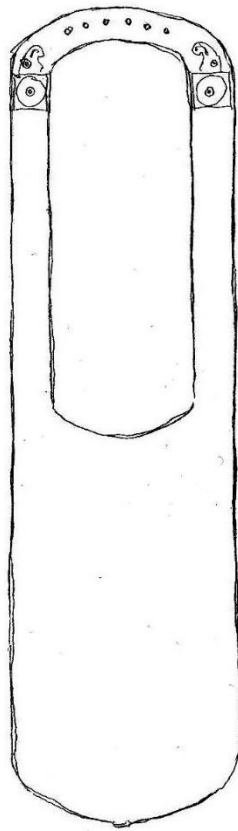


# EARLY LYRES IN CONTEXT

A COMPARATIVE CONTEXTUAL STUDY ON EARLY  
LYRES AND THE IDENTITY OF THEIR OWNER/USER



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# Abstract

Prehistorical musical instruments have been explored in archaeology more systematically since the 1970s when music archaeology was established as a field of study. The new awareness initially led to studies centred on retrieving musical instruments that had been missed and were now lost in archives. New discoveries, too, are very object-oriented. This master's thesis ties together individual finds of the Germanic round-lyre to create a comparative study, in which the main focus is set on their *context*. Instead of focusing solely on the object, the instrument will be used to get a glimpse of the person behind it, i.e. to face questions of identity. 26 finds dating to A.D. 500-1200 have been included from graves and cultural layers, stretching over central and northern Europe. They have been compared in terms of find context, state of the find, construction of the lyre, materials used, position in the grave, other grave goods and burial structure, considering also similarities and differences in space and time. This has resulted in a division between five possible types of owners/users of the lyre: The professional scop/skáld, the continental elite, the Anglo-Saxon elite, the clergyman and the individual from a lower social standing.

**Key words:** *Music Archaeology, Germanic round-lyre, bridge, Anglo-Saxon, continental, Scandinavian, context, grave, identity*

# Table of Contents

<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Research Questions	1
1.2 Material & Method	1
1.2.1 Limitations	2
1.2.2 Criticism of the sources	3
1.2.3 Definitions	4
1.3 Research Background	6
1.4 Theoretical Approach	7
<b>2 THE FINDS</b>	<b>10</b>
2.1 Lyre Finds in Graves	10
2.1.1 Abingdon	10
2.1.2 Trossingen	10
2.1.3 Oberflacht (84)	11
2.1.4 Schlotheim	12
2.1.5 Bergh Apton	12
2.1.6 Prittlewell	13
2.1.7 Oberflacht (37)	14
2.1.8 Morning Thorpe	14
2.1.9 Taplow	15
2.1.10 Sutton Hoo	15
2.1.11 Snape	17
2.1.12 Köln	17
2.1.13 Broa	18
2.1.14 Concevreux	19
2.2 Lyre Finds from Cultural Layers	19
2.2.1 Dorestad (140)	19
2.2.2 Dorestad (141)	19

2.2.3 <i>Elisenhof I</i> .....	20
2.2.4 <i>Elisenhof II</i> .....	20
2.2.5 <i>Birka</i> .....	20
2.2.6 <i>York</i> .....	20
2.2.7 <i>Hedeby</i> .....	21
2.2.8 <i>Gerete</i> .....	21
2.2.9 <i>Sigtuna</i> .....	21
2.2.10 <i>Trondheim</i> .....	22
2.2.11 <i>Oslo I</i> .....	22
2.2.12 <i>Oslo II</i> .....	22
<b>3 ANALYSIS</b> .....	<b>23</b>
3.1 Short Historical Background.....	23
3.2 The Lyre .....	23
3.2.1 <i>Similarities and Differences</i> .....	24
3.2.2 <i>Plucked or Bowed</i> .....	33
3.3 Identity .....	35
3.3.1 <i>Grave Contexts</i> .....	35
3.3.2 <i>Cultural Layers</i> .....	39
3.3.3 <i>Sex and Age</i> .....	39
3.3.4 <i>Poetry and Entertainment</i> .....	40
<b>4 RESULTS</b> .....	<b>48</b>
<b>5 SUMMARY</b> .....	<b>52</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	<b>53</b>

# Early Lyres in Context

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Sound is ephemeral and forms a typical case of immateriality. For the study of prehistoric music, one needs to turn to the actual remains of the sound-producing instruments which are rare themselves. Musical instruments have therefore come to be placed in the shadows of more dominant find categories such as weapons, pots, brooches and coins which have been subject to cataloguing and typology since the very start of archaeology, yielding important knowledge about past life. But what about the aspects yet unknown? Instead of dismissing the rarer find categories as a difficult group to deal with, they should be embraced as the rare glimpse into the past that they are.

The 1970s brought about an important change in this respect. With the establishment of music archaeology as a coherent field of study, front figures within the field have worked to find the hidden treasures and to discuss the finds already found. In this thesis a comparative contextual study will be conducted on musical instruments found in central and northern Europe, dating to A.D. 500-1200. As a next step in the development of music archaeology it is time for contextualising, to get to know not only the instrument as such, but the people behind it. The lyre has been chosen to provide a basis for comparison between different geographical areas and over a time span of 700 years. What changed? What remained the same? Are there any local variations or do they constitute a homogeneous find category? What can be said about their context? Where were they found and what can we learn about their owner/user? The chosen time period has been carefully studied from different angles before, but lyres have mainly figured as only one of many aspects of an archaeological report of a site. The aim here is to connect these different finds to provide a broader picture of the lyre, not least in terms of identity.

### 1.1 Research Questions

- Which are the lyre remains from the time period A.D. 500-1200 and what do they look like?
- Are there any similarities or differences in space and time in terms of lyre construction?
- In what contexts have they been found? Are there any similarities or differences in space and time?
- What can be said about the owner/user of the instrument?

### 1.2 Material & Method

The aim is to look at the development of the lyre as such, but above all, to see what its context looks like and how it has changed over time. Is it possible, despite the rather scarce source material left, to say something about how, where and by whom they were used? 26 archaeological case studies have been chosen to provide a basis for the analysis, listed in the following table:

Site	Country	Date
Abingdon	England	5th century
Trossingen	Germany	580
Oberflacht (84)	Germany	6th century
Schlotheim	Germany	late 6th/early 7th century
Bergh Apton	England	6th - 7th century
Prittlewell	England	6th - 7th century
Oberflacht (37)	Germany	early 7th century
Morning Thorpe	England	early Anglo-Saxon
Taplow	England	620-640
Sutton Hoo	England	7th century
Snape	England	Anglo-Saxon
Köln	Germany	late 7th/early 8th century
Dorestad (140)	Netherlands	8th century

Site	Country	Date
Dorestad (141)	Netherlands	8th century
Elisenhof I	Germany	8th century
Elisenhof II	Germany	8th century
Birka	Sweden	Viking Age
Broa	Sweden	9th century
York	England	10th century
Hedeby	Denmark	10th - 11th century
Gerete	Sweden	11th century
Sigtuna	Sweden	1100
Trondheim	Norway	early 13th century
Oslo I	Norway	early 13th century
Oslo II	Norway	mid-13th century
Concevreux	France	(Frankish)

Table 1: A list of the included finds.

This master's thesis will be above all a comparative literature study. Publications – mostly reports – have been searched for lyre finds and their context in order to realise a comparative contextualisation. This, in order to close in on the identity of early lyre-players. Grave-finds will be discussed in terms of lyre-type, position in relation to the buried person and other grave goods, as well as burial type. Are there indications of whether the instrument has been used or if it was only placed in the grave merely as an act of tradition or status marker? This can then be compared with the other lyre-associated finds that come from contexts other than graves.

Graeme Lawson, who is specialised on Anglo-Saxon lyres, states: *If lyres are still poorly represented in the archaeological record, their cultural context, and in particular the nature of their ownership, is even less well understood...* (Lawson 2001: 218). Since music archaeology was established as a field of study in the 1970s, initial work has often been characterised by cataloguing musical instruments and by projects of inventory to find the ones which have been missed from earlier excavations. This valuable preparatory work now needs to be put into its context. To get further inputs, some literary sources have also been incorporated in the final analysis, yet in a subordinate role. These written records include: Beowulf, The Icelandic Sagas, Snorri's Edda, Bede's Ecclesiastical History of England, Ibn Fadlan's journey to Russia, a verse written by Earl Rognvald of Orkney, The Letters of Cassiodorus and Prokopios work on the Vandalic War.

### 1.2.1 Limitations

The subject can be said to be topical rather than limited in time and space, focusing on one instrument only – the lyre. There were of course other musical instruments in use during the period studied here, and a comparison between the find contexts not only of different specimens, but of different musical instruments altogether, would of course be interesting to look at. Having to choose, however, between a more in-depth study of one instrument type and a more superficial analysis on several instruments, the choice was made in favour of the first alternative. The material is scarce and the time span and the geographical frame chosen are therefore rather inclusive, making possible also the comparative aspect of the study. A rough guideline for the time frame has been set to A.D. 500-1200, thus stretching from Migration Period through Viking Age and to early Medieval Time. From a geographic point of view, the

subject will encompass northern and central Europe (modern day Scandinavia, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, France and Germany).

Despite the topical approach, it would of course be impossible to include all lyre finds made so far. Focus has been set on finds which have actually been published, in combination with a certain demand for size and context. Bridges and fragments from lyre bodies have been of equal interest. Having to draw the line somewhere, single peg finds have not been included here, being aware of the reports by Graeme Lawson on pegs found in England for instance.

Vladimir I. Povetkin, who has worked with the instruments found at Novgorod, writes about the Russian stringed instruments as a *parallel* development from the European (Povetkin 1992: 217), thus not providing decisive information about the Germanic round-lyre discussed here. It would of course be interesting to compare the European and the Russian specimens, but for time and space reasons this will not be possible in this study.

A further limitation are the sources. I am aware of the potential that lies in a comparison between different source materials, this was in fact part of this study's aim. However, it soon became clear that the time limits would not allow for an in-depth study of both archaeological remains, literary records as well as iconographical evidence, and would become rather superficial. The study is therefore focusing on the archaeological material, complemented only by some selected written accounts of lyre-playing in the concluding part of the analysis.

### *1.2.2 Criticism of the sources*

When handling a group of wooden sources, there is of course call for caution. Preservation conditions are not homogeneous but do vary quite considerably from place to place. Especially this wide spread throughout central and northern Europe allows for quite different prerequisites. German finds have for instance been much better preserved than the finds from Anglo-Saxon regions and in Scandinavia the lack of wooden lyre remains could be due to the same reason. In fact, three of the best preserved examples come from the same region in the south-west of Germany (Oberflacht 84, Oberflacht 37 and Trossingen). In England, the finding of lyres has been another story completely. Since so fragmented, many years had to go by before the wooden fragments were identified as lyre pieces. The fragments from Taplow for instance, found in 1882, were not correctly labelled until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, when they were found in a drawer full of mixed wooden fragments. Similar was the case at Sutton Hoo and at Abingdon (R. & M. Bruce-Mitford 1970: 8, R. Bruce-Mitford 1983: 618, 705).

Of course this also has to do with knowledge about the find category. If never seen or heard about, and if only fragments are at hand, it is difficult to make out the whole picture. Many of the finds were made in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century/early 20<sup>th</sup> century for instance, where material for comparison was lacking. The Prittlewell find shows what is possible today with enhanced knowledge and upgraded technology; only a dark stain with the contours of the lyre was preserved in the soil and then moved in a block to the laboratory, where it was examined with X-rays, CT scans and laser scans. Measures have also been taken to keep the very last wooden fragments from drying out (Barham 2008: 377-382). The dark stain nicely illustrates how difficult the lyres might be to find if not attentive. This could also be the case in Scandinavia, where the wooden parts of lyres are conspicuous by their absence.

Last, the apparent difference in documentation available on grave-finds versus the finds from urban cultural layers should be dwelled upon. As has already been mentioned, it is difficult to make some in-depth comparisons between the two contexts, yet the finds from cultural layers can add to the

understanding by means of material, string number and their general context. Much of the analysis has, however, naturally come to build on the grave goods and their combinations and locations in the grave, in the light of which we should discuss Christianity. The period studied here stretches from the very beginnings of Christian belief to a firmly and officially established religious system, where Christian values and customs have been truly incorporated into daily life. The sudden change in context as represented in the studied material at the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century – from graves to cultural layers – cannot be seen as a detached phenomenon, but needs to take into account this religious background. Does the disappearance of lyres (and grave goods in general) from graves, brought about by the accepted and implemented Christian values, mark also a disappearance from the social classes represented in the graves, or did the lyres continue to circulate at the same social gatherings? This is one of the main reasons why the lyre finds from cultural layers have been included, despite the limited information available on them: to trace the lyre beyond the end of grave goods and to take up on the hints as for its continuation.

### 1.2.3 Definitions

There seems to be some general confusion about the definitions and terms used for the instrument that is today called *lyre* (Fig. 1). In *Sohlmans musiklexikon* we can read today's definition (as translated by the author):

***Lyre** (from Gr. λύρα, lyra, Lat. lyra, Ger. Leier, Fr. lyre) is used today as an organological term for a stringed instrument with a box- or bowl-shaped body and two arms extending in the same plane as the sound board, joined at the top with a yoke (...) (Stauder 1977: 396).*

A modern harp (Fig. 2) would be defined as follows, according to *The New Grove Dictionary of Musical Instruments* (resonator = soundbox):

***Harp** (Fr. harpe; Ger. Harfe; It., Sp. arpa). (...) Normally triangular in shape, all harps have three basic structural components: resonator, neck and strings. Hornbostel and Sachs divided them into two categories: 'frame harps' and 'open harps'. Frame harps have a forepillar or column which connects the lower end of the resonator to the neck, adding structural support and helping to bear the strain of string tension. Harps without forepillars are 'open harps'. Only European harps and their descendants are consistently frame harps: most others are open (Griffiths et al. 1984: 131).*

Gjermund Kolltveit mentions that the word *lyre* does in fact not appear in early written texts; instead the word *harp* is frequently encountered. This contrasts the pictorial evidence: Early depictions show lyres (cf. the picture-stone from Lärbro Källstede (Gotland) from 500 in Lindqvist et al. 1941-2), while the harp is only later introduced. This may be due to a different terminology used during the Migration Period and the Viking Age, where harp would indeed designate all stringed instruments (Kolltveit 2000: 23). The same pattern is highlighted by Wickham-Crowley, stating that Anglo-Saxons would use the word *hearp* about instruments which we today describe as a lyre (Wickham-Crowley 1992: 44).



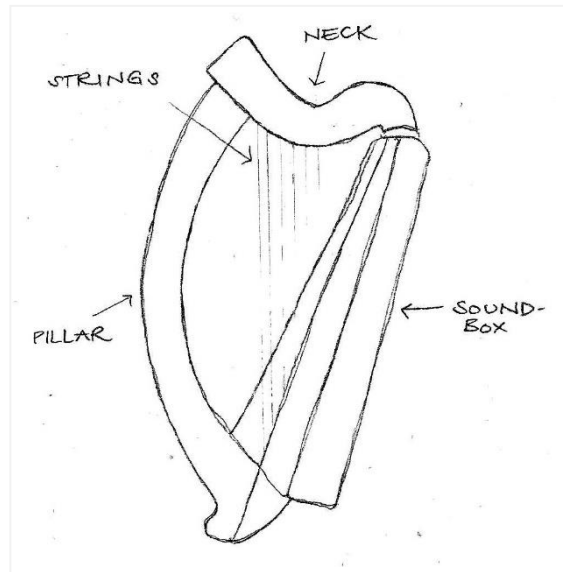
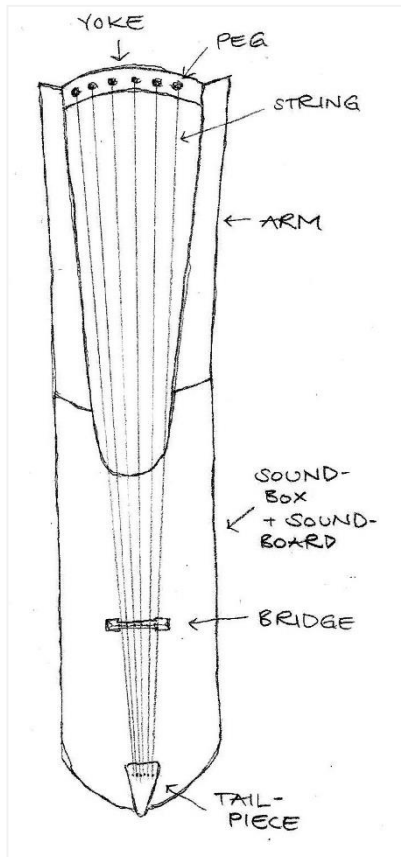


Fig. 2 (above): A harp with its most important characteristics (Hillberg based on Åstrand 1976, vol 3: 345).

Fig. 1 (left): A lyre with all its components (Hillberg based on R. Bruce-Mitford 1983: 684).

In this general air of confusion should also be thrown a definition of *rotte*, because this will be a term surfacing in the description of the Trondheim bridge. Since there are two definitions of the term, both will be given to shed light on the interchangeability of terms and their changing meanings in past times, keeping in mind that it is the second definition that is of relevance in this study:

**Rotte** [rota, rote, rotta] (i). A name for a triangular psaltery. (...) Sachs (1920) took this 'improved' version of the psaltery to be a larger but still basically triangular instrument – a 'Spitzharfe' (see ARPANETTA), occasionally referred to as harp-psaltery or psaltery-harp. This is a credible enough interpretation which leaves open the possibility that the musicians applied to the new instrument, whatever its shape, the name of one already familiar to them though perhaps different in appearance – the Germanic lyre (M. Bruce-Mitford 1984a: 260).

And this leads on to the second definition of *rotte*, which is the one pertinent to the Trondheim bridge, since there are no bridges in the instrument defined in the first version:

**Rotte** (ii). The name given in Middle German to one of the most widely used plucked string instruments in north-western Europe from pre-Christian to medieval times. (...) Instruments of the lyre class consist of a soundbox with two symmetrical arms rising from it and a yoke or cross-bar joining them at the top. The strings run across the soundbox and are usually connected to it by a bridge. The *rotte*, or Germanic lyre, had more in common with the ancient Greek kithara than with the other important Greek string instrument, the lyra (M. Bruce-Mitford 1984b: 261).

Myrtle Bruce-Mitford then goes on to refer to the several finds of *round lyres*, thus equating the term *rotte* with a specific lyre type (M. Bruce-Mitford 1984b). From the Welsh writer Caradoc of Ihancarvon, who died in 1156, we learn that Gruffuth ap Cynan (king of North Wales) brought with him skilful

musicians from Ireland to Wales, who in their turn invented the instruments that were played in Wales (Andersson 1970: 29). One of the instruments mentioned as being introduced was the *crwth*. M. Bruce-Mitford, however, raises a warning hand and claims (in the continuation of the definition of *Rotte* (ii)):

*The Celtic 'crwth', 'cruit', and 'crot', English 'rote' and 'crowd', French 'rote' and German 'rotte' are obviously related etymologically, but whether the use of the instrument spread to Germany eastwards from Ireland or north-westwards from central Europe, or whether it developed in several countries simultaneously, is uncertain (M. Bruce-Mitford 1984b: 261).*

The spread of the lyre will not be of concern in this thesis, but it is important to keep in mind the rather unclear terminology as outlined in this chapter. Especially when including literary sources (as has been done to a minor extent in the analysis), it is useful to bear in mind the confusion between lyre and harp. In this study, the modern term *lyre* will be used throughout, denoting the instrument depicted in Fig. 1 with an oblong soundbox and two arms joined at the top with a yoke, complemented by a bridge, pegs, a tailpiece and strings – to be more precise, the *Germanic round-lyre* or *rotte* will be studied in this thesis.

Before leaving this chapter of definitions, there is one term which still needs clarifying: music archaeology. As defined in *Nationalencyklopedin* by Cajsa Lund, one of the music archaeological pioneers in Scandinavia, music archaeology works to make visible and to explain music and other non-linguistic use of sound by means of archaeological finds. It can be applied both on historical and pre-historical societies (Lund 1994: 519). As shows through, Cajsa Lund has worked much with reconstructing prehistoric sound-scape, something which will not be included in this study or in the definition of music archaeology applied here. Instead, the term will be perceived as the archaeology of music, of musical instruments and of its role in prehistoric society.

### 1.3 Research Background

Research also needs to be put into its context in the same manner as do finds. When eyeing the work done on musical instruments so far, there are some prominent figures which should be highlighted. Studies of musical instruments did by no means take off only in the 1970s with the establishment of music archaeology. It was already the subject of research in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when it was conducted from a musical point of view. Arnd Adje Both calls it comparative musicology, a way of thinking that fitted well within the uni-directional evolutionary thinking of the time (Both 2009: 4).

A compilation was made in 1940 by Curt Sachs, his work being well-cited still today (Sachs 1940). At the paradigm shift in the 1960s, the comparative musicology developed into ethnomusicology, which in its turn led to the forming of music archaeology in the 1970s (Both 2009: 4). Soon came an update on Curt Sachs' work in Frederick Crane's *Extant medieval musical instruments: a provisional catalogue by types*, a work as influential as Curt Sachs' (Crane 1972).

On an international scale, the music archaeological field of study was strengthened by the ICTM (International Council for Traditional Music) Study Group of Music Archaeology, whose function was in 1998 succeeded to the ISGMA (International Study Group of Music Archaeology). ISGMA was founded by Ellen Hickman and Ricardo Eichmann, who have also figured as editors of the series *Studien zur Musikarchäologie* based on conference reports (Both et al. 2008, Hickmann et al. 2000a, 2000b, 2002, 2004, 2006).

In Sweden, Cajsa Lund has been one of the pioneers, pushing projects and university courses as well as writing handbooks on how to identify musical remains in the archaeological record (Lund 1981). She

has worked with aspects of experimental archaeology, trying to recreate the prehistoric soundscape, resulting in the compilation *Fornnordiska klanger* (Lund 1987). Another subject frequently encountered in her research is the search for everyday music and the problems connected to what she calls *green music* (Lund 1998). This early phase was, however, in much to be characterised by “preparatory work”, expressed also by Cajsja Lund (Lund 1981). Before any musical archaeological studies can be conducted, there needs to be a corpus of finds. The drift of the first decades has therefore been to make inventory of archive material and to collect data for later in-depth analyses.

Graeme Lawson has become the main specialist on Anglo-Saxon lyres, figuring as an expert in archaeological reports of lyre-graves (e.g. Lawson 1978, 1987, 2001). He has contributed much to both the constructional and the contextual aspects of lyres, focal points which will also figure in this thesis. Gjermund Kolltveit could be termed the Scandinavian counterpart, having compiled for instance a survey on early lyres or more detailed studies on single finds (e.g. Kolltveit 1997, 2000).

