Vrije Universiteit Brussel

FACULTEIT LETTEREN EN WIJSBEGEERTE

Head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic graves in 9th-13th century Flanders: material characteristics and immaterial meaning

Proeve ingediend voor het behalen van de graad van Master in de Kunstwetenschappen en Archeologie

Vrije Universiteit Brussel
Faculteit Letteren en Wijsbegeerte
Kunstwetenschappen en Archeologie
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Academiejaar 2014-2015

Ik verklaar plechtig dat ik de masterproef, Head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic graves in 9th-13th century Flanders: material characteristics and immaterial meaning, zelf heb geschreven.

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Summary

Deze masterthesis onderzoekt antropomorfe graven in Vlaanderen van de 9^e tot de 13^e eeuw. Antropomorfe graven worden gedefinieerd als tenminste het kenmerk van de hoofd-schouder contour hebbende. Het probleem wat wordt aangepakt is vast te stellen of dit graftype een aparte categorie vormt met een duidelijk onderscheidende eigen naam, zodat dit door archeologen herkend en gebruikt kan worden. Indien adequaat gedocumenteerd kan informatie over dit graftype het onderzoek stimuleren naar begraafpraktijken in relatie tot de middeleeuwse samenleving en de christelijke spiritualiteit. Omdat de terminologie in de literatuur niet eenduidig is, wordt de aanduiding antropomorf graf met hoofd-schouder contour gebruikt; voor het Nederlands taalgebied wordt de term hoofdnisgraf voorgesteld. Een data-set met 11 sites in huidig Vlaanderen werd samengesteld. Deze sites omvatten begraafplaatsen in of nabij kerken, kapellen, kloosters of abdijen. De informatie die gevonden kon worden in opgravingsverslagen en andere publicaties, was beperkt. Er zijn onderzoeksvragen opgesteld met betrekking tot de materiële kenmerken en de immateriële betekenis van dit graftype. De antropomorfe graven op de sites in de data-set zijn beschreven met betrekking tot hun mate van voorkomen, uiterlijke aspecten, constructietypen en datering. Zowel kuilgraven, semi-geconstrueerde en geconstrueerde graven komen voor; de laatste 2 typen maken gebruik van aanvullende materialen zoals kalkmortel, natuurlijke stenen en bakstenen. Het hoogtepunt van de toepassing van dit graftype lijkt in de 10^e en 11^e eeuw te liggen. Ze komen voor vanaf de 9^e eeuw en lijken vrij abrupt te verdwijnen in de 13^e eeuw. Indien mogelijk wordt de identificatie van de overledenen vermeld omdat dit kan helpen bij de interpretatie van het gebruik van dit graftype. De auteurs van de sitebeschrijvingen nemen de locatie van de antropomorfe graven op als een indicatie voor hun betekenis, niet de vorm of de uitvoering of het begrafenisritueel wat zich heeft afgespeeld. Aangenomen wordt dat deze graven bestemd zijn voor leden van de hogere sociale klassen. Omdat antropomorfe graven voorkomen in een periode waarin ook kuilgraven en kistbegravingen bestaan, moet de beslissing van de nabestaanden om voor dit graftype te kiezen, een bewuste zijn geweest. Dit is opmerkelijk omdat de voorbereiding voor een dergelijk graf meer moeite en kosten met zich meebrengen terwijl, wanneer ze eenmaal zijn bedekt met aarde, niets meer aan hun specifieke kenmerken herinnert. Dit zou kunnen betekenen dat de ceremonie zelf van het begraven belangrijk was, met de vertoning van het gewenste beeld dat gevormd diende te worden van de overledene om hem van zielenheil te verzekeren, een blijvende herinnering te scheppen en een voorbeeld te zijn voor de leden van de gemeenschap. Een kort overzicht van

hoofdnisgraven in de omliggende Europese landen laat zien dat dit graftype niet uniek is voor Vlaanderen, hoewel er variatie is in de constructietypen. Opmerkelijk is de veelheid van termen onder welke hoofdnisgraven verschijnen in archeologische opgravingsrapporten en andere publicaties. Mogelijke interpretaties van hoofdnisgraven in het algemeen worden verkend door het werk van buitenlandse auteurs te doorzoeken. Zij baseren hun inzichten en theorieën uiteraard op andere data-sets. Eén van de meest in het oog springende kenmerken van dit graftype is de grote zorg voor het lichaam en in het bijzonder voor het hoofd van de overledene. Het hoofd kan in een bepaalde houding gefixeerd worden waardoor het lichaam op dat van een levend persoon lijkt of, indien er een verhoging onder het hoofd aanwezig is, op een vrome, nederige of zelfs biddende persoon. Dit roept het beeld op van een voorbeeldige christen, gereed om het transformatieproces in te gaan op weg naar het begeerde hiernamaals. Antropomorfe graven lijken meer voor te komen in een kloosterachtige omgeving; dankzij opgegraven endotafen en geschreven bronnen is de identiteit van sommige van de begraven personen bekend. De meerderheid bleek uit mannelijke geestelijken te bestaan. Ook waren er leden van adellijke of vooraanstaande families onder de overledenen in antropomorfe graven. Dit zou te maken kunnen hebben met het gebruik om voorouders te gedenken en wereldlijke macht te doen integreren in een kerkelijke omgeving. Herdenking van de doden was verzekerd door dagelijkse en jaarlijkse gebeden. Niet alle vragen met betrekking tot de data-set werden beantwoord; suggesties voor verder onderzoek zijn voorgesteld.

This Master's thesis investigates anthropomorphic graves in Flanders between the 9th and 13th centuries. Anthropomorphic graves are defined as having at minimum the feature of a *head-and-shoulder outline*. The problem that is being addressed is whether this type of grave forms a category of its own that merits a clear and separate name so that it will be taken into account within archaeology. Once documented, information about this type of anthropomorphic grave can encourage the study of burial practices in relation to medieval society and Christian spirituality. As the terminology encountered is not uniform, the term *head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic grave* is introduced; for the Dutch language, the term *hoofdnisgraf* is proposed. A data-set was composed that consists of 11 sites in contemporary Flanders. These sites consist of cemeteries in or by churches, chapels, cloisters or abbeys. The information provided by the excavation reports and other publications was limited. Research questions concerning the material characteristics and the immaterial meaning of this type of grave were set up. The anthropomorphic graves on the sites in the data-set were described in terms of occurrence, appearance, construction type and dating. Earth-dug graves, semi-constructed and constructed graves all occur, using additional materials like lime mortar, stones or bricks. The peak in the use of these graves seems to lie in the 10th and 11th century. They occur from the 9th century on, and they seem to disappear quite abruptly in the 13th century. Whenever possible, the identification of the interred is mentioned, as this will facilitate the interpretation of the use of this type of grave. The authors of the information on the sites find significance only in the location of the anthropomorphic graves, not in their shape or execution or the burial ritual that may have taken place. It is assumed that these graves were destined for higher-status occupants. As these graves can be situated in a period in which both coffin burials and pit burials occur, it must have been a deliberate choice of the mourners to opt for such a grave. This is noteworthy, because preparing this grave would require more effort and costs, yet nothing would appear to remind anyone of the specific features of the grave once it was covered up with earth. This may imply that the burial ceremony itself was of great importance. It may have involved showing the desired image of the deceased to guarantee his or her salvation, or creating a lasting memory and setting an example to the members of the community. A short overview of head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic graves in other European countries shows that this type of grave is not unique to Flanders, although variation in the types of construction appears. It is noteworthy that these graves appear in archaeological excavation reports and other publications under many names. Possible interpretations of anthropomorphic graves in general are explored by searching the work of foreign authors. They, of course, base their insights and theories on

different data-sets. One of the outstanding elements of this type of grave is the great care for the body and especially of the head of the deceased. The head may be fixed in a certain position so as to resemble a living person, or—when the head is elevated—to resemble a devote, humble or even praying person. This would create an image of an exemplary Christian who is ready to enter the transformation process to reach the desired afterlife. Anthropomorphic graves seem to occur more frequently in a monastic environment. Thanks to recovered endotaphs and written sources, the identities of some of the interred are known. It turns out that most of them were male clergy. Also, some members of noble or well-respected families were among those interred in anthropomorphic graves. This may have to do with the practice of remembering one's ancestors and of integrating the worldly power into an ecclesiastical sphere. Commemoration of the deceased was assured by daily and annual prayers. Not all questions regarding the data-set have been answered; suggestions for further research are proposed.

Abstract

This Master's thesis deals with 9th to 13th century head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic graves in contemporary Flanders. The data for this study was gathered from 11 sites. The goal of this study is to prove that it is worthwhile to distinguish this type of grave as a separate category because it has specific features and occurs in a limited time range. Relating this type of grave to its context may broaden and deepen the understanding of medieval burial practices. Two research questions are answered: first, the material characteristics of anthropomorphic graves in the data-set are described; second, the immaterial meaning of anthropomorphic graves is explored. Special attention is given to the positioning of the head. Fixing the head in a downward gaze may have to do with the appreciation of expressing devotion. These graves seem to be related with monastic environments and with the commemoration of clergy and nobility.

Key Words

Anthropomorphic graves, high-middle ages, Flanders, recess for the head, burial ritual

Antropomorfe graven, volle middeleeuwen, Vlaanderen, hoofdnis, begrafenisritueel

List of figures and tables

Preface

While working towards my Bachelor's degree in Art Sciences and Archaeology, daily life in the Middle Ages has always had my special interest—in particular with regard to death and burial. The paper I wrote to finish my Bachelor's degree—*Een studie naar begraafpraktijken met betrekking tot enkele middeleeuwse parochiekerkhoven in De Kempen*—described the variety of medieval burial customs in a Dutch / Flemish region called the Kempen.[1]

In this Master's thesis, I again deal with mortuary practices in the middle ages. It was Professor Theuws of the University of Leiden—a medieval archaeologist who excavated several settlements in the Kempen—who suggested that I look into anthropomorphic graves. As this is my Master thesis, I feel challenged to go beyond the descriptive part and to try to give meaning to the archaeological finds. I am inspired by Roberta Gilchrist's book, *Medieval Life: Archaeology and the Life Course*, which gave me insight in the lives of medieval people and into the need for archaeologists to use different sources to reconstruct the life course and all the rituals that help people make sense of their lives. Additionally, during my Erasmus experience at the University of Sheffield in the United Kingdom, I took a course in *The Archaeology of Death and Burial* which allowed me to access sources and gain insights that especially facilitated a better understanding of my subject.

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[1] Translation: *A study of Burial Customs with regard to some Medieval Parish Churchyards in the Kempen*

Acknowledgements

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1 Introduction

1.1 Problem statement

During the middle ages, several grave types were used in Flanders and the southern part of the Netherlands, some of them simultaneously. One of those is the anthropomorphic grave, which closely follows the human shape. This resemblance is particularly visible in the head-and-shoulder part of the grave. After an initial orientation, it became clear that head-and-shoulder outlined graves, though relatively rare, occur mainly in the high middle ages. The problem at stake is the following:

Does this type of anthropomorphic grave merit being considered a separate type?

In order to answer this overall question, two main research questions were drafted. The first is of a descriptive nature, and the second is explorative.

1.2 Research questions

The scope of this thesis is head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic graves in contemporary Flanders between the 9th and 13th centuries. A total of 11 sites were selected for this study. I set up two research questions to gain insight into the use of this type of grave.

Research question 1: Material characteristics

What do head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic graves in 9th-13th century Flanders look like at the selected sites?

The first question concerns the material characteristics of the anthropomorphic graves. An inventory of the occurrence and appearance of these graves within the chosen data-set is composed. The expectation is that there are features that distinguish these graves from other graves. In order to answer the research question, the following aspects are taken into account:

- *Short description of site and excavation*

- *Relative occurrence of anthropomorphic graves*

- *Appearance, types of construction and materials used*

- *Identification and dating*

Research question 2: Immaterial meaning

What reasons could there be for using head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic graves instead of coffin graves or general pit graves?

The second part of the thesis deals with the question why head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic graves are being used in a period when other type of graves—such as coffin burials and pit graves—occur as well. This question aims to grasp the significance of these graves. As there are no explicative sources directly related to the sites in the data-set, the answer can only be explorative: i.e., based on general insights and interpretations of other data-sets. The expectation is that the burial ritual itself may have been more important than the grave to create a memory of the deceased. In order to answer the research question, the following aspects are taken into account:

- *Christian conceptions of death and afterlife*

- *Care for the dead body*

- *Expression of social position and prestige*

- *The importance of the burial ritual and the creation of memory*

1.3 Goal

In the orientational phase of this thesis, it became clear that there is no consensus on the use of the term *anthropomorphic* in grave types. It also became clear that, even though anthropomorphic graves are described in Flemish excavation reports, this does not lead to interpretation of the cemetery in relation to the society to which it belongs. A first step is taken by acknowledging the existence of a specific category of graves that have the head-and-shoulder outline as a characteristic feature and by giving this category a name. Naming will allow archaeologists to recognize this type of grave when doing fieldwork and to describe it accordingly. Furthermore, it will enable them to re-evaluate material already recovered from medieval cemeteries. Making detailed excavation reports available for databases and inventories opens up possibilities for researches to broaden and deepen our interpretation of head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic graves in medieval societies. This thesis pledges to make *hoofdnisgraf* a category of grave on its own and to use it to link burial practices to

attitudes, relationships and developments in society. The ultimate goal of this thesis is thus to contribute to our understanding of this type of grave.

1.4 Thesis outline

Chapter 1 introduces the problem of this thesis. It states the questions to be answered and defines the goal of this contribution.

Chapter 2 deals with the methodology of the research. Firstly, terminology and definition issues are addressed. The selection procedure of the data-set to be used in the description of the material characteristics is explained. Exploration of the immaterial meaning will be based on theoretical insights and interpretation proposals. A glossary of the main terms is included.

Chapter 3 addresses the first research question: What are the material characteristics of head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic graves? The anthropomorphic graves of the data-set are looked at regarding their occurrence and appearance. This chapter ends by summing up the key features.

Chapter 4 attempts to answer the second research question: What is the immaterial meaning of head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic graves? After a brief exploration of this type of grave in the surrounding European countries, possible interpretations are explored and presented. Lastly, a summary will be given and applied to the data-set.

Chapter 5 presents the conclusion and a discussion. The main research question is answered in the conclusion. In the discussion, the limitations of the research will be dealt with and suggestions for further research are mentioned.

2 Methodology

The subject of this thesis is a grave type known as anthropomorphic. This term needs a more specific definition if we are to select a data-set. The terminology used by different authors is inconsistent, and this ultimately influenced the choices that had to be made about the scope of the research area.

To answer the research questions, a list of sites to be included in this thesis was set up. All sites answer to the chosen definition. The data of this thesis is constituted by information about the anthropomorphic graves on these sites that could be retrieved from archaeological reports and other available sources. Research problems are taken into account. Features of the graves will be described to answer the question about the material characteristics. The second question concerns the immaterial meaning of these graves; this question cannot be answered solely with the material information from the excavation reports. In an explorative way, archaeological theory on death, burial and society and the interpretations of authors that are based on other data-sets from other countries, will be investigated and applied to the data-set.

2.1 Definition issues and scope of the thesis

A global search for the meaning of the word *anthropomorphic* reveals that is has to do with the human shape. According to the *Oxford Dictionary*, *anthropomorphic* means "having human characteristics".[2]

Applied to graves, the human shape is recognized by authors of archaeological reports and publications, but the range of specific features they observe in such graves varies. In order to work with a comparable set of data as I proceeded in the set-up of my research, I chose to limit my research to one specific type of anthropomorphic grave. This specific type has a distinctive feature: it follows the curving of the head-and-shoulder area and provides a niche for the head. The construction of the grave itself varies from simply earth-dug to semi-constructed and constructed types that use additional materials. This coincides with how the Flemish institution Inventaris Onroerend Erfgoed, based on actual findings in Gent, defines an anthropomorphic grave.

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[2] Oxford Dictionairies, "Anthropomorphic", in: *Oxford Dictionairies* (online), s.d. http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/anthropomorphic (16-12-2014).

Definition by Inventaris Onroerend Erfgoed

According to this Flemish institution, an anthropomorphic grave,

> …is een graf dat de menselijke omtrek sterk benadert. Het graf is het breedst aan de schouders en smaller naar het voeteinde toe. Voor het hoofd werd vaak een nis uitgespaard, waarvan de bodem soms enkele centimeters hoger ligt. De constructiematerialen en afwerking kunnen sterk verschillen. Sommige graven werden opgebouwd uit gestapelde stenen bijeengehouden door kalkmortel (mogelijk ook nog glad afgewerkt met een kalkmortellaagje), andere graven kenden geen stenen opbouw, maar wel een kalkmortellaagje. Op dit graf kwam een deksel van hout of stenen platen, waarna de kuil tot het loopniveau weer met grond gevuld werd. [3]

Dutch definitions

At the start of the thesis, the plan was to include not only Flemish sites but also sites in the province of Brabant, in the southern part of the Netherlands. According to their publicists, anthropomorphic graves are found in three sites selected in the area known as the Kempen.

Reports from two of these sites define an *anthropomorphic grave* as *a pit dug directly into the soil that follows the shape of the human body*. However, as can be observed in figure 1, the graves do not specifically follow the curving of the shoulders. It is possible, however, that the field-archaeologists were not aware of the possibility that the lower part of the pit had a clear anthropomorphic shape with a recognizable area around the head and shoulders. In the excavations and the reports from the three sites in the contemporary Brabant area, the definition of *anthropomorphic* is "following the human shape", but neither in the text nor in the illustrations (drawings, photographs) is the alcove for the head or the arching of the shoulders mentioned or depicted.

Because I chose to study anthropomorphic graves with a clear head-and-shoulder outline, the sites of Oude Toren in Woensel, the cemetery of Aalst and the marketplace and cemetery of Oosterhout are excluded from the data-set in this thesis (see figure 1). On the cemetery of Oude Toren in Woensel, pits both with and without a wooden coffin lid were recovered

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[3] The definition used is based on the publication on the anthropomorphic graves found in Gent; Inventaris Onroerend Erfgoed, "Antropomorfe graven (ID: 1255)", in: *Inventaris Onroerend Erfgoed* (online), s.d. https://inventaris.onroerenderfgoed.be/thesaurus/typologie/1255 (18-12-2014).

(KORTHORST & NOLLEN, 2008, P. 33). The cemetery in Aalst contained one pit grave where the deceased was placed on a wooden ladder (ARTS, 1998, P. 35). The marketplace and cemetery of Oosterhout contained one pit grave in which a lancet was found on the chest of the deceased (SAM, PARLEVLIET ET AL., 2005, P. 52).
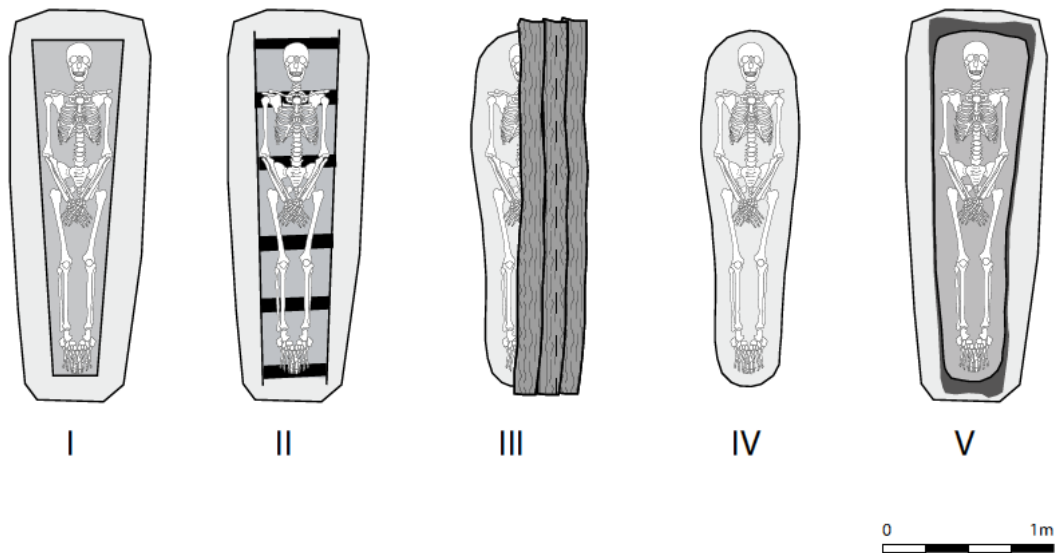
Figure 1: Schematic representation of the types of graves found on the cemetery surrounding the Oude Toren in Woensel. Number 3 is an "anthropomorphic pit with a wooden grave lid". Number 4 is an "anthropomorphic pit without lid" (KORTHORST & NOLLEN, 2008, P. 32).

Prof. Dr. Theuws, who is also involved in excavations in the Kempen area, agrees that anthropomorphic graves in medieval cemeteries are trench graves: the deceased is placed directly into the soil without further grave constructions and without the use of a coffin of any kind. He specifies that the lower part of the pit is dug out following the human shape, with a niche for the head, a broader part for the shoulders and a tapering form towards the feet. This type of pit grave in which the lower part is clearly anthropomorphic occur in Kempen sites like Dommelen, Reusel and possibly Luijksgestel. It is useful to re-evaluate older excavations to learn more about these graves (PROF. DR. F. THEUWS, PERSONAL COMMUNICATION 30 MARCH, 2015).

The database of the Dutch research and inventory institution, MeMo (*Medieval Memoria Online*), which is dedicated to the commemoration of the dead in the Netherlands, does not include the term *anthropomorphic* in its list of definitions. The list does mention *recess tomb*,

but this is a burial monument that is placed in a niche in a wall (MEMO, 2013). In the United Kingdom, the word *recess* is used to refer to the alcove or niche for the head in an anthropomorphic grave.

According to the Flemish definition, other forms than the plain earth-dug grave can also be defined as anthropomorphic: e.g., graves with layers of mortar and graves that have stones around the head. For reasons of terminology, Dutch sites have been left out of this thesis. However, a closer evaluation of past findings and the ongoing publication of reports may reveal that anthropomorphic graves exist here as well.

Definitions used by authors in the selected Flemish sites

The authors of the reports on the sites included in the data-set use more or less elaborated definitions. The descriptions from Gent have strongly influenced the definition that is adopted by a national institution, the *Inventaris Onroerend Erfgoed Vlaanderen*.

Bru, Stoops and Vermeiren

In Gent, two sites were excavated from which anthropomorphic graves were recovered. A study which focuses on this type of graves offers the following definition: a grave that largely follows the shape of the human body (BRU, STOOPS & VERMEIREN, 2010, P. 90). The authors provide a typology of anthropomorphic graves: trapezoidal graves, rectangular graves and the "classic" tapered grave with an alcove (BRU, STOOPS & VERMEIREN, 2010, P. 90).

An anthropomorphic grave is constructed directly as a pit in the ground. The shape of such a pit is wider at the shoulders and tapers to the feet. The arching of the shoulders is noticeable in the pit. The head of the deceased rests in an alcove (BRU, STOOPS & VERMEIREN, 2010, P. 90).

A feature seen in all types of anthropomorphic graves is that there seems to be no use of a wooden coffin in which the deceased was placed. This was the case with the pits with an alcove for the head (BRU, STOOPS & VERMEIREN, 2010, P. 91 AND 103). In order to seal the pit, a wooden lid or stone plate was placed on top of the pit; the sealing plate was not visible

above ground, however. The rest of the pit was filled with soil (Bru, Stoops & Vermeiren, 2010, p. 91).

<u>Klinkenborg, De Maeyer & Cherretté</u>

According to the authors of the report on the site of Moorsel in Aalst, an anthropomorphic grave is a grave which is wider at the shoulders and tapers to the feet. An alcove for the head is provided. The graves are cut out into the soil (KLINKENBORG, DE MAEYER & CHERRETTÉ, 2010, P. 21). In some cases, a wooden plate is used as a lid, but none of the deceased are buried in a coffin (KLINKENBORG, DE MAEYER & CHERRETTÉ, 2010, P. 21).

Analysis of the used definitions and preferential term

This thesis will focus on pit graves cut into the soil and on semi-constructed and constructed graves that do not use a coffin—all of which have an alcove for the head. The graves may be tapered or rectangular and the alcove may be either rectangular or semi-circular. The grave can either have a rectangular or semi-circular ending at the feet. The graves can be earth-dug or constructed with the use of additional materials like mortar, brick or stones. As the term *anthropomorphic* seems to lead to confusion about the various types that exist, I will suggest the term ***head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic grave*** for the specific type of grave that I consider in this research. In Dutch, the preferred term would be *hoofdnisgraf.*

2.2 Status questionis on anthropomorphic graves

Archaeologists need to bear in mind that anthropomorphic graves, like all other artefacts related to death and burial, do not reveal their meaning in a direct way. Looking at the so-called "Ladder of Inference"—a theory set up in a 1954 article by archaeologist Christopher Hawkes, it is clear that religion and all its rituals, practices and values is the most difficult level to infer to from material culture (HAWKES, 1954, P. 161-162). Material culture within religious spheres can contribute to our insight concerning the execution of practices, but the actual motivation behind the practices is a matter of interpretation. It is here that written and art-historical sources can fill in the gaps in our understanding of the religious past.

The data-set studied in this thesis is based on a specific type of anthropomorphic grave: i.e., graves with a specific head-and-shoulder outline. Because scholars in countries in which these graves occur lack common terminology, it is difficult to determine whether these graves are present in a cemetery or within the setting of a monastic house. Often, the term *anthropomorphic* is used to underline the dichotomy between coffin graves and pit graves. *Pit graves* are graves which are cut directly into the soil, whereas *coffin graves* are graves in which the body is placed in a wooden coffin. *Anthropomorphic* then refers to the pit graves.

In many cases it is therefore unclear whether the terms *anthropomorphic* or *following the human shape* imply any specific treatment for the head. This is the case in, for example, the Netherlands, where the term is used in a more general way to define a coffin-less grave. If a specific shape for the head is found, it is occasionally referred to as *uitholling voor het hoofd*. In Flanders, the term *hoofdnis* is used to refer to the head-part; it is considered a specific trait of *anthropomorphic graves*.

Elsewhere, especially in the surrounding European countries, both the general term and more specific terms can refer to the same type of grave.[4] In French publications, for instance, this type of grave is known as *fosse anthropomorphe* or, referring more specifically to the head-part, as *logette pour l'emplacement du crâne, alvéole céphaloïde, logement céphaloïde, encoche céphalique, niche céphalique, cuve céphalique* or *reserve céphalique* or any other combination of these words. In German publications, it is described as *Antropomorpher Grab* or, referring to the head-part, as *Kopfnische, Nische für den Kopf, Apsis für den Kopf, Kopflage, Grab mit separater Ausbuchtung für den Kopf* or *Rahmengrab*. In the United Kingdom, the head-part is referred to as *head recess* or *alcove,* which is often identified as a specific trait of a stone-lined grave, in which stones are used to construct and to emphasize the outline of the grave.

Overseeing the archaeological literature on anthropomorphic graves, this burial option seems to have occurred between the 9th and 13th centuries. Many authors believe that these graves were destined for elite groups within society. These privileged groups seem to have had a strong connection with Christianity, either because they themselves were members of the Church or because they belonged to or were connected with the dominant classes of society and their burial was an expression of their exemplary Christian life. Both pit graves and coffin graves existed as burial modes simultaneously with anthropomorphic graves. It was a

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[4] Terminology obtained when searching online for *anthropomorph*. For more information see Chapter 4.2

deliberate choice to have the grave follow the shape of the human body; besides being a matter of social display, this type of grave possibly reflected the piety and faith of the deceased within.

In the second part of this thesis, I will look briefly into examples of anthropomorphic graves from the surrounding European countries, and I will elaborate on the various theoretical insights and proposed interpretations. This will include medieval Christian attitudes and practices concerning death and burial and aspects of the medieval society in which they are situated.

