

# Early Medieval

# What's happening in the East ...



# Key Point 1

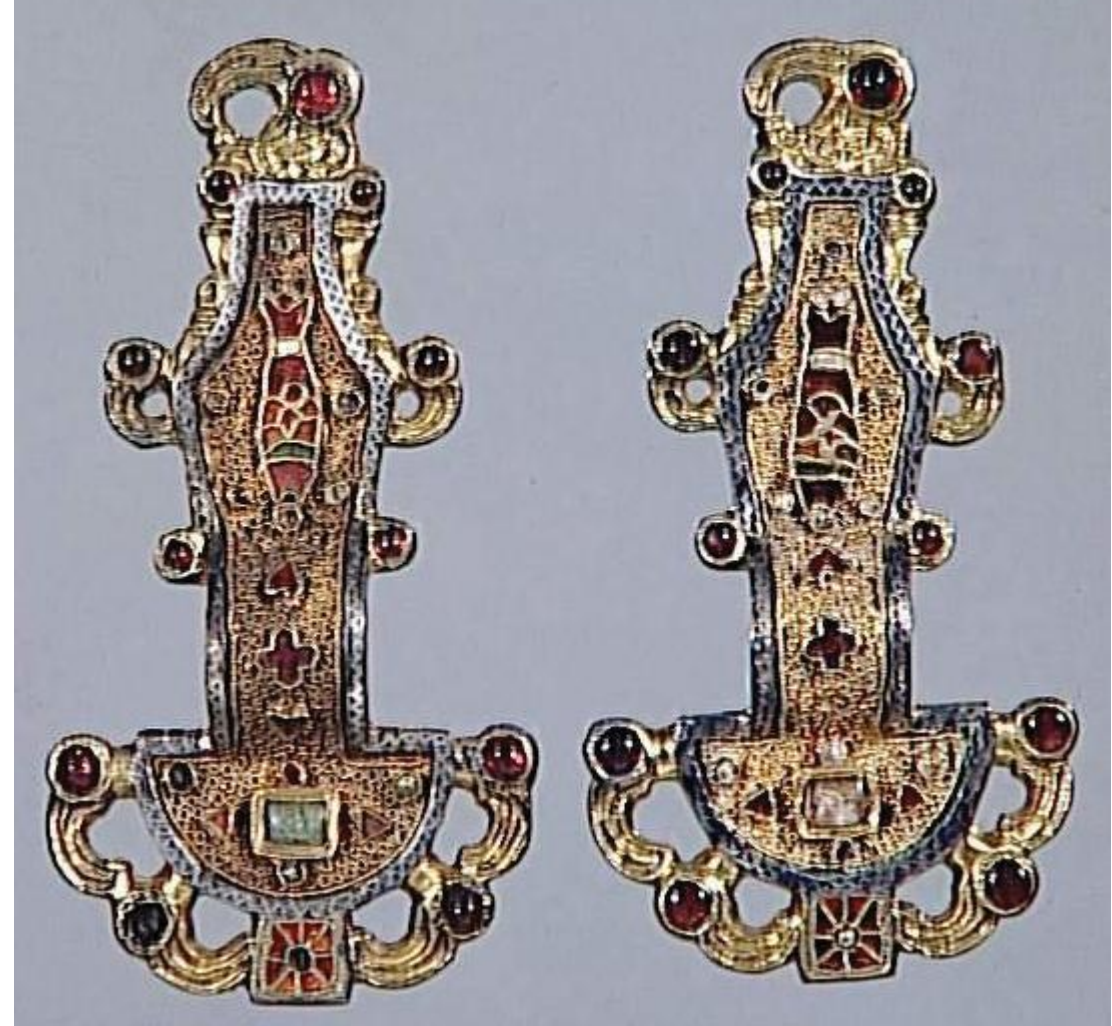


- **Illuminated Manuscripts**

- Transition from scroll to bound books (codices).
  - Allows for preservation of writing and learning.
- Preserved and copied by Benedictine monks.
- Kept literacy alive.

## Key Point #2

- **Small, portable art** is most common.
  - A time of migration and war.



# Middle Ages: *Middle of what?*

- Time between the Roman Empire and Renaissance
  - “Dark Ages” refers to our lack of knowledge of this era.
- Barbarians would invade, settle, and push out previous group.
- This caused chain migration across Europe that leaves it in anarchy.
- Charlemagne’s and Otto’s bring some peace and stability and spread Christianity.
- The art is a fusion of Roman, Northern, and Christianity.

Cultural leadership moved north to France, Germany, and the British Isles.



# British Isles, Scandinavia, & Celtic

- Art of the **Warrior Lords**

- As the Roman Empire dissolved, conflicts for power were common.
- Each group would lead until taken over by another group.
  - Celts, Huns, Vandals, Franks, Goths, Merovingians, Vikings, etc.



# Interlace

- Ribbon interlace and animal interlace were used as decoration on a variety of art objects from Sweden, Norway, and the British Isles.