On the continent too, there seems to be an interest in lyre finds, described in separate chapters in archaeological reports, with notes also on the context. However, here no leading name appears to stick out, the texts seemingly often composed by experts on wooden remains rather than on musical instruments (e.g. Paulsen 1992, Theune-Grosskopf 2008). Despite single finds being contextualised (as observed for all different areas), there still seems to be a lack of overarching *comparative* contextual studies, with considerations of both temporal and regional aspects. Apparently, Lawson did write his PhD on *Stringed Musical Instruments, Artefacts in the Archaeology of Western Europe, 500 BC to AD 1200*, but the PhD thesis is unfortunately unpublished (Lawson 1980).

As becomes clear when reading, and as has been summarised by Lawson in the quote above (see 1.2 *Material & Method*), cultural and social identity in relation to lyres has been a subject of rather limited attention. In archaeological reports, the lyre is mentioned and (if lucky) further described, leading on to discussions about the instrument itself. This is of course a necessary step, but it then needs to be taken one step further in order to learn more about the people behind it. Writing about meadhall entertainment, Stephen Pollington takes another approach on the material (Pollington 2003).

#### 1.4 Theoretical Approach

Above all, this thesis takes its starting point in the question of identity, a term so often used but so difficult to grasp. As archaeology deals with the past of *human* lives, subjectivity will permeate not only our own conclusions about the material, but also the very combinations of finds and traits left behind, mirroring different identities and the staging of identities. Identity is never naturally given, or even final, but is a process (Jenkins 2008: 5f). The most important values governing this process are similarities and differences, as thoroughly discussed by Richard Jenkins. By what humans observe as similarities and differences, groupings and identities are formed, where we are more or less strongly opposing *us* with *them* (Jenkins 2008: 17ff).

Margarita Díaz-Andreu and Sam Lucy focus on aspects such as age, gender, status, religion and ethnicity, which have shown to be main areas of the identification process, and arrive at the important conclusion that identity is not constituted of one aspect only, but forms in their intersection (Díaz-Andreu & Lucy 2007). Identity is therefore a complex matter, where the presence of a lyre will not result in a simple group of lyre-players. The lyre may be a common denominator, but what about other facets?

And this is the very aim of this study: to get past the perception of musical instruments as detached objects and to put them into their context in order to shed light on prehistoric life and prehistoric people, much in accordance with the contextual archaeology advocated by Hodder (2012). Adding a comparative element, these contexts can then be further examined in relation to each other. Are there any patterns? Are there homogeneous features hinting at a common musical culture or are there instead specifically local properties? The position in the grave and the relation of the lyre to other grave goods and the deceased himself can be further indicators. Here it is important to keep in mind the power of material culture, which is in fact the most efficient way to communicate identity to the surrounding (Wells 1998: 20). Objects become imbued with meaning, and depending on the situation and biography of both owner/user and instrument, as well as on the surrounding, the culture and on circumstances of acquisition; meanings change (Kohring 2012: 107). These objects work as symbols of social norms and agreements, understood only by those initiated to its meanings (Jenkins 2008: 6).

For identity is not only defined by different factors, but is also operating on different levels. As Ingrid Gustin discusses in an article about social identity during the Viking Age, focus has long been on national, regional or local levels, but do seldom reach beyond to incorporate an over-regional identity (Gustin 2007: 238). Similarly, one can zoom in on an individual level. An identity will inevitably be imposed on the individual, who has to negotiate these external perceptions according to his or her own definitions (Meskell 2001: 188, Jenkins 2008: 40). One kind of identity does consequently not exclude another, but humans can express several levels of social belonging (Gustin 2007: 238), which are, as rightly emphasised by Jenkins, continually re-negotiated (Jenkins 2008: 17ff).

Someone's identity might, or will, therefore be defined differently in different contexts and by different people. Including us. We will always be coloured by our contemporary ideas of identity when studying an archaeological material (Meskell 2001: 204), and it is difficult to reconstruct all the parameters necessary for re-tracing past identities. This should, however, not be seen as an expression of defeat, but is only meant as a reminder that our interpretations will always be our *subjective* interpretations.

Graves have preserved the most tangible and manifest relation between past humans and musical instruments. However, with graves, there is the reappearing exclamation mark calling attention to the importance of family and the living society in the staging of identity. At a burial, the identity of the deceased is not only described, but also transformed. Certain aspects are highlighted more than others, an active choice made by the survivors (Williams & Sayer 2009: 3). Identity as we encounter it in graves is therefore never a neutral reflection of the buried person, but always a subjective projection on the part of the living society. A lyre could have been placed in a grave for reasons of remembrance of skills or interests, but could likewise have been chosen for its symbolic values connected with social meaning. Other grave goods too, of course, are submitted to the choice of the living, as is the grave itself and its location (Petts 2009: 221). Material culture, especially as encountered in graves, is therefore not much different from the literary documents included in the final part of the analysis of this study: i.e. a subjective arrangement. As for the written documents, there is a general awareness of the biased voice of the author, an awareness which should be transferred also to grave studies. The graves have been structured and written much in the same way as a text, ready to be read by the mourners (Williams 2005: 256) or the archaeologist. The mourners were, however, privy to its code and meaning, while the archaeologist can only make an attempt at its decipherment, never able to check his or her translation against the reality of the past.

Much research has been done on how to study identities in graves. But how should we analyse the lyre-finds from cultural layers related mostly to urban contexts? Wells provides the following answer: *The situation with settlements, and particularly with individual houses, is much less satisfactory.*

*Compared to cemetery excavation, little attention has been paid to settlement research until very recently, and very little work has been devoted to study of the character of individual households* (Wells 1998: 245). If the closer context is not paid attention to already at the excavation site (as in the case of graves), it is difficult to produce an identity-related study on a given material. There have been several identity studies on pottery, showing that it is possible, linked closely to the stage of production (see e.g. Roslund 2013), but with lyre finds from cultural contexts being so rare and specialised, lacking the detailed context of their funerary counterparts, the grave-finds will inevitably come to dominate this study. However, sometimes the mention of contexts other than graves can be enough to provoke a reminder that the find category is by no means limited to the realm of the dead, but can also be found in the very living society, an observation especially useful when studying a transitional phase between pagan and Christian, between grave goods and the absence of grave goods.

Sound has much been highlighted within music archaeological studies, in accordance with the phenomenological perspectives that have come about in post-processual archaeology. Sight is stepping back for the benefit of other senses, aiming at the whole experience. This aspect will, however, *not* be attended to in this thesis, concentrating instead on context and identity. Since music archaeology finds itself between the fields of musicology and archaeology, approaches naturally vary from highly musical to archaeological. Although a cross-disciplinary study would be preferable, as discussed by Both (2009), this master's thesis will only be able to view the material from an archaeological angle.

To conclude I would like to cite Bintliff: *As historians-archaeologists we can only rescue the complexity of that Past through an equally multi-faceted set of approaches, which at times are each taken (incorrectly) as in themselves almost sufficient for that task* (Bintliff 2011: 18).

## 2 THE FINDS

### 2.1 Lyre Finds in Graves

As has been clarified already in the introductory chapter, 26 lyre finds have been included to provide a basis for the comparative analysis. They cover the time span A.D. 500-1200 and originate from central and northern Europe, as well as from Anglo-Saxon contexts. In this sub-chapter, the grave-finds will be introduced. A chronological order has been attempted, starting with the earliest.

#### 2.1.1 Abingdon (England)

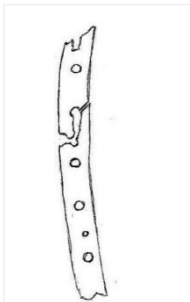


Fig. 3: One of the bone facings from Abingdon (Hillberg based on Leeds & Harden 1936: Plate

About one half of an Anglo-Saxon cemetery was excavated at Saxton Road in Abingdon in the 1930s, the other half lying under modern buildings and therefore unable to be accessed. The unearthed graves showed to be a mix of cremations and inhumations. The predominance of cremations was attributed by Leeds and Harden to the customs of Anglo-Saxon invaders (Leeds & Harden 1936: 11). Nothing indicated wooden coffins, but some of the inhumations were surrounded with stones and some of the interred were found lying on what might have been a wooden bier (Leeds & Harden 1936: 30f).

Inhumation grave B 42 contained the skeletal remains of an adolescent male lying on his back, head facing west. On his left side was an iron sword, with some remains of the wooden scabbard and its mountings still in place. A flint stone was encountered on his right side and at the lower end of the right-hand ribs there were two oval iron buckles. Under the pelvis, also on the right-hand side, was a knife pointing east. In the very last lines of the short description of the grave, a double-sided curved bone piece with five holes (Fig. 3) is mentioned lying next to the left foot. Leeds and Harden interpreted it to be a *comb* (?) (Leeds & Harden 1936: 38f). This find has since been re-interpreted and as it stands now, the bone facings are instead thought to have figured on each side of a lyre yoke. They measure 18,3 and 18,5 cm and have, with the help of the sword, been dated to the 5<sup>th</sup> century, possibly pre-dating 450 (R. & M. Bruce-Mitford 1970: 8, Crane 1972: 12). It should here be mentioned also that the sword from this grave was one of two swords recovered at the site. Moreover, the authors believe them to be of continental origin, suggesting that both sword-bearers would have come to Abingdon from the continent. In other graves there are also strong continental links (Leeds & Harden 1936: 59ff).

#### 2.1.2 Trossingen (Germany)

The Merovingian cemetery at Trossingen had long been known, when in 2001-2002 another archaeological investigation was undertaken. One of the twelve new graves unearthed was grave number 58. Due to the water-logged condition, many wooden artefacts have survived, one of them an almost intact lyre (Fig. 5). Soundbox, yoke and the arms of the lyre have been made in one piece and the material chosen was maple, as for the cover. Also, the wooden bridge (willow) (Fig. 4) as well as six tuning pegs (2 hazel, 4 ash) have been found, thus making the Trossingen find the first example where both bridge and lyre have been excavated in the same context. It should be mentioned here that the bridge shows seven notches (not arched), while only six tuning pegs have been found. Besides being unusually well-preserved, the instrument is also fascinating in terms of decorations. On one side there are two groups of warriors, while the remaining

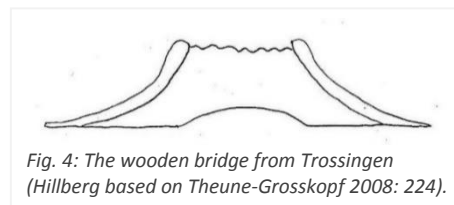


Fig. 4: The wooden bridge from Trossingen (Hillberg based on Theune-Grosskopf 2008: 224).

space is decorated with a Germanic animal style II pattern. The wear marks on the arms are unequal and correspond with abrasions that would have formed when used by a right-handed person (Theune-Grosskopf 2008: 217ff). There are leather remains extending around the lower end of the arms (Theune-Grosskopf 2006: 112).

The specific properties of the soil (“fat and heavy clay-subsoil”), as well as the high water level, have made this region highly favourable for the preservation of wood. Metal fittings, however, seem to have deteriorated the more, indicated by their sheer absence. The grave was mainly unearthed in the covered localities of archaeological laboratories where it was moved in a block due to bad weather (Theune-Grosskopf 2008: 217f). The surprisingly intact lyre measures 80,3 × 19,5 × 2,0 cm, with a bridge of 8,8 × 2,2 cm (Theune-Grosskopf 2006: 102ff, 112).

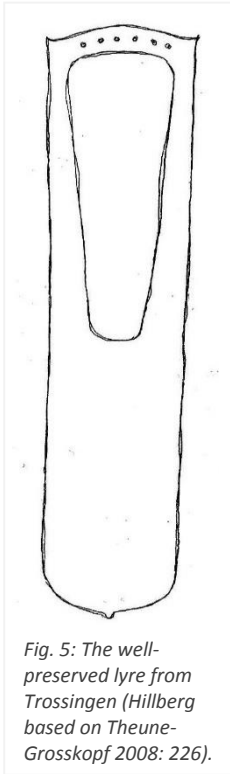


Fig. 5: The well-preserved lyre from Trossingen (Hillberg based on Theune-Grosskopf 2008: 226).

The buried person was shown to be a 30-40 year old man, 178 cm in height. He had been dressed in linen trousers, leather straps wrapped around his calves and a tunic. He had then been laid out in a bed and covered with an exclusive woollen fabric in red and yellow, probably of Mediterranean origin. The bed/coffin was equipped with a wooden roof with a ridge shaped like a serpent. This roof has together with other furniture and wooden boards dated the burial to A.D. 580 (Theune-Grosskopf 2008: 217f). In terms of furniture there was also a chair and a three-legged round table. These were complemented with some tableware: a candleholder, a plate and a flask, as well as a bowl under the bed. There was also a selection of weaponry, containing a lance originally 360 cm in length, a bow, a shield and a saddle bow (Theune-Grosskopf 2008: 218). In his closest proximity the deceased was not only vested with fabrics but had a sword and the lyre, in his right and left arm respectively. It should be said that the lyre was placed with the front facing down (Theune-Grosskopf 2006: 101). Next to his head there was also a comb. The sword was of a type most popular in the 7<sup>th</sup> century and had silver inlays both on the cross-guard and the pommel and a wooden scabbard still intact (Theune-Grosskopf 2008: 217f).

### 2.1.3 Oberflacht 84 (Germany)

In 1892 the contents of grave 84 ended up at the Museum of Schad, the context and circumstances of excavation unfortunately unclear. By means of a note, the different objects of the grave are known, but their position will remain a mystery (Schiek 1992: 55). The mentioned note from 1894 states that the buried individual was lying in a coffin within a larger wooden structure, probably a burial chamber. The outer structure was made of oak, though the material of the inner coffin was not spelled out. The note also declares that the deceased, which has today been established to be a man, had several grave goods: A kind of double chair, with two seats and a common back rest, was probably placed at the foot end of the coffin. The individual was also given a lance, a bow, an arrowhead, a candleholder, two wooden flasks, a clay jug, a bronze basin, a lyre and a sword with parts of the wooden scabbard still intact including the birch bast wrapped around it (Schiek 1992: 55). The grave has been dated to the 6<sup>th</sup> century (Paulsen 1992: 147).

It is not known where the lyre was located when first encountered. The instrument itself has, however, been preserved the better (Fig. 6). According to Paulsen only the strings and the bridge are missing (Paulsen 1992: 149). Pressure marks on the soundbox indicate where the bridge would have been positioned. The instrument measures 81 cm in length and gives an elongated impression.

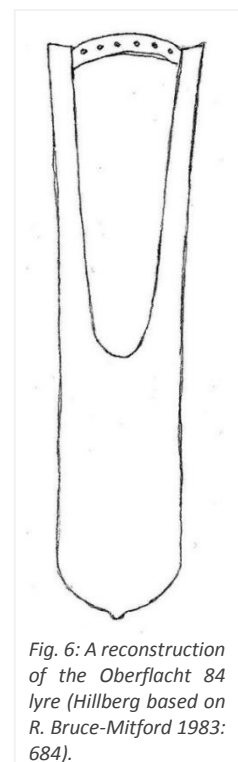


Fig. 6: A reconstruction of the Oberflacht 84 lyre (Hillberg based on R. Bruce-Mitford 1983: 684).

The arms bend slightly outwards towards the top end, where the yoke has been fastened to the arms with wooden pegs. Oak has been used for the soundbox, whereas the covering lid was made from maple (Paulsen 1992: 148f).

#### 2.1.4 Schlotheim (Germany)

Three graves have been found at the outer edge of a cemetery at Schlotheim (Thüringen). In 531 Thüringen was occupied by Franks, attacked in the early 8<sup>th</sup> century by Saxons from the north (Behm-Blancke 1989: 199, 210). Grave 1/85 has been dated to around 600 – early 7<sup>th</sup> century and can thus be placed in a Frankish context. When the grave was found in 1985 it was because a spear head appeared in the scoop of a digging machine, as it is situated in an area characterised by building activity. Archaeologists were brought to the site and the grave was excavated (Behm-Blancke 1989: 200). The spear head found by the digging machine did probably belong to the area of the lower extremities now missing and has proven to be one of the more interesting grave goods. It has been decorated with damascening in silver and gold, with motives reflecting a Christian world: not only triangles symbolising trinity, but also a depiction of a fish and a cross (Behm-Blancke 1989: 201f).

In the remaining grave context was found a rather complete skeleton of a 50 year old man, with the exception of the skull (west end) and the lower extremities (in the damaged east end) from knee downwards (Behm-Blancke 1989: 200f). Beneath his left arm was a sax with the bronze chape still in place. Somewhat further down the body there was an oval iron buckle with three bronze rivets, which seem to have been fastened to wood. A shield buckle was found in the same area, including the metal fitting from the back. Close to the ribs were five objects, which seem to have been in some sort of



Fig. 7: The antler bridge from Schlotheim (Hillberg based on Behm-Blancke 1989: Tafel XVI).

pouch judging from the collected position. These five artefacts were: a razor, tweezers, a knife, a fire steel and flint. A dark stain was encountered not far from the left knee, yielding also the antler bridge (Fig. 7). The bridge was oriented in west-east direction, as is the grave. At the foot end of the grave was a clay bowl (Behm-Blancke 1989: 201).

The lyre is not much more described, except for the statement that it was made to hold five strings and that it was 5,9 cm long (Behm-Blancke 1989: 207, Tafel XVI). When looking at the picture of the bridge, its deviation from other found bridges is striking. It does not have the typical two bases with a horizontal plane in between for the notches, but is rather oblong and unshaped. It does not say if the bridge was fragmented, but the picture shows an asymmetrical bridge, one end stretching out far more from the plane with the notches than the other (Behm-Blancke 1989: Tafel XVI).

#### 2.1.5 Bergh Apton (England)

In 1973, 63 graves were excavated at the Bergh Apton gravel pit, where an iron spearhead and a copper alloy object had been found when quarrying. It is not clear how many graves that were originally existing at the site, the quarry having extracted gravel on both the southern and the western end of the cemetery (Green et al. 1978: 1f).

In one of those 63 graves, grave 22, which was located right at the quarry edge and had been damaged on its southern side, a lyre was found. Its exact location in relation to the deceased man is unclear, since only the femoral fragments survive and half of the grave was damaged by the nearby quarry. All the found grave goods were lying on the same side of the femoral bone fragments in

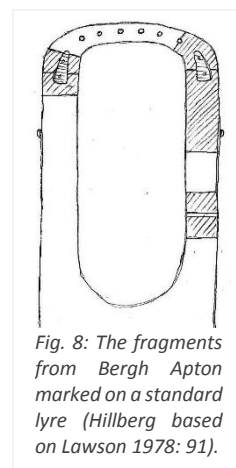


Fig. 8: The fragments from Bergh Apton marked on a standard lyre (Hillberg based on Lawson 1978: 91).



proximity to each other (in the northern end of the grave). They consisted – except for the lyre – of a knife, one decorated buckle of copper alloy and one of iron, as well as a buckle plate and some textile remains. The preservation conditions have not been ideal and the grave has also been damaged by tree roots (Green et al. 1978: 21, 63, Lawson 1978: 96). Most of the lyre has decomposed, except for areas adhering to metal fittings (Fig. 8). In this way the upper mortise-and-tenon joints from both sides and a part from the right side arm were preserved, where the soundboard was fixated with a copper alloy strip (Lawson 1978: 87ff). The upper joints were reinforced with curved copper alloy plates fastened with rivets, paralleling the more elaborate bird reinforcements of Sutton Hoo and Taplow (Lawson 1978: 87f, 91). On the outer side of both arms was found a plug, which Graeme Lawson connects with a possible wrist-strap (Lawson 1978: 95). All in all, Lawson suggest a date of the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> century (Lawson 1978: 89f).

### 2.1.6 Prittlewell (England)

Already in 1887 this Roman and Anglo-Saxon cemetery was come across, another encounter caused in 1923 by a road construction (MoLAS 2004: 11ff). In 2003, three more graves turned up in the archaeological evaluation preceding a road widening, one of them being *one of the richest Anglo-Saxon graves ever found*, as described in *The Prittlewell Prince* (MoLAS 2004: 15). Beneath a burial mound (ca 10 m in diameter) the remains of a wooden grave chamber were found (366 cm wide) dating to the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> century, in the north end of which was the coffin (Barham 2008: 377, Blair 2005: 26, MoLAS 2004: 24). Vessels were still hanging from hooks and an iron stand of 133 cm was still in its upright position, interpreted by Blair as a royal standard or a candelabrum (Blair 2005: 26, MoLAS 2004: 29f). One of the vessels was decorated with cruciform strips, another vessel was an imported Coptic flagon and a third a Coptic bowl. The flagon revealed three figures on horses, possibly saints (Blair 2005: 26ff, MoLAS 2004: 31).

In the east end of the grave, several drinking vessels were found manufactured in both horn and wood and decorated with gilded copper-alloy mounts. Not far from these were 57 gaming pieces of bone, two dice and two pairs of glass jars, blue and green respectively. A sword and the mountings of a wooden shield were also found in the south-east end of the chamber, with a small wooden box nearby. In this box, a silver Byzantine spoon was found with an inscription probably added not at the stage of production but later. It cannot be read except for the letters: “FAB...” and “RONAM” (possibly). Above the letters is a cross. In the same area the excavators encountered what was left of a lyre, lying on the floor facing downwards (Blair 2005: 26, MoLAS 2004: 22, 28). Not much has actually survived, but for the fittings in iron, silver and gilded copper-alloy and the dark wooden stain on the floor (Barham 2008: 378, MoLAS 2004: 37). It was therefore not clear in the field what had actually been found (Barham 2008: 378). Some of the fittings have been suggested to be repairs (MoLAS 2004: 37). Extensive conservation work has been done on the remains with the help of modern technology including X-rays, CT scans and laser scans (Barham 2008: 378f). According to Pollington, its size is comparable to the Sutton Hoo specimen (Pollington 2003: 208). On the floor close to the coffin stood a folding stool on one side and a cauldron on the other, next to which was the four-footed iron stand already mentioned (Blair 2005: 26, MoLAS 2004: 22, 28).

About the coffin itself: The wood has not been preserved, nor have the skeletal remains. At the head end (indicated by human tooth remains) in the west, two gold-foils in the shape of Latin crosses were found lying side by side (Blair 2005: 26, MoLAS 2004: 28, 34). Further east a small fragment of what was once a gold brocade was come across, as were two Merovingian coins from France. In the area of the waist was another remain from the clothing of the deceased: a golden belt buckle (Blair 2005: 26). In the east end of the coffin there were two shoe buckles of copper alloy (MoLAS 2004: 23). Many of the fragile finds were removed from the site in blocks, which were later excavated in the laboratory: a Scythian blade, a bowl, an iron lamp and the lyre are only a few examples (Blair 2005: 27, MoLAS 2004: 16).

