MEROVINGIAN, WITH A ROMAN TWIST

A study on Roman remains in Merovingian grave context

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1 PREFACE

Before you lies the master's thesis 'Merovingian, with a Roman twist'. A study into Roman remains in Merovingian grave context. This thesis is written to meet the graduation requirements of the Faculty of Archaeology at Leiden University. The thesis was written in the period of January 2016 to November 2017.

I would like to use this preface to thank my thesis supervisor Prof. dr. F.C.W.J. Theuws for his guidance and occasionally pointing me in the right direction. In addition, I would like to thank my sister-in-law, Willeke Derks-van der Zee for her help in eliminating the spelling mistakes. Lastly, a big thank you to my family and friends whom I have always been able to build on during the more difficult periods and to keep me motivated.

Enjoy reading this thesis,

Manouk Derks

Zwolle, November 1st 2017

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2 INTRODUCTION

This thesis has been written in response to the Master's program at the University of Leiden. The focus of the thesis are Roman remains in Merovingian grave contexts. Archaeological evidence shows that many Roman objects were reused during the Merovingian period. Roman coins, that are still worth their weight in gold during the Merovingian period, are not used as currency but often worn as amulets. In a Merovingian cemetery, Roman roof tiles and other building material are used in a graves' construction.

Due to a lack of research on this matter, it is unknown whether the reuse of Roman remains is merely convenient or if it has a certain spiritual significance. Whether the reuse of Roman remains and its significance is possible to research is a part of this thesis. Through this research an attempt is made to search for certain patterns that clarify the reuse of Roman remains. The use of Roman coins as amulets while they could still be used as a currency suggests a more spiritual significance rather than a practical convenience.

2.1 LAY-OUT THESIS

The first chapter of this thesis is comprised of previous studies. These studies are about possible reasons for reuse of so-called 'ancestral objects' and a research into Roman coins in Merovingian grave contexts in Germany. Secondly, a short and global description of the Merovingian period will be provided to give an understanding about this period. Here a global summary of the timeline of the Merovingian period will be given. Furthermore, this chapter will also describe the characteristics of Merovingian cemeteries. Chapter 6 is focussed on the various sites and will comprise of a case study encompassing several Merovingian sites. All of the Merovingian sites are cemeteries. In this chapter, the burial customs of the variety of sites and the remains that were found within will be elaborated. Chapter 7 is comprised of the results with added conclusive remarks of each case study. Chapter 8 contains the conclusion of the study. In this chapter the sub questions and the research question are repeated and answered. A discussion will take place in chapter 9. The discussion will mainly involve recommendations for further research.

2.2 RESEARCH QUESTION

Several case studies will be examined through a literature study. The case studies that will be studied are sites from the Netherlands and Belgium. The research focuses on the reuse of Roman remains in Northwest Europe during the Merovingian period.

A research question is formulated to be able to conduct this research. In order to keep the overview, the research question is divided into sub questions. The research question is:

What can the reuse of Roman remains tell us about the Merovingian view on the Roman Empire and their mindset towards the previous period in Northwest Europe?

The sub questions that will help to answer the research question are:

1. *What is the definition of reused Roman remains?*
2. *How can we define whether Roman remains were reused?*
3. *What type of Roman objects were reused and what function did they serve?*
4. *What is the reuse ratio of Roman remains in the selected sites and between the selected sites?*
5. *Are the reuse ratios sufficient to make an adequate conclusion?*

3 METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the emphasis is put on the method and order of the study and this thesis. How is the data collected and how does the study relate to this thesis? This chapter also revolves around the introduction of the selected case studies and the definition of reused Roman remains.

3.1 METHOD

Working in a specific order is needed to achieve an adequate result. First, it is necessary to describe how accidental and/or deliberate reused Roman remains can be distinguished. The occurrence of Roman remains in Merovingian contexts may be the result of the presence of a Roman layer below the Merovingian layer. It is therefore important to determine which Roman remains were deliberately reused and what remains accidentally ended up in the Merovingian contexts. Another method used is to determine whether objects were broken or complete. Broken objects on a site with Merovingian remains may rather be accidental finds in Merovingian contexts. Complete objects may have been deposited on purpose, although it cannot be excluded that broken objects were deposited on purpose too. In that case it is important to determine the position of the objects in relation to the deceased in the grave. Moreover, in order for the results to be of any relevance it is required to determine the ratio in which the occurrence of deliberately placed Roman remains is present in a Merovingian context.

The information used for this thesis is solely derived from publications and literature on Roman and Merovingian sites and the concerned case studies. The author of this thesis did not participate in any of the excavations concerning the case studies, nor did the author conduct a study on the excavated material first hand of any of the case studies.

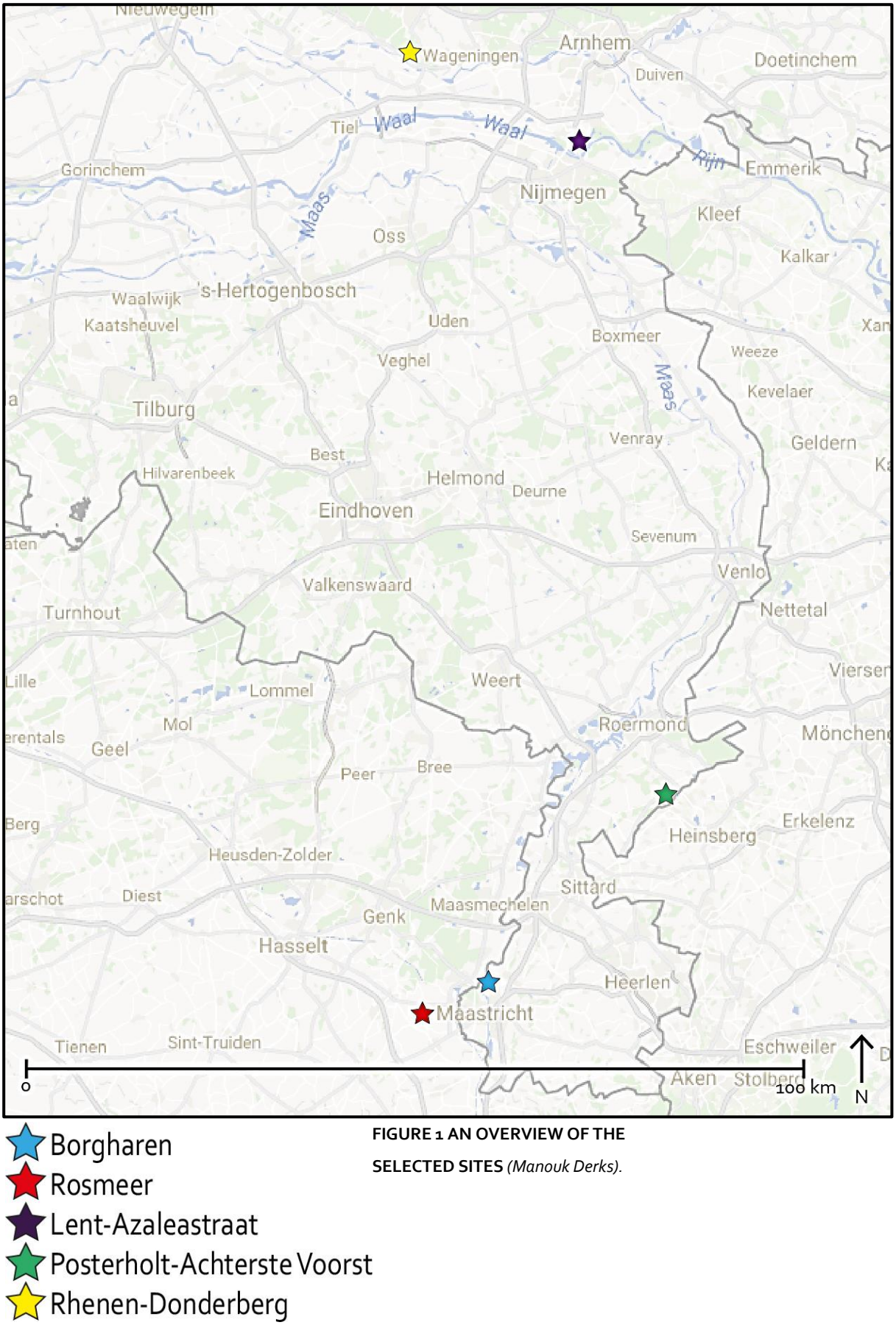


FIGURE 1 AN OVERVIEW OF THE SELECTED SITES *(Manouk Derks).*

3.2 CASE STUDIES

For the literature study, a number of case studies from the Netherlands and Belgium has been used. The case studies are the Merovingian cemeteries of Borgharen, Posterholt-Achterste Voorst, Rosmeer, Lent-Azaleastraat and Rhenen-Donderberg (figure 1).

Several Northwest European case studies show a Merovingian cemetery placed atop the site of a Roman villa (Borgharen and Rosmeer). When studying the different Merovingian sites, it is notable how often the Merovingian sites are situated atop Roman sites. It gives the suggestion that this may have been executed for a reason and that the sites were carefully chosen. On the other hand, the locations might as well have been picked due to practical reasons, the location has already been cleared of forests and rubble and is not suitable for agriculture. A counter-argument for the latter comes from more recent studies. Decomposition of human remains is a high nutrient resource that accelerates vegetation growth (Carter, Yellowlees & Tibbett 2007, 20; Niziolomski, Rickson, Marquez-Grant & Pawlett 2016, 5) and is therefore an advantage for agriculture.

3.3 REUSE OF ROMAN REMAINS

In order to study the reuse of Roman remains in a Merovingian context, it is important to define the definition of reused Roman remains. The material described in this thesis can be interpreted in two ways. That is, deliberately reused material from a previous period in a Merovingian context or accidentally landed material from a previous period in Merovingian context. It is important to determine whether an object is reused deliberately or not, because deliberately reused material informs us about the relation between object and user. Someone took great care in the use of an object, giving the object value, which in exchange tells something about the user's personal values.

Disposed objects have lost value as a functional object to its user. The object may have been broken and the user could not use it anymore. Or the object simply lost its practical value because the user did not care for it anymore. It must be borne in mind, however, that broken objects does not per definition mean that the object has lost any value. It may have been purposely destroyed or taken apart. The object eventually accidentally landed within a Merovingian context, perhaps through farming or digging in the ground. But how do we

determine whether an object is deliberately or accidentally reused? For that, the context in which the object is found is of utmost importance. Without context, it is almost impossible to determine whether an object is reused or not. Unless it is clear that the object has been altered to fulfil its new purpose, for instance creating a hole in a coin to alter the coin into a necklace or amulet. Deliberate reuse is when the object in question is part of the context in a way that clearly illustrates the relation to the individual or to the grave. An example is when a Roman tile fragment is reused as part of a grave's construction from a later period than the Roman object (Müller & Smal 2011, 55). In this case the Roman tile fragment is reused in a Merovingian grave context.

4 HISTORIOGRAPHY

This chapter discusses previous studies that were focussed on the reuse of objects and broadly describes the events that mark the end of the Roman Empire and the entire Merovingian period. These events are essential for the understanding of the previous and subsequent periods and they may help understand how Merovingians viewed the previous periods. Certain events that transpired, can form the basis of how one views an earlier period, and such events can give another "spiritual" significance to an ancestor, object or period.

4.1 PREVIOUS STUDIES

In the past, more research has been conducted into the meaning of ancestral objects and the meaning of much older objects than the context in which the objects were found. Ever since prehistory, humankind is already aware of ancestors or entities that are considered important and are of a certain value.

4.1.1 ANCESTRAL OBJECTS

A good example of this awareness of ancestors or certain entities comes from prehistoric England and concerns Tors. Tors are natural rock formations known mainly from Southwest England. These natural formations were found to be important in the Neolithic, considering that stone enclosures were built around these tors during this period (Bradley 1998, 15). In close vicinity of these tors, are also megalithic structures that resemble the tors and functions as tombs. However, man-made structures are also found in areas where no tors were found nearby. It is not clear as to why these formations were copied, but a suggestion is made by Bradley (1998). According to Bradley, the problem is not in the interpretation of these rock formations, but in the modern concept of geology and what is natural and what is cultural. In the Neolithic, it was not obvious that these rock formations were naturally formed, it is not self-evident that the prehistoric man was familiar with the concept of natural and cultural structures (Bradley 1998, 20). Therefore, it is highly possible that the Neolithic people thought that these rock formations were made by ancestors to bury their dead and the Neolithic people did the same (Bradley 1998, 19-20).

Not only complete objects were used to maintain the connection with ancestors. There is also evidence that objects have been destroyed deliberately and used elsewhere so that this way ancestors could be remembered. In Locmariaquer, a menhir was deliberately split to be used as roofs for megalithic tombs (Bradley 2002, 36-37). Destruction of objects can be carried out in practical terms. According to Caple, the objects lost their value of age or associated meaning, but are reused from a practical point of view (2010, 309). The fact that these objects are deliberately destroyed does not necessarily mean that the objects lost meaning or value. The functional value has been shifted into a different meaning with its own values, resulting in a new purpose for the object. In the Netherlands there are a few examples of objects which have shifted in function and thus value. The Sint-Nicolaas chapel and the Sint-Maartens chapel in Nijmegen for example, has Roman building material incorporated in its construction. Moreover, the church of Dodewaard has a Roman tomb stone incorporated in one of its outer walls (Langereis 2007, 65). Noteworthy about the Roman building materials in both cases is, that when placed within the building's construction, the sides with the inscriptions are faced outwards so that it is still visible. Chapman (2000) states that the presence of fragmented pottery in graves is part of structured deposition and that it represents a link to the living past (Chapman 2000, 49). This suggests that not the complete design of an object gives it its spiritual charge, but the idea that it was manufactured and used by an ancestor. Thus, only small parts or incomplete objects may suffice as a link. This proposal of structured deposition must be able to be ascertained through archaeological studies. Fragments of the same vessel should be found in several graves, unless men only possessed fragments instead of complete objects from the previous period. The problem that arises is that contexts are destroyed regularly by cultural or natural processes, making it difficult to determine whether an object is deliberately fragmented or destroyed during such a process.

4.1.2 ROMAN COINS

In 2004 Max Martin published an article on Roman coins in Merovingian contexts. According to Martin, three groups can be recognized regarding the reuse of Roman coins in Merovingian grave context. Martin only took into account denarii dating from the Republican period (Emperor Augustus to Septimius Severus)(Martin 2004, 247). The first group concerns graves of either gender where a Roman denarius is found in the mouth of the deceased. It was a custom in the Greek world to place a coin (Charon's obol) in the mouth of the deceased during

the burial as a payment to the ferryman Charon for passage to the afterlife. This custom has then spread to the Roman world where it is frequently observed in all corners of the Roman Empire (Stevens 1991, 215; Martin 2004, 247). The second group concerns, according to Martin, graves belonging to adult and non-adult females with Roman coins with suspension loops. These Roman coins were either worn as amulets, attached to a belt or on a necklace (Martin 2004, 247). It is possible that there are multiple coins present per grave. In the third group the Roman coins are found in adult and non-adult male graves around the pelvis area in a belt bag or anywhere else where the belt bag was deposited (Martin 2004, 247). The reasons for carrying around the Roman coins in the ways as described above is not known. The coins in the mouth of the Merovingian deceased may as well have been a continuation of the Greek and Roman custom.

In addition to reusing objects from previous periods, it is also common for sites, where remains of the previous period are still present, to be reused. Like objects, sites can be approached in the same way, but on a larger scale. Does the site hold any value towards its reusers? To stay on topic, Roman sites are usually filled with debris of building materials and remains of structures or graves. Yet, on occasion, as also will become clear in this thesis, Merovingians chose that location to found a cemetery. It would not have been easy to dig graves in the midst of building debris. This suggests that the Merovingians have made the choice of location intentionally and have deliberately chosen the Roman site to relate to their ancestors.

5 MEROVINGIAN PERIOD

This section discusses the history of the Merovingians, from the end of Roman period to the beginning of the Carolingian period. Notable events are described that have had an influence on the political and cultural situation of, in particular, the Dutch area.