2.3 Selection

This thesis considers 11 sites in contemporary Flanders, Belgium. The sites discussed in this thesis are located within contemporary Flanders, which is part of present-day Belgium. Sites in Wallonia, Belgium are not included in the data-set. Five sites are situated in the current province of East-Flanders: the two sites in Gent, and those in Moorsel (Aalst), Dendermonde and Ronse. The site of Meldert in the municipality of Lummen is situated in the province of Limburg. The sites of Buizegem in the municipality of Edegem and of Mechelen are situated in the province of Antwerp. Finally, the last two sites, those of Heverlee and Leuven, are situated in the province of Flemish-Brabant. The Flemish province of West-Flanders is not represented in this thesis, as I have found no anthropomorphic graves there to include in my data-set. The selected sites have been retrieved from a website by Onroerend Erfgoed.[5] On this website, I found a list with known sites from the high-middle ages from which anthropomorphic graves have been recovered. These sites are the following:

- *Saint Baafs' abbey and Chapter house in Gent*

- *Saint Peters' square and Tweekerkenstraat in Gent*

- *Castle chapel in Dendermonde*

- *Saint Lambertus' church in Muizen*

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[5] Rica Annaert, Koen De Groote, Yann Hollevoet, "6.2.3.2 Levenscycli en religie", in: *Onderzoeksbalans Onroerend Erfgoed* (online), 11-12-2008.
https://onderzoeksbalans.onroerenderfgoed.be/onderzoeksbalans/archeologie/vroege_en_volle_middeleeuwen/onderzoek/topics/religie (21-10-2014).

- *Saint Hermes' in Ronse*

- *The Old Church in Edegem-Buizegem*

- *Saint Peters' church in Leuven*

Additionally, I found sites from the discussed period and area in the library, by searching known authors such as Roosens en Mertens and by e-mailing professionals within the archaeological field. Finally, I added one site that appeared in my Bachelor paper (Lummen):

- *Village of Moorsel in Aalst*

- *Saint Willibrordus' Church, Meldert in Lummen*

- *Saint Lambertus' church in Heverlee*

- *Saint Rumbold Churchyard, Mechelen*

This visual display shows the sites and their location in contemporary Flanders.
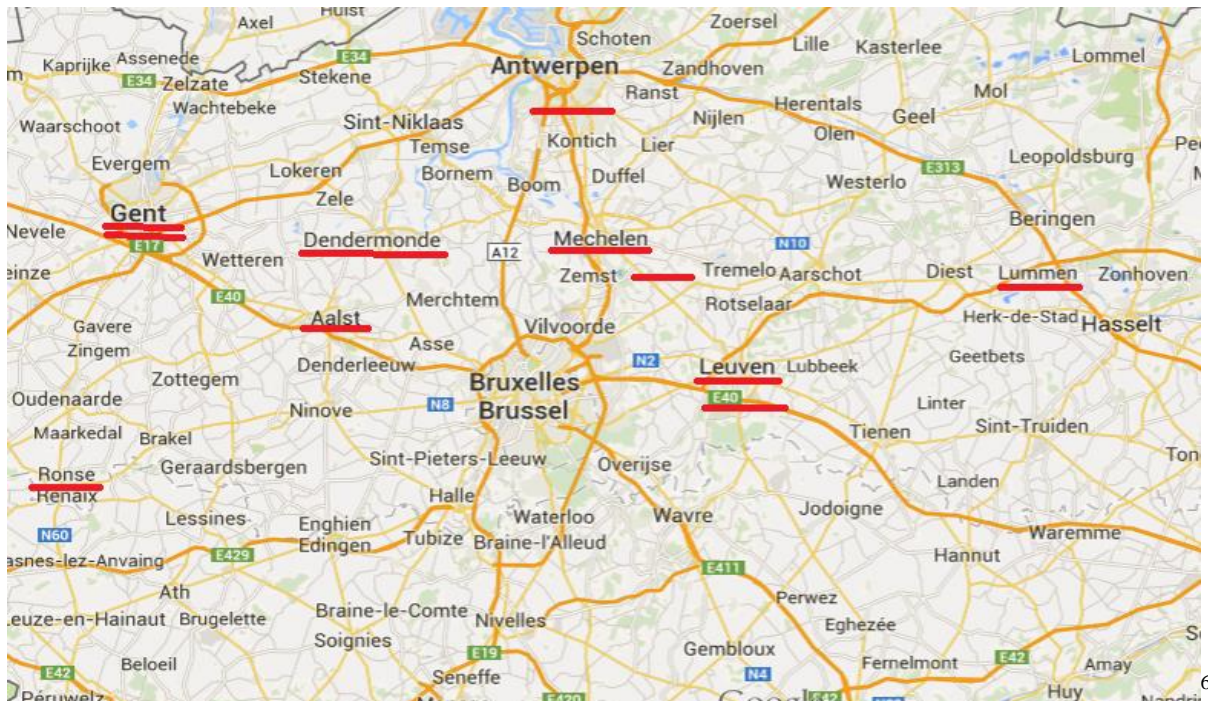
2.4 Research problems

The list of anthropomorphic graves in Flanders composed by the *Onroerend Erfgoed Vlaanderen* was the first source I used to make up my data-set. Some sites do not appear on this list, perhaps because the reports about these sites do not use the term *anthropomorphic grave*, or because the excavations were conducted and described after the composition of the initial list in 2008.

The information on head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic graves is retrieved from both archaeological excavation reports and more general publications about the specific sites. In reading these reports, the lack of uniformity in describing both the process and the results of the excavation becomes very clear. First of all, there is no consensus on terminology. As discussed earlier, the concept *anthropomorphic* is interpreted in different ways. Text, appendices, diagrams and photographs had to be combined in order to extract the relevant information from the excavation reports on how to understand *anthropomorphic*.

Because anthropomorphic graves were not the main focus in the excavations or in the reports in most cases, the amount of information differs from site to site. Homogeneity in reports on excavations in cemeteries is considered to be of great importance. Moreover, standardization will contribute to the analysis of sites themselves and especially to comparisons between cemeteries (GILCHRIST & SLOANE, 2005, P. 14). My data-set is definitely incomplete, and I am limited to the information available.

Afterlife

Christians believed in a life after death. The afterlife was a place in a next world where people would go to after Resurrection Day to be reunited with their loved ones.

Alcove, see also **Recess**

The *alcove* refers to the space in which the head of the deceased is placed. The alcove surrounds the head and follows the arching of the shoulders. The alcove can have a circular or a rectangular shape.

Burial

Although the term *burial* is sometimes used within the archaeological discipline to define a grave and its remnants, in this thesis *burial* denotes the act of burying the body, including the rituals surrounding this practice (SPRAGUE, 2005, P. 2 AND 3).

Cemetery

This thesis will use the term *cemetery* to refer to graveyards and churchyards. The word *cemetery* refers to a special place that is set aside for the burying of the dead (SPRAGUE, 2005, P. 164). The word *cemetery* does not differentiate the religious aspect of the field set aside for the internment of the dead. This thesis emphasizes religious places for the disposal of the dead.

East-facing

East-facing refers to the direction in which the deceased is placed in the grave. The deceased is placed with his or her head in the west and therefore his or her countenance is directed

towards the east, where Jesus Christ will resurrect according to Christian belief (SPRAGUE, 2005, P. 107).

Endotaph

Endotaph refers to the stone or lead marker that is left within the grave, often under the head or next to the body of the deceased. This object was either made especially for the deceased or it consisted of re-used material like often Roman tile fragments. On an endotaph, the name and often the profession of the deceased is mentioned, as are the day and month of death (SPRAGUE, 2005, P. 140).

Grave

The word *grave* refers to the pit in which the deceased is placed. In addition to the filling of the pit (i.e., the skeleton and grave-goods), the sealing and delineation of the pit are included in this term.

Grave-goods

Grave-goods refer to all artefacts which are placed in the grave (SPRAGUE, 2005, P. 115). Excluded from this concept are the materials used to construct the internal part of the graves (see **Lining**) (SPRAGUE, 2005, P. 117).

Head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic grave

In this thesis, an *anthropomorphic grave* is a coffin-less grave which follows the shape of the human body, with special attention to the head and shoulders. The head of the deceased is placed in an alcove or recess and the grave follows the arching of the shoulders. The anthropomorphic grave itself can be rectangular or tapered to the feet (often called trapezoidal). The alcove for the head can be circular or rectangular. Materials such as stones or lime mortar can be used either to seal the grave or to delineate the grave within the soil.

Lining (or **Delineation**)

Lining refers to the material used to construct or delineate the grave. Stones can be used to outline the grave, as can a layer of lime mortar. All materials used to construct the grave are part of the grave (see above; **Grave**).

Location

Location refers to the place on the cemetery or within churches and other religious buildings where the deceased are buried.

Orientation

In this thesis, *orientation* is the way a body is placed in the grave. More specifically, it refers to the direction that the deceased is facing (SPRAGUE, 2005, P. 107). This will usually be West-East.

Recess (see also **Alcove**)

Recess refers to the outlined space for the head within the grave. This recess can either be rectangular or semi-circular.

Shroud

Shroud refers to the textile of a perishable nature that is sometimes used to cover the body (SPRAGUE, 2005, P. 128). This cloth can be fastened to the deceased in various ways.

Tapered grave

A *tapered grave* is a grave that becomes smaller towards the feet. A synonymous term is *trapezoidal*. The tapered grave can either have a rectangular or a circular end near the feet.

3 Material characteristics

3.1 Introduction

Head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic graves are the focal point of this thesis. I selected 11 sites in contemporary Flanders that contain this type of grave. Whenever possible, the following information was extracted from the excavation reports:

- *Short description of site and excavation*

- *Relative occurrence of anthropomorphic graves*

- *Appearance, types of construction and used materials*

- *Identification and dating*

The information available per site varies considerably; it was not always possible to be complete. For reasons of presentation, a general overview of each site is made to sum up the information retrieved. The 11 sites are described in order of the relative number of head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic graves compared to the total number of graves recovered.

Each site will be described according to the circumstances of the excavation, the survey conducted, the type of site, and whether it is a parish site, religious house or other. The total number of graves found, the number of anthropomorphic graves and the percentage of anthropomorphic graves in each site are listed. The location, orientation, materials used to construct the graves and the appearance of the graves are described, as some sites may consist of different types of anthropomorphic graves. The absence or presence of grave-goods is mentioned. Where available, identification of the occupants of the graves will be presented. Dating of the anthropomorphic graves is provided based on grave-goods, endotaphs, evidence from written sources, or a combination of these. This chapter will conclude with a summary of the material characteristics in answer to research question 1: *What did anthropomorphic graves in the High Middle Ages in Flanders look like on the selected sites?*

Below, the sites are listed according to their relative number of anthropomorphic graves:

Site	Number of graves	Number of head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic graves	Rate
Saint-Baafs Abbey and Chapter house, Gent	28	15	53.57%
Saint Peters' square and Tweekerkenstraat, Gent	291	106	36.42%
Village centre of Moorsel, Aalst	101	11	10.89%
Castle Chapel and cemetery, Dendermonde	27	2	7.41%
Saint Lambertus church, Muizen	49	3	6.12%
Saint Hermes' church, Ronse	450	23	5.11%
Old Church, Edegem-Buizegem	22	1	4.55%
Saint Willibrordus' church, Meldert (Lummen)	30	1	3.33%
Saint Lambertus chapel, Heverlee	75	1	1.33%
Saint Rumbald cemetery and church, Mechelen	3575	4	0.11%
Saint Peters' church, Leuven	unknown	1	unknown

Table 1: Rate of occurrence of head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic graves

3.1.1 Saint-Baafs Abbey and Chapter house, Gent

The Saint-Baafs Abbey and Chapter house are situated in Gent in East-Flanders. All but one of the deceased in the anthropomorphic graves found within these sites are connected by function to the Church. This site is clearly a religious locus, and this is reflected in the type of burial.

Archaeological survey was already carried out in 1855. During this excavation, 21 graves were uncovered (VAN LOKEREN, 1855, P. 71). Of this total, 12 anthropomorphic graves were recovered in the Chapter house, which was consecrated in 1148 (BRU, STOOPS & VERMEIREN, 2010, P. 92; VAN LOKEREN, 1855, P. 67). Van Lokeren, in his report on the excavation of the Chapter house, defines the 12 anthropomorphic graves as follows:

"Douze tombeaux, maçonnés en brique et enduits d'un ciment rougeàtre encore en bou état; un seul était endommagé. La forme de ces cercueils, assez semblable à celle d'une momie, n'a de remarquable que la partie oú la tête se trouvait placée. Cette partie suivat exactement le countour des épaules et de la tête" (VAN LOKEREN, 1855, P. 71).

The report describes the graves as being of the tapering type, which means that the grave is smaller towards the feet. It is also stated that the outline of the grave follows the arching of the shoulders (VAN LOKEREN, 1855, P. 71).

The people interred in the Chapter house belonged to the Benedictine order (VAN LOKEREN, 1855, P. 30). After destruction by the Norman invasion, the abbey was re-built during the mid-10th century (VAN LOKEREN, 1855, P. 30).

The monks working in the abbey had different tasks. The *sacrista* was responsible for supervising burial services, amongst other things. Another function was that of hospital attendant: the *sacrista* was responsible for the infirmary and the pharmacy. The *sacrista* also supervised the preparations of the funerals and the embalming of the deceased (VAN LOKEREN, 1855, P. 29).

At the end of 1943, researchers started to excavate the Saint-Baafs abbey in Gent (DE SMIDT, 1956A, P. 7). A total of 7 graves were recovered during this excavation (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 251). Three can be classified as anthropomorphic graves (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 251). The survey by De Smidt describes these three graves, in which abbots were interred.

Combining the results of these two excavations, a total of 28 graves were found in the site of Saint Baafs Abbey and Chapter house, of which 15 were anthropomorphic.

At least two of the three persons buried in Saint Baafs Abbey were placed facing east.

The orientation of the graves in the Chapter house is unknown. The graves from the Chapter house were constructed using bricks. A layer of red cement was applied over the brick walls; both the walls and the bottom part had a red finishing layer (VAN LOKEREN, 1855, P. 71).

None of the graves in the Saint-Baafs Abbey or in the Chapter house had any traces of grave-goods.

The endotaphs found within the three graves of the Saint-Baafs abbey site help to identify the interred. Two of the graves contained grave stones with the names of the deceased: abbot Odwinus and abbot Othelboldus (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 251 AND 261). Both graves were located in front of the altar in honour of Saint Benedict (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 261). A third grave was found between the southern wall of the choir and the northern wall of the southern transept chapel (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 271).

Grave of abbot Odwinus

Although De Smidt does not use this term, the grave of abbot Odwinus is an anthropomorphic grave, as can be seen on the photographs and illustrations (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 251; see figure 2). The grave tapers and ends in a circular shape near the feet. The head is not in a circular alcove, but in a square space which sprouts at the shoulders (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 253). The endotaph found in the grave of this abbot indicates that Odwinus died in May 998 (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 259).

Research suggests that a pit was first constructed and that the shape was subsequently cemented (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 254). The grave was constructed on a sandy layer; a layer of white lime mortar was used to indicate the bottom (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 261). The walls were also lined with a layer of lime mortar (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 255). The grave of abbot Odwinus contained limestone from Doornik, tuff and chunks of mortar. It is possible that this material was re-used (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 253). Limestone from Doornik was used as a lid, which was placed in wide plates above the grave to seal it and thus to protect the body inside (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 255). Noteworthy is the endotaph that was found beneath the head of Odwinus. This

endotaph was made from limestone, probably also from Doornik (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 257). The endotaph of abbot Odwinus is inscribed with his name and date of death. The endotaph measured 18.3 x 13.7 x 3.6 cm. The text on the endotaph is in Latin (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 257). More details on the endotaphs are provided in Appendix A.

Grave of Abbot Othelboldus

A second grave of the anthropomorphic type has been recovered. It belongs to the abbot who succeeded Odwinus: abbot Othelboldus.

According to his endotaph, abbot Othelboldus died on 6th December; the year is not mentioned. Written sources, however, suggest that he may have died in 1034 (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 263).

This grave is similar to that of abbot Odwinus (see figure 2). Both graves are constructed in a comparable manner. The only difference is in the fact that the grave of Othelboldus does not have a circular shape at the feet; it has a rectangular end instead. Unlike the grave of Odwinus, no sealing plates were present in the grave of Othelboldus. Whether the plates have disappeared or were never there is not clear (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 261).

The grave of abbot Othelboldus was finished with a layer of red mortar (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 261). This abbot had an endotaph as well. The endotaph was made from sandstone and measured 23.7 x 16.5 x 5 cm (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 262). It was not placed beneath the head, but positioned on the chest of the deceased. This may well be a deliberate choice, as it must have been visible during the funeral (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 262). More details about the endotaphs are provided in Appendix A.

Figure 2: Graves of Othelboldus (left) and Odwinus (right) in the Saint-Baafs abbey in Gent (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 252).

Grave of an unknown person

A third anthropomorphic grave (see figure 3) had a circular shape at both feet and alcove. Because of its similarity with other graves, it is assumed that this grave was constructed in the same period—that is to say, in the 10th-11th century (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 272).

Here too, it is clear that a pit was dug before it was cemented with debris. Once again, the walls and bottom were covered with a layer of mortar (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 271). The mortar was spread out on the walls and the bottom of the grave. The report does not elaborate on the colour of the mortar, but both white and red mortar were common during the medieval period (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 271). The grave was sealed with plates of limestone from Doornik, which is a noted production centre in the medieval period. Unlike the abbot graves, no endotaph was found. It is therefore impossible to determine who lay in the grave (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 272).

However, since the other two graves were the resting places of abbots, it may be assumed that this grave may have served for an abbot as well (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 271).

Figure 3: Grave of an unknown person in the Saint Baafs abbey in Gent (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 270).

3.1.2 Saint Peters' square and Tweekerkenstraat, Gent

The site of Saint Peters' square and Tweekerkenstraat are situated in Gent, East-Flanders. These two sites are located in the city centre and are linked with Saint Peters' Abbey. Saint Peters' abbey was in use until 1796 (BRU, LALEMAN & VERMEIREN, 2009, P. 12). Due to the construction of underground parking, archaeologists decided to perform an archaeological survey beneath Saint Peters' square. This survey took place from July 2002 until March 2004 (BRU, LALEMAN & VERMEIREN, 2009, P. 18 AND 19). Two years later, in 2006, the archaeological survey was extended to the Saint Peters' church and the Tweekerkenstraat; the latter is situated north of Saint Peters' square (BRU, LALEMAN & VERMEIREN, 2009, P. 19). The north of the zone which was archaeologically surveyed consists of the parochial Onze Lieve Vrouwe church and the adjacent cemetery (BRU, LALEMAN & VERMEIREN, 2009, P. 27). The other two zones that were part of the archaeological survey—the centre and southern part of Saint Peters' square—consist of traces from the monastic period. This period lasted from the 10th century until the late 18th century (1799), when the abbey palace of abbot Antoine Musaert was demolished (BRU, LALEMAN & VERMEIREN, 2009, P. 27).

During the archaeological survey that was carried out in front of the Saint Peters' church, archaeologists recovered remnants of the 7th century abbey church and of two long halls that were situated in front of the church and pointed towards the west across Saint Peters' square. Archaeologists were able to identify these structures as parts of an old atrium (BRU, LALEMAN & VERMEIREN, 2009, P. 35). The atrium was situated west of the former abbey church. From the early medieval period onwards, it was common to build an atrium west of a church (BRU, LALEMAN & VERMEIREN, 2009, P. 50). The halls were provided with additional structures (BRU, LALEMAN & VERMEIREN, 2009, P. 41). These structures, which formed several rooms, were probably used for burials. In the northern hall, three graves were recovered. Archaeologists assume that the structure next to the southern hall contained graves as well (BRU, LALEMAN & VERMEIREN, 2009, P. 42).

The atrium was probably constructed on a wooden foundation. The atrium dated from 10th - 11th century (VAN DEN BREMPT & VERMEIREN, 2004, P. 31). The upper part of the atrium was constructed in limestone. The additional structures were built in the same period as the halls (BRU, LALEMAN & VERMEIREN, 2009, P. 49). The atrium might also have functioned as a last

resting place for wealthy laity and nobility. It was a location to inter the faithful in the nearest proximity of the church (BRU, LALEMAN & VERMEIREN, 2009, P. 51 AND 73).

During excavation, a floor level was recovered. This floor can be dated between the 10th and 12th centuries. The graves that were placed inside the church were correlated to this floor. The floor consists of a layer of lime mortar. This layer was finished with a layer of ground red tile grit. Such floors of lime mortar were common in Flanders during the 10th to 12th centuries (BRU, LALEMAN & VERMEIREN, 2009, P. 39).

The cemetery that was part of the abbey covered almost all of Saint Peters' square. The cemetery can be divided into four parts. The first and second parts were localized in the halls and structures of the atrium and north of the atrium. A third part was placed north of the abbey church, whereas the fourth part consists of graves within the abbey church (BRU, LALEMAN & VERMEIREN, 2009, P. 65).

The graves north of the church and in the Tweekerkenstraat give us a total of 291 graves from the medieval period. These graves could be divided into 151 graves on the square of the atrium and the halls, 100 graves north of the atrium and 40 graves north of the abbey church (BRU, LALEMAN & VERMEIREN, 2009, P. 67).

Of the 291 graves, graves can be classified as anthropomorphic. These anthropomorphic graves were found particularly north of the atrium and the abbey church and in the south-east corner of the atrium (BRU, LALEMAN & VERMEIREN, 2009, P. 67). Given that several graves were situated within and near the atrium, it can be assumed that the deceased in these graves were from the higher levels of society (BRU, LALEMAN & VERMEIREN, 2009, P. 69).

Though different types of anthropomorphic graves occur, a common similarity is the fact that all graves follow the shape of a human and have an alcove for the head. The 106 graves were finished with ground red tile grit. The head of the deceased was east-facing; that is to say, the head was placed in the west. None of the graves contained grave-goods. (BRU, LALEMAN & VERMEIREN, 2009, P. 67).

According to the report, an anthropomorphic grave is constructed directly in the ground as a pit. The shape of such pit is wider at the shoulders and tapers to the feet. The arching of the shoulders is noticeable in the pit. The head of the deceased rests in an alcove, which is a special niche. The bottom of the alcove is usually a few inches higher than the rest of the grave, so the head rests on the chest (BRU, STOOPS & VERMEIREN, 2010, P. 90).

It seems that none of the anthropomorphic graves found at this site in Gent include a wooden coffin in which the deceased were placed; this was the case at least for the pits with an alcove for the head (BRU, STOOPS & VERMEIREN, 2010, P. 91 AND 103). Possibly the dead were wrapped in a shroud; due to the perishable nature of textiles, however, these have not been preserved (BRU, STOOPS & VERMEIREN, 2010, P. 91).

Attempts have been made to set up a typology of the anthropomorphic graves found on the two sites in Gent (see figure 4). A division can be made into three groups. Group 1 is characterized by pits that are trapezoidal, have a rounded foot and feature an alcove for the head. This alcove is either rectangular or semi-circular. Group 2 is very similar to category 1, with the difference of a square foot rather than a rounded foot. Group 3 consists of graves without an alcove, but with a square foot. These graves are either trapezoidal or rectangular. This type of anthropomorphic grave does not match the definition in this thesis and will therefore not be discussed further (BRU, STOOPS & VERMEIREN, 2010, P. 99).
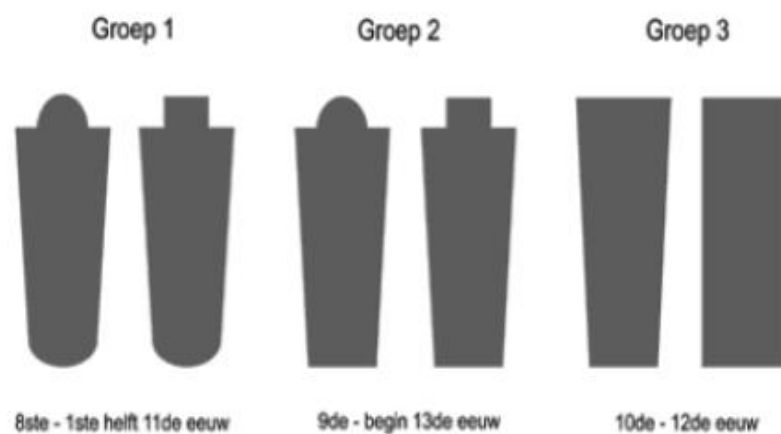
Figure 4: Typology of anthropomorphic graves found in Gent (BRU, STOOPS & VERMEIREN, 2010, P. 100).

The anthropomorphic graves were placed both north of the church and in the Tweekerkenstraat. This zone might also contain graves from a later period that belonged to the later parish cemetery (BRU, LALEMAN & VERMEIREN, 2009, P. 65 AND 67). The graves which were recovered in the Tweekerkenstraat could have been part of the monk cemetery, which was situated north of the church. Although this is not yet confirmed through

archaeological survey, it might provide an indication of the status of the occupants of the anthropomorphic grave type (BRU, LALEMAN & VERMEIREN, 2009, P. 87).

The tombs which were placed in the Saint Peters' church lay on a separate, probably consecrated cemetery, in which only members of the upper-middle class were located (BRU, STOOPS & VERMEIREN, 2010, P. 102). It is assumed that two of the graves within the church were covered with a wooden plate, as remnants were found (BRU, LALEMAN & VERMEIREN, 2009, P. 80). One grave had the remnants of a coffin lid. It is notable that an endotaph was recovered from only one grave (VAN DEN BREMPT & VERMEIREN, 2004, P. 38). From endotaphs, people could read who lay buried, when the person died and what the profession of the interred was (BRU, STOOPS & VERMEIREN, 2010, P. 101).

Besides the pits which were finished with limestone from Doornik, some were cut out in sandstone. The deceased were not wrapped in a shroud, but put directly into the grave (VAN DEN BREMPT & VERMEIREN, 2004, P. 38). To carve a structure in the hard sandstone is difficult; it was probably not a conscious choice to place the graves in this type of rock (BRU, STOOPS & VERMEIREN, 2010, P. 91). The location of these graves probably has to do with the occupation of the cemetery and the availability of burial space. In other cases, the pits were cut directly into the soil. The anthropomorphic shape can be recognized by means of the red powder sprinkled on the bottom (BRU, STOOPS & VERMEIREN, 2010, P. 91). The stone plates sealing off the pits can be distinguished as memorial plaques (BRU, STOOPS & VERMEIREN, 2010, P. 92).

Without exception, all the deceased were laid east-facing (VAN DEN BREMPT & VERMEIREN, 2004, P. 36 AND 78).

Near the western entrance of the church, seven anthropomorphic graves were recovered (see Appendix B for additional background information) (BRU, LALEMAN & VERMEIREN, 2009, P 78). These graves were constructed similarly. All structures had an alcove for the head, four of which were circular and three rectangular (BRU, LALEMAN & VERMEIREN, 2009, P. 78).

Two graves near the western entrance of the church show that a trapezoidal shape, which tapered to the feet and wider towards the head, was first cut into the soil; then later an anthropomorphic shape was cut within this trapezoid. The anthropomorphic shape consists of an alcove for the head of the deceased and the tapering of the grave towards the feet. The end could be either rectangular or circular (BRU, LALEMAN & VERMEIREN, 2009, P. 79).

From the seven graves discovered near the entrance of the church, three were children's graves and four were graves for adults (BRU, LALEMAN & VERMEIREN, 2009, P. 79). The majority of the graves were finished with a layer of red lime mortar (VAN DEN BREMPT & VERMEIREN, 2004, P. 36). The red powder was obtained from ground red earthenware, such as tiles. The red powder could either be implemented in the layer of mortar or sprinkled in the pit afterwards. The report does not specify whether the red earthenware was especially fabricated for this use or rather was re-used material (BRU, STOOPS & VERMEIREN, 2010, P. 90).

The fact that seven anthropomorphic graves were placed in a row near the western entrance of the church may indicate that these graves belong to people from a high social position (BRU, LALEMAN & VERMEIREN, 2009, P. 85 AND 86; see Appendix B). Written sources concerning the rulers of Flanders help determine the identity of some of the deceased which were buried near the western entrance of the church. After archaeological and historical research, it was confirmed that one grave belonged to Judith, the daughter of the West-Frankish king Charles the Bald and the wife of Boudewijn I. The second person identified was Sir Audacer, the father of Boudewijn I (DECLERQ & DIERKENS, 2009, P 130-132).

