Unveiling the Veiled: A Comparative Study of Merovingian and Anglo-Saxon Female Burial Practices

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Figure 1: An illustrated reconstruction of the Harpole burial. MOLA / Hugh Gatt

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Chapter 1: Introduction

After the fall of the Roman Empire, new kingdoms and people emerged. Some already lived amongst the Romans, while others moved in after the empire ended. In this thesis, I will examine two groups, the Merovingians and the Anglo-Saxons. I will investigate the burial practices of women from these groups. Women have always been an overlooked element in history and society. However, there is a lot we can learn about society from their burials. The period after the Roman Empire was very interesting as many changes were happening.

There is evidence that the Merovingians, a dominant dynasty of the continental side, and the Anglo-Saxons, a collection of kingdoms and ethnic groups that lived in modern England both originated from the fifth century CE, had interacted throughout their existence (Higham & Ryan, 2013, p. 1; Fouracre, 2020, p. 35).

Over the past three hundred years there has been a lot of research on the Anglo-Saxons (Hamerow et al., 2011; Hines & Bayliss 2013; Crawford, 2022) and increasing amounts in the last few decades on the Merovingians (Effros et al., 2020). However, even though there has been more research done on them in the last few decades, women in these periods, and in history itself, are often overlooked.

This thesis aims to analyse similarities and differences between the lives and the deaths of early and middle Anglo-Saxon and Merovingian women and identify the influences Christianity had on their cultures. As I stated before, I found in my research that the Merovingians and the Anglo-Saxons had contact with each other in some ways. In some sources, it is stated that an Anglo-Saxon woman married into a Merovingian elite family (James, 2020, p. 246). However, I found little research done into the possible connection that these two groups could have. Therefore, I wanted to compare the two regions to understand if these women had similar lives through their burial practices.

Traditionally both regions have been studied individually, scholars look at one or the other. Only recently have more studies been looking at both regions and the connections between them, for example through grave goods. People have been looking more at the connections between the grave goods in Europe (Brownlee, 2021); however, there has not been a specific study done on the role of women as I am doing.

My research question is therefore: *How do the lives and deaths of the women in the Merovingian and Early Anglo-Saxon periods differ from each other from an archaeological standpoint?* I will be researching this question with the help of the following sub-questions: *What is the difference between the graves of Anglo-Saxon and Merovingian women? What is the status of*

Anglo-Saxon and Merovingian women in their societies? What was the impact of Christianity on early medieval women?

This thesis will mostly be a literature review. I will research and critically analyse the relevant literature to compare the deaths and lives of Anglo-Saxon and Merovingian women. It will focus on furnished graves and their grave goods. I will discuss two case studies from both groups. These case studies are the Merovingian cemetery of Bergeijk-Fanzantlaan in the Netherlands. This cemetery is interesting because it is a Dutch cemetery, while most cemeteries studied from the Merovingian time are from France. The Anglo-Saxon cemetery is in Buckland (England). The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery is from the early to middle period, mid-fifth to late eighth century CE and will therefore be in the range of the Merovingian cemetery. Both sites have been well documented; however, not from a gender perspective. Figure 2 shows the cemeteries of the case studies and other locations that I will be talking about.

Before we dive into the data, I will explain a few concepts that appear often in my thesis. In the next two chapters, I will strictly dive into the Merovingian evidence before moving along to the Anglo-Saxon evidence in chapter 4. In Chapter 6 I will discuss differences and similarities and in Chapter 7, the conclusion, I will briefly refer back to what I have discussed.

Concepts explained

Multiple concepts are mentioned a few times that need a bit more elaboration. I will give a short explanation of them below.

Anglo-Saxons: A common name for the collection of kingdoms, character traits, and ethnic groups that lived in modern-day England from the fifth to the eleventh century CE (Higham & Ryan, 2013, p. 1)

Cremation grave: A burial rite where the body was burned. The ashes were deposit often in some way, e.g. in a pot or other container. Depending on the culture, items were placed with them before it was placed in the ground (Crawford, 2022, p. 217).

Gaul: Preserved area in Roman times that consists of France, Parts of Germany, Switzerland and the Benelux. The Area that the Merovingians ruled and lived in, is also known as Francia (Fouracre, 1990, pp. 3-4)

Inhumation graves A burial rite where the deceased is placed in the ground in a grave. Depending on the culture, the deceased might be accompanied by funeral clothes and grave goods, their body might be laid in a specific body position (Crawford, 2022, p. 217).

Merovingians: Frankish kingdom in Western Europe (Gaul) that came up after the Romans left in the fifth century CE (Fouracre, 2020, p. 35).

Supine: Being placed on your back (Cambridge Dictionary, 2024).

Unaccompanied inhumation grave: A burial without any grave goods (Mullins, 2007, p. 104).

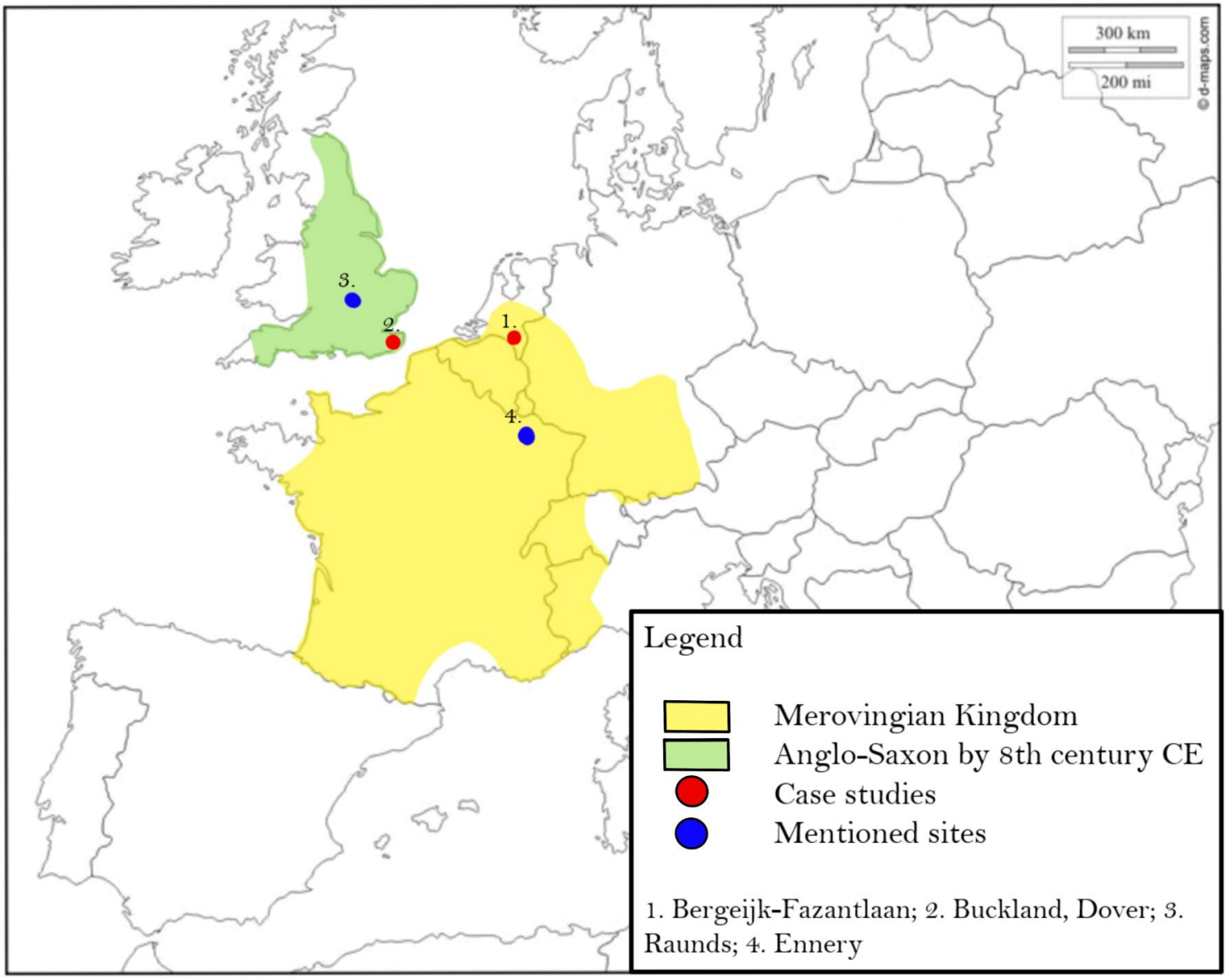

Figure 2: Map of the Anglo-Saxon and Merovingian world with sites mentioned (Emma Augustinus).

Chapter 2: The Burial Practices of Merovingian Women and the Influence of Society

Halfway through the fifth century, the different Frankish tribes came together and fought the Romans to take over Gaul under the command of Childeric (Fouracre, 2020, p. 40). After he died in 481, his son Clovis took over and established the Merovingian dynasty which was in power for 270 years (see Figure 2) (Fouracre, 2020, p. 35; Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica, n.d.). The Merovingian kingdom greatly influences how Medieval European societies are perceived in academia today (Fouracre, 2020, p. 35).

Merovingian archaeology is mostly cemeteries with enormous amounts of material culture (Effros, 2020, p. 77). These cemeteries and thousands of sixth- and seventh-century burials contain human bone, glass, ceramics, metallurgy, and other grave goods. They also contain traces of fabrics of the funerary costumes (Effros, 2020, p. 77 & Halsall, 2020, p. 166). While lists of the grave goods were made, it was only around the end of the nineteenth century that they started to indicate the locations and positions of these objects in each grave (Effros, 2020, p. 82).

While many studies have been done on the Merovingians since their 'discovery', it was only after the 1970s when archaeologists and historians started exploring the lives of the Merovingian women. A few scholars conducted major work on making the women in the Merovingian period more visible, one of them is Guy Halsall (Halsall, 2010). He is an academic specialising in the early medieval period and has done much research on women and gender. His work brings a whole new perspective to the way people look at history. I will explore his work and expand on it with the Anglo-Saxons.

In this chapter, I will discuss the influence of Christianity on women in this period, how society viewed them and the funerary practices of the Merovingian period. I will focus on grave goods and examine differences between men, women and age. In the next chapter, I will discuss a case study to elaborate on the subject.

Christianity in the Merovingian period

Before the Clovis conversion to Christianity, the Gallo-Roman people had already been exposed to it for many years. The Church continued influencing the legal system and its practices (Effros & Moreira, 2020, p. 19). It accepted both men and women inside, unlike some other religions and cults. And women had more functions under Christianity than they had under paganism (Wemple, 1981, p. 127). This might be why women have been supporting the church since the beginning, especially queens who had deep connections to Christianity.

The Merovingian Queens are known for founding and supporting monasteries and churches. As well as having control over wealth and priceless items that were of interest to the church (Effros & Moreira, 2020, p. 22). One of these queens for example was Radegund. She purchased many symbolic relics, which brought a symbol of the Christian empire to Gaul. She also showed her influence on the Christian community with her relationship to Constantinople. Later established the Sainte-Croix monastery in Poitiers and began to live there as a nun (Effros & Moreira, 2020, p. 22; James, 2020, p. 248).

Living as a nun or abbess gave women an opportunity to play a role in the Merovingian church. These roles were very rare, as men decided that women were too fragile because of their female sex. Despite this, women still found ways to live a religious life and in return get a sense of control and power. Monasteries often had large estates, servants, slaves, and wealth which were controlled by the abbess, who had control over men and land (James, 2020, pp. 247-248). Becoming a nun might have been one of the solutions Merovingian women had to escape forced marriages or abusive husbands (James, 2020, p. 252; Wemple, 1981, p. 190).

Despite female monasteries and Christianity welcoming men and women, there were still many restrictions and double standards for women. Women often needed permission from their husbands to enter Christian spaces or take roles in religion. When they did not comply with this there was often a social backlash (Wemple, 1981, p. 132 & 134). Around the fourth and fifth centuries, there were more negative writings created about marriage and women in particular. Especially when the Western church started to advocate for their higher ranks to abstain from sexual activity. Women started to be depicted as temptresses and associated with sin and sexuality in treaties and conciliar laws (Wemple, 1981, p. 127).

Around the seventh century, grave goods disappeared, and for long it was believed that this was a response to Christianity. However, there is no real archaeological or written evidence that Christianity is responsible for this (Effros, 2003, p. 85 & 87). A change in the burial practices might have happened because of Christianity is the appearance of gravestones (Halsall, 2010, p. 229)

The lives of Merovingian women

Most things we know about the lives of the women in Merovingian society are from a few written sources and the grave goods deposited in their burial (Halsall, 2020, p. 169). Women on their own did not have power in their world. However, they could acquire status through living and working for the church or from their fathers or husbands. The few women that have been mentioned in literature and other sources are mostly described as elite women. The majority of these sources were written by men who were not as interested in writing about women as they were about men (James, 2020, p. 238). Women are often invisible in the documents that have been found, but when

they show up, are very underrepresented (Halsall, 2020, p. 176; James, 2020, p. 238). A lot of laws show the value of women goes up, the moment they turn twelve, and the lavish graves and public funerals show the stress the community must have felt from losing a person who still holds a lot of political value through marriage alliance and childbearing. (Halsall, 2020, p. 170; Halsall, 2010, p. 305). It is worth mentioning that the lives of the women were sexualised heavily. From the moment that they could bear children until their children were old enough (Halsall, 2020, p. 172).

Status in law and society

Women played an important role in shaping society although they rarely had access to public power. They often were placed into interethnic marriages where they converted the husbands to Christianity. The children born of these marriages pass on a diverse cultural legacy. As such, they contributed to the demographic and cultural melting pot that was the Merovingian kingdom (Wemple, 1981, p. 9). Women were often placed in boxes of only childbearing and being helpless, especially the higher class. They were exempt from heavy labour and were discouraged to pick up arms and defend themselves (Wemple, 1981, p. 29).

