

# Medieval News

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...Beowulf Revisited

# Medieval News this week...



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## Medieval News

- read about new exhibitions, books, research and much more

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## Photo (frontpage):

The Stoneship at Lejre. Photo: National Heritage Agency, Denmark

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# Lejre Museum

Lejre in Denmark is famous as the mythical royal seat of the Scyldings, renowned in Beowulf. However, it is also a hugely fascinating archaeological site. A new museum is well worth a detour.

Granted, it is a small museum. And yes, more prominent exhibits from the Dark Ages may be found in the British Museum or in Uppsala. Nevertheless, it pays to travel to Roskilde in Denmark to see not only the Viking-ship museum, but also Lejre, a small inland village four km. from the sea.

Here, a new exhibition recently opened, which tells the story of the remarkable finds, which archaeologists under the leadership of Tom Christensen has been responsible for excavating during the last 30 years. Even though excavations continue and new information about the place is sure to surface in the years to come, the

contours of a breathtaking archeological treasure have slowly emerged. What we get is a glimpse of a truly magnificent royal centre dominating the early medieval landscape for more than 500 years (AD 500 - 1000).

## Landscape

Looking a Gl. Lejre from the air, it immediately becomes apparent that the 6th century settlement was located in an “old” landscape filled with ancestral mounds, some of which date back to the Bronze Age. To the east a small river borders up to a flat



*Lejre as seen from the air - looking west with the hardly visible Lejre stream dividing the isthmus with the burial ground and stonships from the village, and the halls in the background © Ole Malling/Roskilde Museum.*

plain. This river, Kornerup, splits into two with Lejre Stream just east of the ancient settlement. Neither of these streams or tiny rivers are believed to have been navigable near Lejre by anything except prams.

Between these two creeks spans a hilly isthmus filled with an ancient necropolis, consisting of a mound from the 7th century and a burial ground from the 10th.

To the east of the small streams the flat heath rolls across a landscape perfect for intensive farming.

To the west a hilly landscape rises, covered in forests alternating with a more open landscape with a scrubby vegetation of oaks, elms, juniper and heather. A trip to

the museum should include a visit to the nearby **Land of Legends**, where the ancient landscape has been recreated. If you have plenty of time, it is especially recommended to take a tour of Særløse Overdrev (Særløse Commons) with ancient grassland recreating a sense of the timeless landscape.

Entering Gl. Lejre from the south, the road reaches the small village bordering on the banks of the western riverbed with the hilly isthmus to the left. It is believed that the present village might originally have been a seasonal marketplace inhabited by craftsmen. On the hill to the left, a number of great halls have been excavated. The earliest settlement found dates to the 3rd – 5th centuries and lies up north of here.

## The Halls

Around AD 500 the first great hall appears to have been built. This hall was around 47 metres long and app. seven meters wide in the middle (5 meters at the ends). The hall was probably whitewashed and would have been visible from afar.

Around AD 600 this hall was demolished and a new hall was built to the south, a bit longer and wider. In the end, all-in-all seven different halls of different sizes and probably some of them contemporary, have been excavated. The last one was demolished some time around AD 1000. What we have here is a settlement of royal halls demonstrating continuous use in a period of 500 years.

To these magnificent halls were added a number of minor houses, serving the area as either sleeping quarters for visiting guests or – as some have speculated – “pagan temples”. Important features in the landscape were also the large stone hearths located next to the halls, were remains of grand feasts have been found. To the west, on the bank of the river, a burial ground have been excavated. Here a number of stone ships were erected some time in the beginning of the 10th century.

Probably a bit later, a warrior was buried together with some dependants at the centre of one of the later halls, which at that point was demolished. It is believed that the site of the ancient hall may have been chosen as a way of honouring the dead man.

## Museum

It is not easy to describe the shifting elements in this settlement. However, the museum has very kindly reconstructed the

foundations of the halls in the landscape and it is recommended to take a walk there before visiting the newly refurbished museum, which tells the story in an immaculate, imaginative and very illustrative way.

Here the visitor is invited not only to get a sense of the history behind the place, but also an overview of the many magnificent archaeological finds – from jewellery to pottery - which has been found in the excavations. Luckily, the curator of the exhibition has kept cool and let the finds speak for themselves. This means that we are not just treated to a few singularly impressive pieces, but are allowed to see the multitude of finds, which endless metal detecting have secured for us. With plentiful explanations and a fine and balance use of multimedia a visit is highly recommended.

If you are fan of Beowulf, this is where you should travel at some point in your life to get a sense of place and poem

## VISIT:

### Lejre Museum

Orehøjvej 4  
Roskilde

*Courtyard of the museum, located in one of the old farms in the village of Gl. Lejre*





*Reconstruction of the hall from ca. AD 900 © Medieval Histories*

## Lejre – Myth and Archaeology

**REVIEW:** New excellent book tells the story of the mythological centre in Gl. Lejre c. 500 -1000 from an archaeological and historical point of perspective. It really deserves to be translated

Thietmar was bishop in Merseburg, a German city south of Magdeburg on the river Elbe. But he was also the author of a famous chronicle, which he wrote from 1013 – 1018 and which deals with the events not only in Ottonian Germany but also among its neighbours.

One of these was the kingdom of Denmark, which at that time (during the reign of Canute the Great) had expanded into a northern empire comprising England, Denmark, Norway and parts of present-day Sweden. In view of this, it apparently seemed natural to him to tell this story about Lejre, currently a small and insignificant village South of Roskilde (now called “Gammel Lejre”).

It is a wild scene and most commentators tend to regard the number of sacrifices as a reflection of Thietmar’s general tendency to describe the Scandinavians and Slavs as wild and uncivilised people. Nevertheless, it is an interesting fact that Lejre early on played such a significant role in the my-

Because I have heard marvellous things about their ancient sacrifices, I will not allow these to pass unnoticed. In those parts, the centre of the kingdom [of the Danes] is a place called Lejre, in the region of Seeland. Every nine years, in the month of January, after the day of which we celebrate the appearance of the Lord [6 January], they all convene here and offer their gods a burnt offering of ninety-nine human beings and as many horses along with dogs and cock – the latter being used in place of hawks. As I have said, they were convinced that these would do service for them with those who dwell beneath the earth and ensure their forgiveness for any misdeeds.

*(Thietmar of Merseburg, Book 1: 17. Here quoted from: Ottonian Germany. The Chronicle of Thietmar of Merseburg. Translated and annotated by David A. Warner. Manchester University Press 2001, p. 80)*

thology of the very early history of Denmark that Thietmar felt the need to name it as the “national” centre par excellence. Later Danish and Icelandic chronicles fleshed this mythology out by recounting the heroic and legendary deeds of the Scyldings – Skjoldungerne – said to have had their royal seat there; as did the poem about Beowulf, although the poet does not locate the ancient seat of the Scyldings anywhere except in mythical Heorot, the famous hall and royal seat of King Hroðgar.

Nowadays, no one believes that Beowulf – or for that matter the later chroniclers – can be mined for any exact information about the heroic deeds of these very early mythological kings. However, excavations at Lejre have continued to yield new information about what was undoubtedly an important royal centre in a period when Denmark was slowly turning into a proper medieval kingdom.

For years, the archaeologist Tom Christensen has excavated the site. Recently this resulted in a very important book about the history behind the site and a report about all the many and exciting finds, which continued to come to light even as he was writing. Although the book is in Danish it deserves a review here, not least because it is the first time the many diverse finds have been carefully studied and thought through from one end to the other. The reader is thus very generously invited into the laboratory of an archaeologist while he is exploring multiple inroads into this very complicated material. The result is an exciting history, which covers a period from c. 400 and up until the 19th century, when national romanticism re-discovered the myths and once more turned Gammel Lejre into a national hot-spot. The main object, though, is to present the excavations and the many subse-



*Part of the rich finds from Lejre © Ole Malling/Roskilde Museum.*

quent finds made by metal-detectors; and not least think them through. This is done through a careful sifting of the chronicles, the other written sources, the archaeological excavations, the many stray metal finds, and the wider landscape. In the back is a full catalogue of the many finds.

## Place Name: Lejre

In itself the name Lejre is rare. It is believed that its original meaning was ‘shed’ or ‘tent’; thus it means the place where people got together and made a camp. Today, the meaning of the Danish word “lejr” is still “camp-site” (spejderlejr= scout-camp).

It is located on a hilly stretch lying to the west of two small rivers and with an old road running along the riverbed. It will have been populated in the Bronze Age as several old barrows may still be noticed in the landscape (others may be found on old maps). Today a small village lies in the vale. For obvious reasons excavations in the village proper are restricted, but remains of an older settlement characterised by the activity of craftsmen have been located here, through which a road leads to the Firth of Roskilde (apparently the streams were never navigable).



*Reconstruction of the first hall with Fredshøj to the right. © ROMU/Niels Valentin*

The real interest, though, are the results of the excavations carried out on either side of the present village. Down by the rivers on the embankment of an isthmus can be found the remains of a Viking Age burial ground including the remains of four stone-ships from the first half of the 9th century. This was excavated in the second part of the 20th century. To the west of the village on a hilly slope a series of halls and other buildings were found. Both areas have only been partly excavated, and new information may be expected to keep adding to our knowledge about the history of the place.

