine de riches tombes à armes masculines - généralement associées à des inhumations féminines bien dotées elles aussi - et qui présentent entre elles de fortes similitudes dans les rites funéraires et l'agencement des dépôts. La dispersion géographique de ces tombes reflète l'expansion franque, aussi les archéologues s'accordent-ils à penser que cette élite inhumée dans ces tombes d'apparat a dû jouer un rôle dans la prise du pouvoir sur la Gaule par Clovis et ses descendants.

Doit-on en conclure que les inhumés de Saint-Dizier sont des Francs ? La question ne se pose pas forcément en terme ethnique mais plutôt en termes d'identité sociale et politique. Le faste et le rituel de ces inhumations reflètent une culture matérielle particulière, qui déroge à ce qui est rencontré habituellement dans les nécropoles environnantes. S'y révèle une volonté manifeste de mettre en valeur l'appartenance de ces défunts à une élite ou caste sociale, qui suit une mode bien précise dans la mort. Mode qui se retrouve dans une partie du nord de l'Europe sur des territoires qui correspondent à peu de choses près aux marges de premiers royaumes francs de la fin du Ve et du VI^e siècles.

La présence de cette élite à Saint-Dizier, qui à l'époque ne revêt aucune importance particulière, peut être liée à l'attrait d'un domaine antique, la villa des *Crassés*. Aux siècles suivants se développent sur place une nécropole et un habitat. Nous ignorons si la présence de ces aristocrates a joué un rôle dans le mode d'occupation du secteur, mais des fouilles qui devraient reprendre en 2011, fourniront peut-être quelques éléments de réponse.

Summary

In 2002, excavations carried out by Inrap at Saint-Dizier led to the discovery of four graves of exceptional wealth, containing a young woman, two men and a horse, dated to c. 525-550 AD.

Dressed and adorned with numerous jewels, the young female (Burial 12) was laid in a coffin upon which were placed vessels in glass, copper alloy bowl and ceramic.

Each male (Burials 11 and 13) had been buried in an excavated funerary chamber, built within an oak frame. They were laid in their coffins along with their personal clothing, including a ceremonial sword with two rings added to the pommel. The larger weapons (throwing axes, shields, lances and angons) as well as

various utensils were placed either on the coffins or in the other parts of the funerary chamber. Finally, few metres away from this group of human burials, a horse had been deliberately buried in a pit. The horse burial contained no objects, but parts of a harness found in Burial 11 suggest that the horse may have belonged to the deceased.

These graves exhibit characteristics – Morken-type chambers, swords with pommel rings, and the horse burial – which are significantly different from the funeral rites usually observed in the region. Indeed, most of the objects found at Saint-Dizier have distributions that are mainly centred in regions further to the north that were under Frankish control during the 6th century AD. All of these aspects indicate that the graves at Saint-Dizier can be linked to the archaeological phenomenon of the so-called 'Chiefs' graves of the beginning of the 6th century. This phenomenon is represented by about fifty wealthy male burials – usually associated with equally wealthy female burials – which are characterized by a high level of similarity both in the funeral rituals and in the arrangement of the deposits. The geographical locations of these burials illustrate the extent of Frankish expansion, leading some archaeologists to suggest that the elite who were buried in such splendour must have played a role in the conquest of Gaul by Clovis and his descendants.

Were the buried people in Saint-Dizier Franks? This is not necessarily so much an ethnic question as one of social and political identity. The opulence and the ritual involved in these burials reflect a specific material culture that is a departure from what is usual in the surrounding cemeteries of the region. This shows a clear intention to demonstrate the membership of the deceased of an elite or high social rank, following a very precise style of inhumation. This style is particularly found in the territories that fit closely with the edges of the first Frankish kingdoms from the end of the 5th to the 6th century AD.

The presence of the elite individuals at Saint-Dizier, which at the time had no particular importance, may be linked to the attraction of a Gallo-Roman estate, the villa of *Crassés*. In the succeeding centuries this area would be developed into a settlement with a cemetery. It is not known at present whether or not these aristocrats played a role in the occupation of the area, but further excavations which began in 2011 may provide some new answers to these questions.

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SESSION II

Identity and landscape

Settled landscapes – a regional perspective from early Anglo-Saxon Kent

Stuart Brookes UCL – *Institute of Archaeology, London, United Kingdom*

Early medieval communities around the North Sea: a ‘maritime culture’?

Pieterjan Deckers, Dries Tys – *VUB, Brussels, Belgium*

The ‘Slavonisation’ of the southwestern Baltic area: Preliminary report on the investigations in the Pyritz region

Dr. Sebastian Messal – *Roman-Germanic Commission, Frankfurt/Main, Germany*

Dr. Bartłomiej Rogalski – *National Museum Szczecin, Poland*

Forms of late antique settlement in Lusitania

Adriaan De Man – *Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal*

Continuity within change. Two sites in the borders of the former Icení territory in East Anglia

Penelope Walton Rogers – *Anglo-Saxon Laboratory, York, United Kingdom*



Settled landscapes – a regional perspective from early Anglo-Saxon Kent

Stuart Brookes¹

Abstract

This paper examines the landscape evidence for earliest Anglo-Saxon settlement in Kent. It suggests that patterning in the mortuary and settlement practices can be explored to demonstrate the preference and chronology of settlement, as well as its relationship to that of the later Roman period. It argues that the symbolic re-use of prehistoric monuments for burial in the fifth century can be closely related to the routes of maritime migration and are likely to represent the land claims of new local elites. Contrasting evidence from east and west Kent, finally, is presented to pose some questions about regional variation in the collapse of the imperial state system.

Keywords

Landscape; Kent; burial; monument reuse; maritime

1 Introduction

The nature, scale and character of the Anglo-Saxon migrations has been the subject of a number of recent works,² renewing the interest in themes which had largely fallen out of favour – at least in British scholarship – during the 1970s–1980s. All have addressed central questions about the relative levels of endogenous development as opposed to external influences, but have

often taken markedly different approaches, in some cases adopting theories from anthropology to address issues of migration and acculturation,³ in other cases using biological data to model the scale of population movement,⁴ and yet others examining the distinctive material culture signifying *folkways* of migratory activity.⁵

Somewhat overlooked in these debates is the landscape evidence for earliest settlement; a subject which had so occupied many of the earliest scholars of the early Anglo-Saxon period.⁶ Recent comparable research on the Viking *landnám* of Iceland and Greenland or Paleoindian dispersal into North America⁷ have demonstrated many of the significant interpretations that can be derived from analysing the landscape patterns of migration. However, apart from the late Hayo Vierck's attempt to correlate cemetery distributions north of the Thames with the proposed locations of 'tribes' and kingdoms listed in the *Tribal Hidage* manuscripts,⁸ there has been no comprehensive inter-regional comparison of archaeological data in an English context. In this regard much is anticipated from the forthcoming *Beyond the Tribal Hidage* project, which will surely set the agenda for any future assessments of this kind.⁹

In contrast to macro-scale analyses of early medieval migration, recent summaries at a regional scale have begun to address some interesting issues regarding the pattern, chronology, and hierarchy of earliest Germanic settlement, often successfully pulling together the evidence from geography, excavation and Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) finds.¹⁰ Such works have gone some way towards clarifying the regional patterns of burial and settlement of the fifth and sixth centuries.

My own work in this vein has focussed on the evidence from Anglo-Saxon Kent. This paper provides a short summary of this

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² Scull 1995; Hamerow 1997; Lucy 2000, 155–73; Härke 2003; Hills 2003; Bruggmann 2011;

Harrington and Welch forthcoming.

³ Chapman and Hamerow 1997; Prien 2005.

⁴ Härke 1998; Weale *et al.* 2002; Thomas *et al.* 2006; Hills 2009.

⁵ Examples for Kent include: Welch 1991; Sørensen 1999; Marzinzik 2006; Kruse 2007; Richardson 2011.

⁶ Kemble 1863; Leeds 1925; 1933.

⁷ Vésteinsson *et al.* 2002; Steele *et al.* 1998.

⁸ Davies and Vierck 1974.

⁹ Harrington and Welch forthcoming.

¹⁰ Chester-Kadwell 2009; Welch 2007; forthcoming; Brookes 2007a.

research as a way of highlighting what I see as some significant lines of enquiry that are emerging on the matter of early Anglo-Saxon settlement.¹¹ I focus on three issues I believe are significant areas of landscape analysis:

- Economic landscapes and chronology of settlement
- Symbolism in mortuary practice
- Roman and early medieval administrative territories

Taking these three issues together I make a few broader observations about the origins of the Kentish kingdom.

2 Economic landscapes and chronology of settlement

Several points of note can be summarised regarding the Anglo-Saxon settlement of Kent. Firstly, burial evidence for the fifth to sixth centuries falls into two main clusters: a westerly group focussed on the River Darent and Northfleet creek, and an easterly group clustering mainly in the area east of Great Stour river. On the basis of the material culture from these cemeteries, the western group displays the characteristics of other 'Saxon' cemeteries in south-eastern England, whilst the eastern group is more distinctively 'Kentish'.¹² Between these two main concentrations a further group is known from the River Medway, which forms, on the basis of its material culture, the western extent of the eastern 'Kentish' cultural zone.

Further refining this pattern, density plots of the distribution of early Anglo-Saxon burial sites draw attention to key areas of settlement (fig. 1).¹³ It is conspicuous that cemeteries with fifth-century material are focussed on inlets and river valleys of the north and east Kent coasts.¹⁴ Particularly noticeable is the concentration of burial sites in the vicinity of Eastrichborough, around the edges of the lagoon at the eastern end of the Wantsum Channel known as *OE Mærceſfleot* in a charter of 1023.¹⁵ Amongst the earliest cemeteries from this group is the newly excavated site of Ringlemere Farm: a mixed rite cemetery dating from c. 450 focussed on the prehistoric burial mound.¹⁶ A further cluster can be seen in the area of the eastern Holmesdale

and Elham Valley, a territory bounded to the south by the inlet of the Limen, the north by the River Dour, and the west by the River Stour. Lastly, the rivers Nailbourne and Great Stour are seen as *foci* for a further group of early burials interred at the cemeteries of Howletts, Bifrons, and Westbere. To the excavated evidence can be added a large number of finds recorded by the PAS. Importantly, metal-detecting has produced an over-representation of certain brooch types compared with finds from burials, indicating potentially different depositional processes, such as casual losses rather than deliberate burial, yet these nevertheless appear to confirm the overall distribution pattern identified from burials.¹⁷

Close examination of this distribution suggests that the earliest Anglo-Saxon settlements are the result of very strategic land-use decisions. Generally settlement was close to navigable rivers and the coast, often with access to marshland resources within 2 kms. Sites are located within a few hundred metres of spurs of chalk upland, favouring good quality, free-draining soils. Indeed, early settlement *foci* in the Holmesdale and Darent valleys occupied the best agricultural soils (rank 5 - good) in all of south-east England, as defined by Soilscape's soil fertility survey.¹⁸

Of equal importance was proximity to routeways.¹⁹ The Eastrichborough cluster is focussed closely on the triangle formed of the Roman roads *Mgy. 10* and *Mgy. 100*.²⁰ Lyminge is centrally placed for the burial sites of the eastern Holmesdale and Elham Valley group, straddling a number of the routes traversing this area.²¹ Similarly, the Nailbourne-Great Stour, Medway, and Darent groups favour river valley locales within easy access of Roman roads. Taken together, this evidence suggests that there is an overarching economic rationale governing primary settlement.

Plots of later sixth- and seventh-century material from burials, PAS finds and excavated settlements emphasise this trend. These data appear to indicate a chronological model of settlement, moving from earlier core areas into other, more marginal, locations. In the later sixth century early Anglo-Saxon finds are found

TABLE 1

Distribution of burials in eastern Kent with respect to *pays* by period. After Brookes 2010, table 1.

Area	burials pre-AD 600	% individuals	burials post-AD 600	% individuals	% Δ
East Kent	1810.35	100.0	3093.65	100.0	70.88
Downs	800.26	44.2	1983.74	64.1	147.88
Foothills	894.78	49.4	1097.22	35.5	22.62
Holmesdale	99.50	5.5	1.50	0.0	-98.49
Marsh	2.17	0.1	2.83	0.1	30.41
Weald	0.50	0.0	1.50	0.0	200
Chart	13.15	0.7	6.85	0.2	-47.91

¹¹ In so doing I am summarizing ideas I have presented more fully elsewhere, cf. Brookes 2003; 2007a; 2007b; 2010; 2011; Brookes & Harrington 2010, chapter 2, and refer the reader to this research for a fuller treatment.

¹² Welch 2007, 209.

¹³ Data from Brookes and Harrington 2008.

¹⁴ See also Richardson 2005, 64-5, and Map 10.

¹⁵ Sawyer 1968: Cat. No. 959.

¹⁶ Parfitt & Corke 2007; Marzinzik 2011.

¹⁷ McLean & Richardson 2010. Compare Figure 1 with Richardson 2011, fig. 34.

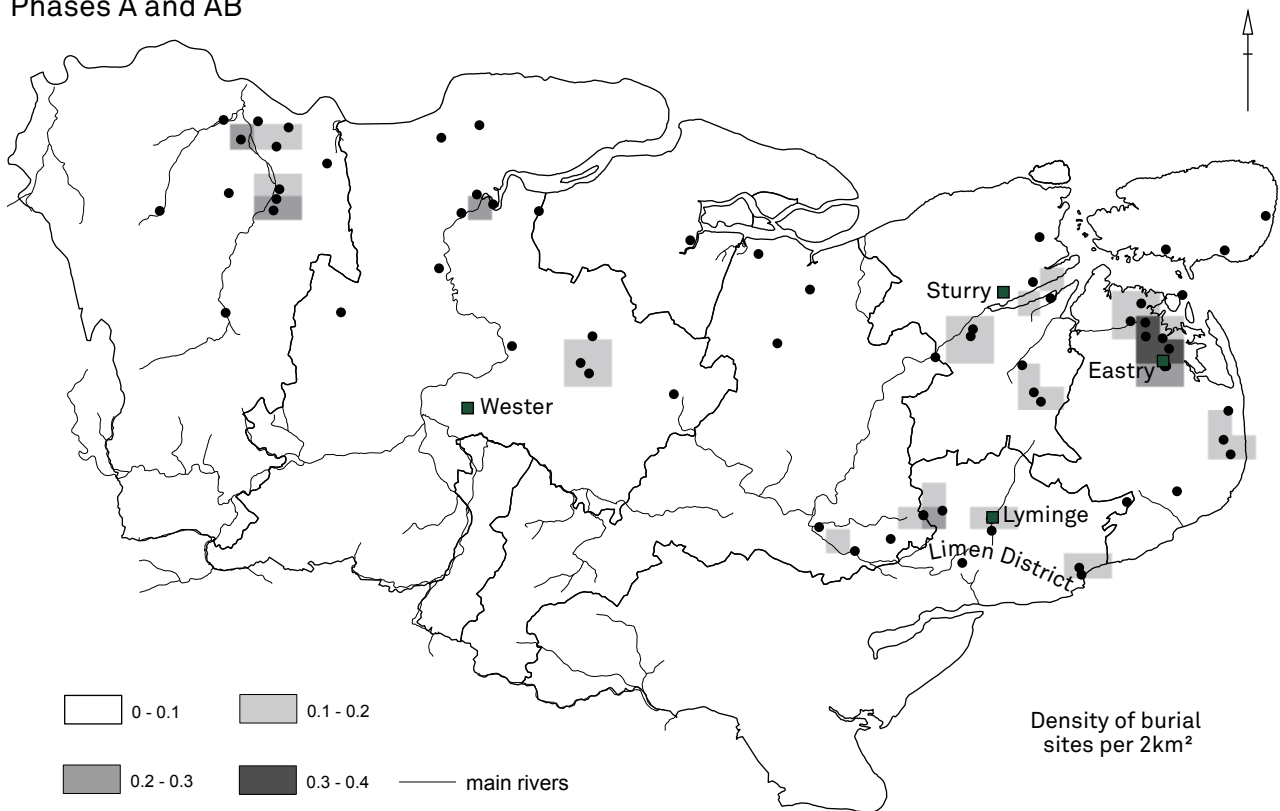
¹⁸ National Soil Resources Institute copyright.

¹⁹ Brookes 2007b.

²⁰ Margary 1955.

²¹ Brookes 2007a, fig. 24.

Phases A and AB



Phases B, BC and C

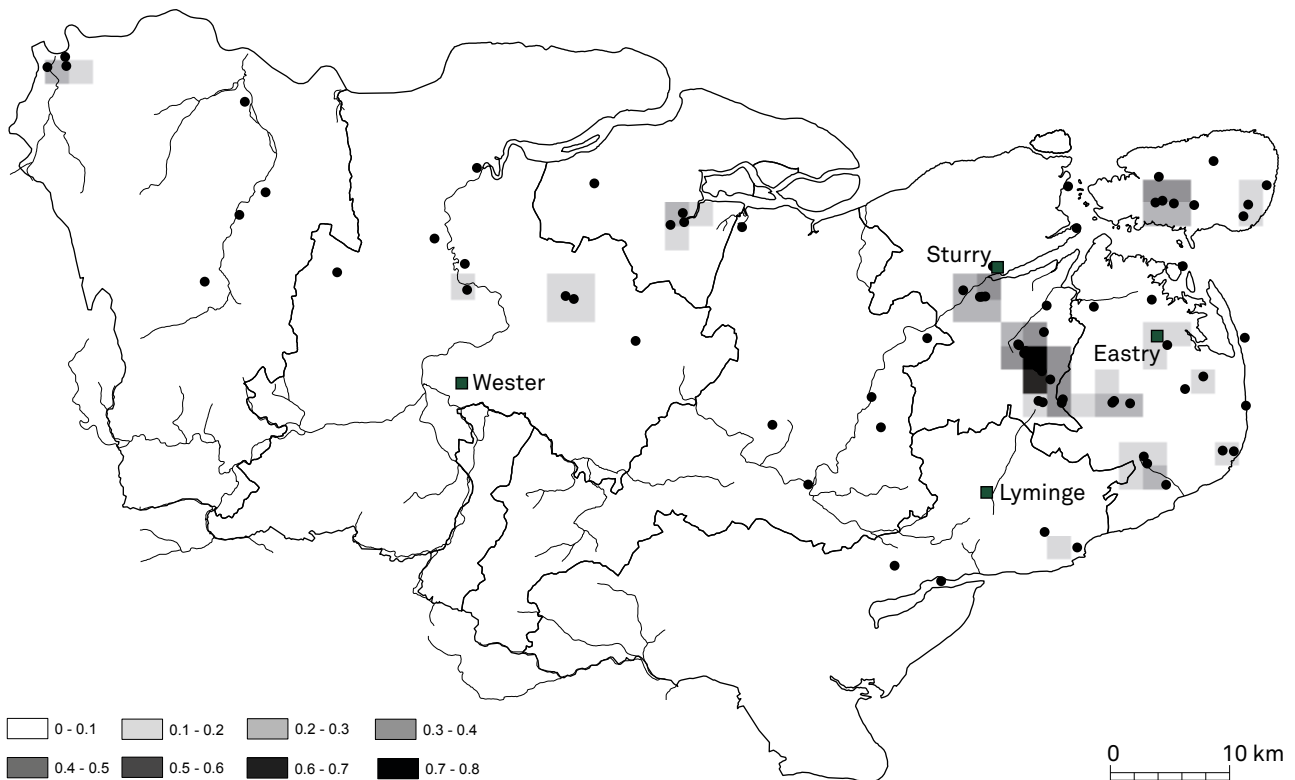


FIG. 1 The density of early Anglo-Saxon burial sites in Kent, showing the number of sites per 2 km². Top: Sites of phases A (475-575) and AB (475-650). Bottom: Sites of phases B (575-650), BC (575-c.720+) and C (650-c. 720+). After Brookes 2011, fig. 67.

more widely throughout those areas first settled but now include an expansion along the narrow, fertile strip of the Holmesdale valley. Finally in the seventh century there is an infilling of the more elevated and less fertile Chalk downlands; a pattern which is paralleled by the distribution of chronologically 'later' place-names containing the elements *-inga-*, *-ingas*, and *-hamm*.²²

Comparison of the excavated burial evidence can be used to chart the general population trends, underpinning this pattern of dispersal. Table 1 compares total numbers of excavated individuals from the 150 years before 600 with the 150 after. Overall there is an increase in the eastern Kent population of 171% across these phases; however, significantly this figure also shows that the downlands saw an expansion of nearly 248% during the seventh and eighth centuries, whilst the core areas of 'primary' settlement witnessed only a modest increase.

A similar pattern of colonisation is apparent in the evidence for Anglo-Saxon settlement, with places in the core area much more likely to display evidence for settlement continuity from the Roman through to later medieval periods, than sites in areas of 'secondary' settlement.²³ At Eastry, Milton Regis or Lyminge, archaeological complexes of Roman to Medieval date are all seen

to lie within a radius of c. 500 m of one another. However, further inland at settlements such as Charing, Hollingbourne, Harrietsham or Lenham, earlier remains are often scattered over a wide landscape, if they are present at all.

3 Symbolism in mortuary practice

One further landscape association may have helped to determine the locations of early sites. Nearly half (8 of 17) of eastern Kent cemeteries with fifth-century graves and/or finds are focussed on prehistoric round barrows, whilst none of the early western Kent cemeteries have such an association (fig. 2).²⁴ Partial explanation for this trend is provided by the distribution of prehistoric barrows and ring-ditches themselves, which cluster predominantly on the chalk upland of eastern Kent, but even in this area there is some suggestion that the inherited landscape was selectively reused. Despite the presence of prehistoric barrows in close proximity to the cemetery at Lyminge, there was no sign of the Anglo-Saxon graves on the surface when they were excavated in the 1950s.²⁵ Similarly in West Kent, the cemetery at Darenth Park Hospital did not appear to reference the prehistoric monuments there.

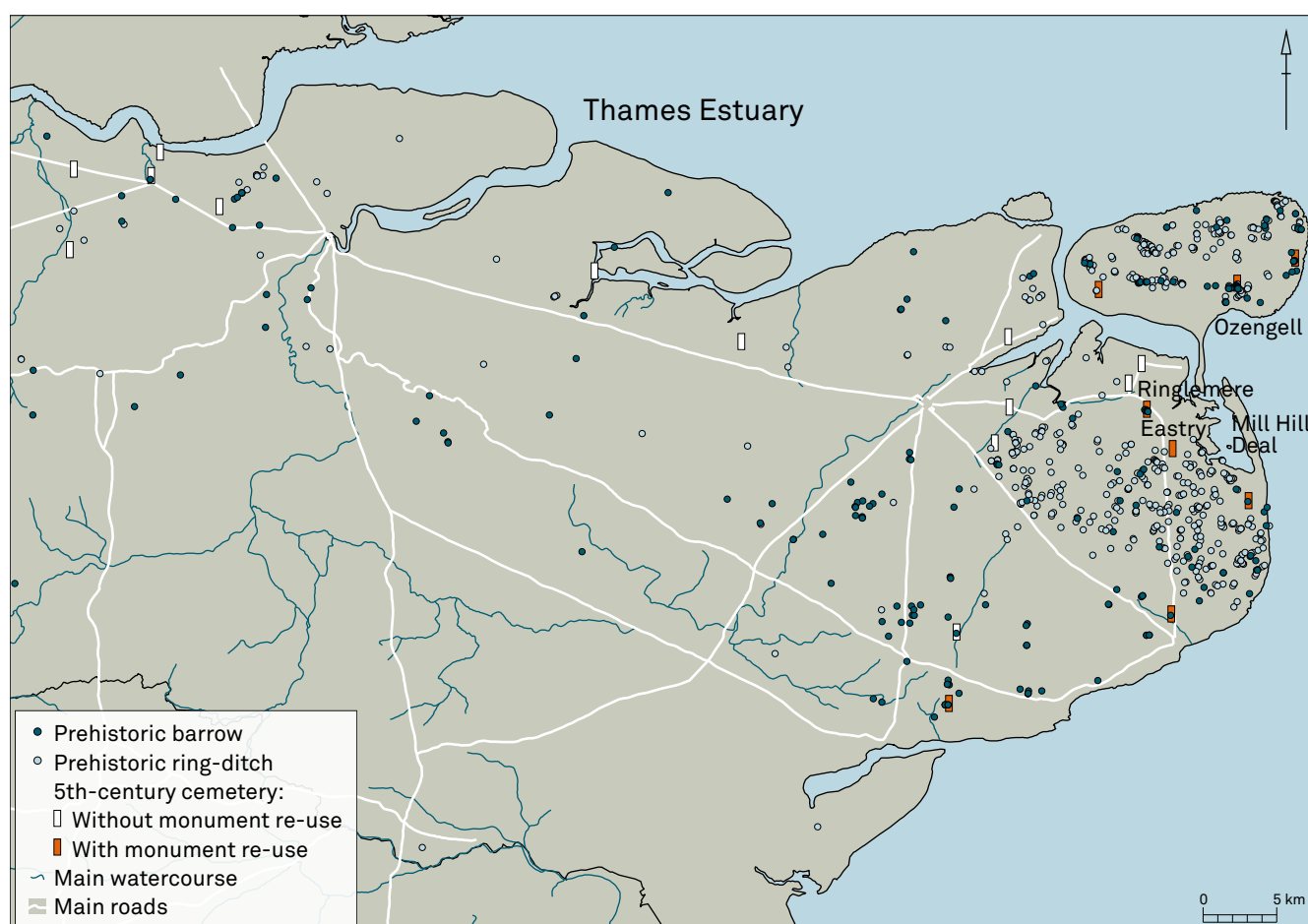


FIG. 2 Map of Kent showing the distribution of fifth-century burials and their association with prehistoric monuments, and the reconstructed coastline of Anglo-Saxon Kent.

²² Brookes 2007a, 68–9; Brookes 2010. For discussion of the pattern of place-names see: Dodgson 1966; 1973; Kirk 1972.

²³ Brookes 2007a, 95–6 for the full list of data; and discussion in Brookes 2010.

²⁴ I am very grateful to John Smythe for giving me access to his data on prehistoric monuments in Kent.

²⁵ Meaney 1964, 127.

The preference for monument reuse appears to have been, at least partially, informed by the visibility of burial sites from the sea.²⁶ Viewshed analysis of a hypothetical maritime route leading from Boulogne up the east Kent coast and through the Wantsum Channel into the Thames estuary reveals a number of significant trends (fig. 3). From the subset of 60 cemeteries and isolated burials dating to c. 450–750 known to fall within

a hypothetical 6 km corridor from the coast, 90% are visible from the plotted route. Importantly, many of these are located at the edges of the produced viewsheds, indicating that any above-ground mortuary structure, such as a barrow, would have been sky-lined on a hill-top. This phenomenon is particularly apparent for important cemeteries such as Mill Hill Deal or Ozengell, both of which focus on Bronze Age barrows, and

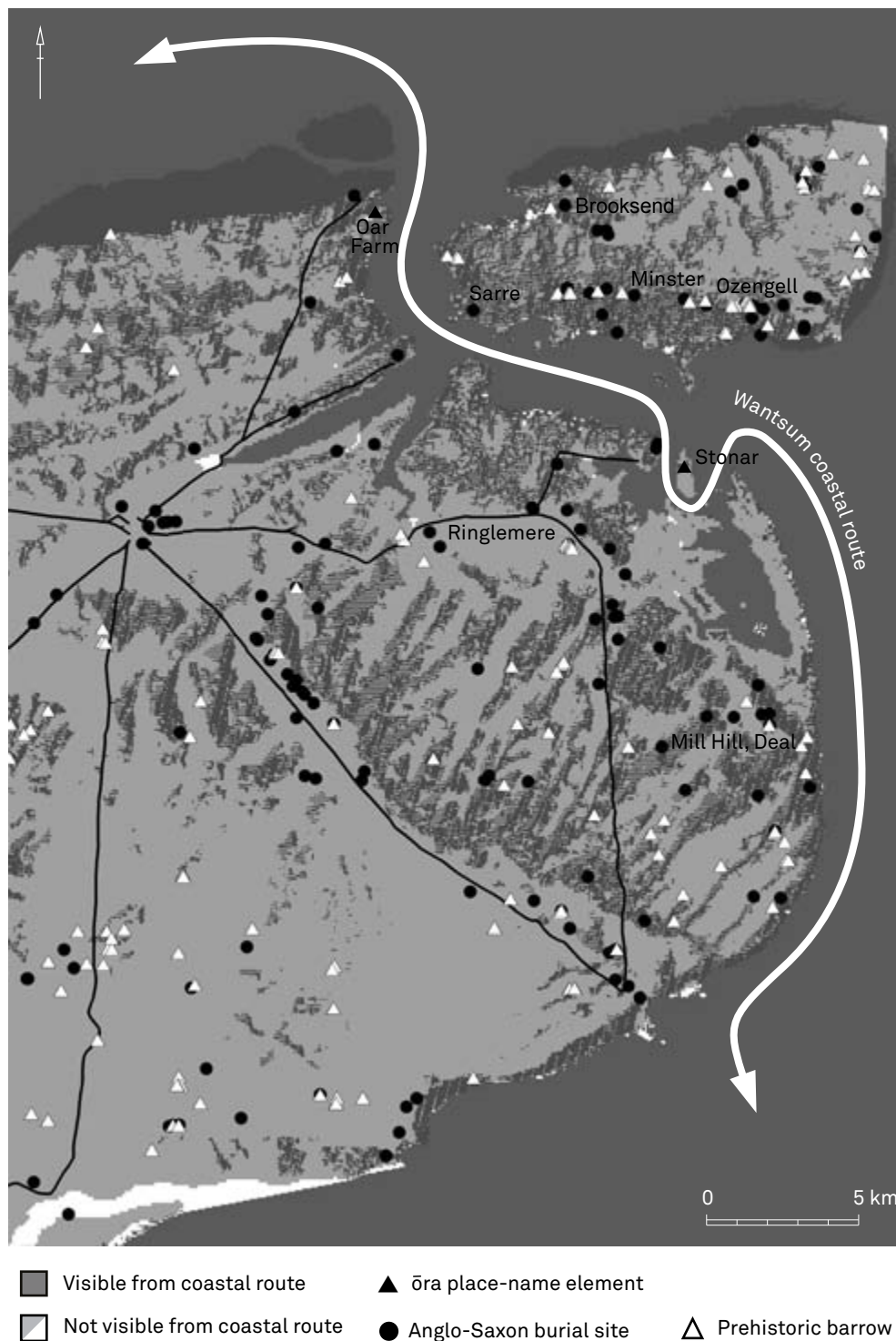


FIG. 3 Viewsheds produced for a hypothetical sea-route through the Wantsum Channel.

²⁶ For a fuller discussion of this theme, see Brookes forthcoming.

whose earliest interments date to the last quarter of the fifth century. These sites would have dominated the hill-top skyline for ships approaching the southern Wantsum entrance. The importance of this location for maritime movement is further emphasised by the place-name *Stonar*, containing the Old English toponymic *ōra*, derived from the Latin ‘shore’.²⁷ The *Stonar* spur is visible above the Shellness spit for ships off the coast of Deal, who on entering the Wantsum Channel proper are confronted with a southern skyline dominated by the Bronze Age barrow at Ringlemere. On passing the Ebbsfleet peninsula (the traditional landing-place of Hengest and Horsa) the northern skyline is commanded by the sixth- to seventh-century cemeteries of Minster and Monkton, as well as that of Sarre (which has its origins in the fifth century). Passing Sarre, vessels would have had clear views of primary barrow cemeteries at Brooksend and Crispe Road, before passing the topographical feature *Oar Farm* and entering the Thames estuary. Seen from the perspective of maritime migration, the location of many of these visible cemeteries can be related to the patches of hospitable shoreline interrupting the chalk cliff formations of the Isle of Thanet and Deal-Dover coasts and the marshy ground lining the Wantsum Channel.

This pattern of reusing prehistoric monuments contrasts with that established in other regions of England. Sam Lucy’s survey of the evidence concluded that the reuse of Bronze Age barrows was primarily a seventh- to eighth-century rite, but in east Kent it is generally a feature of much earlier burial.²⁸ Given this observation it is tempting to suggest that monument reuse formed an important strategy in the shaping of political identities already in the later fifth century. As others have argued,²⁹ the selection of ancient monuments for burial can easily be conceived as a political policy by which land claims were legitimated and naturalised. Perhaps significantly, the symbolic grammar of such displays are familiar also in Late Iron Age southern Scandinavia, northern Germany and Gaul³⁰ – precisely the same regions from which the Kentish elite drew reference to in a range of objects and symbols deposited in burial.³¹

Moreover, the coincidence of this practice with the principal routes of maritime movement gives some indication as to the intended ‘audience’ for such displays of power. Placed in the viewshed of maritime migration, the landscape setting of monument reuse can be regarded as a deliberate symbol, demonstrating the ownership of core lands by social elites. Arguably, competition in land-holding of these key sites would have been particularly intense during periods of ‘late-comer’ colonisation, prompting the increased visibility of dominant groups.³² Inland, fuzzier territorial definitions existed as movement into marginal land eased pressure on coastal resources. In these areas away from the coast, fewer correlations between prehistoric, Roman and Anglo-Saxon burial are recognised. Indeed, by the seventh century, equally visible Anglo-Saxon mortuary monuments appear

to replace former relationships with the prehistoric past (Type IV cemeteries³³); possibly indicating developing forms of inheritance and ownership and the reduced frequency of late-comer settlement from the coastal zone.

4 Roman and early medieval administrative territories

The extent to which the economic, military, and administrative structure of the Roman *civitates* of the *Cantiaci* influenced that of early Anglo-Saxon Kent continues to rely on implied rather than clear evidence. The issue is complicated by the fact that many sites from late Roman Britain end well before c. 400, whilst others take us only just into the fifth century. The coin list for the coastal fort at Richborough provides some unusually late evidence for Roman occupation, suggesting that troops were still stationed there throughout and even a little beyond the first decade of the fifth century.³⁴ Evidence for continued habitation activity at the villa sites of Lullingstone and Darenth in West Kent, similarly take us into the first quarter of the fifth century.

Nevertheless, some correlates hint at the continuity of aspects of the late Roman landscape. One – oft-cited – example is that ‘Kent’ and ‘Canterbury’ derived from the pre-English *Cantiaci* and *Cantia*.³⁵ Another, is the relationship of sites on Roman roads and junctions to later successors; a pattern which has emerged as a key feature in east Kent.³⁶ Yet another has demonstrated the close correspondence between late Roman and archaeological complexes which emerged as important central places at least by the sixth century.³⁷

A potentially significant issue regards the patterning of late Roman military belt equipment and Quoit Brooch Style metalwork in the fifth century (fig. 4). The former are occasionally recovered from early Anglo-Saxon contexts and perhaps indicate warriors (or relations of warriors) that had once been in imperial service³⁸ (examples include the belt equipment (probably derived from a grave) from Milton Regis and burial/s at Bifrons³⁹). The latter are probably best regarded as insular metalwork issued by British authorities to Germanic elites as a version of ‘official’ dress fittings.⁴⁰ Both variants display very limited circulation – a picture confirmed by PAS finds⁴¹ – but nevertheless demonstrate an interesting pattern, as Martin Welch has recently argued.⁴² Drawing links between the sites containing examples of Quoit Brooch Style metalwork, he suggests that earliest Anglo-Saxon communities in Surrey and West Kent, together with Mucking on the north bank of the Thames in Essex, can be reconstructed as a ring of Saxon settlement around London in the fifth century. The ostensibly British provenance of this material suggests that this ring may represent the deliberate settlement of Germanic levies as a buffer against ‘barbarian’ threats up the Thames estuary and from the south coast.

²⁷ Cole 1990, 26–41.

²⁸ Lucy 1998, 88–9; see also Semple forthcoming, chapter 2.

²⁹ Meillassoux 1972; Bradley 1987; Williams 1997; Semple forthcoming.

³⁰ Williams 1997; Zadora-Rio 2003, 8–9; Thäte 2007, 205–11, argues that in contrast to Denmark, monument reuse in Sweden and Norway appears

principally to be a Viking-age phenomenon.

³¹ Behr 2000; Welch 2007, 230–3; Richardson 2011.

³² Cf. Boone 1992.

³³ As defined by Shephard 1979.

³⁴ Reece 1968.

³⁵ Detsicas 1983, 10.

³⁶ See above, and Brookes 2003; 2007a; 2007b.

³⁷ Brookes 2010.

³⁸ Welch 1993.

³⁹ Richardson 2005, 64–5; Hawkes & Dunning 1961; Welch 1993.

⁴⁰ Inker 2000; Suzuki 2000.

⁴¹ Richardson 2011, 78.

⁴² Hines 2004; Welch forthcoming; Harrington & Welch forthcoming.

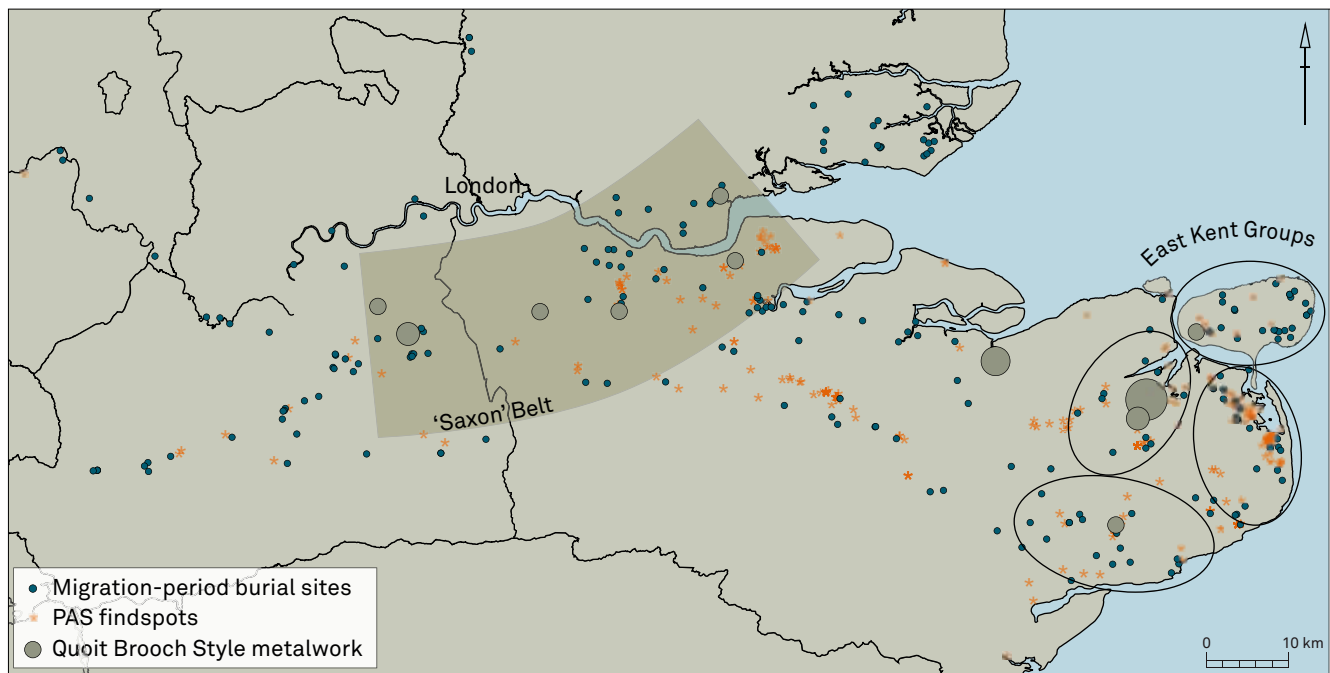


FIG. 4 Surry, Kent and adjoining areas showing the locations of putative regional groups, as derived from burial evidence and PAS finds: the London ‘gap’ and ‘Saxon’ belt (defined by Hines 2004; Harrington & Welch forthcoming), and the East Kent groups discussed further in Brookes 2011.

Significantly it is outside this buffer in eastern Kent – as we have already noted – that the dense pattern of ‘Kentish’ settlements appears later in the fifth century. Two recent articles, one examining the evidence of material culture, the other that of territorial development,⁴³ have both concluded that this cluster marks the extent of the putative original Kentish kingdom, which only later in the sixth century came to absorb settlements further west.⁴⁴ If the foregoing interpretations are followed through to their logical conclusion, one could therefore contrast the pattern of settlement in east Kent (dense settlement clusters and evidence for strategic colonisation, high levels of Scandinavian/Frankish/‘non-Saxon’ material, similarities in funerary rites including monument re-use) with early burial clusters in west Kent along river valleys (areas linked by extended family ties?), adhering to the distinctively ‘Saxon’ milieu of interred grave goods, perhaps originating as deliberate settlements made by the late Roman administration.⁴⁵

5 Conclusions

The foregoing discussion has considered some of the landscape evidence for the earliest Anglo-Saxon settlement in Kent. It has suggested that the pattern of cemetery and settlement location can provide insights about the chronology and preferences of earliest settlement. Kent was clearly a landscape of inherited features, and prehistoric monuments, Roman roads and sites played a significant role in structuring early Anglo-Saxon activities, most noticeably in the ‘core’ areas of earliest settlement. It has been argued here that the re-use of such features, particularly by people burying their dead, is likely to reflect significant strategies

adopted by certain communities to make symbolic and ideological claims. Moreover, the placement and orientation of these symbolic acts make clear that the intended audience was maritime, and familiar with the language of this form of funerary display.

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Résumé

Cet article examine les preuves du paysage des premières colonies Anglo-Saxonne dans le Kent. Il suggère que modèles dans les pratiques funéraires et coloniales peuvent être explorées afin de démontrer la préférence et la chronologie de la colonisation ainsi que sa relation avec celle de la tardive période romaine. Il fait valoir que la réutilisation symbolique des moments préhistoriques pour l’inhumation au cinquième siècle pouvant être étroitement liées aux voies de migration maritime et sont susceptibles de représenter les revendications territoriales des nouvelles élites locales. Preuves contrastées de l’est et de l’ouest Kent enfin est sujet à poser quelques questions au sujet des variations regionales dans l’effondrement du système étatique imperial.

⁴³ Dickinson *et al.* 2011, 1–86; Brookes 2011.

⁴⁴ Brooks 1989; Yorke 1983; Brookes 2011.

⁴⁵ A similar phenomenon may have occurred in neighbouring Sussex, *cf.* Welch 1983; 1989.

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Aufsatz behandelt die in der Landschaft sichtbaren Nachweise frühester angelsächsischer Besiedlung in Kent. Es wird davon ausgegangen, dass Muster in den Begräbnissitten und im Siedlungswesen untersucht werden können, um die Vorlieben und die Chronologie der Besiedlung aufzuzeigen, ebenso wie ihrer Beziehung zu jener der spätrömischen Zeit. Es wird diskutiert, dass die symbolische Wiederverwendung von prähistorischen Monumenten für Bestattungen im 5. Jahrhundert eng mit den Routen der Einwanderung über das Meer in Beziehung gebracht werden kann und wahrscheinlich den Anspruch der neuen lokalen Elite auf Land zum Ausdruck bringt. Gegensätzliche Befunde aus Ost- und Westkent werden schließlich angeführt, um einige Fragen zu regionalen Variationen im Zusammenbruch des römischen Staatssystems aufzuwerfen.

Samenvatting

Deze lezing richt zich op de studie van het archeologische landschap van de vroegste Angelsaksische kolonisatie van Kent. Het wordt gesuggereerd, dat men het patroon van graf- en nederzettingsvondsten kan analyseren om de voorkeur en chronologie van de kolonisatie te reconstrueren, alsmede de relatie tussen de Romeinse en Angelsaksische bewoning. Het symbolische hergebruik van prehistorische monumenten als graven in de vijfde eeuw wordt gerelateerd aan de routes van maritieme migratie, en kunnen waarschijnlijk worden gezien als uitdrukkingen van de aanspraak op het land die de nieuwe elites maakten. Tegenstellig bewijsmateriaal uit oost en west Kent wordt tenslotte gepresenteerd om enkele vraagstukken te beantwoorden over regionale variaties in de ineenstorting van het Romeinse staatssysteem.

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Early medieval communities around the North Sea: a ‘maritime culture’?

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Abstract

The close connections between 6th- to 8th-century communities around the North Sea have been the subject of research for a very long time. However, too often these interrelationships are placed in an ethnic and migrationist framework. Recent socio-geographical research demonstrates that another perspective is possible, that of a ‘maritime culture’ characterized by a large degree of overseas mobility and interaction, resulting in a seemingly hybrid material culture. This concept is explored through the examples of chaff-tempered pottery which persisted along the North Sea littoral for over two centuries, and house building traditions which exhibit a remarkable variability stemming from an intensive exchange of architectural features within the North Sea region.

Keywords

Merovingian period, Carolingian period, North Sea, coastal Flanders, pottery, domestic architecture, maritime culture, group identity, culture definition

1 Introduction

There is no doubt that the early medieval populations around the Channel and North Sea were in close contact. However, the nature, mechanisms and significance of the interaction during the centuries following the Migration Period are still poorly understood. This is partly because our perspective on the period is defined by a frame of reference that may not be completely adequate for the geographical and socio-cultural context of the 6th- to 8th-century North Sea littoral.

In this contribution, an alternative perspective is explored which puts the North Sea at the centre of a ‘maritime culture’. Besides briefly explaining the theoretical basis for this approach, a few examples are presented, particularly focussing on the Flemish coastal plain. The emphasis is on the 6th to 8th centuries, although later developments are examined in order to explore the factors that contributed to what has been called a ‘North Sea culture’.

2 Culture, migration and ethnicity

The study of the typological, stylistic, technical and other similarities across early medieval Europe is often embedded in an explicitly ethnic discourse. Thus, from the perspective of the North Sea coasts of the mainland, we speak of Anglo-Saxon pottery, Frankish brooch types, Saxon burial ritual, etc. The emphasis on ethnicity and migration that prevails in the contemporary written sources and modern research on the Migration Period is tacitly assumed to apply to the period that follows it as well. At the basis of this view – despite decades of anthropological and archaeological theorising – is still the idea of ethnicities as homogeneous culture blocks that may be identified using type-artefacts or stylistic features. Thus, when for instance a button brooch appears on a cemetery on the mainland, it must immediately point to Anglo-Saxon affiliations, as this is supposed to be the geographic and ethnic origin of this type of artefact. Ethnicity is reduced to a typological attribute. This leads to a situation in which the cultural assemblage of a site is picked apart into various ethnic or geographic affiliations. Typological and stylistic studies obviously have their worth as analytical tools, but merely cataloguing the various assumed ethnic indicators on a site may be of limited relevance to understanding the socio-cultural dynamics of this period and region. This is particularly the case in the southern North Sea area, where objects are often considered to be out of place because they appear on the ‘wrong’ side of the North Sea, which is implicitly thought of as a cultural as well as a natural boundary between such culture blocks.

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An excellent example is so-called chaff-tempered pottery. It emerges in the 6th century as a distinct tradition from the great variety of tempers used in the 'Germanic' pottery of the Migration Period. It remains in use until approximately the mid-8th century as the predominant type of domestic pottery on sites in the Flemish coastal plain and south-eastern England and occurs on several sites further north along the Dutch and English coasts.³

Its distribution on the continent is clearly coastal and delimited by inland traditions of grog- and grit-tempered pottery. However, it would be a misrepresentation to describe this pottery as 'Anglo-Saxon' or 'Saxon', as is sometimes done.⁴ Its persistence for more than two centuries cannot be explained through the preceding migrations alone. Rather, it is part of a social tradition centred on the North Sea, and its continual reproduction and eventual replacement by sandy wares in the 8th century must be first and foremost examined within this maritime context.

The notion of such a 'North Sea culture' is of course a long-standing concept, with differing spatial and temporal limits and various explanations.⁵ However, the idea may be refined from the perspective of recent archaeological findings and theoretical insights.

3 Language development as a cultural analogy

Language is a most interesting aspect of culture in this light, as it is a function both of self-defined identity and social interaction. The early languages around the North Sea form part of the West Germanic linguistic family. Several languages of this group share so-called Ingvaenonic features. During the Migration period, these features spread from northwest Germany to England. By the 8th century, Frisian⁶ and several Old English dialects⁷ emerged as more or less distinct languages and Ingvaenonic features had also spread to the Flemish and Dutch coasts.⁸ What happened in the intervening centuries remains open to debate. It has long been acknowledged that linguistic innovations may spread across bodies of water.⁹ However, most studies since have tended to emphasise the pre-Migration continental origins of the North Sea Germanic languages.¹⁰ It is generally accepted that there was no common language in the North Sea area after the Migration Period. It has even been argued that English and Frisian developed in isolation following the migrations, and that their close relationship is merely the result of the loss of Ingvaenonic features in the other West Germanic languages.¹¹ Many linguists, however, ignore the active usage of languages in building and reproducing identities. In this view, common innovations as well as the common retaining of archaic elements may be significant. The most interesting perspective on the matter is that offered by John Hines¹², although it has received little attention in later linguistic studies.¹³ Hines discards the principle of phylogenetic linguistic development and portrays language as a normative system allowing a certain variance. According to this model, the North Sea Germanic

languages developed from a dialect continuum emerging from the Migration Period. Linguistic innovations spread throughout this continuum, mostly from England back to the continent, implying intense interaction across the North Sea. In the 8th century, the appearance of distinct languages can be related to the formation of kingdoms and of more exclusive regional identities.

4 Towards an alternative model?

A comparable view of fluid social and cultural links within a maritime context is offered in studies of historical and present-day communities in harbour towns.¹⁴ Here, the harbour town is presented as a hybrid mix of cultural influences. Mobility and variability, rather than static continuity, are seen as constituting elements of identity. Hines' linguistic continuum may serve as an analogy: culture is not to be captured in phylogenetic structures through which elements are inherited, but as a constantly changing set of influences from which some elements are adopted and others are not. From this viewpoint, it is informative only to a certain degree to dissect a cultural assemblage into the ethnic and geographic origins of its constituent elements. Rather, this seemingly hybrid mix had its own intrinsic logic and coherence as a cultural system.

A particularly relevant case is offered by A. Leontis in his study of 19th-century Greek communities around the eastern Mediterranean.¹⁵ For this phenomenon, he introduces the term 'emporion' to describe the way identity is construed outside the monolithic cultures of hegemonic entities – notably the empires around the Mediterranean. 'Emporion', characterised by continual movement within a given geographic space, is also contrasted with 'diaspora': unidirectional migration in which identity remains based on common origins in a particular place.

Leontis' ideas were quickly adopted in sociology and social geography, as they form a broad metaphor for a current paradigm shift in these disciplines.¹⁶ Simply put, the dichotomy is that between routes and roots. Cultural identity is not necessarily 'a territorialised union of people and place'¹⁷, but is now defined by mobility and interaction.

Both Leontis and the sociologists who borrowed his ideas¹⁸ stress that the sea forms an ideal medium for this type of interaction. As such we may distinguish between 'maritime' and 'terrestrial' culture types, characterised by varying degrees of fluidity and variation, a greater or lesser 'groundedness' in a certain place or region¹⁹, and a stronger or weaker integration into a political hierarchy.

In the literature, the emphasis is usually on the cosmopolitan port cities that form the hubs of this socio-cultural network. However, we argue that the characteristics associated with the communities that form 'emporion' may be expanded towards larger regions of rural settlement along the North Sea littoral during the early Middle Ages.

3 Hamerow *et al.* 1994.

4 *E.g. ibid.* 1994, 16; Soulat 2009, 110–111.

5 *E.g. Hallewas et al.* 1975.

6 Miedema 1971, 100; Bremmer Jr. 2001, 602.

7 Toon 1992, 422–3.

8 *E.g. Tældeman* 1982.

9 First pointed out by Kuhn (1955, 16–7, 23–44).

10 *E.g. Århammar* 1990, 10.

11 Stiles 1995.

12 Hines 1995.

13 But see Boss 1997, 236–238.

14 *E.g. Falck* 2003.

15 Leontis 1997.

16 Cranget *et al.* 2003.

17 *Idem*, 438–439.

18 *E.g. Borovnik* 2004; 2005.

19 *Cf. Escobar* 2001.

5 Case studies

In examining the links evident in the material culture of the North Sea region, context and meaning are all-important. For instance, chaff-tempered pottery and the great Anglo-Saxon and Frisian brooches belong to very different social spheres. Whereas the stylistic similarities between the latter form an expression of diplomatic links between elite groups, the distribution of the former reflects shared technological traditions reproduced through continual contact on a much lower social level. It is the latter exchanges that constitute a maritime culture, as they are indicative of the capability of low-status individuals and communities to engage in overseas interaction.

6 Domestic architecture

Like domestically produced pottery, domestic architecture is an expression of what might be labelled socio-technological praxis – technological skills transferred within the household or local community, and as such indicative of group identity.²⁰

As in the interior, certain regional trends may be discerned in the early medieval house architecture of the coastal area, although these are rarely the only type used. In the northern Netherlands, three-aisled buildings continued to be in use.²¹ Two-aisled constructions often occur in the Dutch river area, mostly as secondary buildings to one-aisled houses. Despite certain similarities with two-aisled buildings inland,²² this is at least partly a local tradition, as excavations at Katwijk show its development from a three-aisled building type.²³ At another coastal site near the Rhine mouth, Valkenburg, a distinct form of two-aisled buildings are the only attested type and probably served as houses.²⁴ In the Flemish coastal area a recurring type is the single-aisled building with post-in-trench walls, heavy corner and door posts, and no external supports.²⁵

In addition, several constructional features point to interaction along the coast. For instance, buildings in Noord-Holland and in northwest Germany combine a byre in the three-aisled tradition with a one-aisled living section. In a few cases²⁶ the three-aisled part features turf walls as in Frisia, demonstrating how structural layout and construction technique were exchanged together, as a template.

Other traces of the long-distance exchange of such architectural templates can be found in several oft-cited examples of highly similar layouts. Thus, houses at Roksem²⁷ (Flanders) and Uitgeest²⁸ (Noord-Holland) are similar in their proportions, use of annexes and the location of the entrances, although the wall construction differs. A further building with the same configuration of entrances and therefore a comparable internal organisation can be found at Katwijk (Zuid-Holland).²⁹ Short houses are another recurring template in England and on the mainland coasts.³⁰ In Flanders these often belong to the house type with post-in-trench walls and without external supports. More generally, these houses often have a small subdivision at one or both of the short sides.

Other features were reproduced independently of building technique. Annexes³¹ and certain types of wall construction³², for instance, occur both on the North Sea coasts and in England in the 7th and 8th centuries, but have not been attested further inland.

These architectural idiosyncrasies and the exchange of templates and techniques within the North Sea area appear to have declined from the 8th century onwards. For instance, the Frisian three-aisled tradition disappeared in favour of one-aisled buildings, annexes fell out of use, and in coastal Flanders the Merovingian building types were replaced by very different three-aisled constructions on heavy posts, which prefigure later medieval farm buildings.

The introduction and spread of curved walls may be seen in a similar light of the changing nature of interaction, local resistance and ultimately realignment with inland developments. First introduced in the Rhine mouth area in the late 7th century,³³ curved walls quickly spread along the river Rhine towards the interior, for instance appearing at Dorestad.³⁴ However, the practice is only adopted in Flanders³⁵ and Noord-Holland in the 9th century³⁶, and never in England.³⁷

This wide range of house-building traditions along the North Sea coast has been explained in terms of a greater social and economic diversity, ultimately a result of the greater ecological diversity of the coastal landscape.³⁸ However plausible, this explanation does not account for the origins of these traditions, which were passed on between communities along the North Sea shores.

As far as domestic architecture is concerned, then, these communities are best characterised culturally through their heterogeneity and pragmatism in adopting architectural practices. Here, diversity does not denote boundaries but the range of social interaction. Although inland architectural traditions seem to have been more regionally consistent, this maritime culture is not fundamentally different, let alone detached from the interior. Rather, the proximity of the sea renders longer-distance contacts possible, which is reflected in the application of what appear to be 'exotic' solutions in architectural practices that are also partly rooted in local and regional traditions.

7 A regional perspective: the Flemish coastal plain in the early middle ages

In exploring the factors that determined the degree to which communities could become involved in this North Sea culture, it is instructive to zoom in to a more regional level, namely the Flemish coastal plain.

The central and eastern parts of this area feature permanent settlement from the 7th century onwards.³⁹ The predominant economic activity of the inhabitants of these salt marshes was sheep pastoralism, and they were well connected to overseas trading networks. Until the 8th century, the ceramic assemblages of sites both in the coastal plain and on its Pleistocene

²⁰ Cf. Gosselain 2000.

²¹ Waterbolk 2009, 90.

²² Theuvs 1996, 758.

²³ Van der Velde & Dijkstra 2008, 437.

²⁴ Bult & Hallewas (eds) 1990, 155–161.

²⁵ Notably Hillewaert & Hollevoet 2006.

²⁶ E.g. Woltering 1975, 28.

²⁷ Hollevoet 1991.

²⁸ Besteman 1990.

²⁹ Van der Velde & Dijkstra 2008, 438.

³⁰ Theuvs 1996, 756; Dijkstra 2004, 399.

³¹ Marshall & Marshall 1993, 379; Hollevoet 2002, 173.

³² Dijkstra & van der Velde 2008, 162.

³³ *Idem*, 140, 168.

³⁴ Van Es & Verwers 1995.

³⁵ Hollevoet 1991, 189.

³⁶ Dijkstra *et al.* 2006, 65–67.

³⁷ Hamerow 1999, 125–126.

³⁸ Besteman 1990, 103; Theuvs 1996, 759.

³⁹ Eryvynck *et al.* 1999; Loveluck & Tys 2006.

edge are dominated by chaff-tempered pottery, thus displaying their close social and cultural ties with other areas of the North Sea coasts. High-status estate centres are only to be found on the Pleistocene edge of the coastal plain.

Despite a comparable physical environment, the situation in the west differs greatly. In the dunes near De Panne, numerous stray finds show the probable location of a Merovingian cemetery and demonstrate the intense occupation of the now mostly eroded dune barrier. The metalwork and other finds, partly of Frankish, partly of Anglo-Saxon type, point to the site's wide range of contacts.⁴⁰

In the 8th century, the first signs of activity in the salt marshes behind the dune barrier appear. At these early sites, chaff-tempered pottery and Rhenish imports are completely absent. Instead, northern French imports dominate. Clearly this was an area belonging to a different sphere of influence, economically and perhaps culturally. Written evidence suggests the development of property of the abbey of St Bertin in this area by the mid-9th century, mostly corresponding closely with areas of archaeologically attested activity in the 8th – 9th centuries. Not coincidentally, the abbey also held a settlement, probably with administrative and logistic functions, at Veurne. As such, this area may be contrasted with the central and eastern parts of the coastal plain: early permanent settlement by free landholders, embedded into the social networks of the North Sea culture in the east, as opposed to settlement connected with, or possibly on the initiative of, the monks of St Bertin, who exploited these areas for wool and other products, in the west.⁴¹

From this, it is clear that structures of power influenced the economic and social identities of coastal communities. In other words, the regional social, economic and political environment is as important as implied geographic or ethnic affiliations in understanding an apparently foreign or hybrid cultural assemblage.

8 Beyond the 8th century

From this point of view, developments from the 8th century onwards are enlightening. As mentioned before, this period sees the disappearance of chaff-tempered pottery, the realignment to a certain extent of domestic architecture with inland traditions, and the emergence of regional languages around the North Sea. This is obviously not because overseas contact ceased. Rather, an explanation must be sought in the socio-political context. It may be that the emerging elites not only had a direct influence on certain aspects of culture but also exerted a strict control on maritime activity, thus limiting the overseas exchange of linguistic and cultural features. The integration, or lack thereof, of regions into the North Sea culture is therefore mainly a function of the degree to which political elites controlled coastal landscapes and were able to tie them into the economic and social networks of the interior.⁴²

Therefore, in addition to the formation of regional kingdoms, we may point to the greater interest of the elites of the Carolingian period in overseas trade. Access to overseas networks was centralised at certain locations where tolls could be collected, notably the wic-sites.⁴³ From the later 9th century onwards, political actors such as the Counts of Flanders tightened their grip on the coastal landscape by draining and embanking great expanses of wetland.⁴⁴ In this way, the landscape was literally closed off to overseas interaction, except at certain locations under the control of those in power. This gradual imposition of political power over maritime activity appears to have reached its peak in the course of the 12th century. From this point onwards, the only communities still involved in a North Sea culture and displaying close links with each other were the harbour towns and fishing villages.⁴⁵

9 Conclusion

The characteristics of the 6th- to 8th-century North Sea culture partly have their origins in the preceding Migration period. However, these features, together with innovations that appeared only after the Migrations, were reproduced within a particular dynamic that may be explained through the specific geographic circumstances. The sea allowed far-reaching contacts between low-status communities, while the coastal wetlands were difficult to control directly by the political elite groups of the interior. Only from the 8th, and certainly from the 10th century onwards, the increasing hold of centralised power over these coastal areas resulted in a growing integration into terrestrial networks and a decline of close overseas interaction and mobility.

From a more theoretical perspective, this maritime culture was not fundamentally different in nature from that found inland. Nonetheless, it has certain peculiar characteristics, notably its hybrid, mobile, fluid nature and the central role it affords to interaction between low-status communities. This in turn raises questions about the meaning of archaeological spatial and temporal variability and regionality, and the influence of factors such as physical geography and political organisation on early medieval social interaction and group identity.

⁴⁰ Deckers 2010.

⁴¹ Deckers forthcoming.

⁴² A similar explanation for the disappearance of chaff-tempered wares has been suggested by Blinkhorn (1997, 120).

⁴³ E.g. Middleton 2005.

⁴⁴ Tys 2004.

⁴⁵ E.g. Walravensijde (Tys & Pieters 2009).

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The 'Slavonisation' of the southwestern Baltic area: Preliminary report on the investigations in the Pyritz region

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Abstract

Important but up to now more or less unsolved questions of early medieval archaeology focus on the date and the process of Slavonisation in the southwestern Baltic area. The state of knowledge in various regions of northeast Germany and Poland has led to partly different research reviews, in some cases even opposing opinions. The few available dates indicate that the beginning of Slavonic settlement can be dated to the late 7th and early 8th century, but how this process of Slavonisation can be explained is still unknown. Did a new 'Slavonic' community migrate into a devastated landscape or was there a change of identity to a Slavonic way of life connected with continuity of Germanic settlement?

New interdisciplinary investigations of late Germanic and earliest Slavonic settlements in northwest Poland focus on these questions. The aim of the research project is to obtain new references for continuities or discontinuities in the history of settlement and the use of landscape in the area of Pyrzyce, Western Pomerania, to explain processes of change during the 6th to the 8th centuries.

Keywords

Early Slavs, Slavonisation, migration, Baltic Sea, settlement archaeology, dendrochronology

1 Introduction

Knowledge of the early Slavonic culture in wide parts of the southwestern Baltic area (north-eastern Germany, Poland) differs strongly among researchers and the topic is currently widely debated³. This discussion about the so-called 'Slavonisation' of the Baltic area is mainly caused by different opinions concerning the development and the process of the spread of early Slavonic culture.

There is little doubt that early Slavonic culture primarily developed from the Kiev culture between the eastern Carpathian lowlands and the central Dnepr region in the 5th century AD (fig. 1)⁴. In this area three closely interconnected archaeological cultures emerged (the Prague-Korchak, Penkovka and Kolochin cultures), of which the Prague-Korchak culture subsequently spread very fast over large parts of Central and Eastern Europe. It is probably this culture out of which the so-called Sukow-Dziedzice culture then emerged along the southwestern Baltic Sea coast, but the chronology and distribution of this cultural phenomenon are still not fully understood⁵.

To illustrate some current problems regarding the question of when and how the Sukow-Dziedzice culture emerged in the southwestern Baltic region, two maps should be presented which were published by Marek Dulnicz a few years ago⁶. Different states of research are shown: absolute dates as a basis for secure time frames (fig. 2) and highly similar pottery complexes (handmade, undecorated), regionally dated within a 150-year range (fig. 3).

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³ Biermann et al. 1999; Brather 1996, 14 ff.; Dulnicz 2001; 2006; Godłowski 1979; Gringmuth-Dallmer 1996; Herrmann 1999; Kaczanowski 2005;

Leube 1995; Parczewski 1993; 2003; 2005; Schneeweiß 2003, 71 ff.

⁴ Parczewski 1993, 131 ff.

⁵ Parczewski 1993, 137 f.

⁶ Dulnicz 2006, 48, fig. 5; 112, fig. 28.

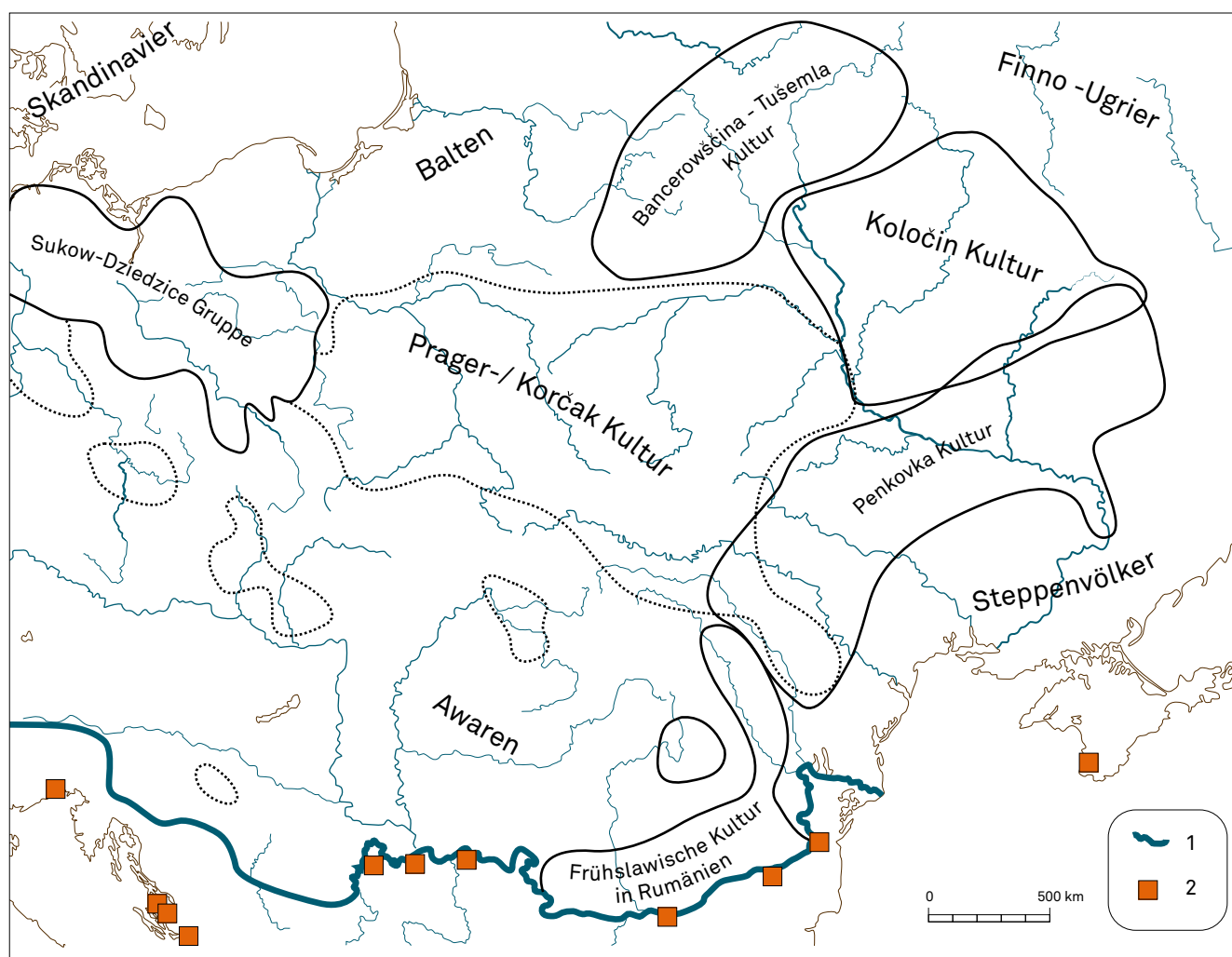


FIG. 1 Distribution of archaeological cultures in Central and Eastern Europe at the end of the 6th and at the beginning of the 7th century AD. The study area discussed is marked in red. 1. Border of the Byzantine Empire; 2. important Early Byzantine centres (Dulinicz 2006, 18 fig. 3).

2 Absolute Dates

West of the river Oder there is abundant absolute dendrochronological dating evidence for early Slavonic settlement complexes, dating to the mid- to late 7th and mostly to the 8th century AD⁷. Slavonic settlement was therefore assumed to have started during that time or shortly before, but about 100 to 150 years after the migration of the former Germanic population. East of the river Oder the picture is completely different: up to now no absolute dates between the 6th and the early 9th century are known from Poland, except for a few radiocarbon dates, which usually show a quite wide date range⁸. Therefore an opposing interpretation of data took place: a settlement discontinuity in Germany versus no discontinuity in the Slavonic settlement. Most Polish scholars dated the start of Slavonic

settlement in present-day Poland as early as the 6th century AD, without a settlement hiatus between Germanic and Slavonic settlers⁹. This interpretation was also equivalent with the idea of an indigenous development of Slavonic culture out of the late Germanic population, which should be confirmed by similar pottery as well as anthropological and even historical sources¹⁰. As a result of new investigations the interpretation has been slowly changing for several years to a non-indigenous development of the Slavonic culture, of which the main proponents are Marek Dulinicz and Michał Parczewski¹¹. This change of interpretation is caused by the fact that the features of early Slavonic culture on both sides of the river Oder are too similar – for example the pottery (fig. 3) – and therefore different dates for these features are unlikely.

⁷ Dulinicz 2006, 39 ff.

⁸ Dulinicz 2006, 51ff.

⁹ For example Hensel 1973; Kostrzewski 1961;

Makiewicz 2005a.

¹⁰ Leciejewicz 2002; 2008; Makiewicz 2005a; 2005b; 2005c; Nalepa 2007; Piontek 2006.

¹¹ Dulinicz 2001; 2006; Parczewski 1993; 2003; 2005.



FIG. 2 Sites with dendrochronologically dated evidence from the end of the 6th until the first half of the 9th century AD (Dulinicz 2006, 48 fig. 5).

3 The non-indigenous 'Slavonisation' process

Another as yet unsolved question is the process of the spread of Slavonic culture. From an archaeological point of view, immigration of Slavonic settlers into mostly deserted landscapes is assumed (non-indigenous development)¹²; contact with a residual Germanic population has so far not been demonstrated but would seem to be probable¹³. Another model was discussed by historians, especially by Walter Pohl¹⁴, who favours a more cultural model, namely the spread of a Slavonic 'way of life', which means adoption of Slavonic traits by the former Germanic population. In his opinion a strongly agrarian lifestyle made the development of newly cultivated areas easy as well as a decentralised, largely egalitarian social organisation characterised this highly flexible model of life that became an attractive alternative to hierarchical societies such as those of the Avars, Germans and Romans. Certain sections of these societies, e.g. soldiers and farmers, could therefore have adapted their

way of life: they became Slavs, not in an ethnic but in a cultural sense¹⁵. This may explain why the 'Slavonisation' of large parts of Eastern and Central Europe only took a relatively short time: it was not a case of a homogeneous Slavonic population immigrating into depopulated regions, but of a cultural model that was transferred and adapted. In particular, the assimilation of the Germanic population left in the wake of migration or even of Germanic soldiers who returned to their homeland is conceivable in this context. They may have come into contact with the Slavic way of life – for example in the Danube region, where Slavonic people are known to have settled from the 6th century AD –, adapted it and implemented it in their home region. Only after the emergence and consolidation of social and settlement patterns could ethno-political federations – such as the Abodrites, Wilzen or Heveller – be developed, which appeared in the written sources from the 8th century AD as tribes and tribal organisations¹⁶.

¹² Biermann et al. 1999, 236; Brather 1996a, 14 ff.; Dulinicz 2006; Godłowski 1976, 70 f.; 1979; 1980; 1989; 1999; Herrmann 1996; 1999; Herrmann/Heußner 1991; Heußner & Westphal 1998;

Parczewski 2003; 2005; Schoknecht 2001, 514.

¹³ Schneeweiß 2007.

¹⁴ Pohl 1988, 94 ff.; 2008a, 23f.; 2008b, 340 ff.

¹⁵ Pohl 1988, 95.

¹⁶ Brather 2004, 236 ff.; 254 f.



FIG. 3 Distribution of complexes with only undecorated and handmade pottery (Dulinicz 2006, 112 fig. 28).

However, while archaeology can describe these cultural and very dynamic processes of change, it cannot sufficiently explain them¹⁷. Possible Slavonic migrations are difficult to prove on the basis of archaeological evidence; it is only possible to show 'subsequent developments'¹⁸. It is therefore not clear at present to what extent a residual Germanic population may have been assimilated and slavonised or if people of different ethnic backgrounds joined a Slavonic migration and thus came into contact with the Slavonic way of life. Or even a combination of both? What is obvious is that the 'Slavonisation' – as we can see it now – must be considered as an extensive cultural (social, economic and religious) overprinting of the original identity, which is also confirmed by historical sources¹⁹.

For this reason, the notion of the 'Slavonisation' of the southwestern Baltic Sea region has not yet been put forward in medieval archaeology²⁰. Such an approach can only be developed with the involvement of scientific methods, because only they allow access to the historic environment as well as the lifestyle and behaviour of the population at that time. The scientific investigation

of migration and mobility of people, especially through multi-element isotopic analysis (strontium, lead, oxygen), may significantly improve the level of knowledge of the 'Slavonisation' of large parts of Central and Eastern Europe. Such approach allows a distinction to be made between 'native' and 'foreign', and thus the detection of possible evidence for a residual population (native) or an immigrated population (foreign)²¹. Added to that, several other methods such as dendrochronology, archaeozoology, pollen analysis or ceramic analysis, should also be taken into account to indicate continuities or discontinuities.

4 Slavs in the Oder estuary

In order to develop and test new approaches in Slavonic archaeology, an interdisciplinary project has been carried out by the Roman-Germanic Commission and the National Museum Szczecin at the German Research Foundation (DFG). This project should be understood as a pilot study, which should serve as a starting point for a comprehensive research project on early Slavonic culture between the rivers Elbe and Dnepr. The aims of this project

¹⁷ Brather 2004, 250.

¹⁸ Brather 2004, 254.

¹⁹ Pohl 2008b, 340.

²⁰ Brather 2004, 238.

²¹ Tütken et al. 2008.

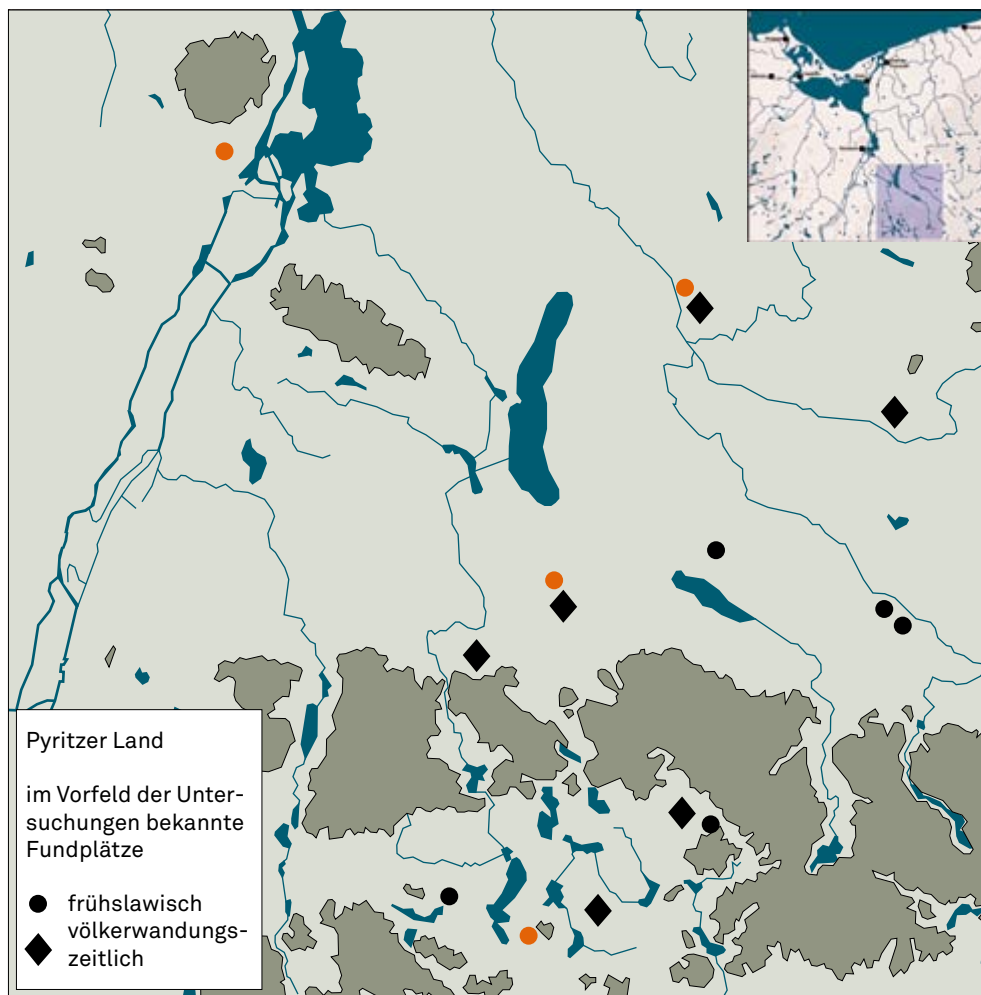


FIG. 4 Distribution of sites dating to the Migration period (rhombus) and early Slavonic period (circle) in the “Pyritzer Land”.

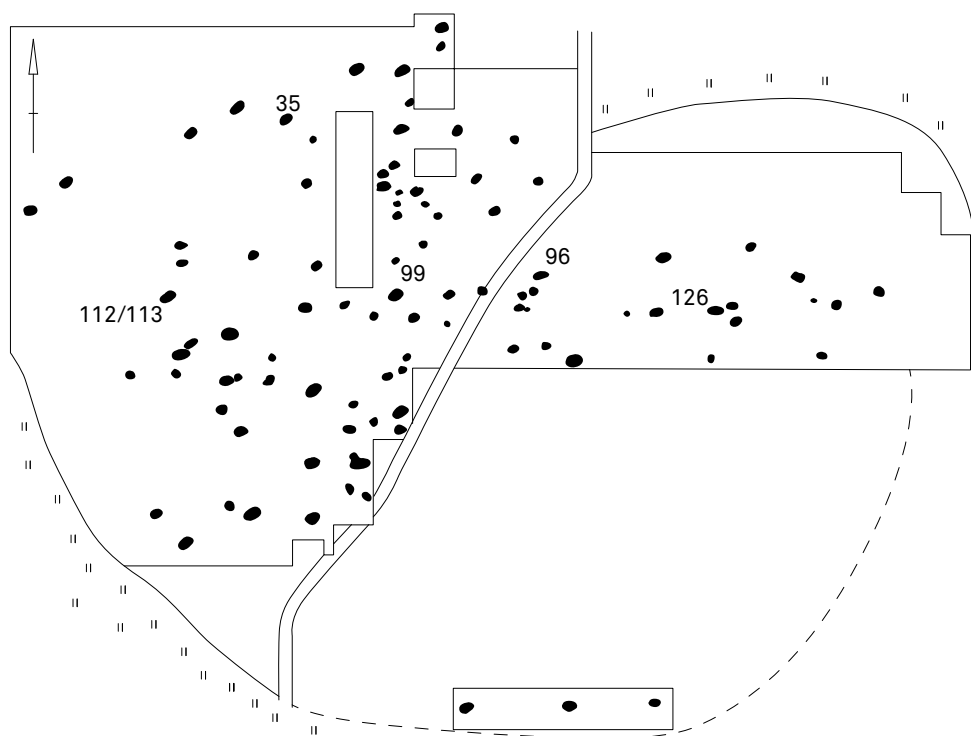
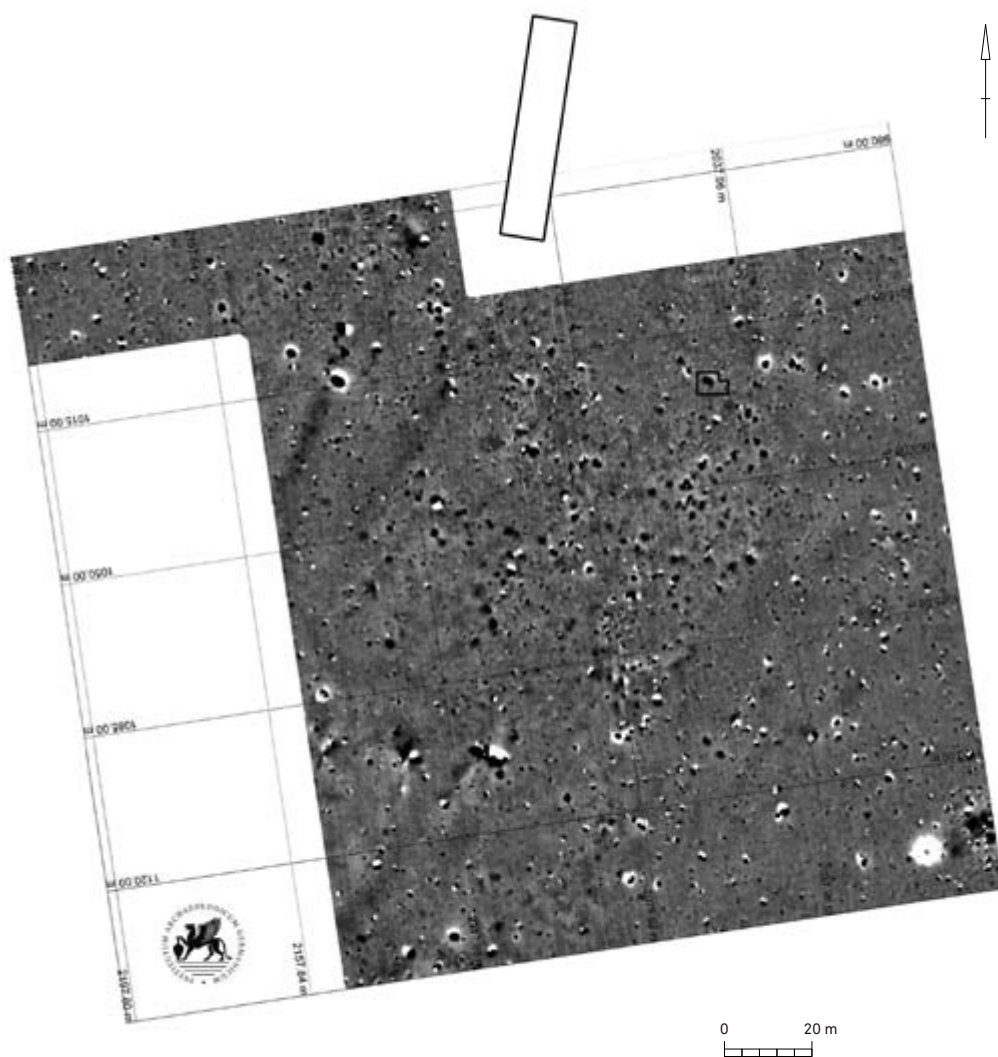
are to archive new data regarding dates and causes of settlement decline during late Germanic times as well as dates and conditions of early Slavonic settlement. Moreover, it is necessary to clarify the role of mobility and migration for the ‘Slavonisation’ of Central and Eastern Europe: to what extent the expansion of Slavonic culture occurred as a result of migration of Slavonic ethnic groups or of the ‘Slavonisation’ of a residual native population.

