

# AVENTICUM HER FABULOUS STORY!



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# POWERS!

In Aventicum, as in any other city in the Empire, imperial power can be seen everywhere, through the objects discovered as well as its monuments.

No one embodies the notion of power better than a Roman emperor, him who, since 27 BCE, as Augustus and then as his successors, concentrates in his hands the political, legislative, military and religious powers.

As he inherited the Republican consuls' powers, the Roman emperor holds the legislative power. He can exercise his legal authority everywhere and establishes laws. He is free to consult the Senate.

He commands the military forces (*imperator*).

As a *Pontifex Maximus*, the emperor is the head of the official religion and religious law. The imperial cult reinforces moreover the divine character of the prince and the feeling of monarchy.

The emperor's power is absolute and unlimited. He declares war and peace, raises taxes, he is also head of public expenses.

The emperor personifies supreme justice: he has the power of life or death on his subjects.



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## **Gold bust of the emperor Marcus Aurelius (161–180 CE) (copy)**

This bust was discovered in 1939 in a water pipe during an excavation of the Cigognier sanctuary by a team of unemployed workers from Lausanne. This extremely precious object was hidden there, probably already during Antiquity.

The technique used here is called “repoussé” and it was done with a single 22 carats gold sheet weighing 1587 g. Crafted around 180 CE.

Imperial portraits express the power of Rome and the gods. Such representations can be carried on poles in processions that take place during festivals or ceremonies of the imperial cult. It is an exceptional artefact as only two other Roman gold busts have been found.

During the period of the Roman Empire (27 BCE - 476 CE), except in some rare cases, only members of the imperial family could be pictured in gold. A gold statue is not only a valuable object, it is a sign of prestige and places the subject of the statue above the common mortals; whereas golden bronze statues were accessible to certain high officials.

## 2 Medallion from a cobalt blue glass *phalera*

This medallion shows the portrait of Agrippina the Elder (14 BCE – 33 CE), granddaughter of the emperor Augustus, mother of Caligula and grandmother of Nero. It is the central part of a *phalera*, a military decoration awarded to soldiers and auxiliary soldiers. *Phalerae* bear the portraits of emperors and members of their family. Attached to a leather harness, entirely made out of metal or with a glass medallion in their centre, they were proudly displayed on the soldiers' breasts. These objects remind the soldiers, posted often far away from Rome, of their oath of allegiance to the emperor. Such decorations were given until to the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, they were then replaced by gifts of money or additional rations.

## 3 Coin of the emperor Caligula

The reverse of this coin, a sesterce, pictures the sacrifice for the inauguration of the Temple of Divine Augustus (*Templum divi Augusti*) in Rome, started under Tiberius and dedicated by Caligula in 37 – 38 CE. One can see the emperor himself, portrayed as the *Pontifex Maximus*, his head covered, accompanied by two priests: the left one thrusts his knife in the animal's throat on the altar. Six Corinthian columns decorated with a garland supporting the pediment of the temple stand in the background.

This very rare piece, was found close to the Grange des Dîmes Temple (cf. 40) and could be related to the inauguration of a monument dedicated to the imperial cult.

#### 4 Richly adorned silver goblet

The goblet bears two scenes separated by the depiction of a sanctuary for the god Pan (nature-god, protector of shepherds and flocks, but also of coasts): the first scene shows two naval carpenters working on a boat and a craftsman probably holding a beater, a tool used to unravel threads; the second scene pictures two fishermen on a boat, close to a shore, while a priestess of Priapus, a torch in her hand, stands in front of an altar.

This exceptional goblet could be an offering to the gods to thank them or to ensure their favour. The process used to create this goblet is called “repoussé” (french for ‘pushed out’). The craftsman worked on a metal sheet to fashion a three-dimensional picture or ornament by raising and shaping the different forms. The object was dated around the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, and may originate from Italy.

#### 5 Military *gladius*

This short sword (*gladius*) was found in a roadside ditch, close to the forum. It is a weapon of high quality. Its blade is made of iron, its hilt of bone and ivory. Traces of wood left on the blade could have belonged to a scabbard. This type of weapon, also found in Pompeii (Pompeii-type I *gladius*) can be dated between 50 and 100/120 CE. It was the symbol of infantry troops and shows the presence of soldiers in Aventicum. Such discoveries are rare: only five other swords have been found on this site.

