



Close to home

A study of the late-Merovingian farmyard burials of
Veldhoven

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Leiden University Applied Archaeology Master Thesis

Cover image: decorated belt buckle from grave 01 (zone G)

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Veldhoven.

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1 Introduction

Research problems

During excavations at Veldhoven in 2017, a cemetery dating to the late 7th and early 8th century was found. This late Merovingian cemetery is what is called a “farmyard burial ground” so named because it was created on or near the farmyard of the people that used the cemetery. The farmyard burial ground in Veldhoven is located in a settlement of which one or some households used the cemetery over the course of at least two generations. Research in the Veldhoven area will continue and more Merovingian settlements are expected to be found. Next to this site two farmyard burials were found on a site several hundreds of meters to the north. The practice of burying the dead on the farmyard is rare for both the Merovingian period before and the Carolingian period that came after and is, in the southern Netherlands, almost unique to the transitional period between the two. The Veldhoven graves are part of a small set of such “farmyard burials” that were created specifically in the transitional period from Merovingian to Carolingian.

The main research question is: *“Why did the people of some settlements during the transitional period from the Merovingian to Carolingian period create farmyard burials while most people were predominantly buried on collective cemeteries, both before and after this transitional period?”*

Research goals and questions

The goal of this study is to gain an insight into why this burial phenomenon in the late-Merovingian/ early-Carolingian period takes place. This will be done by using the archaeological data from the Veldhoven excavation and connecting the data to studies on related cases and relevant literary sources available.

The main research question will be answered by answering a number of sub-questions. The sub-questions are listed below:

1. What type of burials are found at Veldhoven? (how were the graves constructed? which burial rites? Are there various forms of inhumation?)
2. What grave goods have been found in the graves?
3. What is the dating of the burials?
4. How did the grave-field develop over time in a chronological and topographical sense? (lay-out and phasing of the grave-field over the period it was used)

5. Are there, based on the method of burial and material culture of the graves, differences distinguishable with regard to the gender and age of the deceased?
6. Are there, based on the method of burial and material culture of the graves, family relations of the deceased distinguishable?
7. Are there, based on the method of burial and material culture of the graves, differences distinguishable with regard to the socio-economic positions of the deceased?
8. How do the rituals established from research on the burials and the grave-field itself fit into current knowledge about rituals, burials and grave-fields in the late-Merovingian period?

Research methods:

The research will consist of an in-depth study of the cemetery that has been found at Veldhoven. The graves will be studied based on their layout, on their positions in the cemetery as opposed to one another, their stratigraphy, and the grave finds. To aid the study of the archaeological material and to help to answer the sub-questions, a literature study will be conducted in which relevant literary sources on the topic of Merovingian burials will be used.

2 Interpretative backgrounds

In writing this thesis, different theories and existing interpretations have been used. In this chapter, the main theories and ideas that have been used will be outlined. To fully understand from what theoretical contexts the ideas in this paper have been derived, various aspects of the research of funerary archaeology need to be addressed. To do so, not only the theory regarding grave structures will be mentioned, but also theory that guides the interpretation of these structures in this thesis.

To understand the meaning of the Veldhoven burials of the late 7th century a closer look needs to be taken at the earlier funerary practices, starting with the Roman West.

It was customary in the Roman West to cremate the dead. The makeup of the actual grave structure could vary, but as a base principle, all bodies were burned. This changed in the late second and early third centuries AD. Cremation would still be practised for another couple of centuries to come, but this is where inhumation is introduced as indicated in the archaeological record. Inhumation became the dominant method of disposing the dead at the end of the third century AD, and the practice of depositing food and drink in the graves as practised in the Roman West cremation burials was continued in the third-century inhumation graves. This custom then disappeared from the archaeological record in the course of the fourth until the second half of the fifth century. The graves in between these two periods are, for the largest part, devoid of grave goods. After the middle of the fourth century, in a few cases, a different type of grave goods was introduced in the graves. For men these were: weapons, belts and brooches, and for women, these were mainly jewellery (Theuws 2009, 285,286/ Halsall 1995, 7,8). In the article: "Grave goods, ethnicity and the rhetoric of burial rites in Late Antique Northern Gaul", Theuws, discussing the deposition of so-called weapons in graves, stresses the importance of dividing the period from before the late fourth century (c. 390) in which mainly axes, lances, bows and arrows were found from the period thereafter in which, although few, burials containing swords and shields are found (Theuws 2009, 287). He, therefore, does not consider these rare occasions to be structural changes in grave rites. The sword burials from the fifth century onward are however counted as being part of a structural grave rite change since they have shared characteristics. The period ascribed to this change lasts until the beginning of the sixth century. The described changes in burial rites have in the past been linked to the settlement of

Germanic peoples in Northern Gaul who brought these changes with them (Halsall 2010, 6). This idea stems from the concept of homogeneity in which all groups have characteristics that are shared by the whole group and binds them together. From this same idea comes a division between Roman and Germanic and Germanic and Gaulish. Different researchers have ascribed the new rituals as either being a "Germanic" invention or being completely of Roman origin and merely adopted by the Germanic peoples (Halsall 2010, 95). The adoption of the new ritual is in itself enigmatic as it would make more sense for the local leaders to shape and reform the already existing rites instead of adopting new ones. Theuws explains this as: "new ritual repertoires have meanings beyond social practices and the exercise of power, in that they are highly relevant in the creation, definition and interpretation of new concepts, values, norms and ideas, and that the late Roman weapon burial rite was not initially about local leadership." (Theuws 2009, 289) The same concept is applied in this thesis in order to understand the burials. Burials like the ones discussed in this thesis are usually understood through what we in our modern age understand to be the values of burial and the ritual that we use. In research, the concepts about burial, culture and identity that were developed in the 19th and 20th century are often used to understand the burials. This is also why multiple concepts need to be understood and viewed before a definition or academic viewpoint is defined in the case of the late Merovingian burials. Not just concepts behind the burials are to be understood, but also the culture, identity, ritual and ongoing social processes from the late Merovingian period itself.

One of the most important things to take into account before any theorizing about the nature of the Veldhoven burials is performed is to consider that the grave goods that are found in the burials are not to be viewed as just material items, but as social agents that convey a sociocultural or ritual message (Williams 2006, 8). This idea entails that the entire grave structure, including the burial, the grave goods and the perceived burial-rites that are deduced from these things should by no means be taken at face value in reconstructing the meaning of the burial rite. The clothing that the deceased is wearing should not exclusively be seen as the clothing that the deceased was wearing while he/she was alive and the food or weapons that are found alongside the body should not be taken as the literal food that was eaten or the weapons that were used by the deceased. The identification of ethnic identity based on such parameters should also be avoided (Halsall 2011, 15-18). These things should be understood through different models and per grave structure. Yes, there are trends and structural elements

visible in the makeup of these graves, differing per period, but to present the most viable interpretation, each new structure should at first be seen as a single structure before it is connected to wider patterns.

The body of the deceased can, in a way, be seen as a cultural construction that could very possibly have served a purpose other than disposing of the dead or the representation of the living person (Halsall 2010, 94-97). To understand what that purpose is, all different aspects of the burial need to be taken into account, and a rudimentary understanding should be achieved of the cultural impact that certain burial gifts have (Theuws 2009, 295). If a sword, for example, meant great wealth in late Merovingian times, then a body buried with such a sword could be interpreted as belonging to a wealthy man. But it gets more complicated. Such a body could also be interpreted as belonging to a man who is wished to be wealthy in the perceived afterlife. It could also be that the ones who buried the man are the ones who were wealthy and who wanted to give the deceased person some form of post-mortal status as an ancestor providing protection. In that case the communal aspect of the burial and the ideas of a larger group seems more important than the representation of an individual. These are things that are not easily understood based on the limited amount of evidence there is, but all this should be taken into account when reviewing these burials. If the idea of a cultural construction of death and the dead is applied to the cultural context and time-frame of the deceased, there can also be an option in which the deceased were part in something that was not meant for the bodies themselves. The attributes, given to the deceased and the rituals performed might have had to do with the creation of ancestors. The attributes that were buried with the dead (relative) would cause the deceased to be happy or pleased in the afterlife and therefore he or she would lend protection. Another option is that the attributes that are given to the deceased are related to the skillset that he or she should possess or would be given in the afterlife, to rightfully look after the surviving relatives (Halsall 2010, 97; Theuws 2009, 295-296).

After the fifth century, the ritual started to change. The burial rituals in the Merovingian world became soberer as the centuries progressed and from the late 7th century, most burials were void of grave goods. This process would go on to culminate in a period of which no burials at all are found in the region of the burials discussed in this thesis: the Carolingian period. The small period between the two, Merovingian and Carolingian, is the time slot in which this thesis takes place. Burials were not uncommon during this period, but very “sober” and located on a separate part of land with the graves placed in rows. In the southern

Netherlands it would not have been uncommon for some to be buried in chamber graves, but never on the farmyard, always on a separate cemetery. This is of course the main differing factor between the farmyard burials and their contemporary counterparts. The presence of a more elaborate set of grave goods, reminiscent of 5th to early 7th century graves is also what makes these particular farmyard graves stand out in the late 7th early 8th century. To explain the nature of the ever-changing ritual, not only the previous interpretations of such rituals must be expanded upon, but also the possible new interpretations of the burial ritual. Historically a lot of the interpretations regarding new burial rites were viewed from a homogenising point of view. Meaning that cultural groups were viewed in a very black and white way. This perspective suggests that when one group takes over something from another group, they exactly copy it, instead of giving new meaning to ritual or to interpret things in their own way. It should also be considered that some of the groups were not actively aware of the rituals or meanings behind them and simply performed them because that was the way that they had been performed and how they were supposed to be performed (Theuws 2009, 296). Interestingly enough there is an almost certainty that this was not the case for the Veldhoven burials because they differ from what could be called the “norm” of that period. Therefore, it can be assumed that there was some sort of active cultural reasoning in which the Late Merovingians in Veldhoven decided that they should bury their deceased in such a manner.

On the evolution of weapon graves

In the Veldhoven burials weapons were found in a number of graves. These items could be classified as weapons and in this chapter, a closer look will be taken at how to interpret these finds. This is done in order to add that interpretation based on a specific case to the overall interpretation of the grave-rites and meaning of the Veldhoven grave structures.

Originally the main interpretations regarding sword burials were simply that they contained warriors. These sword burials would often be referred to as “warrior graves”. The swords would signify either the military capability of men (because these swords were found next to men) or the status of the deceased within the burying community. The interpretation that is used in this essay differs from these theories. As a classification as warrior is often based solely on the presence of what is nowadays considered a weapon. In multiple cases the people that have been buried with a “weapon” would in life have not been able to use them

because of disease, handicap or simply because they were too young (Härke 1990, 33-36). In the interpretations in this thesis, the symbolism of the supposed 'weapons' is viewed as having a more in-depth meaning. Some of the artefacts that are most commonly associated with war can also be interpreted as being linked to the hunt. Bow and arrows and spears were the most commonly used tools for the hunt of animals. It is, therefore, also necessary to view the burials in this regard. The axe was interpreted as relating to reclamation and claiming parts of the landscape, that might still be the case in later times. Throughout history, the hunt was seen as a heroic act. The hunting of big game was very dangerous and there are numerous displays on grave structures, pots and walls that depict the hunt as being some form of heroic act (Halsall 2010, 125). Theuws following the interpretations by Andreae (1980) relates this to man's victory over death (Theuws 2009, 306-307). These theories mainly apply to early migration period burials in which axes (not related to the hunt but to reclamation of land) were also found in great numbers in graves. Axes, lances, spears and bows and arrows (of which mostly only the arrow tips remain) were, as a rule, more commonly found than the rare swords in this period. The Veldhoven graves do not contain any axes in them, but the rhetoric of axes in burials still needs to be mentioned if we were to apply these ideas to the burials of Veldhoven. The axe can easily be interpreted as another weapon, a tool used to showcase power over others and the need to display this. In the same manner that the other items are not necessarily best explained as tools of war; these axes can also be seen as showcases of the possession of land. The prime usage for axes was to cut down trees. The cutting of trees was, historically, mainly performed to clear land as to claim it for building or farmland. The tool in these scenarios is an indicator for the possession of land or the victory over nature (Theuws 2019b, 129-130). In the Late Medieval period, land was often owned by a ruler that had dominion over everything that happened in the territory. The act of hunting in these periods was a very visible showcase of the power of the lord/ruler to the people. This right of hunting was in many cases only reserved for the ruler, and it was illegal for the normal folk to partake in such events (or illegal in designated areas), under punishment by law (Cummins 2003, 195). In cases where there were none such laws, a distinction would often be made between the "noble" hunt of the upper class and the (in their eyes) "barbaric" trapping and killing of animals just for food and hides (Klemettilä 2015, 49-50). It was not uncommon in such periods to carry hunting equipment to visibly display the right to hunt on the lord's grounds. This idea of the hunt as a pastime for the nobility has its roots deep in history but is

most notably shared by the Romans. The Merovingian dynasty carried on this tradition (Wood 1994, 69). This can also be a remnant of an earlier desire to showcase the ownership of land through the usage of what too often are interpreted as just instruments of war.

Theoretical interpretations of grave goods and their meaning

The objects found in early medieval graves are varied and differ on a regional basis and according to gender and age. Burials that are typically interpreted as being that of a 'male' often include items like weapons, tools and drinking vessels, whereas 'female' burials typically include dress items, jewellery and glass vessels. However, these glass vessels also appear in men's graves. Recently Härke created an overview of various interpretations proposed to show the large variability of the interpretations of the meaning of grave goods (Härke 2014, 43). The oldest interpretation of grave goods is that they were deposited in the grave to aid the deceased on their way to the afterlife, or in the afterlife itself (Paulsen, 1967 in Härke 2014, 45). A later theory is that the goods deposited in the grave were part of the Inalienable possessions of the deceased. These inalienable possessions made up the items of the deceased that could not be inherited, sold or given away (Härke 2014, 45). Textual sources and archaeological evidence show however that some items that were considered to be high-status artefacts, had been passed down or owned by multiple generations before they were eventually buried. These findings led Kars to theorize the idea of collective possessions instead of the inalienable goods of a single person (Kars, 2011 in Härke 2014, 46).

Another interpretation is that of grave goods as the indicators of rank, status or identity. The quality and number of grave goods would, in this case, signify the social status of the dead. Something that is not to be overlooked is the idea that some objects might have rotten away due to the corroding processes of time and that some of the displays of status might have occurred during the funeral itself (Härke 2014, 46-47). This second idea is included in theorizing about the Veldhoven burials as these 'invisible' elements should be conceptualized through contemporary ethnographic and anthropological comparisons in order to reconstruct their possible existence.

A more recent interpretation, influenced by anthropological and sociologicistic ideas, is that of Solsberg. Solsberg suggests that grave goods might be a metaphor for the life, actions and deeds of the deceased. The goods might, in

this case, be a visual autobiography of sorts that highlights or chronicles certain aspects of the life of the deceased (Solsberg 2004 in Härke 2014, 48).

I shall not explicitly state the validity or invalidity of the proposed theoretical interpretations of grave-rite and burials mentioned hereunder, as rites differ heavily between period and culture. Therefore, all proposed theories might have some validity and at the same time none of them might when applied to the Veldhoven farmyard burials. I nevertheless find it necessary to mention the different trains of thought in order to freely pick aspects of multiple theories when considering the nature of the Veldhoven burial rites.

An extension of Solsberg's line of thought is the idea proposed by Hesberg that these grave goods are items associated with the birthplace of the deceased. The items would act as a token of the origins of the deceased, the proposed region of which could be both real or fictional. There are multiple examples of early medieval graves containing items that are originally not from the region where they are buried, which would be explained using this theory. (Hesberg 1998, 23 in Härke 2014, 48).

