CROSSROADS
Travelling through the Middle Ages
EXPO  27/09/2019 – 29/03/2020

TRAVEL GUIDE
FOR YOUR TRIP THROUGH THE MIDDLE AGES
MAP INCLUDED

ART & HISTORY MUSEUM
Dear visitor,

People migrating over long distances, new political structures, climate changes, religious conflicts, shifting markets, ... The turbulent times of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages (c. 300-1000) show more similarities with our modern world than we might think. In Western Europe, this period is often referred to as the ‘Dark Ages’. However, numerous historical sources and artefacts prove that there were many exchanges and contacts during this period through travel, trade, diplomacy and armed conflict. Not only objects were passed on, but also technical know-how, ideas, customs, and religious ideas. All of them reflect an astonishing diversity during this unique period in motion.

We wish you a pleasant journey through the Middle Ages!

With this travel guide in your hands, you are ready to make the most of your trip through the Middle Ages!
Notice to the traveller
Do you choose the red, yellow, green, brown, grey or rather the blue line? Attention: priority from the right and watch out for those you meet on the Crossroads!
A / MEROVINGIAN HOUSE

Welcome to our Merovingian house

Early medieval settlements in our regions differ considerably from the typical Roman stone architecture. They consist of one or more groups of rectangular houses and small annex buildings, silos and wells.

The houses are made of transient materials such as wood, wattle and daub. The roof is thatched with reed or straw. The ridge is covered with sods. The thunder leaf (*sempervivum*) that grows on it was supposed to protect the house from thunder and lightning. Longhouses house the cattle in a separate space. During the winter this is an additional source of heating.

MEROVINGIAN HOUSE

A Merovingian house is rather dark and smoky. There are very few windows. Candles and (oil) lamps provide the lighting. The house consists of one living area that is heated by a central fireplace, the hearth. At the top of both front and rear facade are triangular openings that are intended as smoke holes. A kettle is simmering above the fire. The daily meals take place on benches around the fireplace. In addition, the furniture consists of crates, racks and a bed. Because the house also functions as a workshop, a loom can be placed inside it.
Merovingian peasants, pioneers of globalization

Cemeteries contain a wealth of information. Under their banal appearance, the objects offered to the deceased for the afterlife are steeped in history. Archaeologists often rediscover their origin. This map shows several, also remote regions of origin. The peasants of Broechem clearly had the opportunity to buy exotic and high quality products. Merchants must have travelled to remote areas for doing business at trade fairs. Receiving and giving gifts was customary at the time. But just how did these merchants end up in our regions? Apparently the old Roman roads had not yet been discarded and many rivers were still navigable. These roads and rivers formed an important network for both commerce and communication between the Mediterranean Sea and the North Sea region.

1 Jugs and a globular pot from the Eifel region (Frankish Empire),
   second half of the 5th-7th cent., earthenware, private collection managed by the Flanders Heritage Agency

2 Handmade earthenware from the Elbe-Weser triangle (North Germanic area),
   5th-7th cent., earthenware, private collection managed by the Flanders Heritage Agency

3 Biconical pots of the Scheldt Valley (Frankish Empire),
   late 6th-first half 7th cent., earthenware, Flanders Heritage Agency

4 Cone beaker and small bowl decorated with white glass fillets, Thiérache (Frankish Empire),
   late 5th-early 6th cent., Flanders Heritage Agency

5 White clay pot with red slip, cup, comb fragments, amulets and a hairpin,
   Meuse Valley (Frankish Empire),
   earthenware, glass and antler, Flanders Heritage Agency and private collection managed by the Flanders Heritage Agency

6 Glass beads from the Rhine and Meuse Valley (i.a. Huy and Maastricht),
   Flanders Heritage Agency

7 Handmade earthenware and metal objects (fibulae and weaving material) characteristic forms from the Anglo-Saxon region (Southern England),
   various materials, private collection managed by the Flanders Heritage Agency

8 Fibula from Thuringia (Central Germany),
   second half 5th-early 6th cent., gilded silver, private collection and private collection managed by the Flanders Heritage Agency

9 Fibulae from the Alemannic region (Southern Germany),
   second half 6th cent., gilded silver, Flanders Heritage Agency and private collection managed by the Flanders Heritage Agency

10 Spiral patterned decorations of leg bindings and shoes from the Longobard region (Northern Italy),
   late 6th-early 7th cent., silver, Flanders Heritage Agency

11 Tremissis from the Longobard region (Northern Italy),
   575-650, gold, KBR

12 Justinian solidus of the Byzantine Empire (Constantinople),
   542-565, gold, KBR

13 Two Ostrogothic tremisses of king Baduila from the Ostrogoth region (Northern Italy),
   541-552, gold, KBR

14 Spindle whorl and beads in Alpine rock crystal and amethyst,
   private collection managed by the Flanders Heritage Agency

15 Amber beads from the Baltic Sea,
   Flanders Heritage Agency and private collection managed by the Flanders Heritage Agency

16 Glass beads from the Near East (Syria/Mesopotamia),
   5th-6th cent., Flanders Heritage Agency

17 Garnet for fibulae and jewellery from India and Sri Lanka,
   6th and early 7th cent., Flanders Heritage Agency

18 Sword pendants in meerschaum from the Mediterranean basin or Moravia (Eastern Czech Republic),
   private collection managed by the Flanders Heritage Agency
Who-is-who in the Early Middle Ages?

In the Late Antique period, various peoples (in Roman sources: *gentes*) lived within and beyond the borders of the Roman Empire. These peoples differed in their customs, traditions, dress and lifestyle. Local inhabitants, immigrants, allies and newcomers: people of different origins fought, worked and lived side by side. Group affiliation was not necessarily decided by birth alone, but was determined by the identification of the individual with a group, depending upon their future prospects and the overall political climate. Roman historians only made mention of these *gentes* when they came into contact with the Roman Empire as allies or as enemies. The invasion of the northern Black Sea region by the Huns after 375, disturbed the balance between these different peoples and marked the beginning of the migration period that would last more than 200 years and would fundamentally change the image of Europe.

**THE HUNS**

The Huns, a confederation of nomadic riders from the Central Asian steppes, entered Europe at the end of the 4th century. To escape the threat, tribes such as the Goths moved southwest. The infiltrations that were taking place at the frontiers of the Roman Empire could no longer be prevented. The Empire of Attila the Hun extended from the Caucasus to the Rhine and was centred in the Roman province of Pannonia (Hungary). A combined army of Romans, Franks and Visigoths defeated the Huns and their allies in 451. Two years later Attila died and the Hunnic Empire fell apart after an uprising.

**THE EASTERN ROMANS OR BYZANTINES**

In 395, the Roman Empire was divided into an eastern and a western part. Constantinople, the former Greek polis of Byzantion, was from now on the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire. Although the borders shifted over the centuries, the empire continued to exist for more than thousand years, until Constantinople was conquered by the Turks in 1453. It was the largest economic, cultural and military power in Europe and the Mediterranean world until the foundation of the Arab caliphates in the 7th century. Christianity brought unity in the Empire.
relating to law, science and philosophy from classical antiquity were preserved, copied and studied here.

1 Imperial standard weight showing Justinus I and Justinianus I,
   Constantinople, 6th cent., bronze inlaid with silver, BCM

2 Ring,
   Byzantine Empire (?), 6th-7th cent. (?), found in 1896 in Tournai, garnet, topaz, emerald, amethyst, blue glass, RMAH

Gold coins (solidi) and luxury articles played an important role in the economy of the Byzantine Empire. Imperial standard weights (1) were issued to control the weight of the solidi. The ring is a fine example of the Byzantines’ preference to combine the shine of precious metals with the polychromy of gemstones, colored glass, enamel, niello or pearls.

THE FRANKS - MEROVINGIANS
After the collapse of Roman power and administration in the West, the Kingdom of the Franks emerged in the territory of the Roman provinces of Germany and Gaul. The former leaders of the Roman auxiliary forces established more or less autonomous centres of power. After successful military campaigns, King Clovis I (481/482-511) united different regions into one great kingdom. The Merovingian dynasty ruled over a territory that included present-day France, Belgium and large parts of Germany and the Netherlands, until it was succeeded by the Carolingian dynasty in the 8th century.

7 Grave goods from a man’s grave,
   in Wesseling (North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany), beginning of 7th cent., metal (miscellaneous) and stone, LVR-LMB
   Single-edged sword (seax), belt fittings and touchstone

Merovingian grave goods provide information on the lifestyle, age, role and position of the deceased. In addition to food and drink, earthenware and utensils, weapons were most frequently found in men’s graves.

THE GOTHIC
Several large tribes, including Gothic peoples, were formed in the 3rd century and settled in large parts of present-day Ukraine and southern Russia. From the coasts of the Black Sea, they looted coastal cities in the eastern Mediterranean. When the Huns invaded their territory around the year 400, many fled to the west and southwestern regions. The Visigoths migrated via Southeast Gaul to the Iberian Peninsula. Other Gothic tribes settled in the Black Sea region. Following the administrative collapse of the Western Roman Empire, the Ostrogoths ruled in Italy from 493 to 526 under their king Theoderic I.

3 Bow fibula,
   Spain, 6th cent., copper alloy, RGZM

4 Belt buckle,
   Spain, 6th cent., copper alloy and glass, RGZM

5 Bow fibula,
   probably found on the Crimea, second half 5th cent., gilt silver with almandine inlays, RGZM

6 Bow fibulae connected by a chain,
   probably found on the Crimea, 5th cent., copper alloy, RGZM

THE IRISH
Ireland was not a part of the Roman Empire. The Celtic-speaking people first came in contact with Christianity in the 4th century. The most famous bishops of the so-called Iro-Scottish Church were Saint Patrick and Saint Palladius, born into Christian Roman families. The monasteries remained independent from Rome and developed as important centres of knowledge. Monks created illuminated manuscripts, decorated in artistic styles of Celtic Ireland combined with late antique and Germanic elements. Irish monastic communities sent large numbers of monks, among them Columbanus (born around 540), to the rural areas of
Central Europe. In those areas, only superficially Christianized until then, they founded prominent monasteries.

**THE LONGOBARDS**
The Longobards (long beards) invaded the Roman province of Pannonia (Hungary) in the second half of the 2nd century. The presence of certain artefacts suggests that they had settled in southern parts of Lower Austria by the late 5th century. At different times they fought with and then against the Ostrogoths and the Byzantines. Threatened by the Avars, they moved to North and Central Italy in 568 together with many other tribes of diverse origins. In 774, the Frankish king Charlemaigne conquered their empire and was crowned king of the Longobards in Pavia.

**THE AVARS**
The Avars, a confederation of nomadic rider tribes, appeared in late 6th century as suddenly as the Huns did before them. They left Asia in 568 and took over the hegemony in the Carpathian Basin and the Roman province of Pannonia (Hungary). At the end of the late 6th century, the Avars destroyed a large number of fortresses bordering the Eastern Roman Empire. Consequently, the Byzantines bought peace through annual payments in gold. At the end of the 8th century, the Avar realm was conquered by Charlemaigne, bringing Avar culture to an end.
C / DIVERSITY

Gold and other precious materials were highly coveted by the Avars. They created new showpieces by melting spoils of war or Byzantine gold coins, called solidi. Beautifully crafted buckles and belt fittings were a sign of high rank for the Avars.