5.1 TAKING A STEP BACK

The late Roman period began in Northwest Europe around 275 AD and ended around 450 AD (van Es 1994, 64). The Roman Empire in the late Roman period is mainly ravaged by invading barbarians[1]. These barbarians, however, were not unknown to the Romans. Around the border area of the Roman Empire lived many small Germanic tribes who maintained contacts with the Romans. Trading took place between the Germanic tribes and the Romans and Germanic young men were recruited by Roman officers to join the Roman army (van Es 1994, 66; Goldsworthy 2011, 55). The Roman General Tacitus describes in his annals that he favours the use of auxiliary forces. For example, the Batavians were favoured for their bravery and the Tencterians for their cavalry (Tacitus 4, 24, 12). During the late Roman period military strategy shifted and a new concept was introduced, the so-called 'defence-in-depth'. This strategy moved the Roman legions from the frontline and placed smaller troops some distance behind the frontline in Roman territory (Blockmans & Hoppenbrouwers 2011, 45). The border between Roman territory and barbarian territory was still a defensive line with towers and walls, but instead of having a border a frontier zone was created (Breeze 2011, 161-163). A disadvantage of this new strategy was that smaller bands of barbarians could cross the frontline with more ease. In order to repel this, the Romans decided to create buffer zones in which barbaric tribes were allowed to settle within the Roman territory in exchange that the tribes helped protecting the border (Blockmans & Hoppenbrouwers 2011, 45). These tribes also functioned as farmers and paid taxes to the Roman Empire (Halsall 2007, 149).

[1] The term barbarians refers to anyone who lives outside the Roman empire

Besides having contact with the Romans on the other side of the border, also contact between the Germanic tribes arose. In Northwest Europe the Germanics were called Franks by the Romans. At the beginning of the fourth century, problems at the heart of the Roman Empire caused Roman legions to be recalled. Only a few remaining Roman troops were stationed in Northwest Europe (van Es 1994, 79). In the fifth century it was clear that the Roman troops would not come back and the Frankish tribes were left at their fate, much of their contacts and trade went through or with the Romans and this stopped. A crisis arose whereby settlements throughout Northwest Europe disappeared or moved.

Late Roman emperors tried to maintain their grip on the Dutch part of Germania inferior, by allowing Salian Franks to settle in an area called the Betuwe. These agreements were made official through treaties, which were known as *foedera* (de Vries 1974, 1; Halsall 2007, 152, 153; Blockmans & Hoppenbrouwers 2011, 45). At present Geldrop evidence of a settlement of possible Salian Franks from the fourth and fifth century was discovered. Clues on continuous occupation on the same location were not found (van Es 1994, 79). The Roman period has passed in Northwest Europe and the Merovingian period has arrived.

5.2 FROM EMPERORS TO KINGS

The Salian Frankish king Childeric was the first king of the Merovingian. His son Clovis has successfully expanded his influence and power in southern direction and had become king of the Frankish empire (van Es 1994, 82; Blockmans & Hoppenbrouwers 2011, 121). Clovis baptized in the year 498 AD by the archbishop of Reims. The expansion towards the south and the conversion to Christianity feels like Clovis reaches back to the Roman empire (van Es 1994, 82, 83). The successors of Clovis continued into Clovis's footsteps, and his grandson even held Roman games and minted coins based on Roman coins (van Es 1994, 83).

Although the Salian Franks probably rooted in present Netherlands, the epicentre of the Merovingian kingdom was in France, more accurately in the area of Paris. The Dutch area did not even belong to the Merovingian kingdom. The southern part of the Netherlands was nevertheless an important place for contacts and trade, given that the Rhine and Meuse rivers provided a natural flow of trade. Archaeological research, especially the study of the cemeteries at Rhenen and Elst, shows that from the sixth century the Dutch region plays an

important role. At least, some rich graves indicate the presence of important persons or nobles in the Dutch area (van Es 1994, 86, 87).

At the beginning of the sixth century, Hettergouw was plundered by the Danish king Hygelac. On the way back from his raid, Hygelac was defeated by Prince Theodebert, Clovis's grandson. This suggests that the Dutch part was of importance to the Franks and was considered part of the empire and defended by it (van Es 1994, 88). The Franks seem to have control over a large part of Northwest Europe, but from the sixth century the Frisians also take an interest in expanding their territory. Dorestad is a good example. This settlement was over and again Frankish or Frisian, but ultimately remained in Frankish hands.

The Merovingian dynasty eventually came to its end when a family of palace mayors (maiores domus), the Pippinids, gradually took power under the rule of Charles Martel and replaced the Merovingians. His son and successor, Pepin the Short eventually called himself king, which was the start of the Carolingian period. It was, however, the rule of Charles the Great and the impression he left behind that got this period its name (Blockmans & Hoppenbrouwers 2011, 121 – 126).

5.3 MEROVINGIAN CEMETERIES

In addition to political and cultural changes that took place after the fall of the Roman Empire, a shift in burial rites also transpired. While during the Roman period, especially in our area, the preference was given to cremations (Goldsworthy 2011, 116). Inhumations got the upper hand during the late Roman and Merovingian period and eventually became the standard. Merovingian cemeteries are characterized as so-called ''Reihengräberfelder'. As the name suggests, the graves are equally orientated and are more or less placed side by side forming rows, giving the cemetery an orderly appearance, as shown in Figure 2. The "Reihengräberzivilisation" was firstly introduced by Joachim Werner in his seminal paper 'Zur Entstehung der Reihengräberzivilisation' (Halsall 2009, 93). In this paper he also argued that the rich graves occurring during the Merovingian period most likely belonged to *laeti*.[2] Cremations in the Merovingian period are, although compared to inhumations to a lesser extent, present in cemeteries. The cemetery at Rhenen contains over 1100 burials, with over

[2] Barbaric prisoners of war who were assigned land in return for military service (Hallsall 2009, 316).

300 cremations and 820 inhumations (Wagner & Ypey 2011, 7). There is a total of 83 burials, of which approximately 80 are inhumations and 3 cremations, at the cemetery of Posterholt-Achterste Voorst (de Haas & Theuws 2013, 65).

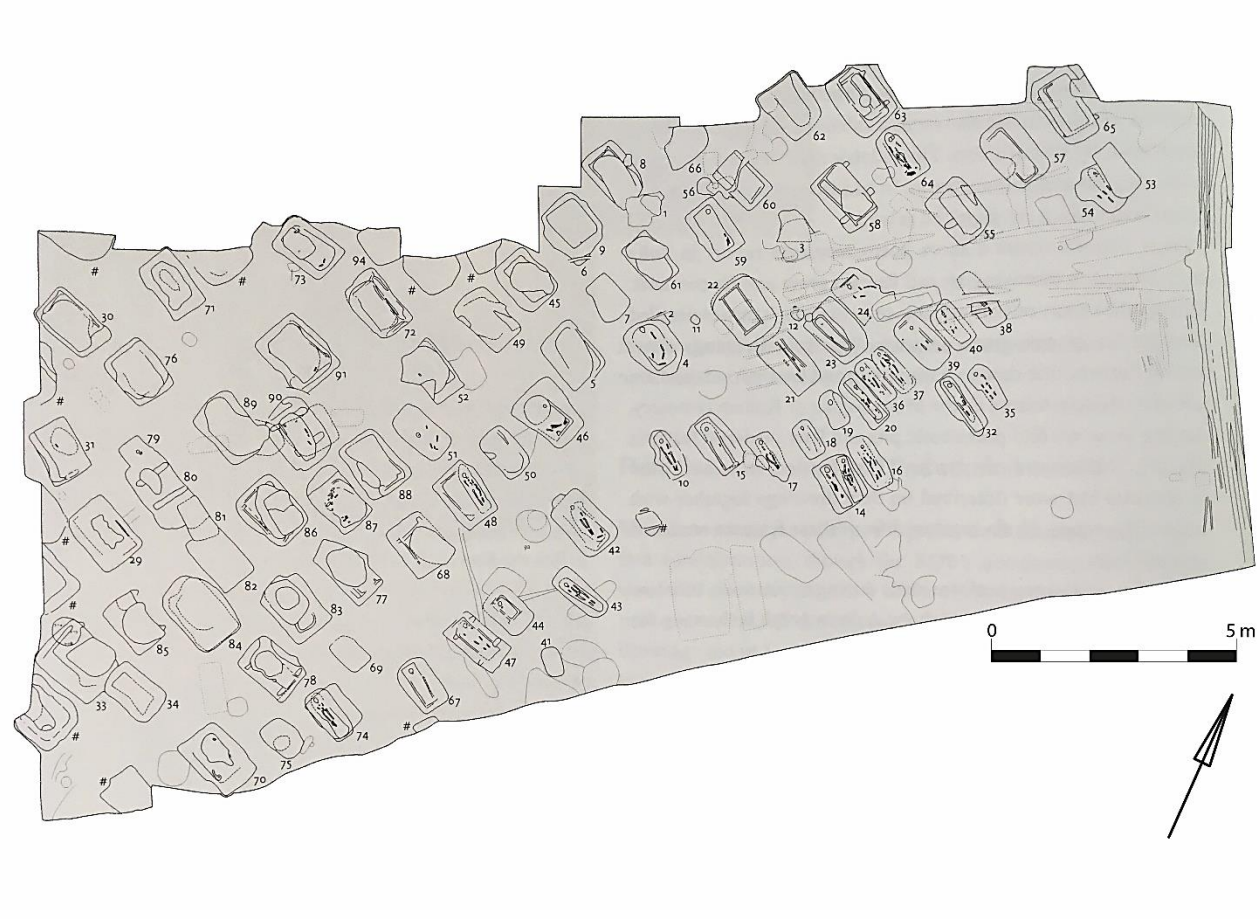


FIGURE 2 THE MEROVINGIAN CEMETERY OF POSTERHOLT-ACHTERSTE VOORST. THE GRAVES LARGELY SHARE THE SAME ORIENTATION AND ARE PLACED MORE OF LESS IN ROWS *(After de Haas 2013, 30).*

The Merovingian cemeteries offer a good overview of the type of objects that were made and appreciated in the Merovingian period. The previous paragraph demonstrated how the transition from the Roman to the Merovingian period affected the existing settlements. This also occurred to cemeteries and more particular, inhumation graves. From the fifth century, an increase in grave goods is witnessed. Due to this transition, it has become possible to get a perspective in the lives of the Merovingian population. Examples of why the Merovingian period was not as dark and poor as many think it was, mainly derives from Merovingian cemeteries uncovered during archaeological excavations. It is believed that these extravagant inhumations were a way to show or strengthen their connection to the Roman Empire.

Metalwork recovered from these graves display imperial motifs and can be associated with the Roman Empire (Halsall 2007, 384, 385).

The burial customs were also, to a certain degree, a way to express a families' wealth, status or religion (Effros 2002, 1, 2). These customs, however, could give a distorted picture, since the relatives of the deceased most likely buried the deceased in an attire fit for the burial ritual. In that case, it will represent one's burial custom, but it will not necessarily represent one's everyday look. This detail will have a limited relevance to this study, as there is no attempt to provide a complete reconstruction of the burial rituals or cemeteries.

In Wijchen, archaeologists found several luxurious items like gilded fibulae, gold amulets and a buckle made of rock crystal (Heeren & Hazenberg 2010, 40-43, 61-71). At the Merovingian cemetery of Rhenen-Donderberg strings of beads made of glass, amber and ceramics were found. Also, fibulae inlayed with almandine, coin amulets and rings were buried with the deceased (Wagner & Ypey 2011, 55-647; Willemsen & Huiskes 2011, 67, 69). Another cemetery at Elst also uncovered fibulae with almandine (Verwers & van Tent 2015). This is just a small selection of examples that could be given regarding the riches with which Merovingians were buried. Cemeteries and graves provide archaeologists and the general public a unique opportunity not only to gain insight into Merovingian burial rituals and values of the period, but it also provides an insight into (spiritual) ideas and thoughts. It gives the funeral and the relationships between the living and the dead meaning and value. Just like the Roman period and the preceding periods, relatives of the deceased in the Merovingian period took value into the idea to not let the deceased go without conveniences. And, just like previous periods there is a distinction between male and female graves. Male graves often contain items such as swords, seaxes, spears, shields and other weaponry as well as vessels of various kinds. Whilst female graves often hold vessels, jewellery and knives. The types of grave goods per case study will be dealt with in the next chapter (Halsall 2007, 384).

6 CASE STUDIES

Now that reused material is defined and a distinction is made between deliberate and accidental material, the case studies can be discussed and assessed. In this chapter, the Merovingian cemeteries are presented with a short summary of the excavation, its Roman predecessor and any relevant information concerning the grave goods and their positions. Only Merovingian graves with Roman remains are described and studied in this thesis, all other graves are not discussed. The grave goods are presented in text, but are also presented as tables in the Appendices (Appendices I, II, III, IV, V, VI) Appendix I contains an overview of al case studies and the Roman remains. Conclusions made by the authors of the relevant publications about possible functions of the Roman structures are not questioned in this thesis. The functions, either villa or anything else, do not affect this research.

6.1 BORGHAREN

The excavation at Borgharen revealed a Merovingian cemetery located on the grounds of a Roman villa. An estimated 900 m^2 has been excavated during campaigns in 2008 and 2009. During these campaigns trenches from previous campaigns in 1995 and 1999 were localized, leaving approximately 550 m^2 to be uncovered for the first time. Within the site sixteen features were interpreted as graves (Müller & Smal 2011, 45). Excavations in 2012 revolved only around areas that were examined during previous campaigns.

The excavations in 1995 uncovered the remains of a Roman villa. The Roman villa was situated at what is now the Pasestraat in Borgharen, a town north of Maastricht. The villa produced products that were sold at the market in the neighbouring vicus of Maastricht (Traiectum ad Mosam)(de Groot, Müller, Soeters & Theuws 2011, 13). Figure 3 shows the excavation on the Pasestraat in relation to Borgharen.