Dating of the graves was performed through architectural evidence and with the help of written sources and radiocarbon dating. The atrium and the adjacent cemetery probably lost their functions between the 12th and 13th centuries. This can be established because brick structures were found in the layers above the atrium. These construction remnants could be dated between the 13th and 14th century (BRU, LALEMAN & VERMEIREN, 2009, P. 51 AND 74). The graves thus date from before the 13th century; they served as a *terminus antequem*. Radiocarbon dating on the skeletons confirm this dating (BRU, LALEMAN & VERMEIREN, 2009, P. 74).

According to archaeological research, two of the graves near the west entrance of the church can be dated between the 9th and 10th century. This means that the graves found at this site can be dated between the 9th – 12th centuries. It is possible that the cemetery was cleared in the 11th or 12th century. The graves are thus from an earlier date (VAN DEN BREMPT & VERMEIREN, 2010, P. 40).

The tombs of the Saint-Peters' church date to between the 10th and 11th centuries. This date can be drawn from the architecture of the church, but also from written sources. It is known that Saint Arnulf (who died in 965) granted financial sources to the abbey church because he wanted to be buried there (BRU, STOOPS & VERMEIREN, 2010, P. 100).

Vulferus

In one grave, an endotaph was placed on which the name of Vulferus was chiselled. The endotaph also included his date of death and a message for whoever would open his grave. The grave of Vulferus (see figure 5) was stone-delineated. This means that the alcove and at least the left side of the grave were delineated with stones. The report does not mention this, but it can be seen in the photograph.

Figure 5: Anthropomorphic grave of Vulferus, grave S1647 on the site of the Saint Peters' Church and Tweekerkenstraat (VAN DEN BREMPT & VERMEIREN, 2004, P. 37).

Vulferus was a literate member of a wealthy family. It is exceptional that he had an endotaph underneath his head, since lay people usually did not receive such a stone (VAN DEN BREMPT & VERMEIREN, 2004, P. 38). Vulferus probably was laid to rest on the cemetery intended for the wealthy laity (VAN DEN BREMPT & VERMEIREN, 2004, P. 40). In Appendix A, more details on the endotaphs are provided.

3.1.3 Village centre of Moorsel in Aalst

Between December 2009 and July 2010, an archaeological survey was carried out in the village of Moorsel in the municipality of Aalst. Aalst is situated in the eastern part of East-Flanders (KLINKENBORG, DE MAEYER & CHERRETTÉ, 2010, P. 7 AND 17). Moorsel was first mentioned in the 7th century (KLINKENBORG, DE MAEYER & CHERRETTÉ, 2010, P. 6).

A total of 101 graves were recovered from around the medieval Saint Martinus' church in Moorsel. Seventeen of these graves were placed around the chapel, which is a location that indicates high status (KLINKENBORG, DE MAEYER & CHERRETTÉ, 2010, P. 17). There seems to be a dichotomy between the graves near the chapel and those near the church. In between these two areas, no grave structures have been found. It is difficult to establish whether the two zones are contemporary (KLINKENBORG, DE MAEYER & CHERRETÉ, 2010, P. 19). Medieval tombs were recovered surrounding the chapel, and on two places surrounding the church (KLINKENBORG, DE MAEYER & CHERRETTÉ, 2010, P. 19). Due to the construction of steps used to enter the Saint-Goedele chapel, it can be assumed that some graves north of this building were destroyed (KLINKENBORG, DE MAEYER & CHERRETÉ, 2010, P. 20).

Together with 6 graves on the adjacent cemetery of the Saint-Goedele chapel (located at the village square), the site of Moorsel contained two anthropomorphic graves near the church (KLINKENBORG, DE MAEYER & CHERETTÉ, 2010, P. 9). These were placed near the entrance of the church, which might indicate high-status occupants (KLINKENBORG, DE MAEYER & CHERRETTÉ, 2010, P. 27). Three other graves were situated west of the chapel (KLINKENBORG, DE MAEYER & CHERRETTÉ, 2010, P. 21). A total of 11 anthropomorphic graves have thus been recovered. It is noteworthy that the graves found surrounding the church are placed in neat rows (KLINKENBORG, DE MAEYER & CHERRETÉ, 2010, P. 20). These graves were shallow; their depth was between 30-50 cm (KLINKENBORG, DE MAYER & CHERRETÉ, 2010, P. 20).

According to the report, an anthropomorphic grave is a grave that is wider at the shoulders and tapers to the feet (see figure 6). Also, an alcove for the head is provided. The graves are cut out in the soil and there is no evidence of a finishing layer of mortar (KLINKENBORG, DE MAEYER & CHERRETTÉ, 2010, P. 21). The deceased in the 11 graves found in this site were east-facing and had no grave-goods (KLINKENBORG, DE MAEYER & CHERRETTÉ, 2010, P. 21). In all cases the arms of the deceased were placed stretched next to the body (KLINKENBORG, DE MAEYER & CHERRETTÉ, P. 27).

Figure 6: Example of an anthropomorphic grave in Moorsel (KLINKENBORG, DE MAEYER & CHERRETTÉ, 2010, P. 21).

It is noteworthy that in one case two bodies were deliberately buried close to each other in one grave pit. It is assumed that the deceased in this grave had a special relationship (KLINKENBORG, DE MAEYER & CHERRETTÉ, 2010, P. 21).

In some cases a wooden plate was used as lid, but none of the deceased was buried in a coffin. The wooden lid was used to seal the grave (KLINKENBORG, DE MAEYER & CHERRETTÉ, 2010, P. 21). The deceased were placed directly into the soil (KLINKENBORG, DE MAEYER & CHERRETTÉ, 2010, P. 21). The photographs published in the archaeological report suggest that one of the anthropomorphic graves may have had a charcoal layer (see figure 7). The report does not state whether this is indeed charcoal.

Figure 7: Detail of an anthropomorphic grave near the church in Moorsel (KLINKENBORG, DE MAEYER & CHERRETTÉ, 2010, P. 25).

Since few to no grave-goods were found in the graves, dating is difficult. In one grave, a sherd of Rhineland earthenware was found, which dated to between the 10th and 12th centuries. One sherd is not enough for definitive dating, so carbon-dating was applied on two skeletons. One result (95.4 % certainty) dated to the period 890-1030 AD; the other (95.4 % certainty) dated to 1020-1160 AD (KLINKENBORG, DE MAEYER & CHERRETTÉ, 2010, P. 23). The archaeological report does not mention any known identifications of the 11 graves, as no visible grave markers or endotaphs were found at the site.

Following the dating results, it can be suggested that anthropomorphic graves decrease at the end of the High Middle Ages and are replaced by wooden coffin graves (KLINKENBORG, DE MAEYER & CHERRETTE, 2010, P. 65).

3.1.4 Castle chapel and cemetery, Dendermonde

The site of the Castle chapel and cemetery is located in the current city centre of Dendermonde, which is situated in the east of East-Flanders. Due to maintenance works on the marketplace, the archaeological survey was conducted in 2008 (VERVOORT, 2004, P. 26). The cemetery that was under survey is situated on the site of the present town hall, which was situated east of the marketplace (VERVOORT, 2004, P. 31). Through the dendrochronological analysis of one oak wooden coffin found at the site, researchers established that the cemetery was being used until about 1077. The graves could therefore not be younger than that date (VERVOORT, 2004, P. 34). The remnants of the cemetery are from a slightly younger date than the Castle chapel (VERVOORT, 2004, P. 27). It is assumed that both the Castle chapel and the adjacent cemetery can be dated to the 11th century (BUYSE, 2004, P. 7)

A total of 27 graves were recovered from the 11th century cemetery (VERVOORT, 2004, P. 30). Two graves could be defined as anthropomorphic (VERVOORT, 2004, P. 30). These two graves were not situated near the other graves; instead, they were located at the entrance of the Castle chapel, north of the cemetery (VERVOORT, 2004, P. 29). This spatial division between the anthropomorphic graves and the other medieval graves seems to indicate a deliberate choice. The motives for this choice are not clear, but these graves may indicate the social position and more specifically the higher status of the persons interred (VERVOORT, 2004, P. 30).

The two graves (see figure 8) consist of a human-shaped pit which was later cemented with mortar and fragments of tiles (VERVOORT, 2004, P. 29). The heads of the deceased were placed in a semi-circular alcove (VERVOORT, 2004, P. 30). The dead were placed on their backs and their arms and legs were stretched along the body. The graves were east-facing (VERVOORT, 2004, P. 30).

Physical-anthropological research showed that a 16 year old boy who probably suffered from scoliosis had been buried in one of the graves. Information about the other person interred in an anthropomorphic grave is not provided (VERVOORT, 2004, P. 30).

The archaeological report does not mention any known identities of the 2 recovered anthropomorphic graves (VERVOORT, 2004, P. 30). The appearance of both graves suggest that this site was meant for people from higher levels of society (BUYSE, 2004, P. 9).
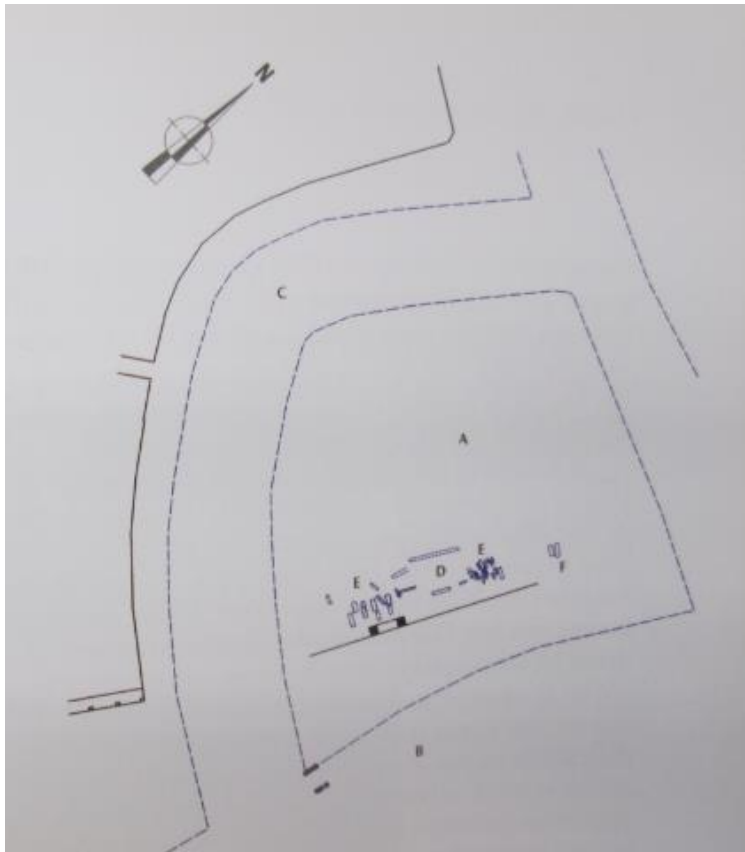
Figure 8: Plan of the excavation of the market of Dendermonde. The two graves in area F are anthropomorphic graves, located near the castle chapel (VERVOORT, 2004, P. 33).

The anthropomorphic graves were finished with a layer of lime mortar and fragments of tiles. Whether these tile fragments were re-used or specially made for this occasion is not known (VERVOORT, 2004, P. 29). The two graves did not contain any traces of grave-goods.

The dating of the anthropomorphic graves can be derived from the usage of the cemetery and Castle chapel. The Castle chapel and the adjacent cemetery both date from the 11th century.

3.1.5 Saint Lambertus church, Muizen

The Saint Lambertus church is situated in Muizen, which is located in the south-east of the municipality of Mechelen (province of Antwerp). The archaeological survey took place in 1949. The church of Muizen was destroyed by a bomb during the Second World War a few years earlier, in 1944; only the tower survived (MERTENS, 1950, P. 115).

In Muizen, both a parish church and a cloister church were in use (MERTENS, 1950, P. 134). The cloister church was built around 1380, while the parish church already existed at this time (MERTENS, 1950, P. 135).

On the site of the 15th century Gothic church that was excavated in 1949, two older stages were recovered. Under the fundaments of the Carolingian church, the remnants of a wooden church were found (MERTENS, 1950, P. 181).

The wooden church served as a burying place for the parishioners. Graves were also found surrounding the church. Since no graves showed evidence of grave-goods, archaeologists assume that the members of the community in Muizen were Christians (MERTENS, 1950, P. 184 AND 185). The church was probably constructed after the 7th century (MERTENS, 1950, P. 185). This church served until the 8th century before it was replaced with a stone church in Carolingian times (MERTENS, 1950, P. 185).

The site of Muizen is a subject of ongoing research. Mertens conducted an archaeological survey there in 1950. He assumed that the anthropomorphic graves found within the Saint Lambertus church were from a pre-10th century date. His dating of the graves is based on a *terminus antequem* of the church. It is not impossible that the anthropomorphic graves date from before the 10th century, as no exact dating was possible at the time and as research is still ongoing.

The stone church is now believed to date from the mid-10th century and follows the example of the octagon-shaped Aachen Palatine chapel and the church of St. Jean in Liège which was constructed under the direction of prince-bishop Notger (Prof. Dr. Tys and Prof. Dr. Declercq, personal communication, 19 June 2015).

At least 49 graves were recovered in Muizen (MERTENS, 1950, P. 186). Of these graves, three are of the anthropomorphic type (MERTENS, 1950, P. 186). These three graves differ from the

other graves; the deceased were placed directly into the soil. The pit in which the deceased were placed has the shape of a human, with a rectangular end at the feet (see figure 9). The heads were placed in an alcove (MERTENS, 1950, P. 186). The deceased were placed in their graves with their arms next to their bodies. These graves are east-facing; that is, the head of the deceased was placed in the west (MERTENS, 1950, P. 186).

Figure 9: One of the three anthropomorphic graves found in Muizen (MERTENS, 1950, P. 187).

There is no evidence for the use of wooden coffins or any other material, such as mortar or a shroud (MERTENS, 1950, P. 186). None of the three graves exhibited any signs of deliberate grave-goods.

No identification was mentioned in the report; but the fact that these persons were interred within the church can provides an indication of their social position (MERTENS, 1950, P. 187).

The dating of the graves can be derived from the use of the Saint-Lambertus Church. According to Mertens, the graves in the church are pre-10th century (MERTENS, 1950, P. 187).

3.1.6 Saint Hermes' church, Ronse

The site of the Saint Hermes' Church is situated in Ronse, which is located in the south of East-Flanders. The excavations, conducted north of the church, took place in 1948 (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 3). All of the current Kaatsplein was subjected to archaeological survey (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 6).

A total of 450 graves were recovered both from the mid-10th century cloister which was dedicated to Saint Hermes' and from inside the current Saint Peters' church (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 6 AND 7).

Of these graves, 23 anthropomorphic graves were found at the site of Saint Hermes' (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 6 AND 7). All of the graves were recovered from the Kaatsplein. This location used to be a cemetery, which has been linked to the contemporary church and cloister. The cloister is located in the western part of the site, while the Saint Peters' church was located in the eastern part of the site (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 6).

These graves were positioned above the deepest, and thus oldest, coffin graves. The stone graves were placed next to each other. Pits had been cut into the soil at the same level. The anthropomorphic graves were constructed with a few layers of stone held together with yellow sand or lime mortar (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 9). In some cases, the pits were sealed with a stone lid (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 9 AND 10). None of the deceased were buried in a wooden coffin; they were placed directly into the soil. The author indicates that this has to do with the alcove in which the head was placed; the shape of the alcove could not be integrated in a wooden coffin (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 11).

Figure 10: Grave found in the area surrounding St-Hermes. The grave has an anthropomorphic shape and was constructed with grey-green stones (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, PL. II).

Most of the deceased were buried with their arms next to their body. In one case, the deceased was placed with one arm on top of the pelvis. Possibly this person had both arms placed on the pelvis and the position changed due to the putrefaction process. In another case, the deceased was buried with his face downwards (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 11).

All anthropomorphic graves were east-facing (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 7).

In all cases the bottom was constructed with brick grit. In some cases, the inner walls of the stone graves were plastered with red limestone mortar; it is believed that it is not impossible that all anthropomorphic graves had a red interior (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 10). In one case, the stone lid was also coloured red on the inside, which must have been done before the deceased was placed in the grave (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 10).

It is noteworthy that one grave has a typical anthropomorphic shape with an alcove for the head. Grey-green fieldstones were used instead of the normal ironstone (see figure 10). The

report does not mention the provenance of these stones. The stones were piled up into 4 layers in order to delineate the grave (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 10).

10 out of the total of 23 graves contained an endotaph, on which the name, profession and day of death of the deceased was mentioned. Of these, 9 were made from re-used Roman tiles. The last endotaph was made from lead (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 12-15). The endotaphs were rectangular. The scribed side was been placed directly under the head of the deceased (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 11).

The endotaphs made it possible to identify the deceased:

- Priest and canon Almoricus (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 11)
- Deacon Tibaldus (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 12)
- Deacon Erenbertus (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 12)
- Dean Everardus (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 12 AND 13)
- Priest Balduinus (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 13)
- Canon Arnulphus (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 13 AND 14)
- Priest Salefridus (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 13 AND 14)
- Priest Werenbaldus (ROOSENS & MERTENS, (1950, P. 14)
- Priest Eldebaldus (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 14)
- Priest Tasmarus (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 15)

In Appendix A, more details about the endotaphs are provided.

Two endotaphs were not found in situ, but were recovered from the site. These endotaphs belonged to priests Werenbaldus and Eldebaldus (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 14).

The 10th century grave held the remains of priest Tasmarus. It is noteworthy that his endotaph was made from lead (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 15).

A deliberate grave-good was found in only one grave (see figure 11). Dean Everardus was buried with a bronze ring with a stone. This ring is assumed to relate to his profession (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 11).
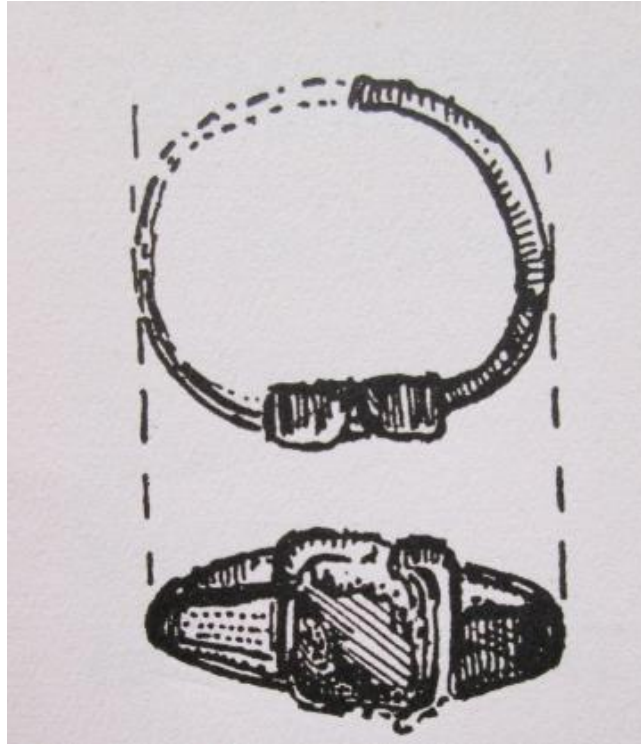
Figure 11: Bronze ring with stone, found in the grave of dean Everardus (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 11).

The dating of the graves can be derived from the stratigraphy of the site. The foundations of the church provide a *terminus antequem* for this type of grave. The deepest graves on the cemetery date from around the 9th and 10th centuries. Several graves were disturbed by the construction of the Saint Peters' church (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 8 AND 9).

The endotaphs, which were present in ten of the anthropomorphic graves, were dated by the stylistic shape of the letters. On this basis, it is assumed that they were from the 12th century or older; the letters have no Gothic elements (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 16). Another argument for the 12th century date is the cross marks that preceded some texts. These cross marks are common in 12th-century charters from chanceries of Doornik and Kamerijk (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 16).

3.1.7 Old Church, Edegem-Buizegem

The site of the Old Church is situated in the district of Buizegem in Edegem in the province of Antwerp (VANDEVELDE ET AL., 2007, P. 10). Buizegem lays where two rivers converge (VANDEVELDE ET AL., 2007, P. 12). The excavation surrounding the church took place in 2005 and covered only a small part of the whole cemetery (VANDEVELDE ET AL., 2007, P. 13). Earlier excavation took place in 1973. It is not known how many graves were retrieved during this campaign. Building activities may have destroyed funerary structures (VANDEVELDE ET AL., 2007, P. 32). A direct link between the Old Church and the graves interred in the cemetery cannot be assumed (VANDERVELDE ET AL., 2007, P. 34).

During the archaeological survey in Edegem-Buizegem, a total of 22 graves were recovered. It is possible that there were more graves in the excavated part, but these were too fragmented to be defined as grave structures (VANDEVELDE ET AL., 2007, P. 32). One grave has been identified as an anthropomorphic grave. This grave is a child's grave. The determination of this grave as a child's grave is based on anthropological survey of the remaining bone fragments and on the measurements of the grave (VANDERVELDE ET AL., 2007, P. 32).

On the cemetery of the Old Church, a total of 5 children's grave were found. The anthropomorphic grave is one of them (see figure 12). These graves were placed in the southern area of the cemetery (VANDEVELDE ET AL., 2007, P. 32). The children's graves were slightly deeper than the graves used to inter adults. The latter were 1 m deep (VANDEVELDE ET AL., 2007, P. 34).

The report does not elaborate on the appearance of the anthropomorphic grave; nevertheless, according to the drawing and the description, it is an anthropomorphic grave. The report states that,

> "… de grafkuil min of meer de vorm van het lichaam heeft met een ronde of rechthoekige uitsparing voor het hoofd" (VANDEVELDE ET AL., 2007, P. 32).

The deceased in the anthropomorphic grave has been placed east-facing (VANDEVELDE ET AL., 2007, P. 32).
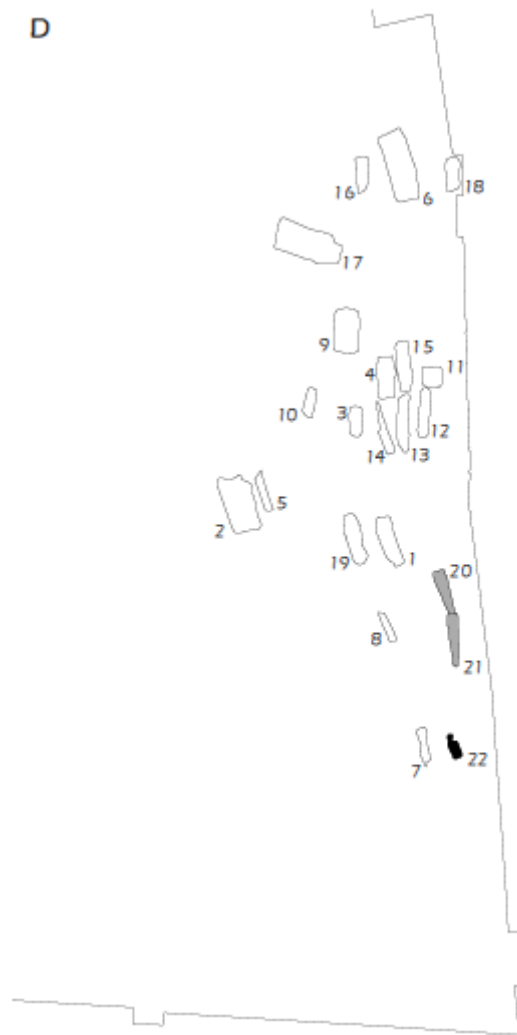
Figure 12: One of the four sections of the cemetery of Edegem-Buizegem. Grave number 22 is the anthropomorphic children's grave (VANDEVELDE ET AL., 2007, P. 33).

It is assumed that the anthropomorphic grave did not contain a wooden coffin; the deceased was placed directly into the soil. There is no evidence for the use of lime mortar. No traces have been found of a wooden or stone plate to seal the grave (VANDEVELDE ET AL., 2007, P. 32). The deceased did not receive any grave-goods.

Identification of the child is not provided (VANDEVELDE ET AL., 2007, P. 32).

The dating of the child's anthropomorphic grave can be situated between the 10th and 12th centuries. This date can be derived from the usage of the cemetery (VANDEVELDE ET AL., 2007, P. 34).

3.1.8 Saint Willibrordus' church, Meldert (Lummen)

The site of the Saint Willibrordus' church is situated in Meldert, a municipality of Lummen, in the province of Limburg. The site consists of the high-medieval cemetery which surrounded the Saint Willibrordus' church in the borough of Meldert (GRUWIER & VANDER GINST, 2012, P. 3). The excavation within and around the church took place in 2011-2012 (GRUWIER & VANDER GINST, 2012, P.4).

A total of 30 graves were recovered (GRUWIER & VANDER GINST, 2012, P. 41 AND 44). These graves were situated either within the church or in the near proximity of it. They were not all from the same date, as some graves were intercut by the construction of others (GRUWIER & VANDER GINST, 2012, P. 41).

Of these graves, one can be defined as an anthropomorphic grave (GRUWIER & VANDER GINST, 2012, P. 44). The anthropomorphic grave was found south of the church tower in Meldert. This grave intersected another pit. The skull of the deceased in the anthropomorphic grave had been disturbed by a square pit (GRUWIER & VANDER GINST, 2012, P. 44). The excavation report of this site does not give much information concerning this single anthropomorphic grave.

The anthropomorphic grave follows the human shape and has an alcove for the head (see figure 13). The grave was disturbed by later burials (GRUWIER & VANDER GINST, 2012, P. 44 AND 101).

The anthropomorphic grave was east-facing. This means that the head was placed in the west (GRUWIER & VANDER GINST, 2012, P. 41).
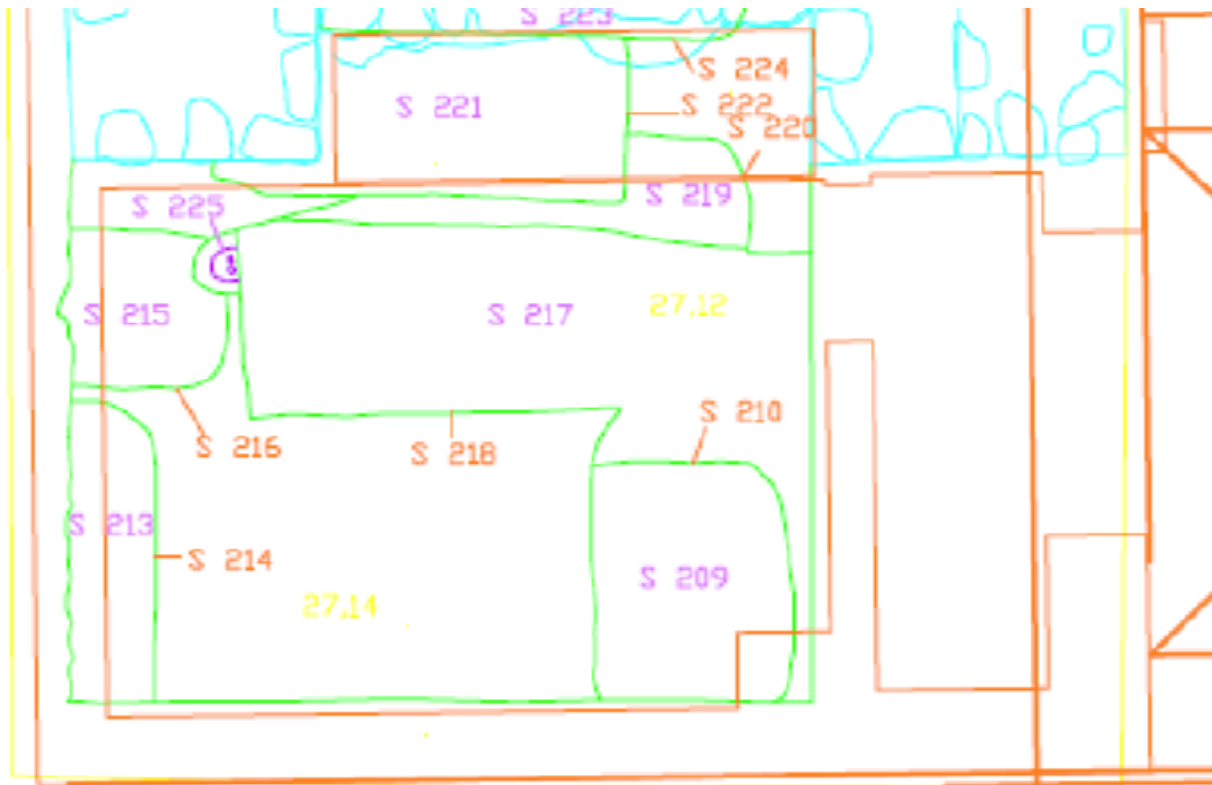
Vlak 4

Figure 13: Anthropomorphic grave in the middle of spit 4 (S 225). The grave is cut by a pit. The grave itself cuts another pit (SMEETS & VANDER GINST, 2012, P. 101).