THE PERSIANS
Under the last pre-Islamic dynasty of the Sassanians (224-642), the Persian Empire was the greatest military and economic rival of the Roman and later the Byzantine Empire. The Sassanians established a strong central authority, based on an extensive administration and civil service. Although the borders shifted during this period, their territory roughly included Iran and large parts of the Near East. Their strategic position controlling the Silk Road provided great wealth. Stimulated by the ruling class, the Persian Empire also developed into an important cultural power.

14 Plate with boar’s head,
Iran, 6th-7th cent., silver and gold, RMAH

15 Earrings,
Iran, 4th-7th cent., gold, pearls, RMAH

Silver tableware was made for the Sassanian court and the nobility. The boar in the centre of the bowl (14) was one of the incarnations of the pre-Islamic deity Verethragna. Images on Sassanian plates and seals show that both men and women wore earrings (15). Pearls found in the Persian Gulf, were a precious commodity.

THE ARABS
After the death of the prophet Muhammad (632), the Arabs began their conquests outside the Arabian Peninsula, spreading the Islam. By 750 Arab armies had conquered a huge territory that extended from the Iberian Peninsula and the Maghreb to the river Indus. In the year 732 Charles Martel halted their advance with victories in Tours and Poitiers. In this immense new territory, a cohesion developed between peoples of different ethnic backgrounds, cultures and societies. Cities like Damascus, Cairo, Baghdad and Cordoba, enjoyed a prosperous economic climate and a flourishing cultural and intellectual life.

16 Oil lamp,
un glazed earthenware, 9th-early 10th cent., found in Fustat (predecessor of Cairo), RMAH

17 Fabric (fragment of a turban?),
Egypt, 12th cent., linen and silk, RMAH

The oil lamp (16) was manufactured after the Arab conquest of Egypt (642). The text (partly in mirror image) reads in translation: ‘Shine (oh) lamp; do not extinguish and illuminate with your light’. The stylized inscriptions on the fabric (17) probably repeat the phrase yumn min Allah (happiness comes from Allah) and the blessing al-yumn wa’l Iqbal (happiness and prosperity).

THE EGYPTIANS
In the 4th century Egypt was a Roman province, known as the ‘granary’ of Rome and famous for the production of linen and woollen fabrics. Its inhabitants spoke Greek – as was customary throughout the eastern Mediterranean region – but also their native ‘Coptic’ language. The capital of the province was Alexandria, renowned for its Museion and library, where scholars were active in various fields. Christianity became established at an early stage and a flourishing monasticism had its roots here. After the Arabic invasion from 639-642, Egypt became one of the most important economic and cultural centres of the Islamic world.

18 Child’s tunic,
Egypt, 7th-10th cent., linen and wool, APM

19 Child’s sock,
Antinoë (Middle Egypt), radiocarbon dating: 240-400 (95.4% probability), wool, MRAH

Thanks to the desert climate in Egypt, organic materials are were well preserved. From the 7th century onwards, it became common in Egypt to sew clothes from pieces of fabric cut according to a pattern, at the expense of the ‘woven-to-
THE VIKINGS
From about 800 to 1100, long boats with warriors and merchants regularly set off from Scandinavia. They occasionally referred to themselves as ‘vikingr’, or ‘pirates’, but were also called ‘Normans’, ‘Rus’, ‘Waräger’ or ‘Dani’. Written sources describe the looting of cities, marketplaces and monasteries; however, Vikings also farmed the land and conducted trade. Their journeys took them to the Black Sea and to faraway places such as the Mediterranean Sea and North America. They sailed from Sweden across the Baltic Sea and along eastern European rivers to conduct trade on the Byzantine and Arab markets. The Vikings established permanent settlements in England, Ireland, northern France, Sicily and Russia.

Evangelium of Xanten,
Aachen (?) or Reims (?), 9th cent., parchment, KBR
(from 27/09/2019 until 06/01/2020)

During the Carolingian Renaissance, the written culture was given a new impulse. Antique texts were frequently copied and produced together with liturgical manuscripts, sometimes illuminated, in abbeys and court scriptoria. Since the 10th century this gospel book is located in the collegiate church of St. Viktor in Xanten, near the imperial court of Charlemagne in Aachen where it was possible made. On an inserted purple parchment folio, the evangelist Matthew is depicted in a surprisingly realistic way as a scribe dressed in a Roman robe. The Latin text is written in the Carolingian minuscule.

Collection of saints’ lives,
Carolingian Empire (eastern border area), 819, parchment, KBR
(from 06/01/2020 until 29/03/2020)

DURING

Oval fibula (copy),
found near Schleswig (Germany), 10th cent., RGZM

Oval fibulae (copies),
found in Sandby on Öland (Sweden), end of 9th-beginning of 10th cent., RGZM

Oval fibulae were typical elements of Viking-era women’s clothing. They were used by the women to attach their dresses to the shoulder straps. The fibulae were worn in pairs, often attached to a chain of beads, and decorated in the Scandinavian animal style.
The Greco-Roman heritage

At the end of the 4th century, the Roman Empire fragmented into the Western Roman Empire (with Rome as its capital) and the Eastern Roman Empire (with Constantinople as its capital). Economic setbacks, corruption, internal unrest and external confrontations led to the decline of the Western Roman Empire. In 476, Odoacer, the leader of the Germanic mercenaries in the Roman army, deposed the Roman Emperor. Shortly thereafter, the Goths, in alliance with the Eastern Roman Empire, conquered Rome and ruled over Italy. The remaining parts of the empire separated into many smaller fledgling states. The Eastern Roman Empire survived until 1453 and was largely based on Greco-Roman culture. The peoples living in these territories dealt with the ancient cultural legacy, such as language, art, customs, religion, commerce and systems of governance, in very different ways. They preserved the heritage and combined it with a multitude of other influences leading to the emergence of new traditions.

1 Fibula. Roma, city goddess of Rome,
Andernach (Germany), late 7th- early 8th cent., iron base plate with silver-gilt foil, LVR-LMB

This unusually large disk fibula depicts a female figure seated on a throne. This is Roma, the patroness of the city of Rome. Her headdress is more elaborate than in representations on Roman coins and is reminiscent of a Byzantine empress. The circumscription reads *Invicta Roma - Utere Felix* (Rome is invincible - Use this with joy).

In the 6th century, the likeness of the goddess merges with that of the Virgin Mary. Can this piece be interpreted as the throne of the Madonna? What exactly the picture on the fibula meant to the owner will remain a mystery.
and the Virgin Mary, while scenes of Joseph’s story from the Old Testament are represented on the sides.

**Plaque with the holy apostle Petrus,**
provenance: Basilica of Our Lady of Tongres, made in Gaule (Metz?) or Italy, 6th-7th cent., ivory, RMAH

**Plaque with the holy apostle Bartholomeus (?),**
Constantinople (?), mid-10th-mid-11th cent., ivory, The Phoebus Foundation

**‘Rosette casket’,**
Constantinople (?), 10th-12th cent., wood, ivory, bone, remnants of gilt and textile inside, RMAH

The relief plaque (5) may have been inspired by Maximianus’ cathedra and may have originally covered a similar piece of furniture. It later formed a diptych, together with a plaque of Saint Paul. This sophisticated plaque (6) is carved with intricate detail: the figure is represented in counter-pose and is draped in a classical antique robe. This style testifies to the new boom of Byzantine ivory carving in the 10th-11th century. Wooden caskets (7), covered with bone or ivory plates were produced in series in Constantinople. The plates of the casket represent, without mutual interaction, people, animals and oriental inspired mixed creatures.

**MYTHOLOGICAL TOPICS**
In Late Antique art, themes from Greco-Roman mythology remained popular, even when Christianity increasingly gained ground. Nevertheless, an alienation of the classical prototypes was gradually taking place. The essential meaning of traditional imagery weakened and classical iconography evolved into stereotypical and abstract representations.

**Textile fragment with female centaur (kentauris),**
Egypt, 5th-6th cent., linen and wool, RMAH

**Plaque with lying Nereid,**
Shurafa [Egypt], 3rd-6th cent., bone, RMAH

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**ROMAN FASHION**

**Tunica,**
Akhmim [Egypt], c. 7th cent., linen and wool, RMAH

**Mummy Portrait,**
Egypt, 3rd cent., wax painting on wood, APM

A *tunica* (2) is the traditional Roman garment par excellence throughout the Mediterranean in the first millennium. It is woven into shape and has a symmetrical decoration at the front and back: vertical bands on either side of the neck (*clavi*), medallions or square panels at the height of the shoulders and knees, and decorative bands at the bottom of the sleeves. *Tunica’s* are worn by men, women and children, with or without a belt. A mummy portrait (3) is applied to the mummy’s face with bindings and resin onto the mummy at the height of the face. The woman depicted is wearing a *tunica* with purple *clavi*.

**IVORY CARVING**
In the 5th and 6th centuries, ivory was a popular material for covering caskets and furniture and for the manufacture of consular diptychs. The Byzantine ivory production in Constantinople and presumably also in Alexandria continued to adhere to Greco-Roman traditions. They will inspire western workshops for centuries. After the 6th century, production fell back in the Eastern Roman empire only to reflowerish from the 10th century onwards with a renewed interest in ancient and Late Antique art.

**Cathedra (bishop’s throne) of Maximianus of Ravenna (546-556) (copy),**
original: Constantinople (?), mid 6th cent., wood and ivory, RGZM

One of the masterpieces of the 6th century is this cathedra, a throne-like seat that has been a symbol of authority of public office since antiquity. The Christian Church took over its use as a bishop’s seat. This cathedra is probably a gift from the Byzantine emperor Justinian to Maximianus, bishop of Ravenna. The monogram on the front is read as *MAXIMIANUS EPISCOPUS*. Several craftsmen have worked on the ivory panels. On the front we recognize John the Baptist and the four evangelists, on the back are depicted scenes from the life of Christ and the Virgin Mary, while scenes of Joseph’s story from the Old Testament are represented on the sides.
In the Byzantine Empire, the stonemasons of column capitals demonstrated great creativity. These two examples from Egypt show an interlace ornament and four animal heads (probably rams heads on one of the two capitals). Two vertical cut-outs on each capital may have held a closure system, perhaps of a pulpitum.

THE GRECO-ROMAN LEGACY IN EGYPT

In Egypt, during Late Antiquity, the classic iconography and texts continued to be an integral part of the culture and education of the elites, even after many of them had converted to Christianity. Some buildings and artworks demonstrated a remarkable mixture of classical and ancient Egyptian characteristics. The artists also discovered that they could reconcile pagan gods and motifs with a Christian interpretation.