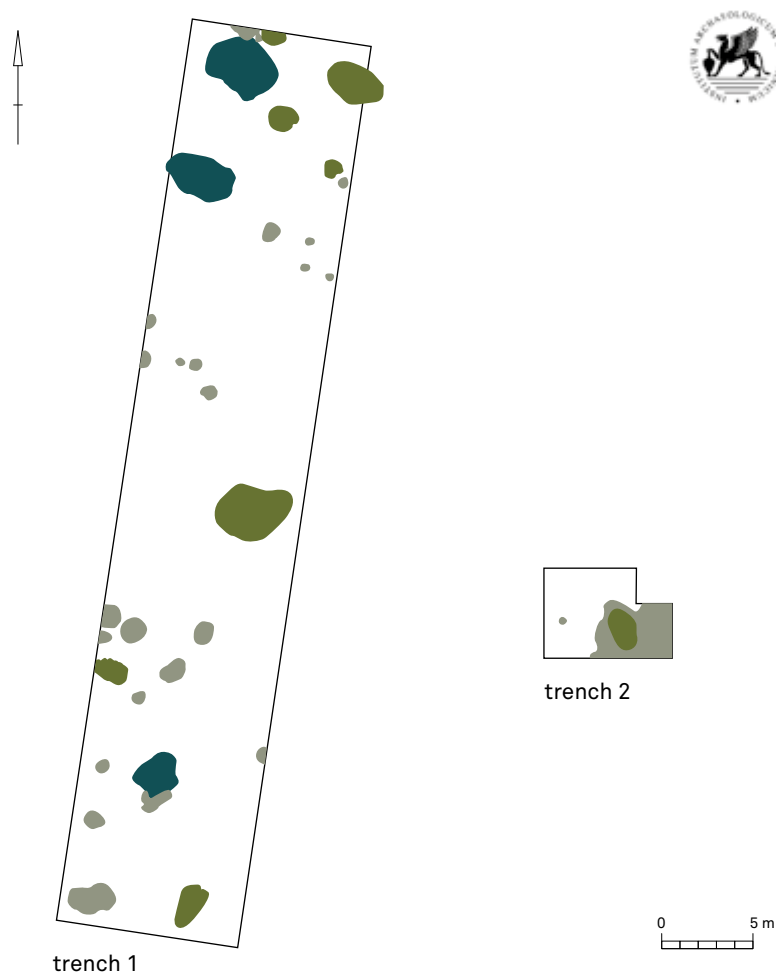
Particularly favourable conditions for obtaining the required information are available in the so-called ‘Pyritz Land’ southeast of Szczecin in Western Pomerania, Poland. From this region, numerous sites from the Late Roman period (5th/6th century AD) up to the early Middle Ages are known which are highly suitable for settlement and landscape studies (fig. 4). In addition, the archaeological record from this region can be addressed as well, because the first investigations in this 50 x 40 km large study area were already conducted during the 1960s by the National Museum in Szczecin, when the early Slavonic settlements of Dziedzice and Derczewo were excavated²². Also, extensive surface surveys were carried out as part of the nationwide registration of archaeological sites (Archeologiczne Zdjęcie Polski).

In 2010, initial investigations (geophysical surveys, test excavation) were conducted by the Roman-Germanic Commission and the National Museum Szczecin. Geomagnetic surveys were carried out at six settlement sites. At the site of Suchań – dating to the Roman Iron Age – the magnetometry survey revealed the remains of a farmstead consisting of pit houses, ovens and furnaces, as well as several concentrations of possible postholes which probably indicate the former locations of buildings. The measurements at the Slavonic sites (Dziedzice, Moskorzyn, Strąpie and Dobropole Pyrzyckie 10 and 12) also revealed numerous traces of settlement activities, especially oval-shaped settlement pits which are typical for early Slavonic settlements. The most comprehensive insights into the extent and structure of an early Slavic settlement were provided by the geomagnetic survey at the site Dobropole Pyrzyckie 12 (fig. 5: 1). The settlement area – estimated by the distribution of early Slavonic pottery – covered a hilly promontory which extends into the river valley of Mała Ina. The subsoil is mostly sandy. The huge (2.5 acre) study area covered the full extent of the site. The magnetometry image shows an 80 x 80 m large area in which a massive accumulation of settlement pits could be detected. The 2–3 m long and up to 2 m wide features are arranged irregularly but the similarities between the

²² Porzeziński 1969; 1972; 1975a; 1975b; 1980.

FIG. 5 Early Slavonic settlements in northwest Poland. 1 Dobropole Pyrzyckie 12. Results of geomagnetical survey and location of excavation trenches. 2 Dziedzice. Excavation plan of the early Slavonic settlement site (Porzeziński 1980, 121 fig. 6.7).





cluster-like arrangement of settlement pits in Dobropole and the excavated settlement site of Dziedzice (fig. 5: 2) are so striking that an interpretation as a settlement was high likely.

The aim of a small-scale test excavation (S1: 50 x 10 m) in the summer of 2010 was to test these survey results from Dobropole Pyrzyckie 12 and to gain more insight into the preservation conditions for wooden objects as well as obtain a date for the structures. Despite the fact that it was not possible to excavate within the geophysically surveyed area, a small trial trench (S2:

5 x 5 m) was opened and investigated. Although the 50 x 10 m large excavation trench S1 was located outside the assumed settlement area, several features were observed and dated to Slavonic period (fig. 6: 1), including two large oval pits – indicating the locations of former buildings – as well as at least three bottle-shaped storage pits. The pottery consists mostly of handmade and undecorated ware which is typical for early Slavonic culture, but some decorated pieces seem to indicate an already more developed phase of settlement. A 2.5 m wide pit was also excavated in the small trial trench S2, since it had been detected as a major

anomaly on the site (fig. 6: 2). The interpretation of this anomaly proved to be correct, the ceramic inventory (only handmade and undecorated) points to an early Slavonic date. Therefore, the entire geophysically surveyed settlement can be robustly dated to the early Slavonic period.

In summary, after the initial studies in Dobropole Pyrzyckie some preliminary results can be presented. On a sandy promontory in the Mała Ina river valley, an early Slavonic-period settlement existed, which in later times (the transition from the early to middle Slavonic period) was relocated to the higher areas of the promontory. This is confirmed by decorated pottery which was found mostly uphill. Although no absolute date is available

up to now, an early date in the early Slavonic period may be argued. Further investigation in the coming years, especially in the lowland areas, should clarify this; a major focus should be placed on the recovery of structural timbers (wells etc.) to obtain absolute dates by dendrochronology. In addition, the finds recovered during the excavations require further examination (archaeozoology, archaeobotany, multi-element isotopic analysis, etc.); the results of these investigations may indicate continuities or discontinuities.

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Forms of late antique settlement in Lusitania

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Abstract

During the 5th and 6th centuries, the western Hispanic territory saw irregular occupation patterns, which were still heavily based on Imperial sites. Although they occur throughout Lusitania, other types of settlement, usually associated with Germanic environments, seem predominant in specific areas. Some supporting examples are presented.

Keywords

Visigoths, late antiquity

In contrast to Spanish tradition, Portuguese historiography never quite valued the notion of a Visigothic society, which formed the transitional backbone to five hundred years of Mozarabic culture. This, of course, did not serve the Reconquista narrative, anxious to ignore the Christian populations living under Muslim rule – and especially their property –, nor the more recent Portuguese republican language largely supported by it, but has been very useful for the idea of a united Spanish kingdom. On the other hand, even taking into consideration the comparatively small amount of research on the subject, there appears to be much less evidence for Gothic settlement in Lusitania than in other Hispanic regions. It has been pointed out that, even as late as the 6th century, central Visigothic power felt ill at ease in the Lusitanian territory (fig. 1). Mérida, the provincial capital, was not considered as *sedes regia* of the unified monarchy, a major reason for which was the hostility of the local population². This

is most interesting, as Mérida had also been, regardless of an old debate on the subject, the capital of the *diocesis Hispaniarum*, with considerable Late Roman public investment, and might have been as valid a candidate as Toledo. Hence one possible starting point to what follows could be the uneven distribution of Visigothic settlement.

According to Hydatius, initial Suevic maneuvers led to hilltop reoccupations, the much invoked *castella tutiora*, from where the invaders were fought *per plebem* (Chron. 81). The underlying idea would be a defensive retreat, and a much wider, general renouncement of imperial forms of production. It is well known that other parts of post-Roman southwest Europe developed in this direction, at the expense of, for example, large-scale land exploitation. Yet even in the middle of the Late Roman Alentejo plains, no *latifundia* are traceable³. Late antique land dynamics may have known no functional disaggregation at all; at least they did not oppose but rather were complementary to the hilltop occupations. In fact, it has recently become clear that such transitions did not occur in large and mountainous areas of this particular region⁴. Elsewhere, even in adjacent territories, there were continuities between a late antique *castra* system and the early medieval villages and feudal structures, and above all the Suevic monarchy tended to favour native (i.e. castral) forms of settlement⁵. Automatic assumption of wide-spread similarities has hindered the identification of more complex and varied dynamics, for instance along the broad transitional area in which the typical Mediterranean geography comes to a sudden end, namely the floodplains of the south bank of the Mondego. In sharp contrast to the erratic early 5th-century rural settlement patterns, the Goths appear to have been established above all in the central area of the Iberian Peninsula known as the Meseta, that is, the modern areas of Soria, Palencia and Segovia in Castilla la Vieja, towards the southeastern lands of Guadalajara,

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² Ripoll López 2000, 395.

³ Alarcão *et al.* 1990, 297.

⁴ Tente 2010, 366-367.

⁵ Martín Viso 2000, 37-101, esp. 96-97.

FIG. 1 Key sites in Lusitania.



Madrid and Toledo. The much later Albelda chronicon mentions the *Campi Gothorum* bordering the upper Douro river basin. The expression would have been applied by the mountaineers when referring to the areas under direct control of the Toledan kingdom⁶.

Within a large and heterogeneous zone, bounded by the provincial Douro frontier and the Mondego valley, quite a few sites confirm sharp deviations from what could be expected during the 4th century. The area corresponds roughly to the southern part of the Suevic kingdom, for which a magnificent inventory of its parishes exists, listed in the so-called *Parochiale*. A surprising number match both the location and the name of later medieval and modern villages, thus outliving not only Islamic administrative adaptations, but especially the very aggressive reorganisations of subsequent Christian conquest. This is in sharp contrast to the only slightly earlier, or even coeval, forms of Late Roman property, which in general did not form the basis for early medieval settlement. It has been observed that the latest Imperial *villae* have no correlation at all with the earliest medieval *villas*⁷. Despite local particularities, other Hispanic regions underwent similar dynamics, and in some cases the *villas* appear to be associated with the abandonment or loss of importance of late antique hilltop sites⁸. There are however visible exceptions: Santiago da Guarda is one of the few cases of superposition, but looks rather unusual when considering the bigger picture, in

which Imperial-type estates no longer functioned as key production units after the beginning of the 6th century. As discussed below, this was not exactly the case in other parts of Lusitania. In this northern area, typical non-urban settlement during late antiquity can be illustrated by some distinctive examples.

Among the larger sites, Cabeço do Vouga benefited from substantial Late Roman investment. Combined with specific interpretations of the Antonine itinerary, this has led to the belief that the place would correspond to Talabriga, a *civitas* mentioned since Avienus but not located until now. No urban features have been identified, however, and considering the topographical dominance over the Vouga river, crossed by a major Roman road, the hypothesis of a lightly fortified road station is, for the time being, more acceptable. The Vouga flows into in a much altered estuary, where an apparently Late Roman site named Torre revealed very expressive elements; an adjacent area, Marinha Baixa, is a late Imperial production area with 6th-century imports, as well as a slightly later occupation⁹.

Another representative site is Ervamoira, a small site with very broad occupation, partially transformed into a palaeo-Christian basilica, one of the *loca sancta* mentioned in this area by Saint Martin of Dume¹⁰. Its location, on the left bank of the Côa, deep in the northeast of Lusitania, implies very close proximity to Monte Calabre, a short-lived rural bishopric of late antique origin named Calabriga, of which remains, beyond the

⁶ Morín de Pablos & Barroso Cabrera (2002),

149.

⁷ Alarcão 2004, 17.

⁸ Fernández Mier 1999, 476–477.

⁹ Sarrazola et al. 2001, 33–38.

¹⁰ Guimarães 2000, 625.

place name itself, a wide rampart surrounding a hilltop visually dominating the river traffic. In general, the area in question is fairly typical of Iron Age site reoccupation during the 5th and 6th centuries. South of the Serra da Nave, the Paiva region includes at least three such transitional sites: Castelo de Ariz, Muro and Vila Cova à Coelheira. The latter seems to have functioned as a true 'village', built at the expense of a local Roman settlement¹¹. Closer to the coast, a similar process may well be discernible in the late antique occupation of the Arouca castle¹². The nearby site of Malafaia also corresponds to a potentially late antique or early medieval hamlet, in spite of previous Late Roman occupation¹³.

As for the Visigothic pizarras of northeast Lusitania, they form a vivid and wide-ranging representation of unofficial life¹⁴. This specific area is dissimilar in more than one aspect, as they are oriented primarily towards the roads to Gaul. In fact, the Germanic rings and belt buckles found in the Salamanca region¹⁵ have little relation to the rest of the province, in the sense that they are visibly linked to the Meseta, and the so-called upper Douro cemeteries area, and not particularly to the lowlands of the West. A survey of the *ager Salmanticensis* identified a number of Visigothic sites, most of them with no or only weak Late Roman precedents¹⁶. Further finds consist mainly of burial sites, such as El Gejo de los Reyes or Salvatierra de Tormes. Finally, Dehesa del Cañal¹⁷, also near Salamanca, is a 6th-century village composed of at least ten large rectangular huts, all built in clay on a metre-high stone base, with wooden roofs.

The coastal strip south of the Mondego river was crucial to Suevic expansion, and to its underlying policy of urban control, ending in a buffer zone centred on the Tagus. Within this territory, later conquered and integrated in the Visigothic realm, changes did occur in a number of sites, which differ slightly from their northern counterparts. If many of the *villae* did not survive, several indicators point towards maintenance or successive revalidation of their *fundi*, even taking into account the inaccuracy of modern estimation of the shape, extension and true exploitation of such estates. Sites suggesting continuity are Tomaréis, Ourém, or Adram. In the same region of Leiria, the origin of several early medieval villages with Muslim toponymy (e.g. Alcouvim, Alcanadas, Zambujal de Alcaria) may predate the 8th century but they remain unexcavated¹⁸. S. Gião da Nazaré is a Visigothic church originally facing the ocean, which has undergone recent archaeological investigation¹⁹, supported by earlier synopses on the architecture of the building. Once more, a marked evolution towards late antiquity, well within Roman parameters, is recorded.

With regard to the southern regions, there is more to them than the monotonous preconceptions of the large plains of the Portuguese Alentejo and the Spanish Extremadura might suggest. Material culture evidences only scarce and random Germanic influence, at least until the mid-6th century. For the southernmost region, the modern Algarve, a recent study comes to the

same conclusion, and specific Visigothic settlement is thought to have been concentrated in some rather undefined mountainous areas²⁰. Much of Lusitania's fate was decided in its key administrative centres, that is, its three *conventus* capitals: Emerita Augusta, the much coveted first city with its wide-spread late antique occupation; Pax Iulia, findspot of a well-known *spatha*, generally associated with a Suevic or Vandal military context, and, just across the Tagus, Scallabis, with its documented Visigothic quarter. In terms of major territorial settlement, this is also the region in which the very large estates developed to impressive standards, and were maintained during late antiquity. Consequently, the traditional view paid little or no attention to the significant number of less pretentious forms of settlement, i.e. *vici* or other secondary agglomerations, as well as a number of truly humble sites, generally interpreted as *villa* dependencies²¹.

Among the examples of the former type, the palatial *villa* of São Cucufate²² is worth mentioning, with its more than probable late antique occupation, and many of the surrounding sites, initially interpreted as Late Roman, turn out to be slightly later²³. The best example is Torre de Palma. Here the 6th-century basilica reflects a brisk rebuilding sequence, from a triple nave ending in a triple apse to a somewhat later stage during which an opposed apse was added, as well as a baptistery compound. Milreu, less than 10 km from Faro (Ossonoba), is a sumptuous *villa*-palace that underwent localised domestic transformations until the early middle ages. The conversion of its large temple into a palaeo-Christian/Visigothic structure has been widely known for decades²⁴.

A recent excavation at a Late Roman site near Serpa provided additional data for the understanding of what is seen as a period of transition to a post-Roman West. Torre Velha 1 occupies a dominant hilltop, facing a secondary late antique domestic site, across a small stream. An interesting late antique sequence was identified, until the transition to the 7th century in what was never a conventional *villa* but rather a large dominating building of early empire origin, lacking signs of ostentation (no traces of mosaic, for instance). Islamic pottery and a kiln constitute further evidence for even later presence at the site.

Montinho das Laranjeiras also corresponds to a large Roman *villa* located on the Guadiana, as is the case of Vale de Condes. Under Visigothic chronology, it was transformed into a cross-like *ecclesia* with further funerary adaptations, ultimately becoming a Mozarabic *monasterium*²⁵, perhaps similar to Casa Herrera, the particularly well-attested Visigothic church some 6 km north of Mérida. At the important Islamic occupation of Montinho, the baptistery as well as the necropolis was preserved. Not far from there, still in the Guadiana basin, Monte da Cegonha is another clear case of a basilica created within a *villa*, and a recent survey around Pax Iulia has yielded further information on regional settlement²⁶. Amid a large range of sites, not a single case of Visigothic origin is identified. In the dependency of Mérida, the scenario is quite similar. Among the cemeteries, fine examples are Brovales and La Mata de San Blas, both in the

11 Vieira 2004, 60.

12 Silva & Ribeiro 2006/2007, 71.

13 Silva *et al.* 2008, 726.

14 Velázquez Soriano 1989, 41-61.

15 Morin De Pablos & Barroso Cabrera (2002), 169.

16 Ariño Gil & Rodríguez Hernández 1997, 244.

17 Storch de Gracia y Asensio 1998, 141-160.

18 Bernardes 2005, 570-574.

19 Fontes & Machado 2010.

20 Inácio 2009/2010, 120.

21 Lopes 1997, 170.

22 Alarcão *et al.* 1990, 259-268.

23 Mantas 1987, 199-214.

24 Teichner 2008, 253.

25 Catarino 1997-1998, 542-543.

26 Lopes 2003.

Jerez de los Caballeros area, and Campo-Lugar, in Cáceres. In contrast, Clarines, in the Algarve, is a probable Visigothic village with no previous Imperial *villa*, in spite of evidence for a sporadic Roman presence²⁷.

Late antique evolution has to deal with the question of transition or apartness in early Islamic settlement south of the Mondego. Guichard argued convincingly for the latter, based on the theoretically dissimilar social organisations, but there has been a growing propensity for attenuating the abstractness of such distinctions, bearing in mind the weight of regional differences²⁸. Eighth-century transitional sequences are more likely to be found in local diversity, that is, in the transformation of Visigothic society itself. Some pottery production and architectural processes, associated with rural habitation patterns, demonstrate that at least in some areas the 'transitional' period does predate Arab and Berber invasions, starting as early as 550²⁹. There is no early evidence for massive islamisation/berberisation, which points to strong and persistent Hispano-Visigothic autarkies during the first two centuries. This is a phenomenon also seen in the functional continuation of Roman sites. Cerro da Vila is a clear example, first facing the southern coastline as a *villa*, and ultimately as an Islamic coastal village. Without any occupation gap during late antiquity, transformations include the typical shift towards both mono-cellular spaces and more complex houses with an internal courtyard, well attested at other early medieval sites³⁰. This change has often been identified as specifically Islamic in nature, or at least in chronology, but the same tendency is visible in urban and rural contexts (e.g. Conimbriga, Lisbon and Mérida, as well as in North Africa), from the late 500s onwards, and therefore has no connection at all with post-711 influences. The vast majority of changes in medium-sized *villae* were of a functional nature, and spaces formerly used for specific activities underwent modifications, turning them into production or funerary areas. Architecturally, only minimum adaptation was needed (closing a passageway or demolishing a wall), but their very broad nature indicates dramatic shifts in the minds of the *possessores*. The many Hispanic examples³¹ demonstrate the widespread nature of the trend, and beg the question whether the massive accumulation of *fundi*, both by ecclesiastical and Visigothic elites, might have caused sequential abandonment by the former owners.

It can be argued that the rearrangement of Imperial estates, in particular the emergence of parishes such as those of the *Parochiale*, was caused by economic variables, not because of the supposed importance of a church, originally maintained by a local *possessor*. Within the typical *fundus* existed, beyond units of *agri*, a number of *loci*, inferable from surviving texts, and both types of land are seen as cultivated plots, such as olive groves and orchards, but "not settlement units"³². Yet it is not impossible to interpret them as a small agglomeration of huts or buildings, on the basis of their crucial importance to the emergence of 6th- and 7th-century villages in the province of Lusitania. Legal evidence created under Egica in 702 (*Lib. Iud.* 9, 1, 21) clearly demonstrates

a functioning network of villages, in which a social hierarchy is evident, ranging from *maiores* to *servi*, generically mentioned as *habitatores loci*, but not one passage refers to *possessores* or *domini* living in the rural areas³³.

Some of these have become likely candidates for the identification of Visigothic settlement lacking imperial precedents. In fact, these 'villages' are often located in areas with no previous occupation at all. In the Madrid area, a remarkable number of early medieval agglomerations show resemblance in their shape and location. Composed solely of perishable and predominantly rectangular huts, these sites have well-established parallels with Frankish and Lombard environments³⁴, but not with what is known in late antique Lusitania. It is unfortunate that timber-built architecture is still often disregarded in post-Roman contexts. Especially the "surface constructions" described by Vigil-Escalera at sites such as Góquez, La Huelga, El Pelicano or La Vega, perhaps evidencing social distinctions³⁵, are very probably present in most of Lusitania, not only in *villa* adaptations but also in the less well known dispersed settlements. But are these sites truly Germanic, or were they built and inhabited by local communities? The issue of linking material evolution with external influence remains highly problematic, and cannot be solved by the mere presence of exogenous or imported artefacts. Possible migration is allegedly discernable in more than one Lusitanian necropolis, in which the presence of *fibulae* and belt buckles is clear evidence of Germanic influence. This has led to the classification of such graves as proof for a certain type of settlement, even if no further evidence was available. The finding that the so-called Visigothic burial sites are greatly (but not exclusively³⁶) concentrated on the Meseta, has triggered many passionate debates on ethnicity since the early 20th century. In fact, the question of strict Germanism versus Romanism, although increasingly unpopular, continues to underpin many a thesis on western Hispanic settlement. Current perspectives tend to interpret Danubian-type artefacts according to what has been called a "mode danubienne"³⁷, that is, in the light of preferences in trade, aesthetics and even in regional production factors.

Overall, the material culture points to a very strong Hispano-Roman presence during the 5th and 6th centuries. This assertion says nothing about ethnicity itself, and the many *villae* and *villulae* mentioned in the previous Visigothic law codes may point to widespread Germanic farming, quite unusual until the mid-6th century. Estimations on the number of Hispano-Germanic peoples fluctuate wildly, and are more often than not based on conjectures. Victor de Vita, following a census by Genseric, mentions 80,000 Vandals. Other calculations are based on equally unreliable data, with results varying between 40,000 and one million³⁸. How these newcomers interacted with local communities can only be very partially understood through Hydatius. Even sources such as Consentius' letter to Augustine have been unjustly cited as a justification for peaceful settlement³⁹. Large-scale immigration during the late 5th century is highly questionable; the very idea lacks any literary or material basis⁴⁰. Thus Visigothic identity would emerge as a political and

27 Catarino 1997-1998, 548.

28 Aillet 2006, 5.

29 Boone 2001, 111-120.

30 Teichner & Schierl 2006, 125-126.

31 Chavarría Arnau 2006, 17-35.

32 Wickham 2005, 471.

33 Isla Frez 2007, 11.

34 López Quiroga 2004.

35 Vigil-Escalera Guirado 2003, 288.

36 Gomes (2002), 339-391.

37 Kazanski 1989, 59-73.

38 Mangas Manjarrés & Solana Sáinz 1985, 118-119.

39 Ubric Rabaneda 2003, 66.

40 Koch 2006, 85.

terminological concern, rather than a demographic one. Arguments in favour of key sites enhancing a strong tribal identity, such as the famous Douro cemeteries, are presently weakening, and a giving way to a much more undefined poli-ethnicity, and derived, regional forms of acculturation.

According to the current data, and in contrast to other parts of Hispania, Germanic settlement in Lusitania appears to build on pre-existing patterns. Whether this reflects historical reality or incoherent data remains to be proven. It is true that research has shaped comparatively little thought on late antique rural organisation, and that these dynamics have been illustrated chiefly through excavation of Imperial sites, i.e. from a 'terminal' perspective. Additional bias is linked with the fact that *villae*, and eventually even churches, tend to reflect the daily lives of only a certain elite, or at least they do not indicate to what extent they are representative of an entire population. Cemeteries too are often disconnected from their corresponding habitat. At a different level, amphorae or other imports are equally silent about other, unknown forms of production and commercial ties. Chavarría and Lewit⁴¹ considered these and other factors, and argued for the impossibility of a balanced representation of the late antique countryside. The picture, however, has changed dramatically during the last twenty years, and large areas have been rigorously studied, both by public institutions and private companies. One of the better integrated examples is the Alqueva project,

a dam construction which created the largest artificial lake in Europe, and which engaged hundreds of archaeologists in the Alentejo region for over a decade. Among the dozens of excavated sites, not one Visigothic village is known. Instead, the Imperial sites are occupied until the 7th century, with only minor shifts (e.g. earth pavements, separating walls, inner areas used for burials). There is, however, a strong caveat to be considered, as an ongoing study demonstrates: the peri-urban site of Casa Branca, near Évora, had been initially interpreted as pre-Roman, yet it rapidly became obvious that the pottery was in fact entirely late antique. The site is currently being studied and corresponds in all likelihood to a 'village' similar to those known for the Madrid area. Further investigation of these structures is much needed, as they may be widely misinterpreted.

⁴¹ Chavarría Arnau & Lewit 2004, 6–9.

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Continuity within change

Two sites in the borders of the former Iceni territory in East Anglia

Penelope Walton Rogers¹

Abstract

Part of northern East Anglia retained a local identity within the broader 'Anglian' culture of eastern England in the 5th and 6th centuries. It is argued that this area represents the contracted remains of the tribal territory of the Iceni and the *civitas Icenorum* of the Roman period, which was profoundly influenced, but not entirely overwhelmed, by the arrival of immigrant culture from the Continent. The recognition of this residual territory has helped in the interpretation of two sites on its borders, Tittleshall (Norfolk) and Flixton (Suffolk).

Keywords

East Anglia, continuity, territory, Iceni, textiles, beads, mortuary ritual, inhumation cemeteries, Anglo-Saxon women.

1 Introduction

The modern region of East Anglia takes its name from the kingdom of the East Angles, which emerged into recorded history in the 7th century². In the Roman period, the same region had been governed as two administrative units, or *civitates*, which were in turn based on the territories of local Iron Age tribes. The long transition that led from two Roman *civitates* to a single Anglo-Saxon kingdom did not follow any simple line of development and a number of studies of different aspects of the subject have demonstrated the complexity of the matter³.

The present paper will argue for some level of continuity in the northern part of the region. It will aim to show that a contracted version of the northern Roman *civitas*, and the tribal territory of the Iceni that preceded it, survived into the 6th century. While the 5th- and 6th-century cemeteries and settlements of this area undoubtedly display all the main attributes of the 'Anglian' culture of northern and eastern England, it will be proposed that this smaller territory managed to retain a form of local identity within the larger cultural group. Two recently excavated sites stand close to the borders of this territory, Tittleshall (Norfolk) in the west and Flixton (Suffolk) in the south. It will be suggested that the contrasting characteristics of the two communities are a product of their different locations and their differing relationships with the main area.

The territory to be discussed is the area drained by the Rivers Wensum, Yare and Waveney (and the Bure can probably be included), which enter the North Sea through the same estuary on the east coast (fig.1)⁴. In the Early Anglo-Saxon period this river system represented one of three main zones of population, the second being on the rivers flowing westwards into the Fenland, where the cemeteries display their own characteristic artefacts and customs,⁵ and the third focused on the estuaries of the south-east⁶. Two parallel lines of earthworks run north-south between the first two zones, their outer ditches facing each other⁷. The northernmost of the eastern series, the Launditch, was probably constructed in the Iron Age, but those on the western side of the watershed are more likely to have been raised in the 5th or 6th century⁸. A parish and hundred boundary which forms an arc around the headwaters of the River Yare may have its origins in the same system⁹. There are no comparable earthworks to the south, but here the Waveney was separated from the south-eastern estuary zone by claylands,

¹ The Anglo-Saxon Laboratory, Bootham House, 61 Bootham, York YO30 7BT, United Kingdom, www.aslab.co.uk.

² Yorke 1990, 72-97.

³ Scull 1992; Hills 1993; 2003, 105-7; Williamson

1993, 36-84; 2008; Ravn 2003; Carver 2005; Penn & Bruggmann 2007; Chester-Kadwell 2009.

⁴ Williamson 1993, 13, 18.

⁵ Walton Rogers forthcoming.

⁶ Scull 1992, 13-15; West 1998, 268-70.

⁷ Wade-Martins 1974; Williamson 1993, 69-70; Chester-Kadwell 2009, 58.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Williamson 1993, 70-1; Kenneth Penn pers. comm.

which were probably sparsely populated in the Early Anglo-Saxon period¹⁰.

The term 'territory' has to be used with care in this context. The boundaries may not have been heavily defended and the evidence from Tittleshall suggests that the western border was relatively open. Although the earthworks imply a degree of control over traffic in and out of tribal lands, society in the 5th century is likely to have been focused on people – family units, kin groups and local petty leaders – rather than land boundaries and political entities¹¹. This means that the routes people took in their daily lives and the journeys they made to family and clan events

will have bound them into a community, whose location within the landscape would be known to outsiders¹².

2 The Iceni and the *civitas Icenorum*

In the Iron Age there were two main tribal groups in East Anglia, the Iceni in the north and the Trinovantes in the south. The boundary between the two has been placed in different positions by different authors, although all agree that it lay to the south of the current county border (between Norfolk and Suffolk) (fig. 1)¹³. To the west, coins and other distinguishing artefacts of the Iceni suggest that their territory extended well beyond

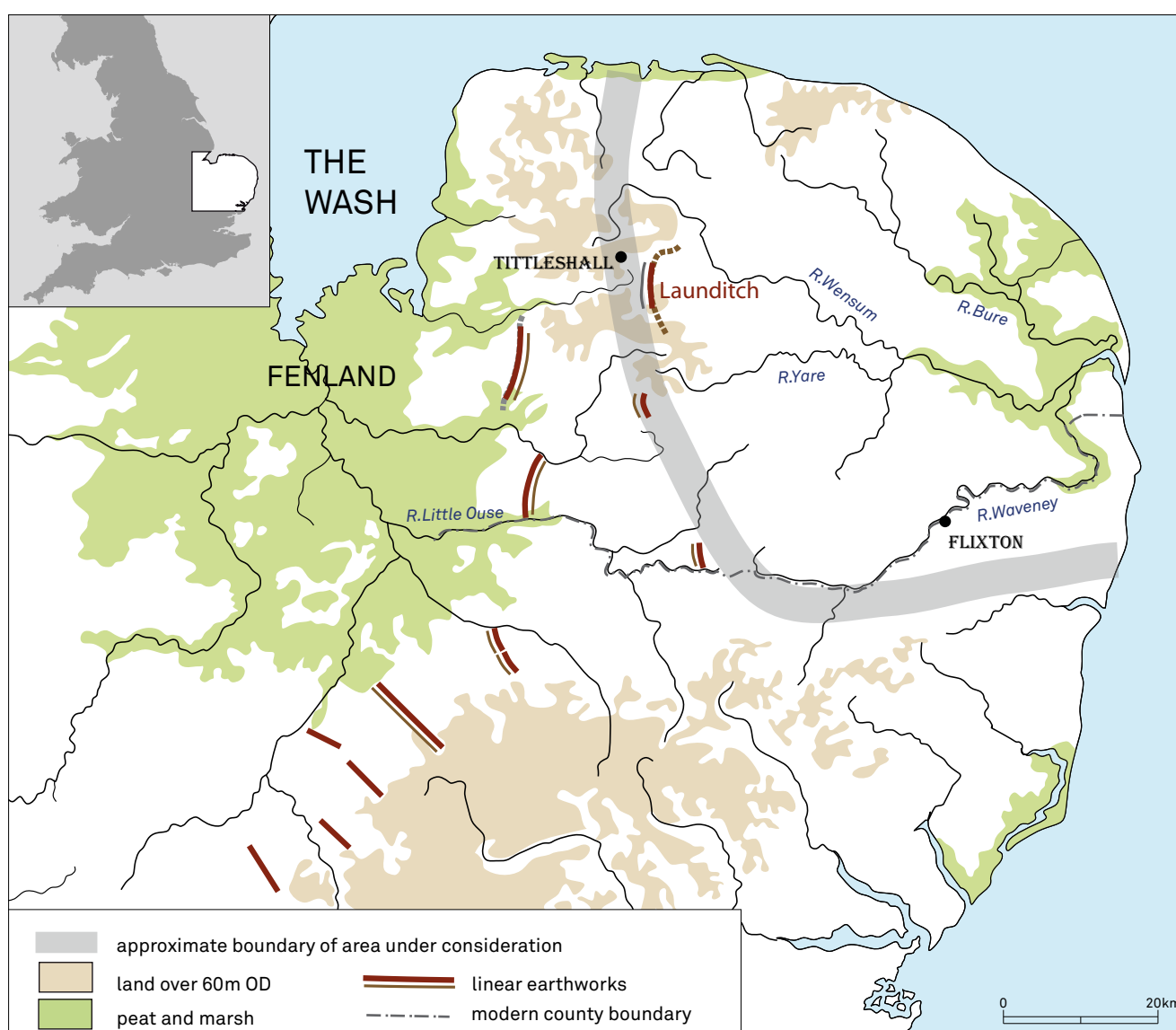


FIG. 1 Map of East Anglia, showing the coastline and drainage of the Fenland as it was in the Anglo-Saxon period (after Scull 1993, 68, fig. 1). The linear earthworks have been taken from Wade-Martins 1974. The Anglo-Saxon Laboratory.

¹⁰ Williamson 2008, 127.

¹¹ Scull 1992, 6, 15–16; 1993, 75–7.

¹² Brookes 2007, 143–4.

¹³ Williamson 1993, 33; 2008, 124–5; Mattingly &

Jones 1990, maps 3.8, 3.10, 5.11; Dymond & Martin 1999, 41.

the western watershed and the Launditch, into the Fenland. To judge from the variety of motifs on the coins, however, this is likely to represent more than one group¹⁴. The *Cenimagni* (interpreted as *Iceni Magni*, the Great Iceni) surrendered to Julius Caesar along with four less well-documented tribes and one authority on the history of Norfolk has suggested that 'the Iceni were the dominant group within, and thus gave their name to, some kind of loose tribal hegemony'¹⁵. Of the early linear earthworks and the watershed they follow, he says 'This, perhaps, represents the frontier of the Iceni with one of the obscure tribes mentioned by Caesar'¹⁶.

Following two revolts against Roman rule, the northern territory was made into a *civitas*, with the tribal elite as a local council¹⁷. This was governed from a new, planned town, Venta Icenorum, close to present-day Norwich (fig. 3)¹⁸. Other smaller towns and a network of roads were also soon established. However, the recession that afflicted much of the western empire in the 3rd and 4th centuries bit hard into this region and raiding from the northern Continent soon became a serious threat. Venta Icenorum was destroyed by fire in the 3rd century and, after a period of abandonment, was reconstructed in a smaller area within new defences, with a shanty town outside¹⁹. Other places acquired defences and the Saxon Shore forts came into existence²⁰. By the second half of the 4th century, the area seems to have been in deep recession: the industrial manufacture of pottery had come to an end and there are signs of insecurity in the increased frequency of the deposition of coin hoards²¹.

3 The emergence of Anglo-Saxon culture

Towns such as Venta Icenorum were eventually abandoned, but during the course of the 5th century particularly large cremation cemeteries were established in their vicinity²². In the countryside there was some contraction of settled areas into the river valleys, and some sites were abandoned while others were newly established; and yet, overall, the areas of occupation seem to have remained much the same²³. This implies significant economic upheaval but perhaps only local displacement of the population. The areas around the former towns were obviously still focal points and the cluster of sites close to Venta Icenorum suggests that it still held some central authority²⁴.

The similarities between the pottery and metalwork of the cremation burials with those of northern Germany and southern Scandinavia, especially Schleswig-Holstein, strongly suggest immigration from those areas, although the level of migration versus acculturation is still debated²⁵. The evidence collected so far has given the impression of gradual settlement by small groups of immigrants and the survival and integration of the Romano-British population²⁶.

By the second half of the 5th century, typically 'Anglian' artefacts such as cruciform and small-long brooches had become firmly established in the northern half of East Anglia, as they were in northern England and the east Midlands (the term, 'North Sea Province' has recently been coined for this larger cultural zone²⁷). These artefacts were soon joined by metal sleeve clasps and distinctive forms of tablet weaving, which suggest small-scale immigration from Scandinavia in the late 5th century²⁸. Annular brooches also became one of the signature artefacts of 'Anglian' burials. By this time, most of the population was living in settlements which followed the traditions of Germanic communities on the Continent,²⁹ although there seems to have been a fusion of building traditions³⁰. The basic unit of the settlement was a post-built structure with ancillary sunken-featured buildings, and there could be one or more unit per settlement. The units are interpreted as farmsteads, each occupied by a nuclear family with dependants and servants or slaves³¹. Organisation in this manner provided a degree of economic self-sufficiency, although each farmstead, hamlet and village would no doubt be linked to others through kinship and marriage.

Occupation was concentrated along the valleys of rivers and streams,³² and, indeed, two early groups of people, the Wissa and the Lodningas, took their names from rivers³³. To some extent this mirrors the rural settlement pattern of the Roman period, but by this time the imperial administrative superstructure, urban markets and long-distance commercial networks had fallen away, so that river systems, and the watersheds dividing them, must have played a prominent role in the shaping of local identities.

4 Survival of a regional identity

Artefacts of types limited to small districts are more noticeable in the archaeological record for the 5th and early 6th centuries,³⁴ reflecting an increased dependence on local skills and resources. Some classes of artefact, however, argue for the existence of a larger territory.

A survey of textiles of the Early Anglo-Saxon period has shown that three textile practices which can be defined as Romano-British survived in certain areas of the country³⁵. The techniques are 2/1 twill weave (fig. 2), the tubular selvedge (fig. 2) and soft-finishing (not illustrated). The area on the east-flowing river system includes five inhumation cemeteries of the 5th and 6th centuries with recorded textiles. Each of these has produced evidence for Romano-British techniques and some of the graves include two or three examples (Table 1, fig. 3). In the cemeteries to the south and west of this group, they are rarely present: of the 512 records of 5th- and 6th-century textiles from eighteen sites to the south and south-west there are only five examples, one each at Snape G5, Ipswich Boss Hall G97, Bury St Edmunds

¹⁴ Williamson 1993, 32-3.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 36-8.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*; Myres & Green 1973, 8-12.

¹⁹ Myres & Green 1973, 12.

²⁰ Williamson 1993, 47.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 48.

²² Myres & Green 1973, 8-14; Hills 1977; Hills &

Penn 1981; Hills, Penn & Rickett 1987, 1994; Williamson 1993, 65-8; Chester-Kadwell 2009, 156-161.

²³ Williamson 1993, 58-62.

²⁴ Myres & Green 1973, 12-14; Scull 1992, 8-14.

²⁵ Scull 1992, 7-9; Hills 1993, 105-7.

²⁶ Scull 1992, 12-14; 1993, 70.

²⁷ Williamson 2008, 132-4.

²⁸ Hines 1984, 105; Walton Rogers 2007, 93-5.

²⁹ Ravn 2003, 132-3.

³⁰ Marshall & Marshall 1993, 400.

³¹ Härke 1997, 139-141.

³² Chester-Kadwell 2009, 95, 142, 154.

³³ Williamson 1993, 64.

³⁴ Chester-Kadwell 2009, 154-6.

³⁵ Walton Rogers 2007, 230-2.

FIG. 2 (a) 2/1 twill on a pair of tweezers from Flixton; (b), 2/1 twill structure; (c), tubular selvedge. a: Vanessa Fell, English Heritage, b-c: The Anglo-Saxon Laboratory.

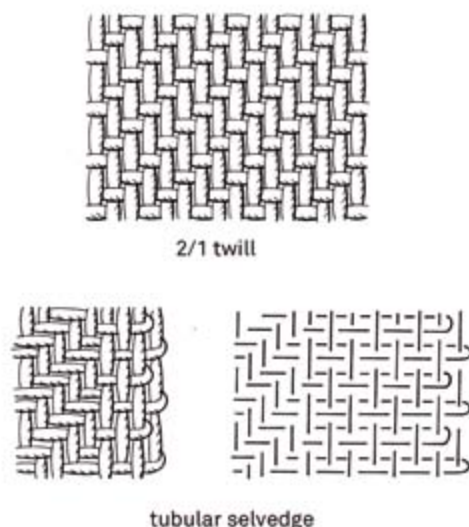


TABLE 1

Graves with Romano-British textile techniques in inhumation cemeteries on the easterly river system, dated to the 5th and 6th centuries. The graves in brackets represent probable examples.

Cemetery	2/1 twill	Tubular selvedge	Soft-finishing	Graves with RB textiles/ Graves with recorded textile/ Graves in cemetery
Bergh Apton (Nf)	G29 x2, G34 (G35)	G35	(G34), G42	4/22/63
Morning Thorpe (Nf)	G376, G384	(G90) G378	—	3-4/98/365
Flixton (Sf)	G9, G17	—	G9, G20B	3/29/62
Spong Hill (Nf)	G31, G32	G12, G24 (G57)	—	4-5/31/57
Tittleshall (Nf)	G2, G11A (G13)	—	—	2-3/12/24

Westgarth Gardens G13, Oxborough G9 and Little Eriswell G11³⁶. The next significant clusters are at Barrington-Edix Hill in Cambridgeshire and Mucking on the Thames estuary in Essex.

Most of the evidence comes from Phase FA2 (using the East Anglian Chronology established by Penn and Brugmann 2007) (Table 2). This is partly because, in this region, relatively few inhumations have been dated to Phases FA1 and MA1, when the practice of cremation was more common; and partly because there was a peak in the burial of metalwork in Phase FA2,³⁷ and textile preservation in burials depends on the presence of metal³⁸. The fall-off in the late 6th and 7th centuries, Phases FB, MB and C, however, appears to be genuine. It can be contrasted with the 2/2 twills with ZS spin which, nationally, emerged at the very end of the 5th century³⁹. In the area within the watersheds, the adoption of ZS twill may have been a little slower than in other sites of eastern England,⁴⁰ but by the 7th century, Phase C, in the graves at Harford Farm near Norwich, it had become established as the main wool textile type (Table 2).

The area in which traditional textile practices were preserved is also home to certain types of glass bead (fig. 4). According to the definitions developed by Birte Brugmann, these are the Norfolk Short, of which the BlueWhite is the most common representative, the Norfolk YellowRed, the Norfolk CrossingTrail and the Norfolk Melon⁴¹. These bead types have been found in the same five sites on the eastern river system, in three graves at Spong Hill, one at Tittleshall, ten at Bergh Apton, 33 at Morning Thorpe and at least two (possibly five) at Flixton⁴². In these cemeteries, there are often several Norfolk-type beads in one grave. Outside this area, only single examples in individual graves have been found, all in Suffolk, two at Eriswell, two at Holywell Row and one at Bury St Edmunds Westgarth Gardens⁴³.

The Norfolk types are regarded as diagnostic of EAC Phase FA2, the late 5th and early 6th century. Their predecessor in terms of regional bead production is the Traffic Light bead of Phase FA1, which has a much broader distribution in

³⁶ http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/archive/clothing_ch_2007.

³⁷ Penn & Brugmann 2007, 90.

³⁸ Walton Rogers 2007, 57-8.

³⁹ Walton Rogers 2007, 104-7.

⁴⁰ Walton Rogers in Boulter & Walton Rogers in press.

⁴¹ Brugmann 2004, 36-7, 79-80, Map 56; Penn &

Brugmann 2007, 26-8.

⁴² Penn & Brugmann 2007, Table 5.1; Brugmann in press [Flixton] and forthcoming [Tittleshall].

⁴³ Brugmann 2004, Table 11.

Anglo-Saxon England, though still focused on Norfolk⁴⁴. In view of the Romano-British element in the textiles, it is worth noting that Traffic Light beads and other beads of Phase FA1 were often decorated with twisted trails, a technique which has

precursors in Late Iron Age Britain, but no relatives in Scandinavia or on the Continent⁴⁵. There are, however, no Romano-British examples of twisted-trail decoration to provide firm evidence for continuity.

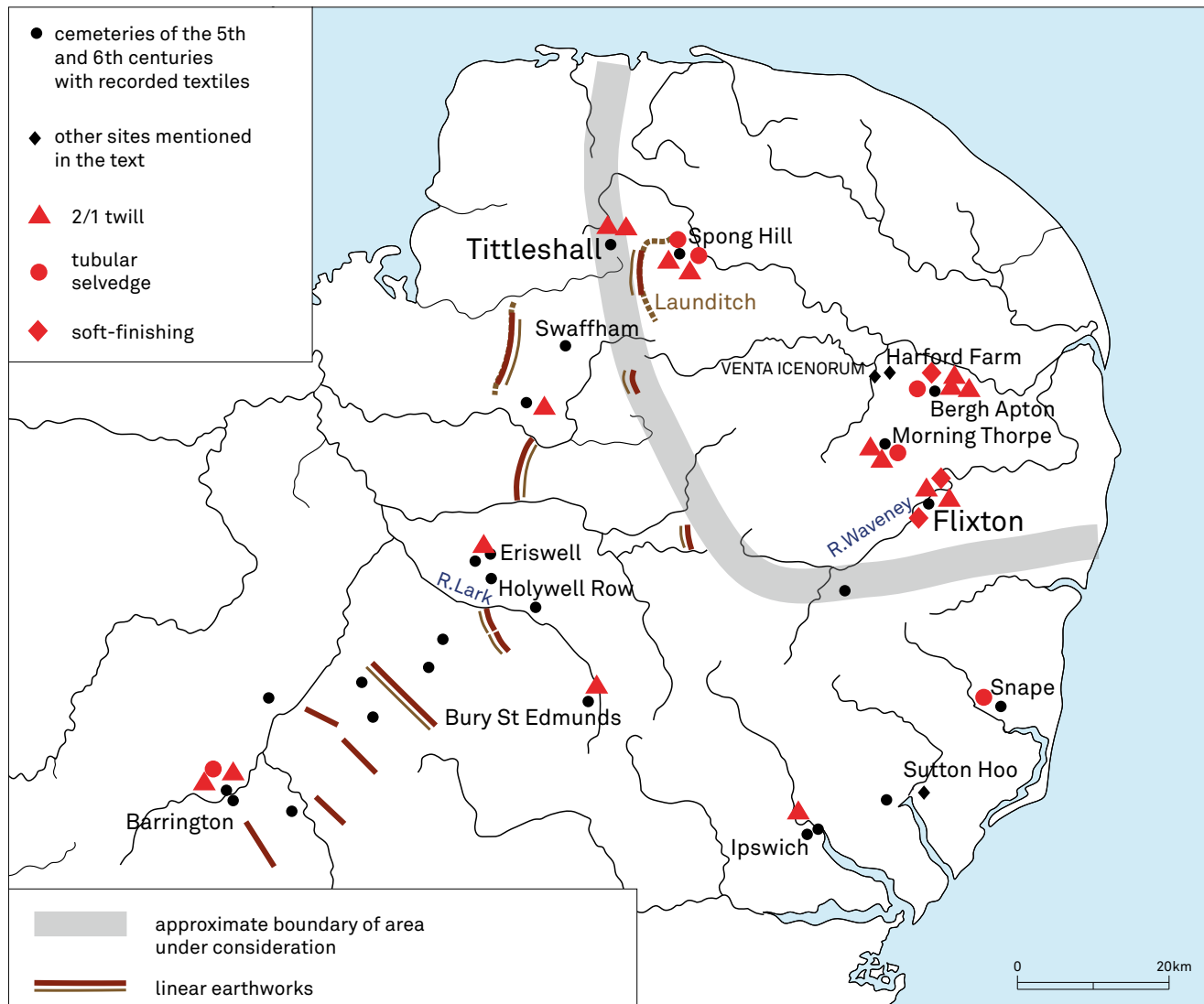


FIG. 3 Map of East Anglia showing the distribution of Romano-British textile techniques in the 5th and 6th centuries (see also Table 1). Note that this has been corrected and updated since Walton Rogers 2007, fig. 6.1. The Anglo-Saxon Laboratory.

TABLE 2

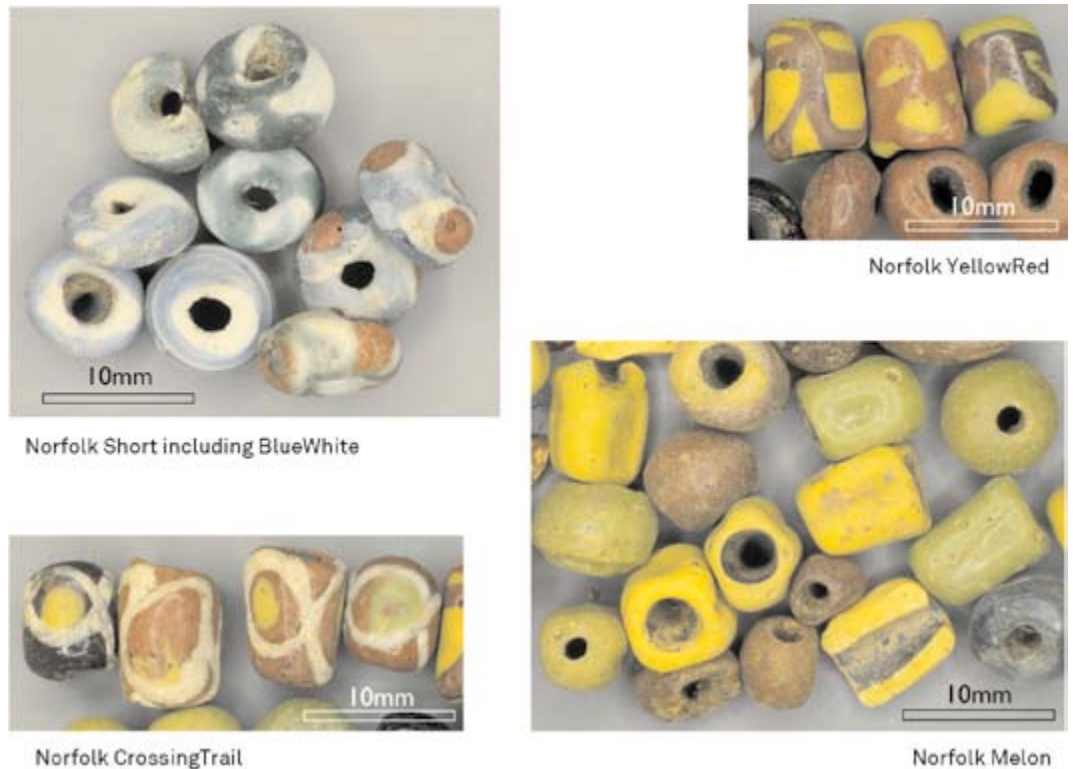
The number of datable graves containing Romano-British techniques compared with datable graves with zS twills, in six cemeteries. The sites are those listed in Table 1, with the addition of a 7th-century cemetery at Harford Farm, Caistor St Edmund (Penn 2000). Phasing from Penn & Brugmann 2007. Male (M) and female (F) burials have parallel, but not identical, chronologies (Phases A1, A2 and B) until Phase C.

	FA1	MA1	FA2	MA2	FB	MB	C
Romano-British techniques	(1)	1	12	1	2	0	0
zS twills	0	1	11	1	10	2	14

⁴⁴ Brugmann 2004, 34–36, 78–9, Map 49.

⁴⁵ Brugmann 2004, 35–6.

FIG. 4 Norfolk-type beads, BlueWhite, YellowRed, CrossingTrail, and Norfolk Melon. From Penn & Brugmann 2007, Plates 3-6; copyright Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service.



There is a burial rite which seems to be limited to the same area. In East Anglia, in the 5th and 6th centuries, the custom was to bury the body with the head to the west. Preservation of the skeleton is often poor, but where that is the case the orientation of the body can be determined from the layout of artefacts. Women's brooches and necklaces are found towards the western end of the grave, where the neck and shoulders would be; and men's spears also point to the head end, the west. In at least eight cases in the northern zone, at Morning Thorpe G153, G207 and possibly G238,⁴⁶ Spong Hill G19 and G44,⁴⁷ Bergh Apton G5, G6, G21 and possibly G7⁴⁸ and Flixton G17, there are examples of bodies with female-gender accessories laid out with the head to the east. The corpse may have been hidden from view in a coffin in one instance (Bergh Apton G6), but in the other examples the burial party must have been aware that they were reversing the body. Burial with head to the east was a minority rite in many Romano-British cemeteries,⁴⁹ although at that time it was not limited to women. No further examples have been uncovered in the cemeteries to the south; and further west, in Cambridgeshire and the Midlands, grave orientation is more variable, so that reverse burial would not have made such an obvious statement. On the data collected so far, it appears to have been limited to the sites on the eastern river system.

There are other, more slender, strands of evidence which may point to the survival of Romano-British culture. For example,

beads suspended in a loop or vertical string from a single brooch, which is a Roman fashion that continued into the 6th century in the Mediterranean world, appear at Flixton in G8, G9, G26, G30 and probably G27A. Other examples of this practice have been recorded in cemeteries with a significant Romano-British component, although none, so far, has been observed in the Norfolk sites⁵⁰. There is also a cluster of iron and copper-alloy penannular brooches, mostly of Fowler Type C, at Morning Thorpe G43, G304, G328 G378, G385, G403 and G407, although it is debatable whether these represent the survival of a Romano-British brooch type,⁵¹ re-use of Roman *objets trouvés*⁵² or a re-introduction from the Continent⁵³.

It might be argued that all this evidence relates only to women. Women are known to have been in charge of the textile crafts;⁵⁴ it was women who wore the bead-strings even if the gender of the bead-makers is unknown;⁵⁵ and there is a theory that some of the burial ritual was orchestrated by 'cunning women'⁵⁶. On the other hand, male-gender artefacts less frequently show regionally confined features and there is certainly no physical evidence for the mass extinction of Romano-British men.

It has been shown that these artefacts and practices cluster in the sites on the main east-flowing river system. Two sites on the borders of this zone offer further insights into the character of the area and its relationship with the outside world.

⁴⁶ Green *et al.* 1987, 6, 10, 100.

⁴⁷ Hills *et al.* 1984, 4.

⁴⁸ Green & Rogerson 1978, 4. The orientation of G7 in the cemetery plan is different from that in the grave inventory.

⁴⁹ O'Brien 1999, 5.

⁵⁰ Boulter & Walton Rogers in press.

⁵¹ Mackreth 1987.

⁵² Penn & Brugmann 2007, 25.

⁵³ Ager 1985, 6.

⁵⁴ Walton Rogers 2007, 45-6.

⁵⁵ Stoodley 1999, 43.

⁵⁶ Geake 2003.

5 Tittleshall

The cemetery at Tittleshall was discovered during construction of a pipeline from Bacton to King's Lynn and was excavated in 2003 by a field team from Network Archaeology (site director Derek Cater)⁵⁷. The site lies on the eastern edge of the north-south watershed, approximately 9 km to the west of Spong Hill and just outside the line of the Launditch earthwork (fig. 1). It was a mixed-rite cemetery, where the inhumations were arranged on the south and east side of a Bronze Age barrow, with some cremation burials immediately to the east of the inhumations (fig. 5). The northern end of the cemetery could not be excavated and some cremations may have been lost to ploughing, but no further Anglo-Saxon artefacts were recovered by metal-detecting or field-walking and it is thought that the 26 inhumations (plus one seemingly unused grave) and two cremation burials are likely to represent the major part of the original burial population.

The size, date-range and social make-up of the cemetery suggests a small single household burying its dead in the same plot over a period of 150–200 years. The earliest graves are dated to the mid-to-late 5th century, which is a time when other inhumation plots were starting to appear⁵⁸. These are likely to represent groups who were splitting away from the large communal cremation cemeteries (such as that at Spong Hill, which was in its final phase at this time) and setting up small graveyards close to individual farmsteads. An alternative interpretation might be that they represent an element in the population who had previously practised *unfurnished* inhumation, which would be difficult to recognise archaeologically⁵⁹. However, if this was the case at Tittleshall,

the site of the earlier burials must have been elsewhere and the relocation of the cemetery in itself would be significant.

The position of many of these plots close to prehistoric barrows may represent an attempt by each community to align itself with the supposed ancestors in the barrow – an act of commemoration which would reinforce their claims to ancestral lands⁶⁰. The Tittleshall barrow was probably visible from the North Pickenham to Toftrees Roman Road,⁶¹ which will have helped advertise the family's local identity⁶². As to where the farmstead or settlement lay, some pits containing domestic debris to the east (fig. 5) possibly represent its edge. The limited amount of pottery and artefacts recovered from the pits placed them tentatively in the 5th century and it would be logical for the cemetery to be on the side of the barrow that faced towards the settlement.

The burials include three well-equipped women's graves. The earliest, G15 from EAC Phase FA1 (AD 450–480), has a mix of local and non-local brooches, but the others, G11A from Phase FA2b and G13 from Phase FB1, have typical suites of 'Anglian' garment fasteners. These women also wore Norfolk-type beads and Romano-British textile types, which safely align them with the community to the east, while the woman in G13 wore a small leaf-shaped pendant of a type previously recorded only at Spong Hill G33⁶³ and Morning Thorpe G303⁶⁴. The woman in G15 had 107 beads and the one in G11A 212 beads, while the woman in G13 had been buried in a grey goat-fibre ('cashmere') cloak, with a fine fur collar or cape, clasped by a gilded square-headed brooch with cast Style I ornament. Clearly this was a well-to-do community.

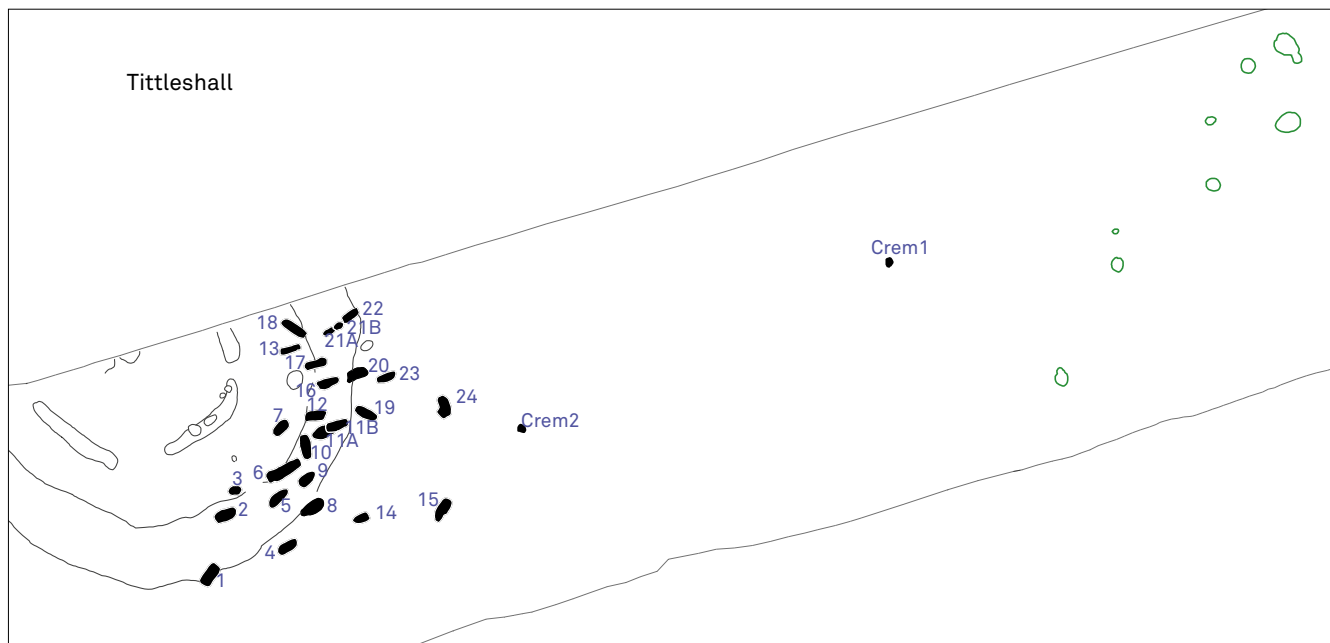


FIG. 5 Tittleshall, Norfolk: plan of the Early Anglo-Saxon cemetery, the Bronze Age barrow and the line of pits to the east. The Anglo-Saxon Laboratory, based on plans provided by Network Archaeology.

⁵⁷ Walton Rogers forthcoming.

⁵⁸ Scull 1993, 75–6; Ravn 2003, 127–9, 131–2.

⁵⁹ Scull 1995, 77.

⁶⁰ Williams 1997, 25–6.

⁶¹ Mary Chester-Kadwell pers. comm.

⁶² Brookes 2007, 69–75.

⁶³ Hills *et al.* 1984, 82–4, 135.

⁶⁴ Green *et al.* 1987, I, 119, II, 297.

There were no men with swords in the cemetery, but there was a significant grave of a child, aged six or seven, G19, buried in the late 6th or 7th century. The grave was large for a child and the body had been dressed in fine linen and was accompanied by a small copper-alloy buckle, two knives and the top part of a sword scabbard. This suggests that he belonged to a sword-bearing lineage. It is noteworthy that two other burials of youngsters under the age of nine, G3 and G14, included brooches. Elsewhere, children's burials often have no surviving grave goods and this adds to the picture of a family with disposable wealth.

Access to goods from further afield is demonstrated by a penannular brooch of Dickinson Type G1.5, which will have originated on the far side of the country, in the Severn basin; a wide-banded annular brooch, which is likely to have come from the 'Saxon' region; and an applied saucer brooch, which would be more at home in the Midlands. Altogether, there is a higher proportion of non-local artefacts at Tittleshall than is found in the other cemeteries inside the watersheds, although there are further examples of applied brooches in the immediate vicinity, at Spong Hill cremation cemetery to the east⁶⁵ and in a single inhumation at Swaffham, G16A, to the south⁶⁶. These probably reflect the proximity of these sites to a network of Roman roads which provided access to the Icknield Way and the route into Cambridgeshire and beyond. A unique hybrid brooch from G14 is probably also a product of the borderland location. Its top half has the square head typical of those small-long brooches which have their focus of distribution to the south-west, while the lower half, which has the horse's head foot of a cruciform brooch, displays details most commonly seen to the east.

Taken as a whole, Tittleshall can be interpreted as the burial plot of a family who were of a sword-bearing lineage and who belonged to the same broad community as the people living on the river system to the east. Their comparative wealth supports Mads Ravn's hypothesis that the first people to separate from the communal cremation cemeteries were families who were rising socially above the rest⁶⁷. When they started to bury their dead close to a barrow, where the burial ground could be seen by passing travellers, they may have been trying to give their ancestors a place in living memory, at the same time as establishing rights over their ancestral farm. Because of their location on the western border, they had better contacts with the rest of Anglo-Saxon England than many of the sites to the east and there are indications of links forged with a neighbouring community to the south or west.

6 Flixton

The multi-period site at Flixton was uncovered during gravel extraction and was excavated in a series of campaigns over 1998–2001 by Suffolk Archaeological Service (site director Stuart Boulter)⁶⁸. The site lies on the southern side of the River Waveney, just inside the modern county of Suffolk (fig. 1). The Early Anglo-Saxon period is represented by a settlement and two burial plots, set on and around a complex of Bronze Age barrows (fig. 6). Both cemeteries, Flixton I and II, would have been

visible from the settlement and it is assumed that they represent the dead from different families there. Only one grave has been excavated at Flixton I, although metal-detected artefacts indicate other burials in the vicinity. Flixton II was at first contained within a large rectangle, 40m x 50m, where 51 out of an estimated 200 graves have been excavated (fig. 6), but in the late 6th or 7th century eleven new graves were placed on and next to the barrow immediately to its south. The centre of Flixton II was not excavated, but most of the earliest and latest graves are likely to have been recovered. Flixton II and the settlement are thought to have been founded at the very end of the 5th century and Flixton I was probably contemporary with the earliest phase of Flixton II. The number of buildings in the settlement and the number of graves in the two cemeteries have been interpreted as representing a community of two-to-three households at any one time, in a settlement occupied over a period of 130–160 years.

The earliest graves in the rectangle were arranged in rows along the edge facing the settlement. They were relatively small, not very well endowed with artefacts and the people buried there seemingly had a low life expectancy,⁶⁹ although they must have been free, since the men had weapons. There is some evidence that they may have come into the area as new settlers from the west. This stretch of the Waveney Valley was either unpopulated in the later 4th and 5th centuries, or so sparsely populated as to leave no archaeological evidence⁷⁰. The earliest graves have external postholes, indicating some sort of grave superstructure, for which there are parallels at Edix Hill, Cambridgeshire, and a brooch from one of the early graves has the typical hooked lap-pets of Cambridgeshire brooches. The Norfolk-type beads and Romano-British textile types seen in the cemeteries to the north are absent from the earliest graves (Phases MA1 and FA2a), although both appear in the next phase of the cemetery, along with a Romano-British style of spindle whorl. The burials at Flixton I possibly represent a higher-status group. Not only are the graves on the barrow, but a prestigious glass claw-beaker was recovered from the single excavated grave.

Any hypothesis concerning the two cemeteries is weakened by the fact that neither was fully excavated, but some observations can be made on the evidence as it survives. Whatever the exact position of the *civitas* boundary in the Roman period, in the Early Anglo-Saxon period, Flixton and its neighbours would represent the first main area of settlement to be encountered by anyone journeying overland from the estuaries to the south-east. In that sense it was on a southern border. There was a river crossing at Bungay, immediately to its east, which means that Flixton would have been only an afternoon's walk away from the sites close to the old *civitas* capital at Venta Icenorum. The rectangular shape of Flixton II is unusual for cemeteries where there are no constraints from the terrain or from earlier man-made structures. If the people buried there do represent a group of settlers who had arrived from the west inside a territory still administered from the north, then the rectangle may represent some limited allocation of land – a process for which there are parallels in the earliest phase of the Dover Buckland cemetery in Kent⁷¹.

⁶⁵ Hills 1977, 197; Hills, Penn & Rickett 1987,

172; Hills, Penn & Rickett 1994, 83, 107, 205–6.

⁶⁶ Hills & Wade-Martins 1976, 7, 19, 24.

⁶⁷ Ravn 2003, 128.

⁶⁸ Boulter & Walton Rogers in press.

⁶⁹ Anderson in Boulter & Walton Rogers in press.

⁷⁰ Boulter in Boulter & Walton Rogers in press.

⁷¹ Evison 1987, 143.

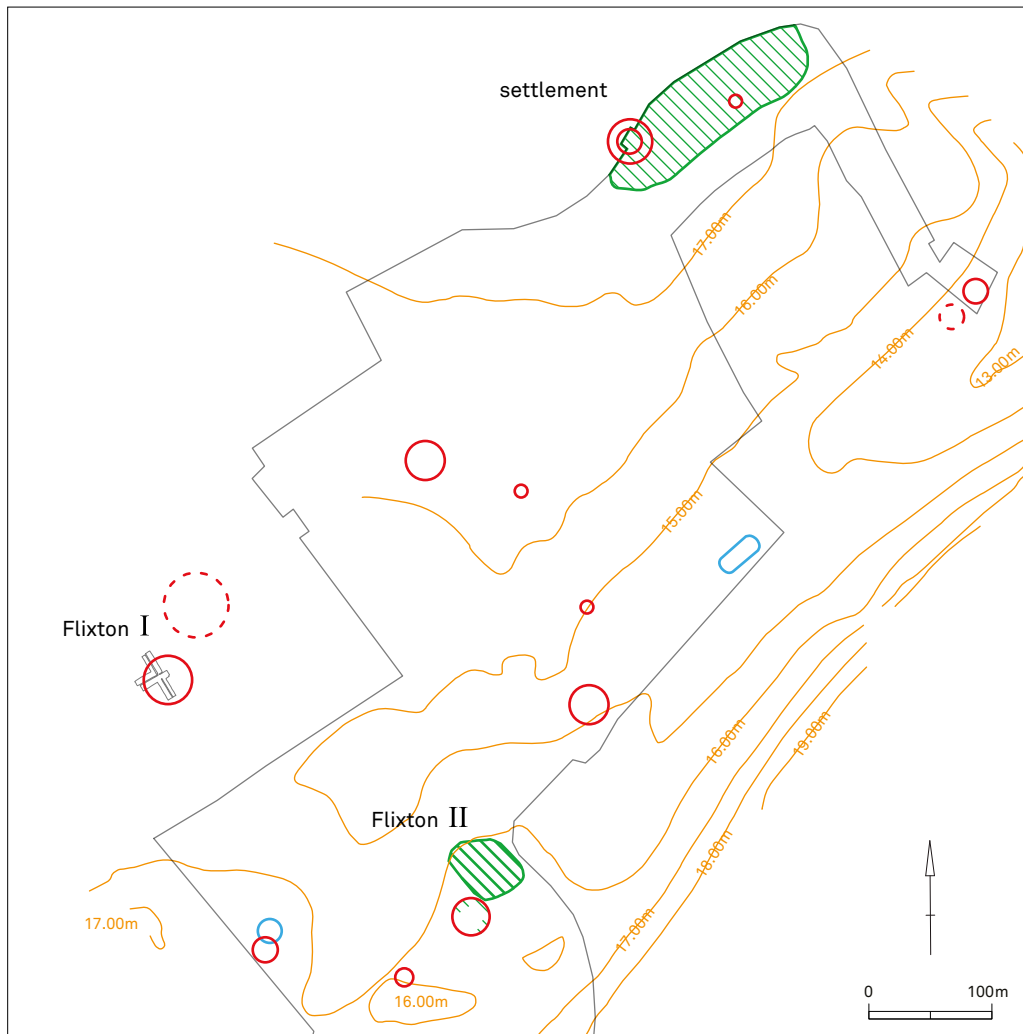
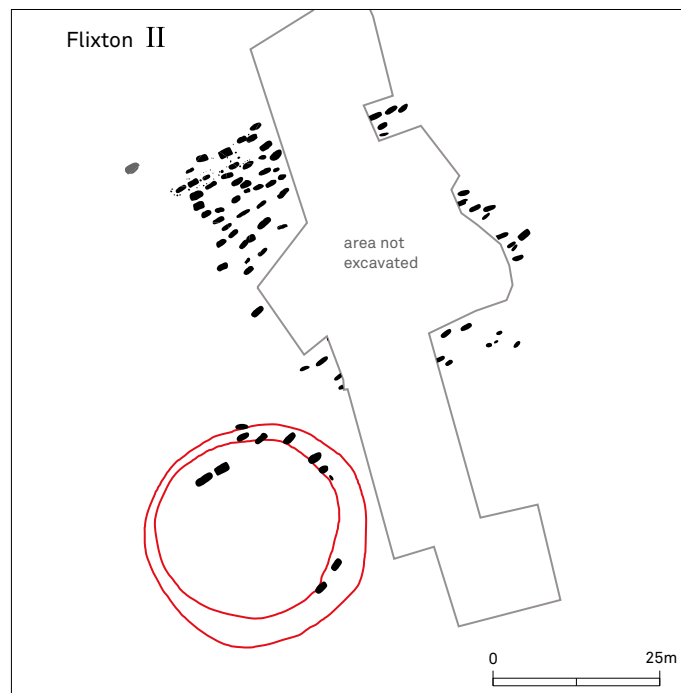
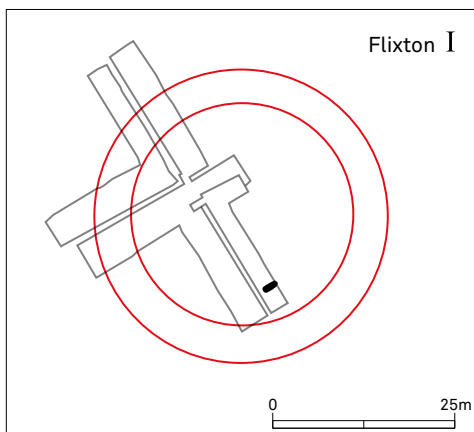


FIG. 6 Above: plan of Early Anglo-Saxon features in relation to the prehistoric features at Flixton, Suffolk. Below: close-up of the cemeteries at Flixton I and Flixton II. The Anglo-Saxon Laboratory, based on plans provided by Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service.

- Neolithic monuments
- Early Bronze Age ring-ditches
- ⋯ Lost or as yet unrecorded ring-ditches
- ▨ Early Anglo Saxon archaeology



During the course of Phase FA2, Flixton II acquired all the characteristics of the sites to the north and by Phase FB (c 530/50 onwards) the burials were no longer less well equipped than their northerly counterparts. There are fewer alien artefacts than at Tittleshall, although some objects typical of the Empingham (Rutland) area on the Gwash-Welland river system may suggest that a woman from that area joined the Flixton community at some stage in the early 6th century. There is also evidence that the Flixton settlement held a significant place in the spiritual life of the area. A pagan shrine has been tentatively identified in the settlement and three or four generations of cunning women have been suggested for certain burials which have bucket pendants, secondary pouches with trios of matching strap-ends and other ritual paraphernalia⁷². This is only a part of the spiritual history of this district: there was a Neolithic timber circle and a complex of Bronze Age barrows at Flixton itself; and the seat of one of the earliest Christian bishoprics was almost certainly 4 km to the south at South Elmham⁷³. It is not unusual to find ritual and religious sites close to boundaries.

In the later 6th and 7th century, burial at Flixton II shifted to the barrow immediately to the south of the main rectangle (fig. 6). Here, eleven graves were located, mostly the burials of adult males, with two prominent burials of weaponed males in coffins at a higher level than the rest. These last, G52 and G53, had similar, non-local shield mounts and their spears had been placed on the right, instead of, as was common practice in East Anglia, on the left. This whole group has been interpreted as a senior family with its male retinue, some of whom may have been warriors from outside the area.

The timing of this process at Flixton coincides with the raising of barrows over princely burials in the south-east of the region⁷⁴ and the documented rise of the Wuffing dynasty, who were to become kings of the East Angles⁷⁵. The Wuffings are thought to have had their power base in the southern zone⁷⁶ and, significantly, one of the weaponed males on the barrow, G52, was buried with a patterned coverlet, of which only one other example has been located so far, at Snape, to the south-east (although Snape itself cannot be associated with the Wuffings with any certainty⁷⁷). One theory concerning the formation of the East Anglian kingdom is that the Wuffings in the south established an hegemony over previously autonomous groups in the north and west of the region⁷⁸ and the archaeological evidence presented in this paper is compatible with this view. If it is correct to see Flixton as standing inside the southern boundary of a northern territory, its position on an east-west route, not far from a north-south river crossing which led into the heart of the former Iceni lands, would have made it strategically important in any power struggle between north and south.

Conclusion

While several recent studies have aimed to describe the broad characteristics of Early Anglo-Saxon culture,⁷⁹ it has also been recognised that there were many local traditions and identities,⁸⁰ and that the transition from Roman to Anglo-Saxon was achieved by a variety of processes in the different regions⁸¹. Political fragmentation must have followed the withdrawal of Roman imperial rule, and immigration and the spread of the culture of the immigrants is undoubtedly a feature of Early Anglo-Saxon East Anglia. This paper has aimed to show that continuity, and quite possibly reverse acculturation of the immigrants, was also part of the picture. It has argued that an area focused on a river system in northern East Anglia was successor to the larger territory of the Iceni and that it retained and developed a cohesive identity in the 5th and 6th centuries. The realisation that such territories may not have been entirely overwhelmed by the incoming culture has been an important aid in the interpretation of Tittleshall and Flixton.

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⁷² Boulter & Walton Rogers in press.

⁷³ Scarfe 2002, 88-9; Dymond & Martin 1999, 46.

⁷⁴ Carver 1998, 107-36; Filmer-Sankey & Pestell 2001, 194-6; Carver 2005, 497.

⁷⁵ Yorke 1990, 67-8.

⁷⁶ Yorke 1990, 69-70.

⁷⁷ Scull 1992, 21.

⁷⁸ Scull 1992, 6-7, 15.

⁷⁹ Stoodley 1999; Lucy 2000; Brugmann 2004; Walton Rogers 2007.

⁸⁰ Lucy 2002; Hines 2002; Chester-Kadwell 2009, 6-7, 17, 163.

⁸¹ Higham 2007.

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SESSION III

Identity and urban centres

Tournai, capitale du Bas-Empire et évolution au Haut Moyen-Âge

Raymond Brulet – *Directeur du CRAN et pdt. de l'Institut INCAL, Belgium*

The Late Roman and early medieval urban topography of Tongeren

Alain Vanderhoeven – *Flanders Heritage Agency, Brussels, Belgium*

New light on the origins, development and decline of the Middle Saxon trading settlement of Lundenwic

Lyn Blackmore – *Museum of London, United Kingdom*

Barcelone, de sede regia à capitale comtale: continuités et changements

Julia Beltrán de Heredia Bercero – *Musée d'Histoire de Barcelone, Spain*



Tournai, capitale du Bas-Empire et évolution au Haut Moyen-Âge

Raymond Brulet¹

Abstract

Cet article reprend la question de l'évolution de la ville de Tournai entre la fin de l'époque romaine et le début du haut Moyen-Âge. Une continuité d'occupation et de projets de construction est avérée par les dernières fouilles archéologiques, notamment celles conduites dans l'environnement de la cathédrale. La ville bénéficie en effet d'une promotion administrative au début du Bas-Empire, comme capitale de cité et son importance persiste au Ve et VIe siècles, qui sont rythmés par l'installation des Francs, puis par la création d'un évêché. La recherche n'a pas véritablement progressé sur la question des enceintes urbaines, puisque celle de l'Antiquité tardive reste peu connue et que celle de l'époque carolingienne demeure très hypothétique. L'apport de l'archéologie se situe ailleurs: la couronne des cimetières qui entoure la cité est mieux connue parce que des fouilles ont été récemment entreprises, notamment à la Rue Perdue. Le cœur du *castrum* antique a aussi été bien approché où il est patent que la ville a été totalement reconstruite au IVe siècle. Dans le quartier cathédral furent mises en évidence de l'habitat urbain et un *balneum*, le site ayant été finalement utilisé pour y construire une basilique paléochrétienne. Au VIIe siècle, prend place une nouvelle église à trois nefs. Les fouilles entreprises dans le quartier de la cathédrale ont considérablement renouvelé nos connaissances pour la période du Ve siècle et la première moitié du VIe siècle, qui ont révélé des traces d'artisanats divers.

Keywords

Tournai, Bas-Empire, Moyen-Âge

1 Introduction

Même s'il ne s'agit encore que d'une agglomération secondaire, la bourgade gallo-romaine de Tournai, sur l'Escaut, développe déjà des programmes urbanistiques et architecturaux ambitieux, dans le courant du IIe siècle de notre ère, à en juger par les découvertes qui y ont été réalisées².

Tournai connaît un second souffle durant l'Antiquité tardive; elle bénéficie d'une promotion politique fondamentale, en tant que *caput civitatis* et endosse de ce fait la qualité de ville³. Ce caractère urbain se renforce au fil du temps et des circonstances l'y poussent naturellement, notamment le séjour de princes francs et l'établissement d'un évêché⁴.

Toutefois, les dimensions de la ville emmurillée demeurent très modestes et cette situation se prolongera jusqu'à la fin de la période carolingienne. Dans le courant du Moyen-Âge, le développement de la ville reprend, elle donne alors l'image d'une cité très vaste, de 185 ha, au tissu urbain très serré, à l'intérieur d'une grande enceinte de 5 kms.

Les conditions de la naissance et de l'expansion de Tournai sont multiples. En plus de sa destinée à caractère politique, il faut évoquer un certain déterminisme géomorphologique.

2 Déterminisme géomorphologique et politique

Des recherches récentes ont permis d'étudier les aménagements des berges de l'Escaut et de restituer son parcours urbain et ses variabilités altimétriques⁵. Ce déterminisme géomorphologique est aussi lié au rapport économique que Tournai entretient avec le fleuve. Citons l'existence d'un port romain décentré au Luchet d'Antoing⁶ et d'un *portus* à l'époque carolingienne, adjacent cette fois au centre urbain⁷, dont l'origine

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² Coquelet 2011, 240.

³ Brulet 1984, 271-282; Brulet 2006a, 22-27.

⁴ Pycke 1990; Brulet 2006b, 107-116; Brulet 2007.

⁵ Verslype, Hennebert & Tilmant 2002; Brulet

& Verslype 2000; Brulet, Deckers & Verslype 2000;

Verslype 2009.

⁶ Amand 1968.

⁷ Mariage 2007, 252-253.

remonte probablement au Bas-Empire romain. Les conditions de l'implantation humaine sont issues d'une autre situation géomorphologique: le site de Tournai se localise au débouché d'un couloir rocheux contraignant le fleuve, avant qu'il ne rejoigne la plaine. Ce qui impose une probable implantation d'un pont, de manière permanente, au même endroit pour une voie romaine franchissant l'Escaut et se dirigeant vers le territoire nervien⁸.

Quant au déterminisme politique, la ville a clairement bénéficié, à ses débuts, d'événements et d'hommes providentiels: une promotion au rang de capitale, sous Dioclétien, la reconstruction de la ville nouvelle s'étalant de la fin du III^e siècle à l'époque constantinienne, avec une remarquable continuité d'occupation révélée par les cimetières du début du Bas-Empire⁹ (fig. 1), deux conquérants francs plus particulièrement intéressés par Tournai, au Ve siècle, Clodion et Childéric¹⁰, puis dans la seconde moitié du siècle ou au VI^e siècle, la création d'un évêché à la faveur de la diffusion du Christianisme¹¹.

Les témoins matériels de cette présence chrétienne ont bien été enregistrés à l'occasion des fouilles organisées dans l'environnement de la cathédrale Notre-Dame et ceux-ci sont d'une

date plus ancienne que celle retenue par quelques historiens¹². Pour ces périodes et le VI^e siècle, en particulier, les mentions historiques sont peu nombreuses, à l'image de celle du baptême de Samson en présence de l'évêque (Grégoire de Tours) ou peu fiables, comme la Vie d'Eleuthère. C'est dans cette mesure que beaucoup d'historiens préfèrent penser que Tournai ne possède pas d'évêque avant le VI^e siècle¹³. Ceux qui pensent de la sorte utilisent en fait un argument du silence, mais les découvertes archéologiques leur donnent tort.

Peu de temps après, l'expansion de Tournai marque un long temps d'arrêt. L'évêché a d'ailleurs été adjoint à celui de Noyon.

3 Le canevas topographique

Le canevas topographique de la ville est déterminé par ses enceintes et, aussi plus tardivement, par les fondations des églises et des paroisses¹⁴.