#### 6 Folding knife with an ivory handle picturing two gladiators

This pocket knife has an ivory handle depicting two gladiators fighting each other: a *retiarus* equipped with a net and a *secutor* wearing a helmet and a sword. The iron blade folded into a slot cut in the *secutor's* back. Gladiatorial games like other amphitheatre games were means of imperial propaganda and closely related to the city's religious activities.

Discovered south-west of the Cigognier, this artefact is remarkable because of the materials used and the high quality of its carving technique. It may have had a cultural function. 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE.

## 7 Ivory ring box picturing a comic actor

The front of the box is decorated by a theatre mask covering the face of an actor whose piercing glass eyes and mouth can be seen. The theatre used to be an iconic place for meetings, exchanges and communication.

A cavity is cut in the back of the box with, in its middle, a cylindrical tenon; a rectangular lid slides to close the box. This very rare and costly object was imported and shows a high level of skill involved.

## 8 Mosaic with inscription

M(arcus) Fl(avius) Marc[ianus] ---  
/media[m aream] --- /et exed[ram] ---  
/tessella strav(it) --- /d(e) s(uo) [p(osuit)  
ou p(onendum c(uravit)]

Marcus Flavius Marcianus...paved with mosaic, at his own expense, the central part... and the exedra...

This inscription informs us about a Marcus Flavius Marcianus who sponsored the mosaic of two public areas next to the forum, one of them being an exedra, a room that could vary in size and plan, fitted with seats and which served as a meeting place.

Notables, generally magistrates who held political authority in their city, often contributed financially to the embellishment of their town (building of monuments, erection of statues for example) or to the organisation of games.

This mosaic comes from a public building close to the forum (cf. 49) and dates back to the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE.



# Staged power 1

The violent gladiatorial combats and the bloody hunts that take place in the amphitheatres are an integral part of the Roman world. They are, however, much more than a popular entertainment: they serve imperial propaganda and are closely linked to the life of the city.

The spectators, seated according to their social rank, are offered a show during which the strength, the power and the virtues of the Roman empire and its master are staged under the benevolent gaze of the gods.





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### 9 Pieces of an hydraulic organ

This music instrument was very popular during the Roman period and was often part of events that took place in the amphitheatre. These bronze pieces were unearthed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the Derrière la Tour Palace (cf. 16). It is an exceptional discovery as only two other examples of the Roman period are known: at Aquincum in Hungary and at Dion in Greece.

### 10 Bronze statuette of a gladiator

It shows a *secutor* (follower). He holds a heavy rectangular shield in his left hand and the short *gladius* in his right hand. An *ocrea* protects his left leg. A loincloth is tied around his waist with a wide belt. He wears a very distinctive helmet fitted with only two small holes and a smooth rounded surface over which the *retiarus'* net slides; it covers his face and neck, protecting him from the strikes of the trident but severely affecting his sight.

This type of gladiator is generally opposed to the *retiarus*, armed with a net, a trident and a dagger. 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries CE.

### 11 Terracotta lamp depicting two gladiators

Two different types of gladiators are standing side by side: on the left, a Thrace (*Thraex*) holds a curved dagger with a double-edged blade and a shield; on the right, a *hoplomachus* holds a sword, a shield and a helmet with feathers. 70 – 100 CE.

### 12 Grey ceramic jar with amphitheatre scenes

In front of arcades recalling amphitheatres, an *Amor* is fighting a lion using a spear; a gladiator can also be seen, probably a *retiarus* with its net and trident.

This vase, signed by the potter Macer, is imported from Aoste in France (Isère). Between 40 and 80 CE.

### 13 Terracotta lamp depicting a lion pouncing onto a donkey

This picture refers to amphitheatre combats and is a very current motif during the Roman period. 1<sup>st</sup> – beginning 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE.

## 14 Mosaic with lioness motif

This panel shows a lioness, a very popular animal for hunting spectacles (*venationes*) in the arenas. Some combats oppose wild animals to humans while staged hunts take place on a set that recalls the natural environment of the beasts.