16 Architectural fragment with acanthus leaves and birds drinking from a bowl, 
Egypt, 5th-6th cent. (?), limestone, RMAH

The vine (15) is in the Greco-Roman tradition one of the attributes of the wine god Dionysos, but it is also depicted as a purely decorative motif. In early Christian art it is a symbol of Christ, referring to the biblical words 'I am the vine, and you are the branches' (John XV, 5). In the Islamic period it is included in the arabesque decorations. The birds drinking from a bowl (16), a common motif in antique art since Hellenistic times, may refer to the source of life or, in a Christian context, to Christ.

CLASSIC DESIGN

13 Bust of a young man, 
North Syria (?), 330-340, limestone, RMAH

Late Antique portraits with wide-open eyes and a striking gaze utilise stylistic elements from Antiquity: this young man from North Syria, with a long clean-shaven face and hair combed forward, refers to the portraits of Emperor Trajan (98-117), brought back into fashion by Constantine.

14 Two capitals with interlace ornament and animal heads, 
Middle Egypt (Deir Mawas?, Bawit?), 5th-7th cent., limestone, RMAH

This funerary high relief sculpture was originally located in a niche. The woman wears the costume of the goddess Isis: a tunic covered with a garment (palla contabulata with a knot) folded and tied on the chest (Isis knot), with a fringed
edge and decorated with a vegetable garland. She holds a situla containing the water from the Nile in her right hand, and probably an incense box in her left. The deceased was an initiator to the Isiscultus, perhaps even a priestess.

POLITICAL PROGRAM

18 Crossbow fibula,
Bonn (Germany), c. 400, gilt bronze, LVR-LMB

19 Bowl,
Bonn (Germany), c. 400, glass, LVR-LMB

This fibula (18) was placed in the grave of a soldier of the Late Roman army, together with the glass bowl (19) and other standard equipment. He must have been a member of a non-Roman military troop unit, since Roman soldiers were not buried with their weapons. Fibulae like these were used to close the military cloak, the chlamys, on the left shoulder. In Late Antiquity, they were used in the Christian Roman Empire to distinguish meritorious officers and civil servants. Therefore, it is more likely that the Christogram at the base of the fibula reflects the viewpoint of the state rather than the personal conviction of the individual.

PAGAN IMAGES

When Christianity is recognized as a religion in 313 and elevated to state religion in the Roman Empire in 380, this does not mean an abrupt end, rather the continuity of use of ancient images and symbols.

20 Bust of Isvardia,
Smyrna (now Izmir, Turkey), mid-4th cent., marble, BCM

The type of crown that the female bust is wearing suggests that she was a pagan priestess.

Table support depicting the good shepherd (copy),
Corinth (Greece), first half 4th cent., marble, BCM

The shepherd was a popular motif in Antiquity and took on a number of different meanings over the course of time. In Early Christian Art the shepherd became a symbol of Christ, referring to passages in the New Testament, in which Christ described himself as ‘the good shepherd who gave his life for his sheep’.

Relief (slab of choir screen?) with Gorgon head,
Lechaion near Corinth (Greece), 5th-6th cent. (front), 6th-7th cent. (back), marble, BCM

In classical mythology, the Gorgons were described as frightening creatures with snake hair. Anyone who gazed upon them was turned to stone. In a later period a cross was carved on the back of the relief.

ROMAN WRITINGS

23 Virgil, Aeneid and other works,
9th-10th cent., parchment, KBR
(from 27/09/2019 until 06/01/2020)

In this epic poem, Virgil recounts in the first century BC the glorious deeds of the Trojan Aeneas, ancestor of the lineage of the Juli, to which emperor Augustus belongs. Many classical texts have been preserved in the form of copies from the Carolingian period. The Carolingian minuscule, which originated from the Merovingian script types but even more from the Roman (half-)uncial, would later become the standard form of script used in book writing in most of continental Western Europe. The clear, well-proportioned letters formed the basis of the humanist writing, and of the printed letters still used today.
A key foundation of the Roman Empire was its highly developed written culture. In the western parts of the Roman Empire, as well as later in the Germanic kingdoms, Latin was the language of the sciences, of government and diplomacy, art and ecclesiastical liturgy. In the Byzantine East, private and state matters were recorded in Greek and in the areas conquered by the Arabs from the 7th century, gradually in Arabic. A large number of Greek works were translated in Baghdad, the cultural centre of the Islamic world from 762 onwards. In the West, monasteries were the most important centres for conserving, transferring and developing knowledge and faith in the Early Middle Ages. During the Carolingian Renaissance the court and monastic scriptoria copied out classical works. Many texts from Antiquity are only known today thanks to the copied versions from the 8th and 9th centuries.

1 Depiction of a philosopher (copy), part of a sarcophagus relief, Sidamara (Asia Minor, Turkey), 3rd cent., BCM

In the 3rd century, stonemasons from Sidamara frequently adorned the sides of sarcophagi with mythological figures such as the Dioscuri, Castor and Pollux, standing between columns. An unusual subject for this period was the philosopher, the one who searches for the meaning and purpose of our existence, the ‘friend of wisdom’, as an ideal.

2 The prophet Ezra in a scriptorium, in: Codex Amiatinus, Wearmouth-Jarrow (Northumbria), before 716

This miniature comes from the Codex Amiatinus, the first complete bible in Latin. In the background is an armarium in which codices are stored.
NEW CERAMICS
From the end of the 8th century on, potters of the Islamic world developed revolutionary techniques. Partly under the impulse of imported ceramics from China, they experimented with new shapes and developed new opaque glazes. They also introduced colors that penetrate the glaze or which are applied on top of the glaze, such as the sophisticated and expensive 'lustre' (painting with a metallic sheen). The application of an incised decor (sgraffiato) is also one of the new techniques. The demand for this colorful and refined pottery was high and stimulated a widespread trade.

Bowl,
Northeast Iran or Central Asia, 9th-11th cent., reddish-brown paste, white slip, painting under transparent glaze, RMAH

Bowl with highly stylized inscription (perhaps al-baraka, blessing),
Northeast Iran or Central Asia, 9th-11th cent., pinkish paste, painted, probably on opaque white glaze, RMAH

Bowl with tricolor decor,
Northeast Iran or Central Asia, end 9th-10th cent., earthenware, white slip, sgraffiato (incised decor), floral and splashed decor with copper, iron and manganese oxides, lead glaze, RMAH

Lobed dish with peacock,
Iraq, 10th cent., earthenware, painted in lustre on opaque white glaze, RMAH

Two potshards,
Fustat (Egypt), 11th cent., earthenware, lustre painting on opaque white glaze, RMAH

WRITINGS FROM EGYPT
Egypt has been a multilingual country for centuries. After the conquests of Alexander the Great (332 B.C.), Greek became the language of administration. However, from the beginning of the 4th century the Egyptian language became more important. Contemporary Egyptian, called Coptic, was from then on written using the Greek alphabet supplemented with seven additional characters. Between the 6th and 8th centuries, the Coptic language gradually gained ground. Arabic was not in use as a common administrative language until the 9th century. The most common text carriers were papyrus and pot and stone shards (ostraca).
Parchment was stronger than papyrus, but much more expensive.

**PYRUS OF OXYRHYNCHOS (PRESENT-DAY VILLAGE OF BEHNASA)**

Oxyrhynchos, once the prosperous capital of a province in Middle Egypt, is known for the discovery of numerous papyri. The majority are administrative documents written in Greek, but there are also letters, as well as literary and biblical texts.

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**FRAGMENT OF A ‘PROTOCOL’ (PRÔTOKOLLON, THE FIRST SHEET OF A ROLL OF PAPYRUS),**

In Greek and Arabic, beginning of the 8th cent., papyrus, RMAH

This text, now barely legible, reads, ‘He is God, the One and Only. Muhammad is the apostle of God’ in Greek and ‘He is God, the One and Only. Muhammad is the prophet of God’ in Arabic.

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**PARCHMENT AND OSTRACA**

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**FRAGMENT OF PARCHMENT CONTAINING MAGICAL FORMULAE, LIKELY WORN AS AN AMULET,**

In Coptic, Egypt, 4th-5th cent., RMAH

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**OSTRACON CONTAINING A LETTER AND MONOGRAM OF CHRIST (AT THE TOP LEFT),**

In Coptic, around the year 600, limestone, RMAH

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**OSTRACON CONTAINING A PAYMENT CERTIFICATE,**

In Coptic, Egypt, 8th cent., earthenware and slip, RMAH

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**OSTRACON CONTAINING A LIST OF NAMES,**

In Greek, 5th-6th cent., earthenware and slip, RMAH

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**CHEST FOR BOOK SCROLLS,**

Kom Aushim (Egypt), 4th-12th cent. (?), wood, bronze, APM

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In Antiquity, longer texts were written on book scrolls of an average of 20 papyrus sheets glued together. To read the text written in columns they were unfurled horizontally. From the end of the 4th century, the much more convenient codex, our current book form, composed of papyrus or parchment pages, increasingly replaced the roll. Paper was introduced into the Islamic world (including Egypt) in the 8th century and spread through Spain to the rest of Europe from the 11th century onwards.

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**THE PAPYRUS OF THE MONASTERY OF APA (FATHER) APOLLO, BAWIT**

The monastery of Bawit (Middle-Egypt) was founded in the 4th century and expanded considerably over the following centuries, until it was abandoned in the 11th century. The numerous papyrus and ostraca (potsherds) that have been found are mainly accounting documents. They give us an idea of the daily life and the great economic activity of the monastery.

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**THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM INCLUDES THE STUDY OF GREEK AND CLASSICAL GREEK TEXTS, ESPECIALLY IN EGYPTIAN CITIES. HOMER’S EPIC POEMS (12) PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THIS.**

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**THE ORDER OF THE SUPERIOR THEODOR,**

In Coptic and Greek, 8th cent., papyrus (reused), ink, RMAH

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**AN ORDER FOR THE PAYMENT IN-KIND (OF WINE) TO AN INCENSE (OR PERFUME) MERCHANT,**

In Coptic and Greek, 8th cent., papyrus (reused), an argil stamp containing a monogram (Isaak?) ink, RMAH

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Miniature with the evangelist Luke, Gospel Book, Saint-Vaast, late 9th century

The evangelist Luke is working in a scriptorium, with on his left a chest with scrolls.
WRITING GOVERSNS KINGDOMS, IMPOSES LAW AND ENABLES TRADE

22 Stylus (writing pen),
Cologne (Germany), medieval, copper alloy, LVR-LMB

23 Stylus (writing pen),
Neuss (Germany), medieval, copper alloy, LVR-LMB

24 Small writing tablet,
Düren (Germany), Roman, beech wood, LVR-LMB

25 Fittings of a case,
Mainz-Kastel (Germany), early medieval, copper alloy, LVR-LMB

This small writing tablet (24), one of more than 70 fragments discovered in a well in the German Rhineland, shows that literacy and writing skills were quite advanced in Roman times. In early medieval western Europe they were restricted to the upper political and ecclesiastical hierarchy. Manuscripts, precious documents, were stored in boxes (25). Shorter messages and letters were temporarily noted on wax tablets with metal styli (22, 23). The message could easily be erased with the flattened top.