Pour la seconde moitié du Moyen-Âge, on connaît deux enceintes successivement construites ou réaménagées, qui rythment les nouvelles phases d'expansion de la ville¹⁵. La problématique des

FIG. 1 Le *castrum* de Tournai et les nécropoles du Bas-Empire. Les nécropoles: N1: Grand-Place/Rue Perdue; N2: Saint-Brice; N3: Hameau Allain; N4: Citadelle; N5: Saint-Piat; N6: Rue d'Espinoy; N7: Parc de l'Hôtel de Ville.



⁸ Verslype 1999.

⁹ Brulet 2006c.

¹⁰ Brulet 1996b.

¹¹ Dumoulin & Pycke 1983a.

¹² Première synthèse, dans: Brulet 2010.

¹³ Le débat tourne autour des évêques connus et de leurs dates de fonction: Agrescius et Eleuthère. Voir notamment: Dumoulin & Pycke 1983b; Pietri 1984; Mériaux 2002; Mériaux 2003.

¹⁴ Pycke 1986.

¹⁵ Dury & Nazet 1983; Vêche 1985.

enceintes plus anciennes est complexe et cette complexité vient aussi de la multiplication des thèses proposées par les auteurs modernes, ne reposant sur aucun témoignage probant et qui peuvent être considérées comme des spéculations.

On ne discute plus la réalité de l'existence de la muraille urbaine du Bas-Empire, mais bien son tracé. En revanche, l'existence et la nature d'une éventuelle enceinte ayant été élevée à la fin du Haut Moyen-Âge, sont très controversées¹⁶.

Le *castrum* du Bas-Empire n'a plus révélé de nouveaux tronçons de son enceinte depuis la découverte en 1955, d'un bout de muraille à La Loucherie¹⁷. Toutefois, la localisation d'une couronne de nécropoles antiques nous indique grosso modo l'emplacement de la courtine, sauf sur la face nord, où un doute subsiste¹⁸. Le segment de muraille de La Loucherie, situé parallèlement à l'Escaut, fait penser à l'existence d'une enceinte quadrangulaire, appuyée contre le fleuve. La superficie correspondante peut être évaluée à 13 ha (fig. 2).

Pour le début du Haut Moyen-Âge, on sait que cette ville emmurillée a subi un siège en 575 par Sigebert, puis n'a pas pu résister aux assauts des Normands, en 880. Le poète Milon décrit l'état exécrable des défenses en 845-855¹⁹. On ne peut guère imaginer qu'il évoque une enceinte différente de celle du Bas-Empire toujours en service. Il est vrai que l'hypothèse de l'existence d'une enceinte carolingienne a été formulée sur

la base de la configuration cadastrale du centre de Tournai, les rues anciennes offrant un dessin en forme de demi-cercle²⁰ (fig. 2). Toutefois, cette idée est assez improbable. On ne voit pas pourquoi il y aurait eu un déplacement, à l'époque carolingienne de l'emprise ancienne de la ville, vers le nord et une réduction de celle-ci vers le sud, en perdant le bénéfice du passage fluvial²¹.

Un diplôme royal, daté de vers 898, donne l'autorisation de reconstruire l'enceinte détruite ou en mauvais état et cette information pose le problème de la localisation de cette *firmitas*. Le fait que ce soit Heidilon (880-903) qui obtient le consentement de Charles-le-Simple de relever les défenses de la ville a fait identifier cette initiative à une enceinte épiscopale²². Deux possibilités théoriques existent et sont débattues: il peut ne s'agir que du relèvement de la muraille antique ou il peut être question de la construction d'une toute nouvelle enceinte, pour laquelle il n'y a d'ailleurs pas d'attestation²³. Pour compliquer le tout, on cite aussi un *claustrum* adossé à l'enceinte tardo-antique²⁴. Il est peu probable d'imaginer le quartier épiscopal défendu de manière autonome par une enceinte dite épiscopale.

En finale, la première enceinte médiévale dont le tracé est connu, épousant une forme très irrégulière, vise à intégrer de fait les quartiers suburbains les plus importants qui se développeront à la fin du Haut Moyen Âge: Saint-Brice, Saint-Piat et Saint-Quentin²⁵ (fig. 3).

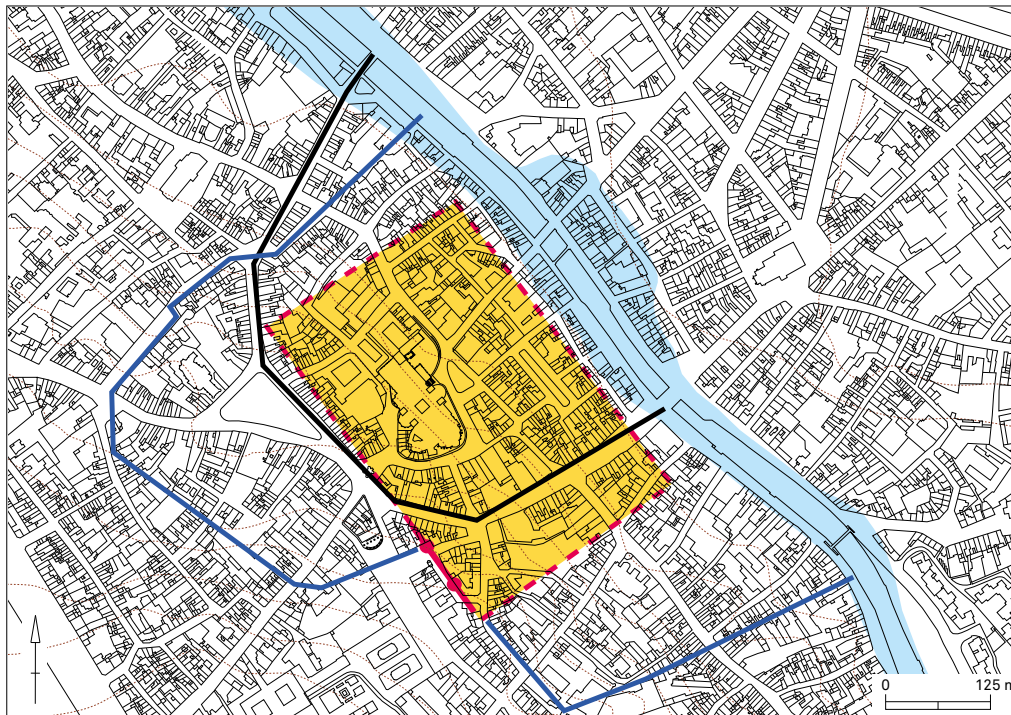


FIG. 2 Les premières enceintes à Tournai, tracés et hypothèses. En jaune, l'espace du *castrum*. En noir, l'ellipse de la fortification carolingienne imaginaire. En bleu: le tracé de la première enceinte médiévale.

¹⁶ Amand 1984; Dury & Nazet 1983.

¹⁷ Mertens & Remy 1974.

¹⁸ Brulet 1994.

¹⁹ Milon de Saint-Amand, Vita S. Amandi, MGH,

Poetae Latini, III, 589.

²⁰ De Meulemeester 1996.

²¹ Verslype 1999, 152.

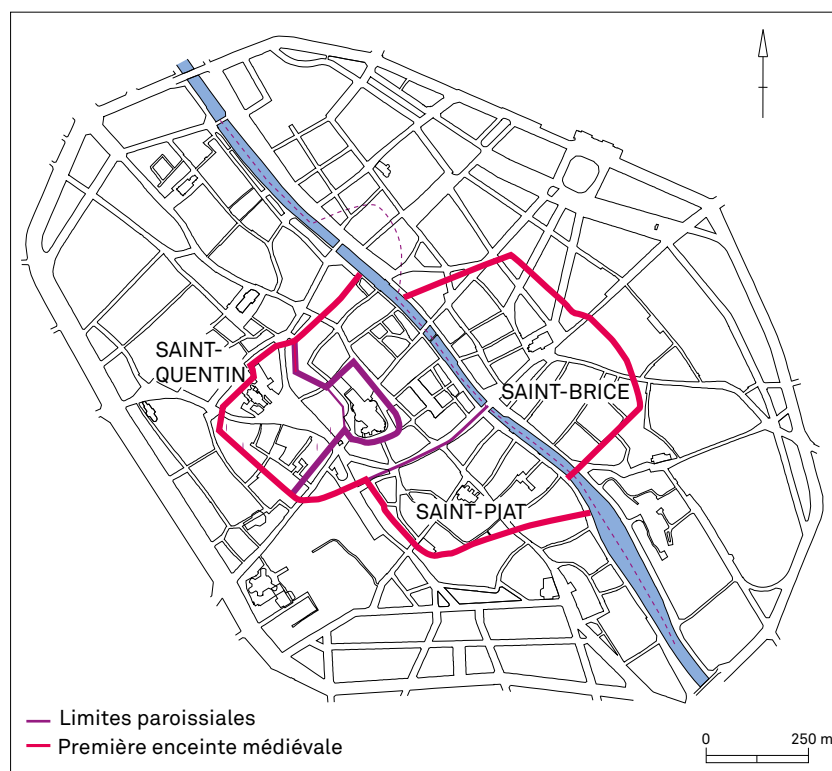
²² Vêche 1985, 28.

²³ Dury & Nazet 1983, 230; Amand 1984; Brulet & Vêche 1985, 37.

²⁴ Dury & Nazet 1983, 230.

²⁵ Vêche 1985.

FIG. 3 Pression démographique représentée par le territoire des paroisses extérieures à l'enceinte du Bas-Empire et ayant participé à la détermination du tracé de la première enceinte médiévale.



Comme on le voit, à partir du XI^e siècle, le cadre topographique tournaisien est aussi relié aux fondations religieuses. Les paroisses médiévales s'insèrent bien dans les espaces des enceintes successives. Mais les églises les plus anciennes n'apparaissent guère avant la seconde moitié du IX^e siècle, hors basiliques funéraires attestées ou présumées (Saint-Piat, Saint-Martin peut-être, voire Saint-Brice)²⁶.

4 L'apport de l'archéologie

En ce qui concerne les programmes de fouilles des années 1970 à 1990 et antérieurement, à Tournai, ils ont été surtout dirigés vers des questions funéraires. Grâce à eux, on a donc une bonne connaissance de plusieurs phénomènes marquants.

La période charnière entre les III^e et IV^e siècles est surtout documentée par une grande nécropole urbaine, celle de la Rue Perdue, qui atteste d'une parfaite continuité de l'occupation humaine dans le dernier quart du III^e et le premier quart du IV^e siècle, ce qui est rare. L'utilisation de ce site funéraire se poursuit d'ailleurs jusque vers 370²⁷.

À partir de la fin de la période valentinienne, les cimetières changent de place, sont plus éloignés du centre urbain et accueillent une population aux caractères différents, comme dans

les sites des jardins de l'Hôtel de Ville et à la citadelle. Ils s'inscrivent dans la continuité vers la période mérovingienne. Saint-Brice, sur l'autre rive, montre une extension spécifique à partir du milieu du Ve siècle, dans la proximité de la tombe de Childéric²⁸.

L'*intra muros* romain avait été peu étudié jusqu'en 1990, date où fut exploré le quartier Saint-Pierre. D'autre part, les programmes de fouilles cumulés dans le giron du quartier épiscopal ont apporté beaucoup d'informations nouvelles. Dans le quartier Saint-Pierre, qui a révélé un bâtiment des années 340, une occupation du Ve siècle est bien attestée. On y a constaté une éradication des structures du Haut-Empire, mais aussi, au sein des terres noires, une occupation du Ve siècle avec des restes d'artisanat²⁹.

Le quartier épiscopal, a ensuite été l'objet de fouilles archéologiques ininterrompues depuis 1996, dans le cadre de fouilles de prévention ou liées aux programmes de restauration de la cathédrale³⁰. L'aboutissement de ces fouilles nous met en présence d'une évolution, traduite en termes d'états archéologiques, qui concernent des occupations, des abandons et des monuments sans cesse reconstruits jusqu'au XII^e siècle.

Les données acquises peuvent être résumées de la sorte: le site est très nettement occupé par des bâtiments divers entre la fin du III^e siècle et le milieu du Ve siècle (fig. 4). Une *domus* romaine, datée de la période valentinienne ou un peu plus tard, sera convertie en une première église, avant la fin du Ve siècle,

²⁶ Dumoulin 1975; Dumoulin & Pycke 1983a; Pycke 1986.

²⁷ Brulet & Coulon 1977; Brulet 1990a; Brulet 1996a.

²⁸ Brulet (éd.) 1990b; Brulet (éd.) 1992; Brulet 1997.

²⁹ Brulet & Verslype (éd.) 1999.

³⁰ Programmes de fouilles de l'UCL/CNRS soutenues par le Ministère de la Région wallonne: aujourd'hui le SPW, DGO4 (Direction de l'Archéologie).

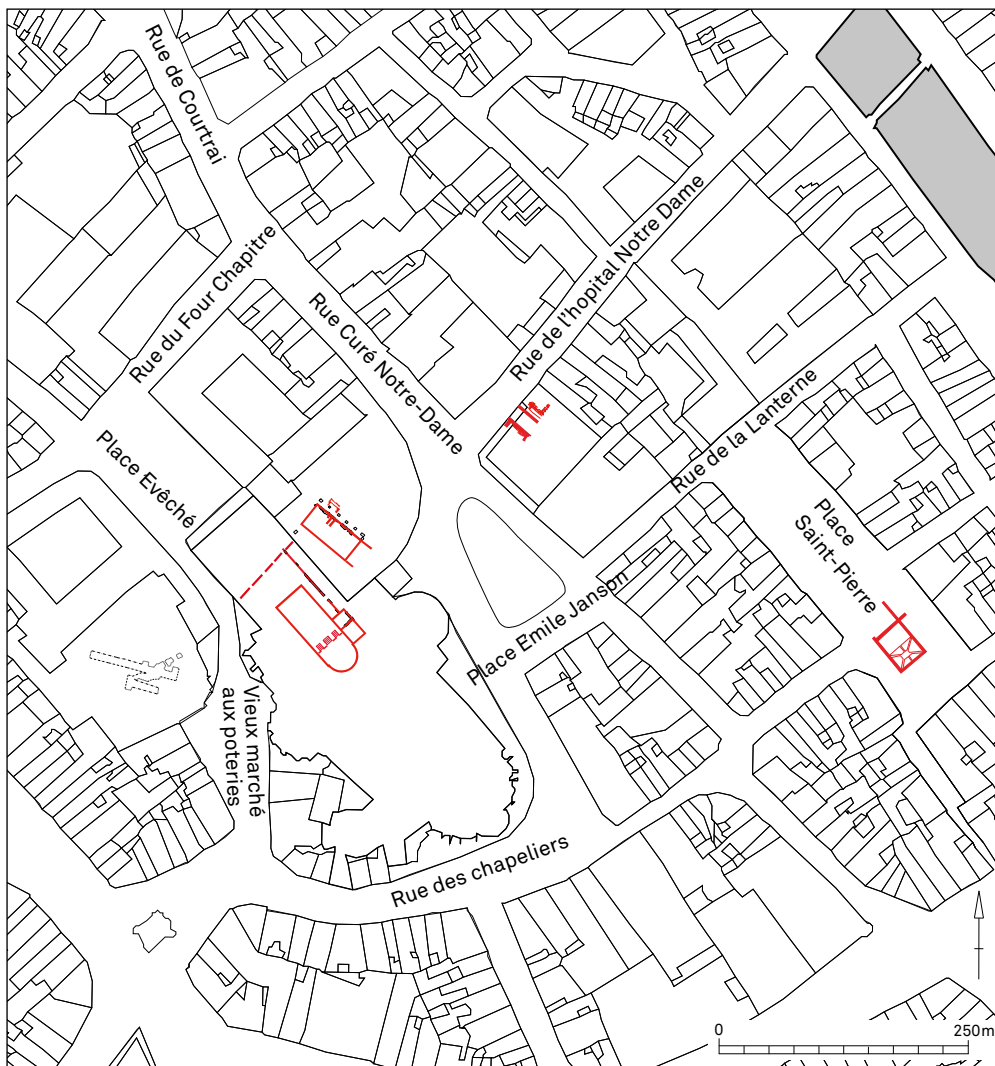


FIG. 4 Le quartier de la cathédrale et ses principaux monuments du Ve siècle.

un moment choisi pour aménager une basilique épiscopale digne de ce nom. Entre ce moment et le XI^e siècle, le site fait l'objet de constructions nouvelles, en particulier sous la cathédrale romane où il est question de plusieurs églises qui y sont réédifiées: une pour le VII^e siècle, deux pour la période carolingienne et une autre pour le XI^e siècle.

5 L'apport des fouilles du quartier cathédral

L'époque de transition entre le III^e et le IV^e siècle est marquée par un grand édifice quadrangulaire, observé dans la zone des cloîtres romans. Il s'appuie sur un mur de terrassement plus ancien. Il est doté d'un réseau de canaux souterrains.

Par la suite, dans la première moitié du IV^e siècle, on édifie un autre bâtiment qui a pu être adossé à l'autre. Il prend la forme d'une longue aile de bâtiment; on le suit aussi sous la nef nord de la cathédrale romane, où une cuve y a été découverte. Cette bâtisse a été réaménagée à plusieurs reprises. Elle a dû servir de *balneum*, au moins dans un second temps.

Plus vers l'est, on enregistre la présence d'un grand bâtiment à hypocaustes, en rupture d'axe par rapport aux édifices évoqués. Manifestement, il entraîne dans un délai difficile à préciser l'abandon des bâtiments plus anciens. Ce nouvel ensemble est identifié comme une *domus*, datée de la seconde moitié du IV^e ou du début du V^e siècle.

Vient ensuite, dans le futur espace des cloîtres, un grand édifice en *opus africanum*, bâti vers 420 (fig. 5). Il conserve l'orientation ancienne et est d'ailleurs implanté sur l'espace jadis occupé par le premier édifice quadrangulaire. La technique de construction est donc particulière, on recourt à l'utilisation de blocs de récupération intervenant dans toutes les maçonneries à sec. Le bâtiment est bordé au nord et au sud, sur ses deux côtés, par un portique. Un séchoir à grains est bâti à proximité. Ce bâtiment n'est d'ailleurs pas totalement isolé, puisqu'on en connaît un autre adjacent. L'usage de cette bâtisse n'est pas déterminé; des indices évoqueraient un grenier, mais sa monumentalité et l'utilisation de celle-ci jusqu'au VII^e siècle posent problème³¹.

FIG. 5 Plan de l'édifice *en opus africanum* (Ve siècle) et de la basilique paléochrétienne (fin Ve ou début VIe siècle).

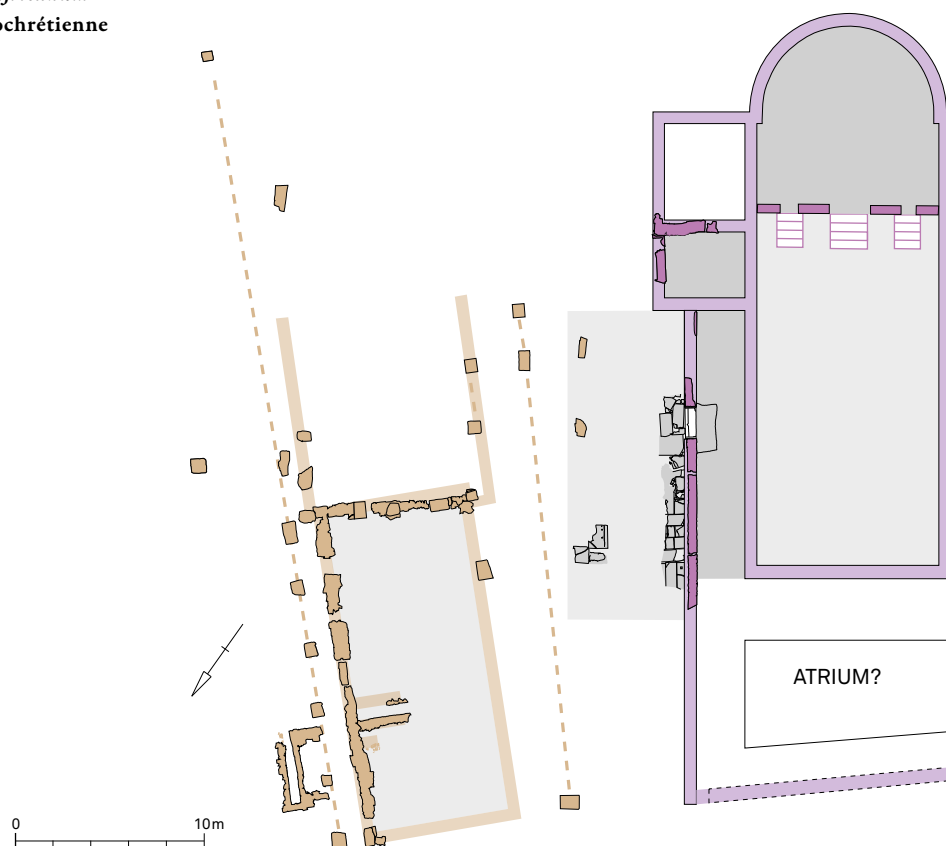
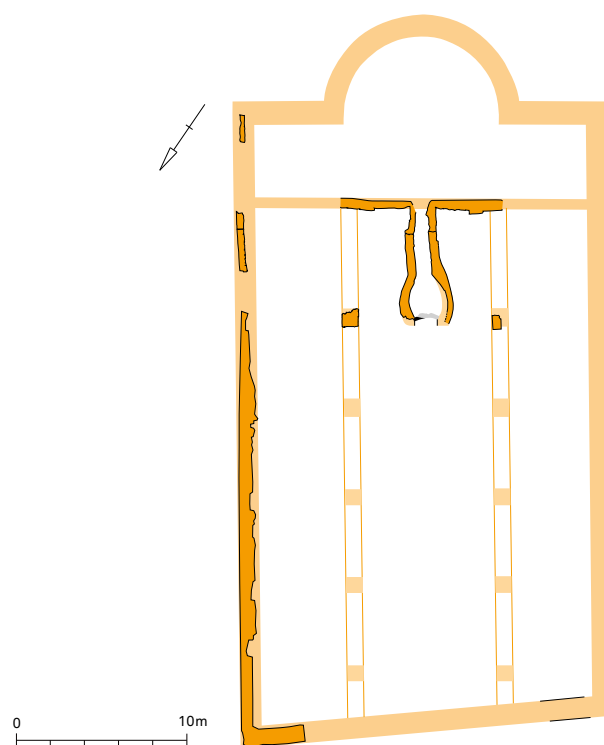


FIG. 6 Plan de la basilique du VIIe siècle.



On bascule dans le monde chrétien aux alentours du milieu du Ve siècle: la *domus* citée plus haut est convertie en église. On récupère des murs et on adapte malaisément le site, notamment par l'implantation de trois escaliers pour donner accès à l'abside. Une galerie et un dallage monumental habillent la zone extérieure du bâtiment.

A la fin du Ve-début du VIe siècle, on réaménage la basilique ancienne, au niveau du chœur (fig. 5). Le fait est clair: on rehausse le niveau de circulation interne et on ouvre une porte monumentale. Une première solea avec ambon est associée.

La période mérovingienne, à proprement parler, se caractérise par deux séquences distinctes. La première (Horizon: AM1-2, surtout le début et le milieu du VIe siècle) fournit de très nombreuses traces de rejets d'activité artisanale (céramique biconique et ses poinçons, moules d'objets de parure en bronze, travail du bois de cerf, du verre). La seconde séquence mérovingienne montre qu'une nouvelle église à trois nefs est construite, au VIIe siècle (fig. 6). Un second ambon lui est liée. Pour la zone extérieure, elle se caractérise par un épais niveau de terres noires, qui a pu se constituer sur la longue durée, entre la fin du VIIe siècle et la reprise en main du site à la fin de la période carolingienne³².

L'édifice sera effectivement réaménagé au VIIIe siècle ou dans la première moitié du IXe siècle. Le redémarrage politique, économique et les efforts d'une nouvelle urbanisation devront attendre la fin de la période carolingienne et l'an mil, moment où les dossiers archéologiques et historiques reprennent de l'épaisseur.

6 Conclusion

Le déterminisme, qu'il soit de nature topographique, géographique ou politique, a joué un rôle considérable dans le développement de la ville de Tournai, entre le milieu de la période romaine et le début du haut Moyen Âge. Toutefois, les conditions changent radicalement par la suite. La perte d'influence est avérée pour la fin du haut Moyen Âge, même si les textes sont tellement lacunaires qu'il est difficile de s'y référer pour suivre les étapes de cette évolution négative pour Tournai, qui est abandonné par la royauté mérovingienne et par son évêque.

L'apport des fouilles archéologiques du quartier cathédral est déterminant. Elles confirment l'importance de la ville au Bas-Empire et dans la première moitié du VIe siècle, sans toutefois que le processus de la Christianisation ne se révèle véritablement précoce, comme à Tongres ou dans d'autres villes du sud de la province de Belgique Seconde. Une basilique nouvelle est construite au VIIe siècle mais la cité connaît un déclin à ce moment. L'essor de la ville ne reprendra qu'à la fin de la période carolingienne.

³² Brulet, Coquelet, Defgnée, Pigière & Verslype (éd.) 2004.

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The Late Roman and early medieval urban topography of Tongeren

Alain Vanderhoeven¹

Abstract

Tongeren, the Early Roman *civitas* capital of the Tungri, extended over an area of more than 100 ha. In the 2nd century it was surrounded by a ca 4.5 km long town wall. Although much smaller, Late Roman Tongeren was still one of the most important urban centres in the province of Germania Secunda, as witnessed by Ammianus Marcellinus. A new and ca 2.6 km long town wall defended the most elevated part of the *civitas* capital. We know there was a bishop in Tongeren around the middle of the 4th century. Rich Late Roman burials were excavated in the northeastern and southwestern cemeteries. In recent years impressive remains of several urban dwellings and of an early Christian church were excavated in the eastern sector of the town. In the early medieval period the former *civitas* capital seems almost abandoned, only the old Roman church was still in use. In the 6th century it was replaced by a new church. In several places in the ruins of the Roman town, early medieval burials were encountered. All these features indicate that in the Merovingian period, local elites were still attracted by the site of the former *caput civitatis* of the Tungri.

Keywords

Tongeren, Late Roman, early medieval period, topography

1 Introduction

The name of the *civitas* capital of the Tungri, *Atuatuca Tungrorum*, seems to refer to *Atuatuca*, the fortification of the Eburones, mentioned by Julius Caesar in his '*Commentarii de Bello Gallico*'². In 54 BC that site and a nearby valley were the scene of the greatest defeat of the Roman army during Caesar's Gallic wars, which led to the subsequent attempts to exterminate the Eburones in 53 and 51 BC³. The location of the central place of the Eburones is still the subject of debate. Since none of the many excavations in Tongeren during the last century have revealed traces dating to the Late Iron Age period, one may assume that it was situated elsewhere in the tribal area of the Eburones⁴. However, the founders of the *civitas* capital of the Tungri, the successors of the Eburones, who had been at least partly exterminated, by Caesar, obviously decided to integrate the old place name into the name of the new town, which suggests that the *Atuatuca* of the Eburones was situated in the vicinity of Tongeren⁵.

Administratively, *Atuatuca Tungrorum* and the *civitas Tungrorum* were originally part of the province of Gallia Belgica⁶, which had been organised by Augustus. Although the rare written sources contradict each other, most scholars nowadays agree that the *civitas* was transferred in the Flavian period to the then newly created province of Germania Inferior⁷. In the second half of the 2nd or 3rd century, Tongeren became a *municipium*. By

¹ Flanders Heritage Agency, Jekerstraat 10, 3700 Tongeren, alain.vanderhoeven@rwo.vlaanderen.be.

² Caes., Bell. Gall. VI, 33, 3; 35, 8 and 10.

³ Caes., Bell. Gall. V, 26-37; VI, 29-43; VIII, 24-25.

⁴ Vanderhoeven & Vanderhoeven 2004.

⁵ A potential candidate for the location of the *Atuatuca* of the Eburones is the plateau of Caestert near Kanne, situated ca 15 km west of Tongeren at the confluence of the Jeker and Meuse rivers

(Verhoeven 2008).

⁶ The *civitas* is situated in Gallia Belgica in the pre-Flavian period by Plinius the Elder (Plin., Nat. Hist. 4, 17 (106)).

⁷ In the 2nd century, Ptolemy still situates the *civitas Tungrorum* in Gallia Belgica (Ptol., Geogr. 2, 9, 5), while for Hyginus (Hyg., De conditionibus agrorum 86) it is part of Germania. The information of two inscriptions, one from Rome (AE 1946, 95), the other from Bulla Regia (AE 1962, 183) is

too confused to bring the discussion to a final conclusion. The mention of the municipal status on an altar found in Tongeren (AE 1994, 1279 = ILB2 159; Vanvinckenroye 1994; Raepsaet-Charlier 1994; *Idem* 1995) supports the hypothetical situation of the *civitas* in Germania Inferior. While the pre-Roman *civitas* capitals of Gallia Belgica seemingly never got municipal or colonial status, most *civitas* capitals in the Germanic provinces received market rights, municipal or colonial status.

the Late Roman period, the *civitas* Tungrorum was undoubtedly part of the province of Germania Secunda⁸.

The *caput civitatis* of the Tungri was situated in the central and most fertile part of the *civitas*. It was surrounded by a well developed and prosperous villalandscape, which formed the agricultural basis for the urban wealth. The town was founded on the watershed between the Meuse and Scheldt basins. That same strategically crucial line in the landscape was chosen by the Romans to construct the important road from Boulogne-sur-Mer on the Channel coast to Cologne on the Rhine. The town was also linked with other *civitas* capitals by roads, such as Cassel to the west, Nijmegen to the north and Trier and Metz to the south. In addition Atuatuca Tungrorum is situated on the banks of the Jeker, a river that was probably navigable in antiquity from Tongeren to Maastricht, a *vicus*, situated at the confluence of the Jeker and the Meuse, which must have served as a provisioning harbour for the *civitas* capital.

The urban topography consists of four different elements (fig. 1).

- The central and most elevated part of the town was dominated by a monumental temple, located in the northern periphery of the settlement⁹. That area corresponds more or less with the distribution map of almost all the known fragments of monumental architecture, sculpture and inscriptions, which leads to the hypothesis that it is the most likely area to look for the official or public centre of the *civitas* capital¹⁰. However we still lack positive evidence for the location of the forum of Tongeren.
- The central area was surrounded by urban sectors, more or less corresponding with the northern slopes of the Jeker valley. A growing number of recent excavations illustrates that they were mainly residential areas, although in some of them craft activities took place.
- To the south of these predominantly residential quarters, in an area that extends on both sides of the Jeker, the Roman occupation levels are covered by more than 4 m of alluvium. In this almost unknown part of the Roman town a small harbour may have developed, since in the 2nd century a huge effort was made to integrate the Jeker and its banks into the town wall over a length of more than 600 m.
- Finally, two large cemeteries extended northeast and southwest of the town. They cover an area of at least 50 ha and are situated along the roads from Tongeren to Bavay and Cassel to the west and from Tongeren to Cologne to the east.

2 Early Roman Tongeren

The earliest archaeological remains of Roman Tongeren date from the last decade BC. In the ceramics of the stratigraphically oldest layers, a so-called 'Oberaden layer' can be distinguished. The oldest features consist of pits and drainage gullies, the material remains of a short military presence ca 10 BC. In the first decades AD members of the Tungri established themselves in the newly founded *civitas* capital. They built and inhabited so-called two-aisled farmhouses of the Alphen-Ekeren type, dwellings

that were conceived and constructed in the Iron Age tradition. Around the middle of the 1st century AD, these native style houses were replaced by courtyard houses, still constructed in wood and clay, but with a Roman type of layout and integrating Roman building techniques. In 69/70, during the Batavian Revolt, the *civitas* capital of the Tungri was burnt down. Remains of that fire extend over an area of more than 60 ha. As far as we know the pre-Flavian occupation history evolved in a similar way in the different Early Roman urban quarters of Tongeren: a short military presence at the time of the foundation of the *civitas* capital ca 10 BC, a first generation of permanent inhabitants, living in traditional farmhouses in the late Augustan and Tiberian period, the replacement of these by romanised courtyard houses in the Claudian and Neronian era and the destruction of the town during the Batavian Revolt in 69/70¹¹.

After the destruction in 69/70 the developments in the different urban quarters became more differentiated. From the Flavian period onwards, stone was gradually introduced as an important building material, but wood and clay remained the most important building components, with wattle and daub the dominating building technique throughout the Roman period. The use of different types of stone as building material started at different times in the various urban quarters and the transformation process from building in wattle and daub to building in stone was never completed. The use of stone as building material was usually limited to the bases of walls, while wood and clay were used for the superstructures.

Most of the excavated ground plans dating from the Flavian period, the 2nd and 3rd centuries, are indicative of typical square courtyard houses. Sometimes we encounter elongated, rectangular buildings. If not both, then at least the first type is typical for the rich urban elite of the Tungri. They were probably urban residences of the local, land and villa owning aristocracy. The complexity of the ground plans and the richness of the interior decorations illustrate how the local elite invested in private buildings in the *civitas* capital and without any doubt also in the as yet largely unknown public buildings¹².

This image of a typical consumer city appeared however to be more complex than was generally admitted. Many excavations revealed the presence of large amounts of waste products from craft activities, in pits and ditches in backyards and courtyards of the otherwise richly decorated urban dwellings, of which the ground plans suggest a purely residential function. Many of these pits contained large amounts of highly fragmented animal bones, mostly of cattle¹³. The internal compositions of the different skeletal elements of cattle in these assemblages indicate that we are dealing with different types of waste of a series of secondary cattle products. Some assemblages are waste products of large-scale slaughtering of cattle. Others, dominated by fragments of crania and horn core fragments are evidence for the presence of horners' workshops or tanneries. Large amounts of extremely fragmented cattle bones can be interpreted as the waste from the industrial production of marrow, grease and glue.

⁸ Mentioned as such by Ammianus Marcellinus

(Amm. Marc. 15, 11, 7), in the *Notitia Dignitatum*

(Not. Dign. 42, 43) and in the *Notitia Galliarum*

(Not. Gall. 8, 267).

⁹ Mertens 1967/1968.

¹⁰ Mertens 1977a.

¹¹ Vanderhoeven 1996; Idem 2001; Idem 2007.

¹² Vanderhoeven 2007.

¹³ Vanderhoeven & Ervynck 2007.

What came as a surprise is not so much the presence of all these activities in a *civitas* capital but the places where the waste products were deposited: the backyards and courtyards of rich urban dwellings. The conclusion must be that that was where these activities took place. Quite often these assemblages of animal

bones are mixed with iron slag, debris from the production of iron, and crucibles, probably for the recycling of bronze. We may assume that these kinds of activities were seasonal and took place in periods when the *patronus* of the house and his family were absent and living in the countryside¹⁴.



FIG. 1 Ground plan of Roman and early medieval Tongeren: A: Late Roman town; B: Early Roman town; C: cemeteries; D: early medieval burials inside the Roman town; 1: 2nd-century town wall; 2: 4th-century town wall; 3: temple; 4: aqueduct; 5: *horreum*; 6: basilica.

The excavations of the last decades have brought evidence to light of two large fires, one dating to shortly after the middle of the 2nd century and one to the second half of the 3rd century. The former is sometimes thought to be related with the historically documented raids of the Chauci ca 160¹⁵, the latter is traditionally seen as the result of the invasions of the Franks ca 275¹⁶, after which the town seems to have been entirely destroyed.

3 Late Roman Tongeren

Late Roman Tongeren appears in several contemporary written sources. Ammianus Marcellinus called it a large and prosperous town. He situates the capital and the *civitas* of the Tungri in Germania Secunda, a situation confirmed by the *Notitia Dignitatum* and the *Notitia Galliarum*. The mention of the so-called *sagittarii Tungri* and the *Tongrecani* or *Tungricani* in the *Notitia Dignitatum* and of a *praefectus Laetorum Lagensium prope Tungros* in the same document illustrates the involvement of Tongeren and the Tungri in the defence of the northern part of the Late Roman empire¹⁷. We also know of the existence of a Late Roman bishop of the Tungri. He participated at the synods of Serdica in 343¹⁸ and Rimini in 359¹⁹ and at a church assembly at an unknown location, probably in Gaul, in 346²⁰. In 350 – 351²¹ he was one of four participants in a diplomatic mission sent by the usurper Magnentius to Constantius II and Athanasius, which suggests that he must have been a prominent member of the network of powerful elites in northern Gaul.

Indirect evidence for the total destruction of the Early Roman *civitas* capital is the layout and orientation of the Late Roman town wall (fig. 1). The new town wall hardly takes into account the original structure of the Early Roman town. It was first and foremost a military construction, enclosing the most elevated and therefore the most defensible part of the *civitas* capital. It crosses numerous former urban quarters that were in ruin by the time of its construction. There is plenty of evidence that the stone from the Early Roman ruins outside as well as inside the new town wall was systematically reused for the construction of the new defence system. With its length of ca 2600 m and its many towers, positioned at equal distances of ca 20 m, it was an impressive building project. We do not have much evidence for the dating of the Late Roman town wall. The appearance of the masonry has been interpreted as Constantinian. A radiocarbon date from one of the foundation posts dates that post to 260 + 50²².

The Late Roman burials that were excavated in the 19th and 20th centuries at both the northeastern and southwestern cemeteries of the *civitas* capital give an impression of the prosperity and internal composition of the urban population of that period. We see a mixture of Gallo-Roman and Germanic elements and of civilian and military features. At both urban cemeteries the presence of early Christian burials can be assumed. In the 1870s a series of burial chambers, decorated with interior wall

paintings, were destroyed at the southwestern cemetery. Only one burial chamber was saved; its interior walls are decorated with festoons and pigeons. These elements cannot be interpreted as unambiguous Christian iconography. Eye witnesses however mention a Christogram on one of the unpreserved chambers, which led to the conclusion that probably all the grave chambers belonged to an early Christian community²³. In the 1980s a series of Late Roman burials were excavated at the northeastern cemetery²⁴. Based on the systematic absence of grave goods, the west-east orientation of the burials and the presence of a silver ring decorated with a Christogram in one of the graves, the excavator came to the conclusion that he had discovered an early Christian cemetery, although almost none of the characteristics clearly indicate that the deceased were Christians.

What we learn from the written sources, from the presence of a monumental 4th-century town wall and from the wealth of Late Roman burials and grave goods in the urban cemeteries, all contrasts sharply to the dearth of Late Roman architectural remains inside the town. In spite of ongoing archaeological research in Tongeren over the last two decades, until recently it has never been possible to uncover remains of Late Roman buildings. This is consistent with the results of the older excavations in Tongeren, which were never able to bring to light clearly identifiable architectural remains from late antiquity. The two best known examples of presumed Late Roman architecture are surrounded with uncertainty. In the Sint-Truiderstraat, remains of an important building were discovered in 1904; additional observations were made in 1971. The building had at least one room with a hypocaust. The construction has been interpreted as a bath house, perhaps a public bath house, but that cannot be more than an unproven hypothesis²⁵. In 1916 considerable remains of another Late Roman building were excavated in the garden of a school along the Maastrichterstraat²⁶. No plan could be drawn, but the description of the remains suggests a rich urban dwelling. In 1985, remains of probably the same building were briefly visible in a building trench on the same plot²⁷. Ironically, the only feature that dates from the 4th century that has come to light in recent times is situated ca 150 m south of the Late Roman town wall. In 1996 an oven was excavated at the Minderbroedersstraat site. It was constructed in the robber trench of a house dating to the 2nd and 3rd centuries²⁸. Its function remains unknown, possibly habitation or craft activity outside the Late Roman wall. It may also be related to the systematic recovery of stone or metal for the construction of the Late Roman town wall.

Recent excavations at the Vermeulenstraat site and in the church of Our Lady have brought to light for the first time in Tongeren the impressive remains of Late Roman architecture. The sites are situated in the eastern part of the Late Roman town, close to the Late Roman town wall, north and south of the gate to Maastricht. The Vermeulenstraat site consists of three excavated plots in the centre of an *insula*, north of the *decumanus maximus*. The

15 SHA, Vita Didii Iuliani 1, 6–9; Thoen 1991a, 53–59; *Idem* 1991b.

16 Vanvinckenroye 1985, 63.

17 Hoffmann 1969, 149, 160, 164, 177–179 and 180.

18 Athanasius, Apologia Secunda 49, 1, nr. 85.

19 Sulpicius Severus, Chronicon II, 44.

20 Concilia Galliae I, 27.

21 Athanasius, Apologia ad Constantium 9.

22 Mertens 1977b; Vanvinckenroye 1985, 66–67;

Brulet 1990, 79–83; Vanderhoeven *et al.* 2002, 83–

84; Raepsaet-Charlier & Vanderhoeven 2003.

23 Van Crombruggen 1963, 369–371.

24 Vanvinckenroye 1983; *Idem* 1995.

25 Huybrigts 1904; Vanvinckenroye 1971.

26 Van de Weerd 1919.

27 Vanvinckenroye 1985, 59, afb. 29.

28 Vanderhoeven *et al.* 1994, 55–56.

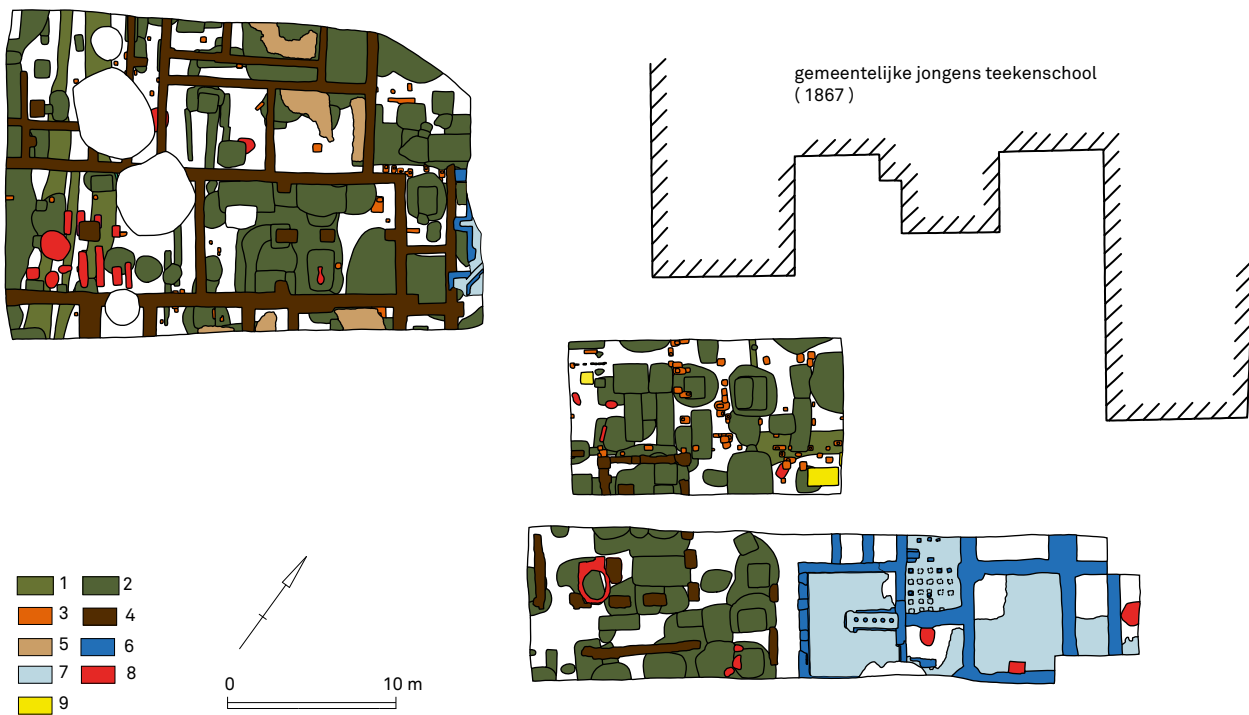


FIG. 2 Tongeren, Vermeulenstraat site: 1: Early Roman ditches; 2: pits; 3: postholes; 4: walls and robber trenches (2nd and 3rd century); 5: floors (2nd and 3rd century); 6: walls and robber trenches (4th century); 7: floors (4th century); 8: ovens and fireplaces; 9: lime pits (probably 4th century).

excavation in the church of Our Lady is also situated in the centre of an *insula*, delimited to the north by the *decumanus maximus* and to the east and south by the Late Roman town wall.

The three excavations at the Vermeulenstraat site took place between 2004 and 2008 (fig. 2). Excavation of the first Vermeulenstraat site did not reveal features that could be dated with certainty to the 4th century²⁹. One feature may however date from the Late Roman period: a west-east oriented palisade that must have been constructed after the demolition of a building that dates to the 2nd and 3rd centuries. Since the site was covered by a ca 2 m thick layer of dark earth and it became clear at the end of the excavation that the youngest Roman layers were incorporated into that dark layer, the decision was taken to sieve a substantial part of the dark earth in artificial layers of ca 10 cm. The residues of the lower part of the dark layer contained Late Roman finds and must therefore represent a Late Roman layer. During excavation of the Vermeulenstraat 2 site, remains of the western edge of a Late Roman building were uncovered on the eastern side of the excavated plot³⁰. They consisted of a *praefurnium* and part of a canal hypocaust underneath a large room. These features were preserved on top of the robber trenches of a house that could be dated to the 2nd and 3rd centuries. The most impressive remains of a 4th-century house however came to light during excavation of the Vermeulenstraat 3 site³¹. No less than six different rooms of a large urban house could be recorded. One of them was heated with a pillar hypocaust, another, the

largest one (ca 6 x 6 m), had an almost completely intact canal hypocaust. Large quantities of wall painting fragments were recovered from the floor surface. One of the reconstructions shows the cereal harvest, a cart drawn by a pair of oxen, a fence and a villa in the background and the letters AUG(ustus). Another assemblage shows the letters NOV(ember). Both finds suggest that scenes representing the months of the year were part of the interior decoration of the large room. A small amount of coins, mainly imitations of Tetricus, recovered from under the canal hypocaust, provide a *terminus post quem* for the building of the Late Roman house. These coins were circulating in large quantities in the *civitas* Tungrorum in the last quarter of the 3rd and beginning of the 4th century.

The Late Roman remains of the Vermeulenstraat 2 and the Vermeulenstraat 3 sites must belong to two different houses. The east-west oriented palisade, presumably dating from the 4th century, that was excavated at the Vermeulenstraat 1 site may have been the dividing line between the two plots on which the two houses were built. With the Vermeulenstraat sites we finally discovered a densely built and populated part of the Late Roman town of Tongeren. At the moment it is impossible to estimate how far this urban quarter extends inside the 4th-century town wall. It is unclear whether the remains at the Vermeulenstraat 3 site were part of the same building that was discovered on the plot along the Maastrichterstraat in 1916³² or whether the latter belongs to a third Late Roman house.

²⁹ Vanderhoeven & Vynckier 2009; *Idem* 2010b.

³¹ Borgers et al. 2009; *Idem* 2010.

³⁰ Vanderhoeven & Vynckier 2010a; *Idem* 2010b.

³² Van de Weerd 1919.

The site of the church of Our Lady is also situated in the eastern part of Late Roman Tongeren. Its peripheral position within the 4th-century town, just inside the town wall, the discovery of an apse in 1912 and of a Late Roman wall in 1961 led to the hypothesis that the subsoil of the Gothic church contained the remains of a Late Roman basilica, probably the early Christian episcopal church of Tongeren, and an unknown number of medieval churches on top of that Late Roman building³³. The rescue excavations undertaken between 1997 and 2008 seem to confirm the old hypothesis. These excavations became necessary due to the restoration of the interior of the church, the construction of new under-floor heating and of several cellars³⁴.

In the Flavian period, the 2nd and the 3rd centuries, the area of the church of Our Lady was occupied by a large urban house, of which most of the western, northern and eastern wings were excavated (fig. 3). Twice during its long history the building was destroyed by fire. The first fire dates from shortly after the middle of the 2nd century, the second one from the second half of the 3rd century. After the second fire the remains of the house were demolished and the area was levelled. In the western wing of the building however, a rectangular room with an apse at its eastern side, probably the aula of the former *domus*, was reconstructed and a small bath house and cistern were added. The bath house consisted of a single room with a hypocaust and one bath. The three buildings seem to have been in use at the end of the 3rd and the beginning of the 4th century, the same period in which the *civitas* capital of the Tungri lay in ruins and the new town wall was built. At present it is impossible to identify the function of this enigmatic constellation of three buildings.

Around the middle of the 4th century, most likely after the construction of the Late Roman town wall, a three-aisled basilica was built on the site of the church of Our Lady (fig. 4). The excavation revealed remains of the northern exterior wall, of four foundations of pillars that separated the southern aisle from the central nave and of the apse. The building was at least 27 m long and ca 20 m wide. The apse had a diameter of ca 7 m. Some elements of the interior architecture suggest that the basilica was built and used as an early Christian church. Parts of a stone bench had survived inside the apse, which can be interpreted as a bench for the priests. In the centre of the apse, eight circular imprints were visible, the remains of small pillars, constructed with circular hypocaust tiles, cemented with pink mortar and jointed with white mortar. These pillars supported an octagonal or circular monument, possibly a reliquary or a shrine. The elevated floor of the apse was separated from the central nave by a small wall. That partition wall, presumably separating the *presbyterium*, was rebuilt twice. With each rebuilding, the *presbyterium* was slightly enlarged to the west.

To the east and south-east of this basilica, alignments of post-holes were excavated. More or less regularly laid out in rows of four, they show the plan of the eastern part of a three-aisled basilica. In the choir of the actual church they have the shape of an apse, in the southern transept of the church two such alignments are at right angles to each other. They are the wooden foundations of a building that was never completed, since no stone walls or robber trenches were encountered overlying the postholes. The interrupted project predates the construction of the basilica that stood slightly west of this enigmatic feature.

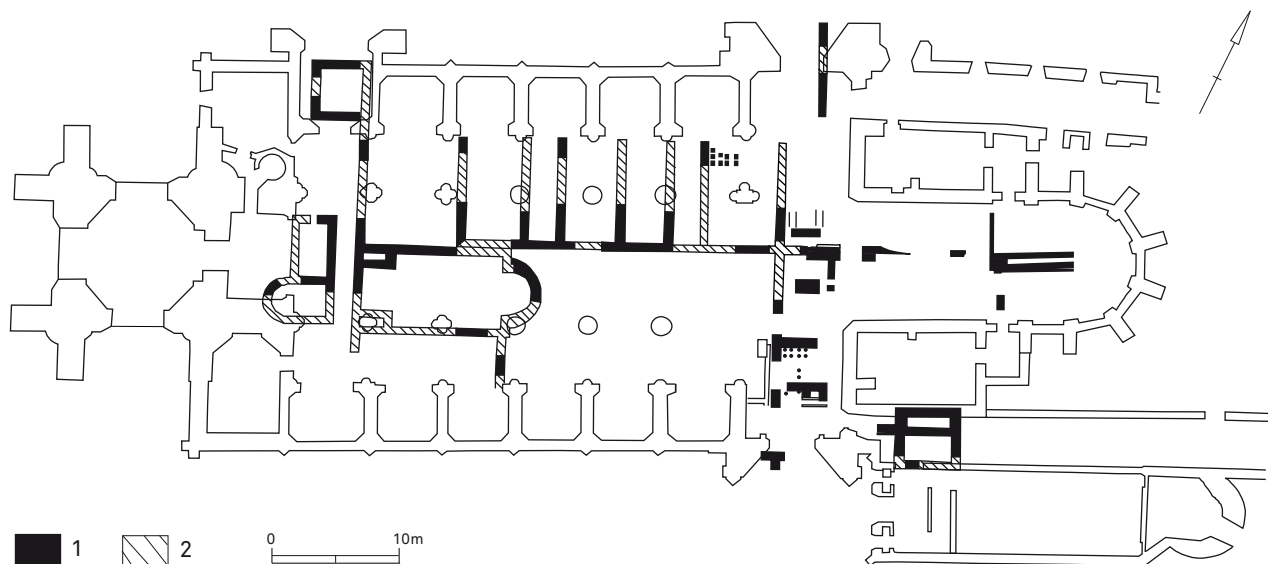


FIG. 3 Tongeren, church of Our Lady site: domus (2nd and 3rd century): 1: walls and robber trenches; 2: reconstructions.

³³ Geukens 1962 (1990); Baillien 1979, 17-19; Vanvinckenroye 1985, 127-131.

³⁴ Van den Hove *et al.* 2002; Arts *et al.* 2009.

As mentioned above the building of the basilica dates to ca the middle of the 4th century. An imitation of Tetricus, a coin type that circulated in the last quarter of the 3rd and the beginning of the 4th century, was found in a layer underneath the stone bench in de apse. It provides a *terminus post quem* for the construction of the basilica. East of the apse a layer of dark earth was deposited against the exterior wall of the basilica. This layer was systematically sieved, which yielded among many other finds 113 coins. The youngest date from 367 – 383, during the reign of Gratianus. They provide a *terminus ante quem* for the building of the basilica. As mentioned above the activities of the only historically documented Roman bishop of Tongeren also date from the middle of the 4th century and it is tempting to see the building of the early Christian church of Tongeren as one of his initiatives. The succession of the building of three partition walls separating the *presbyterium* from the nave suggest that the basilica was in use for a substantially long period, that may have lasted until the construction of a new church in the Merovingian period.

4 Early medieval Tongeren

It is generally assumed that the old Roman *civitas* capital was completely abandoned in the 5th century and that the site of the church of Our Lady would become the centre of a new settlement at an unknown moment in the (early) medieval period. The two old cemeteries northeast and southwest of the Roman town of Tongeren were no longer in use from the second quarter of the 5th century onwards³⁵. There is an interruption in the lists of bishops for the diocese of the Tungri in the second half of the 4th century and the 5th century³⁶. In the 6th century the bishops of

the Tungri had their see in Maastricht, an Early Roman *vicus* and Late Roman *castellum* on the Meuse, ca 15 km east of Tongeren. No remains of early medieval buildings are known from within the Roman town. There are however a few indications of an early medieval presence in or near Tongeren (fig. 1). In 1964 a Merovingian burial was found in the ruins of the monumental temple in the northern periphery of the Roman town³⁷. The grave goods can be dated to the 6th century. In 2001 another Merovingian burial was excavated near the Early Roman town wall gate to Maastricht³⁸. It contained two buckles that also can be dated to the 6th century. These two rather accidental and unexpected discoveries show that the ruins of the former Roman *civitas* capital were used by early medieval inhabitants of the region to bury at least some of their dead. Both burials are situated on sites with a special history: what is probably the most important Roman temple of the *caput civitatis* and the Early Roman gate on the road to Maastricht. This suggests that deliberate choices were made for the location of these early medieval burials. Finally, some written sources, although few and difficult to interpret, suggest that the site of the former *civitas* capital lived on in the collective memory during the early medieval period³⁹. The discovery of a Merovingian church, a Carolingian church and an early medieval cemetery on the site of the church of Our Lady revives the discussion whether there was continuity in the habitation and/or use of the site between the Late Roman and early medieval periods or not.

In the 6th century a new church arose on the spot of the Late Roman basilica (fig. 5). Only ca 18 m long and ca 11 m wide, the Merovingian building was considerably smaller than its Roman

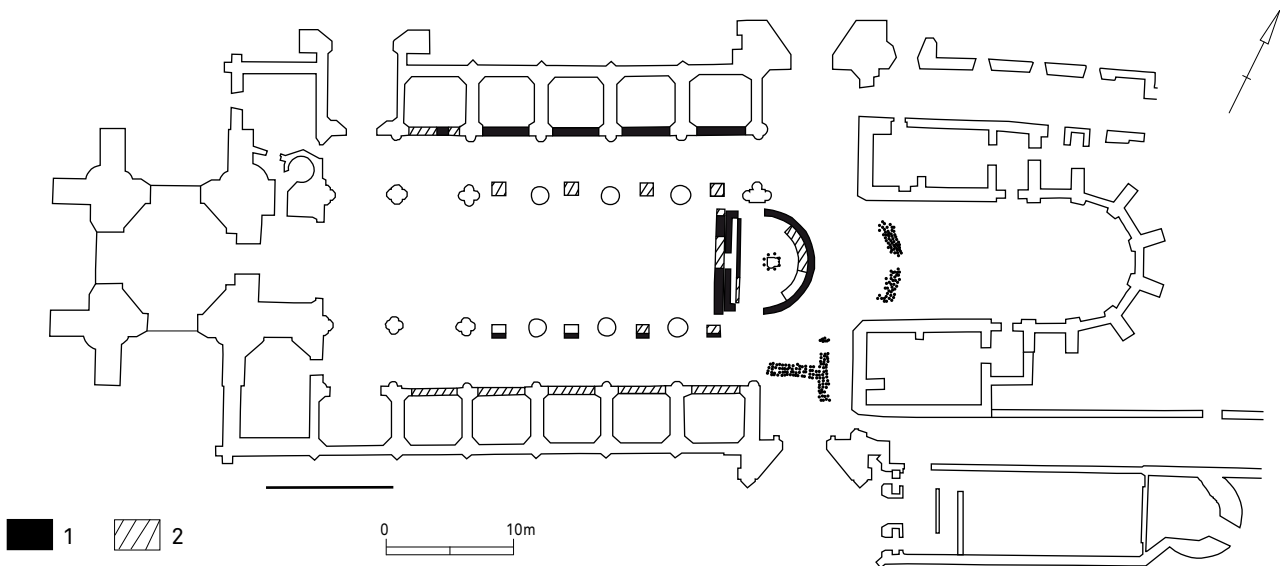


FIG. 4 Tongeren, church of Our Lady site: basilica (4th century): 1: walls and robber trenches; 2: reconstructions.

³⁵ One of the last burials in the northeastern cemetery dates from about the middle of the 5th century (Van Heesch 1992; Vanvinckenroye 1995).

³⁶ De La Hay 1985.

³⁷ Roosens & Mertens 1970.

³⁸ Hensen *et al.* 2006.

³⁹ Baillien 1979, 6.

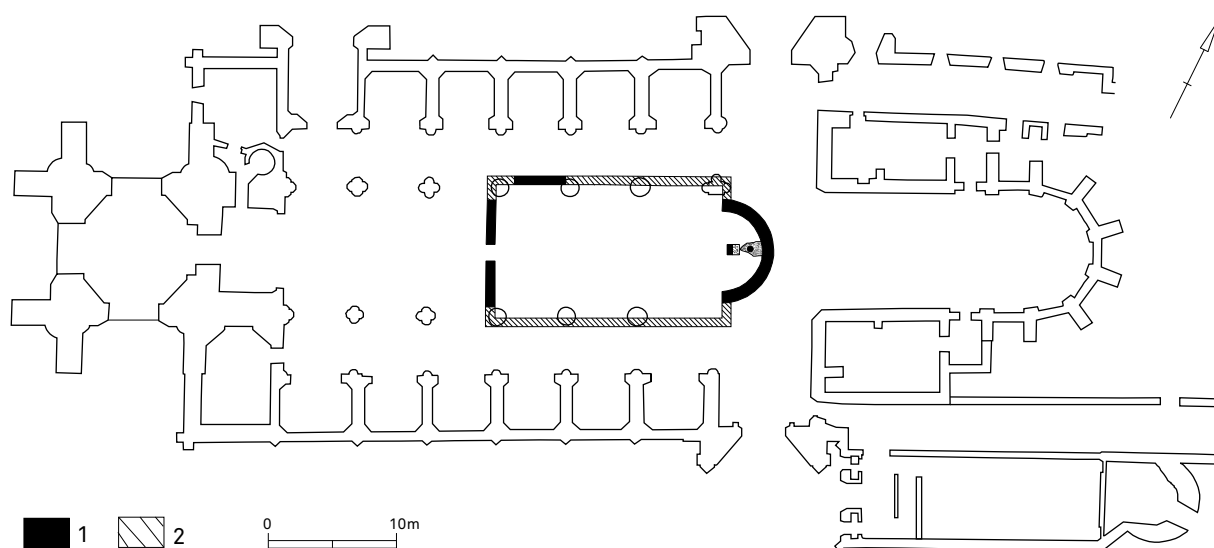


FIG. 5 Tongeren, church of Our Lady site: Merovingian church: 1: walls and robber trenches; 2: reconstructions.

predecessor. Remains of the western exterior wall with the entrance, of the northern exterior wall and of the eastern apse could be excavated. ^{14}C -dating of charcoal found in the western exterior wall dates the construction between 430 and 600, while ^{14}C -dating of charcoal found in the mortar that was used for the enlargement of the entrance in the western wall dates that modification to between 550 and 650. The architects of the Merovingian church reused the old Late Roman apse by enlarging the interior side of the wall. This indicates that the Roman basilica was still extant in the 6th century and perhaps also still in use till that time. In the Merovingian apse, remains of three consecutive floors were encountered. The earliest was made of white mortar, the second of pink mortar on top of a thin layer of green sand and the third consisted of a layer of yellow loam. These floors were built on top of a stratigraphy of foundation layers of carefully sorted reused building materials: a layer of tile and flint fragments, a layer of grey and yellow pieces of mortar and a layer of red painted plaster fragments. The latter seem to derive from the third Late Roman wall that separated the apse from the nave of the early Christian basilica. This is another indication that the Late Roman basilica was still intact and perhaps in use in the 6th century. Finally on the spots of the octagonal or circular monument and the central seat of the stone bench of the Roman church a small rectangular monument was built, while in front of the former central seat a hole was dug and subsequently covered by the rectangular monument. This may have been an early medieval cenotaph and once more suggests that the Late Roman church was still maintained and possibly in use when the Merovingian church was built.

Presumably in the 9th century the Merovingian church was replaced by a Carolingian one (fig. 6). The new building was slightly larger than the previous one: ca 18 m long and ca 13 m wide. The western exterior wall of the Merovingian wall was demolished, its

foundation widened and a new, wider wall replaced the old one. The northern and southern exterior walls of the Merovingian church were demolished and new, thicker walls were built slightly to the north and to the south. Their exterior faces were decorated with pilasters. Only the apse at the eastern side of the church was left intact. The construction of the Carolingian church can be dated between 770 and 980, based on ^{14}C -dating of charcoal in the western wall, but after 670 – 870, based on ^{14}C -dating of human bones that were buried after construction of the Merovingian wall but before the building of the Carolingian one. Numerous pieces of wall painting and fragments of reused Roman opus sectile, encountered in the layer of debris from the Carolingian church, illustrate that the building's interior was highly decorated. Small amounts of pottery in the same layer date the demolition of the Carolingian church to the 10th century.

West of the early medieval churches extends a small cemetery. All but one of the inhumations were west-east oriented. Of the burials, which did not contain any grave goods, the earliest can be ^{14}C -dated to the 7th century. One burial is exceptional by the fact that the deceased was buried in a crouched position and was surrounded by eight Roman fibulae. It is ^{14}C -dated to the 9th century. In the centre of that cemetery and right in the axis of the churches a small circular cistern was constructed. Its fill consists of a small assemblage of fragments of Roman sculpture and a folded golden coin: an imitation of a solidus from the reign of Valentinian III, minted in Arles between 439 and 445.

Finally to the south of the early medieval churches, on top of the foundation of a demolished tower of the Late Roman town wall, the so-called Saint Maternus Chapel was situated⁴⁰. This central construction had four small apses. It was completely demolished in 1803 and we have only post-medieval iconographic documents on which we can base our reconstruction. It predates the 10th

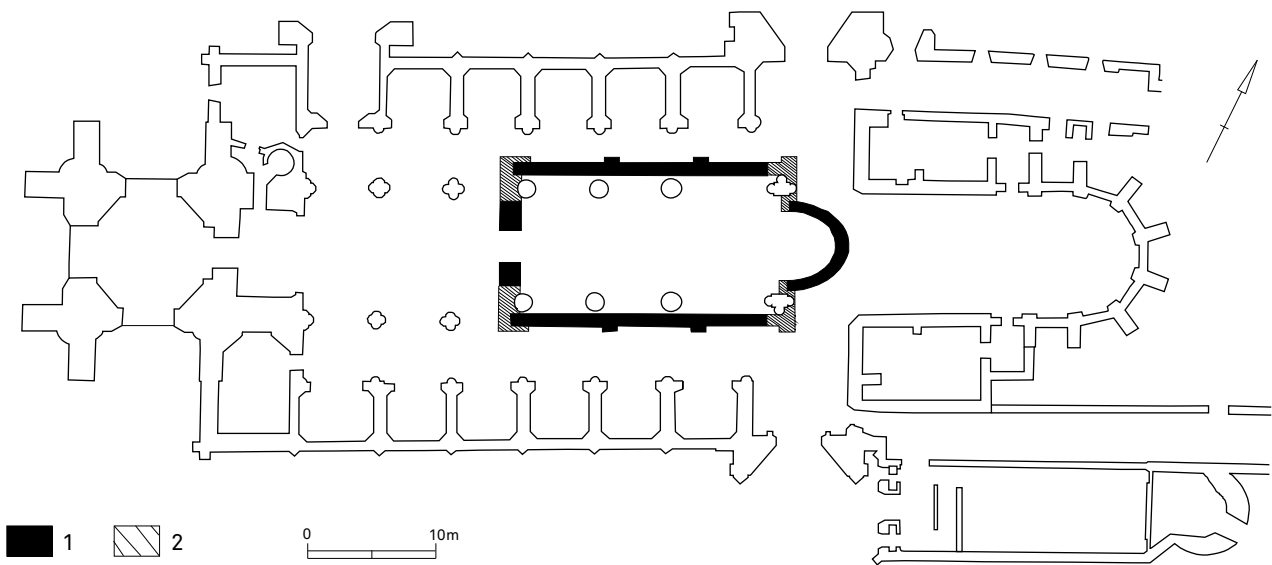


FIG. 6 Tongeren, church of Our Lady site: Carolingian church: 1: walls and robber trenches; 2: reconstructions.

century, since a 1995 excavation shows that in that century the defensive wall for the collegiate church of Tongeren was carefully constructed around the foundations of the Late Roman tower that probably constituted the central part of the Saint Maternus Chapel. The central building must have been a contemporary of the Merovingian and/or Carolingian church.

At the time when the early medieval churches were built on the site of the old Roman episcopal church in Tongeren, the bishops of the Tungri resided in the nearby Late Roman *castellum* of Maastricht. The assumption that they were responsible for the building of the Merovingian and/or the Carolingian churches in Tongeren. They had an important motive for taking such an initiative. By doing so they could claim or reinforce their supremacy over the old *civitas* capital and diocese of the Tungri. Finally, although the historical sources show an interruption in the list of bishops of the Tungri in the 5th century, on the site of the Late Roman episcopal church of Tongeren there is some evidence for continued use of the Roman basilica, from the middle of the 4th century until the construction of the Merovingian church in the 6th century. This implies that the town was not completely abandoned in the 5th century. It may no longer have been a permanently inhabited settlement, but it seems now that some kind of an official site was maintained, maybe by the unknown bishops of the Tungri in the 5th century, on the ruins of the former Roman *civitas* capital.

5 Conclusion

At the beginning of the 4th century the ruined *civitas* capital of the Tungri was rebuilt. A new town wall defended the most elevated part of the settlement. Until now architectural remains dating from the Late Roman period have only been discovered or excavated in the eastern sector of the rebuilt *civitas* capital.

They consist of an early Christian church and rich urban dwellings and tend to concentrate around the town gate to Maastricht. The central and western sectors seem to have been less densely populated or were perhaps even unoccupied. The habitation pattern in the eastern area of the town confirms that Late Roman Tongeren was populated by prosperous inhabitants and that an early Christian community lived within the town wall. It confirms the impression already given by the numerous finds from the northeastern and southwestern cemeteries of the town.

Much less is known about the early medieval history of Tongeren. We now have knowledge of a Merovingian church, built on the site of the Late Roman / early Christian basilica, and of a cemetery in front of its entrance. Two Merovingian burials were excavated at strategically important sites within the territory of the former Roman *civitas* capital: the ruins of the Early Roman monumental temple on the northern periphery of the town and near the gate to Maastricht of the Early Roman town wall. The early medieval features and finds are also situated in the eastern sector of the urban territory.

A possible explanation for the location of the Late Roman and early medieval remains in the eastern part of the Roman town may be the growing importance in the 4th century of the *castrum* of Maastricht, situated on the Meuse, ca 15 km east of Tongeren. In the Merovingian period, this site became an important central place and was even the see of the early medieval bishops of the Tungri. Urban developments often tend to be oriented towards the nearest important place. Late Roman and early medieval Tongeren may be an early example of that trend.

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New light on the origins, development and decline of the Middle Saxon trading settlement of *Lundenwic*

Lyn Blackmore¹

Abstract

This paper aims to show how our understanding of the Late Roman and Saxon London has changed, especially over the last 15 years. The scene is set by summaries of Roman London, the archaeological evidence for the late Roman and Early Saxon periods and the historical and archaeological context of Lundenwic, and the development and decline of the 7th- to 9th-century trading settlement is also traced. The main emphasis is on how archaeology has changed our understanding of the development of this extramural area over the last 10 years, revealing significant Roman and 5th- to 6th-century activity at St Martin-in-the-Fields and to a lesser extent at Upper St Martins Lane and in Long Acre. It is now clear that there was a settlement of some form in the Covent Garden area long before the arrival of Christianity and the foundation of St Pauls in AD 604, and possible reasons for this are explored in the discussion.

Keywords

London, late Roman period, Saxon period

1 Introduction

From Londinium to Lundenwic to Lundenburgh: the aim of this paper is to show how our understanding of late Roman and Anglo-Saxon settlement in London has changed over the past

25 years, and especially since recent excavations at and near the church of St Martin-in-the-Fields, by Trafalgar Square². By coincidence, this same site could be the earliest findspot of Anglo-Saxon artefacts in London, when the discovery of 'treasure', probably in the 1290s, led to a riot³.

In the following, the term Early Saxon refers to the period ca 410-650 (between the departure of the Romans and the arrival of Christianity), while the term Middle Saxon refers to the period ca 650-850. Further details of sites noted in the text can be accessed through the Museum of London website: [http://www/museumoflondon.org.uk/laarc/catalogue/](http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/laarc/catalogue/) by searching on the site code (eg ROP95).

1.1 Roman London

Dendrochronology suggests that Londinium was founded on the site of the present City ca 47⁴. Following the Boudiccan uprising of ca 60, Londinium was rebuilt as a planned town, and grew in size and importance; at its peak in the mid 2nd century, it had gained a fort and extensive port facilities. After ca 150, however, there was some shrinkage, both in the size of the settlement and in trade. The city wall and riverside wall, built as defences against threatened attacks by the Picts and Saxon pirates, date to ca 190-225 and the second half of the 3rd century respectively. Although there may have been a slight revival in the late 3rd to 4th centuries, political unrest in the second half of the 4th century resulted in a decline experienced across the Roman empire. Londinium had four extramural cemeteries, to the west, north, east and south⁵. The location of villas in the hinterland is less well known and would have been governed by the presence of cultivatable soil; the closest to the city is at Shadwell (to the east), with perhaps another at Thorney Island (to the west)⁶.

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² For recent overviews of the history and archaeology of Anglo-Saxon London see Blackmore 2002;

id. 2010; Cowie & Blackmore 2008; *id.* in press.

³ Vince 1990, 14-15, 60-1; Johnson 2005, 4.

⁴ For this paragraph see Marsden 1980; Merrifield 1983 and papers in Bird *et al.* (eds) 1996; Haynes *et al.* (eds) 2000; Clark *et al.* (eds) 2008.

⁵ Hall 1996; Barber & Bowsher 2000; Barber & Hall 2000.

⁶ Thomas *et al.* 2006, 34-9, 168-9.

1.2 The 5th to 6th centuries

The end of the Roman empire in Britain is dated to 410⁷. The riverside wall was strengthened ca 388–402 and it would appear that occupation, perhaps military, continued in the area of the Tower of London, where gold coins and stamped late 4th- or early 5th-century silver ingots have been found⁸. Late Roman Germanic-style dress accessories have also been found in two graves (male and female) in the eastern cemetery⁹. Coins and pottery show that the Roman bathhouse by the Thames at Billingsgate continued in use until after ca 402, but was derelict by the mid 5th century; the demolition debris contained a sherd of pottery and a saucer brooch with Germanic-style floriate cross decoration, identical to others from grave 205 at Mitcham and grave 123 at Guildown, Surrey¹⁰. These are the only stratified 5th-century Anglo-Saxon finds from within the city; residual sherds of glass claw beaker were also found¹¹. More relevant to the development of Saxon London are finds from outside the city to the west, which include a late Roman chip-carved military-style buckle, found in the 19th century and probably from a burial in the western cemetery¹², and a residual fragment of glass Kempston-type cone beaker¹³. Sherds of 5th- to 6th-century pottery have been found to the north of St Paul's in Aldersgate (residual)¹⁴, and in eight pits under the present church of St John Clerkenwell, with a possible 6th-century burial to the south¹⁵. On the west bank of the river Fleet, at its confluence with the Thames, Roman structures underlie the church of St Brides, where two sherds of Early Anglo-Saxon pottery, possibly of Germanic origin, were found in a dump of late Roman pottery¹⁶. The site lies beside the Roman road that led along the line of the present Strand to Bath, passing the site of St Martin-in-the-Fields, some 2km to the west of the city (see below).

Numerous other 5th- to 6th-century sites are also known along the Thames and in the river valleys, providing good evidence for settlement in this period¹⁷. Some of the pottery fabrics are distinctive, containing crushed sandstone, igneous rock or bone¹⁸, and this has helped to identify early activity within the area that later became Lundenwic.

1.3 The 7th to 9th centuries

By the late 6th century the early kingdoms were beginning to evolve; that of the East Saxons included areas that later became the province of the Middle Saxons or part of Surrey. Christianity was being revived; in 601 Pope Gregory decided that London should be the primary see of England, and in 604 Æthelberht of Kent, overking of all England south of the Humber, had a

cathedral church built there for the East Saxons¹⁹. Æthelberht and his nephew, the East Saxon king Saeberht, both died in 616; paganism resumed and Christianity was not re-accepted until 653 or later²⁰. As yet, no evidence for Æthelberht's church or any contemporary structures has been found in the city²¹.

2 Archaeological evidence for the development of Lundenwic

2.1 Background

During the 18th, 19th and earlier 20th centuries, Saxon pottery and other artefacts dating from the 7th to 9th centuries were found in the area to the west of the City. Their significance, however, long went unrealised²² as archaeologists sought for Lundenwic, the 'metropolis' of the East Saxons and 'mart of many nations' described by Bede (ca 730)²³, within the Roman and later city. In 1984, however, surveys of findspots, documentary sources and other evidence led to the simultaneous discovery of Lundenwic by Martin Biddle and Alan Vince, both assuming a religious and administrative focus in the city and trading settlement to the west²⁴. The latter was confirmed the following year, when Saxon remains, including a single burial, structures and evidence for trade and industry were found at Jubilee Hall, just south of the Covent Garden piazza²⁵.

Since then many sites have been investigated, published in monographs²⁶ and other articles. From the work carried out to ca 2003, it was thought that activity in the area of the Strand began in the early 7th century, with settlement in the area of the waterfront, probably near Charing Cross Station (close to St Martin-in-the-Fields), later spreading northwards over scattered burials dating to between ca 630–700. The oldest Anglo-Saxon find was a residual late 6th- or 7th-century saucer brooch from the Royal Opera House site (hereafter ROP95), which it was suggested could have been an heirloom²⁷.

2.2 Recent Roman and Early Saxon finds

Since 2000, however, it has gradually become apparent that this was not entirely the case. The first clue came from two adjacent sites at the western end of Long Acre (sites LCR99, LGC00), where eight sherds of sandstone-tempered and bone-tempered pottery were found – fabrics typical of the 5th- to 6th-century and unlike anything previously found in Covent Garden. Seven sherds of residual Roman pottery and a 3rd-century Roman

⁷ For this section see Marsden 1980, 163–86; Merrifield 1983, 236–59; Vince 1990, 4–12; Perring 1991, 124–31; Cowie 2008; Cowie & Blackmore 2008, 126–30, 146–8.

⁸ Parnell 1985, 30–4.

⁹ Barber & Bowsher 2000, 183–4, 206–8.

¹⁰ Marsden 1968; Welch 1975; Marsden 1980, 185–6; Cowie & Blackmore 2008, 125, 127, 146.

¹¹ Blackmore 2002, 296: fn 3; for other findspots see also Cowie (with Harding) 2000, 199–206.

¹² Hawkes & Dunning 1961, 62; Cowie & Blackmore 2008, 128.

¹³ *Ibid.* 199.

¹⁴ Site code AES96.

¹⁵ Site codes JON89, COW89. Sloane & Malcolm 2004, 21–3; Cowie 2008, 52; Cowie & Blackmore 2008, 19–22.

¹⁶ Milne 1997, 52, 55.

¹⁷ Cowie (with Harding) 2000, 177–82; Cowie 2000, 180–5; Blackmore 2002, 274–5; Cowie & Blackmore 2008.

¹⁸ Blackmore 2008.

¹⁹ *HE*, ii.3; Keene *et al.* 2004, 5–8.

²⁰ For this and summaries of the subsequent

history of Lundenwic see Malcolm *et al.* 2003; Blackmore 2010; Cowie & Blackmore in press.

²¹ Cowie 2004, 202–4.

²² Wheeler 1935; Hurst 1959; *id.* 1976; Haslam 1975; Whytehead & Blackmore 1983, 82–4; Whytehead 2004.

²³ See note 19.

²⁴ Biddle 1984; Vince 1984.

²⁵ Cowie *et al.* 1988.

²⁶ Malcolm *et al.* 2003; Leary *et al.* 2004; Cowie & Blackmore in press.

²⁷ Malcolm *et al.* 2003, 265–6, fig 13.

scabbard slide were also recovered²⁸. Directly across Long Acre, a small amount of Roman pottery and a 3rd-century brooch (all residual), 13 sherds of Early Saxon pottery and part of a 5th-/early 6th-century glass cone beaker (mostly residual) were found during excavations between 2007 and 2009²⁹. The results of this excavation are currently being analysed, but it can be said that there is a long sequence from the prehistoric period onwards³⁰.

All three sites are close to the course of a former stream that flowed south to the Thames along the line of St Martin's Lane, past the church of St Martin-in-the-Fields, to the north of which part of an early 1st-century timber building was found in 2007 (site SMD01), with another possibly dated to the 3rd-century close by³¹. A more substantial building in the vicinity of the site might be suggested by the remains of a double-flue tile kiln found under the southern wall of the church crypt, which doubtless exploited the local resources of running water and a ready supply of suitable clay, and has an archaeomagnetic date of 400-450 for the last firing³². A series of parallel brick arches with ducts, discovered beneath the spring line ca 1722 (when the earlier church was demolished and rebuilt), and during the construction of its temporary replacement to the south, known as The Tabernacle, must be parts of other single-flue Roman kilns on the south side of the church³³.

The watercourse may also have played a role in the choice of the site for burial. At least two Roman sarcophagi, apparently reused in the Saxon period, were found ca 14 feet (ca 4.5m) below the portico in ca 1724, when the stream was recorded as presenting a risk to the stability of the portico³⁴. A limestone sarcophagus, aligned NW-SE, found just to the north in 2006, was apparently reused in the Roman period, and should be at least ca 30 years older than the final burial, which has a ¹⁴C date between ca 340 and 530, most probably ca 410³⁵. The deceased must all have been persons of some importance. Three other definite and two possible late Roman graves were also found on the west side of site SMD01, including two with unusually large nails at the head end, one of which has a ¹⁴C date of 369-78. Another late grave, the fill of which contained a coin of Constantius (355-65), was cut through at the head end, possibly by another grave; the skull and part of a shoulder were found in the later cut, together with a near complete pot with incised and dimpled decoration that probably dates to the mid/late 5th century and is likely to be an import³⁶ (fig. 1).

Three phases of post-Roman timber buildings were found in the northern part of site SMD01; the earlier structure(s) had mortar floors and one room contained a mud-brick oven, the collapse of which is ¹⁴C-dated to between ca 540-600³⁷. The demolition debris of a subsequent structure contained an imported later 6th



FIG. 1 A 5th- to early 6th-century jar from St Martin-in-the-Fields. Photo by Andy Chopping, © MOLA.

century polychrome glass bead³⁸. The latest structures may date to the 7th or 8th century and form part of the trading settlement of Lundenwic (see below).

The 6th-century finds from site SMD01 could be contemporary with the ten cremations found in 2005 at the London Transport Museum³⁹, to the south of the Royal Opera House, seven of which were in ceramic jars. The pottery is very homogenous and suggests that the burials span a short period of time in the mid/late 6th century. Radiocarbon dating is less precise: at 95% confidence, cremation B1 dates to 410-550 (480-540 at 42% confidence), while B8, found in the same pit as cremations B6 and B7, perhaps forming a family group, dates to 430-640 (530-610 at 67% confidence). The pit also contained 19 burnt glass beads and an ornate pair of tweezers very like those found at Broechem, Belgium⁴⁰, probably Frankish and of 5th- to 6th-century date. There were also two female inhumations, neither ¹⁴C-dated. One, aligned N-S, had virtually no grave goods and cut through one of the cremations. The other (E-W) was richer, with a shield-on-tongue buckle and amber necklace with polychrome reticella bead of Koch type 48⁴¹ (all imports), a Kentish silver and garnet keystone disc brooch⁴² and other items. Taken together, the finds suggest a late 6th- or early 7th-century date for the burial, and it now seems likely that the ROP95 saucer brooch derives from a burial of the same date.

²⁸ Blackmore 2002; *id.* 2010, 331; Blackmore *et al.* 2004; Capon 2006.

²⁹ Malcolm 2008; Blackmore 2010, 332.

³⁰ Taylor & Fowler in prep.

³¹ Burton 2007; Telfer 2010; *id.* 2010, 51; *id.* in prep.

³² Burton 2007; Telfer 2010, 53-4; Betts & Telfer in prep.

³³ Society of Antiquaries of London Minute Book 1, 61; MS 264, 33; MS 265, 10; Biddle 1984, 25;

Telfer in prep.

³⁴ One contained a spear, 'ashes' and a palm cup; another palm cup was found in the ground nearby; several 'buffalo' skulls, cinders and burnt bones were also recorded in contemporary accounts. Society of Antiquaries of London Minute Book 1, 64, 151, 170; MS 265, 80; MS 268, 13, 100; Harden 1956, 142; Johnson 2005, 21-2; Telfer in prep; M. Biddle pers comm.

³⁵ Telfer 2010, 52-3; *id.* in prep.

³⁶ See note 35.

³⁷ The best fit of four results; Telfer in prep.

³⁸ Koch type 58; Koch 1977, 21-4, 26, 214, col pl 5; Telfer 2010, 55; *id.* in prep.

³⁹ Blackmore 2010, 332-3; Carew 2009.

⁴⁰ Annaert & van Heesch 2004, 242-9.

⁴¹ Cf. Koch 1977, 20-21, 71; col pl 4.

⁴² Found in a well that cut through the head of the burial.

2.3 Conversion period burials

Conversion-period burials have been found all along the gravel terrace in the area of the Royal Opera House, with a possibly separate cluster of higher status at St Martin-in-the-Fields, where, in addition to the finds of ca 1722⁴³, site SMD01 revealed four definite and seven possible burials⁴⁴. Two are ¹⁴C-dated to ca 660, including an important male wearing a silver seal/signet ring of 7th-century Merovingian type that would have symbolised his administrative duties and power to endorse documents; he was also buried with a palm cup and a hanging bowl, of which only the enamelled basal discs, bird-shaped escutcheons and suspension rings now survive⁴⁵. Taken together the finds suggest that the deceased was an official of English origin, and possibly a port reeve dealing with foreigners⁴⁶.