The Veldhoven goods could also be seen as gifts from the living to the deceased. This would, according to King (King 2004 in Härke 2014, 49) be shown in the correlation between the number of gifts and the size of the grave field or community. The more gifts would mean that there were more people present at the funeral handing out gifts. Gift-giving in general was a, often used, method to create bonds between different parties in the early medieval period (Grierson 1959, 138; Curta 2006, 671) Gifts could also be given with the deceased for them to be transposed to some form of deity. This could relate to the belief that this was necessary in order for the deceased to be permitted to the afterlife, or to gain favour with the deity present there.

Anthropological accounts of the idea that the dead pollute their surroundings are documented extensively. Following this idea is the concept of the disposal of polluted items in graves. These items would have even subject to pollution from the deceased and it would be in the best interest of everyone (including the deceased in the afterlife potentially) to dispose of the possessions of the dead (Härke 2014, 51). A connected fear to the fear of pollution is that of the dead itself. Since the fear of the dead rising from the grave or the dead not being able to rest properly is also found in multiple cultures, it should be taken into account. The idea is however not convincingly applicable to the Veldhoven burials as there are no items found that seem properly out of place, which is one of the only ways to recognize such fears.

Most of the interpretations are derived from anthropological and ethnographic research and are quite difficult to prove the existence of, in an archaeological sense. As is with the idea of forgetting. This idea entails that objects might be placed next to the deceased in order for the living to forget the deceased. From our modern Western perspective, we tend to want to remember our dead. This is however not the case for other cultures, and some choose to try to forget about the deceased. These cultures have tendencies to bury both the belongings and objects connected to the dead and even refrain from mentioning the name of the deceased after his or her passing (Härke 2014, 52).

Halsall notes that: “the precise meaning of a statement or symbol, or its ‘tone’, is also created by the context in which it is made or seen.” (Halsall 2010, 206). He applies this thought to the phenomenon that is the early medieval cemetery, which he describes as a shared ritual site which is located away from the settlement itself and which is reached by a funerary procession, framing the statement or the ideas that the buriers want to convey. This showcases the ‘oddity’ of the Veldhoven burials, being located on or next to the farmyard instead of on a separate piece of land outside the inhabited world. Reconstructing the meaning behind this odd placement is one of the main research goals of this thesis.

Halsall presents the process of burying someone as a text, meant to be read and understood. The grave goods in this context are the words in the text which help give meaning to the people who are witnessing the event. The number of people attending the event would need to be large because the ‘text’ presented during the event would only be visible briefly. As soon as the grave was closed off from the world the ‘text’ and its meaning would be lost, and its message should be conveyed prior. The grave goods that are placed in the grave and the clothing that was put on the body of the buried to be, together, display the identity of the deceased. This display of identity might have been an idealized portrayal of the true identity of the deceased or could have been a means to demonstrate the social standing or power of the ones tending to the grave (Williams 2006, 5). The cemetery itself is a place of remembrance and continuity. The items that were used as grave goods were often restricted to certain sets of items. Halsall labels the usage and continuity of certain elements and burial goods as ‘safe’ items. These items were familiar and recognized by the public, giving a hint of safety to such “critical, threatening and unknown” situations (Halsall 2010, 208). The change that can occur in the social relations of the local community in the event of death is, with such repeated rituals, made less stressful though the focus

on continuity and similar previous occasions (Williams 2006, 215-218; Naum 2007, 2). Other than these big concepts the ritual remembering of the deceased and the created occasion for the community to get together is a great help for comforting the family of the deceased with the loss.

The odd case of Veldhoven and the 'farmyard burials'

Now that enough background information and theory is outlined it becomes easier to explain why the case of the farmyard burials is such an odd one. At the start of the 6th century AD, the burial ritual as described in the previous text was widely adopted by most communities. Soon not only local magnates, but entire local families were burying their deceased with this 'complex' ritual, depositing grave-goods in the process (Halsall 2010, 212). The burial ritual and the nature of burial ritual is however ever-changing. The changes did not cease to exist and at the start of the 7th century CE, several different changes were occurring in the structure of North Gallic society. These changes were linked with an increase in aristocratic power (Halsall 2010, 212) and resulted in the changing of the ritual. A number of families no longer exaggerated the old rituals, as is common with the development of a ritual, but completely broke with the old ways. Halsall uses the example that in some families old women were now buried with 'quite lavish displays of jewellery'. He mentions that some of these graves are 'founder graves' implying that they were the first on the designated grave field and had a special socio-cultural value within the community. In the 7th century CE we see the formation of a new kind of cemetery. The 'new' cemetery is of a smaller variety and is meant for smaller communities and for smaller audiences during the burial process. The display that was in the previous century pushed to its maximum extent now became smaller, soberer and simpler in nature. A loss of symbolism is visible in these graves, as is connected to the loss of several common grave-goods. These grave-goods become more difficult to apply to a certain 'set' of goods, as was common in the previous centuries and therefore prescribing an age or gender group to the inhabitants of the graves becomes harder. The weapons and items that, for the previous centuries, were theorized to be symbols of socio-cultural identity are now interpreted (due the disappearance of axes and heavily decorated swords in graves) as just symbolising that the man in the grave was a 'free' man. This idea however heavily relies on speculation as the nature of the showcasing of rank, or jurisdictional status in graves is heavily debated (Wason 1994, 87; Brown 1981). At the same time, it could be argued that the symbolism is lost in this period and that the people making the graves

just buried their beloved with a weapon because 'that's how it has always been'. The ritual and the theorized performed 'play' or the 'text' that was meant to cope with the social changes during the transitional period after the death of a community member seem to disappear in favour of a 'permanent' marker above ground. And so do the signs of feasting from the archaeological (or rarely, historical) record (Halsall 2010, 213). This brings us to the end of the 7th century and early 8th century CE. It is established that the lavish burial ritual at this point has wholly disappeared and that the meaning that went with these displays was also lost. This is one of the main reasons that justify this thesis because some of the Veldhoven burials were 'lavishly' filled with grave-goods as if they come from a century before. The other reason is that they are not located on a separated cemetery but on the farmyard itself. From the previously mentioned theories, literature and background information a meaning shall be deduced.

3 Grave structures and first insights into the spatial organisation of the cemetery

In this chapter, the layout of the grave-field and its placement within the context of the surrounding community will be explored. The Veldhoven site features two grave fields distinctively called zone G and zone K. Zone G consists out of three graves which are numbered grave 01 to 03. Zone K is a larger grave field of 23 graves which are numbered grave 02 to grave 24. For the sake of continuity no change was made in the numbering of the graves, even though there exists a small overlap. In order to avoid confusion, the zone G graves will always be mentioned as; 'grave 01 (zone G)', 'grave 02 (zone G)' and 'grave 03 (zone G)'.

The layout of a grave-field can be important in understanding its context. This stems from an idea that the differences in placement and form of a grave might indicate differences in age, sex, status, or period (Binford 1971, 20-21). The imaginary boundaries or the placement can not only give information about the graves as opposed to one another, but also on the imagined world that is the grave site. It was more common in the Merovingian era for graves to be placed on a separate grave-field instead of on the farmyard, this has led to the current interpretations of Merovingian grave sites to heavily incorporate that factor into the theories. The fact that the Veldhoven burial is located on the farmyard instead of on a separated piece of land is one of its main features in establishing it as an oddity. When regarding separated grave-fields the separation of grave and community is always viewed as a deliberate choice to divide the area of the living (the settlement) from the area of the dead (the cemetery) (Scholkmann 2000, 108-110). This separation could lead to a binding of a community, as all graves are located on one location, which would point to shared ancestors, or communal ties. A graveyard in such a context becomes more than just a place to store the deceased. A graveyard might even be seen as a form of recreational space, as was the case for church graveyards from at least the 13th century onwards (Maddrell & Sidaway 2010, 75). Graveyards in these regards provide an active social role within a community. The question is if such a social role is lost, otherwise translated, or exactly the same for burials located on a farmyard. To more clearly understand the meaning of these farmyard burials being located on the farmyard, a comparison has to be made to contemporary grave fields that are also situated on the farmyard. An example are the grave fields of Geldrop and of Domellen (Theuws 2019a, 377-378). Both settlement sites feature

different sets of farmyards that have an open space between each other. Interestingly enough the different grave fields that can be connected to different farmyards are placed on the inside of the open space, facing the other farmyards. This is not visible at the burials of Veldhoven, or at least not visible as of yet. It should therefore not only be considered why these graves are located on the farmyard, but also why they differ from other graves that could be considered of the same model. No concise answers on these questions can be given yet as the research on the settlement of Veldhoven is yet to be concluded. A more in-depth understanding of the dating, placement and chronology of the farmyards might reveal either that the Veldhoven burials were (contrary to what is visible currently) placed on the inside 'social space' between farmyards, or that the Veldhoven burials deviate from this organizational model (Theuws 2019a, 377). Having said that, the burials as opposed to each other could also be used to interpret a myriad of other theories. The shared idea through all of these is that the residents of the community that buried the people of the cemetery are not to be reconstructed based off of the graves that they created. As stated in previous chapters, the burials are not perfect reflections of the workings of Merovingian society and should not be held in that regard. It is more likely that the burials were used as a mechanism to convey something that was not connected to daily life. Interpretations regarding this are also fuelled by interpretations regarding the layout and relations of the graves and the people buried within these graves.

Boundaries

The Veldhoven Merovingian grave field is a relatively small field by contemporary standards. It is difficult to discern borders from the available information as the only tangible archaeological features are the graves themselves and the finds within them. Wooden coffins/chambers are recovered, but are mostly in bad shape and in many cases are rotten away completely. Possible features that would have been placed above ground that would have pointed towards the graves or given away any kind of border of the graves site were not retrieved. Structures such as fences or grave stone-type ornaments might have pointed towards the site being a grave site. At the same time it could be argued that such features are not expected at the site because it is located on the farmyard instead of on a separated piece of land. They can therefore not be interpreted as being closed off as the space would have been used in day to day life. Some type of bordering, maybe not of the entire grave field itself, but of the graves must have been visible however. The placement of the graves in perfect rows shows

that the people burying the dead must have known where the other graves were. A counter argument could be made that the graves were dug in a relatively short period, causing the community to remember the location of the graves and the outline to still be visible in the disturbed earth. The theory that there must have been some kind of external markers is in reality more likely, as the counter argument does not consider the burials of the second phase. The burials of phase II are placed a generation later than the first phase and are also placed in rows. These rows coincide with the rows of the phase I burials, showcasing a knowledge of their placement. Another argument for there being markers is the fact that grave 01 and grave 02 of zone G were at some point re-opened. The reopening of the grave is visible in the soil, and the size and accurate placement of the reopening pit shows that the people making the pit knew where to dig.

Grave Field Zone K

Zone K is a larger part of the Veldhoven site and consist out of both Merovingian and Carolingian settlement traces. Located on the northernmost point of the Merovingian habitational area is the grave field of zone K. The grave field consists out of 23 graves (numbered 02-24).

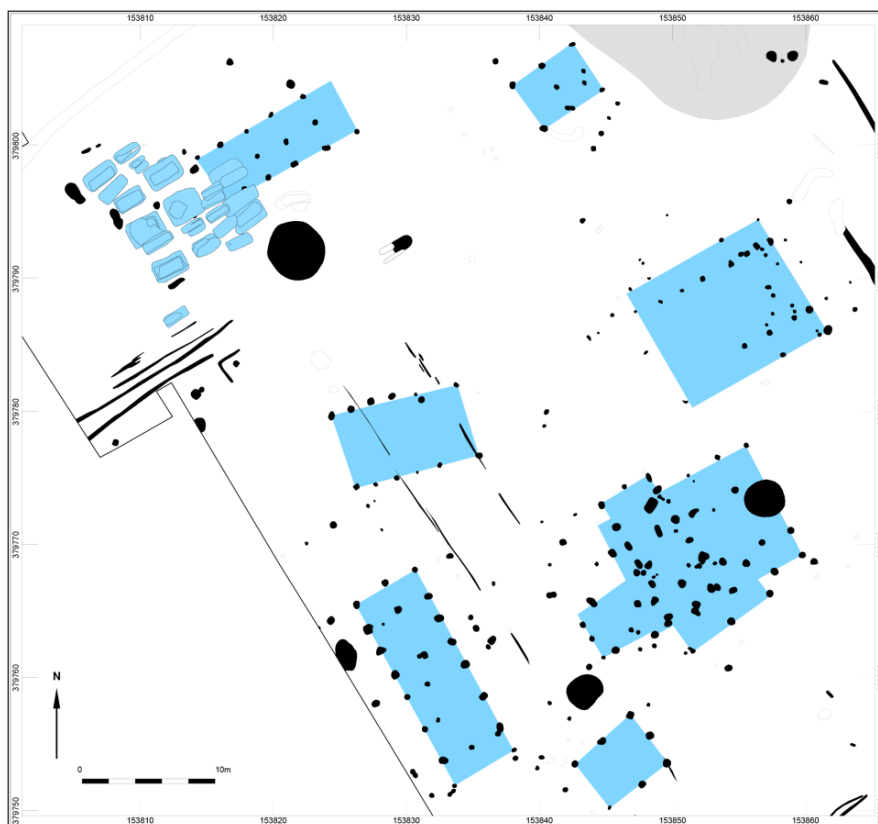


Figure 1 Overview of the features of zone K. The grave field of zone K is located in the upper-left corner. A part of the younger phase of graves is covered by a house plan. (Spelde & Theuws 2017, 30)

The graves of zone K can be divided in two different phases that are not chronologically apart by much more than two generations (fig. 1; fig. 2). A house plan is situated under a number of the younger graves. There is a high possibility that the older graves originate from the period of this house or shed type structure. All the graves that had skeletal remains or traces of human origin had the heads located in the south-west corner of the grave. The older graves are connected to the structure that is located next to them, the younger graves are not, with current data, connectable to any structure.

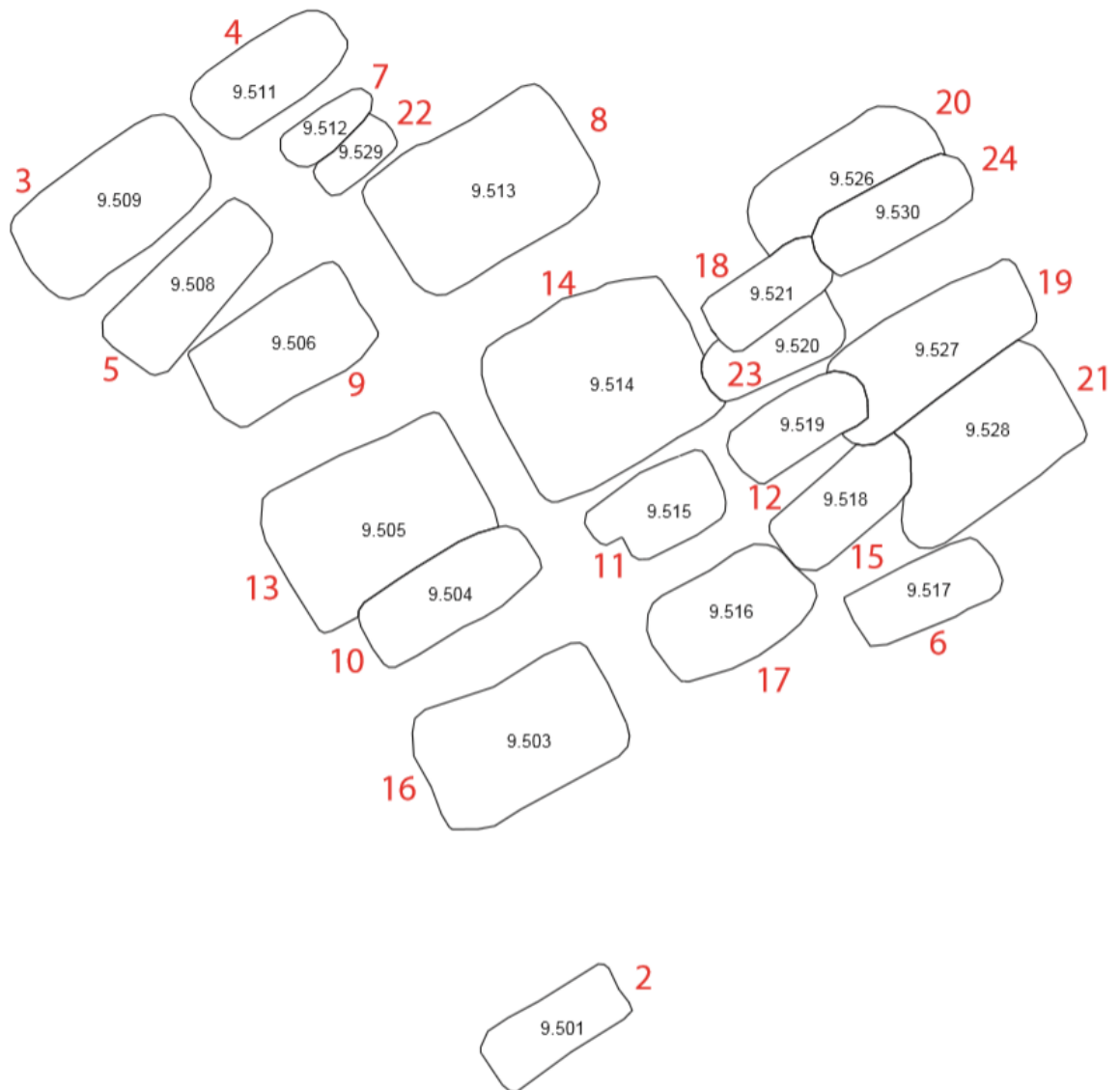


Figure 2 Schematic overview of the grave field of zone K. The grave numbers are marked in red.