EARLY MEDIEVAL MANUSCRIPTS

26 The ‘Antiphonary of Mont-Blandin’,
8th cent., parchment, KBR
(from 27/01/2019 until 06/01/2020)

The so-called ‘Antiphonary of Mont-Blandin’ is the oldest known manuscript of chants for the celebration of the Mass. Although the score consists of only a few neumes, it is of great importance for the study of music in the Carolingian period because of its age and role in the history of the liturgy. From the 13th century onwards, it was kept in the Benedictine St. Peter’s Abbey on the Mont-Blandin in Ghent, but its place of production and the identity of its first owner or recipient remain unknown to this day.

26 Legendarium with the office of St Lambert,
Liege (?), first half of the 10th cent., parchment, KBR
(from 06/01/2020 until 29/03/2020)

This codex bears witness to the intellectual activity in 10th-century Liège. Its exact origin is not known, but its content provides clear indications. The locally venerated bishops Lambertus and Hubertus feature prominently in both the texts and the music of this volume of saints’ lives. The manuscript reflects the liturgical reforms carried out by the clergy of Liège under the direction of bishop Stephanus, which resulted in the writing and composing of new texts and music. The lack of uniformity in this manuscript suggests that these reforms were still being implemented at the time of its creation and that we are confronted here with the result of a work in progress.

27 Collection of texts by Isidorus of Seville,
9th cent., parchment, KBR
(from 06/01/2020 until 29/03/2020)

This manuscript contains mainly copies of texts written by Isidorus (≈ c. 560 - † 636), archbishop of Seville and church teacher, who acquired a notable reputation as a leading and productive encyclopaedist. Since 2005, he has been the patron saint of the internet. The manuscript contains various types of writing: uncials and Carolingian minuscule for the running text and neumes in campo aperto (‘in the open field’, i.e. without staves) for the music, as well as tironian notes (a kind of shorthand). For the presence of the runic alphabet on the verso of the third page, there is as yet no conclusive explanation.

27 Psalter of Saint Wolbodo,
Trier or its surroundings, c. 1000, parchment, KBR
(from 06/01/2020 until 29/03/2020)

This collection of psalms and prayers belonged to Saint Wolbodo, who was connected to the cathedral school in Utrecht and later became bishop of Liège. The writing, the illumination and the aforementioned saints refer to a scriptorium in (the surroundings of) Trier. References to the customs of the
No internet, yet connected

Ideas, symbols, religious beliefs and knowledge spread across early medieval Europe and surrounding areas thanks to frequent exchange of goods, gifts, payments and people: amber and furs from Scandinavia were sent to the Mediterranean region; precious stones as well as spices from southern Asia were brought to the North and the West; pilgrims travelled to the Holy Land; diplomats were exchanged and slaves from eastern European territories were traded with Spain. All these connections created a strikingly uniform material culture. Motifs and techniques were exchanged over long distances and then further developed. From the 7th century onwards, the Byzantine trade network began to lose important trading centres as a result of Arab conquests. However, luxury goods from the East, such as silk and spices, were still acquired from Asia via the widely branched road network of the Silk Road.

Disk fibula from a 7th century woman’s grave in Iversheim (Germany) with garnets from India, cover plate and settings in gold, copper alloy core, inlaid with garnet, glass and apatite, LVR-LMB

In the 7th century, gold disk fibulae were worn by members of the upper social and economic classes of the Frankish Empire. The fibulae followed the example of Mediterranean models in the way they were worn, in their design, the production techniques, the decorative elements that were used and the colours of the inlays. The rest of the grave goods are exhibited in the adjacent display case.

diocese of Utrecht suggest that the manuscript was already in Wolbodo’s possession at an early stage and travelled with him when he left for Liège. Although the intention was to sing the psalms or recite them, the score does not, in this case, represent a melody. The neumes, which remind of the note system of St. Gallen Abbey, are used as reference signs to indicate the relationship between the psalms and the corresponding comments in the margin.
Goods from a woman’s grave, Iversheim (Germany), mid-7th cent., LVR-LMB
   a. disk fibula (tentoongesteld in wandvitrine hiernaast); b. earrings, silver; c. pieces of chest pendants and belt hangings, copper alloy; d. amulet capsule from a chest pendant, copper alloy; e. pieces from a set of leg bindings; f. necklace, glass beads

TRADE IN LUXURY GOODS
Far beyond the borders of the Roman, and subsequently the Byzantine Empire, there was a high demand for luxury goods such as wine, finely crafted tableware in glass or metal, luxurious textiles and all kinds of raw materials. Until the Arab conquest, the Byzantine Empire controlled a substantial part of the trade, especially with the neighbouring kingdoms in the west and north.

Map of trade routes in the Merovingian period
Byzantine amphora for wine, from an Avar grave, Kiskőröös-Pohibuj-Mackó dülő (Hungary), 7th cent., earthenware, HNM

Bottle with plant motifs and swimming birds, made in the eastern Mediterranean region, found in Bonn (Germany), end of 6th-beginning of 7th cent., copper alloy, tin-plated, LVR-LMB

Jug and goblet, Kunágota (Hungary), first half 7th cent., silver, HNM

Spoon, inscribed with 'Bartolomevs', probably the name of the owner, possibly made in the eastern Mediterranean region, from a Frankish woman’s grave, Wesel-Bislich (Germany), 6th cent., silver, LVR-LMB

Bowl with handle, made in the eastern Mediterranean region, from a Frankish grave, Neuwied-Gladbach (Germany), 7th cent., copper alloy, LVR-LMB

Textile fragment with ducks and griffins, Byzantine Empire (Syria?), 7th cent. (?), silk, RMAH

Textile fragment with plant and bird motifs, found in Akhmim (Egypt), 7th-8th cent. (?), silk, RMAH
The decorative patterns on both silk fabrics (9, 10) show similarities to those on the metal bottle (5) in the wall showcase. Woven fabrics, which are easy to transport, may have played an important part in the distribution of motifs.

MONEY RULES THE WORLD

Finger rings, each with a solidus of the Byzantine emperor Phocas (602-610), Kobern-Gondorf, Vochem (Germany), early 7th cent., gold, LVR-LMB

Byzantine coins, Wesel-Bislich, Mayen, Bedburg-Hau (Germany), LVR-LMB:
   a) Justinian I, four tremissis made into necklace pendants; b) Anastasius I (491-518) or Justinian I, tremissis; c) Mauricius Tiberius II (582-602), solidus

Ostrogothic coins, Kobern-Gondorf, Rödingen (Germany), LVR-LMB:
   a) Theoderic the Great (493-526), tremissis, with a depiction of Anastasius; b) Theia (552-553), half siliqua, silver

Coin of Theudebert II, king of the Franks (534-548), tremissis, master of the mint Manileobus, Cologne (Germany), c. 600, LVR-LMB

Sceattas minted in Jutland (Denmark) or Friesland (Netherlands), De Panne, end of 7th-beginning of 8th cent., silver, RMAH
The heavy golden solidi (11, 12c) and their diminutive fractions (12a, b), were the coins most commonly used in the Byzantine Empire. In Italy, Ostrogothic coins were minted with the portrait and name of the Eastern Roman emperor in recognition of his sovereignty (13a). Theudebert I, on the other hand, had gold coins minted with his own name (14). In the 6th century Frankish Empire, coins were generally not used as currency, but were traded based on their raw
By adopting and transforming Roman animal motifs, such as the eagle (21), Germanic tribes developed, primarily in Scandinavia and England, a specific animal style in which animals can be anatomically distinguished (22). In the course of the 6th century, the Frankish artisans combined the interlace motifs of Late Antiquity with this animal style, evolving into the so-called Animal-style II, where the individual animals become so intertwined that they are barely recognizable (23). This demonstrates the extraordinary dynamic with which that blends different cultural influences and traditions blend together in this early medieval period.

Try to define all the animals depicted on the Mülfhofen fibula.

- Head
- Jaw
- Torso and front leg
- Hind leg

The Carthaginian general Hannibal crossed the Alps in 218 B.C. with elephants from North Africa. The Greeks and Romans had elephants in their armies for demonstration battles and triumphal processions. Some centuries later, Charlemagne received an Asian elephant (with the name Abul-Abbas) as a diplomatic gift from the caliph Harun al-Rashid of Baghdad. Together with Isaac, a Jewish merchant, the elephant traveled along the south coast of the Mediterranean Sea to the West. What a sensation this must have been in the territories north of the Alps! In the year 810, the elephant probably contracted pneumonia after crossing the Rhine and died.

Coins are weighed using a scale and weights. At the beginning of the Merovingian period scales of the Roman type, with arms of unequal length, remained in use (20). Gradually, a different type of scale, with two equal arms and a small bowl on each side, was preferred. The weights (16, 17, 18) were often of Byzantine origin. They were round or angular and sometimes stored as a set in a custom-made box (19).
WINGED MYTHICAL CREATURES

- Belt buckle with the depiction of a hippogriff, Harmignies, end of 6th cent., copper alloy, RMAH
- Fragment of a choir screen with the depiction of a griffin, Kobern-Gondorf (Germany), 7th cent., shell limestone, LVR-LMB
- Textile with 'senmurv' (here a composite being with the head and claws of a lion, wings and a peacock tail), Byzantine Empire, 9th-10th cent., silk, RMAH
- Sasanian stamp seals with winged horse, winged creature with human head and winged lion protome (bust), Iran, 3rd-7th cent., carnelian, RMAH

The griffin represents the composition of powerful, dangerous animals: the lion and the eagle, but also often reptiles. As far back as Antiquity, the griffin was ascribed a protective function and was believed to be able to ward off evil. Griffins and other winged mythical creatures have been used in the early medieval period in all parts of Europe and Asia, to China, for decorative elements in architecture, on silk weaves or as heraldic ornaments on small items.

TRAVELING BY WATER

In the early Middle Ages trade routes ran along both the road and the water. Water transport was often preferred for long distances and heavy loads. Ship transport offered economic advantages: lower tolls and less chance of robbery. For long-distance journeys, road and water transport complemented each other. The two main waterways that were navigable for trade in our regions, were the Scheldt and the Meuse. However, few ships or parts of ships have been found in our regions. These two exceptional figureheads in the shape of an animal’s head, found in the Scheldt, are an exception.

- Figurehead of a ship from the Scheldt near Appels (copy), 5th-7th century, MAS
  The original is kept in the British Museum

VIKING SHIPS

- Viking heads (copies), Oseberg (Norway), ca. 800, original: wood, RMO

Inside the Viking ship, interred as a burial ship in Oseberg (Norway), a four-wheel wooden cart was also found. It is richly decorated with intricate carvings. The base on which the cart is resting, ends in two men’s heads, both with convex eyes, neatly combed hair and well-groomed beard and moustache. They both represent an idealised appearance of Vikings, which is far from our image of savage barbarians.