This panel is part of a larger mosaic decorated with a frieze of palmettos that covered the floor of a rich home in Aventicum around 200 CE.

## 15 Limestone sculpture showing a lion devouring a donkey

A lion sitting down holds between its front paws the head of a wild donkey (*onager*) it killed in the arena.

Discovered in 1786, this sculpture probably decorated a fountain. Beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE. Combats between donkeys and lions during amphitheatre games are confirmed by texts and an abundant iconography also in the Gallic and German provinces. Therefore, it is highly probable that such fights were regularly included in the games organised in our regions.

# Power of myth

For the Greeks, like the Romans, power on a land or on people can be legitimated by the Ancestors' inheritance. This is the case in the legendary founding of Rome: a Trojan prince, Aeneas, lands on the Italian coast (Lavinium, in the Latium), after the fall of Troy, with his father Anchises and his son Ascanius. Aeneas then marries Lavinia, the daughter of King Latinus; his son Ascanius founds the town of Alba and becomes its king. Aeneas and Lavinia will have several children. According to Virgil (*Aeneid*), Romulus and Remus are the descendants of Aeneas on their mother's side Rhea Silvia, and sons of the god of war Mars, thus having Trojan heroic, Latin and divine blood at the same time.





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**16 Relief depicting the Roman she-wolf suckling the twins Romulus and Remus**

This limestone block was discovered inside the precinct of one of the most illustrious private homes of Aventicum, the Derrière la Tour Palace (cf. 9). This representation pictures an iconic episode of the myth of the founding of Rome and testifies of the strong relation of the inhabitants of this palace with the capital of the Empire at the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE.

# Power of images

Portraits of the emperor and his family exalt the virtues and accomplishments of those they represent; they express the power of Rome, the values of the succeeding dynasties; they embody power. Such portraits are spread across the empire through various means. Busts, statues, painted pictures, sculpted reliefs are displayed for example in the forum, in the temples where the imperial cult is celebrated, in the theatre and amphitheatre where they are placed next to those of gods, in the courts where the emperor is the symbol of justice. Coins also play an important role in imperial propaganda.

Soldiers are very faithful to their emperor, supreme chief of the armies, and swear an oath of allegiance to him. They always carry imperial portraits with them: displayed in the camps or carried on standards or on medallions placed on the cuirasses or the horse harnesses.





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## 17 Portrait of a Roman princess (copy)

The identification of this fine sculptured portrait remains controversial. It might be Julia, daughter of Drusus the Younger and Livilla who in 21 CE, at the age of 15, marries Nero Iulius Caesar, son of Germanicus, next in succession to the Principate in 23 CE, then de-clared public enemy and banished by the Senate. Another interpretation suggests that this portrait could be Antonia Minor, mother of the emperor Claudius who lived between 36 BCE and 37 CE.

Surviving polychromy traces indicate that this portrait was painted; the analyses show that she had blue eyes and pink lips, she wore a turquoise tunic, the colour of her coat remains unknown.

This statue was discovered in the Roman theatre of Avenches in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, then sold to a private collector before entering the collections of the Canton of Neuchâtel. The original work is exhibited in Hauterive (NE) at the Laténium Museum.

## 18 Head of a deceased barbarian

This golden bronze head, found within the precinct of the Cigognier sanctuary, pictures a man, with dishevelled hair, a drooping mouth and closed eyes, identified as a dying barbarian. It belonged to a group, composed of several statues, probably erected to celebrate an imperial victory during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE.

The motif of the defeated Barbarian, frequent in Roman iconography, expresses Rome's will to propagate in the entire Empire a stereotypical image of power and domination upon defeated populations.

## 19 Bronze leg from an equestrian statue

This right leg is the only piece left of an equestrian statue, similar in style to the statue of Marcus-Aurelius displayed at the Capitoline Museum in Rome. The rider wears shoes reserved for Roman patricians, the *calcei patricii*.

Life-size or monumental golden equestrian statues were usually erected in public squares. Discovered in a pipe of the Derrière la Tour Palace (cf. 16), this leg can be dated to the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE.



