

FAREWELL SYMPOSIUM

In honour of
Prof. Dr.
Nico Roymans

**Between regionality and
connectivity. Understanding
regional dynamics in the
European Iron Age and
Roman period**

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam,
Faculty of Humanities in cooperation
with CLUE+ and ARCHON

**Date: Friday, 24
November 2023**

**Location: Main Building VU,
Room HG-14A33 (14th floor)**

Please register before November 18:
symposiumroymans@gmail.com

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RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR
CULTURE, COGNITION, HISTORY AND HERITAGE

VU 1535
VRIJE
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AMSTERDAM



Programme Symposium in honour of prof. dr. Nico Roymans

9:15 – 9:30	<i>Walk-in</i>
9:30 – 9:45	Ton Derks (VU Amsterdam), Word of welcome and introduction
9:45 – 10:15	Nico Roymans (VU Amsterdam), <i>Elite burials, interregional connectivity and societal change in the 5th century BC Lower Rhine-Meuse region</i>
10:15 – 10:45	Colin Haselgrove (Leicester University), <i>Coins, connectivities and coming together in Europe in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC.</i>
10:45 – 11:15	<i>Coffee</i>
11:15 – 11:45	Sabine Hornung (University of Saarland), <i>Titus Labienus' conquest of the Treveri and its archaeological implications – A change in perspective</i>
11:45 – 12:15	Manuel Fernandez-Götz (University of Edinburgh), <i>Regionality and Connectivity in the Roman Iron Age of Northern Britain</i>
12:15 – 13:15	<i>Lunch</i>
13:15 – 13:45	Maaïke Groot (Freie Universität Berlin), <i>A long-term perspective on animal husbandry in the Netherlands: chronological developments and regional differences</i>
13:45 – 14:15	Marion Brüggler (LVR Amt für Bodendenkmalpflege im Rheinland), <i>Settlement development from the Late Iron Age to the Early Middle Ages on the Lower Rhine (Germany)</i>
14:15 – 14:45	Lisette Kootker & Stijn Heeren (VU Amsterdam), <i>Unveiling Population Dynamics: An Archaeological and Quantitative Isotope Investigation of the Lower Rhine Borderscape from the Iron Age to the Early Medieval Period</i>
14:45 – 15:15	<i>Refreshments</i>

Following the symposium, you are invited to attend a Faculty ceremony including **prof. dr. Roymans's valedictory lecture** in the Aula on the first floor of the Main Building. The ceremony will start at 15:45 sharp.

Symposium in honour of prof. dr. Nico Roymans

Between regionality and connectivity. Understanding regional dynamics in the European Iron Age and Roman period

INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC OF THE PROGRAMME

European archaeology has seen a long and varied tradition of regional research. On the one hand a landscape-archaeological tradition has been developed focusing on the analysis of long-term trends in habitation, subsistence patterns, burial practices and transformations of the cultural landscape, in this way providing an original picture of the changing social organisation of groups in a specific region. However, this landscape-archaeological tradition generally pays limited attention to interregional connectivity and its implications for the understanding of regional developments in specific time periods.

On the other hand a tradition of regional studies in which interconnectivity with other regions is a key topic has emerged. Studies from this perspective are strongly based on the research of mobile material culture, exchange networks and human mobility, and focus on themes like the formation of the West-Hallstatt culture, the expansion of the La Tène culture, or the integration of regional groups in the expanding Roman Empire. Their central message is that regional social developments cannot be understood in isolation from the functioning of groups in supra-regional networks. Power networks may play a significant role, certainly in situations of conflict or integration of groups in new socio-political configurations. Different approaches have been employed over time, ranging from diffusionist models, core-periphery perspectives, or network theories. However, in this research the functioning of regional groups in the context of *longue-durée* trends in land use and habitation often remains underexplored.

Both traditions of regional studies are important and often complementary. In this symposium, we seek to explore the potential of a more balanced, integrated approach which focuses on the ways regionality and interregional connectivity are articulated. A number of regional case studies on the Iron Age and/or Roman period in western Europe have been selected as testing grounds. An integrated approach may generate more complex narratives, especially for periods of intense social change. The substantial increase in both the quantity and quality of archaeological data in many regions, the input of science-based research, as well as the inclusion of insights of the social and historical sciences, offer a challenging perspective for future regional research.