The report does not elaborate on the materials used for the anthropomorphic grave, but there is no evidence for a wooden coffin or a lid to seal the grave, nor for layers of mortar to finish the grave. No grave-goods were recovered from this grave.

Although an osteological survey was performed on several skeletons, no such survey was performed on the anthropomorphic grave (S225). Therefore, it was not possible to identify the person interred (GRUWIER & VANDER GINST, 2012, P. 45-56).

The report does not elaborate on the date of the grave, but Meldert is mentioned in the written sources from the 11th century onwards (GRUWIER & VANDER GINST, 2012, P. 10). Because one of the graves in spit 4 was disturbed by the construction of the tower of the medieval church, it is assumed that the graves in spit 4 are medieval (GRUWIER & VANDER GINST, 2012, P. 44).

3.1.9 Saint Lambertus chapel, Heverlee

The site of the Saint Lambertus chapel is located in Heverlee, which is a municipality in the south of Leuven (Flemish Brabant). The archaeological survey took place in 1960 due to the restauration of the 11th century Saint Lambertus chapel (MERTENS, 1969, P. 5). Previous archaeological research was conducted between 1936 and 1937 (MERTENS, 1969, P. 5). The Saint Lambertus Chapel served as a parish church until the beginning of the 15th century. The counts of Heverlee also used the chapel as a last resting place for the members of their family (MERTENS, 1969, P. 28).

A total of 75 graves were recovered during the archaeological survey in 1960 and were found in the western part of the excavated site (MERTENS, 1969, P. 18). This report does not state what remains were uncovered during the previously conducted survey campaign (MERTENS, 1969, P. 19). Of the graves found, only one can be defined as an anthropomorphic grave (MERTENS, 1969, P. 29). The anthropomorphic grave was situated in the northern aisle (MERTENS, 1969, P. 28). During the construction of this grave, some older graves were disturbed (MERTENS, 1969, P. 29). The deceased had been placed in a pit, which was then formed to mirror the shape of a human. An alcove was made for the head of the deceased. The end of the grave was narrowed towards the feet of the deceased; it has a tapered end (MERTENS, 1969, P. 29).

The deceased was placed with his arms next to his body (MERTENS, 1969, P. 29). The head of the deceased was east-facing (MERTENS, 1969, P. 28).
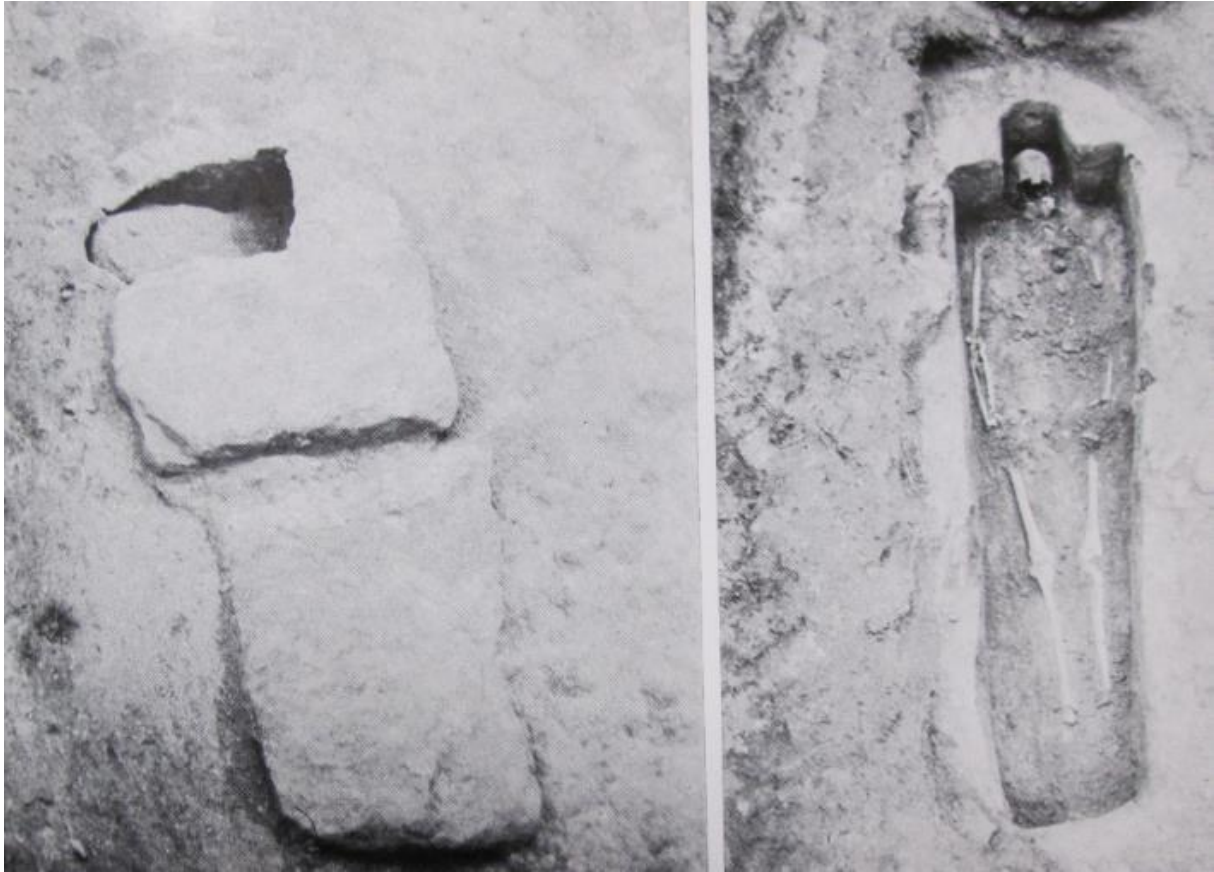
Figure 14: Anthropomorphic grave in the northern aisle of the Saint Lambertus Chapel in Heverlee. The grave had been sealed with four ironstone grave plates (MERTENS, 1969, P. 29).

Both the walls and the bottom of the grave were constructed of brown ironstone (see figure 14), which was then finished with a layer of white mortar. This mortar might have been the same used to construct the Roman chapel (MERTENS, 1969, P. 29). Four ironstone grave plates were used to seal the grave. The report does not mention the provenance of the ironstone. The head of the deceased is placed on top of a stone in order to keep the head upwards. The smaller ends of the grave consist of a pile of stones. These piles serve as pillars for the ironstone plates (MERTENS, 1969, P. 29). There was no evidence of grave-goods (MERTENS, 1969, P. 28).

The report does not provide an identification of the deceased in the grave; no grave-markers or endotaphs were found.

The dating of the graves in Heverlee can be derived from the usage of the cemetery. The graves which belong to the oldest stage of the graveyard probably date from before the 11th century stone church was constructed. These graves may have belonged to a cemetery that does not exist anymore. A place of worship probably stood there, but no remains were found (MERTENS, 1969, P. 19).

The anthropomorphic grave is common between the 11th and 13th centuries in the area around Leuven (MERTENS, 1969, P. 30). Mertens makes a comparison with the anthropomorphic grave belonging to Conigunda, found in Leuven (MERTENS, 1969, P. 30).

3.1.10 Saint Rumbald cemetery and church, Mechelen

The site of the Saint Rumbald cemetery and church is located in the city centre of Mechelen, which is situated in Flemish-Brabant. The archaeological survey was conducted between 2009 and 2011 (DEPUYDT, 2013, P. 9). In 2008, a preliminary research campaign was set up to examine the site (DEPUYDT, 2013, P. 11). On the site of the Saint Rumbold cemetery that existed between 1000 and 1785, several graves were recovered during the excavation in 2013 (DEPUYDT, 2013, P. 16).

The area in which the archaeological survey was conducted was delineated by the 'Huis Concordia' in the north, the Newton building in the east, the street 'Sint Romboutskerkhof' in the south and the street 'Sint Kathelijnestraat' in the west (DEPUYDT, 2013, P. 17). Both north and south of the Saint Rumbald church, parishioners were interred from the 13th century onwards (DEPUYDT, 2013, P. 13). The archaeological survey carried out in Mechelen resulted in 3575 primary graves that were recovered (DEPUYDT, 2013, P. 66). The 16 graves near the Monument der Gesneuvelden have been divided into three stages: skeletons in a dark brown, weak, loamy sand layer; skeletons in a brown, weak, loamy sand layer; and skeletons in the yellow mother soil (DEPUYDT, 2013, P. 12). The first layer was dated between the 17th and 18th centuries, the second layer between the 15th and 16th centuries, and the third and last layer between the 12th and 14th centuries (DEPUYDT, 2013, P. 28).

Of the 3575 graves, 4 anthropomorphic graves were recovered. The report does not give a clear definition of anthropomorphic graves, but it can be assumed that these graves are from the type included in this thesis, as other graves on this site are described as tapered and oval graves (DEPUYDT, 2013, P. 79; see figure 15).

Already in 1235, the cemetery of Saint Rumbold was mentioned in a written document. Graves have been found both north and south of the Saint Rumbold church. Although the cemetery was mentioned in the 13th century, it may have been in use from the 10th century onwards when the chapter of Saint Rumbold was established to guard the relics of Rumbold (DEPUYDT, 2013, P. 13).

The report on the excavation of the Saint Rumbald cemetery in Mechelen differentiates 5 types of grave: one is a rectangular grave with a coffin, and 4 types are graves without

coffins. The latter can be divided into oval graves, irregular graves, tapered graves and anthropomorphic graves (DEPUYDT, 2013, P. 78).

Frequencies Gravecut

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Rectangle	288	7,9	34,1	34,1
	Trapezoid	531	14,5	62,8	96,9
	Oval	17	,5	2,0	98,9
	Anthropomorph	4	,1	,5	99,4
	Irregular	5	,1	,6	100,0
	Total	845	23,1	100,0	
Missing	System	2820	76,9		
Total		3665	100,0		

Figure 15: Frequencies of the type of graves found at the Saint Rumbold graveyard in Mechelen (DEPUYDT, 2013, P. 79).

The anthropomorphic graves were place directly into the soil. There was no evidence for the use of wooden coffins or any other material to construct or delineate the grave (DEPUYDT, 2013, P. 79). The 4 graves had no signs of deliberate grave-goods.

Most of the graves were placed in a West-East Orientation. The head of the deceased was thus east-facing; the head was placed in the west (DEPUYDT, 2013, P. 66).

As no markers were found, either above-ground or within, it was not possible to elaborate on the identification of the deceased.

According to the report, anthropomorphic graves can be dated between 1200 and 1350 by comparison with other graveyards from which anthropomorphic graves have been recovered (DEPUYDT, 2013, P. 79).

3.1.11 Saint Peters' church, Leuven

The site of the Saint Peters' church is located in the city centre of Leuven (Flemish-Brabant). Around 1425, the old Roman church of Leuven was replaced by a Gothic church, which is now still known as the Saint Peters' church (MERTENS, 1958, P. 1).

Due to the bombing of the city of Leuven during the Second World War, archaeologists were able to carry out an archaeological survey in and around Saint Peters' church, which was also bombed during the First World War. The excavations took place between 1953 and 1954 and again in 1957 (MERTENS, 1958, P. 1 AND 2). The excavation conducted in 1957 was not exhaustive, as it was impossible to investigate the parts under the current church (MERTENS, 1958, P. 2).

The total number of graves which have been recovered is not mentioned. However, the report comments on the fact that some graves had been intercut by the construction of the Gothic church and are therefore older than this building (MERTENS, 1958, P. 2). At least 6 graves can be identified by looking at the photograph included in the report of the excavation, but the exact number cannot be given (MERTENS, 1958, P. 4).

Beneath the transept of the current church lay the remnants of the former Roman church, which had the same orientation as the current Saint Peters' church (MERTENS, 1958, P. 2). Due to the presence of graves under the Roman church, archaeologists assume that this Roman building had a predecessor (MERTENS, 1958, P. 2). One anthropomorphic grave was recovered in the axe of the Romanesque nave within Saint Peters' church (MERTENS, 1958, P. 4). Because the anthropomorphic grave was not intercut by any structure, it can be assumed that it was placed within the church during the commissioning of the Romanesque church (MERTENS, 1958, P. 4).

The only anthropomorphic grave found in Saint Peters' Church has an alcove for the head and a rectangular shape towards the feet (MERTENS, 1958, P. 4; see figure 16).

The walls of the grave were finished with a red layer that was spread out over the masonry. The material used here is not mentioned, but in analogy with other sites, it may have been lime mortar mixed with either earthenware or bricks (MERTENS, 1958, P. 4).

The grave was east-facing. This means that the head of the deceased was placed in the west such that his countenance was directed towards the east (MERTENS, 1958, P. 4).

Figure 16: The anthropomorphic grave of Conigunda in Leuven (MERTENS, 1958, P. 5).

The anthropomorphic grave contained a fragmental Roman tile that served as an endotaph within the grave and made identification possible (MERTENS, 1958, P. 4 AND 5). The anthropomorphic grave contained no grave-goods (MERTENS, 1958, P. 2).

The skeleton of the deceased in this grave probably belonged to a young female between the ages of 20 and 25. In her grave, a fragment of a Roman tile had been incised with her name; her date of death was also mentioned. *PRIDIE NON(as) IULII OBIIT / CONIGUNDA* translates to, *On the 6th of July, Conigunda died.* The year of death is not mentioned (MERTENS, 1958, P. 4 AND 5).

In Appendix A, more details are provided about the endotaphs.

According to historical written sources, Conigunda was the daughter of Hendrik I, the count of Leuven in that period. There are no entries about her life in any written sources (MERTENS, 1958, P. 5). Her father died in 1038 and was buried in the Saint-Gertrudis church in Nijvel (MERTENS, 1958, P. 5 AND 6).

The dating of the grave can be derived from the endotaph found within. The grave is believed to belong to Conigunda, a woman who died in the first half of the 11th century (MERTENS, 1958, P. 5 AND 6). On a stratigraphic level, the grave is older than the church itself (MERTENS, 1958, P. 6).

3.2 Summary of material characteristics of head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic graves

To visually sum up the material characteristics of the head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic graves of the data-set, tables of the main features have been composed. These can be found in Appendices C, D and E. They deal with appearance, construction types and dating, respectively.

At the end of this summary, a table is presented that combines the construction type of the graves (earth-dug, semi-constructed or constructed) with the period in which they occur on the selected sites.

Below, a textual summary of the aspects that were described earlier per site is presented in an overview.

Short description of site and excavation

The category *Excavation* is excluded from the results, because it does not tell us more about the material characteristics of the anthropomorphic graves. However, it should be mentioned that 5 of the 11 sites were excavated before the mid-twentieth century. This needs to be taken into account when discussing the results. It is possible that archaeologists in this period of time did not acknowledge the importance of the type of grave discussed in this thesis. We need to bear in mind that this type of grave does not occur often (see relative occurrence in table); hence, archaeologists may not have recognized the specific head-and-shoulder outlined shape of the grave. Period of excavation is not always determinant, however. The most recently excavated site in the data-set is that of Saint Rumbald church and cemetery in Mechelen, which was excavated in 2013. This site contained 4 anthropomorphic graves, but they were not described elaborately. Perhaps this is because the large number of graves found in this site, but it is remarkable that the report does not say what is meant by *anthropomorphic*. To quote Flinders Petrie: "A man does not find anything he does not look for" (FLINDERS PETRIE, 1904, P. 49). The difficulty with medieval graves is that they are found in the deepest layers of a cemetery and are often intercut by younger graves. Building activities in recent periods can also be a negative factor in the preservation of anthropomorphic graves. This is something to keep in mind while examining the data-sets available for research (THOMPSON, 2002, P. 230 AND 231).

Relative occurrence of anthropomorphic graves

This specific type of grave appears to be relatively rare; in 9 out of 11 sites, the proportion was under 11 % (see table of occurrence). On both sites in Gent, however, more than one third to more than half of the recovered graves are of the anthropomorphic type. The site of Saint Peters' square and Tweekerkenstraat in Gent contains 36.42% anthropomorphic graves. The site of Saint Baafs' abbey and the Chapter house in Gent had an even higher percentage of anthropomorphic graves: 53.57%. Gent is remarkable for the occurrence of anthropomorphic graves; it is a monumental site indeed. However, it needs to be noted that the site of Saint Peter square and the Tweekerkenstraat contains three types of anthropomorphic graves. The third type is similar in shape to coffin graves, except for the fact that there is no use of coffins. This type of grave does not fit the definition of this thesis, as there is no alcove or recess for the head. The archaeological report does not, however, mention the exact number of graves from the third type.

In 4 of 11 sites, the proportion of anthropomorphic graves was under 5%. The site of the Saint Rumbald cemetery and church in Mechelen contains only 0.11% anthropomorphic graves. Just 4 out of a total of 3575 graves recovered were of the anthropomorphic type. Three other sites contain a low percentage of anthropomorphic graves: the site of Saint Lambertus Chapel in Heverlee contains 1.33%; the site of Saint Willibrodus Church in Meldert contains 3.33 % and the site of the Old Church in Edegem-Buizegem contains 4.55%.

Appearance, types of construction and used materials

Appearance

In 6 out of the 11 sites, the anthropomorphic graves has a tapered shape. This means that the grave is smaller towards the feet. In most graves, the end was rectangular. Only two sites—Saint Baafs Abbey and Chapter house in Gent and the Village centre of Moorsel—had tapered graves with a circular end. The site of Saint Baafs Abbey and Chapter house had a combination of tapered graves with both circular and rectangular ends towards the feet. Apparently, the execution of the tapered end did not matter. Possibly the execution was decided by the grave digger. Perhaps the site of Saint Baafs Abbey and Chapter house had multiple grave diggers or were not contemporary; but these possibilities are hard to test archaeologically.

Of the remaining 5 sites, the reports on the excavation in Meldert and Mechelen do not elaborate on the exact shape of the anthropomorphic graves. The site of Saint Willibrordus' church in Meldert contains 1 anthropomorphic grave, but it is intersected by another pit. Only the round alcove can be seen. The conclusion that this is indeed a head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic grave was based on the plan. The report in the excavation of the Saint Rumbald cemetery in Mechelen does not elaborate on the shape of the graves. Because the report differentiates between oval, irregular, tapering and anthropomorphic graves, we can assume that the 4 graves had an alcove and are either rectangular or tapered towards the feet.

The site of the Castle chapel and cemetery in Dendermonde contains 2 graves with a round shape at the feet and a semi-circular alcove for the head. The site of the Old Church in Edegem-Buizegem contains 1 grave with a rectangular shape and a round alcove. The site of Saint Peters' Church in Leuven contains 1 grave with a rectangular shape and a round alcove.

In 4 out of the 11 sites, the alcove for the head has a rectangular shape. The two sites in Gent have a combination of graves with a circular and a rectangular alcove. Again, the execution might have been decided by the grave-digger or perhaps by members of the family.

Types of construction

The following 3 types of anthropomorphic grave all occur on the selected sites considered in this thesis: 1) simple earth-dug graves, 2) semi-constructed graves with a layer of mortar or with natural or roughly carved stones to delineate the shape of the head and shoulders, and 3) constructed graves with neatly piled layers of bricks or carved stones held together with mortar. In a table at the end of this summary, the occurrence of each construction type will be linked to the dating of the graves.

Elevated rest for the head

In 4 of the 11 sites, the recess for the head was elevated in some of the graves. This platform helped to keep the head of the deceased directed towards the chest. The sites of Saint Baafs Abbey and Chapter house and the site of the Saint Peters' Church and Tweekerkenstraat in Gent contained several anthropomorphic graves with an alcove that was elevated through the use of two steps within the recess on which the head was placed.
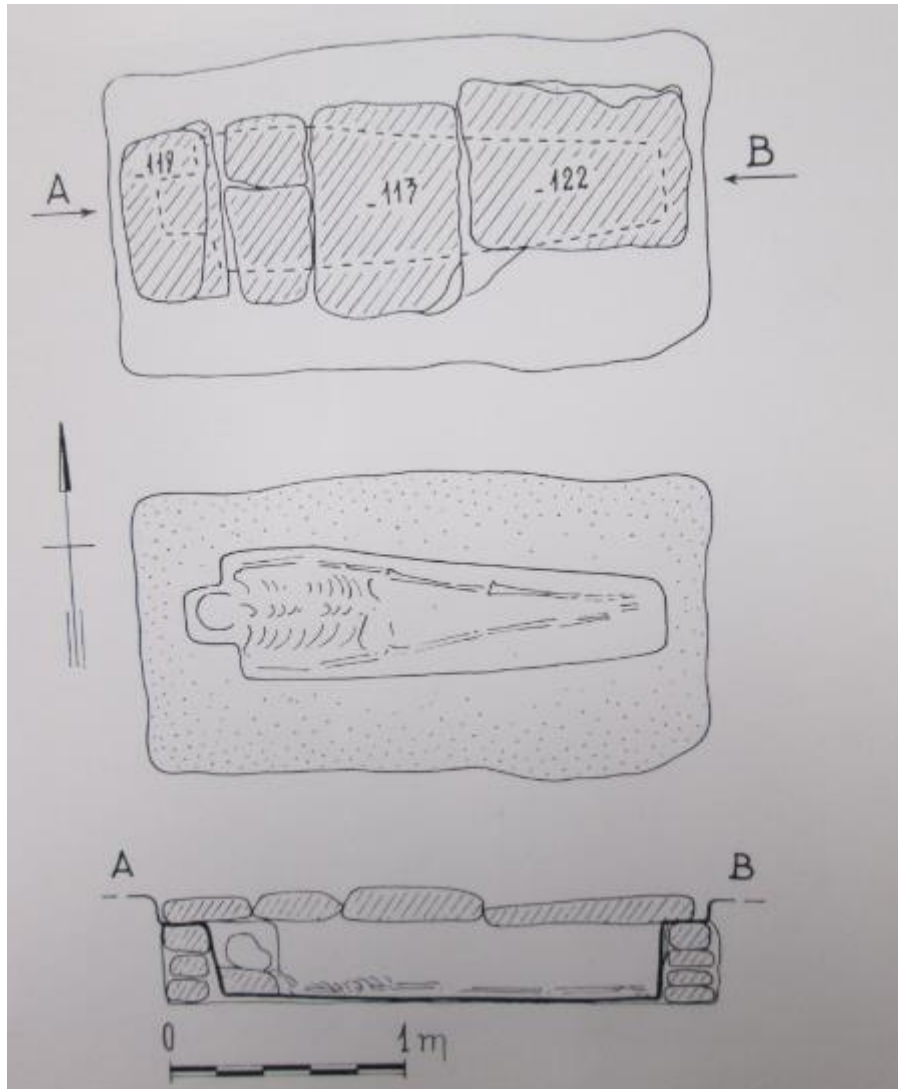
Figure 17: Construction of anthropomorphic grave in the northern aisle of the Saint Lambertus Chapel in Heverlee (MERTENS, 1969, P. 30).

The site of the village centre of Moorsel contained one grave with a gradual platform for the head. The only anthropomorphic grave recovered on the site of Heverlee also had a stone upon which the head of the deceased could rest.

Materials

In 4 of the 11 sites, no materials were used to construct or delineate the grave. These graves were simple earth-dug graves with an alcove. The deceased were placed directly into the soil. On the remaining sites, 5 sites contained anthropomorphic graves which were finished with a

layer of lime mortar. The site of Leuven contained a red material, but the report does not mention the material with which this layer was constructed. Of the sites that used lime mortar, three made use of red coloured mortar. According the report on the site of Saint Peters' church and Tweekerkenstraat in Gent, this red colour could either be obtained by mixing earthenware or bricks in the mortar before applying or by sprinkling it just after the lime mortar was applied to the walls and bottom of the graves. The site of Saint Baafs' Abbey and Chapter house in Gent and the site of Heverlee contained anthropomorphic graves that were finished with a layer of white lime mortar. The first site contained graves with either red or white lime mortar. It is noteworthy that the excavation report of the excavation of Heverlee mentions that the white lime mortar used in the graves is the same that was used to construct the floors of the chapel. The site of the Castle chapel and church in Dendermonde contained two graves with a layer of lime mortar, but the report does not mention the colour of this material. It is remarkable that the sites which used red lime mortar are situated in the current province of East-Flanders. This may indicate a regional practice based on the availability of material. It must be stated, however, that two other sites in East-Flanders—those of Moorsel and Dendermonde—did not use (red) lime mortar.

The report of Saint Peters' Church and Tweekerkenstraat in Gent mentions that limestone was obtained from Doornik—a noted production site in the middle ages. Due to the location of Gent near the Scheldt, this site had easy access to this material. The availability of this material may have influenced the choice of materials used to construct a grave.

As the report on the site of the Saint Peters' Church and Tweekerkenstraat in Gent mentions, limestone from Doornik was imported through the Scheldt into Gent. Due to the location of Saint Peters' abbey, which lay beside the Scheldt, the building structures could be easily provided with limestone from Doornik (BRU, LALEMAN & VERMEIREN, 2009, P. 43).

The first use of limestone from Doornik in Gent can be dated to Carolingian times. The limestone was used to construct the buildings known as Saint Baafs' abbey and Saint Peters' abbey (BRU, LALEMAN & VERMEIREN, 2009, P. 43).

Sealing for the anthropomorphic graves was not used in 6 of the total of 11 sites. The site of Saint Peters' Square and Tweekerkenstraat in Gent and the site of Moorsel contained some graves that were sealed with wooden lids. Due to the perishable nature of wood, the use of this material can only be inferred from remnants of the lids. The aforementioned site in Gent also contained one grave that had a stone lid. The other site in Gent contained two graves

which were sealed with plates fabricated from limestone from Doornik. On the site of Ronse, one anthropomorphic grave contained a stone lid. It is noticeable that this lid was painted red on the inside, probably before the plate was put into place. The site of the Saint Lambertus Chapel in Heverlee contained one grave that was sealed with 4 ironstone plates.

It is remarkable that none of the deceased seem to have been wrapped in or sewed into a shroud before being placed in their graves. Due to the often sandy layers of Flanders, it is possible however that the deceased were indeed covered, but that the textiles did not survive due to their perishable nature.

Orientation

In all the sites, the graves were placed east-facing. This means that the head of the deceased is placed in the west so that the deceased will gaze towards Jesus Christ on Resurrection Day. This means that the occupants of the anthropomorphic graves were probably Christian during life and wanted to display this faith in their graves. However, this choice could also have been made by the relatives of the deceased. In the site of Saint Baafs' Abbey and Chapter house in Gent, 12 graves were recovered in the Chapter house. The report on this excavation does not elaborate on the orientation of the graves. The same site was excavated again sometime later; during this excavation two of the three graves were east-facing.

Grave-goods

During the high-middle ages it was not common custom to bury a person with grave-goods; few to no sites have graves with grave-goods. However, at the site of Saint Hermes' Church in Ronse, Dean Everardus was buried with a bronze ring with a stone. This ring was probably a sign of his office as dean. It is part of the display of social position of this type of grave. The site of the Village centre of Moorsel contains one grave that held a sherd of Rhinelands earthenware. This is probably not a deliberate grave good, but an unintentionally placed sherd from a pot. This sherd helped establish the dating for the grave at this site.

Identification and dating

Identification of the deceased is possible when there are sources that indicate who the person was. These sources can be present in the graves or in other places. In four sites, endotaphs were recovered. Endotaphs are small stones or lead plates with inscriptions. These were often placed under the head of the deceased. In the case of Leuven, however, the endotaph was placed against one of the inner walls. Endotaphs usually contain the name of the deceased and the day of his death, sometimes his profession and some indication of the person he was to the community. Almost all of the endotaphs that were found in the anthropomorphic graves in the data-set belong to people that held functions within the abbey or the church: priests, abbots, canons, deacons, and a dean. But one layman also received an endotaph, as did a young woman from a noble family.