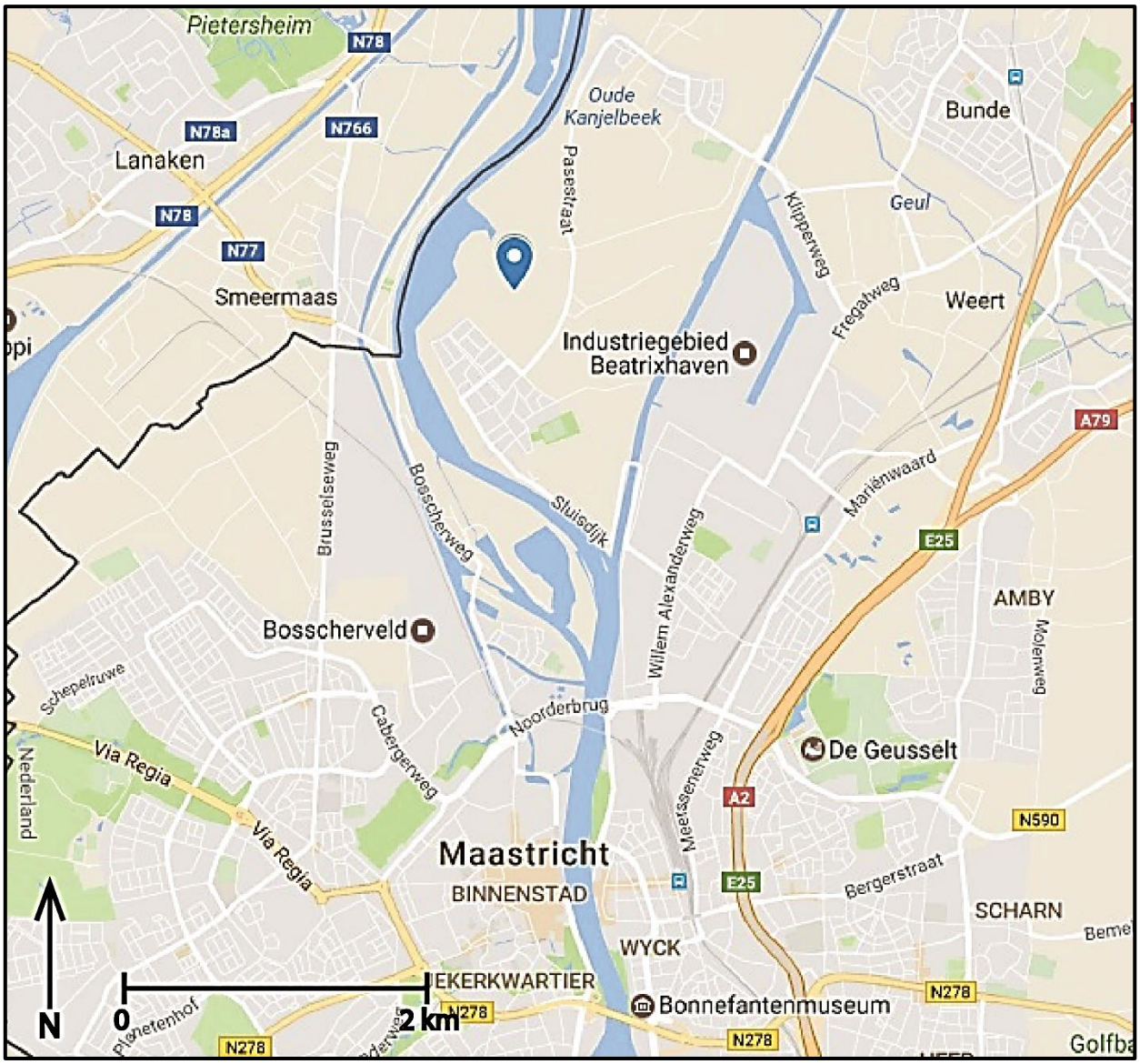


FIGURE 3 THE RESEARCH AREA AT BORGHAREN *(Manouk Derks).*

6.1.1 PREVIOUS CAMPAIGNS

The remains of the villa concerned, among other things, a hypocaust system probably related to baths. One of the Merovingian graves (grave X) was built into the Roman hypocaust-system and surrounded by several other Merovingian graves (Dijkman 2003, 13, 14; de Groot, Müller, Soeters & Theuws 2011, 17). During the campaign of 1995 and a follow-up in 1999, nine graves containing thirteen individuals have come to light, one grave was left in situ. Of the thirteen individuals, seven have been interpreted as female and three as male. The positioning of the graves shows that this is a typical Merovingian cemetery (Reihengräberfeld) and the graves are dated to the second half of the sixth century to the first quarter of the seventh century. Part

of the *opus-signinum*[3] floor of the former Roman bathhouse was dug in. According to some researchers at the time this may indicate a reuse of the floor or building as a burial chapel (de Groot, Müller, Soeters & Theuws 2011, 17). The graves fillings consist mainly of gravel and Roman rubble. Remains of Roman buildings were thus still visible during the founding of the Merovingian cemetery.

During the earlier campaigns, the remains of a horse were found in one of the graves. A significant part of the grave was located outside of the excavation trench and was therefore left in situ. Due to the proximity of a Merovingian human burial (2.5 m) the horse grave was dated to the Merovingian period. A few meters further away the remains of another horse were found. The horse appeared not to be buried, but was interpreted as a cadaver dating from the Roman period (de Groot, Müller, Soeters & Theuws 2011, 17). In the near vicinity of the Pasestraat another grave was found in 2003. The grave, however, dates to around 450 – 525 AD, approximately a century earlier than the graves found at the Pasestraat. The excavations of 2008 and 2009 exposed traces which may indicate the presence of buildings. During the campaign of 2008, eleven Roman coins were found. Most coins were uncovered during the opening up of the trenches (Hulst & Dijkman 2008, 23). Throughout the years the site uncovered several Roman coins dating from the second century up until the fourth century. In 2008 eleven coins were found, most of which were found without context (Dijkman 2003, 23).

6.1.2 THE MEROVINGIAN CEMETERY

Some graves from this cemetery pertain to this thesis due to the Roman finds in the graves. These graves are selected and are presented in this section. There is one notable grave (grave X), which is built into the hypocaust system of the Roman villa. It is believed that this grave might be the founder's grave of this cemetery. A dating analysis does show that the graves further from grave X are the youngest graves in the cemetery, except for the furthest grave V, this grave have been left in situ.

[3] A sort of cement of crushed pottery and lime (Pliny the Elder 35, 46, 7).

Grave 2008-2 is an inhumation grave of a young girl (9-13 years old) buried in a wooden container with a brass bowl. Remains of wood and nails are the remaining evidence of this container (Müller & Smal 2011, 50, 55). Furthermore, a significant number of ceramic fragments was scattered throughout the grave. The fragments have not been described, but can be dated to Roman period, since the site was solely used as a cemetery shortly after the turn of the fifth century (Hendriks 2014, 96). In this grave a cowrie shell was found near the head's end (van der Jagt, Laarman, Kuijper, Nieman, van Os & Zwaan 2014, 176). Other grave goods in this grave are numerous beads with silver rings and silver wire, two biconical pots, a brass bowl, belt garniture, an iron decorated key, a gold tremissis, brass needle, brass ring and an iron knife (Kars & van Os 2011, 93-95).

Grave XI was robbed during the campaign of 2009, this caused some difficulties regarding the analysis of the internal structure of the grave. Within the grave, however, a number of Roman building material was found. Several fragments were horizontally placed on the floor and one fragment stood up right at the head end of the grave (Müller & Smal 2011, 55). Also some iron nails, an iron shield boss, two iron buckles and a brass Roman bowfibula were found in Grave XI (Kars & van Os 2011, 96). No detailed information about the bowfibula was given. It is said that the fibula did not belong to the grave's inventory (Kars & van Os 2011, 96).

Grave XII is a chamber grave containing pottery dating as early as the Iron Age to up until the Modern period. The remains of a child and adult male were found (Lauwerier, de Kort, Altena, Brandenburgh, Hendriks, van der Jagt, Kars, Kootker & Panhuysen 2014, 212). Most pottery, however, dates to the Roman period and the Merovingian period (Hendriks 2014, 96). At the bottom of the graves indications of two beams have been found. These beams probably functioned as supporting beams in relation to the grave chamber. With that also a couple of buildings blocks dating from the Roman period were found in this grave. The building blocks most likely also functioned as a support to the grave's construction. Two building blocks were cut out of marl and one out of bluestone. One of the blocks shows processing marks resulting from a flat chisel. Besides these larger blocks, a number of smaller fragments of ceramic building material were uncovered from this grave. The filling of this grave also contained a large quantity of Roman natural stone (de Kort, van Os and Tolboom 2014, 69; Lauwerier, de Kort, Altena, Brandenburgh, Hendriks, van der Jagt, Kars, Kootker & Panhuysen 2014, 212).

The grave contains various grave goods, belt garniture, remains of a sword, an iron umbo, sax fittings, an iron arrowhead, an iron ax, stirrups, nails, two barn stone beads, a highly fragmented biconical pot and a tremissis. Interesting about the tremissis is its position. The coin was found near the lower jaw, what could suggest that this coin was a Obol and meant to be payment for Charon (Lauwerier, de Kort, Altena, Brandenburgh, Hendriks, van der Jagt, Kars, Kootker & Panhuysen 2014, 213).

The excavation of grave XVI revealed plastic reading the year 1999, meaning that this grave was either disturbed in 1999 or after this year. In 2008 the grave revealed a wooden bucket containing a brass bowl. Furthermore, some nails and two indeterminable iron objects were found. Unfortunately, the grave could not be studied completely, leaving many questions regarding the internal structure of the grave (Müller & Smal 2011, 62). In 2012 this grave was deepened uncovering more human remains and grave goods, such as beads, fragments of a bone ring, fragments of a cowrie shell amulet, fragments of a comb, a knife, three brass rivets and a buckle, brass belt end tip, and an iron needle (de Kort 2014, 56). Also fragments of natural stone and ceramic building material dating in the Roman period were present in this grave. Also, this grave contained pottery from the Late Iron Age up until the Modern period with the majority dating from the Middle Roman period and the Merovingian period, but also the Modern period (Hendriks 2014, 96). The cowrie shell amulet is also an interesting grave good. The cowrie shell amulet is throughout the ages and civilizations known to be worn by women. In Roman believes the cowrie shell was a symbol for fertility and in Egypt it supposedly protects one's children from evil (Romano 1990, 14; Watterson 1991, 104). In the nineteenth century Naples cowrie shells were worn by women to protect them from infertility and venereal diseases (van der Jagt, Laarman, Kuijper, Nieman, van Os & Zwaan 2014, 179).

Grave XV belongs to a six-year old boy. The remains of the individual are no longer in anatomical context. The grave presumably contained a container in the centre of the grave, since no traces of stone and building rubble in the centre of the grave were detected, whilst these were present at the edges of the graves (Müller & Smal 2011, 62). Besides Merovingian artefacts, the grave also contained quite amount of natural stone dating in the Roman period, a Roman coin, a fragment of a coin and a fragment of a Roman silver fibula. 95% of the natural stone consists of marl, but also coal, pumice, lydite, bomb stein, slate and limestone occur.

This material, however, is solely present on the periphery of the grave (Müller & Smal 2011, 62, 69; de Kort, van Os & Tolboom 2014, 69). The Roman coin is highly corroded and undeterminable, the same goes for the second coin fragment. The position of the Roman finds was not described in detail.

The Merovingian cemetery revealed a quite substantial amount of Roman ceramic building material, indicating that the cemetery was indeed founded on top of a Roman villa. The presence of tegulae, imbrices, tubuli and lateres signify that it is a typical Roman villa, with wall and floor heating (de Kort, van Os & Tolboom 2014, 71 - 76). All together an amount of 9.874 fragments of ceramic building material from the Roman period was uncovered at the site. The fragments share a weight of 120.2 kg. The degree of fragmentation of the material is high, which suggests that the remaining material was used secondary.

It is hard to assess the Roman materials in the graves due to its distribution. Looking at graves such as VI, XII, XVI and XV not only Roman and Merovingian pottery occur within the graves' context, but also Prehistoric and Modern pottery was present, even at the deeper layers of the graves (Hendriks 2014, 97). The fragmentation rate of the pottery of all the periods present in the graves are quite high. This suggests that post-depositional process, like bioturbation or tillage have had a lot of influence on the graves' context (Hendriks 2011, 88; Hendriks 2014, 97).

6.2 Posterholt-Achterste Voorst

The Posterholt-Achterste Voorst is located in the province of Limburg, which lies in the south of the Netherlands, with the German border close to the east (Figure 4). The river Meuse is less than ten kilometres away from this area of research. In addition, the location is surrounded by smaller streams such as the Vlootbeek and the Roer.

6.2.1 Archaeological sites in the vicinity

In the vicinity of the study area several early medieval sites have been discovered during previous studies and/or observations. In the immediate vicinity, a Merovingian cemetery was discovered in Vlodrop, the same applies to the German Orsbeck and possibly Karken and Herten. In Sint Odiliënberg, at a distance of six kilometres, the presence of an early medieval (Carolingian) monastery is known (Theuws 2013, 10-13). Besides Merovingian finds also

remains of Roman activity were found in the immediate vicinity of the Posterholt-Achterste Voorst.

At the Voorsterveld several Late Roman coins were located indicating some sort of Roman activity. Additionally, at the Posterholt site, a Roman cemetery was discovered. Later it seemed that several Merovingian graves cut through Roman graves. Other Roman finds include brooches, fibulae, an axe, and decorated strap-ends (Theuws 2013, 15-17). Furthermore, approximately 100 meters southwest of Posterholt-Achterste Voorst more Roman cremation graves were discovered and two smaller Roman cemeteries, respectively 700 meters northwest of Posterholt-Achterste Voorst, called the Voorst cemetery and a cemetery a couple of hundred meters from the previous named cemetery, the Annendaal cemetery (de Haas & Hendriks 2013, 32). Official investigations in the research area encompassed in this study started out in 1983 and were comprised of a test excavation, revealing a Roman and a Merovingian cemetery. Later in 1984 a complete excavation was conducted uncovering 94 features, many of which were disturbed (de Haas 2013, 24, 25).

6.2.2 THE MEROVINGIAN CEMETERY

The 94 features appeared to include two pits, eight Roman cremation graves, one Iron Age cremation grave and 83 Merovingian graves. The Merovingian graves lie more or less in rows next to each other with an east-west orientation. There is, however, no clear correlation visible between the graves in each row. Of the 83 graves, nineteen graves were dateable, which made it difficult to recognize a relation between the rows. Three out of the 83 were cremation graves. Besides these 94 features, another 44 features were revealed, but these were left untouched and unnumbered (de Haas & Theuws 2013, 56, 165). Out of the 83 Merovingian graves, three appeared to be cremation graves, leaving 80 inhumation graves. Eventually, 75 graves were examined summing up a total of 81 burials.

Six graves contained a double burial or a later addition. The shapes of the graves vary, however, the majority of graves are rectangular with rounded corners (de Haas 2013, 56). Furthermore, most of the graves show traces of a wooden container or the outline of such container. Four graves even show outlines of two containers. Two of which were double containers, one might have been a wooden container within a wooden chamber and one grave appeared to be a tree trunk container within a wooden chamber (de Haas 2013, 59).

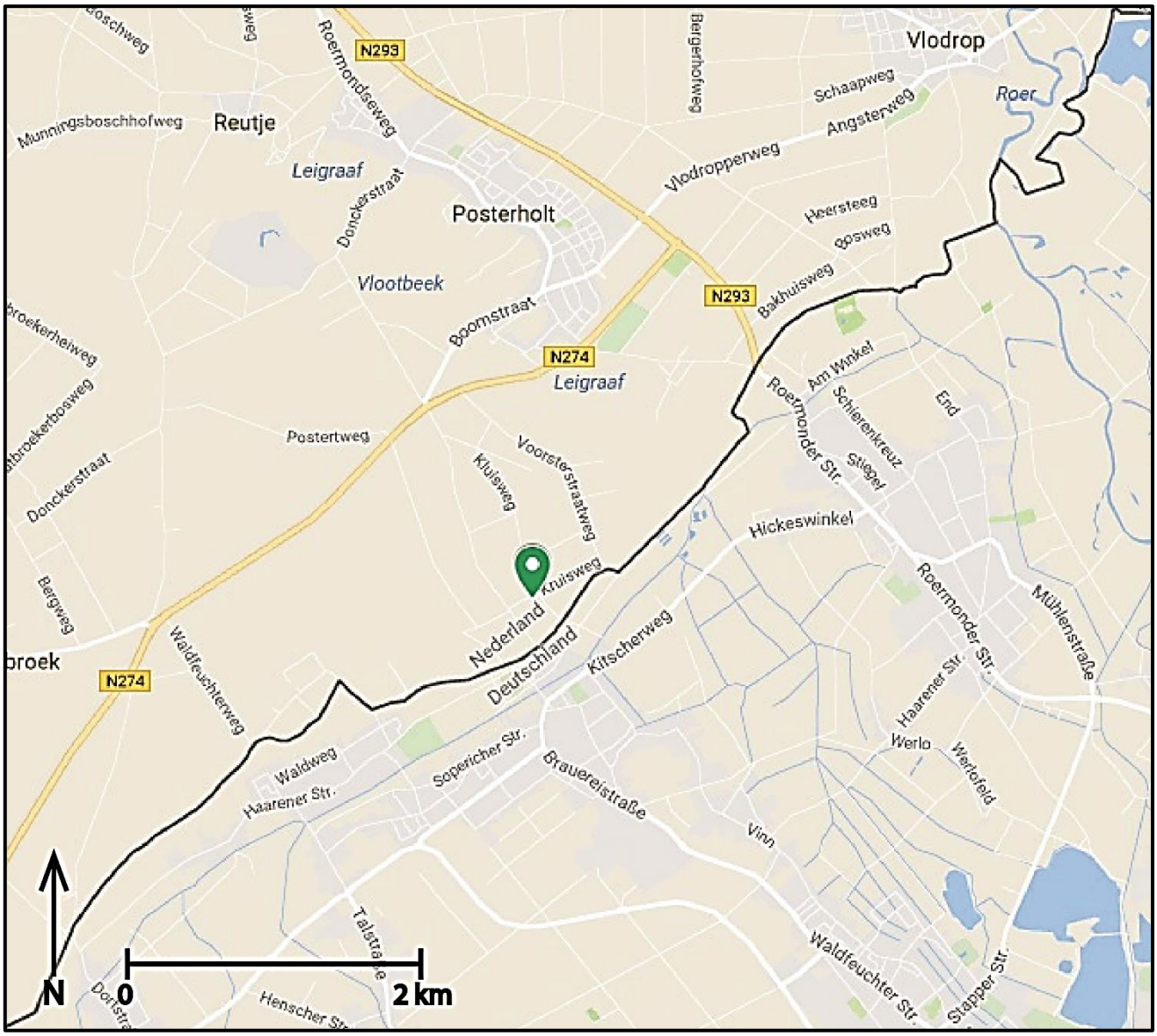


FIGURE 4 THE RESEARCH AREA AT POSTERHOLT-ACHTERSTE VOORST *(Manouk Derks).*

As mentioned earlier in this paragraph, many graves were found to be reopened. Many remains are thus accidentally or deliberately damaged and moved. It is striking that in some cases fragments of the same earthenware vessel were found in several graves. The degree of fragmentation reaches to such an extent that at the cemetery of Posterholt-Achterste Voorst only three (one Merovingian and two Roman) vessels within Merovingian context were complete.