### 2.1.7 Oberflacht 37 (Germany)

Grave 37 was the largest grave found in 1846 and it was in this grave that the first lyre of Oberflacht was found. About 2 m down a burial chamber was encountered measuring ca 330 × 100 × 92 cm. Within this wooden chamber there was a coffin containing the deceased, shown to be a young man (Schiek 1992: 37f). The coffin had a flat base part, to which were joined the upright short sides and the angled long sides. The top part was worked from half of a trunk and decorated with a two-headed serpent with horns (Schiek 1992: 38).

In the coffin a young individual had been placed, whose clothes have not survived except for a belt buckle (Schiek 1992: 38). His head tilted to the right, resting on a sword and a lyre which had both been placed in his right arm (Paulsen 1992: 147). Also in the coffin were a scramasax (next to the belt buckle), a knife and 172 hazelnuts (Schiek 1992: 38). Next to the coffin was a wooden container which had been divided into different compartments. In one of the compartments was a bridle and the mountings from a horse harness. Another compartment contained the remains of a saddle as well as a bronze object that was probably a chest strap for a horse. In the third and last compartment there were a candleholder, a wooden bowl, two flints and a carved wooden board. On the right side of the coffin, thus the only object not placed within the coffin or the wooden container, was a lance (Schiek 1992: 38). The grave has been dated to the early 7<sup>th</sup> century (Paulsen 1992: 147).

In 1924 the lyre was described as fragmented into four parts, being further dismembered during the Second World War. A reconstruction has been attempted, where the lithography made in 1846 by Dürrich and Menzel was of help (Fig. 9). The measurements of the lyre are approximately 72 × 20 cm (Paulsen 1992: 147f), and it consists of a soundbox and arms hollowed out from oak, the lid of maple glued on to the resonator. Where the arms begin, the cover has been dowelled. At the very top end the arched yoke has been fastened between the arms. Lawson mentions perforations at the lower end of the arms, which could indicate wrist straps. He here writes about the lyre in grave 31, but must be meaning grave 37 (Lawson 1978: 95).

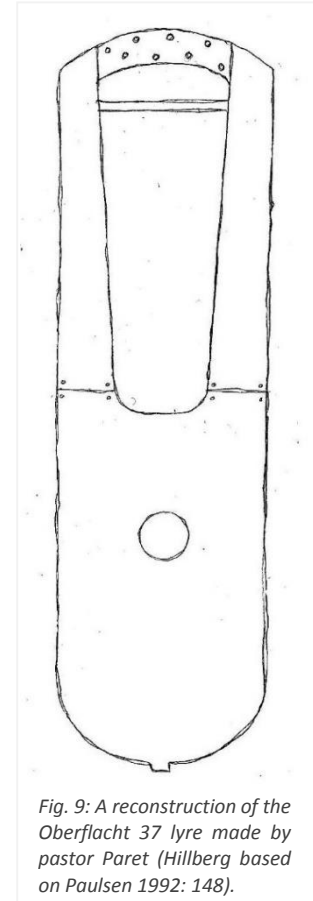


Fig. 9: A reconstruction of the Oberflacht 37 lyre made by pastor Paret (Hillberg based on Paulsen 1992: 148).

### 2.1.8 Morning Thorpe (England)

In 1974-5 salvage excavations were undertaken in order to record the Anglo-Saxon cemetery at a site of gravel extraction at Morning Thorpe. The circumstances led to rather hastily excavations and recordings, yet approximately 365 inhumations and nine cremations were unearthed, as well as features such as ditches and postholes (Green et al. 1987: 1-6).

Grave 97 is described as containing a “male with disturbed female; teeth between M and B [lying at the very western end of the grave] indicate young adult; depth 23 cm” (Green et al. 1987: 63). As for the grave goods these are made up of two cruciform brooches, possible wrist-clasps, iron fragments, an iron knife with a horn handle, an iron buckle, wooden fragments from a possible lyre, iron nails, an iron shield boss, the remains of the shield-grip made of iron with wood and leather remains still on it, a spearhead, iron fragments, an almost intact pot as well as several potsherds. The weaponry, the pots and the possible lyre were all concentrated to the west end of the grave, suggesting that this was the head end, with the belt buckle on an approximated waistline. This would also fit with the teeth found in the west end (Green et al. 1987: 63).

The suggested lyre-fragments consist of two pieces of wood with metal pins. A thin sheet has in both cases been rebated into the wooden piece, being then overlapped by a copper alloy held in place by pins. The fragments could thus have come from the part of a lyre where the lid covering the soundbox would have been fastened. They were found 38 cm apart, which is more than the width of 20 cm suggested from other lyres, yet it is not impossible that they come from the same lyre. The oblique end of the rebate (about  $65^\circ \pm 5$ ) is reversed on the two fragments respectively and deviates from the hitherto more usual  $90^\circ$  on early lyres, which could speak for an alternative construction (Lawson 1987: 166-171).

#### 2.1.9 Taplow (England)

In 1882, an attempt was made to excavate a burial mound at Taplow, situated in an old churchyard. An old yew-tree was growing on top of the mound, impeding excavation from above. Instead, the grave was approached through shafts from the sides. This technique did, however, lead to earth erosions, finally taking down the whole tree (Stevens 1884: 61ff). What is known, is that the buried individual was lying in supine position, probably on a bier, head facing east! Of his clothes have been recovered a tunic with gold braid, a gold belt buckle at his waist, as well as a cloak held together by golden clasps (R. Bruce-Mitford 1975: 512, Stevens 1884: 64f, Webster 2001: 1). A sword had been placed at his right side. Other remains of weapons were two shield bosses lying near the head and three spear heads (of two types: one large and two smaller). The large oak chamber was filled with other grave goods too, consisting of a possible knife, a Coptic bowl, five or six drinking horns with silver decorations, a gaming board complete with gaming pieces, four glass beakers, silver- and bronze-mounted cups, buckets, a cauldron and a lyre (Stevens 1884: 64ff, Webster 2001: 1). The grave has been dated to about 620-640 (Crane 1972: 13) and it should be mentioned that both the belt-buckle and the clasps have been perceived as worn (R. Bruce-Mitford 1975: 512).

The bird plaques from the lyre were identified only in 1948, referred to as *a crescentic metal ornament* in 1882 (R. Bruce-Mitford 1983: 702, Stevens 1884: 65). Apparently they were found at the foot end together with the gaming pieces, a glass vessel and a drinking horn (Stevens 1884: 66). The metal ornaments were not the only lyre fragments, but halfway through the 20<sup>th</sup> century, six maple fragments were found in a drawer, identified as parts of the yoke and pieces of the mortise-and-tenon joint between arms and yoke (R. & M. Bruce-Mitford 1970: 8, 1983: 705). Four holes survive in the yoke fragments, which are, however, incomplete. In the yoke have also been found horn inlays, possibly the remnants of facings (R. Bruce-Mitford 1983: 708f). According to Rupert Bruce-Mitford, there are also leather remains and metal fittings which could have belonged to the lyre (R. Bruce-Mitford 1983: 705). The ridges of the bird plaques are worn down, in line with the previously mentioned belt-buckle and the clasps (R. Bruce-Mitford 1983: 706f).

#### 2.1.10 Sutton Hoo (England)

Excavated in 1939, mound 1 at Sutton Hoo revealed the famous ship burial from the early 7<sup>th</sup> century (Crane 1972: 12). It was later re-excavated in 1965-70 in order to get a fuller understanding and to open up the mound as a whole (R. Bruce-Mitford 1975: 230). The lyre had hung on the western wall of the chamber in a bag made out of beaver-skin. When falling down, it hit a bowl and broke into pieces, fragments from the upper part landing inside this Coptic bowl (R. Bruce-Mitford 1975: 188, Wickham-Crowley 1992: 43). The wooden remains from within the bowl were put in a separate box in 1939, only to be re-discovered in 1948 and finally numbered and registered between 1956 and 1964, when the interest for the instrument had awoken anew (R. Bruce-Mitford 1983: 618). When examined, it was shown that there were two types of wood, oak and maple, the second type of which was now identified to belong to the lyre. As a result from the re-discovery of the wooden lyre fragments from the box, and

a more refined analysis of these pieces and of Anglo-Saxon and continental analogies, a second reconstruction was made to fit the pieces into a lyre (Fig. 10), and not, as was the case in the first reconstruction, as a rectangular harp (R. & M. Bruce-Mitford 1970: 7, 1983: 618, Crane 1972: 12, Wickham-Crowley 1992: 43). The second reconstruction measures 74,2 × 20,9 × 1,9 cm (R. Bruce-Mitford 1983: 689).

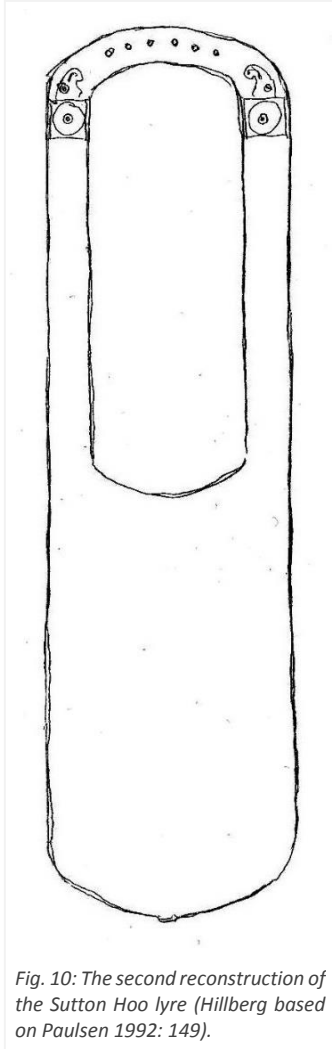


Fig. 10: The second reconstruction of the Sutton Hoo lyre (Hillberg based on Paulsen 1992: 149).

Despite the many smaller fragments, some bigger pieces did survive: the upper end of the arms with a tenon-and-mortise joint still intact, two bronze bird plaques, the yoke with six peg-holes, as well as five pegs in poplar or willow (R. Bruce-Mitford 1975: 451, 1983: 622ff). R. Bruce-Mitford notes that the pegs would have been too narrow to be turned by hand and probably would have needed a tuning key instead (R. Bruce-Mitford 1983: 689f). Pollington mentions that the five willow pegs were in fact complemented by a sixth of alderwood (Pollington 2003: 207). The arms have been hollowed out almost up to the joint and were then covered with a maple soundboard fastened with bronze pins (R. Bruce-Mitford 1975: 451, 1983: 622f, Crane 1972: 12).

About its context can be said the following; the length of the chamber has been approximated to over five meters and is suggested to have had a gable roof (R. Bruce-Mitford 1975: 176). Generally, the grave goods can be said to be arranged along the keel line and at the eastern and western end of the chamber (R. Bruce-Mitford 1975: 180). Stacked along the eastern wall were found three bronze cauldrons including hanging arrangement as well as other vessels (R. Bruce-Mitford 1975: 218f). Closing in on the keel-line, there were an iron lamp (with beeswax still in it), silver dishes, mail coat and drinking vessels (both from horn and wood). Preserved cloth lying at the western end of the drinking vessels marks a space where a buried individual might have been placed. From here eastwards the finds are fairly personal and valuable with small golden objects: shoulder clasps, a purse still enclosing money and a buckle. South of this personal space on the keel line was a sword with astonishing decorative work in gold and cloisonné. Not far from the sword was found a scramasax and spear ferrules. On the northern side of the keel there was a helmet, possibly designating the head end of the grave (R. Bruce-Mitford 1975: 180-221)?

The western side of the burial chamber has yielded silver bowls and two Byzantine silver spoons. The bowls have been decorated with equal-armed crosses and the spoons bear inscriptions (*Saulos* and *Paulos* respectively) preceded by a cross, suggested to be christening spoons. Counting from north to south, there were also an iron stand, the remains of a shield, gaming pieces, a stone bar interpreted as a royal sceptre, a bronze stag, a wooden bucket, spearheads and angons and last but not least, the Coptic bowl already mentioned, with the hanging bowl and the lyre remains inside (R. Bruce-Mitford 1975: 180-221, 492, fig. 111). The body has not yet been mentioned apart from the space with personal connotations along the keel line. There are in fact no surviving bones, neither cremated nor inhumed. Also, the textiles and associated grave goods seem to suggest that there was in fact never a body. It is a much discussed question and it seems that it would have been a cenotaph (R. Bruce-Mitford 1975: 220).

### *2.1.11 Snape (England)*

Grave 32 was completed on the last day of excavation in 1992 and yielded amongst other things some wooden fragments in the western parts, which were then removed in blocks to be excavated in more detail in the laboratory (Lawson 2001: 215). From this micro-excavation have emerged a mortise-and-tenon joint from the upper part of the right arm, parts of the left arm (here, too with a mortise-and-tenon joint), two loops in the shape of a lying eight (one at each side of the instrument), and also a fragment probably originating from the soundbox. Both joints were pierced with a rivet on which were the remains of textile fibres, on one also a wooden sheet. On the right joint can also be seen the rebated soundboard, the joint of which has been strengthened with a copper alloy strip and pins. Arms and resonator were made of maple, whereas the cover was of oak. As for the placement of the loops in relation to the instrument, they were found in the upper half of the instrument, the left specimen lying not far from the left elbow (Lawson 2001: 215ff). About the wider context of the grave can be said that there is not only an Anglo-Saxon cemetery with both cremations and inhumations, but there were also nine or ten mounds, the excavation of which began in 1862 (Filmer-Sankey 2001: 6f).

The buried individual was a male, seemingly encompassed with textiles and provided with a vegetal cover where he was placed, his head facing west. The legs were slightly flexed (Filmer-Sankey et al. 2001: 75, Lawson 2001: 218). It should here be noted that the graves in this cemetery have been sexed only by means of grave goods since skeleton remains have not been preserved sufficiently enough (Filmer-Sankey et al. 2001: 17). The lyre covered his left shoulder with his left arm in all likelihood bent around it (Filmer-Sankey et al. 2001: 75, Lawson 2001: 215). The reason for the body position to be understood despite the lack of skeletal remains is due to the soil, which has destroyed the bones but left behind a brown stain (Filmer-Sankey 2001: 12).

The lyre was lying under a shield, probably covered with leather as indicated by a dark stain. The shield boss and grips, as well as two decorative studs were also found. Further finds were a strike-a-light, a steel piece with a wooden handle, a 17 cm long knife, a shield-on-tongue buckle, a wooden bowl, a ferrule, two clamps and a socket. Probably also belonging to this grave are two spear fragments and part of another iron socket. Noticeable are also the traces of textiles, found for instance in connection with the knife and the shield-on-tongue buckle, as well as a leather pouch within which assumedly the strike-a-light and the steel were lying. Except for the wooden bowl at his feet, all grave goods were found around/on the upper body (Filmer-Sankey et al. 2001: 75-79).

### *2.1.12 Köln (Germany)*

The excavations of the inside of the St Severin church were begun in 1938 and continued during the Second World War until 1943, when Köln was attacked. In 1948/49 and 1955 some complementary excavations were carried out. The excavations have yielded both different stages of the church building, but also graves filling up a time span from the Roman Empire till the Middle Ages and upwards. There is not only a great temporal variation, but also a variation in burial customs (Päffgen 1992 Teil 2: 167).

Grave III,100, which has been dated to the late 7<sup>th</sup> century/early 8<sup>th</sup> century, was found in the nave (Päffgen 1992 Teil 2: 280f). The entombed individual was considered to be a woman in 1939, which is why the grave has become famous as a woman's grave. After re-evaluations this label is no longer valid, since the individual has shown to be male (Päffgen 1992 Teil 1: 481). The outer structure of the tomb takes the form of a stone cist, consisting of several stone slabs. For the floor and the top, trachyte

has been used, while the sides are made up of sandstone. Its outer measurements are 220 × 76-82 × 81-83 cm. The buried person was lying on his back in WSW-ENE orientation. Textile remains have shown to be surprisingly well preserved, revealing for instance that the man was probably dressed in a silken outer garment and a coat, both decorated with a gold brocade. Leather remains and a buckle on the feet hint at the shoes he was wearing. Around his calves were wrapped leather straps made of sheep leather, to which were attached two layers of textile; the outer was woollen, whereas the inner layer was of linen, probably stockings. Remarkable are also the leather gauntlets on the gloves found under the lyre. Next to the legs were silver mountings, possibly originating from the leather straps but which could also have been fitted to the leather bag (Päffgen 1992 Teil 2: 280f).

Except for the clothes, the deceased has also been equipped with grave goods: Leather remains at the foot end have been interpreted as a bag and east thereof were a wooden flask, a clasp knife, scissors, a comb, a fire striker and a firestone. A lyre was placed on the upper part of the right leg and extended to the right forearm. Between the southern wall and the lyre a knife was unearthed. A vegetal cover was seen to cover the body, of which were identifiable parts of the common box, the dog rose and possibly lavender (Päffgen 1992 Teil 2: 280f). When found, the lyre was copied (Fig. 11), a lucky circumstance considering that the original was destroyed in June 1943. Of the lyre, only the left half had survived, essentially the parts which were closest to the corpse. The soundbox was hollowed out from oak and covered with a maple board, which had been fastened with copper alloy nails. The yoke had six tuning pegs which decomposed when retrieved. The instrument measures 53 cm in length (Paulsen 1992: 149, Päffgen 1992 Teil 2: 284).

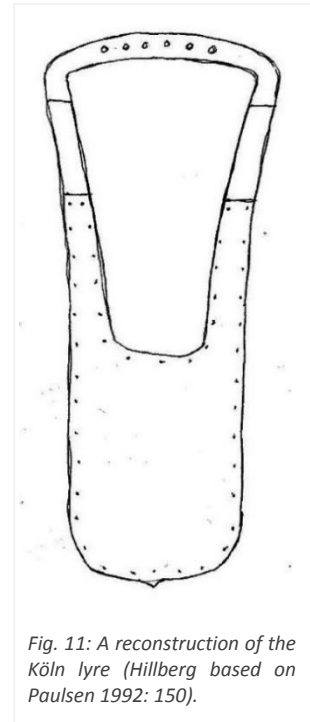


Fig. 11: A reconstruction of the Köln lyre (Hillberg based on Paulsen 1992: 150).

### 2.1.13 Broa (Sweden)

When land was cleared in connection with the construction of a building at Broa (Halla sn) in 1899, two graves were encountered. Several artefacts are related to the graves, one of them an amber bridge (Salin 1922: 189). The grave in which the bridge was found was discovered by the owner of the newly constructed building when digging down a stone. He then came across a layer of cobblestones, beneath which were the skeletal remains of the interred individual, together with a horse. The man was buried above the horse with his head directed to the west. Probably lying on his back, the man had a sword, a green glass bead and a bridge (Fig. 12) on the right hand side of his head (Salin 1922: 190, 193).

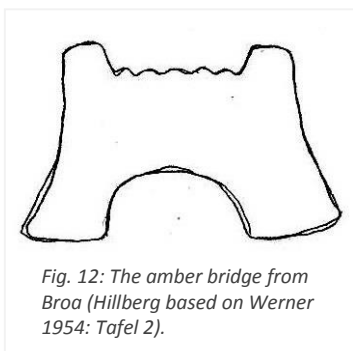


Fig. 12: The amber bridge from Broa (Hillberg based on Werner 1954: Tafel 2).

About the sword Salin writes that it was of a northern type with Animal Style III ornamentations and a zig-zag-pattern on it, dating it to the 8<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> century (Roes 1965: 46, Salin 1922: 190). The bridge has been carved from amber and made to encompass 3-4 cm in length and 4 cm in height. It has notches for four to six strings and has been dated to the 9<sup>th</sup> century (Kristensen 1994: 227, Salin 1922: 205). The horse lay at right angle to the individual, with the head facing north. It had a bridle in its mouth and some gilded mounts at the sides of the head (Salin 1922: 190). Further finds are belt buckles, some of them with preserved leather remains, small iron rivets with bronze discs at the

top, as well as other small metal fragments. Of the mentioned mountings one pair comprises two lion heads with marks of cloth on the backside (Salin 1922: 190-3). Apart from the buried individual and the horse, as well as the grave goods immediately connected with one of both, the context is unclear.

#### 2.1.14 Concevreux (France)

A cast bronze bridge was found at Concevreux (Dép. Aisne) in a Frankish necropolis. It is the most decorated bridge excavated so far, with animal heads curving out from the bases (Fig. 13). It is 5,3 cm wide and 3,7 cm high, providing notches for six strings (Werner 1954: 14). The horizontal part is not solid as in most other examples, but is divided in two: the upper part furnished with notches, the lower part probably functioning merely as reinforcement (Werner 1954: Tafel 2). Unfortunately nothing more is known about its context and the other grave goods (Werner 1954: 14). Due to its vague dating, this bridge will be put last in chronologically ordered diagrams or presentations.

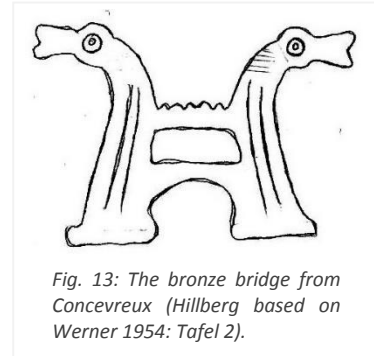


Fig. 13: The bronze bridge from Concevreux (Hillberg based on Werner 1954: Tafel 2).

## 2.2 Lyre Finds from Cultural Layers

Lyre finds have not only been excavated in graves, but also in cultural layers, most often in early towns. These, too, will be presented in an approximated chronological order, set in the same geographical and temporal frame as the grave finds.

#### 2.2.1 Dorestad 140 (Netherlands)

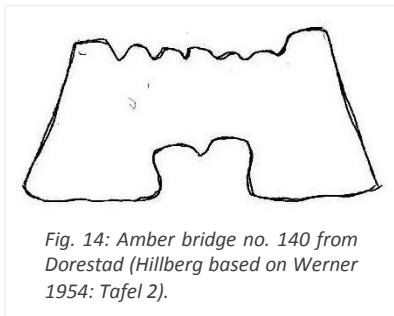


Fig. 14: Amber bridge no. 140 from Dorestad (Hillberg based on Werner 1954: Tafel 2).

At the urban site of Dorestad (Utrecht) two amber bridges were found. The bigger one, number 140 (Fig. 14), measures 4,5 cm in width and 2 cm in height (5 cm × 2,5 cm according to Crane 1972: 14). Its two bases are conical, the string-holding plane horizontal with six notches (Roes 1965: 45f, Plaat XIX). Dorestad was at its peak in the 8<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> centuries, after which it ceded to exist (Roes 1965: 1). The bridge has been dated to the 8<sup>th</sup> century (Werner 1954: 14).

#### 2.2.2 Dorestad 141 (Netherlands)

Information about amber bridge no. 141 (Fig. 15), also found at Dorestad, is even sparser (Roes 1965: 45f). It has also been dated to the 8<sup>th</sup> century (Werner 1954: 14). On plates its bases can be seen to be less conical and the notches can be counted to seven (Roes 1965: Plaat XIX). It is 3,7 cm wide and 2,5 cm high and is thus similar in height but not in width when comparing with no. 140 (Crane 1972: 14).