The endotaphs that have been found in Saint-Baafs' abbey in Gent had the same stylistic characteristics as the plates of Ronse. The plates of Gent date from the 11th to 12th centuries (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 17).

As the inscriptions on the endotaphs are important to identify the deceased but too long to be included here, full descriptions of all endotaphs are included in the appendix A of this thesis.

On the site of Saint Baafs' abbey and chapter house in Gent, the endotaphs mention two abbots—Odwinus and Othelboldus—who succeeded each other. The other site in Gent—that of Saint Peters' square and Tweekerkenstraat—contained one grave with an endotaph. Vulferus was placed in this grave. He was a layman, but seems to have been included at the higher levels of society. The third site from which endotaphs were recovered is that of Saint Hermes' church in Ronse. Here, 10 endotaphs were found within graves that could help to identify the interred. Of the 10 people, 6 were priests. Almoricus was both a priest and a canon. Two people were identified as deacons. Only one was considered a canon.

The last site is Saint Peters' Church in Leuven. Here, an endotaph was found leaning against the wall of the grave. The interred could be identified as Conigunda, who was the daughter of the contemporary count of Leuven.

Another way to identify a person is through historical written sources. This was the case for two people buried near the western entrance of Saint Peter's Church in Gent. One grave is believed to belong to Sir Audacer, the father of Count Boudewijn I. The latter was the ancestor of the counts of Flanders (DECLERCQ & DIERKENS, 2009, P. 130). The other grave

possibly belonged to Judith, daughter of the West-Frankish king Charles the Bald and spouse of Boudewijn I (DECLERCQ & DIERKENS, 2009, P. 130).

The graves on the site of Saint Lambertus Church in Muizen are probably pre-10th century. The remaining sites fit the period between the 9th and the 13th centuries, with a focus in the 11th and 12th centuries. The graves on the site of the Saint Rumbald cemetery in Mechelen can be dated between 1200 and 1350.

Dating of the graves is often based on either historical sources or on material objects which can be dated easily, such as sherds of pottery. The 4 sites that contain endotaphs could be dated because of these stone tablets. Other sites were dated based on *terminus antequem*, historical sources or osteological research.

Table 2 illustrates the various construction types within the head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic graves that occur in the data-set, situated in time: that is, between the 9th and 13th centuries. These construction types are based on the scheme composed by archaeologist Marc Durand (DURAND, 1988B, P. 168). Anthropomorphic graves can be divided into earth-dug graves, semi-constructed and constructed graves. Earth-dug graves are graves that are cut directly into the soil. No other construction materials are used (DURAND, 1988B, P. 168). What differentiates the earth-dug grave from a pit grave is the addition of a recess for the head. The second category is the semi-constructed grave. This grave demands more work to ensure the human-like shape; there are two types. The first type is the earth-dug grave with a layer of lime-mortar or other material. This grave is constructed in the same manner as the earth-dug grave; the only difference is the addition of lime mortar or other material to fix the shape and delineate the grave in the dark soil. The second type of semi-constructed grave is the stone-delineated grave. At least one grave—that of Vulferus on the site of St Peters' Church and Tweekerkenstraat in Gent—can be defined as stone-delineated. This is an earth-dug grave with a recess in which the contours are delineated with stones (DURAND, 1988B, P. 198). A third category of anthropomorphic grave, even more elaborated than the semi-constructed grave, is the constructed grave. This is a grave that is constructed either using piles of stones or bricks, or cut into the surface of a rock. The inside of this type of grave is often finished with a layer of lime mortar.

These three types of grave all occur between the 9th and 13th centuries, although some options seem to have been used for a limited time within that period only. The semi-constructed grave seems to have been dominant in the 10th and 11th century. Of the 11 sites in the studied data-

set, three sites contain this type of grave. The site of Saint Peters' Church and Tweekerkenstraat in Gent, which is abbreviated to Gent (2) in the table, contain the stone-delineated grave of Vulferus. The remaining two categories are found on 5 sites each. The sites of Saint Baafs' abbey and Chapter house, Gent (1) in the table, and Saint Peters' Church and Tweekerkenstraat in Gent contain both semi-constructed and constructed graves. The constructed graves seem to have been used throughout the whole period, although a peak in their use can be observed between the 10th and 12th centuries. Within the category of the earth-dug graves, only the site of Saint Rumbald's church and cemetery seem to have earth-dug graves that were dated in the 13th century. A 13th century constructed grave was found on the site of Heverlee.

		9th century	10th century	11th century	12th century	13th century
Earth-dug	Moorsel					
	Muizen					
	Edegem-Buizegem					
	Meldert					
	Mechelen					
Semi-constructed	Gent (1)					
	Gent (2)					
	Dendermonde					
Constructed	Gent (1)					
	Gent (2)					
	Ronse					
	Heverlee					
	Leuven					

Table 2 : Head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic grave construction types over time[7]

[7] The illustrations used in table 2 are taken from Durand's illustration on different grave types in the medieval period in France (DURAND, 1988B, P. 169).

4 Immaterial meaning

4.1 Introduction

Having described the material characteristics of the graves in the data-set, we may now consider the second research question, which deals with their immaterial meaning. What is the significance of head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic graves in Flanders during the 9th to 13th centuries? Because a grave does not directly reveal the thoughts and intentions behind it, interpretation of the material culture is needed. The authors of the excavation reports and the descriptions of the graves in the data-set rarely provide this interpretation. I have found no Flemish or Dutch studies concerned with head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic graves. Professor Dr. George Declercq confirms that there is no known Flemish literature regarding medieval views on death (PROF. DR. G. DECLERCQ, PERSONAL COMMUNICATION 19 JUNE, 2015).

Therefore, I have studied the work of several European scholars who have written either about death, burial and medieval society or about anthropomorphic graves and their significance. The authors consulted agree in defining *anthropomorphic* as following the human shape, including an alcove or recess for the head. Their observations are based, of course, on archaeological data in their own countries of research. I will mention some of these findings—which are by no means exhaustive—not for comparative reasons, but only to demonstrate that this particular kind of anthropomorphic grave was known in several European countries surrounding Flanders. Here, again, the lack of homogeneity in terminology arises: no common name is used, which makes finding and comparing archaeological sites difficult.

In order to explore possible interpretations of the use of anthropomorphic graves, I will follow the aspects mentioned in the introduction of the research questions. In the summary chapter, I apply these findings to the Flanders data-set to see if and to what extent the interpretational context also fits here.

A global search of archaeological reports on anthropomorphic graves shows that this type of burial is, to some extent and under different denominations, also known in the contemporary countries of the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Germany, Romania and the United Kingdom. The search was not exhaustive, of course, but a first orientation shows that the Flanders data-set is not unique. This provides an opportunity to develop an interpretative framework; comparison of the findings of the excavations abroad with the Flemish findings is, however, not within the scope of this thesis.

The Netherlands

In the Netherlands, an archaeological survey was conducted on and near the Roman choir of the 11th century Maria church in Utrecht (DE GROOT ET AL., 1989, P. 54). No graves were found within the choir, but there were three graves just outside the choir wall. Two of them contained the remains of male adults in human-shaped, coffin-less, trapezoidal graves. The heads of the deceased were placed in a semi-circular alcove which served as a headrest (see figure 18), as the recess for the head was slightly higher than the rest of the grave. With the aid of material-culture remains, these anthropomorphic graves could be dated between the 12th and 13th centuries (DE GROOT ET AL., 1989, P. 56).

Figure 18: One of two graves with a recess for the head found in the Maria church in Utrecht (DE GROOT ET AL., 1989, P. 57).

It is difficult to say whether more head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic graves are found in the Netherlands, as the term *anthropomorphic* in this country often refers to earth-dug pit graves in general. Not all excavations undertaken in recent decades have led to detailed reports; notably, the reports on several sites in the Kempen region in the province of Brabant are still to be published. In Susteren, province of Limburg, excavations on the site of the Salvator abbey took place from 1991-1993 under the direction of senior archaeologist Drs. Henk Stoepker. Publication is forthcoming (STOEPKER, 2007, P. 62).

Belgium

In Wallonia—the French-speaking counterpart of the Dutch-speaking Flanders in contemporary Belgium—excavations have been undertaken on the site of the Old Church in Froidlieu (MIGNOT, 2010, P. 173). The church that was archaeologically surveyed served as a church with parish rights. Froidlieu is situated in the municipality of Wellin in the province of

Luxemburg (MIGNOT, 2010, P. 173 AND 175). The church and cemetery in Froidlieu are subject to ongoing research (MIGNOT, 2010, P. 174).

This church was established on the site of an older cemetery. Several constructed graves—which seem typical for the 11th to 13th centuries (see figure 19)—have been found that include elements like a niche for the head or support stones in the grave (MIGNOT, 2010, P. 176). The use of stones to construct graves is not a regional practice; it is known throughout Europe (MIGNOT, 2010, P. 176). The author of the publication report assumes that the collective memory of the community must have been important, as there are no signs of above-ground grave markers (MIGNOT, 2010, P. 178).

Figure 19: Stone-constructed anthropomorphic grave in the cemetery of Froidlieu (MIGNOT, 2010, P. 177).

France

Although the head-and-shoulder outlined part of anthropomorphic graves is known under different names in France, this type of grave is widely recognised and described as such; therefore, it can be traced in excavation reports and other documents. Using Open Edition as a source and entering the searching term *logette céphalique*, for instance, reveals 23 results, all

accessible in the database of Archéologie de la France (Open Edition, n.d.). Other terms are also used, of course.

In a study on the development of a parish centre in Rigny, a cemetery on the remains of older stone buildings was excavated. Several graves with an "aménagement céphalique" were found there, one of which could be dated with certainty to the 12th century. It had two blocks of stone on either side of the head (GALINIÉ, ZADORA-RIO ET AL., 2001, P. 227). In the Abbey of Landévennec in Brittany, semi-constructed anthropomorphic graves dating from the 12th or 13th centuries have been found in which the head of the deceased is kept in place by means of stones that are sometimes held together with mortar (BARDEL & PERENNEC, 2004, P. 130-131). Durand describes constructed graves "à cuve céphalique" in the area south-east of the river Oise. In this region, head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic graves occur from before the 11th until the 13th centuries. There is an example of a child's grave (see figure 20) of this type (DURAND, 1978, P. 44). A particular case of an elaborated grave was found in Tours; it contained a recess for the head with two more, smaller, recesses on each side of it. According to the author, these smaller alcoves were meant to contain holy water and charcoal (DURAND, 1988B, P. 182).

Figure 20: Anthropomorphic child's grave with elevated rest for the head (DURAND, 1978, P. 44).

According to Durand, anthropomorphic graves occurred in France during the 12th century. The decline of these type of graves becomes visible in the 13th century (DURAND, 1988B, P. 164).

Germany

In the German region of Sachsen, an early churchyard at Niederwünsch was partially excavated and archaeologically surveyed. 213 individuals were found (MÜLLER, 2013, P. 150). Of these graves, 5 could be identified as anthropomorphic graves with a recess for the head (MÜLLER, 2013, P. 158). The *"Kopfnischengräber"*, graves with a recess for the head of the deceased, had a recess with either a rectangular, semi-circular, square or round shape (MÜLLER, 2013, P. 161; see figure 21). A platform cut into the soil prevented the head from falling to either side (MÜLLER, 2013, P. 155).

The first appearances in Germany of graves from this type, more specific in Niederrhein, can be dated to the 8th century. The majority occurred between the 10th and 12th centuries. After the mid-13th century, these graves seem to have been replaced by other types—most likely by coffin graves (MÜLLER, 2013, P. 161).

Figure 21: One of the "Kopfnischgräber" of Niederwünsch (MÜLLER, 2013, P. 161).

At the site of Harsefeld, a 10-century church was archaeologically surveyed along with the graves within it. Both the church itself and the graves were finished with a layer of lime mortar (ZMK, 2001, P. 11). The lime mortar used on this site is burnt plaster mortar. This practice seems to be common for this period (ZMK, 2001, P. 11). The graves found within this church are so-called *"Rahmengräber"*: i.e., graves outlined with stones and with a recess for the head (ZMK, 2001, P.11).

Romania

In the city of Sibiu, in Transylvania in the south of Romania, a cemetery on the south side of a church was excavated (ISTRATE, 2012, P. 371). It is assumed that the cemetery was founded by settlers from the German region of Sachsen (ISTRATE, 2013, P. 371-372). 1874 individuals have been found at the cemetery (ISTRATE, 2013, P. 371). Seven anthropomorphic stone graves with a niche for the head were found (see figure 22). These graves date from the period of the first parish church: i.e., mid-12th to mid-13th centuries (ISTRATE, 2013, P. 376). A stone element was placed underneath the head of the deceased (ISTRATE, 2013, P. 373). The inside walls of these graves were finished with a layer of yellow lime mortar to secure the bricks of the walls (ISTRATE, 2013, P. 373). One of the graves evinced the use of yellow lime mortar on the bottom of the grave as well. This probably was a measure to protect the body from the soil underneath (ISTRATE, 2013, P. 373). The graves might have been sealed with either stone or wooden plates (ISTRATE, 2013, P. 374). Though not all skeletons were preserved, it is assumed that the deceased were adults. The alignment of the graves was, in all but two examples, west-east (ISTRATE, 2013, P. 374).

Figure 22: One of the head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic graves found in Sibiu, Romania. This grave is intercut by the construction of the church (ISTRATE, 2013, P. 391).

The first occurrence of this type of grave was in Alba Iulia, west of Sibiu (ISTRATE, 2013, P. 374). Of the sites containing anthropomorphic graves, Sibiu has the most graves with a head-recess (ISTRATE, 2013, P. 375). On the cemetery of Sibiu, anthropomorphic graves occur simultaneously with rectangular earth-dug pits (ISTRATE, 2013, P. 376). The use of stones to keep the head of the deceased in place might have had to do with fixing the gaze of the deceased towards the direction of the Resurrection; in this way the deceased are amongst those privileged to witness this event first (ISTRATE, 2013, P. 376).

According to Istrate, brick-built anthropomorphic graves are rare. This type of grave occurs in only one other site: that of Alba Iulia. The construction of these graves must have been a deliberate choice (ISTRATE, 2013, P. 377). The occurrence of brick-built cists can be linked with highly religious foci (ISTRATE, 2013, P. 379).

The Saxon colonists brought the practice of using anthropomorphic graves to Transylvania (ISTRATE, 2013, P. 374). The first German settlers came to Transylvania in the mid-12th century. The majority of the settlers came from Saxony; hence, the Transylvanian name "sasi" for these people (RĂDVAN, 2010, P. 82). Settlers also came from Flanders and Wallonia (RĂDVAN, 2010, P. 81). The area in which the Germans settled was known as "German Altland" (BEREND ET AL., 2013, P. 254). The settlers both established new towns and mixed with the inhabitants of southern Transylvania (BEREND ET AL., 2013, P. 254). After the 13th century, the anthropomorphic graves seem to have disappeared from Transylvania (ISTRATE, 2013, P. 380).

United Kingdom

Anthropomorphic graves are not an unknown phenomenon in the United Kingdom. Gilchrist and Sloane have published an online resource of excavated samples within their Medieval Monastic Cemeteries project (GILCHRIST AND SLOANE, 2005). Searching the database by entering the grave-type *anthropomorphic* results in a list of 139 burials (ARCHAEOLOGY DATA SERVICE, 2015).

In the United Kingdom, both stone-lined graves with support stones for the head and anthropomorphic graves with an alcove for the head are known (see figure 23). During excavations of a cemetery in Raunds Furnells, Northamptonshire, remains were found of a first church which was established around the 10th century. This church was constructed with stone and mortar (BODDINGTON, 1996, P. 8). A second church was erected on the same site that intercut some of the older graves. This church was constructed by re-using the mortar and stone from the former church (BODDINGTON, 1996, P. 9-10). A total of 363 graves were uncovered (BODDINGTON, 1996, P. 3-4). The majority of the graves were coffin-less; other graves consisted of stone coffins (BODDINGTON, 1996, P. 31). Stones were used to further construct the earth-dug graves.

Figure 23: Stone coffin with recess for the head, Raund Furnells (Boddington, 1996, p. 45).

According to Boddington:

"Stones placed within the graves served one or both of two functions: to support the body, particularly the head, and to protect the body against the earth backfill and later intrusion" (BODDINGTON, 1996, P. 38).

The purpose of putting a stone beneath the head of the deceased was also two-fold: it prevented soil from being thrown in the face of the deceased while the grave was filled, and it maintained the head in an appealing position (BODDINGTON, 1996, P. 39). The head would face down towards the body of the deceased rather than up towards the sky (BODDINGTON, 1996, P. 48). This practice occurred more often in male graves than in female graves (BODDINGTON, 1996, P. 41). One of the graves found in this cemetery is noteworthy. It was a stone coffin which tapered to the feet and was placed near the south of the church, close to its main entrance (BODDINGTON, 1996, P. 43). An alcove for the head was cut out. It can be dated to the 10th century (BODDINGTON, 1996, P. 43). There is evidence of simple grave markers (BODDINGTON, 1996, P. 45).

At another site, Cirencester abbey, five types of graves were recovered: graves that were delineated with stones and had an oval or rectangular shape, graves that were delineated with stones and tapered at the feet, stone coffins, wooden coffins and simple earth-dug graves.

Graves belonging to the first two types might have had a niche for the head (HEIGHWAY ET AL., 1998, P. 163). According to Hadley, stone-delineated graves were common during the later Anglo-Saxon period (HADLEY, 2001, P. 98). Non-tapered, stone-lined graves are thought to be late Saxon and occur throughout the 12th and 13th centuries. These graves were placed west of the abbey (HEIGHWAY ET AL., 1998, P. 163-164). Unlike other sites from the same period, the Cirencester graves did not have so-called earmuffs: i.e., stones that were placed on either side of the head and occurred between the 10th and 11th century (HEIGHWAY ET AL., 1998, P. 163). The majority of the deceased were male and in all probability were members of the abbey (HEIGHWAY ET AL., 1998, P. 167).

A well-known example of an anthropomorphic grave with a recess for the head is the 13th century tomb belonging to the Archbishop Walter de Gray in York Minster (RAMM, 1971, P. 101; see figure 24). Upon opening the coffin, archaeologists noticed that the skeleton was fairly well-preserved. The archbishop lay on his back, and his head had fallen to the right. His head was placed on an organic pillow, which had survived, though it was fragmentary. The coffin had a semi-circular recess on the side of the head; this feature was elevated compared with the rest of the coffin (RAMM, 1971, P. 108).

Figure 24: Canopied tomb of Archbishop Walter de Gray (d. 1255). The coffin revealed a pastoral staff, chalice and patten, and a ring, along with some textile fragments (BINSKI, 1996, P. 85).

The site of Saint Mary Magdalen in Winchester consists of an 11th- mid 12th century cemetery and a late medieval leper hospital (ROFFEY, 2012, P. 210; ROFFEY & TUCKER, 2012, P. 170). Of the 38 burials found on the northern side of the cemetery, most used anthropomorphic graves with a recess for the head and were placed in the direction of the chapel in the west (ROFFEY & TUCKER, 2012, P. 171; see figure 25). It is not clear whether the deceased in the anthropomorphic graves were of a high social position (ROFFEY & TUCKER, 2012, P. 173).

Figure 25: Head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic grave from the Saint Mary Magdalen cemetery in Winchester. The grave contains a lip half-way so that a wooden sealing plate could be placed (ROFFEY, 2012, P. 222).

Anthropomorphic graves not unique for Flanders

This brief and incomplete overview demonstrates that head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic graves do not occur only in Flanders. Excavations have uncovered this type of grave in all the surrounding European countries, though their construction differs. Stones and carved-out graves seem to be used more often; this may have to do with availability of material. It is interesting that the anthropomorphic graves in Romania are believed to have been introduced by German settlers.

Internationally, there is no uniform way to define an anthropomorphic grave. This lack of terminological uniformity makes it hard to do comparative research. In the United Kingdom and France, this type of grave is traceable in online inventories.

4.3 Possible interpretations

Grasping the immaterial meaning of head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic graves is not a straightforward exercise. It implies a move beyond the material culture that archaeologists uncover. There is a body of knowledge about medieval Christian burial in general. On those fundaments, additional insights can shed light on how this grave-type relates to the 9th to 13th centuries, to the locations in which they were found, to the people interred in them, and to beliefs and attitudes that were translated into practices.

Authors of the excavation reports of the sites included in the data-set have made little to no comment on the significance of this grave-type. If they do comment, they link location to status. Bru, Stoops and Vermeiren, who wrote about Saint Peters' church and Tweekerkenstraat in Gent, suggest that anthropomorphic graves were probably a means of distinction. The graves in Saint Peters' church were situated on a separate burial ground where only members of the upper middle class were interred (BRU, STOOPS & VERMEIREN, 2010, P. 102). Vervoort—author of the report on the Castle chapel and cemetery in Dendermonde—draws upon the location of the graves to state that location may indicate a higher social position (VERVOORT, 2004, P. 30). Mertens, who studied the Saint Lambertus church in Muizen, takes the burial location within the church to indicate the social position of the deceased (MERTENS, 1950, P. 187).

As important as location may be for the expression of social status, it does not help us to understand the shape of an anthropomorphic grave with emphasis on the head. It is often said that the dead do not bury themselves; the execution of the grave and the arrangements of the burial are therefore deliberate choices made by the people who were left behind, possibly inspired by the will or the preference of the deceased.

It demands effort, craftsmanship and sometimes additional materials to construct a head-and-shoulder outlined grave. The most striking about this type of grave is that nothing of the shape or the construction remains visible once the grave is sealed and covered. So why did people bother with it? Apparently because they cared about the deceased person in life and continued to care about his or her remains after death and about the image and memory that would remain of him or her. Several authors have given possible interpretations for this grave-type or for prestigious graves in general, highlighting mostly one particular aspect. Combined with

general knowledge about medieval Christian death-and-burial practices, the different theories and insights allow us to begin explore the significance of the occurrence of these graves in Flanders and abroad.

The life course perspective

Gilchrist's theory of the life course stresses that it is important for archaeologists to understand how life is experienced in the middle ages (GILCHRIST, 2013A, P. 1). The life course attempts to see the different stages of life as culturally constructed, with each society giving a different meaning to life events (GILCHRIST, 2013A, P. 2). This theory not only stresses the individual experience of a person; it also emphasizes processes and practices within groups and communities (GILCHRIST, 2013A, P. 1). The life-course perspective connects human life with the material culture of a certain society (GILCHRIST, 2013A, P. 1). To gain insight into the experience of life, both material culture and written sources can provide information (GILCHRIST, 2013A, P. 23).

The life-course perspective aims to understand the experience of medieval people concerning life after death. The dead were seen as a separate group that would live on in another place (GILCHRIST, 2013A, P. 1). At the same time, this group maintained a certain role in the society they belonged to before their deaths (GILCHRIST, 2013A, P. 5). Death did not mean the end of life; after death, a person's life would persist until Resurrection Day (GILCHRIST, 2013A, P. 19). Moreover, the dead were promised that their bodies would be intact on the day that Christ would return (GILCHRIST, 2013A, P. 20). Archaeological evidence suggests that, during the middle ages, an effort was made to maintain the body in one piece during burial (GILCHRIST, 2013A, P. 21).

While undergoing a rite of passage or a ritual such as burial, the body is seen as able to take on new abilities as it 'travels' into a next stage (GILCHRIST, 2013A, P. 9). But a body was changed not only during rituals. The act of going into a church and moving towards the 'holy' altar was enough to invoke the experience of Christian belief (GILCHRIST, 2013A, P. 9).

Graves and cemeteries give insight into medieval mortuary practices and into the daily lives of medieval people; graves are frozen structures in which material culture reveals aspects of religion, social and cultural structures (KEARL, 1989, P. 7 AND 49; PARKER PEARSON, 1999, P. 5; EFFROS, 2009, P. 53; BAKER, 2012, P. 14).

Christian conceptions of death and afterlife

With the emergence of Christianity, death becomes an important part of daily life; belief in an afterlife becomes a focal point (BINSKI, 1996, P. 9). Life and death were closely linked (HUNTINGTON & METCALF, 1979, P. 5; BINSKI, 1996, P. 26; GILCHRIST, 2013B, P. 193). The majority of the population found comfort in the preaching about salvation and afterlife (CARVER & KLAPSTE, 2011, P. 414).

The way a community approaches death is based on society itself, its values and its standards (KEARL, 1989, P. 22). The value, attention and approaches a community holds towards death reveal the mentality of that particular society (HOWARTH, 2007, P. 88; KEARL, 1989, P. 7).

Religion was one of the markers with which medieval people could identify themselves (BARROW, 2006, P. 121). Religious life was hard to separate from the daily life of a medieval person (BAKER, 2012, P. 15). Religion beliefs were implemented in daily life by the majority of the population; this provided a strong binding between members of a society (BAKER, 2012, P. 16).

At the end of the 7th century, churches appear in the scenery of the communities. Rich families used the establishment of churches to display their power. In the first few centuries after the 7th century, bishops were not heavily involved (CARNIER, 2004, P. 5; THEUWS, 2004, P. 37; BARROW, 2006, P. 123 AND 124). From the 10th century on, a rise in population and an associated increase in the number of churches and cemeteries within a parish can be seen (CARNIER, 2004, P. 5). From the higher middle ages onwards, the church was the centre of a village or town (BARROW, 2006, P. 135; CARVER & KLAPSTE, 2011, P. 415). The church was not only the place where parishioners would learn about their faith; personal belief and piety would also be anchored (BARROW, 2006, P. 133; GILCHRIST, 2013, P. 170; VITZ, 2009, P. 20, 21).

Church buildings occupied an important place within the lives of medieval humans, as they were loci of spirituality and contemplation (DE COCK, 2006, P. 243; TRIO, 2010, P. 237). A church acted as a threshold into the afterlife. During the act of burying, the central idea is liminality. This means that the deceased passes from the bodily world of the living to the other, spiritual, world, where his soul can enter the realm of the afterlife (BINKSI, 1996, P. 29).

Burial has to do with the ultimate aspect of daily life: i.e., the end of life. In handling the dead, the beliefs, faith and mentality of the living are reflected. But death was not seen as

something tragic and something to be afraid of. After living a good life, people wanted a proper burial, after which they would go to Heaven and reunite with Jesus Christ (WIECK, 1999, P. 442). Within the medieval community, the belief in Resurrection Day was strong; it determined the acts and aims of people (LAUWERS AND TREFFORT, 2009, P. 450).

A person who did not say his or her prayers was not prepared to die. This type of death would be defined as a 'bad death'. A good death, or as Ariès calls it, a 'tame death', meant that preparations were undertaken to make sure the soul would go into Heaven (GILCHRIST & SLOANE, 2005, P. 19). A good death was a type of death in which the person was prepared to die; the person had said his or her daily prayers, had gone to church on a daily basis and did not fear his or her upcoming death (HOWARTH, 2007, P. 20 AND 21, 133). It was important to show the community that one was ready to depart this world; it would benefit the commemoration of this person within society (WESTERHOF, 2012, P. 20). A good death usually occurred at home: the dying person would lie in bed and family and other members of the society would gather to accompany the dying person in his or her last hours (HADLEY, 2001, P. 73; GILCHRIST & SLOANE, 2005, P. 20; HOWARTH, 2007, P. 116). When the dying were members of a monastery, cloister or other religious house, the best place to die was in bed within their private rooms (GILCHRIST & SLOANE, 2005, P. 22). People of the church had the highest number of visitors (HADLEY, 2001, P. 73).

It is believed that it did not matter what the grave of a Christian looked like; Christians would go on to the afterlife no matter the type of grave (BINSKI, 1996, P. 26 AND 55). According to the 5th century theologian Augustine of Hippo, the fate of a deceased person does not depend on his funeral or the rites carried out on this occasion; his Christian faith is enough. The grave can nonetheless offer comfort to the bereaved and help them commemorate the dead (LAUWERS AND TREFFORT, 2009, P. 440-441).