## 20 Funerary inscription to the emperor Titus' nurse

*[D(is)] M(anibus)/Pomp(eiae) Gemell[(ae)]/  
Pomp(eia) Dic[a]ea l(iberta)/et Primu[l]ia  
s(erva)/educat(ricis) [A]ugusti n(ostris).*

To the Manes. The freedwoman Pompeia Dicaea and the slave Primulia (erected this monument) to Pompeia Gemella, our emperor's nurse.

This white marble plaque discovered at the West Gate cemetery in 1886, was originally placed on the grave of the freedwoman Pompeia Gemella. This inscription mentions that the latter was the emperor's nurse. Researchers suggest that this emperor might be Titus, the son of Vespasian (79–81 CE). Second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE.

This inscription offers us exceptional evidence of the presence of a (future) emperor in Aventicum.

## 21 Bronze medallion bearing the portrait of the emperor Hadrian (117-138)

These medallions differ from coins in size and weight. The prestigious objects were offered to high rank personalities for particular events such as New Year. Discovered within the precinct of the Grange des Dîmes Sanctuary (cf. 40).

## 22 Circular enamelled strap applique

Bronze applique with a central hole and two rectangular head rivets on its reverse. Enamelled decoration around the hole. These multicoloured enamelled bronze phalerae were originally used to embellish the horses' leather harnesses; the smaller ones could also be used on the soldiers' gear.

## 23 Circular head rivet enamelled bronze disc stud

A kind of decorative stud for leather. Mostly used on horse harnesses or to fasten some appliques; they could also embellish the leather skirts worn by the soldiers (*pteruges*). The reverse is fitted with a circular rivet with a wide flat head for its fastening.

## 24 Elements of a bronze scale cuirass

This type of cuirass consists of individual scales linked to each other by hinges, hooks and straps. This relatively flexible armour offered, however, good protection against very violent attacks.

## 25 Bronze spear head

It belongs to the end of a spear (*hasta*) a thrusting weapon used by the Roman legions. Its head, in the shape of a laurel leaf, is very common.

## 26 Bronze eagle

Fragment of an eagle with spread wings associated with Jupiter/Jupiter. End of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE. The eagle symbolises strength and authority. Considered as the King of birds, he presents a majestic and powerful image when flying high up in the sky. The eagle, symbol of excellency in the Roman empire, personifies imperial power. Furthermore, he is closely linked to the military: the standards bearing his image serve as a landmark for the legions during battles. Tacitus calls the eagles the “true deities of the legions”. When it is not led on the battlefield, the eagle is kept on the camp, under a tent serving as a temple and often housing an altar dedicated to Mars, the god of war.

# Power of symbols

Strength and power are values conveyed not only by imperial ideology but also by a patriarchal Roman society, where the *virtus* (from *vir* “man”) is a masculine ideal of self-discipline that encompasses bravery, excellency and courage.

The lion, powerful, sovereign, solar, is the embodiment of power as well as wisdom and justice; however, his arrogance also makes him the symbol of the Sovereign blinded by his own power.

The phallus is believed to ward off the evil eye and is usually associated with the god Priapus. Protector of prosperity and fertility, he guards all potentially dangerous places, such as crossroads, bridges, doors etc. He also protects water. Phallus can be carried as amulets, hung as mobiles in front of houses or set in walls as bas-reliefs to protect homes.





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### **27 Bronze folding spoon with lion handle**

The spoon folds over the body of the lion and the blade, of which nearly nothing survives, opens horizontally on the right side of the feline. Two slots, one on the front and the other one on the hindleg accommodate the blade. Below the handle, under the pivot of the knife, a pick turns on a hinge. It folds into a slot underneath the body of the lion.

3<sup>rd</sup> century CE (?).

### **28 Iron and bronze key with lion head handle**

Key handles with animal heads are frequent in the Gallo-Roman world. The lion motif can, in this case, have an apotropaic function, warding off evil spirits. Lion head keys found in sanctuaries and necropolis act as guardians of these religious places.

### **29 Golden bronze lion paw belonging to a statue of Hercules**

Hercules is usually pictured with the skin of the lion he killed during the first of his twelve labours: his victory on the invulnerable lion that terrorised the inhabitants of the hills around Nemea (Greece, Peloponnese). From then on, Hercules wore the animal's thick pelt on him acting as an impenetrable armour against weapons and fire.