In academia, European laws are set up as legal collections, also known as 'codes'. They are often characterized by a variety of ethnic modifications, many of which are retroactive. They have influenced assessments of the time and its place in legal history in an unnaturally significant, if not exclusive, way (Murray, 2022, p. 254). The oldest Merovingian law code was the *Pactus Legis Salicae* which was written by Clovis in 507 and 511 (Gradowicz-Pacer, 2002, p. 8 & Drew, 1991, p. 29). Depending on one heritage, two law codes were recognised, Roman or Germanic (Murray, p. 2022, p. 242).

One of these rules included the *wergeld*, which is noted in the *Pactus Legis Salicae*. It is the compensation an offender needs to pay the family if they were to kill a woman of childbearing age. For these women, it was three times the typical amount (Halsall, 2020, p. 170).

Women could arrange their marriage when they came of age, which was twenty-five for Roman law, but marriages were most likely already arranged before that time. Aristocratic daughters were betrothed at the age of twelve (Wemple, 1981, p. 32). Whether of Roman or Germanic heritage, a woman became the property of her husband if she chose to reside with him. While he still needed her consent, the husband could manage her properties and speak for her in court. If the husband died, the widow would get all her husband's rights and become the household's head (Wemple, 1981, p. 31).

There were a lot of double standards in the Merovingian laws, especially when it came to marriage (Wemple, 1981, p. 38). If, under Burgundian law, the family rejects the groom, he could demand 300 *solidi*. A betrothed lady may be killed as an adulteress if she marries someone else.

Women were treated more humanely under Roman law. The lady may marry another man only once two years had passed since the previous engagement, but the groom could only claim four times the amount he had paid if the girl or her parents broke the engagement (Wemple, 1981, p. 33).

Women were expected to stay faithful to their husbands. However, the husbands did not have to stay faithful to their wives. Polyamory was legal under the Merovingian law. Men could marry multiple women and occasionally the wives of magnates and queens had to share their position with co-wives. Women on the other hand did not have thesis possibilities. She was obligated to stay faithful and submissive to her husband. She could not start a divorce even if he was an alcoholic, gambler, abused or neglected her. She also could not file a lawsuit against him for adultery (Wemple, 1981, pp. 38-42).

Death in the Merovingian Dynasty

Over almost 3 centuries, burial practices changed a lot by the Merovingians. In the early years, there was a lot of diversity in funerary practices in different regions of Gaul. The sex, age, rank, religious belief, gender, ethnicity, and social status of the deceased person also affected the burial rite (Effros, 2003, pp. 97 & 127). Everything was thought of, the place of the burial and grave goods, where they were placed, they all were deliberately chosen to fit in the community's social boundaries (Effros, 2003, p. 176). The differences between men and women, especially in their burials, are very obvious when compared. I will explore that later in the chapter. While every region in Gaul has individual traditions and specific artefacts, they all have the same underlying components.

In this part, I will discuss the funerary practices of the Merovingian world and the grave goods that came with them. In Chapter 6, I will compare them with the data from Chapter 4, the Anglo-Saxons.

Funerary practices

There have been two distinct changes in funerary practices from the Roman period to the Merovingians' foundation. From the beginning of the third century, cremation had been discarded almost everywhere. The other change is that graves in most cemeteries shifted from laying from north-south to west-east, around the end of the fourth century (Effros, 2003, p. 188).

Like the Romans, the Merovingians buried their deceased outside their cities and towns.

After the burial, a feast was likely held close to the grave. Excavations have shown pits on the cemetery sites which contained broken pottery, ashes, and bones. Food offerings have also been found in different graves (Halsall, 2010, pp. 204-205).

While burial rituals became more coherent around Gaul, every individual community and family had its traditions and rituals (Effros, 2003, p. 128). Even nearby towns had different traditions that separated them from each other (Halsall, 2010, p. 212).

Cremation graves

In my research, I have not found a lot about Merovingian cremation graves. There were only a few sources that briefly discussed them. This might be because they are not studied a lot or they appear less frequently in the archaeological record than inhumation graves. Literary sources do mention the common uses of shrouds (Perez, 2020, p. 192). Since full-body cremations were hardly practical in the Merovingian period, unlike in Gallo-Roman societies, the role of fire in funerary contexts is still not fully understood (Effros, 2003, p. 165).

The cremation burials that were found could be identified with the same method as inhumation graves. This was because the ashes (if they could afford it) were buried in urns or sometimes in tomb structures, columbaria, or mausolea (Effros, 2002, pp. 84-85).

Inhumation graves

In the fifth century, wooden coffins were primarily used for burials. However, in some cases, they used stone coffins or plain earth pits. (Perez, 2020, p. 192). In this period the graves were mostly underground and had little indication of placement above ground. Only a few burial mounts were above-ground indicators that could be connected to a burial (Effros, 2003, p. 181).

From the sixth century onwards, furnished burials became even more popular and became public events (Halsall, 2020, p. 167). Burials north of the river Loire, all had a few consistent components giving good indications of what these burials may have looked like. The community dressed their deceased in funerary clothing, which could have been very refined and ornament or immensely simple. The fabrics, however, barely leave traces in the archaeological record (Halsall, 2010, p. 204). The community placed grave goods inside the grave (Halsall, 2010, pp. 204-205).

Types of grave goods

Grave goods are some of the most visible parts of burials from the fifth to the seventh century in the Merovingian world. They might not always have been the possessions of the deceased; however, they were not random items either. Many artefacts often had long histories behind them, carefully selected by the family and community. They showed their status in society and the relationships they had with the community. (Effros, 2002, pp. 6-7 & 33-34).

In this part, I will discuss the grave goods found, and what they said about the deceased person, focusing on gender and age aspects.

Grave Goods and Gender

When archaeologists find surviving skeletal remains they always want to know more about the person to whom it belonged. Tests are conducted on the remains to determine the biological age and sex. The biological age and sex are here separated from the social experience and expressions that these individuals may have experienced (Halsall, 2020, 166). Grave goods can help with understanding the gender of the person.

When looking at the gender of these individuals we also need to keep in mind that our experience with gender is different from that of the people in the early medieval period. We can not assume that they had the same views on males and females as we have (Effros, 2003, p. 98). To help indicate the gender of a burial without human remains, it is widely accepted to analyse grave goods to assume the gender of the deceased person or whether they were a child (Theuws & Haperen, 2012, p. 166). Children are often seen as genderless and have gender-neutral grave goods (Effros, 2003, p. 98). In literature, boys will cut their hair for the first time around the age of twelve to make them visibly different from girls (Halsall, 2020, p. 170). Sex is biological and gender is social.

Another example of the difference between sex and gender and how people might have seen it is the Merovingian cemetery of Ennery (France). One of these graves is Grave 32, which contains biologically male remains with female grave goods. We do not know if this person just liked to dress as a woman, or if they lived their life as a woman. We only know that their biological sex was masculine and had feminine grave goods (Halsall, 2020, p. 167).

'Between the fifth and the late seventh centuries, men, women, and children were buried with an assortment of grave goods' (Perez, 2020, p. 187). The grave goods did not always reflect the everyday life of the people but presented an idealized picture of the community. The grave goods and the clothing the deceased person wore represented the person in age and gender (Effros, 2003, p. 176; Halsall, 2010, p. 208).

Grave goods could be things such as accessories and jewellery, weaponry or tools, pottery, glassware, and different vessels (Perez, 2020, p. 187). Site analyses show that there are three general groups of grave goods. These groups are masculine, feminine, and neutral. Weapons are seen as masculine, while jewellery is more feminine, they are gender-based objects. Objects that fall outside these two groups are gender-neutral and fall therefore under the neutral term (Halsall, 2010, p. 294).

Masculine grave goods are things such as weapons, tools, strike-a-lights, flints, and knives. These objects were characterized as things that men often worked with (Halsall, 2020, p. 175). In the sixth century, a few of the grave goods changed and some men were buried without any grave goods (Halsall, 2010, p. 299). Later, in the seventh century, their funerary clothing became more visible with the popularity of decorated plate buckles (Halsall, 2020, p. 177).

From excavations of burial sites, it is shown that in the late fifth- and sixth centuries feminine artefacts were associated with costume or bodily adornments and jewellery. They consist of necklaces, earrings, bracelets, brooches hairpins, dress pins, châtelaines, bone or antler amulets, finger rings and shoe or garter buckles. Some objects were associated with 'women's work', such as shears, spindle whorls, bread cutters, weaving batons, and iron buckles (Halsall, 2020, p. 169; Halsall, 2010, p. 294). In the sixth century, there was a big reduction of grave goods in some cemeteries. Graves of women were found with no more than two feminine-specific objects, most of them being necklaces. However, some cemeteries still had elaborately decorated female graves with plenteous feminine artefacts (Halsall, 2010, p. 299).

The difference in grave goods and age

Grave goods may be the biggest difference between men and women that archaeologists can find in their burial. As seen above, there is a difference between the masculine objects and the feminine items. However, there is also a big difference between the different ages (see Table 1).

In early childhood, there are not many differences between genders. There were barely any gender-indicating objects. Their graves were furnished but there was no pressure on the community to produce a big burial, which could be an indicator of grief from losing a life so young. Older children also had barely any objects in their graves that recognised their sex, except for a few feminine objects. There are very few children found that were buried with a weapon (Halsall, 2020, p. 169; Halsall, 2010, p. 289).

At puberty, we see the first change in the grave goods of the deceased people. Adolescent women were buried regularly with multiple different feminine artefacts, most commonly jewellery. Archaeology shows that masculine bodies continued to stay ungendered while women were not. Their graves may contain a few masculine items; however, weaponry was rarely found (Halsall, 2020, p. 170).

When men reach their twenties, they are buried with masculine artefacts and weapons. The bodies can now clearly be identified as masculine by the grave goods. Women who have reached this age have a larger number of grave goods. However, their costumes and bodily adornments are less luxurious. For women, these elaborate burials will continue until they are forty years old (Halsall, 2020, p. 171).

When men are between the ages of thirty and sixty, they are buried with a full panoply of weaponry. They have the most extravagant funerals, adorned with an array of male items and other grave goods. These men are believed to be the most important members of the community and that can be seen from their graves (Halsall, 2020, p. 171).

The people with the least amount of grave goods are, women older than forty and men older than sixty. They receive artefacts that are neutral in gender not unlike the children. Women may have had a rare piece of jewellery in their graces and men had an occasional weapon or masculine artefact. While both genders had occasionally a few marked artefacts in their graves, there are more burials marked masculine instead of female (Halsall, 2020, pp. 171-172).

Age	Female	Male
Early childhood	No Gendered artefacts	No Gendered artefacts
Early childhood - 12	No Gendered artefacts Sometimes a feminine artefact	No Gendered artefacts Sometimes a feminine artefact
12 – 20	Multiple feminine artefacts Jewellery	No gendered artefacts
20 – 30	A large number of feminine artefacts Less lavish bodily and costume adornments	Masculine artefacts and weapons
30 - 40	A large number of feminine artefacts Less lavish bodily and costume adornments	The full panoply of weaponry Masculine artefacts and other grave goods
40+/60+	Very few grave goods Rare piece of jewellery	Very few grave goods Occasional weapon or masculine artefact

The significance of these patterns will be discussed more in the discussion when I compare this information with that of the Anglo-Saxon world.

Table 1: The difference between age and gender in grave goods in the Merovingian period (Emma Augustinus, based on Halsall, 2020, pp. 169 - 172).

Changes that happened during and after the seventh century

Around 600 CE dramatic change happened in the north of Gaul, which drastically influenced burial rituals (Halsall, 2010, pp. 212 & 229). Suddenly there were a lot more, smaller, cemeteries found. The graves had above-ground monuments, such as gravestones, sarcophagus, and security such as walls around the graves (Halsall, 2010, p. 229). The grave goods inside the graves also changed.

They became a lot more standardized and more masculine. Suddenly, the grave goods were not as connected with gender and age as they used to be (Halsall, 2010, pp. 212-213 & p. 229; 2020, p. 177). Another change was the private burials in churches. People buried their deceased in private or ruler churches, which promoted the high status of the deceased. It was a phenomenon that already happened in the late fifth- early sixth century; however, it became more popular in the seventh century and could have explained the disappearance of burials of the elite in row grave cemeteries (Effros, 2003, p. 211).

Chapter 3: The Merovingian Cemetery of Bergeijk-Fazantlaan

In Noord-Brabant, there are multiple Merovingian cemeteries found over the years. The cemetery of Bergeijk-Fazantlaan is the biggest in the province and its surrounding areas (Theuws & Haperen, 2012, p. 10). It was in use from 590 until 730/740 (Brabants Erfgoed, 2017). The land where the cemetery was built, used to be one of the 'islands' of fertile soils (Theuws & Haperen, 2012, p. 15).

The cemetery was discovered in 1957 when the family van Daalen were building their new house. While digging the trenches, they dug up multiple graves with the mechanical excavator. The area was declared an official archaeological site after they also found a shield boss and two pots (Theuws & Haperen, 2012, p. 30). The cemetery has been excavated twice by J. Ypey and G.J. de Vries. The first time was in the summer of 1957 when they excavated 75 graves. And again in the spring of 1959, when they excavated around 55 graves (Theuws & Haperen, 2012, p. 30).

In total, they found 117 inhumation graves (see Figure 3) which they excavated, eight possible inhumation graves, six pits with burned bone, two possible pot depositions, and one pit. Most of the graves have not been preserved due to unsuitable soil. Besides the loss, it is believed that there was at least one corpse in each burial (Theuws & Haperen, 2012, p. 38).