### **First Phase: Fredshøj ca. 500 – 600**

The first settlement (apart from some earlier and smaller houses) at Fredshøj can be dated to c. 500 – 600 and contained a large hall 47 m long, three-aisled construc-

tion with slightly curved walls and with a width of 7 meters at the centre and 5 meters at the ends. It was probably a rather high building, was fitted with a prominent gable, daubed and whitewashed. It has obviously been visible from afar by people travelling to the place along the road down below. Next to it was found the signs of yet another building but the interpretation is not quite clear. Nearby a stone heap (perhaps a “hørg”) was discovered which had been exposed to fire and with infill consisting of animal bones, primarily domesticated animals. 52% of the bones came from pigs, while 33% stemmed from cattle and the rest stemmed from sheep and goats. Noticeable were the percentage of piglets signalling a surplus or elite economy. The same message is perhaps sent by the presence of the remains of a marten, which might have been hunted for the pelt. Remains of red and fallow deer plus ducks, geese and fish also contributed

to the menu. Finally, a number of birds of prey seem to have been hunted, perhaps for the use of the feathers. It appears the animals were brought alive to the place and killed on site near the stone heap – perhaps this was indeed a “hørg”, a visible heap of stones used for sacrifices.

The name of the location “Fredshøj” – Peace barrow – signals that the first hall was located next to a space, which might have been cordoned off for judicial dealings. Nearby – to the west – a significant find of a golden bractate from the 6th century plus an earlier find of a golden treasure signifies the importance of the place as a cultic and political centre at this point. From around AD 650 the remains of princely burial were excavated down by the river in a barrow called Grydehøj. Unfortunately the man and his grave-goods had been cremated but a profusion of melted bronze and gold as well as sacrificed animals testifies to its wealth.

## Second Phase: Mysselhøjgård ca. 600 – 900

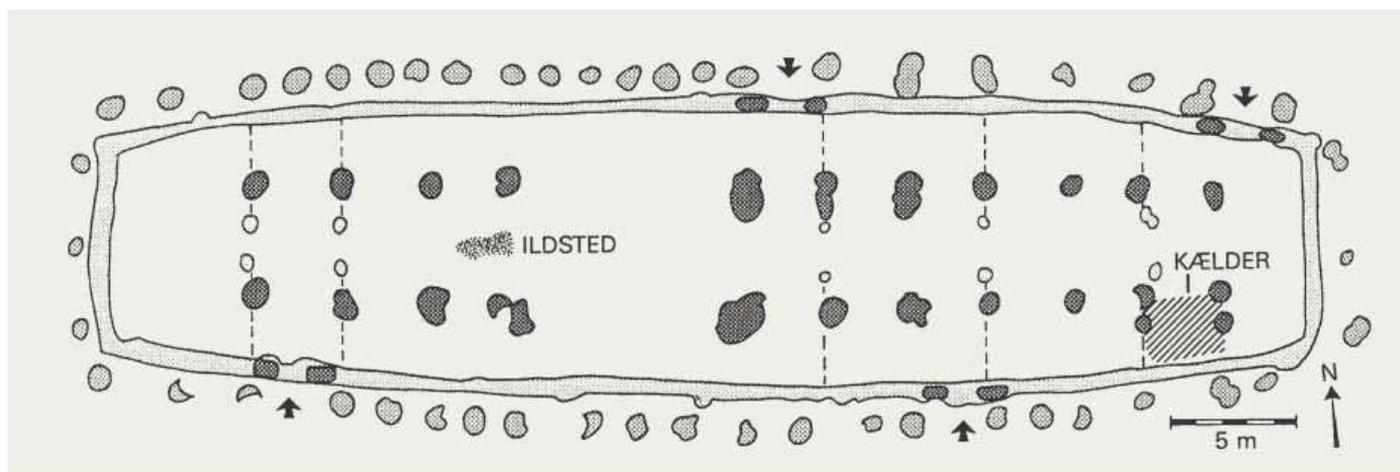
In the beginning of the 7th century the site at Fredshøj was abandoned and moved app. 50 meter south to the site, which is now called Mysselhøjgaard. This move was

accompanied by a more complex settlement divided into two parts, ditched and fenced. To the north the great hall was rebuilt, now on a magnificent platform constructed of stones and with an even more impressive gable. The hall was built on the slope, probably using this to make the gable signal a very high and impressive building. Lesser houses were constructed to the south. To this was added the construction of a new stone heap. As the Mysselhøjgård-site was used for a longer period, the remains of animals appear to have been shifted around from time to time, when rebuilding and internal relocation took place.

The composition of the herd of animals is like that found at Fredshøj but expanded with several horses, dogs, wild hogs, beaver plus a more substantial element of deer. Elsewhere on the site, pieces from the skull of a bear were found. It might have come from an imported bearskin, perhaps used in a ritual context. This might also be the case with another enigmatic find, a pierced piece of an antler, which might have been fixed to a mask.

It is from this phase a significant find was made in a village called Gevninge up north on the road to the firth. Here an “eye” from

*Excavated groundplan of The Great Hall in lejre from the 10th century. © ROMU/ Tom Christensen*



an elaborate helmet of the Sutton Hoo-type was found indicating Gevninge as the port to the “royal” site at Lejre. The “eye” is unique in a Danish context.

### Third phase: Myssehøjgaard c. 875 - 1050

Finally, around 900, the hall is moved once more. Now located in the southern part of the hilly slope, the old site of the hall from phase two was given over to a burial ground. Interestingly, a burial of a 35 – 50 year old man was found in the exact centre of the old – now defunct – hall. This grave was furnished with a fire steel, a knife with a handle wrapped in silver, and a fragment of what must have been a dress with gold-embroidered ornaments. The man had been buried in a coffin. Outside the defunct hall a number of other burials were found of mainly elderly people, obviously belonging to the hardworking people at the bottom of society. Tom Christensen speculates that the site of the old hall was chosen as a “burial gift” to an important man in society. None of the minions buried in its periphery appear to have been the victims of a sacrificial killing. This, however, was the case of one of the other burials down by the river where a 35 – 55 old man was buried with his hands and feet tied and his head chopped off. He was laid to rest in a grave with a 25 – 40 year old man. The very large stone ship (80 – 100 metre long) nearby is dated to the 10th century.

The hall itself changed slightly. Now the architecture became reminiscent of the last great halls of the “Trelleborg-Type” and became characterised by new internal partitioning. It is during this period the importance of Jelling as a probable competing centre grew, while Roskilde with a very early church from around 1000 took over



*Reconstruction in the Museum of Lejre of a warrior from the 7th century using local finds from the graves at Lejre and the stray find from nearby Gevninge of an “eye” from a Sutton Hoo-like helmet. This demonstrates the cultural affinity between Sutton Hoo, Uppsala and Lejre woven together in the heroic poem, Beowulf.*



many heathen connotations still afoot? The story of Lejre, though, does not end there. Significant finds suggest that royal and later noble interests continued to set their mark upon the village. And Tom Christensen tells this story as well in his grand new book, which also presents the final neo-romantic revitalisation in the 19th century.

However, the main part consists of a very well-written and detailed presentation of the site and the finds, and witness to a very careful and wide-ranging effort to understand Lejre in its full historical and topographical context. This was obviously a regional if not a “royal” centre functioning continuously from AD 500 -1000 and with a special significance from AD 600 – 900. It may very well have been the real cradle of Denmark as opposed to Jelling, which looks more and more like a short-lived, though impressive “upstart”.

as the regional centre. Around 1050 it is obvious the practical importance of Lejre had faded. However – as is apparent from Thietmar – it also acquired a somewhat ill-reputed fame until the chroniclers in the 12th century began anew to retell the old heroic fairy tales. It is perhaps significant that no church was ever built on site. This was erected two km to the south in the village of Allerslev. Perhaps there were too

Well done! It definitely deserves a translation into English.