Another male buried in Long Acre (site BOB91) wore a late 7th-century belt set of Frankish-Alamannic type, made of iron with copper alloy inlay and originally silvered, which suggest that he was a foreign visitor of some importance; similar forms in copper alloy are known from graves in Ipswich and Southampton⁴⁷. Including a spear found in 1722 at St Martin-in-the-Fields (see above), there are now four weapon burials, all with spears and one also with a shield (sites PEA87, JES99; CVCO3)⁴⁸. A residual 6th- to 7th-century sword pommel may also be from a burial (site FLL01)⁴⁹. The most important female assemblage is from a grave in Floral Street (site FLR00), which contained three beads and four elastic silver rings, probably from a necklace, and a late example of a Kentish-style composite disc brooch, dated to ca 650-660⁵⁰. At St Martin-in-the-Fields, an empty grave cut a few yards to the north of the male burial noted above contained a Kentish-style gold pendant, elastic silver rings, two amethyst beads and three of glass, which probably represent a female burial of ca 650-660⁵¹. Other possible residual grave goods are summarised elsewhere⁵².

2.4 The development of the wic

Lundenwic was strategically located near the mouth of the Thames and at the border of different kingdoms – East Saxons, South Saxons, Kent and Wessex; linked to the city and the hinterland by two Roman roads, it was an ideal port for traders coming, as recorded by Bede (ca 730), by land and by sea⁵³. Although the chief town of the East Saxons, during the 7th century London was ruled at different times by Kent and Mercia and possibly by Wessex; during the 8th and 9th century it was the port of Mercia, although Wessex may have briefly controlled it in the 9th

century⁵⁴. The site of the pre-existing settlement offered good beaching facilities, well-drained land with good water supply on the gravel terraces, and raw materials for the construction of buildings and roads. Numismatic and artefactual evidence show that commerce was developing from ca 600 and from ca 675/680 there was a dramatic change as occupation expanded along the gravel terrace, over the graves noted above.

This sequence is clear from the ROP95 excavations, where two ring ditches and three burials, including an adult ¹⁴C dated to 607-660, and an old male dated to 640-673⁵⁵ were superseded by seven wells and five buildings; a 3m wide north-south road was built with drains on either side, linking the area with the Thames and possibly also with the Roman road to the north⁵⁶. In all it was resurfaced more than ten times, probably with gravel taken from extensive quarries to the north to the site. The first buildings could predate the road, as they are on a different alignment (parallel to Upper St Martin's Lane). In the three subsequent periods, more buildings were constructed, initially on the same alignment⁵⁷, but gradually shifting so that those closest to the road were end on, or parallel to it; the buildings became more standardised and more closely spaced, with associated yards and alleys⁵⁸. Some of the earlier buildings, including a smithy, formed a courtyard arrangement which survived until the late 8th century, when the intensity of activity began to decline. Between 764 and 801, *Lundenwic* suffered three major fires, the last two in close succession⁵⁹, and although some of the 8th-century buildings at ROP95 continued in use, only three new ones were constructed. The remains of over 60 timber buildings were found at ROP95, and the total represented in the wic now exceeds 100⁶⁰. Traces of other roads have also been found, of which that on site JES99 was parallel to that noted above and resurfaced at least five times⁶¹. The settlement probably covered some 55-60 hectares, although occupation levels may have fluctuated.

Expansion to the west some time after 730 is indicated by a farm under the National Gallery/National Portrait Gallery⁶². By ca 770-800 there was a possible royal hall in Whitehall⁶³, while finds from the highest part of Thorney Island lend support to the tradition that a minster was established there in the 7th century⁶⁴, prior to the foundation of a Benedictine Abbey by Dunstan in the late 10th century.

To the east there was developing activity between Holborn and the Fleet valley, and although this is poorly understood it is possible that the area of the Temple was of a higher status than the

⁴³ See note 34.

⁴⁴ For this section see Blackmore 2010; Cowie & Blackmore in press; Telfer in prep.

⁴⁵ Burton 2007, fig 14; Telfer 2010, 55-6.

⁴⁶ Scull 2011, 85, 86; Cowie & Blackmore in press; Telfer in prep.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*; Cowie & Blackmore in press.

⁴⁸ See note 34; Whytehead *et al.* 1989, 49, 58, fig 14; Leary *et al.* 2004, 6-7, 26; Telfer & Blackmore 2008.

⁴⁹ Taylor 2004, 202.

⁵⁰ Blackmore 2002, 280, fig 4.

⁵¹ Burton 2007, fig 15; Telfer 2008; *id.* 2010, 55.

⁵² Blackmore 2010, 336-7.

⁵³ *HE*, ii.3; Whitelock 1955, 609; for this section see Blackmore 2010; Cowie & Blackmore in press.

⁵⁴ See note 20.

⁵⁵ At one standard deviation; Malcolm *et al.* 2003, 338. These and other dates have now been recalibrated (see Cowie and Blackmore in press, Table 63).

⁵⁶ Malcolm *et al.* 2003, fig 14; Blackmore 2002, 281-4.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, fig 14.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, figs 23, 24, 49, 50, 51.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 109, 126.

⁶⁰ See note 26; also Cowie 2000, 189; 2001, 201-2; 2004.

⁶¹ Leary *et al.* 2004, 8, 142.

⁶² Whytehead & Cowie 1989; Leary *et al.* 2004, 87-114.

⁶³ Green 1963; Cowie 2004, 205-9; Cowie & Blackmore 2008, 90-100.

⁶⁴ Stott 1991, 285-6, 309, no.62; Sullivan 1994, 23-4, 59; Mills 1995, 69; Cowie 2004, 205; Thomas *et al.* 2006, 40-6; Cowie & Blackmore 2008, 99.

main settlement⁶⁵: finds include the spectacular late 8th-century sword pommel from Fetter Lane⁶⁶ and a fine 9th-century Trewiddle-style strapend⁶⁷. Excavations within the Temple revealed three burials, one possibly with grave goods, but their date is unknown as they were preserved *in situ*. Occupation is indicated by a pit, postholes and a well containing a north French (Quentovic?) sceat of 710–20, 7th- to 9th-century pottery and three glass-making crucible fragments⁶⁸.

2.5 The waterfront, trade and industry

The function of most *wics* was to supply the court and the church with goods and revenue from tolls, and it is thought that Lundenwic was created as a planned town during the reigns of Wulfhere of Mercia (658–675), and Hlothhere (ca 673/5–85) and Eadric (ca 684–6) of Kent⁶⁹. This is supported by waterfront constructions near Charing Cross station, dendro-dated to ca 679 or soon after⁷⁰ and documentary evidence for ships visiting the *portum Lundoniae* by ca 672–74⁷¹. This first reference to *Lundenwic* is in the laws of Hlothhere and Eadric (ca 680) which refer to a royal hall and a king's reeve used by the Kings of Kent to regulate Kentish trade in London⁷². A grant of 687 refers to a property '*supra vicum Lundoniae*' and land '*iuxta Lundeniam*'⁷³.

Trade developed rapidly in the late 7th century and flourished in the 8th century under the Mercian kings Æthelbald and Offa, when special trading privileges for various religious houses are documented and Frisian traders were particularly active⁷⁴. Pottery, Niedermendig lava querns, coins and glass confirm that the main traffic was with northern France/Belgium and the Rhineland. From ca 730 most pottery was imported, either from Ipswich or from the continent. The first North French-type wares probably date to the late 6th or 7th century, but it is not yet known at what point importation ceased; Badorf-type wares are less common and the forms more diagnostic. Continental imports are widely distributed across the settlement, with no major concentrations to indicate merchant enclaves; the amounts fluctuate over time but average ca 12–14% by sherd count and ca 9% by weight⁷⁵.

Most coins⁷⁶ appear to be from London, Essex and Kent (Series L and O, K, S); those from Hamwic and Ipswich (Series H and R) are much less common. One sceat is from northern France (type G2c; see above), four are probably Frisian (series D), and one may be from Dorestad (series E). A Wodan monster coin is an insular copy of a type originating in Ribe (series X). Other evidence for

imports is very limited but might include some possible gaming pieces from ROP95 which have near parallels in *Hamwic*, York, Ribe and Frisia⁷⁷. Iron-working was probably confined to smithies but bone-working, non-ferrous metal working and weaving took place alongside domestic activities⁷⁸; the increase in loom weights, however, suggests that cloth was produced for export from ca 730, and this is supported by references to trade in black stones (lava querns) and English cloaks in correspondence between Offa and Charlemagne ca 796⁷⁹.

2.6 The decline of the wic

Although a grant of Coenwulf in 811 refers to 'the famous place and royal town' of Lundenwic (*Lundoniae vicu*)⁸⁰, the archaeological evidence points to a decline around this time. In the 9th century widespread political instability on the Continent led to a decline in international trade, compounded by the threat of Viking raids. A rapid reduction in the number of buildings and finds is evidenced not only at ROP95, but also on other sites⁸¹, while two substantial east-west 9th-century ditches may have been defensive measures during the first documented Viking raid of 842 or an earlier attack⁸². That at ROP95 was fortified and on a different alignment to the buildings; the fill was sealed by a layer of dark earth in which a hoard of 21 Northumbrian stycas was probably buried at the time of the second raid in 851, or later⁸³. This part of the *wic*, therefore, must have been unoccupied for some time before the coins were buried. It is possible that the focus had shifted to Westminster, or more likely to the area of the Temple⁸⁴, where a hoard of 366 coins was probably buried during the first Viking raid of 842⁸⁵. Whatever the case, the last recorded uses of the term '*wic*' for London are in two charters of 857, one spurious, the other granting the bishop of Worcester a property and commercial rights, '*in vico Lundoniae*', yet near the west gate of the city⁸⁶. There is no material evidence for an overlap between the occupation of the *wic* and that of the city, which argues against a mass relocation to the city, but it would appear that renewed activity was activity taking place there before it was made a burh by Alfred (possibly in 879 and formally in 886⁸⁷).

Discussion

This brings us back to the city and the Roman period. The account of Cassius Dio tells that in 43 the Thames was forded by the Romans at a point where the flood-tide forms a lake; this rules out Southwark, which was both wide and tidal, but fits with

65 Blackmore 1997, 127–8; *id.* 2002, 284; Butler 2005, 21–2.

66 Webster & Backhouse 1991, 211.

67 Bowsher 1999; Blackmore 1997, 128; *id.* 2002, 284, 297; fn 11; Cowie 2004, 204–5.

68 Butler 2005, 16–22.

69 Cowie 2001, 88; Blackmore 2002, 294; *id.* 2010; Cowie & Blackmore 2008, 5–6; *id.* in press.

70 Cowie 1992, 164; *id.* 2001, 198, 200–201.

71 Whitelock 1955, no. 54; Gelling 1979, 148, no. 309; Dyson 1980; Biddle 1984, 26; Blackmore 1997, 125–6; *id.* 2002, 285, 297; fn 12; *id.* 2010, 340–1.

72 Whitelock 1955, 360–1.

73 Hart 1966, 122–7; Sawyer 1968, no. 1246.

74 Kelly 1992; Malcolm *et al.* 2003, 187–90, 198–201; Blackmore 2010, 341–7.

75 Blackmore 1993; *id.* 2001; *id.* 2008; *id.* 2010; Jarrett 2004; *id.* 2005; Vince 2006.

76 Total 26 archaeological finds (11 from ROP95), 29 other finds; Stott 1991; Blackmore 2002, 285–6; *id.* 2010, 342–4; Malcolm *et al.* 2003, 285–7; Butler 2005, 57.

77 Malcolm *et al.* 2003, 302–15.

78 Blackmore 2002, 289–90; Malcolm *et al.* 2003, 150, 168–87, 175–80; Leary *et al.* 2004, 142–8.

79 Whitelock 1955, 781; Stenton 1971, 221; Malcolm *et al.* 2003, 58, 168–70.

80 Sawyer 1968, no. 168; Blackmore 1997, 127–8; *id.* 2002, 295; *id.* 2010, 350–2; Malcolm *et al.* 2003, 199; Cowie 2004, 201.

81 Malcolm *et al.* 2003, 109–24; Leary *et al.* 2004, 144–5.

82 Cowie *et al.* 1988, 71–3, 76, 79; Malcolm *et al.* 2003, 118–20; Leary *et al.* 76–7.

83 Malcolm *et al.* 2003, 278–84.

84 Blackmore 2010, 350–2; Whytehead 2004.

85 Dolley 1960, 42, 47; Rigold & Metcalf 1984, 255.

86 Gelling 1979, 105, nos 210, 211; Sawyer 1968, nos 208, 318; Blackmore 1997, 127–8.

87 Blackmore 1997; Haslam 2009.

Westminster, where it would have been possible to cross to Thorney Island⁸⁸. The site of St Martin-in-the-Fields would have been directly *en route* to what became Londinium, and had a strategic location, on a hillside by a stream, with good views both up- and downstream. The 1st-century building could have had a military function, but the site later gained in importance, and the cluster of sarcophagi on the west side suggest that it may by then have been at a crossroads of the Strand (the Roman road to Bath), and a minor north-south route linking the road to Oxford (by which a few Roman burials have been noted to the north of Lundenwic⁸⁹) with Thorney Island, where Roman structural remains and an elaborate sarcophagus have been found, the latter also thought to have been reused in the Saxon period⁹⁰.

Stone coffins are immensely heavy and had to be imported from far afield; as such they were used for high status burials. Less than 20 specific examples are known from the north London cemeteries⁹¹, and the cluster at St Martin-in-the-Fields is a remarkable outlier. The juxtaposition of these and other 4th- to 5th-century burials with apparently contemporary industrial activity is difficult to explain, especially when mass production of building materials had ceased elsewhere in Britain. While the products of the tile kiln(s) could have been destined for the 4th-century city, it is tempting to suggest that they were purpose-made for an adjacent villa and/or temple. Certainly the site had a religious significance that continued well after the traditional end of Roman London in 410.

The time lapse between the Roman period and the Early Anglo-Saxon presence evidenced by the later pottery, and whether there was any interaction between the two groups are important questions that require more work. While the near complete pot might be an import left by the first wave of post-Roman settlers in the Thames valley, the coincidence of Roman and Saxon activity with later religious sites at St Bride's (Fleet Street), Westminster abbey and St Martin-in-the-Fields is striking and may reflect the transition from Roman villa with burials to Frankish church that has been noted on the Continent. In Merovingian Gaul, for example, unwallled *bourgs* often evolved around a shrine outside a fortified *civitas*, or in locations suitable for trade. At St Martin-in-the-Fields, the former could have led to the latter, the early post-Roman settlement (whether seasonal or permanent), along the stream attracting traders to supply residents and visitors⁹². We assume that the first immigrants were Angles and Saxons, as documented by Bede⁹³; later artefacts show that the community was more mixed, but items from Kent and the Continent could have arrived in a number of ways and do not necessarily reflect the origins of those they were buried with.

In the early 7th century, Pope Gregory encouraged Mellitus, the first bishop of London, to destroy all idols but to convert

formerly pagan temples for use as Christian places of worship. The Roman church dedicated to St Martin in Canterbury was certainly reused, and the same may have been the case at St Martin-in-the-Fields⁹⁴, which remained a focus for high status 7th-century burials, with others spread across the gravel terrace. The site of the first church of St Paul the Apostle, built in 604, is assumed to be that of the present cathedral, but unproven and debated⁹⁵. Could it in fact have been at St Martin's, where there was clearly a local community to use it? By the time of Bishop Eorcenwald (675-693), however, St Paul's was definitely in the city; both he and king Sæbbi of Essex were buried there, the latter in a stone coffin ca 694, and a charter of Æthelred of Mercia, dated 693-704 refers to a monastery (later Paulesbyri)⁹⁶.

The development from *portus*⁹⁷ to *wic* from ca 675/680 onwards was doubtless made possible by the change to burial in churchyards following the revival of Christianity. Curiously no such graves were found on site SMD01 at St Martin-in-the-Fields, where although the 7th-century burials respected the earlier ones, they were apparently superseded by domestic activity. Further expansion in the 8th and 9th centuries was followed by shrinkage, decline and Viking raids, prompting a relocation, perhaps first to the Temple, and then, possibly by ca 850 and almost certainly by 880, to the walled city.

Conclusions

The combined evidence suggests that the site of St Martin-in-the-Fields was the first focus of Anglo-Saxon activity in London, with a religious significance that persisted from the Roman period onwards. St Martin-nigh-the-Cross – then a small chapel and burial ground, possibly used by the monks of Westminster abbey, under whose estate Lundenwic lay buried – was first documented in 1222⁹⁸ and a church has stood on the same site ever since. Other churches built along the Strand in the 10th to 13th centuries could also have earlier origins⁹⁹. Thus, while questions of continuity and coincidence are complex, the events of the 1st to 9th centuries have in diverse ways shaped the current form of the City and Westminster.

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88 Sloane *et al.* 1995; Thomas *et al.* 2006: 2, 35; Thomas 2008, 102-4.

89 Hall 1996, 63-4, fig 1.

90 Henig 1996, 101; Thomas *et al.* 2006, 35.

91 Hall 1996; Barber & Bowsher 2000, 96; Barber & Hall 2000; Telfer 2010, 52.

92 Telfer 2008, 346; *id.* 2010, 53; Nicholas 1997, 27-9.

93 *HE* 1.15; Cowie 2008, 53; Cowie & Blackmore 2008, 146-8.

94 *HE*, 1.30; 26; Vince 1990, 61.

95 Keene *et al.* 2004, 4.

96 *HE*, iv.11; Gelling 1979, no. 190*; Sawyer 1968, no. 1783; Whitelock 1955, no. 61; Schofield *et al.* 2008, 79, fig 2.

97 The Low Countries equivalent of *bourg* (Nicholas 1997, 28); see note 92.

98 Johnson 2005, 3; the name Covent Garden derives from the Convent Garden of the monks.

99 Biddle 1984, 24-5; Vince 1990, 44, 62-3. The church of St Paul in the Covent Garden piazza, built in 1631, has no known antecedent.

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Barcelone, de *sede regia* à capitale comtale: continuités et changements

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Abstract

In late Antiquity *Barcino* was fundamentally an episcopal city, a city based around a strong port, the urban Christian community that moved around its bishop; a city that was chosen during diverse periods by the Visigoths as their regal base. This condition of capital and the monumentalisation of the episcopal buildings seem to be closely related. *Barcino* kept the commercial circuits alive throughout the stage that came to form part of the Visigoth domain, a receptive and consuming city, yet also productive. In the suburbium the funerary areas were organised, with the founding of basilicas and the consolidation of martyrial worship. Barcelona and its territory came to form part of Al-Andalus for nearly a century (714-801), providing social, economic and administrative continuity. In 801 it was occupied by the Franks, and the city's continuity can be observed in the urban layout, the occupation of the city wall by the local elites and the continuity of the centre of power. Barcelona progressively consolidated itself as a capital city, the setting for a profound change that would arrive in the mid-11th century.

Keywords

Barcelona, late Antiquity, Early Middle Ages

1 Introduction

Au IV^e siècle ap. J.-C., *Barcino* était une ville prospère et dynamique, avec une nette continuité aussi bien dans les espaces publics que privés, capable d'entreprendre des projets de grande

envergure, comme la construction d'un nouvel espace fortifié et de maintenir en fonctionnement le réseau d'assainissement. La ville présentait une dynamique économique importante, comme le prouvent la quantité et la variété d'amphores trouvées dans la ville.

L'activité édilitaire apparaît dans la construction de nouvelles et riches *domus* (fig. 1), et dans la réhabilitation de celles existantes, qui sont ornées de peintures et de mosaïques². Ces actions dans les domaines domestiques comportent la construction de thermes privés et montrent comment les élites de la ville tendent à privatiser l'hygiène à une époque où certains thermes publics de la ville avaient déjà été réutilisés et que d'autres, sans doute, se maintenaient avec difficulté à cause de la disparition de l'évergétisme impérial, municipal ou de particuliers, propre à la société romaine.

Au IV^e siècle ap. J.-C., un nouvel espace fortifié est construit, adossé à celui existant par l'extérieur et renforcé de 76 tours et d'un *castellum*, un édifice à plan quadrangulaire fortifié moyennant un mur défensif et sept tours. Il s'agit sans doute d'une défense avancée, un espace fortifié qui saillit de la ligne de muraille en direction de la façade côtière. Sa fonction n'a pas été clairement établie mais nous pensons qu'il s'agit d'un point stratégique et de contrôle, en rapport avec le port et le commerce maritime.

Au IV^e siècle ap. J.-C., *Barcino* est un siège épiscopal. Nous connaissons l'existence de trois évêques: Pretextato (343), Paciano (370-390) et Lampio (391-400), même si les données archéologiques pour le noyau chrétien du IV^e siècle sont rares. Toutefois, nous pouvons situer le premier emplacement chrétien à l'angle nord de la ville, à côté de la muraille (fig. 1: 1-4). Il faut supposer l'existence d'une basilique à l'endroit de la cathédrale actuelle, mais l'absence de fouilles ne permet pas de le vérifier. Par contre, nous connaissons archéologiquement le premier baptistère, duquel sont conservés une partie des fonts baptismaux à

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² Cortés 2011; Miró 2011.



FIG. 1 Plan de la ville romaine de *Barcino* du IV^e siècle avec indication des *domus* conservées. Hypothèse: J. Beltrán de Heredia. Dessin: E. Revilla-MUHBA.

plan carré et le système d'évacuation d'eau, utilisé dans le baptistère ultérieur³. Aussi bien dans la *civitas* que dans le *suburbium*, les nouveaux bâtiments chrétiens marqueront l'image de la nouvelle ville.

2 Barcino comme sede regiae, la période wisigothique

Barcino est choisie par les wisigoths, pendant plusieurs périodes brèves, comme *sede regia*; il en est ainsi sous les règnes d'Ataulfo, de Máximo et d'Eurico, puis de Gesaleico. Il ne faut pas oublier non plus que, lors des premières années de règne de l'usurpateur Máximo, quand la base d'opérations se trouvait à *Tarraco* et non pas à *Barcino*, la monnaie est frappée dans la ville entre les années 409 et 411, numéraire qui inclut la légende *Sacra Moneta Barcinonensis*. Il semble évident que, à partir de la présence des wisigoths en Gaule, *Barcino* a été un choix clair en tant que *sede regia* vu qu'elle se trouvait à un point clé au niveau stratégique et qu'elle permettait, en outre, de contrôler le port de la zone occidentale de la Méditerranée, tout en étant bien protégée par une notable fortification.

À partir du Ve siècle ap. J.-C., il se produit en *Hispanie* une série de changements dans le paysage urbain qui sont le reflet des changements sociaux qui se déroulent. À *Barcino*, il est possible de parler d'une perte de fonction des édifices publics, une certaine déstructuration urbaine, l'apparition de nouvelles formes d'*habitat* et une occupation des voies, déjà commencée quelques siècles auparavant⁴.

Dans la ville tardive-ancienne, la topographie réticulaire du Haut-Empire disparaît progressivement, produisant un rétrécissement et une déviation des anciennes voies, la ville grandit verticalement et, par conséquent, il se produit un changement important dans les niveaux de circulation. Des documents montrent également un abandon progressif du réseau d'assainissement, qui se maintenait déjà difficilement à cause des changements de niveau⁵. Les grands édifices publics sont abandonnés ou réadaptés, les thermes publics, connus sous le nom de Sant Miquel, sont christianisés, mais nous ne savons pas ce qu'il en a été pour le temple d'Auguste actuellement conservé dans la rue Paradis et qui a continué, sans doute, à marquer la topographie de la ville. À cette époque, les temples sont abandonnés et convertis en églises ou reconvertis en espaces d'habitation, comme nous pouvons l'observer à de nombreux autres endroits de l'Empire; cependant, il n'existe pas de données archéologiques pour celui de Barcelone.

Au Ve siècle ap. J.-C., le centre de la vie urbaine, le foyer politique/religieux s'était déplacé du *forum* vers l'angle nord de la ville, à côté de la muraille, où se trouvait le groupe épiscopal (fig. 2). Le *forum* avait perdu sa fonction primitive et les éléments caractéristiques de cette agora publique commencent à être démontés. Un grand nombre de piédestaux honorifiques, épigraphiques et anépigraphiques, sont réutilisés pour construire

le palais épiscopal bâti dans les premières années du Ve siècle ap. J.-C.

2.1 Le groupe épiscopal

Dans les premières années du Ve siècle, un agrandissement du noyau chrétien primitif se produit, avec l'incorporation de nouveaux édifices essentiellement rattachés au rôle de représentation de l'évêque (fig. 2). Au Ve siècle, les évêques avaient déjà atteint un rôle important qui allait au-delà du cadre spirituel. Ils intervenaient dans des thèmes économiques et politiques, recevaient d'illustres personnages, donnaient la justice, administraient le patrimoine ecclésiastique et, par conséquent, avaient besoin d'une résidence digne répondant à ces fonctions. Pour cette raison, dans les premières années du Ve siècle, d'autres édifices ont été ajoutés, tels qu'une résidence pour l'évêque et une *aula* épiscopale faisant fonction de salle de réception ou de représentation.

À côté de l'*aula* et en étroite relation avec cet édifice et avec la basilique, un nouveau baptistère a également été construit, de plus grande envergure, qui disposait d'une piscine centrale à plan octogonal entourée de chancels. Des structures localisées entre l'*aula* et le palais épiscopal semblent indiquer la présence d'un *balneum* sans doute également destiné à l'évêque.

2.2 Le groupe épiscopal et le patrimoine ecclésiastique

Au nord-est du palais épiscopal se trouvent deux installations de production : un vivier et une installation vinicole qui, à notre avis, ont fait partie à un moment donné du patrimoine ecclésiastique⁶. À partir du IVe siècle, et à partir de l'empereur Constantin, l'institution ecclésiastique pouvait recevoir des legs testamentaires. En *Hispania* commence à se dessiner archéologiquement un lien entre les sièges épiscopaux et le commerce et la production. La *cetaria* de *Portum Sucrone* a été mise en rapport avec le rôle économique assumé par le siège épiscopal de València, ce qui peut permettre de penser qu'elle pouvait être sous son contrôle. De plus, la présence d'installations industrielles en rapport avec des espaces ecclésiastiques est également apparue dans des monastères, comme celui de Punta de l'Illa à Cullera, fondé au VIe siècle par l'évêque Justinien ou celui de Mura a Llivia⁷. Ce type d'installations industrielles a pu exister également dans les groupes épiscopaux, des noyaux organisationnels très complexes. Nous pensons que c'est le cas de *Barcino*, mais également de *Valentia*, où le même phénomène a été récemment documenté, avec la localisation d'une zone de salaisons, datée des IV-Ve siècles ap. J.-C., à côté du noyau épiscopal⁸.

Dans le cas de l'installation vinicole, nous ne pouvons pas oublier l'importance qu'avait le *celler* épiscopal, qui constituait la réserve du diocèse pour le vin de consommation et de cérémonie, en plus d'une bonne source de revenus. Les labeurs d'assistance de l'église sont également connus et bien documentés par les sources textuelles ; par exemple, nous savons qu'à Mérida au

³ Sur le groupe épiscopal et la ville tardive-ancienne, consultez les publications de Bonnet & Beltrán de Heredia et Beltrán de Heredia entre 2000 et 2011.

⁴ L'intervalum commence à être occupé à l'époque flavienne, un phénomène très fréquent au IIe siècle.

⁵ Beltrán de Heredia & Carreras, sous presse.

⁶ Beltrán de Heredia 1998, (dir.) 2001, 2006; Beltrán de Heredia et al. 2006.

⁷ Rosselló 2005.

⁸ Álvarez et al. 2007.

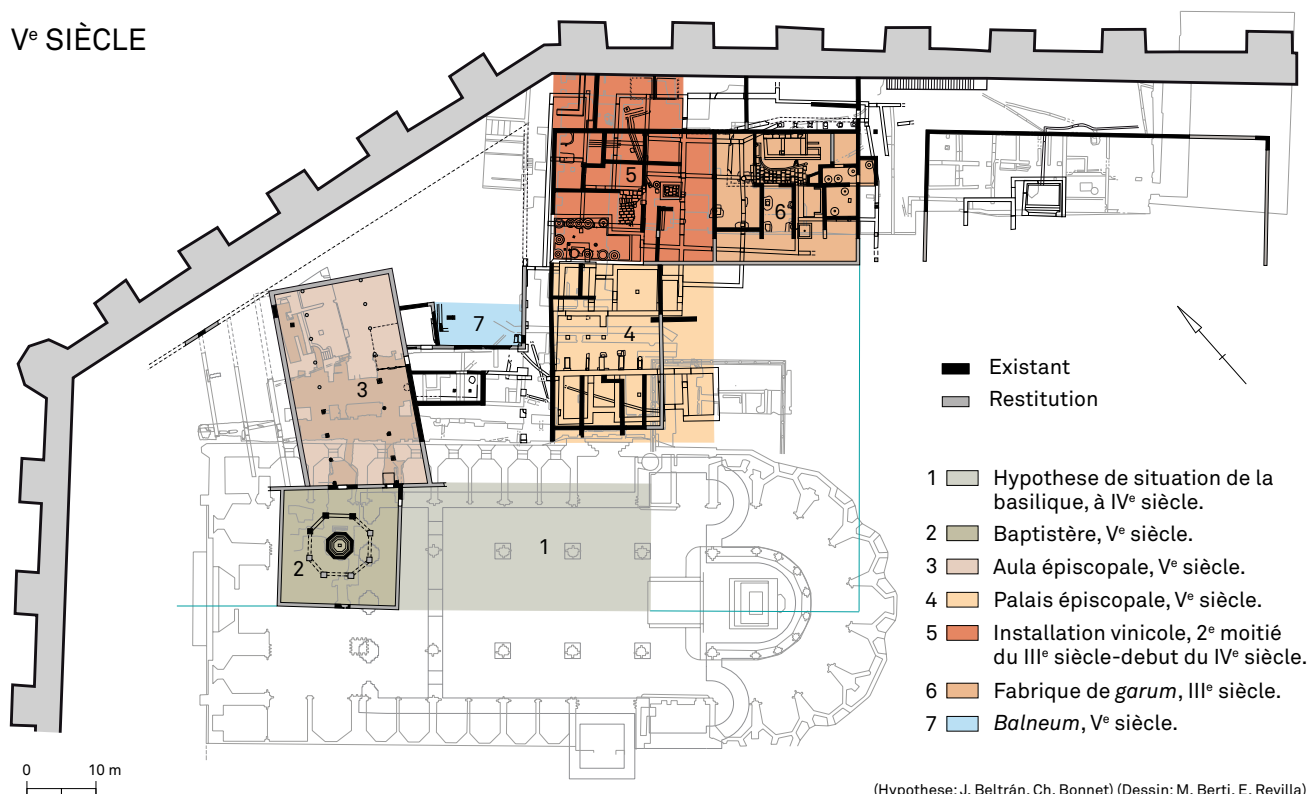
V^e SIÈCLE

FIG. 2 Plan du Groupe Épiscopal au Ve siècle.

Hypothèse: J. Beltrán de Heredia - Ch. Bonnet. Dessin: E. Revilla-MUHBA.

VI^e siècle, la curie épiscopale distribuait de l'huile, du miel et du vin aux démunis. En outre, pour le christianisme, le vin jouissait d'un fort symbolisme en tant que boisson sacrée et source de vie, vu qu'il représentait le sang du Christ. De nombreuses mosaïques des églises des VI^e-VII^e siècles de Syrie, Judée et Arabie représentent des scènes reliées à la production de vin. Par exemple, dans le cas de Trèves au VI^e siècle, nous savons que le palais de l'évêque était une grande propriété contenant de nombreuses vignes qui s'étendaient sur diverses collines⁹. Cette continuité de l'exploitation de la vigne est également bien documentée en France, où les évêques deviennent les principaux viticulteurs des villes françaises pendant l'antiquité tardive¹⁰. En Catalogne, la même situation semble se produire, vu que nous savons qu'à l'époque carolingienne, les sièges épiscopaux sont devenus les principaux propriétaires des vignes, dépassant largement les propriétés appartenant aux comtes¹¹.

3 Barcino et le VI^e siècle

Dans le cas de l'Hispanie, l'archéologie et les sources écrites parlent d'une dynamisation ou renaissance de la ville hispanique pendant la seconde moitié du VI^e siècle ap. J.-C., Barcelone, Valencia, Cordoue ou Mérida en sont de bons exemples. À *Barcino*, le dynamisme urbain est impulsé par l'église et l'état wisigothique. L'épiscopat de Barcelone qui, comme nous l'avons vu, existait déjà au IV^e siècle ap. J.-C. se configure avec force au

VI^e siècle et au VI^e siècle ap. J.-C., il s'élargit et se monumentalise jusqu'à occuper, pratiquement, un quart de la ville (fig. 3).

Barcino a été le point de rencontre d'usurpateurs et de monarques et son rôle comme *sede regia* à différents moments des Ve et VI^e siècles, a sans doute été important. Quand la cour wisigothique est transférée à *Hispalis* et puis à *Toletum*, *Barcino* est demeurée un centre de pouvoir administratif et économique et a maintenu les fonctions administratives, religieuses et économiques. Les recherches archéologiques réalisées dans les dernières années montrent comment son rôle urbain non seulement perdure mais également se renforce, ce qui se traduit par une tentative de consolider la ville comme un espace de pouvoir et un centre administratif ayant un rôle bien clair de contrôle. Les sources écrites décrivent *Barcino* comme un centre de pouvoir économique où les évêques ont de plus en plus d'importance, comme le montre le *De Fisco Barcinonensis*, un document daté de 592 qui spécifie que les impôts de *Tarraco*, *Egara*, *Gerunda* et *Emporiae* étaient perçus à Barcelone. En outre, sous le règne de Leovigildo et Recaredo, la ville sera un important centre émetteur de monnaie avec les frappes de *Barcinona*.

3.1 Le noyau épiscopal

Pendant la seconde moitié du VI^e siècle, une revitalisation urbaine se produit à la charge de l'église et de l'état wisigothique, le noyau épiscopal s'élargit vers le nord-est de la ville avec la

VI^e ET VII^e SIÈCLES


FIG. 3 Plan du Groupe Épiscopal aux VI^e-VII^e siècles.
 Hypothèse: J. Beltrán de Heredia - Ch. Bonnet. Dessin: E. Revilla-MUHBA.

construction de nouveaux édifices (fig. 3). Au VI^e siècle, le siège épiscopal de Barcelone a été la scène de deux conciles, en 540 et en 599, des événements au caractère politique et religieux marqué. Le rôle de l'évêque arien Ugnas, qui a gardé sa fonction après sa reconversion lors du III^e Concile de Tolède de 589, a été, sans doute, décisif au moment de mettre en œuvre un plan de travaux ambitieux qui a touché la totalité du quartier chrétien. Il est fort probable que le rôle politique important joué par cet évêque pendant la période wisigothique lui a permis de réaliser une campagne de propagande fondée sur la monumentalisation du groupe épiscopal, comme le fera plus tard l'évêque Frodoïno à l'époque carolingienne. L'évêque Ugnas à Barcelone et bien d'autres évêques hispaniques au VI^e siècle, tels que Justinien à Valencia, Nebridio à Tarrassa et Paulo, Fidel et Mazona à Mérida, sont devenus de véritables mécènes et promoteurs de grands programmes architecturaux qui ont exalté et donné du prestige à leurs sièges respectifs.

Au VI^e siècle, la topographie chrétienne de *Barcino* devient plus complexe. Lors de la seconde moitié du siècle, que l'archéologie situe entre 530 et 595¹², le groupe épiscopal fait l'objet d'un projet architectural ambitieux et complexe qui a modifié l'image du quartier épiscopal. Les constructions ecclésiastiques

sont agrandies à l'est du noyau primitif au détriment des différents espaces de production, le vivier et l'installation vinicole, déjà mentionnés, qui disparaissent. Sur les niveaux de réutilisation est construite une église à plan de croix, avec sa nécropole annexe (fig. 3: 5). Un édifice palatin est également bâti, relié au pouvoir civil wisigothique, sans doute la résidence du *comes civitatis* (fig. 3: 6). En même temps est construit un nouveau palais épiscopal, sur les niveaux de rasement du précédent (fig. 3: 4), et les principaux espaces de circulation et de transit sont monumentalisés par des portiques (fig. 3: 7 & 8). Des réhabilitations sont également détectées dans les autres édifices, comme le baptistère (fig. 3: 2) ou la salle de réception de l'évêque (fig. 3: 3): nouvelles décorations picturales sur les murs, espaces ornés de chancels, etc. Les anciens espaces de circulation entre les différents édifices se dessinent à présent plus clairement, vu que la plupart sont dotés de zones à portiques (fig. 3: 7 & 8).

La construction d'un ensemble thermal à cette époque et sa proximité du groupe épiscopal (fig. 3: 10) nous mène à les mettre en rapport, bien qu'il soit difficile d'établir si nous avons affaire à un témoignage du rôle d'évergètes des évêques ou s'il s'agit d'installations qui ont fait partie du propre groupe épiscopal.

¹² Datations obtenues à partir des matériaux archéologiques (céramique et pièces de monnaie) et des datations des mortiers par C-14 (AMS). Cf. à cet égard Beltrán de Heredia 2009b, 161.

- A Mosaic de Sant Miquel
- B Mosaic del Circ
- C Mosaic de les Tres Gràcies
- D Mosaic del carrer de la Palma de Sant Just
- E Mosaic del carrer de la Baixada de Santa Eulàlia
- F Mosaic de la Plaça Regomir
- G Mosaic de la plaça de Sant Felip Neri
- H Mosaic de Sant Sever

- DOMUS
- a Domus de Sant Iu*
 - b Domus del Palau Arquebisbal*
 - c Domus de Sant Honorat*
 - d Domus d'Avinyó*
 - e Domus de Sant Miquel*
 - f Domus de Bisbe Caçador*
 - g Domus de Sant Felip Neri*

-  Muralla segle IV dC
 Abocador/Fossat
 Pervivències actuals de possibles traçats romans

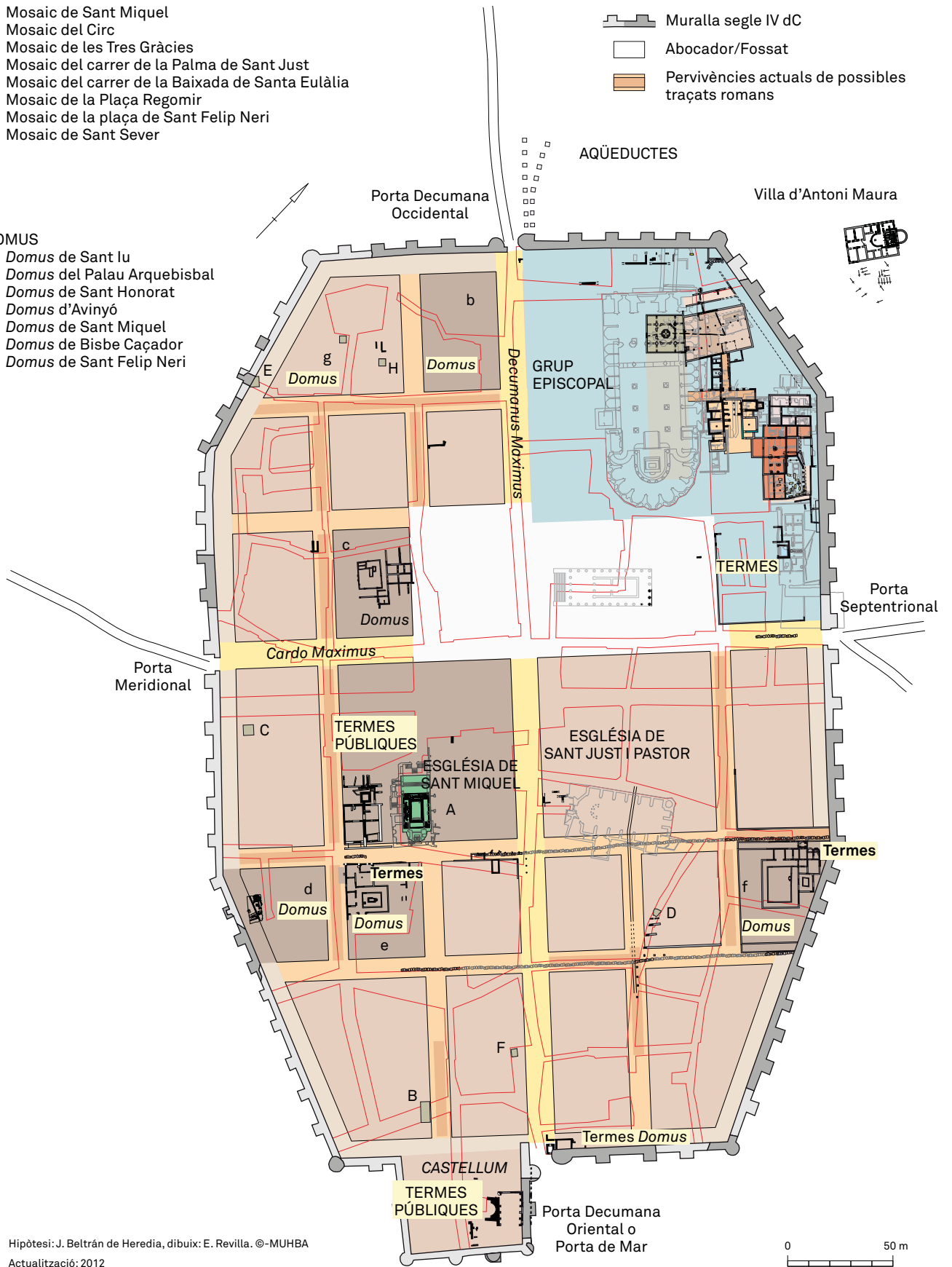


FIG. 4 Plan de la ville aux VI^e-VII^e siècles.

Hypothèse: J. Beltrán de Heredia - Ch. Bonnet. Dessin: E. Revilla-MUHBA.

Ce processus d'agrandissement et de monumentalisation du groupe épiscopal configurerait définitivement ce qui serait le quartier épiscopal, un quartier compact et parfaitement planifié à côté de la muraille et de l'une des portes d'entrée à la ville, une porte qui au Haut Moyen Âge était déjà connue sous le nom de «porte de l'évêque». Un quartier où résidaient les hiérarchies ecclésiastiques et également la plus haute représentation de l'état wisigothique dans la ville, le *comes civitatis*, délégué royal qui avait à sa charge le gouvernement de la ville.

3.2 La structure urbaine

Le centre du pouvoir politico-religieux des VI^e-VII^e siècles ap. J.-C., devait occuper presque un quart de l'extension de la ville, si nous tenons compte des espaces destinés au clergé, les salles du personnel laïque au service de l'évêque, les entrepôts et les archives, ainsi que d'autres dépendances qui, sans doute, ont fait partie du noyau épiscopal complexe, même si, archéologiquement, elles ne sont pas connues (fig. 4).

En marge du centre de pouvoir, l'intérieur de la ville se transforme également, même si nous ignorons si cette intense activité édilitaire documentée pendant la seconde moitié du VI^e siècle, a pu également s'étendre à d'autres points de la ville, vu que nous ne savons rien des résidences des élites urbaines de cette époque. Cependant, nous ne pouvons pas oublier que la ville tardive-ancienne était fondamentalement un centre administratif et de culte; les programmes édilitaires rattachés aux classes du pouvoir civil ou religieux, avec des édifices importants, qui contribuaient à donner du prestige à leurs occupants étaient une chose; une autre, très différente, étaient les constructions propres à l'architecture domestique. À cet effet, nous disposons d'un nombre inférieur de données archéologiques, mais non pas pour autant moins illustratives, comme nous le verrons par la suite.

En marge du groupe épiscopal, nous devons supposer l'existence d'autres édifices destinés au culte chrétien *intra muros*. Nous pouvons parler de la christianisation des thermes publics de Sant Miquel (fig. 4: A). L'utilisation d'une mosaïque du II^e siècle ap. J.-C. dans l'édifice religieux médiéval qui est documentée en 951, le matériel associé apparu lors des fouilles et la présence de quelques enterrements dans une caisse de *tegulae*, aident à situer le phénomène, bien documenté à d'autres endroits, de la reconversion des thermes en églises, également à *Barcino*¹³. Nous supposons que l'actuelle église de Santos Justo y Pastor, dont le vocable s'étend à l'époque wisigothique, a une origine très ancienne, datée habituellement du IV^e siècle. À l'intérieur de l'église se trouvent des éléments architecturaux réutilisés d'époque wisigothique, ce qui semble confirmer un précédent cultuel. Le vocable aux saints enfants martyrisés au IV^e siècle à *Complutum* (Alcalá de Henares), et la relation de Paulino de Nola originaire de cette ville, qui a été ordonné prêtre à Barcelone en 393, est une donnée à prendre en considération¹⁴. Nous pensons que l'orientation de cette église

primitive suivait celle établie pour la cathédrale principale et pour les autres édifices religieux connus à l'intérieur de la ville et, par conséquent, elle ne répond pas à l'orientation de l'édifice actuel d'époque gothique, même s'il existe probablement une continuité dans la position de l'autel et des reliques. Comme pour la cathédrale, l'absence de fouilles empêche toute vérification.

Nous constatons également une nouvelle occupation des espaces publics qui avait commencé au II^e siècle ap. J.-C. Il se produit un rétrécissement et une déviation des voies primitives, à cause de leur invasion ou de l'occupation des portiques. Toutefois, le quadrillage romain primitif est conservé, mais avec les modifications mentionnées. Il semble que le *forum* entre dans une nette décadence à partir de la première moitié du Ve siècle ap. J.-C., époque à laquelle nous constatons la réutilisation de piédestaux honorifiques, épigraphiques et anépigraphiques dans l'ouvrage du palais épiscopal datée des premières années de ce siècle. D'autres endroits de la ville, comme le monastère de San Pau del Camp ou l'église de Santa Maria del Pi, situés dans le *suburbium*, utilisent des piédestaux du forum dans leurs premières constructions chrétiennes¹⁵.

L'emploi de matériaux pour les entreprises architecturales réalisées pendant l'antiquité tardive est un phénomène bien connu et largement documenté. À *Barcino*, la ville se transforme en une carrière permanente, nous pourrions dire qu'il s'agit de «détruire pour construire»¹⁶, un fait qui commence au Ve siècle et qui se maintient au cours du VI^e siècle, comme nous avons pu le constater dans toutes les constructions bâties pendant la seconde moitié du VI^e siècle dans le groupe épiscopal. En marge du groupe épiscopal, toutes les constructions documentées dans la ville, qui peuvent se situer à cette époque, incorporent tout type de matériaux architecturaux, chapiteaux, colonnes, piédestaux épigraphiques et anépigraphiques, bases, etc.

Au VII^e siècle, certaines zones de la ville nous apparaissent désoccupées et avec des indices d'une certaine déstructuration urbaine, il semble qu'une partie de la ville se ruralise, de nombreuses fosses ou silos étant utilisés comme déversoirs. À cet effet, la présence d'enterrements isolés *intra muros*, surtout d'enfants, est très parlante, comme ceux localisés sur les niveaux de réutilisation de l'ancienne *domus* de la rue Bisbe Caçador¹⁷, ou dans la zone de la *domus* du palais archiepiscopal, à côté de la porte *decumana* occidentale¹⁸. Il faut également souligner la localisation de certains enterrements occasionnels dans des silos¹⁹. Ces enterrements n'ont aucun rapport avec les inhumations *intra muros* privilégiées, que nous traiterons plus tard; bien au contraire, il semble que nous soyons devant des inhumations «clandestines» de personnes qui, bien qu'enfreignant l'interdiction d'enterrer à l'intérieur de la ville, n'avaient pas suffisamment de pouvoir pour le faire «officiellement», comme c'est le cas des cimetières épiscopaux. Dans le cas des inhumations d'enfants, nous ne pouvons pas non plus écarter l'idée qu'elles sont la conséquence de

¹³ Beltrán de Heredia 2008a.

¹⁴ La documentation littéraire recueille que son fils Celso, en bas âge, a été enterré à Complutum, à côté d'un martyrium, probablement celui des enfants Justo et Pastor.

¹⁵ Beltrán de Heredia 2010b.

¹⁶ Ce fait est très évident à *Barcino*, où toutes les structures tardives documentées dans la ville, des constructions *intra muros* ou des constructions dans le *suburbium*, incluent de manière très générale des matériaux archéologiques, des pierres de taille et des pièces de maçonnerie, plus anciens.

¹⁷ García et al. 2002, 365.

¹⁸ Roda 1982, note 9.

¹⁹ Cette pratique a été documentée dans deux sites de fouilles très proches du forum de la colonie.

coutumes païennes très anciennes, comme celle d'enterrer des enfants en bas âge dans le cadre familial. Ces pratiques ont perduré au moins jusqu'au XIII^e siècle en Catalogne, comme l'ont prouvé les sources archéologiques et documentaires²⁰.

3.3 La maison urbaine: le processus de division des *domus*

Dans les *domus* de *Barcino* archéologiquement connues, nous documentons un processus de division des différents espaces pour accueillir un plus grand nombre de familles, ce qui comporte l'entière disparition de la distribution originale de la maison romaine. Ce processus est réalisé de manière progressive et ne suppose pas une rupture brusque par rapport au plan original de la *domus*, par conséquent sans niveaux de destruction massifs, uniquement des démontages de structures considérées superflues et la construction de nouveaux éléments, mais en maintenant ou en utilisant les murs porteurs. Apparaissent des bancs, de nouvelles cloisons qui délimitent des pièces beaucoup plus petites, des foyers et des pavements en chaux ou terre battue. Les somptueuses *domus* deviennent des maisons de voisins²¹.

Dans le cas de la «*domus* de Bisbe Caçador» (fig. 4: f), nous constatons la construction de murs qui divisent les espaces, des fermetures de portes et l'existence de différents foyers, qui indiquent la création de nouveaux espaces à caractère domestique et également artisanal, comme l'indique la localisation d'un four à verre²². Dans la «*domus* de Sant Miquel» (fig. 4: e), nous pouvons voir comment la structure interne de la maison se transforme entièrement avec la présence de foyers et l'apparition de cloisons qui créent des dépendances beaucoup plus petites²³. Le même processus se produit au début du VI^e siècle dans la «*domus* de Sant Honorat» (fig. 4: c), où sont modifiés les niveaux du sol originaux où apparaissent de nouveaux pavements en chaux sur les mosaïques, des niveaux où il existe des témoignages de foyers, des trous de poteau et des découpes à la fonction incertaine, etc. Malgré ces réhabilitations, les différentes salles nouvellement créées s'organisent autour du *viridarium* qui continue à fonctionner comme une structure centrale²⁴. Il semble en être de même, toutefois avec moins de données, pour la «*domus* du palais archiepiscopal», dans laquelle, après le Ve siècle ap. J.-C., la maison est réhabilitée avec un caractère plus sobre et plus pauvre²⁵.

Ces réhabilitations mettent en évidence des logements plus réduits et une occupation de moindre qualité, des logements qui cohabitent avec leurs déversoirs domestiques, un phénomène similaire à celui documenté à Mérida, mais également à *Bracara Augusta* et à *Corduba* à la même période. Le cas de Mérida est emblématique, avec l'un des exemples les plus clairs dans les logements du quartier de Morería²⁶. Le même phénomène est documenté en Italie à la même époque, comme le prouvent les fouilles de Brescia, où sont également fractionnés les anciens espaces domestiques²⁷.

Nous sommes sans doute face à un changement dans les traditions et dans les modèles de construction par rapport au modèle précédent, avec une nette différence entre l'édilicite privée et l'édilicite des programmes publics du pouvoir établi, ressortant tout particulièrement le rôle des évêques et de leurs édifices religieux, une architecture officielle du pouvoir et de la représentation. En termes généraux et à partir des V-VI^e siècles ap. J.-C., nous pouvons dire qu'il se produit un changement dans la culture matérielle dans tous ses aspects, un reflet des transformations des structures productives et commerciales d'époques antérieures. L'architecture de l'époque met en évidence un paysage très varié avec différents types de constructions et des solutions techniques riches et diverses, en fonction d'une pyramide sociale et économique très différenciée, comme l'a exposé G.P. Brogiolo²⁸.

3.4 Les morts entrent dans la ville: les inhumations privilégiées *intramuros*²⁹

L'apparition de nécropoles *intra muros* est un phénomène qui va de pair avec la christianisation. Avec le christianisme, les morts entrent dans les villes, brisant ainsi la barrière que supposait le *pomerium*, qui séparait la ville des vivants et la ville des morts. À *Barcino*, tandis que les zones de nécropoles s'étendaient dans le *suburbium*, quelques rares élus étaient enterrés à l'intérieur de la ville, à côté des édifices de culte. À cet effet, nous devons mentionner la nécropole tardive-ancienne de la place du Rey rattachée à l'église à plan en croix (fig. 5), sans doute à caractère de martyr, qui a été bâtie pendant la seconde moitié du VI^e siècle, et que nous avons déjà mentionnée. La nécropole, une authentique *area* funéraire à ciel ouvert, limitée par des murs, n'a accueilli que 24 enterrements (la moitié d'enfants)³⁰, datés de la fin du VI^e siècle et des premières années du VII^e siècle ap. J.-C., et pratiqués dans des amphores (Keay LX, LXI, LXII, LXIII et LRA-4) et des caisses de *tegulae*. Les enterrements présentaient quelques objets à usage personnel, des boucles d'oreille, une boucle de ceinture, une fibule, un bracelet. La fibule nous apporte des données sur sa filiation culturelle, vu qu'il s'agit d'un élément féminin relié directement à la mode et à la manière de se vêtir des wisigothes, et elle est de plus la seule pièce de ces caractéristiques trouvée dans la *Tarraconense*.

Nous connaissons l'existence d'autres enterrements privilégiés *intra muros* en rapport au noyau principal basilique/baptistère. À l'ouest de ces deux édifices, à côté de la muraille, ont été localisées des zones funéraires avec des inhumations. Il est fort possible qu'il s'agisse d'autres *aerae*, comme celle reliée à l'église cruciforme.

Au nord-ouest de l'*aula* épiscopal se trouve également une annexe latérale qui a abrité des morts privilégiés. Les restes conservés ne permettent pas de déterminer s'il s'agit d'un portique, d'un couloir ou d'une galerie (fig. 3: II). Nous connaissons trois inhumations dans des amphores et une dans une caisse de

20 Riu 1982.

21 Beltrán de Heredia 2008c; 2009b.

22 Garcia et al. 2002, 365.

23 Raya & Miró 1994.

24 Florensa & Gamarra 2006.

25 Granados & Rodà 1993.

26 Mateos & Alba 2000; Alba 2005.

27 Brogiolo 1994, 216.

28 Brogiolo 1994.

29 Pour plus d'informations sur ce sujet, cf.:

Beltrán de Heredia 2008 lettre.

30 Il semble qu'à une époque les enfants étaient l'un des secteurs de population les plus protégés en les destinant fréquemment à un emplacement privilégié.

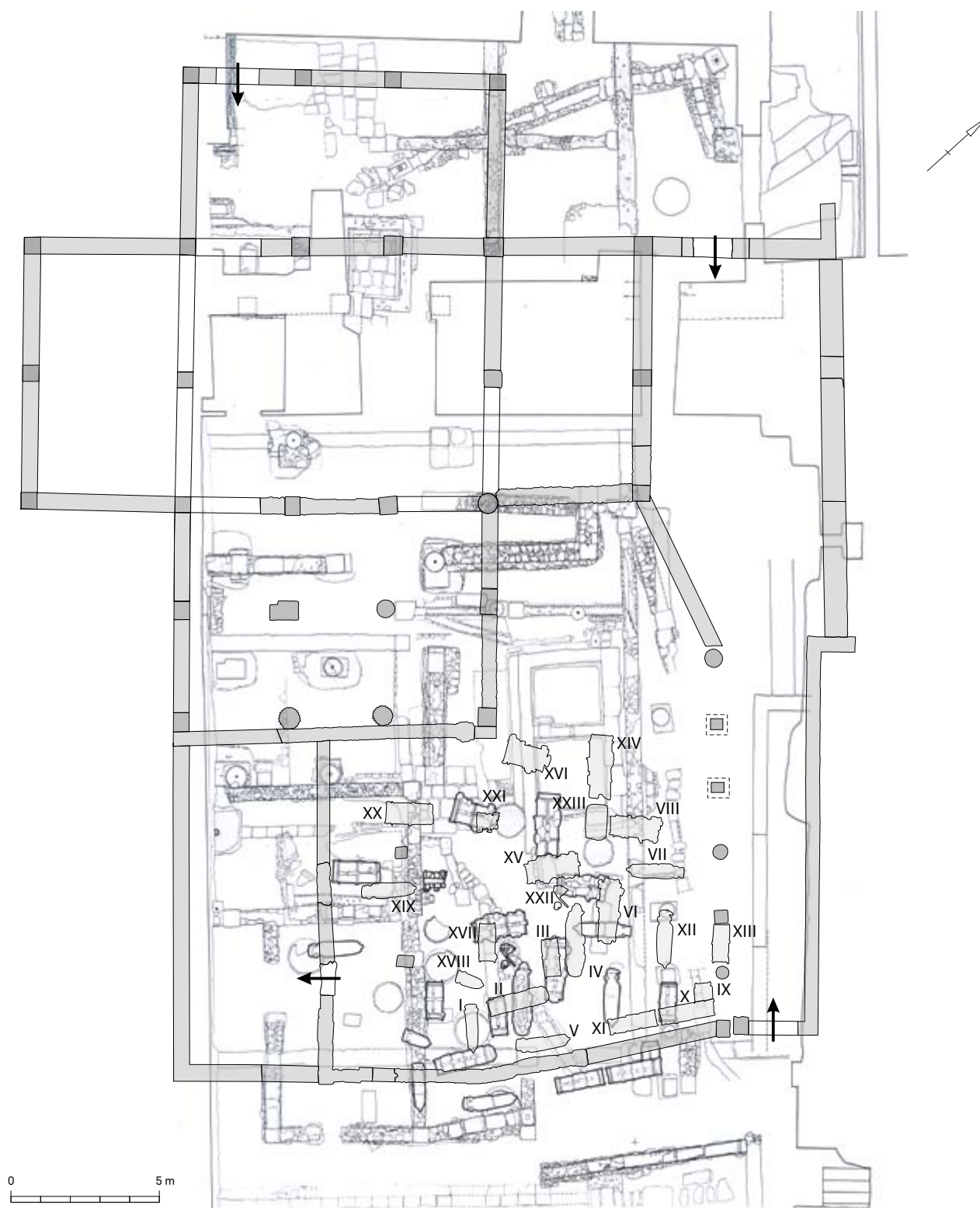


FIG. 5 Plan de l'église cruciforme avec la nécropole annexe. VI^e siècle.
Dessin: E. Revilla-MUHBA.

tegulae. Le chiffre n'est pas indicatif, vu que la quasi-totalité de ce couloir n'a pas été fouillée, et les trouvailles funéraires sont dues à deux actions ponctuelles de faible importance. L'étude anthropologique a mis en évidence que les inhumations correspondent à quatre individus de sexe masculin, âgés de 20 à 28 ans, de 28 à 38 ans, de 45 à 55 ans et de 60 à 70 ans, respectivement. Cette espérance de vie assez élevée, surtout dans deux des cas, et le fait qu'aucun d'entre eux ne présentait de déficit nutritionnel, ni de pathologies propres à une activité musculaire, indiquent qu'il s'agit d'individus qui jouissaient d'une certaine qualité de vie. Les marqueurs extraits de l'étude anthropologique sont conformes à l'emplacement des sépultures, vu que les cimetières épiscopaux étaient destinés aux élites locales et à la hiérarchie ecclésiastique.

Finalement, nous avons documenté des enterrements d'enfants isolés à l'intérieur de certains édifices, comme le baptistère et une salle annexe à l'*aula*. Dans le premier cas, il correspond à un nouveau-né (38-40 semaines); pour son inhumation une fosse a été directement ouverte dans le pavement de l'*opus signinum* du baptistère puis elle a été recouverte d'une *tegulae*. Dans le second cas, un enfant d'environ quatre ans, une caisse en pierres avait été construite avec une couverture de dalles, qui a été par la suite scellée par le pavement d'*opus sectile* de l'*aula*. Les deux enterrements nous indiquent clairement des emplacements privilégiés, vu que les deux édifices sont d'une grande valeur et représentent la fonction épiscopale par excellence.

3.5 *Barcino*, ville productrice et réceptrice

Barcelone est dans l'Antiquité tardive une ville active qui a maintenu vivants les circuits commerciaux pendant toute l'étape de son appartenance au domaine wisigothique, comme le montrent les découvertes qui proviennent de tout l'arc de la Méditerranée, Ibiza, île de Lipari, sud de l'Italie, Cerdagne, Carthagène et des ateliers de l'Afrique du Nord, actuellement Tunisie, Algérie, Lybie, Pamphylie (aujourd'hui Turquie asiatique) et Palestine³¹. La céramique arrivait également du sud-est péninsulaire et sûrement de nombreux autres endroits qui doivent encore être établis. Ces céramiques montrent le caractère portuaire et commercial d'une ville côtière de la Méditerranée.

Une ville réceptrice et consommatrice mais également productrice comme l'attestent les études de céramique des dernières années qui démontrent une dynamique commerciale complexe³². Ces études montrent l'existence de différents ateliers dans la ville. À partir des études archéométriques, il a été possible d'identifier dix fabriques différentes qui prouvent une importante production locale, avec un grand nombre d'ateliers qui se chargeaient d'approvisionner la ville. La production de céramique tardive-ancienne faite à Barcelone était destinée à un marché local ou régional, comme le prouvent les trouvailles de ce type de pièces dans la zone côtière de la région du Maresme.

En outre, la localisation d'un four à verre nous indique une production dans la ville. Il s'agit du four retrouvé dans les niveaux de

réutilisation de la zone thermale de la *domus* du Bisbe Caçador, ainsi que de la présence de déchets reliés à la production vitrée à d'autres endroits dans la ville.

3.6 L'organisation du monde suburbain à *Barcino*³³

3.6.1 Voies et nécropoles

Barcino possède la même dynamique que d'autres villes d'*Hispania* dans lesquelles nous pouvons voir comment les zones funéraires s'organisaient dans le *suburbium* et comment les évêques et l'évergétisme privé jouaient un rôle important dans celui-ci, avec la fondation de basiliques et la consolidation du culte de martyrs.

À Barcelone, nous constatons une organisation et parcellisation de l'espace funéraire qui semble indiquer des nécropoles indépendantes qui doivent répondre à différentes propriétés. Les différentes zones étaient bien délimitées par des structures de plus ou moins grande envergure, dans certains cas par des murs, dans d'autres marqués par des éléments périssables ou, même, par des bornes pouvant être reconnues même si elles n'étaient pas marquées. Les voies et les chemins ont servi d'éléments articulateurs et, en suivant la tradition romaine, les tombes s'alignent en épi à côté de la voie.

Il se produit une croissance très importante du *suburbium*, où les zones destinées à des nécropoles se succèdent, occupant de grandes étendues de terrain, un *suburbium* dont la surface dépasse 120 hectares, une surface douze fois supérieure à celle occupée par la ville romaine, d'à peine 10 hectares. Dans les vastes zones funéraires, les inhumations fonctionnent et se succèdent sur un seul plan, ce qui indique que l'étendue des zones destinées à enterrer les habitants de *Barcino* s'élargissait, au lieu d'occuper ou de réorganiser des surfaces fixes. Seulement à deux ou trois endroits il semble exister une superposition d'enterrements, qui n'altèrent pas les précédents, ni modifient, à peine, la cote de circulation.

Les tombes sont toujours distribuées d'une manière ordonnée et avec un espace suffisant entre elles pour pouvoir circuler. Cet aménagement et la non superposition d'enterrements indiquent que tous devaient être signalisés extérieurement. Des indicateurs qui aidaient à l'aménagement de l'espace funéraire, contribuaient au souvenir et rendaient possible la réutilisation de la sépulture, comme nous l'avons déjà vu dans plusieurs cas. De la plupart, nous ignorons la signalisation externe, qui pouvait être une ou plusieurs pierres ou un élément en bois non conservé. À cet effet, il faut souligner les pierres tombales d'*opus signinum* avec un grand nombre d'exemples conservés à Barcelone, qui signalisaient la tombe au ras du sol.

Les enterrements semblent cohabiter avec d'autres types d'activités, sans doute agricoles, et d'autres à caractère saisonnier ; il y a une présence de silos, mais il existe également des indices d'activités artisanales (ateliers), ou d'espaces consacrés

31 Beltrán de Heredia 2005a; Jarrega 2005.

32 Buxeda & Cau 2005; Beltrán de Heredia 2005a; 2005b.

33 Pour plus d'informations sur la christianisation du *suburbium*, cf. Beltrán de Heredia 2010b, 2011.

à des déversoirs de longue durée, sans rejeter la possibilité d'un *habitat* dispersé (foyers et trous de poteau), même si l'archéologie ne nous en a pas donné une image claire.

3.6.2 La christianisation des uillas

Pendant l'Antiquité tardive, les *uillae* perdent leur caractère original, leur architecture s'estompe et leurs fonctions varient. La christianisation des grands propriétaires comporte dans de nombreux cas la construction d'oratoires, qui finissent par devenir des ensembles ecclésiastiques plus ou moins importants et dynamiques.

À *Barcino* se distinguent deux enclaves qui ont joué un rôle important dans la christianisation du *suburbium*: l'*uilla* de Sant Pau del Camp et celle d'Antoni Maura, dans le *suburbium* occidental et oriental, respectivement. L'*uilla* du Haut-Empire de Sant Pau del Camp présente une continuité pendant l'Antiquité tardive, une transformation progressive de l'*uilla* se produisant, les changements les plus significatifs pourraient se situer à partir du Ve siècle. Nous nous trouvons face à un espace de résidence, dont le *dominus* a construit dans ses propriétés un mausolée pour lui et sa famille, un mausolée qui a pu donner lieu à un oratoire et plus tard à une église générant une vaste zone de nécropole, bien documentée archéologiquement. L'aménagement ne s'éloigne pas des modèles connus³⁴.

De plus, il est possible que la transformation de l'*uilla* ait conduit à la construction d'un monastère et que le monastère du Xe siècle ait une origine monastique beaucoup plus ancienne. Les actes d'évergétisme de membres importants de grandes familles aisées qui remettaient leurs possessions à l'église et fondaient des basiliques et des monastères sur leurs propriétés, sont bien connus à partir des sources écrites et ont été certifiés par l'archéologie. Dans tous les cas, une petite communauté a pu laisser une trame de structures simples mais d'identification difficile comme espace monastique.

En ce qui concerne Antoni Maura (fig. 6), nous savons peu de choses sur le processus d'évolution de cette *uilla* et sur la manière dont elle est passée d'un espace de production et d'*habitat* à un cadre funéraire chrétien³⁵. Toutefois, nous observons sans difficulté un édifice funéraire construit sur les structures de l'*uilla*. Cet édifice présentait un plan rectangulaire avec un chevet à absides et maintenait les orientations des structures du Haut-Empire, ce qui indique un processus de transformation de l'espace d'habitation et non pas une rupture totale. Cet édifice hébergeait une série d'inhumations pratiquées dans des *formae*, des caisses de *tegulae* et, exceptionnellement, dans une amphore. Ici se trouvait une inhumation singulière qui disposait d'une pierre tombale massive qui présente comme motif central une couronne pourpre avec les lettres alpha et oméga. Traditionnellement, la tombe a été attribuée à Saint Paciano, évêque de

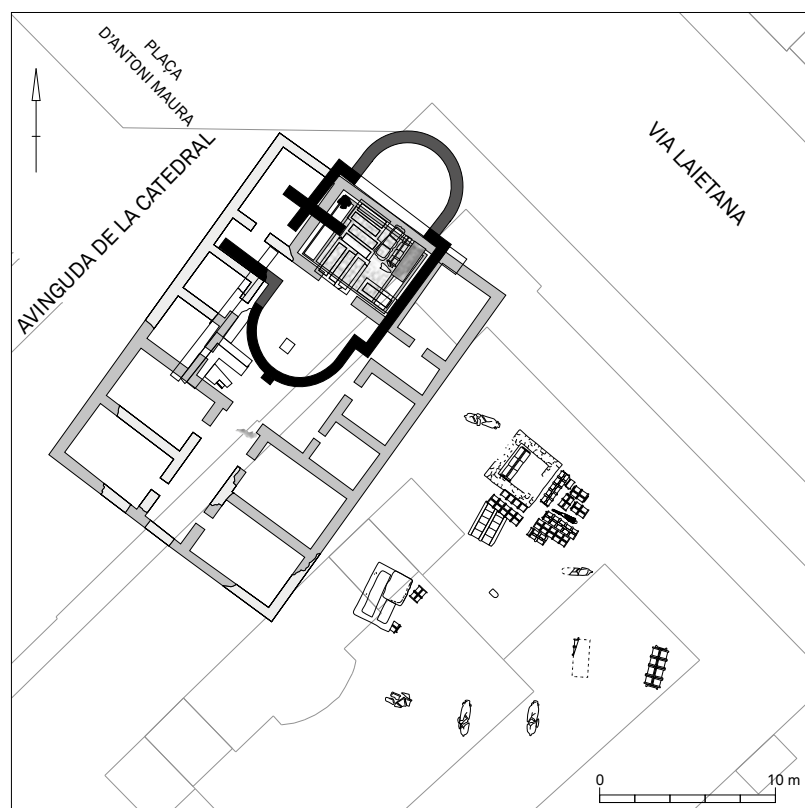


FIG. 6 Plan des structures de l'*uilla* d'Antoni Maura avec la *cella* funéraire tardive-ancienne. Dessin: E. Revilla-V. Triay- MUHBA.

³⁴ Ce comportement peut être apprécié à Satigny où la mort du propriétaire et sa sépulture sont liées à une première église ou à la Villa de Lullingstone à Kent, où la construction d'un mausolée et d'un temple consacré au culte des eaux à la fin du IIIe siècle devient un oratoire familial à la fin du IVe siècle puis à une église (Ripoll & Arce 2001). Un autre cas intéressant est celui, plus proche, de Santa Maria de los Arcos en Tricio, Rioja, une église à trois nefs dont l'abside est un mausolée de l'époque impériale, noyau de la basilique des IVe-Ve siècles (Sáenz Preciado 1999).

³⁵ Le thème est assez complexe et se trouve en ce moment en cours d'étude.

Barcelone au IV^e siècle, d'autres travaux ont indiqué une tombe de martyr et elle a également été considérée comme la tombe de Teodosio, fils d'Ataulfo et Gala Placidia. En marge des possibles ou impossibles attributions, la tombe appartient sans doute à un personnage important de la communauté chrétienne qui a vécu au Ve siècle, comme le démontre la chronologie de la pierre tombale. L'intérieur de l'édifice est entièrement pavé d'*opus signinum*, la pierre tombale massive se distinguant, car disposée pour être vue et pour souligner son importance dans cet espace.

3.6.3 Les cimetières ad sanctos, les basiliques suburbaines et les monastères

Les sources écrites nous révèlent la présence au VI^e siècle de basiliques suburbaines et de communautés monastiques dans les villes de la Péninsule Ibérique ; *Barcino* n'est pas restée en marge de cette nouvelle organisation, conséquence du processus de christianisation. Dans le cas de Barcelone, archéologiquement, nous voyons nettement l'association entre des nécropoles chrétiennes tardives-anciennes et/ou des édifices de culte et des édifices religieux médiévaux conservés actuellement, une continuité se produisant dans les lieux de culte. Santa María del Mar en est un exemple très clair (fig. 7), même si nous ne connaissons pas archéologiquement le premier édifice culturel. La construction de basiliques suburbaines à caractère de martyr, comme nous pouvons le voir à de nombreux autres endroits, attirait les fidèles. C'est ce qui a été établi pour Santa Maria del Mar, mais aussi pour Sant Cugat, même si jusqu'à présent l'archéologie n'a pas découvert ces basiliques primitives.

Nous ne savons rien, au niveau archéologique, sur l'existence de monastères dans le *suburbium*, nous ne possédons qu'une référence dans les sources écrites, qui recueille comment l'évêque Quirico a fondé un monastère dédié à Sainte Eulalie près de sa tombe. Il est également possible que le monastère médiéval de Sant Pau del Camp ait son origine dans une installation monastique primitive. À l'origine, les monastères n'étaient que des espaces fermés avec à peine un oratoire et un petit édifice où vivait la communauté. Plus tard apparaissent un ou plusieurs édifices de culte, des ateliers, des espaces communs, les vergers ou zones cultivées, un espace pour le logement de serfs et du personnel rattaché au monastère, le cimetière des moines, un autre indépendant pour le personnel qui vivait dans le monastère, etc., jusqu'à composer une surface assez vaste. Les études statistiques réalisées pour les villes épiscopales de la Gaule montrent un pourcentage élevé de communautés monastiques existantes, des communautés qui se situent autour de la ville. Les monastères installés dans le *suburbium*, les basiliques funéraires et les *xenodochia* formaient une «couronne défensive spirituelle» de la ville³⁶.

3.6.4 Les élites urbaines et leurs espaces funéraires

Dans le *suburbium* de *Barcino*, il faut distinguer pour ses caractéristiques, la zone funéraire de Santa Caterina, avec une série d'*areae* contiguës et regroupées (fig. 8). Il s'agit d'espaces à l'air

libre délimités par des murs en pierre qui deviennent des espaces ayant une signification funéraire spéciale. Dans ces espaces se concentre toute l'architecture funéraire localisée à Barcelona, un nombre important de monuments qui signalisent la présence des personnes qui y sont enterrées, ce qui indique une zone funéraire destinée aux élites locales. Les monuments à caractère familial ont dû accueillir les différents membres des familles les plus importantes de la *Barcino* des Ve et VI^e siècles.

En outre, nous ignorons tout du lieu d'enterrement destiné aux évêques et à la haute hiérarchie ecclésiastique, la plupart ont dû être enterrés à l'intérieur du quartier épiscopal, où est connue l'existence de plusieurs zones funéraires, mais la proximité de l'enclave d'Antoni Maura avec la cathédrale, et selon ses caractéristiques, nous pousse à penser plutôt à une destination reliée à la hiérarchie ecclésiastique. Il est fort possible que l'inhumation à Antoni Maura d'un ou plusieurs membres de la communauté chrétienne ait généré une vaste zone de nécropoles aux portes de la ville. Dans tous les cas, nous avons un édifice funéraire qui accueille plusieurs tombes signalisées qui ont dû appartenir aux élites urbaines.

À Valencia, par exemple, un édifice à plan cruciforme accueille la tombe d'un évêque, sans doute Justiniano, ainsi que d'autres inhumations «épiscopales»³⁷, dont les caractéristiques, comme dans le cas d'Antoni Maura, montrent indubitablement un caractère privilégié des individus qui y sont enterrés.

4 Le VIII^e siècle et la conquête musulmane: Bargilūna

Au cours de la première décennie du VIII^e siècle, une grande partie de la vallée de l'Èbre et de la Province de Tarragone avait échappé au contrôle du roi wisigothique de Tolède Roderico. En fait, au moment de l'invasion d'*Hispania* (en 711), la zone était gouvernée par Akila II, caudillo local. La ville de Barcelone a dû capituler, tout comme Saragosse (714), Huesca, Lérida et Narbonne (719-720). Barcelone et son territoire ont alors fait partie de l'Al-Andalous pendant presque un siècle (714-801), la ville a été dénommée par les musulmans Bargilūna. La présence islamique est recueillie dans les témoignages écrits, également dans les sources archéologiques qui, bien que peu nombreuses, montrent la présence musulmane dans notre ville³⁸. Deux événements caractérisent la courte histoire de la Barcelone musulmane: son rôle comme base importante pour l'expansion islamique dans le sud de la Gaule et une certaine continuité sociale, économique et administrative par rapport à la période précédente. Le *comes civitatis* wisigothique sera remplacé par le wali ou gouverneur militaire arabe, mais à ses côtés l'évêque continuera d'être le chef de l'administration urbaine et le responsable de la collecte d'impôts.

Nous savons très peu de choses sur le résultat de la conquête. Au niveau archéologique, il semble qu'il ne reste pas de témoignages très importants sur l'urbanisme ou sur l'habitation,

³⁶ Biarne 2002.

³⁷ Ribera 2005.

³⁸ Il est difficile de reconnaître ce siècle dans le

registre archéologique vu le manque de fossiles
modèles guides clairs mais de nouveaux registres
céramiques sont progressivement identifiés et, en

plus de la pièce de monnaie arabe, permettent de
fixer l'horizon chronologique andalou.

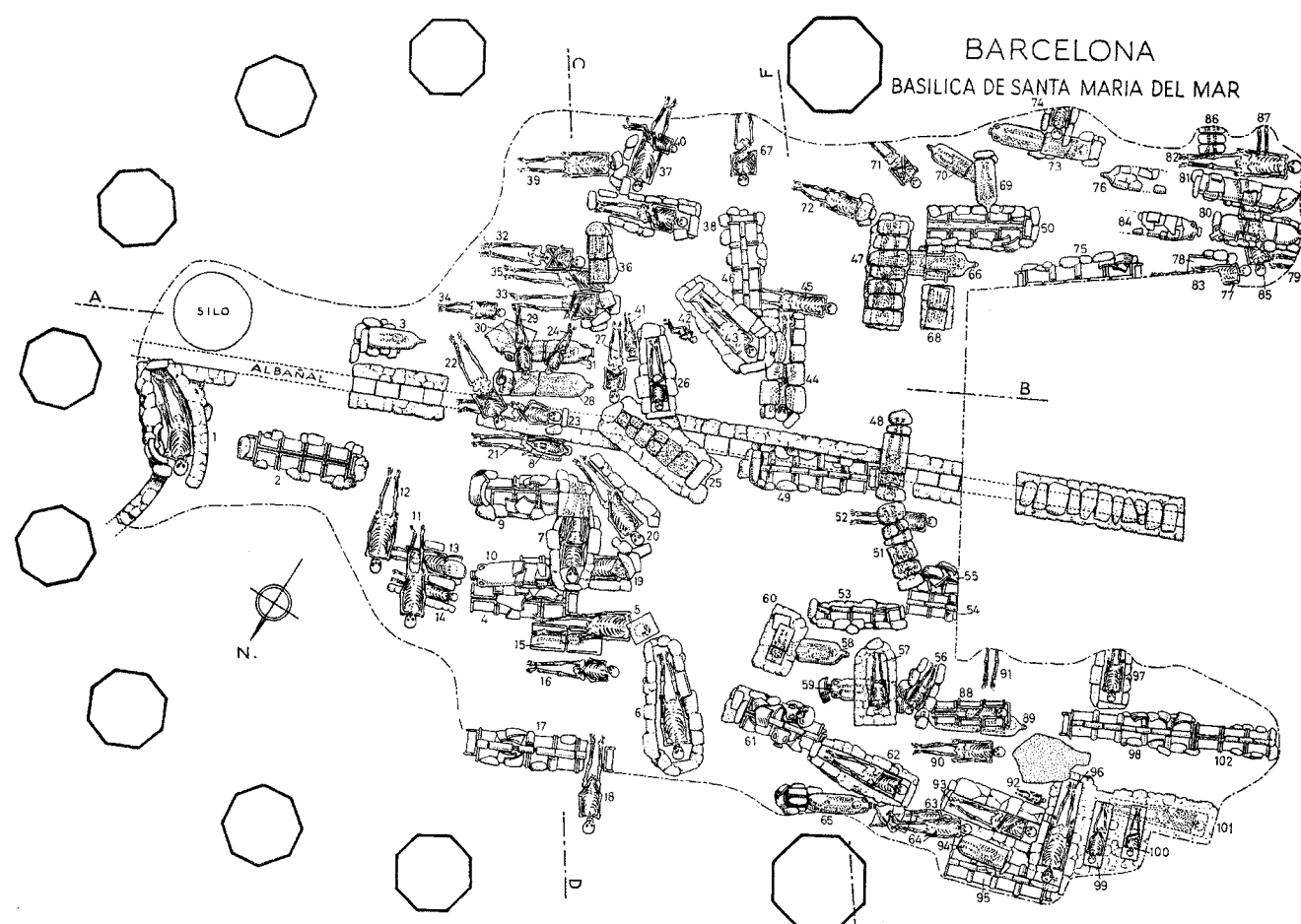


FIG. 7 Situation de l'église gothique de Santa Maria del Mar avec les enterrements tardifs-anciens localisés dans el sous-sol de l'église.
Photographie: MUHBA.

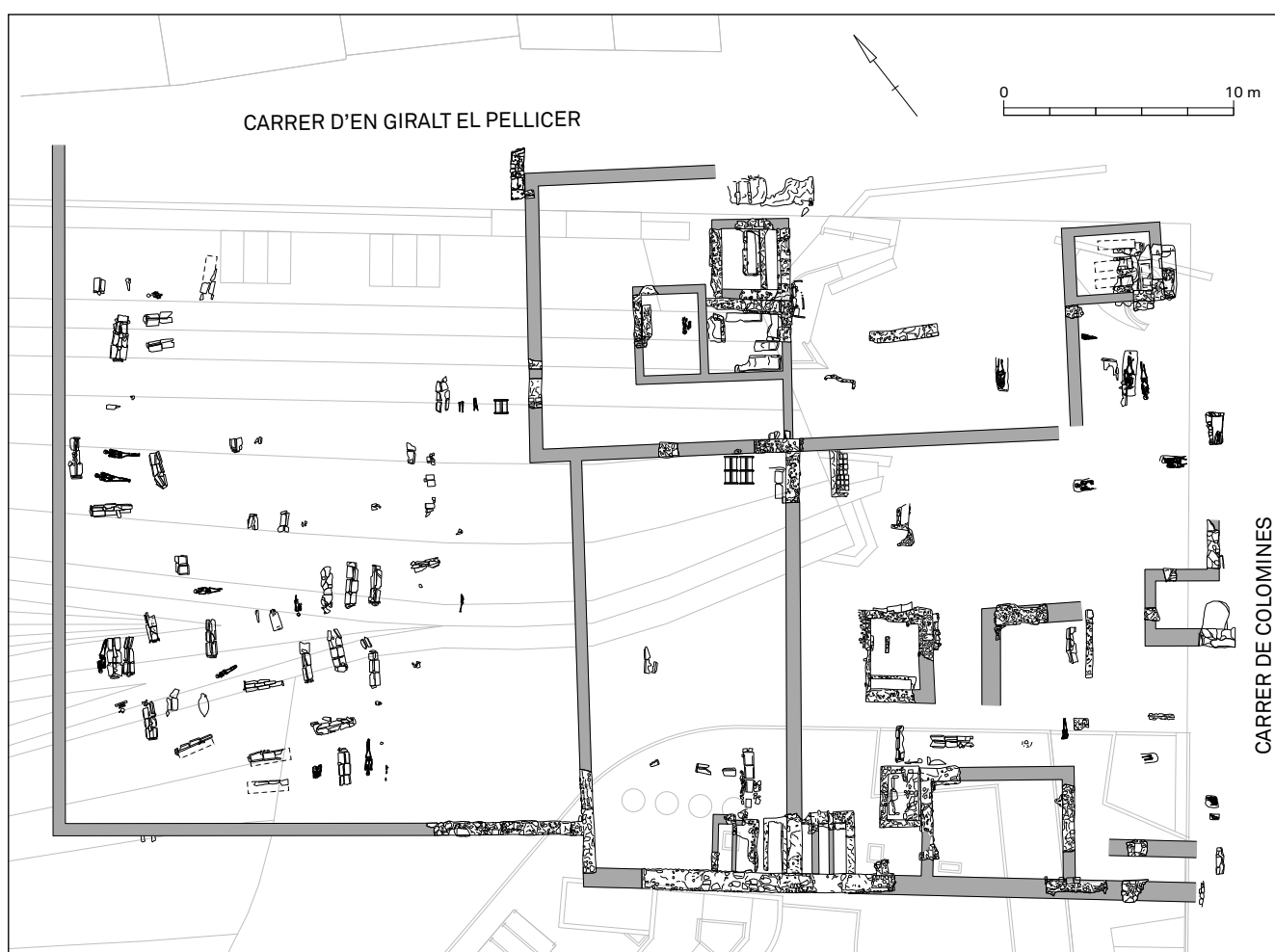


FIG. 8 Zone de nécropoles de Santa Caterina avec les différentes *areae* et l'indication des mausolées. Dessin: MUHBA.

comme cela se produit à Mérida, Tolmo de Minateda (Hellín) ou Recopolis. Dans tous les cas, il ne faut pas oublier que le phénomène urbain de l'islamisme est conditionné par la trame existante. Le fait que la ville ait fait un pacte avec les musulmans et la continuité observée dans la plupart des édifices portent à croire qu'il n'y a pas eu de conséquences traumatiques, mais pas non plus de grandes transformations. De plus, les découvertes monétaires dans des contextes archéologiques confirment la circulation de monnaie arabe dans la ville, mais elles ne sont en aucun cas associées à des niveaux de destruction³⁹. D'autres matériels comme une omoplate de bovin avec une inscription en arabe⁴⁰ et la présence de formes céramiques de tradition arabe⁴¹ dans des contextes du VIII^e siècle, sont pratiquement exceptionnels dans la ville de Barcelone. De plus, la présence arabe

dure à peine 87 ans, c'est pourquoi le processus d'islamisation sociale a dû être très limité.