A sandstone monument was present at the Roman cremation cemetery at Posterholt-Achterste Voorst. A part of the monument was still standing in the early 1950s (de Haas 2013, 171). Fragments of this monument were found in various places of the Merovingian cemetery and within a number of graves. The cemetery seem to hold two concentrations with a higher

amount of sandstone fragments. One of the concentrations is located near the assumed original location of the monument and near graves 22, 59 and 61. The other concentration is situated around graves 72 and 73. De Haas and Theuws do not rule out that there may have been a second monument, since grave 73 cuts through a Roman cremation grave indicating that the Roman cemetery must have been larger that presumably expected (de Haas & Theuws 2013, 126). The degree of fragmentation indicates deliberate destruction of the monument. It is unclear when this destruction took place and due to the level of disturbance at the cemetery it is difficult to determine whether the destruction happened at the time of the founding of the Merovingian cemetery or after the founding (de Haas & Theuws 2013, 79, 125). The number of fragments per Merovingian grave is not convincing to conclude that the sandstone fragments may have been used as grave filling (de Haas & Theuws 2013, 128).

Except for one grave (41) all Roman cremation graves date to the second half of the second century or the beginning of the third century (de Haas & Hendriks 2013, 54). The youngest Roman traces found in the near vicinity of the cemetery dates to the end of the fourth century and the first half of the fifth century and the oldest Merovingian traces dates back to the beginning of the sixth century, leaving a gap of 50 years. Of course, it must be kept in mind that the oldest phase of the Merovingian period was probably not found and this could change the history of the cemetery (de Haas & Theuws 2013, 166).

The grave goods at Posterholt-Achterste Voorst cemetery appear to reveal a typical Merovingian burial ritual. Although, many graves were reopened, emptied and damaged, there is still a somewhat clear set of grave goods visible in most graves. In the filling of many graves, Iron Age or Roman pottery fragments were present. Grave 57 does contain one complete Samian ware cup dating to circa 150-300 AD. The cup has sgraffito marks on two sides. On one side, it has an 'X' and the other side is unclear (de Haas & Theuws 2013, 123). A high quantity of Roman shoe nails ended up in a number of Merovingian graves. These shoe nails belonged to the cremation graves. An exceptional number of nails was present in grave 73, the Merovingian grave cuts through a Roman cremation grave. The number of Roman nails in Merovingian graves increases the closer the Merovingian grave is to a Roman cremation grave (de Haas & Theuws 2013, 130).

FIGURE 5 SOME OF THE ROMAN COINS FROM THE MEROVINGIAN CEMETERY *(After de Haas & Theuws 2013, 64).*

A total of nine Roman coins were recovered from the Posterholt-Achterste Voorst cemetery. Two coins were found in grave one, a Roman cremation grave. Another coin was found as a stray find. Six Roman coins were recovered from a Merovingian context (Figure 5). The oldest deposited Roman coin in Merovingian context is a quinarius. This quinarius was minted in 89 BC and eventually landed in grave 46. It is hard to assess whether the coin – this is accountable for most artefacts – is recovered from its original location, or whether the reopening of grave caused a repositioning of the coin. Grave 46 belongs to one of the graves that were reopened. The grave contained two individuals, one of them lay in a disarticulated position and the other was the skull that which designates a second individual. The first individual is most probably a female. The second individual and the coin both were found in the reopening pit. Besides the coin, the grave also contained a sandstone fragment, pottery fragment, some iron fragments, thirteen glass beads, a small fragment of flint and several iron belt parts.

A second coin was found in grave 9, together with some iron fragment, 24 glass and amber beads, one copper alloy fragment and a small iron nail (probably Roman shoe nail). The grave also contained molars belonging to a cow and a pig. The coin is a dupondius/as belonging in the period of Hadrian and is dated between 138-253 AD. This coin has a suspension loop with remains of the wire still attached in the loop. On this basis, the coin was supposedly worn as an amulet, necklace or was attached to a belt. Grave 9 cuts through a Roman cremation grave (grave 6). The contents of grave 57 consist of an iron buckle, an iron knife, two Iron Age or Roman pottery fragments, a sandstone fragment, some iron fragments and a complete Samian ware cup (Dragendorff 33) dating in the middle of the second to the third century AD. Grave 58 also contained a dupondius/as with an image of Antoninus Pius. The coin thus dates within 147-148 AD. The coin was found close to the southern wall of the wooden coffin and could have been close to the individual's right hand. It is unsure whether that is its original location,

because grave 58 is a reopened grave and no skeletal remains were present. Moreover, the grave contained the jaw of a dog, a complete belt set made from a copper alloy, a complete seax with traces of the leather sheath, iron knife, a flint fragment, a sandstone fragment, fragments of fine and coarse pottery and an Iron Age or Roman age pottery fragment and three small iron nails (probably Roman shoe nail)(de Haas & Theuws 2013, 234). Grave 85 contains a coin with a suspension loop and two coin fragments, which are indeterminable. The complete coin with suspension loop is interpreted as ½ centenionalis and can be dated between 383-402 AD. The ½ centenionalis was probably worn as an amulet, necklace or attached to a belt, the other fragments could have had the same function. The two fragments were probably minted after the coin reform of 348 (de Haas & Theuws 2013, 82, 83). Furthermore, a copper alloy plate, a copper alloy object indicated as an *agrave*[4], 36 beads, iron fittings of a wooden box, one small iron nail (probably Roman shoe nail), a large iron nail and a nail which probably belongs to the wooden box and some iron fragments. The gender of the individual in grave 85 could not be determined.

6.3 ROSMEER

During road construction in the 50's of the last century in the Belgian town of Rosmeer (Figure 6), road workers encountered the remains of a Merovingian cemetery. The cemetery covers an area of 30 acres and is founded on the remains of the foundations of a Roman villa. An archaeological excavation followed, recovering 120 burials of an expected larger number. During the road construction about 15 burials were destroyed and it is presumed that over the years more burials were ruined, estimating a total of 150 burials originally founded (Roosens & Janssens 1978, 6, 7).

6.3.1 THE MEROVINGIAN CEMETERY

Further investigation into the individual graves show that some 43 men, 44 women and 18 children were buried in the Merovingian cemetery. Merovingian cemeteries are usually ordered more or less in rows. The cemetery of Rosmeer does not, however, show that characteristic, and therefore seem to fall out of place. Besides the disorderly impression of the cemetery, the cemetery is in terms of orientation, measurements and position of the graves

[4] "A kind of staple, used to fasten textiles or small chains" (de Haas & Theuws 2013, 95).

also rich in variety. Therefore, the cemetery can be divided into four sections, with an eastern group, a middle group and a western and northern zone (Roosens & Janssens 1978, 7, 8).

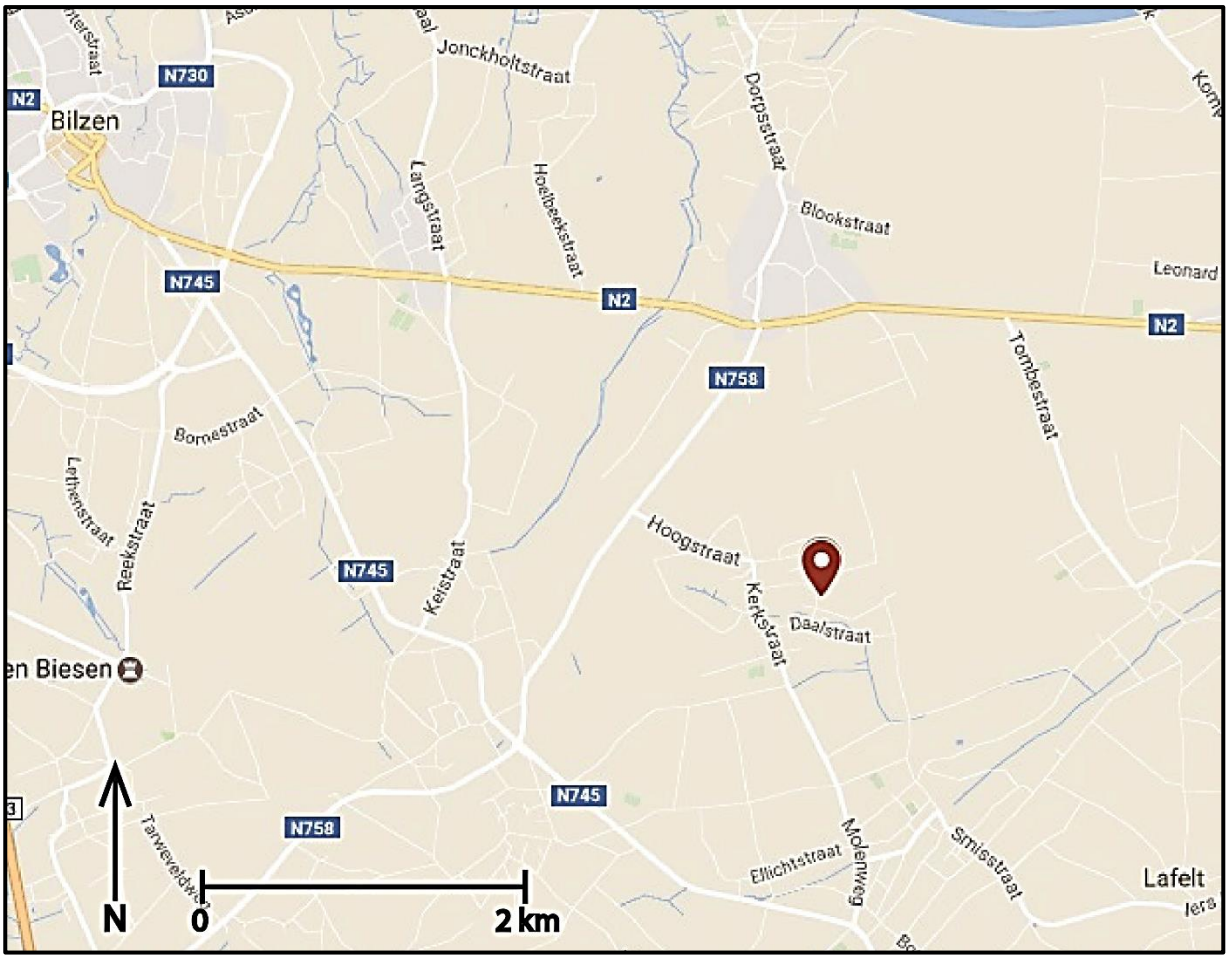


FIGURE 6 THE RESEARCH AREA AT ROSMEER (BELGIUM) *(Manouk Derks).*

Regarding the grave goods, the cemetery of Rosmeer does show the characteristics of a typical Merovingian cemetery. Most graves contain pottery dating to the end of the sixth century and the first half of the seventh century. In three graves vessels of reddish pottery was found. These types of vessels are a development of the late Roman terra sigillata vessel (Chenet 304). In four graves, Roman remains were amongst the grave goods. Grave 9 belongs to a woman in the approximately age of 50. The woman is buried with a variety of grave goods such as, pottery, two decorative discs, 105 beads different in material and colour, a bone amulet, a brass ring, a knife, two iron rings and a silver Roman coin with two drilled holes. Remarkable about one of the drilled holes is the presence of rust. An iron thread is most probably the cause of the rust. The coin, minted under the rule of Marcus Iulius Philippus (Philip the Arab), was through the

iron thread attached to the brass ring. The Roman coin was positioned between the breast and the upper left arm, just below the brass ring (Roosens & Janssens 1978, 10). Grave 24 is the grave of a girl not older than fifteen. Within the grave 20 beads were recovered and a Roman jug with ear beside her right foot. Moreover, the body silhouette of a man in grave 69 was accompanied by a biconical pot, a Roman bowl, a Scramasax, a brass rivet, fragments of an iron buckle, iron fragments and a ring rod. An impression on the soil caused by rust suggests the presence of a sword. The grave itself was cut through by grave 53 and is therefore partially destroyed. The Roman bowl is late Roman coarse ware, presumably originating from the Mayen area and was found next to the right shin. Grave 73 is the grave of a woman, only the body silhouette was visible. In this grave a complete Roman bottle, a buckle, an end tip of a belt and 21 beads came to light. The Roman bottle is made of blue-green glass, as shown in figure 7 (Roosens & Janssens 1978, 10, 14, 15, 24, 26).

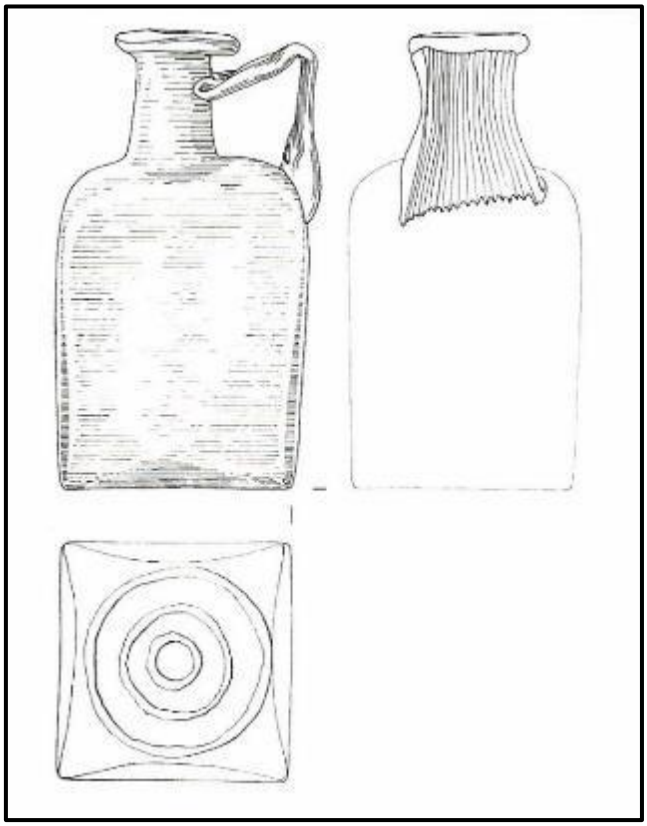


FIGURE 7 THE ROMAN BOTTLE FOUND IN GRAVE 73 *(After Roosens & Janssens 1978).*

6.4 LENT-AZALEASTRAAT

Before the archaeological research in Lent in 1972, a survey was conducted by Modderman during the same year revealing pottery fragments from the Roman period, the Merovingian and Carolingian period and the Middle Ages. The excavations at the Azaleastraat (Figure 8) revealed numerous features and artefacts belonging to the Roman period. A total of 227 fragments of wheel-thrown pottery varying from Terra Sigillata to coarse ware all dating to the Roman period (first to second century AD).