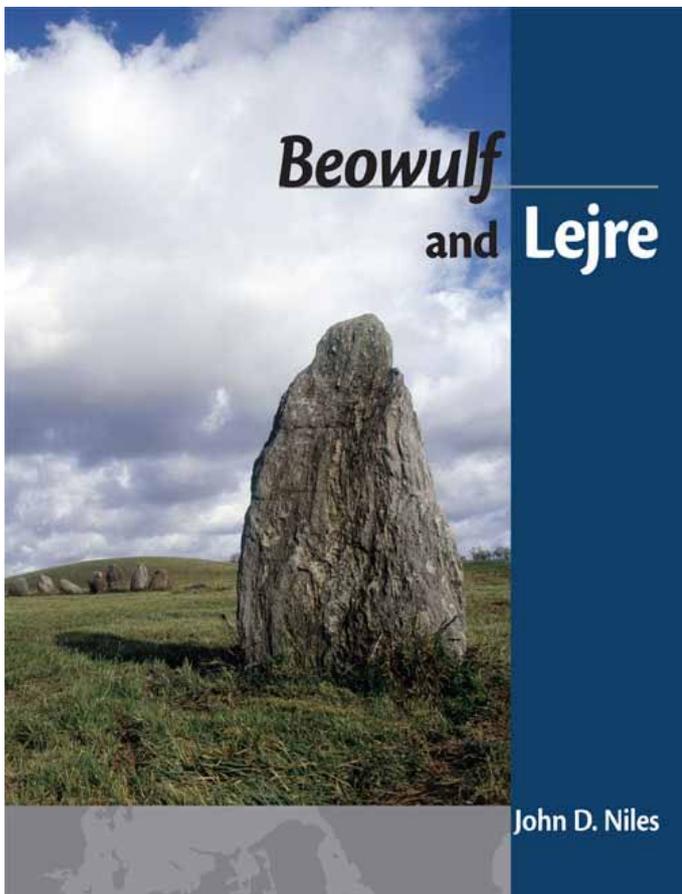
### **Lejre bag Myten**

By Tom Christensen

Roskilde Museum and Jysk Arkaeologisk Museum 2015

ISBN: 978-87-88415-96-4





## **Beowulf and Lejre**

Ed. by J. D. Niles

Brepols and MRTS at Arizona State University 2007

ISBN: 978-2-503-52734-5

On the basis of legendary analogues, specialists in the Old English poem *Beowulf* long inferred that the action of the main part of that poem was situated at the village of Gammel Lejre on the island of Zealand, Denmark. Archaeological excavations undertaken from 1986 to 1988 under the direction of Tom Christensen of Roskilde Museum yielded spectacular confirmation of that inference by uncovering the remains of the great halls at Lejre dating from ca. AD 680 to 990, one built on the site of the next. At that time, this discovery had little impact upon *Beowulf* scholarship, in part because the chief monograph reporting on the excavations was only available only in Danish. However, in 2004–05, a new round of excavations revealed that a still earlier hall had

once stood elsewhere at Lejre. The find of the this hall dated to the mid-sixth century and very close to the time when the action of *Beowulf* is set prompted the publication of a book in English presenting both the excavations and the different sources. The main purpose of this book was to bring these archaeological discoveries to the attention of a wider – English-speaking – public, with analysis of their significance.

Although somewhat dated because of even further archaeological excavations, it is still the best English presentation.

The book consists of five parts:

1. A translation into English of Tom Christensen's 1991 monograph *Lejre—Syn og Sagn* (*Lejre—Fact and Fable*), together with a new chapter by Christensen on the most recent excavations.
2. A presentation of other important archaeological studies relating to Lejre, including reports on the Iron Age cremation mound named *Grydehøj*, which dates from ca. 630 to 660.
3. Essays by John D. Niles and Marijane Osborn evaluating the significance of these finds from the perspective of Old English scholarship, with attention to the complex legendary history of Lejre.
4. A presentation, in their original texts and in modern English translation, of the chief medieval Latin and Old Norse documents that mention Lejre as the seat of power of the early kings of Denmark.
5. Some impressions of Lejre made by antiquarians, travellers, poets, and artists who have known that place during the modern period and have described or evoked it in various ways.



## Odin from Lejre? Or Freya? Or a Völva?

Major excavations during 2008 - 09 in Lejre, the old Royal stronghold in Eastern Denmark, yielded evidence of one of the largest mead-halls ever excavated.

Another intriguing find was a small silver statuette with niello inlay, no more than 1.72 cm x 19.8 cm x 12.4 cm. Based on the style the figurine has been dated to c. AD 900. According to the official understanding, the figurine shows the god Odin, sitting on his throne, Lidskjálv. On each side

of Odin from Lejre are two birds, perhaps the ravens, Hugin and Munin, and behind him are his wolves, Geri and Freki. Around his neck – and below a moustache – is presumably the goldring, Draupner, which spawns 8 new goldrings every 9th night. As behoves Odin he is shown with a missing or at least roving eye. As the myth goes he had to give Mimer an eye in exchange for the chance of drinking himself to unlimited wisdom in the well of Mimer.

## Female

However, due to some odd details this identification of the small figurine as Odin has been contested. Foremost the details of “his” dress – what might be understood not as a helmet but as easily as a hairnet, the long garment covering the feet, the cape rather than the mantel or cloak, the pearls around the neck and finally what perhaps is an apron – are believed by the archaeologist Ulla Mannering to signal female gender. However, Tom Christensen, who has identified the figurine as Odin, points to the fact that European iconography in the 10th century presented kings in long robes and seated on thrones. He has floated the interpretation that the figure might even be a syncretistic presentation of a Christian emperor - God’s representative on earth, dressed up as Odin.



*A Viking period silver amulet of the Norse goddess Freyja found in Aska in Hagebyhöga parish, Aska hundred, Vadstena municipality, Östergötland, Sweden. Photo: SHM*

## Transgender

However, many of the female elements may also be found on a small pregnant figurine from Aska, which decidedly is female, but also seems to sport “wandering” or maybe even “roving” eyes.

This prompted Elisabeth Arwill-Nordbladh to a detailed study of other figurines from the same time and milieu. She has concluded that the archaeological material shows that the ocular theme was part of various performative practices connected with prophesying and “future” gazing and not just a feature clinging to the myths about Odin.

She concludes that the Vikings seem to have moved in a world where ambiguous gender paired with impaired sight might play a part in the negotiations of “body-normative practices”. In her own words

“This corporal exceptionality in relation to (today’s) notions of body-normativity may imply that the Viking Age abled body sometimes was extended to include reduced visual capacity. The processing of both gender-normativity and body-normativity in one and the same precious item, may imply that the high-ranked setting of Lejre included performative practices that were negotiating both hetero-normative and body-normative hegemonic orders.” A less “postmodern wording” may formulate it a bit differently. As old age approaches in a Viking setting, ambiguous “clothing” in the form of blankets and visual impairment caused by cataract may not be considered signs of actual impairment. Old people - even old chieftains, who could no longer swing a sword - might still be of some “prophetic” value. Further: It is evident from the Nordic Mythological writ-

ings from a later age that Odin was considered a shapeshifter, well-versed in shifting from male to female to animal.

## Völva

Recently another attempt to understand the enigmatic figurine was floated by Bettina Sommer and Morten Warmind. They have proposed that it may instead represent a pre-Christian prophetess, a völva and that the figurine – which is hollow – might originally have been fitted to the top of a staff of one of these Viking sorceresses.

First off all, they note that there is no scriptural evidence, which points to an identification of the seat of Odin – Lidskjálv – as a throne per se. Rather, it might be understood as another name for Valhalla and not a chair or throne set apart. Rather, Odin would have been seated at a bench in the hall marked out by the ornamental posts, the ondvegissúlur. Secondly the arguments concerning the female character of the dress and the inconclusive understanding of the ring around the mouth as a moustache leads in another direction.



*Amulet of silver formed as a cubic chair found in the presumed grave of a Völva at Fyrkat. © National Museum of Copenhagen*

Perhaps, posits the authors, it is significant what we know Völvas explicitly were the ones sitting on thrones – set apart – when performing their sorceries and ceremonies. Thus in the Edda poem, the Völuspá, the sorceress explains how she met with Odin “sitting out alone”; here he came to look her in the eyes. (Ein sat hon úti, þá er inn aldni kom, yggjungur ása, ok í augu leit; v. 28)

*Staves from Swedish Völva Graves © National Museum in Copenhagen*





*Freya from Tissø. Notice her apron, which might in fact be a bag worn on top of her dress and filled with her magical "stuff" © National Museum of Denmark*

Later folklore describes how sorceresses were known to position themselves outside at crossroads – presumably on chairs or thrones; or alternatively, they seated themselves high up on scaffolds as it is described in Eiriks Saga Rauda how “The women formed a ring round about, and Thorbjorg ascended the scaffold and the seat prepared for her enchantments. Then sang Gudrid the weird-song in so beautiful and excellent a manner, that to no one there did it seem that he had ever before heard the song in voice so beautiful as now.”

It is tempting to understand the figurine as depicting a drugged Völva, who is “sitting out” and waiting with her rowing eyes for Odin to meet up with her and tell her and her audience the future. It is also tempting to understand the tiny figurine – which is meant to be seen both from the front and the back – as an embellishment, which might have been placed at the top of the ritual staffs, which we know Völvas carried around and which have been found in a number of old women’s graves.

## SOURCES

### **A Silver Figurine from Lejre**

By Tom Christensen

In: Danish Journal of Archaeology (2013) vol 2, no 1, pp.65 -78

### **Man or Woman? – perception of gender through costume**

By Ulla Mannering

In: Danish Journal of Archaeology (2013) vol 2, no 1, pp 79 – 86

### **Negotiating normativities – ‘Odin from Lejre’ as challenger of hegemonic orders**

By Elisabeth Arwill-Nordbladh

Danish Journal of Archaeology: Published online: 28 May 2013

DOI:10.1080/21662282.2013.791131

### **Óðinn from Lejre — or?**

Bettina Sommer and Morten Warmind

In: Nvmen (2015) Vol 62, pp.627 – 638

## SEE MORE:

**A video with a 360° presentation of the figurine may be seen at Roskilde Museum, where it is exhibited.**



*Cup from the hoard from Lejre with Freya. Photo: Natmus/John Lee*

## The Hoard from Lejre

The Viking hoard from Lejre from the end of the 10th century consists of spectacular items of an extraordinary quality

In 1850 an old peasant was clearing some shrubs on the hills behind the village of Gl. Lejre, when he discovered a hoard of silver cups and other valuables. He took them home and had them washed by his wife. As he was unsure of the value of the metal, he cut pieces out of one of the small bowls. Later he brought the hoard to a goldsmith in the city of nearby Roskilde. He, however, immediately called the police and the couple were arrested for breaking the ancient law concerning “Danefæ” according to which valuables found in the earth belonged to the King. The couple were afterwards sentenced to a short stint in the local prison and to pay a fine of 5 sovereigns. However, according to law they were also entitled to be refunded the metal value

of the find, 34 sovereigns and 64 pennies (‘Rigsdaler’ and ‘skilling’).