Bien que nous méconnaissions l'impact que la conquête a eu sur la ville, il faut penser à la continuité du culte chrétien grâce à la tolérance religieuse, mais également à l'existence d'une mosquée. Il est possible qu'une partie de la cathédrale ait été aménagée comme telle, comme certaines sources documentaires⁴² semblent l'indiquer, et comme cela s'est produit, semble-t-il, dans d'autres villes, par exemple à Narbonne. Toutefois, a priori il n'est pas possible de rejeter l'idée de l'emplacement de la mosquée à n'importe quel autre endroit de la ville, ni d'oublier que l'ancien temple romain reçoit le nom de *meschig* (mosquée) dans un document du début du XII^e siècle⁴³.

³⁹ Un numéraire arabe a été trouvé à Barcelone (fals, dirham et dinar) lors des différentes fouilles de la ville.

⁴⁰ Garcia *et al.* 2002.

⁴¹ Sur les formes céramiques de tradition arabe, comme les cuvettes trouvées lors de fouilles du palais comtal/royal, cf. Beltrán de Heredia 2005b, l'm 12 et 15.

⁴² Le poème d'Ermold, le Noir, écrit vers 826, explique que Louis le Pieux entre dans la ville et purifie le lieu où un culte aux démons avait été rendu. Des siècles plus tard, cette idée demeure et, lors de l'acte de consécration de la cathédrale romane en 1058, Louis le Pieux est de nouveau cité et non seulement il expulse les infidèles mais rend de plus à la cathédrale le culte chrétien. Cf. à cet

égard: Verges & Vinyoles *s.d.*, manuscrit inédit fourni par les auteurs.

⁴³ Banks 2003, 15.

4.1 La domination musulmane et le centre de pouvoir

Il est difficile d'évaluer les conséquences de la conquête musulmane dans le quartier épiscopal/comtal, affecté, sans doute, par la nouvelle situation. Toutefois, nous pouvons affirmer la continuité de tous les édifices et l'existence d'une série de réhabilitations que nous relierons, précisément, aux changements d'utilisation de certains édifices.

Les chrétiens et les musulmans ont dû « se répartir » les différents édifices du noyau épiscopal/comtal d'époque wisigothique. Avec la nouvelle situation politique, le pouvoir ecclésiastique chrétien a dû en conserver une partie, alors que l'autre a dû être occupée par les nouveaux mandataires. Nous pensons que le palais de l'évêque (fig. 9: 4) a continué d'être la résidence du principal représentant du culte chrétien, alors que le *wali* de la ville a occupé l'ancienne résidence du *comes civitatis*, qui demeurait debout (fig. 9: 6), une occupation non exempte de logique et totalement symbolique, qui montre à la population un changement de cap du pouvoir politique⁴⁴.

4.1.1 Le baptistère et l'aula: un changement d'utilisation

Nous pensons que l'aula et le baptistère (fig. 9: 2-3) ont été réservés aux musulmans, comme espace de prière et de réunion. Le choix de l'endroit est idéal, les musulmans ont occupé la zone du noyau épiscopal qui s'adaptait le mieux à leurs besoins: une bonne orientation de l'édifice de l'aula qui était compatible avec leurs préceptes religieux et l'existence d'eau pour les ablutions. Il est également très probable qu'ils se soient réservés les salles situées entre l'aula et l'édifice qui avait été la résidence du *comes civitatis*, ce dont nous n'avons aucune preuve archéologique. Il ne faut pas oublier que dans cette zone se trouvait justement la cour/jardin du palais comtal aux XIe-XIIe siècles. Si nous tenons compte de la conception et du symbolisme de ce type d'espaces – végétation et eau – dans le monde arabe, comme représentation terrestre du paradis⁴⁵, nous pouvons alors nous demander si l'origine de cette cour/jardin ne provient pas de l'occupation musulmane de ce secteur au VIIIe siècle et les transformations que cette occupation a dû comporter.

VIII^e SIÈCLE

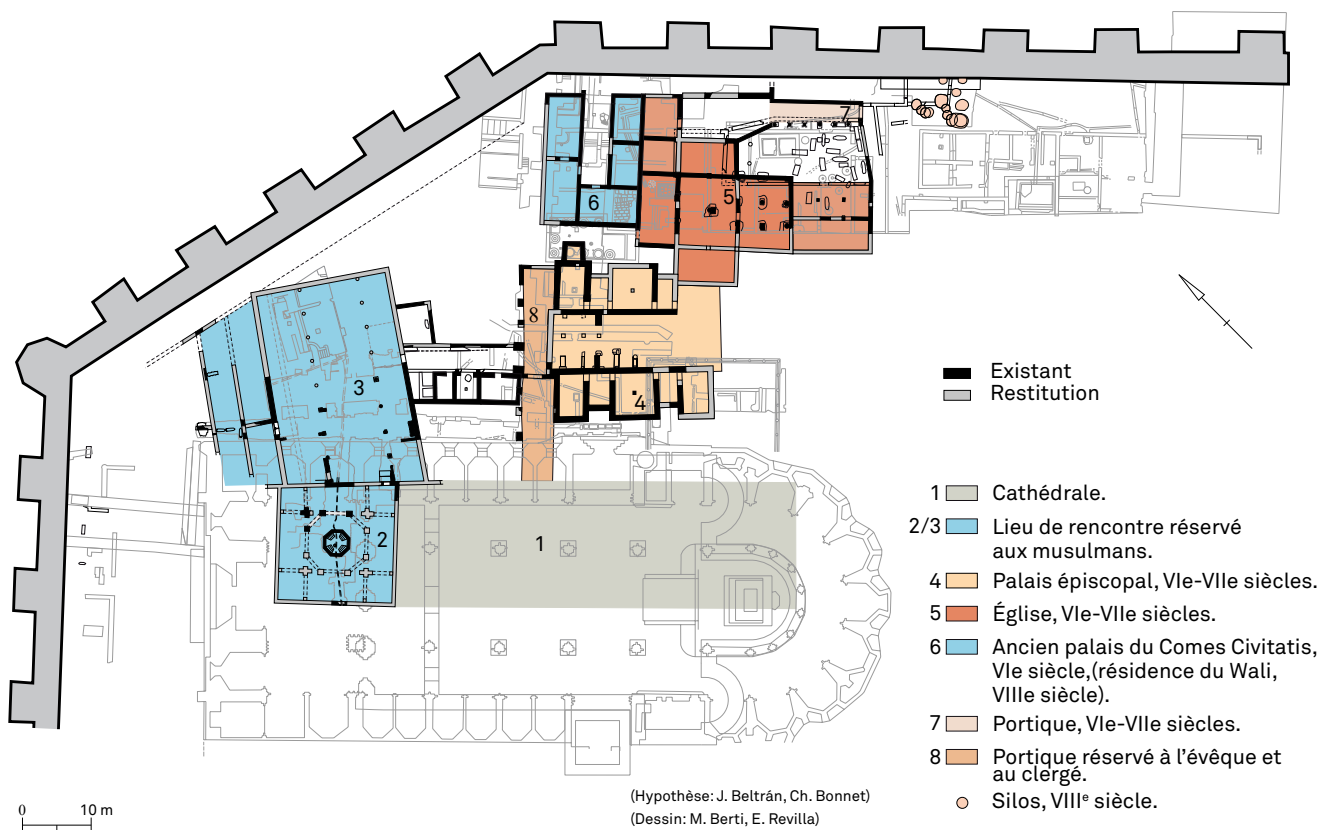


FIG. 9 Plan du centre de pouvoir politico-religieux au VIIIe siècle.

Hypothèse: J. Beltrán de Heredia - Ch. Bonnet. Dessin: E. Revilla-MUHBA.

⁴⁴ Concernant l'occupation du palais par le wali, il est intéressant de souligner la présence de formes de tradition arabe, comme des cuvettes, localisées lors des fouilles de cet édifice (Beltrán de Heredia 2005b, planches 12 et 15). Concernant le matériel numismatique, des 13 pièces de monnaie que nous connaissons, trouvées lors des fouilles archéologiques à Barcelone, 5 proviennent des fouilles de la Place du Rey.

⁴⁵ Castro del Rio 2001, 250.

L'intérieur du baptistère ne souffre presque d'aucune transformation architecturale et il est fort possible qu'il ait été employé pour les ablutions. Au contraire, dans l'*aula* se trouve une série d'éléments qui montrent des changements dans l'organisation de l'espace. Diverses structures bâties sur le sol d'*opus signinum* et qui modifient le plan original sont documentées. Il faut également tenir compte d'une autre donnée qui peut être significative : les peintures murales des parois de l'*aula* sont couvertes d'un badigeonnage blanc/ocre, peut-être pour cacher tout vestige de la décoration précédente. Une décoration qui représentait des contreplaqués de marbre et des colonnes, ainsi que d'autres motifs qui imitaient des éléments architecturaux. Mais nous ignorons comment s'organisait la décoration picturale dans la partie haute, il se pourrait qu'il y ait eu des scènes figurées ou des textes écrits.

4.1.2 L'existence d'une mosquée?

Actuellement, nous ne pouvons pas affirmer avec certitude la présence d'une mosquée dans cette zone, vu qu'il nous manque des éléments fondamentaux comme le *mihrab*, qui devait se trouver dans la *qibla* ou mur orienté vers la Mecque qui est le mur nord-est ayant une position centrale. Mais nous ne pouvons pas oublier que nous nous trouvons face à une adaptation d'un édifice préexistant et nous nous demandons si dans un tel cas le *mihrab* ou niche ouverte dans le mur, ne pourrait pas être une structure adossée au mur de la *qibla* par l'intérieur. Toutefois, nous ne connaissons pas archéologiquement la totalité du tracé de ce mur et, de plus, nous ne devrions peut-être pas penser à une organisation type. Il est possible que le *mihrab* se trouve plus dans l'angle. Dans tous les cas, bien que des structures existantes soient réutilisées, ceci ne signifie pas que les préceptes religieux élémentaires ne soient pas respectés, en adaptant les édifices à ceux-ci⁴⁶. En outre, nous connaissons très peu de mosquées dans l'Al-Andalous du VIII^e siècle; nous ne possédons que la mosquée de Cordoue.

La disposition topographique proposée pour le cas de Barcelone n'est pas exceptionnelle, elle présente des parallélismes avec la ville byzantine de Resafa et à Al-Bakhrad, en Syrie. Dans le premier cas, la ville, siège épiscopal, est devenue après la conquête musulmane Rusafat Hisam et a disposé d'une mosquée construite par le calife Hisam (724-743), grand-père d'Abd al-Rahman Ier, souverain de l'Al-Andalous. Le nouvel édifice de culte a été construit en plein cœur du groupe épiscopal, à côté de la cathédrale chrétienne⁴⁷. La salle de prière organisée en trois nefs était unie à la cathédrale et les deux partageaient un passage qui reliait la cathédrale et le mur de la *qibla*. Un cas similaire se produit à Al-Bakhrad, à 22 km de Palmyre, où l'église chrétienne et la mosquée sont contiguës, la seconde s'adosse directement au mur nord de l'église, qui correspond au mur de la *qibla*⁴⁸. La situation montre clairement la cohabitation des deux religions dans le noyau épiscopal, comme nous le proposons pour Barcelone.

Comme déjà commenté, l'hypothèse existe de placer la mosquée dans la cathédrale ou sur le temple romain, ce qui se fonde sur des données documentaires ou des modèles comparatifs. Mais il est vrai que les différentes hypothèses ne sont pas incompatibles et que rien n'empêcherait qu'il y ait eu plus d'un oratoire dans la ville et que la zone de l'*aula* ait été reconvertie en un oratoire privé du *wali* et de sa cour la plus proche, comme nous pouvons le voir dans d'autres ensembles palatins de Syrie, du Liban, de Jordanie, d'Irak ou de Palestine⁴⁹, tandis que d'autres musulmans résidant dans la ville se dirigeaient vers d'autres points. Dans tous les cas, l'occupation musulmane de Barcelone n'a duré que peu d'années et il faut plutôt penser à une réadaptation d'espaces existants qu'à la construction d'édifices notables au nouveau plan.

4.2 Les nécropoles islamiques

Nous ne disposons pas non plus de beaucoup de données sur les zones funéraires islamiques au VIII^e siècle, même si dans le *suburbium* oriental, les fouilles ont mis à jour vingt-deux inhumations dans lesquelles le défunt était déposé en décubitus latéral droit, les jambes repliées et avec une orientation NE-SO (tourné vers la Mecque), qui correspondent à des enterrements islamiques (fig. 10). Ces inhumations cohabitent avec d'autres pratiquées dans des *tegulae* et dans des amphores datées de l'Antiquité tardive, ce qui permet de constater une continuité dans l'utilisation funéraire.

La localisation d'enterrements islamiques partageant le sol funéraire avec d'autres plus anciens a été également documentée à d'autres endroits d'Espagne et du Portugal; par exemple, dans les fouilles de la Plaza del Castillo de Pampelune, à Marroquíes Bajos (Jaén), Rossio do Carmo (Mérida, Portugal), Tolmo de Minateda, et dans la nécropole de Fuente de la Mora, à Madrid⁵⁰, où, comme dans le cas de Barcelone, il existe une superposition de tombes et un changement dans l'orientation et dans le rituel.

D'autres nécropoles islamiques ont dû sans doute exister mais actuellement nous ne les connaissons pas. Dans le cas qui a pu être documenté, la nécropole se trouve à quelques mètres du bord de mer, avec les inhumations pratiquées dans le sable de la plage, une situation qui n'est sans doute pas fortuite. Dans le rituel islamique, l'eau servait à la purification de l'individu et à «*rafraîchir*» la tombe ou à «*rafraîchir*» le mort dans le complexe processus de transit («procès de la tombe»), au cours duquel interviennent de nombreux facteurs, par exemple, l'«habit de feu» destiné au défunt. La présence d'un cours d'eau, rivière ou ruisseau, soulageait et facilitait le dur transit; pour cette raison la famille aspergeait la tombe d'eau⁵¹. En ce sens, la proximité de ruisseaux a été interprétée comme une recherche intentionnée d'eau. Cette situation se reproduit, par exemple, à Murcie, Marroquíes Bajos (Jaén) ou Cordoue, où les cours fluviaux font fonction de limite des nécropoles; également à Valencia ou Mérida⁵².

⁴⁶ Un bon exemple à cet égard est la mosquée située dans l'actuel couvent de Santa Clara, construite à partir d'une basilique de l'époque wisigothique orientée vers l'Est; la mosquée rompt l'orientation de l'édifice wisigothique et se tourne

vers le Sud-est (López Gutiérrez & Valdivieso Ramos 2001, 234).

⁴⁷ Ulbert 2004, 380.

⁴⁸ Genequand 2004, 17.

⁴⁹ Valdés Fernández 1999, 283.

⁵⁰ Serrano & Castillo 2000; Gutiérrez 2007; Macías 2006; López Quiroga & Benito Díez 2010, 284.

⁵¹ León 2009, 41.

⁵² Casal *et al.* 2006, 270; León 2009, 41.

La même approche a été appliquée aux nécropoles localisées près de la mer, comme à Málaga ou Almería, où les tombes sont creusées dans le sable⁵³.

Enfin, nous ne pouvons pas laisser passer l'occasion de mentionner une découverte d'un intérêt tout particulier: la localisation dans les fouilles de la place de Sant Miquel, à l'intérieur de la ville, d'un enterrement qui, par le rite employé (orientation NE-SO, disposition latérale et type de fosse) peut être classé comme islamique. Bien que les enterrements *intra muros* à l'époque islamique ne soient pas la procédure habituelle, ils ne peuvent pas non plus être considérés comme exceptionnels⁵⁴. La trouvaille correspond à une fouille ancienne et les données du contexte spatial ne sont pas très claires⁵⁵. En termes d'hypothèses, nous pouvons penser que l'enterrement a été pratiqué à l'intérieur d'un logement, comme c'est le cas parfois à Cordoue, et qu'il a appartenu à un personnage possédant un certain prestige au sein de la communauté musulmane.

5 L'arrivée des Francs: la Barcelone carolingienne

Au IX^e siècle, en réponse aux pressions musulmanes, une partie du territoire catalan a été occupée par les Francs, Gérone tombe en 785 et Barcelone en 801. Ces territoires constitueront ce qui est connu sous le nom de Marche Hispanique, qui, à travers leur incorporation à l'Empire franc, ont constitué dans le domaine politique une consolidation de la structure féodale, et dans le domaine religieux un changement liturgique, vu leur dépendance religieuse du diocèse de Narbonne.

La conquête de Barcelone a fait l'objet d'interprétations contradictoires. Les sources carolingiennes parlent d'un long siège et d'un assaut violent. Suite à cet assaut, le samedi de Pâques 801, Louis le Pieux, fils de Charlemagne entre victorieux dans Barcelone. Toutefois, les sources arabes indiquent l'existence d'un pacte de capitulation qui accorderait un an aux musulmans pour abandonner la ville ou son territoire. Des indices documentaires,

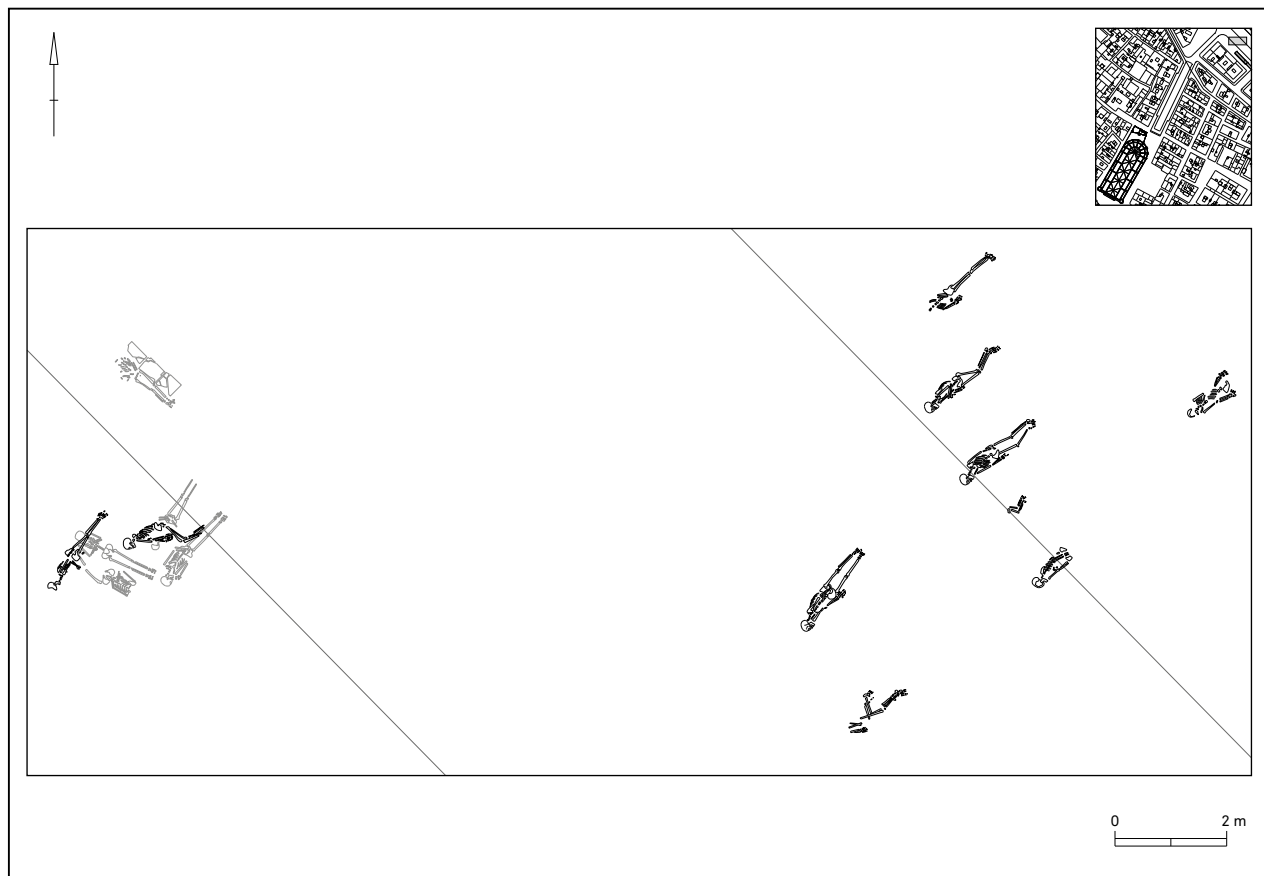


FIG. 10 Nécropole islamique du VIII^e siècle localisée à Barcelone. Dessin: MUHBA.

⁵³ Casal *et al.* 2006, 270.

⁵⁴ Nous tenons à remercier très sincèrement le Dr. Alberto León de l'Université de Cordoue, pour l'information et la bibliographie fournie sur les enterrements islamiques et leurs contextes et rituels.

⁵⁵ Bien que la découverte ait eu lieu lors des fouilles des années 70, elle était restée inédite. Même si, comme nous l'avons dit, il manque quelques données pour encadrer le contexte, nous pensons qu'il est important de faire connaître cette nouvelle donnée relative à une période historique

de notre ville où les registres archéologiques sont actuellement très limités.

toponymiques et onomastiques signalent dans la zone de Barcelone l'existence de petites communautés musulmanes qui se sont établies hors de l'enceinte fortifiée après la conquête franque; une situation plus conforme à l'existence d'un pacte. Au IX^e siècle, Barcelone était une petite ville d'environ 1 000 habitants mais la démographie augmente et un chiffre d'environ 1 500 habitants a été calculé pour l'an 1000 et environ 3 000-4 000 à la fin du XI^e siècle.

Au IX^e siècle, Barcelone était un centre administratif et militaire qui absorbait les excès de la population rurale. Barcelone était également une ville héritière de l'Antiquité tardive, marquée par la continuité de fonctions de la période wisigothique. Cette continuité peut être observée dans la topographie urbaine, l'occupation de la muraille et la situation du centre de pouvoir. La muraille romaine était encore utilisée, bien qu'avec quelques modifications qui lui avaient fait perdre sa fonction défensive originale. À partir du Xe siècle commencent à apparaître des constructions de particuliers, surtout de familles nobles et d'institutions, directement adossées à la muraille romaine. Les tours de la fortification étaient ainsi incorporées aux nouvelles résidences. Les portes de la ville deviennent des châteaux, lieux de défense et de résidence du pouvoir comtal et épiscopal: le Château de Regomir et la porte de l'Évêque (aux extrémités du *decumanus maximus*) restent sous la domination de l'évêque; le Castell Nou et le Castell Vell (aux extrémités de l'autre rue principale, le *cardo maximus*) restent dans les mains du comte. Le temple romain demeurait debout, mais nous ignorons l'utilisation à laquelle il était destiné. Au XI^e siècle, il était connu sous le nom de *Miraculum* (le miracle), sans doute en raison de sa grandeur et de la force de son architecture, uniquement attribuables à un miracle pour les habitants de l'époque.

Hors des murailles, les aqueducs romains étaient l'axe autour duquel se développait l'un des faubourgs de la ville, comme l'indique son nom: *le burg dels Arcs Antics* (le bourg des Arcs Anciens). La plupart des maisons ont utilisé l'aqueduc comme mur mitoyen des nouvelles constructions du bourg. Depuis la fondation de la ville, *Barcino* a compté un système complet de distribution d'eau. La date d'abandon ou le début de la détérioration de tout le système (aqueducs, réservoirs, distributions...) est difficile à indiquer, mais nous pensons qu'il a été en fonctionnement au moins jusqu'au Xe siècle⁵⁶.

Aux IX^e et Xe siècles, les réseaux d'échange de Barcelone avec l'extérieur étaient faibles et commercialement informels. Les rares objets importés que l'archéologie a mis à jour pour cette période doivent être interprétés comme le résultat de cadeaux et de relations entre des personnages importants des différentes Cortes. Nous devrions situer dans ce cadre le chapiteau califal de la première moitié du Xe siècle, retrouvé lors des fouilles du Palais Comtal de Barcelone⁵⁷. Ce n'est qu'aux XI^e-XII^e siècles que se consolident des routes de commerce stables avec l'Andalous, la Majorque islamique et le Maghreb, et qu'apparaissent les contacts commerciaux avec la Provence et le Languedoc.

Au cours de la période carolingienne, l'évêque devient, aux côtés du comte, un instrument de la politique d'unification. L'évêque carolingien, comme l'était l'évêque à l'époque wisigothique, a une autorité civile et religieuse. À Barcelone, le comte, qui représentait le roi franc, et l'évêque ont partagé et occupé le même espace: le quadrant nord-est de la ville qui s'est définitivement confirmé comme centre de pouvoir de la ville (fig. 11). L'évêque est devenu une espèce de fonctionnaire royal et un instrument de la politique d'unification entre l'autorité civile et l'autorité religieuse. Souvent, il existait une coïncidence géographique entre l'évêché et le comté.

Au IX^e siècle, deux personnages se distinguent dans ce sens: Frodoïno et Joffre le Poilu. Chacun dans son cadre de pouvoir, a marqué une période d'expansion et de consolidation des structures sociopolitiques. La désarticulation progressive de l'Empire carolingien a affaibli son pouvoir, ce qui a donné une plus grande autonomie des comtes de Barcelone. Joffre le Poilu a été nommé comte de Barcelone et de Gérone par le roi Charles le Chauve. Avec Joffre le Poilu, à partir de 897, la fonction devient héréditaire et commence ainsi la dynastie comtale catalane. Pendant cette période, les comtes ont adopté un rôle de plus grand rattachement au territoire et, par conséquent, la résidence comtale a acquis une plus grande importance. L'évêque Frodoïno a été proposé par le roi Charles le Chauve pour implanter la liturgie romaine ou carolingienne et éradiquer le culte local wisigothique.

5.1 La période carolingienne et le centre de pouvoir: une nouvelle étape de transformation

Par le biais de sources documentaires, nous savons que des réhabilitations dans la cathédrale ont été réalisées en 877. Frodoïno répare/réhabilite la basilique principale, mais nous ignorons la portée de cette intervention, vu qu'aucune fouille archéologique n'a été réalisée dans le sous-sol de la cathédrale. Les textes écrits nous apprennent également que l'évêque Frodoïno trouve les reliques de la martyre Eulalia dans une église extra muros et les transfère solennellement à la cathédrale, dans laquelle il fait construire une crypte sous l'autel principal. L'archéologie nous indique que le baptistère et l'*aula* sont réutilisés à l'époque carolingienne⁵⁸. Les réhabilitations liturgiques mises en œuvre pendant la période carolingienne et, surtout, l'occupation de cet espace par les musulmans pour le culte, justifieraient sa destruction avec l'arrivée des Francs.

Les Francs ont organisé le territoire conquis en comtés, et ont mis un comte à la tête de chaque comté. Dans le cas du comté de Barcelone, la résidence comtale a été établie à l'endroit où se trouvait la résidence du comte de la ville (fig. 11: 5). Le palais a été agrandi au détriment de l'église cruciforme, dont la réutilisation doit être reliée à l'implantation de la nouvelle liturgie carolingienne.

5.1.1 La réutilisation du baptistère et de l'*aula*

La séquence archéologique du baptistère montre comment la réutilisation de cet édifice correspond à un démontage planifié

⁵⁶ Miró & Orengo 2010.

⁵⁷ Cressier 2004.

⁵⁸ C'est ce qu'indique la grande quantité de céramique carolingienne trouvée. Cf. Beltrán de Heredia 2006.

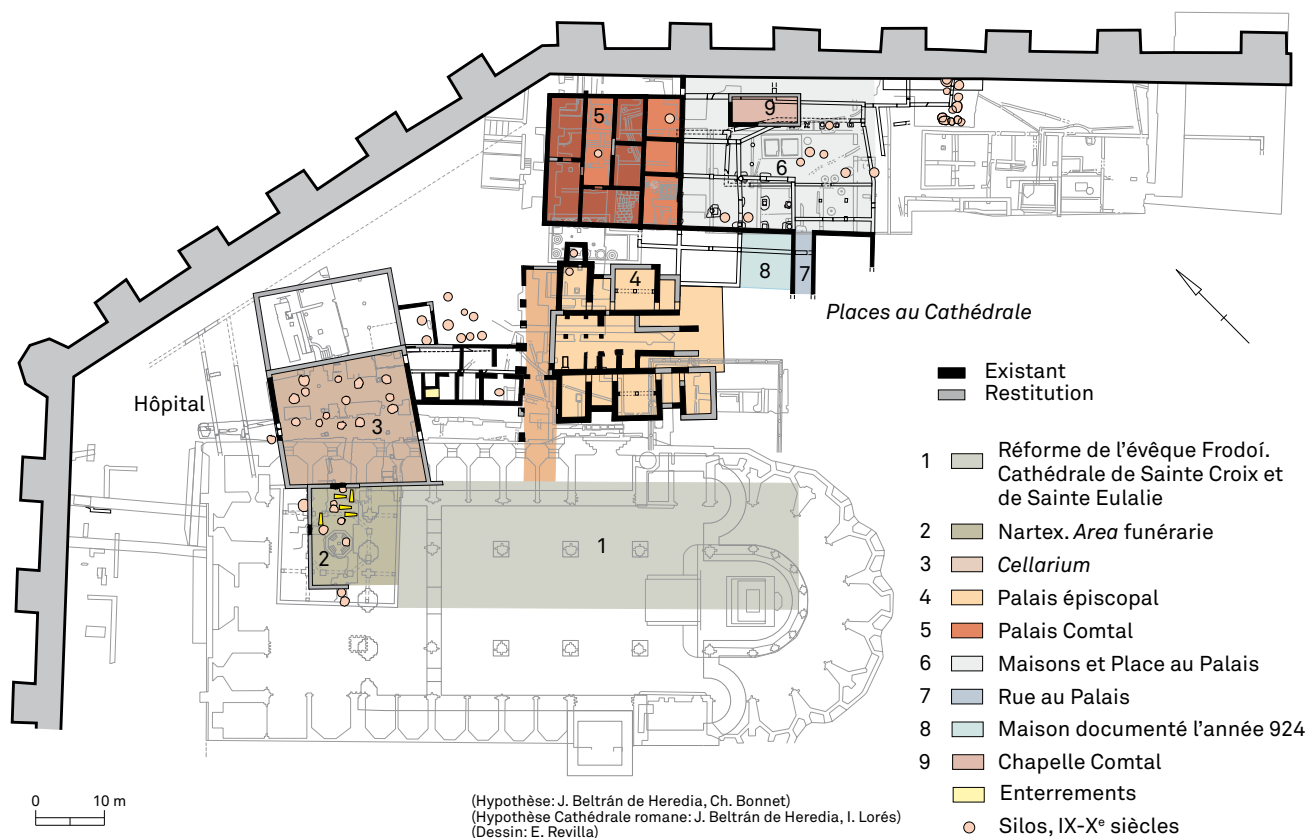
IX^e ET X^e SIÈCLES

FIG. 11 Plan du centre de pouvoir politico-religieux à l'époque carolingienne.
Hypothèse: J. Beltrán de Heredia - Ch. Bonnet. Dessin: E. Revilla-МУНБА.

et non pas à un acte violent, comme l'historiographie traditionnelle l'avait proposé. Les structures du baptistère étaient comblées par des éléments propres de la démolition de l'édifice, mais d'une démolition sélective. Il semble que sont récupérés la totalité des tuiles de la toiture, les tubes en plomb de la canalisation d'entrée et de sortie de la piscine (il ne reste que quelques fragments situés dans des zones d'accès compliqué), les colonnes, chancels, chapiteaux et autres éléments à caractère plus noble qui, sans doute, ont été réutilisés dans d'autres édifices, y compris une grande partie des plaques en marbre qui composaient le pavement d'*opus sectile* qui entourait la piscine, ainsi que la plupart des moulures qui couronnaient les fonts baptismaux.

La zone a été occupée par un espace à plan rectangulaire où a été ouverte une série de silos (fig. 11: 2). Il semble que la plupart des silos devaient être revêtus d'une structure en bois, comme l'indiquent le négatif du bois conservé dans le remplissage de certains d'entre eux et les analyses réalisées. Le recouvrement en bois contribuerait à améliorer l'état du grain et à augmenter sa période de conservation. Ce revêtement a dû être réalisé à base de baguettes verticales fixées par une autre série de pièces placées horizontalement, comme cela a été documenté pour

certains silos localisés dans l'église de Confignon (Genève) et à Lyon, mais aussi à Saint-Maclou à Rouen (France)⁵⁹.

Ce type de réserves alimentaires, fondamentalement de céréales, mais également d'autres types de vivres, a été retrouvé dans de nombreux édifices de culte. De plus, nous savons qu'entre 875 et 877, une réhabilitation a été menée, impulsée par le roi Charles le Chauve avec l'aide de l'évêque Frodoïno. Nous ignorons la portée des travaux, la documentation n'est pas explicite sur ce thème, nous ne savons qu'*ad suma ecclesiam reparare*, l'absence de fouilles archéologiques dans le sous-sol de la cathédrale nous empêche de savoir s'il s'agit de travaux *ex novo* ou d'une réhabilitation de l'édifice existant. Devons-nous relier ce type de réservoirs d'aliments à l'arrivée d'un grand nombre de personnes venues pour travailler sur les chantiers réalisés dans la cathédrale ? Des réserves de ce genre ont été retrouvées dans d'autres édifices de culte, à cet effet. Dans le sous-sol de l'église romano-gothique de Saint-Just ont été retrouvés des silos de très vastes dimensions et très profonds. Les travaux archéologiques ont permis de dater les aménagements des Xe-XI^e siècles. Il ne fait aucun doute que ces réserves alimentaires étaient prévues pour le chantier en cours⁶⁰. Ainsi, les donations destinées aux artisans pour le chantier pouvaient être accumulées plus facilement.

⁵⁹ Bonnet 1984; Calderoni & Le Cain 2002, 118-119.

⁶⁰ Reynaud 1998, 88-94.

D'un intérêt tout particulier est la transformation de l'*aula* en une sorte de *cella* ou *cellarium*, avec une fin identique à celle des silos du baptistère: stocker des grains, du vin ou d'autres produits alimentaires (fig. 11: 3). Nous avons documenté 15 silos de grandes dimensions qui se répartissent d'une manière parfaitement organisée et qui maintiennent des alignements parallèles à l'orientation de l'édifice. Au sol, nous pouvons voir comment leur distribution permettait une bonne circulation à l'intérieur. La donnée est d'une très grande importance, vu qu'habituellement ces types de structures se superposent les unes aux autres, montrant une occupation continue mais non organisée. La *cella* a pu être destinée à conserver les réserves alimentaires de la communauté ecclésiastique et du personnel rattaché au noyau épiscopal, mais elle pourrait également être reliée aux travaux dans l'environnement et à la cathédrale, dans la même ligne que les silos du baptistère. En ce sens, un parallélisme très intéressant au niveau archéologique se trouve à Gérone, où à l'époque carolingienne a été construit un immense *cellarium* également relié aux sphères du pouvoir⁶¹.

Dans cet espace rectangulaire contenant des silos apparaît très rapidement une série d'enterrements, ce qui indique l'emploi de la zone comme nécropole. Le phénomène est bien connu et largement documenté. La création d'églises ou de paroisses urbaines est associée à de nouveaux cimetières et les zones funéraires sont privilégiées dans les accès aux lieux de culte. Nous sommes sans doute face à un espace de «sagera», des espaces protégés par l'église qui, en plus de zone d'enterrement, était utilisé comme zone de stockage, un phénomène bien connu et documenté en Catalogne et qui pourrait exister depuis le Xe siècle⁶². La réutilisation de cet ensemble de silos, aussi bien du baptistère que du *cellarium* de l'ancienne *aula* présente le même arc chronologique, fin du IXe siècle – début du Xe siècle⁶³.

L'espace au plan rectangulaire est reconstruit en suivant un tracé presque identique, ce qui donne lieu à un second niveau d'enterrements, sans doute alors reliés à la cathédrale romane qui date de 1058. Les silos qui ont servi à conserver des vivres et des provisions sont devenus des déversoirs quand ils ont été abandonnés, probablement vers l'an mille selon la datation du matériel céramique.

De ce second niveau d'occupation en tant que nécropole, il faut souligner la localisation d'un enterrement qui se trouve au centre de l'espace et sur les fonts baptismaux. Il s'agit d'une inhumation dans une ciste en pierre, datée par C-14, pouvant être située entre 880 et 1010. Elle correspond à un individu masculin de complexion robuste, âgé de 45 à 65 ans. La position et la cote nous font penser que cet enterrement a pu être relié au début des travaux de la cathédrale romane, peut-être celui d'un personnage important qui est enterré dans la *sagera* de l'église. Sa position

centrale, par rapport aux structures carolingiennes, indique que l'édifice précédent était encore en fonctionnement, même si son emplacement (il s'appuie pratiquement sur les fonts baptismaux) et son rapport stratigraphique avec les profondes tranchées de cimentation creusées pour construire la cathédrale romane⁶⁴, nous aident à situer cet enterrement pendant la phase des travaux romans, sans doute autour de l'an 1000. Rapidement, cet enterrement s'accompagne d'autres sépultures, tout l'espace occupé par l'ancien baptistère se consolidant ainsi comme nécropole.

5.1.2 Le palais comtal carolingien

Le palais comtal d'époque carolingienne continue dans la même enclave que le précédent (fig. 11: 5): en fait il pourrait être considéré comme une réhabilitation du palais wisigothique. Sa construction a supposé la démolition de l'église cruciforme, sans doute à cause des changements liturgiques introduits à l'époque carolingienne. Le nouveau palais avance sa façade jusqu'à l'une des croisées de l'ancienne église, configurant ainsi un édifice au plan quadrangulaire, situé à l'angle nord de la muraille, qu'occupaient probablement les deux tours contiguës de la muraille. La façade principale donnait sur un espace plus ou moins ouvert, connu plus tard sous le nom de *plaça al palau*, puis actuellement de place du Rey. L'accès à cet édifice était réalisé par une porte située à côté de la muraille, à l'angle nord de la place encore conservé.

C'est justement au IXe siècle que nous commençons à avoir les premiers nouveaux documentaires sur le palais comtal et sur d'autres édifices des environs⁶⁵. Nous savons également qu'il existait déjà au Xe siècle la fonction de garde de palais, (*palatii custos*) et qu'en 985 elle était occupée par un certain *Querus*, fonction mentionnée à nouveau en 1001 et 1008⁶⁶. Le palais a dû avoir une chapelle, à usage exclusif du comte, dont nous ignorons l'emplacement, même si l'existence de structures localisées lors des fouilles de la place du Rey, très près de l'endroit où se trouve l'actuelle chapelle, nous porte à croire qu'il pourrait s'agir des fondations de la chapelle comtale.

Des environs du palais comtal et de la cathédrale provient une peinture de grande qualité datée des IXe-Xe siècles, l'un des rares témoignages existants de peinture de cette période en Catalogne. Il s'agit d'une pierre de taille réutilisée dans le parement d'un corps du Palais Comtal/Royal du XIe siècle. La peinture représentait un visage d'ange dans un nimbe⁶⁷. En raison de la taille de la représentation, il est possible qu'elle se trouvait dans une salle aux dimensions réduites, peut-être dans une chapelle privée, et aussi bien dans les dépendances comtales qu'épiscopales. La construction de la cathédrale romane au XIe siècle comportera le réaménagement total du siège épiscopal primitif et de tout son environnement immédiat.

61 Nolla et al. 2008, 193.

62 Bonnassie 1994. Pour le cas concret de la Place du Rey, cf. Beltrán de Heredia (dir.) 2001, 112.

63 Cette datation peut être apportée à partir de certaines datations par thermoluminescence appliquées à des jarres et des marmites trouvées dans les silos.

64 Il s'agit d'énormes tranchées ouvertes en talus, nécessaires pour construire facilement des fondations qui n'ont pas été bâties comme un ouvrage apparent et sans la technique du coffrage perdu.

65 Concernant l'étude des sources documentaires de l'environnement du palais comtal et la cathédrale, les travaux de P. Banks 1984; 1990; 1992a; 1992b sont indispensables.

66 Ainaud et al. 1947, 16.

67 Mancho 1999.

5.2 Le suburbium à partir des Xe-XIe siècles

À partir du Xe siècle, tous les espaces suburbains ont été «urbanisés» jusqu'à configurer des noyaux stables de population, dans de nombreux cas créés à partir d'un édifice, une basilique ou un monastère, qui a fini par donner son nom aux nouveaux bourgs ou villes-neuves récemment créés: le *burg* du Pi, le *burg* de Sant Pere, la Vilanova del Mar, etc. Vers l'an 1000, une nouvelle existe concernant des activités de construction dans l'axe de l'actuelle rue Argentería, ancienne *via marina*, chemin qui partait de la porte septentrionale du *cardo maximus* et débouchait sur la plage. Sur cette *via marina* se trouvait l'église de Santa María del Mar, une enclave culturelle de l'Antiquité tardive qui apparaissait pour la première fois dans les sources documentaires en 985.

Le réseau de chemins qui se dessine clairement dans l'Antiquité tardive se consolide. Le monde funéraire change de paramètres, l'apparition des *sagreras*, à une époque où la christianisation était déjà complètement consolidée, a modifié le modèle de gestion de la mort. En ce sens, les grandes zones de nécropoles de l'Antiquité tardive se réduisent et les inhumations se situent à côté des édifices de culte, comme avant-salle du temple et dans tout son environnement immédiat. D'une gestion du monde funéraire tardif-ancien, où le particulier et le familial avaient encore un poids important, on était passé – vers l'an mil – à une standardisation progressive de la mort, avec une nette appropriation de celle-ci de la part de l'église⁶⁸.

En ce qui concerne les activités agricoles et de production de la ville, les études paléo-environnementales et les datations au carbone-14 ont permis d'en faire une approche et d'établir une évolution. Pour la seconde moitié du Xe siècle, ce type d'études montre un *suburbium* ayant une activité agricole faible mais, toutefois, une activité artisanale d'une certaine catégorie, tandis qu'à la fin du Xe siècle – première moitié du XIe siècle, on détecte une expansion agricole et une réduction des activités artisanales, des activités qui augmentent à nouveau à partir de 1020. Le XIIe siècle apparaît comme un siècle avec une rétraction agricole et un développement important des activités artisanales, probablement suite à la consolidation urbaine et au développement des activités artisanales dans le secteur littoral de la ville⁶⁹.

6 Pour conclure

Barcelone est un clair exemple de continuités et de changements. Une ville avec un riche héritage de l'époque romaine tardive et un poids important de son passé wisigothique qui devient ensuite une ville indépendante du pouvoir franc. L'implantation du christianisme offre un nouveau cadre idéologique et social sur lequel s'articulera la trame urbaine. Les vieilles formes de pouvoir et l'organisation sociale de l'Empire seront progressivement supplantées par la hiérarchie ecclésiastique et par une aristocratie locale liée à l'ecclésiastique. La ville sera la scène de ces changements.

Le noyau urbain est aménagé autour du noyau chrétien, une organisation qui définit l'image de la ville tardive-ancienne et qui détermine l'image de la ville médiévale. L'évolution du paysage urbain depuis l'Antiquité tardive jusqu'au Haut Moyen Âge a supposé, sans doute, quelques changements radicaux, mais également une lente transformation qui a tourné autour du christianisme, des édifices de culte et de représentation, un reflet fidèle d'une image de pouvoir qui faisait fonction de centre d'attraction. Ces transformations sont marquées par un fort facteur de continuité, comme nous l'avons exposé: la continuité des lieux de culte, celle des espaces palatins du pouvoir politique, nous pourrions dire du palais du *comes civitatis* à la monarchie catalano-aragonaise. Non moins indicative est la continuité de la trame urbaine, mais également le rétrécissement et la déviation du réticule romain, accompagné dans certains cas de l'annulation totale de certaines portions d'anciennes voies.

Au Ve siècle, la ville se consolide comme un espace de pouvoir et un centre administratif qui exercera un net contrôle sur le territoire environnant. *Barcino* commencera à être une référence dans la dynamique politique du royaume wisigothique pour le nord-est péninsulaire, au IXe siècle la ville s'est maintenue dans une position entre l'environnement carolingien, avec Narbonne comme point de référence, et l'aventure d'un chemin propre. À cette époque, le pouvoir du comte s'est consolidé et a acquis un plus grand rattachement territorial et juridictionnel en concurrence avec l'évêque. Barcelone se configure déjà comme une ville capitale, scène d'un profond changement qui se matérialisera au milieu du XIe siècle. À la fin du XIIe siècle, Barcelone était la ville la plus importante de Catalogne et le comte de Barcelone le seigneur le plus important, seuls quatre comtés se trouvaient hors de ses possessions.

68 Azkarate 2002, 129.

69 Julia & Riera 2010.

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SESSION IV

Material culture.

How are identities reflected in their material culture?

Questioning Migration. Continuity and change in the cemetery at Rhenen (4th – 8th century AD)

Annemarieke Willemsen – *National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden, The Netherlands*

Who were buried at the Broechem cemetery? (5th - 7th century AD, prov. of Antwerp, Belgium)

Rica Annaert – *Flanders Heritage Agency, Brussels, Belgium*

Céramiques et verres mérovingiens dans la vallée mosane: miroir d'une civilisation en evolution (du milieu Ve au VIIIe siècle)

Line Van Wersch – *Flanders Heritage Agency, Brussels, Belgium*

Hand-made pottery along the Channel coast and parallels from the Scheldt valley

Jean Soulat – *Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sor-bonne, Paris, France*

Anne Bocquet-Liénard – *Craham of centre de recherches archéologiques et
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Questioning Migration. Continuity and change in the cemetery at Rhenen (4th – 8th century AD)

Annemarieke Willemsen¹

Abstract

The ‘*Reihengräberfeld*’ at the Donderberg in Rhenen is the largest and probably the richest early medieval cemetery in the Netherlands. It contained over 1100 graves yielding over 3000 objects, now in the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden. At Rhenen, people continued to bury their dead at the same site for almost four centuries, from ca. 375 to 750, making it a perfect source for the study of continuity and change within these ‘Dark Ages’. This observed continuity calls into question the scale and the dating of the (supposed) migration. This contribution consists of three parts: first the cemetery is introduced briefly with some of its highlights, then its spatial aspects are discussed, and finally its importance is explored for the theme of migration and continuity, which is the focus of this volume.

Keywords

Early medieval period, cemetery

1 The ‘Reviving Rhenen’ Project²

In February 1955, the Illustrated London News published a full spread on the Frankish cemetery at Rhenen³. The headlines read: ‘Light on Holland in the Dark Ages’, ‘Fine glass and jewellery of

the Merovingian Franks’ and ‘Outstanding 6th-century finds in a Dutch cemetery’. The text, written by Anna Volgraff-Roes, stresses how extraordinary many of the objects found in the cemetery are, in a Dutch but also in an international context. Within the Netherlands themselves, the discovery attracted an unusual amount of attention: it was all over the newspapers, there were many visitors to the excavation, also from abroad, and the excavation even made the so-called ‘Polygon news’ shown in all cinemas before the movie in the summer of 1951. The cinema news item finishes with the words: “The discovery of the cemetery near Rhenen will be of extreme importance for the knowledge of the civilisation of our country in the 6th and 7th century”.

And it should have been. The ‘*Reihengräberfeld*’ at the Donderberg just west of the town of Rhenen is the largest and probably the richest early medieval cemetery in the Netherlands, and the one that saw the longest use. It contained over 1100 graves, with about 300 cremations, 820 inhumations, and 14 horse graves. About 830 of the graves contained objects, in total over 3000 pieces. In Rhenen, unlike for instance in Maastricht, people continued to bury their dead at the same site, and in the same way, for almost four centuries, from ca. 375 to 750. This period includes the transition from Late Roman to Merovingian/Frankish times, the introduction of Christianity, and the rise of a distinct elite material culture. Rhenen therefore is a perfect source for the study of continuity and change within these ‘Dark Ages’.

Nowadays, however, what was found in the Rhenen cemetery is largely unknown to those studying the period, let alone the wider public. As can be reconstructed from archival documents, everyone immediately saw the significance of what was found

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³ The Illustrated London News, 19 February 1955, 322–323.

in 1951, and steps towards publication were taken as early as the year of the excavation, "in order to prevent that the results of this excavation so important to the Netherlands, were postponed indefinitely"⁴. But despite the efforts of various people, notably Jaap Ypey and Annette Wagner, who worked on a catalogue in the 1950s-1980s and 1990s respectively, the cemetery so far remains unpublished.

For this reason the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, legal keeper of the finds and records of the Rhenen cemetery, is now supervising a research project within the Dutch Odyssey 'backlog programme', to publish the full catalogue of the cemetery by the end of 2011, exactly sixty years after excavation⁵. The publication will be accompanied by an exhibition in Rhenen itself. The project, which started in November 2010,

was presented for the first time at the conference. Although the catalogue is available now, the cemetery still awaits full analysis. Therefore, even after 60 years, this is work in progress, and some of the conclusions have to be preliminary.

In the winter of 2013, the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden will host a large exhibition on the beginning of the Middle Ages in the Netherlands, and Rhenen will play an important role in that. There will be an international conference held on the occasion of that exhibition early in 2014. A large selection of objects from the Rhenen cemetery has been on display in the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden since 2011, as part of the new permanent exhibits on the Archaeology of the Netherlands (fig. 1).

FIG. 1 Finds from the Rhenen cemetery displayed in the permanent galleries 'Archeology of the Netherlands' in the National Museum of Antiquities at Leiden, January 2011. Photo: RMO/Tanja van der Zon.



FIG. 2 Overview of the excavations at the Donderberg in Rhenen, February 1951. Photo: ANP (archive of H. Deys, Rhenen).



⁴ Willemsen 2012, 10.

⁵ Wagner & Ypey 2012.

2 Recovering the cemetery

The site at Rhenen was discovered by workmen in December 1950 during sand extraction for road works between Utrecht and Arnhem, within the larger framework of the post-war Reconstruction⁶. The cemetery, measuring about 1250 m², was excavated in its entirety by the Dutch State Service for Archaeology, known at the time as the ROB (Rijksdienst voor het Oudheidkundig

Bodemonderzoek), in five months, from January to June 1951, using up to 25 unemployed relief workers (fig. 2). This would amount to an average of recovering ten graves a day. The scale and character of the finds was new then, and in a way the ROB 'grew up' trying to deal with them. They constructed their first laboratory with X-ray machine, to conserve and study the Rhenen finds, and sent out artefacts to specialists all over Europe⁷.



FIG. 3 Selection of colourful beads from the Rhenen cemetery. Photo: RMO/Peter Jan Bomhof.



FIG. 4 Selection of glass vessels from the Rhenen cemetery. Photo: RMO/Peter Jan Bomhof.

⁶ Basic bibliography of the Rhenen cemetery: Glazema & Ypey 1955; Id. 1956; Heidinga 1990; Isings 1959; Wagner 1994; Webster & Brown (eds.) 1997; X 1959/1960; Ypey 1964; Id. 1969; Id. 1973; Id. 1978; Id. 1983.

⁷ This paragraph is based on the documents in: Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed, Province of Utrecht archive, Rhenen dossier. For a more extensive overview of the historiography of this excavation, see: Willemsen (forthcoming).

FIG. 5 Grave of a man with decorated bucket, bronze bowl and weaponry (Rh 763). Photo: RMO/Peter Jan Bomhof.



The 3000 artefacts from the graves were allocated to the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden because of their international importance. This collection includes the largest and best assemblages of medieval jewellery, beads (fig. 3), weaponry and reused Roman objects in the Netherlands. There are over 850 pieces of ceramics and some 40 glass vessels, most of them intact (fig. 4). It is also a collection with a complicated history, and the first six months of the project were very much like an excavation in the storerooms and archives, with workers trying to locate all the finds. In early May 2011, the bones from the horse graves, which had been missing since the 1960s, finally turned up. Ironically they were close by, at the Natural History Museum in Leiden, and had been there ever since May 1951, when they were sent as a gift, just days after the excavation had finished⁸.

What is striking about the Rhenen cemetery is the sheer amount and quality of the finds. Some impressive numbers, taken from the article published by Ypey in 1973⁹, include 51 bow brooches, 25 disc brooches, 22 bird brooches, and some S-, horse and horseman brooches; 148 weapon graves (fig. 5, see also Fig. 7) with 13 broadswords, 33 seaxes, 29 axes, 36 shield bosses, 42 sets of arrows, 3 spears and 83 lances; 34 graves, both male and female, contained glass vessels.

The scientific material analyses undertaken as part of our project, using many techniques not available sixty years ago, only strengthen this impression of the importance of the site. In spite of the hasty excavation and the various undocumented restorations carried out over the decades, the investigations of the many textile fragments, wood fragments, garnet inlays, human bones, etc. have brought to light many new features of the objects that only add to the significance of the find assemblage. To name

just one example: analyses with X-ray diffraction showed that besides garnets and glass, pearl (in Rh 601A) and bone (in Rh 338A) were also used as inlays in brooches¹⁰. The garnets used all seem to have originated in India and therefore must have reached Rhenen through an impressive early medieval trade network¹¹.

3 Spatial setting and chronology

The importance of the cemetery for the theme of migration goes beyond individual characteristics of the artefacts found. It is, however, much harder to reconstruct the original graves and the positions of the objects than to estimate the importance of the grave goods in their own right. The drawings and measurements made in the field are not as detailed as one might wish, with just two undisturbed graves with all their goods completely recorded in detail (Rh 470 and Rh 842). And although the information was ostensibly recorded objectively, grave by grave, by means of a card system in the 1950s and 1960s, it has been shown that interpretations were made between the situation in the field and these cards. Back then, the assumption was still that there was a standardised burial ritual, and a strong connection between burial attire and real life. For instance a decorated belt seen rolled up into a corner of the grave on the excavation plan was nevertheless seen positioned on the hips in the drawing on the grave card. And although the article in the *London News* describes how the coffins were clearly visible from black patches in the ground, and that lance heads were often seen protruding above these coffin outlines¹², the spears and lances were usually drawn inside the outline of the grave. Moreover, just a few photographs were taken *in situ*, so there is little or no way of checking the drawings.

⁸ Archive RCE-Rhenen: letter by G. Kortenbout van der Sluijs, Director of the National Museum of Geology and Mineralogy, to P.J. Glazema, Director of the National Service for Archaeology (ROB), June 2, 1951, on receipt of the bones; Naturalis, National Museum for Natural History, Stamboek 28074-28089.

⁹ Ypey 1973.

¹⁰ XRF analyses of 20 brooches with inlays at the ICN Amsterdam, by Dr Ineke Joosten and Dr Luc Megens, December 7, 2010.

¹¹ AGLAE analyses of 50 brooches with garnet inlays at the C2RMF Paris within the CHARISMA

project by Dr Ineke Joosten and Dr Luc Megens, supervised by Dr Thomas Calligaro and Dr Claire Pacheco, June 8-10, 2011.

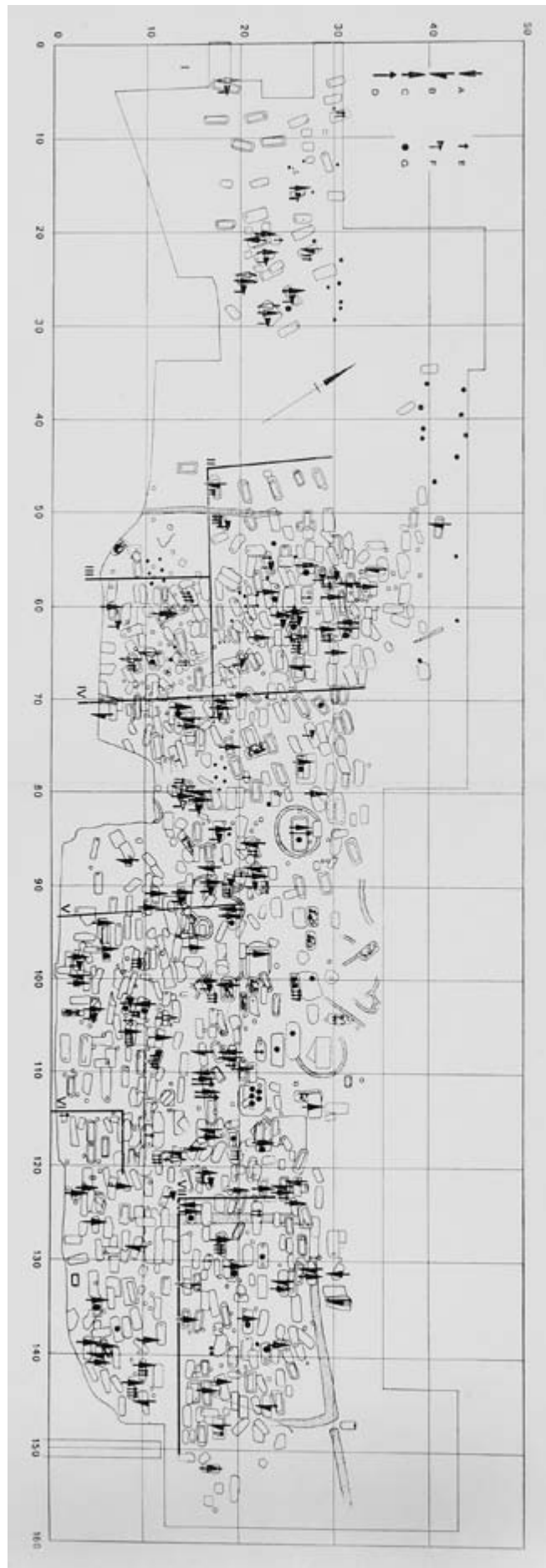
¹² The Illustrated London News, 19 February 1955, 322.

This means that common aspects of burial research, such as deposition rituals and post-depositional processes, are hard to study. The 1951 excavators noted of only 15 graves that they had been disturbed, but recently some more traces of grave robbing have been accounted for by Wagner¹³.

Looking at the cemetery plan (using the plan published by Ypey in 1973, fig. 6), a few things draw our attention with regard to layout and chronology:

- The cemetery measures ca. 140 x 50 metres and seems to be largely complete, with all borders traced. The southwestern edge was already destroyed by earlier road construction (but no cemetery was found to the south of the road) and one part, where a shed stood, was untouched in 1951.
- Most graves are arranged in east-west oriented rows, and even in the busiest parts they usually do not overlap.
- For most of the period during which the cemetery was in use, the whole area was used, and from 450 onwards, some six zones spread across the site were used at the same time, each extended west to east over time, and some with a concentration of children's graves on one side. These zones may reflect families or social groups.
- There is a group of some 30 graves set apart from the rest in the western part of the cemetery, mostly oriented north-south; these are early graves (one dating from before 375, most to the middle and second half of the 5th century), many of them containing weaponry and decorated belts. It is possible that the men buried here still served the Roman army, but more likely they had access to accessories produced in workshops that (also) served soldiers.
- There seems to be a largely empty 'buffer zone' between this group and the rest of the cemetery, but both cemetery zones overlap chronologically.
- There are circular ditches within the site, in which prehistoric pottery was found; these structures attest to an earlier use of the burial site.
- The northern zone, within reach of some old circular ditches and containing some 30 graves, stands out because of the extremely large and richly furnished graves (all decorated buckets are from this area) and the large amount of horse graves. This seems to be a zone for men who had a special position. Some Frankish graves here seem to have been placed in the middle of the older structures.
- Most of the horse graves are located close together. They are not set apart from the human graves, but clear relationships between human and horse graves cannot be established either.
- The cremations were usually 50 to 70 cm below the surface, while the inhumations were usually buried deeper and found at 120 to 150 cm below the surface¹⁴. Many of the cremations are therefore younger than most inhumations, and there is evidence that cremation graves even higher up were destroyed.

FIG. 6 Plan of the Rhenen cemetery with the weapon graves indicated. Taken from Ypey 1973 (Abb. 16). Symbols: A = broadsword, B = seax, C = lance head, D = spear, E = arrow heads, F = axe, G = shield boss.



¹³ Unpublished, oral comment of A. Wagner, 2011.

¹⁴ Ypey 1973.

- In a week-long excavation in 1995, some cremation graves were found below the inhumations and also below what had looked to be virgin soil in 1951¹⁵.
- The cremations are spread out across the area. Some date to around AD 400, some to the second half of the 5th and the beginning of the 6th century AD, and the largest group to the 7th and early 8th century. Inhumation and cremation were thus practiced side by side for all four centuries that the cemetery was in use.
- There are some inhumation graves in which no grave goods were placed. These graves can be dated to the last phase of the cemetery. They may relate to people who converted to Christianity, or at least who chose a different burial ritual compared to the way things had been done before.
- The Christian cemetery near the present-day Rhenen church seems to follow the Donderberg cemetery chronologically. We consider the end of the long period of use of this site for burial to be connected to the spread of Christianity and the accompanying changes in burial customs, especially regarding the locations where people wanted to be buried.

4 Geographical context

Placed on an elevation map (fig. 7), it is clear why the Rhenen cemetery is situated in this spot. It was placed close to the river Rhine, which was flanked by a road and must have functioned as a corridor for Roman and Germanic people. Rhenen is on the far eastern edge of a series of moraines pushed up by glaciers during the Pleistocene. This ridge also forms the location of a belt of early medieval sites, with important finds all the way from Utrecht to Rhenen, and again at the next ridge, separated from the Rhenen belt by the low-lying Grebbe, starting with another '*Reihengräberfeld*' (of 'just' 230 burials) at Wageningen¹⁶. In the Rhenen region, other early medieval sites were discovered, including a spectacular gold hoard found at Rhenen-Achterberg¹⁷, a large coin hoard found at the adjoining village of Remmerden¹⁸ and other cemeteries at Achterberg, Elst, Leersum, Leusden and Remmerden¹⁹. Moreover, people seem to have been attracted to this place over a very long period of time, as high-status finds from prehistoric, Roman and late medieval times have been uncovered as well²⁰.

It is still unclear where the people who were buried in Rhenen actually lived. This also applies to the owners of the gold cached

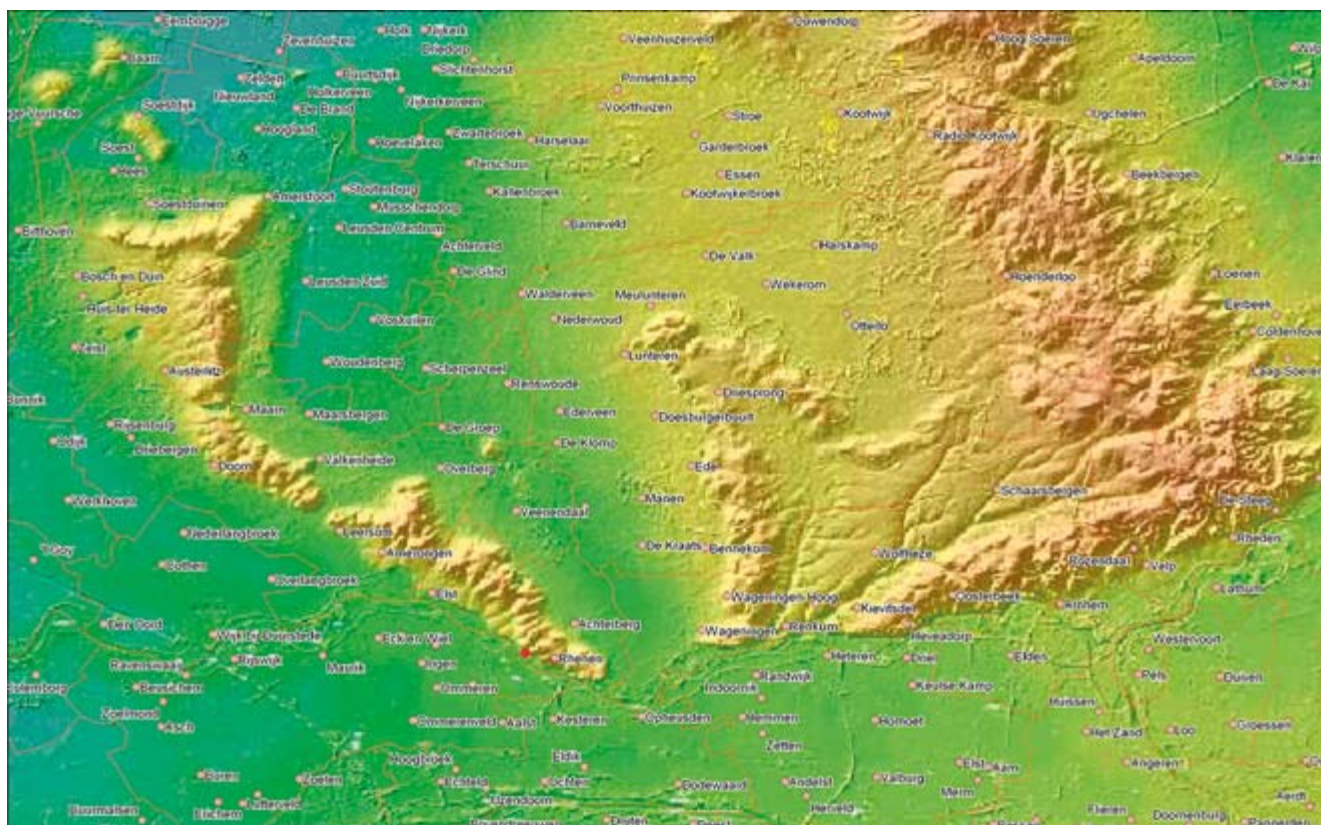


FIG. 7 Elevation map of the Netherlands (AHN) with the cemetery site at the Donderberg in Rhenen indicated by a red square. Map: RCE/Menne Kosian.

¹⁵ Personal comment of A. Wagner to author, Winter 2010.

¹⁶ van Es 1964.

¹⁷ Roes 1947.

¹⁸ Pol 1989.

¹⁹ Ypey 1965-1966; van Dockum 1994-1995; van Tent 1980-1984; van Tent 1988-1989; [online], [http://www.collectieutrecht.nl/view](http://www.collectieutrecht.nl/view.asp?type=verhaal&id=1111)

[asp?type=verhaal&id=1111](http://www.collectieutrecht.nl/view.asp?type=verhaal&id=1111), (last viewed on October 25, 2011).

²⁰ van Heeringen 2008; Hessing 1994.

here and the burials in the other cemeteries. In fact, almost no settlement traces have been found in the entire region. The only site here with both graves and house plans dating from the 7th century is Wijk bij Duurstede, and this was only recognised in excavations during the last five years²¹. Elsewhere in the Netherlands too, for instance in the coastal belt of Merovingian sites lining The Hague and Leiden, including Rijnsburg, Katwijk²² and Oegstgeest, predominantly graves have been found. The traces of quays at Oegstgeest were only found a few years ago²³.

There is a twofold explanation for this. On the one hand, many of these cemeteries were found in the first half of the 20th century, invariably because grave goods turned up during works, and then the graves were excavated, at best, or emptied, usually. Perhaps it takes a planned excavation to find a settlement. But in any case, it looks like early medieval people chose different places to live than they chose to bury their dead²⁴. In the western coastal region, they appear to have chosen the higher and drier sandy dunes for the cemeteries, while living in the lower-lying and wetter areas, and/or in the places where towns later developed; in both the latter two areas, much more was lost than in the more elevated zones. In the region of Rhenen, they chose the ridge for burial (and hoard disposal), while perhaps living more to the eastern end of the ridge, where the town is currently located.

5 Continuity versus migration

To conclude, what can this specific site contribute to our knowledge of the cultural and social dimensions of migration and colonisation in the 5th to 8th century? What is striking about the early medieval cemetery at Rhenen is that people living in this area were able to use this burial site for almost 400 years. This works out to some twenty generations burying their dead in exactly the same place, while a few older (prehistoric) graves within the cemetery site demonstrate that people had gone here to perform burial rituals even earlier. All this time, they were able to use the entire area undisturbed. Moreover, for twenty generations they were burying their dead in essentially the same manner, with a remarkable coherence in grave types, grave goods and use of space. Such continuity is unprecedented, at least in the Netherlands. It indicates that at least in Rhenen, between roughly 400 and 700, nobody was on the move.

This coherence in itself calls into question the scale and the dating of the (supposed) migrations in this border region, in many ways.

- There is continuity from Roman to medieval times in Rhenen, with the supposed ‘missing 5th century’ present everywhere.
- There was an increase in the number of burials in the 6th century, but there is no indication that these were different people, let alone that they came from elsewhere. On the contrary, everything points to a population growth within the same cultural context.
- There are objects with different ethnic connotations (‘Roman’ belts, ‘Saxon’ pottery, ‘Merovingian’ and ‘Frankish’ jewellery, ‘exotic’ coins) not only within the same cemetery,

but within the same graves as well. This underlines that the background of these objects does not say much about the background of their owners.

- For almost 400 years nobody seems to have disturbed or threatened the people living in this region. There are no traces of violence, or of drastic actions undertaken in haste. This challenges the popular idea of these centuries, and especially this region, as violent, unstable and full of fear.

Rhenen is not the only site in the Netherlands suggesting that the dust here may largely have settled as early as the end of the 4th century. We should acknowledge the discrepancy between written sources on peoples moving and wars raging, and archaeological evidence from various sites showing relative peace and cultural continuity.

6 Roman vs Barbaric

The only graves from the Rhenen cemetery that have been published are the group of 4th–5th-century ones, and they were discussed together with other Roman finds, thus deliberately setting them apart from all the burials that followed on the site²⁵. For the Rhenen gold hoard, dated to around 400 AD, the story was spread that the jewellery was hoarded by Germanic allies of the Roman army, rewarded for their services, a story told about every early medieval gold hoard in the Netherlands, even the Wieuwerd hoard dated to 630²⁶. This is something encountered often with Dutch early medieval finds: every effort is made to give them a Roman connection. This might have something to do with the history of medieval archaeology in the Netherlands. In contrast to for instance France, and maybe also Belgium, the Middle Ages as a whole were not a very popular subject in the Netherlands in the first centuries of historical research, as they fall inbetween two highlight periods in our country: the Roman period and the seventeenth century. From the Velp hoard found in 1715²⁷ all the way through to the Rhenen cemetery in 1951, if studied at all, these first generations of early medieval discoveries were studied mainly by specialists in Roman culture, trying to comprehend the ‘barbaric’ times and sites from their Roman perspective.

In spite of their name, the Early Middle Ages in the Netherlands have mostly been seen as ‘very Late Roman Ages’, the end of an era, and the period that followed it was equally unhelpfully and vaguely called the Dark Ages, or The Great Migrations. In my opinion, it is far more fruitful to view the period of ca. 400 to 700 as the beginning of the medieval period, and the two as inextricably bound together.

²¹ Dijkstra & Williams 2010.

²² Dijkstra 2011.

²³ Ongoing excavation project of the University of Leiden at Oegstgeest, supervised by Dr Jasper

de Bruin, [online], <http://www.archol.nl/project.php?id=6>, (viewed on August 2, 2012).

²⁴ Idea originally formulated by P. Deckers MA (Free University Brussels).

²⁵ Böhme 1974.

²⁶ Lafaurie et al. 1961.

²⁷ Beliën 2008.

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Who were buried at the Broechem cemetery? (5th - 7th century AD, prov. of Antwerp, Belgium)

Rica Annaert¹

Abstract

This paper demonstrates the importance and necessity of interdisciplinary research and processual analysis to find answers to questions concerning identity, ethnicity and migration. After a short overview of the Broechem cemetery, a recently excavated early medieval cemetery that offers abundant opportunities for such interdisciplinary research, the different aspects of identity and their visibility in the graves are clarified: age, gender, political and social identity and ethnicity. Finally a few preliminary results of a combined interdisciplinary and processual analysis demonstrate how this methodology can consolidate ideas on migration, which are too often based on scarce archaeological objects from the graves.

Keywords

Early medieval cemeteries, Scheldt valley, inhumation graves, cremation graves, elite, ethnicity, migration, identity, anthropology, charcoal analysis, burial rituals, grave goods.

1 Introduction

The Broechem cemetery was excavated by the former Flemish Heritage Institute (now reorganised into Flanders Heritage Agency) during the years 2001 – 2003 and 2007 – 2010. This Merovingian cemetery, which was in use from the second half of the 5th until the second half of the 7th century, is to be considered one of the more important regional burial grounds in a remote region of the northern part of the Merovingian kingdom Austrasia, historically known as the *Pagus Renensis*.

Broechem is a village situated in the north of Belgium, to the southeast of the city of Antwerp. The cemetery is located on a 13 m high sandy loam ridge flanking the alluvial Nethe valley. This micro-region is located in, and forms part of, the Scheldt valley area. It has distinctive geographic, toponymic and pedological characteristics: geographically the region is enclosed by the rivers Scheldt, Rupel, Nethe and Schijn; toponymically many early medieval place names occur, while pedologically, this area forms an island of fertile sandy loam soils in the sandy region of northern Belgium (fig. 1).

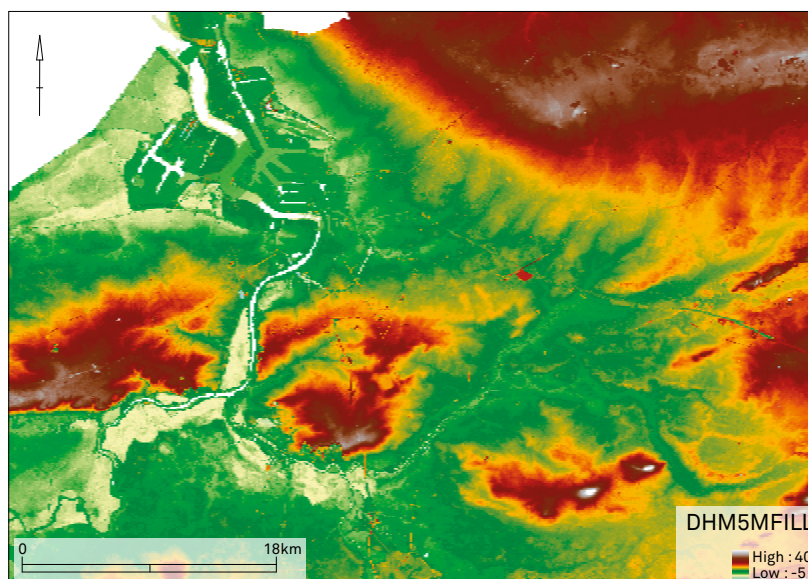
During the excavations at least 510 burials were recorded (fig. 2). The vast majority, at least 442 (86%), are inhumation burials - including 3 horses, oriented either west-east (first phase) or south-north (second phase). Scattered among them are at least 68 cremation burials (14%).

There is a clear chronological evolution from the north to the south. In the southwest part some elite graves from the 6th and 7th century are clustered in a more or less isolated area of the cemetery.

Due to the acidic nature of the sandy loam and certain taphonomic processes, skeletal parts of the inhumation burials have not been preserved. Therefore the cremation graves are of high scientific interest, since they contain the only material human remains in the cemetery. The preservation of the cremations is better because of the burning process.

The earliest burials seem to lie in the most northern part of the burial grounds. In that part the graves date back to the second half of the 5th century, are arranged in orderly rows and have a west-east orientation (fig. 2: A). There is also a little cluster of cremations, among them one urn grave (fig. 2: B). The depositional rituals of the inhumations do not reveal any individual characteristics: all deceased were deposited in a rectangular wooden chest in a deep rectangular pit. Only the grave goods and dress ornaments inside the graves as well as the position of the grave

FIG. 1 Location of the site on the DEM map.
Topografische situatie op de DHM-kaart.



goods in the graves, give us age-, gender- or ethnicity-related information on the deceased.

From the 6th century onwards, a change can be observed in the central part of the cemetery. Instead of the orderly layout in rows, now clusters of graves, often with a different orientation, are visible (fig. 2: C). In addition cremation graves are scattered among the inhumation graves.

The cremation graves either had an isolated position or cut west-east or south-north oriented inhumation graves (fig. 2). They were scattered among the inhumation graves, mostly in the central part of the cemetery. However, a conspicuous concentration occurred in the earliest, northern part (fig. 2: B). To this group belongs an urn grave with a typically Saxon ‘*Schalenum*’ and a four-post cremation house.

During excavation the cremations appeared as irregular black or brown spots. The fills of some of these features contained a variety of combinations of charcoal, burnt and fragmented grave goods and incinerated bones, varying in abundance. In most cases there was no pit visible in section. The dimensions varied from 20 cm to 100 cm diameter, with a maximum depth of 100 cm. Following the classic typology, different types of depositions were identified. Both unurned graves with pyre remains (*Brandgrubengräber*) and pits with a compact selection of cremated bones (*Knochenlager*) were present. A distinction can be made between *Brandgrubengräber* containing abundant charcoal and *Brandgrubengräber* with only a few charcoal remains.

Despite pillaging in early medieval times (in 31% of the inhumations traces of grave robbing or grave reopening were observed) many inhumation burials still contained grave goods. These show clearly that the cemetery was in use from the second half of the 5th to the early 7th century AD.

Some of the richer graves contain ‘exotic’ grave goods that indicate the presence of a local elite who had contacts with the

higher nobility of regions with great political power. Whether the nature of these contacts was economic (trade) or social (marriage or other alliances) remains unclear. Although most graves seem to be ‘(Gallo-)Frankish’, certain practices such as cremation, the north-south orientation of inhumation graves and the presence of some grave goods appear to indicate the presence of immigrants from a more northerly region.

2 The identity of the deceased in the Broechem cemetery

2.1 Age

There is very little information to reconstruct the age of the deceased. For the inhumation graves, only the size of the inhumation burial pits and coffins give direct information on age. Also, the scarce dental remains may provide an estimate of the number of deceased children. Where dental remains were present, they were lifted in blocks for further anthropological research. So far only a few samples have been examined, for example the teeth in a lower jaw that could be identified as those of a boy of approximately 12 years old² (fig. 3). The distinction between juvenile and adult burials is much more difficult to make than that between child and adult burials.

Sometimes the position of the grave goods also refers to the presence of a child or juvenile. Pottery, for instance, usually found at the foot end of the coffin, often seems to have been placed at the head in child or juvenile graves. This applies to graves of limited size as well to graves where traces of the skeleton were still vaguely visible. In the latter, it could be observed that children and juveniles were often deposited with a reversed orientation, i.e. with the head to the east.

Currently we can estimate (only based on the size of the coffins and pits) that 17% of the inhumation burials are children, which is rather high.

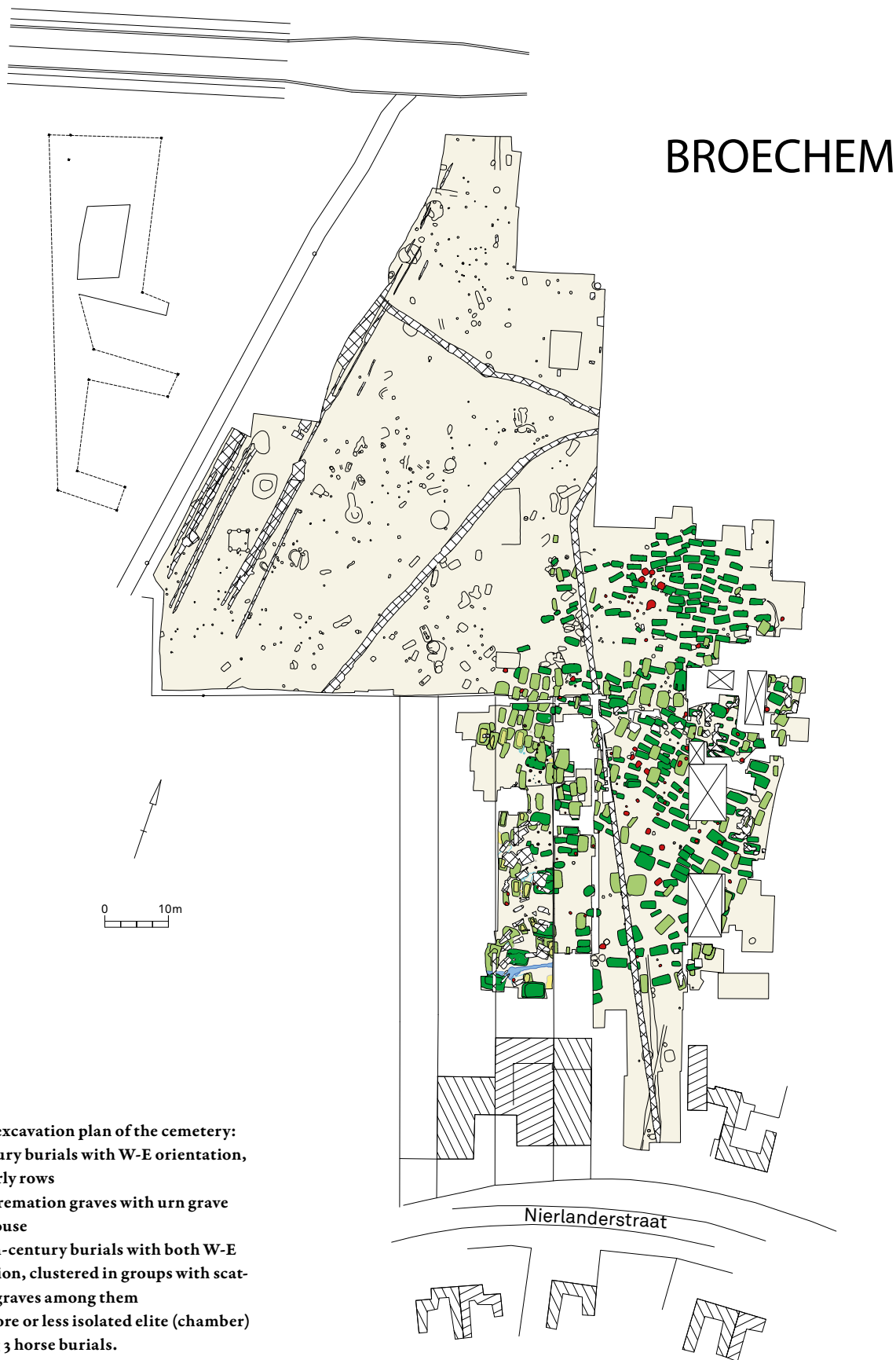


FIG. 2 General excavation plan of the cemetery:

- A. The 5th-century burials with W-E orientation, arranged in orderly rows
- B. A cluster of cremation graves with urn grave and cremation house
- C. The 6th – 7th-century burials with both W-E and N-S orientation, clustered in groups with scattered cremation graves among them
- D. Zone with more or less isolated elite (chamber) graves, including 3 horse burials.