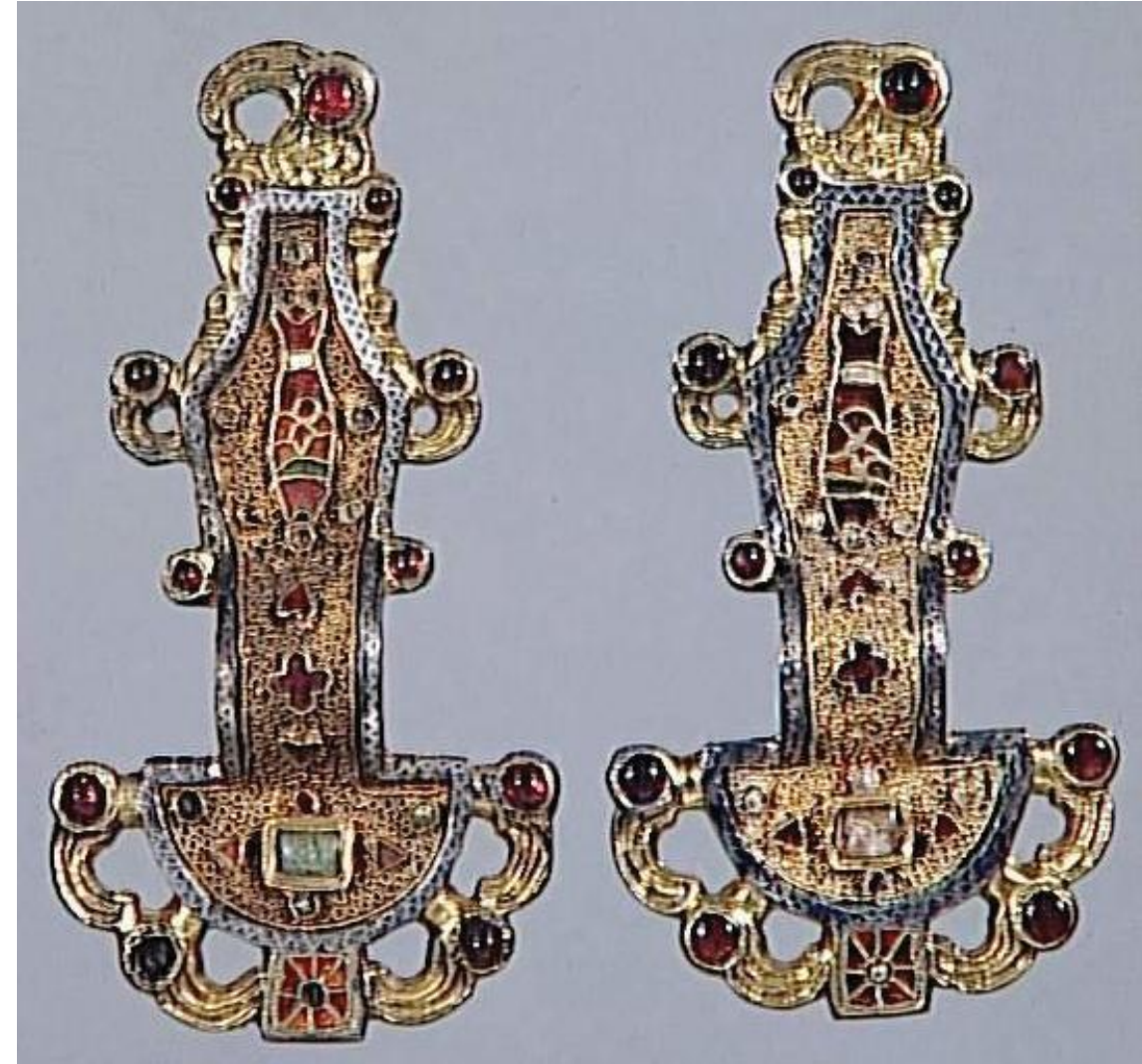


# Merovingian looped fibulae.

Early medieval Europe. Mid-sixth century CE. Silver gilt worked in filigree, with inlays of garnets and other stones.