- Fenrir, (small scale) reconstruction of the Gokstad funeral ship (Vestfold province, Norway), 2009, Gigos vzw

Around 900 A.D. a rich man is buried in his ship in Gokstad (Norway). The burial chamber in the stern of the ship is furnished with gold embroidered textiles and contains sumptuous grave gifts including three smaller ships. The Fenrir is a smaller scale reconstruction of this ship made by a group of young people from Genk (Gigos vzw) according to the old techniques of the Vikings. To get inspiration for the reconstruction, they undertook a study visit to Scandinavia! The name Fenrir is inspired by Norse mythology.
EXCLUSIVE JEWELLERY

34 Fragments of necklaces with amethyst beads and gold foil pendants, from graves in Andernach and Mülheim-Kärlich (Germany), late 6th-7th cent., LVR-LMB
35 Necklace with beads of glass, amber and a spiny oyster shell, Meckenheim (Germany), mid-8th to mid-7th cent., LVR-LMB
36 Necklace with beads of glass, amber and a wavy common whelk shell, probably from the North Sea, Andernach (Germany), end of 5th-first half of 6th cent., LVR-LMB
37 Necklaces with beads of glass, amber and perforated shells, Iversheim (Germany), end of 7th-beginning of 8th cent., LVR-LMB
38 Element of a belt, Bonn-Beuel (Germany), 6th-7th cent., cowry shell with iron wire, LVR-LMB
39 Necklace, Ribemont (France), late 5th-early 6th cent., glass beads and bone pendant, RMAH

Frankish women often wore long, elegant necklaces with which they were buried. Inspiration for the design and the beads to be used were sought in distant countries. Especially Jewish and Syrian merchants built up trading networks between the Frankish Empire and the Mediterranean region, while Frisians carried out trade in the North Sea region and on the major rivers. The combination of amethyst beads and gold pendants (34) was probably adopted by the Franks from the Lombard Kingdom in Italy. Modern in the late 7th century are the perforated shells (37) from the Mediterranean, while the small green glass beads (39) originated in Southeast Asia.

A WORLD CITY IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Dorestad, located near Utrecht on the Rhine in today’s Netherlands, was the largest city in northwestern Europe in the 8th and 9th centuries. As the northernmost trading place or emporium of the Carolingian Empire, the city functioned as a transit port and tollhouse for products going from the mainland to the British Isles and Scandinavia. During the sailing season, the semi-permanent market of Dorestad was a European hub where traders met and exchanged goods and ideas. Many were converted to Christianity here. Dorestad was also one of the most important Carolingian mints. It is estimated that a few thousand people lived in this town.

40 ‘Bird’s eye view with reconstruction of Dorestad anno 833’ just before the Viking ships reached the city.
In the foreground the wooden piers and decks, contiguous wooden floors that rested on thousands of wooden posts. Vaguely in the background the castellum.

EARTHENWARE FROM DORESTAD

41 Badorf spout pot, Dorestad (Netherlands), 750-850, earthenware, RMO
42 Tatinger jug, Dorestad (Netherlands), 750-850, earthenware, RMO
43 Upper edge of a ‘relief band amphora’, Dorestad (Netherlands), 750-850, earthenware, RMO

Enormous quantities of earthenware have been found in Dorestad, including shards of more than 23,000 pale yellow containers, spout pots and bowls from the Badorf region (Germany) (41, 43). All these receptacles for storage and drinking wine arrived in Dorestad via the Rhine and were thrown away after use. Dozens of rare waterproof ‘Tatinger’ jugs (42), decorated with tin foil, were also found. Findings in Scandinavia, where they are called ‘Birka jugs’, show that these jugs from the Rhineland were traded via Dorestad.

LUXURY GLASS IN DORESTAD

44 Beaker with cross shape on the bottom, Dorestad (Netherlands), 750-800, glass, RMO
45 Glass smoother, Dorestad (Netherlands), 750-800, glass, RMO
When ships were to be repaired or dismantled, the wood was usually reused. Only the typical double ship rivets remained.

**THE SILK ROAD**

The term ‘Silk Road’ refers to a network of land and sea trade routes between East Asia and Europe. Silk is one of the many goods traded, but is among the most lucrative and prestigious. The technological progress made by silk weavers in the eastern Mediterranean since Late Antiquity is one of the most remarkable in history. Even after the Arab conquests, high tech silk fabrics bear witness to a lively trade and exchange of techniques and motifs between the Islamic and Byzantine worlds. Between the 8th and 10th centuries, silk weavers prefer representing rows of medallions containing human, animal and fantastic figures, proof of a lasting influence of Sassanid Iran.

**TRADE AND SHIPPING IN DORESTAD**

The excavations in Dorestad yielded many coins, weights (49) and touchstones (50) that were used for trade. Coins were weighed because of the importance of their weight. In those days, you could pay with all coins and also with jewellery. Important products that were offered for sale in Dorestad are woolen fabrics (broadcloth) (51). All merchandise arrived and departed on ships that were manoeuvred along the piers in the elongated harbor of Dorestad with boat hooks (52).
Only one god

Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages are decisive for the three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. After the destruction of the Second Temple of Jerusalem in 70 AD, many Jews left Judea and dispersed throughout Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean. Rabbinic Judaism became the main movement in Judaism. Especially from the 4th century onwards, more and more people in the Western and Eastern Roman Empire adopted Christianity as their religion. Both in the West and in the East there is a growing belief in a monotheistic world domination. This also applies to the Islamic Empire, which took shape with the Arab conquests from the 7th century onwards.

Political leaders embodied a divinely inspired leadership, such as the Christian emperor, the Islamic caliph and the Jewish Exilarch in Babylon. Religious communities were formed around spiritual leaders and scholars, such as the Jewish rabbis, the Muslim ulama and Christian bishops and abbots.

1 Relief plaque,
Southern Spain, 5th-7th cent., earthenware, The Phoebus Foundation, Antwerp

The exact function of these relief plaques, often found in Christian buildings, remains uncertain: part of wall decorations, such as friezes, or coverings of wooden ceilings or graves? Under an architectural arch a Christogram is centrally depicted between the first and last letter of the Greek alphabet, beginning and end, referring to the eternity of Christ. On both sides we read an inscription: SALVO EPIS(copo) MARCIANO (during the episcopate of Marcianus). There are indications of two bishops with this name in southern Spain between the 5th and the 7th century.
EARLY CHRISTIAN ARCHITECTURE

2 Slab of choir screen from the cemetery of Kobern-Gondorf (Germany), 7th–8th cent., limestone, LVR-LMB

This panel comes from a screen that separates the altar area from the space reserved for the worshippers in the church. The panel depicts an apostle in antique clothing, with a book in his hand. The doves on his shoulders may symbolize paradise or the soul. The griffins in the corners have a protective or apotropaic function.

A SYNAGOGUE IN APAMEA (SYRIA)
The city of Apamea (Syria) is one of the largest cities of Roman and Proto-Byzantine Antiquity. The main street, nearly two kilometres long, has two monumental porticoes along its entire length. In Greco-Roman times, Apamea was famous for its oracular temple to the god Zeus Belos. Apamea is also an intellectual centre renowned for its neoplatonic school of philosophy. From the beginning of the 4th century, Apamea became the seat of an important diocese. Several churches have been excavated there. One of them covered a synagogue, whose mosaics are dated in 392, but which probably existed since the 1st century. The city was conquered by the Persians in 573, followed by the Arabs in 636 when the islam became the dominant religion.

3 Part of a geometric mosaic floor from a synagogue, Apamea (Syria), 392, stone, RMAH

4 Picture of a part of a geometric mosaic floor from a synagogue, Apamea (Syria), 392, RMAH

A seven-branch lampstand (menorah) has replaced a purely decorative motif in the left triangle.

Both mosaics (3, 4) come from the floor of a synagogue that was discovered in Apamea under a church. The floor of the main hall of the synagogue was completely covered with mosaics, donated by believers. Greek inscriptions recall the names of these donors and specify the number of square feet of mosaic each of them donated. The inscription on mosaic (3) reads: ‘Thaumasis, with Hesychios his wife and (their) children, and Eusthatia his mother-in-law, made 100 feet’. The fragment (4) reads as follows: ‘Avocado Euthalis had 140 feet (of pavement) made.

THE WORSHIP OF RELICS IN THE MIDDLE AGES

From the 4th century onwards, as Christians began to practice their religion more openly, it became customary to erect altars and churches on or near the graves of martyrs. This became so common that it was just a matter of time that all altars were linked to the remains of martyrs. For medieval believers, the most effective way to call on the help of a saint was visiting his or her relics. Pilgrims sometimes undertook distant pilgrimages to pray to their shrines, to sacrifice and to invoke their mediation with God. Private relics were kept as beneficial amulets.

5 Photo of the main street in Apamea (Syria), with over its entire length two monumental porticoes of about two kilometres long.

6 Cover of a reliquary used to preserve the remains of a saint, Apamea (Syria), 5th–6th cent., serpentine (Thessaly, Greece), RMAH

This is the lid of a reliquary, in which the bones of a saint were kept. Through an opening at the top of the lid, oil could be poured into the reliquary. By contact with the saint’s bones, the oil was consecrated. Pilgrims could take the holy oil with them in bottles.
THE BEGINNING OF AN ISLAMIC EMPIRE

Islam is a monotheistic religion that originated in the Arabian peninsula in the 7th century. According to tradition, in 622 the Prophet Muhammad left his native city of Mecca for Yathrib, the later Medina, where he founded the first umma or Islamic community. This migration or hidjra marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar. By the time of his death in 632, most Arab tribes had joined the prophet and his new regional power. A hundred years later, the Islamic world stretched from Southern Spain and the Maghreb to present-day Uzbekistan and Afghanistan.

BYZANTINE ICON

Mosaic icon depicting the Virgin and Child,
a copy of the original from the last quarter of the 13th cent., manufactured in Constantinople and originating from Triglia (Turkey), wood, glass paste, gold and silver, BCM

This piece is a rare example of a precious mosaic icon. Icons facilitated the communication between the believers and God both at home and in church. Priests and worshippers honored them by kneeling before them, by lighting candles and burning incense, by kissing and blessing them. From very early on, the church was occupied with the question if divine persons could be represented. In the Byzantine Empire, discussions on this subject led to the period known as iconoclasm (the destruction of images), which occurred throughout two periods between the years 726 – 843, with many icons being destroyed. Therefore, only a few icons from before the 9th century have survived.

SACRED BOTTLES

Flasks with the image of Saint Menas,
Egypt , 5th-7th cent., earthenware, APM (7-13) and RMAH (14)

The Egyptian ampullae in the shape of a field flask depict Saint Menas († late 3rd century). He was soldier in the Roman army and was killed in Asia Minor during the Christian persecution. A camel who brought his body back to Egypt refused to continue at the place where he was buried. His grave in Aboe Mena, near Alexandria, became an important place of pilgrimage. The ‘Menas flasks’ on which he is often depicted between two camels were filled with water from the spring next to his grave and sold to pilgrims. The small flasks have been found in the Mediterranean, Europe and Asia.