Algemeen opgravingsplan van het grafveld:

- A. De 5de-eeuwse graven met W-O oriëntatie, in rijen geordend
- B. Cluster crematiegraven waaronder een urngraven een crematiehuisje
- C. De 6de- en 7de-eeuwse graven met zowel W-O als N-Z oriëntaties, geclustered in groepjes met verspreide crematies rondom
- D. Zone met min of meer geïsoleerde elite (kamer)graven waaronder 3 paardengraven.

For the cremation graves the outlook for future anthropological research gives more positive expectations. Most cremations yielded a large amount of incinerated bones (in many cases even more than 1000 g). Physical anthropological research will tell us much more about the people who lived here: not only age, sex and gender information but also pathological and physical information³.

2.2 Gender

Without skeletal material it seems impossible to determine the sexes of the inhumated bodies. Grave goods are not always gender-related and do not necessarily provide a robust answer regarding the sex of the individual. One has to consider that the deposition of grave goods was selected by the living relatives⁴ and often formed part of ritual acts by the mourning survivors⁵. Some objects need not necessarily have belonged to the deceased.

In general, graves containing spears, axes and seaxes are associated with males, while beads (fig. 4), spindle whorls and 'châtelaines' with keys and other tools are regarded as typically female accessories. Brooches, belt fittings and knives are associated with both males and females⁶. At least 100 Broechem inhumations yielded a certain amount of beads (22%) while in ca 60 graves (13%) weapons were present.

For this aspect of identity too, analysis of the incinerated bones from the cremation graves will provide much more information.

2.3 Social identity

The expression of social identity seems to have evolved in the cemetery layout from the second half of the 5th century to the 6th and 7th century. While in the earlier period graves with a clearly rich content were placed among the common burials in the northern part of the cemetery (fig. 2: A), later on the elite

graves were clustered on a reserved plot isolated from the other graves in the southern part of the grounds (fig. 2: D). These high-status burials are characterised by a specific layout in large wooden chamber graves, lavish furniture and the accompaniment of horse burials.

One of these chamber graves contained two coffins. This grave was reopened in early medieval times so the content was disturbed and left incomplete, but some of the forgotten and left objects had a clear 'Lombard' origin (for example silver decorative shoe elements and a gold coin)⁷. We can imagine that this local nobility tried to strengthen their relations with other politically important regions by marriage or other social and economic alliances⁸. This could explain some of the foreign objects with 'Alamantic', 'Thuringian', 'Ostrogothic' or 'Lombard' origin in the other elite graves in this cemetery zone.

One of the other chamber graves from the same area included a gold coin (an unidentified *tremissis*) and an early 7th-century gold disc brooch inlaid with garnet (fig. 5).

2.4 Ethnicity and migration

Finally the Broechem cemetery provides a wealth of information on ethnicity and migration. Many 'exotic' grave goods also reveal contacts with overseas or northerly regions. These contacts could be economic, social (marriage or other alliances) or ethnic (migration). Only the practice of certain burial rituals such as north-south oriented inhumation graves and the cremation rite, affirms the arrival of small groups of 'Germanic' or 'Anglo-Saxon' people in the Scheldt valley region, who clung to their original traditions.

In the wider Scheldt valley region, a striking distribution of the early medieval cremation rite can be observed (fig. 6). One concentration occurs along the river Scheldt in the province of East Flanders (fig. 6: A), a second to the southeast of Antwerp in the



FIG. 3 Teeth of a mandible of a 12 year-old boy.
Tanden van een onderkaak van een jongen van ongeveer 12 jaar oud.



FIG. 4 In situ bead strings in a female grave.
In situ kralensnoeren in een vrouwengraf.

3 Annaert, Deforce & Vandenbruaene 2011.

4 Huggett 1996, 338; Härke 1997, 23; Lucy 1999, 33.

5 Ravn 2003, 14-18.

6 Huggett 1996, 345, 348; Walton-Rogers 2007, 127.

7 Annaert & van Heesch 2004, 241, 249-251.

8 Ibid., 251.

aforementioned area of the *pagus renensis* (fig. 6: B). Other cremations are scattered across the Taxandria region in the north of Belgium and the south of the Netherlands (fig. 6: C). In the Meuse valley, cremation burials only occur sporadically (fig. 6: D). In northern Austrasia the cremation practice appears to have resumed in the second half of the 5th century and in some cemeteries continued until the end of the 6th century. The cremation graves always occur in cemeteries where inhumation is the usual burial custom.

The origins of this burial ritual in the Scheldt valley have been a topic of discussion for decades. Should cremation be interpreted as the survival of Gallo-Roman or even older Iron Age traditions⁹, or is it an indication of the presence of overseas and trans-Rhenan colonists¹⁰? With this question in mind an interdisciplinary archaeological, physical-anthropological and charcoal investigation of the Broechem cremations is beginning to provide clarity.



FIG. 5 Gold tremissis (a) and early 7th-century gold disc brooch inlaid with garnet from elite burial (b).
Gouden tremissis (a) en vroeg-7de-eeuwse gouden schijffibula met inlegwerk in granaatsteen (b).



FIG. 6 Distribution of early medieval cremation rite in the Scheldt valley.
Verspreiding van de vroegmiddeleeuwse crematieritus in de Scheldevallei.

⁹ Van Doorselaer/Rogge 1985, 169-170.

¹⁰ Roosens 1968, 19.

3 Results of an interdisciplinary and processual analysis of the Broechem cremation graves

3.1 Anthropology and Charcoal analysis¹¹

Rather than applying the classical (but still current) typological classification to the cremations, the ideas of processual archaeology are followed and the Broechem cremations are studied as a depositional process¹². Research is not focussed on the appearance of the graves, but on the whole ritual resulting in a grave and its contents. Physical-anthropological investigation forms an essential part of the analysis of the burial process. The rituals performed during a burial ceremony are the activities of relatives of the deceased and tell us much more about the living people than typological classifications, giving researchers the opportunity to understand the social relationships within past communities¹³.

The present study of the cremation graves of the Broechem cemetery demonstrates a clear difference between Gallo-Roman and early medieval cremation rites¹⁴. Continuity of earlier Iron Age and Roman cremation traditions to explain the presence of early medieval cremation graves in the Scheldt valley and the Antwerp region does not seem acceptable:

- The appearance of the graves that are present as shallow irregular pits is different;
- Preliminary results of the charcoal analysis tell us that the Broechem cremation graves show much more variety in fuel selection than Roman graves¹⁵;
- The fact that the incinerated bones were not as fragmented as Roman cremated remains demonstrates that the burning process was different. While Roman pyres were extinguished with water or wine (resulting in fragmentation of the bones), it seems that the early medieval pyres were left to burn out (leaving little charcoal and larger bone fragments);
- The Broechem cremations are mostly complete. Their weight values are much higher than those in Roman graves and all parts of the body tend to be present¹⁶. This means that the cremated bones were gathered with precision while in Roman times a *pars pro toto* of the deceased seemed sufficient;
- Roman cremation graves always contained grave goods that were unburnt besides burnt fragments of gifts and clothing accessories. In early medieval times, the deceased was placed on the pyre with all his or her ornaments and accompanied by all the grave goods. After the burning process the burnt or melted remains of these objects were deposited in the pit.

3.2 Types of cremation graves

All cremations were recovered as bulk samples and then wet-sieved to a 0.5 mm fraction. All bones, charcoal and burnt seeds or grave goods were picked out by hand. This process made it possible to distinguish three main categories of grave types:

- *Knochenlager*, characterised by a concentration of incinerated bones, possibly originally wrapped in organic material,

such as leather or textile. In some cases this concentration of bones was placed in a deeper part of the pit, while the shallow part was filled with remains of charcoal and burnt grave goods;

- *Brandgruben* graves with sparse charcoal and an exceptional amount of cremated bones (with a maximum of 2.3 kg);
- *Brandgruben* graves with abundant charcoal and cremated bone.

Besides these three main types, there were two for this region rather exceptional grave types. Both were situated in the northern and earliest part of the cemetery (fig. 2: C). One urn grave was found with the cremated bones deposited in a hand-made urn similar to the Anglo-Saxon or Saxon *Schalenurnen* (second half 5th – early 6th century). The contents of the urn (1200 g of cremated bone) were sampled in different layers to investigate whether the human remains had been deposited in anatomical order. This was not the case. The remains are those of an adult male (under 40). All parts of the body were present including tooth remains. The urn also contained burnt pig bone. The presence of both white and blue-grey colouring on the bones suggests changes in temperature due to changing weather circumstances.

The cremation inside the four-post building contained only 150 gr of burnt bone, mostly animal bone (pig and goat or sheep), but also some fragile human bones and tooth remains, possibly of a child or juvenile.

At first sight the different grave types provide similar anthropological information. All grave types contained burnt animal bone (sheep/goat and pig) and artefacts; almost all graves (except the cremation house type) contained high amounts (>1000 g) and large fragments (>5 cm) of human bone. Both males and females, adults (<40 years) and subadults (<20 years, children and juveniles) were identified. All individuals show warping effects and bone colouring, indicative of high combustion temperatures.

The presence of a four-post cremation house with a burial inside of it, and the urn grave with a Saxon *Schalenurn* in the northern part of the cemetery, provide a supplementary indication that the early medieval cremation rite has its origin in the Germanic regions¹⁷.

Sequences of radiocarbon dates will give more chronological information, in addition to the typochronological information from the grave goods. Based on the latter, it seems that the earliest cremation graves in Broechem (concentrated in the northern part of the cemetery) date back to the end of the 5th century; the tradition continues into the 6th and the beginning of the 7th century. However, the absolute chronological information provided by radiocarbon dating is indispensable to establish if there is a chronological relationship between the different types of graves¹⁸.

¹¹ Research by colleagues Marit Vandenbruaene and Koen Deforce, Agency Flanders Heritage.

¹² Following Hiddink's methodology for Roman cremation graves: Hiddink 2003, 21. See also Huggett 1996, 339.

¹³ Härke H. 1997, Ravn 2003.

¹⁴ Annaert, Deforce & Vandenbruaene 2011, 215.

¹⁵ Annaert, Deforce & Vandenbruaene 2011, 215.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 215.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 215.

¹⁸ To date only two cremations have been radiocarbon dated, which places them in the 6th century: Naysmith *et al.* 2007.

4 Conclusions

The practice of cremation rituals in northern Austrasia appears to be the result of the arrival of small groups of people from northern or overseas regions, practising their own burial traditions. According to the evidence from the Broechem cemetery, this migration started in the 5th century (urn grave and four-post house grave).

The 6th to the 7th century must be seen as a period of acculturation and integration. In the central part of the Broechem burial grounds, cremations are scattered among the inhumation graves as well as the south-north and west-east graves. Not one single grave presents a typically 'Germanic' look: where 'Saxon' or 'Anglo-Saxon' objects were present, there were also typically 'Frankish' objects in the grave.

In the same period we can demonstrate a development of a local elite with graves in a particular plot in the southernmost part of the cemetery. These graves also present foreign grave goods but here the objects are to be explained in a socio-political or economic context.

The presence of so-called Saxon and Anglo-Saxon objects among the grave goods in Broechem and most of the cemeteries in the Scheldt region confirms the migration theory. The concentration of cremation graves and graves with objects displaying Continental-Saxon and Anglo-Saxon influence along the North Sea coast and the Scheldt valley is certainly not accidental¹⁹: waterways were the most convenient travel routes and the first settlements were undoubtedly founded along the coast or rivers, from where the inland regions were easily accessible.

This however cannot be classed as a general transformation in burial traditions. The cremation graves occur in a restricted region and reflect the presence of small family groups of colonists who clung to their original traditions. Although there is a large difference between the deposition of a burnt (destroyed) or unburnt (intact) body, the rituals practised before, during and after the ceremonies seem to be very similar. Alternatively, one can speak of acculturation.²⁰

It is clear that cemeteries offer a unique resource to research into early medieval migration. In this it is important to introduce interdisciplinary research and a processual analysis. The objects must always be seen in relation to their contexts – not only the relationship with the grave itself but also between different clusters of graves within the cemetery and between the known cemeteries in the wider region. Material culture cannot be interpreted without analysing ritual practices and traditions²¹.

Samenvatting

Het vroegmiddeleeuwse grafveld te Broechem (B, prov. Antwerpen) is een van de meest uitgestrekte grafvelden die ooit opgegraven zijn in Vlaanderen. Het grafveld is gesitueerd in de regio ten zuidwesten van Antwerpen, historisch gekend als de *Pagus Renensis*, met een topografische ligging op de zuidelijke helling van een lemige zandrug. Nu de site bijna volledig opgegraven is (2001-2003 en 2007-2010), is het mogelijk om de ontwikkeling en diversiteit van de graven te onderzoeken. De meeste graven, ten minste 442, zijn inhumatiegraven waaronder ook 3

paardengraven. Daarenboven liggen 68 crematiegraven verspreid tussen de inhumaties. Skeletmateriaal en ander organisch materiaal is bewaard gebleven in de zure lemige zandbodem. Enkel het gecremeerd bot is goed bewaard. Wegens de afwezigheid van deze directe informatie, zijn andere bronnen nodig om de identiteit van de in deze regio begraven vroegmiddeleeuwse gemeenschap te onderzoeken. Dit onderzoek naar identiteit focust zich niet enkel op etniciteit maar ook op leeftijd, gender en politieke en sociale identiteit. Het moet tevens duidelijk zijn dat vroegere gemeenschappen andere opvattingen en tradities hadden m.b.t. identiteit en dat deze zelfs geëvolueerd kunnen zijn tijdens de gebruiksduur van het grafveld.

Er is heel weinig informatie om de leeftijd van de overleden personen te reconstrueren. Enkel de afmetingen van de inhumatiekuilen en kisten, en de studie van het verbrand bot uit de crematiegraven kunnen een idee bieden over het aantal overleden kinderen. Graven van jongeren en volwassenen zijn veel moeilijker te onderscheiden van elkaar.

De bijgaven kunnen gender-gegevens verschaffen maar het is daarbij van belang om te beseffen dat gaat om deposities geselecteerd door de overlevende verwanten. In het algemeen zijn wapengraven gerelateerd aan mannen, terwijl kralen, spinstenen en zgn. 'châtelaines' met sleutels en andere gebruiksvoorwerpen geïnterpreteerd worden als vrouwelijke attributen. Mantelspelden, gordelbeslag en gespen en messen horen zowel bij mannen- als vrouwengraven.

De uiting van sociale identiteit lijkt zich ontwikkeld te hebben vanaf de tweede helft van de 5de eeuw tot de 6de eeuw. Graven met een rijke inhoud bevonden zich in de vroege fase (tweede helft 5de eeuw) tussen de eenvoudige graven, terwijl later de elitaire graven in de latere fase (6de-7de eeuw) geclusterd lagen op een geïsoleerde zone apart van de overige graven. Deze elite graven zijn gekenmerkt door de aanwezigheid van grote houten grafkamers, rijke bijgaven en de aanwezigheid van paardengraven. Tenslotte biedt het grafveld van Broechem heel wat informatie over etniciteit en migratie. Ten eerste onthult de aanwezigheid van 'exotische' bijgaven contacten met overzeese regio's en noordelijke streken. De contacten kunnen een economische, sociale (huwelijks- of andere allianties) of etnische (migratie) achtergrond hebben. Enkel de toepassing van bepaalde grafrituelen zoals zuid-noord gerichte inhumaties en het crematieritueel, bevestigt de aanwezigheid van kleine groepjes Germanen en Angelsaksen in de Scheldevallei, die trouw bleven aan hun traditionele tradities. De aanwezigheid van een gemengde culturele context in de grafdeposities en de verspreiding van de crematiegraven tussen de overige graven, lijkt aan te tonen dat er een goede integratie en acculturatie is geweest tussen de verschillende groepen mensen.

19 Soulat 2009; Soulat 2011.

20 Recent research on the graves of the Rhenen

cemetery in the Netherlands has led to the same conclusion (Willemsen, this volume).

21 Lucy 1999, 37-38.

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Céramiques et verres mérovingiens dans la vallée mosane: miroir d'une civilisation en évolution (du milieu Ve au VIIIe siècle)

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Abstract

Cet article tiré d'une thèse de doctorat sur les céramiques et verres mérovingiens dans la vallée mosane présente les récipients utilisés dans cette région au début du haut Moyen Âge. Il retrace brièvement leur évolution ainsi que celle des techniques et matériaux employés. À partir de là, l'article aborde notamment les possibilités de différenciation culturelle sur base de la vaisselle utilisée ainsi que les pratiques funéraires liées aux récipients. Ceux-ci soulignent une certaine uniformité dans cette civilisation et illustrent un passage progressif entre l'Antiquité et la période médiévale.

Keywords

Mérovingien, vallée mosane

1 Introduction

À la fin de l'Antiquité, en Europe, le centre de gravité se déplace peu à peu du sud vers le nord. En Austrasie, avec l'ascension des Pipinnides, le pays mosan occupera une place primordiale sur le plan économique, social et politique. Malgré l'importance de cette période et si l'histoire événementielle est relativement bien connue, l'économie, la société et la vie quotidienne le sont nettement moins car les sources écrites restent laconiques. La recherche historique doit dès lors se tourner vers la culture matérielle.

Parmi les objets mis au jour, la céramique et plus spécifiquement la poterie, très peu altérée, est présente sur presque tous les sites où elle constitue la majeure partie du matériel exhumé. Les verres servent aussi de contenants mais sont nettement moins nombreux. Vu les matériaux et techniques utilisés pour

leur fabrication, les règles qui régissaient les deux productions, leurs diffusions et leurs consommations étaient différentes et peuvent donc fournir des informations complémentaires aux archéologues.

Les résultats présentés font partie d'une thèse de doctorat². Ce travail qui reposait à la fois sur une étude archéologique et des analyses archéométriques des céramiques et verres mérovingiens dans la vallée mosane a permis d'obtenir des informations sur l'histoire des techniques mais aussi sur plusieurs questions d'ordre économique. Ces dernières de même que le classement des objets et leurs analyses ne seront que brièvement présentés dans cet article. Ils serviront à soutenir l'interprétation sociale et culturelle, thème au cœur de ce volume.

2 Méthodologie

Compte tenu de la quantité énorme de données, la première étape du travail a été le choix des sites archéologiques appropriés. Sur base des informations disponibles pour leur étude, en fonction de leur intérêt pour notre problématique globale et de l'accessibilité au matériel, 24 sites ont été sélectionnés (fig. 1).

Dans ces sites, près de 36.000 tessons céramiques dont 4.000 individus et 600 fragments ou objets en verre dont 211 individus ont été inventoriés grâce à une base de données informatisée. Le contexte de provenance, les caractéristiques techniques (matière, technique de mise en forme) et les caractéristiques morphologiques (dimensions, formes, décors) de chaque objet ont été enregistrés. Cet inventaire a permis le classement des vases et tessons selon des critères croisés. Plusieurs échantillons ont ensuite été sélectionnés pour procéder à des analyses pétrographiques et physico-chimiques dans les laboratoires du C2RMF à Paris et au Centre Européen d'Archéométrie de l'Université de Liège.

Une fois les différentes classes d'objets définies, leurs techniques de fabrication et matériaux identifiés, nous avons tenté de les

rattacher à la chronologie absolue. Les sériations contextuelles et fréquentielles, combinées aux datations obtenues par ^{14}C , par dendrochronologie ou grâce aux sources écrites, ont permis de dater les groupes d'objets et de retracer leur évolution.

3 Matériel

3.1 Céramique à inclusions volcaniques

Le premier groupe, la céramique dite «à inclusions volcaniques», reprend trois sous-groupes distincts: des cruches à surface brute et cuisson oxydante, des pots ovoïdes à surface brute et cuisson oxydante et d'autres à pâte fine, surface lissée, cuisson oxydante et enfumage. Chacun de ces sous-groupes compte assez peu d'individus. Dans la vallée mosane, les cruches ont été découvertes dans des tombes les plus anciennes. Au contraire, les pots ovoïdes ne proviennent que de contextes d'habitat de la fin de l'époque. Enfin, la céramique à surface lissée se trouve exclusivement à Stavelot, après la moitié du VII^e siècle. Pour retracer la provenance des tessons, la présence d'inclusions volcaniques dans leur pâte nous oriente vers l'Eifel. Techniquement et morphologiquement, les récipients sont proches de ceux produits dans les ateliers de Mayen³.

3.2 Sigillée tardive

Le second ensemble importé correspond à la sigillée tardive des ateliers argonnais⁴. Les formes utilisées dans la région mosane sont surtout des bols de type Chenet 320⁵, parfois décorés de motifs chrétiens, ou des bols de type Chenet 304, 324 et 313⁶. Au début de l'époque mérovingienne, la sigillée d'Argonne atteint encore la Meuse moyenne où elle devait constituer une part importante de la vaisselle. Son importation cesse définitivement dans la première moitié du VI^e siècle.

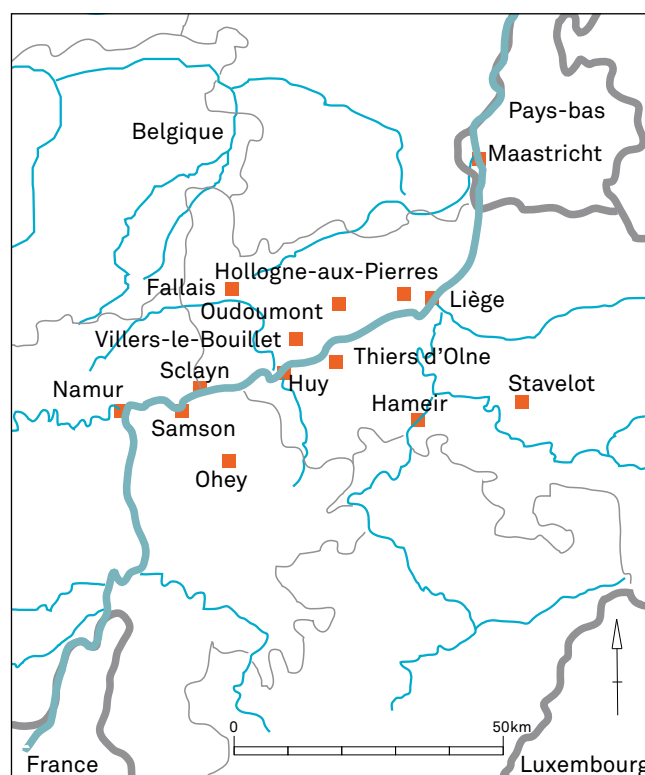


FIG. 1 Localisation des sites étudiés dans la vallée mosane: Namur Grognon, Namur Saint-Gilles et Saint-Hilaire, Namur La Plante, Samson, Sclayn, Ohey, Huy Batta, Huy Saint-Jacques, Huy ISI, Huy «Aux Ruelles», Huy «Sous-le-Château», Huy Saint-Victor, Thiers d'Olne, Villers-le-Bouillet, Oudoumont, Fallais, Hollogne-aux-Pierres, Stavelot, Hamoir, Liège Place Saint-Lambert, Maastricht Wyck, Maastricht Lanakerveld, Maastricht Mabro, Maastricht Vrijthof.



FIG. 2 Céramique à pâte fine. 1: Pot biconique du cimetière de Hamoir; 2: Ecuille carénée découverte dans la nécropole de Hollogne-aux-Pierres.

³ Redknap 1999.

⁴ Pour le récapitulatif le plus récent sur le sujet voir Brulet *et al.* 2010, 227-253.

⁵ Chenet 1941.

⁶ Chenet 1941.

3.3 Céramique à pâte fine

Les céramiques à pâte fine et surface lissée sont toujours mises en forme au tour (fig. 2). La matrice argileuse contenant peu d'inclusions a diverses teintes. Obtenues à partir d'atmosphères oxydantes, on distingue la céramique rouge de la céramique beige. Les pâtes foncées sont quant à elles cuites, en mode réducteur. Certains vases ont subi un enfumage. Enfin, quelques rares exemplaires ont été recouverts d'un engobe. La céramique à pâte fine et surface lissée a été produite dans la région mosane, notamment à Huy et Maastricht. À côté de ces deux centres fabricant des vases rouges et foncés, de la céramique beige était façonnée dans la région d'Ohey. Tous les ateliers mosans travaillaient avec des argiles locales.

La céramique à pâte fine est connue depuis la moitié du V^e siècle au moins. À cette époque, elle prend la forme de vase biconique (fig. 2: 1), souvent larges et toujours de couleur noire. Les écuelles carénées rouges (fig. 2: 2) apparaîtront vers la moitié du VI^e siècle. C'est également à cette époque que le nombre de vases rouges augmente. Les décors d'abord réalisés au cachet vont peu à peu se simplifier. Ceux à la molette sont surtout utilisés à partir du VI^e siècle. Le nombre de vases décorés diminue aussi dans le temps. La céramique fine de couleur beige est datée du VII^e siècle. À partir de la moitié de ce siècle, les céramiques à pâte fine deviennent de moins en moins nombreuses.

3.4 Céramique à pâte grossière

La matrice de la céramique à pâte grossière et surface rugueuse contient d'abondantes inclusions de grande taille (fig. 3). Elle peut être rouge, beige ou grise avec un enfumage ou non. À l'exception de trois vases modelés, toute la céramique à pâte grossière était tournée. Les ateliers hutois et ceux de Maastricht ont produit des vases à pâte grossière rouge ou grise. Les tessons beiges viennent surtout d'Ohey. Les analyses pétrographiques et chimiques permettent de distinguer plusieurs ensembles dont les pâtes beiges, les productions de Maastricht, celles de Huy ainsi qu'un quatrième groupe originaire de Namur.



FIG. 3 Céramique à pâte grossière. Pot ovoïde du site de Lanaker-veld (Maastricht).

La céramique grossière à surface rugueuse est utilisée tout au long de l'époque mérovingienne et peu d'éléments fournissent des critères de datation. Le pot ovoïde est la forme prédominante dans cet ensemble (fig. 3). Les variantes morphologiques se situent au niveau de la lèvre qui peut être simplement étirée vers l'extérieur, enroulée ou creusée d'une gorge destinée à recevoir un couvercle. Les pots ovoïdes ne varient quasiment pas en dehors d'une légère diminution du nombre de récipients à gorge interne au VII^e siècle. Des cruches sont fabriquées avec des pâtes grossières mais seulement si leur corps est ovoïde. En plus, cet ensemble compte quelques formes ouvertes tels des bols globulaires ou des écuelles à bord courbe et court qui apparaissent à la fin du VII^e siècle. On notera également une augmentation de la proportion de céramique grossière dans le temps. À la fin de la période mérovingienne, ces vases seront plus souvent décorés, toujours avec des motifs simples.

3.5 Verre incolore

La matrice des verres de ce groupe est parfois légèrement verdâtre ou jaunâtre mais sans réelle intention de coloration (fig. 4). Elle contient de petites bulles et quelques filandres. Les verres incolores sont les plus nombreux. Ils présentent aussi le plus de variantes décoratives et morphologiques. Les décors sont faits avec des fils de verre blanc opaque, avec des fils de verre incolore ou par impression. Le verre incolore est caractéristique du début de l'époque mérovingienne durant lequel il a servi à fabriquer des petites bouteilles, de nombreuses petites coupes à décor de fils de verre blanc opaque. Les coupes à décor chrétien sont contemporaines de ces dernières et de cornets décorés d'émail (fig. 4) ou de fils de verre incolore. Vers le dernier quart du V^e siècle apparaissent les gobelets carénés. Ils perdurent durant le VI^e siècle mais sans décor de fils de verre blanc car ceux-ci ne dépassent pas le premier quart du siècle. Les gobelets carénés et des coupes plus profondes à larges côtes sont les seules formes incolores à dépasser la moitié du VI^e siècle.



FIG. 4 Cornet incolore provenant du site de Fallais.

Les analyses chimiques prouvent que tous les vases incolores sont des verres sodiques obtenus à partir d'un mélange de sable et de natron⁷. Bien que proches, leurs compositions chimiques ne correspondent pas à celles connues au Bas-Empire et les éléments indiquant le recyclage du verre sont peu concentrés⁸. La matière première employée ne résulte donc qu'assez peu de la récupération des matériaux antérieurs. Sa composition chimique est par contre proche de celles de verres contemporains mis au jour en Allemagne, en France ou en Angleterre et prouve que le verre brut provenait encore d'Orient, sans doute d'une région entre le Nil et Israël⁹.

3.6 Verre vert

La matrice est soit verte foncée ou verte-jaune avec des bulles, filandres et impuretés (fig. 5), soit vert-bleu et pure. Sur les vases verts, aucun fil blanc n'a été repéré. Les décors sont imprimés ou faits de fils verdâtres. Les deux techniques décoratives peuvent être associées sur des cornets très fins ornés de côtes hélicoïdales, hérités de l'Antiquité tardive. Ceux-ci ne dépassent pas le dernier quart du V^e siècle. Les formes plus frustes au verre impur sont datées de la moitié du VI^e siècle aux environs de la moitié du VII^e siècle. Des côtes larges décorent des coupes étroites et profondes ainsi que des gobelets. Les fils de verre sont appliqués sur des pots et des gobelets à carène basse et profil arrondi (fig. 5). A cette époque, les verres verts côtoient encore des verres incolores mais ces derniers sont nettement moins nombreux.



FIG. 5 Gobelet vert découvert à Hamoir.



FIG. 6 Coupe bleue à bord replié mise au jour dans la nécropole de Saint-Victor à Huy.

Les analyses de quelques fragments verts montrent une disparité chimique assez importante. Par rapport au groupe précédent, la composition est plus proche des verres de l'Antiquité tardive¹⁰ mais les traces de recyclage sont rares. Quoiqu'il en soit, les sources d'approvisionnement en matière première semblent différentes de celles du verre incolore. Cela va de paire avec une diminution du nombre de récipients.

3.7 Verre bleu

En dehors de quelques vases bleutés sans aucune inclusion, la majorité des verres de cette couleur sont criblés de grosses bulles et de filandres (fig. 6). Le verre bleuté a majoritairement servi à fabriquer des récipients sans décor. Leurs parois sont lisses sauf dans le cas d'une coupe ornée de larges côtes sur le fond. Les formes bleutées sont surtout des pots et des coupes à bord replié (fig. 6) qui datent du VII^e siècle.

D'après les analyses, la composition chimique du verre bleu varie. Dans la majorité des échantillons analysés, la teinte serait due au fer dont la présence ne semble pas (ou plus) palliée par l'ajout de manganèse. Le verre bleu reste un verre sodique réalisé à partir de natron mais plus de traces de recyclage y sont décelées. Sa production semble donc être moins dépendante des importations.

4 Résultats et discussion: interprétation socio-culturelle

4.1 Statut social

Dans les nécropoles, pour identifier les inhumations «privilegiées», plusieurs indices sont utilisés comme les armes¹¹, mais aussi les sceilles¹² ou la position de la tombe dans la nécropole¹³. La céramique associée à ces tombes ne présente pas vraiment de caractère distinctif. Ni le nombre, ni la qualité des vases ne se démarquent systématiquement. Les céramiques fines ou importées ne semblent pas prendre place dans un type particulier de tombe et les céramiques montées à la main ou celles à pâte grossière ne se trouvent pas que dans les sépultures pauvrement dotées. Il arrive même que les tombes dites privilégiées contiennent moins de vaisselle. Aucune règle ne semble régir le dépôt des vases, du moins pour les cimetières étudiés.

Si cette tendance est très nette pour la céramique, la fragilité et la rareté des verres justifieraient leur importance et ils pourraient être marqueurs d'un statut particulier¹⁴. Dans la vallée mosane, le nombre de verres funéraires est certes moins élevé que celui des céramiques mais, lorsque le contexte peut être restitué, ces récipients ne sont pas toujours associés aux mobiliers funéraires riches. S'il est vrai que des sépultures privilégiées en contiennent, ce n'est pas le cas de toutes. Il est aussi intéressant de bien distinguer les tombes du début de l'époque mérovingienne de celles plus récentes. Avant la moitié du VI^e siècle, le verre est nettement plus abondant dans les sépultures qu'après. Le nombre de vases présents dans une nécropole était

⁷ Henderson 1985, 267-291.

⁸ Foster & Jackson 2009, 192.

⁹ Freestone *et al.* 2008, 36.

¹⁰ Freestone *et al.* 2000; Foy *et al.* 2003.

¹¹ Dierkens 1981, 43-44.

¹² Verslype 1998, 577.

¹³ Buchet & Loren 1977, 42.

¹⁴ Verslype 1998, 576.

certainement lié aux possibilités d'approvisionnement plus qu'au statut social des occupants¹⁵.

Dans les sites d'habitat, le mobilier, souvent fragmentaire, n'est pas abondant et surtout constitué de céramique. Si pour l'époque gallo-romaine, on sait différencier céramique de luxe et céramique commune, cette distinction reste problématique pour les périodes intermédiaires¹⁶. Les critères pour évaluer le luxe d'un habitat peuvent être la présence d'armes et les pièces de l'équipement de cavalier, des objets liés au loisir ou les restes de gros gibiers¹⁷. On sait également que pour formaliser et maintenir des accords, les élites mérovingiennes participaient à des festins et échangeaient des cadeaux¹⁸. Ceux-ci pouvaient notamment consister en de la vaisselle comme les bols d'argent et d'étain offerts aux églises et monastères¹⁹. En Scandinavie, la présence du verre est presque exclusivement le résultat d'échanges non-commerciaux²⁰. Dans ces régions, il pouvait correspondre à des cadeaux faits entre les élites²¹. De même, en Normandie, de nombreux tessons de verre associés à de l'or et autres objets précieux ont été trouvés sur un site privilégié²². Cependant, selon la région et l'époque, la «valeur» du verre a dû varier. Ainsi, sur le site du Thiers d'Olne, habitat aristocratique clairement identifié²³, très peu de verre a été retrouvé. En revanche, le site de Villersle-Bouillet²⁴, implantation rurale sans trait distinctif, contenait plusieurs récipients de ce type.

La céramique est beaucoup plus courante sur les sites domestiques. Parmi ces vases, il existait aussi des produits importés et des céramiques finement décorées dont la valeur pouvait être différente. Toutefois, la présence de telle pièce en contexte domestique ne résulte pas nécessairement du statut de son propriétaire. Ni le nombre, ni la qualité de ces biens ne définissent la place d'un individu ou d'une groupe dans la société et à ce stade de la recherche, on ne pourra pas définir de vaisselle de luxe.

4.2 Différentiation culturelle?

Bien que les sources écrites ne marquent presque aucune différence entre «Germanins» et «Gallo-Romains»²⁵, on pourrait à travers le mobilier trouver des indices de comportement où les uns exacerbent leur «germanité» et les autres cherchent l'assimilation avec les populations en place au V^e siècle²⁶.

4.3 Régime alimentaire

Pour l'époque qui nous intéresse, la gastronomie romaine (vin, huile, pain) est bien différente des préférences traditionnellement germaniques (lait, beurre, viande)²⁷. La nourriture ainsi que la façon dont elle est préparée et consommée peuvent révéler les imprégnations culturelles. Dans cette optique, chaque type de nourriture a un contenant adapté non seulement pour sa consommation mais aussi pour sa préparation.

-Préparation: Les «pots à cuire» étaient employés pour les cuissons des mets liquides²⁸ ou semi-liquides. Les traces de suie et de fumée de même que les zones rougies observées sur les panses des vases en contexte de consommation attestent l'utilisation de ceux-ci en contact avec le feu. Leur forme était adaptée à cet usage et la pâte contenait un dégraissant abondant pour résister aux changements de température. Enfin, l'enfumage des vases permettait une meilleure étanchéité²⁹. Un autre élément important à prendre en compte est le goût donné aux aliments par la cuisson dans un pot de terre car des textes montrent une certaine sensibilité du consommateur aux saveurs que confèrent les contenants aux denrées³⁰. Un pot enfumé et un autre sans enfumage ne donnaient pas la même saveur. De même, les différents types de terre cuite devaient aussi avoir une sapidité propre.

Dans la vallée mosane, du Bas-Empire à l'époque mérovingienne, peu de différences existent entre les pots à cuire (fig. 3). Les formes et dimensions restent les mêmes au long de la période mérovingienne. Seule une légère différence peut être observée dans la proportion de bords à gorge qui diminue impliquant sans doute un recours moins fréquent aux couvercles, ustensile rarement retrouvé sur les sites. Vers la fin de l'époque mérovingienne, notons la (ré)apparition des pots ovoïdes importés de l'Eifel. Comme le montrent des traces de fumée, ils ont pu servir de pot à cuire, peut-être appréciés pour leurs propriétés techniques ou gustatives.

A côté des pots ovoïdes, des récipients en céramique étaient aussi utilisés comme mortier. Hérités de l'Antiquité, ils sont assez rares et se rattachent au début de la période. Enfin, les écuelles globulaires pouvaient être dévolues au mélange ou à la consommation d'aliments. Rares sont celles portant des traces de fumée, elles ne devaient donc pas être destinées au contact avec le feu.

-Service: La vaisselle de service concerne les récipients et ustensiles directement liés à la consommation des denrées alimentaires, ceux que l'on retrouve sur la table³¹. Pour la consommation des aliments, les écuelles et bols, d'abord en sigillée, évoluent vers les écuelles carénées (fig. 2:2) souvent de couleur rouge puis vers des écuelles à bord plus court en céramique à pâte grossière et enfumée. L'aire de répartition de ces récipients semble correspondre à celle de la sigillée tardive. En Alsace, cette dernière comme les écuelles carénées sont quasi inexistantes³². Ces formes et la façon de manger qui y est associée découleraient donc de traditions romaines.

Dans la plupart des sites, le nombre d'écuelles est souvent inférieur à celui des pots biconiques. Ces formes correspondent à l'évolution morphologique généralisée de la vaisselle de service où presque tous les vases ont une carène. Les pots biconiques sont destinés à la consommation de liquides. Lorsque le poète Fortunat parle, dans un de ses textes, d'un pot de terre noire

¹⁵ Les deux peuvent aussi être liés, les verriers s'installant à proximité des consommateurs en mesure de s'offrir ce genre de produit.

¹⁶ Zadora-Rio 1995, 149.

¹⁷ Zadora-Rio 1995, 149.

¹⁸ Effros 2002, 25.

¹⁹ Effros 2002, 22.

²⁰ Näsman 1984, 143. La présence du verre ne devient régulière qu'au VIII^e siècle.

²¹ Lebecq 1998, 202.

²² Adrian 2006, 381.

²³ Witvrouw *et al.* 1992.

²⁴ Loicq & Marchal 2003.

²⁵ Halsall 1995, 27.

²⁶ Dierkens 2008, 16.

²⁷ Dierkens 2008, 17; Plouvières 2003, 85-90.

²⁸ Alexandre-Bidon 2005, 51.

²⁹ Echallier 1984, 20.

³⁰ Alexandre-Bidon 2005, 122.

³¹ Gentili 1988, 254.

³² Châtelet 2002.

rempli de lait d'une blancheur immaculée³³, on imagine facilement un pot biconique rempli de ce liquide. Le fait qu'ils soient plus souvent cuits en mode réducteur et enfumé devait améliorer leur étanchéité³⁴. Comme pour les récipients destinés à la cuisson, les vases en céramique liés à la boisson devaient lui donner un certain goût. Au cours de la période mérovingienne, les pots biconiques «classiques» (fig. 2:1) font leur apparition dans la seconde moitié du V^e siècle et ce n'est qu'à la fin de la période que les pots à carène basse voient le jour.

A cette vaisselle destinée à la consommation de portions «individuelles» devaient s'ajouter quelques éléments de service. Les formes biconiques les plus ouvertes pouvaient peut-être faire office de contenant pour plusieurs portions, tout comme certaines écuelles. On peut aussi imaginer que des pots à cuire étaient utilisés pour le service mais les plats semblables à ceux du Bas-Empire – formes ouvertes très larges – sont quasi inexistantes. Les cruches et bouteilles sont également exceptionnelles et plus courantes sur les tables du début de l'époque mérovingienne qu'à la fin de celle-ci.

Presque tous ces vases en verre trouvent leur origine dans des formes romaines³⁵. Par rapport à la céramique, ils ne transmettaient pas de goût aux breuvages. La couleur du verre et ses variations sont sans doute plus influencées par la technique de fabrication et les matériaux disponibles que par des changements alimentaires. Les formes à boire en verre sont des coupes (fig. 6), des gobelets (fig. 5), des cornets (fig. 4) et des pots. Tous ces vases ont des contenances inférieures à celles des céramiques. En plus du goût, le verre présente l'avantage de sa légèreté et de sa transparence. Contrairement aux parois rectilignes des cornets, la carène de certains gobelets leur conférait des avantages pratiques (comme sur la céramique) car elle pouvait retenir les impuretés présentes dans les liquides. Vers la fin de la période mérovingienne, on constate une augmentation de la taille des récipients en verre, les formes ouvertes tout comme les pots bleus peuvent contenir un peu plus de liquide que les petites coupes et cornets antérieurs.

-Conservation: Durant l'occupation romaine, les *dolia* et amphores étaient utilisés pour le transport et la conservation. Au haut Moyen Âge, un trafic régulier de vin existait encore entre les bouches de la Loire et le nord-ouest des îles britanniques depuis l'Irlande jusqu'aux Hébrides comme le prouvent les fragments d'amphores³⁶ mais, dans la région mosane, elles ne sont plus attestées.

Pour servir au transport et à la conservation de denrées alimentaires, les récipients devaient pouvoir être fermés. A cet effet, il est possible que des peaux ou vessies tendues aient été utilisées ; leur maintien par des ligatures sous le bord a pu laisser des traces d'usure et certaines zones plus claires pourraient être interprétées dans ce sens. Comparés aux récipients romains, si les pots ovoïdes ont bien été utilisés à des fins de conservation, les quantités contenues étaient moindres. Seuls quelques grands vases retrouvés à Namur et Maastricht font exception. Le rôle de la

céramique en matière de transport et de stockage semble donc minimale. La vannerie ou les éléments en bois ont sans doute joué un rôle plus important dans ce domaine³⁷ comme le montre le tonneau de Molendorp³⁸.

Du côté du verre, les petites bouteilles et petits pots pouvaient aussi servir au transport et à la conservation de certains produits. Vu leur contenance, environ 10 cl, ils devaient plutôt renfermer des produits précieux, peut-être des épices, des huiles ou du parfum, voire des onguents à l'instar des boîtes d'albâtre embaumées où les aristocrates conservaient les parfums et baumes que décrit Sidoine Apollinaire³⁹.

4.4 Pratiques cultuelles dans le monde des morts

Dans les tombes, la présence de la vaisselle est liée, directement ou indirectement, à la pratique des banquets funéraires et aux dons d'offrandes alimentaires dérivant de la tradition romaine où le défunt était enterré avec nourriture et boissons⁴⁰. Si, au début de l'époque mérovingienne, les récipients enterrés avec les défunts semblent garder leur fonction première – contenir de la nourriture – cette signification a dû évoluer dans le temps pour peu à peu disparaître.

Au début de l'époque mérovingienne, dans la seconde moitié du V^e siècle, la vaisselle funéraire se compose de sigillée tardive, formes ouvertes de couleur rouge. Ces vases sont souvent déposés en plusieurs exemplaires dans la tombe. A ceux-ci peuvent être associés une ou plusieurs cruches. Les formes à boire sont surtout en verre. Les cornets et coupes sont encore assez fréquents. On retrouve donc dans les sépultures de la vaisselle de table et le symbolisme du banquet funéraire reste évident.

Vers la seconde moitié du VI^e siècle, les pots biconiques foncés sont de loin les plus nombreux. Les formes ouvertes, soit les écuelles rouges, deviennent rares dans les tombes de même que les cruches. Le nombre de verres diminue aussi de façon drastique. La majorité des sépultures comptent un seul vase, exceptionnellement deux ou trois. Cette modification et la disparition de certaines formes peuvent être liées à des contingences économiques ou à une mode globale. Il n'empêche que celles-ci correspondent à une modification dans les pratiques funéraires car les formes ouvertes rouges, des écuelles carénées, sont encore utilisées en nombre dans le «monde des vivants» alors qu'elles sont plus exceptionnelles dans les nécropoles. Le symbolisme du repas funéraire semble s'effriter peu à peu sous l'influence de nouvelles croyances, de modifications dans les rites et, peut-être, de facteurs économiques.

Les dépôts de vaisselle se raréfient au cours du VII^e siècle. Vases en verre et en céramique restent présents mais le nombre de sépultures en comprenant diminue. A la fin de la période mérovingienne, le dépôt de vaisselle dans les tombes est encore pratiqué de façon sporadique. La signification de cette pratique est complexe à déterminer mais son abandon semble s'être fait petit à petit, au fur et à mesure que les mentalités se modifiaient, certaines

33 Plouvié 2008, 82.

34 Echallier 1984, 20.

35 Feytaud 2003.

36 Lebecq 1998, 186-188.

37 Gentili 1988, 257.

38 Hollevoet 2005, 105.

39 Dierkens & Périn 2008, 33.

40 Effros 2002, 69.

familles, voire certains individus, restant peut-être attachés aux anciennes coutumes. En 742, le *concilium germanicum* finit par proscrire le sacrifice aux morts⁴¹ mais la «tradition» semble éteinte avant l'interdiction officielle.

5 Conclusion

Grâce à une approche pluridisciplinaire, nous avons pu proposer un classement raisonné des verres et céramiques, valable à la fois pour les sites d'habitat et les sites funéraires. Cette classification basée à la fois sur des critères techniques et morphologiques a été rattachée à la chronologie absolue, permettant ainsi de dater les objets et d'aborder certains aspects socio-culturels de la période mérovingienne dans la vallée mosane.

Concernant le statut social de ses possesseurs, la présence de telle ou telle pièce de vaisselle dans une tombe ou un contexte domestique ne résulte pas nécessairement du statut de son propriétaire. Dans les nécropoles comme dans les habitats, ni le nombre, ni la qualité de ces biens ne définissent clairement la place d'un individu ou d'une groupe dans la société. Pour aboutir à une interprétation de ce type, céramiques et verres doivent toujours être associés aux autres données archéologiques.

D'un point de vue culturel, dans les sites étudiés, le vaisselier renvoie l'image d'une civilisation uniforme. Les vases sont au départ ceux utilisés par les populations occupant la vallée mosane au Bas-Empire. Dans la région concernée, ils évoluent ensuite uniformément. Nous ne pouvons pas définir une vaisselle spécifique aux « Francs » et les occupants des différentes implantations ne se différencient pas sur base de la céramique et du verre qu'ils ont utilisé. Cette uniformité peut être perçue dans la façon de consommer les aliments mais aussi dans le mode d'inhumation des défunts. Cette civilisation uniforme est aussi en constante évolution et apparaît définitivement comme le passage progressif entre l'Antiquité et la période médiévale.

⁴¹ Effros 2002, 76-79.

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Hand-made pottery along the Channel coast and parallels with the Scheldt valley

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Abstract

Hand-made pottery, often referred to in the literature as 'Anglo-Saxon pottery' because of its similarity to locally produced ware from South-East England in the 5th and 6th centuries, has been found all along the French Channel coast from, Normandy to the Pas-de-Calais. Recovered from estuaries and river valleys around Caen, Boulogne and Ponthieu, this pottery, decorated with incised lines, is evidence of cross-Channel contact, probably related to manufacturing traditions. These belong to a specific material culture that is found only along the Channel coast. People living by the sea, in estuaries and major river valleys, develop a coastal culture, in this case evidenced by a clear connection between the two sides of the Channel. Some vessels were subjected to chemical and petrographic analysis with the collaboration of A. Bocquet-Lienard (Craham) and X. Savary (SDAC), including the contexts from the valley of the Canche (Pas-de-Calais) and the lower valley of the Orne (Calvados). The results of these investigations will be help to understand the presence of hand-made pottery on the Channel coast. One of the research objectives was a comparison with hand-made pottery, occasionally decorated, from the Scheldt valley, which suggested interesting parallels with the influences Channel or a link with Rhineland, Lower Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein.

Keywords

Hand-made pottery, Channel Coast, early medieval period

1 Introduction

Hand-made pottery, generally named 'Anglo-Saxon pottery'⁵ because in shape and decoration these ceramics are closely related to Anglo-Saxon pottery production, represents an important part of the study of the ca 150 Anglo-Saxon artefacts discovered in early medieval cemeteries and settlements along the continental coast of the Channel⁶ (fig. 1). At the time, the continental coastline was a homogeneous territory and the Channel connected insular Britain and the continent. Influences mingled as people and artefacts moved back and forth, to form a melting pot on both sides of the Channel in the 6th century. The distribution of archaeological finds from this period demonstrates the importance of three main areas between Cotentin and Calais: around Boulogne-sur-Mer (Pas-de-Calais) in the Liane valley, in Ponthieu (Pas-de-Calais and Somme) between the Canche valley and the Somme valley, and in the Orne valley (Calvados). This distribution is partly the result of excavation strategies, which in the 1970s and 1980s focussed on the area around Caen and Boulogne-sur-Mer, and of the actual concentration of finds along estuaries and major river valleys, such as the Canche valley (Pas de Calais), which may reflect control over these regions. 86 'Anglo-Saxon' pots can be dated from the last quarter of the 5th century to the early 7th century (fig. 2). Several sites have yielded multiple examples, namely the cemeteries at La Calotterie and Offin (Pas-de-Calais), Vron (Somme), Novion-en-Ponthieu, and Giberville (Calvados), as well as the settlements at Giberville (Calvados).

2 Analysis of hand-made pottery found along the Channel coast

Petrographic and chemical analyses have been undertaken on a series of vessels identified as having 'Anglo-Saxon' influence. Initial petrographic analyses were conducted by X. Savary (Sdac)

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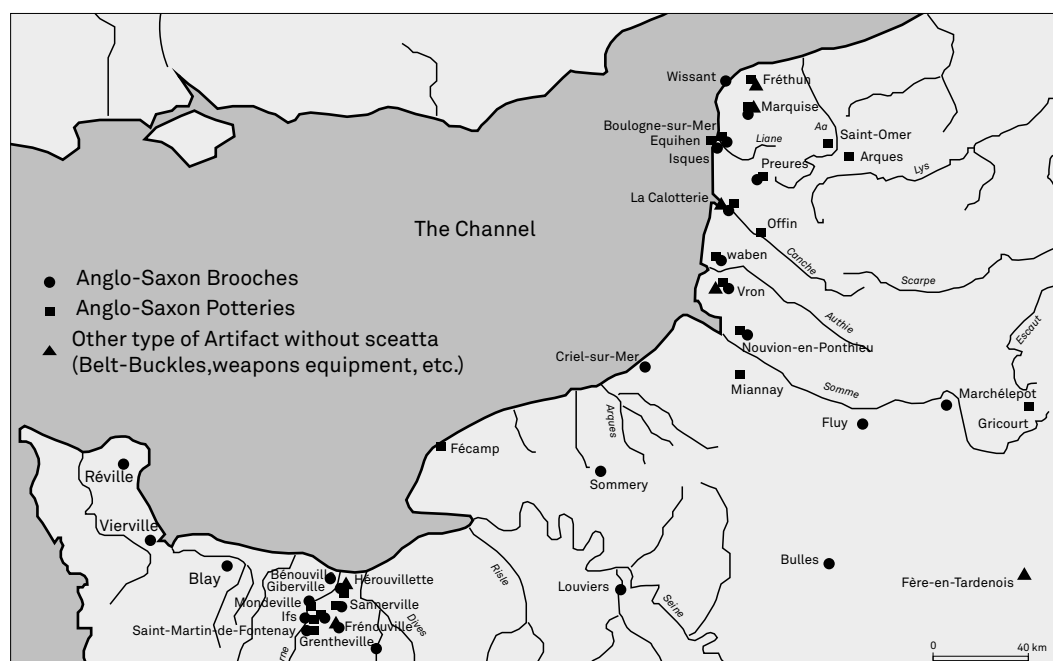
⁴ Vincent Hincker, SDAC, vincent.hincker@

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⁵ Myres 1969 and 1977; Hamerow, Hollevoet & Vince 1994.

⁶ Soulat 2009.

FIG. 1 Distribution of Anglo-Saxon artefacts along the Channel coast (after Soulat 2009).



and published in 2005⁷ after some discoveries made in Calvados, in particular at the settlement in Giberville and in the cemeteries around Caen. They revealed three main types of ware. The first group, which forms the majority, is characterised by inclusions of fossil organisms (bioclasts). The other wares include either elements of bioclastic limestone or siliceous fragments. The analysis suggests that this pottery was produced locally, perhaps using clay and degreasers from the surrounding area⁸. In addition to this regional study, a series of other tests was conducted in 2010 by A. Bocquet-Lienard (Craham) as part of the *Quentovic Research Programme* directed by L. Verslype⁹, which focussed on the Canche Authie valleys with the cemeteries at La Calotterie (Pas-de-Calais), Offin (Pas-de-Calais) and Waben (Pas-de-Calais) (fig. 3).

In order to determine the 'Anglo-Saxon' or 'insular' character of the pottery from the Canche valley, 4 of the 9 vessels from the La Fontaine aux Linottes cemetery at La Calotterie (Graves 375, 470, 456 and 433) and 5 of the 11 pots from the Bois Montclair cemetery at Offin (Graves 14, 19, 56, 34 and 64) were investigated by means of petrographic and/or chemical analyses¹⁰ (fig. 4). In order to distinguish continental production from possible imports, a reference collection was built for the Canche valley on the basis of pottery found in a production context¹¹. A series of 15 pots was analysed from the Carolingian kilns (first half of the 9th century) discovered on the plateau of La Calotterie next to the

La Fontaine aux Linottes cemetery¹². So far no early medieval kiln has been found in the Canche valley, so the material from a Gallo-Roman kiln was used instead¹³. Finally, a clay sample from an Eocene formation at Saint-Aubin was added to this material. Petrographic and chemical analyses of 'Anglo-Saxon pottery' from the Canche valley have revealed several groups of ware characterized by various inclusions and chemical compositions.

At La Calotterie, the ware is composed of siliceous clay, with pores whose elongated form (600 µm to 1 mm) indicates the use of degreasing plants or shells. Microscopic observation revealed that these inclusions have completely disappeared, the low quantity of carbonates (CaO) identified by chemical analysis pointing toward a vegetal origin. The observation of similar degreasing elements on some contemporary finds from Flanders¹⁴ might confirm this hypothesis, although it needs to be confirmed by analysis of further samples. Samples from graves 375 and 470 have a thin, dark and silty matrix rich in small sub-angular to sub-rounded quartz inclusions (300 – 350 µm). The presence of numerous vacuoles with angular ends, some more than 2 mm long, in the sample from grave 470 is striking. The analysis has shown that the chemical signature of these two vessels is similar to the clay from Saint-Aubin and to the hand-made ceramic sample found in a settlement context at La Calotterie Visemarest (284 LCALOT Us 455)¹⁵. The vessel from grave 456 has a thin matrix; the ware contains quartz inclusions (200 – 400 µm)

⁷ Hincker, Saint-Jores (de) & Savary 2005, 62.

⁸ Hincker, Saint-Jores (de) & Savary 2005, 65.

⁹ Research Programme (2006-2010) involving the study of coastal cultures and the study of 'Anglo-Saxon' pottery.

¹⁰ The pots from graves 19, 34 and 64 are closer to cooking pots 1 (Soulat 2009, 71), such as the pot from grave 14 at Offin, of plain form type. However, the sample from the pot from grave 56 belongs

to a vessel type whose shape and decoration are atypical in Anglo-Saxon pottery (Soulat 2009, 80). Given the importance of some vessels held in the museums, the samples taken were generally small or of poor quality, and it has not always been possible to check the analysis by conducting a second petrographic and chemical analysis. Chemical analyses were performed by atomic emission spectrometry (Optima DV 2100 to Perkin Elmer)

on calcined powders put into an alkaline solution by Laetitia Birée at the Centre Michel de Boüard.

¹¹ Barbet & Routier (forthcoming).

¹² Harnay & Desfossés 1997.

¹³ Couppe, Tuffreau-Libre & Vincent 1977.

¹⁴ Hand-made pottery with chaff-tempered ware discovered in Flanders (Hollevoet 1993, 197 and Hamerow, Hollevoet & Vince 1994).

¹⁵ Barbet & Routier 2007.

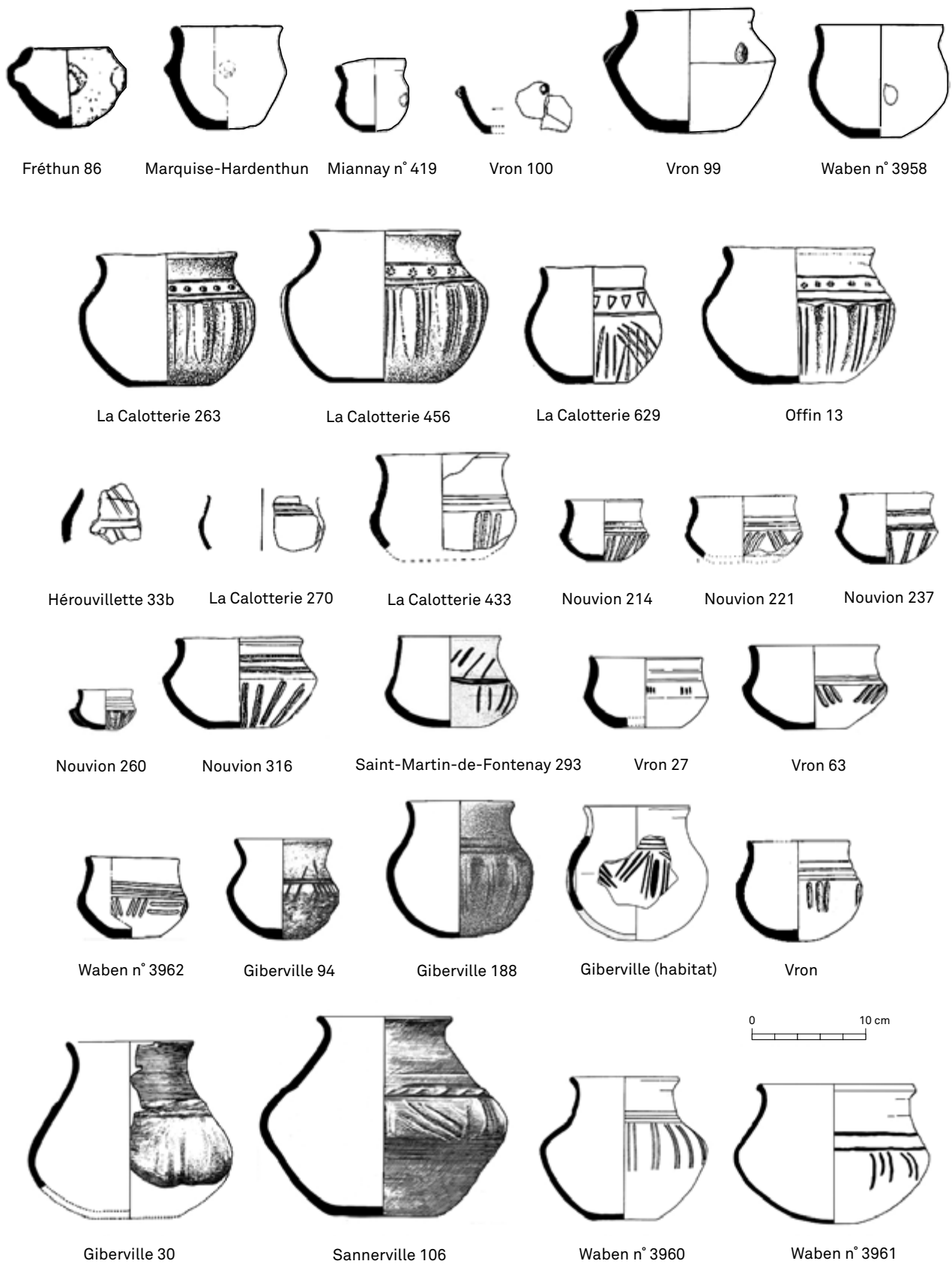


FIG. 2 Hand-made pottery with 'Anglo-Saxon' influences from northern Gaul (after Soulat 2009).

FIG. 3 Hand-made pottery from La Calotterie and Offin (after Musée de Berck-sur-Mer, G. Dilly).

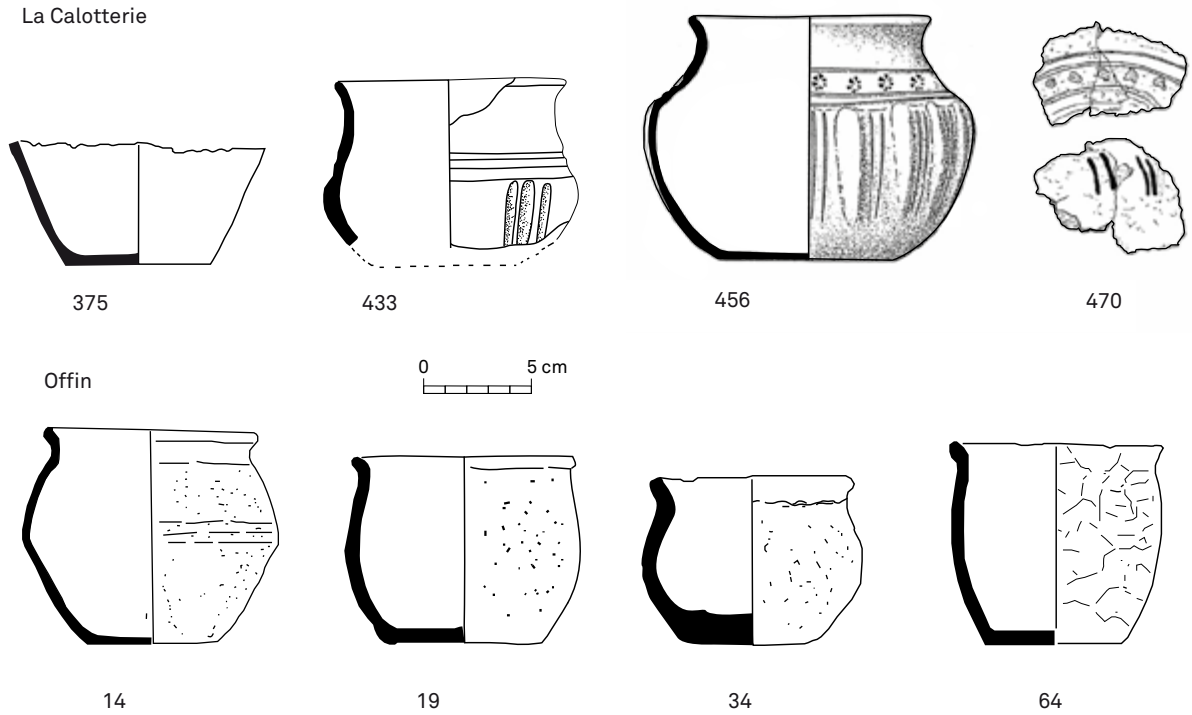


FIG. 4 Hand-made pottery analysis (after Soulat 2009).

coated with iron oxide and some vacuoles similar to the samples from graves 375 and 470. Grains of polycrystalline quartz and, quite surprisingly, flint, were also identified in this sample, while these are absent in the samples from graves 375 and 470. From a chemical point of view, the vessels from graves 456 and 433 are richer in iron oxide and poorer in titanium oxide than those from graves 375 and 470. They also differ from these two examples in their raw material which, apart from its iron content, is based on a clay similar to the one used in the Carolingian workshop at La Fontaine aux Linottes¹⁶ and might therefore be of local provenance. Further comparative material will be needed in order to confirm this hypothesis.

At Offin, petrographic observations and chemical analyses have been difficult to conduct because of the state of preservation and the degree of firing of the five selected samples. Only four out of five could be prepared as thin sections and three have been chemically analysed. The pot from grave 19 contains angular oyster shells (1–2 mm) with a thin internal structure, as well as quartz inclusions smaller than 200 µm. A similar ware, containing traces of shell fragments (oyster?), is observed for the pottery from graves 14, 34 and 64. These shells have a microcrystalline internal structure; some have traces of a thin structure, but most are micriticised or dissolved. It is therefore very difficult to determine whether these shell fragments were added by the potter or if they were naturally present in the raw material. The pot from grave 19 gives a partial answer to this question since it contains shells of angular shape used as a coarse degreaser. Chemical analyses have shown various compositions depending on the concentration of calcium oxide. The origin of the raw material remains unknown, but the pot from grave 34 would be quite similar to the vessels from the Gallo-Roman workshop if we deduce the calcium oxide content from its chemical composition. The addition of coarsely ground shells to the clay remains puzzling. Was it meant to facilitate manufacture, to provide some particular qualities to the container or perhaps to give it an insular or coastal character? The pot from grave 56 at Offin, on the other hand, is very different from the other vessels analysed for this site. It is characterised by a very thin ware with small inclusions of quartz of 50 µm (silt). Except for the presence of potassium and silica, this clayish silt chemically resembles the products from the Gallo-Roman workshop at La Calotterie.

At Waben, a cemetery in the Authie valley excavated in the 19th century, three out of five vessels could be analysed and observed with a petrographic microscope. One pot (3958) is chemically similar to the products from the Canche valley. It is presently impossible to determine the origin of its raw material. In order to do so, it will be necessary to increase the number of samples and to analyse local clays petrographically and chemically.

Despite the limited corpus of pottery from the Canche valley, it has been possible to distinguish several types of ware corresponding to different types of production. On the one hand, there are wares with carbonate inclusions (Offin) and on the other hand,

wares with vegetal and siliceous inclusions (La Calotterie). This diversity has already been observed macroscopically and petrographically for the pottery from the Orne valley (Basse-Normandie)¹⁷, among which three main types of ware were identified, different from those from the Pas-de-Calais.

The studies conducted in Calvados (Orne valley) and in the Canche valley indicate that raw materials varied within each region and from one region to another. Pots from La Calotterie are chemically similar to clay from St. Aubin and to the products from the Merovingian workshop discovered nearby. Pots from Offin, however, bear a resemblance to the Gallo-Roman products from La Calotterie. In Lower Normandy, most pottery is made of local Jurassic marls. Therefore, 'insular' pottery from cemeteries and settlements in this area appear to have been produced locally, despite their morphological and technological similarities. This implies that they were not brought from the other side of the Channel by trade, while this question remains opened for ornaments and jewellery (brooches, belt-buckles, etc.). Chemical and petrographic analyses have revealed a great diversity in raw materials, but also some similarities supporting the morphological analyses. Several pots from the Canche valley are characterised by the deliberate addition of a vegetal or shelly degreaser. This phenomenon has already been observed on 'Saxon' and 'Anglo-Saxon' pottery¹⁸ and characterises a tradition that differs from the modes of production present in these areas at the time. If siliceous inclusions do not allow us to make a similar distinction, the voluntary addition of a shelly or vegetal degreaser, as well as the use of clays naturally rich in shell fragments, is remarkable. In Lower Normandy, no other pot from the 6th century is made of marls naturally rich in carbonate shells (group 1). Similarly, group 2 contains grains of bioclastic limestone which might have been added to the raw material. In Ponthieu, degreasing plants or shellfish seem to have been added intentionally to the raw material¹⁹.

Thanks to the combination of ceramology and archaeometry, this analysis has led us to consider the possibility of different pottery productions traditions, either local or 'Anglo-Saxon'. In Ponthieu and on the coasts of Normandy, the second would have required sourcing raw materials and developing methods that enabled the manufacture of pots with the same features as those made in insular Britain or on the shores of the North Sea. Perhaps this particular effort would have been motivated by the need to express membership of the same cultural group, both in daily life and in death. It therefore seems likely that the individuals or groups who settled in these territories brought with them certain know-how and customs typical of Anglo-Saxon populations.

The approach chosen for this study, which includes cross-comparison of archaeological data and technical observations, as well as physical and chemical analyses of 'Anglo-Saxon' artefacts, will be further applied in Calvados, namely to the recent discoveries at Bourguébus²⁰, but also in Somme, to vessels from the cemetery at Vron. It should provide answers to the question of cultural transfer and continuity in pottery

¹⁶ Bocquet-Lienard & Routier (forthcoming).

¹⁷ Hincker, Saint-Jores (de) & Savary 2005.

¹⁸ Worthington 1993; Hamerow, Hollevoet & Vince 1994; Hincker 2006.

¹⁹ Also noticed by Daniel Piton on 'Anglo-Saxon' pottery from Nouvion-en-Ponthieu (Somme) (Piton 1985, 203).

²⁰ Pers. comm. Vincent Carpentier (Institut Nationale de Recherches Archéologiques Préventives, INRAP).

making traditions, and contribute to a better understanding of the role of non-native populations, their influence and their acculturation.

To conclude this part, a focus on hand-made pottery with coastal influences (whether, Saxon, Anglo-Saxon, Kentish, Frisian or Frankish) is a key element in the understanding of the social context on both sides of the Channel during the early medieval period, specifically in the 6th century. The Channel region is a 'cosmopolitan' region, a melting-pot, with a specific material culture that has become known as the Maritime Culture.

3 Hand-made pottery from the Scheldt valley and parallels from the Channel coast

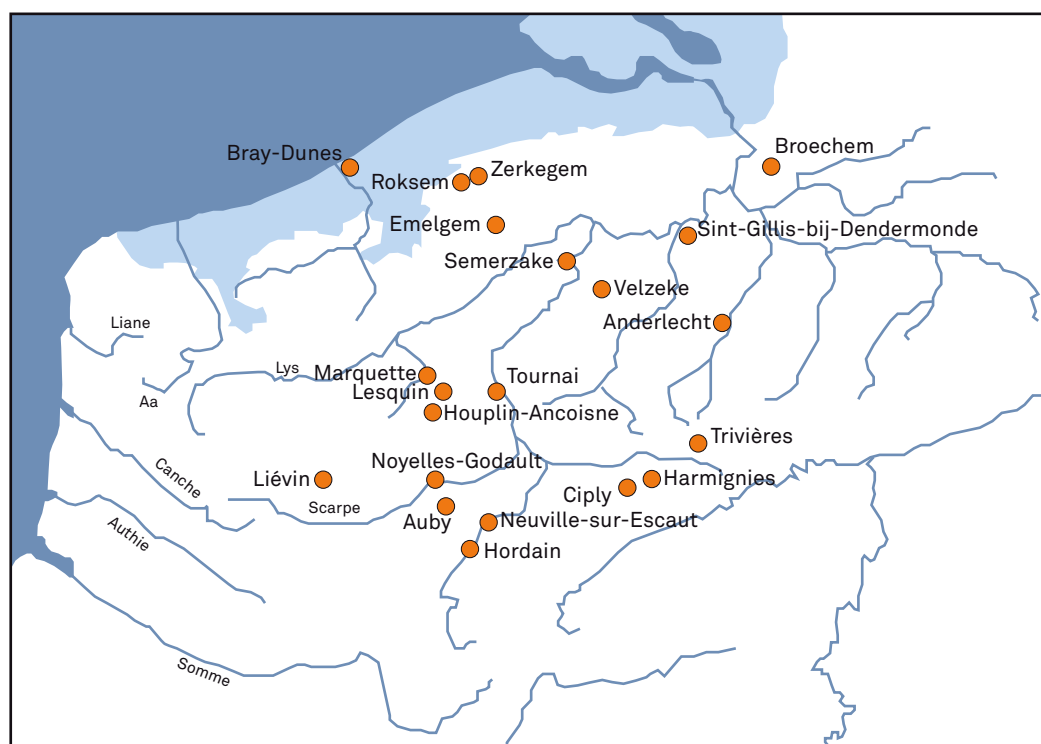
123 hand-made pieces of pottery dating to the middle of the 5th century to the 7th century have been recorded in the Scheldt valley and its surrounding area, between Maritime Flanders and Cambrasis. 60 of them are decorated, which may reflect Channel, 'Anglo-Saxon' or 'Frisian' influence. The vessels are distributed across 20 sites, including cemeteries and settlements (fig. 5). Several settlements, particularly in Maritime Flanders, have delivered this type of pot, namely Bray-Dunes (Nord), Roksem (Western Flanders), Emelgem (Western Flanders) and Zerkegem (Western Flanders). As mentioned above, some decorated hand-made pots from the settlement at Roksem were analysed by A. Vince and published in 1994. Many cemeteries have also yielded examples of this type of production, such as Sint-Gillis-bij-Dendermonde (Eastern Flanders) and Broechem (Antwerp). From a morphological and ornamental point of view, some vessels are very similar to the Channel-style production method,

for example the finds from Bray-Dunes, Roksem, Semzerzake, Sint-Gillis-bij-Dendermonde, Anderlecht (Brussels) or Tournai (Hainaut). They display both globular and carinated forms and are decorated with horizontal, vertical or diagonal incised lines, as well as chevrons (fig. 6). Stamping on necks and bellies is also fairly frequent, indicating a greater ornamental diversity than for pottery found along the Channel coast, which have a more limited range of decorations. This diversity can be attributed to stronger contacts with the Thuringian world and the Meuse valley, where similar hand-made vessels have been found²¹. Apart from those decorated pots, coarser vessels of cooking pot type are encountered, which bear a strong resemblance to those found on the coast. Their only ornaments are lugs, of which there are often three. Hand-made pottery from the Scheldt valley has not yet been analysed but it is likely that both ware and degreasers would be similar to coastal types. It is likely that this pottery was produced locally along the Scheldt.

When considering the data quantitatively, it is interesting to note that a number of sites have only yielded one or two vessels each, for example the cemeteries at Velzeke (Eastern Flanders), Marquette lez-Lille (Nord), Houplin-Ancoisne (Nord), Liévin (Pas-de-Calais), Neuville-sur-Escaut (Nord) and Hordain (North), while other sites have delivered far more, such as Roksem with 20 or Sint-Gillis-bij-Dendermonde with 23 vessels.

Non-ferrous artefacts belonging to Anglo-Saxon material culture have also been found in connection with hand-made pottery: three button brooches from Broechem²² and Asper-Jolleveld (Eastern Flanders)²³, a square-headed brooch from the cemetery of Saint-Brice in Tournai²⁴, a penannular brooch from

FIG. 5 Distribution of hand-made pottery around the Scheldt valley (by J. Soulat).



²¹ Châtelet 2003.

²² Pers. comm. Rica Annaert.

²³ Rogge 2007, 39.

²⁴ Brulet (ed.) 1990-1991.

Sint-Gillis-bij-Dendermonde

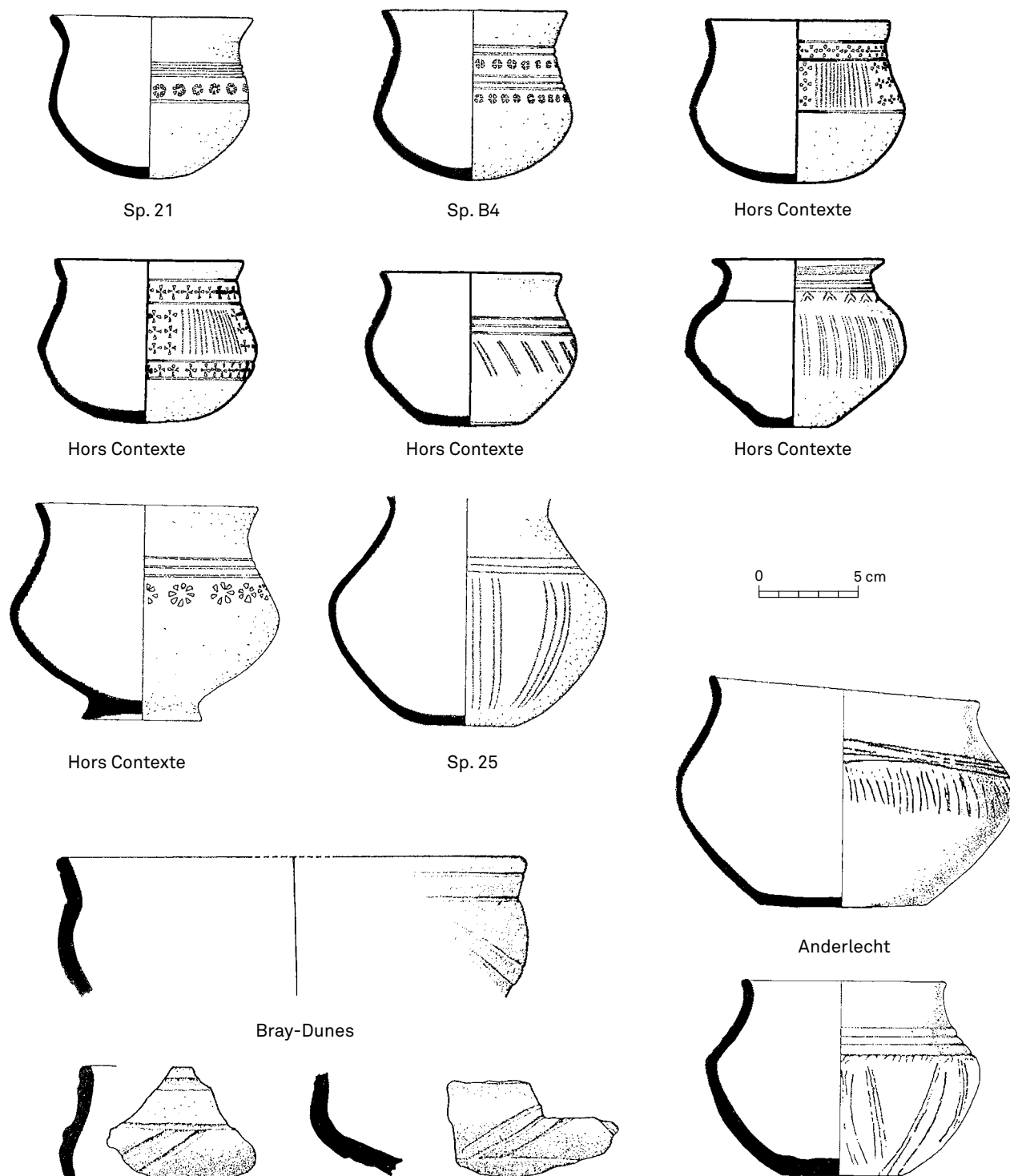


FIG. 6 Hand-made pottery from Sint-Gillis-bij-Dendermonde, Bray-Dunes and Anderlecht (after Van Doorselaer 1958).

Broechem²⁵, two shields from Emelgem and Nimy (Hainaut)²⁶, a sword pommel of Bifrons-Gilton type from Grenay (Pas-de-Calais)²⁷ and two sceattas from Roksem and Cambrai (Nord). These objects are all dated to the 6th century. As was the case for the sites along the Channel coast, it is domestic and funerary assemblages from the 6th century that who provide the most relevant information to the issues discussed in this article. They reveal a great chronological and geographical homogeneity in the distribution of Anglo-Saxon artefacts, in particular hand-made pottery, between the coast and the major river valleys of northern Merovingian Gaul.

4 Future research

To follow up on the chemical and petrographic analyses performed in the Canche valley (Pas-de-Calais) and the Orne valley (Calvados, Normandy), it would be useful to study hand-made pottery from the Scheldt valley; indeed, the question of the occupation of the coastal areas is the same there as it was in the initial case studies presented here. Determining whether this pottery is local or not is important for our understanding, at a social and cultural level, of the populations who were buried or cremated with them. We are fortunate enough to have a large quantity of pottery from various sites, among which a few, such as the cemetery at Sint-Gillis-bij-Dendermonde, have delivered a remarkable amount of finds (23). The analyses by Alan Vince for the settlement at Roksem could be compared with other finds from funerary contexts. A reference collection (A. Bocquet-Liénard, Craham) will soon be implemented, taking into account the results from the different regions studied (Orne valley, Canche valley and Scheldt valley). It will then be possible to compare their material with the results from British databases established in Kent, Sussex and Hampshire.

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Résumé

Des céramiques modelées, souvent appelées dans la littérature «de tradition anglo-saxonne» car elles sont similaires aux productions localisées dans le sud-est de l'Angleterre aux Ve-VIe siècles, ont été retrouvées le long des côtes de la Manche, de la Normandie au Pas-de-Calais. Localisés dans les estuaires et les vallées fluviales, dans la plaine de Caen, le Ponthieu et le Boulonnais, ces vases non tournés et décorés de lignes incisées sont le témoignage des contacts transmanche en relation probable avec la circulation des traditions de confection qui traversent le Channel. Ces productions appartiennent à une culture matérielle spécifique que l'on rencontre uniquement le long des côtes de la Manche. Les populations vivants en bord de mer, au sein des estuaires et des vallées fluviales majeures, développent une véritable «culture des littoraux» qui montre une connexion évidente entre les deux rives de la Manche. Quelques vases ont pu subir des analyses chimiques et pétrographiques grâce aux concours d'A. Bocquet-Liénard (Craham) et de X. Savary (Sdac), notamment sur les contextes de la vallée de la Canche (Pas-de-Calais) et de la basse vallée de l'Orne (Calvados). La mise en perspective de ces résultats sera intéressante pour comprendre la présence de ces vases modelés sur les côtes de la Manche. La comparaison avec les céramiques modelées parfois décorées du bassin de l'Escaut est une perspective de recherche intéressante suggérant ainsi des parallèles avec les influences transmanche ou un lien avec les apports rhénan, de Basse-Saxe et du Schleswig-Holstein.

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Early metallic artefacts of adornment in Portugal

Andreia Arezes¹

Abstract

This article aims to define the cultural context of a set of metallic artefacts of adornment related to the early presence of 'Barbarian' people in Portugal, more specifically, from the last decades of the 4th century until the beginning of the 6th. The adornments, made of gold and bronze and mainly worn over costume, were recovered from several sites, with different chronological and cultural contexts. The analysis and interpretation developed in this text attempt to sort the artefacts according to a typology, in order to discuss their affiliation and chronology. In the process, a comparison is made between the Portuguese artefacts and those from well-known sites, namely burial sites located in the Danubian area or in the Spanish territory.

Keywords

Metallic artefacts, adornment, Portuguese territory

1 Introduction

In the Portuguese territory, only seven archaeological sites (fig. 1) have so far provided artefacts of adornment related to the early presence of people of Germanic origin: Beiral do Lima (Ponte de Lima); Falperra (Braga); Briteiros (Guimarães); Castelo Velho (Vila Nova de Foz Côa); Conimbriga (Condeixa-a-Nova); Monsanto (Idanha-a-Nova); Santa Clara de Louredo (Beja)².

However, it is important to note that these sites have different chronological and cultural contexts. Indeed, the first one, Beiral do Lima, is a burial site, probably with two occupation phases: first, Roman or Late Roman, thereafter Vandalic or associated with the passage of the Sueves³. In Falperra, apart from a Bronze Age settlement, a paleo-Christian basilica was discovered, and some objects, dated to the 5th – 6th century⁴. In Briteiros, a large Iron Age settlement subsequently occupied by Romans⁵, some early medieval objects were found. A similar situation was observed in Castelo Velho, a prehistoric site whose first occupation dates from the third millennium BC⁶. From Conimbriga, a well known *oppidum* converted into a Roman *municipium* which was invaded by Suevic people in the 5th century⁷, the largest set of artefacts of adornment was recovered, mainly worn over costume: nine bronze fibulae and three buckles. Monsanto da Beira only yielded a buckle, of which the ends are the heads of a beast⁸. However, we do not know anything about the place where it was recovered. Finally, there is Beja, a burial site, discovered in the 19th century after the demolition of Santa Clara de Louredo Monastery⁹. Nevertheless, it has never been excavated, so its size and features are still unknown¹⁰.