I chose this cemetery because it was well documented, with a catalogue of the graves, including sex, grave goods and possible age. I also chose the cemetery because it was in the Netherlands. Most Merovingian cemeteries that are studied are in France, and I wanted to see the difference between the more France-focused literature and the Dutch Merovingian cemetery.

Figure 3: A plan for the excavated area in 1957 and 1959 of Cemetery Bergeijk-Fazantlaan. (Theuws & Haperen, 2012, p. 31).

The Graves

The burials are all constructed differently in size and form. Most of the grave pits are rectangular with rounder corners. A few graves from the beginning of the eighth century are oval-shaped (Theuws & Haperen, 2012, p. 38). In the pits, there is evidence that there were wooden containers, most likely containing the bodies. The wood has not been preserved; however, dark lines in the soil and different fill colours indicate their presence. Most burials appear to have only one wooden container in them (Theuws & Haperen, 2012, pp. 38-39).

Human remains

Due to the relative lack of surviving bones, age and sex could not be determined. Therefore, to obtain insight into the demographic of the population of the cemetery, other sources of information were employed (Theuws & Haperen, 2012, p. 138).

The cemetery, as far as we know, contains 117 excavated burials; however, it has not been fully excavated and some burials may have been lost or overlooked within the cemetery boundaries. This means that, while there were only six graves (11, 19, 26, 28, 110, and 117) found with human

remains, there might be more still lying in the cemetery. The remains from graves 110 and 117 have gone missing and the other remains were very small fragments of bones making it impossible to analyse them. There were also 30 body silhouettes, the shadows of the bodies left on the soil that they laid on, found. These give a lot of information about the people who were buried there (Theuws & Haperen, 2012, p. 138).

Body silhouettes show body position, in this case, they were mostly lying on their backs. Age-of-death can also be calculated from it, and compared with known Middle Age lengths of people to determine their general lengths (see Table 2)((Theuws & Haperen, 2012, pp. 138-139).

Determining the gender/sex of the body silhouettes is a lot harder, especially with a small amount of human remains. Grave goods are used as context to determine if the deceased was a man, woman or child as identified earlier (Theuws & Haperen, 2012, p. 157).

In Figure 4 the assumed genders are shown for some graves. Some note-worthy discoveries are that the children's graves are found close to that of women. The deep graves in the centre of both areas are of men. Some of the graves of opposing genders seem to be paired, which could indicate existing relationships between the deceased (Theuws & Haperen, 2012, pp. 155-157).

With the genders and ages of the people in the cemetery, a lot more can be said about the community that is lying there.

Table 2: Reference table for age estimations and standard physical anthropological age categories on the basis of stature (Theuws & Haperen, 2012, p. 139).

Mean length in centimetres	Age in years	Age Category
51.7	0	Infans I
72.1	1	Infans I
83.1	2	Infans I
91.9	3	Infans I
99.2	4	Infans I
106.4	5	Infans I
112.7	6	Infans I
118.6	7	Infans II
124.6	8	Infans II
130.2	9	Infans II
135.9	10	Infans II
141.8	11	Infans II
147.5	12	Infans II
152.3	13	Juvenile - adult
158.4	14	Juvenile - adult
164.7	15	Juvenile - adult

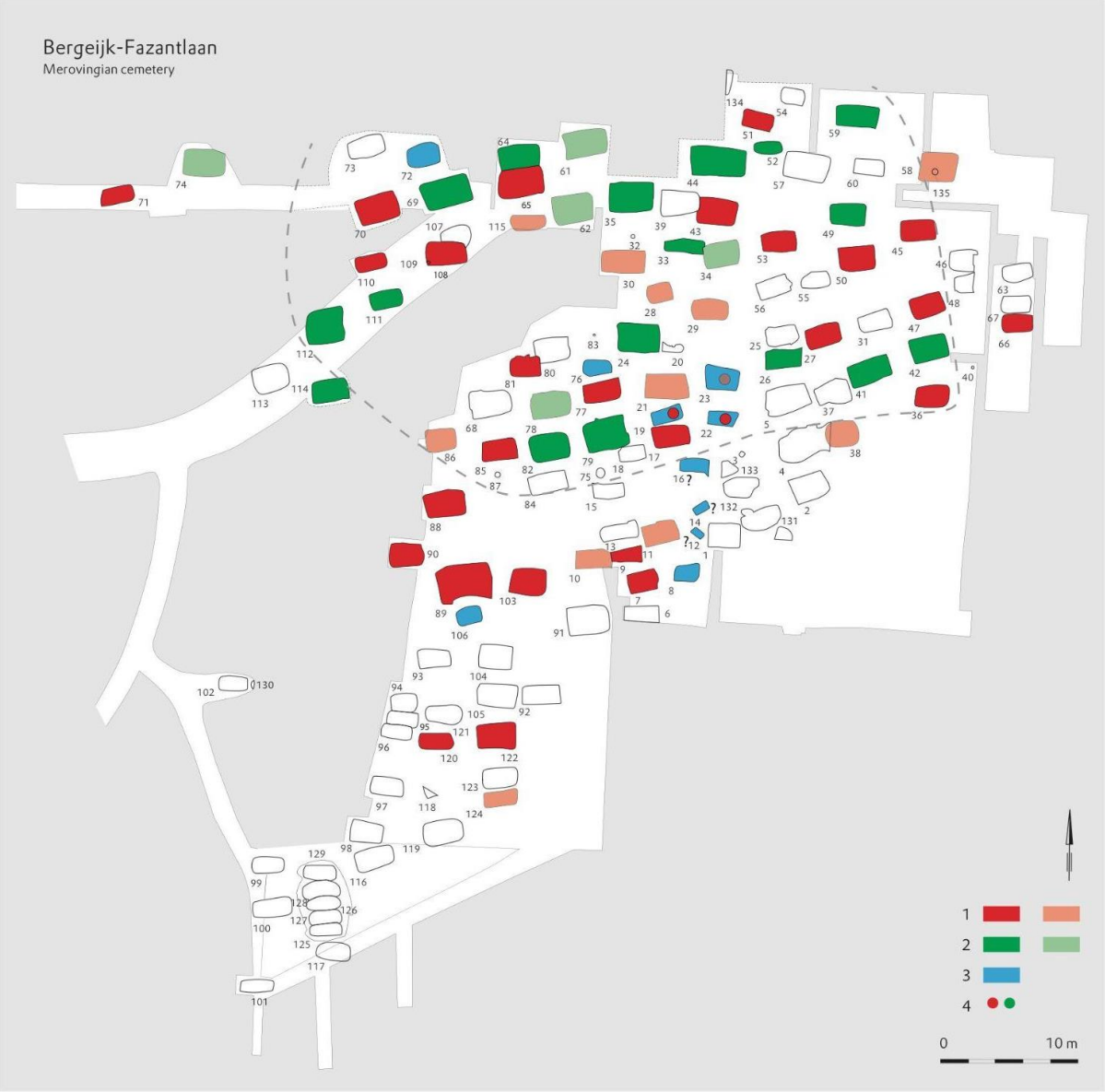

Figure 4: A plan of the cemetery on which the gender or possible gender (light colours) of the deceased is indicated. 1. women, 2. men, 3. children, 4. the gender of a child, red: female, green: male (Theuws & Haperen, 2012, p. 160).

Grave goods

There is evidence found that a lot of graves have been reopened after the initial burial. Cuts in the graves and the chaotic distribution of artefacts and broken artefacts indicate this. It is unknown whether this was done in the medieval period or the modern period. It is possible that some artefacts were removed. While taken artefacts do not leave traces in the soil, they are found in missing fragments (Theuws & Haperen, 2012, pp. 46-51).

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Even if there were objects taken from the graves, there are still a lot of grave goods left that can be examined. It might have been that some of the objects had accidentally been added to the

graves while they were reopened; however, most have been placed during the funeral (Theuws & Haperen, 2012, p. 58). There have been a lot of utensils and dress accessories found. Beads were very popular as there were a total of 383 beads found in 36 graves (Theuws & Haperen, 2012, p. 78). There were also a lot of different sorts of pottery found with eight types of fine pottery and three types of coarse pottery (Theuws & Haperen, 2012, pp. 101-116).

Analyses of the graves

I will discuss a few partly randomly chosen burials to analyse and compare them to the previous chapter. This cemetery is located in the Netherlands and the data is collected from areas in present-day France. I am also looking if there is a big difference. It needs to be kept in mind that this is just one cemetery and only six graves out of all of them that I will be discussing. I will discuss graves 7, 19, 24, 25, 44 and 52 (see Figures 5-10 & Table 3).

Compared to earlier data

It is stated in earlier literature that the deceased are dressed in funerary clothing. However, as stated in the literature this is not often found back in archaeology (Halsall, 2010, p. 204). None of the graves have any fabric. Only grave 44 has a fragment of leather of unknown origin.

All the graves, except for 25, have some kind of pottery in their burial, most of them have multiple fragments or even vessels. This implies they were part of the grave goods inside the burial, especially the full vessels. But it could also point to the public event surrounding the burial. As mentioned earlier, there was probably a feast around the grave which could cause broken pottery to end up in the burial, like the fragments of grave 44 (Halsall, 2010, pp. 204-205).

In the seventh century, the graves became a lot more masculine and after certain ages the number of grave goods decreased (Halsall, 2010, pp. 212-213 & 229; Halsall, 2020, p. 177). Grave 7 shows less feminine artefacts and also a small number of grave goods. This might point to them being older than 40 years old.

Compare female to male graves

At the beginning of this chapter, it was mentioned that males and females had different kinds of grave goods, masculine and feminine. This is also seen in the graves here. The females all have some beads in their graves, which point towards necklaces. Grave 19 also has a bracelet and a spindle whorl. all three are seen as feminine artefacts.

For the males. Grave 24 and 44 both have a lot of different rivets (nail). Grave 24 and 25 both have types of weapons (knife and arrowhead).

This shows that the feminine and masculine artefacts are deeply woven into their society. Although, the number of artefacts is different between the two. The females have more artefacts in their graves if you count the individual beads; however, they belong to either one or 2 necklaces. Without the beads grave 53 only has 23 different artifacts, grave 7 has 4 and grave 19 has 13 artifacts. Compared to grave 24 (63 artefacts) this is not a lot.

Grave 53 belongs probably to a young adult woman, who looking at the grave goods, fits into the picture Guy Halsall painted. As mentioned before, grave 7 probably belongs to a woman of middle age, as seen with the low amount of grave goods. Grave 19 is surprisingly furnished for a child. This could mean the parents were wealthy or she was already in the marriage market.

Grave 24 is the most furnished out of all of them. With multiple weapons and tools. This seems to fit for an adult male, probably between the ages of 20 and 40 years old. Grave 25 on the other hand does not have a lot of artifacts which might indicate a seventh century grave or the person was a lot older. Grave 44 does not mention an age; however, looking at the artefacts a conclusion can be made that the person was likely in their late teens to early 30s.

As this is only a small part of the cemetery and there are not a lot of accurate ages and genders among the graves, it is hard to go deeper into the analysis. With more human remains, I could hopefully go more into the difference between the ages and genders as discussed before.

Table 3: Graves of the Merovingian cemetery of Bergeijk-Fanzantlaan with grave goods (Emma Augustinus, based on Theuws & Haperen, 2012, pp. 188-285).

Grave	Grave 53	Grave 7	Grave 19	Grave 24	Grave 25	Grave 44
Sex/gender	Female	female	Female	Men	Men	Men
Dated	580/90 – 640/50	Seventh century	565 – 640/50	580/90 - 640/50	No date	565 – 610/20
Age of death	Non-adult, adult women (1.55 m)	Adult (1.62)	4-9 (child)	Adult	20 – 60 years old (skull fragment)	No date
Finds	19x Beads, glass	5x beads, glass	Beads, glass	5x pottery fragment	Skeletal elements	Pottery fragments
	2x Bead, amber	Strap end, iron	42x Beads, glass	25x Indeterminate fragments, iron	Flint	7x Indeterminate fragments, iron
	2x Belt plate, iron	Buckle, iron	3x Beads, amber	2x Indeterminate fragment, bone?	2x Indeterminate fragments, iron	Indeterminate fragment, organic
	Chain, iron	Nut, Organic	Bead, copper alloy	Indeterminate fragment	Arrowhead	Indeterminate fragment, leather
	Strap end, copper alloy	Pottery vessel	2x Pottery vessel	4x Belt plate, iron		2x Mount, iron
	Strap end, iron		Strap end, copper alloy	5x Rivet, iron		2x Rivet, copper alloy
	10x indeterminate fragment, iron		Skeletal element	4x Rivet, copper alloy		Pottery vessel
	4x Pottery vessel		Plate buckle, iron	7x Knife, Iron		Small copper alloy Rivet with fragmented wood
	Glass vessel		Bracelet, copper alloy	2x Strap end, iron		
	Disc, glass		Wire, copper alloy	3x Plate buckle		
	Buckle iron		Spindle whole, pottery	3x Buckle, iron		
				Plate buckle or knife fragment, iron		
				Flint		

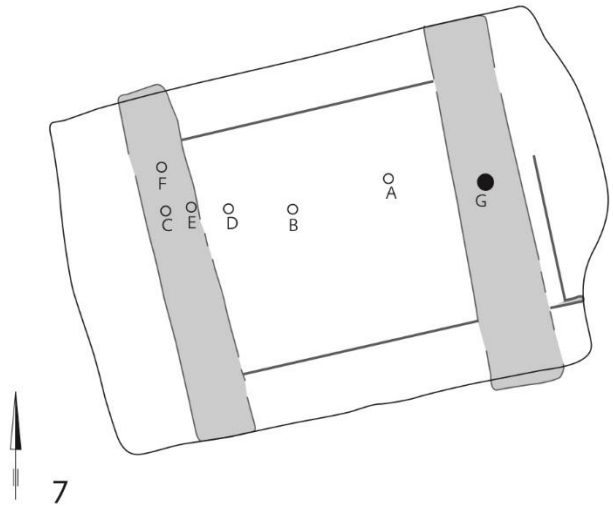

Figure 5: Reconstruction grave 7. Dots are position of grave goods (Theuws & van Haperen, 2012, p. 188)