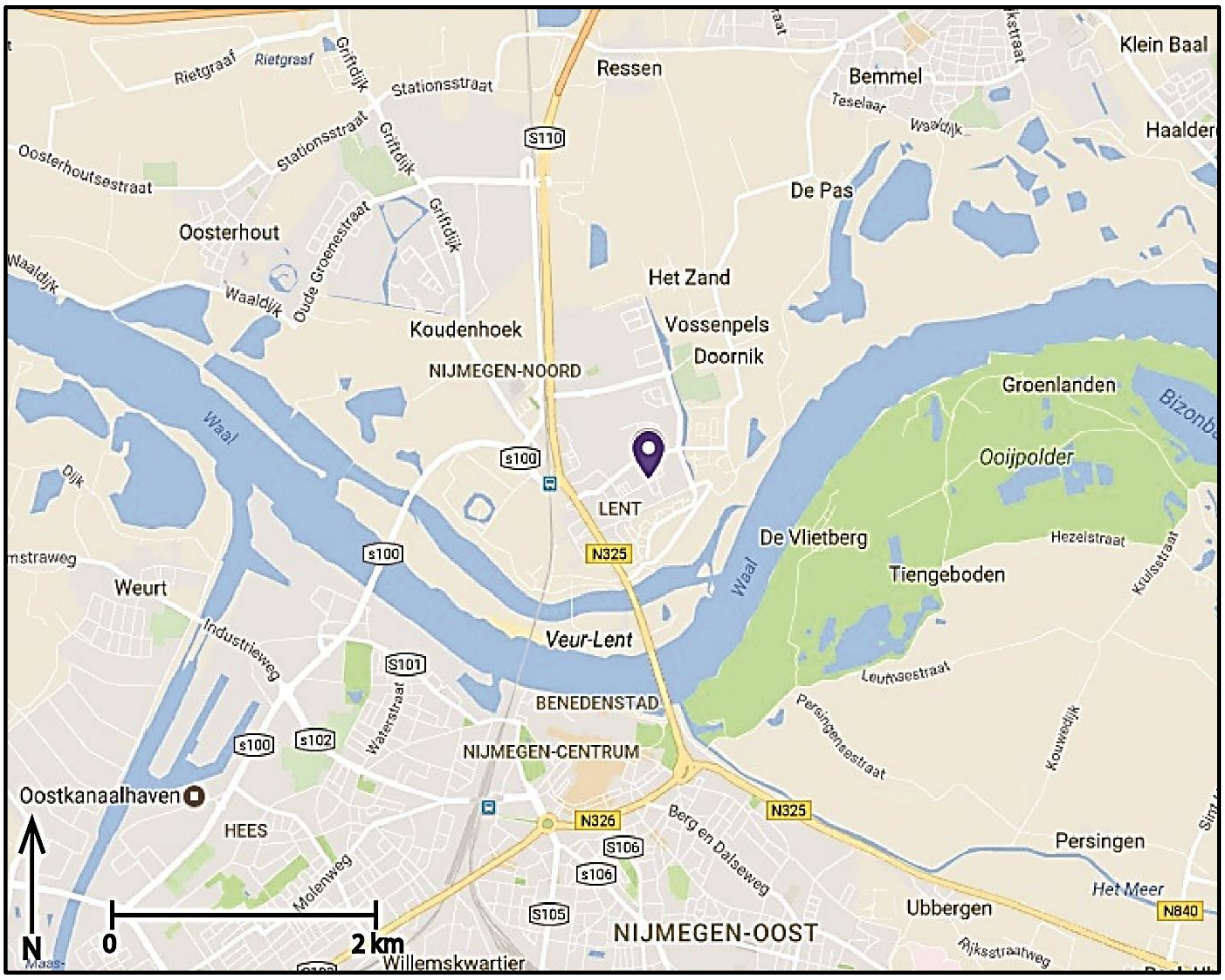


FIGURE 8 RESEARCH AREA AT LENT-AZALEASTRAAT *(Manouk Derks).*

With 443 fragments the hand formed indigenous pottery is represented well, of which the local kitchenware is the dominant type (van Es & Hulst, 1991, 32-50). The excavation from 1972 contained, besides fragments of pottery, also fragments of a mural decoration. 86 fragments of mural decoration were discovered on the location of the rectangular structure from the Roman period. One fragment was located in a posthole belonging to a small rectangular structure. The

type of mural decoration is typical for the Flavian and Trajan period and is similar to the murals found in the castrum of Nijmegen (van Es & Hulst 1991, 55, 56).

The function of the rectangular structure is uncertain. A few options are left open for debate. The structure may have been part of one of the buildings belonging to a villa. With dimensions of 26.00 x 9.70 m and parallels with a shared width this is a plausible interpretation. Regarding the parallels, the wooden poles were directly placed into the ground, while the wooden poles at the Azaleastraat were fixed in stone foundations. The use of wooden poles fixed in stone foundations was common during the construction of a courtyard or porch. This, however, would not explain the mural decorations found on the spot, unless the structure would have had closed rooms. A building complex, consisting of four buildings, alongside the road from Cologne to Iuliacum (Jülich) could be interpreted as a resting place (*statio*) and two of the four buildings are similar to the structure at the Azaleastraat (van Es & Hulst 1991, 63, 64). The structure shows many similarities with different types of Roman buildings, but due to lack of decisive evidence the interpretation is still up for debate.

At a small distance to the rectangular structure a small square structure was encountered. Finds in the postholes date the structure between 70 – 100/150 AD (van Es & Hulst 1991, 65, 75). In the south-eastern part of the excavation terrain a large storehouse was found. The storehouse consists of 16 postholes. Curiously about this storehouse is that on the west side of the storehouse two rows of four postholes in a small distance apart from each other, were placed. It is possible that the actual storehouse stood on twelve poles and the western four poles formed a platform at the entrance to the storehouse. On the south side two postholes were found possibly belonging to a stairway leading up to the platform, providing access to the storehouse (van Es & Hulst 1991, 66, 67). To the north of the excavation site numerous postholes were excavated belonging to several storehouses or sheds (van Es & Hulst 1991, 68).

In the eastern part of the excavation one of two wells was excavated. The filling of the well consisted mainly of stone (tuff and slate), charcoal, roof tile fragments and fragments of indigenous pottery. The filling dates the well in the Roman period. To the east from the rectangular structure the second well was found. At a depth of 1.57m the remains of a wooden casing came to light. Moreover, the well was filled with artefacts belonging to the period between 70 – 150 AD, and thus, dating to the Roman period (van Es & Hulst 1991, 69-71).

Strangely enough, the area revealed not a single house plan and there are no unambiguous traces found that indicate a continuous or civil residence. Therefore, this area is most probably a shared storage for a nearby settlement, a resting place or has military purposes.

6.4.1 THE MEROVINGIAN CEMETERY

Features from the later Merovingian period were less unambiguous. The Merovingian cemetery can be divided into two groups, a northern and a southern group. The northern group is located directly besides a concentration of storage houses and barns dating from the Roman period, whilst the southern group is located directly south of the Roman rectangular structure. The southern group is different from the northern group regarding burial gifts. The graves of the northern group include more grave goods and after further investigation show that the northern group is older than the southern group with a few exceptions in the latter. A number of graves of the southern group also contain considerably more grave goods than the other graves in the same group. These graves are the oldest graves in the southern group. The Merovingian graves of the northern group date back to approximately 630/40-670/80. The southern group is difficult to date, but the grave goods indicate a starting date around the end of the seventh/early eight century. The final date of the southern group is indeterminable. Interestingly, regarding the burial rituals, the oldest graves of the southern group are equal to the graves of the northern group (van Es & Hulst 1991, 217, 218, 220).

From a total of 120 Merovingian graves, thirteen graves contain remains dating from the Iron Age or the Roman period. In fifteen graves one or more fragments Iron Age or Roman pottery was found. In two graves (1972:20/1975:20) a fragment of Roman glass was found. The glass fragments are both made from light green glass, one has white threads along the glass (grave 1972:20) and the other contains threads of the same colour as the glass (grave 1975:20). The first grave concerns a non-adult male and also contained an iron sax, side fittings for the sax sheath, five iron arrowheads, iron knife and fragments of a comb. The second grave concerned an adult male and also contained an iron sax, brass sheath fittings, an ornamental fitting and two other brass fittings. The glass from grave 1972:20 was found at the north wall of the grave. The position of the glass fragment from grave 1975:20 is unknown. Two presumed fibulae, one brass and the other iron, have been recovered from a non-adult male grave (1972:7). The brass fibula is a bow fibula dating from the Roman period. The iron object is presumably the spring

coil of a fibula, also dating from the Roman period (Figure 9). Furthermore, the two fibulae were both found near the right foot of the individual. The grave was undisturbed, apart from the west side which was slightly disturbed (van Es & Hulst 1991, 225, 230, 231, 245). It is noteworthy that the disturbed graves are substantially concentrated and that could clarify the Roman remains scattered through the Merovingian graves.

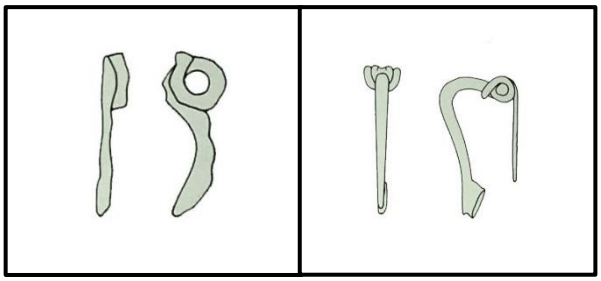


FIGURE 9 THE PRESUMED FIBULA (LEFT) AND BOW FIBULA FROM GRAVE 7 *(After van Es & Hulst 1991).*

6.5 RHENEN-DONDERBERG

In response to an undertaking to broaden a road towards Rhenen (Figure 10), in the 1950s, pottery fragments have been excavated during road constructions that are of early medieval origin. The fragments appeared to be part of grave goods of a Merovingian cemetery that offered a final resting place for four centuries long, after which it was discontinued in the first half of the eight century (Wagner & Ypey 2011, 32). After an archaeological campaign lasting for six months, over 1100 graves have been excavated and studied.

6.5.1 THE MEROVINGIAN CEMETERY

Of the 1100 graves, 300 were cremations and 820 inhumations (Wagner & Ypey 2011, 7; Willemsen & Huiskes 2011, 41, 49). The 820 inhumations are all more or less east-west orientated and buried stretched on their backs inside a container. The grave goods are diverse and some graves are, regarding grave goods, rich. Amongst the grave goods are necklaces, bracelets, pottery, shields, lances, horse gear, swords and coins (Wagner & Ypey 2011, 55-647). West of the Merovingian cemetery, late Roman inhumations were found. The Roman cemetery was discontinued at the beginning of the fifth century and none of the graves were cut through by the Merovingian graves. The Merovingian cemetery can be classified into six zones, which were in use at the same time (Wagner & Ypey 2011, 31). This could be deduced from the dates of the graves that were determined for each subgroup. The graves move per zone from west to east with the late Roman zone as earliest occupation. The Merovingian cemetery eventually ends in the first half of the 8th century (Wagner & Ypey 2011, 31, 32).

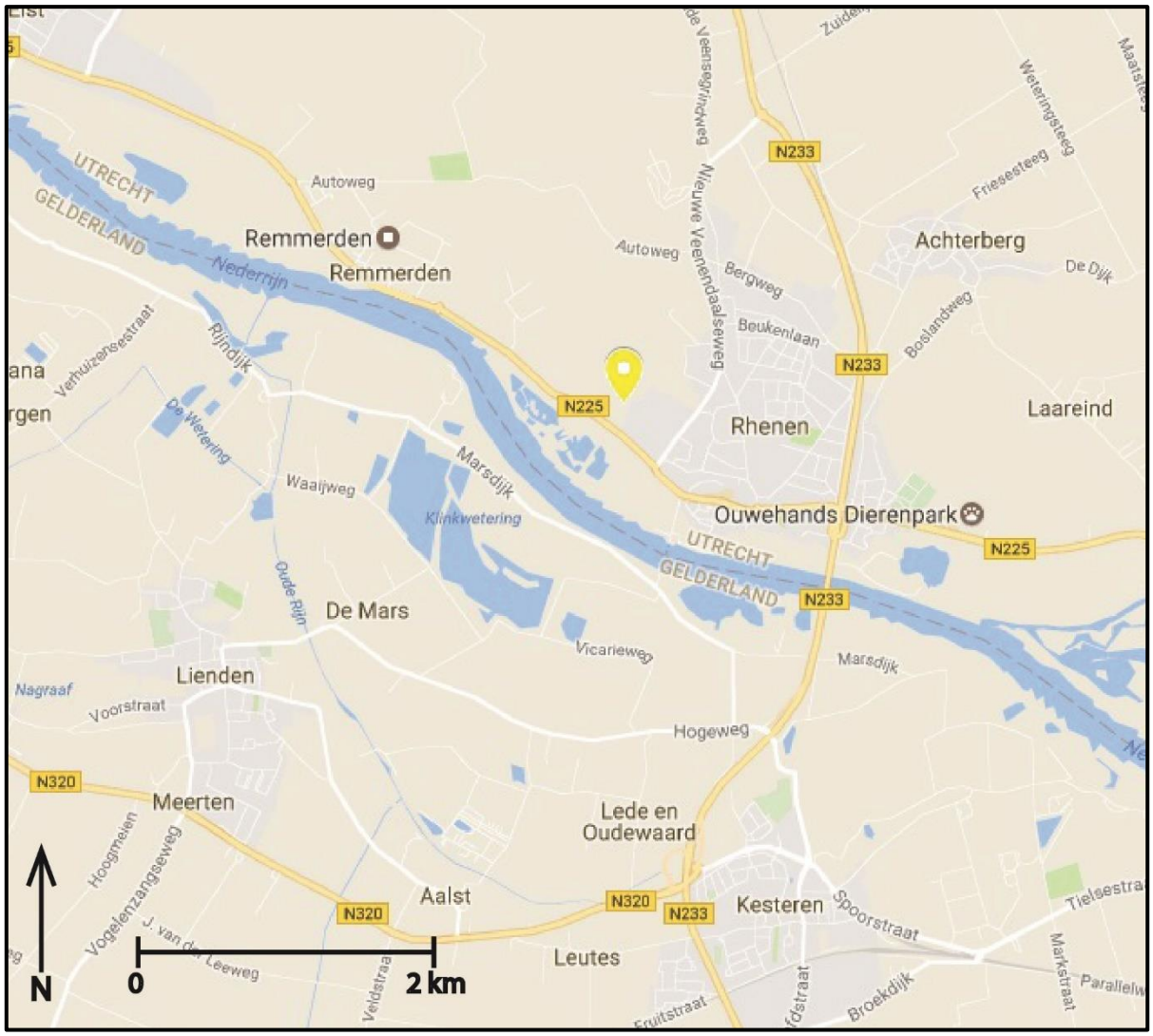


FIGURE 10 RESEARCH AREA AT RHENEN *(Manouk Derks).*

Judging from the inventories of Merovingian graves it can be said that the cemetery of Rhenen is a typical Merovingian cemetery. There is a clear distinction between men and women grave goods sets noticeable. In Rhenen, men were mostly buried with pottery, a shield, francisca's (typical Merovingian throwing axe), a sword, arrows, a lance and belt garniture. Occasionally men were buried with a Roman coin amulet, flint or horse gear (Wagner & Ypey 2011, 55-647). For women, beads, Roman coin amulets, daggers, fibulae and pottery have the upper hand in relation to the grave ensemble (Wagner & Ypey 2011, 55-647).

In total, there are 17 graves where a Roman coin was part of the grave's inventory. Seventeen of which had a suspension loop and were worn or attached, the other eight did not show signs of such an alteration, bringing the total of Roman coins in Merovingian context in this cemetery to 21 coins. The other eight coins, were mostly highly corroded and incomplete.

Two coins were still in quite good condition, from grave 315, a silver denarius of Antoninus Pius (150-151 AD), from grave 838 was well preserved and a solidus of Gratian (378-379 AD) from grave 842 was hardly worn (Wagner & Ypey 2011, 609, 615-621). Grave 31 contained a silver coin of Antoninian Gordians III (238-244 AD). The coin is incomplete making it difficult to assess whether or not the coin contained a suspension loop. Besides the coin, two bow fibulae, a large double conical bead, an iron buckle, a glass bowl and a knife with leather remains of the sheath were part of the grave's inventory of this woman. No information about the position of the Roman coin in correlation with the human remains is available.