Photo of the interior of the Friday Mosque of Nayin (Iran),
oldest part: 10th century
This is one of the oldest mosques in Iran. It was built according to a hypostyle plan.

Photo of the Friday Mosque of Nayin (Iran),
oldest part: 10th century
The sumptuous stucco decorations are reminiscent of stucco from the Sassanian period (224-642) and of 9th-century examples from the Abbasid capital of Samarra (Iraq).

Photo of the Friday Mosque of Nayin (Iran),
oldest part: 10th century

These four pages from a Quran manuscript contain verses 44 to 66 of surah 28 (al-kasas, the story). The text is written in flawless Kufic handwriting with red and brown-green diacritical marks, so that a correct reading can be guaranteed. Golden drop-shaped motifs separate the verses from each other. Medallions in the margins indicate units of 10 verses.

Bifolium from a Quran,
Iraq or Syria (?), 11th-12th cent., paper, The Phoebus Foundation, Antwerp

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THE WORSHIP OF RELICS IN THE MIDDLE AGES

19 Sarcophagus of Sancta Chrodoara (cast),
Saint-Georges-et-Saint-Ode church of Amay, first half 8th cent., RMAH

This unique sarcophagus contained the remains of Chrodoara, an aristocratic woman who died at the beginning of the 7th century and who was canonized on 9 July 730. The decoration of the sarcophagus (with interlace ornament with sharp-edged corner details and the formulation and shape of the letters of the inscription) indicates that the sarcophagus was made at the beginning of the 8th century. The inscription, in which Chrodoara is called a saint (sancta), praises her religious and moral virtues and is related to the worship of her relics. It is therefore a reliquary sarcophagus intended to be visited by pilgrims.

20 Censer with scenes from the life of Christ,
Egypt, Syria or Palestine, 7th-10th cent., bronze, APM

In the Eastern Mediterranean, aromatic substances are used for liturgical and court ceremonies, but also at home. Incense can purify the air and cleanse it from bad odors, which are also associated with evil forces and demons. This burner, decorated with a Christian iconography, would fit well in a liturgical context. However, it could also be for domestic use, for prayer or to ward off evil.

21 Reliquary, Andenne, end 7th-first half 8th century, copper, wood and silver, MDN
(Musée diocésain de Namur)

In the Early Middle Ages, the cult of saints and their relics developed. The latter are sometimes kept in small portable reliquaries such as this exceptional example where thin copper plates are attached to the oak-wood core with small silver nails. The decoration in repoussé is a geometric variation of the typical interlace ornament, a fine illustration of the adoption and transformation of Celtic and Insular influences in this early medieval period.

22 Sedes Sapientiae,
Meuse Valley, radio-carbon dating: 980-1050 (88,8 % probability), wood, polychromy, The Phoebus Foundation, Antwerp

This Virgin and Child wood sculpture is one of the oldest preserved in Belgium. Sedes Sapientiae - or Throne of Wisdom - is a term referring to medieval texts, in which Mary is compared to the ‘throne of Solomon’ or the ‘seat of wisdom’. The Infant Jesus embodies Eternal Wisdom and the Virgin is His throne. The frontal hieratic representations go back to Byzantine examples, e.g. on ivory plaques or icons. Sedes Sapientiae are mobile images that can be placed on an altar or carried in processions. Only from the 12th century, images of the Virgin Mary are created that express tenderness.

23 Liturgical comb,
made in Metz, 10th cent., ivory, RMAH

This comb comes from Stavelot’s Abbey, where it was venerated as a relic of Saint Remaclus, its founder. This was a misconception, since Remaclus lived in the 7th century, whereas the comb is rather a 10th-century production. In the Middle Ages, liturgical combs were used by the clergy while preparing and dressing up before Mass.

24 Pyxis (for incense or Sacramental bread) with the resurrection of Lazarus,
origin unknown, 6th-7th century, ivory, LVR-LMB

This box, the lid and bottom of which have disappeared, tells the story of Lazarus, a highly popular topic in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. The dead body, the central figure, is wrapped in bandages. Christ holds a cross in his left hand and raises his right hand in blessing of Lazarus, who awakens from the dead. The scene is witnessed by the apostles.
PROFESSION OF FAITH AND PROTECTION

25 Sleeve fragment depicting the Baptism of Christ, Akhmim [Egypt], linen and wool, 7th–8th cent., RMAH
26 Textile fragment with Christ in medallion, Akhmim [Egypt], 7th–10th cent., linen and wool, RMAH
27 Fragment of a bowl depicting a dove, Zülpich [Germany], 4th cent., glass, gold-foil LVR-LMB
28 Glass medallion depicting a saint performing a miracle, Cologne [Germany], 4th cent., LVR-LMB
29 Cross with inscription ‘In memory of Deacon Semionios, may he rest in eternal peace’, Asia Minor, 6th cent., copper alloy, BCM
30 Pectoral cross, provenance unknown, 6th–7th cent., copper alloy, BCM
31 Pectoral cross-reliquary with inscription ‘Jesus Christ overcomes’, Constantinople or Anatolia, 10th–11th cent., brass, RMAH
32 Belt buckle with cross, Tigani [Greece], 6th–7th cent., bronze, BCM
33 Signet ring with inscription ‘May you live in God’ and Christogram, Trechtingshausen [Germany], 4th–5th cent., gold, LVR-LMB
34 Reliquary buckle, according to the inscription, made by Siggiricus (Siggiricus fecit). Hollow on the inside to hold blessings and/or relics; Kobern-Gondorf [Germany], 6th–7th cent., copper alloy, LVR-LMB

Early Christian pilgrims brought back souvenirs from the holy places they visited. Pectoral crosses, which were also used to store relics (29–32), were especially popular in the Byzantine Empire and worn by people of all social classes. The crosses held pieces of the True Cross or soil and small stones from the places where Christ had lived. The custom of wearing crosses continued to be practiced in the Frankish Empire (35, 36). Tunics (25, 26) decorated with Christian scenes were probably intended to invoke God’s blessing and help, as well as to protect the wearers from harm.

PAGAN CUSTOMS REMAIN IN USE

37 Bowl with Aramaic inscription, based on biblical Psalm 91 about divine protection, provenance probably Iraq, c. 600, pottery, APM
It was believed that these kinds of bowls would protect the occupants of a house or a family. They were buried upside down in corners of rooms, under thresholds, in gardens or cemeteries.
38 Magical text with fragment from the Egyptian Book of the Dead, Egypt, 10th cent., papyrus, APM
39 Pottery shard, with inscription about an angel, Egypt, early medieval, APM
40 Amulet capsule, provenance unknown, Roman, gold, LVR-LMB
41 Amulet capsule, provenance unknown, 7th cent., copper alloy, LVR-LMB
42 Grave goods from a woman’s grave, including an amulet capsule, Meckenheim [Allemagne], 7th cent., copper alloy, LVR-LMB
43 Sword belt fittings with depiction of two bearded men, Szentendre [Hungary], second half 6th cent., copper alloy, silver and niello, HNM
In Memoriam

A sense of identity is usually developed through contact with and in relation to others. It gives a feeling of belonging to a group or differentiates itself from others. In the early medieval period, religion, ancestry, status, sex and age were key factors in the development of an identity. This was reflected in many customs and traditions, such as burial rituals and the custom of interring the dead with grave goods. Equally important in endowing a sense of identity were not only symbols and clothing, but also different religious beliefs, social structures or settlement patterns. And lastly, the rulers of the Germanic successor states of the Roman Empire legitimised their authority by tracing their lineage back to mythical origins, basing their symbols of power and traditions on those of their role models, the rulers of Antiquity.

1 Golden disk fibula with niello,
Kölked (Hungary), first half 7th cent., HNM

The decorative elements of this gold disk fibula are carved in the typical intertwined animal style that we know from objects found in the graves of the Frankish Empire. This and other comparable pieces bearing similar ornamentation are evidence that this jewellery style remained in use, even under Avar rule.

2 Two (wedding?) crowns,
Greece, 10th cent., tinned bronze, BCM

These crowns may have been used as wedding crowns. The first mentions in Greek ‘Lord, help your servant, the spathorokandidatos Romanos, his wife and children’. Spathorokandidatos originally referred to a senior official of the Byzantine court. Later it was used as a general honorary title. On the other hand,...
crown, the inscription reads: ‘Thou settest a crown of precious stones on his head. He asked Life of Thee and Thou gavest it him; even length of days, for ever and ever’. (Psalm 21:4-5).

GRAVE GOODS AS SYMBOL OF SOCIAL IDENTITY: THE ‘DAME’ OF GREZ-DOICEAU

From the end of the 5th century there is a discernable difference in the use of grave goods in the Frankish Empire: the gender of the deceased can be determined by the jewels and weapons that are placed in the grave. The number and quality of the material gives an indication of the social rank and position of the deceased. The grave of the ‘dame’ of Grez-Doiceau is one of the richest Merovingian graves found in Belgium since the discovery of the grave of Childeric in 1653. The woman had been given all kinds of gold jewelry and some richly decorated utensils. A golden solidus by Theudebert I was placed in her mouth as an obol for Charon.

Grave goods of the ‘dame’ of Grez-Doiceau, Bossut-Gottechain, 2nd third of the 6th century, SPW-AWaP:

3 Ornaments for a headdress (twenty-eight pieces), hypothetical reconstruction, gold
4 Coin (solidus) of Theudebert I (king of the Franks from 534 to 548), gold
5 Earrings, gold, garnet and glass
6 Pendants of a necklace, gold and garnet
7 Necklace, amber, glass and faience
8 Bird-shaped fibulae, gold, bronze, silver, garnet and glass
9 Ring, gold and silver
10 Scissors, iron

11 Knife with handle, iron, gold and silver
12 Chopping knife, iron
13 Lock and key of case, iron
14 Coin of Constans (341-342), bronze
15 Belt buckle, bronze
16 Buckle, bronze
17 Goblet, glass
18 Biconical pot, earthenware
19 Basin, bronze
20 Bucket, bronze, iron, wood (not on display)
21 Photo of the grave of the ‘dame of Grez-Doiceau’ during the excavation, Bossut-Gottechain, 2nd third of the 6th century
22 Map of the Merovingian cemetery of Grez-Doiceau, Bossut-Gottechain, end of the 5th to the 3rd quarter of the 7th century

FUNERARY STELAE

23 Tombstone with architectural motifs, eagle and cross, Fayum (Egypt), 7th cent., limestone, APM

Since Antiquity, the eagle has been a symbol of Zeus and of divine, imperial glory. On Coptic Christian funerary stelae, the eagle often wears a bulla (amulet holder) around its neck and/or is depicted with a cross. The image could refer to Christ who carries the soul of the deceased to heaven. Curiously, funerary stelae...
decorated with this motif often do not bear an inscription or the name of the deceased.