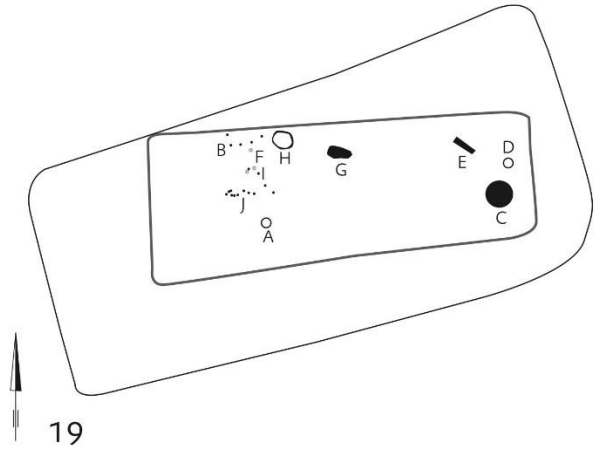

Figure 6: Reconstruction grave 19. Dots are position of grave goods (Theuws & van Haperen, 2012, p. 196)

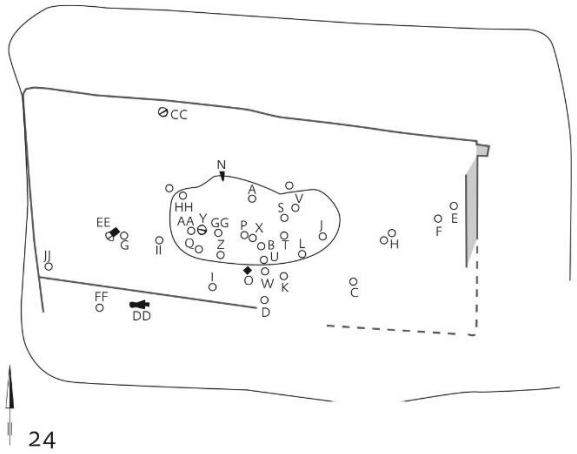

Figure 7: Reconstruction grave 24. Dots are position of grave goods (Theuws & van Haperen, 2012, p. 202)

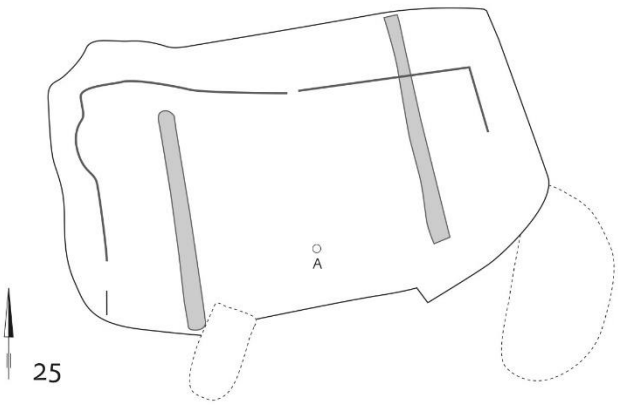

Figure 8: Reconstruction grave 25. Dots are position of grave goods (Theuws & van Haperen, 2012, p. 208)

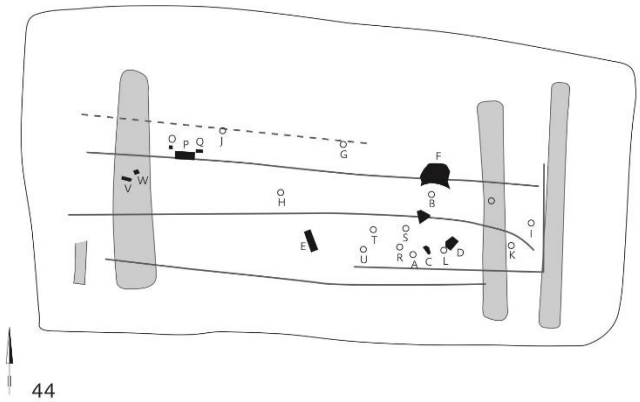

Figure 9: Reconstruction grave 44. Dots are position of grave goods (Theuws & van Haperen, 2012, p. 224)

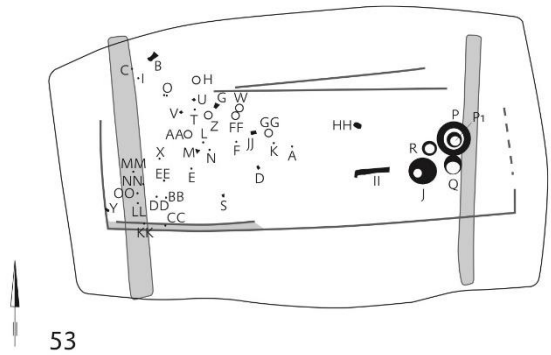

Figure 10: Reconstruction grave 53. Dots are position of grave goods (Theuws & van Haperen, 2012, p. 236)

Chapter 4: The Burial Practices of Anglo-Saxon Women and the Influence of Society

After discussing the Merovingians, I will now go into the Anglo-Saxons and their society and burial practices.

Before the fifth century, England was occupied by the Romans, who started withdrawing their forces at the beginning of that century. Changes started to happen almost immediately. Archaeology shows that material culture, settlement patterns, and burial practices started to develop 'Germanic' characteristics (Crawford, 2022, p. xiii). This was the beginning of a period that we now know as the Anglo-Saxon period.

The Anglo-Saxons are the ancestors of modern English people. They lived there from the fifth century until the eleventh century CE (*Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2024; Higham & Ryan, 2013, p. 1). And are a mixture of preexisting British Celtic people, migrating Germanics, and later on Viking and Danish invaders (*Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2024). DNA analyses have shown that these people migrated from mainland Europe. The Germanic people settled down and became the groundwork for the kingdoms and territories that divided the Island (Leslie et al., 2015, fig. 3c & p. 313).

The Anglo-Saxon period continues for approximately seven centuries and is divided into three phases. The first phase (400-600 CE) is known as the *early Anglo-Saxon*, or *Migration Period* because the Germanic tribes were migrating all over Europe. The second phase (600-850 CE) is known as the *middle Anglo-Saxon* or the *Conversion* period because Christianity came to power. The *late Anglo-Saxon* period was from 850 CE to the Norman Conquest in 1066 (Crawford, 2022, p. xvi).

There have been many studies on this period because the Anglo-Saxons are such a big part of the history of England. Of these studies, *The Oxford handbook of Anglo-Saxon archaeology* (Hamerow et al., 2011) gives an overview of some important topics, such as migration, laws, Christianity, kingdoms, settlements, and burial practices.

In this chapter, I will discuss the influence of Christianity and society on women, the funerary practices of the early and middle Anglo-Saxon period, the difference between the grave goods of men and women and the difference between de grave goods and the different ages. I will also discuss a case study of an early Anglo-Saxon cemetery in the next chapter.

Christianity in the Anglo-Saxon period

The Anglo-Saxons converted slowly to Christianity from the Seventh century onwards (Crawford, 2022, p. 2). This did not happen overnight, instead over multiple decades. It has been

record that women were frequently the first of their families to convert to Christianity. Isotope studies also showed that women were often married outside of their groups/tribes, especially between 630 and 800. Women mostly stayed within a 10 km radius. However, it has also been shown that both men and women moved 100 km from their childhood home (Hamerow et al., 2024, pp. 486 & 498). This could show the reason and how Christianity spread in this period. Women who already converted to Christianity could teach their husbands and children the religion after they were married and it could spread in that area.

In the Conversion period and the centuries after Christianity was established, things slowly started changing. Burial customs and material culture started reflecting new influences. Cremation started disappearing and special zones for people started to appear in cemeteries. The Christian cemetery, Raunds, for example, had these zones. Men and young infants were found on the south side of the cemetery, while women were found on the north side (Nielsen, 2013, p. 164). Both Christians and pagans buried their deceased with grave goods (Leyser, 1995, p. 8).

Christianity brought literacy with it to Anglo-Saxon England. Books were made and writing became more popular. Anglo-Saxon law codes were also made, for example, those of King Aethelbert of Kent. These laws showed that the worth of women was determined by their status and rank (Leyser, 1995, pp. 19 & 40-41).

For women lower on the social hierarchy, the connection with the church could be more complicated. Women's roles in Anglo-Saxon paganism and their adoption of the new religion are poorly understood. This is seen for example by identifying Anglo-Saxon goddesses (Dunn, 2009, p. 138). Women's position in itself changed because of Christianity. It has been frequently stated that through the writings influenced by Christianity, society started to view women as inferior and impure (Härke, 1997, p. 132).

Women remained important in pagan and Christian burial practices. This may indicate the survival of family and household structures despite changing political and religious environments. This shows the gradual conversion to Christianity as new religious and social frameworks evolved (Dunn, 2009, p. 165).

The lives of Anglo-Saxon women

When looking at the lives of Anglo-Saxon women, we can look at multiple sources, such as literature, laws and grave goods. For the early period, grave goods were the best indicator; however, so were the law codes that came up between 600-850. As Crawford (2022, p. 14) said 'they were dependent on their fathers or husbands for their economic and legal status but still has some rights, responsibilities, and economic independence'. I will discuss some of the ways women were being perceived in their daily lives in this part.

The status of women by law and society

As aforementioned, women were dependent on their father's or husbands' class. However, their social class was not solely playing into how they were seen. Their marital status was also very important and, women were treated differently depending on this. Widows, unmarried and married women were all treated differently by the law codes (Härke, 1997, p. 131). Before the tenth century, the Anglo-Saxon legal system was mostly decided by the different regions (Editors of Encyclopaedia, 2012). I will discuss a few examples, mostly from the same region as the case study, Kent

If a man touches a woman inappropriately he would have to pay her a certain amount of money depending on the crime. However, if he would lay with her without her permission and then claim that other men already touched her, he would only have to pay her half of the original money. A woman's worth was tied to her virginity (Crawford, 2022, p. 23).

Women were also protected by the laws that were in place. She was for example not tied to her husband's crimes unless she was an accomplice. In addition, she had financial and legal autonomy. A third of the households was hers and her word counted for something in court (Crawford, 2022, p. 14).

In the countryside, women were more equal to their brothers and husbands than they were in any other period before modern times (Härke, 1997, p. 130). Women had a certain measure of economic control. They could keep control over land that they had received as *morning gifts*, a 'gift made by the husband to the wife on the morning after the consummation of the marriage' (Bosworth, 2014). If she would die, her morning gift would go to her paternal kinsmen. This suggests a separate economic identity with some respect to her husband (Härke, 1997, p. 132).

A law of Æthelberht of Kent (sixth century) might suggest that women could be in control of keys to treasure stores. This could give meaning to the keys found in the graves of women. I could find no information on the treasure stores; however, I imagine that they are where the household funds are held. Other laws discuss the split of marriage goods between husband and wife (Härke, 1997, p. 48 & 131).

Women had little power except for household management, they were handed over from father to husband. Fewer women held some political power. Gender roles are also very strict. Men milked and butchered the animals, while women could not, as they would defile the milk and the animals (Hárke, 1997, p. 162). It is not sure why this is believed. However, a possibility was menstruation, which could make them seem unclean and unpure.

Only three laws discuss the relations between men and women. They discuss sexual crimes and marriage. It appears that divorce was allowed with Anglo-Saxons (Lendinara, 1997, p. 216). Chapters 78 and 80 of the Æthelberht law codes discuss the financial position of women whose

marriage came to a sudden stop by death or other means (Hough, 1994, p. 19). While divorce was accessible, it could only be insinuated through mutual consent. The wife could not initiate divorce by herself and would not be financially compensated (Hough, 1994, pp. 22-23).

The other laws state that the kinsmen would arrange the marriage, and look after the woman post-marriage, and she would not be legally charged for her husbands crime (Lendinara, 1997, p. 216).

Death in the early and middle Anglo-Saxon period

When it comes to Anglo-Saxon studies, one of the biggest sources of information includes burials and burial practices. Data found from them is woven into every other part of the discipline (Dickinson, 2011, p. 221). Cemeteries from the early Anglo-Saxon period (400 to 600) were often separated from settlements. Early cemeteries were similar to early settlements: they did not have ditches or fences surrounding them, which left space to grow and expand (Crawford, 2022, p. 217).

This section will discuss the Anglo-Saxon funerary practices from 400 to 800 CE. I will discuss two different burial types, the changes that happened when the Conversion period started, body positions and grave goods associated with the burials.

Funerary practices

In the early Anglo-Saxon period, there were two main types of burials: inhumation with grave goods and cremation. There might have been other ways of disposing of deceased people because there are not enough graves found for the entire population. For example, leaving the deceased outside in nature; however, they are archaeologically untraceable (Crawford, 2022, pp. 217-218). Both cremation and inhumation graves will be discussed momentarily. No matter the type of burial, throughout this period, the cemeteries, burial grounds and graves were handled with honour and care. It is also important to note that in this period feasts were a very common part of the funeral rituals. The mourners would come together at the cemetery, hold a feast and would leave food beside the dead. These feasts are found in the archaeological record as pottery fragments, bowls and pots in the grave, and animal bones and pottery sherds in the soil that fill up the grave (Crawford, 2022, p. 220).