2 Methods and materials

The artefacts of adornment presented in this article come from highly diverse sites. Many of them do not give any clues regarding their archaeological context. Therefore, our work was based primarily on analysis of these materials dispersed across the Portuguese territory, a methodology that has some inherent limitations. To analyse the artefacts, we attempted to study them directly in the institutions where they are held. In two cases this was not possible because the work was not authorised.

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² Arezes 2011, 131-132.

³ Barroca 1987, 84; Quiroga 2001, 117.

⁴ Sousa 1968/70, 3-5; 10; Sousa 1973, 9.

⁵ Silva 2007, 14-17.

⁶ Jorge 2004, 586, 593.

⁷ Alarcão & Étienne 1977, 9-10; Alarcão 1994, 7, 11-12.

⁸ Rodríguez-Aragón & Escartín 1989, 222, 224; Rodríguez-Aragón 1992, 246.

⁹ Viana 1953, 186; Almeida 1962, 239, 251.

¹⁰ Aillagon & Roberto 2008, 364.

In all cases, however, bibliographic information on the subject was available as a resource, although it mostly consisted of isolated articles. Nevertheless, the bibliographical sources proved to be extremely important, since they enabled us to compare the Portuguese artefacts with those from well-known sites, such as burial sites located in the peninsular territory and in the Danubian area.

Our approach to early metallic adornments begins by discussing the artefacts recovered from a site in northwest Portugal, at

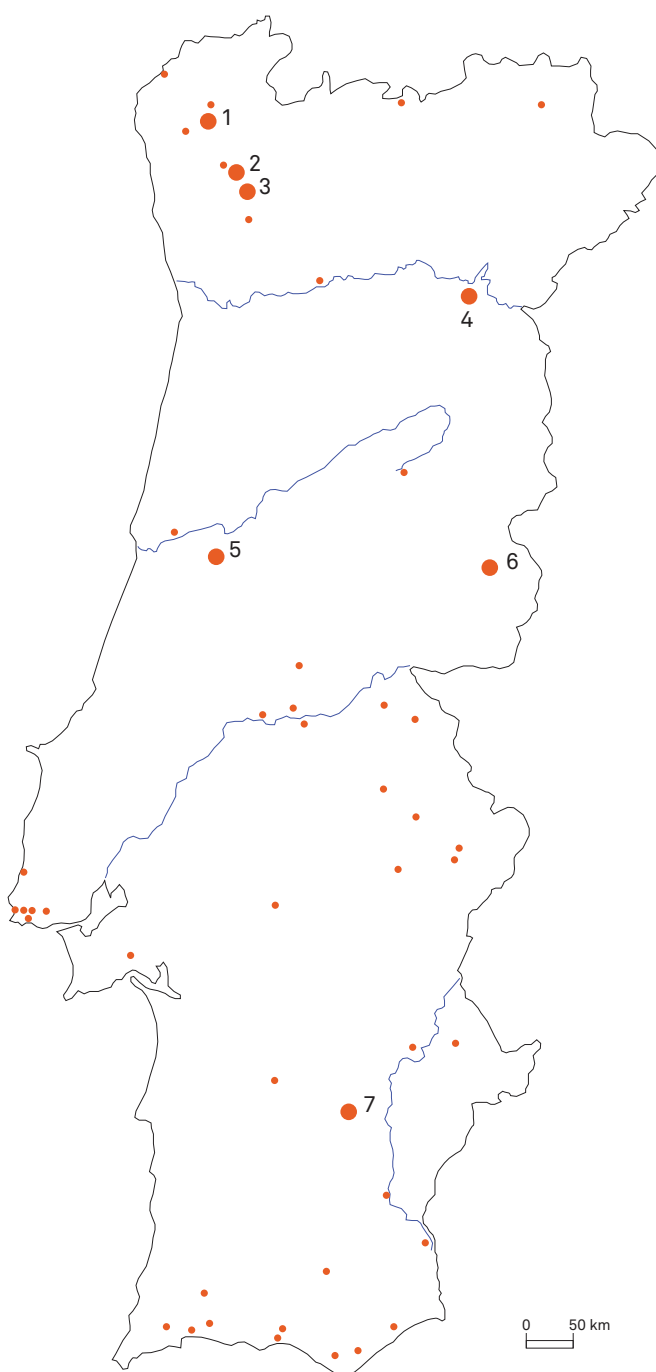
Beiral do Lima. We then proceed according to the relationships established between the various findings, from a typological, chronological and cultural problematising perspective.

2.1 Ring and diadem (Beiral do Lima)

This burial site, located at a property in the northwest of Portugal, was revealed in the course of agricultural work and subsequently robbed and damaged.¹¹ Several objects associated with the site, namely glass and amber necklace beads, and the metallic

FIG. 1 Map of the Portuguese territory, on which are marked all the known sites from where early medieval metallic artefacts of adornment have been recovered. The numbered points correspond only to those that allowed the collection of the set of early objects discussed in this article. These sites are:

- 1: Beiral do Lima (Ponte de Lima).
- 2: Falperra (Braga).
- 3: Briteiros (Guimarães).
- 4: Castelo Velho (Vila Nova de Foz Côa).
- 5: Conimbriga (Condeixa-a-Nova).
- 6: Monsanto (Idanha-a-Nova).
- 7: Santa Clara de Louredo (Beja).



personal adornments that we have analysed, were recovered from the soil accumulated near the graves. They were about twenty graves; some had been constructed with *tegula* and contained no objects, the rest were graves excavated in the substrate, which have yielded an intact collection of glass vases and pottery¹². The artefacts from Beiral were initially exhibited in the Museum of Ethnography and History of Littoral Douro, in Oporto¹³. When this museum closed some of these materials (pottery and glass) were transferred to the Archaeology Museum D. Diogo de Sousa in Braga, and the others (metallic adornments) to the National Archaeology Museum, in Lisbon¹⁴.

Some interesting aspects of the ring and the diadem are worth highlighting. The ring¹⁵ (fig. 2), made of solid gold¹⁶, has *cloisonné* decoration, using sixteen encrusted coloured garnets around an empty cavity that has lost its decorative element. The symmetrical and radial design of the ring makes it look like a rosette; moreover, the profusion of ornamentation reveals a complete rejection of “emptiness”¹⁷.

Two pins, more than thirty pendants and eight necklace beads with different shapes constitute the diadem¹⁸. It was probably deposited in the same grave as the ring¹⁹. Rigaud de Sousa has pointed out some possible parallels to this artefact, although he recognised that none of the indicated objects were identical to the one recovered from Beiral²⁰. More recently, López Quiroga searched for parallels to the diadem, having identified some objects found in princely tombs very similar to this adornment: one from Hochfelden (Strasbourg, France), another from Bakodpuszta (Hungary), a third from Kertsch (Ukraine) and yet another from a female grave in Untersiebenbrunn (Austria). They are all dated to between 380/400 – 440/450, corresponding to period D2, as defined by Tejral for Central and Eastern Europe. However, it is important to note that, in this case, as well as the findings of Vigo, the recovered artefacts pose problems concerning their ‘ethnic’ affiliation.

One hypothesis advanced points out the possibility that the Beiral finds could be part of the personal adornments of the wife of a ‘Barbarian’ military chief whose grave was located here. She would have been buried according to the Danubian way. Although it lacked the characteristic fibulae²¹, the burial could be generically linked to this particular ‘fashion’, developed mainly by sedentary Germanic tribes, who submitted to the Huns, from the late fourth to the middle of the fifth century²². On the other hand, König shows that this type of diadem can be regarded as identical to necklaces of Vandalic people found in Eastern Europe²³, since some parallels for the personal adornments of Beiral were discovered in the Danube river basin and seem to be related to the Untersiebenbrunn-Gospital-Naja culture, or to the Smolin-Kosino culture, defined in terms of aristocratic group’s objects, mainly discovered in female graves²⁴.



FIG. 2 Gold ring from Beiral do Lima, with *cloisonné* decoration, according to Almeida 1986, 32.

Some authors have associated artefacts related to the Untersiebenbrunn culture, in Gallaecia, with Vandalic people. In this sense, Beiral findings could attest the presence of Vandals in the north of Portugal in the first half of the 5th century. However, we should not reject the possibility that these materials could belong to Sueves, especially given the strong heterogeneity of Germanic groups that arrived in the Iberian Peninsula²⁵. And we must not forget that unlike the Vandals and the Alans, who did not establish themselves in the Portuguese territory, the Sueves founded a kingdom in northeast Portugal that survived until 585.

Finally, another theory can be advanced to explain the occurrence of these remarkable adornments, one which may also be apply to those recovered from Beja: ‘gift-giving’ sequences. These practices, working not only as a social or economic mechanism but also as a political strategy, established important relationships – although not necessarily of reciprocity – between the donor and the recipient²⁶. Obviously, it is very hard to define the meaning of a particular object to giver and recipient, and what the social relationship between the two was. Was one subservient to the other? Could ‘gift-giving’ be seen as the transfer of precious prestige artefacts, perhaps even as a resolution of conflict, without weapons²⁷? Several hypotheses will be considered in order to clarify this issue.

¹² Viana 1961, 9.

¹³ Lanhas 1969, 249; Sousa 1979, 295; Barroca 1987, 84–85.

¹⁴ Quiroga 2001, 117.

¹⁵ Viana 1961; Lanhas 1969, 240–260; Almeida 1979, 312; Sousa 1979, 293–304; Almeida 1986, 32; Barroca 1987, 83–88; Mattoso 1992, 328; Quiroga & Lovelle 1999, 231; Quiroga 2001, 117, 123; Resino 2003, 287, 296; *id.* 2004, 107, 128–129; Arezes 2011, 58, 119, 287–288.

¹⁶ Sousa 1979, 296.

¹⁷ Sousa 1979, 296; Barroca 1987, 85.

¹⁸ Viana 1961; Lanhas 1969, 246–260; Almeida 1979, 312; Sousa 1979, 293–304; Almeida 1986, 34; Barroca 1987, 83–88; Mattoso 1992, 341; García & Lobeiras 1996, 17; Quiroga & Lovelle 1999, 231–232; Quiroga 2001, 117; Resino 2003, 286–287, 296; *id.* 2004, 128–129; Arezes 2011, 58, 127–129, 367–368.

¹⁹ Barroca 1987, 86.

²⁰ Sousa 1979, 297.

²¹ Quiroga 2001, 117–118.

²² Rodríguez-Aragón 1997, 629.

²³ Resino 2003, 287.

²⁴ Quiroga 2001, 118.

²⁵ Quiroga 2001, 122.

²⁶ Curta 2006, 677.

²⁷ Curta 2006, 693.

2.2 Belt-buckles (Beja)

The objects recovered from Beja compose a very specific group, revealing some similarities to those from Beiral. Two gold belt buckles (fig. 3-4), with round plates and encrusted coloured garnets, an adornment (fig. 5) of which the function has not been completely defined, and a sword with an iron blade and gold adornment in the cross-guard compose the set²⁸. All these materials were decorated with a technique known as *cloisonné*, a polychrome style which reveals influences from Oriental civilizations, namely from Sassanid Persia, Scythia and Caucasus²⁹. In fact, it was only in the late 4th and during the 5th century that



FIG. 3 First belt-buckle from Beja. Made of gold, with *cloisonné* decoration and a zoomorphic needle. Photo courtesy of the National Archaeology Museum (Lisbon).



FIG. 4 Second belt-buckle from Beja. It is made of gold, with an inlay of red garnets. Photo courtesy of the National Archaeology Museum (Lisbon).

cloisonné decoration began to spread, mainly through the movements of 'Barbarian' people and through cultural interpenetration processes, which occurred gradually³⁰.

Materials such as those recovered from Beja usually occur in burial contexts. The two buckles and the adornment have direct parallels in the Untereisenbrunn culture, based on burial treasures of great richness identified in regions submit to the Huns, whose chronological limits lie between 375 and 454, the year of the death of Attila³¹. Actually, Hun goldsmithing displays a clear predisposition to the use of garnet inlays, which appears to be a continuation of practices developed by Alans and Sarmatians. Nevertheless, with the Huns, goldsmithing became simpler – the colours tended to be monochrome and the work less careful³².

In the north of the Danube region the princely tombs of Untereisenbrunn type are located in isolated spots, a fact possibly explained in terms of the privileged social position of the individuals buried, who were known as *logades* (the chosen ones). They could be members of the entourage of Attila, vassal princes of the Hun Empire, particularly eastern Germans, which lie near the symbols of their endowment³³.

So, how can we explain the presence of similar artefacts at Portuguese sites? Can we justify the occurrence of these materials through the passage of Late Roman military contingents, which, because of their origin or by assimilation, wore distinctive Hun type elements? It is possible that most of these adornments, in particular masculine objects connected with the 'barbaric' eastern Danubian world, which arrived in Hispania in the first decades of the fifth century, are not necessarily related to the invasions of the year 409. Indeed, they may well have been brought by Roman soldiers of Oriental descent who embraced the so-called 'Danubian fashion'³⁴.



FIG. 5 Adornment made of gold, with an inlay of a single garnet. This object may have been a decorative element of a sword guard. Photo courtesy of the National Archaeology Museum (Lisbon).

²⁸ Supiot 1934, 53-54; Viana 1953, 185, 187-188; Santa-Olalla 1934, 169-170; Figueiredo & Paço 1974, 17-18; Almeida 1962, 108, 239-241, 251; Alarcão 1986, 152-154; Mattoso 1992, 338, 344; Rodríguez-Aragón 1997, 631, 635; Lebedynsky

2001, 81, n° 1, 123; Resino 2003, 296; *id.* 2004, 124-126; Aillagon & Roberto 2008, 364; Arezes 2011, 77, 112-113, 119, 129-130, 211-214, 369-370.

²⁹ Figueiredo & Paço 1974, 17-18.

³⁰ Lebedynsky 2001, 83.

³¹ Kazanski 1991, 76.

³² Lebedynsky 2001, 82.

³³ Rodríguez-Aragón 1997, 634; Resino 2003, 286.

³⁴ Rodríguez-Aragón 1997, 641.

2.3 Fibulae (Conimbriga and Falperra)

Although so far we have no knowledge about the existence of any occurrence of eagle-shaped or trilaminar fibulae specifically in Portugal³⁵, we present some of the most ancient ‘Germanic’ fibulae discovered in this territory. Almost all of these types of metallic elements were recovered from Conimbriga, and their remains are conserved in the Monographic Museum dedicated to the study and investigation of the site and its collections.

There are five objects, recovered from Conimbriga, that are part of the *Armbrustfibeln* group: two of Duratón type, two of Rouillé type and another one of Siscia type³⁶. In the *Bügelknopffibeln* group, only one known example can be identified, integrated into the Conimbriga type (fig. 6); however, beyond the abovementioned fibulae, we are aware of the existence of another example of *Bügelknopffibeln*, which was recovered from Falperra and belongs to the Desana type³⁷.

Finally, there is a specific group of three fibulae, all recovered from Conimbriga, which raises doubts as to its classification: some authors recognise in them characteristics related with the *Armbrustfibeln* group; others indicate specific characteristics that could place them in the *Bügelknopffibeln* group³⁸. Actually, González explains that the most particular feature that the three fibulae present is the fact that spring and needle do not constitute independent elements, since they are structured from the bow itself. Still, they are part of a common trunk, with roots in Eastern Europe and, particularly, in the area related to the Sintana de Murs culture³⁹, characteristic from specific groups and sometimes associated with the example from Tchernjahov⁴⁰.

At this point, it must be noted that there is no consensus on the suggested classification, and that there are widely differing interpretations and hypotheses concerning the typological integration of early Portuguese fibulae⁴¹.



FIG. 6 Profile photo of the only example of fibula of the Conimbriga type, integrated into the group of *Bügelknopffibeln*.

Less problematic is the identification of Germania Libera as the place of origin of these objects. They were widespread abroad, mainly through the movements of Barbarian mercenaries integrated into the Roman army in Late Antiquity. This could explain the similarities between the findings from Portuguese sites, namely Conimbriga or Falperra, and the Central Europeans specimens, attributed to the Sueves and dated to the 5th century or the beginning of the 6th⁴².

With regard to the *Armbrustfibeln* group from Conimbriga, it is possible to point out parallels for the two specimens of the Rouillé type: an example recovered from the eponymous site of Rouillé (France), and another discovered in Asotokoe (Lithuania). For the single example of the Siscia type, the similarities point to fibulae found in Bozen and Venusio (Italy) and to materials collected from Teurnia and Peggau (Austria) as well as in Siscia (Yugoslavia), the site that gives the name to the fibula type. Also within the *Armbrustfibeln* group there are parallels between the specimens of Duratón type and fibulae found in burial sites located in the Spanish territory: Cerro de San Juan, Briviesca (Burgos), Madrona (Segovia) and, of course, Duratón (Segovia).

Regarding the *Bügelknopffibeln* group, there are resemblances between the artefacts of the Conimbriga type and some recovered from the Spanish burial sites mentioned above⁴³. Beyond these, however, other fibulae can also serve as parallels, such as the one discovered in Dantcheny cemetery (Soviet Union), which is associated with the Tchernjahov culture⁴⁴. Regarding the Desana type, found in Falperra and presently conserved in the Archaeology Museum D. Diogo de Sousa (Braga), identical specimens are known from Rimini (Italy), Erding-Alternending and Bordesolm (Germany) as well as Desana itself⁴⁵.

Finally, and most difficult to classify, there are also some objects that display similarities to three specific artefacts recovered from Conimbriga. One was found in Santa Vitória do Ameixial, Estremoz, and another in Idanha-a-Velha, both part of the Portuguese territory. Salete da Ponte classifies these five fibulae within Type Ponte 47, connected to the *Armbrustfibeln* group⁴⁶. But this is a problematic issue, since certain characteristics that could justify the integration in the group are not present. In any case and despite the doubts concerning the classification, it seems certain that these objects reveal parallels to fibulae recovered from Svábenice (Mähren, Moravia) or, more generically, to artefacts found in Suevic sites, located in Slovakia or Moravia, Central Europe⁴⁷.

It may be possible to connect the occurrence of this type of material in the Portuguese territory with the arrival of the Suevic people and, in the case of Conimbriga, to the attacks and sacking that took place in that Roman *municipium* in the second half of the 5th century. The *Chronicum* of Hydatius, bishop of Aqua Flaviae (Chaves, Portugal), the most important written source

³⁵ Arezes 2011, 105–106.

³⁶ González 1989, 182–186, 205–206; Alarcão 1994, 134; Resino 2003, 284; *id.* 2004, 119–120; Ponte 2006, 483; Arezes 2011, 107–109. We note that only one specimen of Duratón type was analysed at the Conimbriga Monographic Museum.

³⁷ González 1989, 180–186, 204–206, 212; Alarcão 1994, 134; Quiroga & Lovelle 1999, 230; Resino 2003, 284; *id.* 2004, 119–120; Ponte 2006, 387,

483–484; Arezes 2011, 62–63, 199–200.

³⁸ Alarcão *et al.* 1979, 115–116; González 1989, 182–186, 205–206, 212; Alarcão 1994, 134; Rodríguez-Aragón 1997, 629–634, 641; Resino 2003, 284, 295; *id.* 2004, 119–120; Ponte 2006, 387–389, 482–483, Arezes 2011, 189–192, 197–198.

³⁹ González 1989, 182.

⁴⁰ Rodríguez-Aragón 1997, 633.

⁴¹ Arezes 2011, 107–109.

⁴² González 1989, 184–185; Arezes 2011, 107–108.

⁴³ González 1989, 183–184; Arezes 2011, 185–186.

⁴⁴ Kazanski 1991, 132.

⁴⁵ González 1989, 184; Arezes 2011, 199–200.

⁴⁶ Ponte 2006, 386, 482–483.

⁴⁷ González 1989, 182–183; Rodríguez-Aragón 1997, 634.

to the understanding of events at the time of Hispania's 'invasion', refers to two terrible assaults against Conimbriga. About the first, dated to 465, it says the Sueves robbed the possessions of Cantaber's family and took the mother and her sons captive⁴⁸. According to the same source, Conimbriga was pillaged three years later, part of the walls and buildings destroyed, the people imprisoned and deported, the region converted to a desert⁴⁹.

The *Chronicum* presents, in chronological order, all events that took place from 379, the year Theodosius the Great was proclaimed Emperor, to 469. By this time, Hydatius's death was imminent⁵⁰. Historians' opinions on his writings are divided. Certainly they should be approached critically, especially given the solid Roman education of the bishop and his loyalty to the Empire which led him to paint a tragic and sometimes apocalyptic picture, reflecting his anguish and fear as well as those of local people⁵¹. However, during the years of excavations known as the *Fouilles de Conimbriga*, evidence was found that substantiated Hydatius's claims. Although the devastation was not as drastic as he had described it, the 5th-century material, the destruction layers and fire levels in the forum and in the cryptoporticus support his narrative. Nevertheless, and contrary to the idea of the death of the city, Conimbriga survived, and was later occupied by Visigoths⁵².

2.4 Buckles (Castelo Velho, Conimbriga and Monsanto da Beira)

Regarding the bronze buckles, there are some hypotheses that can explain their discovery in the Portuguese territory. The first, with a semi-circular ring, was recovered from Castelo Velho⁵³. It presents identical features to a specimen published by Rodríguez-Aragón: the Burgos belt buckle⁵⁴.

Although this type of buckle was produced in Hispania, it was clearly inspired by imported models and reveals early signs of Germanic influence in the northwest, during the transition from the 4th to the 5th century and lasting until the middle of the latter⁵⁵.

The artefact recovered from Monsanto is decorated with beasts on the rim, facing the axis around which articulates the needle. It is interesting to note that it reveals some similarities with a group of belt-buckles, bounded with large metal plates and cut out decoration. However, there are direct parallels between this specimen and two foreign belt-buckles, one retrieved from Can Bosch de Basea (Barcelona) and another from La Bienvenida (Ciudad Real). As in the case of the object retrieved from Castelo Velho, the origin of these artefacts raises some doubts. Could they have been produced in the peninsular territory? This suggestion is difficult to substantiate, especially given the complexity of the decoration on the abovementioned objects. In this sense, it is important to consider the possibility that these elements could have been produced beyond the Pyrenees, between the last decades of the 4th and the first half of 5th century⁵⁶.

As for the other buckles, of rectangular or trapezoidal shape, recovered from Conimbriga⁵⁷ and Briteiros⁵⁸, these should correspond to peninsular productions, being part of the so-called 'Simancas type', as suggested by Marcus Sommer⁵⁹. This type is made up of a variety of shapes, appearing to derive directly from prototypes of *cingulae militae* dated to the 2th and 3th centuries. It divides up into two distinct branches: one includes objects with a flower decoration and the other those with a rectangular shape. The specimens collected from Conimbriga can be associated with the latter, whose origin dates back to the 3th century. In Hispania these buckles, rectangular in shape and bulging at the ends, eventually evolved into trapezoidal buckles, with well-developed appendages similar to balls⁶⁰. This applies to two of the buckles recovered from Conimbriga. The first is identical to an artefact found in La Morterona, located in Saldaña (Valencia) and to a group of buckles retrieved from a grave in Fuentesprada (Zamora), both sites located in the Spanish territory⁶¹. The second is similar to a bronze buckle recovered from Briteiros (Guimarães, Portugal)⁶².

In general, the chronology proposed for objects classified as 'Simancas type' ranges between the second half of the fourth century and the mid-fifth century. Thus, it is possible that these elements confirm the continuation of Legio VII troops in Late Antiquity, of which cantonments are reported in the *Notitia Dignitatum*. This may explain the archaic features presented by these types of artefacts⁶³. However, and given the limitations imposed on this research, different possibilities must continue to be considered.

3 Results and discussion

From this brief selection of early metallic adornments, mainly used over costume, it is clear that some foreign and very particular objects occur in Portugal. Far from being part of a homogeneous group, they clearly differ on several counts and raise questions concerning their presence in this territory. The answers are complex and the issue is as yet unresolved. The first question is whether it is possible to establish a direct connection between their occurrence and 'Barbarian' invasions in the 5th century. While this may explain Conimbriga's fibulae, it is not possible to generalise on the basis of that. The discovery of materials of Germanic origin on Portuguese archaeological sites may equally be the result of occasional military episodes.

Moreover, as in the case of Beja, for instance, the mercenaries who were part of the Roman Army could have brought adornments and other objects from Eastern Europe. Perhaps those soldiers continued to dress and adorn themselves according to customs in the Danube valley area and in the territories dominated by the Huns.

⁴⁸ Tranoy 1974, 171-173, §229, §230 §231.

⁴⁹ Tranoy 1974, 175, §241.

⁵⁰ Tranoy 1974, 16; Colodrón 2002, 287.

⁵¹ Tranoy 1974, 7, 18.

⁵² Alarcão & Étienne 1977, 10-11, 143, 165, 179.

⁵³ Oral information by A. Silva; Arezes 2011, 69, 217-218.

⁵⁴ Rodríguez-Aragón 1992, 248, 261.

⁵⁵ Rodríguez-Aragón 1992, 245, 255; Resino 2003, 283-284.

⁵⁶ Rodríguez-Aragón 1992, 246.

⁵⁷ Salellas 1969, 143, 151-152; Alarcão *et al.* 1979, 97, 100; Rodríguez-Aragón 1992, 249; Alarcão 1994, 142; Arezes 2011, 62, 114, 223-224, 229-232.

⁵⁸ Cardozo 1961, 453; Salellas 1969, 143, 151; Cardozo 1990, 55; Arezes 2011, 62, 114.

⁵⁹ Rodríguez-Aragón 1992, 248.

⁶⁰ Rodríguez-Aragón 1992, 248-249.

⁶¹ Compare with: Rodríguez-Aragón & Escartín 1989, 230; Rodríguez-Aragón 1992, 259.

⁶² Cardozo 1961, 453, fig. 5, n° 4; *id.* 1990, 55, fig. 15; Arezes 2011, 229-230.

⁶³ Rodríguez-Aragón 1992, 255.

In general, the identification of these 'barbaric' metallic elements in Western Europe has been linked to the presence, even if transitory, of people from southern Russia or from the lower Danube. However, it is important to note that the significance of these discoveries varies according to whether they were used by men or women; usually given less significance is attached to objects associated with male costume, because they can imitate the military apparatus of other nations. The decorative elements of women's clothing, on the other hand, are more linked to the preservation of ethnic tradition and conservatism, and are therefore of greater relevance in this context. In this sense, the extensive in-depth study of cemeteries and other burial contexts, with particular attention to the gender of the individuals buried and to the arrangement of the adornments and other artefacts in relation to the osteological remains, is essential to clarify some problematic issues. Given the way that particular elements that constitute 'Danubian fashion' appear in graves, it is possible to consider that apparatus in death were related to the condition of the individual when alive. And, in this sense, certain kinds of artefact would seek to transmit and perpetuate a hierarchic position to the world of Death.

Although, funerary archeology has its limitations. A grave-stone may not necessarily be a reflection of everyday life, in that it may reveal a specific composition on death.

Despite the heterogeneity of the materials discussed in this article, it is clear that they have some commonalities. They comprise a group of personal adornments associated with the migration

of people of Germanic origin. Nevertheless, it is possible that successive 'gift giving' sequences as manifestations of power relations can explain the occurrence of some artefacts in specific archaeological contexts. This applies particularly to jewellery or weapons, the kind of gift that can be mentioned in written sources. Exchanging objects like these, particularly among members of the aristocracy, assumes a symbolic significance and emphasises the status of those involved in the process.

This question, however, along with several others, has not as yet been clarified, and is open to debate. Also, problems related to the 'ethnic' affiliation of the artefacts and issues connected to their geographic origin await further investigation.

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Merovingian reuse of Bronze Age barrows at Beerse-Krommenhof (prov. of Antwerp, Belgium)

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Abstract

During recent excavations in Beerse in the Belgian Campine region, evidence was encountered for reuse for burial of Bronze Age barrows during the Merovingian period. While research has suggested that this is not exceptional in the early medieval period, the site of Beerse gives a clear indication of the intentional character. This sheds light on the reuse of the existing landscape during the early medieval period.

Keywords

Early medieval period, Merovingian cemetery, Middle Bronze Age, barrows

1 Introduction

Between November 2008 and July 2009, AdAK, the intercommunal archaeological service for the northern Antwerp Campine region, in collaboration with project developer Matexi, discovered and excavated a multi-period site covering more than 2 hectares⁸. The site is located northeast of the town centre of Beerse (fig. 1) on the southern ridge of the top of a so-called micro-cuesta, a large east-west oriented elevation formed by the sea at the beginning of the Pleistocene, ca- 2 million years ago. The top is accentuated by a sand ridge formed during the Late Glacial period.

2 Bronze Age barrows and Merovingian cemetery

During the excavations it was possible to investigate a large part of a Bronze Age cemetery, consisting of ten barrows (fig. 2). The earliest dates back to the Late Neolithic, but most of the barrows were constructed between 1600 and 1400 BC. The cemetery was maintained during the rest of the Bronze Age and most of the barrows show signs of repairs and revisualisation, mostly by adding post circles.

Remarkably, four of the Bronze Age barrows were reused for burial in the Merovingian and the beginning of the Carolingian period, between approximately 600 and 775 AD. A total of 36 inhumation graves was discovered, most of which were situated in or next to a barrow. Most graves had an overall ENE-WSW orientation, with slight variations. Only one solitary child grave was oriented NW-SE.

3 Chamber graves

Most striking were six large chamber graves, which occupied two separate barrows. In the largest barrow (M1), with a diameter of 23 m, four chamber graves were situated (fig. 3). In the fill of the central grave, the remains of the primary Bronze Age burial were found. In a smaller, presumably oval monument on the northern side of the cemetery (M3), two other chamber graves were located. These chamber graves consisted of a large pit of ca 3.5 x 2.5 m in which a wooden grave chamber was built with planks on two cross-beams. The deceased was buried fully dressed with jewellery and/or weapons and other grave goods,

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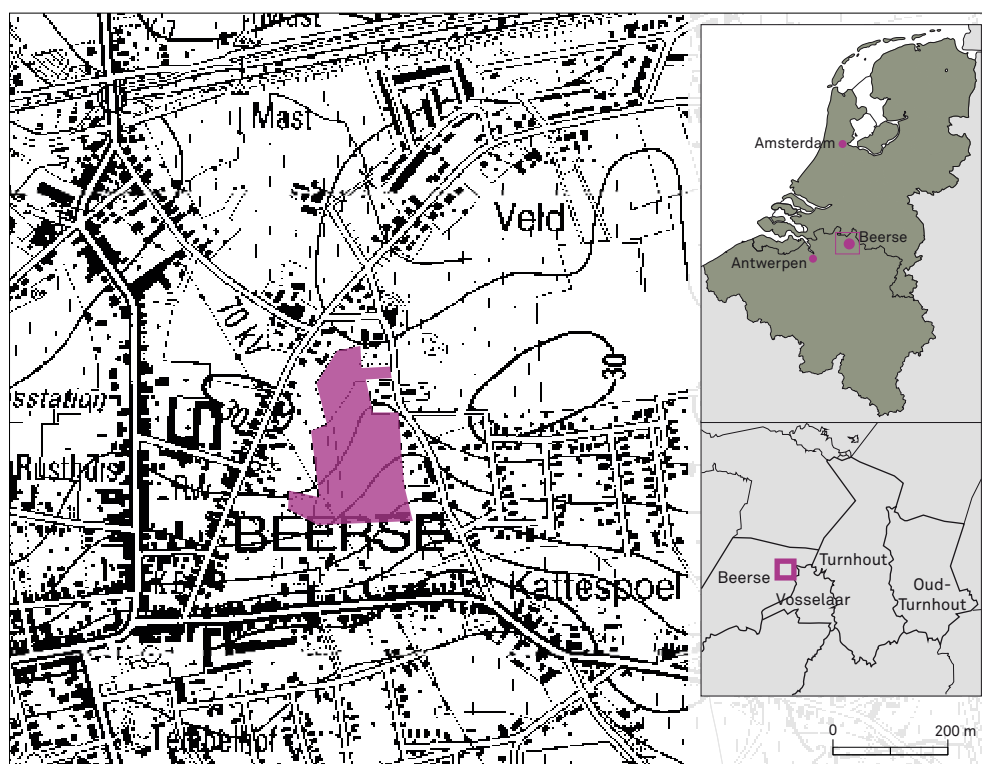
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⁸ De Smaele *et al.*, *in prep.*

FIG. 1 Location of the excavation north of Beerse on the topographic map (©NGI).



mostly pottery (fig. 4). Unfortunately, some of the graves had been raided by contemporary grave robbers. On the basis of these goods, it was possible to identify two male graves and three female graves. However no bones remained to confirm this hypothesis, due to poor preservation in the sandy soil. Typologically, the finds date most of the chamber burials between AD 610 and 680.

4 'Simple' inhumation graves

Most of the other graves had been dug into two other monuments, M6 and M8, which suggests that the people buried in the chamber graves were of higher status. Six graves lie in between M3, M6 and M8. Almost none of the graves contained a coffin, however five had clear traces of a shroud. Only eleven individuals were buried in a coffin; ten of these coffin graves were situated in M8, where they formed a row (fig. 5). Most prominent is the presence of a double coffin grave.

In ten of these 'simple' inhumation graves the outline of the skeleton had been preserved and in some cases part of the teeth, which made it possible to estimate the age for the deceased⁹. Most were fully grown (young) adults and one adolescent; one child could be identified. Remarkably, the child was buried in a large coffin. Five other child graves were identified in the large pit; these were mostly laid out in between the barrows. Only four of the coffin graves contained grave goods. In all four graves a belt buckle was found, indicating that the individual had been buried fully dressed. One of the double

graves also contained a fibula and a knife. The rectangular silver fibula with geometrical patterns (type S-Fib11) can be dated to between AD 670 and 750¹⁰. Several of these burials may be younger than the chamber burials. Dating of the preserved bone of the skeleton from one of the coffin graves yielded a date between AD 690 and 880 (KIA 41878: 1230 ± 25BP).

5 Horse burial

South of M6 a horse was buried in a relatively small pit, at a relatively large distance from the human burials. Presumably, the horse had been inserted vertically. The vertebra and the teeth were particularly clearly recognisable (fig. 6). There was no clear connection with the richer inhumation graves or the chamber graves, as seems to be the case with other horse burials in Frankish cemeteries¹¹. The presence of this solitary horse burial may point to a northeastern influence¹².

6 Contemporary settlement traces

Next to the barrows, traces of early medieval farmsteads were documented (fig 2), possibly related to the graves. These farmsteads generally consist of a three-aisled building, accompanied by a well and some smaller outbuildings. Although only one building on the northwestern edge of the excavated area undeniably dated to the Merovingian period, it seems clear that the settlement itself was located in close proximity to the cemetery.

⁹ Examination of the teeth by lic. Denis Verplanken and lic. Sofie Verplanken. Physical

anthropological quick scan by Kaat Maessen.
¹⁰ Müssemeier *et al.* 2003, 30 & 109.

¹¹ Annaert 2011, 150.

¹² Müller-Wille 1970-71.



FIG. 2 Plan of the excavation at Beerse-Krommenhof (©AdAK).

FIG. 3 Bronze Age monument 1 with four Merovingian chamber graves in the centre of the barrow (©AdAK).



FIG. 4 Chamber grave in monument 1 during the excavation (©AdAK).



FIG. 5 Plan of the inhumation graves in monument 8 (©AdAK).

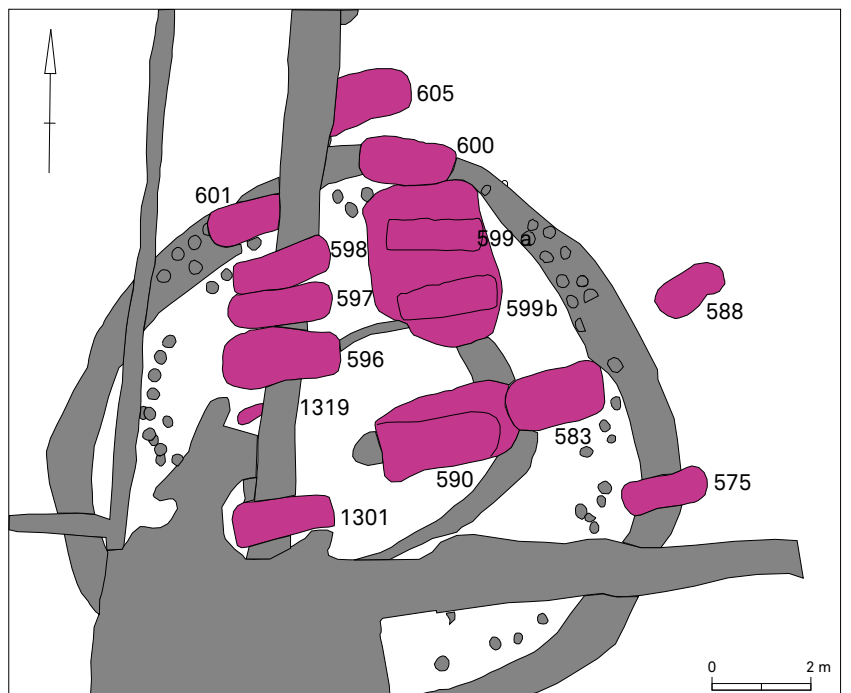




FIG. 6 Solitary horse burial south of monument 6 (©AdAK).

7 Incorporating the past, claiming the land

The intentional reuse of Bronze Age barrows in Merovingian times has already been established in other excavations in the Campine region, such as Casteren and Broekeneind, both near Hoogeloon (NL)¹³. The phenomenon is widespread, with known sites in Verlainne (Ht., B)¹⁴, La Calotterie (Fr.)¹⁵ or Saint-Vit (Fr.)¹⁶, although in most cases the barrows did not have the same structuring effect on the layout of the cemetery that the Beerse barrows had. In Britain, reuse of prehistoric and Roman sacred ground is common during the Anglo-Saxon period and is often related to high-status graves¹⁷.

This Merovingian elite reuse of these ancient burial mounds can be interpreted as staking a claim on the land. They may have thought that by continuing the use of the cemetery, the ancestral right to own the land would devolve to them. This custom has previously been suggested for later prehistoric urn fields, which evolved around Bronze Age barrows, often incorporating the barrow into the new structure¹⁸. This practice continues throughout the later Iron Age and the Roman period, with examples at Weelde-Schootseweg¹⁹, Ursel-Rosenstraat²⁰ or Oedelem-Wulfsberge²¹.

8 Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be put forward that the site of Beerse-Krommenhof offers a clear example of intentional reuse of Bronze Age burial monuments during the Merovingian period. Although this is a known phenomenon, it is seldom encountered this explicitly in a large-scale excavation. It therefore sheds new light on the use of pre-existing landscape elements by early medieval populations.

¹³ Beex 1954, 63; Beex 1964, 102, 106.

¹⁴ Destexhe 1998.

¹⁵ Desfossés 1998.

¹⁶ Urlacher *et al.* 2008.

¹⁷ Williams 1999.

¹⁸ Gerritsen 2003, 143–145, 243.

¹⁹ Annaert 2006, 73; Annaert *et al.* 2012.

²⁰ Bourgeois *et al.* 1989.

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L'établissement germanique du Bas-Empire à Baelen/Nereth, province de Liège (Belgique)

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Abstract

During the archaeological intervention which preceded the building of the high speed train, several sites discovered in Baelen revealed the widespread occupation of the area during the Roman Empire. At Nereth, the site proves the presence of one or more Germanic families during the 4th century. The buildings and archaeological material are typical of the peoples coming from the North Sea, Lower Rhine and Weser Triangle. From the end of the third century these peoples were often referred as the 'Franks'. The identification of a Germanic rural site in Wallonia is an interesting historical event. Up to now, most known Germanic settlements in the Roman territory were to be found in the south of the Netherlands, the valley of the Scheldt valley or the region of Campine. The presence of Germanic populations in Wallonia during the 4th-5th centuries seemed to be limited to military sites.

Keywords

germanic settlement; Late Roman Empire; hand-made pottery; Northern Gaul; military equipment

Introduction

Lors de l'opération archéologique préalable aux travaux de la ligne de train à grande vitesse menée par la Direction de l'Archéologie du Service Public de Wallonie (DGO4), les vestiges découverts à Baelen/Nereth révélèrent une vaste occupation

du secteur de la fin du 1^{er} siècle à la fin du 1^{ve} siècle apr. J.-C. Le site fut découvert en février 2003 lors d'une évaluation par sondage systématique. Une fouille de sauvetage⁴ eut lieu durant l'été de la même année sur la superficie menacée par les futurs travaux, soit près de 2250 m². Baelen est une commune wallonne voisine des entités germanophones d'Eupen et de Welkenraedt. La région est localisée entre le paysage bocager du Pays de Herve et les massifs forestiers des Fagnes et de l'Hertogenwald.

1 Les bâtiments du Bas-Empire et les structures associées (fig. 1)

Les vestiges d'au moins deux constructions sur poteaux, orientées est-ouest, sont alignées sur la limite courbe d'une terrasse naturelle. Dans le secteur 1, à l'ouest, un premier bâtiment, de 6,5 sur 12,5 m, couvre une superficie de plus de 80 m². Un cloisonnement sur pieux divise l'espace interne en plusieurs cellules (fig. 1: A-B). D'autres alignements de poteaux suivent un axe différent et signalent sans doute la présence d'une construction antérieure.

À l'extrême sud-est de la zone décapée, dans le secteur 2, un seul édifice a été reconnu. Sa façade nord, repérée sur 16 m de longueur, est légèrement bombée et suggère un plan naviforme. Le pignon ouest est identifié sur 5,5 m de long. Côté ouest, un petit fossé prolonge l'axe de la façade sur 5 m de long (fig. 1: C, D et E). Cet aménagement peut être interprété comme la marque d'une cloison protégeant des vents dominants une aire de plein air située plus au sud. La couverture de ce bâtiment se composait de plaques de siltite gris foncé qui pourraient avoir été extraites de la formation du Bois d'Ausse qui affleure à 5-6 km à l'est/sud-est de Nereth. Des fragments de ce matériau⁵, avec trous de fixation, ont été identifiés dans plusieurs fosses aux alentours du bâtiment.

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⁴ Goffioul 2004; Fock *et al.* 2008, 62, 154.

⁵ Il ressemble à s'y méprendre à du schiste ardoisier mais sa nature géologique est différente.

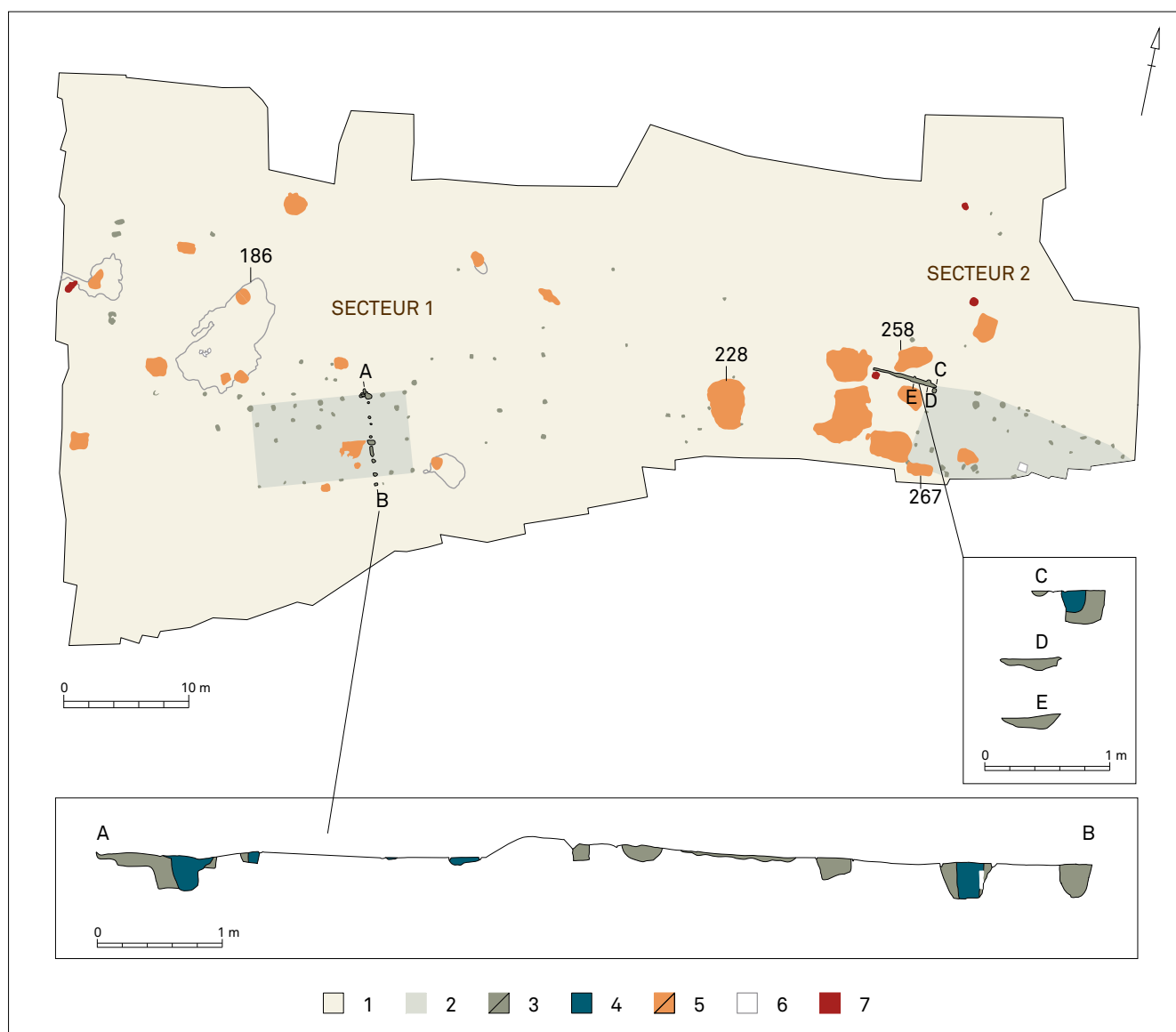


FIG. 1 Plan général du site de Baelen/Nereth. 1 : limite d'emprise de la fouille en 2003 ; 2 : bâtiments du Bas-Empire ; 3 : trous de poteaux et tranchées de fondation ; 4 : empreintes de poteaux ; 5 : fosses ; 6 : éléments lithiques ; 7 : foyers. Infographie F. Giraldo Martin © SPW-DGO4.

Dans le secteur 1, les fosses dispersées autour du bâtiment témoignent d'activités diverses: métallurgie, stockage en silos. Leur remplissage a livré de grandes quantités de déchets métallurgiques et lithiques, avec un mélange de céramiques du Haut et du Bas-Empire. En limite d'emprise des fouilles, une structure de combustion pourrait correspondre à un foyer de cinglage. La concentration des trouvailles du Haut-Empire dans le secteur 1 nous autorise à localiser l'établissement de cette époque à l'ouest du chantier de fouilles. Dans le secteur 2, les fosses proches du bâtiment à plan naviforme sont liées à une activité domestique. Contrairement au secteur 1, les ensembles céramiques sont homogènes, tous datés du ive siècle. Trois foyers circulaires ont été découverts non loin du bâtiment.

2 Chronologie de l'habitat du Bas-Empire

Une importante occupation de l'Antiquité tardive vient s'implanter en bordure d'un habitat rural du Haut-Empire (fin I^{er}-III^e siècles). Même si quelques tessons résiduels du Haut-Empire apparaissent dans une majorité d'ensembles du Bas-Empire, le mobilier du ive siècle représente l'essentiel des découvertes. Les quelques témoignages numismatiques nous donnent un *terminus post quem* dans le deuxième quart du ive siècle⁶. Les céramiques issues de quelques contextes indiquent une occupation du site jusqu'à l'extrême fin du ive siècle. Cependant, la grande majorité des faits archéologiques est datée des deuxième et troisième quarts du ive siècle (320-380 apr. J.-C.). L'habitat du Bas-Empire est complètement abandonné au ve siècle. On

⁶ Etude numismatique Johan van Heesch, Cabinet des Médailles de Bruxelles.

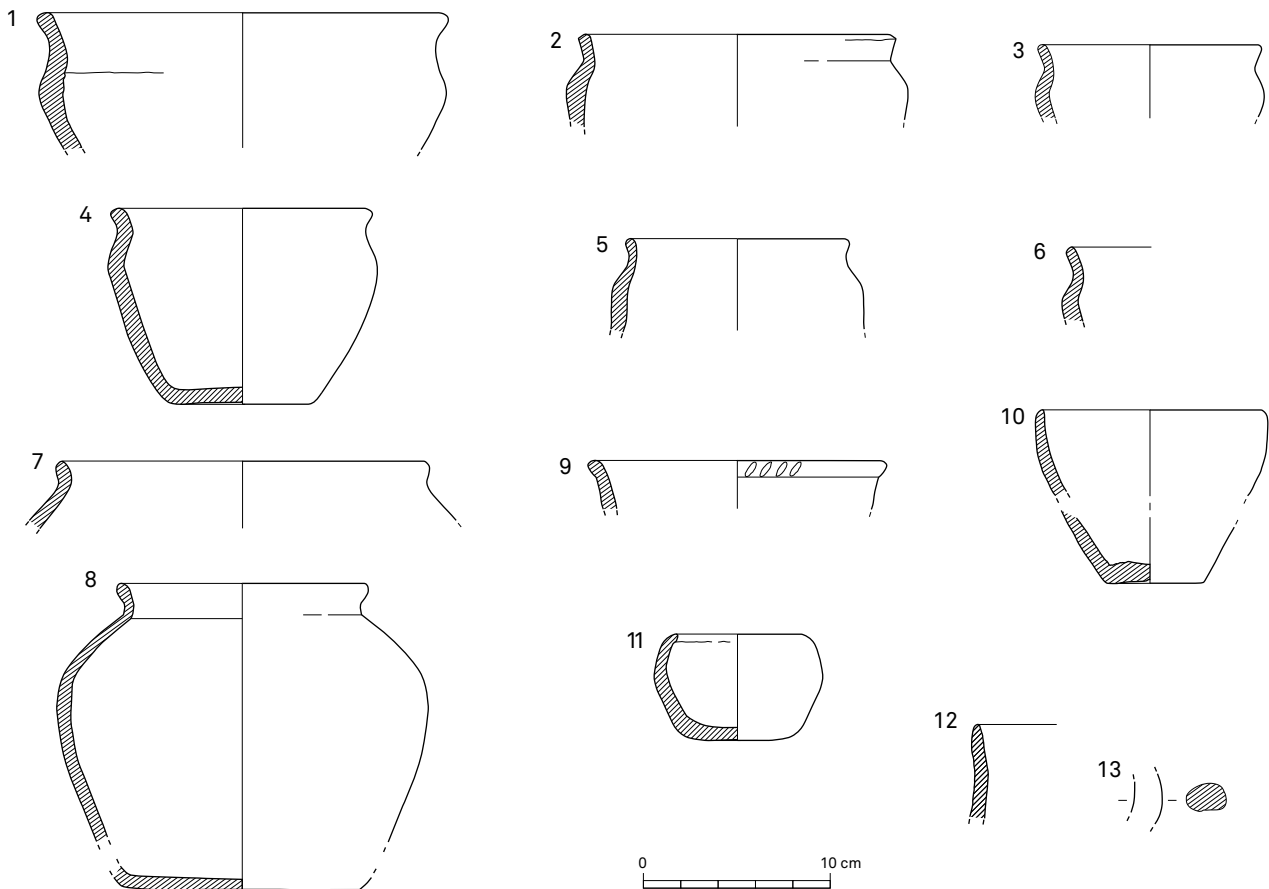


FIG. 2 Sélection de quelques vases en céramique modelée germanique de Baelen/Nereth. Echelle 1/4. Dessins C. Régimont © SPW-DGO4.

estime sa durée d'occupation à trois générations au maximum. Cependant, l'habitat n'a pas été fouillé dans son entièreté; il nous est difficile de nous prononcer sur son ampleur réelle et sa densité au IV^e siècle.

3 Identification des occupants au départ du mobilier archéologique

L'examen de ce matériel nous révèle l'identité des occupants du site au IV^e siècle: des immigrants germaniques originaires de la rive droite du Rhin qui construisirent leurs habitations à la périphérie d'une ancienne villa abandonnée depuis plusieurs décennies. L'installation de cette population est relativement précoce et peut être datée de la fin de la période constantinienne. Le schéma d'un hameau germanique fondé à la périphérie d'un domaine agricole du Haut-Empire a été observé sur plusieurs sites de Gaule septentrionale: Breda-Ouest, Donk, Neerharen-Rekem, Tiel-Passewaaij, Saint-Ouen-du-Breuil, Voerendaal ou Wange⁷. Le matériel archéologique associé à ces établissements

montre que la plupart ne sont pas fondés avant le milieu du IV^e siècle. La durée d'occupation n'est jamais très longue, en moyenne deux ou trois générations, avec une désertion complète avant le milieu du V^e siècle.

L'indice le plus remarquable est la quantité élevée des vases en céramique modelée de tradition germanique (fig. 2). Ils figurent dans plusieurs ensembles des années 320-380 apr. J.-C., en association avec diverses céramiques romaines comme la terre sigillée tardive d'Argonne, les gobelets à boire en *terra nigra* tardive de même origine ou la vaisselle culinaire de l'Eifel. Si elle n'était pas mise au jour en compagnie de céramiques romaines dans des ensembles homogènes du IV^e siècle, il serait difficile de distinguer la céramique modelée de tradition germanique de la vaisselle protohistorique en usage dans la région durant La Tène D2. Elle rassemble 17% du mobilier céramique du Bas-Empire. Il s'agit de poteries culinaires, cuites en atmosphère réductrice et à basse température; des caramels alimentaires sont visibles sur de nombreux vases. Les parois sont épaisses et de teinte irrégulière, noires à noir brun avec des zones plus claires au niveau

⁷ Theuws 2008, 771; Theuws *et al.* 1996, 75-80; Opsteijn *et al.* 2004, 126-127, fig. 2; Heeren 2007.

de la panse. Plusieurs vases présentent un faible lissage de la surface externe. Les rares éléments de décors sont de fines impressions à l'ongle sur la lèvre d'un vase (fig. 2: 9) et une rangée horizontale d'impressions au doigt sur quelques fragments de paroi de vases à carène arrondie. Les rangées d'impressions digitées sur la panse des vases de tradition germanique sont des décors très fréquents; ils sont connus dans divers établissements du ive siècle, en dehors ou à l'intérieur du territoire romain⁸.

L'examen à la loupe binoculaire des tessons révèle une diversité dans la nature des dégraissants, avec deux grands groupes de pâtes. Nous avons soumis quelques échantillons de ces deux groupes à un examen au microscope optique polarisant. L'objectif est de comparer les données de Baelen/Nereth avec les résultats de l'étude pétrographique menée par P. De Paepe et L. Van Impe sur la céramique non tournée germanique issue de différents sites belges, allemands et néerlandais⁹. L'analyse pétrographique confirme l'existence de deux groupes de dégraissants minéraux; les premières données sont particulièrement prometteuses pour la compréhension générale du site et de l'origine géographique de ses occupants. Le premier groupe est constitué en grande majorité de fragments anguleux de roches volcaniques. Il correspond au groupe B de P. De Paepe et L. Van Impe; c'est un des groupes les plus rares, attesté uniquement sur un site wallon (Virton-Château Renaud) et sur un site néerlandais (Ede-Veldhuizen)¹⁰. Le second groupe renferme d'abondants grains de quartz arrondis à subarrondis, millimétriques à plurimillimétriques et un peu de chamotte. Il peut être rapproché du groupe D1 de De Paepe et Van Impe qui est un des groupes les mieux représentés au sein de la céramique modelée germanique des sites belges et néerlandais¹¹. Les pâtes à quartz grossiers ont aussi été identifiées parmi les céramiques modelées des IVE-ve siècles à Arras¹². Il y a de fortes probabilités pour que les vases modelés de Baelen/Nereth n'aient pas été fabriqués sur place¹³. La source des dégraissants du premier groupe (B) est à trouver dans le complexe des roches volcaniques quaternaires du Massif de l'Eifel. Les habitants germaniques ont peut-être séjourné dans cette région avant de s'installer à Baelen/Nereth. Les grains de quartz du second groupe (D1) sont ubiquistes et pourraient appartenir à de nombreux environnements géologiques¹⁴. Néanmoins, l'absence de feldspaths et de débris de roches, la présence de quartz filonien et l'arrondi des grains impliquent un dépôt sédimentaire fluvial composé exclusivement de sable grossier quartzueux blanc. En Allemagne, les sables issus de la désagrégation des grès du Taunus ou de l'Hunsrück seraient de bons

candidats, sans totalement exclure les séries gréseuses de l'Eifel et du Massif de Stavelot.

Le répertoire typologique des vases en céramique modelée de tradition germanique se compose principalement de jattes à profil en S (fig. 2: 1-6), de pots à cuire à lèvre épaissie évasée (fig. 2: 7-8), de coupes à simple lèvre rentrante (fig. 2: 10-11) et de plats à cuire à lèvre épaissie (fig. 2: 12). Citons encore la découverte d'un petit fragment d'anse en bandeau de section arrondie (fig. 2: 13). Les jattes à profil en S sont les plus répandues (fig. 2: 1-6); elles présentent un col court concave, une lèvre évasée et une carène arrondie¹⁵. Ces vases sont également les plus nombreux dans l'établissement germanique de Steenakker, à Breda-Ouest¹⁶. Ils figurent parmi les céramiques modelées germaniques du site de Donk, occupé durant la seconde moitié du ive siècle¹⁷. Des profils comparables existent parmi les trouvailles céramiques du hameau étendu de Saint-Ouen-du-Breuil, en Haute-Normandie¹⁸. Ils apparaissent bien évidemment sur différents sites de Germanie libre; plusieurs exemplaires ont été mis au jour lors de la fouille d'un fond de cabane à Petershagen-Lahden, en Westphalie¹⁹, daté du ive siècle apr. J.-C. Une deuxième forme attestée à Baelen/Nereth est le pot à cuire globulaire, à large ouverture et lèvre courte évasée (fig. 2: 7-8). On le rencontre à Saint-Ouen-du-Breuil²⁰ et un récipient au profil complet a été retrouvé au fond d'un puits de Kontich (province d'Anvers)²¹. A Zele (province de Flandre orientale), dans la vallée de l'Escaut, une fosse datée de la fin du iiie-début du ive siècle a livré quelques pots à cuire globulaires, peut-être d'origine frisonne²². En Germanie libre, ces vases apparaissent surtout dans des contextes des iie et iiie siècles; ils peuvent être identifiés avec les types IIB et IIC2 de Wijster²³. Le répertoire de Baelen/Nereth comprend encore quelques coupes à lèvre simple rentrante (fig. 2: 10-11) et des plats à cuire (fig. 2: 12). Les coupes sont présentes sur plusieurs sites germaniques du Bas-Empire comme Breda-Ouest²⁴, Gennepe²⁵, Montigny-en-Ostrevent²⁶, Saint-Ouen-du-Breuil²⁷ et le castellum de Liberchies-Brunchaut²⁸; il s'agit des vases du type VIIb1 de Wijster où ils dominent largement le spectre de la céramique modelée²⁹.

La mise au jour dans la fosse 258 d'une fibule en fer à ressort du type «Armbrustfibel»³⁰ (fig. 3: 1) constitue une preuve supplémentaire d'une présence germanique. Cette parure féminine est caractéristique des peuples de la rive droite du Rhin; des concentrations importantes de ce type de fibule ont été mises en évidence dans les cimetières saxons entre les embouchures de l'Elbe et de la Weser, dans le nord de l'Allemagne³¹. Elle a été

8 Berkvens *et al.* 2004, 43-44; De Clercq *et al.* 2004; Bérenger 2000, 197-202; van Es 1967, 276-278.

9 De Paepe *et al.* 1991.

10 Id., 159-160.

11 Id., 161.

12 Bouquillon *et al.* 1994, 232.

13 Virton-Château Renaud est avec Baelen/Nereth le seul site où nous observons une présence conjointe des groupes B et D1.

14 On ne peut jamais exclure totalement la possibilité que ces céramiques aient été produites sur place, c'est-à-dire à Baelen ou dans les environs immédiats, comme cela a été démontré pour une partie de la céramique modelée de tradition

germanique découverte dans le nord-ouest de la France: Bouquillon *et al.* 1994, 231-233.

15 Elles correspondent au type IVA de Wijster (Drenthe) dont l'usage s'étendrait jusqu'aux premières décennies du ve siècle: van Es 1967, 237-240, fig. 130-131.

16 Berkvens *et al.* 2004, 43, fig. 4.

17 Van Impe 1983, 89, fig. 14, n°29-32; De Paepe *et al.* 1991, 149, fig. 4, n°28-29, 32, 150, fig. 5, n°2-4 et 7-10.

18 Il s'agit des vases du type II: Gonzalez *et al.* 2003, 164, fig. 9; Gonzalez *et al.* 2001, 50, fig. 6, n°14-15.

19 Bérenger 2000, 200, fig. 78, n°1 et 14, 201, fig. 79, n°4, 17-18.

20 Il correspond au type I de la céramique non tournée: Gonzalez *et al.* 2003, 164, fig. 9; Gonzalez *et al.* 2001, 50, fig. 6, n°16-17.

21 De Paepe *et al.* 1991, 153, fig. 7, n°5.

22 De Clercq *et al.* 2004, 61-63, fig. 4.

23 van Es 1967, 213-221, 223-224.

24 Berkvens *et al.* 2004, 43, n°15-16.

25 Verhoeven 2003, 125, fig. 4.

26 Corsiez 2006, 359, fig. 25, n°84-85.

27 Elles correspondent aux vases du type III: Gonzalez *et al.* 2003, 164, fig. 9.

28 De Paepe *et al.* 1991, 152, fig. 6, n°16.

29 van Es 1967, 313-315.

30 Fibule en arbalète.

31 Böhme 1974, 8.

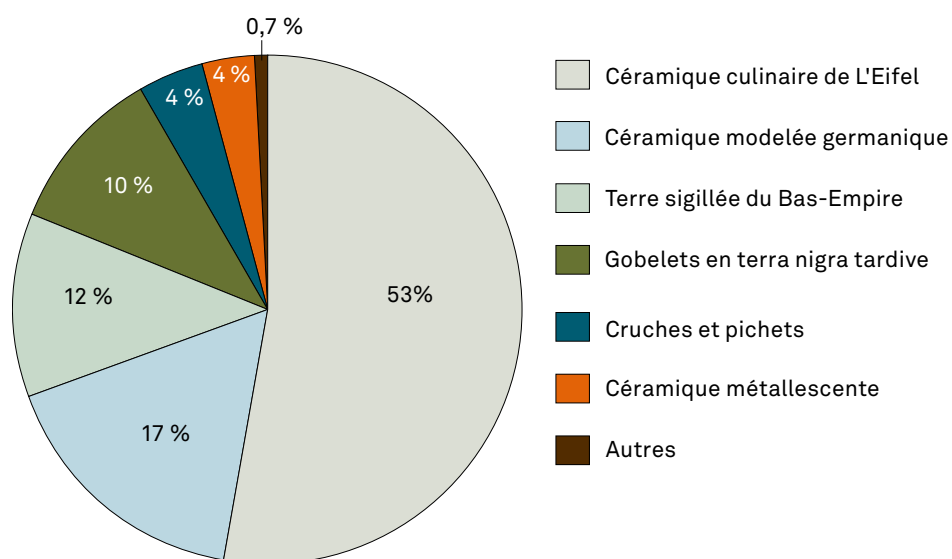
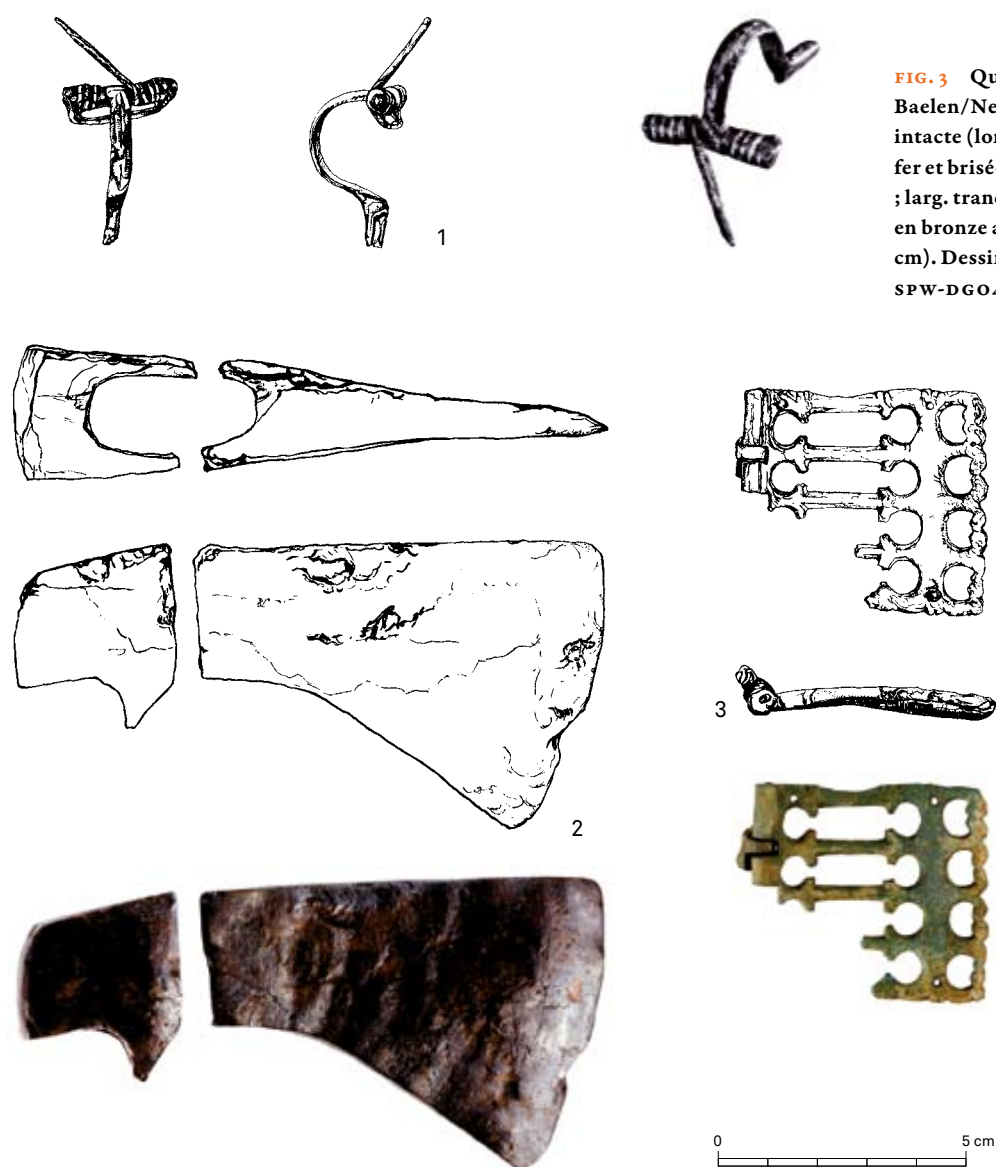


FIG. 4 Pourcentages des principales catégories de céramiques du Bas-Empire à Baelen/Nereth.

fabriquée en fer et en bronze et se caractérise par un long ressort bilatéral à corde intérieure à l'arc et un arc de section plate à bords parallèles. Elle est répandue au cours des années 275-375 apr. J.-C. Cette fibule est excessivement rare dans les régions contrôlées par Rome et n'a probablement jamais été adoptée par les populations gallo-romaines de Gaule septentrionale. Sa présence à l'intérieur des frontières de l'Empire traduirait l'arrivée de familles originaires du nord-ouest du monde germanique, aux traditions vestimentaires exogènes.

4 Le mobilier céramique: données générales (fig. 4)

Le spectre général du mobilier céramique du Bas-Empire révèle une proportion écrasante (53%) de céramiques culinaires de l'Eifel. Ces vases se partagent entre les productions de Speicher et celles de Mayen. Les céramiques à inclusions volcaniques de Mayen sont près de deux fois plus nombreuses que celles de Speicher. La terre sigillée du Bas-Empire (12%) est presque exclusivement originaire d'Argonne. Son répertoire est très limité; les coupes et les assiettes sont très rares, nous trouvons surtout des bols et des mortiers tels que les bols hémisphériques décorés à la molette Chenet 320, les bols à collerette courte Chenet 324b et 324i et les mortiers Chenet 328-330³². La *terra nigra* tardive (10%) est illustrée par plusieurs gobelets à ouverture évasée et épaule large du type Chenet 342. Ils ont été fabriqués en Argonne; ils se caractérisent par une grande diversité dans les gabarits et le façonnage du fond, avec un pied tantôt annulaire, tantôt haut et cylindrique. Certains gobelets sont décorés de rangées concentriques de guillochis. Ces vases en *terra nigra* tardive ont joué un rôle majeur dans la vaisselle de table de l'établissement germanique de Baelen/Nereth. Ils étaient particulièrement prisés par les populations germaniques du nord-ouest de l'Europe; ils ont été importés en grand nombre dans les territoires libres de la rive droite du Rhin et ont même été copiés en céramique modelée³³. Ils font régulièrement partie des dotations funéraires des sépultures germaniques entre 350 et 450 apr. J.-C.³⁴. Parmi le groupe des cruches et des pichets, nous retrouvons divers fragments de récipients à une ou deux anses en céramique marbrée de la vallée de la Moselle (Trèves) ou en céramique flammée de Speicher.

De manière générale, les céramiques romaines du Bas-Empire proviennent de deux grandes régions, l'Argonne d'une part, l'Eifel et la vallée de la Moselle d'autre part. L'importance numérique de toutes ces importations montre que les occupants germaniques n'étaient pas un groupe isolé en Germanie seconde; l'établissement de Baelen n'est pas à l'écart des principaux circuits commerciaux de la Gaule du nord-est. À côté d'une vaisselle liée à des traditions culturelles du monde germanique, les habitants utilisaient toute la gamme des céramiques de table du Bas-Empire (bols, gobelets à boire) mais également la batterie de cuisine adaptée aux habitudes culinaires du monde romain (mortiers, marmites, jattes, bouilloires/pichets et plats à cuire).

5 Un ensemble archéologique singulier: la fosse 267 (fig. 5)

En plus des divers ensembles à caractère détritique, il faut signaler une excavation particulière, de forme oblongue et creusée au niveau du gouttereau sud du bâtiment oriental. Son remplissage, riche en terre brûlée, a livré douze poteries entières ou au profil archéologiquement complet (fig. 5), une plaque-boucle de ceinturon en bronze (fig. 3 : 3), une attache en fer d'un seau ainsi qu'un marteau en fer de forgeron ou de chaudronnier. L'excellent état de conservation du matériel nous permet de considérer ce lot comme un dépôt primaire daté du milieu ou du troisième quart du I^{er} siècle; il nous livre les principales composantes de la vaisselle de table et de la batterie de cuisine d'un habitat du Bas-Empire, notamment quatre gobelets Chenet 342 en *terra nigra* tardive d'Argonne (fig. 5: 1-4), une cruche à deux anses également originaire d'Argonne (fig. 5: 5) et quelques céramiques rugueuses de l'Eifel (fig. 5: 6-10). Ces dernières se composent de deux plats Alzei³⁵ 34 de Speicher et de Mayen (fig. 5: 6-7), d'une jatte Alzei 28 de Mayen (fig. 5: 8), d'un petit pichet Alzei 30 (haut. 11,5 cm) en pâte blanc jaune de Speicher³⁶ (fig. 5: 9) et d'un grand pichet Alzei 30 (haut. 23,4 cm) originaire de Mayen (fig. 5: 10). La fosse renfermait aussi de la céramique modelée germanique: une coupe à lèvres rentrante (haut. 5,7 cm) (fig. 2: 11), une jatte profonde à profil en S (haut. 10,5 cm) (fig. 2: 4) et un pot à cuire à lèvres épaissies évasées (fig. 2: 8). La plupart des céramiques culinaires de ce dépôt présentent des coups de feu et des dépôts alimentaires carbonisés au niveau des lèvres, des cols et des parois externes et/ou internes.

6 Le mobilier métallique à caractère militaire

Les fouilles ont livré une quantité très élevée d'artefacts métalliques, principalement en fer. Nous trouvons des instruments de la vie quotidienne et des outils agricoles: une sonnaille en bronze, deux clés³⁷, une pelle de foyer, des forces et une dent de herse. Nous avons aussi des objets à caractère militaire comme une pointe de flèche en fer, une petite hache de guerre brisée en deux morceaux (fig. 3: 2), un probable fragment de casque en fer et une plaque-boucle en bronze de ceinturon ou '*cingulum militiae*' (fig. 3: 3).

La hache est l'arme traditionnelle des guerriers germaniques occidentaux; elle n'appartient pas à l'armement classique du soldat romain. La douille est cantonnée de deux saillies en pointe destinées à une meilleure fixation du fer. Cette hache correspond au type B de H.B. Böhme, caractérisé par une face supérieure légèrement courbe³⁸. Qualifiée de proto-francisque, elle est datée du I^{er} siècle³⁹ (fig. 3: 2).

La plaque-boucle (4,5 x 4,8 cm), découverte dans la fosse 267, possède une décoration ajourée (fig. 3: 3). Cette dernière se compose de quatre ouvertures rectangulaires dont les extrémités se terminent par un arceau outrepassé. Ces ouvertures sont encadrées par quatre petits orifices et une rangée de quatre motifs en forme de pelves longe l'extrémité crénelée de la plaque. La boucle devait figurer deux dauphins affrontés, seule l'extrémité de la queue du dauphin supérieur est conservée. Les éléments de

³² Chenet 1941.

³³ Reichmann 1996, 61-62, fig. 44.

³⁴ Böhme 1974, 134; van Es 1967, 158-168.

³⁵ Unverzagt 1916.

³⁶ Une empreinte de pouce apparaît à l'attache inférieure de l'anse.

³⁷ Il s'agit et d'une clé à tête en forme de T et d'une clé en crochet, un modèle fréquent dans les

tombes germaniques du Bas-Empire.

³⁸ Böhme 1974, 105-106.

³⁹ Kazanski 1995, 38.

ceinturon avec plaque ajourée et boucle en forme de dauphins apparaissent le long des frontières européennes de l'Empire au cours de la première moitié du ive siècle⁴⁰. Ce modèle de plaque à décor ajouré est répandu dans l'armée romaine du ive siècle.

7 Le mobilier en pierre

Une grande quantité d'objets en pierre est associée aux habitations du Bas-Empire. Les grès plaquettés micacés beiges, plus

rarement rouges ou roses du Famennien⁴¹ et les calcaires dinantiens fortement altérés (blanchis, kartifiés) dominent largement l'assemblage. Le site de Baelen/Nereth est implanté à cheval sur une zone de faille séparant au nord des grès famenniens et au sud des calcaires ou dolomies du Dinantien.

De nombreux fragments de meules ont été découverts dans les fosses et appartiennent à deux types lithologiques distincts : le basalte vacuolaire extrait de la région volcanique de l'Eifel et le grès graveleux blanc d'origine proche (Formation de



FIG. 5 Les céramiques romaines de la fosse 02.267. 1-4 : gobelets en terra nigra tardive ; 5 : cruche à deux anses ; 6-10 : la céramique rugueuse de l'Eifel. Echelle 1/4. Dessins C. Régimont et photo L. Baty © SPW-DGO4.

⁴⁰ Appels et al. 2007, 167.

⁴¹ Formations de Montfort et d'Evieux, connus sous le nom générique de 'Psammites du Condroz'.

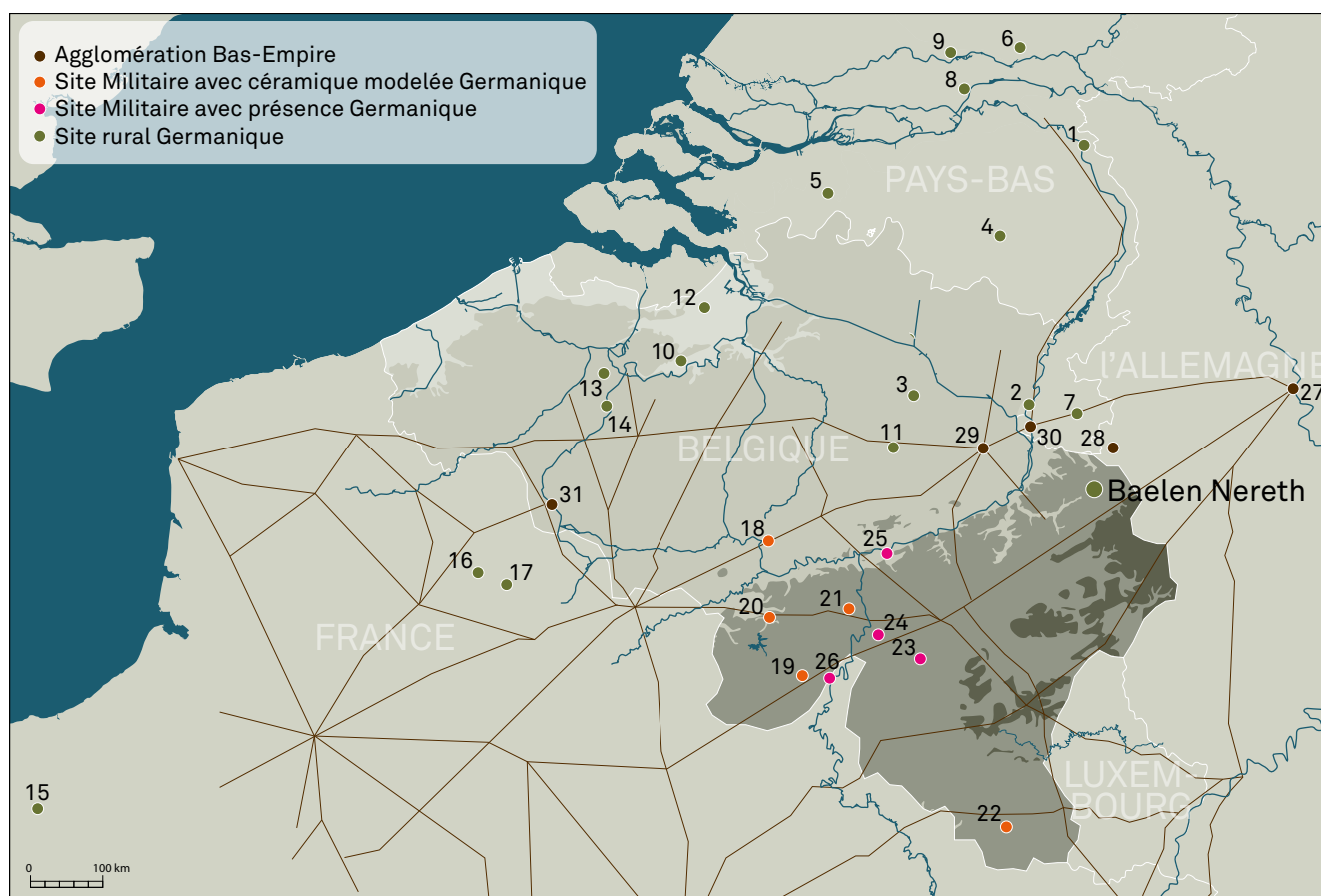


FIG. 6 Carte des principaux sites à caractère germanique du nord de la Gaule. 1 : Gennep ; 2 : Neerharen-Rekem ; 3 : Donk ; 4 : Geldrop ; 5 : Breda ; 6 : Bennekom ; 7 : Voerendaal ; 8 : Tiel-Passewaaij ; 9 : Wijk bij Duurstede ; 10 : Zele-Kammershoek ; 11 : Wange ; 12 : Sint-Gillis-Waas ; 13 : Sint-Martens-Latem ; 14 : Asper ; 15 : Saint-Ouen-du-Breuil ; 16 : Flers-en-Escrebieux ; 17 : Montigny-en-Ostrevent ; 18 : Liberchies-Brunchaut ; 19 : Dourbes ; 20 : Pry ; 21 : Montaigle ; 22 : Virton-Château Renaud ; 23 : Eprave ; 24 : Furfooz ; 25 : Thon ; 26 : Vireux-Molhain ; 27 : Köln ; 28 : Aachen ; 29 : Tongres ; 30 : Maastricht ; 31 : Tournai. Cartographie J.-N. Anslin © SPW-DGO4.

Vicht, Dévonien moyen). On est surpris par le nombre très élevé d'aiguisoirs en grès quartzitique très fin gris à gris bleu (Formation de Montfort, Famennien), en grès beige (Formation de Montfort, Famennien, Dévonien supérieur) d'origine locale et en grès gris foncé plus grossier (Dévonien inférieur probable, affleurant quelques kilomètres au site de Baelen/Nereth). On retrouve à Baelen/Nereth toute la chaîne opératoire de ces objets avec des aiguisoirs en cours de fabrication. De manière générale, les occupants du site ont exploité les abondantes ressources en matériau lithique disponibles à proximité immédiate du site ou dans un rayon de 5 à 10 km.

Conclusion (fig. 6)

Le site de Baelen-Nereth illustre l'installation au I^{er} siècle d'une ou plusieurs familles germaniques. Il s'agit d'une population attachée à la terre. Le mobilier archéologique nous apprend qu'elle pratiquait l'élevage (forces, sonnaille) et l'agriculture

(herse) mais les éléments militaires mis au jour signaleraient la présence de guerriers. La découverte d'une pièce de ceinturon de l'armée romaine pourrait même indiquer leur intégration ou leur collaboration avec les contingents militaires de l'Antiquité tardive. Peut-être ont-ils participé au contrôle d'un territoire en grande partie déserté au I^{er} siècle? Il ne s'agit pas d'une occupation 'sauvage', imposée *de facto*; l'installation de ce groupe à Baelen/Nereth a probablement été acceptée par les autorités de Germanie Seconde. Le vicus d'Aix/*Aquae Granni* se situe à environ vingt km au nord-est; cette agglomération a dû remplir un rôle centralisateur par rapport aux campagnes environnantes. Dans la culture matérielle, divers éléments (vaisselle montée à la main, fibule féminine en arbalète, armement germanique) sont représentatifs des peuples établis entre la mer du Nord, le cours inférieur du Rhin et la Weser⁴². À partir de la fin du III^e siècle, ces populations sont fréquemment réunies sous le vocable générique de 'Francs'⁴³. L'habitat germanique de Baelen/Nereth ne devait pas être isolé dans cette zone de la

⁴² Citons les Bructères, Tencières, Chérusques, Chamaves, Saliens, Chattuarii, Amsivarii, etc.

⁴³ Theuvs 2008, 765; Périn et al. 1987, 24-27.