Even though the church largely set the customs surrounding mortuary practices, communities decided how to carry out a funeral before the 10th and 11th centuries. Local, pagan customs were linked with Christian beliefs (HADLEY & BUCKBERRY, 2005, P. 121). In order to receive a burial that was set within Christian beliefs, members of a community had to live an appropriate life, guided by Christianity (DURAND, 1988B, P. 192). Where and how a person was to be buried was a decision made both by the person and by the members of the family and even the environment. The milieu a person belonged to during life could influence the burial of this person (DURAND, 1988B, P. 192).

The grave can be seen as a reflection of one's life, one's status, one's values and one's environment. However, in some cases, this is deliberately ignored and is not reflected in the grave. Burial practices were subject to fashion and availability of materials. In some cases, people opted for older traditions instead of participating in new forms of burial practice (WAKEFORD, 1890, 4; DURAND, 1988B, P. 193).

From the 11th century onwards, it was customary to be buried in as simple a manner as possible. The majority of graves in the medieval period were dug directly into the soil without many additions. A coffin was often not included in the burial ritual (WAKEFORD, 1890, P. 15-16). Wooden coffins replaced the earth-dug graves from the 13th century onwards. The anthropomorphic element can still be seen in most coffins, which have the shape of a human (DURAND, 1988B, P. 168). The fact that wooden coffins started to echo the human form in the 13th century, was a result of the idea that the deceased should maintain a certain position, that of praying (DURAND, 1988B, P. 192).

Grave-goods did no longer occur as often as before the Christian period, when they would have reflected who the deceased was en what was important to him or her. According to Hadley:

"It was increasingly to be above ground, in terms of ritual, ceremony and funerary monuments, that burial continued to be a dynamic arena for the expression of social identity" (HADLEY, 2002, P. 228).

This is true only to some extent. Burial ritual and ceremony may have become important indeed, but with the use of a specific shape of grave that showed great care for the position of the body and the head of the deceased, distinction underground was still possible and present.

Care for the dead body

It was believed that there was a stage between being alive and being dead. This is the stage of dying. During this stage, features that belong to either a living or a dead person can be attributed to the dying person and therefore he is in a privileged state (THOMPSON, 2003, P. 92). Death was seen as a development rather than as a single event (HADLEY, 2001, P. 56; THOMPSON, 2003, P. 92 AND 93). Death did not mean the end of life, but was merely a step towards Resurrection Day, the day on which everybody who had lived a good life would be

redeemed of earthly life and forgiven their sins (TREFFORT, 2010, P. 116; VAN BELLE, 2010, P. 151). The community believed that a body that laid in the grave was not dead yet, but still able to sense as in the living world, hence the care for the person within a grave (OHLER, 1990, P. 79; THOMPSON, 2003, P. 92 AND 93).

During the burial, emphasis was placed on the body and its transition. Rituals, or better called rites de passage, are events in which a person changes from one environment to the other (FOWLER, 2004, P. 79). A human shaped grave may have had to do with this ritual (HALLAM & HOCKEY, 2001A, P. 38; THOMPSON, 2003, P. 92). Van Gennep states that with each ritual that was carried out, the person undergoing it would move from one state to another. In between these stages, the person would find himself in liminality (HUNTINGTON & METCALF, 1979, P. 8; FOWLER, 2004, P. 80). With regards to the burial ritual, the person would go from the state in which he or she is alive but moving towards the end of life to the state in which the person is buried. The stage in-between, the liminal zone and in fact death itself, is where the ritual is actually taking place. The burial is a rite of passage, in which the body goes from this world to the realm of the dead (HUNTINGTON & METCALF, 1979, P. 8).

Burials that occurred from the 9th century onwards had one thing in common: the place of the body would be specifically delineated, as to keep it sheltered. In particular, the head would be secured with stones (THOMPSON, 2002, P. 232). A reason for this boundary can be found in the enclosure of the cemetery itself. As the demarcated area for the deposition of the dead was secured, so was the body secured within the grave (THOMPSON, 2002, P. 233). In many cases the cemetery would encircle the church, like a sacred public space that everybody could enter (KEARL, 1989, P. 50; BURNOUF ET AL., 2009, P. 122; ALEXANDRE-BIDON, 2010, P. 246). In other words, the sanctity of the church would reflect on the cemetery, as it was consecrated by a priest. The cemetery was in fact a place in which parishioners would be protected from danger and threats (CUTTS, 2013, P. 308). The great emphasis placed on the protection of the head by stones probably has to do with the fact that the medieval community did not regard the deceased as dead immediately after dying. Therefore, people thought the deceased needed to be protected, even after burial (WILLIAMS, 2006, P. 111).

There was a strong belief that the body should be kept as perfect as possible. This included practices by which the body did not undergo decay. Sometimes it was believed that the body of a deceased person was perfect if it was not affected. In order to maintain the appearance of a body as it was when alive, the tendency grew during the 9th and 10th centuries to use coffins

and grave linings. This practice was believed to decrease pollution from the soil and from insects and to prevent disturbance by the intercutting of burials (HADLEY & BUCKBERRY, 2005, P. 124). The use of lime mortar in graves may have had to do with this, as the mortar would form a protective layer between the body and the soil on which the deceased was placed, so that the soil could not affect the body in an unpleasant way (THOMPSON, 2002, P. 238). The placement of stones or lids to seal the grave may be seen in this light as well. Like coffins, sealing stones create an empty space between the body of the deceased and the earth that is thrown in the grave afterwards. A "clean burial"—one in which the body of the deceased was as little affected as possible by the soil in which it was placed—was something after which to aspire (THOMPSON, 2002, P. 236-237).

It seems somewhat contradictory that great care was taken to keep the body as intact as possible, as the Church reassured its members that they would resurrect as they once were, or as they would be, on Resurrection Day. In other words, it did not matter what happened to the body as long as one´s grave was in consecrated ground (CHARLIER ET AL., 2013, P. 1349). However, official liturgical texts also mention the analogy of the body as a temple. Thus, the fact that the faithful would resurrect no matter what became of their bodies did not imply disrespect towards the remains (CHARLIER ET AL., 2013, P. 1349-1350).

During the medieval period, emphasis was placed on the human head (GRAVES, 2008, P. 41). Often the Church would be regarded as a body with Jesus Christ functioning at its head. The head served as a symbol of order within a community (GRAVES, 2008, P. 42). The importance of the head was stressed during rituals surrounding baptism, but also during rituals surrounding burial (GILCHRIST, 2013A, P. 8). When a member of society was dying, the priest would place his hands on the head of the dying. This was done so that the dying person could receive Absolution (GRAVES, 2008, P. 43). The deposition of the deceased in the grave had the head as a focal point. Evidence from English burials show special recesses for the head and stones placed around the head (GRAVES, 2008, P 43).

In some anthropomorphic graves, it is clear that the protection of the head is an important factor. Sometimes, graves were finished with a flat stone on top of the recess to protect the head (DURAND, 1988B, P. 161). Great care was given to maintain the head of the deceased in a straight position so that it would not fall to the sides. Often the graves would contain aiding tools to fix the head in a certain position. These tools could be stones placed either surrounding the head or underneath the head as a sort of pillow; the pillow could also be made

of organic material (DURAND, 1988B, P. 161). Support of the head with stones or pillows is a typical characteristic of the high-middle ages (DURAND, 1988B, P. 194).

It is believed that the care for the position of the head has a religious reason. One effect of using a stone coffin to protect the head is that the head of the deceased is kept in its position; the head is kept looking in the direction of the feet of the deceased (WILLIAMS, 2006, P. 111). The practice of securing the head of the deceased with stones or a recess may refer to an attitude of humility. The deceased who were placed in their graves in this manner would have the 'right' demeanour on Resurrection Day (DURAND, 1988B, P. 191). Using stones and pillows to maintain the head in a position of bowing would resemble a praying attitude (DURAND, 1988B, P. 161).

The inclusion of a recess in graves of the middle ages marked a change in the burial practices of this period (DURAND, 1988B, P. 192). Anthropomorphic graves with recesses can be viewed as a new burial form (DURAND, 1988B, P. 198). From the 9th century onwards, anthropomorphic elements are more common in the funeral record. The recess, which imitates the shape of a human head, appears in the 9th century, and the decline of this type of grave can be seen during the 13th century (DURAND, 1988B, P. 168). Human-shaped graves with special features for the head occur in Europe mostly in the high-middle ages. There are several forms. Graves can be earth-dug and delineated with stones, the head-part can be constructed or the whole shape of the grave can be cut out. Either way, this shape of grave requires time and effort to construct and reflects a deliberate attempt to treat the body of the deceased in a certain way. Whether or not a deceased was placed in a coffin can be determined archaeologically with regards to the width of the grave (see figure 26). It is assumed that a slender grave did not contain a wooden coffin, as it would not have fitted (HADLEY, 2001, P. 65).
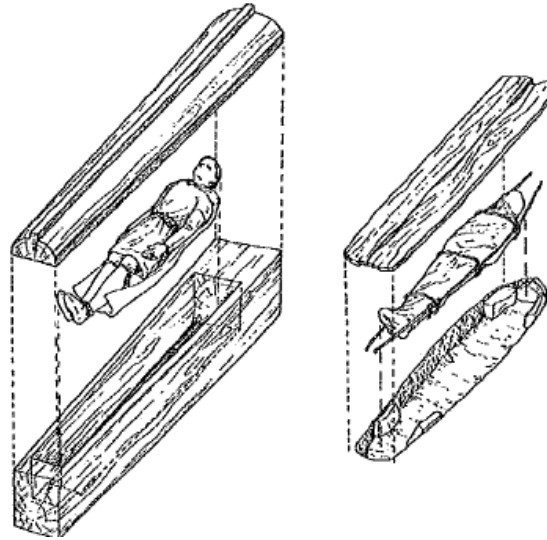
Figure 26: Schematic representation of an anthropomorphic grave (right) as opposed to a coffin grave (KLINKENBORG, DE MAEYER & CHERRETTÉ, 2010, P. 24).

Anthropomorphic graves, according to Gilchrist and Sloane, are graves which have a head alcove and no signs of lining (GILCHRIST & SLOANE, 2005, P. 132). The alcove that surrounds the head is resonant to a nimbus (GILCHRIST & SLOANE, 2005, P. 133). The majority of these graves in the United Kingdom can be linked with monasteries and their members (GILCHRIST & SLOANE, 2005, P. 132). Most of the individuals buried in this type of grave were males (GILCHRIST & SLOANE, 2005, P. 132).

According to Thompson, the variation of grave types from the 9th century onwards can be divided into three categories: graves with a finishing layer, elaborate graves in terms of material and graves which include stones or tiles to delineate them (THOMPSON, 2002, P. 231). Some graves were outlined with stones, which are often placed either surrounding the head or beneath the head as a sort of pillow. The stones would prevent the head from rolling to either side (THOMPSON, 2002, P. 232). Stone-delineated burials indicate that the deceased or the family and close environment of the deceased had made an investment, as it is an elaborate way of burying (HADLEY, 2001, P. 64). There are some examples from England in which graves were outlined in chalk or mortar (THOMPSON, 2002, P. 232). The use of chalk or lime mortar in anthropomorphic graves may have had to do with the display of wealth or faith. Graves dug into brown soil are not very visible. The use of white or yellow chalk or lime mortar however, would clearly indicate the position of the grave within the soil. The

whiteness of some of the lime mortar or chalk may be a symbol of purity (GILCHRIST & SLOANE, 2005, P. 143).

Graves were usually dug by a gravedigger who followed regulations concerning the digging of pit graves (SAM, PARLEVLIET ET AL., 2005, P. 58 AND 59). Information about this profession and its activities is rare. From the archaeological record, it seems that grave pits were often constructed in a similar fashion. Most of the graves dug in the medieval period were shallow: usually less than 1 m. deep. It was possible to accommodate the grave pit to the preferences of the mourners. The overall similarity in pits indicates that the profession of grave digging was probably passed down from one generation to another. Alternatively, it may have been transmitted orally to anyone who wanted this profession (GILCHRIST & SLOANE, 2005, P. 131). A grave pit dug by a grave digger was often adapted. When the bereaved wanted to include stones as an outline of the grave, the pit had to be widened (GILCHRIST & SLOANE, 2005, P. 181). As earth-dug grave pits were often adapted, the execution is believed not to have mattered that much. The final outcome mattered, of course, as the grave would represent the deceased inside it (GILCHRIST & SLOANE, 2005, P. 131).

Archaeologists need to bear in mind that we cannot always determine the exact meaning of a certain burial practice. Choices in burial practices are not always influenced by the Church (DURAND, 1988B, P. 194). A certain type a grave does not belong exclusively to a certain level of population or to a certain social position (DURAND, 1988B, P. 195). Historic sources can help gain insight into the burial practices of the medieval period, but they are not to be taken at face-value. The same can be said for art-historical sources (DURAND, 1988B, P. 195).

Expression of social position and prestige

Anthropomorphic graves are often considered to be an expression of higher status, also because of their privileged location. Lauwers and Treffort have written on prestigious burials; as their insights are valuable in terms of possible interpretations of anthropomorphic graves, they will be discussed here in length. Prestige is a term that has to be employed with caution because it is a social construct, not a material fact. It is difficult to know how a burial was perceived by the mourners (LAUWERS AND TREFFORT, 2009, P. 440). Prestige was exceptional. The context of a site needs to be taken into account when interpreting graves (LAUWERS AND TREFFORT, 2009, P. 449-450).

Prestigious burials indicate a willingness to direct and organize the ceremony and location of a burial for the sake of the experience of the moment and for the long-term memory. Information regarding the arrangement of a funeral or burial can be found in both material evidence and written sources; over time, however, much information has been lost, including not only the perishable materials but also the words, gestures, sounds and smells (LAUWERS AND TREFFORT, 2009, P. 440).

Prestige expresses itself in visibility and monumentality. Although it does not aid the salvation of the deceased, it grants social meaning within society, according to Augustine (LAUWERS AND TREFFORT, 2009, P. 440-441). What defines the monumentality of a grave? Location is a means of distinction used to express relationships between the deceased and society and between the deceased and the place of burial. It is significant whether the grave is positioned in the proximity of a meaningful element, such as a church, funeral monument or historic feature, because the environment can serve as a stage for display (LAUWERS AND TREFFORT, 2009, P. 442).

Monumentality transmits a symbolic message concerning the dead that is meant for the living. It is a message that reaches from the past into the future. Some elements of prestige become invisible—features within a grave, for example. These markers of prestige work only for the attendees of a funeral—i.e., for the contemporary generation. For generations afterwards, the invisible elements become only memories (LAUWERS AND TREFFORT, 2009, P. 442). Prestige can be derived from the funeral ceremony, the burial or the visible grave itself. Certain elements may not be visible to the human eye after a certain point in time, but they will remain meaningful for God. What is prestigious to a society depends on social structures or ideological beliefs (LAUWERS AND TREFFORT, 2009, P. 443).

Archaeological evidence is not sufficient by itself to contribute significance to objects within rites of passage. To determine its prestige, a grave should be examined in combination with other features. To draw conclusions from archaeological excavations, archaeologists must survey an entire site rather than a only part of it. The key word to keep in mind while examining a site is *context* (LAUWERS AND TREFFORT, 2009, P. 444).

Religious centres are important for burials. From the 10th century onwards, consecrated cemeteries were common in medieval towns (LAUWERS AND TREFFORT, 2009, P. 445). There is an increase in cemeteries and in general; little distinction exists between graves. This apparent anonymity may have to do with an ideology regarding humility. Monastic-like

humility would demonstrate reference to both a worldly and a heavenly community (LAUWERS AND TREFFORT, 2009, P. 446).

It is hard to understand practices and social codes when the indications are subjective or no longer present. Material culture and texts cannot answer all inquiries concerning the beliefs of a past community. Later generations struggle to comprehend the acts with which prestige was conferred on a burial: for example, the care for the body of the deceased and any embalming before display of the body. But prayers that accompanied the funeral and the burial and shrouds used to conceal the body leave few to no traces. The motivations behind gestures cannot be derived from skeletal remains (LAUWERS AND TREFFORT, 2009, P. 449). Taphonomic processes need to be taken into account (LAUWERS AND TREFFORT, 2009, P. 448). Family ties and relationships with the community can help determine the identity of a deceased person (LAUWERS AND TREFFORT, 2009, P. 450).

Often a dying person would write a will in which he or she declared their preference of burial. The dying often would not be concerned with how his or her grave would look, but rather would try to secure a good place near the altar or in the aisles of the church in the parish (BINSKI, 1996, P. 34). Not everyone was allowed to be buried within the church. It is only in the second half of the middle ages that respected people were allowed a place within the church near the altar or images of saints (BINSKI, 1996, P. 12; DE COCK, 2006, P. 246; TOWNSEND, 2009, P. 63; VERHAEGHE, 2010, P. 11). In the early-middle ages, only saints and clergy had the honour to be buried within a church. In time, the wealthy and powerful part of the population could secure a grave within a church. Those who financially supported a church also had this privilege (BINSKI, 1996, P. 57; WIECK, 1997, P. 439; DE COCK, 2006, P. 246; VAN BELLE, 2010, P. 152; VAN DEN HOVEN VAN GENDEREN, 2013, P. 173).

The appearance of a grave was not mentioned in the law or in any written sources—at least not in the 10th century (HADLEY & BUCKBERRY, 2005, P. 123). A reason for the variety of grave forms can be found in the fact that the Church did not specify the appearance of a grave required to obtain salvation (HADLEY & BUCKBERRY, 2005, P. 136). Greater variation occurred more often in high social position sites with large churches than in smaller urban cemeteries (HADLEY & BUCKBERRY 2005, P. 142).

For a long time, there was no uniformity in the way in which the deceased were put to rest. Because of the tolerance of the church regarding to the type of grave, a great variety of burial forms can be observed; stone-lined graves were among them (THOMPSON, 2002, P. 229).

Depending on one's social position, one would be buried in a wooden coffin or put directly into the soil. Wealthy people would be placed in a wooden coffin. In the case of a less wealthy person, the coffin would be used only to transport the deceased to the last resting place (BINSKI, 1996, P. 55; WIECK, 1999, P. 440; ARIÈS & HOLIERHOEK, 2003, P. 107; VAN BELLE, 2010, P. 158). The use of a coffin for transporting the body is a custom exclusive to western Europe (BINSKI, 1996, P. 55). In the 10th and 11th centuries, members of a community chose the type of grave for the deceased. Of frequent occurrence was a coffin grave (HADLEY & BUCKBERRY, 2005, P. 132). If a coffin was too expensive, people opted for a lining in stone. This way, the grave would be visible in the soil (HADLEY & BUCKBERRY, 2005, P. 135 AND 136).

It is not known for certain where the first anthropomorphic graves occurred. They occur both in England and on the Continent (THOMPSON, 2002, P. 232). Stone-delineated recesses occurred somewhere between the 9th and 10th centuries (DURAND, 1988B, P. 198). Somewhat later, before the 11th century, the alcove for the head was cut into the soil (DURAND, 1988B, P. 199). Stone lining and stones beneath the head of the deceased were not commonly used for the whole community; rather, they were reserved for the higher levels of the population, such as the clergy. It was a way of distinguishing through burial and of displaying the social position one had whilst alive (HADLEY, 2002, P. 226). The appearance of graves with a resonance of a human body may, in the eyes of monastics, have had a holy effect on the body, thus protecting it within the grave (GILCHRIST & SLOANE, 2005, P. 133). The reason for the specific shape of an anthropomorphic grave may have had to do with what the remaining family and members of the community wanted to display (PARKER PEARSON, 1999, P. 5).

During the 12th and 13th centuries, the most sacred place to be buried was within the proximity of religious houses such as monasteries. This had to do with the locus, as it was an enclosed space where only the privileged would be interred (POSTLES, 1996, P. 622). However, in the course of the 12th century, lay people could also be buried within the grounds of religious houses, at least in English religious houses (POSTLES, 1996, P. 630).

Mertens mentions that during the 10th and 11th centuries, monastics were placed in specially cut stone graves which followed the shape of a human body and had an alcove for the head (MERTENS, 1950, P. 186). The Chapter house was a locus of importance within a monastery, as it was the place were prayers were said on set times during the day. The members of the monastery preferred their final resting place to be within the Chapter house. This preference

came from the fact that part of the daily liturgy included the remembrance of the deceased within the monastic community. The practice of burying within the Chapter house lasted until the 13th century (GILCHRIST & SLOANE, 2005, P. 59).

Monks were laid on a cemetery exclusively meant for monks. The abbots, who were higher in status, found their last resting place in a chapter house or in monastic churches (BINSKI, 1996, P. 58). Chapter houses were places that served as a locus for the commemoration of the dead as well (GAZEAU, 2004, P. 19). After an abbot died, there were up to three days of vigil (GAZEAU, 2004, P. 15). Testimonies of the life and death of abbots were sometimes written down in a book called a Vita (GAZEAU, 2004, P. 15). The Vita served as an instrument within the cult of the dead. This book aspire to create a model of holiness, whether or not it is in agreement with the actual facts regarding the person. The hour and day of death of abbots were often correlated with liturgical events to emphasize their sanctity (GAZEAU, 2004, P. 16).

Epitaphs can provide information about the name that was given to a burial place or to the burial arrangement. These stone features help localize burial places (DEBIAIS, 2004, P. 25-28). Absence of an epitaph does not equal absence of written memory. Sources can sometimes be found elsewhere. Above-ground markers with a commemorative function are not always found (LAUWERS AND TREFFORT, 2009, P. 442).

To determine the identity of a person interred in a specific grave, endotaphs can be studied. Endotaphs—stone or sometimes lead markers—are often placed within the grave of abbots or bishops. The endotaph carries the name of the deceased chiselled onto the stone surface. The name in stone served as a way to prevent violations to the grave. The memorial function was to keep the memory of the deceased alive in case of changes or vandalism to the grave (DEBIAIS, 2004, P. 28).

On the endotaph, the day and month of death were mentioned. Often, the year of death was omitted because it had no function in the commemoration. The anniversary of the date of death was important. Date of death and name are mentioned in the obituary. Mentioning a deceased person's name was a way to keep the person existent in the world of the living. (DEBIAIS, 2004, P. 35).

Burials within a religious context enter into the context of a privileged time and place-dimension. The location and the period during which burials occurred contribute to the holiness of the locus and the liturgical dimension. The religious context of a burial allows the

deceased to become part of this location and to undergo the blessings that come with it (DEBIAIS, 2004, P. 44).

The importance of the burial ritual and the creation of memory

Rituals surrounding death were meant not only to say farewell to the dead, but to ensure that they would live on in another world (BINSKI, 1996, P. 30; BAKER, 2012, P. 15). Moreover, the deceased would remain members of the community, but in another form, as ancestors of the community (FOWLER, 2004, P. 81). In the first half of the 9th century, commemorating the dead became part of the prayers spoken in monastic liturgies (PAXTON, 1990, P. 134). By the 10th century, the office for the dead was common in many religious houses (PAXTON, 1990, P. 136).

Lauwers has written on the significance of commemoration in the 11th-13th century Diocese of Liège (Belgium). As this is the period in which anthropomorphic graves occur, and as Liège is close to Flanders, his insights help us understand burial practices. Therefore, I offer an elaborate review here. According to Lauwers, what matters is the relationship between the living and the dead and not so much how medieval people reacted to death. It is the way the living regard the dead that provides insight into the significance of commemoration and rituals (LAUWERS, 2009).

The 11th to 13th centuries can be viewed as a period of transition (LAUWERS, 2009). During this period, local power started to get a grip on social life. The community was split into smaller cells, each with its own values and characteristics. People belonged to various cells. Especially in urban settings, life based on customs gradually changed into life based on rights. This meant a new organization of social life, with new values, different social distinctions and an increase in the circulation of money (LAUWERS, 2009).

Few documents have been recovered from the period between the 11th and 13th centuries. Scholars need to study other sources to gain insight into the social practices of this era. Among these documents are deeds, obituaries, liturgical texts, hagiographies, archaeological excavation reports and iconographical sources (LAUWERS, 2009).

The Church is not outspoken about preferred modes of burial; it is therefore difficult to gain insight into western Christian burial practices. However, the 5th century theologian Augustine

wrote *De cura pro mortuis gerenda* (*On the Care for the Dead*), which has long remained a reference.

Variations in burial practices occur between the 8th and 9th centuries (LAUWERS, 2009). Up until the year 1000, official church doctrine was about the care for the soul. The Church allowed folk customs. The official doctrine did not compete with these customs, but rather the doctrine was adapted to fit the needs of the community. The Church gave the cult of the dead a public and spiritual character; commemoration of the dead and worship of the saints were given a focal place during mass (LAUWERS, 2009).

The relationship between the living and the dead was twofold, with either a focus on the laity or the Church. The laity cared for their dead because of kinship: or so-called carnal solidarity. Within the spheres of the Church, it was the duty of the Christian community to pray for the spiritual community, to praise the loyalty of the deceased towards their faith (LAUWERS, 2009).

These two models of relationships conjoined between the 11th and 12th centuries. The laity adjusted to the religious practices; they followed the Church with regard to the commemoration of the dead. At the same time, the Church accommodated its practices to those preferred by society (LAUWERS, 2009). The practices concerning the commemoration of the dead were extensive, as the practices of both the laity and the Church were mixed (LAUWERS, 2009).

Because the community wanted to stay as close to its ancestors as possible, villages emerged in the proximity of cemeteries. These were places of refuge and locations for social gathering and trade. It became custom for noble men to bury their family members within religious institutions such as chapels and churches. These institutions would eventually serve as their own last resting place as well, as they aspired to be close to their ancestors. Commemoration rituals consisted of evoking the ancestors and linking one's own fate to them, acknowledging that all the possessions and the power of noble families come from their ancestors (LAUWERS, 2009).

Commemoration of the dead was among the duties of the church community. The memory of both members of the religious community and of the elite was kept alive as a means to shape the community of the living. The deceased could be laid to rest not only in cemeteries, but also in abbeys and chapter houses. The latter had a special status (LAUWERS, 2009).

During the 11th and 12th centuries, the focal point was on the commemoration of the dead rather than on praying for their souls. Celebrating the memory of the deceased and honouring the ancestors was of fundamental meaning for communities, as these practices directed the actions of the living. It was important for the Church to expand the spiritual family. Noble families bonded with the Church by pious gifts (LAUWERS, 2009).

Pious gifts, or *Donations pro anima* were common in the 11th and 12th centuries. For example, noblemen would donate land, goods or rights to the Church in exchange for the assurance of both their own commemoration and, in due time, of their ancestors. This exchange helped to strengthen the sense of belonging and was a means of legitimating power (LAUWERS, 2009).

The Church benefitted from this exchange. Not only did this bond yield prosperity, the Church was also assured of the reception of the bodies of the elite, which confirmed the place of the Church in the community. Gifts were circulating and material goods were translated into spiritual "goods". Offering the elite a resting place in a religious institution, enabled the Church to retain the power of the noblemen. The exchange of gifts becomes part of the doctrine of the Church, as it benefits both giver and receiver (LAUWERS, 2009).

Some ancestors were more celebrated than others. Elaborate commemoration was meant for saints, abbots, bishops and some of the nobility. They were seen as "founding fathers" of their communities. The elite, by placing themselves under the patronage of the religious leaders, felt justified to exercise their power (LAUWERS, 2009).

During the 11th and 12th centuries, the Church went to great lengths to commemorate its own deceased as well as those who possessed worldly power. Commemoration of the dead in the 11th and 12th centuries also served the need of the elite to establish order. Moreover, it helped to form parishes and to develop villages. The elite used commemoration to legitimize their local power and to reaffirm its roots. The cult of the ancestors was associated with places of significance (LAUWERS, 2009).

It was in the 13th century that these practices began to change. Other groups emerged, such as knights and the bourgeoisie. Rituals were still in use, but they acquired a different meaning. The Church emphasized the importance of salvation. The living were expected to pray for the souls trapped in Purgatory. Masses were dedicated to the dead (LAUWERS, 2009).

Alongside the commemoration of the dead and the memory of the ancestors, the 13th century emphasized the care for the soul of the individual and that of his loved ones. Other groups in

society—such as the so-called mendicant orders—took over the task of caring for the deceased (LAUWERS, 2009). Lay communities, such as beguines, came up in the 13th century and also took over social tasks from the Church. From that point forward, the laity prayed for the dead. The Church reacted by claiming the realm of the holy and the spiritual; the worldly and the temporary realms were rebounded. Medieval society found its basis more and more in the juridical sphere. The cult of the dead decreased in the 13th century (LAUWERS, 2009).