Abstracts

Nico Roymans (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam), *Elite burials, interregional connectivity and societal change in the 5th century BC Lower Rhine-Meuse region*

In 2018 an Early La Tène chariot burial was found at Heumen in the Dutch eastern river area. This newly discovered burial is not unique for the Low Countries, but is part of a broader cluster of Early La Tène conspicuous burials in an area indicated as the 'Lower Rhine-Meuse region'. The graves share several characteristics: the use of a cremation ritual and the deposition in the graves of bronze vessels, horse harnesses, weapons and in some cases the remains of two-wheeled vehicles. This group of burials can be considered the most northern off-shoot of an elite culture that has its roots in the Late Hallstatt and Early La Tène culture of more southern regions in France and the German Rhineland. This horizon of essentially 5th- century BC burials was analysed within the context of the project *Chariots on Fire* carried out by a team of Dutch and Belgian archaeologists.

I will start my presentation with a short overview of the basic archaeological evidence and then focus on the social interpretation of this group of burials. This social interpretation oscillates between the poles represented by 'connectivity and 'regionality'. From a European perspective this northern cluster of conspicuous burials offers ample opportunities to study patterns of connectivity with southern regions, above all the Aisne-Marne region and the Middle Rhine-Moselle area. For the broader European context of the patterns sketched for the Lower Rhine-Meuse region I will use network analysis and core-periphery models - be it in a 'soft' and flexible variant. Our study shows that Early La Tène elite networks went further north and were more intense than expected so far, but at the same time they were highly fragile, already breaking off towards the end of La Tène A.

But the appearance of this horizon of burials can only be understood within its proper regional context. The 5th century BC manifests itself as a highly dynamic period characterised by:

1. A break with the traditional urnfield mortuary ritual;
2. The abandonment of many urnfield cemeteries, possibly indicating a demographic regression;
3. The emergence of new cemeteries with flat graves;
4. The introduction in the Dutch river area of a practice of inhumation burials as a minority rite;
5. The introduction and rapid diffusion of 'Marnian ware' as a new pottery style.

The horizon of Early La Tène elite burials clearly represents only one element in the broader spectrum of social changes which manifest themselves in this phase. For understanding this complex regional dynamics we need a model that offers space

to interregional connectivity, demographic fluctuations, discontinuities in habitation, ecological problems and probably also small-scale immigration of southern groups, not only of elites but also of lower social groups.

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Colin Haselgrove (Leicester University), *Coins, connectivities and coming together in Europe in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC.*

Precious metal coins copying Greek models were struck from around 300 BC across much of Iron Age Europe, but only a minority of the coins put into circulation over the next 150 years entered the archaeological record, and then singly or as deposits at sacred sites. This makes it hard to evaluate the uses to which the earliest coins were put, or gauge the extent to which their adoption transformed La Tène societies, with many arguing that precious metal coins were struck largely for military purposes. Using case studies, this paper will reflect on the use of coins in long-distance social and economic interactions and explore how this relates to the emergence of La Tène craft-based agglomerations in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC, a period when minting coins also became increasingly linked to regional identity. In southern Britain, the import of coins through cross-Channel networks connecting leading individuals or groups promoted the further spread of the medium. In continental Europe, the peoples living to the north of the La Tène zone generally remained indifferent to the idea of coinage, which may reflect differences in social structure and/or ideology between them and their neighbours.

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Sabine Hornung (University of Saarland), *Titus Labienus' conquest of the Treveri and its archaeological implications – A change in perspective*

Titus Labienus' conquest of the Treveri in 53 and 51 BC are two episodes of the Gallic Wars that have long been known only from historical sources. Thanks to the discovery of a Caesarian fortress, we are now able to locate some of the events described only superficially in Caesar's *Commentarii de bello Gallico*. They took place near the modern town of Hermeskeil in the western Hunsrück, in the very heart of the Treveran territory and yet in a liminal landscape dominated by the impressive "Hunnening" in the early 1st century BC. Since we are informed on military conflicts between the Roman army and the Treveri in little detail by the proconsul's written account, it seems important to look at how these events reflect in the archaeological record beyond the Roman fortress itself. Despite intensive research there are as yet no indications of a battlefield in the area. The lecture will therefore address the question, if alternative markers for interactions between Romans and the native population can be identified. Is it possible to link the Roman military presence with native settlement developments? Which role did the Otzenhausen oppidum play in these conflicts? Could it even have served as a retreat for the Treveran forces? And can archaeological evidence possibly be derived from sites like for example Late Iron Age sanctuaries?