Another female (grave 79) was also buried with a pair of Bow fibulae, two smaller fibulae, 27 beads, a spherical shaped amulet and a silver denarius of Elagabal (219-220 AD). The Roman coin has a suspension loop and was positioned at hip height on the right side, east of the fibulae and beads inside the container. 54 beads, an iron buckle, some iron fragments, two ceramic pots and a coin have been excavated from grave 138 of a female individual. It is a brass pierced as or dupondius of Marcus Aurelius (161-176 AD). During the excavation of the grave the coin was fixed to an iron fragment due to rust. The coin was positioned between the left hip joint and the left lower arm. In grave 161 another silver denarius of Elagabal was uncovered, together with a brass shield-shaped belt part, brass fittings and three iron parts, one of which is an iron buckle. The Roman coin has a suspension loop and was located at in the northern part of the container approximately alongside the longitudinal axis of the container. A silver denarius of Caracalla (211-217 AD) is amongst the grave goods of a female grave (169), accompanied by a fibula inlaid with almandine, a silver wire ring and a necklace with 50 beads. The location of the coin is somewhat unclear, but it was somewhere at waist height and the lower half of the thorax. A silver-plated brass coin shares the grave goods inventory of grave 176 with a small glass bead, a stone with a natural hole. The hole contains rust residue from an iron wire, which is evidence for the stone to be worn as an amulet, or together with beads as a necklace or attached to a belt. Moreover, the grave contained brass fittings, a knife, a brass ring and several fragments of organic material, leather as well textile. One leather fragment contains the impression of the brass coin. The brass coin contains a suspension loop and probably dates to Antoninian Phillips I around 244-247 AD. The coin was positioned a little above waist height at the right lower half of the thorax. A brass As of Vespasian (71 AD) with suspension loop is together with a carinated pot, triangular brass fittings, a rolled-up brass

sheet and an iron strip part of grave 188's inventory. This coin is also positioned above waist height at the lower half of the thorax. The individual in grave 195 was accompanied by two bow fibulae, a horse fibula and a bow fibula. 31 beads, two iron ring fragments, a slightly skew carinated pot and two silver coins were also part of the grave's inventory. Both coins contain a suspension loop. The first coin is a denarius of Elagabal dating around 220-222 AD. The second coin is from Antoninian Phillips II (245 AD). There is no information available on the coin's position. Two coins of Roman origin were found in grave 332. This rich grave belongs to a female and was gifted with 13 beads of different types of material, three fibulae, two iron buckles, a fragment of an iron knife, a brass and a glass ring, a couple of iron fragments and two carinated pots. Both roman coins are highly corroded. The first coin is a silver denarius of Aurelius and Verus (164-169 AD). The second coin is an indeterminate brass coin. One of the coins was found at the upper part of the sternum. More information regarding the coins' positions is unavailable. Grave 413 is quite a wealthy grave belonging to a female individual. The grave's inventory is comprised of four fibulae, fragments of silver wire, 131 or 132 beads, two large amulet beads, a brass needle, a silver arm ring, a silver ring, a cleaver and knife, a chain of at least fifteen interlocked rings, iron fittings of a wooden chest, a nail, a glass claw beaker and four Roman coins. Al four coins contain a suspension loop. The coin ensemble consists of a silver denarius from Commodus (183-184 AD), a silver denarius of Galba (69 AD), a silver denarius of Antoninus Pius (after 141 AD) and a half-siliqua of Theoderic (500-525 AD). The position of the coins is debatable. The sketch in the excavation notes read: "together with the big beads at the feet end of the grave". Another card reads: "near the teeth" (Wagner & Ypey 2011, 300). Fragments of two or three disc fibulae, two beads, a knife, iron ring, a hand-made ceramic pot and a coin were excavated from a female's grave 563. The coin is a silver double-pierced republican denarius dating 150-91 BC. The coin was positioned in the mouth area. The grave of a female (grave 600) contained a bow fibula, a skew ceramic pot, a chain consisting of ten beads, one large bead, small interlocked iron rings, two iron buckles, a broad iron ring with the remains of iron nails, small knife, one side of a tweezers, a brass ring, two iron shafts, a cross-shaped iron joint and a pierced brass indeterminate coin. Location of the coin is somewhat unclear, somewhere in the mouth area. A male individual was buried with a lance, a shield, pottery and a pierced coin (grave 714). Of these grave goods, only the lance point, the shield boss, pottery shards and a heavily damaged coin remain. Also, some textile

fragments were found. The coin is a silver denarius of Faustinas II (161-170 AD). The coin was recovered in the mouth area. A silver coin was found in grave 838 together with a ceramic pot and a glass folded beaker. The glass beaker is dated somewhere in the second half of the fourth century. The coin is a well-preserved denarius of Antoninus Pius (150-151 AD) and was found in the mouth area. In grave 841 the remains of an arrowhead, a brass ring fibula, a fire steel and flint, a brass buckle, an awl, two ceramic pots and a silver denarius were found. One of the ceramic pots is a terra nigra or terra nigra-like bowl with footed base and S-profile. The coin is a denarius of Trajan dating in 101-102 AD. Information about its position is absent. Grave 842 is also a richly gifted grave of a male individual with a brass fibula, a brass tweezers, several fragments of belt girdle, fragments of a bone comb, two brass rings, various iron and brass fragments, a ceramic pot and a solidus of Gratian (378-379 AD). The coin does not contain or hardly any wear and was positioned 10 cm from the head wall of the coffin and lying about 7-8 cm to the right of the longitudinal axis of the coffin. The last grave (grave 846) is also a male grave. The grave contained a lance head, an axe, a brass fibula, fragments of a belt girdle, brass fittings and rivets, leather and textile fragments, a slim knife, a bone comb, a glass bowl, a bell beaker, a wooden bucket with handle, and a highly corroded coin. The coin is most likely a brass denarius of Antoninus Pius and was found in the mouth area. The cemetery of Rhenen displays a good overview of the transition from Roman to Merovingian. Many objects, especially the pottery and glass, are Merovingian continuations of Roman designs, such as the glass folded beaker. This form of beaker has been manufactured since the 2nd century AD. The same applies to the terra nigra or terra nigra-like bowl with footed base from graves 156, 819 and 841. In grave 833 is a late Roman terra sigillata bowl originating from Argonne-area in Northern France and contains a roulette stamp decoration from the belly to the foot (Unverzagt 2009, 124 , 125). From grave 540, a cremation grave, two earthenware pots were excavated. One of them is an ornate terra sigillata bowl of the type Dragendorff 37. This type of terra sigillata was produced from circa 65 AD (Hiddink 2011, 56).

7 RESULTS

In the previous chapter, several sites were presented that have both a Roman and Merovingian history. This chapter summarizes the sites with added conclusive remarks. In the last paragraph, the different sites are compared, where the similarities and differences are highlighted. Ultimately, this chapter concludes with a conclusion that deals with all sub questions and the research question.

7.1 BORGHAREN

The cemetery of Borgharen was founded atop the foundations of a Roman villa. At the time of the founding of the Merovingian cemetery, parts of the foundations of the Roman villa were still partially present. It is therefore not surprising that throughout the entire site, Roman ceramic building materials were spread and have landed in the Merovingian graves. It is, however, noteworthy that some fragments of building material were used in the graves' constructions. Like in the robbed grave (grave XI), where inside the grave several fragments of building material were found in peculiar positions. Some were positioned horizontal and others were positioned vertical at the grave's head end. This indicates that the Roman material has been reused as a container or perhaps to reinforce the grave's container construction. A similar situation is present in grave XII, where Roman building blocks were used to support the grave's construction. The material was reused in a very practical sense, but most likely out of a spiritual sense as well. There are graves present in this cemetery where no Roman building material has been reused, meaning it was not necessary to strengthen the graves' construction with building material. Graves XI and XII, however, show that Merovingians did deliberately implement Roman building material into the construction of both graves. This type of reuse suggests a more spiritual reuse to possibly attain a link with their ancestors or perhaps their precursors, as discussed in paragraph 5.1. The presence of a number of large blocks of natural stone and large fragments of building material indicates that the material is unlikely to have been crushed by the Merovingians. If done by the Merovingians, it may be assumed that the larger fragments would also have been crushed.

Graves VI, XII, XV and XVI all contain Roman pottery fragments. The ceramics from the Modern period in grave XVI can be explained due to the disturbance that occurred in or after 1999. As for the other graves, the fragmentation rate of both Roman and Merovingian as well as the Modern period is rather high and suggests influences of post-depositional processes such as bioturbation or tillage.

A Roman silver fibula and two highly corroded Roman coins, one of which still complete, were amongst other goods part of the context of grave VI. Two coins and a fibula together in a grave might seem intentionally. Earlier excavations, however, revealed eleven Roman coins scattered throughout the site. The coins from grave VI most probably landed in the grave by a coincident during the construction of the grave. Concerning the fibula, it is hard to determine whether the fibula was a grave good. Considering that the individual was no longer in anatomical context and the amount of Roman (and other periods) pottery dispersed all over the site, the fibula undoubtedly originates from the Roman villa. Pottery from the Iron Age up until the Modern period occur in many graves. As mentioned before, a high post-depositional influence in the shape of human or natural disturbances, is most likely the cause of the widespread of materials.

A remarkable grave is the possible founders grave of this cemetery. Which was built into the hypocaust system of the previous Roman villa. Whether this indeed concerns the founder of the cemetery is difficult to conclude. It is, however, certain that this individual was of some importance to the community, considering the effort made to realise a grave for this individual in the hypocaust system of the villa. It is possible that due to natural processes a shallow hole was created, making it a natural and easy location to dig a grave. Still, an effort was made in to realise this grave. Since this grave is one of the oldest graves in the cemetery, the individual buried in it might also have been the closest to the sites Roman precursors and therefore have been buried inside the Roman remains.

7.2 POSTERHOLT-ACHTERSTE VOORST

The site of Posterholt-Achterste Voorst encompasses both a Roman and a Merovingian cemetery. In the immediate vicinity, more Roman cemeteries have been discovered. The cemetery of Posterholt-Achterste Voorst shows a lot of reopening's to the 92 graves. Ultimately, 75 graves have been examined, uncovering 81 individuals. The extent of disturbances to the graves make it difficult to distinguish original context from displaced context due to the reopening of graves. In any case, it is still valuable to study the grave contexts, as not only the position of the material provides valuable information, but also the material itself.

At the preceding Roman cremation cemetery stood a sandstone monument. The problem is that it is unclear when the monument was partially destroyed and whether it was done by Merovingians who wanted to found a cemetery in the same location. The destruction has, in any case, taken place after the end of the Roman cemetery and before the founding of the Merovingian cemetery. This makes it plausible that the destruction was carried out by the founders of the Merovingian cemetery. Destruction of the sandstone monument could have been executed to make room for the Merovingian graves, but this does not explain why the monument have only been destroyed partially and why the fragments were so widespread throughout the Merovingian cemetery. If the monument had no value to the Merovingians then it may be assumed that the remains of the monument would have been deposited elsewhere. Otherwise, they make it difficult to dig graves into the debris that they have caused themselves. Furthermore, if the previous mentioned was the case, the monument would have been destroyed completely and not partially. As Caple and Chapman suggests, the fragments may have been deliberately scattered throughout the Merovingian cemetery in order to maintain the connection with their Roman ancestors or precursors. The presence of sandstone fragments from the Roman period dispersed throughout the Merovingian cemetery could represent a link to their ancestors or function as some sort of blessing ritual of the cemetery. The second concentration of sandstone fragments might, in this case, be the cause of an uneven distribution of the fragments.

The remains of the sandstone monument on the Posterholt-Achterste Voorst has so far been discernible. The high fragmentation rate indicates that the monument has been deliberately destroyed. Destroying an object of other people is usually associated with the sense of aversion to the creators of the object or its users. By destroying it, besides the object, the memory of the individual or individuals is also destroyed. The spread of the remains over the Merovingian cemetery and the fact that the monument was only destroyed partially, suggests that something else is going on here. When spreading the fragments sandstone it can be assumed that a layer containing the fragments must be visible, at this cemetery this is not the case. Most fragments are at a depth of 39 - 38 + NAP. The difference in depth level could be explained due to the fact that the monument was destroyed before the founding of the Merovingian cemetery. Digging graves causes a disturbance in the soil, which then causes a spread in depth of the sandstone fragments. Furthermore, a number of graves were reopened at a later moment, making the spread even greater.

In addition to the amount of sandstone fragments, many fragments of Roman pottery were uncovered from Merovingian graves as well. Some of these fragments found in different graves belong to the same earthenware vessel. The reopening of many graves makes the presence of the same pottery fragments in different graves difficult to explain. It is possible that the Roman fragments accidentally landed in the Merovingian graves. Another possibility is that the Roman fragments were given purposely to maintain the connection with ancestors as suggested by Chapman and discussed in paragraph 5.1. Many of the fragments from the Iron Age and Roman period have also been found in the filling of Merovingian graves. This also applies to Roman shoe nails and the closer to a Roman grave, the more Roman nails were found. As a result, it is unlikely that the fragments of the same vessel were given as a burial gift in order to establish a connection with ancestors. The Roman pottery found in the Merovingian graves and scattered across the Merovingian cemetery must be considered as unintentionally deposited and thus should not be seen as an ancestral object.

Objects that can be considered as burial gifts are the Samian ware cup and the Roman coins. The complete Samian ware cup from Grave 57 can be seen as an object most likely passed from generation to generation and eventually given to an individual as a burial gift. There are six Roman coins in Merovingian graves of which the cause of deposition is less clear. The occurrence of Roman coins in Merovingian graves is not unusual, but with two out of six Roman coins containing a suspension loop in Merovingian graves is remarkable and worth mentioning.

Grave 9 contained a *dupondius/as* of Hadrian (117-138 AD), dating between 138-253 AD. The coin has a suspension loop with wire still present within the loop, meaning it was worn around the neck or attached to clothing or a belt. Grave 9, a Merovingian grave cuts through grave 6 which is a Roman cremation grave dating to the second half of the second century until the start of the third century AD. Grave 85 also contained a Roman coin with a suspension loop and two coin fragments, which may have had the same function. The complete coin is a ½ centenionalis dating between 383-402 AD and the fragments were minted after 348 AD. In conjunction with the dates from the Roman graves (150-250 AD and grave 41 250-350 AD) it is rather impossible for the coins to originate from a Roman grave. Thus, the three coins must come from a Merovingian grave. Graves 46 and 58 both contain a coin. Both graves have been reopened which may have caused a disposition of the coins making it virtually impossible to draw conclusions regarding their origin.

The appearance of Roman coins in Merovingian graves is an interesting case. The two coins with suspension loops functioned as an amulet. The date of the three coins from grave 85 and the Roman graves shows that there is no correlation between the Roman graves and that the coins were in Merovingian possession. This means that the individuals have carried the Roman coins for a reason, either as an amulet or as decoration. Nevertheless, the Roman coins have had a meaning for the individual and have been reused with a purpose.

7.3 ROSMEER

In the Belgian town of Rosmeer the remains of a Roman structure was located, with on top of its foundations a Merovingian cemetery. The Roman structure that preceded the Merovingian cemetery is a Roman villa. The excavation was clearly focussed on the cemetery, since both reports are fully focussed on the lay-out and the grave goods of the cemetery. Unlike the previous Merovingian cemeteries, the cemetery at Rosmeer does not appear to be the typical "Reihengräberfeld". Five Roman remains were amongst the Merovingian grave goods.

A Roman silver coin with suspension loop was uncovered in grave 9. Grave 24 contained a Roman jug and grave 69 a Roman bowl. In grave 73 a complete Roman bottle came to light made out of a blue-greenish glass. These goods seem to be still in their original position. The coin was positioned between the woman's left arm and chest, accompanied by a brass ring. The other graves also did not show signs of disturbances or post-depositional displacement. Interestingly, the Roman jug accompanied a girl who could not have been over fifteen years old.

These Roman objects in Merovingian graves belong to grave goods where the spiritual or sentimental value is dominant. A good example is the Roman jug found in the grave of a girl. The object has most likely been passed on from generation to generation and eventually given to this girl as a grave gift. It is unclear whether there is a relationship between the Merovingians of the cemetery and the Romans of the villa, but this is presumptive. As with Posterholt-Achterste Voorst, the Roman coin has gained a function as an amulet or decoration in the following period.