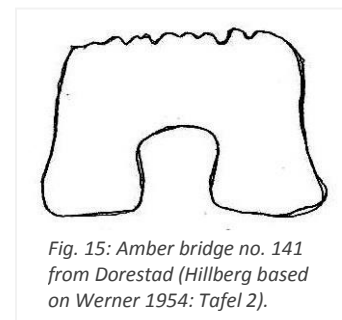
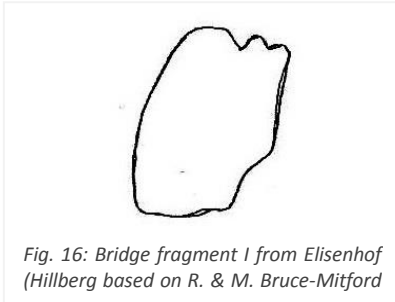


Fig. 15: Amber bridge no. 141 from Dorestad (Hillberg based on Werner 1954: Tafel 2).

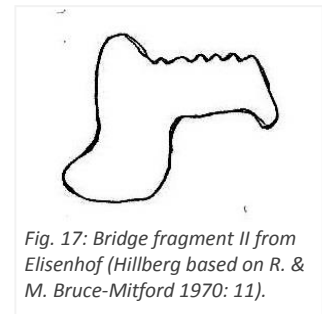
### 2.2.3 Elisenhof I (Germany)



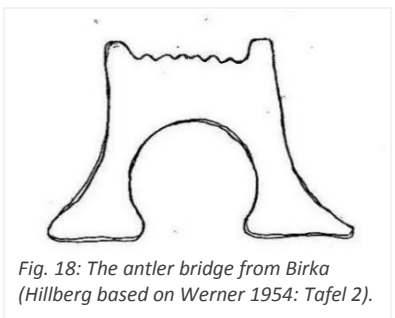
This find was made in 1967, when the amber factory of Elisenhof (Schleswig) was excavated, dated to the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Not much can be read about the two amber bridges found at the site, but from the illustrations it becomes clear that this fragment, which has here been named Elisenhof I, consists of one of the bases as well as a small part from the horizontal crossbar, revealing 1,5 notches (Fig. 16). According to Crane it is 1,9 cm wide (in its fragmentary state) and 2,3 cm high (R. & M. Bruce-Mitford 1970: 8, Crane 1972: 13).

### 2.2.4 Elisenhof II (Germany)

From the excavation in 1967 at the site of Elisenhof (Schleswig) stems a second amber bridge fragment. The pillar has a foot that is more marked than in the other fairly straight example. Here, more of the horizontal piece has survived with 5,5 notches (Fig. 17). The fragment measures 2,8 cm in width and 2,1 cm in height and will here be called Elisenhof II (R. & M. Bruce-Mitford 1970: 8, Crane 1972: 13).



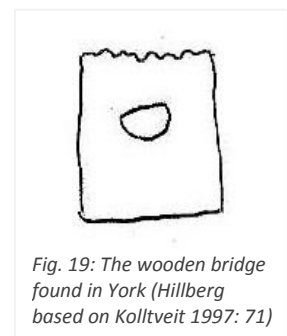
### 2.2.5 Birka (Sweden)



In the settlement context (Svarta Jorden) at the site of Birka, this Viking Age bridge of antler was found. It is 4,9 cm wide, 3,3 high and has been designed for five to seven strings (Fig. 18). One side has been described as smooth, whereas the other is more porous in character (Arbman 1939: 129, Gustafsson 2007: 197, Historiska Museet 2011). Crane offers a more specific date: he suggests that it is from the 9<sup>th</sup> century, certainly before the year 1000 (Crane 1972: 14).

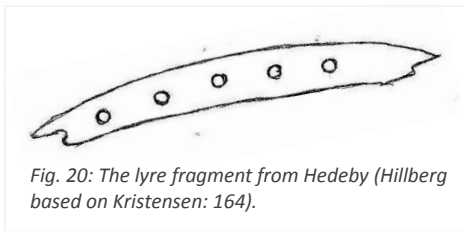
### 2.2.6 York (England)

A wooden bridge was found at the excavation at Coppergate in 1976-81, where it was unearthed in the urban context of Jorvik in relation to buildings dated to the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Its design deviates from the other bridges, not looking like a U put upside down, but quadrangular with a hole in the middle (Fig. 19). From the side it looks like a triangle, with one side standing on the body of the instrument, while the third angle points upwards 2,7 cm and forms the plane for the strings. There are six incisions for the strings (Hall 1984: 115, Kristensen 1994: 200).





### 2.2.7 Hedeby (Germany)



At the site of Hedeby (Schleswig) an arched wooden fragment of 15,5 cm was found with equally distanced holes in it (Fig. 20). The find was made in a refuse pit and can be dated to the 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century. It has been interpreted as the yoke of a stringed instrument, the six holes being holes for tuning pegs. The material used is yew (Lawson 1984: 155f in Kristensen 1994: 74, 164).

### 2.2.8 Gerete (Sweden)

After a silver hoard dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> century had been found at Gerete (Fardhem sn, Gotland) in 1845, metal detector campaigns were conducted, mainly in 1990 but also in 2000 (Gustafsson 2007: 197). One of the finds from this project was the Gerete bridge. As it was found by metal detector, it cannot be attributed to a context, but in its surrounding it had two silver hoards, several stone structures, richly ornamented stray finds, as well as finds related to crafts or workshops (Gustafsson 2007: 198f).

Since the Gerete bridge has a finish not quite retouched, Gustafsson discusses the idea that it could be an exemplar not entirely finished or a model serving as a test. This would not be a far-fetched idea considering the character of the surrounding finds, many of them relating to workshops (Gustafsson 2007: 198). It is made out of bronze, probably cast by the process of *à cire perdue*. The choice of material has allowed the artisan to add details which could not be worked in stone or horn. The most striking feature added is the top bar, enclosing the space through which the strings would pass, the number of which would have counted six to eight (Fig. 21). Its measurements are 4 x 2 cm (Gustafsson 2007: 197).



### 2.2.9 Sigtuna (Sweden)

During excavations at Sigtuna in 1999, a tuning key 13 cm in length was found in a layer consisting of waste from buildings and other waste materials, dated to around 1100 (Gustavson 2008: 40). It is made from elk horn and is covered on all four sides with runes. The runes have been interpreted to mean the following: 'Listen to (he) who made this! Erri made this harp with skilful hands' or 'May Erri play this harp with skilful hands.' (Gustavson 2008: 40-46). The rectangular horn piece is tapering off towards one end, where it has a hole of 0,6 cm in diameter. The hole bears wear marks indicating that it had been suspended; maybe it was worn around the neck (Gustavson 2008: 40)? The other end of the assumed tuning key shows a carved hole 1,5 cm deep into the key forming an oblong measuring 1,3 x 0,8 cm. This hole, together with the runic inscription, has led to the assumption that it was used as a tuning key for a plucked stringed instrument (Gustavson 2008: 40).

### 2.2.10 Trondheim (Norway)

During excavations of the cultural layers of Trondheim in 1985, a peculiar find was made (Hagland 1987: 60). It looks like a bridge but has an unusual concave where the strings are supposed to lie (Fig. 22). Also, there are no marks or impressions from the strings, which is rather curious considering the soft wood. This has led to the hypothesis that the bridge might never have been in use, but would have functioned as a model or a test. The overall character gives a homemade impression (Hagland 1987: 62f). Its measurements are 2,7-3,8 cm × 5,3 × 0,6-1,0 cm. The most interesting feature is, however, the runic inscription covering one of the sides. It says *ruhta* and can be related to *rotta*, the continental European word for the Germanic round-lyre. According to the stratigraphic analyses it can be dated to the early 13<sup>th</sup> century (Hagland 1987: 60f).

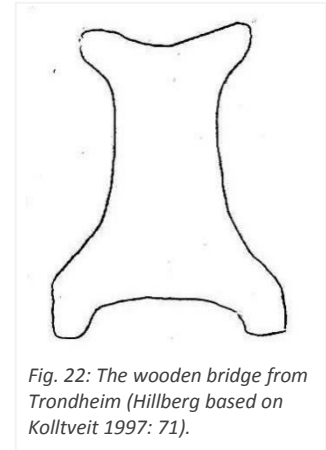


Fig. 22: The wooden bridge from Trondheim (Hillberg based on Kolltveit 1997: 71).

### 2.2.11 Oslo I (Norway)

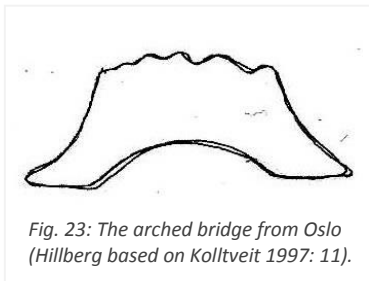


Fig. 23: The arched bridge from Oslo (Hillberg based on Kolltveit 1997: 11).

In 1988 this pine bridge was found during an excavation of a house in Gamlebyen in Oslo. As is the case with the other bridge from Oslo, this house had nothing beyond the ordinary, therefore indicating a rather ordinary citizen status-wise (Kolltveit 1997: 80). It has been dated to the early 13<sup>th</sup> century and will here be mentioned by the name of Oslo I. An interesting disparity when comparing with the other finds is the fact that the bridge is arched (Fig. 23). It is 7,4 cm long, 2,9 cm high and 1,4 cm thick, made to hold five strings (Kolltveit 1997: 70).

### 2.2.12 Oslo II (Norway)

This rather big bridge (Fig. 24) was excavated in Oslo in 1971, where it was found in an ordinary house where nothing indicated an elite stratum (Kolltveit 1997: 69, 80). It has been dated to the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century and was found to be in good condition. Like the older examples from Sweden, this bridge seems to have held the strings at the same height and was thus probably plucked. It measures 10,1 × 3,3 cm, was made out of pine and held seven strings (Kolltveit 1997: 69ff). It will here be referred to as Oslo II.

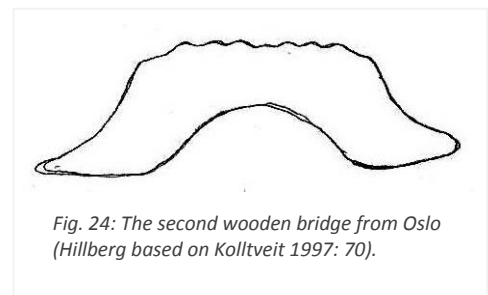


Fig. 24: The second wooden bridge from Oslo (Hillberg based on Kolltveit 1997: 70).

## 3 ANALYSIS

### 3.1 Short Historical Background

Before turning to the analysis of the material, some notes should be made about the historical background in order to get an understanding of the politics and the religious currents of the time. The beginning of the studied period falls into the Migration Period, which was characterised by an unstable climate. The Franks built a loose confederation east of the lower Rhine in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D and were involved in uncountable raids. In the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century, the family of the Merovingians rose to power and King Clovis I held military campaigns against the Alemanni, the Burgundians and the Visigoths, to name only a few, and took vast areas under his rule. In the late 5<sup>th</sup> century he was baptised and is today often referred to as the first Catholic king of a Germanic tribe. Not much later, the Christian church got foothold also in England.

As a Roman outpost, Britain was protected by Roman troops against attacks from tribes in the north, east, south and west. Auxiliary troops were called up from different areas, including tribes such as Saxons and Angles, but also Jutes, Frisians and Franks. The term *Anglo-Saxon* thus covers not only the two spelled-out tribes, but is really a simplification. Most probably, these former auxiliary troops came to cause an upheaval in the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century after Roman forces had left in 410, and managed to seize land to form local kingdoms, pushing away the Celtic tribes to the southwestern parts of England (Harrison 1999: 100ff). In the 6<sup>th</sup> century, king Aethelberht rose above other rulers and became the first Christian king of England. Under the rule of Aethelberht, pope Gregorius sent St Augustine in 597 to spread Christianity (Harrison 1999: 106f), an effect we will return to in the analysis of the graves.

About the continental area east of the Frankish kingdom, not much is known from this early time. The Alemanni and the Thuringii inhabited much of modern-day Germany, and further north lived the already mentioned Frisians and the Saxons. About their religious beliefs there is also a lack of sources; we thus do not know if they were mostly Christian or had pagan beliefs and when change struck (Harrison 1999: 76). For Scandinavia, conversion to Christianity came later. In Sweden for instance, a first attempt was made in the 9<sup>th</sup> century with the missionary Ansgar (Norr & Sanmark 2008: 383), but the first king to be baptised and to stick to the new religion was Olof Skötkonung (early 11<sup>th</sup> century) (Gräslund et al. 2008: 353). These early baptised kings mentioned here of course only indicate a starting point for Christianity and not a fixed date for the whole people to convert and all their customs to change.

### 3.2 The Lyre

After having got to know the finds, the next step will be to analyse them in reference to several aspects, ranging from strictly constructional to more contextual. In this first sub-chapter, the lyre itself will be the focal point, considering properties such as temporal and geographical spread, material, construction, size, string number, decorations, marks of use, possible carrying cases and location in the grave. Are there any similarities or differences? In the next sub-chapter, there will be a discussion on the question of playing technique: whether the lyre was plucked or bowed.

### 3.2.1 Similarities and Differences

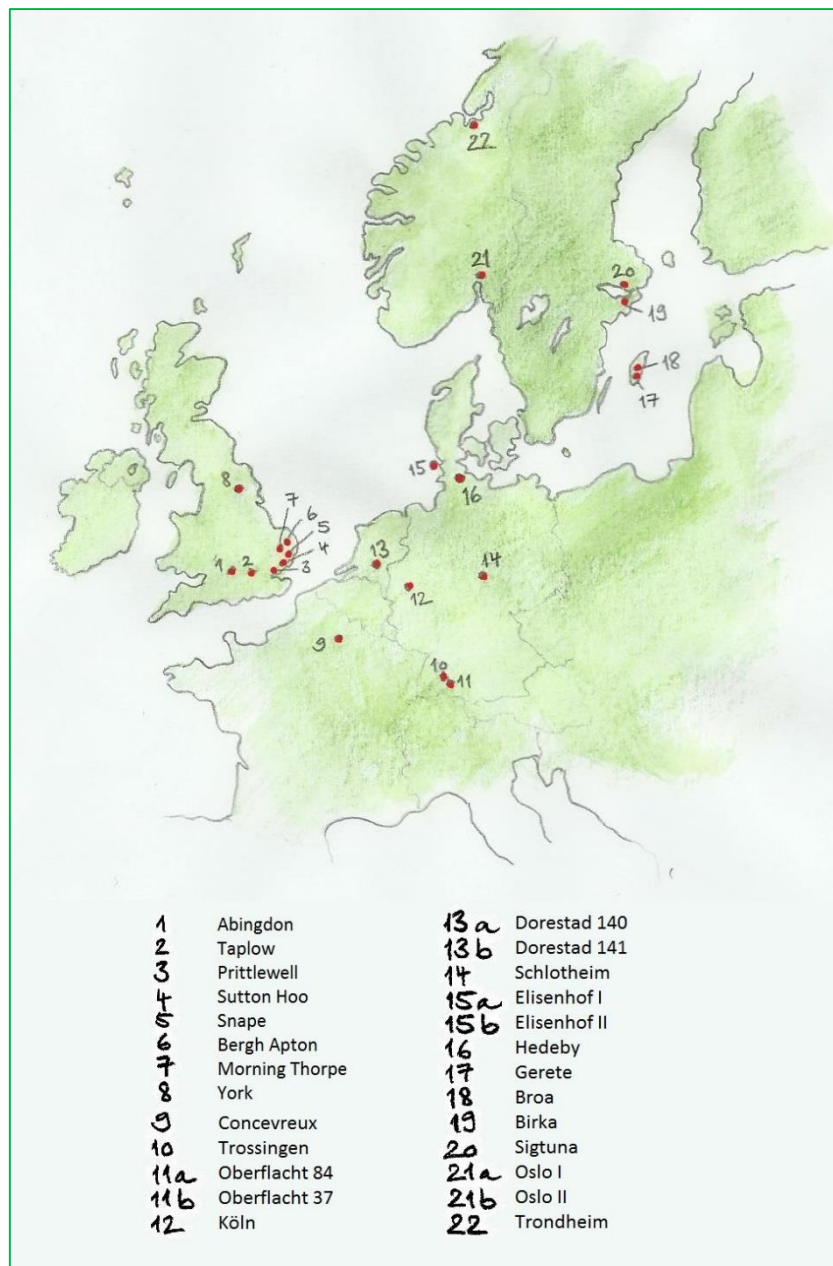


Fig. 25: A map of all the lyre-finds included in this study (Drawing by Hillberg).

*Temporal and geographical spread.* Analysing the graves, there is a marked peak of lyre-finds between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century, both on the Continent and at Anglo-Saxon sites, following the establishment of the just mentioned post-Roman kingdoms and princedoms. The Abingdon lyre constitutes an early example (5<sup>th</sup> century), whereas the Scandinavian lyre of Broa stands out as an unusually late find, dating to the 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> century. Another quite striking observation is the fact that the graves seem to provide fragments from the wooden structure, whereas non-funerary contexts yield bridges instead, the Broa find again an exception, together with the Trossingen bridge. This might be due to different conditions of preservation or simply to a more attentive approach when excavating graves, facilitating the detection of fragile wooden remains. Now, when looking at the lyre bridges, what immediately catches the eye is that the earliest as well as the latest specimens are made of wood or antler and that

the amber bridges cluster in the time period between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> century, right at the end of the Vendel period and at the start of the Viking Age.

It seems more than just a peculiar coincidence that the amber bridges all date to the same period. There are five amber finds in total, found at three different sites: a grave on Gotland (Broa), an amber factory in Schleswig (Elisenhof) and an urban context in Friesland (Dorestad). The three areas all show connections with early trading activity. Amber bridges as a trading good could therefore be equally possible as an independent development. The York bridge dates to the 10<sup>th</sup> century, and though it is not much later in time, it seems to mark the end of the amber trend. The use of amber seems to have been limited in time also at the other end. The Trossingen wooden bridge is the earliest specimen, dating to 580, and here it should be remembered that the conditions were very favourable for preservation. Schlothheim also constitutes an early bridge find (made of antler), dating to the late 6<sup>th</sup>/early 7<sup>th</sup> century. The reason for the gap in time until the next bridge-find, which is the amber bridge from Broa (8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> century), could have been caused by the choice of wood as construction material. When then the amber trend struck the northern Continent and Scandinavia, the bridges have survived in contexts where the wooden structure has long since deteriorated.

As for the seemingly strict division between finds dating to the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century from funerary contexts and finds from between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> century from non-funerary contexts, this might be related to changes in religion and identity, as shown in the historical background, and in the forming of towns. Although difficult to determine, considering the limited material available, it seems that Scandinavia would have adopted the lyre only in a later phase, in the Viking Age, whereas continental Europe and the Anglo-Saxon population are represented already from the beginning.

	Trossingen	Oberflacht	Oberflacht	Köln	Taplow	Sutton Hoo	Snape
Soundbox	Maple	Oak	Oak	Oak	Maple	Maple	Maple
Soundboard	Maple	Maple	Maple	Maple	-	Maple/Oak?	Oak

Table 2: An overview of the materials used in the lyre-construction.

*Material.* As for the material, the bodies of the lyres are all made out of wood. Maple seems to have been the most popular type by far, used both for soundboards and the body itself (Table 2). In some lucky cases, the different choice of wood for the separate components have been determined, pointing at a rather interesting fact: Three of the four German lyres which have been analysed in this way (Oberflacht 84, Oberflacht 37 and Köln) show a construction with oak for the soundbox and maple for the soundboard. For the Trossingen find, maple has been used for both soundbox and soundboard. The English lyre constructors on the other hand have chosen maple for the soundbox and maple or oak for the soundboard (Taplow, Sutton Hoo and Snape) – that is, the other way round. About the Sutton Hoo lyre should be said that the maple pieces have been sorted out as belonging to the lyre, whereas the oak fragments from the same bowl-complex have been attributed to the ceiling (R. Bruce-Mitford 1983: 618). It might very well be that some of the oak pieces did in fact belong to the lyre. The identifiable pieces are from the body itself, which would, however, still open up for the possibility of an oak soundboard.

Maybe the difference in material can be referred back to different constructions? At this point the yoke from Hedeby should be put forward, for it consists of neither maple nor oak, but of European yew! It is the only example from northern Europe, maybe acting as a reminder that in the end, the local tree population would be decisive in the choice of material. If we look at different instrument constructions of today, the choice of material seems not to be affected in a substantial way, but is rather uniform: Guitars are made from a hardwood back, usually maple, rosewood or mahogany and

covered with a top board carved from redwood or spruce. Similarly, violins are made from maple, with the top board cut from spruce (Fletcher et al. 1991: 207, 237). The choice of material seems thus to be connected with tradition rather than with construction.

Before looking at the construction of lyres, the bridges too should be examined in terms of material more closely. Thirteen bridges have been gathered, five of which are made of amber: Two from Dorestad, two from Elisenhof and one from Broa, thus fairly concentrated in space and time. Five others are made from wood; Trossingen has provided a bridge from willow wood, then there is York and Trondheim with a bridge each from unspecified wood and finally there are two bridges from Oslo made of pine. The wood, although taking into account the local flora, is thus represented in all different regions (Anglo-Saxon, continental and Scandinavian), as well as in time: from 580 with the Trossingen find to Oslo in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The most detailed bridges are cast in bronze, which allows for features both of decoration and design difficult to achieve in other materials. Both the Gerete bridge and the bridge from Concevreux have a second structure apart from the necessary horizontal plane with notches. The find from Concevreux has furthermore been decorated with animal heads. The remaining two finds – Schlotheim and Birka – are made of antler, the material seemingly the only common denominator (Fig. 26a-b). There is of course a gap in time between the two (from late 6<sup>th</sup>/early 7<sup>th</sup> century to about the 9<sup>th</sup> century), yet Schlotheim is a fairly peculiar case also in the overall assemblage of bridge finds. It is asymmetrical in design and very wide in relation to its height. It also lacks the features so typical in the other bridges: two clear bases with a crossbar for the strings. Furthermore, the notches can be found on a carved out piece rather than sticking out. The Trondheim bridge, too, is fairly unproportioned (Fig. 26c, see also *Size*) and has an odd absence of impressions or notches that would indicate its use.