The viking hoard was soon forgotten in the vast stores of the National Museum in Copenhagen. However, renewed exploration of the artefacts in the hoard by Thomas Christensen, leading archaeologist in Lejre, has yielded new information.

It appears that many of the artefacts are in fact rather spectacular. Such is the case of the largest of the bowls, which stems from an Anglo/Irish context and was fitted to hang. Obviously it was originally a liturgical vessel. It can be dated to the 8<sup>th</sup> century. The small solid cup of silver is also remarkable. Decorated with four winged

female creatures in niello it is a remarkable piece of Scandinavian extraction. It is speculated that the winged figures represents Freya. Another find is the fragments of yet another cup, decorated in Mammen style. This dates the hoard to the same time as the newly found viking hoard from Ll. Karleby, the late 10th century. The peculiar silver plate may have functioned as a cover for one of the cups. To the hoard also belongs a group of very beautiful pearls made of glass, semi-precious rock and amber. Finally a whetting stone is peculiar. It probably stems from Sweden.

The hoard serves as an illustration of the remarkable milieu, which continued to set its mark on life in and around Lejre until the end of the halls around AD 1000.

## SOURCE:

### **Lejreskatten**

Af Tom Christensen

In: Danefæ. Skatte fra den danske muld.  
København 2010

*The Hoard from Lejre © National Museum in Copenhagen /John Lee*





*The Hoard from Ll. Karleby © ROMU*

## The Hoard from Ll. Karleby near Lejre

The hoard from Ll. Karleby found in 2015 about 10 km from the royal centre in Lejre sheds important light on the life of Vikings in the 10th century

Sometime in August 2015, an amateur archaeologist, Søren Bagge, found a couple of Arabic coins and later a small silver cup near Karleby, 10 km from Lejre. As it was weekend, he did the proper thing and reburied the cup. On Monday he then contacted the local Museum in Roskilde. Later that day the archaeologists encountered multiple artefacts and removed the entire block of black earth in order to CT-scan the lot and excavate it under laboratory conditions.

The excavation revealed an exceptional treasure consisting of 392 pieces – 53 gilt bronze and silver pendants, more than 300 beads made of glass, amber, rock crystal and silver, 18 Arabic and Western European coins, a braided silver chain, a bracelet or arm ring with five smaller rings attached, two silver cups and a large thistle brooch. The different pieces were obviously of different national extraction – France, Eastern Europe and Ireland or Scotland. A preliminary study of the treasure has dat-

ed it to the second half of the 10th century. It thus complements the story of life in and around Lejre in the 10th century, the time of the last great hall.

One of the more elaborate finds was a penannular thistle brooch, which measures 25 cm. Such a brooch actually helped to gain Scotland its national flower. According to a legend a Viking marauder happened to step on such a pin during a nightly raid. His yelp raised the Scottish troops who succeeded in repulsing the attack. Whether the brooch is of Scottish or Irish extraction remains to be decided.

Another remarkable find was the trefoil strap-mount with acanthus decoration. The French used such trefoils as fittings on sword straps. However, later it became a coveted motif used for brooches by the Vikings.

Seven hollow beads were of either Scandinavian or Slavic origin. Some were probably manufactured in Poland or West Russia, while others were more home-grown.

This is also the case with the bracelet, which would have clinked merrily while worn on the arm of a woman, perhaps reminding her of Odin's Draupner, dripping rings every 9th night.

*Bracelet from Ll. Karleby Viking hoard © ROMU*



*Pendant with mask from Ll Karleby Viking hoard © ROMU*

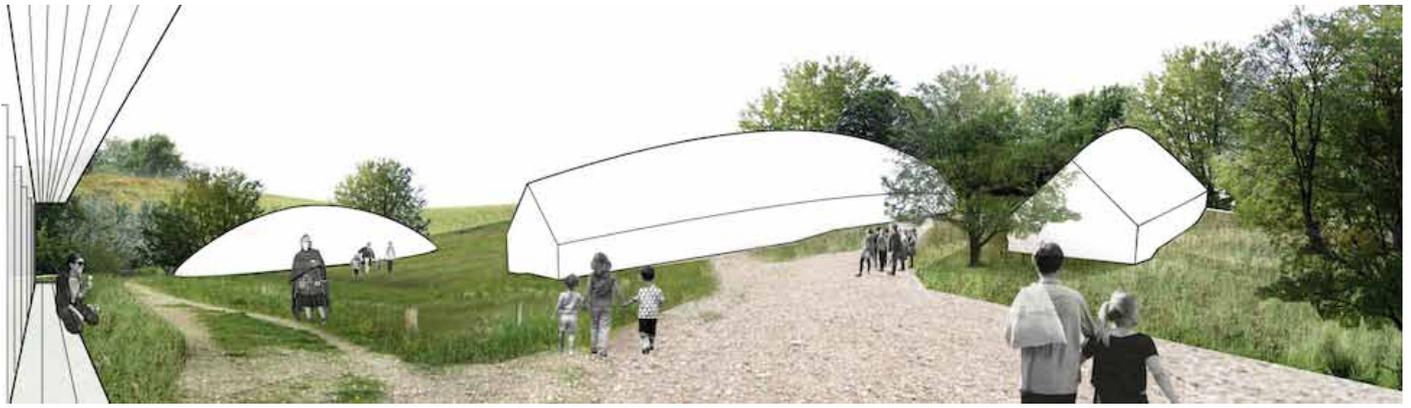
Finally the silver cups are remarkable pieces representative of the double sets known from other hoards. It is believed such sets of cups were used to honour guests; the larger and more decorated would have been offered to the guest, while the host would drink from the lesser and non-decorated cup.

## SOURCE:

**ROMU Årsberetning 2015**

*Silver cups from Ll. Karleby Viking hoard © ROMU*





## The Great Lejre Hall to be Reconstructed

“Land of Legends” is a historical park near Lejre, dedicated recreating ancient forms of life as well as experimental archaeology. Huge project aims to recreate the Great Lejre Hall, which was found in Gl. Lejre a few years back.

Currently the **Land of Legends** invite guests to time-travel to a number of periods in the Danish history – ranging from the Stone Age to 19th century life in the countryside. Although the main feature is the reconstructed Iron Age village Lethra, the site also offers a Viking market as one of its attractions.

For some time, however, the management has worked to renovate this “Viking Part”. This resulted a few years back in the reconstruction of the large stone ship known from the historical landscape at Gl. Lejre.

Last year, AP Møller and Chastine McKinney Møller Foundation donated the historical park 65 mill. Danish kroner (€ 8.7 mill) in order to begin the reconstruction of the so-called Great Hall from Lejre from the beginning of the 10th century. Although the full financing has not yet been found, the plan is to begin sourcing the oaks soon. Prices have gone up on this kind of timber as the Chinese are appar-

ently mad about using oak for the modern take of their traditional architecture. It is estimated that between 200 – 250 full grown oaks will have to be found in Denmark in order to get the main material for the reconstruction.

*Reconstruction of the interior of a hall in the Museum of Lejre © Medieval Histories*



Covering more than 600 m<sup>2</sup> the hall will tell the story of the life in the Viking Mead-Hall as it is known from archaeology, poetry and sagas.

However, the plan is also to find the money for recreating a walk-in burial mound with virtual content such as those, which litter the landscape around Gl. Lejre.

“We will not only show how the Vikings lived, how they dressed and what they ate, we will also show how they viewed the world,” tells Lars Holten, an archaeologist who is a member of the Land of Legends board. “The Vikings believed in guardian spirits in the form of animals as well as shape-shifting. A warrior could be a bear and a peasant could be a pig. Using smartphones and iPads, we are going to invite visitors to choose an identity and though

this experience the social environment of their “specific animal” in the community,” he continues.

The plan is also to build a Viking House of slightly smaller proportions, which will be used to house school-camps visiting the region, which was recently given the status of a National Park - **The Land of the Scyldings**

Partly mimicking the landscape around Gl. Lejre, the reconstructed Viking hall will be posited with a view to the stone-ship across the central vale, which runs through the museum.

## SOURCE:

**Historisk vikingehal bliver genskabt i Lejre**







*View of Roskilde with Viking Boat. In the background is the Viking Boat Museum. Source: Wikipedia*

## From Lejre to Roskilde

Around AD 1000 the royal seat in Lejre lost its political power to the Jelling Dynasty, which founded a new royal centre there. Later this grew to be the city of Roskilde.