Cremation graves

Cremation graves do not leave many archaeological traces behind, especially compared to inhumation burials. However, they leave enough to analyse them and learn more about this practice and the people. The crematory urns and containers are highly decorated. Between the cremated remains, burned and melted pieces of fabric were found, suggesting clothed bodies. There were also

pieces of animals found within the cremations, which might suggest food offerings or animal sacrifices. Small personal artefacts were often added to the urn or the pit, and bigger artefacts, such as weapons, were found in the pit. Some evidence indicates pyres could be used for multiple burials, as some urns contain traces of several people (Crawford, 2022, p. 218).

Inhumation graves

For most of the fifth century CE, the most frequent burial ritual was that of unaccompanied inhumation. Only from 470/480 CE onward did furnished burials with grave goods become widespread in England (Dickinson, 2011, p. 230). Throughout history, they have been associated with Paganism (Williams, 2011, p. 238). The graves differ greatly, such as the size and orientation of the graves, markings and furniture, the position of the body, the number of bodies, and grave goods (Crawford, 2022, pp. 218-219). Despite all the differences, there seem to be many overlaps between the different burials. The deceased were well-dressed and arranged with their grave goods around them (Crawford, 2022, p. 220).

The way how someone was buried depended on a lot of different factors. There were of course the practical and economic factors of the community, and the location and its environment played a big role in burial methods. Social factors may also have affected the burial ritual of the deceased person, such as the circumstances of the death, social identity, and relationships among the mourners (Williams, 2011, pp. 239-240). There can be different grave goods, and the number and quality of grave goods in their burial can vary depending on this (see Table 4).

Table 4: Wealth categories after Shephard 1979 (Härke, 1997, p. 144).

category	males	females
A	broad range of rich finds, incl. ring sword, bronze bowl; *later*: seax, bronze bowl	gilt brooches, gold braiding, crystal ball, bracteates, bronze bowl; *later*: union sets, cabochon garnets, biconical gold beads
B	sword, shield, spear; *later*: seax + spear	(poorer versions of A objects)
C	shield, spear	(continuum; difficult to distinguish)
D	spear	
E	knife or unfurnished	knife and/or buckle or unfurnished

Arm position

A phenomenon of the burial practises that has caught the eyes of some scholars, is the body positions. The most focus seems to lie on the question of why bodies are either crouched or extended; however, the position of the arms has been mostly overlooked. There are multiple types of arm positions found in the fifth to early-eight-century cemeteries (see Figure 11) (Coulton, 2023, p. 1). It seems that the gestures can be put into different groups, correlating to the age, sex and possible social status of the deceased person (Coulton, 2023, p. 7).

Six of the most popular positions that were found over the Anglo-Saxon cemeteries can be seen in Figure 11. The analyses are done in thirty-four fifth- to eighth-century Anglo-Saxon cemeteries (Coulton, 2023, p. 1). Position A seems to be most popular between the ages of fifteen and thirty-five. Position B seems to be most common among people between the ages of five to fifteen (Coulton, 2023, pp. 7 & 11). Position D and E seem to be most popular among adult women. Position E is also seen mostly by people above 35, with most of them being above the age of 45 (Coulton, 2023, pp. 7 & 12). Position F seems to be most popular in the seventh century. It might show someone of high social status or being a woman (Coulton, 2023, pp. 13-15).

These are only a few of the most common positions. There are multiple positions with combinations of crouching, lying on the side and lying straight, that I have come across in my research. For example, my case study has different, documented skeletal positions.

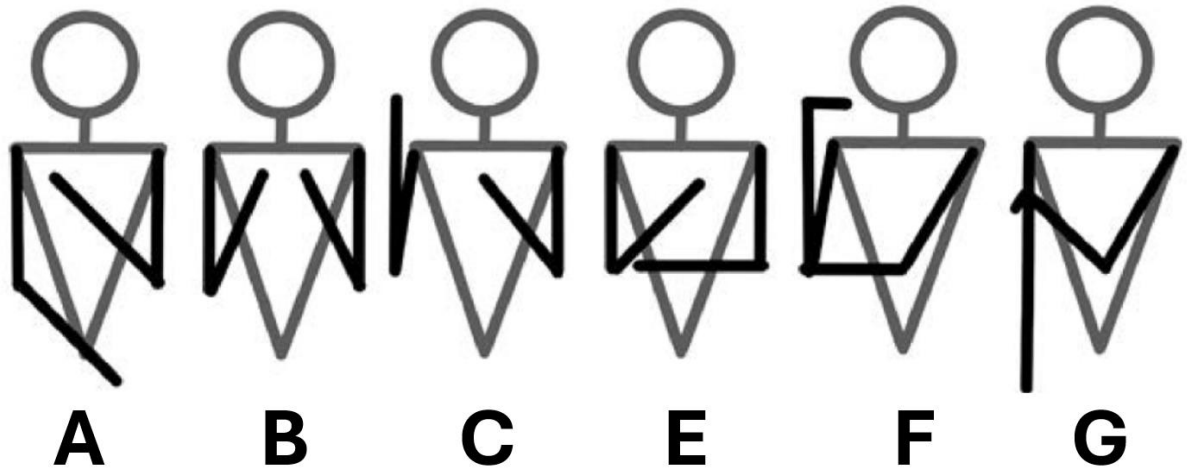

Figure 11: Arm gestures A-F. Different arm gestures were found in the graves of Early Anglo-Saxon England, adopted from (Emma Augustinus adapted, from Coulton, 2023, p. 7).

Types of grave goods

Grave goods offer the most comprehensive information available in the archaeological record for early Anglo-Saxon material culture. In every cemetery, there is a variety of different types, qualities and quantities, even if not every grave includes artefacts. The artefacts seem to have been

given to the deceased person and placed in their graves without the intention of recovering them. This is specifically seen for cremation burials since their artefacts had mostly melted or burnt in the process. Additionally, there is little evidence of grave robbery in this period (Crawford, 2004, pp. 88-89).

The type and quantity of grave goods in the graves depend on the person who is buried. It is a reflection of the age, stature, religious belief, wealth, and gender of the deceased. The reason for grave good depositions is unknown; they could be offerings to deities, or they were believed to be useful to the deceased person in the afterlife (Hills, 2011, p. 3; Crawford, 2022, p. 220).

Grave goods and gender

The types of grave goods from the Anglo-Saxon world are similar to the Merovingians. Similarly, it is believed that the gender of the deceased person could be indicated by the types of grave goods, masculine or feminine. However, not all the burials of adults can be assigned a gender/sex through their grave goods. Some burials were labelled 'ungendered' or 'gender-neutral' as their graves contained no artefacts or different types of artefacts that belonged to both genders (Lucy, 2011, pp. 691-694). The types of artefacts found in the burials of men and women, overlap sometimes but often are very distinct. Here, I discuss the data, and later in the discussion, I will compare them with the Merovingians.

Male graves consist of what are considered masculine artefacts, most commonly including weapons and armour. Other artefacts were belt sets like buckles, which were also often found in female graves, shield bosses, weapons such as spearheads, swords and seaxes, and different types of vessels (see Table 5) (Lucy, 2011, p. 691; Bayliss *et al.*, 2013a, pp. 241 & 328-334; Welch, 2011, p. 278).

Female graves include very common feminine artefacts like jewellery and other less common artefacts. Dress accessories such as brooches were often found in a lot of early and middle Anglo-Saxon graves. Also, beads and pendants of different materials could be identified. Chatelaine fittings and buckles of belts were found, and so were wire rings, pins, workboxes, wooden chests and glass vessels (see Table 5) (Bayliss et al, 2013b, pp. 356 & 449-454; Lucy, 2011, p. 692; Welch, 2011, p. 277).

Table 5: Most popular categories of grave goods. Different types of grave goods are found in the burials in Early Anglo-Saxon England (Emma Augustinus).

Male	Female
Weapons	Beads
Belt sets	Dress fittings
Shields	Necklaces and pendants
Bronze vessels	Chatelain fittings
Glass vessels	Workboxes
	Wooden chests
	Glass vessels
	Gold Jewellery

Grave goods and age

There is a correlation between the grave goods and the age of the deceased. The type and the amount depend on how old the person was when they died (Stoodley, 2011, p. 459). Infants are very underrepresented in cemeteries and are buried with no or only one or two objects, they also are often found in communal graves. This phenomenon is very common in Western Europe in the early Middle Ages and might be because of the high child mortality rate (Härke, 1997, p. 127; Stoodley, 2000, p. 459). Around the ages of two and three, the first grave goods show up in the graves, and the number will only go up as the people get older. The grave goods start to consist mostly of small weapons and sometimes weaving equipment. They are also being buried in a single grave instead of a shared one (Härke, 1997, p. 127; Stoodley, 2000, p. 459).

From the ages of seven to fourteen girls' grave goods grow in quantity and variation, increasing in jewellery and beads. From the age of 10, they are often found in full dress kits, which consist of brooches, keys, chatelaine or necklaces. This might be a sign of their growing femininity. There is increased at fifteen-years-old (Härke, 1997, pp. 127-128; Stoodley, 2000, p. 462). For boys that change happens around twelve-years-old, where they are often found with shields and swords (Härke, 1997, p. 128).

From the age of eighteen people are considered adults. Body positions become more standardised, and the artefacts clearly show that the graves belong to adults. The burials also start to include new grave goods, such as musical instruments, gaming pieces, axes, scales, horse harnesses, and seaxes (Härke, 1997, p. 128; Stoodley, 2000, p. 459). Adult men are often hard to differentiate; however, artefacts such as seaxes, axes, and horse gear are often found in their burials (Härke, 1997, p. 127).

When women get older, there seems to be a last chance in the burials. This does not apply to all women; however, after 30, it appears that their burials lose their strong feminine character. They contain fewer grave goods and have only a single brooch and a shorter necklace. Objects such as keys and different iron rod objects become more common (Stoodley, 2011, p. 648).

Changes that happened during and after the seventh century

Around the late sixth- early seventh century a big shift happened in the burial practices, especially for the furnished burials. A big and fast decline in grave goods was seen and churchyard burials and burials around settlements became popular. This is also known as the 'Final Phase', in which Christianity is slowly introduced to the people, it is a period between the 'Pagan' and the 'Christian' periods. At the end of this period and the beginning of the eighth century, most burials were without grave goods, with a few exceptions scattered around the Anglo-Saxon parts of England (Dickinson, 2011, p. 231; Crawford, 2004, p. 89; Crawford, 2022, p. 220).

However, these were not the only changes. Cremation graves disappeared completely in the seventh century (Welch, 2011, p. 267). Charlemagne put a ban on it in 789 (Lippok, 2020, p. 149). The burial costumes of the females changed from North European to late Merovingian and Byzantine influence, becoming more standardized. In the eighth century, there were still grave goods here and there; however, they were mostly basic items, such as knives and belt buckles (Dickinson, 2011, p. 231).

Chapter 5: Anglo-Saxon cemetery in Buckland, Dover

After discussing the literature behind the burials, the next section looks into the case study of an Anglo-Saxon cemetery to see if broad patterns are recognisable. The cemetery was discovered in 1951, in Long Hill near Buckland, Dover (see Figure 2), while building a house. During construction, multiple objects were discovered; however, they did not get much attention until the human skeletons were uncovered. Some of the earlier finds were a ring, sword, shield-boss, and spearhead. After studying all the artefacts that were found at the site, it was ruled that there might be an early Anglo-Saxon cemetery. With that statement, excavation started in September 1951 under the supervision of Vera I. Evison (see Figure 12) (Evison, 1987, p.11).

The hill had been mostly undisturbed for many centuries. It was covered by a layer of turf on top of a big layer of solid chalk. Despite this layer, the graves are not well preserved (Evison, 1987, p. 18). Of 169 graves, only a few contained human remains. The cemetery has seven phases (see Table 6) with phase one beginning in 475 and phase seven ending in 750 (Evison, 1987, pp. 138-141).

I chose this cemetery as my case-study as it was from the right periods and well documented. The author analysed the findings and data. She also gave an explicit overview of all the graves and their grave goods, skeletal position, and sex.

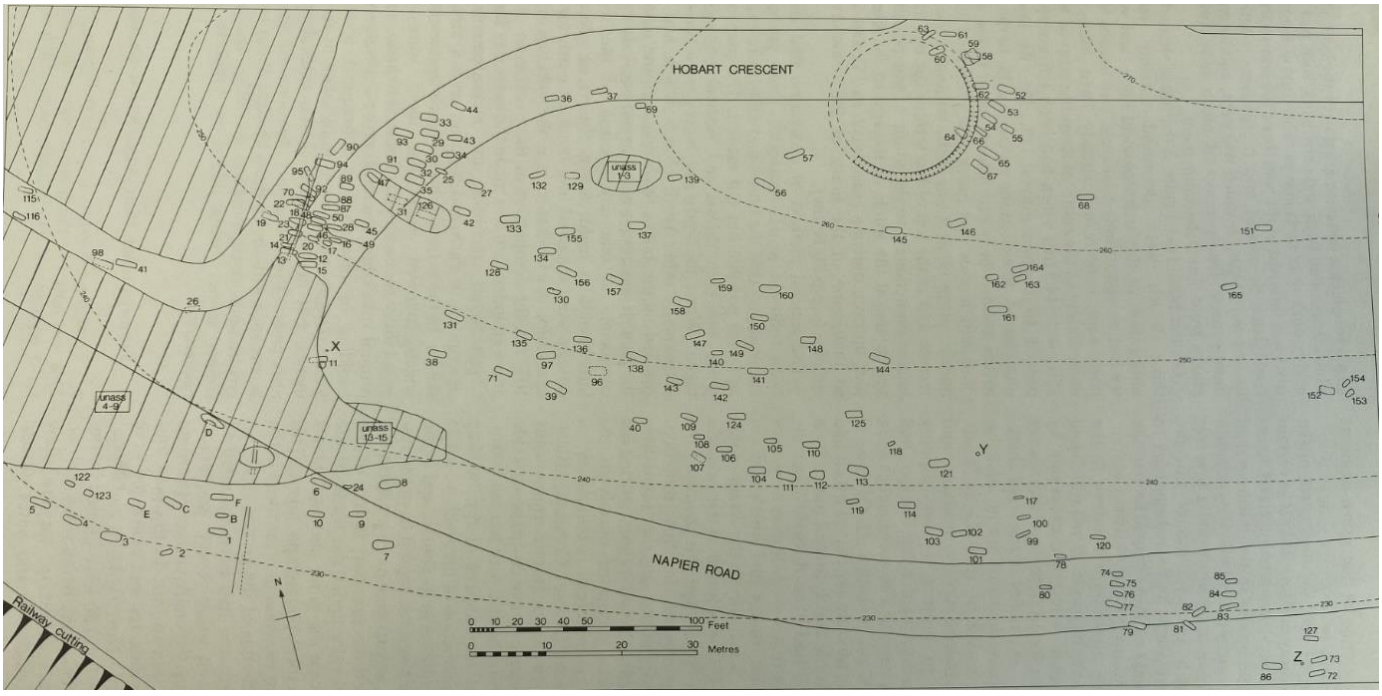

Figure 12: Plan of Anglo-Saxon cemetery, Buckland, Dover (Evison, 1987, p. 14)

Table 6: The seven phases of the cemetery Buckland, Dover (Emma Augustinus based on Evison, 1987, pp. 138-140).