In contrast with the smaller grave field of zone G, the graves in zone K are placed in a more orderly structure consisting out of four distinguishable rows of graves within a rectangle. Some vague features are interpreted as being possible border

outlines of the grave field. The only grave that does not conform to the proposed border is grave 2 which is located outside this border for unknown reasons. The orientation of the grave is however in line with the line-based structured orientation of the rest of the graves. Overlapping between the graves is minimal, and where there is any then, in all cases, it concerns just a small corner or edge of a grave. Based on this data it can be argued with certainty that the inhabitants of Veldhoven knew where the graves were located and where the borders of these graves were. This proof of a shared knowledge of grave traces, widens the theoretical concepts of interpretation as it allows the assumptions of the grave site as more than just a practicality for disposing of the deceased. The graves are all placed in rows in what is called Reihengräber fashion (Werner 1950, 23-33). Which is a staple of Merovingian archaeology. Graves would be placed in well-structured simple rows, and in this regard they do not differ from the placement of other graves from the same period. The main difference does not lie in the placement as opposed to each other but in the placement of the entire grave field. Albeit small, there is still a difference detectable in the placement of the graves. As some of the graves are somewhat easily connectable to each other through the fact that they share the same grave- makeup. These specific makeups are based on the size, nature and the grave-goods found within the graves. Through these differences two main phases can be discerned. Within these phases another distinction could be made between certain graves but this will be expanded upon later. The main two phases consist out of the first phase, which covers the Merovingian chamber graves, which are interpreted as possible founders graves, and the rest of the graveyard, which consists out of smaller graves that contain smaller gifts. The smaller graves are as mysterious as the larger graves because many of them seem to be children's graves and it remains a mystery where the other age groups would have been buried.

Phasing (zone K)

Phase I

The first phase consists out of the graves numbered: 08, 09, 13, 14 and 16. These graves were recognized as being older based on the bigger size and deeper placement of the structures. All of the mentioned graves are chamber graves and have a different set of items placed within them than the graves of the younger phase. An exception to this interpretation is grave number 09. This grave is placed outside of the house plan and it could therefore be argued that this grave (alongside 13 and 16) is part of an even older generation. Another

piece of information adding to this interpretation is the fact that grave 16 contains a three-partide belt set that is dated to the second or rather third quarter of the 7th century. While grave 14 contained a Merovingian denarius and is dateable to the late 7th or rather the first quarter of the 8th century. A problem with the interpretation is that the grave goods found within grave 09 conform better to the grave goods that are typically found in the younger phase of graves (phase II of zone K). Grave 09 could by these interpretations be placed both at the very start of phase I as well as at the end of phase I, the latter of which seems the most likely.

Phase II

The second phase consists out of the remaining 18 graves. The graves of this phase are dated as being at least of a second generation of grave structures in the grave field of Veldhoven based on their size, placement and the goods that were found within. This second phase is therefore placed at around the first half of the 8th century AD. The graves are all about 200 by 100 cm (l x w). The depth was not measured for every grave specifically but ranges from 10 to 30 cm below the first excavation level. The grave fillings were in general darker and more homogenous than the surrounding natural soils consisting of loamy sand. The homogenous fillings had at times reasonably visible outlines of the skeletal remains and in a few cases, the teeth coronae were conserved but highly fragmented. The younger graves are all interpretable as belonging to the same phase, that being the first half of the 8th century. The grave pits are small and shallow and in most cases, there are only traces of a simple wooden coffin, or in some cases, no coffin at all. These graves contain little to no grave goods and are overall dateable to the same phase being a phase younger than the chamber graves. With the graves of zone G being a generation older than those in zone K (with the possible exception of grave 03 of zone G). The grave goods that are most commonly found are simple iron buckles or small knives.

Grave Field Zone G

The grave field found in zone G is remarkably smaller than that of zone k and consists out of three different graves. Two of which are large Chamber graves and the last one is a smaller chest grave. Connected to the graves of zone G are two parallel oriented households and a smaller rectangular sub building.

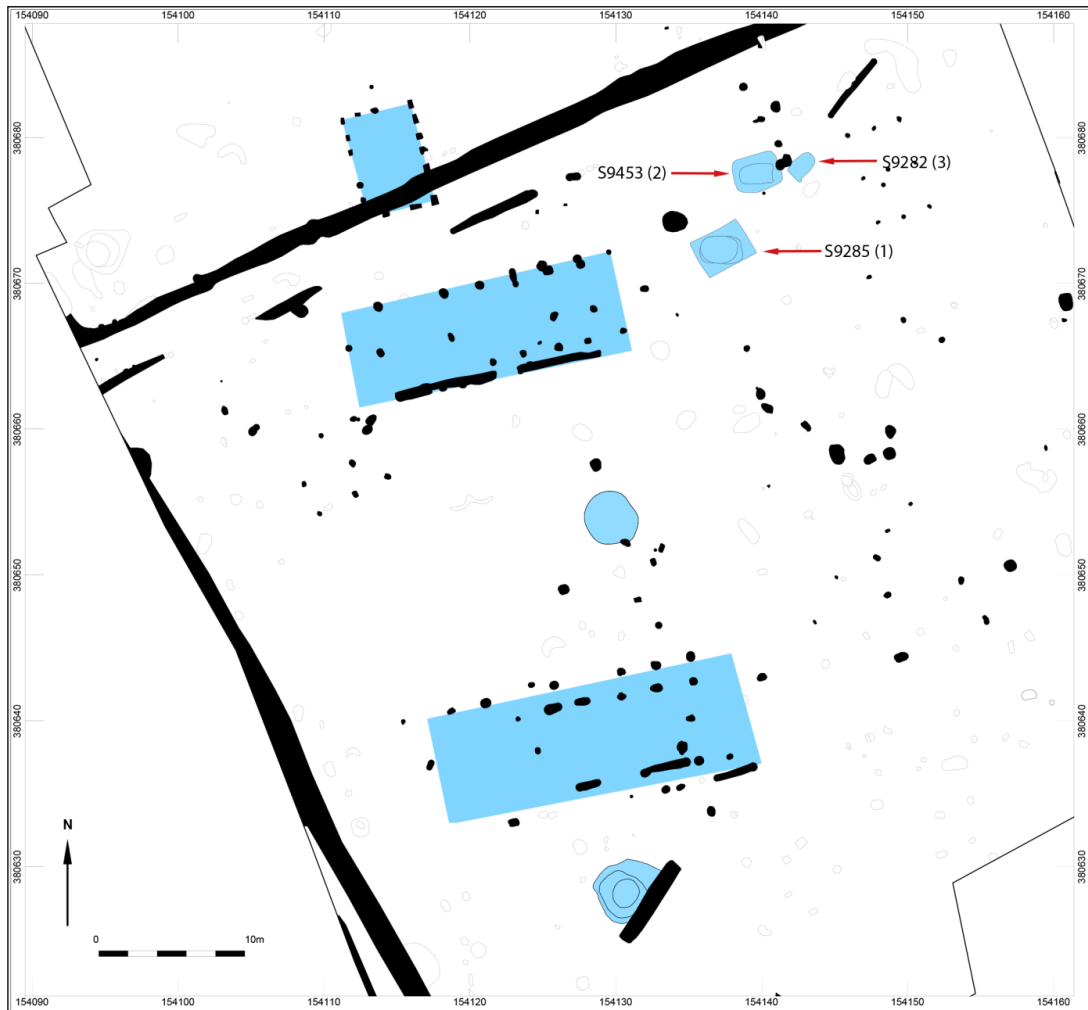


Figure 3 Overview of the features and structures of zone G. The three graves are located in the top-right corner. (Spelde & Theuvs 2017, 28)

A notable feature of the graves in zone G is their orientation. The graves in zone K all are oriented southwest-northeast (fig. 3). In zone G only grave 01 and grave 03 are oriented southwest-northeast. Grave 02 is oriented west southwest-east northeast. This orientation is shared by the households and the smaller sub building. The three graves are bundled close together, but do not share any sense of the strict layout in rows of the graves of zone K.

Phasing (zone G)

A phasing of zone G is very hard to construct, due to the small number of graves and the differences between them. The graves 01 and 02 are both Merovingian chamber graves and are based on their grave goods dateable to roughly one generation before the creation of the first phase of zone K (625-650 AD). It should be noted that the chamber graves of zone G have, at some point in time, been reopened and (presumably) most of the grave goods have been taken out of the graves. The graves 01 and 02 of zone G are because of the similarity in

grave goods placed in the same phase, but their placement as opposed to one another does not necessarily support this idea. Grave 03 (zone G) is in its makeup nothing like the other graves in the zone. The grave is roughly the same size as the graves from phase II of zone K. The only item that was found in the grave was a simple belt buckle corresponding to zone K phase II findings. Grave 03 of zone G was either a pit grave or at some point contained a simple wooden chest. Nothing remains of this chest, although at the bottom of the pit a small layer of organic matter was found which could be interpreted as the remains of a chest. The proposed phasing for the zone G grave field is that, despite their orientation, the graves 01 (zone G) and 02 (zone G) are part of the first phase of burials. These burials are connected to the two households and the sub building. At some later point a second phase of burials was constructed this phase consists only out of one burial, that being grave 03 (zone G). There is a possibility that only these three graves were preserved in zone G but that more would have at one point in time existed.

Gender and age

It would be very useful for both current and future research to be able to assign specific genders and age groups to the remains of the grave field. The state of preservation of the remains however causes for very little osteological information to remain. Due to the bad conditions of the human remains the most useful method for determining the sex of a body is by comparing the grave goods to current interpretations of gender based grave good disposal. Such comparisons don't rule out the presence of irregularities or differences in the model but are the best option in the case of very few remains. The presence of children in the grave field is determined based on the sizes of coffins and the sizes of the remaining outlines of bodies in the field. Based on these current interpretations some of the graves can be put into an age group and some genders can be reconstructed too. The two chamber graves of zone G, grave 01 (zone G) and grave 02 (zone G) are both interpreted as males, based on their grave good sets. The main factor in this interpretation is the presence of the horse gear which is a grave good more commonly deposited in male graves in this period. Grave 08, grave 14 and grave 16 of zone K are all chamber graves containing weapons. These graves conform to an interpretation as male, as all graves containing similar grave good sets have been males. The chamber grave 13 is the only chamber grave that is interpreted as female. The grave goods in this grave were a set of beads and a bowl that was located near the legs (the

only one found in the grave field). A number of burials from Veldhoven have been interpreted to be that of children. The interpreting of a grave as a child's grave can only be done when there is either a silhouette of a body visible in the earth, or if a wooden chest was found that is too small to fit an adult. Using these ideas the graves; 07, 11, 17,18 and 23 are interpreted as possible children's graves.

4 Grave constructions

This chapter focusses on the types of grave structures that make up the Merovingian farmyard burials of Veldhoven. The grave structures of zone G and zone K will be discussed, and additional background information surrounding grave structures will be given.

The three types of grave structure found on the Veldhoven farmyard burials are the; pit grave, the chest grave and the chamber grave. The pit grave is the simplest form of inhumation and consists out of digging a pit for the deceased and placing the deceased in said pit. The grave goods that are given to the dead in the pit graves are very simple and never consist out of more than a simple belt buckle or small knife. As mentioned in previous chapters, the pit graves are a part of the younger set of grave structures found in the Veldhoven burials (phase II). The next type of grave structure is the chest grave. The process of burial in chest graves is almost the same as with the pit grave, with the exception that a simple wooden chest is placed in the pit in which the deceased is laid to rest. The grave goods that can be expected in these structure are the same as in the pit graves. Although there is a fundamental extra step in the creation of these chest graves, they are still placed in the same burial phase as the pit graves (phase II). These two grave types are placed in the same phase because they are connected by similar sets of grave goods (or a lack thereof) and a connected placement structure in the grave field. I shall also state that it is not known how many graves are in fact real pit graves and how many were originally chest graves. Due to the poor conservation of wood in the soil there might be a possibility that there were more chest graves than are now visible. Graves interpreted as pit graves are therefore in reality interpreted as 'potential' pit graves. What kind of social or cultural differences were in place that caused some people to be buried in pits and others in chests is not known and can't be accurately reconstructed based on the very limited amount of material coming from the phase II graves. The last type of grave structure and the focal point of this thesis are the Merovingian chamber graves. These chamber graves are easily distinguishable from the phase II graves based on their size alone. All of the chamber graves have been measured accurately during the fieldwork , but the younger graves have been measured generally. The smaller graves on average are all 200x100cm with a depth ranging from 10 to 30cm deep (tab. 1). The following table shows the differences in length, width and depth of the graves of both phase I and phase II:

Table 1 Table showcasing the differences in length, height and width between the different types of grave construction of Veldhoven.

Grave construction type	Grave number	Length x Width (cm)	Depth (cm)	Phase
Pit/chest grave	03 (zone G), 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24	200x100	10-30	II
Chamber grave	02 (zone G)	204x112	100	I
Chamber grave	03 (zone G)	200x110	100	I
Chamber grave	8	280x180	88	I
Chamber grave	9	230x125	55	I
Chamber grave	13	270x200	85	I
Chamber grave	14	275x230	95	I
Chamber grave	16	265x155	36	I

The grave length and width of the younger phasing of grave structures seems comparable to that of the older phase. This is somewhat deceptive as the measurements of the chamber graves are the actual sizes of the grave chambers and the measurements of the younger phase include the pits. The entire grave with pit is measured for this younger phase as there were many cases in which the grave structure and the pit were not distinguishable from one another.

Merovingian chamber graves and their interpretation

The earliest chamber graves that are dated to the Merovingian period are located in northern Gaul. The graves are dated to about 520-530 until 560-570 AD. A distinction should be made between the 6th and 7th centuries CE. From the 6th century, a handful of chamber graves are known, while there are a great number of documented chamber graves from the 7th century (Soulat 2007, 2). It is difficult to ascribe one over-arching interpretation to all the Merovingian chamber graves as their natures and makeup seem to differ. They certainly do not at all only represent elite burials because they are relatively common in Merovingian cemeteries in the southern Netherlands for instance in the nearby cemetery of Meerveldhoven (Verwers 1978). The distinctive increase in popularity at the end of the 6th and early 7th century might also be connected to a new interpretation or meaning behind the graves. Near the town of Erstein a burial ground dating from the beginning of the 6th to the end of the 7th century was found. This burial ground contained around 239 burials, 138 of which were chamber graves, which translates to 54 percent of all graves on the cemetery (Médard et al. 2007, 307-309). The chamber graves contain men, women and children and some of them seem to be devoid of any grave-goods. This of course adds to the problems of

interpretation of the Merovingian chamber grave as a consistent feature, interpretation-wise (Soulat 2007, 2). Cemeteries where more than half of the burials are chamber graves are (other than in Erstein) also found in Hégenheim (Soulat 2007, 5) and Saint-Vit (Passard & Urlacher 2003, 143-145), showcasing the widespread usage of the chamber grave burial in the 7th century AD. The chamber grave burial rite of northern Gaul is first seen during the Late Roman Period in the Vron cemetery, reaching its peak in the 6th century CE (Soulat 2007, 6). These burials seem to be mainly reserved for the elite of Merovingian society. This is in contrast to the chamber grave burials of the 7th century that seem to be more widespread among the overall population, thus explaining their increase in numbers.