7.4 LENT-AZALEASTRAAT

At the Azaleastraat in Nijmegen-Lent traces belonging to both the Roman period and the Merovingian period were uncovered. The excavations in 1972 and 1975 revealed various structures dating to the Roman period. The function of these structures are difficult to define. It is almost certainly that the Roman structures did not involve actual residence, but rather served as storage facilities for food coming from the surrounding farmlands, and for keeping livestock or the structures served as a resting place (*statio*). The 86 fragments with mural decorations do suggest that these structures were of some importance to its users or were at

least important enough for the application of decorations. The evidence of a mural decoration, makes it plausible to interpret the Roman structures as a *statio*. The rectangular structure with murals may have served as a hall, with the murals signifying that travellers were still inside the Roman Empire. The remaining structures were, in the case of a *statio*, storage facilities and the nearby well was used to supply fresh water for the travellers as well as the horses and/or mules.

The Merovingian cemetery is divided and exists of a northern and southern part. The northern part of the cemetery is also the oldest part and started around 630/40 AD up until around 670/80 AD. The southern part had its first graves dug around the end of the seventh century AD. It is mentionable that the graves in the northern parts contain more grave goods than the graves in the southern part. The amount of grave goods shifts from abundantly in the northern part to just a few in the southern part. Regarding the chronology of the cemetery, the division between north and south is easily recognizable. With its many grave goods, the northern part of the cemetery is the oldest and the southern part, with its few grave goods is the youngest. The most northern graves in the southern part of the cemetery are similar to the graves in the northern part. In thirteen graves of the Merovingian cemetery Roman or Iron Age pottery was found. No information on the position of the fragments within the graves were provided making it impossible to claim the fragments as purposely deposited as ancestral objects. These fragments, however, probably landed within the graves by accident and belong to the Roman activities that previously occurred in the same area, because it usually involves only one or several fragments (van Es & Hulst 1991, 85). This most probably happened during the digging of the graves or post-depositional processes. Besides the fragmented pottery, only five other 'Roman' objects were recovered, fragments of glass, a fibula and a possible fibula. The two glass fragments are most probably, just like the pottery fragments accidental depositions, displaced by post-depositional processes. Compared with another fibula, the disputed iron object from grave 7 does resemble a spring coil from a fibula (Figure 11). The two fibulae, brass bow fibula and

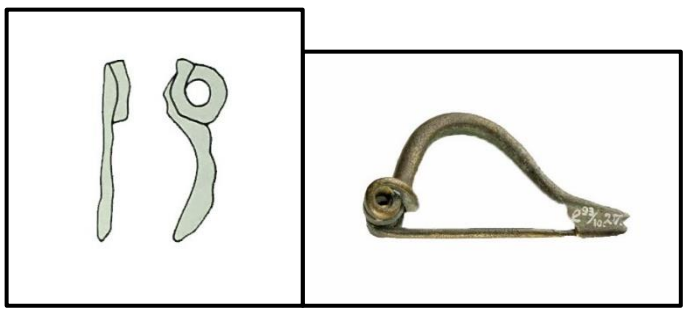


FIGURE 11 THE SPRING COIL AND THE SPRING COIL OF A RANDOM BOW FIBULA COMPARED *(After van Es & Hulst 1991 & Rijksmuseum van Oudheden).*

an iron spring coil, seem unlikely as deliberate grave goods given their position in regard to the deceased. Both fibulae were found near the right foot, as a deliberate grave good it would be more likely that the fibulae would have been positioned near the shoulder, given the function of a fibula.

It is unknown how much of the Roman structures were still visible when the Merovingians founded the cemetery. From a total of 120 Merovingian graves, fifteen graves contained Iron Age or Roman pottery fragments. Since there were former Roman structures on site, the pottery fragments probably came from this predecessor and accidently ended up in some of the Merovingian graves. In addition, the filling of the nearby water well also consisted of ,amongst other objects, pottery fragments dating from the Roman period.

7.5 RHENEN-DONDERBERG

The cemetery at the Donderberg near Rhenen is with more than 1100 graves one of the largest, if not the largest, Merovingian cemeteries known to date, and it is probably one of the richest Merovingian cemeteries as well. West of the Merovingian cemetery, some late Roman inhumations have been found. The Roman cemetery was abandoned at the beginning of the fifth century. The Merovingians then embroidered on the Roman idea to found a cemetery on top of the Donderberg. The Merovingian cemetery can be divided into six zones that were in use at the same time. In the first half of the eighth century the Merovingian cemetery came to its end.

The grave goods set are rather typical Merovingian with an abundance of fibulae, knives, beads and belt fittings. There are some grave goods that deserve the necessary attention in terms of origin, dating or appearance in this chapter. The grave goods that stand out the most are the Roman coins. The cemetery of Rhenen contains an unprecedented amount of Roman coins compared to the other cemeteries discussed. This difference is presumably due to the extent of the Rhenen cemetery, but nevertheless noteworthy. Compared to the amount of graves at the Rhenen cemetery itself the number of Roman coins in this cemetery is quite low. There is no set pattern when it comes to type of coins, value of coins or imagery on the coins. The most common coin is the silver denarius. The graves 838, 841, 842 and 846 belong to the late Roman group. The coins that emerged from these graves do not contain a suspension loop. Two of the four coins have been found in the mouth area, the other two's position is unclear.

The coin from grave 842 is 10 cm at the head end of the container and 7 to 8 cm to the right of the container's longitudinal axis. It is possible that these four coins were placed in the mouths of the deceased and have functioned as an obol. Seventeen coins contain one or more suspension loops which strongly suggest a function as amulet or being attached to something else, belt for instance. The dating of the coins vary greatly, although most coins can be dated to the second or third century AD. The occurrence of Roman coins with suspension loop in the Merovingian graves of Rhenen based on gender does show that the majority is female. There are eight female graves with Roman coins versus one male grave. The gender could not be determined for two graves. The position of the coins in the two unidentified graves and the male grave show that the coins were not worn as an amulet or necklace around the neck, but were most likely attached to a belt. This could mean that in the case of the Rhenen cemetery, a Roman coin attached to the belt as an amulet was not exclusively for females. Nevertheless, it is interesting to see that the Roman coins have had a second life and meaning even after a few hundred years. Furthermore, the two terra sigillata bowls and the terra nigra pottery or terra nigra-like pottery, in addition to the Roman coins, seem to emphasize that the Merovingian cemetery is a continuation of the Roman cemetery and that there is a connection between the users in both periods.

Rhenen-Donderberg stands out compared to other sites that are discussed in this study. First of all, it is obvious that the Merovingian cemetery is a continuation of the Roman cemetery, which is a little further westward. The Roman graves have not been cut-through deliberately. Of course, this may be a coincidence, but the fact that seventeen Merovingian graves contain 23 Roman coins as a grave gift shows that at least some of the Merovingians had a certain connection with their predecessors, or at least wanted to show or believe that there was a certain connection.

8 CONCLUSION

For this study, Merovingian cemeteries were selected which were founded on a former Roman site. This selection has been done deliberately, so that the relation between both periods in each Merovingian cemetery could be analysed and eventually compared.

There is a difference in the type of Roman site, which gives the impression that the Merovingians did not target specific Roman sites to found a cemetery on top of. The five studied Merovingian cemeteries all have a Roman predecessor. The cemetery of Borgharen and Rosmeer were founded on the site of a former Roman villa. The Merovingian descendants of Posterholt-Achterste Voorst and Rhenen-Donderberg share their last resting place with a number of Roman cremations and inhumations. The cemetery in Lent at the Azaleastraat is founded on a presumed *statio* along a well-travelled road.

8.1.1 RESEARCH QUESTION

In this paragraph, the sub questions will be answered separately and then finally the research question will be discussed and answered.

1. *What is the definition of reused Roman remains?*

Reused materials can occur in three ways. First, it can be recognized by material that is used for a different purpose than it originally was manufactured for. That means, the primary function expires and the material gets a secondary function. This is seen in Borgharen, where a Roman roof tile is used as part of a container or as reinforcement of a container. Secondly, reused materials can be recognized by alterations applied to the material. These changes usually occur at a later date than when the material is manufactured. The Roman coins with suspension loops are good examples of alterations done to an object at a subsequent period. The third way can be recognized by the position in which the object is found. An example of this are the Roman coins found in the mouth area. Which suggests that the coins have been used as an obol.

2. *How can we define whether Roman remains were reused?*

In order to determine the reuse of Roman material, the context in which the object is located is of great importance. In the case of this study, the context is a Merovingian cemetery or a Merovingian grave. It is vital to document the context of the cemetery or grave properly and evidently, but it is equally imperative to map the relationship between the objects and the deceased through the objects' position as well. Again, a good example is the Roman roof tile used as part of a container or as reinforcement of a container. Without context, it would not have been clear that the Roman tile was reused, rather than just a Roman tile found in the ground.

3. *What type of Roman objects were reused and what function did they serve?*

In principle, any Roman object may have been reused. This study shows that especially ceramic building materials and Roman coins were involved in this practice. It seems that the Roman ceramic building material has been reused in practical terms, for example the Roman building materials in graves XI and XII of Borgharen, where it is reused in the graves' construction. It is, however, illogical given the effort that has been made only for it to be a practical reuse. Especially considering the great effort the Merovingians took in incorporating the grave – of what is believed to be the founder's grave – into the former Roman hypocaust system. Bearing in mind the process involved in order to reuse Roman ceramic building material into a rather simple otherwise wooden grave construction. Finding the right and fitting building material and implementing this into the grave's construction, meaning changing the standard grave construction of a wooden container, which would have sufficed as well since it is present at the same cemetery, in order to fit the Roman building material. This makes it quite unlikely that the reuse was solely out of a practical sense. What reasons they did have is difficult to grasp. Although this cannot be said with a hundred per cent certainty, the findings described above do strongly suggest that there is a spiritual or religious reasoning to it. Perhaps through this way the Merovingians felt they have established a connection with their precursors.

It is difficult to identify pottery fragments as a grave good. Usually, the assumption that when encountering one or a few pottery fragments in a grave, it is a chance discovery that ended up in the filling of the grave. Yet, it is possible that these findings are deliberate grave goods. The individual may have found a fragment of pottery from an earlier period in his or her life and developed a fascination for it, and made some sort of talisman. Just like some people in the present bear certain objects (whether or not superstition) thinking that it protects or fosters them (for instance the rabbit's foot or the Evil Eye (Berger 2012, 1099-1102; Bartlett 2016, 204-206). Two graves at the cemetery of Rosmeer contained complete Roman earthenware and a complete glass bottle. These objects are undoubtedly grave gifts and belong to a collective sentiment. The objects have probably been in the possession of the same family or community for a long time and were passed on from generation to generation.

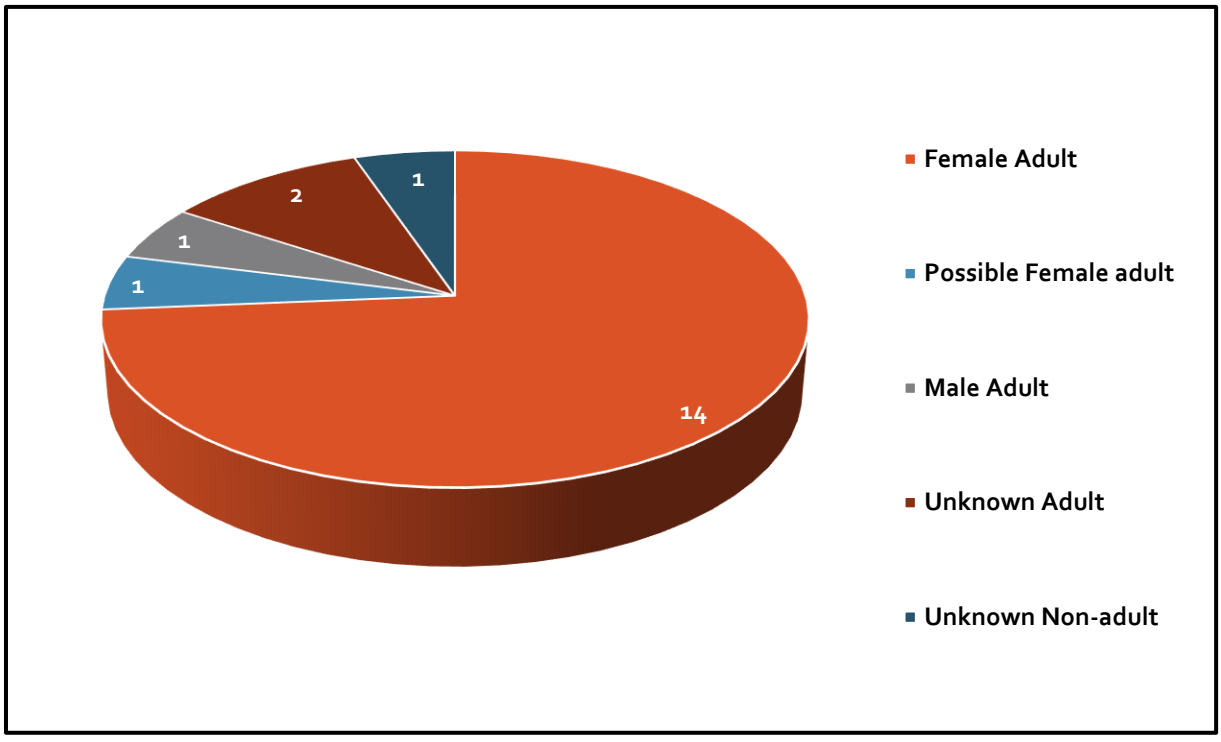
The reuse of Roman coins seems less ambiguous. It is clear that the Roman coins found in the Merovingian graves were mainly part of the grave's inventory and that the coins had a different function than the means of payment. The coins with suspension loop are most remarkable. Of the case studies that were dealt with in this thesis, nineteen coins contained a suspension loop. When looking at the ratio of coins with a suspension loop and the appearance of these coins in the 1,148 graves in the five case studies, it is clear that this has not been a major use within the Merovingian communities of the selected case studies. Also, within the cemeteries there are no patterns in grave relations regarding the graves with Roman coins with suspension loop. What is worth mentioning, is that of these nineteen graves, at least fourteen graves are of the female gender (see Table 1). Only grave 714 of Rhenen-Donderberg concerns a male grave. It should be noted that this conclusion was drawn based on the remaining grave goods (lance point and shield boss), there were no skeletal remains in this grave. Apart from the male grave, it seems that a Roman coin as an amulet or part of a chain was worn only by females during burial.

The Roman coins that lack a suspension loop have been placed in the mouth of the deceased or kept in a belt bag. As also has been suggested by Martin and discussed in paragraph 5.1.2. Martin recognized three groups regarding the Merovingian use of Roman coins. The first group encompasses Roman coins placed in the mouth of the deceased at the time of burial. This concerns both female and male graves. The coins have functioned as an obol, a payment

to Charon (ferryman) for a safe crossing into the afterlife. The second group concerns only females wearing coins with a hole as an amulet, necklace or belt. The third group concerns only males who found coins around the upper part of the pelvis. These coins were presumably kept in a belt bag.

The groups proposed by Martin also seem to apply to the selected sites in the Netherlands. Only the third group does not appear in the case studies with great conviction. In some cases, coins have been found around the pelvis area. These coins, however, contain a suspension loop and were most likely attached to a belt instead of kept in a belt bag. Yet, it cannot be confirmed that these coins have been used exclusively as an amulet or as decoration. Grave inventories are thus far the only known way pierced Roman coins are found in Merovingian context, making it rather difficult to determine whether it is purely a funerary rite or that is was used during life as well.

TABLE 1 ROMAN COINS WITH SUSPENSION LOOPS CATEGORISED PER GENDER *(Manouk Derks)*.



4. *What is the reuse ratio of Roman remains in the selected sites and between the selected sites?*

The ratio reuse of Roman material in the five selected case studies is too small to call it a Merovingian custom. In particular, the cemetery in Rhenen, where more than 1100 graves were excavated and only twelve of the graves contain Roman coin amulets. It seems strongly that it is determined on an individual level or perhaps among families within the community. Although reuse per cemetery does not occur significantly, it is remarkable that reuse is not constraint to one cemetery. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the reuse of specific Roman remains occurs in a large area in Northwest Europe.