Yet another form of unavoidable interaction between Roman occupational forces and the native population has not been considered from an archaeological perspective: the problem of supplies and the provisioning of an army that would have temporarily multiplied the demand for food resources in the region. Since detailed information on the organization of Caesar's supply infrastructure can be derived from his *Commentarii*, we know that the oppida and other central places in Gaul played a key role. Bearing that in mind we need to ask, if it is possible to reconstruct Titus Labienus' supply lines by looking at neighbouring sites and re-evaluating archaeological findings from Treveran contexts. Is it possible to identify characteristic markers for a Roman military presence? Can we draw any political conclusions from this? And how did the massive drain in food resources caused by the army actually affect the native population?

By combining historical and archaeological research we are presented with the rare opportunity to study military interactions between Romans and Treverans and change perspective in order to consider the fate of the conquered. We can address important methodological issues with regard to the archaeology of conflict that may be helpful in understanding material remains from other periods and places.

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Manuel Fernández-Götz (University of Edinburgh), *Regionality and Connectivity in the Roman Iron Age of Northern Britain*

For several centuries, Scotland represented the northernmost frontier of the Roman Empire, witnessing episodes of war but also exchange and collaboration between indigenous societies and the Roman power. This paper will explore how communities in northern Britain were simultaneously part of various nested networks of interaction, from small-scale regional patterns and trajectories to Empire-wide phenomena. Three main categories of data will be discussed: indigenous settlement patterns, distribution of Roman objects north of Hadrian's Wall, and evidence for military campaigns. The paper will also explore how short-term events and decisions interplayed with long-term factors of a more structural nature.

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Maaïke Groot (Freie Universität Berlin), *A long-term perspective on animal husbandry in the Netherlands: chronological developments and regional differences*

The Iron Age in northwestern Europe was a dynamic time, with the formation of new cultures, exchange networks and mobility of people. The Roman period brought further political, social and economic change. This paper discusses how these developments are reflected in animal husbandry. I will compare different regions of the Netherlands, both within and outside the Roman border, and sketch developments over time. My paper will provide a state of the art and identify research lacunae. Besides traditional zooarchaeological analysis, newer scientific approaches can provide new insights into animal husbandry and mobility of livestock. Livestock mobility can be used as a proxy for human mobility or connectivity.

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Marion Brüggler (LVR Amt für Bodendenkmalpflege im Rheinland), *Settlement development from the Late Iron Age to the Early Middle Ages on the Lower Rhine (Germany)*

In contrast to the narrow zone with military installations close to the river, the rural areas in the northern part of the Lower Rhine have long been terra incognita. This was not due to archaeological remains being completely absent there nor to a lack of scholarly attention, but found its explanation in certain natural preconditions on the one hand, and less effective instruments for heritage management in the past, limiting insights to chance observations during construction works, on the other hand. Recently conducted systematic survey campaigns especially in the preliminary stages to gravel extraction, accompanied by test pit excavations as well as large-scale site excavations have greatly increased our understanding of settlement development in this region.

While in the past this region was considered less suitable for settlement than other areas with more fertile soils and therefore almost empty of habitation, an increasing number of settlements is now known. It is argued that the region benefitted already in the Roman era from the long-established channels of communication and trade that constituted the rivers Rhine and Meuse and that through these the region was well connected with areas to the Northwest and South.

We are only at the beginning of a better understanding of the settlement history in this region, especially in comparison to other regions with a longer and more intense research tradition. The presentation will give an overview of the state of research and bring it up for further discussion.

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Lisette Kootker & Stijn Heeren (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam), *Unveiling Population Dynamics: An Archaeological and Quantitative Isotope Investigation of the Lower Rhine Borderscape from the Iron Age to the Early Medieval Period*

In 'traditional' archaeological studies, which are based on (dis)continuities in settlement phases, demographic fluctuations such as population, depopulation, and repopulation have been documented across various regions within the Low Countries. Until recently, strontium isotope ($^{87}\text{Sr}/^{86}\text{Sr}$) studies conducted on burial sites yielded promising results pertaining to human mobility but were constrained in scope. In recent years, extensive isotopic research has been conducted in the Dutch central river area – some of them in collaboration with Nico – on a much larger scale, encompassing burial sites from the Iron Age, Roman period, and subsequent early Middle Ages. These exciting new findings have advanced the research field in two significant ways:

- a) a quantitative isotope analysis has been performed on burial sites, resulting in a statistically more robust pattern;
- b) isotope techniques have also been successfully applied to cremation sites, expanding the possibilities, given that cremation was the dominant funerary rite in this region for an extended period. This contribution will provide an overview of both the traditional evidence and the new isotope studies, thereby shedding light on population trends, depopulation, and repopulation in the Rhine Delta.

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