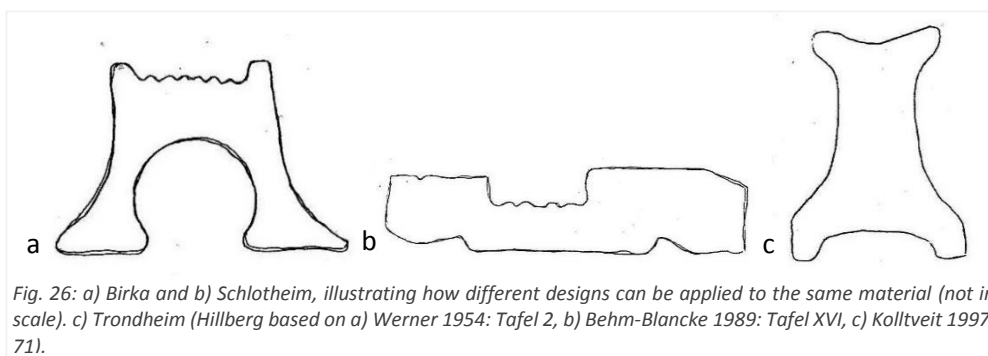
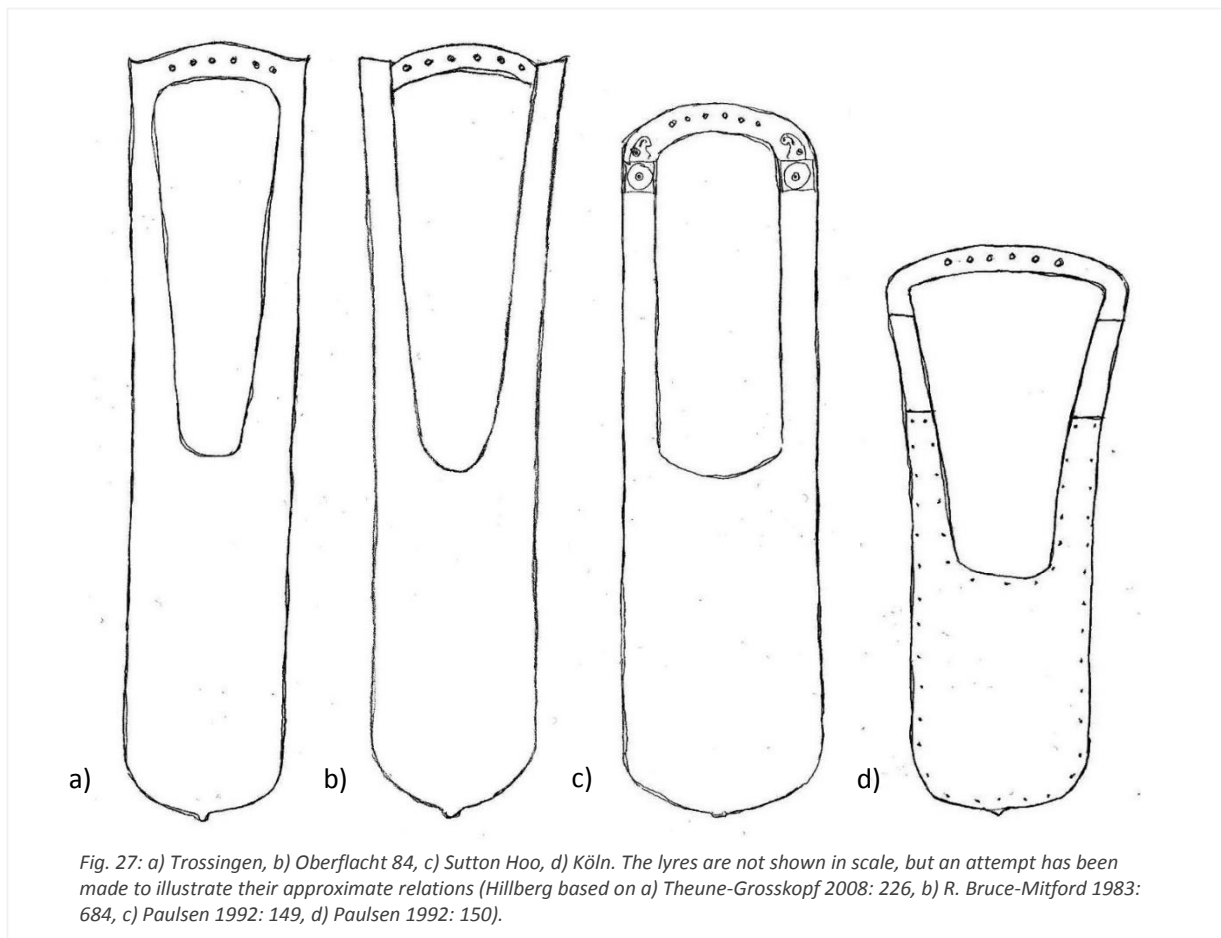


Fig. 26: a) Birka and b) Schlotheim, illustrating how different designs can be applied to the same material (not in scale). c) Trondheim (Hillberg based on a) Werner 1954: Tafel 2, b) Behm-Blancke 1989: Tafel XVI, c) Kolltveit 1997: 71).

*Construction.* So what does the lyre construction look like? To begin with, all finds fit into the lyre-type named round-lyre (M. Bruce-Mitford 1984b: 261). As became clear in the definition of a lyre (see 1.2.3 *Definition*), the common features are a hollowed out soundbox with arms (carved out to various extent), stretching up and joining the yoke, where the pegs were fastened. Covering the soundbox and the arms (depending on the extent of hollow space) is the soundboard. We have been introduced to the bridge as such, but what is its function in the lyre construction? A bridge holds the strings at a distance from the instrument so that they can be better played and the vibration properties are enhanced (Kolltveit 1997: 69). The craftsmanship had to be executed with precision and since errors or deviations can affect the acoustics in a bad way, specific details can be assumed to be well thought through. This becomes the more apparent when considering that the bridge was not fastened to the instrument more than by the sheer pressure of the strings (Kolltveit 1997: 69).

The Anglo-Saxon lyres present a straight design with parallel arms joined with the yoke by means of a mortise-and-tenon joint (Fig. 27c). This joint has then been reinforced with metal plaques at Bergh Apton, Taplow and Sutton Hoo, the first pair of which are simple, paralleling the simple grave

construction and the simple grave goods. At Taplow and Sutton Hoo the plaques have been decorated with bird heads at their upper ends (see 3.3.4 *Poetry and Entertainment*). Deviating from this seemingly Anglo-Saxon plan might be the lyre from Morning Thorpe, where the usually right-angled joint between arms and yoke is instead set at an angle of about 65°. This does not have to mean anything at all, but it could indeed make possible a construction that can otherwise only be seen in the German specimen from Köln, with arms curving out to form almost an 8 with the slightly curved soundboard (Fig. 27d) (Lawson 1987: 166-171). A feature seemingly pronounced Anglo-Saxon in its character is the copper alloy strip pinned on the rebated end of the soundboard (appearing at Sutton Hoo, Bergh Apton, Snape and Morning Thorpe). Other ways of fastening the soundboard to the soundbox are bone glue and copper alloy pins, represented both in the continental and Anglo-Saxon examples.



In continental lyre construction the most striking difference is the way in which the yoke is held in place. Instead of the mortise-and-tenon joint from Anglo-Saxon lyres which is connecting the arms and the yoke in a single curving movement, the yoke has been fastened *between* the arms (Fig. 27b). At Oberflacht 37 there are wooden pegs holding the parts together. The shape of the arms is thus also somewhat different from the Anglo-Saxon examples, bending outwards towards the top end. Exceptional and outstanding in craftsmanship are the specimens from Trossingen and Köln, where the whole lyre (body, arms and yoke) has been crafted from a single piece of wood (Fig. 27a+d), the one dating to 580, the other to the late 7<sup>th</sup> century/early 8<sup>th</sup> century (Paulsen 1992: 150, Theune-Grosskopf 2008: 218). These alternatives seem to be in agreement with manuscript illustrations, where the yoke can be seen varyingly fastened between the arms and made in the same piece as the rest (Paulsen 1992: 150). The Trossingen find is the only find so far with soundholes, placed on both sides of the

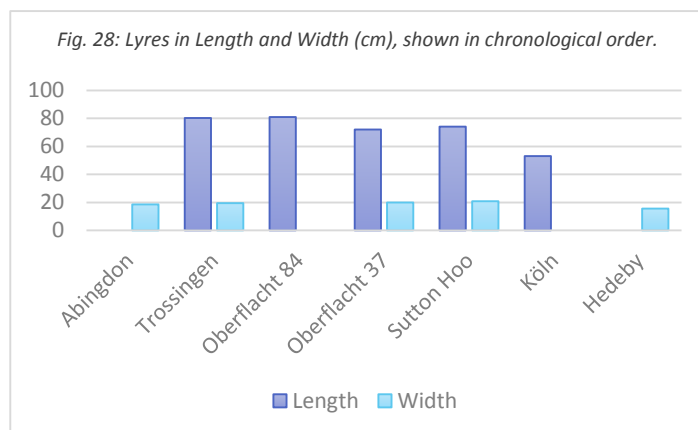
bridge counting four on each side (Theune-Grosskopf 2006: 102ff). At the lower end, the strings would have been fastened in a tailpiece, a component which has until now only been found at Köln (Paulsen 1992: 149, Päßgen 1992 Teil 2: 284).

There is a possibility of a third construction category, forming around the Köln lyre (Fig. 27d). Its shape is quite outstanding and could have been matched by the specimen from Morning Thorpe, as described above. The Morning Thorpe find is, however, very much fragmented and constitutes a rather uncertain example. If disregarding the upper construction, the Snape lyre comes closest to the Köln lyre (Lawson 2001: 218). Both are fairly lightweight thanks to the arms which are hollow almost all the way up. The find from Köln is dated to the late 7<sup>th</sup>/early 8<sup>th</sup> century and thus forms the latest find of wooden lyre remains. Maybe it is proof of the newest fashion? But considering the Snape burial and the find from Morning Thorpe, the construction can be seen to have its predecessors and consequently might instead just constitute a parallel type. Maybe this refined construction is not pointing towards a certain tradition of making lyres at all but can rather say something about its owner. Perhaps these were made for the professional player?

Trossingen	Bergh Apton	Oberflacht 37	Taplow	Snape
Leather remains	Plug for strap?	Perforations	Leather & loop?	8-shaped loops

Table 3: An overview of the prerequisites for wrist straps.

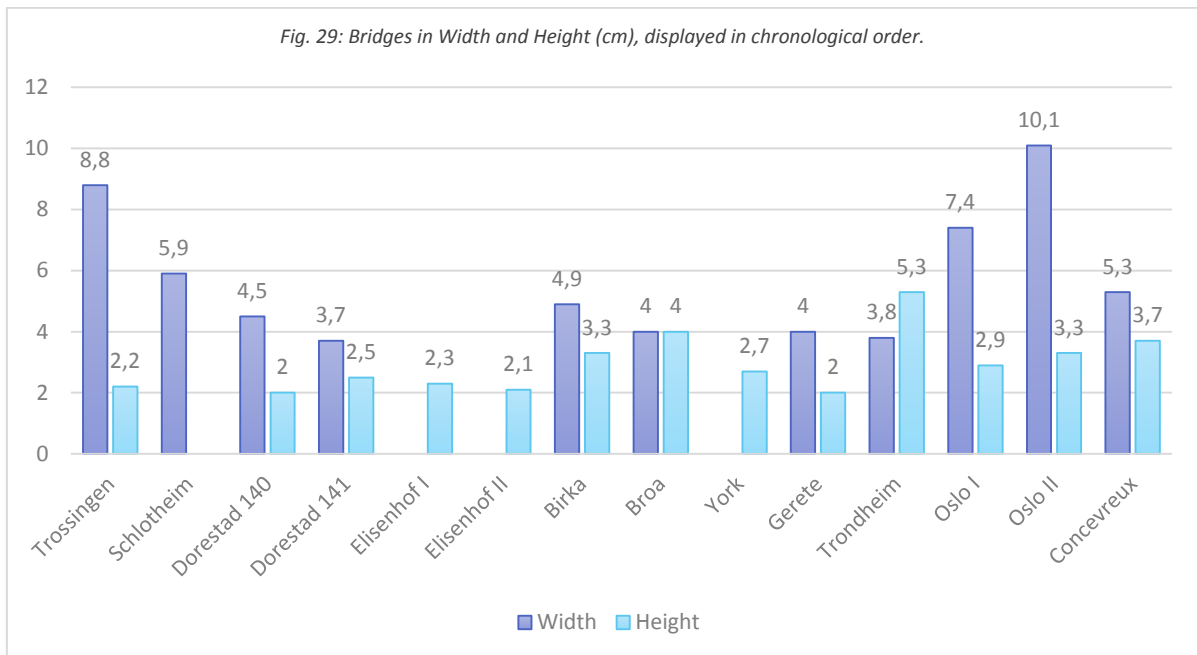
Finally, something should be said about the prerequisites for wrist straps: In five examples, three from an Anglo-Saxon cemetery dating to about the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century, and two from a 6<sup>th</sup> century continental context, there are indices as for the playing technique (Table 3). On the Trossingen lyre, there are leather remains extending around the lower end of the arms, possibly suggesting wrist straps. The specimens from Bergh Apton, Oberflacht 37 and Snape have yielded plugs on the outside, perforations and 8-shaped loops respectively, interpreted by Lawson as possible ways of attaching these wrist straps. The material of the straps is not only indicated by the Trossingen find, but also by the loops found at Snape; the 8-shaped loops of copper alloy both have textile adhesions and iron strap ends, indicating a wrist strap made of leather (Lawson 2001: 217f). The same is indicated by the leather remains and the bronze terminal for leather straps found at Taplow, which were possibly connected to the lyre. The leather straps agree with the bronze terminal in width and thickness and on the bronze loop can be seen also the prerequisites for attachment to the lyre (R. Bruce-Mitford 1983: 714).



Size. Looking at the lyre finds which provide enough material to build a reconstruction, the sizes seem rather varying (Fig. 28): Köln constitutes the smallest find with its 53 cm in length. In the middle field there is the Oberflacht 37 lyre measuring 72 cm and the Sutton Hoo lyre measuring 74 cm. Interesting



is that one is continental and the other Anglo-Saxon, especially considering the different constructions. The biggest lyres are 80,3 cm (Trossingen) and 81 cm long (Oberflacht 84). There is thus a spectrum from 53 to 81 cm, the former about a third smaller than the latter. Keeping in mind the small sample, it is still noteworthy that the biggest lyres are also the earliest (6<sup>th</sup> century), with a gradual decline in size (7<sup>th</sup> century) towards the latest and smallest find from Köln (late 7<sup>th</sup>/early 8<sup>th</sup> century). Despite the varying length, the width remains about the same, from the fragmented yoke of 18,3 and 18,5 cm at Abingdon, to 19,5 cm at Trossingen, 20 cm at Oberflacht 37, 20,9 cm at Sutton Hoo and the fragmented yoke of 15,5 cm at Hedeby.



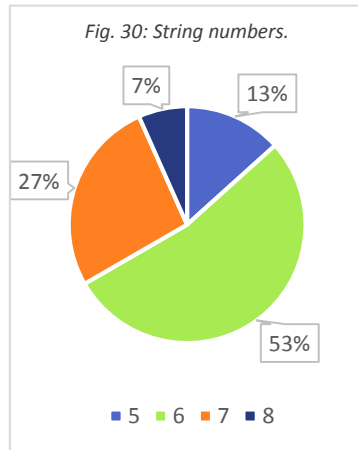
As for the bridges, the variation in size seems difficult to grasp. Most of them gather around 4-6 cm in width, with outliers stretching up to 10,1 cm (Fig. 29). Interestingly enough, the widest specimens are the very earliest (Trossingen; 8,8 cm) and very latest finds (Oslo I; 7,4 cm and Oslo II; 10,1 cm). About the table should be said that the widest point has been rendered. Trossingen for instance measures only 3,6 cm at the very top, i.e. less than half of the total length. The Oslo finds too have pronounced feet adding to the width. In other bridges there is of course also a tapering off towards the upper end, but of somewhat less extreme dimensions. The Trondheim bridge for instance measures 2,7 cm at the top and 3,8 at the bottom and the find from Broa moves within 3-4 cm. Not included in the table are the two finds from Eisenhof, which are both fragmented: Their width in their fragmentary state is 1,9 and 2,8 cm respectively.

	Trossingen	Dorestad 140	Dorestad 141	Birka	Broa	Gerete	Trondheim	Oslo I	Oslo II	Concevreux
Proportion (Width/Height)	1 : 4	1 : 2,25	1 : 1,48	1 : 1,48	1 : 1	1 : 2	1 : 0,72	1 : 2,55	1 : 3,06	1 : 1,43

*Table 4: The proportion between the width and the height of the bridges.*

Height measurements are more uniform, keeping within the range of 2-4 cm, with no notable difference in time or space. The Trondheim bridge stands out with its 5,3 cm, then being also fairly different in design from the others. This becomes clear also when looking at the proportion between width and height (Table 4), where Trondheim is the only example with a higher value on height than width. As for the other bridges, there is a group of three around Concevreux (1 : 1,43), Dorestad 141

(1 : 1,48) and Birka (1 : 1,48), which is rather fascinating considering their geographical spread, and even more so as they are all made from different material (bronze, amber and antler). Another cluster forms around Gerete (1 : 2), Dorestad (1 : 2,25) and Oslo I (1 : 2,55). From the bridges with known measurements, Broa is the most equilateral bridge (1 : 1), with Oslo II at the other end of the spectrum (1 : 3,06) together with Trossingen (1 : 4), again due to marked feet.



*String number.* A quite coherent picture emanates from Fig. 30, with six as the most frequent number of strings in all different areas and time periods. The Swedish bridges (Birka, Broa and Gerete) have been up for discussion concerning the outermost depression on each side of the row of notches, not knowing if they would have been used or not (Gustafsson 2007: 197). Here, the notches have been counted in the same way as on the other bridges, thus including those outer depressions. At Trossingen, there is an uncertainty stemming from the fact that the lyre is showing seven peg holes, but has yielded only six pegs. In the diagram it has been attributed to the group of 7-stringed lyres. Other finds in this category are Dorestad 141, Birka and Oslo II. The smallest groups consists of one 8-stringed lyre (Gerete) and two

5-stringed lyres (Schlothheim and Oslo I). This leaves a group of about 53% with six strings: Oberflacht 84, Sutton Hoo, Köln, Dorestad 140, Broa, York, Hedeby and Concevreux. Despite different constructional work and different sizes, the string number seems to have been more set to a certain homogeneous standard, with only slight variations. After all, they belong to the same type of stringed instrument.

*Decorations.* Besides being unusually well preserved, the Trossingen instrument is also spectacular in terms of decorations. Both front and back side, as well as arms, have been incised with decorations and filled with charcoal. The front bears a motif of two groups of six warriors facing each other on each side of a central lance, while the remaining space is decorated with a Germanic Animal Style II pattern (Theune-Grosskopf 2008: 219). Another decorative element is the yoke facing, found on several lyres. At Abingdon for instance two facings of bone were found, having originally been fastened on each side of the yoke. Similarly, there are several indications for horn facings on the Taplow specimen: The outer rims of the yoke are protruding over the area where the facings would have been countersunk, an area marked with horn remains. Further allusions are given by the rivets located between the peg holes in pairs. Bone or horn appears not to have been a given choice, but could equally be replaced by wood. The Köln lyre is said to have had wood facings (since destroyed in war, this cannot be confirmed), with the grain of the two pieces (probably different wood types) put at a right angle to each other. At Oberflacht 31, there seems to have been facings too, presumably of wood. While the aesthetic value should not be underestimated, the facings might have been filling a merely practical function of reinforcement (R. Bruce-Mitford 1983: 708f, 718).

*Marks of use.* Trossingen has yielded not only one of the very earliest specimens with decorations and other fine details, but it can also be said to show wear marks. One side is considerably more worn, coinciding with abrasion marks from the gripping and holding of the lyre (Theune-Grosskopf 2008: 219). Other indicators of use and wear are the remaining pegs. They have only survived at the site of Sutton Hoo and Trossingen, where they represent a variation of wood, ranging from willow and alder to ash and hazel (R. Bruce-Mitford 1975: 451, Pollington 2003: 207, Theune-Grosskopf 2008: 219). The pegs compose the very part of a lyre that (apart from the strings) needs to be replaced most often. When looking at the four ash and two hazel pegs of Trossingen and the five willow pegs and one of alder at Sutton Hoo, it seems likely that different workshops had different wood types and when in

need of replacement one would simply get some from the nearest workshop. Some of the metal fittings from Prittlewell have been suggested to be repairs (MoLAS 2004: 37), and Taplow also provides wear marks, in the form of worn down ridges on the bird plaques (R. Bruce-Mitford 1983: 706f).

When talking about wear and use, the Sigtuna find should of course be involved. Tuning keys seem not to have been enclosed in graves, the find from the urban cultural layers of Sigtuna thus offering an alternative glimpse into the use of stringed instruments. In the runic inscription on the find it says *harbu* (harp), but with the somewhat diffuse terminology of the time, it could very well have been used on a lyre. On the lyre from Sutton Hoo for instance, R. Bruce-Mitford remarks that the pegs would have been too narrow to turn by hand and probably would have been tuned with a tuning key instead (R. Bruce-Mitford 1983: 689f). In manuscript illustrations they seem to be a recurrent element, suggesting, according to Myrtle Bruce-Mitford, ill-fitting pegs or a frequent need for retuning to changing modes (M. Bruce-Mitford 1984b: 264). Finally, the Hedeby find illustrates the last stage in the life of a lyre: the disposal (Lawson 1984: 155f in Kristensen 1994: 74, 164). Found in a waste pit, this specimen was probably beyond repair.

*Carrying case.* There are several lyres with traces indicating carrying bags. The most famous is of course the one from Sutton Hoo, made of beaver skin. On almost every maple wood piece beaver hair was found and with the help of fragments with both skin and hair remains preserved, it could be deduced that the fur skin had been chosen to face inside (R. Bruce-Mitford 1983: 625). There are, however, other examples too; At Snape for instance, the lyre had textile fibres preserved on the rivets piercing the joints, above which were remains of wood (Lawson 2001: 217f). It is not unlikely, that this is what is left of a carrying case.

*Location in the grave.* Except for the construction of the lyres, this is the aspect with the most clear similarities and differences. In fact, they can be divided into two groups; one where the lyre has been deposited in the immediate vicinity of the deceased within the inner burial structure (Fig. 31, 32), and one where the lyre has been placed at a distance (Fig. 33). At Prittlewell, the buried individual was placed in a coffin with the lyre in the outer structure, away from the person. At Taplow and Sutton Hoo where the body was placed in a wide burial chamber, the lyre too was placed at a distance, lying at the foot and head end respectively. The continental burial chambers have painted another picture, where the lyre is instead embraced in the arms of the deceased, one of the selected items to accompany the body in the coffin. As for the lyre location within the coffin, looking both at continental, Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian finds, this varies from placements on the upper body or on an arm (Trossingen, Oberflacht 37, Snape, Morning Thorpe and Köln), near the feet (Abingdon, Bergh Apton), in between (Schlothheim) or near the head (Broa) (Fig. 31-33). Time does not seem to be a conclusive factor in this and neither does geography.