### **30 Terracotta oil lamp with four phallus**

Miniature lamp, probably votive, discovered close to the Forum (cf. 49): good-luck charm or to keep evil spirits away. 50–100 CE.

### **31 Bronze statuette used as a one pound weight**

It shows a prankster doing the middle finger gesture (*digitus impudicus*), another way to ward off the evil eye; under his clothes hangs an oversized penis. He was suspended to a balance by a small hook on the top of his head.

### 32 Limestone relief depicting a dog-phallus

The phallus is decorated with small bells supposed to drive away evil spirits; it also presents an erect phallus. Probably placed in the facade of a house in Aventicum, this stone block bore an incomplete inscription. From 70 CE.

### 33 Limestone lion's head

Sculpture of a lion, of which only a head remains. This statue was found in the area of Rafour, next to the main entrance of the amphitheatre; it can be related to the neighbouring arenas. It should be noted that lime kilns were also discovered here: during several centuries, limestone was recycled into lime mortar and used in new constructions.

## Powers of the gods 1

Romans honour many gods, from Italic, Greek and Etruscan origins.

Besides minor deities, major gods like Jupiter, Juno and Minerva coexist. The Roman pantheon presents a wide range of gods, native as well as foreign. Gods are an integral part of the life of the Ancients. They are present in their everyday life, from the newborn's first cry to the dying's last breath. Each event, party or spectacle is placed under divine protection. As the *Pontifex Maximus*, the emperor is the master of public cults and religious right. An official priest is responsible for all things relating to the gods. Magistrates can also preside religious ceremonies on behalf of the State. The father of the family honours the household gods by accomplishing the prescribed rituals. Official cults are celebrated in sanctuaries.





### **34 Bronze chariot fitting**

Bronze statuette of a male figure in motion, clad with a simple coat floating in the wind, held on his shoulder by a fibula. He wears high boots. He seems to hold a dagger in his right hand. He stands on a rectangular base in front of a column, rectangular slots are cut in its rear side. The comparison with a similar object in Budapest allows us to identify this item as a chariot fitting. 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE.

The clothing, appearance and attributes identify him as one of the Dioscuri, the twins Castor and Pollux, greatly venerated in Gaul as astral deities, protectors of navigation and riders.

### **35 Votive bronze hand dedicated to the god Sabazios**

This rare and very fine artefact is related to the cult of the god Sabazios who came originally from Asia Minor and was sometimes assimilated to Bacchus or Jupiter.

Sabazios' right hand makes the auspicious gesture of the "Latin blessing"; it is decorated with several motifs: busts of deities, divine attributes, religious objects, offerings and symbols of protection. The snake is Sabazios' main attribute.

It is a liturgical object that would have been fixed onto poles for processions, or destined for sanctuaries or domestic worship, crafted between 50 and 120 CE.

### **36 Small bronze owl associated to Minerva**

As the owl is standing on a base, it could have been either a decorative element or a lid handle.

Minerva/Athena is the goddess of strategy and warfare, of wisdom, intelligence and the arts. The owl is a nocturnal bird, preferring the soft moonlight rather than the harsh rays of the sun. It is the symbol of rational knowledge, of thought that precedes action thus overcoming darkness.

### **37 Bronze statuette of a dancer (Hora?)**

This exquisite statuette shows a young woman, dancing lightly and gracefully. She has been identified as a *Hora* (Hour), a deity of the seasons. The three Hours are the daughters of Zeus and Themis. They are the personification of discipline, justice and peace and are represented as young graceful girls often holding in their hand a flower or a plant. Middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE.

### **38 Bronze vase with Bacchic motifs**

The neck is inlaid with a vegetal garland. The scenes depicted on this small vase are extremely rare and can be related to the cult of Dionysus/Bacchus. This artefact contained liquids and was most certainly used in a cultual context. 1<sup>st</sup> century CE (?).

### **39 Bronze statue of Bacchus**

Bacchus, god of wine and drunkenness is recognisable thanks to the two grapes covering his ears. He is naked except for fringed sandals in the shape of lion or panther paws. He crosses his legs and rests his right arm over his head, like the Apollo Lykeios type, while probably leaning against a pillar with his left arm. His inlaid eyes are made of silver. This statue could have been part of a piece of furniture (table foot, luminaire) as shown by the large slot cut in its back. 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE.