Looking at a map and pinpointing the localities, which have been archaeologically connected with the royal seat in Lejre, it is easy to see that its sphere of influence reached to the northwest. Rowing down the stream from Lejre the king and his men would pass Gevninge, where the tantalising ‘eye’ from a 7th century helmet and several other high status objects represent stray finds witnessing to the village as an important settlement. At this point the river was obviously navigable leading out to Lejre Vig. From here there is only a short boat-trip to the other shore near Lyndby, where a road would pass on to Ll. Karleby (the spot where the latest hoard

was found) and further on to Vestervang south of Kirke Hyllinge. Here archaeologists have excavated a late Iron Age settlement, also with very rich stray finds. It has been speculated that the existence of a “Karleby” on the route meant a place where the “karle” or “ceorls” belonging to the king’s personal contingent of warriors had their farms.

Around AD 980 – 1000, however, a whole new settlement grew up on the other side of the Firth of Roskilde at a rather curious place. High up on a plateau app. 50 m above sea level, it may have seemed an ideal location. However, Roskilde means

the “Spring of Ro” (Ro being later believed to be a mythological king) signalling that the whole place is in fact inundated with a number of very active springs, which may have led to a number of water-mills, but also created obstacles for secure foundations for the churches and royal estate, which seems to have constituted the first buildings. Built on a moraine sheet consisting of rigid, calcareous clay and criss-crossed with 11 springs, marshy fens and smaller ponds meant a prohibiting high ground-water table. Occasionally this would be undermined by muddy holes.

However, as with Lejre Vig, the new location was easily defensible as the Firth of Roskilde is only navigable by people with precise knowledge of the shallow waters and narrow channels leading through. Later (around AD 1050) these natural defences were even amplified by the sinking of the wrecks up by Skuldelev at ‘Peberrenden’, a narrow channel with strong currents. These wrecks constitute the core of the **Viking Ship Museum in Roskilde** and a must-see for anyone visiting the region.

Presumably, this led to the location of the new settlement designed to dominate a region, which had hitherto been ruled from Lejre. Here at Roskilde, a new royal seat grew up, mentioned for the first time in AD 1022 in a charter documenting an exchange of land between Cambridge and Ely. It was later reported by Adam of Bremen (AD 1073 - 1076) that Roskilde had been founded by Harold Bluetooth around AD 980 and that his remains after his death at Jumla were brought here to be buried in his own church. Although most historians believe this to be a myth, the fact remains that the town did possess a number of very early churches, probably built of wood and that the charter from 1022 mentions a “Gerbrand from Roskilde



*Maglekilde in Roskilde. Source: Wikipedia*

Diocese among the people of the Danes”. One of these churches was rebuilt in the 11th century as the first cathedral, later superseded by the present building. However, up above the harbour the church at St. Jørgensbjerg stills stands, built around c. 1080 in local travertine limestone. It is curious that the stone masons recreated the “wooden” corner posts in stone.

This church was originally dedicated to St. Clemens and must have been used by the seafarers and merchants, who were now busy turning Roskilde into a proper city with all-in-all fourteen churches serving the city and the surrounding countryside.

In connection with this it is perhaps pertinent to mention that Lejre never acquired a church of its own, while the new site at Roskilde very early on was known to flaunt the new national religion, Christianity. (It is around the same time Thietmar of Merseburg told his horror-stories about human sacrificing, see p. 6).



*Sct. Jørgensbjerg church in Roskilde. Notice the stone posts mimicking those from the old wooden churches © Medieval Histories*

## Liquid Landscape

Nevertheless, it has been suggested that the location of Roskilde was not only chosen because it represented virgin land, which could be defended easily. Perhaps the many streams and springs also signified that the site might even have functioned as a sacred landscape, an alternative to Lejre. This, however, has not so-far been documented archaeologically through for instance finds of sacrificed

valuables in the streams. On the other hand, it is apparent that the site chosen for the royal estate and its new church was not located at the top of the moraine plateau. Rather, it was located where the wet and trickling landscape slopes steeply down towards the sea, thus dominating the horizon when seen from below. This definitely mimicked the location of the halls at Lejre, at Uppsala and at Kaupang.

It still mattered to be seen from afar – in Lejre around AD 600 and in Roskilde AD 1000. Later, merchants and craftsmen began to turn the new place into a city by filling up and redirecting all the bubbling springs. But that is quite another story.

## SOURCE:

**Vestervang at Kirke Hyllinge, Zealand: a late Iron Age settlement with rich stray finds.**

By Ole Thirup Kastholm  
In. Danish Journal of Archaeology (2012)  
vol 1, no 2, pp. 142 -164

**Roskilde – en bygrundlæggelse i et vanskeligt terræn.**

By Jens Ulriksen, Cille Krause and Niels H. Jensen  
Kuml 2014, pp. 145 - 185

*Roskilde from 1820 by Ole Jørgen Rawert, 1820. The Cathedral is in the background to the left with a clear view of the sloping hill. To the right is the church at St. Jørgensbjerg © Royal Library*



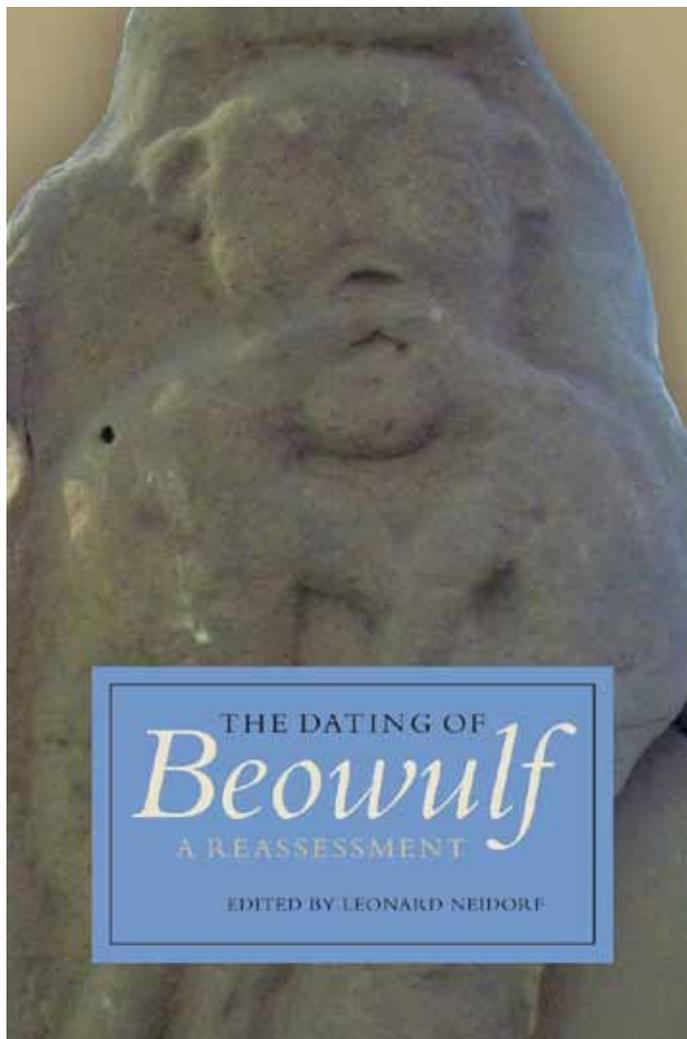
# WÆT PE GARD

Na in gearum. þeod cuninga  
 þrym se frumon huda æþelungas elles  
 fre medon. of seýld sceþing sceþe  
 þreatum monegū mægþum meodo secl  
 of teah <sup>lure</sup> esode eorl syddan aqest þe  
 fea sceapt funden he þæs þroffe seba  
 weox under wolenum weorð myndum þah  
 oð þ him æghwyle þara ymb sitten drea  
 ofen hron. þade hyran scolde sombar  
 sylðan þæs god cuning. ðam æftera þas  
 æfter cenned seong in gearum þone god  
 sende folce to þroffe fýren ðearfe on  
 gear þhe ær þurzon aldor. a se lange  
 hwile him þæs lif þra puldnes. þealder  
 þorold aþe for gear. þearful þæs þrenne  
 blæd wite sprang seýlde. a se sece  
 landum in. Spa secl. a se god  
 se þrecean þromum feorþum on þeod

Beowulf Unlocked?

# Dating of Beowulf

Evidence mounts that Beowulf was in all likelihood written in the end of the 7th or beginning of the 8th century, the Time of Bede



## **The Dating of Beowulf. A Reassessment.**

Ed by Leonard Neidorf.  
Boydell and Brewer 2014  
ISBN: 9781843843870

In 1815 the poem, Beowulf, was first published. Since then “few topics in Anglo-Saxon studies have generated as much speculation and scholarship as the dating of Beowulf”, writes Leonard Neidorf in his recently edited volume on the “Dating of Beowulf”.

Contrary to what might be expected, though, this book is not about the prehistory of this debate. Although we get an overview of the unfolding of this controversies in the 19th and 20th century, we soon grasp that this new book from 2014 is primarily intended to be part in the scholarly debate, which has waxed and waned since 1981, when a conference took place in Toronto, which later came to be known as “The Scandal in Toronto”.