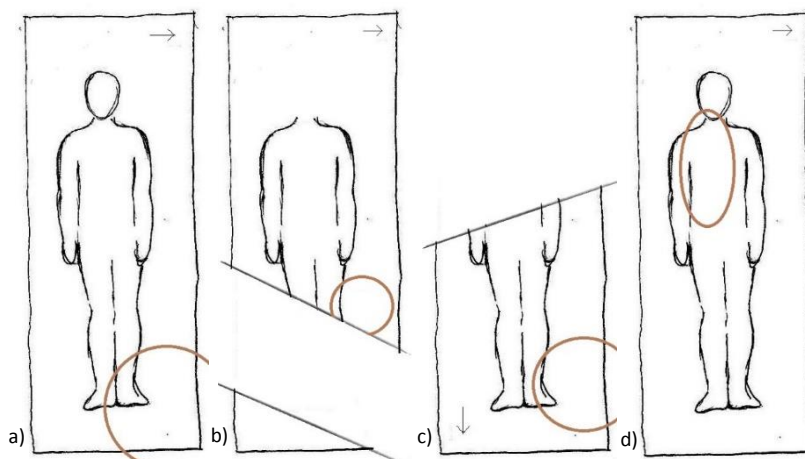


Fig. 31a-d (previous page): Location of the lyre-finds in the graves. a) Abingdon, b) Schlotheim, c) Bergh Apton and d) Morning Thorpe (Hillberg based on a) Lawson 1987: 169, b) Behm-Blancke 1989: 200, c) Green et al. 1978: 21, d) Green et al. 1987: 63).

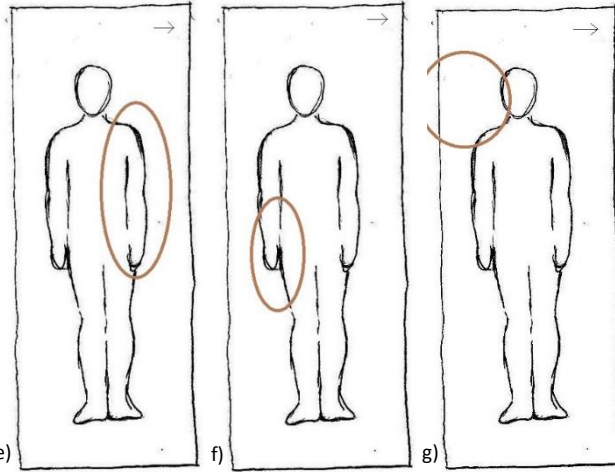


Fig. 31e-g (right): The location of the lyre-finds within graves. e) Snape, f) Köln and g) Broa (Hillberg based on e) Theune-Grosskopf 2008: 227, f) Pöfgen 1992, Teil 3: Tafel 130, g) Salin 1922: 190ff).

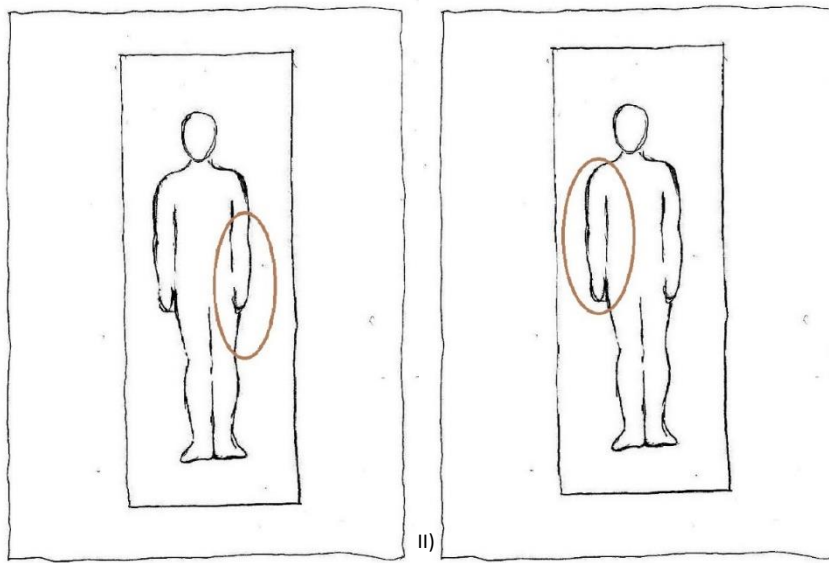


Fig. 32: Location of lyres in larger burial structures on the Continent. I) Trassingen, II) Oberflacht 37 (Hillberg based on I) Theune-Grosskopf 2008: 223, II) Theune-Grosskopf 2008: 227).

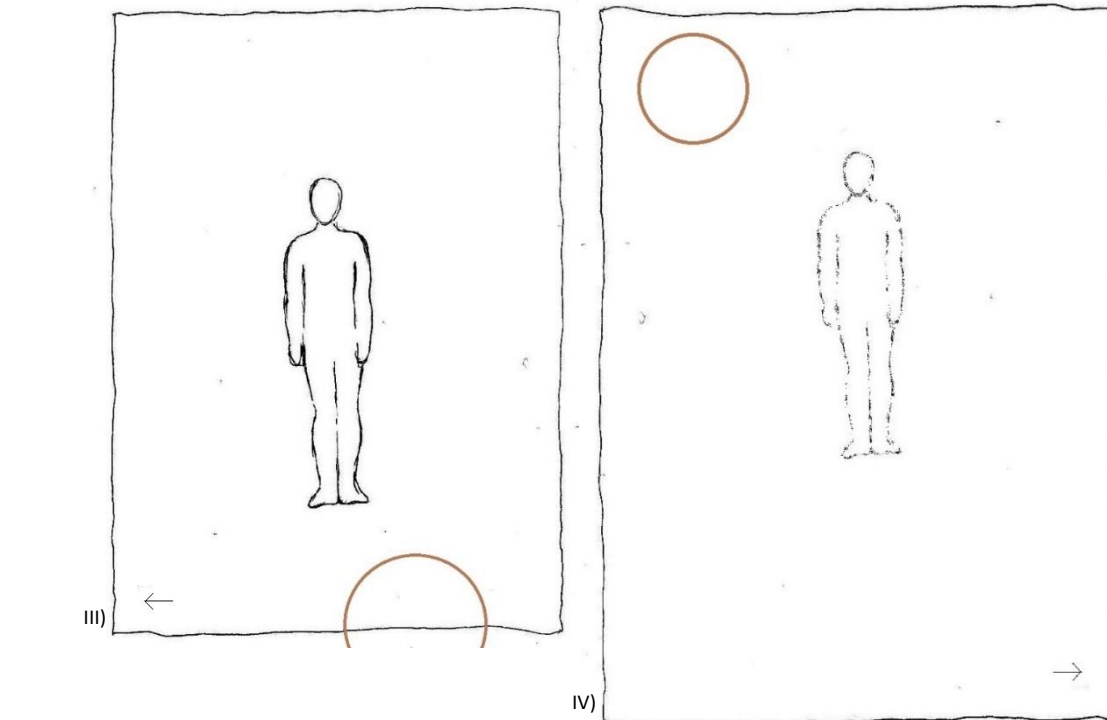
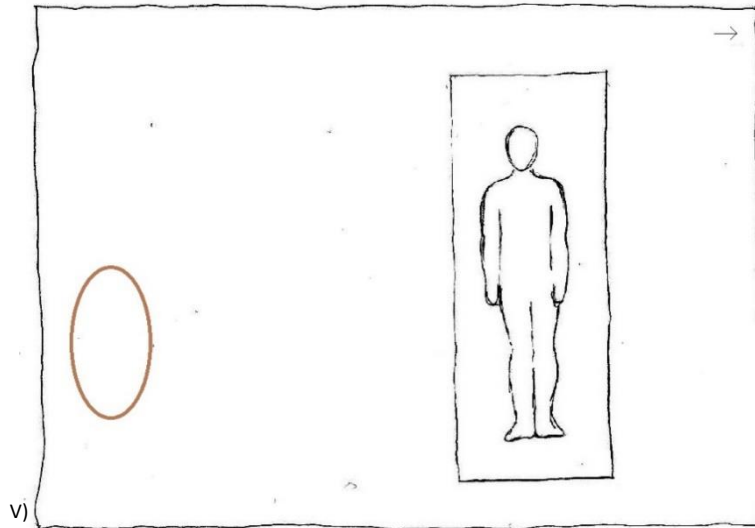


Fig. 33 (below): Location of lyre-finds in larger Anglo-Saxon burial-structures. III) Taplow, IV) Sutton Hoo, V) (next page) Prittlewell (Hillberg based on III) Lawson 1987: 169, IV) R. Bruce-Mitford 1975: 180-221, V) Barham 2008: 381).



### 3.2.2 Plucked or Bowed

Another debated topic in this field is the question of plucked or bowed. For an Anglo-Saxon context, Joan Rimmer and Myrtle Bruce-Mitford seem to agree on an introduction date for the bow in the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> century, reaching its full impact in the 11<sup>th</sup> century (Rimmer 1969: 13, M. Bruce-Mitford 1984b: 262). The same can be applied to northern Europe in general, Kolltveit claiming for instance that stringed instruments were bowed throughout Europe from the turn of the first millennium (Kolltveit 2000: 20). Where did the idea come from? The spread of the bowed lyre has been the topic of many discussions, and it would be too consuming to account for all of it here. For this thesis it will suffice to state that there are mainly three perspectives represented in this discussion: 1) the bow spread from Asia to northern Europe (Povetkin 1992: 222), 2) the bow spread from England to Norway and then further east (Andersson 1970: 27) and 3) the bow spread from the Rhine area to Scandinavia (Emsheimer 1980 in Kolltveit 2000: 23).

Does the archaeological material analysed here correspond with the time frame set above? Kolltveit underlines the importance of an arched bridge for the art of bowing, since a bow would unavoidably touch all strings at once if placed at the same height level (Kolltveit 1997: 71). Following this criteria, there is only one sole contestant from the compiled sample: The pine bridge from early 13<sup>th</sup> century Oslo !! To stretch this relation so far as to state that bowed instruments could have existed only from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards would be to take it too far, especially since the finds are as rare as they are. However, it is rather interesting that *none* of the previous bridges have been made according to the arched design. It is a rather strong hint at least. Now this was the result of taking into consideration the arch, but Gustafsson puts to the fore another aspect: According to him, the Scandinavian bridges could very well have belonged to bowed instruments, relating in this observation to the distinct feet (Gustafsson 2007: 197). In the following, Kolltveit's argument will, however, be leading the discussion.

It seems thus to be highly possible that the lyre of the period subjected to study here was plucked, but the question remains of how the lyre was handled more specifically. Myrtle Bruce-Mitford has turned to manuscript illustrations for answers and did conclude the following:

*The plucked rotte was usually held on the knee either upright or inclined slightly away from the player. One hand gripped the frame – very often at the top with the index and middle fingers clamped round the yoke – while the other plucked the strings in the open area. Left- and right-handed players are shown with equal frequency (M. Bruce-Mitford 1984b: 264).*

This is also roughly in accordance with the wear marks on the Trossingen find, where there are abrasion marks on the lyre arm hold with the left hand, while plucking with the right. It is here somewhat vague what she means by “at the top”, but it must be at the upper end of the arm as in contrast to the lower end of the arm, since pegs would make it uncomfortable to hold it at the very top. The wrist-straps indicated both by the archaeological material (see *Construction*) and illustrations would have allowed for the left hand to be more active in the playing part: Instead of being responsible for holding the instrument, the lyre could be supported by the wrist around which the strap was tied, leaving the fingers free to play (Lawson 1978: 92ff, Pollington 2003: 210, Theune-Grosskopf 2006: 112). M. Bruce-Mitford puts forward another observation from the manuscript illustrations:

*There is a possibility that the instrument was held with the front facing the player; manuscript evidence is conflicting on this as on almost every other point, but several illustrations clearly show it in this position, and the minstrel in the Cologne grave was buried with the bridge side of his rotte clasped against his chest (M. Bruce-Mitford 1984b: 264).*

This is of special interest, since not only the lyre from Köln was found face down, but also the lyres from Trossingen (Theune-Grosskopf 2006: 112) and Prittlewell (Blair 2005: 26)! The lack of mention in the other grave contexts could be due either to 1) a difficulty in establishing front and back side when too fragmented, 2) an encounter with a lyre facing upwards and taking it as the norm not worth mentioning or 3) the archaeologist specialised on lyres has not been on site, but is given the material afterwards. Either way, it seems plausible that what we would term the front side, was not necessarily the front when in use. When stringed instruments are decorated today, this is generally done on the visible front, the both-sided decorations of Trossingen could thus also be a hint. Pegs seem also varyingly to have been asserted from the bridge- and non-bridge-side respectively. At Trossingen for instance, the pegs have shown to be inserted from the non-bridge-side (Theune-Grosskopf 2008: 119), whereas the Sutton Hoo pegs indicate that they were fastened from what we would term the front (R. Bruce-Mitford 1983: 692). If this is due to different use of material and practical reasons or to an ambiguity about front and back side remains, however, an open question.

Now, what about the plucking hand? According to M. Bruce-Mitford, both right and left handed players are depicted in manuscript illustrations, the one as common as the other. What does the material at hand suggest? If looking at the side on which the lyre has been placed, the right arm is represented by Köln and Oberflacht 37 (and possibly Morning Thorpe), whereas the left arm is represented by Snape and Trossingen. At Abingdon, Bergh Apton and Schlotheim, the lyre has been placed on the left side of the feet, and at Broa the bridge was found on the right hand side of the head. The choice could indeed be due to the buried being a right or left handed lyre-player, especially when put in the arm.

How does this accord with the placement of the swords, can it really tell something about whether the buried was left or right handed? Where it has been accounted for and where the sword was placed within the primary structure, the sword has been placed on the left side at Abingdon and in the right arm at Trossingen and Oberflacht 37. At Broa the sword was found on the right side of the head, in the same area as the bridge, and at Schlotheim the scramasax was lying beneath the left arm. It seems to be rather varying and because of the limited information it is difficult to draw any conclusions. What can be said, is that lyre and sword/scramasax are most often placed on the same side of the body (Köln, Oberflacht 37, Abingdon, Schlotheim and Broa), with the clear exception of Trossingen, where the sword was placed in the right arm and the lyre in the left. In order to be able to say anything about whether the placement of swords (or lyres) could indicate a right or left handed person, more graves would have to be examined as for the sword.

### 3.3 Identity

The finds are now to be put into their respective contexts. How do their grave constructions correspond and what does a find combination analysis reveal? These are questions for the grave contexts. In a smaller sub-chapter, the cultural layers will then be compared, after which there will be an analysis on sex and age, followed by the concluding discussion on poetry and entertainment, the concluding discussion also on the identity of lyre-players.

#### 3.3.1 Grave Context

*Grave.* Somewhat less than half of the graves have been interred within one small structure only, in contrast to the burial chambers described below. They are spread over all areas and span the whole period studied here, although they seem to cluster around the early 7<sup>th</sup> century. The lyre finds from simple graves come from Abingdon, Schlotheim, Bergh Apton, Snape and Morning Thorpe. However, soil properties and preserving conditions vary greatly and could of course have prevented the outer structure from surviving.

*Wooden burial chamber.* The connection between lyre finds and burial chambers seems rather established, if all but universally prevailing. Anglo-Saxon and continental burials are about equally well represented with Trossingen, Oberflacht 84, Oberflacht 37, Taplow, Sutton Hoo and Prittlewell. The size of the chamber varies from the rather compressed chamber at Trossingen to the ship burial at Sutton Hoo. The Sutton Hoo burial is in fact the only ship burial represented. In general the Anglo-Saxon grave chambers seem to be somewhat larger with more space around the deceased/coffin. Broa should also be mentioned in this category. More detailed circumstances about any burial chamber are missing, since never professionally excavated. The horse on which the body was lying would, however, speak for a large primary structure.

*Stone cist.* The Köln lyre has so far been the only specimen found within a stone cist. It is also the only example from within a church, making this find rather outstanding. The stones used are trachyte and sandstone.

The combination of grave goods may also give a hint as to who was buried in the grave:

	Grave type	Sword	Shield	Spear/Lance	Sax	Bow/Arrow	Other	Knife
Abingdon	Grave	Yes	-	-	-	-	-	Yes
Trossingen	Burial chamber	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	-	-
Schlotheim	Grave	-	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-	Yes
Oberflacht 84	Burial chamber	Yes	-	Yes	-	Yes	-	-
Oberflacht 37	Burial chamber	Yes	-	-	Yes	-	-	Yes
Taplow	Burial chamber	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-	-
Sutton Hoo	Burial chamber	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-	-
Bergh Apton	Grave	-	-	-	-	-	-	Yes
Prittlewell	Burial chamber	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-	Yes	-
Snape	Grave	-	Yes	Yes	-	-	-	Yes
Morning T.	Grave	-	Yes	Yes	-	-	-	Yes
Köln	Stone cist	-	-	-	-	-	-	Yes
Broa	Burial chamber	Yes	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 5: Types of weapons found in the graves.

*Weapons & Knives.* The most common denominator is the occurrence of weapons (Table 5). There is no given combination, but the most usual weapons are the sword (Abingdon, Trossingen, Oberflacht 84, Oberflacht 37, Taplow, Sutton Hoo, Prittlewell and Broa), the shield (Trossingen, Schlotheim, Taplow/Sutton Hoo, Prittlewell, Snape and Morning Thorpe) or spear/lance heads (Trossingen, Schlotheim, Oberflacht 84, Taplow, Sutton Hoo, Prittlewell and Morning Thorpe). Some rarer additions are the scramasax, the bow or arrow heads. Looking at Bergh Apton and Köln, these are the only graves lacking every sort of weapon but for a knife. The Bergh Apton grave is all in all quite simple, both in grave construction and in terms of grave goods, and also, the disturbed state of the grave should not be forgotten. The other weapon-less grave is Köln, which is also rather odd in its grave construction as mentioned above, placed as only example within a church. At the same time, the knife is absent in almost all examples where there are three weapons or more, almost seeming redundant. The Broa grave is somewhat deviant here too, containing only a sword. This could, however, be a result of the circumstances of excavation, which were rather poor. The weapons do not seem to be restricted to a certain grave construction but occur in most of them (with the exception of Bergh Apton and Köln). As for their location in the grave, it seems to parallel the location of the lyre: When the lyre is placed close to the individual, so is the weapon. The same goes for lyres placed in a second burial structure: then the weapons too are found in this second structure.

	Weapon	Knife	Horse/ Equipment	Furniture	Tableware	Light/ Warmth	Hygiene	Gaming	Vegetal cover	Christian features
Abingdon	Yes	Yes	-	-	-	Yes	-	-	-	-
Trossingen	Yes	-	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-	-
Schlotheim	Yes*	Yes	-	-	Yes	-	Yes	-	-	*
Oberflacht 84	Yes	-	-	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-	-	-
Oberflacht 37	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-	-	-
Taplow	Yes	-	-	-	Yes	-	-	Yes	-	-
Sutton Hoo	Yes	-	-	-	Yes*	Yes	-	Yes	-	*
Bergh Apton	-	Yes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Prittlewell	Yes	-	-	Yes	Yes*	Yes	-	Yes	-	*, Yes
Snape	Yes	Yes	-	-	Yes	Yes	-	-	Yes	-
Morning T.	Yes	Yes	-	-	Yes	-	-	-	-	Yes
Köln	-	Yes	-	-	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	-
Broa	Yes	-	Yes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 6: The grave goods found within the lyre-graves.

*Equestrian equipment.* The frequent occurrence of weapons leads on to the question of a possible relation between lyres and warrior burials. Are there other indicators that could add to the understanding? Remains of a horse have only been found at Broa. Horse equipment does, however, appear also in the continental graves of Trossingen and Oberflacht 37. Despite the meagre material, it is still interesting to note the total lack of any horse-related items in Anglo-Saxon lyre-graves. A first hint at possible different identities between continental and Anglo-Saxon people buried with lyres arises. All the three sets of equestrian paraphernalia are fairly well-decorated and nicely done.

*Furniture.* Only burial chambers are of course big enough to hold furniture, so that is where we find the bigger pieces of grave goods. Trossingen, Oberflacht 84, Oberflacht 37 and Prittlewell represent this find category with the most common furniture item being the chair (Trossingen, Oberflacht 84,



Prittlewell). The remaining items consist of different kinds of containers, with Trossingen also providing a small table. The coffin/bed can also be seen as a piece of furniture, especially in the German examples, where the bed has been rendered with many considerate details. In two cases (Trossingen, Oberflacht 37) the upper structure forms a gable decorated at the ridge with a serpent. However, it should be remembered that wood has been much better preserved in the German burial chambers, a similar existence of bed- or even house-like structures cannot be ruled out for the Anglo-Saxon burials. Here coffin nails or a darker stain are often the only thing left to bear witness of a former coffin. Sutton Hoo with its general wealth of grave goods might surprise with its total lack of furniture, focus instead seemingly put on exquisite tableware and personal and representative paraphernalia. This could of course be a misleading interpretation, considering the conditions of preservation which have shown to be unfavourable for wood in these Anglo-Saxon contexts.

*Tableware.* Weapons were earlier mentioned as the most common denominator. That is true, but they share this first place with tableware, here used as a term for drinking vessels, plates, bowls and cauldrons. Only the simple graves of Abingdon and Bergh Apton and the horse-associated burial of Broa are lacking this very fundamental part of civilised everyday life. Tableware is of course not simply tableware, but there are several degrees of exclusivity. The most eye-catching samples come from Sutton Hoo, Taplow and Prittlewell, exemplified here with cauldrons, silver vessels, glass vessels and silver-mounted drinking horns. The continental graves seem rather simple in this respect. It almost seems as if the continental graves are focused on functionality and splendour in wooden craftsmanship whereas the Anglo-Saxon exceed its parallels in exclusivity of chosen material and value. This could, however, also be the simple effect of different conditions of preservations. As has already been pointed out, metal has been much better preserved in Anglo-Saxon contexts, the well-preserved lyre from Trossingen for instance lacking any metal fittings at all.

*Light/Warmth.* When reading through the finding contexts of the different graves, it is striking how many are equipped with some source of light and warmth. Fire steel and flint does figure in both continental (Schlotheim, Oberflacht 37 and Köln) and Anglo-Saxon (Abingdon, Snape) graves. At Trossingen, Oberflacht 84 and Oberflacht 37 can be observed a candleholder each, whereas the Anglo-Saxon graves have provided iron lamps (Sutton Hoo and Prittlewell) as well as a possible iron candelabrum (Prittlewell). At Prittlewell it has been suggested that the iron lamp had been placed on the coffin (Blair 2005: 27). The thought of light and warmth in this dark and unfamiliar place is all but far-fetched and bears witness of a rather considerate act.

*Hygiene.* Three of the buried individuals were given what I have termed hygiene tools. At Trossingen and Köln there was a comb and at Schlotheim a hygiene kit was found, consisting of razor and tweezers. None of the Anglo-Saxon individuals have been equipped with tools for the care of the outer appearance.