The chamber graves of Veldhoven

As mentioned in the previous paragraph; the usage of chamber graves had by the 7th century increased greatly. The consequence of the prolonged usage of a certain ritual is that it more often than not changes. Such change results in the creation of different types of a concept. This holds true for the Merovingian chamber graves, as there are differences recognizable between some of the graves on the farmyards.

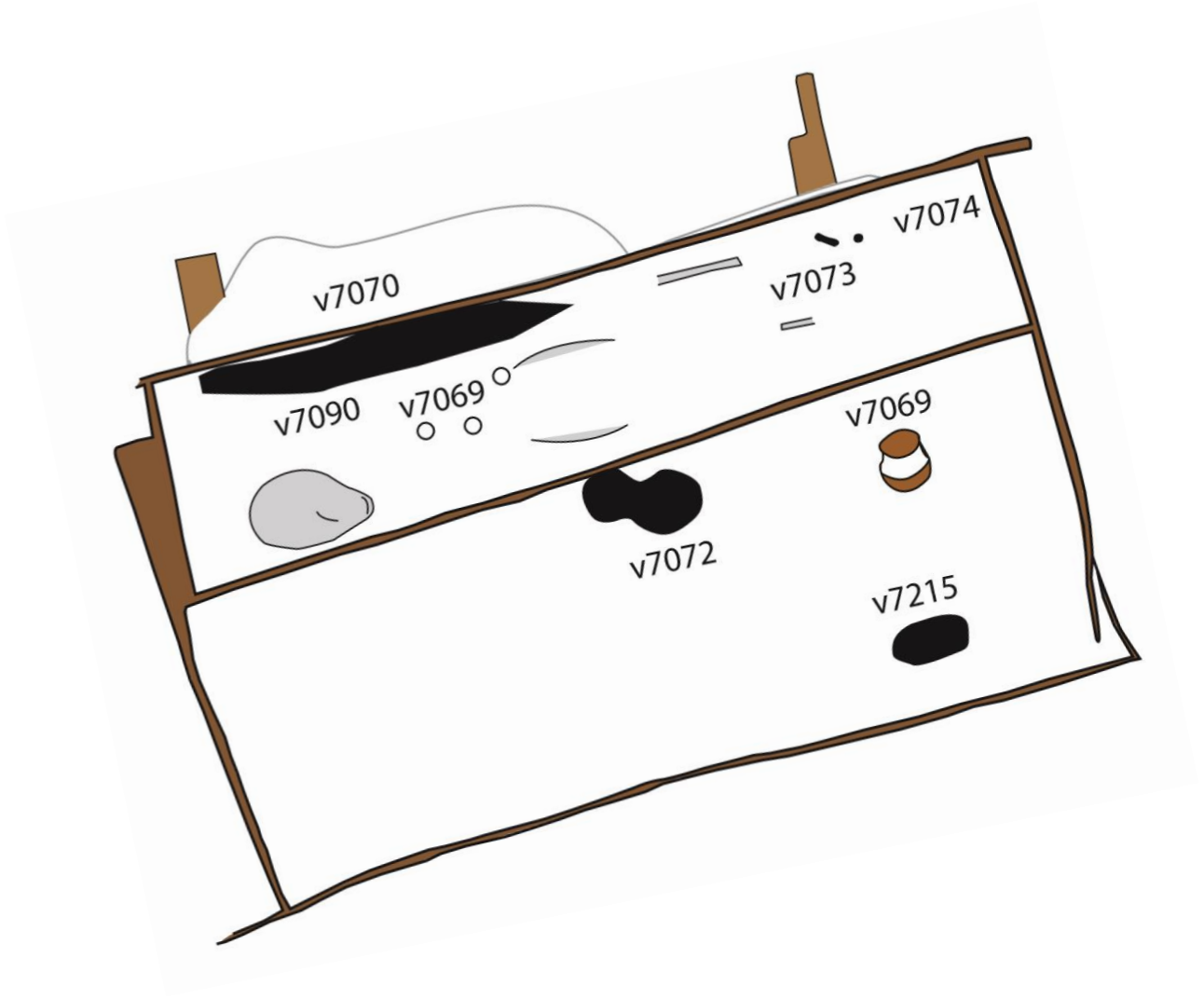


Figure 4 Schematic view of chamber grave 14 (north is up). (Veenstra 2020)

The graves 08, 14 and 16 all are of the same chamber grave type. The chamber graves are made out of wooden planks and have a distinct rectangular shape. The wooden chamber grave structures are placed on two wooden beams to give them stability. The wooden beams can be seen protruding from under the grave chamber at the north-side of grave 14 (fig. 3). The main feature that differentiates the chamber graves 08, 14 and 16 from the others is the presence of a wooden plank in the middle of the grave. This wooden plank divides the grave in two sections. One of these sections is where the body is stored and the other is where some additional grave goods are placed. As can be seen in figure 3, the head of the body is located in the southwestern corner of the grave structure. A seax is lain next to the body and located at the feet are horse rider spurs and a small belt buckle. This set of grave goods is almost identical to that of grave 08 and very similar to that of grave 16.

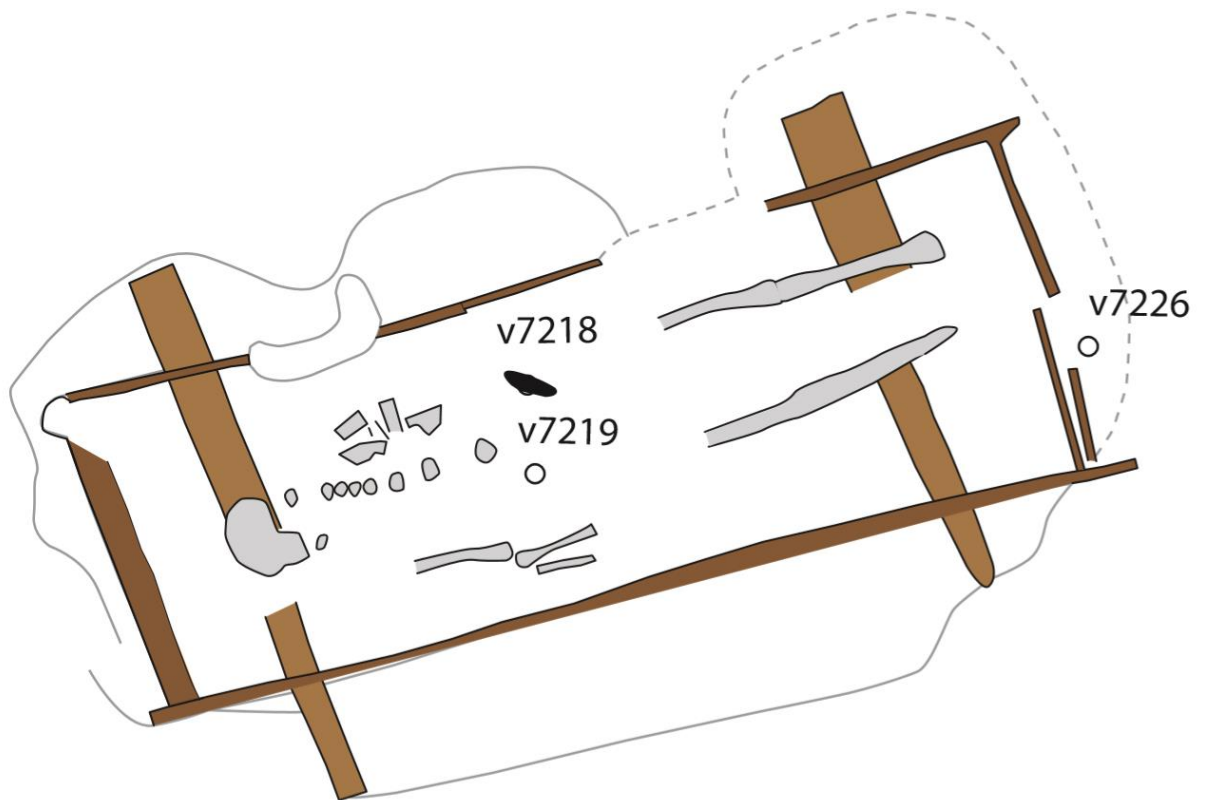


Figure 5 Schematic view of chamber grave 09 (north is up). (Veenstra 2020)

A different type of chamber grave structure is that of grave 09 (fig. 5). Although grave 09 is still considered to be a chamber grave, the chamber itself is much smaller than that of the other chamber graves. The grave also does not feature the division in two distinct 'rooms' that the other chamber graves have. The grave is just like its bigger counterparts placed on top of two wooden beams. The body is also placed in a very similar manner, with the head near the southwestern corner of the grave. The graves; 01 (zone G) and 02 (zone G) are both very similar to this grave. The difference between 09 and the two zone G graves lies in the different sets of grave goods they contain, but shape and size-wise they are roughly the same. The last differing grave structure is that of grave 13. Grave 13 is interpreted as the only female chamber grave in the field. The grave is of a similar size as the chamber graves of grave 08, 14 and 16 but misses the wooden plank that divides the grave in (roughly) half.

5 The grave finds and their dating

In this chapter the different categories of grave-finds from the Veldhoven farmyard burials are discussed. This chapter will mainly focus on the categories themselves and give examples from the archaeological material of Veldhoven. For a more in-depth view of which finds belonging to which graves were found and in what context a catalogue is created that is included in the appendix of this thesis (Appendix A). The objects in this chapter were all found during the field-work in Veldhoven in the year 2017. Although most items are very much practical in nature, it is assumed that they must also convey a message that is not connected to the practical elements only. The objects originating from Veldhoven will in this chapter be discussed per object type.

Weapons in the burials

There are multiple items found in the Veldhoven graves that can be classified as weapons. It should be noted here that although these items were classified as 'weapons' in a traditional sense, they do not necessarily convey an image of war or warrior status upon the graves in which they were found. There is also a division made between cutting items such as knives that can arguably put into the utility category as a single knife that has been found in a context without other weaponlike artefacts is most likely a simple utility tool.

Lances

Lanceheads were found in grave 08 (fig. 6) and in grave 16 (fig. 7). A small piece of metal that could possibly be interpreted as the remains of another lancehead was found in grave 14, but this is not certain. Remains of wood originating from the long wooden shaft to which the lanceheads were attached when buried were found. Other than these small samples no parts of the wood of the lances remain.



AUL 1068

Figure 6 The lancehead from grave 08 (both sides).

Whereas only one lancehead was found in grave 08, two different lanceheads were found in grave 16. The first of which seems to be of the same slim-elongated variety as the lance from grave 08. The second lancehead differs in that it has a much broader blade than both other lances. The lances are generally dated to Rheinland phase 8-9-10 (640-710 AD) (Siegmond 1998). The somewhat broader lance could date to either the same period as the narrower lances or slightly earlier.



AUL 1070

Figure 7 The broader lancehead variant of grave 16.

Sword (spatha)

A spatha was found in grave 08 (fig. 8). The spatha is a type of double-edged sword. The spatha had been in use since the Roman period and went through a number of changes over the centuries, resulting in distinctly different spathae in different periods. Spatha decorated with cloisonné and garnet were found early on in the transitional period from Late Roman to Merovingian period and were made in roman ateliers (Böhme 1994). The spatha is typically a heavier type of sword that would have been used on horseback. There is an added symbolism in the implication of horse- ownership or battle from horseback when discussing Early Medieval society and such an implication should not be lost in the creation of this particular grave. It could be stated that this grave somewhat differs from the other 'founders' graves as the spatha located in the grave denotes this higher status. This status must not necessarily be applied to just the inhabitant of the grave, but also most likely to the part of the community that took care of burying this particular individual (most likely the close family).



AUL 1060

Figure 8 The spatha of grave 08 (both sides).

The spatha found in grave 08 is not as heavily decorated as the aforementioned early Merovingian/ late Roman spathae were. Remains of wood and leather were found on the blade of the spatha possibly from a leather sheath. On the handle of the sword traces of wood were found which show that the spatha must have had a wooden handle. The spatha is dated to the 7th century AD (Taayke 2003, 217) and is assumed to come from the mid to late 7th century.

Seax

A seax is a type of big knife, generally considered to be a weapon instead of a utility tool. Two seaxes were found, one in grave 14 (fig. 9) and another in grave 16 (fig. 10). The seax is a common type of grave good found in Merovingian cemeteries starting in the 6th century AD and is almost always part of the grave good assemblage of a male. In modern times a distinction is often made between a small seax and a knife using the 15 cm blade divide of Sigmund (Siegmond 1998, 87). It should be noted that such a distinction would not necessarily have been made during the Merovingian period in which these items were used. This also applies to the interpretation of a seax as either combat weapon, utility tool or both. As is the case for most weapons in the Veldhoven cemetery, the blades are preserved where the handles were not because they were generally made of wood which does not conserve well in the Veldhoven soil. The seaxes found in grave 14 and grave 16 are not easily confused with utility knives as they are of the long seax variety. As a general rule the seax became increasingly larger from the 5th century until the 8th century AD. The long seax is, as the name implies, a long and more slender variant of the seax, which in Schmitt's chrono typology are placed after the broader and shorter heavy broadseax (or Schwere Breitsaxe) (Schmitt 2007, 34-35). Both seaxes can be dated to the 10th Rheinland phase (670-710). Schmitt also places them in the late 7th century to early 8th century AD.



AUL 1064

Figure 9 The lonseax of grave 14.

A number of seax types feature a blade that ends in an angled (or broken) backside. The blade point in such cases is located at the end of the straight blade edge instead of being near the centre line of the blade. Both seaxes from the graves 14 and 16 feature a blade point that is fixed near the centre line of the blade which places both items at either the longseax or narrow longseax stage in Schmitt's typology. Based on the same typology however the blades of the seaxes are not narrow enough to be placed in the younger narrow longseax stage.



AUL 1057

Figure 10 The longseax of grave 16 and a small knife that was found alongside the blade.

Umbo (shield boss)

An umbo or shield boss is the centre part of a shield. Umbo's are generally regarded as being part of the male grave good assemblage and are often accompanied by spears or seaxes in the grave. The umbo's are mostly dated from the 5th until the early 8th century AD (Kars 2011, 387), placing the Veldhoven umbo's roughly in the last period of usage. The umbo's found in Veldhoven are the only remaining parts that were found of the shield. The shield-bosses were found in grave 08 (fig. 11), 14 (fig. 12) and in grave 16 (fig. 13), all chamber graves. There are no visible traces of the wooden parts of the shields but they are believed to have existed in the graves. The umbo from grave 08 has a pointed surface and was attached to the wooden shield with four rivets. At the base of the cone the metal is shaped inwards, before expanding outward again

until it ends in a somewhat narrow dome, or cone shape.



RESTAURA 100 MM

AUL 1065

Figure 11 The cone shaped umbo of grave 08.

The umbo of grave 14 has a much smoother rounded surface with the same iconic inward shape at the base of the umbo although this umbo ends less in a clear cone and more in a dome shape.



RESTAURA 100 MM

AUL 1067

Figure 12 The dome shaped umbo of grave 14.