The way a grave is constructed gives information about the values of society and how it wants to remember the loss of its loved ones (HUNTINGTON & METCALF, 1979, P. 6). After a deceased person is buried and the body has decayed, what remains are the memories and the material culture linked to the person; these are features that stay within the community (FOWLER, 2004, P. 85).

The more people were present to witness the death and burial of a person, the more prayers that person would receive. These prayers were important, as they accompanied the deceased to the afterlife (THOMPSON, 2002, P. 239). Prayers were an important element of the funerary rites in the medieval period, which consisted of five stages. The first stage took place directly after the death of a person and implied prayers spoken by the family and other members of the community. The second stage involved undressing the body of the deceased, washing it and clothing it in shrouds that were often made especially for this occasion. The third stage dealt with carrying the body to the grave, often accompanied by prayers. Once the deceased was at the location of his final resting place, prayers were offered in the fourth stage. Finally, in the fifth stage, after the deceased was interred, the last set of prayers was spoken to give the soul of the deceased salvage (GILCHRIST & SLOANE, 2005, P. 19).

Dying and burial was a process that brought family, friends and a great part of the community together in order to give the deceased a proper ceremony before burial (ARIÈS, 2004, P. 41). It was very common to die in the company of others (OHLER, 1990, P. 56). Mourning took time; communities needed to re-arrange themselves and go on with daily life (ARIÈS, 2004, P. 41).

The rituals by which the deceased were placed in their graves do not necessarily reflect their social position; rather they reflect how the deceased wanted to be remembered by the rest of the community (GILCHRIST & SLOANE, 2005, P. 6). Christianity was concerned with one's journey into the afterlife, which was secured by prayers for the deceased and regular commemorations (HADLEY, 2002, P. 227).

People who attended mass would see where freshly dug graves were situated. These graves would have a pile of earth on top of them. It was the duty of the members of society to know where each individual was buried, as there were often no other grave markers visible (GILCHRIST & SLOANE, 2005, P. 185). Sometimes a monument was erected for the deceased, through which the deceased would live on (HALLAM & HOCKEY, 2001B, P. 131 AND 132).

Theologians thought of people who did not listen and act on the Word of God as 'dead', as their soul would not receive purification on Resurrection Day (WESTERHOF, 2012, P. 17). According to Christian belief, the faithful would not cease to exist; rather, their souls would live on in the afterlife (GILCHRIST & SLOANE 2005, P. 6). To be commemorated by loved ones was a way of never really dying. In this sense, forgetting or even neglecting a person is similar to the death of that person (WESTERHOF, 2012, P. 16).

There are several elements—introduced mainly by British and French authors—that may be of importance in understanding the significance of head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic graves. The treatment of the body and especially the care for the head is one of them. These practices can be related to attitudes and beliefs about the fate of the deceased in the afterlife. Furthermore, the fact that this is an elaborate manner of burial and that the special shape of the grave is not visible above-ground, may mean that the burial ceremony was important for creating an impression on the mourners and for marking the start of the commemoration process.

Position of the head

Great care was taken to position the head of the deceased appropriately, either in a recess or alcove or by fixing it with the aid of stones on both sides of the head. It may be that keeping the head in an upright position and preventing it from falling to the sides was thought to make a dead person look less dead and more in a state of temporal rest. Medieval people did not consider a deceased person to be dead immediately. Death was seen as a process. Even though a person was declared 'dead', it was believed that he did not leave Earth immediately for the afterlife. The shape of the contours of the head may be reminiscent of a nimbus, which emphasizes the special status of the body passing on to a next stage. The human shape would protect the body during its passage. In some of the graves, a gradual or step-like elevation in the head-part, or the placing of a stone or pillow under the head results in the head pointing towards the chest instead of upwards to the sky. This may have had to do with respect for the dead body and with preventing the face from being covered with earth once the grave was filled. There are indications, however, of lids and sealing plates that extend halfway along the anthropomorphic graves to create an empty space over the body before the grave was filled with earth. It may also be that the deceased who had an elevated head were thought to be amongst the first to witness Christ on Resurrection Day. Ordinary people who were placed in their graves looking upwards, had to stand up first before they could behold Christ. Some authors believe the downward-facing position of the head refers to humility and piousness, as

the inclined head is associated with praying and modesty towards God. This humble, praying demeanour would remind the attendees of the burial of the exemplarity of the deceased person and would suggest that nothing would prevent his soul from being saved in the afterlife.

Burial and memory

There are several ways to ensure that a burial will impress and will be remembered. Choice of location is one of them. To provide a dead person with privileged location—e.g., in a chapter house, a church or chapel, or in a preferred part of a cemetery as near to other meaningful features as possible—is a means to display social status and to secure the attention and prayers of the community. Such burial places were of course the first options for the clergy, especially those higher in rank. Members from the local nobility could also opt to be buried in religious centres, however. This was a way to become integrated into the commemoration practices of the religious community. Both religious and profane leaders could enter into the memory of the community as "founding fathers". The monastics ensured the celebrations of the death days of all these ancestors, the names of whom were included in the obituaries. This served to facilitate the long-term memory of the deceased. Above-ground grave markers—such as tombstones or slabs—would reinforce this memory. But the burial ritual itself could also be of importance for the people that were present. As it was custom to die and be buried in the company of members of the community, the mourners would assist in securing one's life after death by praying and accomplishing other tasks in the burial ritual. People witnessing the burial saw how the deceased was placed in an elaborate grave which had the contours of a human body and in some cases had a stone in which the name of the deceased was chiselled. The arrangements of the funeral and burial ceremonies, and the execution of the grave would emphasize not so much the person but the image being created of the deceased. Few elements of the rituals have survived archaeologically; what is left are the graves themselves.

Applying the possible interpretations to the data-set

A short summary may be useful at this point. Of the 11 sites included in the data-set, 2 of them stand out. Both sites in Gent are remarkable for their relatively high number of anthropomorphic graves. They were both important religious loci: an abbey, a chapter house, a church and a surrounding area closely linked to an abbey. It is known that members of noble families were buried near the entrance of a church in Gent. Also, the grave of a layman was identified in Gent. Ronse, with graves on the sites of a church and a cloister, turns out to be the burial place of at least a number of clergy whom we know by name and rank because of the endotaphs in their graves. One of the interred deans carried a bronze ring with a stone. In Leuven, a single anthropomorphic grave was found that belonged to a young noblewoman. In Edegem-Buizegem, the only anthropomorphic grave belonged to an unknown child. All sites studied in this thesis had a close relationship with Christianity; they were all linked to churches or other religious buildings. Most of the anthropomorphic graves were of the semi-constructed type, using layers of mortar to delineate the shape of the head-and-shoulder area. There is one stone-delineated grave. In Ronse, all the anthropomorphic graves were of the constructed type, whereas in Aalst they were all earth-dug. The period of occurrence of graves of this type lies between the 9th and 13th centuries with a peak in the 10th and 11th centuries. In some of the graves included in this thesis, an elevated rest for the head was present; often this was visible in the photographs but not well-described in the reports.

In what way and in how far do the possible interpretations of the importance of the position of the head and of the social aspects of burial and memory apply to the sites in the data-set?

Protection of the body and the head achieved by isolating it from the soil underneath and the earth on top can be observed in several graves. A number of graves from the data-set in this thesis contain a finishing layer of lime mortar on the bottom and the walls of the grave. This practice may not be exclusive for anthropomorphic graves, however. The layer prevented direct contact between the body of the deceased and the soil, creating a 'clean burial'. Only people from a certain social position—most likely clergy and nobility—could afford to be treated this way after their death. None of the reports, however, mentions why the mortar sometimes was coloured red by mixing with ground brick grit. This practice may be regionally determined; the availability of red bricks may have been an important factor. Within the data-set, 4 sites had anthropomorphic graves in which red-lime mortar was used. Two sites contained white-lime mortar, while the rest did not contain any lime mortar at all.

No sealing plates in either stone or wood were found at 6 sites. This does not mean that they were never there. In one of the graves on the site of the Saint Baafs' abbey and Chapter house in Gent, only the recess was covered by a stone plate. It perhaps served as a protection when the grave was filled with earth. In the case of the Saint Lambertus Chapel in Heverlee, piled-up stones on the short sides of a grave formed a support for four ironstone plates that were placed on top of the grave. The site of Saint Peters' square and Tweekerkenstraat in Gent was the only site to contain both stone and wood sealing plates, although they were present in just three out of 106 anthropomorphic graves.

None of the graves discussed in this thesis had above-ground grave markers that survived. Only four sites discussed here had anthropomorphic graves in which endotaphs were placed. These sites were the two in Gent and the sites in Ronse and Leuven. The endotaph found in the anthropomorphic grave in Leuven was not placed underneath the head of the deceased as in the other sites, but against the wall of the grave. It is noteworthy that the endotaphs of Ronse were all of different quality. This could perhaps be explained by multiple scribes. One of the endotaphs of Ronse was manufactured from lead. Naming the deceased and bringing into memory their day of death was important in commemoration practices. The daily offices and the obituaries ensured that prayers were said for the deceased.

As several of the sites included in this thesis were monastic, it is possible that the monastic lifestyle of humility and devotion was put forward as an example to follow. Underlining these aspects of the deceased person would teach the community and pave the way to salvation. This may explain the choice to emphasize the downward position of the head, as in praying. For the clergy and the nobility, the image of devotion would be something they aspire to be remembered by, and it would encourage the members of the community to imitate them. A humble attitude would reflect a Christian life and heighten the chance that they would be accepted in the afterlife.

But the heads of the deceased were not always elevated in the grave. Maintaining the head upright in a recess or alcove may have been a way to evoke the reminiscence of a living, sleeping or resting person who is not yet dead. This may have been the case where young, cherished and deeply missed persons were buried, such as the child in Edegem-Buizegem or the young woman in Leuven. Elaborate graves, often in meaningful locations, suppose that the family members were able to afford this way of saying farewell.

It is noted by several of the authors of the reports on the excavations, that the mere location of the anthropomorphic graves may indicate a higher social status of the interred. It is difficult to say without archaeological or written sources whether this was the only aspect of display or if there were prestigious elements in the funeral or burial ceremony. The shape of the grave can be considered an expression of distinction, as it reflects deliberate choices and investments.

The peak of head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic graves in Flanders seems to lie in the 10th and 11th centuries—a period during which commemoration of the dead was important and ecclesiastical and worldly power began to intertwine. Elaborate burial practices including a specific type of grave may have played a role in creating memory of one's ancestors.

5 Conclusion and discussion

5.1 Conclusion

This thesis attempts to tackle the problem whether head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic graves merit to be considered as a separate type in burial archaeology. Literature study revealed that the term *anthropomorphic* is understood differently by different archaeologists. Without an unambiguous definition and a clear name, less attention may be given to such graves during fieldwork, which may result in inadequate descriptions and entries in databases and in missed on opportunities to study these graves in their social contexts.

A list of 11 sites with anthropomorphic graves in 9th to 13th century Flanders was set up. The presence of a recess or alcove for the head was considered to be a distinctive feature, which excluded earth-dug graves without that feature from the thesis.

Research question 1 concerned the material characteristics of this type of grave. It was possible to identify graves with a head-and-shoulder outline in the reports and publications about the included sites, although the amount and level of detail of the information available varied considerably. Sometimes, drawings and photographs had to be consulted for additional information. With the exception of 2 monumental, monastic sites in Gent where the number of anthropomorphic graves was considerable, this type of grave turned out to be quite rare in medieval cemeteries. Types of construction range from earth-dug graves via semi-constructed graves with the use of mortar or stones to brick- or stone-constructed graves. Although the sites all fit between the 9th and 13th centuries, a peak in the use of this type of grave occurred in the 10th to 12th centuries. Sometimes, an elevated part on which to rest the head was seen. Thanks to endotaphs and other written sources, it was possible to give some of the deceased a name; many of them were male priests and abbots, and some belonged to nobility.

Research question 2 investigated the immaterial meaning of the use of this type of graves. This question is difficult to answer by looking at the archaeological evidence. Anthropomorphic graves occurred alongside pit graves and coffin graves, so their occurrence indicates a deliberate choice. Once covered, the special features of this type of grave become invisible. It is assumed that the burial ritual itself and the way in which the mourners preferred to remember the dead played a role in the choice of grave shape and execution. The

fixed and sometimes downward-gazing position of the head possibly refers to a Christian demeanour of humility and devotion. It is generally believed, also based on the location of the graves, that people of a higher status were interred here. This may have implied prestigious burial ceremonies and elaborated grave arrangements. Commemoration of ancestors was a fundamental practice of the 11th to 13th centuries that was related to the changes and developments in society and the transition of power from the Church to the laity.

To conclude, it is recommended that head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic graves be assigned a separate category in burial archaeology. For Dutch-speaking countries, the term *hoofdnisgraf* is preferable. Identifying and describing this type of grave in medieval cemeteries will broaden our knowledge and understanding of important events in the life course of death, burial and remembrance. As the occurrence of this type of grave seems to be limited to a few centuries only, it also opens up the possibility of relating archaeological finds with developments in medieval Christian society in Europe and in particular to the dominant ecclesiastic and worldly culture.

5.2 Discussion

The research undertaken in this thesis affirms the need to investigate the anthropomorphic grave as a category of its own. The descriptive and explorative research questions have been resolved to some extent, but some questions remain to be answered. Below, the limitations of the research conducted in this thesis will be brought to mind, and suggestions for further research will be offered.

Of the 11 sites discussed in this thesis, only the two sites in Gent and those in Mechelen, Moorsel, Meldert and Edegem-Buizegem had archaeological reports from which relevant information could be retrieved. For the remaining 5 sites, information was retrieved from general publications about the designated site, in which the archaeological evidence constituted only a small part. Not all cemeteries on the selected sites were researched completely, and analysis was incomplete on some of the graves. This may affect the results of this thesis.

Due to the limited extent and time range of this thesis, it was not possible to do an exhaustive study of anthropomorphic graves in Flanders between the 9th and 13th centuries. No doubt other cemeteries, churches and religious houses contain anthropomorphic graves that have not

yet been investigated. In Flanders, few medieval churches have survived; this may imply that graves were destroyed or have gone unnoticed. Also, when churches were under archaeological survey, graves were sometimes considered subservient to church architecture. High medieval layers are often disturbed by contemporary or recent building activities. The information archaeologists can draw from the archaeological record may therefore be biased. Most of the information collected and analysed in this thesis comes from excavation reports. Other sources used to gain insight into burial practices between the 9th and 13th centuries include general handbooks on death and burial in Medieval Europe. Historical and art-historical sources—such as episcopal tracts, manuals for priests, manuscripts, liturgy books, drawings and paintings—will no doubt shed more light on Church influence of burial modes and burial practices. They may help to answer the question why anthropomorphic graves begin to occur in the higher middle ages and cease to be used some centuries later.

The overall impression is that head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic graves were used in a certain period to bury mainly clergy and some members of noble families. Monastic centres seem to play a role in this practice. Overlooking the data-set as a whole, some of the sites fit in with this pattern: notably the two sites in Gent and the one in Ronse. But on some of the other sites, it is less obvious why people chose such a grave. Anthropomorphic graves occur in very infrequently in medieval cemeteries, and it is difficult to interpret a rare find.

Although most interred are male, some female graves found and a child grave have also been found. Authors of the reports and publications on the sites often mention privileged locations for this type of grave, but it would be interesting to know if there are examples of anthropomorphic graves in non-high status locations or evidence of non-high status people buried within. In some of the graves in the data-set, the head was elevated and oriented towards the chest. This feature is not well-documented. It would be worthwhile to see whether this elevation occurs in sites of less religious prestige and what it may mean.

As the highlight of this type of grave seems to be in the 10th and 11th centuries, historical documents on society and culture of that period in Flanders may facilitate understanding of burial practices. The fact that the use of anthropomorphic graves seems to cease quite abruptly in the 13th century merits more thought. Coffin burials seem to have replaced earth-dug graves. It remains to be determined whether this is due mainly to practical reasons, such as changed attitudes and beliefs about hygiene. Coffins usually have a human form-shape.

Expanding the scope of this thesis to the Dutch province of Brabant, as was foreseen originally, remains a preferred option for further research. Other areas in the (southern) Netherlands, specifically of a monastic nature, must be re-evaluated. As far as the European sites are concerned, taking a closer look at them may provide information about how, where and when head-and-shoulder outlined graves occur and whether it is possible to recognize patterns of influence between the regions.

Anthropomorphic graves deserve more attention. As information and interpretation seems to be scarce, it is valuable to bring together the available excavation results, knowledge, experience and insights; this will contribute to our understanding.

Archaeologists doing fieldwork need to be aware that anthropomorphic graves can occur from the 9th century onwards, with a peak between the 10th and 12th centuries. In most cemeteries, this type of grave is not very common; it can also be found within churches or chapter houses. Archaeologists may have overlooked the characteristic shape of anthropomorphic graves or may not have recognized these as such.

A final suggestion concerns the construction of head-and-shoulder outlined anthropomorphic graves. Since there is little or no information regarding the profession of grave-digging, a form of experimental archaeology may be undertaken to recreate this type of grave in order to gain insight into the effort, time, craftsmanship, additional material and tools required.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Endotaphs

Saint Baafs Abbey and Chapter house, Gent

Two of the three anthropomorphic graves contained an endotaph. It was possible to identify two abbots: Odwinus and Othelboldus.
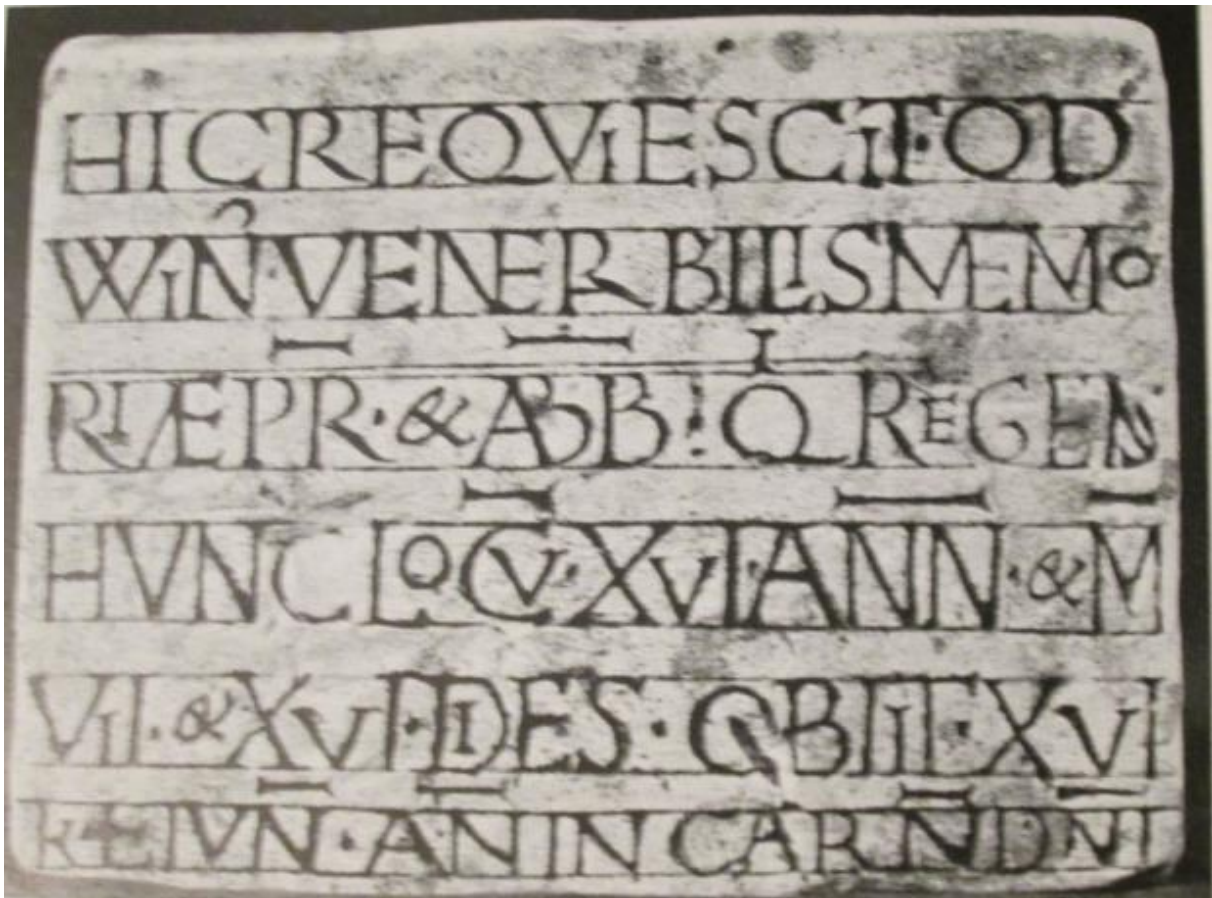
Abbot Odwinus

Figure I: Front side of the endotaph of abbot Oldwinus (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 254).

The scribe who chiselled the text on the front side of the endotaph made use of a line in order to write the letters in an orderly fashion. The text in Latin reads as follows (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 257):

> HIC REQUIESCIT ˙ OD
>
> WIN (us) VENERABILIS MEMO
>
> RIæ PR (esbyter) & ABB (a) Q(u) I REGENS
>
> HUNC LOCUM (m) XVI ANN (os) & M(enses)
>
> VII & XVI DIES OBIIT XVI
>
> K(a)L(endas) IUN(ii) AN(ni) INCARN(ationis) D(omi)NI

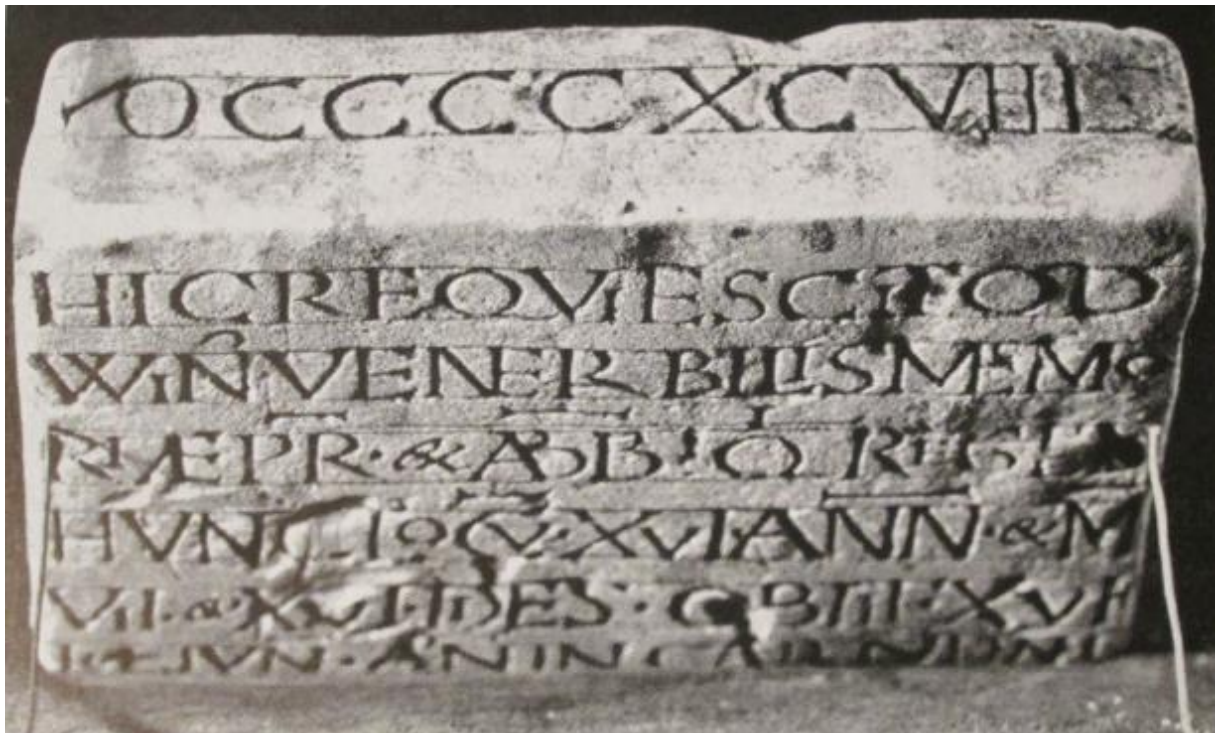On the side of the endotaph, there is a date (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 257):

> DCCCCXCVIII

Figure II: Top and front side of the endotaph of abbot Odwinus (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 256).

Freely translated, it says that abbot Odwinus led the abbey for 16 years and that he died on the 17th of May, 998 (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 259).

The backside of the endotaph contained a less well-executed inscription than the front side (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 259):
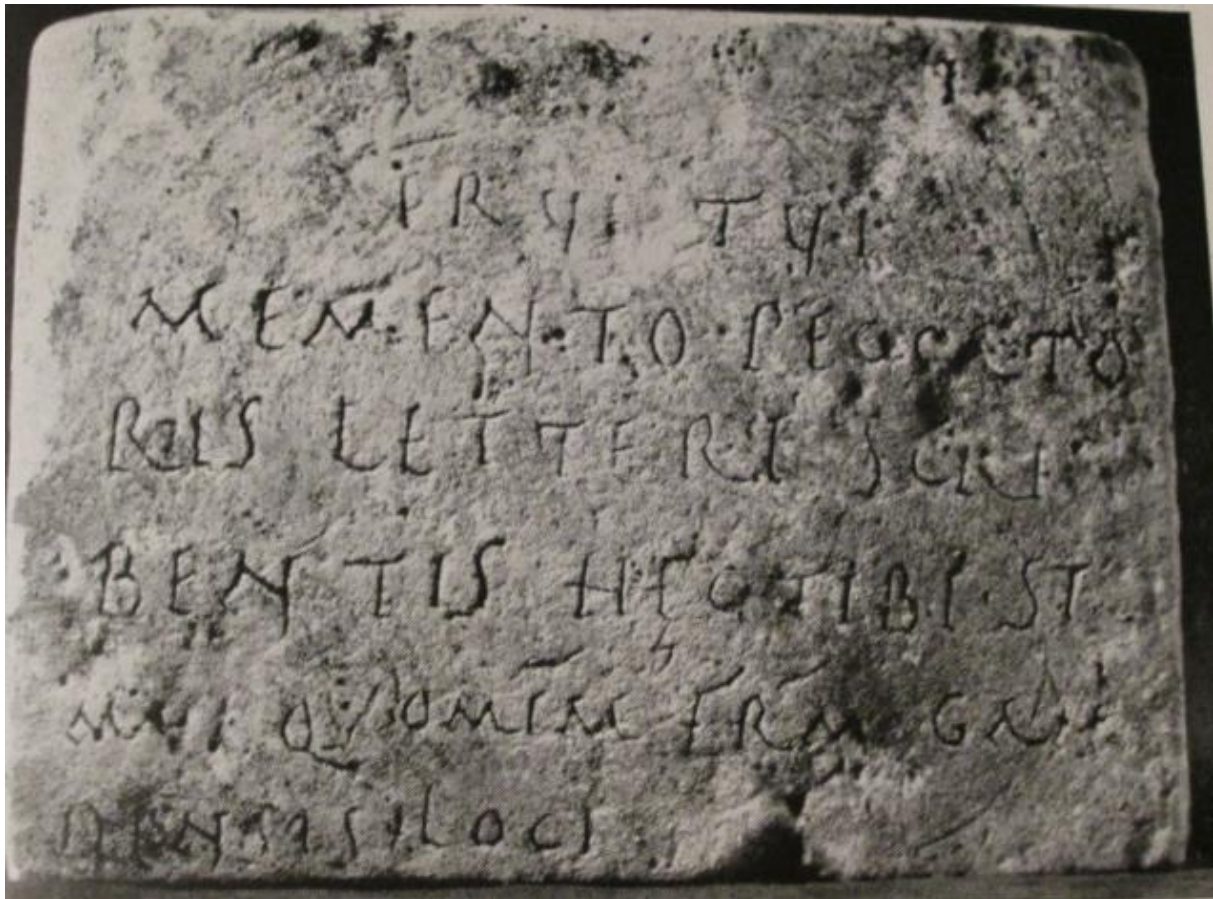
Figure III: Back side of the endotaph of abbot Odwinus (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 255).