### **40 Golden bronze acroterion**

Left side of a fragmented palmette element that adorned the top of the Grange des Dîmes Temple pediment at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE.

### **41 Limestone relief depicting the god Sol (Sun)**

The face of Sol is surrounded by rays. Discovered next to the Grange des Dîmes Temple (cf. 40), this block must have belonged to its sculpted decoration at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE.



## 42 Marble disk with the representation of a river god

The river god is Achelous, identified by his full beard and the two horns above his forehead, referring to the myth of Hercules and Deianira. In this story, Achelous who has the power to metamorphose himself, turns into a bull. This disk was maybe used as an *oscillum* (from the word *osculum*: small mouth; *os* meaning “the face”). Such decorations were hanged inside houses or in gardens; mythological scenes or genre scenes appear on the disks. The french word “osciller” (to swing) comes from the latin verb *oscillare* which is derived from this object that swings with the wind.

This finely crafted object was imported from Italy between 50 and 80 CE.

## Powers of the gods 2

In the provinces, religion and mythology are never completely Roman. Roman and native deities merged together. It is difficult to ascertain who viewed the foreign gods through the prism of their own: the Romans or the natives.

When worshipping a deity, one has to respect very detailed rites that have to be accomplished in a specific order (libations, sacrifices, offerings). These rituals serve to honour the gods during their annual festival, to purify oneself for any mistakes done, to attract the favour of the gods (health, security, travel, military expedition, etc.). The gods can be contacted by different means and all sorts of messages can be sent.





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### 43 Kalksteinaltar mit Weihinschrift für Mars Caturix

*MARTI CATVR(igi)/IVL(ius) SILVESTER/ LAPIDAR(ius)/V(otum) S(olvit) L(ibens) M(erito).*

To Mars *Caturix*, Iulius Silvester, stone cutter, gladly and deservedly fulfilled his vow.

Mars *Caturix* is a typical Helvetian deity. *Caturix* means “king of war” and is one of the forty different surnames given to Mars in the Celtic world. All the inscriptions referring to Mars *Caturix* were discovered in Switzerland (Aventicum), except one. It was found in Böckingen (Germany), on the Rhine frontier where a cohort of Helvetian legionaries was based. The king of warfare was particularly appreciated by the noble *Camilli*, a native family living in Avenches and Yverdon.

This altar was found inside the precinct of the Cigognier sanctuary.

The four letters *VSLM*, written on the last line, are the initials of a formula used by the Romans to fulfil a vow made to a deity.

#### 44 **Small altar with an inscription to Mercury Cissonius**

*Deo/Mercur(io) Cisso(nio) L(ucius)  
C/Patern(us)/ex voto.*

To Mercury Cissonius. Lucius C. Paternus (erected this monument) after a wish.

During the Roman period, Mercury was the most revered and the most popular god of the Celtic pantheon. Julius Caesar says that the Gauls regard him as “the inventor of all arts, and believe him to have great influence over the acquisition of gain and mercantile transactions”.

Mercury is the Latin name given by the Romans to a Celtic deity similar in its qualities and attributes to the Roman Mercury: the god Teutates. However, the Gauls still distinguish them, on the one hand by adding the word *deus* before the deity’s name, on the other hand by giving a native surname: here the surname *Cissonius* which means in the Celtic language “protector of carriages and transports”.

Lucius Paternus’ wish remains unknown, but once it was granted, he offered his protector an altar to thank him (*ex voto*). The altar was surrounded by miniature ceramic objects (cups, flasks, lamps) that belonged to the votive offering.

#### 45 **Head of the infant Mercury**

This partly preserved limestone head is identified as Mercury because of his famous round, slightly pointed and broad-rimmed traveller’s hat (*petasos*) usually worn by Greek travellers and pilgrims. This hat is one of Hermes/Mercury’s attributes: as a messenger of gods, he is always travelling on the roads. This sculpture was found inside the precinct of the Grange des Dîmes Temple (cf. 40) and probably belonged to its sculpted decoration at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE.