Phase	Dates
Phase 1	475 – 525 CE
Phase 2	525 – 575 CE
Phase 3	575 – 625 CE
Phase 4	625 – 650 CE
Phase 5	650 – 675 CE
Phase 6	675 -700 CE
Phase 7	700- 750 CE

The graves

While the century was in use for almost 300 years, there are a lot of similarities when it comes to the graves. The orientation of the graves is almost identical everywhere. The bodies were roughly buried with heads to the west and feet to the east (WNW-ESE) (Evison, 1987, p. 16). The graves are all roughly the same shape, rectangular, with only a few small differences between them (Evison, 1987, p. 16).

Human remains

While most human remains are not preserved, multiple pieces have been found. They are mostly pieces of the skull, pelvis, arms, and legs (Evison, 1987, p. 18). The preserved bones were analysed and can help determine the age of death and sex of the deceased person.

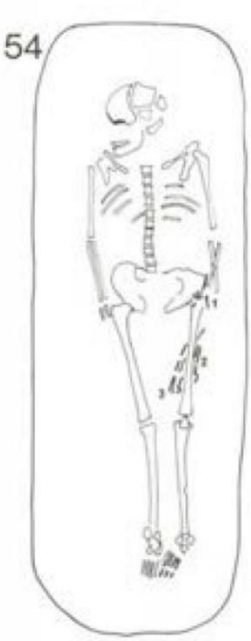

Figure 13: Reconstruction of grave 54 (Evison, 1987, p. 343)

To determine the sex of the bodies, both the bone analysis and the grave goods that were found in the graves are used. In the case of the Buckland excavation, there were two skeletal reports done. It seems that osteological sexing and the gender indicated by grave goods did not always correspond (Evison, 1987, p. 123). Grave 54 for example had artefacts in it that would suggest that the body in it was female; however, after analysing the bones twice they came up as male. This happened with multiple graves (Evison, 1987, p. 124). There are multiple reasons for this phenomenon. When dealing with partially degraded bones, the difference in the bone structure between females and males can be too subtle to make a definitive conclusion. In these instances, it is useful to look at the grave goods to help indicate the gender of the person. As mentioned before, feminine artefacts could indicate a woman, while masculine artefacts would be a man. In these cases, it seems that the 'true sex' of the body is indicated by the grave goods (Evison, 1987, p. 123). However, current thinking has criticised this, I will explore this in the discussion.

The skeletal positions were very well recorded and preserved at this cemetery. The exact or approximate placement of the limbs was documented for 117 burials. There did not appear to be a big correlation between one position and any sex. For example, the head was often turned to the right, no matter if the deceased was male, female, or a child. The most popular position was supine, with the hands on top of the pelvis or the femur. There appear to be many variations of the most popular positions; however, these were often rather small. The variety of body positions found is typical for Kentish cemeteries (Evison, 1987, pp. 129-134)

With the grave goods and human remains, also the age of death can be assumed. There is a difference between the age of death between the men and women in the cemetery. There were 54 males found and of 31 of them the age of death can be assumed. 16-17 remains indicate that these people died between the ages of 18 and 45, while the other 14/15 died after they were 45. While a lot of the men survived until their middle ages, this is very different for the women. Of the 66 female bodies, only 18 of them could not be given an age. Eleven of the graves belong to women who died before they turned 18. Sixteen died in their twenties and ten later on in their thirties. Only eleven made it past the age of 45 (Evison, 1987, pp. 127-128). Of the 48 women who can be aged, 77% did not make it until 45-years-old, while this was almost 50% for men. Women died a lot younger than men. This could be because a lot of them died in childhood or were killed by disease or crimes.

Grave goods

There were multiple grave goods found in the burials, and almost all contained multiple artefacts. The artefacts that were found fall under seven sub-categories (see Table 7). There are a few grave goods that were found that I will go into more detail, with a focus on feminine grave goods.

Multiple types of brooches found in the graves are related to or come from different places. The Square-Headed brooches are one example. Two of them were found in grave 13. Brooch 13/1 has a lot of similarities in shape, decoration and technique that can be related to the Jutland Group C brooches that were made in Kent between 480 and 520 (Evison, 1987, p. 36). This kind of brooch could than again be related to the *Vedstrup* brooch from Scandinavia. Brooch 13/2, was so similar to the Jutland brooch that it could even be one (Evison, 1987, p. 37). There can be multiple conclusions drawn from these brooches. It could mean that these women were Scandinavian descendants or that there was trade with the Scandinavians. Which then could indicate a European trading system between multiple countries.

Two of the Kentish disc brooches are also interesting to discuss. In total, there were twelve found; however, brooch 29/1 is much larger than the other. It also has 'four T-shaped granite cells combined with the cabochon centre to make a definite Christian cross shape' (Evison, 1987, pp. 42-43). The other Kentish disc brooch has runes inscribed on the back of it (Evison, 1987, p. 46). This is very interesting as there were only a handful of artefacts found with runes on them before 650 in England, and this is the first brooch (Evison, 1987, p. 47). This can mean multiple things, one of which is that it shows the movement of people. They are either trading or moving and taking their heritage with them.

The last brooches that I will discuss are three Frankish disc brooches. They are very common Frankish brooches and were important for this research as it is a connection to the Merovingians. These brooches were found in burials that were close to each other in the earlier phases of the cemetery. There are other objects found in these graves that can be associated with the Franks (Evison, 1987, p. 47).

Other pieces of jewellery that were found in abundance were beads. There were a total of 1442 beads found on the site over 45 confirmed graves and one unspecified (see Table 8). There were a few remarkable things about these beads. One of these was that the amber beads for example were never found in a grave with amethyst, metal or shell beads were often found with jet, stone, glass and composition beads (Evison, 1987, p. 57). Another interesting thing is that whereas the amethyst beads only appeared in the mid-sixth century in England, they appeared in an earlier, continental Germanic grave, showing the connection between the Anglo-Saxons and the people of continental Europe (Evison, 1987, p. 60).

One other very interesting thing is that knives did not fall under the weapons category but personal equipment. In the cemetery, there were a total of 131 knives found. There were six types, which all appeared in different phases and different plots of the cemetery. The most common was type 1 (39 total) which appears in all phases of the cemetery. Knives occur in both male and female graves, although occur more often in male graves. The knives were often found at the height of the

waist of the deceased. Some of the females were also found in bags, pockets or other containers by their left hip (Evison, 1987, pp. 13-15).

Table 7: Categorised grave goods found in Anglo-Saxon cemetery Buckland. All the grave goods organised in categories that were found in the graves of the Early Anglo-Saxon cemetery in Buckland, Dover (Emma Augustinus).

Weapons	Jewellery	Belt mounts	Containers	Tools	Weaving equipment	Personal equipment
Swords	Square-headed brooches	Buckles	Pottery	Sharpening steel	Iron weaving battens	Knives
Spearheads	Small long brooch	Belt	Glass	Awls	Weaving pick	Girdle hangers
Seaxes	Kentish disc brooches	Strap mounts	Coffin	Mattock	Ae needle	Tweezers
Arrow	Frankish disc brooches		Wooden Box	Fire-steel	Spindle Whorl	Spoons
Shield	Saucer brooch		Ae Bowl	Hones	Shears	Iron diamonds
Ferrule	Pendants		Bucket			Ivory rings
	Beads		Wood vessel			Silver, bronze, and iron rings
	Pins		Bone box			Combs
	Pins with man's head		Ae work box			Lyre
	Bracelets		Bone lid			Key
	Finger-rings					

Table 8: Types of beads in individual graves. Number of beads found in every grave and what type of bead it is (Evison, 1987, p. 59).

Grave number	Amber	Amethyst	Jet	Shell	Composition	Metal	Stone	Monochrome	Orange Barrel	Drawn Globular	Drawn Globular Gilded	Drawn Cylinder	Polychrome	Mosaic	Millefiori	Reticella	Total in Grave
B								1									1
F	5							1									6
1	6							83	1	13			19				122
6				1				32		1	2						36
12													1				1
13	3		1								7	5	1				17
14	27				1					11							39
15								1				7					8
18	1							7	2				9				19
20	21				1			8			21	4					55
23	1							3					1				5
29	3							84		4		1	3				95
30	14							49					15	4			82
32								131		24	27		11				193
35	2							10		22	30		1				65
38	70							4				1	1		1		77
42	17							9					28			1	55
46								141		14	24						179
48	8							2		5	1	7					23
49	1																1
53		3							4						1		8
55	2						2	3	1				2				10
59	3							28					12	1			44
60	7							30		2		2	7	2			50
62	3							22					1				26
66	7																7
67		3		6		3		5	4								21
75		4		1				5									10
76								1					2				3
83								1									1
92	74		1							6		3				1	85
93																1	1
107								2									2
110								13									13
124		2															2
127		2						5									7
129				1		3	1	5					1	1			12
132		6						2	2				1		2		13
133		2				3		2	5				2				14
134				2				4	2				1				9
141				1				2									3
155								5									5
157				1				3	2				1				7
160								6									6
161								1									1
UN								2					1				3
Total	275	22	2	13	2	9	3	713	23	102	112	30	121	8	4	3	1442

Analyses of the graves

As mentioned, the cemetery has 169 graves (Evison, 1987, pp. 214-252). As with the previous chapter, I will discuss six graves. I will investigate gender, age, body position and grave goods. I will compare that information with what was mentioned earlier in the chapter and with each other. I will look at graves 1, 6, 9, 20, 27 and 137 (see Figures 14 & 15)

Comparison with earlier data

As mentioned in the text before, how someone was buried depended on the society they lived in and how they were seen in that society (Williams, 2011, pp. 239-240). This is seen in these graves, especially the females with many personal items in the form of jewellery. Feminine and masculine artefacts are also clearly displayed here. Females have a big assortment of jewellery and the males have some form of weapon in their graves.

A big difference is seen in the graves of the juveniles, especially grave 20. The deceased was between the ages of 0 and 6 years old. According to the literature, she would have only a few items in her grave (Härke, 1997, p. 127 & Stoodley, 2000, p. 459). However, she has the most amount, which was also seen in grave 48 (also female, 12-18, multiple grave goods). This might suggest that she is between the ages of 3 and 6, instead of 0-6, as children from 0-3 had almost no grave goods. Other reasons could be that her family was wealthier than others, or she might have been in the marriage market already

The body positions were also very well preserved and recorded at this cemetery. Härke (1997, p. 127) states that the body positions should standardise after the age of eighteen. Both graves 6 and 9 are around the same age and have a similar body position (skull pillowed and hand on the pelvis).

Comparison between females and males

All the graves are around the same age between the males and females. The biggest difference between the two might have been the amount of grave goods and the categories that they fall under. The females have more grave goods than the males. This occurs multiple times in the cemetery, of course, most are jewellery pieces that they might have been wearing. The females also have more pottery or glassware in their graves. as seen in graves 5 and 20. Grave 137 also has a pottery bottle in his grave; however, this might be connected to him being a juvenile.

Table 93: Graves of Anglo-Saxon cemetery Dove Buckland (Emma Augustinus, Evison, 1987, pp. 214-253).