**Fragment of a tombstone with Christian symbols (copy)**
provenance: Saint-Servais church in Maastricht (Netherlands), 5th cent., original: limestone, RMO

In Merovingian times, the Tongres-Maastricht region was an important Early Christian Settlement. Saint Servais, the first bishop of the Netherlands and of what would later become the diocese of Liège, was situated there. Many Christian burials have been found in both cities.

**Tombstone (cast)**
Niederdollendorf (Germany), mid-7th cent., original: limestone.

Front: Frankish warrior with the sword (broad seax) that was typical for the 7th century. The male figure combs his hair, above him there are two snakelike animals similar to those found on jewellery, executed in the animal style. Back: lance bearer with aureole. As there is no inscription, its interpretation is still being discussed today. In many ancient cultures, long, thick hair was considered a sign of vitality; the warrior combing his hair could therefore be an allusion to eternal life after death.

**JEWELLERY AS STATUS SYMBOLS**

Early medieval jewellery reflected the status of the wearer, but also the influence of some prominent models. Byzantine jewellery long remains a source of inspiration, that extends far beyond the borders of the Empire. The Dorestad pin buckle may have been a local imitation of a typical Scandinavian pin, intended to close a thick coat.

**Earring in the shape of a half moon**
Greece, 6th-7th cent., gold, BCM

**Earring in the shape of a half moon**
Óbuda (Hungary), first half 7th cent., gold, HNM

**Finger ring from a woman’s grave**, Kobern-Gondorf (Germany), 7th cent., gold, LVR-LMB
The *aedicula* is inspired by Byzantine examples presenting the tomb of Christ.

**Finger ring with Roman intaglio from a woman’s grave**, Wesel-Bislich (Germany), first half 7th cent., gold, carnelian, LVR-LMB

**Cloisonné fibula**, Marilles, end 6th-beginning 7th cent., gold with garnet inlays, RMAH

**Pin**
Northern Iran (?), 7th-8th cent., gold, glass and semi-precious stones, RMAH

**Signet ring with bust of the owner under a cross and inscription in Syriac**, Iran, 4th-7th cent., gold, carnelian, RMAH

**Buckle with pin (copy)**
Dorestad (Netherlands), 9th cent., original: silver, RMO
The needle is inserted vertically through the clothing, after which the triangular part folds down and covers the pin.

**CHILDERIC’S GRAVE**

Childeric I (c. 440-481/482) was the first king of the Salian Franks, who ruled over parts of northern Gaul as allies of the Romans (*foederati*). The signet ring depicts him as the highest military commander and king. After Childeric’s death, his son Clovis I staged an elaborate funeral in Tournai to emphasise his own political claim to rule in Gaul. The discovery of his grave in 1653 was a real sensation, so much so that even more than a century later, in 1804, Emperor Napoleon I underlined his own claim to power by using the bee motif from the grave of Childeric on his coronation robes.

**Copies of two bee-shaped fittings from a sword belt from the grave of Childeric I**
Tournai, 5th cent., originals: gold with garnet, RMAH

**Copy of signet ring of Childeric I with inscription CHILDERICI REGIS**
Tournai, 5th cent., original: gold, RMAH

**Chifflet, Jean-Jacques, Anastasis Childerici I. Francorum regis, sive Thesaurvs sepulfchralis Tornaci Nerviorum effossus, & commentario illustratus**, 1588-1660, RMAH
FUNERARY STELAE

37 Tombstone of lady Rebecca, daughter of R. Moïse,
Tienen, 1255-1256, stone, RMAH

This tombstone is the first tangible proof of Jewish settlement in Belgium. The headstone was found in 1872 together with human remains. Inscription: 'An engraved stone is placed at the head of Lady Rivkah (Rebecca), daughter of Mr Moschè, who died in the year 5016 (1255-56) and that she may rest in Paradise'.

38 Tombstone with cross in a laurel wreath,
Egypt, date unknown, limestone, APM

The cross in a laurel wreath symbolizes salvation and victory and is a popular motif on Christian tombstones in Egypt. According to the inscription, Tasia died at the age of 25.

39 Tombstone of Makki ibn al Hassan ibn Musa
(Makki, son of al-Hassan, son of Musa),
Egypt, 829, marble, RMAH

Egyptian funeral habits change with the spread of Islam. A grave has to be as modest as possible to prevent the cult of the dead. However, this instruction is not always followed. The inscription on this tombstone points to the comfort that Allah offers to the deceased and his relatives. The death of the prophet Muhammad is presented as the greatest catastrophe ever. The deceased is mentioned by name as a witness, followed by his profession of faith. This way, we will remember that he was a believer and hoped to rise again, as promised in the Quran.

40 Tombstone of Athenodoros,
provenance unknown, 5th-6th cent., limestone, RMAH

This tombstone is decorated in the typical Greek-Roman style with an inscription in Greek and a depiction of a small temple (aedicula). A triangular pediment rests on two columns with Corinthian capitals; at the centre of the pediment is a depiction of the Egyptian symbol of life (ankh), used as a cross between the Alpha and the Omega.

TIRAZ

Originally, tiraz was the Persian word for embroidery. Gradually it acquired several meanings: an embroidered inscribed band on a luxury fabric, a robe of honour with inscriptions, or the royal workshop where these fabrics were produced. There were two types of tiraz factories: in a tiraz al-khassa they were produced exclusively for the court, while in a tiraz al-'amma the production was controlled by the court and the fabrics were sold to the community. Usually, these prestigious fabrics indicate the location of the tiraz workshop and the production date. Fragments of many linen tiraz have been found in Egyptian tombs, where they were used as shrouds.

41 Tiraz-fabric,
Tinnis (Egypt), dated 270 AH (883-884), linen and silk, The Phoebus Foundation, Antwerp

The inscription reads: ‘In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Allah be praised... Blessing of Allah to his servant, Ahmad, the Imam al-Mu' tamid ‘al-Ilah, Ruler of the Faithful. May Allah grant him a long life. Ordered by the emir Dja'far, son of the (ruler) of the faithful in the year (?), in the public tiraz workshop in Tinnis. Year 270 AH’. The Abbasid caliph, al-Mu'tamid, ruled from 870 to 896. The commissioner Dja'far, his son, was the Regent over the Western half of the Caliphate, to which Egypt belonged.
In 1901, the young conservator-Egyptologist Jean Capart bought for the museum the contents of two graves from Antinoë (Middle Egypt), which were excavated in 1899-1900 by the French archaeologist Albert Gayet. These are the grave ensembles of ‘the Embroideress Euphemia’ and those of the goldsmith Kolluthos and his wife Tisoia. The ‘natural mummy’ of Euphemia has been preserved almost intact. She was identified by Gayet as an ‘embroideress’ because he considered some of the textiles and objects in her grave to be embroideries and embroidery tools. Afterwards, however, they turned out to be tapestry fabrics, spinning and weaving instruments. In an inscription on a fabric, Gayet thought he recognized the name ‘Euphemiān’. This inscription was not found later.

The inscription reads: ‘In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Allah alone can give me success, in him do I trust (Koran 11/88). He is the Lord of the magnificent throne (Koran 9/129). And he who trusts in Allah, has in Him enough (Koran 65/3). Allah bless…in the year 300’.

Both warriors wear an inscription band (tiraz) on their upper sleeves.

The city of Antinooupolis, or Antinoë, in Middle Egypt, was founded by the emperor Hadrian on 30 October 130, as a memorial city to his beloved Antinous who had drowned in the Nile near the location of the new city. At the time of the Egyptian Expedition of Napoleon Bonaparte (1798-1801) the city was still in a remarkable state of preservation, with its gates, streets, temples and colonnades.
The bodies of Aurelios Kolluthos and his wife Tisoia were too poorly preserved to be transported and were left behind in Egypt by archaeologist Albert Gayet. Other finds from this grave ended up in the museum, including fragments of a sarcophagus, exquisite shrouds and large tunic fragments.

Textile from the tomb of Kolluthos and his wife Tisoia, Antinoë, radiocarbon dating: 1st quarter 4th cent.-1st quarter 5th cent. (84.6% probability), wool, RMAH

This impressive textile is described by Gayet as the last shroud of Kolluthos, wrapped around two other shrouds. Originally it may have served as a curtain. The frontal busts under the arches probably do not represent the grave owners, but rather have a Dionysian connotation; perhaps they are Dionysus and Ariadne or a maenad? Based on papyrus fragments, the grave can be dated between 454 and 456. The same texts also make it possible to identify the grave owners as Kolluthos and Tisoia.

‘Euphemia’ is no longer mummified according to the centuries-old ‘classical’ method which included removing organs from the body. She was dressed in several tunics, wrapped in shrouds and buried without a coffin. Salt on her skin and clothing helped the preservation process. Multidisciplinary research revealed that she was over 40 years old when she died and that she had had enough water and excellent food throughout the year. The number and quality of the clothes and textiles she was buried with, confirm her wealthy social background. ‘Euphemia’ recently underwent a significant conservation and restoration treatment, thanks to the generous support of a private sponsor through the King Baudouin Foundation.

The purple of the tunica was probably extracted from the Hexaplex trunculus. Multidisciplinary research revealed that she was over 40 years old when she died and that she had had enough water and excellent food throughout the year. The number and quality of the clothes and textiles she was buried with, confirm her wealthy social background. ‘Euphemia’ recently underwent a significant conservation and restoration treatment, thanks to the generous support of a private sponsor through the King Baudouin Foundation.

‘The Embroideress Euphemia’, with grave goods, Antinoë, radio-carbon dating of the hair of the ‘mummy’: 430-620 (95.4 % probability), linen and wool, RMAH

The purple of the tunica was probably extracted from the Hexaplex trunculus.
Small textile fragments with plant and animal motifs, from the tomb of the ‘embroideress Euphemia’, Antinoë, c. 5th - beginning 7th cent., linen and wool, RMAH

These small textile fragments are similar to the motifs on the fabric on Euphemia’s right shoulder and arm. It is possible that they come from this fabric.

Albert Gayet during excavations in Antinoë, Le Petit Journal, 10 January 1904

Between 1896 and 1914, Frenchman Albert Gayet (1856-1916) led the excavation campaigns in Antinoë. Although the excavations were carried out in a rather chaotic manner by present-day standards and the exact location of the pieces is rarely known, they have resulted in several complete grave ensembles.
No peace without war

Late Antiquity is characterized by a multitude of violent conflicts both within and outside the borders of the Roman Empire. These conflicts broke out for various reasons: climate change, warring neighbouring tribes, the attraction of prosperity... After the disappearance of the professional army of the Western Roman Empire, armies in the West were formed on the basis of social ties between leaders and aristocratic subjects. The latter received land in exchange for periodic military service. The Eastern Roman Empire maintained a diplomatic and an intelligence service and built fortifications in response to the Arab conquests. From the 8th century onwards, Vikings were the largest naval power in the West. With their ships they crossed the North Sea to sail the waterways of the Carolingian Empire. Our knowledge of weapons and military equipment from the Early Middle Ages is mainly derived from the many archaeological finds.