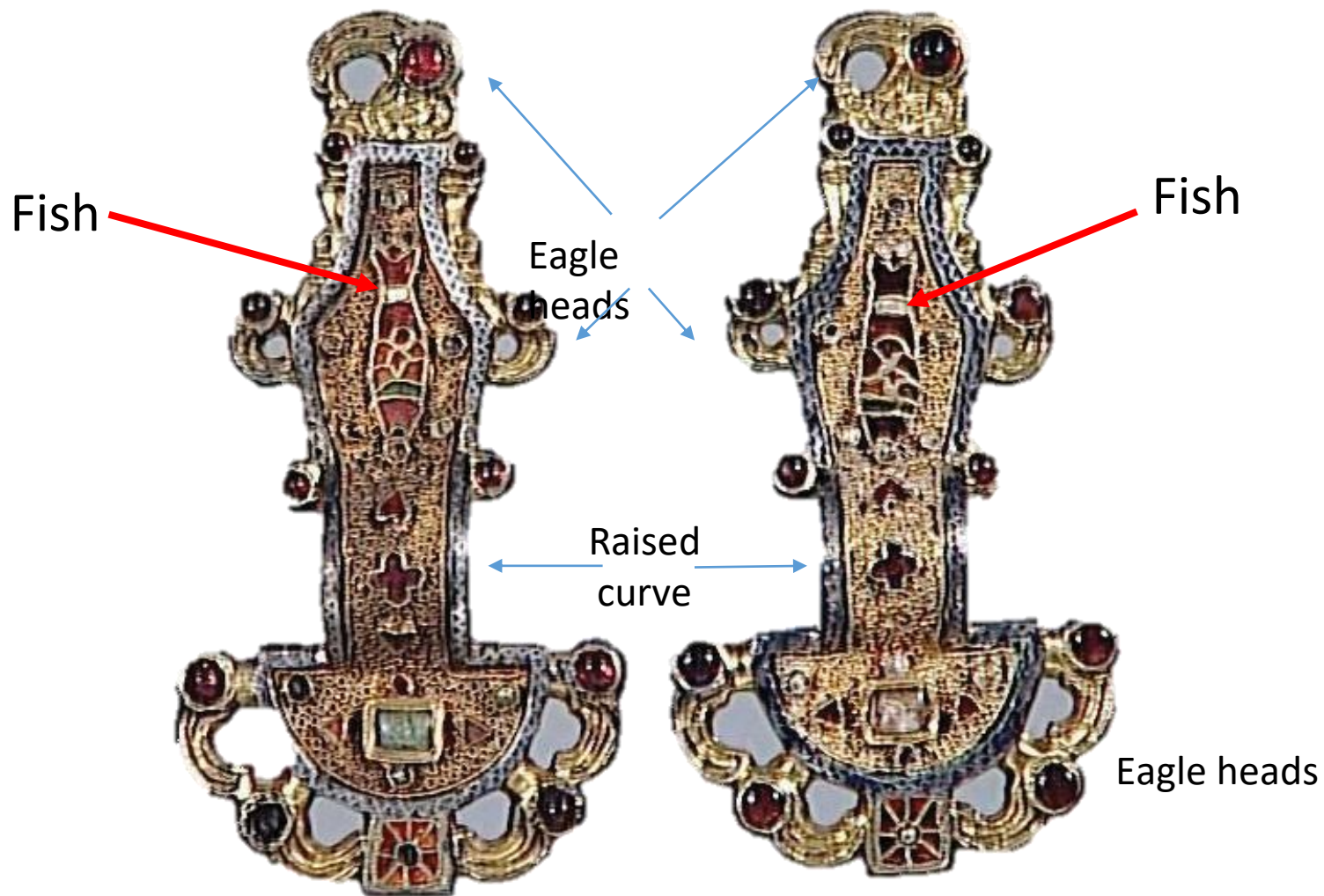
## Visual/Content

- **Fibula**: decorative pin used to fasten clothes together.
  - originally used in Etruscan and Rome.
- Made of gold, silver, bronze and precious and semiprecious stones.
  - **Cloisonné**: using thin metal bands to separate colored areas on metal.
  - Imbues the object with great power.
  - Similar in looks to stained glass windows and mosaics.
- Covered in decorative patterns to emphasize the shape.
- **Zoomorphic** – highly stylized use of animal forms.
  - Fish and eagle seen here



# #53 Merovingian looped fibulae.

Early medieval Europe. Mid-sixth century CE. Silver gilt worked in filigree, with inlays of garnets and other stones.