At this conference a wide variety of dates for the composition of the poem of Beowulf ranging from the end of the 7th century and well into the 11th were put forward. Whether by evil intent or not, the result was a profound tectonic shift in the understanding of the poem, which through these machinations was handed over to a long series of literary critics of all ilks and genders. Now the time had come to explore the poetic qualities of the poem without having to consider its “Sitz im Leben”, its cultural context or even worse, come to grips with the complicated evidence presented by the linguistic, philological, phonological, palaeographical or metrical experts, who had for a long time plodded ahead trying to understand this enigmatic and beautiful poem in its cultural and historical context. Instead the time had arrived for New Critics to “own the field”. As no one could seemingly present any solid proof for a particular date, but rather “a cautious and necessary incertitude” it became a free-for-all to study the way in which the poem had been received

at particular times during the last 1000 years or more. No longer was there “a text in this class”, only shifting audiences. The “effete, latte-drinking, Volvo-driving, Toronto Crowd” got their field day (as characterised by Roberta Frank).

Luckily, though, the careful plodders – “The Hush Puppies” as she calls them – continued to rake the earth, studying the diminutive details of such boring elements as etymological lengths, Kaluza’s Law, the confusion and faulty transliteration of letter pairs like *d* and *ð* by the scribes and a number of other interesting features. This backlash was led by R. D. Fulk, who slowly gathered steam from 1989 and onwards. In 1992, this resulted in his seminal publication on *History of the Old English Meter*. Finally, last year, Leonard Neidorf presented a volume with the title: *The dating of Beowulf: A Reassessment*, which offers a number of very detailed studies presenting overwhelming indices for the date proposed by Fulk based on his linguistic studies. Although not a date-frame, which can ever be finally proven, the different studies in this collection all indicate a reasonable window for the composition of *Beowulf* from ca. 685 – 750 and probably located in Mercia.

Reading the book, it soon becomes apparent that the careful trudging through all the mud left behind by the literary critics have yielded an impressive, neigh overwhelming, set of arguments, which does not leave much room for post-modern wiggling. To this should be added the nice, understated, yet precise way in which the knife has been wrought. In the conclusion by Allen J. Frantzen, we read, “that sooner or later, those who want to argue from external evidence, will have to deal with linguistic, metrical, semantic, onomastic, and palaeographical evidence”. And further:



*Beowulf*, fol 104 v. Cotton MS Vitellius A XV © British Library

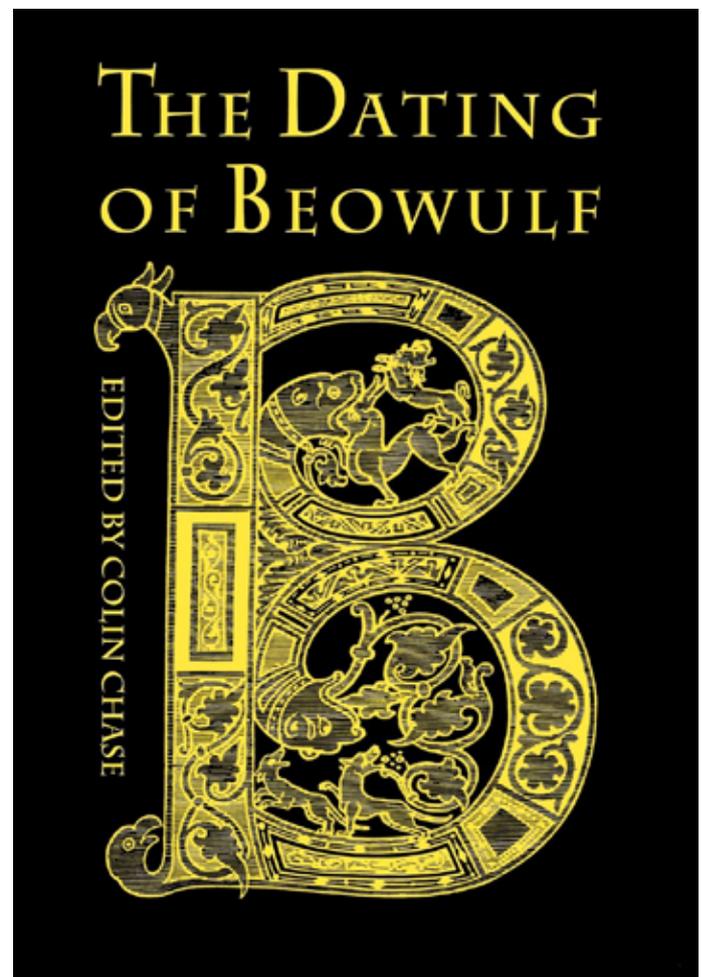
“The literary knowledge emerging from this work will help us see the Anglo-Saxon world anew, a project all *Beowulf* scholars [should] endorse.”

This is a magnum opus, which liberates the text for all the “others” – the cultural historians, the archaeologists, the art-historians etc. It suddenly becomes unquestionable to quarry this wonderful mine once more, when trying to understand the world, the poet lived in.

*Karen Schousboe*

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- Beowulf and Language History by R.D. Fulk (pp. 19-36)
- Germanic Legend, Scribal Errors, and Cultural Change (pp. 37-57) by Leonard Neidorf
- Names in Beowulf and Anglo-Saxon England (pp. 58-78) by Tom Shippey
- The Limits of Conservative Composition in Old English Poetry (pp. 79-96) by Megan E. Hartman
- The Date of Composition of Beowulf and the Evidence of Metrical Evolution (pp. 97-111) by Thomas A. Bredehoft
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- “Give the People What They Want”: Historiography and Rhetorical History of the Dating of Beowulf Controversy (pp. 157-177) by Michael D.C. Drout, Emily Bowman and Phoebe Boyd
- A Note on the Other Heorot (pp. 178-190) by Joseph Harris
- Beowulf and Conversion History (pp. 191-201) by Thomas D. Hill
- Material Monsters and Semantic Shifts (pp. 202-218) Rafael J. Pascual
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- Afterword: Beowulf and Everything Else (pp. 235-248) by Allen J. Frantz



The Conference Papers from 1981 were published in:  
*The Dating of Beowulf*  
Ed by Colin Chase.  
University of Toronto Press 1981.

In 2007 Roberta Frank wrote a witty essay on the Scandal in Toronto: The dating of Beowulf a Quarter of a Century on.  
In: *Speculum* 82 (2007), pp. 843-64

*Beowulf*, fol 102 v. Cotton MS Vitellius A XV © British Library





## Beowulf – soon to be – Unlocked

Soon, Michael Drout and his team publish their long-awaited book on the lexomic analysis of Beowulf. The blurb promises us "The implications of this investigation for the dating, structure, and cultural context of Beowulf will overturn the current scholarly consensus"

Beowulf is one of those texts, which have nearly been thrashed to death by competing scholars out for just about any imaginable bar-fight. Soon, the latest episode is about to unfold, when Michael Drout and his team publishes their long-awaited book on their lexomic analysis of Beowulf. A lexomic analysis is basically a structural analysis of the bundling of specific words (or rather lexemes, the basic units of meaning, which can be found in any text.

The idea behind such analyses is that any author will unwittingly make his or her stamp on a text; or, alternatively, reveal if he or she has compiled the text from other sources. (Basically this is also the technique used to expose students who try to cheat be "reusing texts".)

For some years now Michael Drout – also known as the blogger responsible for wortalk and slugspeak - has taken part in running the Lexomics Research Group at Wheaton College. So far, this has yielded a number of exciting results concerning a number of Anglo-Saxon and other texts. However, it is the results of their lexomic study of Beowulf, which has been awaited eagerly by half of academia (consisting of hard-core philologists). The rest, the liter-

ary scholars, are probably busy manning the barricades. The reason is that come end of May, the team will publish their book on the results. The blurb tells us that this book, “the most original and groundbreaking work on Beowulf in several decades...uses lexomic” methods that blend computer-assisted statistical analysis with traditional approaches to reveal new and surprising information about the construction and sources of the greatest surviving Old English poem. Techniques of cluster analysis identify patterns of vocabulary distribution that indicate robust similarities and differences among segments of the poem. The correlation of these patterns with knowledge gained from source-study, philological analysis, and neglected previous scholarship sheds new light on the material of which Beowulf was made and the way it was composed. The implications of this investigation for the dating, structure, and cultural context of Beowulf will overturn the current scholarly consensus and significantly improve our understanding of the poem, its nature, and origins”.

It is very apparent that Drout and his people have been able to keep at least some of their conclusions under wraps. Extensive google-search has not satisfied us here at Medieval Histories as to what these im-

*Unlocking the secrets of Beowulf in class*



plications exactly are. However, rumours have circulated, since Drout & Co has been obliged to give papers and teach, which means that we seem to know that at least a year ago, Drout believed that a fair hypothesis was that Beowulf was the work of a highly talented poet/compiler who found his material in a series of different textual compilations, which he then began to weave together into a united whole; much like Tolkien – due to his lifelong immersion in the text - came to believe the poem had come about.

As to the date: it is perhaps pertinent that Drout together with Emily Bowman and Phoebe Boyd wrote an enlightened defence for the new 21st century quest for an early dating of Beowulf in the recent book edited by Leonard Neidorf on Dating Beowulf (Boydell and Brewer 2014). May we surmise that at least some of the conclusions in the new book will reflect this?