Although slightly different, both umbo's could arguably be put in the same Siegmund categorization dating to the seventh century AD, but an argument could also be made for the placement of the pointed shield boss of grave 08 in a slightly younger phase. The shield boss of grave 08 would in this case be dated

to Rheinland phase 11 (710-740) and the shield boss of grave 14 would date to Rheinland phase 10 (670-710) (Hines et al. 1999, 19-20). The dating of the umbo of grave 14 would make it contemporaneous to that of the Merovingian Denarius that was found in the same grave. The umbo from grave 16 can be dated to either the Rheinland phase 9 (640-670) or Rheinland phase 10 (670-710), of which the former seems most likely due to the higher, more pronounced inward dent at the base of the umbo.



RESTAURA 100 MM

AUL 1066

Figure 13 The umbo of grave 16.

Knife

Knives were found in graves; 08 (fig. 14), 09, 16 (fig. 15), 17 (fig. 16), 19 and 20. The knives are all of a similar design and are hard to put into a specific typology. The only real distinctions between knives are made based on the other grave goods (or the lack thereof) in the grave. As a general rule, the knives of graves 17, 19 and 20 are considered to date in the first half of the 8th century AD as they were found in the smaller grave structures (pits and simple coffins) and were the only items in their respective graves. The exception is the knife from grave 19 which was accompanied by a simple belt buckle. The addition of the belt buckle has no effect on the dating of grave 19 or the knife. More confusing is the knife from grave 09. Grave 09 is a chamber grave, which are in the Veldhoven grave field generally dateable to an older period than the other younger structures based on their positioning, depth and grave goods. Although grave 09 is a chamber grave, the grave good assemblage is the same as in grave 19, meaning; a simple belt buckle and a knife. The knife (and grave) can in this

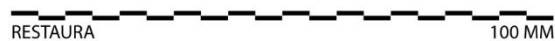
context possibly be placed in the period between the chamber graves and the younger phase as a transitional feature of sorts.



AUL 1080

Figure 14 The small knife from grave 08.

The knife in grave 08 is not regarded as a part of the younger phase because of the more elaborate set of grave goods and their respective chrono typological interpretation.



AUL 1057

Figure 15 The small knife from grave 16.

The knife from grave 16 was found alongside a number of different grave goods but was notably attached to the blade of a longseax because of corrosion. The

knife features a broken back and is reminiscent of the early short seaxes (Kurzsaax) (Schmitt 2007, 34-35). Due to the very short length of the blade the knife can only be interpreted as a knife and not a seax.



RESTAURA 100 MM

AUL 1077

Figure 16 The knife from grave 17 featuring the distinct short round blade.

With the exception of the knife of grave 16 all other knives feature a short-wide blade with one straight side and a rounded side that gradually slopes into a point as seen with the knife from grave 17. It should be noted that the knife of grave 16 could be of the same type, but became unrecognizable as such because of corrosion.

Belt fittings

This section contains a variety of different types of belts, most of which would have been worn around the waist area of the Veldhoven inhabitants. There is also a possibility that a number of the belt and strap fittings would have been used for different purposes, but such information is hardly deducible from the finds themselves. Different purposes include buckles being a part of; shoes, leg wear, purses or leather straps that were attached to the belt (Kars 2011, 225). The buckles would have often been attached to leather belts, but the metal buckle or the other (metal) belt-related fittings are the only parts that are preserved. Belts can play a crucial role in showcasing the chronological development of a cemetery if there are variations in belt buckle typology and the location of the placement of the buckles in the grave is known. Belt fittings were

found in all three graves of the zone K grave field and in the graves; 05 (fig. 17), 08, 09, 14, 16 and 19 of the zone G grave field.



Figure 17 One of the 'simpler' buckles (grave 05)

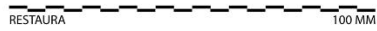
Most of the graves contain belt fittings and buckles of a practical less ornate design. These buckles are harder to date to one specific period as they were used over a longer period and did not go out of style due to their practicality. The dating for such buckles is mainly contextual and depends on the rest of the grave good assemblage of the grave. The simple buckles from the graves; 03 (zone K), 05, 09 and 19 are dated to the first half of the 8th century AD. Belt buckles of a more elaborate, earlier design are found in grave 01 and 02 of zone K and in grave 16 of zone G.



Figure 18 Copper alloy belt buckle of grave 01.

In grave 01 of zone G a more elaborate style of buckle was found (fig. 18). This buckle can be placed in either Rheinland Phase 8 (610-640) or Rheinland phase 9 (640-670) of Siegmund's phases. The buckle is made of a copper alloy and tin and features carved or punched organic decorative patterns, reminiscent of Salin's style I animal motifs (Martin 2015, 154-155).

In grave 16 a tripartite belt set was found (fig. 19; fig. 20; fig. 21). This tripartite belt set consists out of the belt buckle, the counter plate and a belt mount. All of the items are plated with silver. Parts of the silver plating are missing. The tripartite belt set dates to the second or third quarter of the 7th century AD. The belt buckle and the counter plate would have been secured to the outer ends of a leather belt. The belt mount would have been secured to the back of the belt for decorative purposes.



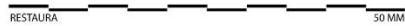
AUL 1058a

Figure 19 Belt buckle of the tripartite belt set of grave 16.



AUL 1058b

Figure 20 Counter plate of the tripartite belt set of grave 16.



AUL 1058d

Figure 21 Belt mount of the tripartite belt set of grave 16.

Horse gear

In grave 01 and 02 of zone G a number of finds have been found that are interpreted as belt/girdle mounts for the decoration of horse gear. The finds are all dated to the second quarter and middle of the 7th century AD. The girdle mounts are made of iron and feature silver inlaid decoration. Some of the mounts are adorned with silver in the Animal Style II (fig. 22) (Vida 2008, 20; Hakenbeck 2011, 101-102).

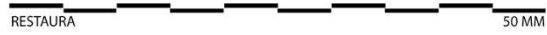


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AUL 1094

Figure 22 Two belt tongues with silver inlay featuring Type II animal decorations from grave 02 (zone G).

Two different girdle mounts notably feature the (almost) same patterning of silver inlay. The overall design is almost exactly the same, the only difference is the decorative pattern within the circle in the middle (fig. 23; fig. 24).



AUL 1102

Figure 23 Decorative girdle plate from grave 01 (zone G).



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Figure 24 Decorative girdle plate from grave 02 (zone G).



Figure 25 Horse gear girdle mount featuring decorative silver inlay from grave 01 (zone G).

Coin

A Merovingian Denarius was found in grave 14 (fig. 26; fig. 27). This Merovingian Denarius is of great value to the dating of the site as rotation of such coinage is restricted to the late 7th and early 8th century. There is no possibility of the coin having ended up in the grave at a later date as it was found within the confines of the skull area of the body, specifically, within the jaw outline. The practice of placing coinage or other items (often meant to represent coins) in the mouth of the deceased dates back to Hellenistic times. The practice is often referred to as Charon's obol.

Charon's obol

The term Charon's obol, or Charon's penny is used to refer to the practice of placing a coin in the mouth or hand of the deceased in order for the deceased to pay for passage across the river Styx (Effros 2003, 138-140). It could be argued that the deposition of coins in Merovingian graves is a (although heavily adapted) variation on this same concept. The adaptation and changing of this rite had already taken place prior to the fifth century AD (Effros 2003, 138-150). There are numerous variations of this practice in the Merovingian period, with some accounts of the coins being placed either inside, or near the mouth and others of the coins being thrown into the grave before closing it. In this case the first case seems most reasonable because the coin would have otherwise been tossed into the mouth area. The coins used are in some cases of older origin and may have been used as some form of status display instead of mere ritual usage. It should

be noted that this is not suspected for the coin of grave 14 as it seems to be contemporary with the other grave goods.



Figure 26 The Merovingian denarius with S shaped monogram (backside). Grave 14.



Figure 27 The Merovingian denarius with the A shaped monogram (frontside). Grave 14.

The denarius

Only one side of the coin has distinguishable features. The markings on the other side of the coin are no longer visible. The side with the visible markings features a mirrored letter S with two small circles on each of the insides of the letter. Located at the right of the mirrored S is a small T shaped feature above which

three small circles are placed in a triangle shape. Through comparisons with other coins of the same period and area, the side with the S shape can be designated as the backside. The front side of the coin used to feature an A shape with a circle underneath. Both the A shape and the circle underneath are surrounded by smaller circles or dots (fig. 28). The Merovingian denarius conforms to the descriptions of the coins; Prou 2789 and Belfort 5692 as catalogued in their respective reference works (Belfort 1894; Prou 1892). The exact place where such coins were minted is not known, but they date from 670 until 750 AD.



Figure 28 Illustration showing both sides of the coin. I note that the coin in the drawing has a slightly different variant on the backside decoration. The front side is the exact same that would have been featured on the Veldhoven coin. (Illustration from Belfort 1894, 198)

Other items in the burials

Ring

A ring was found in grave 16 (fig. 29). The ring is made out of bronze and of a simple design. The ring could be interpreted as a ring meant to be worn on the finger because it was found in the area of the body near where the hand would have been.



AUL 1059

Figure 29 The bronze ring from grave 16.

Flip knife

A flip knife was found in grave 08 and in grave 14 (fig. 30). The objects feature an elongated rectangular shape and are made out of iron. Within the iron shape, a blade is concealed. The concealed blade is secured to the handle part with a small hinge. On figure 29, the hinge is visible on the right side of the image. The blade could be pulled out of the handle like a modern day swiss army knife. The knife was used as a practical utility tool and could have been used to shave.



AUL 1083

Figure 30 The flip knife from grave 14.

Tweezers



Figure 31 The bronze tweezers from grave 08.

In grave 08 a pair of tweezers was found (fig. 31). The tweezers are made of a copper alloy and are the only of its kind to have been found in the Veldhoven burials.

Spurs

A set of items interpreted as being part of a set of spurs for horse-riding were found in grave 08 (fig. 32) and grave 14. The spurs in grave 14 only consist out of two very small pieces of iron. More is preserved from the spurs of grave 08.



Figure 32 The horse-riding spurs of grave 08.

The spurs from grave 08 feature a set of small buckles and a range of other parts and plates. The upper four parts (figure 31) are made out of tin and silver. The other parts, including the buckles are mad out of iron. Interestingly enough, both the spurs from grave 08 and grave 14 were found next to the feet of the deceased. The spurs would have traditionally been worn attached to the back of the feet in order to regulate the speed of a horse by prodding it with the spurs.

Pottery

Two earthenware pots were found. One was placed in grave 08 (fig. 33) and the other in grave 14 (fig. 34). Other than the pots an earthenware bowl was found in grave 13 (fig. 35). The earthenware pots of grave 08 and grave 14 are both so-called 'Knickwandtopfe' or biconical pots. These biconical pots are the most common type of pottery found on Merovingian cemeteries. Regardless of that fact they have formerly been considered as luxury products designated specifically for usage in grave contexts (to hold food and liquids for deposition). This idea has been contested as evidence is found for the usage of this type of pot outside of grave contexts (Kars 2011, 195-196). The biconical pots of grave 08 and 14 are black/gray and feature distinctive carinated walls and multiple rows of stamped details. The only real difference between the tow pots is that the biconical pot from grave 08 has a more elongated neck than the grave 14 pot.



AUL 1061

Figure 33 The biconical pot of grave 08.

In Siegmund's typology both pots seem to conform to the KWT- 5e type of biconical pot. These pots are a staple of 7th century pottery (Hines 1999, 12).



AUL 1062

Figure 34 The biconical pot of grave 14.

Earthenware bowls of the Rheinland phases 6 until 9 are generally hard to date but a distinction can be made between bowls with a smooth texture (earlier) and bowls with a rough texture (later) (Hines et al. 1999, 12). The bowl of grave 13 features a carinated wall, an outwards curved upper wall and a foot plate. Such bowls were in use for a long period of time and can be classified as Siegmund's

type Sha 2.21 which would give them a dating of 555-610/640 AD (Rhineland phase 5-8) (Siegmund 1998, 154-156). It is however most likely that the bowl dates to the younger end of this estimate.



AUL 1063

Figure 35 The bowl of grave 13.

6 Dating the Veldhoven burials

In this chapter another look will be taken at the dating of the Veldhoven farmyard burials. This will be done using the information provided in the previous chapters based around the different grave goods, the layout of the grave field and the construction of the graves themselves.

The first method that can be used to discern information about the dating of the burials from the grave field is by looking at the placement of the graves. The placement of the graves in this regard considers the placement of the two grave fields as opposed to one another and the placement of the graves themselves within their respective farmyard contexts. From this information a couple of observations were made. The first observation is that the graves in zone K all align with one another. Based on the alignment and the sizes of the graves a distinction can be made between the, what we now know are chamber graves, and the pit/chest graves. The second observation is that grave 08 and 14 are partially covered by a house plan, which could indicate that they are chronologically apart from the other chamber graves. The third observation is that the graves in zone G are not placed in rows. Not only do the graves of zone G not entirely conform to the placement of the zone K graves, but they also do not show any signs of structural placement as opposed to one another. Two of the graves of zone G are orientated in the same direction as the entire zone K grave field (southwest-northeast). Apart from this fact there seems no other structural connection between the two farmyard burials. It could be argued that the two graves of zone G that share their orientation with the zone K field, could be linked to each other through their shared orientation, but this seems unlikely as the size, grave structure and grave goods of grave 01 (zone G) and grave 03 (zone G) differ greatly.

The second method used to interpret the dating of the Veldhoven burials with is focused around the construction of the graves themselves. There are a number of different types of grave structures found on the grave field and they can be put into different categories. The graves numbered; 03 (zone G), 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24 are all considered to be of the same generation of graves. As mentioned before, some of these graves are pit graves and some are chest graves but they are considered one generation based on their similar size, placement and grave goods. There is a possibility that

some, or most of the pit graves were chest graves but that the chests have not been preserved.

The third method of interpretation is using the grave goods (tab. 2). This method is the most reliable interpretational method to use in the grave fields of Veldhoven as the results can be cross-referenced among each other and compared with the results of the other two methods to create a more accurate dating. None of the grave goods can be dated to an exact year. It is therefore only possible to place the graves in certain periods (tab. 3). One of the most reliably dateable objects is the Merovingian Denarius found in grave 14. This particular Merovingian Denarius was only used from 670-750 AD. This is still quite a wide dating but it gives grave 14 an earliest date of 670 AD. Grave 08 and 14 are considered to be at least somewhat contemporary because they have a set of grave goods that are similar beyond accident. Next to this argument is the fact that the placement of the grave goods and the makeup of the grave structures are also almost the same. Umbo's were also found in bot grave 08 and grave 14. The umbo from grave 08 can be dated to 710-740 whereas the umbo of grave 14 dates to 670-710. This information might imply that the grave 08 and 14 are chronologically further apart than was expected, but the spatha found in grave 08 (dating approximately to 650-700) pulls the dating of grave 08 closer to that of 14 again. The small date gap between the spatha and the umbo from grave 08 implies that the umbo might date a little bit earlier or is part of a phase between two umbo types. The only item from grave 13 that could be dated is the bowl which is placed around 610-640, but was used for a long period and could come from later, making 13 hard to date. Here follows a table showing the dated grave goods per grave.

Table 2 Table showing the different dated items.

Grave	Item	Approximate dating (AD)
01 (zone G), 02 (zone G)	Horse gear	625-650
01 (zone G)	Belt buckle	610-670
08	Umbo	710-740
14	Umbo	670-710
16	Umbo	640-710
14, 16	Seax	670-710
08	Spatha	650-700
14	Merovingian Denarius	670-750
16	Belt set	625-675

Grave goods and their usage can always be susceptible to local variation and therefore the dating's are all approximate. If the dating of these grave goods is connected to the information about grave placement and structure construction a

general dating of most chamber graves can be made. In the dating of these graves, as a general rule, the graves containing either only a knife or only a buckle or a combination of the two are dated to 700-750. The resulting data are as follows:

Table 3 Table showing the approximate dating of each chamber grave.