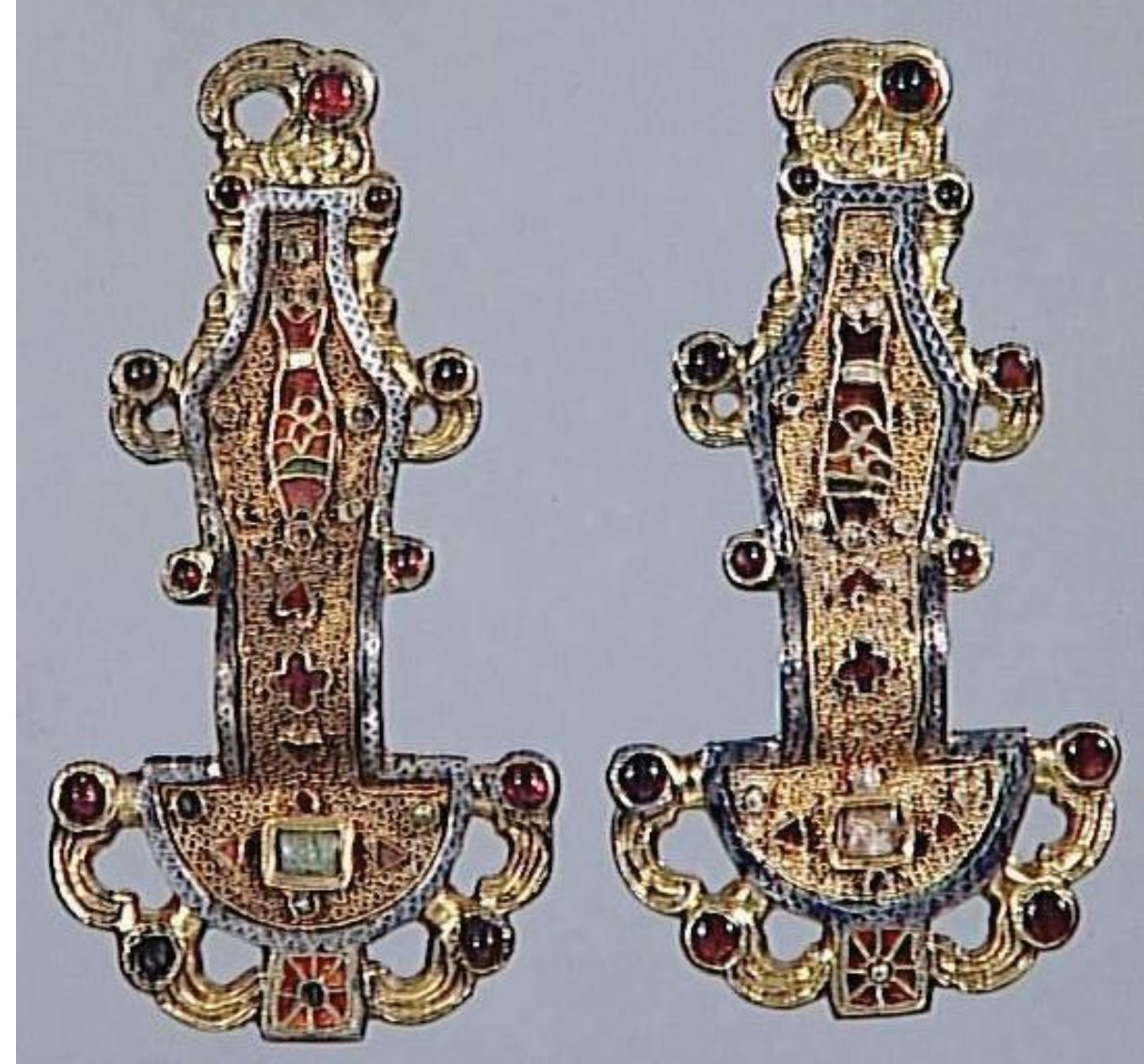


# Merovingian looped fibulae.

Early medieval Europe. Mid-sixth century CE. Silver gilt worked in filigree, with inlays of garnets and other stones.

## Context

- Decorative luxury item.
  - Requires many hours of highly skilled labor to create it.
- Shows social status, office, and prestige.
- Found in a Buried with the owner.
- Displays the highly sophisticated technique and material use of the Northern artists (France) .
- Design is the result of migration and multiple influences.