*Entertainment.* Except for the lyres, which would of course be attributed to this category, gaming pieces have been found at three sites: Taplow, Sutton Hoo and Prittlewell. At Prittlewell two dices were found in addition to the 57 gaming pieces. Gaming is of course a leisure activity, but at the same time it is often related to strategic thinking, a valued quality of leaders and warriors. The seemingly strong Anglo-Saxon connection as regards gaming pieces in lyre-graves might suggest a different identity?

*Vegetal cover.* Preservation conditions have ensured the remains of a vegetal cover in two graves; at Snape and at Köln. This was probably not confined to these specific graves, but is rather a lucky glimpse into past burial customs. At Köln the flower stalks of the common box, the dog rose and maybe lavender have survived, sprinkled over the grave. Perhaps as an effect of better preserving conditions,

they seem to concentrate on top of the lyre. At Snape, too, there appears to have been organic components distributed within the grave. Of somewhat different character are the 172 hazelnuts that had been put in the inner coffin with the deceased at Oberflacht 37.

*Christian features.* Starting at the least overwhelmingly Christian features, the person buried at Morning Thorpe was adorned with two cruciform brooches. The individual at Schlotheim was given a spear head with Christian symbols on it, including both a cross, a fish and the trinity symbol. In this particular case, Behm-Blancke (1989: 208, 211f) argues for a saint. Thüringen had just been occupied by the Franks who sought to make the region more adapted to the Frankish ways of living and used the church as one means for this end. Behm-Blancke refers to the Council of Nicaea, where it was stipulated that altars should be provided with relics. He therefore goes on to suggest that this might well have been the fate of the skull from grave 1/85. Cut marks on the upper cervical vertebrae do indeed suggest that the skull was removed after the burial (Behm-Blancke 1989: 208ff), but the assumption about its removal should be made carefully, with a stress on it being a hypothesis only.

At Sutton Hoo, silver bowls decorated with crosses were found, as well as two silver spoons engraved with *Saulos* and *Paulos* preceded by a cross. These silver spoons have been suggested to be christening spoons. A silver spoon of the same type was found at Prittlewell in a box. Silver bowls with decorations of Christian motives were also found at Prittlewell, as were two crosses of gold-foil, seemingly placed carefully one on each eye. This is unusual in England, but has appeared in several continental burials (Blair 2005: 26, MoLAS 2004: 28, 31).

It is interesting that the two graves that are richest in grave goods, a pronounced pagan tradition, are also the graves with the most obvious Christian elements. With Christian traditions, however, it is sometimes the absence of certain features rather than the presence of others that tell the most (Trotzig 1999: 474). Although the preservation conditions at Bergh Apton have been everything but ideal, the rather meagre corpus of grave goods could also be a Christian attribute or a social indicator. The Köln lyre which was found in a stone grave within the St Severin church gives an apparent Christian association, yet grave goods are still existent. It can be noted that Köln and Bergh Apton are the only graves without any weapons, possibly a Christian influence or solely a reflection of social standing.

	Abingdon	Trossingen	Oberflacht 84	Schlotheim	Bergh Apton	Prittlewell	Oberflacht 37	Morning Thorpe	Taplow	Sutton Hoo	Snape	Köln	Broa
Orientation	W-E	?	?	W-E	N-S?	W-E	?	W-E(?)	E-W	(W-E?)	W-E	W-E	W-E

Table 7: The orientation of the buried individual, with the direction of the head spelled out first.

Another Christian feature which should be mentioned is of course the orientation within the grave (Table 7). Being nothing to take too strictly, it can still be noticed that almost all lyre-graves with information about this aspect are oriented W-E, the head end lying in the west (Abingdon, Schlotheim, Prittlewell, Snape, Köln and Broa). Taplow stands out as a quite peculiar example, with the individual placed in exactly the opposite direction. Morning Thorpe has not much skeletal remains left, the placing of the grave goods, in combination with the few teeth remains left, would though suggest that the individual was placed with his head in the western end. The orientation at Bergh Apton is somewhat uncertain since disturbed. However, all in all, the orientation seems to be rather uniform throughout.

*Clothing.* As for other grave goods, textile remains seem to be surprisingly well represented. At Trossingen, the deceased was dressed in linen trousers, leather straps, a tunic and a woollen cloak. At Köln were found the remains of a silken outer garment and a coat with gold brocade as well as stockings, leather straps, gloves and shoe remains. The Taplow grave contained remains of textiles and gold braids. Gold brocade and shoe buckles were also detected at Prittlewell. Other textile remains are

not as clear, but can be found at Sutton Hoo, at Bergh Apton and at Snape. Moreover, Abingdon, Schlotheim, Oberflacht 37, Sutton Hoo, Bergh Apton, Prittlewell, Snape, Morning Thorpe and Broa have provided buckles in various materials: Sutton Hoo, Taplow and Prittlewell have yielded lavishly decorated gold belt buckles, whereas the others are made of bronze or iron. Shoulder clasps in gold were also found at Sutton Hoo. At Köln, the buried individual was given a leather bag and at Snape there was a leather pouch which probably contained the fire striker and the steel.

*Other.* Other grave goods are in much consisting of metal fragments. Standing out from this category are the scissors from Köln, the two Merovingian coins and the possible royal standard from Prittlewell, as well as the possible royal sceptre, the helmet and the purse still containing gold coins found at Sutton Hoo.

### 3.3.2 Cultural Layers

About the other contexts there is unfortunately not as much information. All come from cultural layers, where most of them are urban: Dorestad 140, Dorestad 141, Birka, York, Hedeby, Sigtuna, Trondheim, Oslo I and Oslo II. Deviating are only the two finds from Elisenhof which are described as finds from a past amber factory, and the Gerete find, found as a stray find not far from two silver hoards and stone structures. The Elisenhof finds are both fragmented and could thus be attempts or tests which were never really used. Perhaps they broke already in the process and were thrown away as waste material. At Gerete many of the other finds from the site are workshop-related. Gustafsson (2007: 198) mentions also the wanting finishing touch, which could indicate a test or simply an unfinished specimen. Arguing against this would be the very late stage of the bridge in the building process of a lyre. To produce an exemplar that fits the instrument, the body of the instrument has to be known, both its size and inclination.

It is interesting that the late wooden bridges of York, Oslo I and Oslo II were found in close connection to buildings, in the Oslo cases specified to buildings belonging to ordinary citizens. At Sigtuna, too, there is a connection to buildings, as it was found in a layer containing waste material from buildings. The Hedeby find was detected in a waste pit, and could thus, not unlike the finds from Elisenhof and Gerete, have been thrown away since no longer useful. Here it would then probably not have been in the process of production, but after consumption.

### 3.3.3 Sex and Age

Unfortunately, the skeletal remains are rare and often very fragmented. In some of the Anglo-Saxon examples, the individual has been sexed entirely on the basis of grave goods, which could be a delicate affair and a dangerous path to take. Where the basis is more substantial it has, however, shown that there is a strong connection between male individuals and lyre-graves. Only Morning Thorpe has provided female remains, but these seem to be a disturbing element in a grave otherwise attributed to a male skeleton. Another grave standing out is the Sutton Hoo burial, which seems to contain no skeletal remains at all, but was in fact a cenotaph.

Site	Age
Abingdon	adolescent
Trossingen	30-40
Schlotheim	50
Oberflacht 37	young

Table 8: Age determination.

How old was the harp-player? Age is equally difficult to read from the remains and remains do not necessarily mean that a closer osteological analysis has been made. From four graves there are, however, age determinations (Table 8); There is Abingdon with an adolescent, Oberflacht 37 with a young man, Trossingen with a man of 30-40 years and Schlotheim

with a 50-year old. The range is thus fairly spread. It is interesting that the lyre from Trossingen, with all the wear marks described above, belongs to a man of maturity. The lyre possibly accompanied him through the years, now bearing evidence of being well-used. It is easiest to learn an instrument at an early age, an accomplishment which can then be further refined as the years go by. The graves could therefore stand for a representation of different stages in this process.

The *Leges Wallicae* (laws of Wales), said to have been codified in the 10th century but surviving only from the 13th century, mention three necessities for a man: A cushion on his chair, a good wife and – last but not least – a well-tuned harp (Sachs 1940: 263). Similarly, in 534 the captured King of the Vandals (Gelimer) asks for three things: bread, a sponge and a lyre (Prokop II 6). In Ragnar Lodbroks saga, Aslaug, three-year old daughter of Sigurd the dragonslayer, manages to escape to Norway with the help of old king Heimer. The interesting detail is that she was hidden within a harp (Grimberg 1926: 151). By the time this saga was written down, the harp must consequently have been introduced, since there is no space within a lyre to conceal a child. But this is not the point here, but what follows; when sad, Aslaug was calmed by old king Heimer's harp-playing (Thorpe 1851: 109f). Harp-playing thus seems to have been connected with showing off, the noble sphere, comfort, but also with the fatherly aspects of putting a child to sleep.

The dominance of male harp-players stands in contrast to the female connotations of today. In *Frauenleben im 19. Jahrhundert*, we can read about Vicki Baum (1888-1960), the only woman working as a harpist in an orchestra otherwise consisting of men (Weber-Kellermann 1983: 208). Similarly, in 1850, harpist Pauline Åhman was the first female instrumentalist to be employed by the Swedish *Kungliga Hovkapellet* (Ahnfelt 1887: 667). In 1966, Erik Dybeck, active in *Kungliga Hovkapellet*, states that the first female member of the orchestra was accepted in 1953, except of course for the harpists, which were female as of tradition (Kungliga Hovkapellet 2009). Noteworthy is also that the first female member of the Wiener Philharmoniker was a harpist. Good male harpists seemingly wanting, the traditionally male orchestra saw itself constrained to employ her in 1970 (Der Standard 2006, Wiener Philharmoniker 2015). It seems as if the Köln burial, found in the excavations between 1938 and 1943 could in fact have been misinterpreted on basis of the harp, with weapons obviously lacking. At the time of this first sex-determination, the harpist was typically female, an idea possibly projected onto the found person, until much later this misunderstanding was corrected (Päffgen 1992 Teil 1: 481).

### 3.3.3 Poetry and Entertainment

To further understand this relation between men and lyre-playing, an introduction should be given to the role of poetry within the Odin-connected warrior cult of the Vikings. In *Skáldskaparmál* by Snorri Sturluson (1179-1241), we can read about the creation of a mead that turns its drinker into a skáld, a poet. The story then goes on to tell how this mead of poetry came into Odin's possession and how he had to transform into a snake and then into an eagle in order to escape. After succeeding, he gave the potion to the gods and could also hand off this gift to humans (Snorri Sturluson/Holtsmark et al. 1950: 83).

This strong connection between Odin and poets has led to interesting interpretations of the Sutton Hoo instrument. Except for the wooden pieces of the instrument, two bird ornaments were also found. They are square (3,2 × 3,2 cm) with the head of a bird attached on one side, decorated with gold foils to complete the look (R. Bruce-Mitford 1983: 630ff). In this context, Wickham-Crowley highlights the two kinds of birds associated with Odin. As we recall from the introduction, Odin himself turned into an eagle when escaping from the very theft of the mead of poetry. Ravens are also closely connected with Odin, both as harbinger of death, as good omens in battle and as representations of Odin's

knowledge in the shape of Huginn and Muninn. And it is especially this last relation that is of interest in this context. Huginn and Muninn, meaning Thought and Memory, may represent two crucial aspects also of poetry (Wickham-Crowley 1992: 47), perhaps even two desirable traits of a good man?

Bird-plaques have also been found in the Taplow grave, originally fitted into the rebates off the lyre. The design is somewhat different from the Sutton Hoo plaques, without the squares, but with an elongated curved neck instead, decorated with animal style II patterns (Wickham-Crowley 1992: 45, 56). The head seems thus to be the significant part: Perhaps the bridge from Concevreux should therefore be interpreted in the same way? The animal heads forming from the bases of the bridge and curving away from each other at the top end are difficult to read, their possible beaks definitely deviating from the ones found at Sutton Hoo and Taplow. At the same time, their pronounced mouth is the very part that would speak for a bird interpretation. Apart from this rather uncertain case, there is another bird-association, coming not from one of the lyre finds accounted for here, but from the 10<sup>th</sup> century Muiredach's Cross at Monasterboice (Ireland): On the crossbar of the lyre a bird is depicted (Rimmer 1969: 19f)!

*The professional lyre-player.* The bird could of course be a decorative element only, or could allude to the sweet sound of the instrument comparable with bird song. However, the terms used to describe the lyre-players in literary documents – skáld (Old Norse) and scop (Old English) – should be looked at more closely. Egon Werlich has done just that with scop, arriving after an elaborate discussion from a philological point of view at the conclusion that *Der Skop, dem wir in der westgermanischen Überlieferung begegnen, ist ein säkularisierter germanischer Priesterdichter* (Werlich 1967: 274). (The Skop, whom we meet in the west-Germanic records, is a secularised priest-poet). Werlich takes his starting point in Odin's mead of poetry mentioned above, through the use of which a person would become privy to the arts of rune-magic and poetry. At an early stage, the scop would therefore have been more of a priestly figure, bestowed with the gift of poetry, the gift of Odin, by drinking mead and reaching a stage of ecstasy (Werlich 1967: 354f). From this phase would also come the dancing elements hidden in the etymology of the word scop. As time went on, the cultic significance was toned down, the scop engaged instead as entertainer at gatherings in higher social classes (Werlich 1967: 372ff). According to Werlich, the mead-drinking at these events could be a remnant from the days in which the mead was so closely connected with poetry (Werlich 1967: 356), an interesting thought, but difficult to prove.

Apart from the entertaining significance, the historical value should not be forgotten. In the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D., Tacitus writes about Germanic tribes, where the collected record of their history consisted of songs only (Pollington 2003: 204), a state prolonged in time until the written word became more established with Christianity. John Niles accentuates the common experience in these historical records, where there would be little room for personal versions and reflections: At gatherings, it was important to accentuate the common identity and the common heritage. Indirectly the scop would therefore also become a guard of social norms, by showing that actions which benefit the group are considered worthy of praise, while others are not (Niles 1983: 51ff). Since a scop would also need to live off his profession, he would seek the patronage of noblemen, some employed as house-scops (e.g. in Beowulf 1063-1067), while others wandered from place to place. In return for patronage (appreciation and material wealth), the scop would offer his patron praise (Niles 1983: 51ff).

This in many aspects resembles the function of a skáld, in fact, scop and skáld are seen to be synonyms, used in the Old English and Old Norse spheres respectively (von See 1964: 13f). Looking at the etymology of the word skáld, Malm arrives at the conclusion that it is probably to be connected with the verb *schelten*, whose primary meaning was not as in Old German *to defame*, but rather *to resound* (Malm 2010: 136). Using sprechgesang accompanied with the lyre, the skáld praised the chieftains,

provided entertainment and took care of collective memory and history, much in line with the tasks of a scop (Malm 2010: 135, Paulsen 1992: 154f). As was mentioned already in the description of Odin's role in the appropriation of the mead of poetry, there is a strong connection to Odin here too, appearing by name in several skaldic verses.

In terms of lyre design, the Snape and the Köln lyre stand out as the most refined and lightweight constructions, possibly befitted a traveling skáld or scop? If so, they illustrate what has become clear here above; that the professional entertaining story-teller and praise singer was a fairly wide-spread phenomenon. Turning to Cassiodorus, professional harp-players seem indeed to have been used also as gifts between kings, thus becoming a diplomatical and political agent. In an episode of the 5<sup>th</sup> century as described by Cassiodorus, King Clovis I (king of the Franks) requested a harp-player from king Theoderic the Great, who obliged to this request (Cassiodorus II, 40).

So what was the value of such a scop or skáld? In the Icelandic saga of Gunnlaug Serpent-Tongue, Gunnlaug arrives at several royal courts and at the headquarters of leading men to perform his lays. There is an episode at the Irish court, where the king seems highly unaccustomed to the lay-form. He is unsure about what to pay and suggests two merchant vessels. The treasurer is rather shocked at this generous offer and enlightens the king about what other kings usually give; golden bracelets, a good sword or articles of equal value (Alving 1938: 282f). There might thus have been a rather standardised payment, the exact amount depending on the skills shown during the performance. This could also be what we meet in lyre-graves; the sword could possibly be an indication of the skills of a lyre-player, given to him as payment. As we will come back to in the paragraph on warriors, the link between weapon graves and warriors has been taken as a certainty far too often. There need not be a warrior-association linked to the weapon.

Finally, it is interesting to note that the individuals at Snape and Köln, possible professionals considering the refined lyre constructions, both have been covered with flowers. This might be nothing more than an indication of favourable preservation conditions, yet it is a rather peculiar correlation, especially when taking into account that one is continental and the other Anglo-Saxon. Perhaps there was a special treatment of scops/skálds?

*Christian lyre-music.* With Christianity, the scop and the skáld were more and more pushed aside, partly because of the spread of the written word, partly on morally grounds. In the Christian priest-laws of Northumbria from the early 11<sup>th</sup> century, we read for instance that a priest would have to make amends if he was to fall for insobriety or to become a musical entertainer or mead-scop (Werlich 1967: 365). Lyre-players seem, however, not to have disappeared at the blink of an eye, but did perform also in the secluded spaces of clerics: In 764 abbot Cuthbert of Monkwearmouth and Jarrow wrote to his Anglo-Saxon colleague Lul in Mainz asking for a player that could play his rotta (Pollington 2003: 206). Should the Köln lyre and the Schlotheim lyre be understood in this context, considering the simple graves marked in different ways by Christian values? A clerical owning a lyre, glad to hear its soft tones fill the room, but having to leave the playing part to a more accomplished lyre-player? Or simply a lyre player using the instrument in the praises of God?

It is interesting how seemingly strict different kinds of instruments are divided between different Christian characters. In church paintings, the devil for instance is never showed playing the harp or lyre. Instead, he is often associated with wind instruments, especially pipes and bag pipes (Hellenius-Öberg 1994: 154, Kalkmalerier 2010). The same goes for stone crosses: The 10<sup>th</sup> century Muiredach's Cross at Monasterboice (Ireland) shows the Last Judgement, where the represented instruments allude to a symbolism with lyres for the blessed and triple pipes for the damned (Rimmer 1969: 19f).

The division in Greek mythology instantly comes to mind: Stringed instruments are Apollo's attribute, representing moderation, mental balance and control. Here, too, pipes are associated with the excessive and immoderate side of life, attributed to the likes of Dionysus and Pan (Sachs 1940: 128). It is also interesting that when there is a musical contest between lyre and pipes, the lyre always wins. Pan challenged Apollo with his pipes, while Marsyas tried his luck with the auloi. Regardless type of wind instrument, Apollo would come out as victor (Smith 1870: 963). Could the instruments per se represent the fight between 'good' and 'bad' life styles?

This is even more striking since the church did so obviously not encourage music enacted by instruments (Povetkin 1992: 207); all the same they were still depicted on church walls, church portals and stone crosses. Despite the general unacceptance of musical instruments, some instruments were seemingly deemed worse than others, the Christian figure of King David so clearly representing the good with his lyre, putting to flight the evil spirits troubling King Saul (King James Bible 2015: 1 Samuel Chapter 16), connecting in this way (with the instrument) to pre-Christian times.

The episode of *Gunnar in the snakepit* illustrates this transitional phase very clearly. Belonging to the pagan story of Sigurd the dragonslayer, with origins in the central Europe of the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> century (Holtmark 1972: 5), this scene appears on many Norwegian stave churches and can also be supported with a Swedish baptismal font and a cross slab from the Isle of Man (Blindheim 1972, Hallbäck 1961: 26, Kermodé 1907: 177f, Kolltveit 2000). There are several versions of Gunnar's lyre-play in the written records, reflected also in the iconographical evidence. Most commonly, however, Gunnar is shown surrounded by snakes, his hands tied, thus using the feet to play the lyre and to sooth the snakes (Holtmark 1972: 6ff). Profoundly pagan in character, the Christian structures on which it is depicted reflect a society that has begun the process of converting, yet still holding on to past culture and tradition. This is comparable with the burial customs that are outlined in the lyre-graves. Change is slow. From all the lyre-graves not one is lacking grave goods, despite many of them post-dating the introduction of Christianity. Some of the buried individuals have also been provided with what could be christening spoons, others have grave goods decorated with Christian symbols. The cross-shaped gold-foils of Prittlewell likewise suggest a connection to the Christian world. But similarly, there are graves without any apparent link to the new religion, speaking again for an appearance of the lyre not conditioned by Christian values, but operating indifferent to religion.

*Warriors.* Here it might be relevant to turn back to Odin: He is not only the god of poetry, but also the god of war. Being a warrior and a musician at the same time was therefore nothing contradictory, quite the reverse, it was an ideal to aim for. Is this in any way visible in the archaeological record? As has already been mentioned, the two find categories most widely represented in the lyre-graves were tableware and weapons. There are in other words clearly battle-related items connected to most of the graves (with the exception of Köln and the disturbed grave of Bergh Apton). At Oberflacht 37, Trossingen and Broa the weapons are further complemented with horse-associated grave goods, apparently specifying the type of warrior that was buried here. At the same time there are of course many more richly furnished burials which have *not* yielded a lyre. This could be due to preservation conditions, but could equally be connected with a genuine musical interest on the part of these buried individuals, or the family wanting perhaps to keep the instrument within the world of the living. In this context, the burial of skálds as described in the Icelandic sagas are informative, since weapons and clothes are listed while the instrument is conspicuous by its absence (e.g. Alving 1938: 154, 258).

The Abingdon find could add another aspect of a warrior culture: the travelling part and the possibility of cultural influences. Especially the sword has led many (e.g. R. Bruce-Mitford 1983: 718) to believe this grave to be an immigrant's grave and consequently also this lyre to be of continental origin. The grave does undeniably coincide well in time with the period of Germanic settlement in Britain

attributed to the 5<sup>th</sup> century (Niles 1983: 31). Perhaps this was one of the many settlers, possibly a warrior, possibly a wandering Germanic scop?

This ambivalence between warrior and scop should also be considered for the simpler graves of Schlotheim, Bergh Apton, Morning Thorpe and Snape, where the lyre was placed close to the body, and where all are equipped with weapons other than a sword! Are these sword-less graves examples of simpler warriors with a poetic flair or are they instead scops owning also some pieces of weaponry? Perhaps they would have worked part-time as scops and part-time as warriors, a possibility shining through also in the Icelandic sagas. There we seldom meet a “full-time” skáld, but a person travelling the seas, attending to battles as well as poetry (e.g. Egil Skallagrímssons saga or Gunnlaug saga ormstungu). Odin too is both skáld and warrior. Striking here is that his most valuable piece of weaponry consists of his spear Gungner and *not* a sword (cf. Schlotheim, Bergh Apton, Morning Thorpe and Snape)!