Grave number	Approximate dating (AD)
01 (zone G)	625-650
02 (zone G)	625-650
08	Around 700
09	700-750
13	640-700
14	670-710
16	670-710

7 Discussion/interpretations/theories

In this chapter, I will try to, as cohesively as possible, outline interpretations of the Veldhoven farmyard burials. I will do so in such a manner that it might at times seem as if I am discussing with myself or indeed as I would like to, with the reader. This is also the reason why I will not only present the theories that I feel are the most likely, or the ones that are backed the most by the (small) number of other writers on this subject. In this way, an overview of all possible modes of interpretation is achieved which, I hope dearly, would fuel the greatest amount of debate and discussion when discussed.

In a paper by Theuws, a similar case to that of the Veldhoven burials is discussed. He discusses the possible reasons behind the burial of some members of a household on the farmyard in newly created nuclear settlements in the later seventh century in the Kempen region (Theuws 1999). In review of that paper Theuws later stated that the oldest graves are usually those of men in which a set of weapons is deposited although the majority of the graves are those of women and children. This strikes a very similar case to that of the Veldhoven burials in which the five chamber graves are also interpreted as the original graves. A large share of the younger graves are due to their size obviously those of children. He claims that the graves were created to define the position of the individual households and substantiate their claims on the lands on which they live. In both the Dommelen and Geldrop settlements there are multiple farmyard burial grounds. In Veldhoven however we have only one (and a very small zone G burial ground) , which could be due to the extent of the excavated area. This interpretation is also in accordance with the interpretation offered in chapter 2 on the nature of the 'weapons' in the burials. A great case can be made for these weapons, other than their military character, to be interpreted as symbols for the claim and possession of land, and the importance to showcase this in the case of changing social relations (a death in the community).

Theuws considers the men's graves with their elaborate sets of weapons as the founders' graves. These founders graves were created in this way in order to symbolically create and embed the related farmstead into the landscape and the local community. This was necessary because the setting of the new nucleated settlements from which these graves are derived caused for something to give form to them (Theuws 1999, 342). The grave structures, and this is also the case for the Veldhoven burials, consist of incomplete households; meaning that the

rest of the household could have been buried elsewhere. If this was near a church or in a 'normal' existing grave-field away from the farmyard is not known, but open for speculation. Contemporary burials for women, containing almost identical sets of grave-goods as in this farmyard burial, exist in cemeteries that had already been in use since the sixth century. The outliers here are the men's 'founder' graves because, in the 'traditional' contemporary graves of the era, burial with weapons as burial gifts was no longer a practice. Theuws argues that the traditional men's burials and the farmyard men's burial groups could have co-existed for a period but it should be mentioned that the burial rites seem to differ quite a lot.

The farmyard burials would, in this case, be interpreted as a part of a system of complementary burial grounds that were used by a single household. Burials at different places would display membership of a different kind of community (Theuws 2019a, 374).

The odd location of the farmyard burials is thus explained by denoting them as an expression of the individual household or farmyard group in relation to each other. The burials and all the added social or ritual meanings would, in this case, be a form of identity for the individual families that helps them establish their position in the new settlement and its social environment. Another explanation in the same 'social' train of thought would be that the burials were used to make claims on parts of the landscape in relation to the newly created nucleated settlements (Theuws 2019a, 377).

Personally, I believe that the most likely option is not to simply pick one of these models but combine the two. The burial ritual, and especially the inhumation practiced at Veldhoven has developed for such a long period at that point that multiple meanings can easily be ascribed to the burials.

The interpretation does however not have to stop at a social one, nor does it have to have just one purpose or meaning. It could have no particular meaning at all, but that is not something that will be reasoned in this thesis. Another addition opted for the interpretation of the burial ritual is that they did not just separate the different households, but that they bring those households together. I would argue that such an idea, in essence, can be proposed with a sense of certainty because from what can be recognized the zone K and zone G farmyards share parts of a ritual (shared inhumation in chamber graves). As stated earlier in this thesis, the usage of a set ritual could comfort a community during loss and guide changing social relations and it could be reasoned that it would in the same sense have an enduring comforting effect on the community.

The placement of the graves within the farmyard could also have a significant symbolic meaning. If the farmyard is entered from an open space as is argued for the Dommelen and Geldrop settlements, the first thing that would be seen are the graves of the ancestors. The burials are however not located on the outside, but the inside of the individual spaces. The burials face each other and Theuws rightly mentions that this could be taken as an antagonistic position, clearly dividing the community. He also mentions however that the burials circumscribe the internal open space which would have been used as a communal space due to the fact that it seems to be shared by all of the households. Interestingly enough, this is where the Veldhoven farmyard differs from that of Geldrop and Dommelen as the Veldhoven burials are not placed around a central open space. The burials of Veldhoven are placed to the side of the community, but the idea that further research might reveal that the Veldhoven site is located around an open communal space is not excluded. The individual space would be connected to the individual farmyard household, and the open space would be shared and important for the definition of the group as a co-resident group (Theuws 2019a, 378). Due to their placement between these two very different spaces they would in Theuws's theorizing then serve a purpose that would define multiple households at the same time. The burial ritual due to its proposed widely understood meaning in this case not only connects different farmyard household but also connects those two to Merovingian society as a whole. Using the Geldrop and Dommelen concept, but applied to Veldhoven, it could be stated that the Veldhoven grave site consists of different households that were each adding their own 'founder' to a newly created grave field. The ritual and socio-cultural implications of the division and at the same time connection of multiple households as was theorized for Geldrop and Dommelen would in this case still hold true for the Veldhoven farmyard burial variant.

All interpretations are however preliminary regarding the farmyard burial phenomenon as more and more of these burials are recognized and more research is performed. The previous theories concern themselves mainly with the big macro message that the burials have to offer. A closer look is also taken at the smaller connotations that the burial ritual might imply and the ritual meaning of for example taking a burial ritual that seems out of date and use it to connect new communities.

The interpretation of the Merovingian chamber graves also adds evidence to the social theories. Not considering that the Merovingian chamber grave burial, as

practiced at Veldhoven, had by the end of the seventh and the beginning of the 8th century been out of fashion for almost a century, a closer look can be taken at the proposed original meaning of the chamber graves as substantiated in the previous chapters. I duly note however that due to the gap between the last and new usage of the burial ritual the meaning could have changed substantially, but let's, for now, consider its definition as proposed in this thesis. As mentioned before, the items found in the richly furnished chamber graves could be interpreted as simply being instruments of war that the deceased would be given to either display status in life or use in a conceived afterlife. The proposed idea for the items to be connected to the reclamation and claiming of land is however well-argued and fits precisely with the land-claiming ideas proposed for the layout and placement of the burials on the farmyard.

Another idea about the usage of these types of burials specifically is that the burials might fit with the 'standard' image of what a burial ground is supposed to look like. Because skeletal remains are ill preserved in the Veldhoven burials, and the research has not yet been fully rounded down, it is as of yet not possible to allocate the origins of the grave's 'inhabitants'. The model proposed in this chapter is that of the buried as being immigrants from another region who made these specific burials because they convey a message of the legitimacy of their presence on the location which might not be their region of origin. A simpler option should therefore also be considered, and that is that the cemetery burials in the minds of the new settlers are supposed to look like this. If the picture of the Veldhoven farmyard households as being that of fresh immigrants holds true, then it can be argued that they moved from a more established community or larger set of households. Many of the graveyards in these periods were known to have been used over the course of multiple centuries, and it can't be ruled out that there may have been big chamber grave burials present at the cemetery in the community that the Veldhoven people originated from. These burials would have been viewed as those of the ancestors because the people buried there were possibly far enough removed that the local inhabitants did not personally know them. There is always room for speculation in these vaguely defined ritual definitions and their social implications, and a very simple answer could be that the new inhabitants of Veldhoven started a cemetery on their ground in the image of what the 'original' settlers of their previous location would have made. If we proceed to interpret along these lines, it could also be argued that the new Veldhoven inhabitants very knowingly used such an older burial ritual to imply that they had lived there for more years than that they had. Such practices have

been observed in many different societies and can be considered a form of 'fictive kinship', which is a process that usually originates in immigrant communities as a mechanism for integration into new communities (Ebaugh & Curry 2000, 191-194). As research on the Veldhoven settlement progresses more can be said about possible social relations on a macro scale. These new findings could greatly help the investigation of the Veldhoven cemetery as it might give insight or add context to the relations between the settlement's inhabitants and neighbouring communities or religious institutions. An interesting question I would like to see answered in follow-up research is; if the inhabitants of Veldhoven were independent or dependant farmers. If the Veldhoven people were independent and worked for themselves then the burials could signify some distinction between them and other communities, or as theorised in this chapter to both separate and connect themselves within their small community. If it turns out that the Veldhoven household inhabitants lived on land that was not their own, a new light could be shed on the interpretations. In the case of some form of serfdom, or, more general forms of dependency, as is clear from contemporary charters, the burials could be interpreted as being part of a social construction, aimed to 'prove' in a sense that they were an independent community. It is also possible that in building these structures, the Veldhoven households created something in the environment that they owned and that was created on their terms. If there is any value to this statement then the statement can be taken in a multitude of different ways. It could be interpreted that the burials are evidence for a community that 'rebels' against the 'governing' or owning body that treats them poorly or does not see them as equal. At the same time, such a process does not have to be negatively aimed at any ruler, it could be that its merely a comforting factor, or a simpler claim to land as stated before.

Regarding all theories discussed in this chapter, the most coherent formulation of an interpretation would be that; 'the farmyard burials located on the farmyard of the two Late Merovingian- Early Carolingian households of Veldhoven, were created in order for the nucleated settlement, newly created by immigrants from an as of yet unknown region to establish the legitimacy of their 'claim' on the land, to both connect and divide the households on a multitude of social scales and to visualize their heritage and claims to any possible connected stakeholders'.

In the theoretical outlining of this particular research, I mention sources by Theuws that mention the interpretation of the axe in the graves as conveying the reclamation of land before lending any sort of warrior status to the deceased. I

deem it therefore important to regard the absence of the axe in these graves. It could be argued that this absence either denotes a definitive warrior status to the deceased of Veldhoven, or it could imply a changing burial ritual. The gap that the disappearance of depositing an axe in the burial rite leaves in showcasing the inhabitants claim on land can easily have been substituted by another new part of the ritual that highlights this claim. There is a possibility that such displays of land-ownership were moved to be performed during the burial itself. In this case it would be hard to find the true essence of such a ritual aspect, on the other hand it could be argued that the spears that are located in the Veldhoven chamber graves have taken on the role of the main display of land ownership. Although it is theorized in this thesis that the spears had previously, possibly, already been used for such purposes I would like to double down on their importance as symbolic items in the Veldhoven case.

8 Conclusions

In this concluding chapter, a closer look will be taken at the research questions as proposed in the first chapter and they will be answered according to the results of this thesis study. The research questions as stated at the beginning of the research are:

1. What type of burials are found at Veldhoven? (how were the graves constructed? which burial rites? Are there various forms of inhumation?)
2. What grave goods have been found in the graves?
3. What is the dating of the burials?
4. How did the grave-field develop over time in a chronological and topographical sense? (lay-out and phasing of the grave-field over the period it was used)
5. Are there, based on the method of burial and material culture of the graves, differences distinguishable with regard to the gender and age of the deceased?
6. Are there, based on the method of burial and material culture of the graves, family relations of the deceased distinguishable?
7. Are there, based on the method of burial and material culture of the graves, differences distinguishable with regard to the socio-economic positions of the deceased?
8. How do the rituals established from research on the burials and the grave-field itself fit into current knowledge about rituals, burials and grave-fields in the late-Merovingian period?

1 What type of burials are found at Veldhoven?

Two main types of inhumation have been found at Veldhoven. The first are the 5 Merovingian chamber graves. The chamber graves are in itself not enigmatic in nature as they are found quite commonly in the 7th century. These chamber graves however contain a range of grave-goods that are usually dated to a period preceding that of the Veldhoven burials by almost a century. The practised burial rite with depositions of weapons got more or less outdated by the time the Veldhoven burials were created. The remainder of the graves consists of simple row-graves. In these cases, just the outline of a wooden coffin is present and very simple grave-goods such as a small knife. Some of these graves do not contain a chest and are interpreted as pit graves. Some of the younger graves are interpreted as child burials.

2 What grave goods have been found in the graves?

The grave goods found in the graves of the second phase consist out of simple knives and belt buckles. The grave goods found in the Merovingian chamber graves are however more varied. These grave goods consist out of; different sets of weapons (spear, sword, shield, seax), different types of elaborate belt buckles and other belt fittings, earthenware pots, horse gear and a Merovingian denarius.

3 What is the dating of the burials?

The dating of the burials relies primarily on the presence of a Merovingian denarius in burial number 14. The denarii dates to the very late 7th and early 8th century and puts the early phase of the grave field in the late 7th early 8th century. Because of the theorizing regarding the nature of the burials and the clear phasing present in the grave-field, an exact date for all of the burials can't be given but the denarius indicates an almost exact date and puts the burials in a specific time-frame between the end of the Merovingian era and the start of the Carolingian time period (c. 685-740/50). A great contributing factor in this placement is due to the fact that the denarius was found in a grave belonging to the first phase of graves on the farmyard-burial grave field.

4 How did the grave-field develop over time in a chronological and topographical sense? (lay-out and phasing of the grave-field over the period it was used)

First of the grave field of zone G was created. It is not certain in what order, but the graves 01 (zone G) and 02 (zone G) were first. Then a generation, or half a generation later, the five chamber grave burials of zone K were created. There are different interpretations possible, but most likely is that the graves 08, 13, 14 and 16 were all created roughly around the same time (mid or third quarter of the seventh century AD). The chamber grave 09 was, based on its size and grave goods, possibly created at a later stage. The rest of the graves of zone K and the grave 03 (zone G) were all created around a generation later (700-750 AD). This later generation is called phase II. The first phase of graves in zone K was structured in rows with space in between the different grave structures. The graves of the second phase connect to the rows of the first phase but are more hurdled together.

5 Are there, based on the method of burial and material culture of the graves, differences distinguishable with regard to the gender and age of the deceased?

First, off it should be noted that a distinction is made in this theses, which is common in burial archaeology between gender and biological sex. The biological sex of the people in the graves of the Veldhoven burial site is almost impossible to trace with current knowledge because the analysis of the skeletal material is not completed and due to the fact that there are little physical skeletal material finds recovered from the burials in the first place. The gender of the burial is based on current knowledge and interpretations of the burial ritual and the supposed sex of the bodies found in similar cases. These previous studies have shown that many grave goods are associated with either males or females and that a certain gender is traceable from these finds. That being said, the chamber graves are all interpreted as being that of males due to the presence of weapons and other goods that are considered to be male items except for grave 13. Grave 13 is based on the slightly divergent grave chamber and the distinctive set of grave goods interpretable as being that of a female. A number of graves from the younger phase are interpreted as being that of children based on skeletal remains, body outlines and the size of graves. It is not realistic to assign a gender to the children's graves as there is no evidence pointing towards a specific gender classification for these graves.

6 Are there, based on the method of burial and material culture of the graves, family relations of the deceased distinguishable?

From the method of burial and material relations by themselves are no family relations distinguishable. The relations that have become visible are all recognized due to the theoretical interpretation of finds and grave plans. The layout in the field of the graves, as mentioned in the previous chapters, denotes a phasing of two periods. The cohesiveness between the two different grave sets shows that during both phases there must have been social relations between the burying groups at the very least. Because in this thesis it is implied that the buried belonged to the social groups that buried them, they too must have had social relations with the burying group. If these social relations are to be interpreted as being family relations is hard given the material. It is however given the small size and the placement on the farmyard of the burials that these burials were made for a small group indicating a family or two families. Another thing to regard in this matter is the multitude of children burials, showing by all means not a great number of child-deaths, but a healthy reproduction of offspring in the settlement, which by itself means family relations.

7 Are there, based on the method of burial and material culture of the graves, differences distinguishable with regard to the socio-economic positions of the deceased?

This is a very theoretical question. As discussed in chapter 1 and 4, in recent years new interpretations of grave rites and social connections of the early medieval period have shown that the lavishness of burial is not to be simply connected to the wealth of the buried.