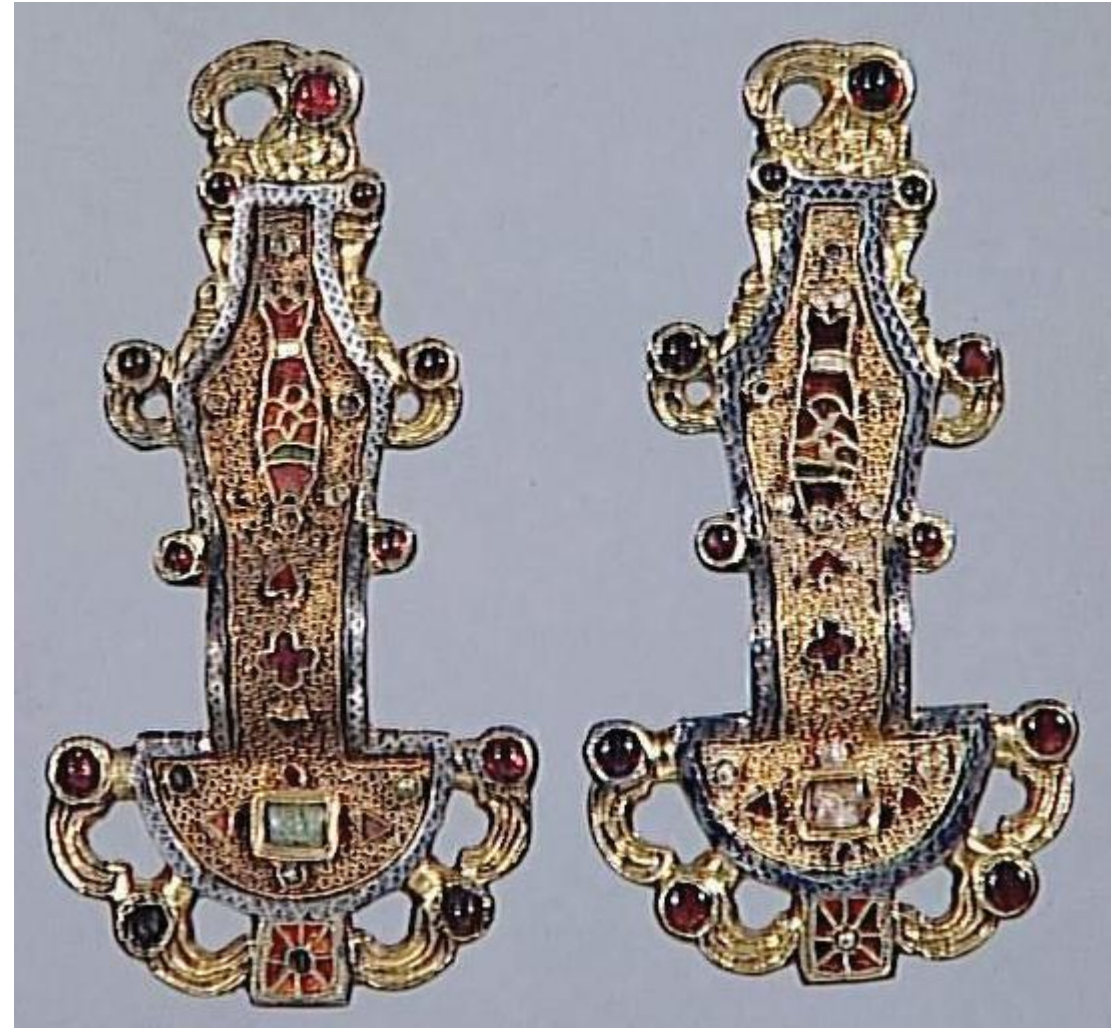


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Early medieval Europe. Mid-sixth century CE. Silver gilt worked in filigree, with inlays of garnets and other stones.



Done at the same time



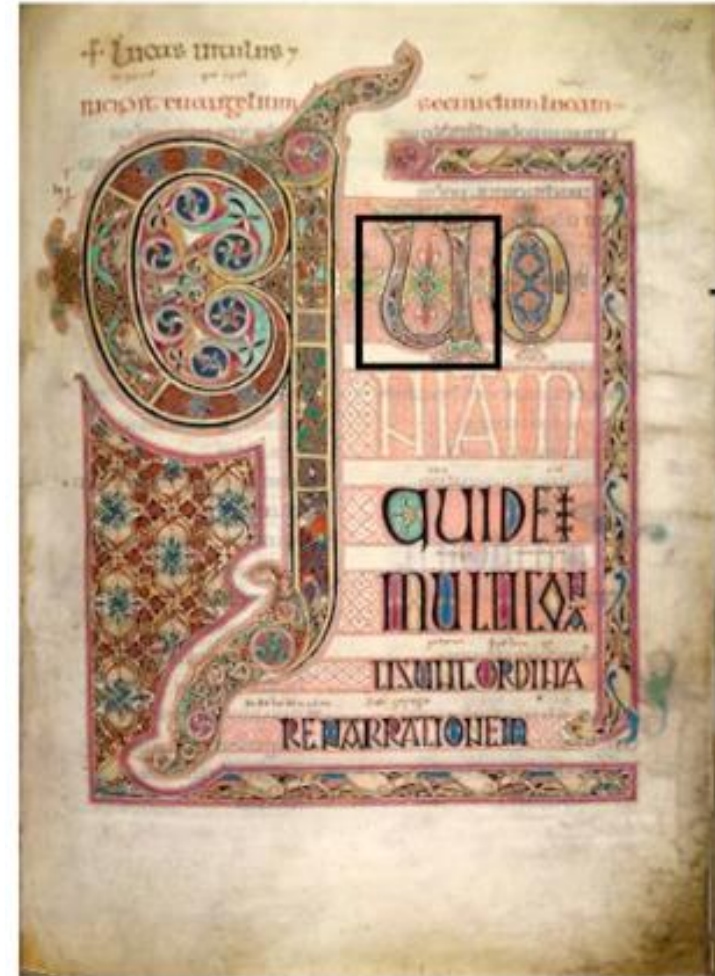
# Christian Ireland and England

## *Hiberno-Saxon* (Irish-German)

- Most distinctive products were the **illuminated manuscripts**.
  - *Animal style* = animals in stylized combat patterns.
- Brought the Word of God to a predominantly illiterate population.
- Created in a **scriptorium**.
  - A cold workplace where monks worked in silence at slanted desks.
- Books were extremely rare and guarded treasures.

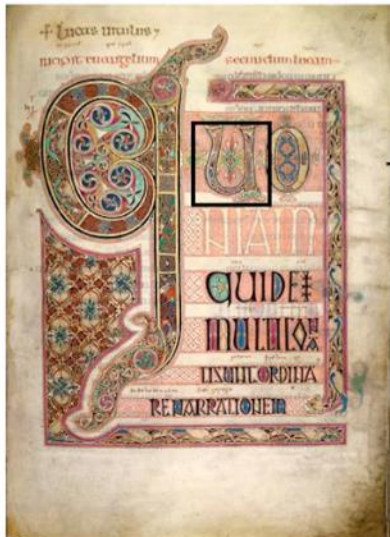
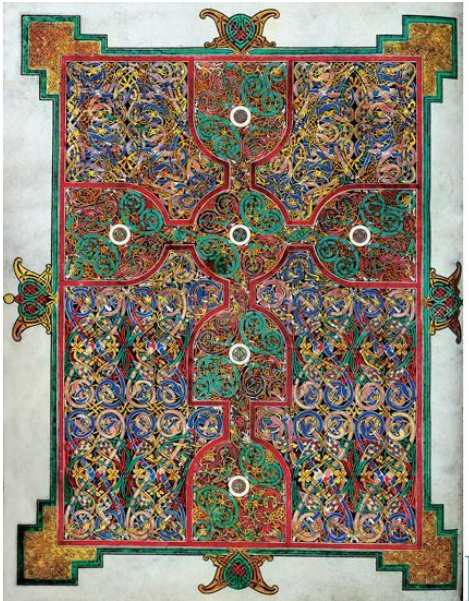
### Medium:

- **Vellum**
  - Made from calfskin.
- Parchment
  - Made from sheep skin.
- Extremely time consuming and expensive to make.
- Manuscripts were treated as objects with great spiritual POWER.
  - Carried in processions into mass and placed on altar (holiest spot in church)
  - Visual manifestations of spiritual power.
  - **Used by missionaries to convert locals to Christianity**



# Lindisfarne Gospels: St. Luke portrait page; St Matthew, cross-carpet page; St. Luke incipit page.

Early medieval (Hiberno Saxon) Europe. C. 700 CE. Illuminated manuscript (ink, pigments, and gold on vellum).



- Produced in a monastery on Lindisfarne Island (British Isles) .
- **Hiberno-Saxon-** the style of art.
  - (Roman and Anglo-Saxon influences) .
- **Illuminated manuscript-** a book with elaborate illustrations to supplement the text.
  - (manu=hand, script=written) .
- *Book of Lindisfarne* contains the 4 gospels (stories of Jesus's life by 4 different authors, the evangelists: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) .
  - Each gospel began with a **PORTRAIT** page, then a **CARPET** page, and then an **INCIPIT** page.
- The artist: a monk named Eadfrith.
  - Most books were made by a team, this one is unique.
- 259 pages-portraits of Evangelists, carpet pages, and the gospels, each introduced with an initial.
- **Carpet pages-**decorative panels of abstract and **zoomorphic** forms.
- **Incipit:** opening words of the gospel.
- **FUNCTION:** used by clergy for spiritual purposes.
  - Read during meals for contemplation.

# #55 Lindisfarne Gospels: St. Luke portrait page.

Early medieval (Hiberno Saxon) Europe. C. 700 CE. Illuminated manuscript (ink, pigments, and gold on vellum).

## Content:

- Luke is a writer (so he has a scroll and pen).
- His attribute animal is the calf (or ox),
- Also a symbol of Jesus's sacrifice on the cross.
- Halo.
- Winged calf carries the gospel.
- Bearded, but young.
- No interest in creating 3D effects.
  - No shading or contouring of fabric.
- Only line and color are used – very flat.
- Drapery is sharp curving lines with flat color.
- Classical style, lots of Roman influence.
- Greek and Latin are both used.



# #55 Lindisfarne Gospels: St. Luke portrait page.

Early medieval (Hiberno Saxon) Europe. C. 700 CE. Illuminated manuscript (ink, pigments, and gold on vellum).

## Context:

- Written in Latin and Greek.
  - 150 yrs later English is added.
  - Earliest interpretation of the Bible in English,
  - This style sets the Lindisfarne Gospels apart from Mediterranean manuscripts,

Blends styles of Holy Roman Empire and Hiberno-Saxon.

Roman:

seated like a philosopher

Greek & Latin

Serifs on letters

Fabric

Hiberno-Saxon:

Interlacing on corners

Flattening of space

Multiple views at once





# #55 Lindisfarne Gospels: St. Luke portrait page.

Early medieval (Hiberno Saxon) Europe. C. 700 CE. Illuminated manuscript (ink, pigments, and gold on vellum).



# *Lindisfarne Gospels: St Matthew, cross-carpet page.*

Early medieval (Hiberno Saxon) Europe. C. 700 CE. Illuminated manuscript (ink, pigments, and gold on vellum).



## **Content**

- Combines Christian symbolism with intricate interlace patterns and animal motifs.
  - These are familiar to the new converts.
    - Like the Merovingian fibulae.
- A large cross against a background of knots and spirals.
- Some say the animals are snakes writhing and devouring themselves.
  - When examined, long-legged, long-necked birds.
- Rich, vibrant colors.
  - No shading or value.
- Shows motion and change.
- Central cross adds stability.
- Using the Hiberno-Saxon style increases conversion to Christianity.

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# *Lindisfarne Gospels: St Matthew, cross-carpet page.*

Early medieval (Hiberno Saxon) Europe. C. 700 CE. Illuminated manuscript (ink, pigments, and gold on vellum).



## **Content:**

- Horror Vacui.
- Symmetrical.
- Cloisonné style on birds .