SERVI TUI
MEMENTO PECCATO
RIS LETTERI SCRI
BENTIS H (a)EC TIBI SI
MULQ(ue) OM(n)I(u)M FR(atru)M GAN
DENSIS LOCI

According to Smidt, the text may be translated as follows: *Remember your servant the sinner LETTER, who wrote this for you, and (remember) all the votaries of Gent at the same time*, (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 259).

Letter was the name of the monk who incised the text on the stone (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 260).

Abbot Othelboldus
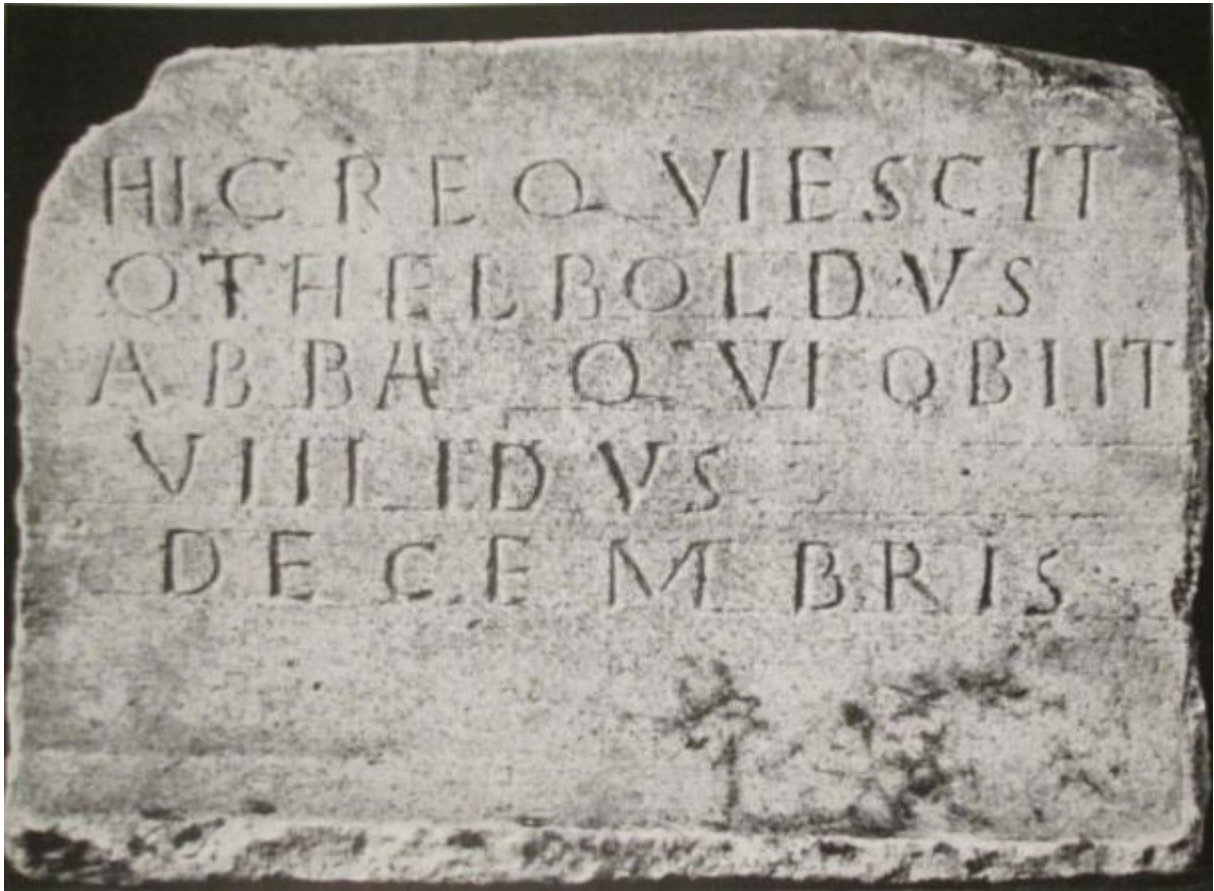
Figure IV: Stone endotaph of abbot Othelboldus (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 262).

The scribe used a line on which the letters were chiselled; the letters themselves are uneven (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 263).

The text reads as follows (DE SMIDT, 1956, P. 263):

HIC REQUIESCIT
OTHELBOLDUS
ABBA QUI OBIIT
VIII IDUS DECEMBRIS

The text on the endotaph does not specify the year in which abbot Othelboldus died, but from written sources it is known that he died in 1034.

Saint Peters' square and Tweekerkenstraat, Gent

Vulferus

In one anthropomorphic grave, an endotaph which measured 12.2 x 12.2 x 4.5 cm was found.

A Latin text was chiselled into the stone. It was possible to identify Vulferus, because his name was mentioned on the endotaph.

Figure V: Stone endotaph of Vulferus with a Latin inscription (VAN DEN BREMPT & VERMEIREN, 2004, P. 37).

It is noteworthy that the written side of the stone was placed downwards. The name of the person in the grave was Vulferus, who died on the of 10th February, 1013 (VAN DEN BREMPT & VERMEIREN, 2004, P. 36). The back side of the stone was also chiselled. The text can be translated as follows: *If you see me too, I beg you to let me rest* (VAN DEN BREMPT & VERMEIREN, 2004, P. 36).

<u>Saint-Hermes church, Ronse</u>

Ten graves were found in which endotaphs were placed.

Grave 1: *priest and canon Almoricus* (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 11):

Figure VI: Stone endotaph of Almolricus (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, PL. III).

+ XVI. KAL. APRIL. OBI
IT. ALMOLRICUS. PBR
& CAN. M.C.X.L.IIII

Transcription: XVI Kalendas Aprilis (17th March) obiit Almolricus presbiter et canonicus, 1144

Dimensions: 19 x 7.5 cm (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, p. 12)

Grave 1 belonged to priest and canon Almoricus who died on the 17th of March. The letters on his endotaph are irregular. The text is preceded by a cross, which is placed like an 'X'. The surface of the endotaph is not smooth; this might have to do with the fact that the stone was re-used.

Grave 2: *deacon Tibaldus* (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 12):
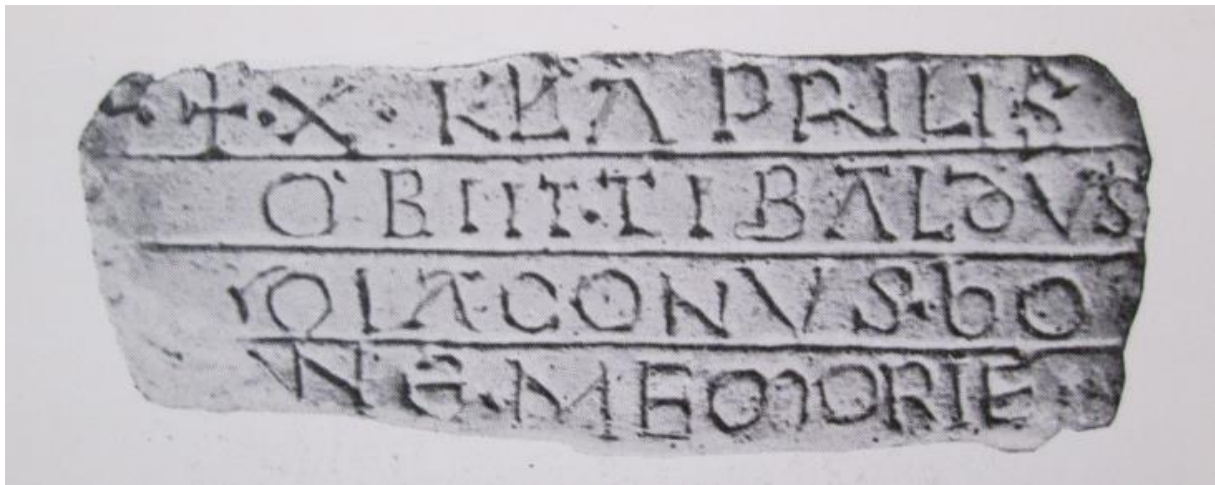
Figure VII: Stone endotaph of Tibaldus (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, PL. IV).

+ X. KL APRILIS
OBIIT. TIBALDUS
DIACONUS. BO
NE. MEMORIE.

Transcription: X Kalendas Aprilis (23th March) obiit Tibaldus diaconus bone memorie

Dimensions: 17 x 6.3 cm

This endotaph belonged to deacon Tibaldus. The scribe who chiselled the letters used a clear line in order to make regular letters. The text is preceded by a cross. The surface of the endotaph is smooth.

Grave 66: *deacon Erenbertus* (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 12):

Figure VIII: Stone endotaph of Erenbertus (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, PL. IV).

IIII KL IUNII
OB EREN
BERTUS
DIAC

Transcription: IIII Kalendas Junii (29th May) obiit Erenbertus diaconus

Dimensions: 19 x 14.5 cm

Grave 66 belonged to deacon Erenbertus, who died on the 29th of May. The stone on which the text was chiselled is very irregular and is damaged on the right side. The letters are irregular and there is no evidence of a line to help the scribe.

Grave 129: *dean Everardus* (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 12 AND 13):

Figure IX: Stone endotaph of Everardus (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, PL. V).

XVIII KL. OCTOB

OBIIT EVE

RARD PS

Transcription: XVIII Kalendas Octobris (14th September) obiit Everardus præpositus

Dimensions: 14 x 9 cm

This endotaph belonged to dean Everardus, who died on the 14th of September. The text is preceded by a cross, which is shaped like an 'X'. The text seems to be damaged or subject to correction, as it seems to have faded. The first and second line of the text are similar, but the third line seems to be scratched rather than chiselled.

Grave 221: *priest Balduinus* (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 13):

Figure X: Stone endotaph of Balduinus (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, PL. VI).

+ VIIII. KL.
SEPT. OB.
BALDUIN'
PBR

Transcription: VIIII Kalendas Septembris (24th August) obiit Balduinus presbiter

Dimensions: 14.5 x 12 cm

This endotaph belonged to priest Balduinus, who died on the 24th of August. The text is preceded by a cross. The scribe made use of a line to chisel regular letters. However, the letters are slightly irregular. The stone on which the text is chiselled is of an irregular shape.

Grave 364: *Canon Arnulphus* (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 13):

Figure XI: Stone endotaph of Arnulphus (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, PL. III).

+. II. ID'. IA
N. OB. ARN
ULPH'. CAN

Transcription: II Idus Januarii (12th January) obiit Arnulphus canonicus

Dimensions: 16 x 12 cm

This grave belonged to canon Arnulphus, who died on the 12th of January. The text is preceded by a cross. The last word on the endotaph seems to be damaged; it is uncertain whether this was a post-mortem degradation, or whether it happened before the deceased was placed in his grave. The stone on which the text was chiselled is irregular.

Grave 440: *Priest Salefridus* (ROOSENS EN MERTENS, 1950, P. 13 AND 14):

Figure XII: Stone endotaph of Salefridus (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, PL. VI).

+ IIII NON
SEUT : OB
SALEFRID'
PBR +

Transcription: III Nonas Septembris (2nd September) obiit Salefridus presbiter

Dimensions: 11 x 10 cm

Grave 440 belonged to priest Salefridus. He died on the 2nd of September. The text is preceded by a cross. The scribe did not use a line to make all letters similar. However, the text is very regular.

Two plates were not found *in situ*, but on the site during excavation (Roosens & Mertens, 1950, p. 14).

Priest Werenbaldus

One stone contained the following text:
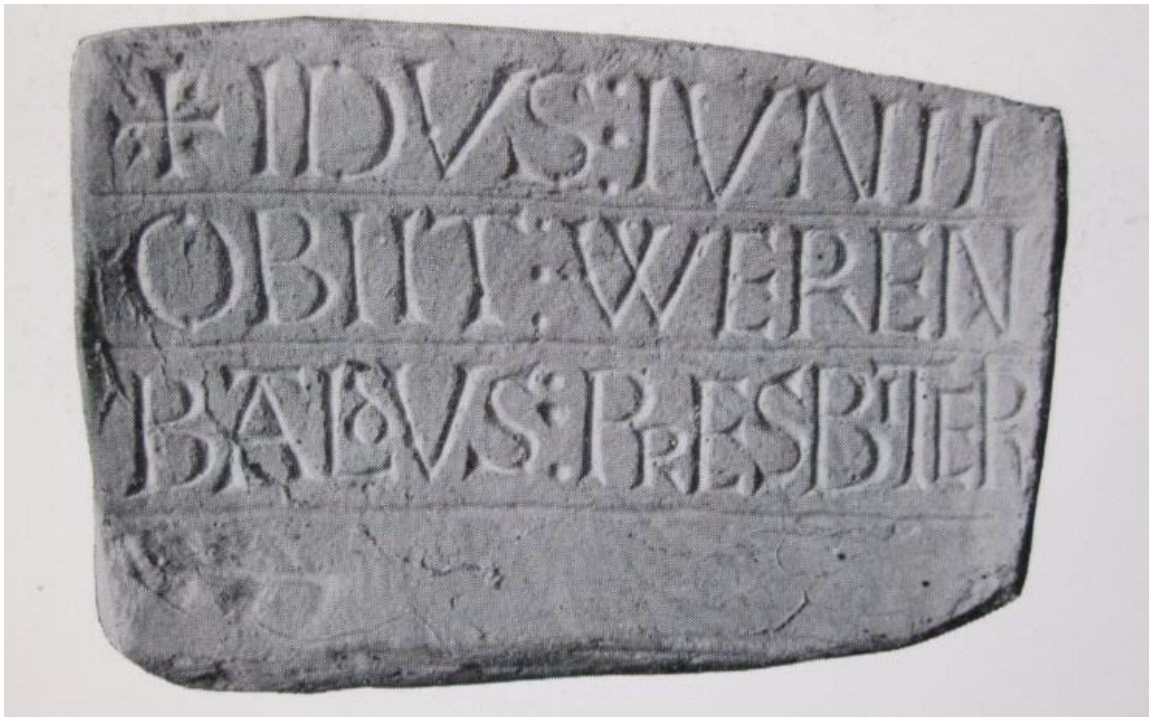
Figure XIII: Stone endotaph of Werenbaldus (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, PL. V).

+ IDUS : IUNII
OBIIT : WEREN
BALDUS : PRESBITER

Transcription: Idus Junii (13th June) obiit Werenbaldus presbiter

Dimensions: 15.5 x 10 cm

This endotaph belonged to priest Werenbaldus, who died on the 13th of June. His endotaph was styled; both the cross and letters were chiselled very neatly. The surface of the stone was smooth.

Priest Eldebaldus

The other stone contained the following text:

Figure XIV: Stone endotaph of Eldebaldus (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, PL. VII).

```
VIII
KL DE
CEBRIS OBIIT
ELDEBALDU
S PRESBIT
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Transcription: VIIII Kalendas Decembris (24th November) obiit Eldebaldus presbiter

Dimensions: 13 x 10.5 cm

This endotaph belonged to priest Eldebaldus, who died on the 24[th] of November. The stone contained neither a cross nor a line to make similar letters. The letters seem to have been scratched onto the stone rather than chiselled; they are very irregular. The stone is damaged and shows a fracture on the right side.

Unlike the others, the tenth plate found was made from lead and lay with the text downwards in one of the pits without brickwork (Roosens & Mertens, 1950, p. 15).

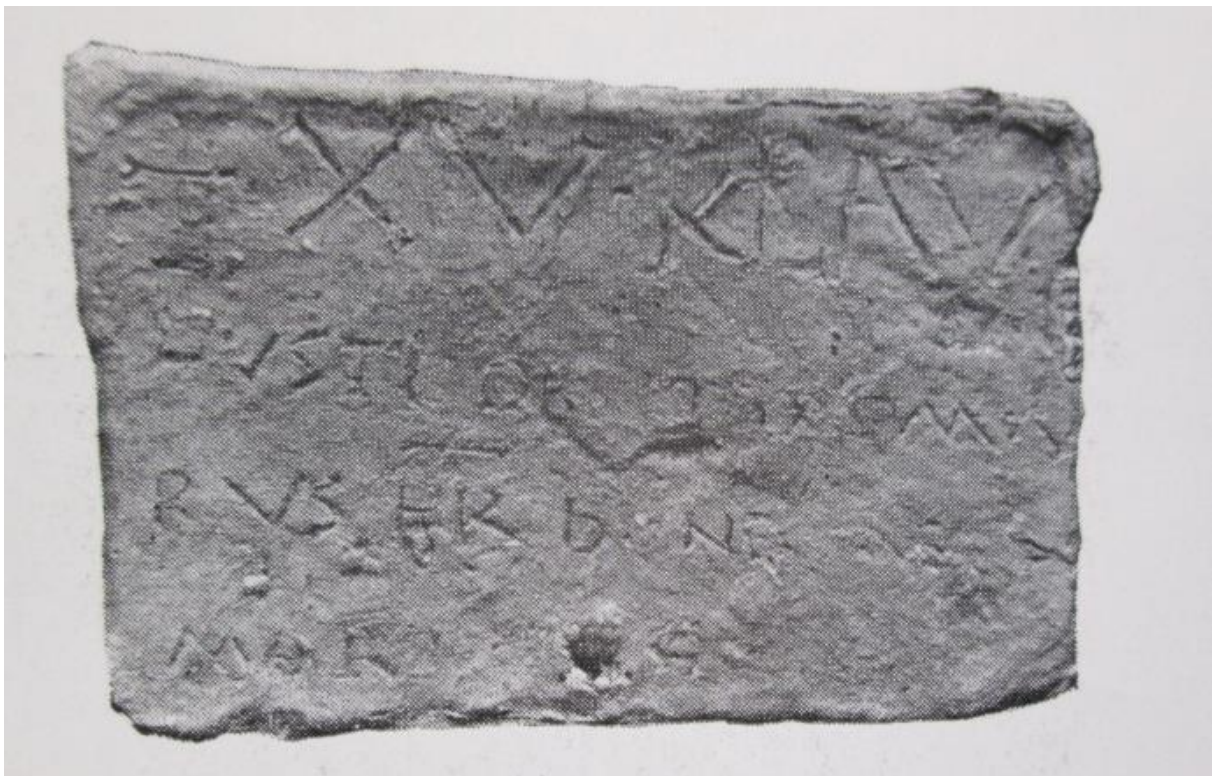Grave 205: *Priest Tasmarus* (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 15):

Figure XV: Lead endotaph of Tasmarus (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, PL. VII).

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+ XV. KL AU
GUSTI OBIIT TASMA
RUS PR BONE ME
MARIE
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Transcription: XV Kalendas Augusti (18th July) obiit Tasmarus presbiter bone memarie

Dimensions: 11 x 7 X 0.5 cm

Grave 205 belonged to priest Tasmarus, who died on the 18[th] of July. The text is preceded by a cross. The letters are thin and irregular. The lead tablet contains a hole in the middle of the bottom of the tablet.

The ten plates have the same stylistic characteristics even though the workmanship was not the same with each plate (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 15). In just one case, a year was present: it is in Almoricus' grave (number 1). His year of death, 1144, might be a repetition of the text that had been written down in the obituary (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 15). This is a book of dead in which the names of the members of the ecclesial community were mentioned (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 16). Each year the dead were remembered; an official year of death mentioned on a grave stone was thus not necessary (ROOSENS & MERTENS, 1950, P. 16).

Conigunda

The only anthropomorphic grave found in Saint Peters' church in Leuven contained an endotaph. Both sides of the stone are written on.

Figure XVI: Stone endotaph found in the grave of Conigunda (MERTENS, 1958, P. 6).

The front side contained the following text:

PRIDIE NON OBIIT

The bottom side contained some numbers:

IVL

This may be a date, but it is not described in the publication.

The back side of the endotaph, which perhaps was scratched by a second scribe, contained the name of the deceased:

CONIGVNDA

Some space is left between the *D* and the *A*; it is not known whether this was a deliberate choice to insert a letter between these two (MERTENS, 1958, P. 4-6).

According to historical written sources, Conigunda was the daughter of Hendrik I, the count of Leuven in that period. There are no entries on her life in any written sources (MERTENS, 1958, P. 5). Her father died in 1038 and was buried in the Saint-Gertrudis church in Nijvel (MERTENS, 1958, P. 5 AND 6).

Appendix B: The 7 graves near the western entrance of the Saint Peters' Church in Gent

Saint Peters' square and Tweekerkenstraat, Gent

In Carolingian times, it was common to place the deceased landlord and his relatives in the proximity of the entrance of a church. In this way the family ensured that the deceased would be remembered by the members of the community, who could pray for their souls (BRU, LALEMAN & VERMEIREN, 2009, P. 86 AND 87). Until the 12[th] century, it was uncommon to be buried within the church; a grave near the entrance of a church was an option that would guarantee protection by the saints inside the church (BRU, LALEMAN & VERMEIREN, 2009, P. 87; DECLERCQ & DIERKENS, 2009, P. 116). The placement of graves near an entrance would be financed by the family members (BRU, LALEMAN & VERMEIREN, 2009, P. 87).

Thanks to physical anthropological research on skeletons found in the 7 anthropomorphic graves near the western entrance of the church, archaeologists have established that at least two adults had remnants of lifestyle diseases. These traces, plus the fact that these persons were buried near the entrance of the church suggest a high social position (QUENTELIER & VANDENBRUANE, 2009, P. 101).

People who had to be purged from their sins were frequently buried at the entrance of a church. These persons had to be purged first before they could enter the church, which was a holy place (DECLERCQ & DIERKENS, 2009, P. 117).The location just in front of the church represented the gates of heaven, meaning the place where one would have to wait and be purged before entering heaven (DECLERCQ & DIERKENS, 2009, P. 117).

Other reasons for a grave under the portal of a church could be protection or humility. A grave under the portal would mean that humility would secure the interred a place in paradise (DECLERCQ & DIERKENS, 2009, P. 117). In the case of protection, the person buried under the portal would act as a guardian of the holiness of the church, so that only people with true faith would enter the church (DECLERCQ & DIERKENS, 2009, P. 117).

Members of the Carolingian family often chose to be buried in this particular way. It was Charlemagne who started this tradition (DECLERCQ & DIERKENS, 2009, P. 117). His grave was placed in front of the entrance of the palatine chapel in Aachen (DECLERCQ & DIERKENS, 2009, P. 118).

A total of 11 members of the noble family have been buried in the former abbey church of Gent, in the eastern part. Evidence for these graves comes from a collection of Latin grave poems that were written in the abbey itself (DECLERCQ & DIERKENS, 2009, P. 119). Historiographic sources of the late 15th and first half of the 16th centuries discuss the graves of the members of the noble family (DECLERCQ & DIERKENS, 2009, P. 120). Sources from the 17th and 18th centuries also mention graves of the noble family in the church (DECLERCQ & DIERKENS, 2009, P. 119).

Identification of persons buried near the entrance of the church is difficult due to the circumstances of the archaeological survey. The sex of the individuals could not be guaranteed by anthropological analysis for each individual. It was not possible to explore the relationships between all the individuals (DECLERCQ & DIERKENS, 2009, P. 129).

Only two graves could be identified, that is to say, grave s150 and grave s127. Grave s150 belonged to a male around 25 years old (DECLERCQ & DIERKENS, 2009, P. 129). His grave was the first that was laid near the entrance of the church (De Clercq & Dierkens, 2009, p. 130). This grave probably belonged to Sir Audacer, father of Count Boudewijn I. The latter was the ancestor of the counts of Flanders (DECLERCQ & DIERKENS, 2009, P. 130).

In grave s127, a female around 45-50 years old was buried—possibly Judith, daughter of the West-Frankish king Charles the Bald and spouse of Boudewijn I (DECLERCQ & DIERKENS, 2009, P. 130).

Judith was married two times and was widowed before she met Boudewijn I in 862. Her father wanted to send Judith to a cloister, but it was then that she met her future husband. Boudewijn and Judith first fled Judith's father, but they got married in October 863 after the pope convinced Charles the Bald that Boudewijn was a suitable man for Judith (DECLERCQ & DIERKENS, 2009, P. 131). Judith's date of death was probably somewhere around 900, since her date of birth was 844. The woman buried in grave s127 died in her fifties (DECLERCQ & DIERKENS, 2009, P. 132).

Appendix C: Features of appearance

Site	Alcove	Shape	Sealing plate	Elevated rest for the head
Saint Baafs Abbey and Chapter house, Gent	Both circular and rectangular	Tapered: both circular and rectangular ends	In 2 graves: sealing plates from limestone from Doornik	Several graves: two-step elevation
Saint Peters' square and Tweekerkenstraat, Gent	Both circular and rectangular	Tapered: both circular and rectangular ends	2 graves: wooden sealing plates 1 grave: stone sealing plate, coffin lid	Several graves: two-step elevation
City Centre of Moorsel, Aalst	Rectangular	Tapered: rectangular ends	Some graves: wooden sealing plates	One grave: gradual platform for elevation
Castle Chapel and cemetery, Dendermonde	Semi-circular alcove	Round shape towards the feet	No sealing plates found	No elevated rest for the head
Saint Lambertus' Church, Muizen	Circular	Tapered: rectangular ends	No sealing plates found	No elevated rest for the head
Saint Hermes' Church, Ronse	Circular	Tapered: rectangular ends	1 grave: stone sealing lid; lid is painted red on the inside	No elevated rest for the head
The Old Church, Edegem-Buizegem	Circular	Rectangular shape towards the feet	No sealing plates found	No elevated rest for the head
Saint Willibrordus' Church, Meldert (Lummen)	Circular	Grave is intersected by another pit grave, so shape is unknown	No sealing plates found	No elevated rest for the head

Saint Lambertus' Chapel, Heverlee	Rectangular	Tapered: rectangular end	1 grave: 4 ironstone sealing plates	One grave: elevated rest for the head through stone under head of deceased
Saint Rumbald cemetery, Mechelen	The report does not elaborate on the exact shape of the alcove	The report does not elaborate on the exact shape of the grave	No sealing plates found	No elevated rest for the head
Saint Peters' Church, Leuven	Circular	Rectangular shape towards the feet	No sealing plates found	No elevated rest for the head

Appendix D: Construction types

Site	Earth-dug	Semi-constructed: earth-dug with lime mortar; stone-delineated	Constructed
Saint Baafs' Abbey and Chapter house, Gent	-	3 graves	12 graves
Saint Peters' square and Tweekerkenstraat, Gent	-	Unknown, but probably major part of 106 graves; at least 1 stone-delineated	Unknown part of 106 graves
Village of Moorsel, Aalst	11 graves	-	-
Castle Chapel and cemetery, Dendermonde	-	2 graves	-
Saint Lambertus' Church, Muizen	3 graves	-	-
Saint Hermes' Church, Ronse	-	-	23 graves
The Old Church, Edegem-Buizegem	1 grave	-	-
Saint Willibrordus' Church, Meldert (Lummen)	1 grave	-	-
Saint Lambertus'	-	-	1 grave

Chapel, Heverlee			
Saint Rumbald cemetery, Mechelen	4 graves	-	-
Saint Peters' Church, Leuven	-	-	1 grave
TOTAL	20 graves	6 graves + unknown, but probably major part of 106 graves	37 + unknown part of 106 graves

Appendix E: Dating

Site	Dating
Saint Baafs' Abbey and Chapter house, Gent	998 AD, 1034 AD (10th -11th c.)
Saint Peters' square and Tweekerkenstraat, Gent	10th/11th c.
Village of Moorsel, Aalst	9th/10th c. and 11th/12th c.
Castle Chapel and cemetery, Dendermonde	10th c.
Saint Lambertus' Church, Muizen	Pre 10th c.
Saint Hermes' Church, Ronse	9th-10th c. and 12th c.
The Old Church, Edegem-Buizegem	10th-12th c.
Saint Willibrordus' Church, Meldert (Lummen)	11th c.
Saint Lambertus' Chapel, Heverlee	11th-13th c.
Saint Rumbald cemetery, Mechelen	1200-1350 AD
Saint Peters' Church, Leuven	11th c.