Instead, the burial itself and the rituals surrounding it might possibly say more about the people doing the burying instead of the people being buried. That being said, a number of theories and interpretations are still proposed in this thesis in order to create oversight of the interpretations that modern theory can provide us with. The socio-economic positions of the deceased are therefore not easily reconstructed, as social positions by themselves differ between certain groups and on certain levels. An argument could be made that due to the 'lavish' nature of the chamber graves burials the men that were buried within must have been men of great importance. In this thesis, I try to refute such arguments by showing the modern interpretations of Theuws and Halsall of the grave as a social tool, used for coping with loss, the uncertainty of changing social relations and display of power over land. At the same time the ritual meaning of the items within the graves, as they were theorized for the usage of such chamber graves a century before the Veldhoven burials. Therefore, I argue that in short no, there are no social-economic positions retrievable from studying the placement of the graves or goods. At the same time, within the interpretative scheming in this thesis, the chamber graves are designated as being that of the founders of the community. The hard part of interpretation is that this does not have to mean anything by itself. Being the founders, and the theory by Theuws (Theuws 1999, 343-344) that not everyone must have been buried on the farmyard, gives the founder graves some sort of social status. The lavish nature of the burials does not by itself imply great richness when regarded in their periodical context. The inhabitants of the Veldhoven farmyards were most likely immigrant from another area, and as the ritual of placing the dead in the chamber graves was not a new one, but an older one used anew to make a statement, it can't be secluded that the people of Veldhoven either saved up the money or acquired the goods in a way other than by definition being rich themselves. Especially in the context of the farmyard itself, the settlement was small and it remains a question if the inhabitants owned the land themselves or if it was owned by a ruler. Despite some being buried in a chamber grave with an elaborate set of weapons, the

most likely picture of the inhabitants of the Veldhoven farmyards remains one of farmers living in a small farming community, and not that of warriors.

8 How do the rituals established from research on the burials and the grave-field itself fit into current knowledge about rituals, burials and grave-fields in the late-Merovingian period?

There are two types of burials found on the Veldhoven grave field. The Merovingian chamber grave burials, and a set of graves that conform to the Rheingraber burial standard of the period. Both of these were once common usage in the Merovingian world, but the practice of them had died out during the 7th century. Especially the chamber graves. It is to current knowledge not a usual practice for any of these graves to be buried on the farmyard of a settlement. Graves were always buried on grave-fields separated from the farmyard, and these graveyards were regarded as places of spiritual and memorial significance. This does not denote the spiritual and memorial meanings of the farmyard burials, but it remains important to consider that the segregation from household and farmyard is interpreted as being an important aspect of such grave-sites. That is one of the main reasons that so much interpretable significance in this thesis is given to the peculiar placement of the farmyard graves. The chamber graves themselves are not uncommon for the period that they are in, the grave-goods that were found in the chamber graves are uncommon for the period. On basis of the grave-goods the graves can be dated about two-generations before their current date. It is due to the Merovingian denarius that was found in one of the oldest graves (grave 14) that the burial ground was dated to a much later period than that would be ascribed in a normal research based on the chronology of other finds.

All of the previous research questions were selected at the start of this thesis research in order to, when answered, provide the best context, theory and evidence to answer the main research question. The main research question is: ***“Why did the people of some settlements during the transitional period from the Merovingian to Carolingian period create farmyard burials while most people were predominantly buried on collective cemeteries, both before and after this transitional period?”*** As is made clear in a review of the answers to the research questions, there is no one concise answer to this question. The most legitimate answer however as of now, with regard to current theory, knowledge and the evidential material from the Veldhoven burials is one that is divided into multiple parts. First of we have considered the multitude of

different aspects of interpretation and the multitude of theories, stepping away from an interpretation which is focussed on the individual in the grave and more focussed on the individuals burying their dead, and the social and ritual relations that come into play during the occasion of a burial. Deducing from these concepts we can conclude that the chamber graves numbered 08, 14 and 16 (and possibly 13) are the graves of the founders of the grave field. They are built in their respective manners because of a multitude of reasons.

First off: The graves are built on the farmyard with a purpose. That purpose could be that they are built on that specific location in order for the settlement to be connected and at the same time divided. This theory was created by equating the Veldhoven farmyard burials and those of Geldrop and Dommelen. The idea in the theory entails that the placement of the graves is as such that they are themselves between the households and the communal space. This would create an environment in which the graves are both connected to the households, shared by their similar makeup and ritual implications, while at the same time dividing them because they are placed between the households in the community space. This theory remains to be tested by further research, as currently the grave site does not seem to fit this model. Instead it could be argued that the Veldhoven farmyard grave field is a different variation on a similar concept. The founders graves of the Veldhoven grave field could indicate that multiple different households were each adding their own 'founder' to a newly created grave field. The ritual and socio-cultural implications of the division and at the same time connection of multiple households as was theorized for Geldrop and Dommelen would in this case still hold true for the Veldhoven farmyard burial variant.

Secondly; the graves are used as a tool that showcases the rightful claims that the Veldhoven inhabitants have made for themselves on the land itself. If this idea should be contextualized in a serfdom situation or if they worked their own land is unknown, but for both options theories and speculation are proposed in this thesis. For answering the main question the context does not matter however as in both cases, flatly said, it would point towards laying a claim on the land through the positioning of the graves on the farmyard, the grave-goods inserted into the graves and possibly through the lost ritual that was performed during the actual burial ritual itself.

Put into a cohesive sentence, the answer would be something like this: the farmyard burials located on the farmyard of the two Late Merovingian- Early Carolingian households of Veldhoven, were created in order for the newly created nucleated settlement by immigrants from an as of yet unknown region to

establish the legitimacy of their 'claim' on the land, to both connect and divide the households on a multitude of social scales and to visualize their heritage and claims to any possible connected stakeholders in the area'.

Abstract

During excavations at Veldhoven in 2017, a cemetery dating to the late 7th and early 8th century was found. This late Merovingian cemetery is what is called a “farmyard burial ground” so named because it was created on or near the farmyard of the people that used the cemetery. The farmyard burial ground in Veldhoven is located in a settlement of which one or some households used the cemetery over the course of at least two generations. The practice of burying the dead on the farmyard is rare for both the Merovingian period before and the Carolingian period that came after and is, in the southern Netherlands, almost unique to the transitional period between the two. The Veldhoven graves are part of a small set of such “farmyard burials” that were created specifically in the transitional period from Merovingian to Carolingian. The Veldhoven farmyard burials can be divided into two phases of usage. The first phase roughly dates to the last half of the seventh century AD, while the second phase dates to the first half of the eighth century AD. The graves of the first phase consist out of a set of chamber graves of differing size and build. Within these chamber graves, a wide variety of grave goods were found. These grave goods were used in order to date the burials and to add context to the understanding of the burial ritual and its socio-cultural connotations. A number of the Merovingian chamber graves were, due to the presence of elaborate sets of weapons and other grave goods, interpreted as being the founder graves of the grave field. Historically, such weapon graves would have been interpreted as ‘warrior graves’. The inhabitant was in this scenario viewed as being a warrior of high status and more often than not the interpretation would include the designation of the graves inhabitant as being ‘Germanic’. In this thesis I argue, using modern theory and interpretations, that the grave goods do not say that much about the inhabitant of the grave and that they do not inherently denote a warrior status. The grave goods are instead meant to be viewed as a text that was ought to be read by the people who were present at the burial. The weapons can in this regard be interpreted as being tools of the hunt which can be connected to the possession of land. The grave goods, when read as a text, give more information about the people that buried the deceased instead of about the deceased itself. In contrast to the chamber graves of the first phase are the smaller chest graves and pit graves of the second (younger) phase. These graves are sober in comparison, often only including a small belt buckle or a knife as grave goods. A number of different interpretations can be proposed, however, the interpretation of the Veldhoven

farmyard grave-builders as immigrants from another region seems most likely out of these. These immigrants would not have put their deceased on a shared cemetery with the other local inhabitants. Instead they used a somewhat older ritual in order to convey the message that they had a rightful claim to the land they inhabited and possibly in order to speed up the process of the creation of an ancestor cult. The burial process would have been a visual guide that strengthens the bond of the community, while at the same time legitimizing their claims on the land that they recently started to inhabit.

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Appendix A

A catalogue of the graves

The Veldhoven site features two grave fields distinctively called zone G and zone K. Zone G consists out of three graves which are numbered grave 01 to 03. Zone K is a larger grave field of 23 graves which are numbered grave 02 to grave 24. For the sake of continuity no change was made in the numbering of the graves, even though there exists a small overlap. In order to avoid confusion, the zone G graves will always be mentioned as; 'grave 01 (zone G)', 'grave 02 (zone G)' and 'grave 03 (zone G)'.

1 (Zone G)

Inhumation grave

Trench	286
Feature	9285
Grave structure	wooden chamber grave
Grave pit length	3.80
Grave pit width	2.80
Remaining depth	1.00
Orientation	southwest-northeast
Stratigraphic relation	same depth as grave 02 (zone G)

DESCRIPTION

Grave 1 is a chamber grave. The grave pit is 380 cm in length and 280 cm in width. The maximum depth is 100 cm. The grave pit is described as very rectangular with a half-round shaped re-opening pit located inside the pit outline. The re-opening pit reaches to the bottom of the pit. On 25 cm from the bottom, the shape of the wooden chamber grave became visible, measuring 204 by 112 cm.

PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

No visible remains were found in this grave.

DATE (finds)

625-650 AD.

FINDS

Decorated belt buckle, belt hook, decorated belt and girdle mounts, very small late-roman coin.

2 (Zone G)

Inhumation grave

Trench	286
Feature	9453
Grave structure	wooden chamber grave
Grave pit length	3.80
Grave pit width	2.56
Remaining depth	1.00
Orientation	south southwest- north northeast
Stratigraphic relation	same depth as grave 01 (zone G)

DESCRIPTION

Grave 1 is a chamber grave. The grave pit is 380 cm in length and 280 cm in width. The maximum depth is 100 cm. The grave pit is described as very rectangular with a half-round shaped re-opening pit located inside the pit outline. The re-opening pit reaches to the bottom of the pit. On 25 cm from the bottom, the shape of the wooden chamber grave became visible, measuring 204 by 112 cm.

PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

No visible remains were found in this grave.

DATE (finds)

625-650 AD.

FINDS

A set of decorative belt or girdle mounts and a small belt buckle.

3 (Zone G)

Inhumation grave

Trench	286
Feature	9282
Grave structure	wooden chamber grave
Grave pit length	1.95
Grave pit width	1.23
Remaining depth	0.36
Orientation	southwest-northeast

Stratigraphic relation roughly at the same depth as the other phase II graves (03 (zone G), 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24).

DESCRIPTION

Grave 1 is a chamber grave. The grave pit is 380 cm in length and 280 cm in width. The maximum depth is 100 cm. The grave pit is described as very rectangular with a half-round shaped re-opening pit located inside the pit outline. The re-opening pit reaches to the bottom of the pit. On 25 cm from the bottom, the shape of the wooden chamber grave became visible, measuring 204 by 112 cm.

PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

No visible remains were found in this grave.

DATE (finds)

Late 7th until early 8th century.

FINDS

A small belt buckle.

2

Inhumation grave

Trench 286

Feature 9501

Grave structure pit grave

Grave pit length 2.00

Grave pit width 1.00

Remaining depth 0.10 – 0.30

Orientation southwest-northeast

Stratigraphic relation roughly at the same depth as the other phase II graves (03 (zone G), 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24).

DESCRIPTION

A younger grave. The fillings of these graves are much darker and more homogenous. In this filling the outline of the skeletal remains is often reasonably preserved and in some cases the caps of the teeth were also preserved (although heavily fragmented). In some cases there are traces of an outline of a wooden chest, but there are also many of these younger graves that show no trace of a wooden structure. In other cases the grave was clearly a pit grave. A small amount of these graves contain grave goods, but these grave goods are limited to a small knife and/or a small belt buckle.

PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

No visible remains were found in this grave.

DATE (finds)

Late 7th until early 8th century.

FINDS

/

3

Inhumation grave

Trench	286
Feature	9509
Grave structure	chest grave
Grave pit length	2.00
Grave pit width	1.00
Remaining depth	0.10 – 0.30
Orientation	southwest-northeast

Stratigraphic relation roughly at the same depth as the other phase II graves (03 (zone G), 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24).

DESCRIPTION

A younger grave. The fillings of these graves are much darker and more homogenous. In this filling the outline of the skeletal remains is often reasonably preserved and in some cases the caps of the teeth were also preserved (although heavily fragmented). In some cases there are traces of an outline of a wooden chest, but there are also many of these younger graves that show no trace of a wooden structure. In other cases the grave was clearly a pit grave. A small amount of these graves contain grave goods, but these grave goods are limited to a small knife and/or a small belt buckle.

The grave contains a wooden chest and a clear silhouette of the human remains. The chest is caved inward.

PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Silhouette of body visible in ground.

DATE (finds)

Late 7th until early 8th century.

FINDS

/

4

Inhumation grave

Trench	286
Feature	9511
Grave structure	chest grave
Grave pit length	2.00
Grave pit width	1.00
Remaining depth	0.10 – 0.30
Orientation	southwest-northeast

Stratigraphic relation roughly at the same depth as the other phase II graves (03 (zone G), 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24).

DESCRIPTION

A younger grave. The fillings of these graves are much darker and more homogenous. In this filling the outline of the skeletal remains is often reasonably preserved and in some cases the caps of the teeth were also preserved (although heavily fragmented). In some cases there are traces of an outline of a wooden chest, but there are also many of these younger graves that show no trace of a wooden structure. In other cases the grave was clearly a pit grave. A small amount of these graves contain grave goods, but these grave goods are limited to a small knife and/or a small belt buckle.

Chest grave containing a clear chest outline at the south-east side. Contains a lot of bioturbation.

PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

No visible remains were found in this grave.

DATE (finds)

Late 7th until early 8th century.

FINDS

/

5

Inhumation grave

Trench 286

Feature 9508

Grave structure chest grave

Grave pit length 2.00

Grave pit width 1.00

Remaining depth 0.10 – 0.30

Orientation southwest-northeast

Stratigraphic relation roughly at the same depth as the other phase II graves (03 (zone G), 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24).

DESCRIPTION

A younger grave. The fillings of these graves are much darker and more homogenous. In this filling the outline of the skeletal remains is often reasonably preserved and in some cases the caps of the teeth were also preserved (although heavily fragmented). In some cases there are traces of an outline of a wooden chest, but there are also many of these younger graves that show no trace of a wooden structure. In other cases the grave was clearly a pit grave. A small amount of these graves contain grave goods, but these grave goods are limited to a small knife and/or a small belt buckle.

Double grave with a clear chest and body silhouette.

PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Outline of body visible in the ground.

DATE (finds)

Late 7th until early 8th century.

FINDS

A small belt buckle.

6

Inhumation grave

Trench 286

Feature 9517

Grave structure chest grave

Grave pit length 2.00

Grave pit width 1.00

Remaining depth 0.10 – 0.30

Orientation southwest-northeast

Stratigraphic relation roughly at the same depth as the other phase II graves (03 (zone G), 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24).

DESCRIPTION

A younger grave. The fillings of these graves are much darker and more homogenous. In this filling the outline of the skeletal remains is often reasonably preserved and in some cases the caps of the teeth were also preserved (although heavily fragmented). In some cases there are traces of an outline of a wooden chest, but there are also many of these younger graves that show no trace of a wooden structure. In other cases the grave was clearly a pit grave. A small amount of these graves contain grave goods, but these grave goods are limited to a small knife and/or a small belt buckle.

Chest grave containing silhouette.

PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Silhouette of body visible in the earth.

DATE (finds)

Late 7th until early 8th century.

FINDS

/

7

Inhumation grave

Trench 286

Feature 9512

Grave structure pit grave

Grave pit length 2.00

Grave pit width 1.00

Remaining depth 0.10 – 0.30

Orientation southwest-northeast

Stratigraphic relation roughly at the same depth as the other phase II graves (03 (zone G), 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24).