cloisonné-enamel work with colored areas separated by thin bands of metal

## **Context:**

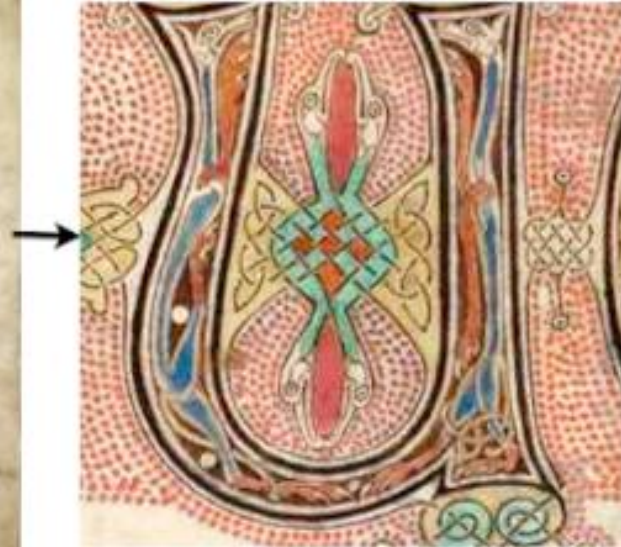
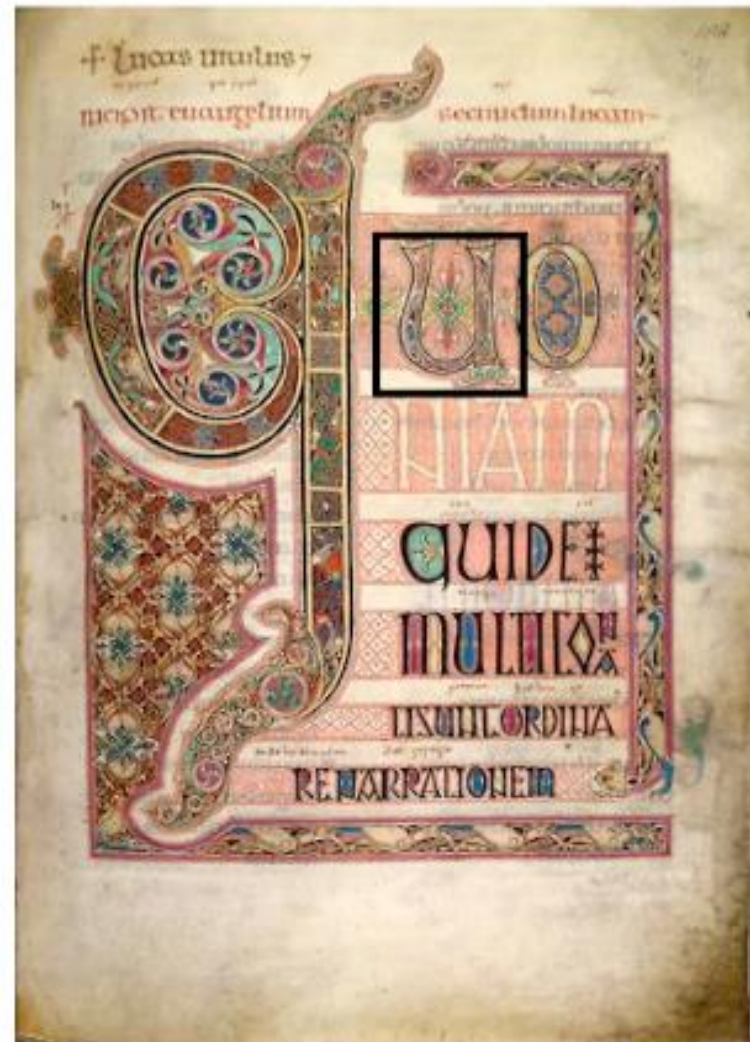
- Earliest manuscript to devote an entire page to the cross.
- Combines Christian imagery and animal interlace.
- **Function:** to be gazed at for meditative purposes.

## **Influences:**

- Celtic: (curvilinear organic motifs).
- Asian: called “carpet” pages because of their resemble to oriental rugs or prayer mats.