5. *Are the reuse ratios sufficient to make an adequate conclusion?*

The reuse of Roman remains seems to be a collective idea. The information from this study has shown that the reuse of Roman remains is a relatively common factor in Merovingian cemeteries in present Northwest Europe. Zooming in on each Merovingian cemetery discussed in this thesis, however, it is not a major factor. The Merovingians most likely had a certain connection or relation with the Romans in general or their Roman precursors. The collected information is sufficient to draw a conclusion and answer the research question below.

"What can the reuse of Roman remains tell us about the Merovingian view on the Roman Empire and their mindset towards the previous period in Northwest Europe?"

This study has made it clear that the Merovingians were aware of their surroundings and its landscape. Many Roman remains were still visible at the time when the Merovingians founded their cemeteries. Each Merovingian community dealt with it in their own way. How the Merovingians deal with the Roman remains seems to be dependent on the former Roman use of the site. Posterholt-Achterste Voorst and Rhenen-Donderberg concerned both Roman cemeteries. The reuse of Roman objects is significantly more present here than in the other three sites where it did not concern Roman cemeteries. Especially the Roman coins are often encountered. The reuse of Roman building materials, however, is more present at Borgharen, where a Roman villa has been located, than at Posterholt-Achterste Voorst, Rhenen-Donderberg and even Rosmeer and Lent-Azaleastraat. The reuse of Roman remains and the use of Roman customs is not odd considering that the region in question has been under

Roman influence for a long time. By studying Roman remains in Merovingian grave context, this study has shown that the effects of the Roman empire during the Merovingian period have not yet been fully diminished. Although it does not apply to all Merovingian cemeteries, it does occur in a number of cemeteries in the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany.

It can be concluded that the reuse of Roman remains is part of the Merovingian culture. Although it appears to be a small part of the Merovingian culture, it is a widespread practice that occurs in many Merovingian cemeteries throughout at least Northwest Europe.

9 DISCUSSION

In this chapter some recommendations will be put up front and why they are important concerning the study on the relation between Merovingian cemeteries and Roman remains.

9.1.1 CONSIDER YOUR SURROUNDINGS

Archaeological research must, regarding Merovingian cemeteries, focus not only on the cemetery, but also on any predecessors and observations in the surrounding area. This study has shown that usually one or more Roman sites are present in the near vicinity of a Merovingian cemetery. This does not only involve Roman villas, but any other Roman structures as well. These Roman structures may have had a relationship with the founding or, at least, the determination of the location of the cemetery. In order to achieve a clear overview of the landscape and social relationships with Merovingian cemeteries, this is a factor of importance.

9.1.2 EXCAVATION FORMAT

In addition, it is important that a format is used during archaeological research so that Merovingian cemeteries can be excavated and elaborated in the future by means of a standard. Thus, Merovingian cemeteries are excavated in the same way, gathering the same information in exactly the same way, creating a unit in Dutch archaeology. Especially considering that incomplete remains or just fragments may have been a part of the grave's inventory.

The ultimate goal is to do this on an international level, so that results can be exchanged and supplemented. This way, one creates a clear and standardised overview of Merovingian cemeteries in Europa, which could make it possible to compare relationships between Merovingian cemeteries and grave goods mutually at an international level. This ultimately leads to a clear picture of the spread and accessibility of Merovingian communities.

9.1.3 LOCATION CHOICE MEROVINGIAN CEMETERIES

Moreover, besides reuse of Roman material, location selection must not be forgotten when analysing the relationship between Roman and Merovingian sites. The context of graves can provide a lot of information about the Merovingian perspective on Roman landscape layout and the Roman period in itself. However, location selection for the establishment of a Merovingian cemetery is a factor that is equally important. Are Merovingian cemeteries

founded on former Roman sites because of the unsuitableness of the soil for agricultural activities or is there another underlying thought behind it? It is remarkable that when Roman stone structures are abandoned these are often torn down. The case studies in this study have shown that there is indeed a lot of debris in the soil, which is not conducive to future agrarian plans.

Merovingian cemeteries founded on top of Roman cemeteries are in need of a different explanation. A recent study has shown that cemeteries have a positive outcome for the soil. The degradation of human remains causes a boost in nutrition level which increases the vegetation growth (Carter, Yellowlees & Tibbett 2007, 20; Niziolomski, Rickson, Marquez-Grant & Pawlett 2016, 5). Thus, agriculture should thrive well in such areas. To found a cemetery on top of it might have been done out of respect. This issue is difficult to study, but it has to be kept in mind. When looking at the size of Merovingian cemeteries, the cemetery of Posterholt-achterste Voorst is estimated to be a total of 241 graves (de Haas & Theuws 2013, 162). One might wonder if it is practical or desirable to generate this number of graves in a terrain of rubble? Or perhaps this was done deliberately to prevent agricultural activities from being carried out on the terrain in the near future? Were the Merovingians aware of the effects of decomposing human remains on the soil?

10 ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study on Roman remains in Merovingian grave contexts in Northwest Europe. Roman building materials and Roman coins have been found in numerous Merovingian graves throughout Europe. The purpose of this study was to find out why the Roman remains were present or deposited in a Merovingian funerary context. Did the remains land there by chance or have they been reused on purpose? Type of objects, type of alterations, position of the objects and the ratio in which the objects occur in the Merovingian cemeteries and between the Merovingian cemeteries have all been taken into consideration.

The results show that the majority of Roman remains have been given as a grave gift or have been deliberately deposited into the grave. The Roman building material was deliberately used in the graves' constructions. Extraordinary efforts have been made to achieve this, as it was not necessary. Grave constructions with a rather simple wooden container or even without container also occur in the same cemetery. The Roman coins in the graves functioned as an amulet or as obol, with a few exceptions. The use as an amulet or as obol in Merovingian grave contexts also occurs in Germany. Furthermore, the Roman sandstone monument that has been deliberately destroyed shows that objects do not necessarily have to be complete to gain a spiritual charge.

It should be noted that the reuse of Roman remains in Merovingian grave context does not occur on a regular basis, but they are common throughout Europe. The study of Roman remains is important to understand the transition from the Roman period to the Merovingian period.

For further research, it is recommended to study Merovingian cemeteries using a standardised (inter)national method with the emphasis on location choice and proper documentation of Roman findings in Merovingian context, since these findings can give a clear picture about the mindset of Merovingians towards their predecessors. In addition, through further research information is gained on the spread and accessibility of Merovingian communities in early Medieval Europe.

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APPENDIX I

TABLE 2 AN OVERVIEW OF THE ROMAN GRAVE GOODS PER CASE STUDY *(Manouk Derks).*

Material	Borgharen	Posterholt-Achterste Voorst	Lent-Azaleastraat	Rosmeer	Rhenen-Donderberg
Pottery	X		X	X	
Coins	X	X			X
Natural stone	X				
Ceramic building material	X	X			
Glass			X	X	
Jewellery	X	X	X	X	X

APPENDIX II

TABLE 3 THE PRESENCE OF ROMAN FINDS IN BORGHAREN *(Manouk Derks)*.

Material Grave	2008-2	6	7	47	51
Pottery	101 fragments of Roman pottery		late Roman pottery fragments	late Roman pottery fragments	Two fragments of Roman pottery
Coins					One complete highly corroded Roman coin and a fragment of a Roman coin
Natural stone			Large quantity of Roman natural stone in the grave's filling	Natural stone dating in the Roman period	Natural stone dating in the Roman period
Ceramic building material		Roman building material placed in a specific position	Roman building material. Some building blocks were used to support the grave's construction	Ceramic building material dating in the Roman period	Ceramic building material dating in the Roman period
Glass					
Jewellery		A bend brass Roman fibula			A silver Roman fibula
Gender	♀ (non-adult)	♂	♂ + ? (non-adult)	♀?	? (non-adult)

APPENDIX III

TABLE 4 THE PRESENCE OF ROMAN FINDS IN POSTERHOLT-ACHTERSTE VOORST *(Manouk Derks)*.

Material Grave	9	46	58	57	85
Pottery				Samian ware cup, Dragendorff 33	
Coins		Quinarius, minted in 89 BC	Dupondius/as depicting Antoninus Pius. The coin dates 147-148 AD		Two fragments of coins, most likely minted after 348
Natural stone					
Ceramic building material					
Glass					
Jewellery	Dupondius/as depicting Hadrian. The coin has a suspension loop with remains of the wire preserved in the loop. The coin dates 183-253 AD				1/2 centenionalis coin with a suspension loop. The coin dates 383-402
Nails	One small iron nail		three small iron nails		Three iron nails
Gender	**?** (non-adult)	♀	**?**	♀	**?**

APPENDIX IV

TABLE 5 THE PRESENCE OF ROMAN FINDS IN ROSMEER *(Manouk Derks)*.

Material Grave	9	14	69	73
Pottery		A Roman jug with ear made of a white clay	Roman Coarse ware bowl originating from the Mayen area in present Germany	
Coins				
Natural stone				
Ceramic building material				
Glass				A complete blue green Roman bottle
Jewellery	Roman silver coin with two suspension loops. Rust is visible in one of the loops, probably due to an iron thread that connected the coin to a brass ring			
Gender	♀	**?** (non-adult)	♂	♀

APPENDIX V

TABLE 6 THE PRESENCE OF ROMAN FINDS IN LENT-AZALEASTRAAT *(Manouk Derks)*.

Material Grave	1972-3	1972-4	1972-6	1972-7
Pottery	Fragmented pottery from either the Iron Age or the Roman period	Fragmented pottery from either the Iron Age or the Roman period	Fragmented pottery from either the Iron Age or the Roman period	Fragmented pottery from either the Iron Age or the Roman period
Coins				
Natural stone				
Ceramic building material				
Glass				
Jewellery				Two fibulae; A Brass fibula, probably Roman. An Iron spring coil of a fibula
Gender	♀	♀?	♀?	♂

Material Grave	1972-8	1972-9	1972-10	1972-11
Pottery	Fragmented pottery from either the Iron Age or the Roman period	Fragmented pottery from either the Iron Age or the Roman period	Fragmented pottery from either the Iron Age or the Roman period	Fragmented pottery from either the Iron Age or the Roman period
Coins				
Natural stone				
Ceramic building material				
Glass				
Jewellery				
Gender	♂	?	♀	♀

Material Grave	1972-15	1972-17	1972-18	1972-19
Pottery	Fragmented pottery from either the Iron Age or the Roman period	Fragmented pottery from either the Iron Age or the Roman period	Fragmented pottery from either the Iron Age or the Roman period	Fragmented pottery from either the Iron Age or the Roman period
Coins				
Natural stone				
Ceramic building material				
Glass				
Jewellery				
Gender	♂	♂	♀	♂

Material Grave	1972-20	1972-24	1975-20
Pottery	Fragmented pottery from either the Iron Age or the Roman period	Fragmented pottery from either the Iron Age or the Roman period	Fragmented pottery from either the Iron Age or the Roman period
Coins			
Natural stone			
Ceramic building material			
Glass	One fragment of light green glass, with white horizontal threads	One fragment of light green glass, with horizontal threads of the same colour	One fragment of light green glass, with horizontal threads of the same colour
Jewellery			
Gender	♂	♂	♂

APPENDIX VI

TABLE 7 THE PRESENCE OF ROMAN FINDS IN RHENEN-DONDERBERG *(Manouk Derks)*.

Material Grave	31	79	138	161	169
Pottery					
Coins	Silver coin. Antoninian Gordians III, 238-244 AD				
Natural stone					
Ceramic building material					
Glass					
Jewellery		Silver denarius with suspension loop. Elagabal, 219 - 220 AD.	Brass as or dupondius with suspension loop. Marcus Aurelius, 161-176 AD.	Silver denarius with suspension loop. Elagabal, 219 - 220 AD.	Silver denarius with suspension loop. Caracalla, 211 - 217 AD.
Gender	♀	♀	♀	♀	♀

Material Grave	176	188	195	332
Pottery				
Coins				Two coins. Denarius of Aurelius and Verus, 164-169 AD or later. Brass coin of unknown origin.
Natural stone				
Ceramic building material				
Glass				
Jewellery	Brass coin with silver plating. probably Antoninian Phillipps I, 244-247 AD?	Brass as with suspension loop. Vespasian, 71 AD	Two coins with suspension loops. Antoninian Phillips II, 245 AD. A denarius from Elagabal, 220-222 AD	
Gender	♀	?	♀	♀

Material Grave	413	563	600	714
Pottery				
Coins				
Natural stone				
Ceramic building material				
Glass				
Jewellery	Four coins with suspension loops. Silver denarius of Commodus, 183-184 AD. Silver denarius of Galba, 69 AD. Silver denarius of Antoninus Pius, after 141 AD.	Silver, Republican denarius with two suspension loops. 150-90 BC	Indeterminable brass coin with suspension loop.	Silver denarius with suspension loop. Probably Faustinas II, 161-170 AD.
Gender	♀	♀	♀	♂

Material Grave	838	841	842	846
Pottery				
Coins	Silver denarius depicting Antoninus Pius, 150-151 AD.	Silver denarius of Traian, 101-102 AD.	Solidus of Gratian, 378-379.	A probable brass denarius of Antoninus Pius.
Natural stone				
Ceramic building material				
Glass				
Jewellery				
Gender	?	♂	♂	?

APPENDIX VII

TABLE 8 AN OVERVIEW OF THE ROMAN COINS, THEIR POSITIONS AND POSSIBLE FUNCTION *(MANOUK DERKS).*

Site	Gender	Belt attachment/ amulet	Necklace/ amulet	Obol	Other
Borgharen					
Grave XV	Male non-adult				One complete coin and one coin fragment. Positions of the coins are unknown.
Posterholt-Achterste Voorst					
Grave 46	Female adult (+ second individual)				The coin was found in the reopening pit, most likely repositioned.
Grave 9	Unknown; non-adult	X	X		Coin with suspension loop. Position is unknown.
Grave 58	Unknown				Grave was reopened, probably next to the right hand.
Grave 85	Unknown	X	X		Three coins, one with suspension loop. The other two coins concerns two small fragments. Position of the coins are unknown.
Rosmeer					
Grave 9	Female adult		X		Coin with suspension loop. The coin was located, together with a brass ring, between the breast and upper left arm.

Rhenen-Donderberg					
Grave 31	Female adult	X	X		The coin is damaged, but appears to have been drilled. Position of the coin is unknown.
Grave 79	Female adult	X	X		Coin with suspension loop. The coin was positioned at waist-height in the Northwest part of the container. Other grave goods are beads.
Grave 138	Female adult	X	X		Coin with suspension loop. Position of the coin and the iron fragments are between hip joint and the left lower arm. The coin however, was rusted to an iron fragment. The iron fragment is part of more iron fragments, which suggest that the coin might have been attached to a belt with iron belt garnish.
Grave 161	Female adult	X	X		Coin with suspension loop, located in the middle of the thorax.
Grave 169	Female adult	X	X		Coin with suspension loop. Between waist and lower part of the thorax
Grave 176	Female Adult?	X			Coin with a suspension loop. The coin was found east of several organic fragments at waist-height. The coin is found at the same height as the brass fittings of a belt.

Grave 188	Unknown	X			Coin with a suspension loop. The coin was found at waist-height. The coin is found at the same height as the brass fittings of a belt.
Grave 195	Female Adult	X	X		Two coins with suspension loops. Position of the coins are unknown.
Grave 332	Female adult	X	X		One coin was found at the upper part of the sternum.
Grave 413	Female adult	X	X		Not certain, due to different notes: either at the foot or in the neck area.
Grave 563	Female adult		X	X?	Coin with suspension loop found near the mouth.
Grave 600	Female adult		X		Coin with suspension loop found in the western part of the grave next to beads.
Grave 714	Male adult	X	X		Coin with suspension loop. East of the lance tip and shield boss, in the western half of the container.
Grave 838	Unknown			X	Coin found in the mouth area.
Grave 841	Male Adult				Position is unknown.
Grave 842	Male adult			X?	Position of the coin is at the container's head end.
Grave 846	Male adult			X	The coin was found in the mouth area.