Foremost, the upcoming book about to be published (may 26th, 2016) will hopefully enlighten us about the hard-core linguistic information, which modern scientific and computerised approaches can yield.

## SOURCE

### **Beowulf Unlocked. New Evidence from Lexomic Analysis**

By M.D.C. Drout, Y. Kisor, L. Smith, A. Dennett, and N. Piirainen  
eBook ISBN 978-3-319-30628-5  
ISBN 978-3-319-30627-8

## LEARN MORE:

**Michael Drout: Lexomic Analysis of Beowulf and J.R.R. Tolkien's Scholarship on the Poem: A Confluence**

# Call for Papers and Book Proposals...





*The Engagement of Virgin, by Michael Pacher, AD 1495-1498. Österreichische Galerie, Vienna: Public Domain*

## Gendering the Late Medieval and Early Modern World

Amsterdam University Press is pleased to announce a new scholarly book series, **Gendering the Late Medieval and Early Modern World**. The General Editors of this series are Victoria Burke, University of Ottawa; James Daybell, Plymouth University; Svante Norrhem, Lund University; and Merry Wiesner-Hanks, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee.

This series provides a forum for studies that investigate the themes of women and gender in the late medieval and early modern world. The editors invite proposals for book-length studies of an interdisciplinary nature, including but not exclusively, from the fields of history, literature, art and architectural history, and visual and material culture. Consideration will be given to both monographs and collections of essays. Chronologically, we welcome studies that look at the period between 1400 and

1700, with a focus on Britain, Europe and Global transnational histories. We invite proposals including, but not limited to, the following broad themes: methodologies, theories and meanings of gender; gender, power and political culture; monarchs, courts and power; construction of femininity and masculinities; gift-giving, diplomacy and the politics of exchange; gender and the politics of early modern archives and architectural spaces (court, salons, household); consumption and material culture; objects and gendered power; women's writing; gendered patronage and power; gendered activities, behaviours, rituals and fashions.

To submit a proposal, visit [www.arc-humanities.org](http://www.arc-humanities.org) or contact Erika Gaffney, Senior Acquisitions Editor, at [Erika.Gaffney@arc-humanities.org](mailto:Erika.Gaffney@arc-humanities.org).

**The Series Flyer**



*Charles le Téméraire rend visite à David Aubert dans son scriptorium*  
 From: David Aubert, *Histoire de Charles Martel* with illuminations by Loyset Liédet  
 Bruxelles, KBR, ms. 8, f. 7 © Bibliothèque royale de Belgique

## Le livre et l'écrit

In the Middle Ages, the manuscript book brought together a number of "artisans": parchment-makers, scribes, painters and illuminators, binders, booksellers, etc. Each of these required unique tools. A double issue of the journal, **Pecia**, will be published in 2017 with the title: *Le livre et l'écrit* (volumes 19 and 20). Articles relating to these themes are sought

*Pecia* is an international journal devoted to sources, mainly manuscripts, for the study

of history of Western Medieval Society. **Pecia is published by Brepols**

### Proposals:

Jean-Luc Deuffic  
 pecia29@orange.fr

Please send short abstracts before the 30th April 2016



**Plaque with the Journey to Emmaus and Noli Me Tangere, ca. AD 1115-20. León, Spain**

**Accession Number: 17.190.47**

**© Met Museum**



Plaque with Scenes of the “Road to Emmaus”, ca. 850–900, Northern France. This plaque probably once served as the side panel of a small, luxuriously crafted box made for a church. © Metropolitan Museum

## Monastic Journeys from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages

### Monastic Journeys from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages. Religious Aspirations, Political Goals and Economic Concerns

Vienna

17.11.2016 – 19.11.2016

Monastic Journeys from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages is the third conference organised by the programme: **Monks Around the Mediterranean: Contacts, Exchanges and Influences in East and West from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages (4th-15th c.)**

### Call for papers

The conference on “Monastic Journeys from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages: Religious Aspirations, Political Goals and Economic Concerns” welcomes contributions on Eastern and Western monasticisms. It will focus on monks travelling over long distances, despite the monastic

rule of *stabilitas loci*.

Monastic journeys have several aspects, among them:

- Religion, for missionary monks, founders, pilgrims, crusaders;
- Representation, for ambassadors, petitioners, administrators of monasteries, congregations or orders;
- Economy, for monks seeking business, privileges and funding;
- Education, for monks considered as students, scholars, or those looking for a distant monastic experience;
- Constraint, for refugees, monks banned or summoned to a trial.

Monastic journeys reveal the broad social functions of the monks in late antique and medieval societies. They show in what ways monasticism was regularly used to meet political needs. One may also consider the sacred geography and the holy places of power linked by those move-

ments. Practical issues such as logistics, financing and distant accommodation may be addressed, as well as the role of monks in interreligious dialogue. The geographic frame is the wider Mediterranean and continental Europe. The period under consideration extends from the 4th to the 15th century.

Communications are expected to last 20 minutes. They will be presented preferably in English, but German and French are also accepted. The proceedings of the conference will be published.

## CONTACT:

Please send your title and a brief summary by 30 April 2016 to the following address: [programme-moines@ifao.egnet.net](mailto:programme-moines@ifao.egnet.net).

The results of the call will be announced by 15 May 2016.

A first conference on regional trips (“Monastic mobility and contacts at local and regional scales”) was held at the French School in Rome from 17 to 19 September 2014. A second conference on the monastic heritage of a Greek father was held in Rome in 3 November 3 2015 (“From Basil to the Basilians. The monastic offspring of a Greek father in East and West”).

## ORGANISING COMITTEE:

Olivier Delouis, CNRS, Paris [olivier.delouis@college-de-france.fr](mailto:olivier.delouis@college-de-france.fr)

Maria Mossakowska-Gaubert, IFAO, Cairo [mmossakowska@ifao.egnet.net](mailto:mmossakowska@ifao.egnet.net)

Annick Peters-Custot, University of Nantes [annick@peters-custot.fr](mailto:annick@peters-custot.fr)

Claudia Rapp, Universität Wien and Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften [claudia.rapp@univie.ac.at](mailto:claudia.rapp@univie.ac.at)

*Mosaic Map in Madaba, AD 542 - 570. Jordan. Source: Wikipedia*





Castelo de Vide, Portugal © Matt Trommer

## The Role of Small Towns in the Construction of Medieval Europe

### The role of small towns in the construction of Medieval Europe

Castelo de Vide

06.10.2016 – 08.10.2016

Deadline for CFP: 31.05.2016

Contact: [imcv2016@fcs.unl.pt](mailto:imcv2016@fcs.unl.pt)

The goal of this conference is to promote the study of small medieval towns by looking at the role they played while at the same time disregarding the large, but rarer cities that normally feature in medieval urban history. These small towns include, for example, coastal nuclei where trade passed by, or others located in the mountains, which functioned as centres for sub-regions. Another type is represented by the small towns located along roads and welcoming pilgrims on their way.

### Thematic panels:

castelo de vide cfp poster1 – urban hierarchies in the Middle Ages: the cores and

flows.

2 – Comparative Studies medieval towns: scales of analysis (the “region” in Europe).

3 – The materiality of medieval towns – archaeological perspective.

4 – virtualization medieval towns: the e-heritage preservation.

5 – The medieval towns in art and art in the medieval urban world.

6 – Echoes in the literature of medieval towns.

7 – Castelo de Vide in the Middle Ages, a frontier town – multidisciplinary approaches

The International Days of the Middle Ages are formed in a partnership between the Instituto de Estudos Medievais (EMI / FCSH / NOVA) and the town of Castelo de Vide, to unite the research center that articulates scientific research with the transfer of knowledge to society, and a City Hall, which has decided to sustainably invest in culture, heritage preservation and education.

Both partners want to make these meetings an annual event, a discussion forum on major themes and issues of the Middle Ages between experts from different scientific fields, particularly history, archeology, art history and literature.

The aim is to include the International Medieval Days of Castelo de Vide on the international agenda for regular meetings devoted to the Middle Ages.

## Background

Part of the background for the location of the conference at Castelo de Vide is the predicament of such towns in present-day Portugal, which suffer from depopulation. Hope is, the conference will help enhance the attractions and heritage potential of this charming city and the border region, in which it is located.

But it also reflects the multidisciplinary character of the IEM where both historians, archaeologists and literary scholars work together by developing medieval community studies.

**The Institute of Medieval Studies (IEM)** was founded in 2002 as an interdisciplinary scientific home for most medievalists in Lisbon.

## Rural Archaeology

Another important contribution is the ongoing archaeological research project focusing on early medieval rural settlements in the territory of Castelo de Vide, the PramCV. The general objective of PramCV is to reconstruct the way of life of peasant communities in the early medieval period. It's a four-year archaeological research project running between 2014 and 2017.

PramCV is a four-year project in archaeology approved by the **Directorate-General for Cultural Heritage (DGPC)**, the organism responsible for managing the cultural heritage in mainland Portugal.