Graves	Grave 1	Grave 6	Grave 20	Grave 27	Grave 9	Grave 137
Sex/Gender	Female	Female	Female	Male	Male	Male
Age of Death	Over 45	20-30	Juvenile, 0-6	Over 45	20-30	Juvenile
Body Position	Skull turned right, left arm bent across body, right forearm missing, knees slightly flexed	Skull turned slightly right and tilted (pillowed?); right arm bent with hand in pelvis, left arm straight	-	Skull half right	Skull pillowed, inclined left, left hand in pelvis	-
Finds	Reddish golden bracteate	Glass bell-beaker	Iron weaving batten	Spearhead	Spearhead	Bronze bowl
	Fragment iron ring	Cowrie shell	Disc brooch	Spear ferrule	Iron shaft	Bronze buckle
	Silver gilt disc brooch	Spindle whorl	Silver pin	Sword	Iron buckle	Small spearhead
	Bronze pin	Iron pin	Golden bracteate	2x Iron buckle	Knife	Pottery bottle
	118x glass beads	Iron key	21x amber beads	Knife	Bronze buckle	Spear ferrule
	6x amber beads	Knife	33x glass beads	2x iron discs		Knife
	Bronze wire bracelet	Iron shaft Pendant fragments	Silver-gilt square-headed brooch			Small knife fragments
	Knife	Iron pin	Silver wire bracelet			
	Iron ring	1 shell bead	Silver-gilt square-headed brooch			
	Ivory ring	35 glass beads	Bronze buckle			
	Bronze ring		Bronze wire bracelet			
	Iron key fragments		Knife			
	Iron key shaft		Iron key fragments			
	Iron key		Iron riveted loop fragments			
	Piece of iron		2x iron diamond			

			Brown glass claw-beaker			
			Spun bronze bowl			
			Large cylindercel bead			
			Wooden belt			

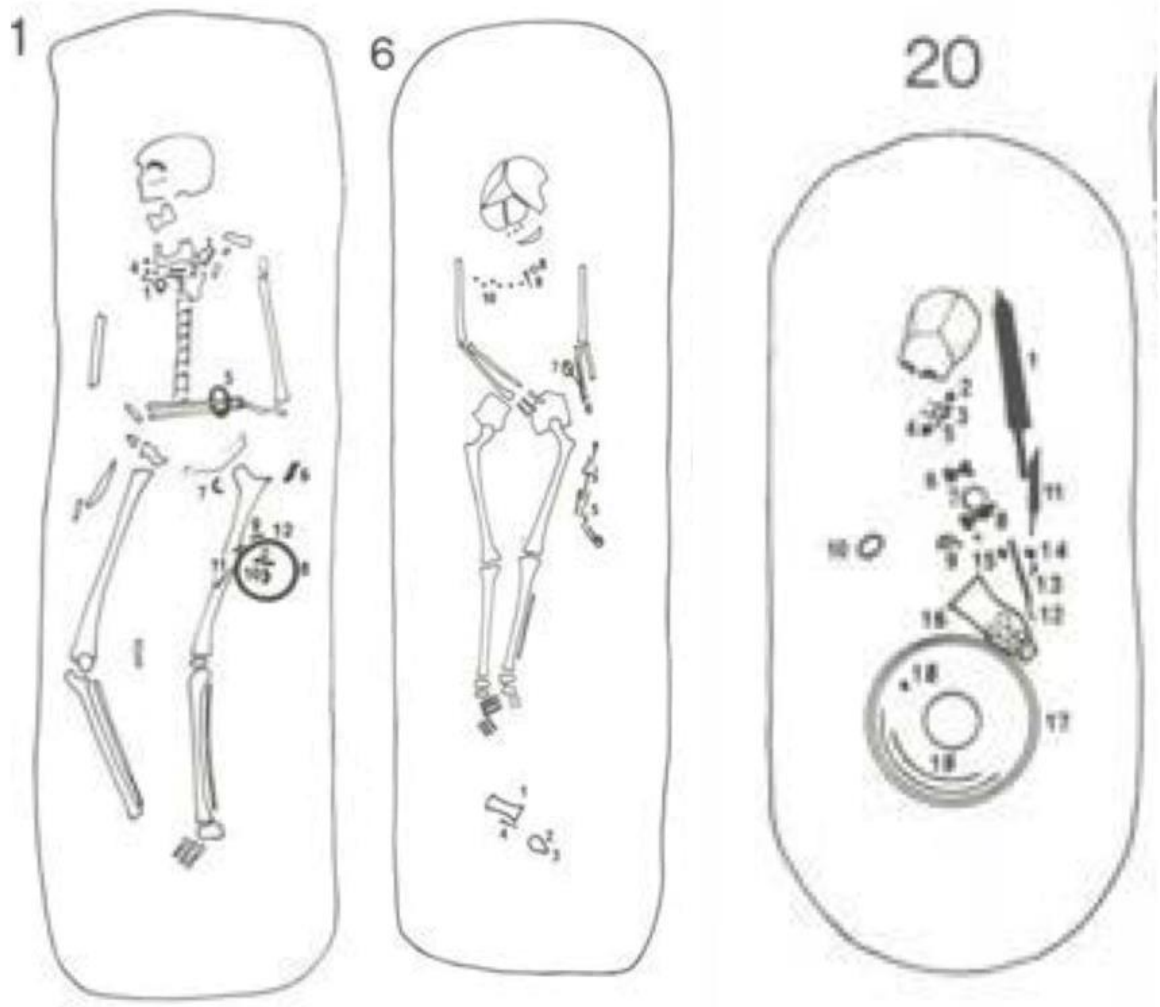

Figure 14: Reconstruction female graves 1, 6 & 20 (Evison, 1987, pp. 337-340)

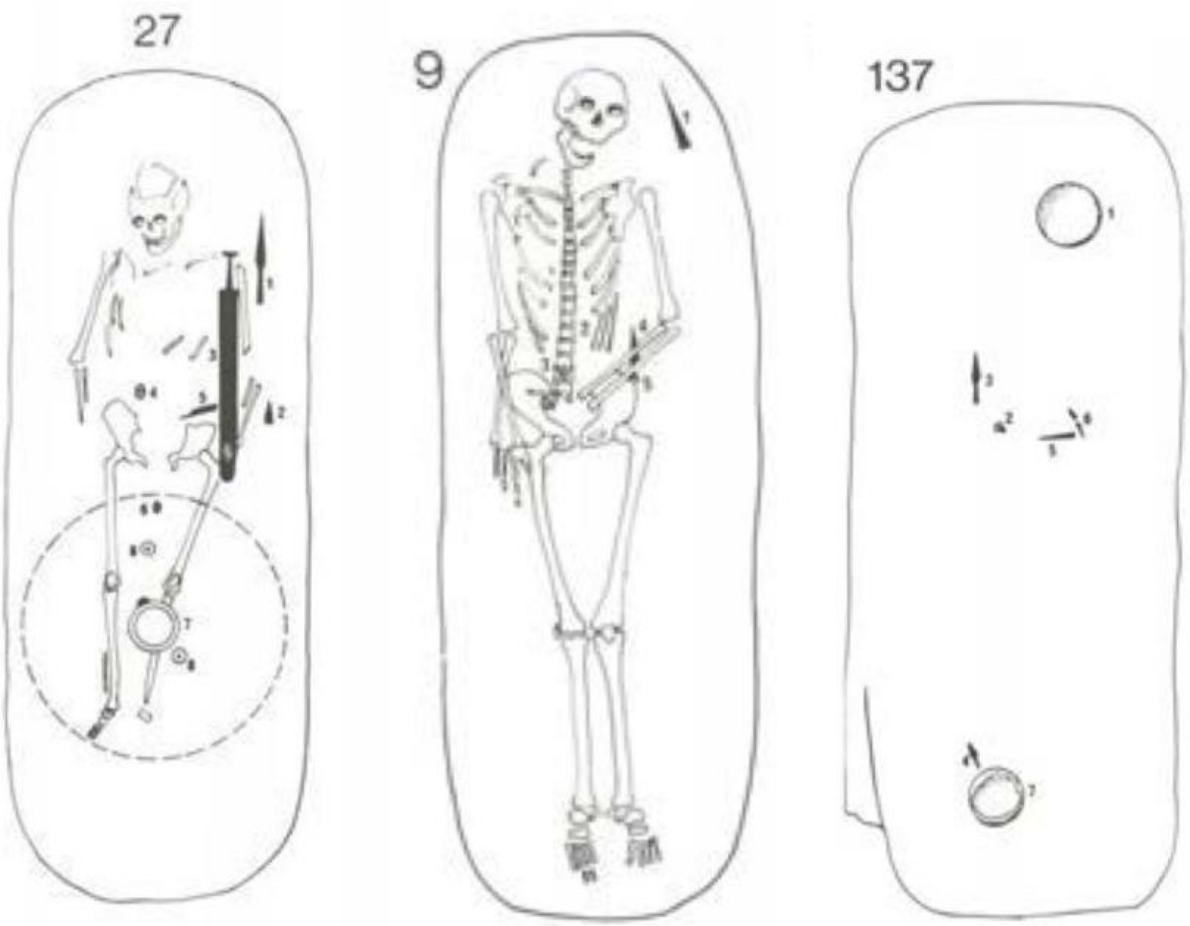

Figure 15: Reconstruction male graves 27, 9 & 137 (Evison, 1987, pp. 338-352)

Chapter 6: Discussion

I have provided much information on both Merovingian and Anglo-Saxon societies. I have discussed their burial practices, grave goods, and how they compare with gender and age. I have talked about the lives of women in these times and the possible influences of Christianity on everything. In this chapter, I will take some of the most important things that I have mentioned and discuss them to try to answer my thesis question and the sub-questions.

What was the Impact of Christianity on Ealy Medieval women?

One of the biggest differences between the Merovingians and the Anglo-Saxons is that the Merovingians were Christian since establishment while the Anglo-Saxons converted to Christianity later on (Effros & Moreira, 2020, p. 19; Crawford, 2022, p. 221). When it comes to women, much can be discussed. Merovingian women had functions in Christianity and Anglo-Saxon society, it is believed that they helped spread it (Wemple, 1981, p. 127; Hamerow et al., 2024, pp. 486 & 498). However, there were a lot of double standards when it came to women. The Church could offer them protection and power as was seen by the nunnery and bring literacy to the people. However, laws and writing influenced by Christianity could demonise women and make them out as temptresses, inferior, impure, and associate them with sin (Härke, 1997, p. 132; Wemple, 1981, p. 127). This would leave women with less power and control over their own lives than they might have thought. While women had more roles and sometimes power in Christianity, they still had little compared to today. They could be seen as unfit for certain roles because of their 'fragile lives' and dismissed quickly.

It is often believed that Christianity caused the disappearance of grave goods and cremation graves. Both are often associated with paganism in early archaeology (Lippok, 2020, p. 149; Williams, 2011, p. 238). However, there is no real evidence for this, as other cultures that are mostly Christian (e.g., Merovingians) also had grave goods in this period. Therefore, this belief has been mostly discarded. This does not mean that Christianity did not have any influence on the funerary rituals. Burial customs and material culture are observed to change slowly with the new influence. Graveyards change in size and structure among the Anglo-Saxons. Cremation burials started to disappear, something that already had happened among the Merovingians (Nielsen 2013, p. 164). The case study of Dover discusses a brooch that is 'Christian cross-shaped'. These brooches are believed to show a connection to Christianity. The appearance of them in different places could show the spreading influence of Christianity (Evison, 1987, pp. 42-43).

What is the status of Anglo-Saxon and Merovingian women in their societies?

Women are often overlooked in the literature of the Merovingian kingdom and the Anglo-Saxon realm. They are underrepresented and if they are mentioned they are often part of the elite (James, 2020, p. 238). In both cultures, women had little social power. They were dependent and got their power from their fathers, husbands, and sometimes the church (James, 2020, p. 238; Crawford, 2022, p. 14). The Merovingians saw women as helpless and only good for childbearing, which prevented them from bearing arms and, in elite cases, doing heavy work. They were their husband's property. While they had little power, this did not mean they had no power. Merovingian queens had accumulated power through the church and common women were heads of their households and could have their properties (Wemple, 1981, p. 31).

The Anglo-Saxons did not have the same views. Anglo-Saxon women had the most equality with their brothers than at any time before modern times. They had some economic control and were exempt from their husbands' crimes, while also having legal autonomy (Crawford, 2022, p. 14; Härke, 1997, p. 132).

Both cultures do ask a form of wergeld for hurting a woman of childbearing age. For both, it has been said to be higher than men's wergeld. However, the Anglo-Saxons bring it down if the woman was not a virgin (Halsall, 2020, p. 170; Crawford, 2022, p. 23).

The stance on divorce in both cultures is different. Merovingian women had to be faithful to their arranged husbands, while their husbands did not have to stay faithful to them. Divorce was not an option for the women. If a husband was unhappy, he could just take a second wife. However, the wife was stuck no matter if he abused her (Wemple, 1981, p. 42). Whereas Anglo-Saxon women could diverse their husbands, once both are in agreement (Hough, 1994, pp. 22-23). This meant that they could be trapped in harmful relationships if their husbands did not want to leave.

It seems that women in the Anglo-Saxon culture had more freedom and rights than their sisters in the Merovingian kingdom. While it might not have been a big difference, it does show that even between two neighbouring cultures, women are treated differently. However, this could also be a difference in scholarship.

The Church, which had a lot of power in society, gave women a bad image by painting them as impure and related to sin, which could not have made their lives easier. Both cultures seemed to sexualise women a lot in their daily lives. This is seen back, not only in the *wergeld* but also in the grave goods mentioned earlier.

What is the difference between the graves of Anglo-Saxon and Merovingian women?

The first sub-question is very interesting and has a lot of different layers. Therefore I will discuss the multiple factors that will help answer this question. I will look at the burial practices, grave goods, and interpret the case studies.

The funerary practices.

The burial practices between the Merovingians and early/middle Anglo-Saxons (400-800) were very similar. For both the Merovingians and the Anglo-Saxons, gender/sex, age, religious belief, ethnicity, economic factors, social identity, rank, and cause of death were all important when it came to how someone was buried and what the rituals entailed (Effros, 2003, pp. 97 & 127; Williams, 2011, pp. 239-240). Both cultures occasionally had feasts around the graves that are found in the archaeological record (Halsall, 2010, pp. 204-205; Crawford, 2022, p. 220). Both of them had inhumation graves which contained funeral clothes and gendered grave goods (Halsall, 2010, pp. 204-205; Crawford, 2022, p. 220). I will go into the grave goods later as there is a lot more to be said about them.