So far, the weapons and the connection of Odin with both poetry and warriors seem the only links to a warrior-connected identity. As has been hinted at already, weapon graves need, however, not be indicating the grave of a warrior. Heinrich Härke calls attention to this very problem. Analysing the spread of Anglo-Saxon weapon burials, Härke notices a peak around the mid-6<sup>th</sup> century. According to historical records, however, this phase seems to have been the most peaceful of Anglo-Saxon times, finding itself between two sets of expansion activity (Härke 1990: 30ff)? It seems, there must have been other criteria in the choice of burying weapons with individuals. Looking at the skeleton material, it becomes clear that most are male, aged between 12 months and 60 years. The children could not possibly have been buried with weapons because they were warriors, but probably because they belonged to a certain group. Härke suggests the weapon burials to be a choice connected with descent and ethnicity. The stature, for instance, shows that men buried with weapons are generally 2-5 cm taller than men which are not, at least in an early phase, and that weapons appear in graves which are more richly furnished. All in all, this sums up to the following idea; these were the graves of Germanic tribes. It would also explain the levelling out of the statures after the first centuries, when they would have assimilated to the Romano-British population (Härke 1990: 38ff). This line of argument fits well with the finds discussed here, not least the Abingdon find. The Germanic tribes seem, as has been mentioned also in the historic background, to have risen to an elite position after the Romans left. Rather than symbolising warriors, the weapon graves, to which also the lyre-finds are closely linked, appear to indicate an elite.

An alternative and parallel interpretation is the already discussed possibility that the sword could be connected with a professional lyre-player by means of payment, given to him as proof of his proficiency. To be able to differentiate between the two alternatives, the resources put into the grave provides clues, an elite grave more likely to show off wealth in goods and time spent on the burial. As for the connection of Odin with both war and poetry, it seems here to reflect the professional lyre-player rather than the warrior, linking up with the original meaning of scop as illustrated earlier.

If projecting this onto the other end of the time spectrum, where early medieval knights had to be versed in the arts of music and poetry amongst many other accomplishments, this was not linked to the knight as a warrior, but to the court and its demand for chivalry (Bengtsson 1999: 31). The knight would probably not have used the lyre, since replaced by the harp around the turn of the first millennium in upper circles, yet this note adds to the understanding of the importance – or rather the lack thereof – of the warrior-element in the use of lyres. The two components *warrior* and *music* were not linked directly, but via the courtly life of an elite.



*Noblemen*. Burials read as belonging to noblemen have been found on the Continent (Oberflacht 84, Oberflacht 37, Trossingen), in Anglo-Saxon territory (Taplow, Sutton Hoo, Prittlewell) and possibly in Scandinavia (Broa). Despite the spread of elite-graves, there are reasons to suggest a gradation of social strata. The Anglo-Saxon graves are the most lavishly equipped graves, where no expense seems to have been too big. Vessels, standing out also in their sheer amount, are silver-mounted, belt buckles gilded, there are silver dishes, cauldrons and iron stands, and in the case of Sutton Hoo, there is also a suggested royal sceptre. In these three cases, the lyres are placed at a clear distance from the individual together with the other grave goods. A royal association outgoing from the lyre, can also be discerned in the already rendered story about Aslaug and king Heimer (see 3.3.3 *Sex and Age*) in *Ragnar Lodbroks saga*, where he would play for the child Aslaug when she is in need of comfort (Thorpe 1851: 109f). Other royal representatives are King Gelimer and of course King David, and a fourth example comes from Beowulf:

*Sometimes the battle-bold one greeted the harp with pleasure –  
the mirth-wood – sometimes recited a lay  
true and tragic, sometimes a fine tale  
he rightly related, the great-hearted king* (Beowulf 2107-2110 in Pollington 2003: 205f).

The amber (Dorestad 140, Dorestad 141, Elisenhof I, Elisenhof II, Broa) and especially the bronze bridges (Gerete, Concevreux), which are deemed to have poorer acoustical properties than have wooden bridges, could be seen in this context too. Under these circumstances, where the connection to a higher social stratum would perhaps have been more important than a pure musical interest, the elaborate details could have been considered crucial to make it look as valuable as possible, to wow the *spectator* rather than an *audience*. This leads on to the continental graves of Oberflacht 84, Oberflacht 37 and Trossingen, with Trossingen as a suitable transition, as it splendidly decorated. Since the decorations are cut out from the wood, their preservation is of course a lottery win, and so the look of the other German noblemen's graves remains unsolved. It should also be remembered that it is rather difficult to compare continental and Anglo-Saxon lyre-finds, since continental soil allows for good wood preservation, whereas Anglo-Saxon soil is favourable for metal. It could thus very well have been that the Anglo-Saxon lyres were also decorated with patterns and motives incised and filled with colour. In the same way, the continental lyres could have been decorated with nicely worked metal plaques. What can be noted, is the equestrian focus on the continental graves, the smaller size of the burial construction and above all, the closeness of the body and the lyre, which has been put into their arms, indicating a closer rapport.

To further support the relation between nobility and lyres, Ibn Fadlan should of course be mentioned. He makes an interesting observation of a burial of a prominent Scandinavian man, stating that *they put in his grave mead, fruits, and a kind of mandolin* (Ibn Fadlan/Frye 2005: 68), amongst other things. The mandolin is translated to different types of instruments in different versions, with the only common denominator the instrument being stringed. It could thus possibly have been a lyre. Here too, weapons are laid beside the buried man (Ibn Fadlan/Frye 2005: 68). This observation, together with the Broa find, represent the Scandinavian lyre-graves of noblemen. In Ibn Fadlan's description, it is the status as prominent man rather than the status as an exceptional musician/poet that is highlighted. This could of course be due to Ibn Fadlan's limited knowledge about the man. But also, it could denote that the stringed instrument was here rather considered a symbol of the elite than the signification of a good poet. Earl Rognvald of Orkney (from Norway) lists nine skills of his in the following 12<sup>th</sup> century verse:

*I am quick at playing chess, I have nine skills, I hardly forget runes, I am often at either a book or craftsmanship. I am able to glide on skis, I shoot and row so it makes a difference, I understand both the playing of the harp and the poetry (Earl Rognvald of Orkney/Graham-Campbell 2007: 356).*

It is difficult to know if he is talking about the lyre, or an actual harp, as the verse is set in the transitional phase between the two. Be that as it may, it illustrates the versatility expected of elite members. The gaming pieces found at Taplow, Sutton Hoo and Prittlewell seem to confirm this. There will certainly have been noblemen able to play the lyre (see e.g. Earl Rognvald, King Gelimer or King Heimer), but there will also have been kings waiting to be entertained (see e.g. King Clovis I), possibly more in line with Cuthbert described above: owning a lyre but not knowing how to play it.

*Everyday use.* Lyre-play did also figure in more amateur-settings, where the instrument would be passed around for everyone to play a tune (Lawson 1978: 96). The literary evidence most clearly evidencing this type of lyre-playing comes from 680 when Bede wrote about cow-herd Caedmon, who came to be the first poet singing in English, a gift given to him from heaven (R. & M. Bruce-Mitford 1970: 11, Sellar 1907: 277f). Before this proceeds, there is, however, the following sequence:

*For having lived in the secular habit till he was well advanced in years, he had never learned anything of versifying; and for this reason sometimes at a banquet, when it was agreed to make merry by singing in turn, if he saw the harp come towards him, he would rise up from the table and go out and return home (Bede, translated in Sellar 1907: 278).*

Before turning attention to this kind of casual lyre-players, the similarity between Caedmon and the just described skáld or scop should be noted, the gift of poetry so clearly given by divine powers! Caedmon shows here that the casual evening entertainment is not only limited to the elite or the royal court even, but was in fact present also in lower classes. As highlighted both by Kolltveit and M. Bruce-Mitford, there was a disappearance of lyres from expensive documents such as illustrated manuscripts by the 10<sup>th</sup> century, which would represent a decline in exclusivity and a decline of interest for this instrument type within the nobility (M. Bruce-Mitford 1984b: 264, Kolltveit 2000: 24). Glimpses of lyre-players from less privileged strata are found at York from the 10<sup>th</sup> century, in Norway (Trondheim, Oslo I and Oslo II) from the 13<sup>th</sup> century and possibly at Birka from the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century. The spread of the lyre into lower social classes when the harp was introduced, as suggested by both M. Bruce-Mitford (1984b: 264) and Kolltveit (2000: 24), could thus have started before. Both Caedmon and the York find suggest that the lyre could indeed be found also in the circles of ordinary men already in 680 and in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Perhaps the spread into lower social classes did only wait in Scandinavia (considering the Norwegian finds): yet the York find was unearthed in the Viking Age layers of Jorvik (Hall 1984: 115), and the Birka find could be falling in this category also. It seems therefore plausible that the process commenced around the turn of the millennium, the lyre becoming more wide-spread and more commonly used with time. As for the later finds, the Trondheim bridge gives a rather homemade impression, removing it far from the refined lyres of professionals and the exclusive versions of elite members.

The rapidly decreased popularity of the lyre in the circles of noblemen can certainly be tied to the introduction of the harp, yet the forming of towns, as well as the spread of Christianity, did probably play an important part too. At the same time, lyres did of course not disappear from elite contexts only because they are no longer visible in elite graves. It was continued to be used, yet gradually replaced by the harp. Almost simultaneously with the disappearance of lyres (and grave goods in general) from graves in a true Christian manner, they begin to appear in towns. There were no finds from cultural layers before that. For reasons connected to both musical novelties, changes in religion and

demography, the lyre ended up in the strata of people of lower standing, where it continued to be used for some time, probably also gradually applying the bowing technique.

At the same time it is important to keep in mind that despite a spread into lower social classes, the lyre was still an instrument of certain solemnity if comparing with other instruments. The construction of a lyre was still a complex piece of craftsmanship and would not have been used in the same way as a horn for instance, which is easier to make and more portable in its design. At this rather final stage of the lyre, historical and praising values were most likely subordinated to the entertaining significance, which is still rather different from a horn for instance, which was more of a signalling instrument (Kristensen 1994: 50). Well aware of the different functions and fields of application for different instruments, this study has aimed at bringing closer the lyre-player and at furthering the understanding of who this lyre-player was. For future studies, it would be interesting to look also at other instruments and to compare not only the contexts within one kind of instrument, but within different instrument types as a whole.

## 4 RESULTS

After having analysed the material from different perspectives, it is now time to return to the research questions. Have we found the answers posed at the very beginning of this study?

*Which are the lyre remains from the time period A.D. 500-1200 and what do they look like?*

The lyre remains found and included in this study have been unearthed in Germany, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and England. They all belong to Germanic round-lyres, which were at the time variously termed harp or rotte. From southern Germany there are the well-preserved lyre-finds of Trossingen, Oberflacht 84 and Oberflacht 37, found in close proximity to each other and stretching in time from the late 6<sup>th</sup> to the early 7<sup>th</sup> century. Further north were discovered the lyre of Köln (Germany) and the bridges from Schlotheim (Germany), Concevreux (France) and Dorestad (Netherlands), made of antler, bronze and amber respectively. Two more amber bridges were found at Elisenhof in Schleswig, north of which was unearthed a yoke, at the site of Hedeby.

Following the map further north, there are three bridge finds from Sweden, two of which were found on the island of Gotland: An amber bridge was unearthed at Broa dating to the 9<sup>th</sup> century and Gerete has yielded an 11<sup>th</sup> century bronze bridge. The third Swedish bridge was found at Birka and was made of antler. From the cultural layers of Sigtuna (Sweden) comes a tuning key bearing a runic inscription mentioning the harp (or what is today termed *lyre*). The Norwegian finds are rather late in time (13<sup>th</sup> century), and consist of three wooden bridges, two from Oslo and one from Trondheim. The latter bears a runic inscription reading *ruhta*, which probably relates to rotte, the contemporary term for the Germanic round-lyre.

Finally, there are the lyres of England, which all seem rather concentrated in space, especially the finds from Prittlewell, Sutton Hoo, Snape, Bergh Apton and Morning Thorpe, not far from which were also unearthed the finds of Taplow and Abingdon. The cluster is thus mainly confined to the south-eastern part of England. The only bridge was found in the urban layers of York and dates to the 10<sup>th</sup> century, consequently quite different both in time and space. All in all, most parts of a Germanic round-lyre have come together from the many contexts. The soundbox, arms, the soundboard, the yoke, the bridge, pegs and the tailpiece are all represented in the material. The only component missing, are in fact the strings.

*Are there any similarities or differences in space and time in terms of lyre construction?*

Four different kinds of lyre construction seem to have taken form. The most apparent differences are the fastening arrangements of the yoke. In an Anglo-Saxon type, the yoke and the arms were joined by means of a mortise-and-tenon joint, which was in three cases reinforced with a metal plaque (Bergh Apton, Taplow and Sutton Hoo). Different degrees of decoration on these plaques, in combination with the grave context in general, suggests that the lyres were constructed to the same standards, but incorporated different details befitted the buyer.

The continental lyre constructor seems instead to have fastened the yoke between the arms by means of wooden pegs, the arms thus extending beyond the yoke. Another type encountered on the continent is the lyre constructed from a single piece of wood, as is the case in the Trossingen and in the Köln lyre. The Köln specimen at the same time represents a fourth type, as it is much smaller in size than all others and swinging out at the top to form a curve, contrasting in this way the parallel

arms of the Anglo-Saxon type and the straight but slightly bent-out arms of the continental types. There is one more contender possibly matching this type, which is the Morning Thorpe lyre. Since very fragmented, it is difficult to draw any conclusions, but there is a possibility that they do conform to the same construction. This would indeed be interesting, considering that all other types are so clearly culturally bound. Even choice of material seems to have been based on local traditions.

The different types aside, there are also constructional details which have been applied in all areas. String numbers for instance seem rather standardised for all lyres, a cluster forming around six strings. It has also been hinted at the suggestion that the lyres all became smaller in size as time went on. A further similarity would be the wrist straps indicating a similar playing technique. Despite different construction processes, they still all belonged to the same Germanic round-lyre type.

*In what kind of contexts have they been found? Are there any similarities or differences in space and time?*

Now, what did the archaeological contexts look like? Here it is important again to point out the fact that graves are in general much better documented than are other contexts. Both are, however, well represented in the chosen material and have shown to be more or less conditioned by time: Early finds dating to about the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries belong to graves, while finds from the 8<sup>th</sup> century onwards were unearthed in the cultural layers of workshops or towns. This is of course very generalised, but indeed it fits all finds except for the Broa bridge dating to the 9<sup>th</sup> century, which was found in a grave.

Turning first to the earlier phase outlined above, the graves have shown to be of great variation, both in terms of grave construction, grave goods and the position of the lyre in the grave. There are several ways to divide the graves into groups, one way might be the way in which the lyre was handled. Most strikingly standing out from the rest are the graves of Taplow, Sutton Hoo and Prittlewell, all Anglo-Saxon chamber graves with an abundance of grave goods. Here, the lyre has been placed markedly distanced from the body, forming a stark contrast especially towards the finds of Trossingen, Oberflacht 37, Snape, Morning Thorpe and Köln, where the lyre was found in the arms of the buried individual. At the remaining graves, the lyre was placed close to the head (Broa) or to the lower half of the body (Abingdon, Bergh Apton and Schlotheim).

Another division which could be made is the one between richly furnished chamber graves on the one side and rather simple graves on the other. Again, Taplow, Sutton Hoo and Prittlewell stand out, the clearest examples of the former group. The continental graves of Trossingen, Oberflacht 84 and Oberflacht 37 should, however, not be forgotten. Whereas the Anglo-Saxon examples are richer in gold and silver, as well as in metal work in general, the continental graves display a wealth in wooden craftsmanship as seen in their furniture. This might be due to the conditions of preservation, which have favoured the preservation of metal in English soil and wood in southern Germany, but might equally be due to local customs. Despite the link which seems to exist between the Germanic tribes of the continent and the Germanic tribes in England, the grave contexts reveal local adaptations and traditions as much as the lyres themselves. Anglo-Saxon graves are somewhat bigger, with room for more grave goods, consisting of glass and horn vessels, cauldrons, wooden (!) cups, iron stands, gaming pieces, weapons and golden belt buckles. Articles for hygiene for instance, present in the continental graves, seem however non-existent. The graves not mentioned yet have been equipped with grave goods too, in fact, there is no grave without. Here the grave goods are, however, simpler and fewer, including artefacts such as bowls, weapons, knives, fire steel and iron buckles.

When eyeing the grave goods, another type of division takes form; the one between weapon graves, graves with equestrian equipment and graves with only a knife. Only Köln and Bergh Apton belong to this last group, the latter of which was rather disturbed when excavated. This leaves the main group with different kinds of weapons. Individuals buried in burial chambers have all been given several pieces of weaponry, the sword figuring in all of them. Some have also been equipped with a shield and a spear. The most interesting relation did, however, appear in the simpler graves, where none of the graves where the lyre was placed close to the arms of the buried did contain a sword (Schlotheim, Bergh Apton, Morning Thorpe and Snape). The third group with horse-related grave goods is confined to Trossingen, Oberflacht 37 and Broa, all fairly rich in grave goods.

An element slipping into most groups is Christian symbolism. Besides a W-E orientation in most cases, Morning Thorpe has provided cruciform brooches, Schlotheim has yielded a spear with motives such as a fish, a cross and the trinity symbol, and possible christening spoons have been found at Sutton Hoo and Prittlewell. At Sutton have also been found bowls decorated with crosses, and at Prittlewell the individual seems to have been equipped with a gold-foil cross on each eye. While this is rather unusual in England, it has been encountered more frequently on the continent, underlining again the connections between the two areas. When talking about Christian elements, the grave of Köln should of course be noted also, where the deceased was placed within a stone cist in the nave of a church.

Lyre remains have not been found in graves only, but also in the cultural layers of towns and workshops. These consist mostly of bridge finds, Hedeby (yoke) and Sigtuna (tuning key) excluded. Most examples are from urban contexts (Dorestad 140, Dorestad 141, Birka, York, Hedeby, Sigtuna, Trondheim, Oslo I and Oslo II), and in the context descriptions of York and Oslo the picture of a non-elite lyre-player is mediated. The bridges from Elisenhof are from a workshop-related context and were probably thrown away already in the stage of production. For the Gerete bridge, the circumstances might have been similar. The Hedeby yoke was found in a waste-pit and illustrates the last stage in the life of a lyre, worn out and cast away.

#### *What can be said about the owner/user of the instrument?*

After having looked at the grave contexts, what catches the eye the most, is that there seems to be a plethora of variations. So what can be said about the owner or user of the instrument? As has become clear in the analysis, the identity of the lyre-player builds on several components. This has been emphasised also in the chapter on the theoretical approach: Identity takes form in the intersection of several aspects, such as age, sex, social standing, religion and culture. What seems to be in common for all of the lyre-players, is that they all appear to be male. The aspect which causes the most obvious disparity is the social standing, but also local culture.

The mentioned group of simple graves with the lyre in the arms or very close to the individual can most probably be associated with the professional lyre-player, the scop or skáld. This group includes Abingdon, Schlotheim, Bergh Apton, Morning Thorpe, Snape and Köln. Here, the weapons seem to be a characteristic of the scop (possibly a gift or payment), rather than the lyre being a characteristic of a warrior. Still seemingly adhering to the ideal of Odin as god of poetry and god of war, it is interesting to take a look at the weapon most closely connected with him – the spear and not the sword – reflected also in many of these graves. The lightweight constructions of Köln and Snape suggest a construction for the professional, especially in combination with their rather simple graves.

Then there is the association between the burial chambers of southern Germany, with the lyre put into the arm of the buried and equestrian grave goods. Although much later in time, the Broa find could

also be attributed to this group of social class, as could the other amber bridges. The lyre appears to be an important object also for this group, placed as one of few selected items in a position ready to be used. The contexts speak for an elite, with both aspects of Odin represented here too, although the warrior part seems to be of greater significance than the lyre-playing, departing in this from the previous group. Warriors, first thought to form an additional group of lyre-players, seem not have been specifically connected to the lyre, but are linked with music and poetry via the common ground of elite circles. Together with the context, the lyre construction clearly sets this group apart from the following.

A third group would be the lavishly furnished graves of Taplow, Sutton Hoo and Prittlewell, where possible royal associations speak for the uppermost elite stratum buried here. The lyre, as well as the drinking vessels and gaming pieces found in the graves, were here probably only one of many parts of contemporary pastime entertainment. As has become clear in the analysis, it seems that some kings were able to play the lyre themselves, while others were instead entertained by a scop. Possessing an instrument did not necessarily mean that one was able to play it. Characteristic of this group is the distance at which the lyre has been placed from the body.

Clergymen too seem to have enjoyed the lyre-play, especially in England, where the unacceptance of musical instruments as postulated by the church was followed only half-heartedly to begin with. Perhaps the finds of Schlotheim and Köln should be seen in this light, considering their strong Christian connotations? The wealth of Christian symbolism in the graves of Sutton Hoo and Prittlewell should probably not be mistaken for representatives of pious lives, but rather be reflected in the contemporary religious transitions taking place.

Finally, it should be highlighted that there is also a fifth social group represented in the material: the lower classes. This group has taken form mainly in the non-funerary contexts, led above all by the York and the Oslo bridges encountered in the ordinary quarters of towns. The York find dates to the 10<sup>th</sup> century and the Oslo bridges have been dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, indicating that the lyre was indeed part also of lower social classes and did not only figure in the elite or in the circles of employees of the elite (such as the scop). This seems, however, to have taken place in the later stages of the period studied, a drop paralleled in manuscript illustrations, where it would slowly disappear *pari passu* with the introduction of the harp. In this more common setting, the lyre seems to have been in use for some time, applying on the instrument also the technique of bowing.

## 5 SUMMARY

Lyre remains dating to A.D. 500-1200 have been presented, contextualised and analysed in this study. After having been subjected mostly to object-oriented studies for many years, the research questions in this master's thesis have been directed towards the person behind the lyre. Especially by means of the well-documented grave contexts, hints as for the identity of the lyre-players have been searched for. What can the grave construction, the grave goods and the location of the lyre within the grave reveal about its owner/user and his or her relation to the musical instrument? This master's thesis can thus be summarised as a comparative contextual study.

From the analysis has become clear that the lyre cannot be attributed to a certain identity, but is represented in several social classes and cultures. Five types of lyre-players can be discerned from the material: 1) The professional scop or skáld, 2) the continental elite, seemingly fond of their instruments, 3) the Anglo-Saxon elite (possibly royal), where the lyre is only one of many ways in which to be entertained, 4) the clergyman not yet succumbing to the non-instrumental ways of the church and finally 5) members of the lower classes. There seems to have been a highly elitist association to begin with, appearing in the higher strata of the continent and the British Isles, played both by the elite themselves and by professionals. By the turn of the millennium, the nobility seems to have lost interest in the instrument – possibly due to the introduction of the harp? – leading to a spread into lower social classes.



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