Germanie seconde, à l'est de la cité des Tongres. Il est implanté au pied du massif des Fagnes et à proximité de la vallée de la Vesdre. Les sites ruraux germaniques les plus proches sont ceux de Voerendaal (Limbourg néerlandais) et de Neerharen-Rekem (Limbourg flamand) (fig. 6: 7 et 2). Au Haut-Empire, la région autour de Baelen/Nereth semble avoir été une importante zone d'exploitation du minerai de fer. Les fouilles du TGV mirent au jour des sites de production mais aucun d'entre eux ne semble avoir été occupé au Bas-Empire. Les deux ateliers de réduction du minerai de fer les plus proches de Baelen/Nereth sont ceux de Baelen/Corbush et de Lontzen/Krompelberg dont l'activité est datée du ^{II}e siècle⁴⁴. Néanmoins, les importantes ressources minières⁴⁵ de cette partie orientale de la Belgique devaient encore être exploitées à la fin de la période romaine.

Dans l'état actuel de nos connaissances, il est vain de vouloir relier à tout prix l'installation d'un groupe germanique à Baelen/Nereth à l'un des événements historiques du Bas-Empire. Nous songeons notamment à la victoire de Julien en 358, près de Tongres, sur les Francs du Rhin inférieur (Saliens et Chamaves) qui eut pour conséquence la négociation de la paix en échange du recrutement de nombreux auxiliaires germaniques et de l'implantation définitive des Saliens dans la Toxandrie⁴⁶. Le site de Baelen/Nereth se situe en dehors de la Toxandrie dont le territoire est généralement identifié avec la Campine et le Brabant néerlandais. Cependant, on ignore l'étendue réelle au Bas-Empire de cette région qu'Ammien Marcellin nomme 'Toxandria'⁴⁷. Il est également délicat de se prononcer sur le statut de ces immigrants germaniques en contexte rural. Diverses hypothèses sont régulièrement proposées: vétérans installés avec leur famille dans l'arrière-pays gaulois, fédérés, milices des *laeti* ou des gentiles venues mettre en valeur des terres publiques laissées à l'abandon depuis les troubles de la seconde moitié du ^{III}e siècle⁴⁸. On ignore le lien qui a pu exister entre le groupe humain installé à Baelen/Nereth et le préfet des Lètes – 'Praefectus Latorum Lagentium' que la *Notitia Dignitatum* situe près de Tongres – 'prope Tungros'⁴⁹. Quoi qu'il en soit, la fouille de Baelen/Nereth démontre que la germanisation et la militarisation au ^{IV}e siècle des régions traversées par le Rhin, la Meuse et l'Escaut constituent des réalités archéologiques indéniables. Le mobilier

archéologique montre que les occupants de la première génération sont des allochtones par rapport à la population provinciale gallo-romaine. Leur identité culturelle s'est probablement atténuée au cours des décennies; la céramique modelée germanique tend notamment à disparaître des contextes les plus récents.

L'identification d'un site rural germanique en Wallonie est une donnée historique intéressante. En effet, jusqu'ici, la plupart des habitats germaniques connus en territoire romain se concentraient dans le sud des Pays-Bas, dans la vallée de l'Escaut ou en Campine (fig. 6). La présence d'éléments germaniques en Wallonie aux ^{IV}e -^Ve siècles se cantonnaient le plus souvent aux sites militaires et aux cimetières qui ont parfois été retrouvés en association⁵⁰. Des fragments de céramiques modelées germaniques ont été identifiées dans le castellum de Liberchies et les fortifications rurales de Dourbes, Montaigle, Nismes II, Pry et Virton-Château Renaud. L'habitat germanique de Nereth est probablement le plus important site rural du Bas-Empire mis au jour en Wallonie durant ces vingt dernières années. L'étude du matériel céramique et du mobilier lithique n'est pas encore achevée; les résultats définitifs feront l'objet d'une monographie dans la collection études et Documents du Service Public de Wallonie⁵¹.

⁴⁴ Fock et al. 2008, 152 et 155.

⁴⁵ La région est riche en gisements de fer, de plomb et de zinc.

⁴⁶ Dierkens et al. 2003, 167-169.

⁴⁷ Theuws 2008, 767.

⁴⁸ Gonzalez et al. 1997-1998, 208-209.

⁴⁹ Krüger 1983, 389.

⁵⁰ Brulet 2008; Böhme 2008.

⁵¹ Nous remercions toutes les personnes qui nous ont aidés dans la réalisation de cette première étude. Saluons en premier lieu l'aide précieuse des collaborateurs du Service de l'Archéologie en province de Liège (Direction extérieure de Liège 1, Service public de Wallonie): Felicidad Giraldo-Martin pour le plan du site, Anne Mélon et Louis Bruzzese pour le montage des posters, Caroline Régimont et Huguette Draux pour les dessins des

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Cultural discontinuity and the migration hypothesis. The 6th-century Slavic migration in the light of new archaeological finds from Bohemia

Nada Profantová¹

Abstract

The problem of discontinuity between the archaeological cultures of the Migration Period and the Prague-Type Pottery Culture (PTPC) applies to a large area of Central Europe, including Bohemia and Moravia. The PTPC developed in the 5th century in Ukraine and southern Belarus. About a century later, it had spread over a large area of southeastern Poland, Slovakia, Moravia and Bohemia. This paper discusses the similarities in archaeological remains from Ukraine and Bohemia from this period, using evidence from the sites of Rashkiv and Roztoky. Another important conclusion is that in Bohemia, continuity can be observed between the PTPC and later phases of the early medieval period (8th to 12th centuries).

Keywords

migration hypothesis, Prague Type Pottery Culture, early medieval period, Slavs, Bohemia, cultural discontinuity, settlement

1 Introduction

During the 6th and 7th centuries, Central Europe, including southern Poland, Slovakia, Bohemia and Moravia (Fig. 1), underwent cultural discontinuity and complex transformations

that have been attested archaeologically. Traditionally, these processes are described as 'the arrival of Slavs'²; however, in the last decades serious reservations towards this explanation have appeared³. The discussion extends to the appropriateness of the term Prague-Type Pottery Culture (PTP Culture), the archaeological culture that is regarded as the material manifestation of these processes⁴.

The PTP culture emerged in the 5th century in the region of Ukraine and southern Belarus, developing out of the Kiev culture and partly out of the Cherniakhov culture⁵. In the course of the 6th century this culture replaced the later phase of the Migration Period (the Merovingian culture), known mainly from cemeteries⁶, in Bohemia and Moravia.

The cultural complex with Prague-type pottery was originally characterised only by its hand-made pottery of vase-like shapes with low necks (Fig. 5: 5). Gradually, further ceramic types typical of the PTPC have been determined, such plates (Fig. 5: 1⁷), and pot-like bowls. For the later phases, attested at least at Roztoky, non-transferable large rectangular pans (Czech: *pražnice*) are known. Specialised types are represented by the so-called small casting pans/melting ladles (Fig. 5: 2), which are abundant in Ukraine (Bernashivka, Rashkiv, Korčak VII and Semenki); however, their occurrence in Bohemia (Fig. 5: 2, Roztoky, Kadaň⁸) and Moravia (Věrovany, Bořanovice and Pavlov⁹) remains rare. Small casting pans are also known from the settlement at Krakow-Nowa Huta¹⁰ and probably from Żukowice in Silesia.

So far, among the most significant non-ceramic markers determining the independent PTPC are the following:

- Types and organisation of settlements such as along river banks (Figs. 2, 3) and with the dwellings arranged in a circle.

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² Zeman 1976.

³ See Brather 2006; Curta 2001.

⁴ This research was funded by the Czech Science Foundation, No. P 405/10/2289: Záhada raně středověké sídelní aglomerace v Roztokách. Krajina, ekonomika a vzorce sídelního chování/ The puzzle of Early Medieval settlement agglomeration at Roztoky. Pattern of land use, economics and a site formation.

⁵ Baran 1988; Terpilovskij 2005.

⁶ Svoboda 1965.

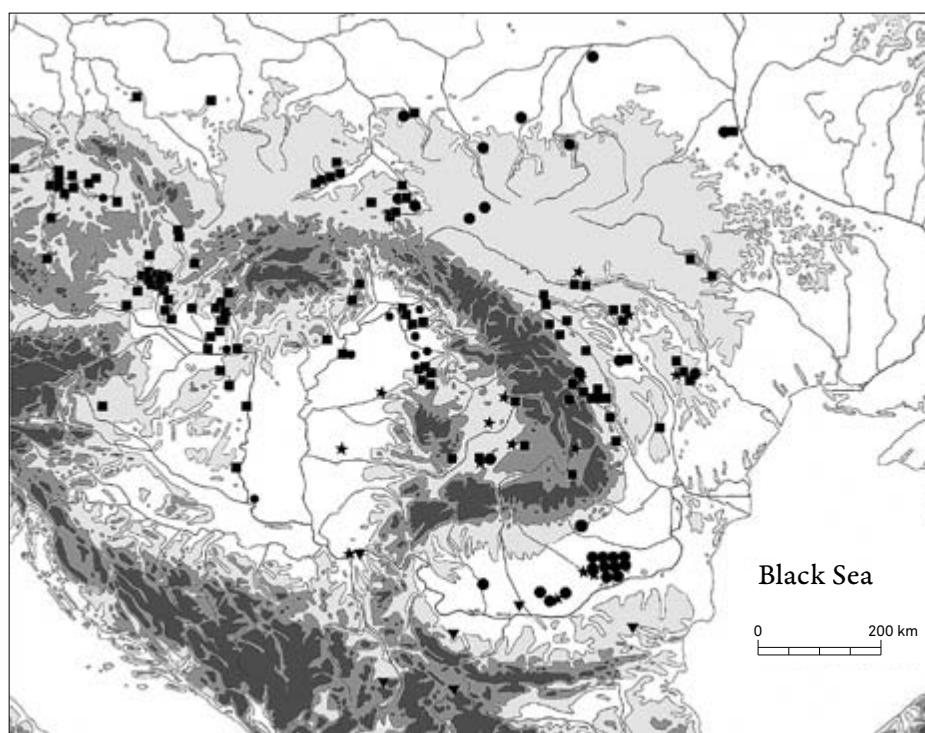
⁷ Kuna & Profantová 2005, Fig. 61.

⁸ Profantová 2009, Fig. 5.

⁹ Jelínková, Šrein & Šťastný, v tisku (in press).

¹⁰ Kubica-Kabacińska & Szmoniewski 2002.

FIG. 1 Map of Prague-Type Pottery Culture pit houses with stone ovens (square) and clay ovens (circle), or lacking an oven (star). After N. Profantová 2009, obr. 6. The territories of Slovakia, Romania, and Moldavia are after G. Fusek.



- Certain types of dwellings/houses: a sunken dwelling with a stone oven in the corner (mainly NW corner); the best examples come from the Roztoky settlement, Fig. 4C, cf. 4A, B).
- Certain funerary customs: the cremation burial rite (Prague-Loretánské n., Ždánice¹¹, Zvinjach I at Ukraine¹²).
- Certain structures of settlement patterns, e.g. presence/absence of strongholds (in Central Europe these are mostly absent); the spatial relationships between settlements and burial grounds, etc.
- The main elements of the material culture such as undecorated hand-made pottery, costume ornaments (fibulae, necklaces, Fig. 5, 6), etc.

However, usually only two or three of the above-mentioned markers can be observed simultaneously at individual settlement units (i.e. sites), such as the settlement location, house types, pottery types, and funerary customs. Only the best-known sites also provide data for the other markers, e.g. settlement organisation (Roztoky, Březno, Mutěnice, Břeclav-Pohansko).

Roztoky is the largest known PTPC settlement in Central Europe, with the highest number of excavated dwellings (335) (Fig. 2¹³). It is estimated that originally, the entire Roztoky settlement on the Moldau River bank comprised 600 to 700 houses¹⁴. Březno, near Louny, represents a different type of settlement (attributed to the PTPC culture), with approximately eight houses¹⁵ arranged in a circle.

The best examples of these two main types of settlement organisation (circular and longitudinal) known from Bohemia are

found in western Ukraine. The closest parallel for the longitudinal arrangement is seen in the large settlement at Rashkiv on the river Dneister (98 houses and 80 later houses; 8th century; cf. Fig. 3¹⁶); the circular arrangement was attested at the eponymous site of Korchak VII¹⁷. A substantial number of similar occurrences of carefully arranged dwellings can be found in Ukraine (Fig. 4A, B, C). Moreover, the Rashkiv settlement in Ukraine shows another common detail known from Roztoky, namely the occurrence of vessels placed next to stone ovens and sunken into the floor. The same detail is known also from the site of Luka Kavetschinskaja (House No. 2¹⁸). Likewise, the deep silo pits with tapering necks that have been attested not only at Roztoky¹⁹ but also at Prague-Liboc and other sites, have parallels at the Rashkiv settlement²⁰.

The archaeological evidence of the PTPC known from Ukraine and Belarus is dated to as early as the 5th century²¹; thus, it chronologically precedes the Central European finds. This is why it is traditionally accepted that the PTPC spread from the Ukraine and Belarus.

2 The PTPC concept

The PTPC concept was obviously created with the help of markers borrowed from everyday life. On the other hand, the costume ornaments are evidently of a general or trans-cultural nature, and their repertoire continuously shifted according to the broader political and cultural context in which the PTPC existed.

¹¹ Bubeník, Pleinerová & Profantová 1998, 114f.

¹² Baran 1972, 166.

¹³ Kuna & Profantová 2007.

¹⁴ Kuna & Profantová 2005; Kuna & Profantová

2007.

¹⁵ Pleinerová 2000.

¹⁶ Baran 1988.

¹⁷ Rusanova 1973.

¹⁸ Vakulenko & Prichodnjuk 1985, Photo 10.

¹⁹ Kuna & Profantová 2005, Fig. 115.

²⁰ Baran 1988, Tab. 24: Silo Nos. 9, 51, 52.

²¹ Baran 1988.

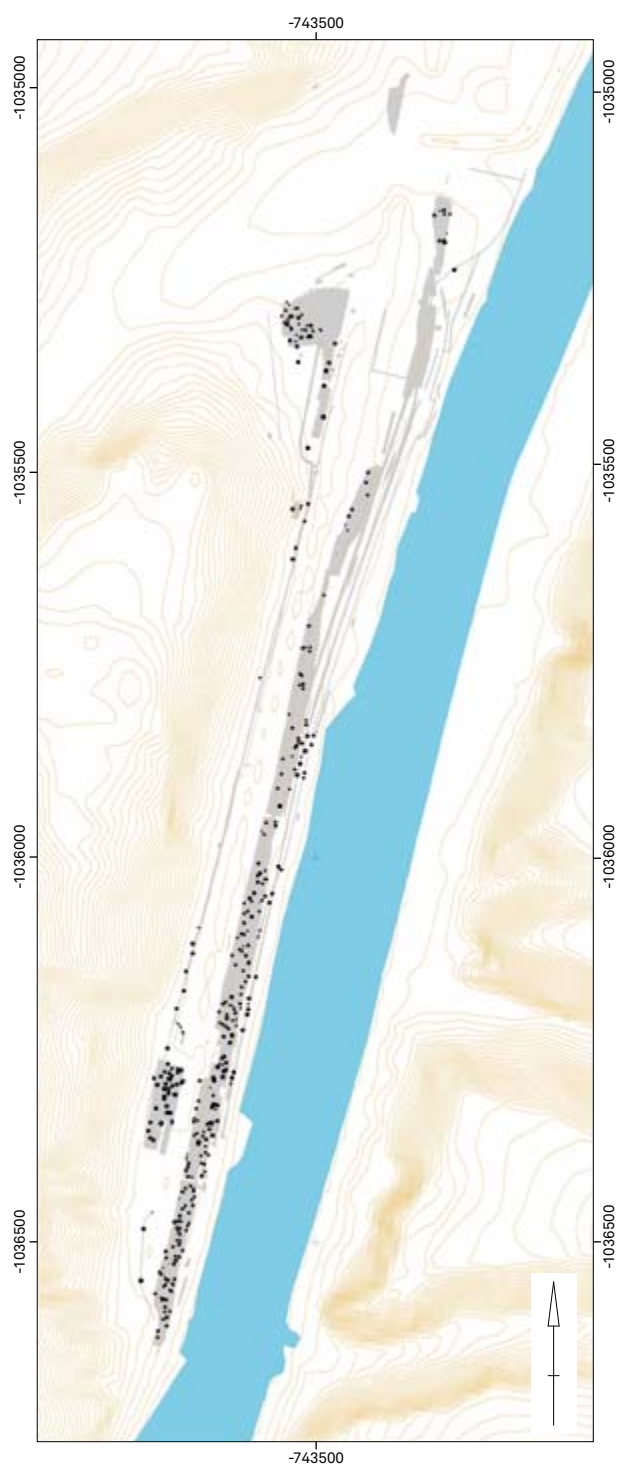


FIG. 2 Plan of the site of Roztoky, on the bank of the Vltava river (Bohemia), the largest PTPC site. Only houses (335) are indicated on the plan. After M. Kuna.

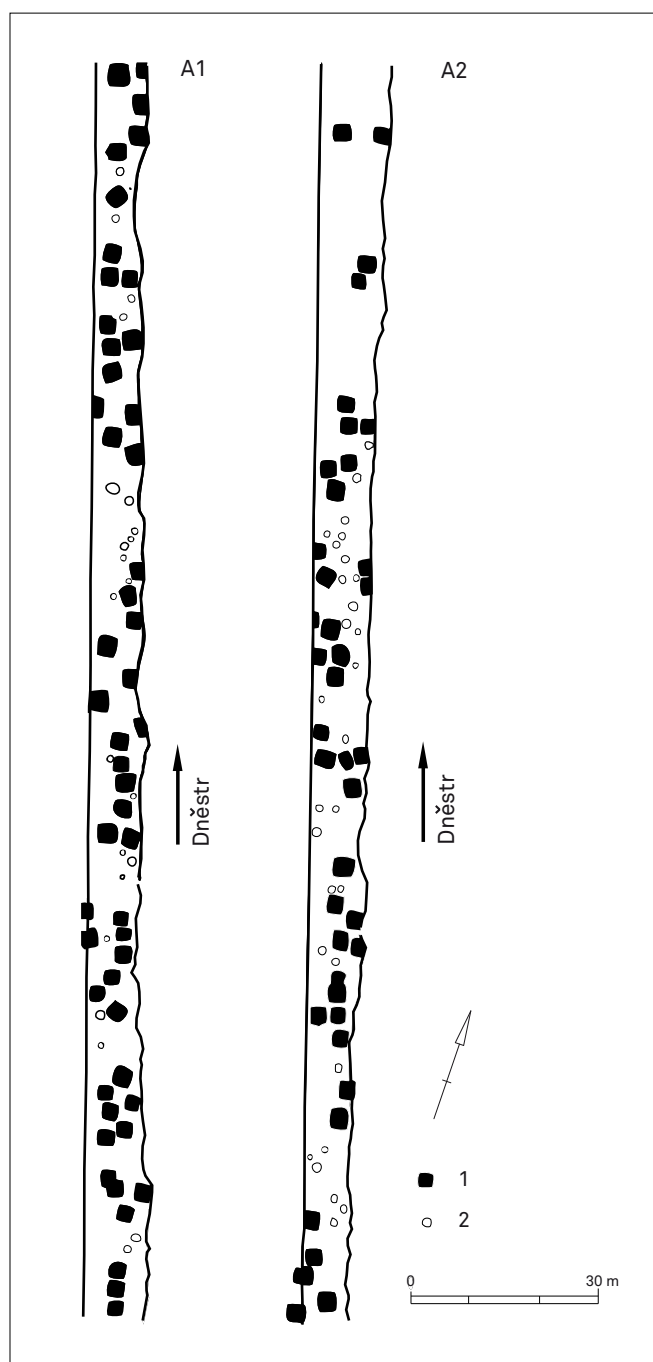


FIG. 3 The very similar to Roztoky is the situation in the earlier part of the PTPC site Rashkiv III in western Ukraine. Section A2 is adjacent to the north of section A1. After V.D. Baran.

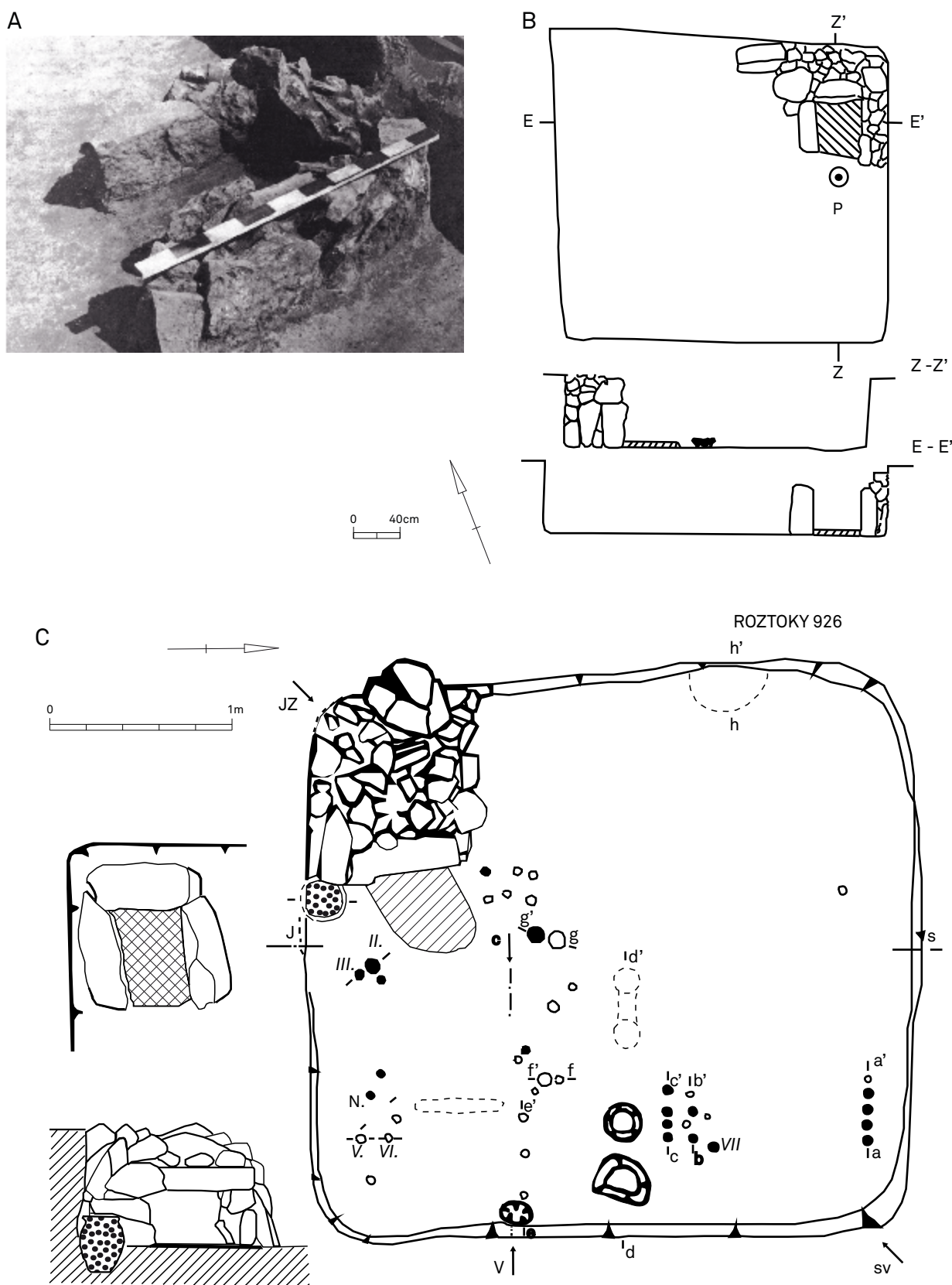


FIG. 4 A: Detail of the stone oven in Luka Kavetchinskaja, H. 23. After L.V. Vakulenko & O.M. Prichodnjuk 1985, photo 10; B: Typical house of PTPC, a pit house with stone oven in the corner, house 14 in Raškov III, Ukraine. In front of the oven, the lower part of a vessel lies on the floor. After V.D. Baran; C: Plan of House 926 in Roztoky near Prague, a similar example with an oven with inset vessel (detail on the left), atypical oven in SW corner, After M. Kuna & N. Profantová 2005.

Several significant types such as spiral-shaped necklace elements with decorated plates and the so-called radiate-headed bow fibulae (found at Dřevíč, and Liteň in Bohemia: Fig. 5: 3), which can be linked with both the western Ukraine region and the Early Avar culture, occurred in the costume ornaments assemblage from the beginning, while others appeared only after the arrival of the PTPC into Central Europe, and are absent on the Ukraine sites. This group of finds consist of single-sided combs (Fig. 5:4), iron strap ends (the influence of Lombards and Baiuvars²²), and Early Avar beads with eyelets, etc.

It is worth noting that so far neither the most archaic shapes of pottery, dated to the 5th – early 6th century AD (Gavrituchin's phase 0²³), nor assemblages featuring 5th-century fibulae have been attested in Bohemia or Moravia. Moreover, finds assemblages that can be securely dated to the first half of the 6th century AD were found only in southern Poland²⁴ and in southwestern Slovakia²⁵. Even though the earliest Bohemian assemblage, including metal finds (a necklace with decorated plates, probably of Byzantine origin) remains so far unpublished (Fig. 6:2, Houses 1717 and 1708 from Roztoky²⁶), several sets dating to

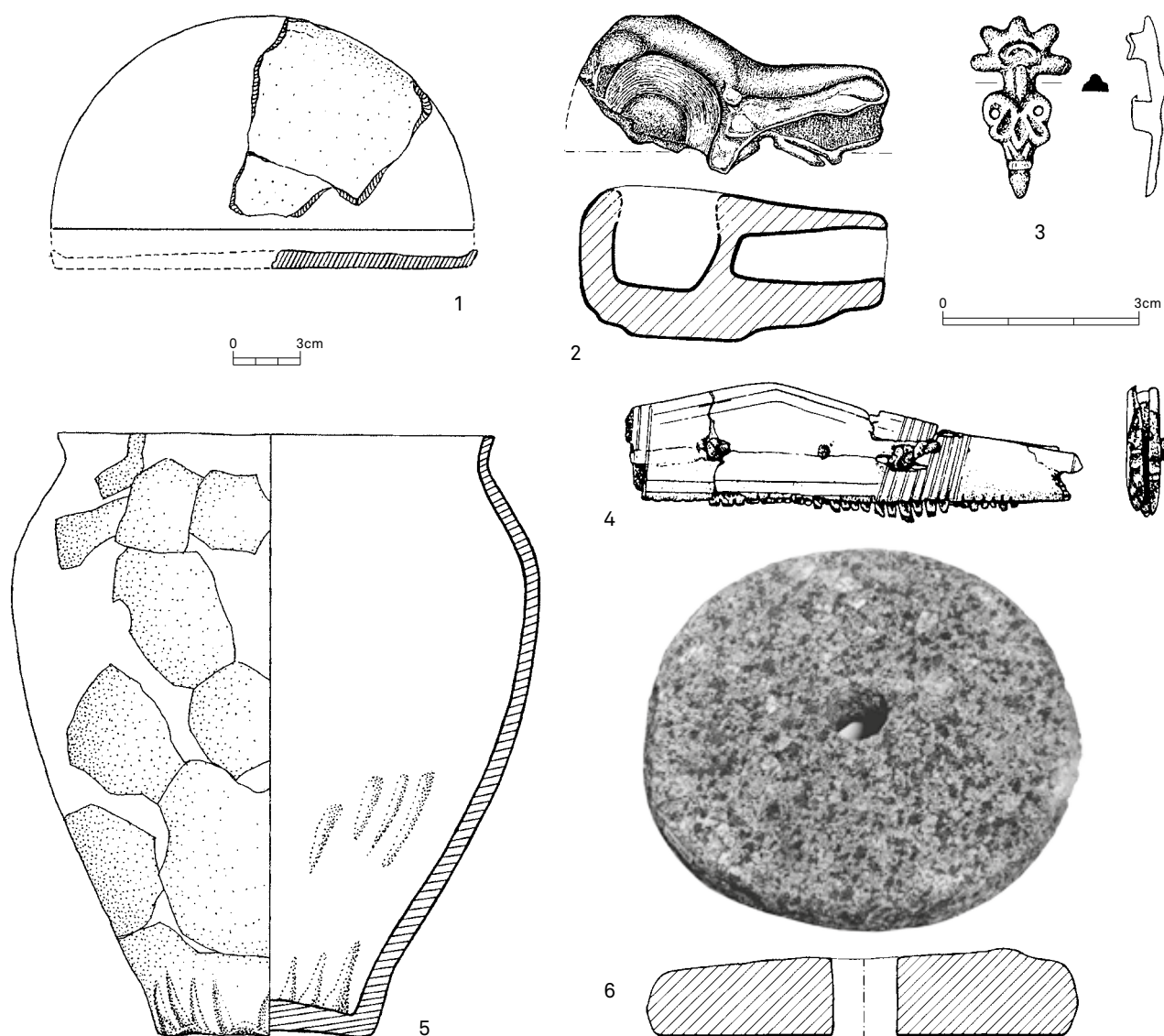


FIG. 5 PTPC: A typical simple, undecorated hand-made pottery vessel (with cylindrical mouth), plates and some other artefact types (melting ladle, small bow fibula, a quernstone and a single-side comb – attested for Central Europe). 1 Prague-Bohnice, house, 2 Roztoky (Prague-west), house 1034, 3 Dřevíč, Rakovník distr., 4 Roztoky (Prague-west), house 911, 5- Roztoky (Prague-west), house 1086, 6 Roztoky (Prague-west), f. 291. After J. Zeman 1976 (1) and M. Kuna & N. Profantová (2,4-6), and Profantová 2008 (3).

²² Profantová 2008, Abb. 5, 10:5, 7.

²³ Gavrituchin 1997.

²⁴ Parczewski 1988, 102-104, Fig. 21.

²⁵ Fusek & Zábojník 2010.

²⁶ Profantová 2009, Fig. 8; Profantová in press.

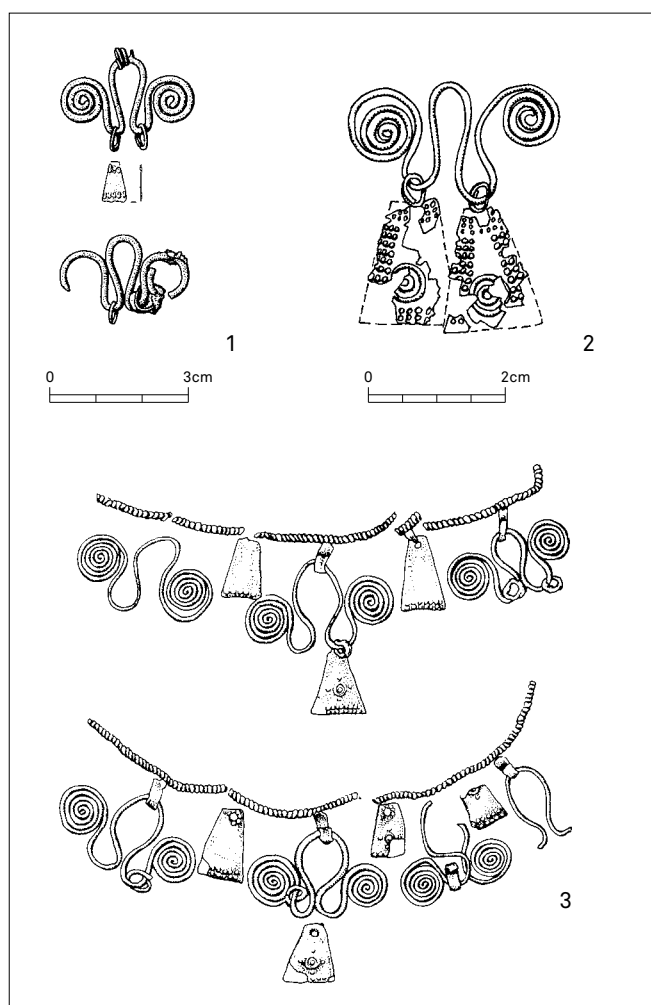


FIG. 6 Bronze necklaces: 1- Grossprüfening (Ge), cremation grave 2. 2 Roztoky (Cz), House 1717. (Dat. 566 – 620 AD). Part of bronze necklace. Drawing L. Rasslová. 3: Complete bronze necklace from Early Avar grave No. 40, Oroszlany II (Hu). 1- After W. Eichinger & H. Losert 2004, 3 After E. Garam 2001, Taf. 23.

the final decades of the 6th century are known from Bohemia (for example Fig. 6:2²⁷). The occurrence of single-sided combs (Fig. 5:4), their local manufacture (Mutěnice²⁸), and the adoption of a particular type of pottery decoration, the filled stamps (Prague-Běchovice²⁹), seem to confirm a certain amount of contact between the Slavs and the Lombards that could only have taken place between 540 and 560/567 AD. The radiocarbon dates for the PTPC remain mostly unpublished; as far as the Roztoky settlement is concerned, only a general date of the late 6th/ early 7th century is available (calibrated 570 – 680 AD at 1 sigma confidence level, House 1264). The radiocarbon dates from the Prague-Liboc are very similar³⁰.

However, justified doubts can be raised. Individual markers such as hand-made pottery, sunken dwellings or cremation graves have been also attested for other cultures dating to the Migration Period; therefore, only the simultaneous occurrence of those markers can be characterised as typical of the PTPC. The key question, then is: would be culture lacking its specific articles with symbolic and statutory values determined at all if the 'early Slavic culture' had not been looked for?

The likely answer is: no, such a culture would not be determined. Discoverer of PTPC, Ivan Borkovský, had been looking for the earliest Slavic material culture. And he found it. Thus, from a methodological point of view, the origin of the PTPC clearly lies on 'the wrong side of the blanket' as is the case with any other Migration Period cultures.

The migration hypothesis cannot be tested with the help of the natural sciences. It is worth noting that cremation burial rites and the small number of graves hamper any serious research based on isotope analysis³¹ or other modern methods.

On the other hand, a supposed connection between the weakly determined archaeological culture and historical assumptions regarding Slavic tribal migration to Central Europe enables meaningful interpretation of transformations occurring during the so-called 'dark' centuries. This mainly comprises the following phenomena:

- The PTPC represents a combination of regression (e.g. in variability and quality of pottery) and economic and technological innovations, such as the widespread use of rotary querns (Fig. 5:6, Roztoky), the introduction of common wheat instead of the previously cultivated emmer wheat³², and stone ovens. Short-term innovations which vanished after a while, like the occurrence of metal casting pans which, for a certain period of time, replaced melting pots (crucibles) carry a high measure of significance in this aspect. This trend, which appears irrational or illogical to us, may perhaps be better explained by the presence of bearers of a certain culture than by cultural diffusion and/or cultural interaction.
- Transformation of settlement dynamics: according to the current state of knowledge, the PTPC's emergence in southern Poland and Saxony (up to the Elbe and Havel rivers) had been preceded by significant depopulation (this settlement hiatus may extend to several decades). The PTPC's arrival could be associated with the emergence of intensive settlement. However, in the case of Bohemia, estimations of population decrease preceding the PTPC's emergence are much lower.
- Continuous development of the PTPC: settlement and cultural continuity between the PTPC and the later phases of the early medieval period, i.e. the Early and Middle 'Hillfort' periods (8th – 10th century; with well-attested Slavinity based on written sources), well documented from Bohemia and Moravia, represent another important aspect in the subsequent development. The best attested examples of settlement continuity can be found on the sites of Prague-Liboc³³ and Prague-Hloubětín in Bohemia, and Pavlov and Mutěnice³⁴

²⁷ Garam 2001, Taf. 23.

²⁸ Klanica 2008, Photos 19 and 17, Fig. 73.

²⁹ Profantová 2008, Abb. 7.

³⁰ Bureš in press. Three dates could be determined on the basis of animal bones. One of the dates from the house shows 'before 665 AD' at 95%

confidence level, while the other was 'before 686 AD' at 75% confidence level.

³¹ Strontium isotopes analysis was carried out on selected animal bones from the Roztoky site. However, results from the analyses had not been revealed at the time of the deadline for this paper.

³² Hajnalová & Profantová 2005.

³³ Profantová 2009, Fig. 8; Profantová & Bureš 2010, Figs. 1, 5, 6, 8, 11; Profantová & Bureš in press.

³⁴ Klanica 2008.

in Moravia. As far as cemeteries are concerned, continuity is best attested at Přítluky and Břeclav-Pohansko³⁵ in Moravia, and Čakajovce in south-western Slovakia³⁶.

A commonality in the worship of particular gods (Perun, Svarožič³⁷) can be observed on the study area, as well as concurrence of certain rituals, and last but not least the existence of a particular group of identical toponyms in this vast territory, such as river names: Donau/Dunaj, which also occurs in Belarus, Morava (Moravia/Serbia), and Bystrica (Slovakia/Romania), as well as names of castles or towns: Krakow (Silesia/northern Hungary), Děvín (Slovakia/Bohemia), Melnik/Mělník (Bohemia/Bulgaria), to name but a few.

3 Conclusions

The 6th- and 7th-century Central European cultural transition, often called the ‘Slavic expansion’, cannot be interpreted as the arrival of a population group held together by a well-defined and functional political and cultural identity, with characteristics that remained unchanged for several centuries, as some of its critics³⁸ have attempted to. After all, such an idea falls well below the standards set by research at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, carried out for example by L. Niederle (1923)³⁹. Even then, the contrast between the diversity in Slavic tribes, all with their own etnonyms (mentioned by Prokopios and Jordanes), and the relative uniformity in language and customs was taken into consideration. As far as the PTPC is concerned, the work by the chronicler Fredegar (ca 655 AD) is of great importance as he applied the term ‘Slavic’ as a kind of catch-all denomination when referring to the two tribes/gentes, Wends and Serbians.

The Fredegar Chronicle⁴⁰ provides more interesting insights than the simple process of a unified people becoming

more sedentary. The creation of new collective, tribal identities, or rather the redefinition of the old ones, occurred in a context of intensive power struggles and cultural interaction between the Slavs and the Avar Khaganate. The archaeological evidence confirms and builds on the chronicler’s testimony, and stresses the Byzantine influence on Avar-Slavic co-existence. From the outset, cultural interaction between the Slavs and the Germanic cultures is equally intensive. Even though they are not mentioned in the written sources, such interactions are attested not only by the presence of common toponyms and hydronyms (including the name of the sacred Czech hill ‘Říp’, deriving from Germanic ‘Rip’⁴¹) but also by the occurrence of production innovations (such as single-sided combs, etc.). The intensity of this linguistic process is illustrated by the cemetery at Grossprüffening near Regensburg (late 6th, early 7th century⁴²) an exceptional example of syncretism.

The connection between the PTPC and the “Slavic expansion” is less significant for the identification of the place of origin of the cultural change and the diffusion of Slavinity across Central Europe than for the interpretation of archaeological finds dating to the period of which the final phase was characterised by the biographer of Charlemagne in the 9th century with the following words: “*Wild and barbarous tribes dwelling in Germany ... all of which speak very much the same language, but differ widely from one another in customs and dress. The chief among them are the Welatabians, the Sorabians, the Abodriti, and the Bohemians...*” (Einhard 1880, cap. 15)⁴³. And it was exactly during this particular period that a new political and ethnic map of Central Europe emerged, which subsequently determined the entire early medieval development of the region.

TABLE I

Distinguishing features of the PTPC, as documented in various regions with respect to cultural continuity in Bohemia and Moravia. Only the presence of relevant phenomena is documented. In fact, none of the registered phenomena turns up in the later phase of the Migration Period, with the sole exception of bow fibulae, which nonetheless vary in shape and size. A newly identified feature is represented by pits with narrowed necks, similar to the so-called pits of pear-shaped sections, the only example being pit 1553 at Březno. These small pits had an economic function and were archaeologically sterile so that their chronology is uncertain. A Circle indicates the occurrence of the phenomenon both breaks. After N. Profantová 2009.

Region	Houses with stone oven / Nos. of sites	Storage/ pits with narrowed neck	Cremation graves	PTPC vessels, plates	Smelting pan	Bow fibulae	Little bread/ chlebec	Mills-rotary querns
Bohemia	•/43	•	•	•/•	•	•	-	•
Moravia	•/25	•	•	•/•	•	•(1)	•(1)	•
Slovakia	•/17	•	•	•/•	-	•(1)	-	•
Ukraine	•	•	•	•/•	•	•	•	•
Bohemia 8th cent.	•	•	•	-/•?	-	-	-	•
Moravia 8th cent.	•	•	•	-/-	-	-	-	•

³⁵ Dostál 1985.

³⁶ Rejholcová 1990.

³⁷ Profantová & Profant 2004, 160–164.

³⁸ Curta 2008.

³⁹ Niederle 1923.

⁴⁰ Fredegar, cf. Havlik (ed.) *et al.* 1966; Krusch (ed.) 1888.

⁴¹ Labuda & Stieber (ed.) 1970, 637.

⁴² Eichinger & Lösert 2004.

⁴³ In his list of significant Slavic tribes, Einhard completely omitted the Moravians, of whom the first mention in the written sources is not until 822 AD.

Resumé

Kulturelle Diskontinuität und Migrationstheorie. Die slawische Migration (6. Jh.) im Lichte neuerer Funde aus Böhmen

Die Diskontinuität zwischen der merowingischen Phase der Völkerwanderungszeit und dem Erscheinen der sog. Keramik des Prager Typs wird im breiteren Raum Mitteleuropas üblicherweise nicht nur als Kulturwandel erklärt sondern auch als ethnischer Wandel. Die Kultur der Keramik des Prager Typs war in der Ukraine im 5. Jh. entstanden und breitete sich von dort während des 6. Jh. nach Mitteleuropa aus. Archäologisch ist erwiesen, dass hier für die Siedlungsgründung vergleichbare Landschaften ausgesucht wurden, gleiche Grundrissanordnungen vorliegen (Raškov/Raschkiv in der Ukraine, Roztoky in Böhmen), die gleichen Grubenhaustypen mit Steinofen in der Ecke, dieselben gewulsteten Keramikformen einschließlich spezifischer Teller, evtl. nicht übertragbare Röstplatten aus Lehm.

Entsprechungen finden wir auch bei den Fibelfunden und einigen Ziergegenständen (Abb. 5, 6). Der gleichfalls in der Ukraine belegte Brandbestattungsritus wurde von Körperbestattungen abgelöst. Aufgrund der Kontinuität der Kultur mit Keramik des Prager Typs zu jüngeren Entwicklungsetappen, vor allem der Kultur der Burgwallzeit (8.-10. Jh.) auf einigen Siedlungen (Prag-Liboc, Prag-Hloubětín, Böhmen) und Gräberfeldern (Břeclav-Pohansko), können wir den ethnischen Wandel mit den überwiegend später schriftlich belegten Slawen in Verbindung bringen, und zwar konkret mit den Wenden (Fredegar, 7. Jh.), erst zu Anfang des 9. Jh. sind zum ersten Mal die Cihu-Widinen/Winiden und Beu-Winiden (J. 805) – entstellte Formen des Ethnonyms der Tschechen/Böhmen schriftlich belegt.

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The rise and fall of a Frankish intention. The early history of a frontier site between Saxons and Slavs on the river Elbe

Jens Schneeweiß¹

Abstract

Recent archaeological research has produced strong evidence for the identification of the Frankish border trade post Schezla and of Hühbeck hillfort on the Elbe river. Both were known from written sources but had remained undiscovered. They appear to be the only known Carolingian sites along the Franco-Slavic border with clear evidence from the early 9th century. This paper discusses the main purpose of the Eastern border posts and the role of trade around 800. Both sites have to be understood as a functional unity. It is argued that their fate reflects, both Charlemagne's intention to establish the Eastern border of the Empire definitively after the end of the Saxon war and its fall after his death in 814.

Keywords

Frankish Empire, 9th century, Elbe

1 Introduction

In December 805, in Diedenhofen (today's Thionville in Lorraine), Charlemagne proclaimed a capitulary, the so-called Diedenhofen Capitulary. Its constitution is set against a historical background². It has the form of a *capitulare missorum*, that is, it contains instructions for the *missi* of the Empire³. In the

second part of the capitulary, foreign trade on the eastern border of the Empire is regulated. It prohibits the export of staple foods in times of dearth and the export of weapons into Slavic territory. In particular, it contains the order to restrict trade with the Slavs to certain specifically named border control places, which are clearly listed in geographical order from north to south (fig. 1). In addition, in each case the responsible imperial official is mentioned. In the beginning of 806, just a few weeks after the Diedenhofen Capitulary, Charlemagne proclaimed the *divisio regnorum*⁴. In the same time he led several campaigns against the Slavs⁵. This historical background emphasises the Charlemagne's clear intention to establish definitive control over the newly created eastern border of his Empire.

The location of the border trading post of Schezla, mentioned only in the Diedenhofen Capitulary of 805, has been the subject of many scholarly debates⁶. The current state of research has recently been summarised by Stefan Hesse⁷. Attempts to locate Schezla never ceased, even after the basic investigations by Fritz Timme⁸. But although up to now 14 different places⁹ have been suggested for Schezla, no fundamentally new knowledge was gained. Nearly all suggestions about its location are commonly based on historio-geographic and, above all, onomastic argumentation. Archaeological evidence, by contrast, has rarely been put forward, for the simple reason that it was absent¹⁰. Archaeological evidence, however, is vital, because it draws on sources independent from history and onomastics. Having said that, the absence of evidence is equally meaningful. A useful overview of the places mentioned in the Diedenhofen Capitulary was given by Wolfgang Hübener¹¹. Regarding the seven known possible locations¹², he was only able to state that although there is no

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² Verhulst 1986; Brunner 1984.

³ MGH *Capitularia regum Francorum* I, 44.

⁴ MGH, *Capitularia regum Francorum* I, 45.

⁵ Annales: a. 805; Annales: a. 806.

⁶ Cf. Schneeweiß 2010b with further references.

⁷ Hesse 2009.

⁸ Timme 1964.

⁹ Cf. the recently listed and mapped places in Hesse 2009, 27 and fig. 11.

¹⁰ Wachter 1998.

¹¹ Hübener 1989.

¹² Bardaenowic (Bardowick), Magadoburg (Magdeburg), Erpifurt (Erfurt), Halazstat (Hallstadt bei Bamberg), Foracheim (Forchheim), Ragenisburg (Regensburg), Lauriacum (Lorch/Enns).

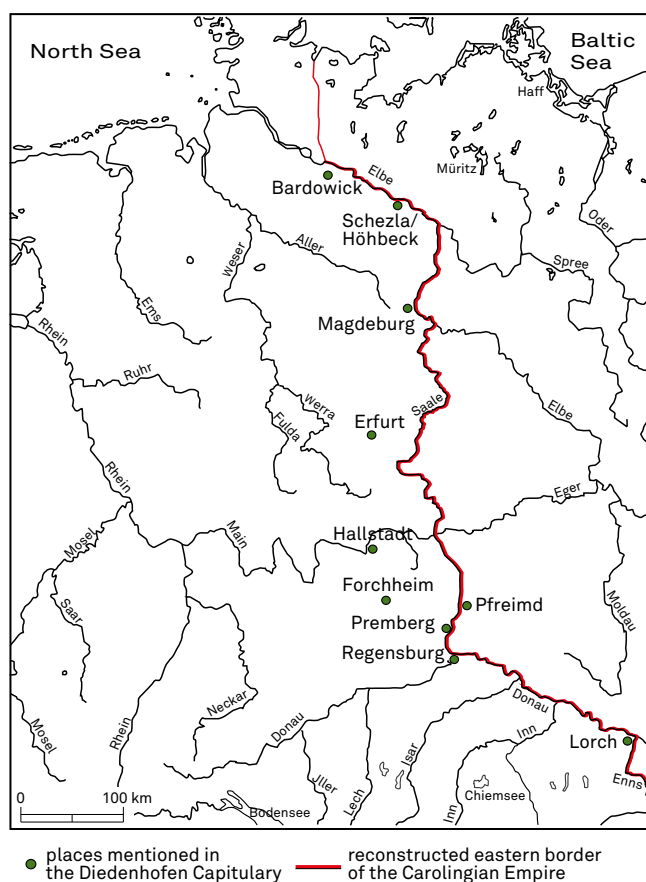


FIG. 1 The probable trajectory of the eastern border of Charlemagne's Empire with the places mentioned in the 805 Diedenhofen Capitulary (modified after Ehlers 2007, 252 fig. 76).

doubt about the continuity of their names and the settlements, the knowledge about their exact location, their extent and shape in the year 805 is virtually non-existent. There is no evidence of settlement features of the early Middle Ages in these places. Concerning the location of Schezla, Hübener stated, pessimistically: "Archaeology will not be able to contribute anything to this problem."¹³ It is one of the objectives of this paper to demonstrate that the opposite is true.

2 The historical background

Charlemagne's war against the Saxons finally ended in 804 with the deportation of the Saxons from North Elbia, which was given to the Abodrits. The handing over to the Abodrit ruler Thrasco took place in Hollenstedt, but even before, during the war,

Charlemagne had often stayed in Saxony. In 789 he crossed the Elbe river on the occasion of a campaign against the Slavs, probably at the Höhbeck¹⁴. It can be assumed that when he proclaimed the Capitulary in 805 and the *divisio regnorum* in 806, he had a very concrete idea of the Saxon territory in the north-eastern part of the Empire. This territory was earmarked for his principal heir Charles Junior, who also came to Saxony more often in the following years. In 808, Charles Junior led a campaign against the Slavic Linons and Smeldingers, crossing the Elbe at the Höhbeck again. This was a reprisal for the attack of the Danish King Gudfred against the Abodrits, who were still allied with the Franks at that time. It was in the same year that Charlemagne ordered the construction of two fortifications against the Slavs at the Elbe river¹⁵. The years immediately following the Diedenhofen Capitulary were marked by border conflicts between the Danes, the "Frankish" Saxons and the Slavs. The situation was further complicated by the first Viking raids in Frisia¹⁶. Events then followed each other in quick succession: in 808 the Danish king Gudfred attacked and destroyed the trading place Rerik¹⁷, and in the following year he assassinated Charlemagne's ally Thrasco, ruler of the Abodrits¹⁸. In the same year Charlemagne gave the order to build a fort at Itzehoe against the Danes¹⁹; in 810 he himself stayed for the last time in the north-east of his Empire, when he negotiated a treaty on the *limes saxoniae* with the Abodrits²⁰. From then on North Elbia was part of the Frankish Empire. The Danish aggression was not carried through due to the death of Gudfred in 810²¹. In the same year the Slavic Wilzen attacked the newly built *castellum hobbuoki*²², which was renovated in 811 after a campaign of vengeance. A peace treaty was concluded with the Danes²³. During these two years, three of Charlemagne's sons and heirs died²⁴, so that Louis the Pious remained as the universal heir and the *divisio regnorum* became obsolete. In 813 Louis was crowned co-emperor before Charlemagne died in 814. At that time the north-eastern region of the Empire had yet not been pacified – the former allies the Abodrits now became the target of military campaigns²⁵ and fortifications against them were built even beyond the Elbe river²⁶. It was not until 822 that military actions against the Danes and Abodrits ceased. In sharp contrast to his father, Louis the Pious only stayed in Saxony once, namely in Paderborn in 815²⁷. His reign was characterised by Viking raids and, above all, by conflicts with his sons. These conflicts also concerned Saxony. It is possible that the unstable situation in Saxony had facilitated the Norman raids, or even caused them in a way, as has been suggested by Caspar Ehlers²⁸. After the death of Louis the Pious in 840, a fratricidal war broke out. It only ended with the Treaty of Verdun in 843 and the final break-up of the Empire.

The written sources do not give any information concerning the border region in the middle Elbe region after 811; the pre-822 conflicts mentioned took place further north or south. For a long

¹³ Hübener 1989, 260.

¹⁴ In the same sense: Langen 1989, 206 f.; Willroth 2000, 723; Saile 2007, 91. By contrast in favour of a crossing at the mouth of the river Ohre: Schmauder 2000, 68; Ruchhöft 2008, 97. For the Elbe crossing in 789 at the Höhbeck see also Schneeweß 2010a, 258 note 22.

¹⁵ Annales: a. 808.

¹⁶ Annales: a. 810.

¹⁷ Annales: a. 808.

¹⁸ Annales: a. 809.

¹⁹ Fortification Esesfeld (Annales: a. 809).

²⁰ A description of the course of the *limes saxoniae* is given by Adam of Bremen, liber II, cap. 15b. For evaluation of the *limes saxoniae* cf: Hardt 2000, 46 ff; Schmauder 2000, 58 ff; Hardt 2005b.

²¹ Annales: a. 810.

²² Annales: a. 810.

²³ Annales: a. 811.

²⁴ Pepin in 810; Pepin the Hunchback and Charles Junior in 811.

²⁵ Annales: a. 817.

²⁶ For the last time in 822 at a place named Delbende (Annales: a. 822).

²⁷ Annales: a. 815.

²⁸ Ehlers 2007, 291.

time, the vast territory between the dioceses of Hildesheim, Verden and Halberstadt, the area east of today's Hannover along the rivers Aller and Elbe (fig. 1)²⁹, remained unaffected by the constitution and development of clerical structures and therefore does not appear in the written sources. In this context it is not surprising that the *castellum hobbuoki* and Schezla, located far away from where the major political events of the later 9th century took place, lost their significance and were abandoned. Therefore, for approximately one century – or three generations –, the described territory between Bardowick and Magdeburg was located beyond the sphere of interest of the East Frankish Empire. The trajectory of the border, as it had been intended and established by Charlemagne, was not retained after his death, and Slavic settlement extended far beyond the river Elbe³⁰. It was only in Ottonian times that the by then Slavic territory along the Elbe once again became the focus of the written sources.

3 The location of Schezla at the 'Höhbeck'

The Höhbeck is a natural insular rise in the middle of the wide floodplain of the Elbe river (fig. 2). It is situated halfway between Bardowick in the north and Magdeburg in the south (fig. 1). The site has always been a favourable location for fording the river. Dendrochronological samples from recent excavations of the well-known fortification on the Höhbeck, yielded a robust date of AD 810³¹. Therefore there can be no doubt that we are dealing with the *castellum hobbuoki*, known from the Frankish Annals, or indeed that it was here that the eastern border of the Frankish Empire took shape in the beginning of the 9th century. The archaeologist Carl Schuchhardt was the first to suggest such an identification and also the first to excavate the fort. He argued

that at those times the Elbe only had three fording places suitable for an army: at Magdeburg (Wolmirstedt), at the Höhbeck, and at Artlenburg³². Each of these locations had been fortified by Charlemagne. For this reason Schuchhardt dated the origin of the Ertheneburg³³ back to the time of Charlemagne³⁴. The description of Charlemagne's river crossing of 789 in the Frankish Annals in relation to the specific topographic situation at the Höhbeck supports the interpretation that the location of this crossing was at the Höhbeck. The Annals refer to two bridges across the river, one of them protected by a fort. Fortunately a more precise description of the fortification is given, stating that the forts were built of timber and earth³⁵. Schuchhardt's argument was mainly based on the connection between river crossings and border trading posts, at least for the northern part of the Slavic border. He therefore saw a close relationship between Magdeburg and Bardowick and the two crossing places mentioned above. He then concluded that Schezla must have been situated at the Höhbeck, halfway in between the other two places³⁶. Forty years later, Fritz Timme also argued in favour of the Höhbeck, although he did not have any new supporting evidence either³⁷. We can assume that between Bardowick and Magdeburg it was obviously the Höhbeck which provided the most suitable conditions for crossing the Elbe and, therefore, for the location of Schezla.

4 The role of trade in the frontier places of the Diedenhofen Capitulary

What was trade like around 800? How can one imagine these activities, and what kind of archaeological evidence should we expect? When Wolf-Dieter Tempel attempted to find Schezla in Hitzacker, he apparently imagined a place similar to

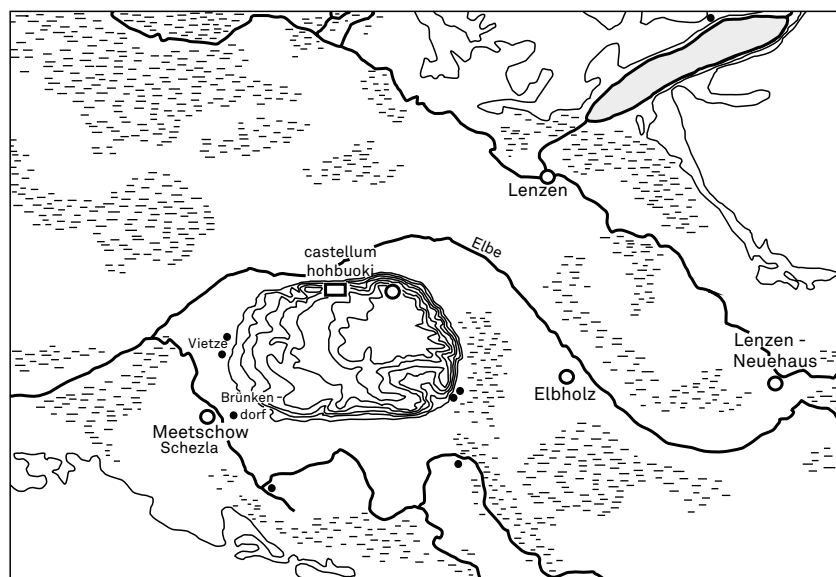


FIG. 2 The 'Höhbeck' in the Elbe valley and the early medieval sites. Key: ring: fortification; rectangle: Höhbeck hillfort (*castellum hobbuoki*); dot: settlement.

²⁹ Cf. e.g. Ehlers 2007, 101 fig. 31 and other maps.

³⁰ Hardt 2000, 45 and recently Hardt 2009. Cf. by contrast Hardt 2000, 42 f. and 50 ff., where he suggests extensive Slavic settlement on the western side of the Elbe as early as in the early 9th century.

³¹ Annales: a. 810; Annales: a. 811; Schneeweß

2009; *Idem* 2011.

³² It is about the campaign by Charlemagne against the Wilzen in 789, when he was building two bridges across the Elbe, one of them protected by a fortification (Annales: a. 789).

³³ Annales: a. 822.

³⁴ Here and following: Schuchhardt 1924, 57 ff.

³⁵ „ibique duos pontes construxit, quorum uno ex utroque capite castella ex ligno et terra aedificavit“ (Annales: a. 789).

³⁶ Schuchhardt 1924, 63.

³⁷ Timme 1964, 128, 142.

Hedeby³⁸. Without any doubt, Hedeby was a place of high importance for long-distance trade. Its prosperity, however, reached its peak mainly in the 9th and 10th centuries³⁹. In the early 9th century, Hedeby played an important role in the Danish-Frankish-Slavic conflicts, but the Frankish regulations for the border of their Empire did not affect this town. Therefore Hedeby is not really comparable with the locations in the Dienenhofen Capitulary. The usual trade along the Frankish-Saxonic-Slavic border can be seen as small-scale border traffic⁴⁰. Therefore we have to consider what the main purpose of these eastern border posts actually was in this early period, just after the victory over the Saxons. Their importance was certainly related to the continental long-distance traffic routes of the early medieval period⁴¹. Long-distance trade presumably ran via predetermined locations, otherwise efficient control would not have been possible. In the time of the Capitulary, the territories between the rivers Aller and Elbe were still under military administration. The focus of Dienenhofen was not trade itself but control over it. Also, some of the other towns – for instance Hallstadt – could be better described as border-crossing posts than as trading posts, as there was neither a mercantile settlement nor an economically developed hinterland⁴². Their main role was to exert control over foreign traffic. It is of some importance to envisage this control not only as a kind of a customs station, but also as additional monitoring of the highways and byways, because smugglers targeted hidden tracks. So what type and size of archaeological finds can we expect at such a place, a place like Schezla, which lost its significance before any monastery or abbey was founded⁴³? Evidence for significant long-distance trading activities cannot be excluded, but they are not a given. In contrast to e.g. like Magdeburg or Erfurt, Schezla did not develop into an important trading post. Its heyday was restricted to a short period in the early 9th century, when the military aspects of the border control were of greater importance, as it was Charlemagne's intention to establish the border of the Empire at the Elbe. Therefore, no significant traces of long-distance trade are to be expected, nor is there any reason to expect evidence for local crafts, which is well known from the great trading centres. Maintaining a border post, including passing trade is possible even without a developed hinterland, assuming we are talking about small-scale border trade. Such trade was probably concentrated on everyday goods such as food, clothes and tools. It is nearly impossible to identify remains of such items as 'trading goods' among the archaeological finds. Nevertheless one could expect to find at least some evidence for a social hierarchy or even the regular presence of the military as a reflection of the governmental controlling authority.

5 Archaeological evidence

The region of the Hühbeck was the focus of archaeological investigations within a multidisciplinary research project, running from 2005 until 2010 by the Department of Pre- and Protohistory at the University of Göttingen⁴⁴. The investigations yielded a wealth of important information about the history of this region at the periphery of the Frankish Empire. Of major importance are the results of the excavations at the Meetschow site and in the Hühbeck hillfort (fig. 2). Only the western rampart of the hillfort has been well preserved. It was excavated in two places; the first trench included the entire rampart and ditch, while the second reopened an old trench first excavated by Ernst Sprockhoff in 1964. As a result, the remains of the rampart could be observed in two completely different states of preservation: in one trench it was burnt and preserved as charcoal, while in the other trench there were no traces of fire and, consequently, no preservation of wood at all. We succeeded in dendrochronologically dating the charcoal to 810, as mentioned above. Other important results were yielded by the excavations on the Meetschow site in 2006 and 2007 (fig. 3)⁴⁵. Completely unexpected was the discovery of an unfortified settlement, which preceded the known 10th-century Slavic ringfort. It is characterised by a loamy cultural layer, containing abundant animal bones⁴⁶ and ceramics. The pottery was distributed irregularly. Sherds were often found in clusters, making it possible to refit entire vessels. A strikingly large number of hearths, fire pits and furnaces (30) was uncovered in an area of 400 m². They were concentrated in a particular area and partially overlay one another, suggesting that the settlement must have seen multiple periods of occupation. The presence of buildings is indicated by small wall trenches and postholes. It is not possible to say anything specific about the internal structure of the settlement until the final analyses have been carried out. Among the archaeological finds are several whetstones, a rectangular iron clasp knife (fig. 4: 5) with associated whetstone, an iron spearhead and an arrowhead (fig. 4: 4), as well as two iron spurs (fig. 4: 1, 2) and a strap end (fig. 4: 3). This artefactual evidence suggests that several approaches are available for dating the settlement. The spurs belong to the beginning of the 9th century⁴⁷, as does the strap end, which was found together with one of the spurs. Although the analysis of the ceramics has not yet been completed, an initial review of the restored vessels suggests that they date to the 7th to the 9th century (fig. 5). Distinct parallels of the wares and vessel-shapes from Meetschow can be observed in Saxonian pottery from other sites (fig. 5: 1-3)⁴⁸ and some vessels of the Slavic Sukow type are also present (fig. 5: 5-6). It can therefore be assumed that we are dealing with a late Saxonian settlement. This is supported by the nature of the archaeological

³⁸ Tempel 1991, 143.

³⁹ As there is a considerable body of literature concerning Hedeby, I have chosen to list only two recent references, which deal with the function of the trading place and its integration into the hinterland on the one hand and into the system of marine trading places on the other: Müller-Wille 2002; Sindbæk 2007.

⁴⁰ Timme 1964, 129.

⁴¹ Cf. especially for Magdeburg, Erfurt and

Regensburg: Hardt 2005a.

⁴² Timme 1964, 131.

⁴³ A clerical institution may have been more durable. For the continuity of secular and clerical central places, cf. Ehlers 2007, 231, 402.

⁴⁴ The project was carried out with financial support from the German Research Foundation. Cf. Willroth 2007; Schneeweiß 2007a; Lüth & Messal 2008.

⁴⁵ As early as the 1970s excavations were carried

out here, which provided essential information about the Slavic fortification: Steuer 1973; *Idem* 1976; Bernatzky-Goetze 1991. In 2005 the excavations were resumed. In the first year they resulted in a significant clarification of the dating (cf. Schneeweiß 2007a, 272 f.; *Idem* 2007b).

⁴⁶ Apparently mainly food waste.

⁴⁷ Stein 1967, 85 f., 100; Gabriel 1991, 182 ff.

⁴⁸ Steuer 1974; *Idem* 1975; *Idem* 1979; Hornig 1993.

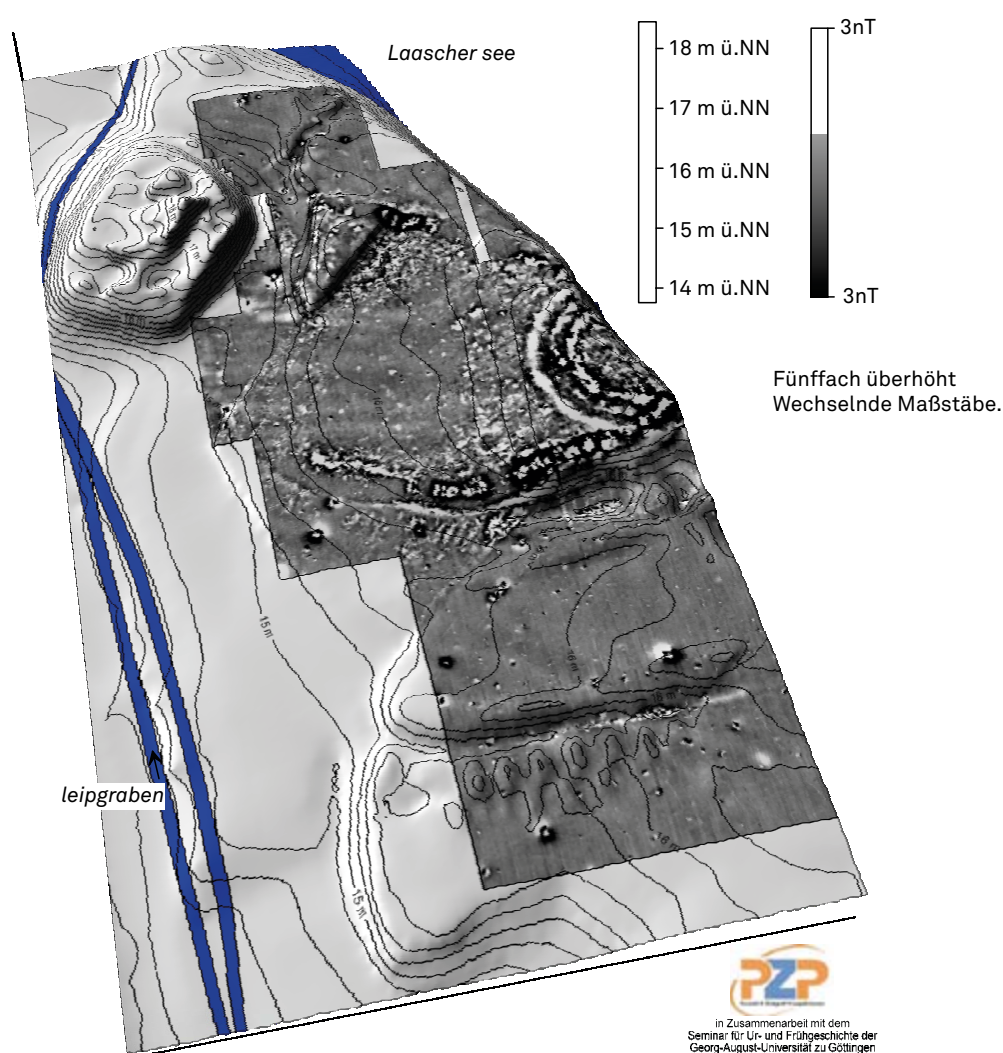


FIG. 3 Terrain model of the Meetschow site with integrated magnetogram. View from SSW (Graphics: M. Posselt).

features (the absence of Grubenhäuser, the presence of post-holes) and by some of the archaeological finds, such as the clasp knife, the loop spur with its riveted decorated stimulus, or the ceramics. Only the vessels of the Sukow type, which are easily distinguishable from the Saxonian pottery, indicate the presence of Slavs. The age determination is supported by a series of radiocarbon dates. Currently there are six radiocarbon dates, which give a time span for the settlement from the 7th to the middle of the 9th century⁴⁹. The earliest dates predate 775, and may even go further back to the 7th century⁵⁰. The beginning of the settlement, then, remains rather vague. The site was certainly abandoned in the first half of the 9th century, a date that is supported by the iron spurs, the ceramics and the radiocarbon dates. A settlement period of two centuries seems too long given the amount of archaeological finds and the density of features,

therefore it is more likely that the settlement was first established in the first half of the 8th century.

The settlement was fortified with a rampart around 800. Although the rampart apparently burnt down, only a few of the timbers were poorly preserved as charcoal. Dendrochronological dating was not possible, although the wood species could be identified: oak, alder and elm⁵¹. The same species were used for the rampart of the Hühbeck hillfort. Despite the fact that not much of the Meetschow rampart has survived, some remarkable similarities in construction could be observed between that and the hillfort. The timbers had largely vanished, but their position was clearly visible from discolourations of the soil. Thus it became clear that all timbers had been oriented perpendicular to the line of the rampart and had been fixed by widely spaced massive posts

⁴⁹ At 2-sigma confidence level. The values concentrate on the centuries between 650 and 850. More radiocarbon dates have been commissioned, but we are still awaiting results of those.

⁵⁰ Erlangen: Erl-13668 (charred grain): 1361 ±

38 BP, cal. AD: 606–713 (88,0 %), 744–767 (7,4 %); Kiel: KIA 33563 (bones): 1274 ± 22 BP, cal. AD: 674–775 (95,4 %).

⁵¹ An attempt at dendrochronological dating was made by Dr. H.-H. Leuschner (Göttingen).

Radiocarbon dates, although commissioned, are not yet available. The first wood species were identified by Dr. H.-H. Leuschner (Göttingen). Work on a comprehensive and detailed identification of the wood species is currently in progress in Kiel.

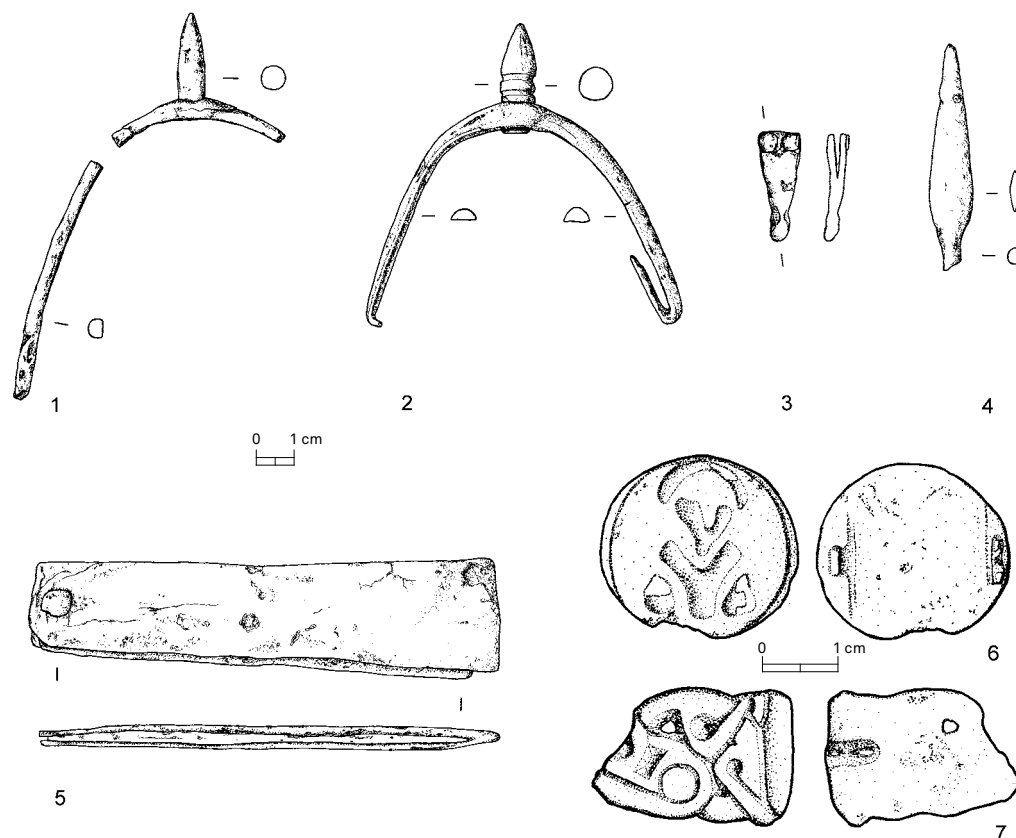
– in the same way as at the Hühbeck hillfort. These striking parallels once again indicate the chronological relationship between the two fortifications on the one hand, while on the other hand clearly distinguishing them from Slavic constructions.

In close proximity to the Meetschow fortification, just on the opposite bank of a small recent lake (Laascher See), a mid- to late Slavic settlement is located (site Brünkendorf, cf. fig. 2). The beginning of this settlement possibly goes back to the 9th century. Here too analyses are ongoing and so far there are no results indicating a settlement at this location as early as the 8th century. However, a fragment of an older fibula, decorated in the Germanic animal style II, is an extraordinary find and remains unique at this location (fig. 4: 7). It shows the importance of the Hühbeck region during the migration period and the early medieval period, probably as a crossing place for the Elbe. The site Vietze 63, ca 1 km away from Meetschow, is another Slavic settlement (fig. 2). Its origin lay in the 9th century. Of major importance is a Frankish Saint's brooch, found on the periphery of the Slavic settlement (fig. 4: 6)⁵². As it came to light in the ploughsoil, it is unfortunately lacking a clear context – like most of the known Saint's brooches. Thus its date remains controversial⁵³. However, so far no Christian disc fibula of that type is known from the Slavic territory, their distribution being clearly limited to the Saxon Frankish territory. A correlation with the Saxonian settlement of Meetschow (Schezla) and the Frankish hillfort on the Hühbeck seems obvious, because there

is no Saxon Frankish influence to be observed in the archaeological material later than the middle of the 9th century and up to the 10th century.

There is very limited evidence for the presence of people around the Hühbeck during the migration period. Archaeological evidence suggests that the middle Elbe region was not resettled until the 7th century. On the left bank of the Elbe river the earliest Saxonian settlement is known from Meetschow, beginning perhaps in the 7th, or more likely in the 8th century. So far, no other certain Saxonian or Slavic settlements left of the Elbe have been found. On the right bank the earliest, Slavic, settlement, on the Rudower See⁵⁴, is also considered to date to the 7th century. Then, at the turn of the 8th and 9th centuries, fortifications arose on both sides. The Saxonian settlement of Meetschow (Schezla) was fortified around 800, the *castellum hohbuoki* was built in 810, and in Lenzen-Neuehaus on the right side of the Elbe, a Slavic fort was erected in the beginning of the 9th century⁵⁵. Thus the situation on the border becomes clear. Nevertheless, in the first half of the 9th century both Schezla and the Hühbeck fort were abandoned, probably because the Emperors had other problems to contend with after the death of Charlemagne in 814. From then on, no later than the middle of the 9th century, the Slavic settlers crossed the river. They built settlements and soon also erected ringforts on the left bank of the Elbe, apparently without any resistance from the Frankish side. The border probably shifted to the naturally dry and forested and unoccupied

FIG. 4 Metal finds from Meetschow/Schezla (1–5), Vietze (6) and Brünkendorf (7): spurs (1, 2), strap end (3), arrowhead (4), clasp knife (5), Scale 1:2, Saint's brooch (6) and animal style fibula (7), Scale 1:1 (Drawings: P. Fleischer).



⁵² Schneeweiß 2010a.

⁵³ Cf. the summary of the debate in Krüger 1999, 150 ff.

⁵⁴ Gofler & Kinkeldey 2011.

⁵⁵ Biermann et al. 2009.

Drawehn. This was the end of the fortified eastern frontier of the Empire on the Elbe as it had been intended by Charlemagne. The written sources of that time give no information about this area between Elbe, Ilmenau and Drawehn, but it is striking that the western limit of cumulative Slavic toponyms runs along the Ilmenau and Drawehn⁵⁶. There is, however, a certain discrepancy between that and the western boundary of Slavic finds, therefore it is most likely that the Slavic toponyms are more recent⁵⁷. In contrast, the Slavs were previously believed to have settled left of the river Elbe independently and long before the arrival of

the Franks⁵⁸, but this was mainly based on the early dates for the Slavic ringforts⁵⁹, which no longer hold true. In the last two decades most of the fortifications have been redated, mainly by dendrochronology, to the late 9th and 10th centuries⁶⁰. Therefore it can be assumed that it was not before the 9th century that the area left of the Elbe (the so-called Hannoversches Wendland) was settled by Slavs. Saxon (Frankish) colonisation during the 7th and 8th centuries in this area remained relatively weak. Therefore a developed hinterland to Schezla was missing and the territory was abandoned after the death of Charlemagne.

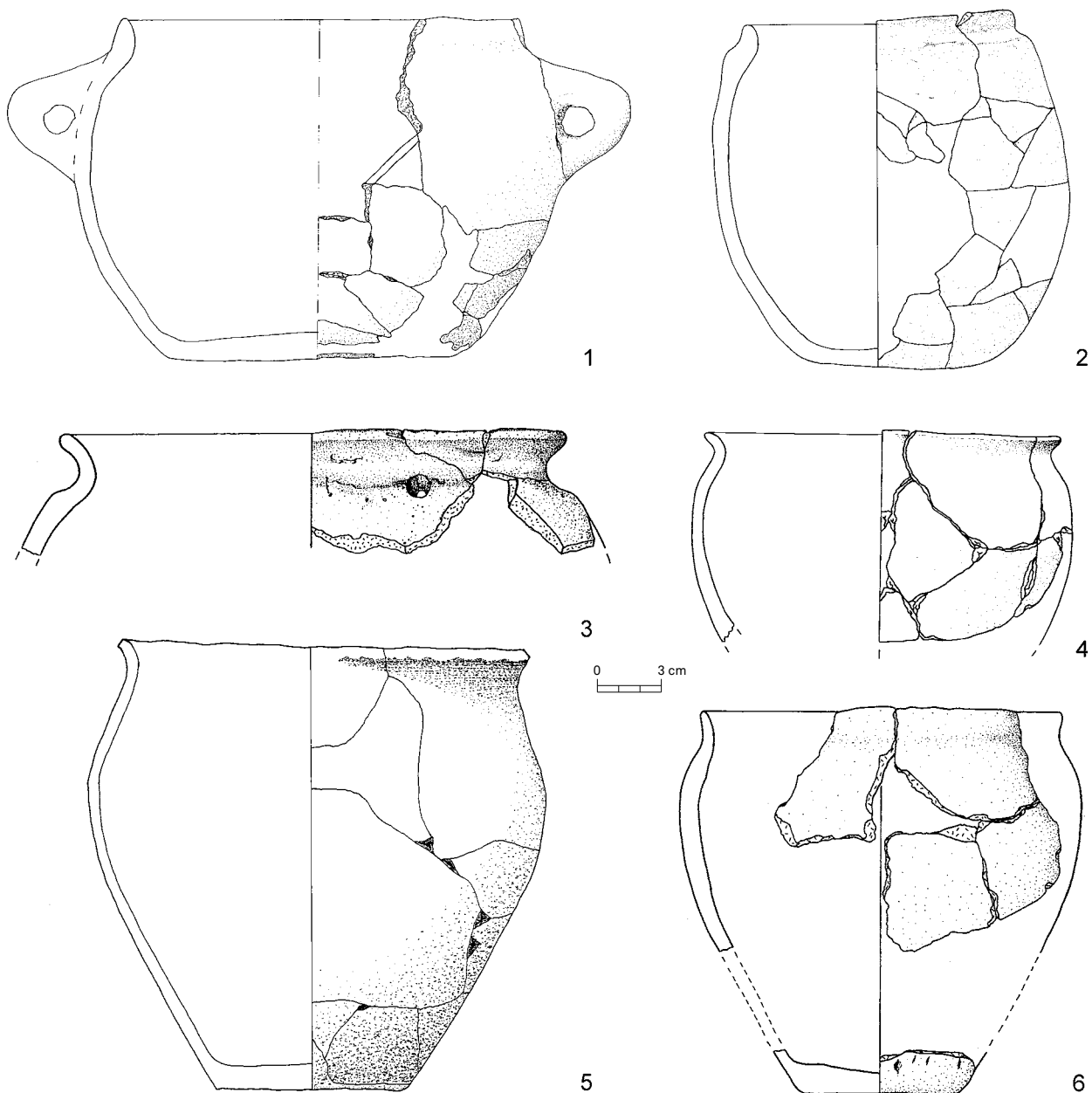


FIG. 5 Pottery from the early medieval cultural layer at Meetschow/Schezla. Examples from Saxonian (1-3), Slavic (5-6) and hybrid (4) forms. Scale 1:3 (Drawings: P. Fleischer).

⁵⁶ E.g. Lübke 2001, 66 Abb. 1.

⁵⁷ Ernst 1976, 163 note 207.

⁵⁸ Ernst 1976, 163.

⁵⁹ Grimm 1958, 81 ff; Schulze 1963, 6 f; Wachter

1972; Herrmann 1985.

⁶⁰ Henning & Heußner 1992.

6 Conclusions

Strong evidence can be put forward for the location of Schezla at the foot of the H hbeck. The H hbeck is situated between Bardowick and Magdeburg and in the beginning of the 9th century it was located, without any doubt, right on the border between the Frankish Empire and the Slavs, which Charlemagne at that time intended to establish irrevocably. At the H hbeck an important overland route crossed the Elbe⁶¹, which was always a significant communication line. Archaeologically, the places mentioned in the Diedenhofen Capitulary did not occur only because of their position on the border in 805. They probably all have earlier origins⁶². This is also the case with Meetschow/Schezla. The settlement's origin goes back at least to the middle of the 8th century, perhaps even significantly earlier. Unfortunately we do not know very much about the extent and organisation of the site. We know it was fortified around 800, but it is not possible to be more exact and to say whether it was one of the dates known from the written sources, namely 789, 805 or 808. The fortified area covered ca 2 ha; compared with the other places mentioned in the Diedenhofen Capitulary this seems rather small⁶³. However, it must be taken into consideration that most likely the border trading post was not limited to the fortified settlement, but included a wider area as it consisted of several different parts. The Frankish Saint's brooch, found 1 km from the Meetschow settlement in the direction of the H hbeck fort, and the fort itself, can be seen as supporting this view. We know that the Saxon *legatus* Odo found himself in the H hbeck fort when

the Slavs attacked it⁶⁴. Perhaps the *missus Madalgaudus* from the Diedenhofen Capitulary was subordinate to Odo as *comes*, if this hierarchy, suggested by Timme⁶⁵, is true. The micro-topographical situation around the H hbeck in the Elbe valley has fundamentally changed, at least since the dike was built. Therefore a full reconstruction of Schezla would not be possible. The finds emphasise the military character of the settlement. There is no clear indication of long-distance trade, but some evidence for regular regional communication between Saxons and Slavs can be observed in the ceramics⁶⁶. The course of history at this place is closely linked with the shifting of the border and the changing political focus of the Frankish Emperors after Charlemagne's death, which was followed by a westward population migration. The Meetschow site at the H hbeck offers the extraordinary opportunity to gain insight into a prominent place dating to Charlemagne's own lifetime, which – in contrast to nearly all other known places – has not been disturbed and covered by a later settlement or town. The reuse of the site remained restricted to the middle Slavic period. Thus the history and the character of this site at the very periphery of the Frankish Empire reflects the changing political intentions in the late 8th century and, above all, in the first decades of the 9th century.

⁶¹ Saile 2009, 138.

⁶² H bener 1989, 263.

⁶³ H bener 1989, 260.

⁶⁴ Annales: a. 810.

⁶⁵ Timme 1964, 128.

⁶⁶ By chemical-technological and typological analysis of ceramics. Cf. Brorsson 2009.

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