DESCRIPTION

A younger grave. The fillings of these graves are much darker and more homogenous. In this filling the outline of the skeletal remains is often reasonably preserved and in some cases the caps of the teeth were also preserved (although heavily fragmented). In some cases there are traces of an outline of a wooden chest, but there are also many of these younger graves that show no trace of a wooden structure. In other cases the grave was clearly a pit grave. A small amount of these graves contain grave goods, but these grave goods are limited to a small knife and/or a small belt buckle.

Double grave with grave number 22. Possibly grave of a child.

PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

No visible remains were found in this grave.

DATE (finds)

Late 7th until early 8th century.

FINDS

/

8

Inhumation grave

Trench 286

Feature 9513

Grave structure wooden chamber grave

Grave pit length 2.80

Grave pit width 1.80

Remaining depth 0.88

Orientation southwest-northeast

Stratigraphic relation Roughly at the same height as grave 13 and 14.

DESCRIPTION

Part of a duo of chamber graves that lay parallel to one another. Based on the placement of the graves and the finds within them grave 8 and 14 are considered to form a duo or are otherwise connected. Both graves have clear visible outlines and have a wooden plank that roughly divides the graves in two. Both graves contain the human remains in the northern part of the grave. Near the bodies are different grave finds such as a longsword (spatha) and longseax, girdles and both bodies have rider spurs located at the left foot. The remains are identified as being that of males. Both graves also contain a lance tip, an umbo and a biconical pot. The only truly unique find comes from 14 and is a Merovingian denarius (coin) that was located within the outline of the skull, within where the jaw is located.

PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Parts of skeleton found, located on the north western side of the grave.

DATE (finds)

650-740 AD.

FINDS

Bronze tweezers, parts of horse riding spurs, a flip knife, a small belt buckle, a biconical pot, one lancehead, a small knife, umbo and a spatha.

9

Inhumation grave

Trench 286

Feature 9506

Grave structure wooden chamber grave

Grave pit length 2.30

Grave pit width 1.25

Remaining depth 0.55

Orientation southwest-northeast

Stratigraphic relation just a little deeper than the phase II graves (03 (zone G), 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24).

DESCRIPTION

Small chamber grave that possibly belongs to the younger phasing of the field based on the simple grave gifts (a small knife and a buckle) that are more commonly found in younger graves.

PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Traces of skeleton found, located on the north western side of the grave.

DATE (finds)

Late 7th until early 8th century.

FINDS

A small knife and a belt buckle.

10

Inhumation grave

Trench 286

Feature 9504

Grave structure chest grave

Grave pit length 2.00

Grave pit width 1.00

Remaining depth 0.10 – 0.30

Orientation southwest-northeast

Stratigraphic relation roughly at the same depth as the other phase II graves (03 (zone G), 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24).

DESCRIPTION

A younger grave. The fillings of these graves are much darker and more homogenous. In this filling the outline of the skeletal remains is often reasonably preserved and in some cases the caps of the teeth were also preserved (although heavily fragmented). In some cases there are traces of an outline of a wooden chest, but there are also many of these younger graves that show no trace of a wooden structure. In other cases the grave was clearly a pit grave. A small amount of these graves contain grave goods, but these grave goods are limited to a small knife and/or a small belt buckle.

Chest grave containing both chest and human- silhouette.

PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Silhouette of body found.

DATE (finds)

Late 7th until early 8th century.

FINDS

/

11

Inhumation grave

Trench 286

Feature 9515

Grave structure chest grave

Grave pit length 2.00

Grave pit width 1.00

Remaining depth 0.10 – 0.30

Orientation southwest-northeast

Stratigraphic relation roughly at the same depth as the other phase II graves (03 (zone G), 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24).

DESCRIPTION

A younger grave. The fillings of these graves are much darker and more homogenous. In this filling the outline of the skeletal remains is often reasonably preserved and in some cases the caps of the teeth were also preserved (although heavily fragmented). In some cases there are traces of an outline of a wooden chest, but there are also many of these younger graves that show no trace of a wooden structure. In other cases the grave was clearly a pit grave. A small amount of these graves contain grave goods, but these grave goods are limited to a small knife and/or a small belt buckle.

Children's grave. Part of the chest remains and there is a human silhouette visible.

PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Visible silhouette in the ground.

DATE (finds)

Late 7th until early 8th century.

FINDS

/

12

Inhumation grave

Trench 286

Feature 9519

Grave structure pit grave

Grave pit length 2.00

Grave pit width 1.00

Remaining depth 0.10 – 0.30

Orientation southwest-northeast

Stratigraphic relation roughly at the same depth as the other phase II graves (03 (zone G), 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24).

DESCRIPTION

A younger grave. The fillings of these graves are much darker and more homogenous. In this filling the outline of the skeletal remains is often reasonably preserved and in some cases the caps of the teeth were also preserved (although heavily fragmented). In some cases there are traces of an outline of a wooden chest, but there are also many of these younger graves that show no trace of a wooden structure. In other cases the grave was clearly a pit grave. A small amount of these graves contain grave goods, but these grave goods are limited to a small knife and/or a small belt buckle.

PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

No visible remains were found in this grave.

DATE (finds)

Late 7th until early 8th century.

FINDS

/

13

Inhumation grave

Trench 286

Feature 9505

Grave structure wooden chamber grave

Grave pit length 2.70

Grave pit width 2.00

Remaining depth 0.85

Orientation southwest-northeast

Stratigraphic relation Roughly at the same level as grave 08 and 14.

DESCRIPTION

Large chamber grave with a clearly visible chamber structure. Interpreted as a female grave based on the grave finds. The finds consisted out of a necklace consisting of beads and an earthenware bowl which was located near the legs.

PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

No visible remains were found in this grave.

DATE (finds)

640-700 AD.

FINDS

An earthenware bowl, glass beads (the glass beads are still being researched and could therefore not be included in the material chapter) and a small knife.

14

Inhumation grave

Trench	286
Feature	9453
Grave structure	wooden chamber grave
Grave pit length	2.75
Grave pit width	2.30
Remaining depth	0.95
Orientation	southwest-northeast
Stratigraphic relation	At the same level as grave 08.

DESCRIPTION

Part of a duo of chamber graves that lay parallel to one another. Based on the placement of the graves and the finds within them grave 8 and 14 are considered to form a duo or are otherwise connected. Both graves have clear visible outlines and have a wooden plank that roughly divides the graves in two. Both graves contain the human remains in the northern part of the grave. Near the bodies are different grave finds such as a longsword or longseax (spatha), girdles and both bodies have a riders spur located at the left foot. The remains are identified as being that of males. Both graves also contain a lance tip, an umbo and a biconical pot. The only truly unique find comes from 14 and is a Merovingian denarius (coin) that was located within the outline of the skull, within where the jaw is located.

PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Skeleton found located in the north western corner. The head is placed near the south western corner of the body chamber.

DATE (finds)

670-750 AD.

FINDS

Biconical pot, Merovingian denarius, umbo, longseax, flip knife, belt buckle.

15

Inhumation grave

Trench 286

Feature 9518

Grave structure pit grave

Grave pit length 2.00

Grave pit width 1.00

Remaining depth 0.10 – 0.30

Orientation southwest-northeast

Stratigraphic relation roughly at the same depth as the other phase II graves (03 (zone G), 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24).

DESCRIPTION

A younger grave. The fillings of these graves are much darker and more homogenous. In this filling the outline of the skeletal remains is often reasonably preserved and in some cases the caps of the teeth were also preserved (although heavily fragmented). In some cases there are traces of an outline of a wooden chest, but there are also many of these younger graves that show no trace of a wooden structure. In other cases the grave was clearly a pit grave. A small amount of these graves contain grave goods, but these grave goods are limited to a small knife and/or a small belt buckle.

Possibly a pit grave but could also be a chest grave of which all remains have disappeared. Outline of body visible.

PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Outline of body visible in soil.

DATE (finds)

Late 7th until early 8th century.

FINDS

/

16

Inhumation grave

Trench 286

Feature 9503

Grave structure wooden chamber grave

Grave pit length 2.65

Grave pit width 1.55

Remaining depth 0.36

Orientation southwest-northeast

Stratigraphic relation Roughly at the same depth as grave 09.

DESCRIPTION

Grave 16 is a medium sized, shallow chamber grave containing grave goods that point towards identification as male. This could possibly be the oldest grave based on these goods. The goods consist of a short sword or seax, a lance tip, an umbo, a three-piece girdle set and a ring of either bronze or silver.

PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Silhouette of body located at the north western part of the grave.

DATE (finds)

626-710 AD.

FINDS

Two lanceheads, umbo, tripartite girdle-set, belt buckle, bronze ring, small knife and longseax.

17

Inhumation grave

Trench 286

Feature 9516

Grave structure chest grave

Grave pit length 2.00

Grave pit width 1.00

Remaining depth 0.10 – 0.30

Orientation southwest-northeast

Stratigraphic relation roughly at the same depth as the other phase II graves (03 (zone G), 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24).

DESCRIPTION

A younger grave. The fillings of these graves are much darker and more homogenous. In this filling the outline of the skeletal remains is often reasonably preserved and in some cases the caps of the teeth were also preserved (although heavily fragmented). In some cases there are traces of an outline of a wooden chest, but there are also many of these younger graves that show no trace of a wooden structure. In other cases the grave was clearly a pit grave. A small amount of these graves contain grave goods, but these grave goods are limited to a small knife and/or a small belt buckle.

Possible double chest grave. Almost certainly a children's grave.

PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

No clearly visible remains were found in this grave.

DATE (finds)

Late 7th until early 8th century.

FINDS

Small knife.

18

Inhumation grave

Trench 286

Feature 9521

Grave structure pit grave

Grave pit length 2.00

Grave pit width 1.00

Remaining depth 0.10 – 0.30

Orientation southwest-northeast

Stratigraphic relation roughly at the same depth as the other phase II graves (03 (zone G), 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24).

DESCRIPTION

A younger grave. The fillings of these graves are much darker and more homogenous. In this filling the outline of the skeletal remains is often reasonably preserved and in some cases the caps of the teeth were also preserved (although heavily fragmented). In some cases there are traces of an outline of a wooden chest, but there are also many of these younger graves that show no trace of a wooden structure. In other cases the grave was clearly a pit grave. A small amount of these graves contain grave goods, but these grave goods are limited to a small knife and/or a small belt buckle.

No visible outline of any chest and therefore interpreted as pit grave. Possibly a children's grave. Body silhouette visible.

PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Body silhouette visible in the soil.

DATE (finds)

Late 7th until early 8th century.

FINDS

/

19

Inhumation grave

Trench 286

Feature 9527

Grave structure chest grave

Grave pit length 2.00

Grave pit width 1.00

Remaining depth 0.10 – 0.30

Orientation southwest-northeast

Stratigraphic relation roughly at the same depth as the other phase II graves (03 (zone G), 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24).

DESCRIPTION

A younger grave. The fillings of these graves are much darker and more homogenous. In this filling the outline of the skeletal remains is often reasonably preserved and in some cases the caps of the teeth were also preserved (although heavily fragmented). In some cases there are traces of an outline of a wooden chest, but there are also many of these younger graves that show no trace of a wooden structure. In other cases the grave was clearly a pit grave. A small amount of these graves contain grave goods, but these grave goods are limited to a small knife and/or a small belt buckle.

Chest circumference not visible but still interpreted as a chest grave. Silhouette of body visible and metal finds found in the grave.

PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Silhouette of body visible in the soil.

DATE (finds)

Late 7th until early 8th century.

FINDS

Small knife and a belt buckle.

20

Inhumation grave

Trench 286

Feature 9526

Grave structure pit grave

Grave pit length 2.00

Grave pit width 1.00

Remaining depth 0.10 – 0.30

Orientation southwest-northeast

Stratigraphic relation roughly at the same depth as the other phase II graves (03 (zone G), 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24).

DESCRIPTION

A younger grave. The fillings of these graves are much darker and more homogenous. In this filling the outline of the skeletal remains is often reasonably preserved and in some cases the caps of the teeth were also preserved (although heavily fragmented). In some cases there are traces of an outline of a wooden chest, but there are also many of these younger graves that show no trace of a wooden structure. In other cases the grave was clearly a pit grave. A small amount of these graves contain grave goods, but these grave goods are limited to a small knife and/or a small belt buckle.

Body silhouette visible but no remains of a chest visible. Metal finds found in grave.

PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Body silhouette visible in the soil.

DATE (finds)

Late 7th until early 8th century.

FINDS

Small knife.

21

Inhumation grave

Trench 286

Feature 9528

Grave structure chest grave

Grave pit length 2.00

Grave pit width 1.00

Remaining depth 0.10 – 0.30

Orientation southwest-northeast

Stratigraphic relation roughly at the same depth as the other phase II graves (03 (zone G), 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24).

DESCRIPTION

A younger grave. The fillings of these graves are much darker and more homogenous. In this filling the outline of the skeletal remains is often reasonably preserved and in some cases the caps of the teeth were also preserved (although heavily fragmented). In some cases there are traces of an outline of a wooden chest, but there are also many of these younger graves that show no trace of a wooden structure. In other cases the grave was clearly a pit grave. A small amount of these graves contain grave goods, but these grave goods are limited to a small knife and/or a small belt buckle.

Chest grave with wooden beams located under the chest.

PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

No visible remains were found in this grave.

DATE (finds)

Late 7th until early 8th century.

FINDS

/

22

Inhumation grave

Trench 286

Feature 9529

Grave structure chest grave

Grave pit length 2.00

Grave pit width 1.00

Remaining depth 0.10 – 0.30

Orientation southwest-northeast

Stratigraphic relation roughly at the same depth as the other phase II graves (03 (zone G), 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24).

DESCRIPTION

A younger grave. The fillings of these graves are much darker and more homogenous. In this filling the outline of the skeletal remains is often reasonably preserved and in some cases the caps of the teeth were also preserved (although heavily fragmented). In some cases there are traces of an outline of a wooden chest, but there are also many of these younger graves that show no trace of a wooden structure. In other cases the grave was clearly a pit grave. A small amount of these graves contain grave goods, but these grave goods are limited to a small knife and/or a small belt buckle.

Possible underside of a children's grave. Double grave with grave number 22.

PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

No visible remains were found in this grave.

DATE (finds)

Late 7th until early 8th century.

FINDS

/

23

Inhumation grave

Trench 286

Feature 9520

Grave structure pit grave

Grave pit length 2.00

Grave pit width 1.00

Remaining depth 0.10 – 0.30

Orientation southwest-northeast

Stratigraphic relation roughly at the same depth as the other phase II graves (03 (zone G), 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24).

DESCRIPTION

A younger grave. The fillings of these graves are much darker and more homogenous. In this filling the outline of the skeletal remains is often reasonably preserved and in some cases the caps of the teeth were also preserved (although heavily fragmented). In some cases there are traces of an outline of a wooden chest, but there are also many of these younger graves that show no trace of a wooden structure. In other cases the grave was clearly a pit grave. A small amount of these graves contain grave goods, but these grave goods are limited to a small knife and/or a small belt buckle.

Pit grave containing silhouette. Possibly a children's grave.

PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Silhouette visible in the soil.

DATE (finds)

Late 7th until early 8th century.

FINDS

/

24

Inhumation grave

Trench 286

Feature 9530

Grave structure pit grave

Grave pit length 2.00

Grave pit width 1.00

Remaining depth 0.10 – 0.30

Orientation southwest-northeast

Stratigraphic relation roughly at the same depth as the other phase II graves (03 (zone G), 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24).

DESCRIPTION

A younger grave. The fillings of these graves are much darker and more homogenous. In this filling the outline of the skeletal remains is often reasonably preserved and in some cases the caps of the teeth were also preserved (although heavily fragmented). In some cases there are traces of an outline of a wooden chest, but there are also many of these younger graves that show no trace of a wooden structure. In other cases the grave was clearly a pit grave. A small amount of these graves contain grave goods, but these grave goods are limited to a small knife and/or a small belt buckle.

Pit grave containing silhouette. No traces of a wooden chest found.

PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Silhouette visible in the soil.

DATE (finds)

Late 7th until early 8th century.

FINDS

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