## SOURCES:

**O papel das pequenas cidades na construção da Europa Medieval**

**Jornadas internacionais de idade média**





*The Book of Job. Patmos, late 8th or early 9th century. © Monastery of St. John the Theologian*

## SUMMER SCHOOL:

# Greek Palaeography and Byzantine Epigraphy

The Institute of Historical Research of the National Hellenic Research Foundation is pleased to announce the organization of its first Summer School on Greek Palaeography and Byzantine Epigraphy from July 4 to July 9, 2016 with the kind collaboration of the Monastery of Saint John the Theologian in Patmos.

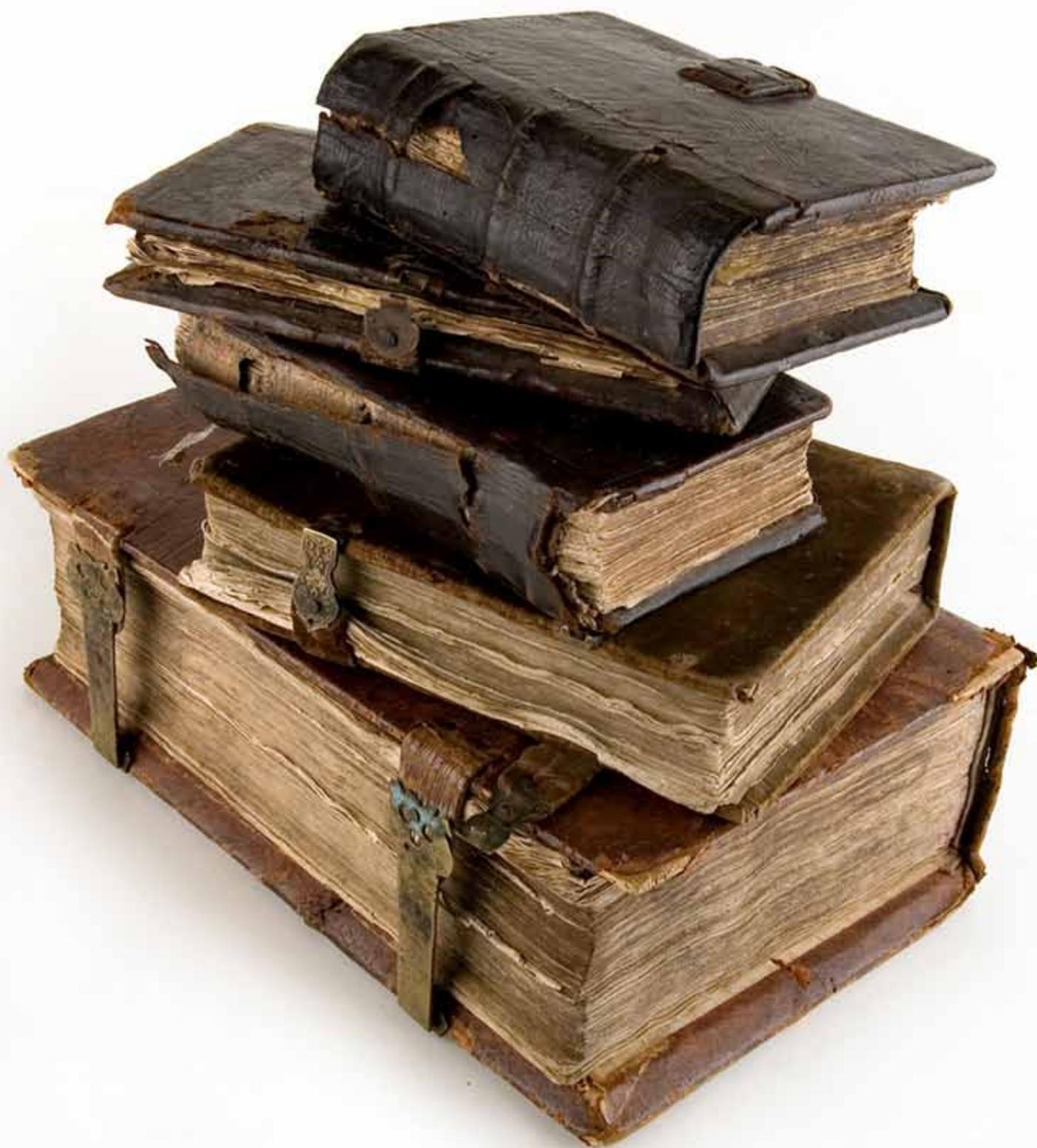
The one-week intensive Summer School is an introductory course to Greek Palaeography and Byzantine Epigraphy aiming to provide students with basic skills that will enable them to approach manuscripts and written inscriptions. A unique feature of this Summer School is that students will be given the opportunity to learn and practice in the Monastery of Saint John, which is now home to more than 1200

manuscripts and a large number of icons and monumental paintings with inscriptions dating from the 12th to the 16th century. The Monastery of Saint John the Theologian (also called Monastery of Saint John the Divine) is a Greek Orthodox monastery founded in 1088 in Chora on the island of Patmos. UNESCO has declared it a World Heritage site. It is named after St. John of Patmos.

The school is open to PhD candidates, postgraduate students and students in their final year of Classics, Philology, History, Theology and Byzantine & Medieval Studies.

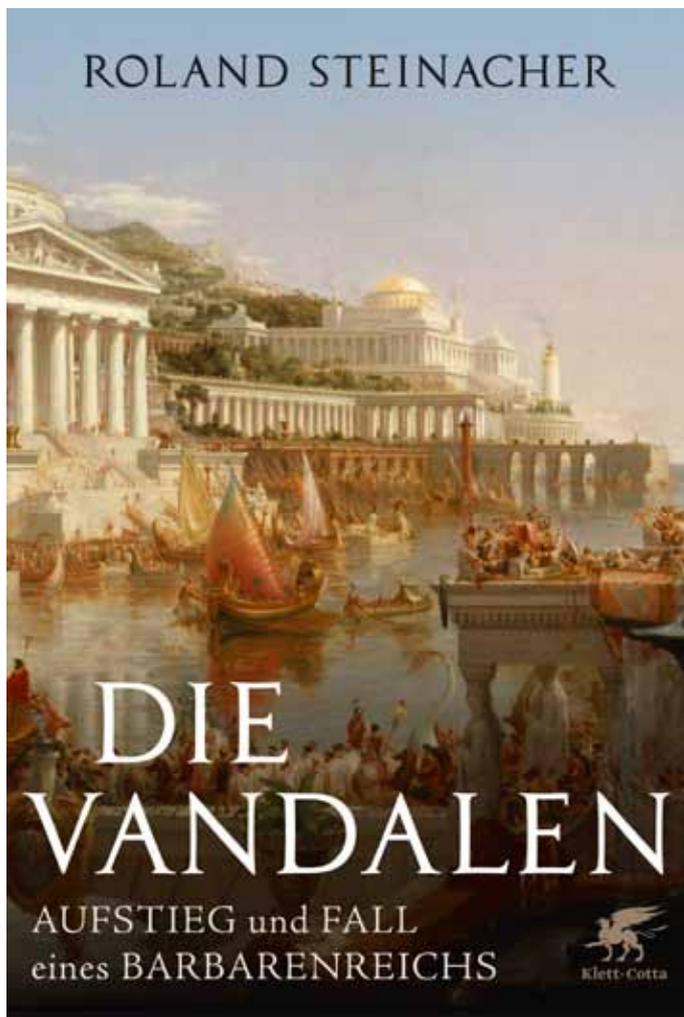
**Further information on the Summer School can be found on the website**

New Books...



NEW BOOK:

# The Vandals



## **Die Vandalen. Aufstieg und Fall eines Barbarenreichs**

By Roland Steinacher

Klett-Cotta Verlag

Language: German

ISBN: 978-3-608-94851-6

## **ABSTRACT:**

Die Vandalen. By Roland Steinacher Klett-Cotta Verlag 2016 The Vandals, The Suebs and the Alans famously crossed the river Rhine on New Years eve in AD 406. Since then, their names have stood for destruction, terror and barbaric rule. In 409, the Vandals moved further South across the

Pyrenees and into the Iberian Peninsula, where their main groups, the Hasdingi and the Silingi, settled in Galicia (northwest) and Baetica (south central). However, in 429

After the Visigoths invaded Iberia, the Vandals entered North Africa in 429 under the leadership of under king Genseric. By 439 they had established a kingdom which included the Roman province of Africa as well as Sicily, Corsica, Sardinia, Malta and the Balearic Islands. They fended off several Roman attempts to recapture the African province, and plundered the city of Rome in 455. This brutal act created the word "vandalism", still valid in our time. Their kingdom finally collapsed in the Vandalic War of 533-4, in which Justinian I managed to reconquer the province for the Eastern Roman Empire.

In this new history of the Vandals Roland Steinacher tells the story of this most famous group of Barbarians and offers a modern version - free of myths. Perhaps the Vandals were more than anything the victims of a bad press?

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

Roland Steinacher is a historian of Late Antiquity and a medievalist. He works at the "Institut für Mittelalterforschung der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften". He defended his Phd on the history of the Vandals in 2002 and later worked as junior scholar on a project, exploring the Historical Anthropology of the Vandals.