All these similarities do not exclude differences. There are two very big differences between the burial practices which are the cremation graves and the body positions. As stated in Chapter 2, fully-body cremation did not occur that often in the Merovingian period (Effros, 2003, p. 165). This did not mean that it did not happen. The case study mentioned cremated bones (Theuws & Haperen, 2012, p. 58), and some literature mentions that the change from cremation to inhumation happened around the third century (Effros, 2003, p. 188). With the Anglo-Saxons, on the other hand, cremation was one of the two big forms of burial. There were many decorated urns found with few artefacts in them (Crawford, 2022, p. 218). There can be a lot of speculation as to why one of them had a lot more cremation graves than the other; however, they remain speculations. Due to the ban on cremation graves by Charlemagne, it was believed that there were religious motivations. However, there is no evidence that the disappearance of cremation graves had religious reasons. There are multiple Christian cremation burials found and in the case of Charlemagne, it was more politically motivated (Lippok, 2020, p. 149). The Merovingians could have more cremation graves; however, they might not have buried them in an urn; thereby limiting preservation. The traces of charcoal and burned places could be easily missed by archaeologists if not specifically looked for.

The other big difference was the arm position. A lot of Anglo-Saxon studies I found discuss the position of the bodies and arms of the deceased. Some studies investigate what the positions could indicate (Coulton, 2023). They found that some positions occur more often with women and

different ages. While the Merovingians did bury their dead supine extended west-east, the position of the arms is rarely mentioned and I have found no literature on what the body position could mean. This could mean two things, the Merovingians did not care about the position of the bodies, despite having a dominant pattern in body position, or more subtle variations have been overlooked by scholars. As I have said, the body position is rarely mentioned, meaning it is often overlooked in academia. This is a good example of why cross-cultural comparison studies are important. They show what one culture specialist is studying and could help the other group with finding a new subject to study. If the body positions were also studied more in-depth by the Merovingian scholars, there could be a study done on whether there is a connection between the body positions of the two cultures. This could then tell us more about possible connections between the two.

The grave goods and gender

The grave goods set apart the men and women most when it comes to their burials. Both cultures had gendered grave goods. The masculine and feminine artefacts are fairly similar between the two groups. Men had weapons and tools, while women had jewellery and, for example, whole spinning tools (see Table 5).

The gendered grave goods; however, did not always indicate sex. Evison (1987, p. 123) and many other scholars mention that when the bones can not indicate the sex of the bones, the grave goods will tell the sex of the deceased. The deceased is labelled male or female even if the bones give a different sex. However, sex and gender are not the same. Sex is physiological while gender is the role society gives you or you give yourself (Wilson, 1989, p. 1). This would mean that if the bones would say that a person was female; however, they would have masculine grave goods, the sex of the person would still be female, and their gender was probably man. There are multiple examples throughout history where this has happened. I have mentioned multiple of them in this study already, Ennery for example had a male grave with female grave goods. The Anglo-Saxons also had gender-neutral graves and different sex grave goods and graves (male grave goods, female skeleton). This shows that even between two different cultures, people still show who they feel they are. Scholars need to keep in mind that the past does not have the same rules and beliefs as the present and that outdated ideas, such as grave goods indicating sex, do not always apply.

When talking about the grave goods and the connection to the deceased, it is always good to keep in mind that the dead do not bury themselves. The artefacts might represent accumulations from their lives; however, it was the community that buried them and decided on the grave goods. There are a lot of reasons why the community decided on the specific artefacts other than gender and religious beliefs.

What can be said about the women from the grave goods?

While written documents do not show a lot about the daily lives of the women who lived in the Merovingian period, mostly showing a few elite women, grave goods show how normal women were seen by the community and society.

As aforementioned, the first time feminine artefacts are found is in child burials. There are not many explanations for the slight gendering of these mostly gender-neutral graves, except that these artefacts might signify the possible betrothal of the deceased child. It has been shown in literary sources that children as young as eight years old were betrothed (Halsall, 2020, p. 169).

The big change and difference in puberty can be related to the fact that girls will get their first period around the age of twelve and will be able to bear children of their own and are of marriageable age.

The gendering and sexualisation of the women continued for many years. It is also found in bodily adornments. While funerary clothes do not survive, the accessories and ornaments placed on the body show a lot about the view of the women. The adornments are focused on the places that are seen as taboo to be touched and can be punished by law. They are 'associated with the hand and arms, the breast, and the hair' (Halsall, 2020, pp. 170-172). This highlights the unavailability of the female body but also shows the objectification of the women (Halsall, 2020, p. 172). There is a lot of evidence of the sexualising of the female body in the Merovingian and Anglo-Saxon periods.

After the age of forty, feminine grave goods almost disappear from the burials, with only here or there a piece of jewellery. This might indicate the loss of status as women are less likely to bear children and are too old to be married off. Their children have reached the age of maturity and probably have been married (Halsall, 2020, p. 173). Childbearing and marriage were the cornerstones of Merovingian women's status and identity (Halsall, 2020, p. 172). Therefore their death put not a loss of stress on the community, as they have less value at this stage/now (Halsall, 2020, p. 173).

When it comes to the Anglo-Saxons, a similar story is told. There is an obvious difference between young boys' and girls' grave goods. Girls receive more gendered grave goods at a younger age than boys. Around the age of seven girls get their first big growth episode when it comes to being seen in a feminine way, while boys only get that around the age of twelve (Härke, 1997, p. 127). This might be linked to the fact that children were expected to help in the household from the age of five. The young girls started to do more feminine-related household activities (Stoodley, 2011, p. 659).

The other change around the ages of ten to fourteen could be interpreted in the same way the change happened by the Merovingian girls in the previous chapter. These girls were going into puberty and were therefore seen as sexual objects who could now be given away in marriage.

Although I have not found any sources, in my opinion, this pattern can likely be explained in the same way.

Females of all ages were connected through material remains, which in turn could be seen as a means of teaching feminine duties, behaviours, and skills. Jewellery is often used to interpret feminine identities, and how they are understood in relation to the body. Jewellery, as a symbol, can therefore be used to interpret the exchanging of ideas and concepts associated with feminine development (Stoodley, 2011, p. 659). However, after thirty slowly the number of grave goods decrease. Their feminine artefacts disappear until they have only a few items left (Stoodley, 2011, p. 648).

Both groups show that girls get more lavish graves from a young age compared to boys. Young girls are sexualised and seen as mature from a very young age. Around the age of ten to fourteen, they could have gotten their first period and can now bear children. They can be married off and help grow the community. You can see they lose that value when they are around thirty to forty. These women probably already had children or are not at the age anymore that they could raise them properly, therefore they lose their value in the community. This is seen again in the decrease of grave goods.

Halsall's study on the comparison of grave goods and age is very helpful when it comes to understanding the life cycle of Merovingian women. Similar studies have been done for Anglo-Saxon women; however, often it is done only for single cemeteries and not the entire culture. The Anglo-Saxons were a multitude of different cultures, kingdoms and ethnicities, which made it harder to give them one specific chronicle. However, most of these studies show a similar story as the Merovingians have.

Two interesting differences between the Anglo-Saxons and the Merovingians are the knives found in the graves of Anglo-Saxon women in Dover (Evison, 1987, pp. 13-15). Knives are often seen as weapons or tools and therefore placed in male graves. However, this is not the case with the Anglo-Saxons. In the Case study, almost all female graves had knives in them, something that the Merovingians did not see. Merovingian women were discouraged from picking up arms, this would have included knives (Wemple, 1981, p. 29). To see them in the Anglo-Saxon graves in the case study shows that these women were not discouraged from protecting themselves or doing harder labour.

The other difference is that there were multiple brooches found that are from or are related to different places inside the Anglo-Saxon territories and outside them. This shows that people travelled and traded with each other as Scandinavian, Jutland and Frankish brooches were all found in Dover (Kent) (Evison, 1987, pp. 36-47). There can be multiple conclusions drawn from these brooches. The Scandinavian/Jutland brooch could mean that these women were Scandinavian

descendants and show that ethnic-marriages happened at a bigger scale than just island-wise. It could also mean that there was trade with the Scandinavians. This than could indicate a European trading system between multiple countries. An article by Montgomery et al. (2005, pp. 133-134) shows that grave goods from Norway and Denmark are found in the graves of both local and non-local burials, which supports the hypothesis of ethnic marriages and the trade system. The three Frankish brooches in Dover follow this pattern, indicating a connection with the Merovingians. They show that there was contact between the Merovingians and the Anglo-Saxons.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This study aimed to understand how the Merovingian and fourth to eighth-century Anglo-Saxon women were treated in their lives and deaths from an archaeological standpoint. I looked at different archaeological finds and literature discussing women from the fourth to the eighth century in these cultures and looked through the eyes of Christianity, society and burial practices to answer this question.

Christianity did not seem to have a big influence on the burials of the women as one might have thought. Grave goods do not suddenly disappear just because people start to believe in one deity. Cremation graves were once believed to have disappeared because of Christianity. However, no real data supports that statement. Besides some little changes, the social culture and the community are what determine the funerary rituals for the women. People's traditions stayed for many years after Christianity took over and only started to change as society changed as well.

The way how women were viewed changed more. The Church brought lots of changes with it. In both cultures, women could get more power and autonomy by having a role in the Church. They could find protection from men as a nun. However, the double standards only seem to increase with the Church, especially seen with the Anglo-Saxons. There is a clear change. Women were almost equal to their brothers in the early Anglo-Saxon period. However, when Christianity came into place, they were viewed as impure and inferior to men. This could have had a great impact on how these women went about their day-to-day lives.

The status of women in society seems to change depending on the person's social status. Both cultures' women did not have a lot of power over themselves. They had to rely on their fathers or husbands. The Merovingians only saw their women as being good for childbearing and being helpless. Nothing like this is mentioned for the Anglo-Saxon women. In both cultures, women could have property and have their voices heard in court; however, for the Merovingian women, their husbands represented them. Both cultures very much sexualised their women. The stance on divorce in both cultures is interesting. Most marriages seem to be arranged from a young age and there were consequences if you were to break off the engagement. While Anglo-Saxon women could get out of their marriage with divorce, if the husband agreed, the Merovingian women could not do such a thing.

To my understanding, the biggest difference in literature between the two cultures is that the Merovingian women seem to have less freedom and autonomy in society than their Anglo-Saxon sisters. However, in my opinion, this is because of the little research done on this topic for the Anglo-Saxons. This is a difference in scholarship.

There seems to be little difference between the funerary rituals between the Anglo-Saxon and the Merovingian women. Both cultures bury their women with grave goods and in funeral clothes. One of the bigger differences is the cremation burial that still happened by the Anglo-Saxons and disappeared later due to politics. The knives that were found in the female graves in Dover, Kent, is another big difference. It shows a difference in how women are seen in society. As the Merovingian women were discouraged from bearing arms to appear helpless, the women in the Anglo-Saxon cemetery did have them and could therefore protect themselves and have slightly more power in life. The arm positions of the Anglo-Saxons are another difference; however, this is probably because of the lack of research on the Merovingian's side. Both cultures seem to have very gendered grave goods and for both cultures, the amount of grave goods increases immensely when a girl starts puberty and comes of age. This shows the value they place on women for being able to bear children. Young girls are this way sexualised and viewed as adults. There are more reasons for it; however, as they are seen as old enough to bear children. They are often married a few years later. When they are between thirty and forty years old, they start to lose their value.

It is important to note that the dead do not bury themselves. However, there can be still a lot said about the status of women from their burial rituals as that shows how their community saw them.

This thesis showed, that even though the neighbouring cultures had a lot in common, they did have differences. One of the biggest differences between the two is the difference in scholars. This is why cross-culture analyses are important as they show new sides to old research and give people new ideas to test in their respective fields. It can show connections between groups that have not been seen before and help understand the culture from a different perspective.

This thesis discussed a lot of topics connected to the women from the Merovingian kingdom and the Anglo-Saxons. While I discussed a lot here, there is much more to be found out about the connection between these two groups. Some recommendations for future research include a systematic investigation of subtle differences in body and arm positions between the two groups. There might be new meanings found behind the positions. Another recommendation would be a systematic investigation of the occurrence of knives in Anglo-Saxon and Merovingian graves across a large sample size. And also the connection between the two groups in itself.

Abstract

There have been many studies done on Medieval Europe and the Kingdoms and cultures that lived during this period. The Merovingians and the Anglo-Saxons are two of these groups that lived as neighbours in the same period. A lot of research has therefore been done on them. However, one element has been overlooked by both of them for many centuries: women. Women have been an overlooked part of history and society. Only in the last few decades did they get more attention.

This thesis investigates the lives and deaths of women in the Merovingian and the early and middle Anglo-Saxon periods from an archaeological standpoint. It does this by looking at the different themes, such as burial practices, what their status was in society and the influence of Christianity. This thesis is a literary review that discusses two case studies; the Merovingian cemetery of Bergeijk-Fazantlaan and the Anglo-Saxon cemetery in Buckland, Dover.

There are a lot of similarities between the two neighbouring groups. A similarity is that both groups highly sexualised their women. Additionally, women did not have a lot of power and control in their lives. Their societal status depended on their fathers and husbands' status. There were still a few differences between the two groups. The Anglo-Saxons still used cremation burials, while the Merovingians discarded them. Another difference is the appearance of knives in the Anglo-Saxon female graves in the case study. These knives show a difference in how women were seen in society. Merovingian women were encouraged to be helpless and to never bear arms. The knives show that the Anglo-Saxon women were encouraged to protect themselves and to be slightly more powerful in life.

This thesis showed, that even though the neighbouring cultures had a lot in common, they did have differences. One of the biggest differences between the two is the difference in scholars. This is why cross-culture analyses are important as they show new sides to old research and give people new ideas to test in their respective fields.

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