1 Belt buckle,
Kőlked (Hungary), first half 7th cent., gilded bronze, silver, with silver sulphide inlays (niello), HNM

This valuable buckle fastened the belt of a woman buried at the beginning of the 7th century in a large cemetery located in the Avar kingdom. The tongue of the buckle is adorned with a warrior holding two swords in his raised hands while fighting a snake. Depicted is a god, perhaps Týr, or an unknown local Germanic hero.
The custom of burying men together with their weapons was introduced in the Frankish Empire as of the late 5th century. The weapons on display represent the typical military equipment of warriors in the 6th and 7th century. Among other weapons, the *francisca* is part of this standard equipment. It could be used both as a striking as well as a throwing weapon. According to Isidor of Seville (560-635) this axe was named after the Franks because of their preference for this particular weapon. Unlike the Romans, the Franks did not have a permanent, centralized army.

**WELL-ARMED FRANKS!**

- **Childeric and his men,** 5th century, painting by Grzegorz Rosinski (2009)

Childeric is a Frankish king in the service of the Roman government as military and civil commander of the province of Belgica Secunda. The cruciform golden fibula discovered in his grave is a sign of dignity given by the Roman emperor to those who served him. Childeric lives with his people in the area between the Lys and Sambre. As a general in the service of the Roman army, he fights against the Huns, the Visigoths, the Saxons and the Alamanni.

**WAR AND DIPLOMACY**

- **Belt buckle,** Jülich (Germany), 6th cent., bronze, LVR-LMB
- **Two swords, double-edged blade (*spatha*),** Mülheim-Kärlich (Germany), late 5th-6th cent.; Wesseling (North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany), beginning of 7th cent., iron and silver, LVR-LMB
- **Sword, single-edged blade (*seax*),** Jülich (Germany), 6th cent., iron, LVR-LMB
- **Sword pendant,** Hochhemmerich (Germany), 6th-7th cent., gold and garnet, LVR-LMB
- **Angon,** Andernach (Germany), 6th cent., iron, LVR-LMB
- **Spearhead,** Neuwied-Heddesdorf (Germany), 6th cent., iron, LVR-LMB
- **Francisca (throwing axe),** Neuwied-Heddesdorf (Germany), 6th cent., iron, LVR-LMB
- **Shield boss,** Neuwied-Heddesdorf (Germany), 6th cent., iron, LVR-LMB
- **Grave goods from a man’s grave,** mid-7th cent., LVR-LMB

Single-edged sword (*seax*) with bronze decorative fittings on the scabbard, arrowheads, iron knife, flintstone, bronze belt fittings, two biconical pots

The custom of burying men together with their weapons was introduced in the Frankish Empire as of the late 5th century. The weapons on display represent the typical military equipment of warriors in the 6th and 7th century. Among other weapons, the *francisca* is part of this standard equipment. It could be used both as a striking as well as a throwing weapon. According to Isidor of Seville (560-635) this axe was named after the Franks because of their preference for this particular weapon. Unlike the Romans, the Franks did not have a permanent, centralized army.

- **Tomb of a young man in military equipment,** Harmignies, 5th cent., RMAH

**WAR SPOILS OR PRESENTS?**

- **Helmet,** *Cheragh Ali Tepe*, Northern Iran (?), late 6th-early 7th cent., iron, bronze, silver, RMAH
- **Folding seat,** *Cheragh Ali Tepe*, Northern Iran (?), late 6th-early 7th cent., iron, silver, brass, RMAH

This helmet and folding seat have supposedly been found in a Persian grave in northern Iran. Similar seats have been found in Avar graves in Hungary and Lombard graves in Italy. In the 6th century, Lombard mercenaries fought against the Sassanid Persians alongside the Byzantine army. The folding seat could be a spoil of war or a diplomatic gift. The luxurious decoration and choice of materials reflect the prestigious military and social status of their owner.

- **Victory of the first Sassanian king Ardashir I (224-241) on the last Parthian monarch in Hormozgan (224),** drawing of a rock relief in Firuzabad (Iran)
- **Photo of the equestrian statue of the Sassanian king Khosrow II (591-628),** Taq-i Bustan (Iran)
With a treasure consisting of 32 gold coins bearing the effigy of the emperors Phocas (602-610) and Heraclius (610-629), 21 gold jewels, 17 silver objects and a bronze seal was discovered on the island of Lesbos. This treasure was buried after 630, shortly after the Arabs started to advance into the eastern parts of the Byzantine Empire. The small crosses on some objects suggest that the wealthy owners were Christians. However, they continued to appreciate mythological scenes, such as the naked Aphrodite (born from the sea) depicted on the ladle (trulla).
SKULL FROM BRAIVES

29 Skull,
Braives, 6th-7th cent., RIBNS

Injuries caused by weapons are sometimes found on male skeletons. For example, tomb 97 of the Merovingian cemetery in Braives contained a skull with wounds caused by two weapons, one cutting, the other perforating. The deceased, about 30 years old, was accompanied in his grave by a seax or scramasax, a belt buckle plate, a biconical beaker, a knife and some small tools. The weapons remind us that any man of combatable age could be sent to battle. The head injuries could be the result of a violent conflict. Despite their healing it is likely that the trauma led to death a few months later.

29 Lex Salica,
8th cent., parchment

The Lex Salica dates from the beginning of the 6th century but is known thanks to copies from the 8th and 9th centuries. The text mainly concerns the regulation of inheritances and the punishment of theft, assault and murder. The wer(e) gild (blood money) is the amount to be paid to the victim or his family in case of personal injury. This amount varies according to the importance of the crime and the rank of the victim. Salian law had set a rate in advance for many cases (a blow to the head, a broken tooth, a severed finger...). Hereby the Merovingian kings made a judicial distinction between Romans and Franks.

30 Sword fittings,
Kunágota (Hungary, 7th cent.), HNM

In Kunágota (Hungary), an Avar leader was interred together with his horse and his weapons. The sword was ornately decorated for his funeral with plaques from a Byzantine casket.
Ohthere from Hålogaland
also the North becomes part of Europe (end of 9th century)

Merchant, seafarer and whale hunter Ohthere came from Hålogaland, an area in the North of Norway. He sailed over the White Sea, past the North Cape, and travelled to Sweden, South-Denmark, Finland, Wessex in England and Ireland. He described whales and reindeer and did not always dare to go ashore for fear of hostilities. Ohthere described his travels to King Alfred the Great of Wessex (r. 871-899) in Southern England, who will preserve the travelogue.

Theophanu
Byzantine princess and empress in East Francia (ca. 960-991)

Princess Theophanu was the niece of the Byzantine emperor. At the age of twelve she married in Rome the then eighteen-year-old future emperor Otto II. Theophanu’s magnificent robes, large retinue and glittering dowry made a great impression. The young empress would come to be known at the Ottonian court as ‘the Greek’. Along with her husband, Theophanu travelled from one imperial residence (’Pfalz’) to the next. After the death of Otto II in 983, she took on the regency for her three-year-old son together with her mother in law Adelheid. She was respected and recognised for her political skills.

Egeria
a smart pilgrim to the Holy land (4th century)

Egeria, from northern Spain, started in the year 381 an extensive pilgrimage to the holy places of Christianity in the eastern Mediterranean. Between 381 and 384 she travelled to Jerusalem via Constantinople (Istanbul), Egypt and Mesopotamia (present-day Syria and Iraq). She sometimes travelled by cart or on the back of a donkey, but mostly on foot, rarely accompanied by an escort and often in a group with other pilgrims. She wrote an account of her travels in Latin to her ‘sisters’, nuns or women living in a Christian community.

Abul-Abbas
Charlemagne’s elephant

The Asian elephant Abul-Abbas was a diplomatic gift from the caliph of Baghdad, Harun al-Rashid (r. 786-809), to Charlemagne (r. 768-814). Together with Isaac, a Jewish merchant sent by Charlemagne, the elephant travelled to the west along the southern shore of the Mediterranean. The elephant accompanied Charlemagne on his campaigns and travels to his imperial residences. What an impression this animal must have made! Abul-Abbas is thought to have died in 810 from a lung infection, while crossing the Rhine.

Hasdai Ibn Shaprut
Jewish scholar at the court of the caliph (ca. 915-970)

Ibn Shaprut, son of a wealthy and educated Jew from Jaén, studied languages at an early age: Hebrew, Arabic, Latin and Castilian. He also studied medicine. As senior official and scholar at the caliph’s court of Córdoba he was responsible for the diplomatic contacts with other rulers and realms. Thus, he received diplomats of Otto I and of the Byzantine Emperor and he corresponded with Jewish scholars in Southern Italy and the leader of the Khazars in the Russian steppe, who had proclaimed Judaism state religion.

Olympiodoros of Thebes
The diplomat with the parrot (380-430)

Olympiodoros, who called himself a wandering poet, came from the Egyptian city of Thebes and mastered Coptic and Greek, as well as the Latin language, a prerequisite for working as an envoy in the service of the Roman Emperors. Olympiodoros travelled some ten thousand kilometres and visited the Huns in the Danube region and negotiated with the Blemmyes, a Nubian people in modern Sudan. He also travelled to Thrace, Athens, Ravenna and Rome. Olympiodoros was accompanied by a parrot that could imitate people, dance, sing, swear and much more.
ABBREVIATIONS

APM: Allard Pierson Museum, Amsterdam
BCM: Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens
HNM: Hungarian National Museum, Budapest
LVR-LM: LVR-LandesMuseum, Bonn
MRAH: Royal Museums of Art and History, Brussels
RGZM: Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum, Mainz
RIBNS: Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences
RMO: Rijksmuseum van Oudheden

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A

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B

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Archeohotspot
The Art & History Museum, in collaboration with urban.brussels, are rolling out a first ArcheoHotspot in Belgium: an open archaeolab, where the public can work with real archaeological material, guided by a team of volunteers with a passion for archaeology. The initiative launched in the Netherlands by the Allard Pierson Museum makes archaeology tangible and allows the public to get to know the material from recent Brussels excavations up close and hands-on. Participants can help sort, identify and puzzle. This way a conversation can develop about what the finds tell us, about the past and about archaeology as a science.

The open archeolab is part of the exhibition ‘Crossroads. Travelling through the Middle Ages’, which runs from 27.9.19 to 29.03.20. The ArcheoHotspot is open on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays from 14:00-16:00.

Preventive archaeology in het Brussels Capital Region
Within the Brussels Capital Region, Urban.brussels manages the archaeological heritage. It organizes the preventative archaeological research to preserve and study the traces of the past still present in the subsoil and in ancient buildings. This research is planned prior to or simultaneously with building activities, renovation and infrastructural works and is carried out by the Department Archaeological Heritage or assigned to a licensed institution. It is based on the archaeological potential as defined by the regional atlas and can take different forms: surveys and test pits, preventative excavations, archaeological accompaniment and building archaeology. In the case of discoveries, a rescue excavation can be organized. Each field intervention is followed by the laboratory treatment of the archaeological material. The collected data are then studied by the archaeologists to reconstruct the evolution of the sites and buildings.

More information?
Go to: http://patrimoine.brussels