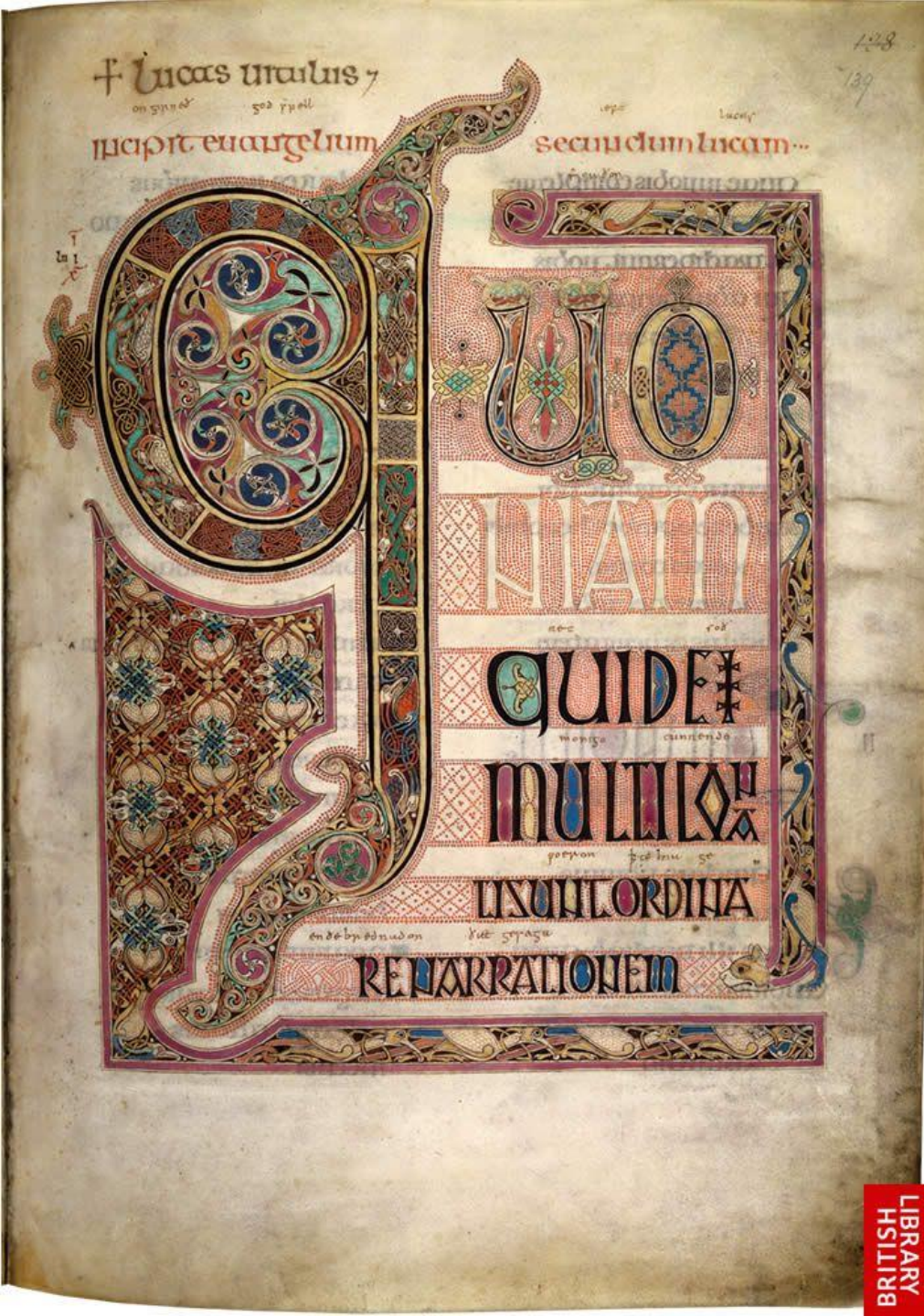
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Early medieval (Hiberno Saxon) Europe. C. 700 CE. Illuminated manuscript (ink, pigments, and gold on vellum).



**Incipit:** opening words of the gospel

- Filled with animal life and spirals.
- Large Q forms the opening sentence "Quoniam. . ."



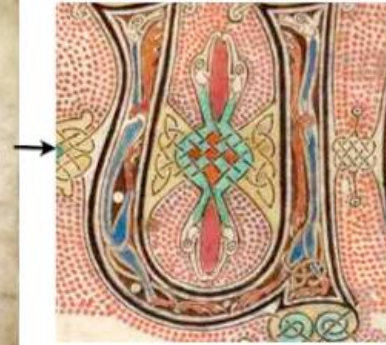
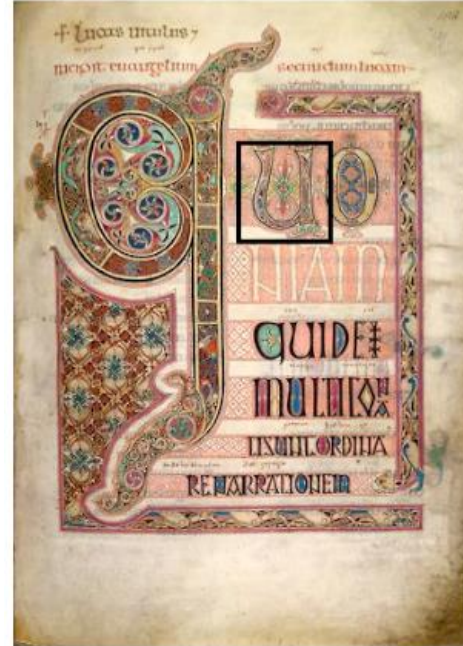
## Lindisfarne Gospels: St. Luke incipit page.

Early medieval (Hiberno Saxon) Europe. C. 700 CE. Illuminated manuscript (ink, pigments, and gold on vellum).

- Red text written under each word is the oldest translation of the Gospels into the English language.
  - Added in 950 by a monk in the same monastery.

# #55 Lindisfarne Gospels: St Matthew, cross-carpet page; St. Luke portrait page; St. Luke incipit page.

Early medieval (Hiberno Saxon) Europe. C. 700 CE. Illuminated manuscript (ink, pigments, and gold on vellum).



- Draws together all the varied influences that shaped Christian art.

Italian

- Use of Latin

Celtic

- Horror vaccui
- Intricate design

Anglo-Saxon

- Interlacing
- Animal style

Chi-rho-iota page, folio 34 recto of the Book of Kells, probably from Iona, Scotland, late eighth or early ninth century. Tempera on vellum, 1' 1" X 9 1/2"

- Interlacing patterns
- Animal style
- Combines Irish heritage and Christian motifs
- Lots of symbolism
- Horror Vacui
  - "fear of empty spaces"
  - Style of art that is filled in a sometimes congested way