#### 46 **Inscription to Mercury**

*[D]EO MERC/M.VALERIVS/SILVESTER*

This poorly preserved limestone inscription tells us that a certain Marcus Valerius Silvester offered this inscription (?) to the god Mercury.

#### 47 **Elements of a monumental limestone statue of the goddess Minerva**

Acrolithic statue. Only the visible parts of the statue were made of stone. The rest of the body was probably made of wood and covered by fabric, as evidenced by the slots on the neck and the iron hook fitted in the forearm of the statue. Minerva wears a cuirass bearing a marble Gorgon Medusa’s head. A helmet, placed on her head, is decorated with a face and closed eyes.

This statue, who was originally about 2,80 m high, stood in a public monument (library, archives, the meeting place of a corporation?) east of the forum (cf. 49). 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE.

#### 48 **Inscription to the goddess Aventia**

*Deae/Aventiae/Cn(aeus) Iul(ius)/Marcellinus/  
Equester/d(e) s(ua) p(ecunia).*

To the goddess Aventia. Cnaeus Iulius Marcellinus, from the Equestrian Colony (erected this monument) at his own expense.

This limestone inscription tells us that a certain Cnaeus Iulius Marcellinus from the Equestrian Colony (now the town of Nyon), offered a monument to Aventia, a Celtic water deity, protector of Aventicum, who gave her name to the city.

## Power of places

Located in the heart of the capital, the forum is the pulsing centre of the urban life, a major meeting place favourable to social relations, where politicians, merchants and usurers coexists. It concentrates the essence of Roman power.

A temple dedicated to Roman state deities and/or to the imperial cult, stands opposite administrative buildings such as the curia, where the decurions hold their assemblies, and the basilica dedicated to commercial, financial and judicial affairs. Professional associations meet in buildings that are granted maximum visibility as they stand along the access roads.

Statues and monuments are erected on the forum in honour of the imperial family or town notables as a sign of gratitude for their generosity (financing of games, spectacles, distribution of food, embellishment of the town, etc.).





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**49 Limestone bench legs  
adorned with lion carvings**

This bench, as well as another similar one, originally belonged to a meeting room decorated with a black and white geometric mosaic in an edifice marking one of the entrances of the Forum, around 130/150 CE.

## Staged power 2

Theatre plays are an essential part of Roman life. They also serve to shape social relations as people come here not only to enjoy a show but to meet and exchange information thus fostering social cohesion. Like the amphitheatre, the theatre seems to have been driven largely by social and political forces: the financing of the edifices and the spectacles is mainly provided by magistrates who dispose of public funds. A successful political career is closely linked to the organisation of games.

Provincial theatres host a wide variety of productions such as mime, pantomime, dance, singing, music, mythological plays and less frequently tragedies and comedies.

The theatre of Avenches, associated with the Cigognier Sanctuary, belongs to a wide architectural and plurifunctional complex, where ceremonies honouring the emperor take place, during which sacrifices and rites related to the imperial cult are performed.





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**50 Terracotta antefix  
in the shape of a theatre mask**

It terminated the covering tiles of a roof.

**51 Bronze statuette of a tragic actor**

The actor wears the traditional scenic clothing: a long tunic held at the waist by a large belt inlaid with the wire letters DOVECUS, probably referring to the actor's name of Gaulish origin, pictured here in one of his plays.

A coat is attached to his shoulder by a fibula. The man wears *cothurni*, platform sandals, characteristic of tragic actors. He has a bearded face, a thin and slightly curved nose; his gaze is sharp thanks to his silver inlaid eyes. Short and curly hair frames his face. A hinge on the top of his head indicates the presence of a mobile mask, now lost. Very fine execution. Beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE.

**52 Terracotta lamp  
in the shape of a tragic mask**

Imported from northern Italy.  
1<sup>st</sup> – beginning of 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE.

**53 Terracotta lamp  
decorated with a theatre mask**

Probably imported. 50 – 100 CE.

**54 Mosaic with theatre scene**

Mosaic picturing a theatre scene showing two actors, one of them wearing the young girl comic mask. Around 200 CE.

Antique actors wore masks, tragic or comic, expressing stereotyped personalities. Women's roles were usually played by men.



